



Swiss-Israeli Anthropologist Journeys to Nigeria

By Daniel Lis

As I came out of Abuja's airport, two men with kippot and a lady were waiting for me. They greeted me with a cordial “Shalom”. This was just the start of two amazing weeks in Nigeria, which I will not easily forget.

I am a Swiss-Israeli Social Anthropologist, and I came to Nigeria in order to check out possibilities for a PhD project and to see if there was really any sense in doing research about a Jewish (re)naissance movement in Nigeria.

Everything had started in Basel, Switzerland, not far away from Herzl's famous balcony, in a nightclub where they were playing some R&B music and where I had chatted with a young Igbo fellow over a beer. We exchanged telephone number and he put down his name,



The author eating typical Igbo delicacies

which I had not managed to spell correctly: “Levi”.

“But that's a Jewish name,” I said.

“Yes it is and I am a Jew.”

I got even more curious when this fellow told me that the Igbo came originally from Israel and that his grandparents had told him so.

Shortly thereafter I started to read reports from Nigeria in the Kulanu Newsletter and I tracked down every sort of hint on the Internet and went to the libraries in order to read about Igbo history, religion and culture. I got in touch with Remy Ilona, a lawyer in Abuja who had written a book with the title *The Igbos: Jews in Africa?* I ordered a copy and started to read it (several times). The topic was fascinating since the Igbo represent a people of about 40-50 million. Were they all saying that they came from Israel? Did they really circumcise on the eighth day? What was the state of the Judaizing communities among the Igbo? I had to see with my own eyes since books and Internet will never tell the same story.

I was very lucky that Remy Ilona devoted two weeks to my visit and made sure that I met as many people as possible and visited as many communities as possible. He had also secured accommodation for me with the help of Dr. Tom Timberg, an American Jew working in Abuja, and Teddy Luttwak, a long-time resident in Nigeria and a cosmopolitan, self-made Jew.

Friday evening started surprisingly in a rather Israeli setting. Serving as the tenth man, I was taken (by car) to an Israeli minyan at a hotel. According to the Israeli ambassador in Abuja, Noam Katz, there

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Wuriga Cites Progress Among the Lemba

By Karen Primack

Rabson Wuriga spoke about the Lemba Jewish Community of Southern Africa at Tifereth Israel Congregation in Washington, DC, in February. A Lemba elder and a resident of Zimbabwe, he was in the US for a conference.

Wuriga tells of old map which locates a town called “Lemba” in Israel during the Hasmonaean kingdom (134-63 BCE), and cites oral history of gold and ivory traders coming to Africa from the area of Yemen. Wuriga says, “They did not part ways with their Jewish practices,” although they picked up Arab and African customs during their migrations. Circumcisions and marriage-within have remained central. Today Lemba can be found in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, and Malawi.

When Christian missionaries became active in Africa, Wuriga says that the only religion recognized was Christianity, and an African had to be certified or recommended by a local missionary before he could go to school. However, some elders founded a “church” based on the Old Testament, trying to help their children go to school. Many parents postponed their children's education. Some Lemba walked more 26 km to and from school daily, although Wuriga's family and many others did home studies (he now has a PhD in Philosophy).

Islam was recognized at a later stage. Wuriga is adamant that “we are not Moslem.” This has been told to the Lemba generation after generation. Older Lemba do not even accept any offer of food in Moslem houses.

It has been a struggle for the Lemba to keep their identity, according to Wuriga. Out of fear, they have tended to do much in private. He recalls that elders would talk until late on Friday night. Last year he interviewed an old Lemba who said his family celebrated Shabbat privately. Older Lemba still hold on to some of their traditions, but they are not written down or told to the young. Some were surprised, in reading the book *To Be a Jew*, to see their “secret” customs written down!

Wuriga has introduced an annual conference to teach the young about their religion, and he holds some progressive views not shared by all. For example, the Lemba had shifted circumcising from the eighth day to the eighth year out of fear. Wuriga says, “We must move eight years to eight days, and we should start educating women now.”

Lemba forefathers used to meet at a mountain as a pre-rabbinic community, with priests rotating among families. Therefore, some of the older members wonder why they need a synagogue. But Wuriga believes, “Now we should unite with other Jewish communities,” and a chief has given land for a synagogue in Mapakomhere, Zimbabwe.

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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.

Wetzler Receives Rare Award

Singer, lecturer, and Kulanu activist Laura Wetzler was presented with Kulanu's rarely-bestowed Extraordinary Service Award following her talk to 15 officers and activists in Silver Spring, Maryland, on June 13.

The award has only been presented one other time in Kulanu's 12-year history

Wetzler was cited for her vital involvement in over 20 projects with the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda, ranging from annual mitzvah tours to Uganda and an interfaith coffee cooperative to educational programs and water projects. These projects are described in the last Kulanu newsletter ("It Is a Joy To Do This Work" by Laura Wetzler, Spring 2006).

Wetzler first became connected with Kulanu in February 2002, when she (and her special voice and guitar) participated in the organization's delegation to Uganda accompanying a Beit Din. This was followed by her hosting Abayudaya student ambassador Rachel Namudosi Keki on her US



tour in 2003, including securing a place for Rachel as a junior counselor at Camp Yavneh in New Hampshire and programming her on a tour of musical lectures. Wetzler became Kulanu's first Coordinator for Uganda that year, and went on to widen her portfolio dramatically.

Wetzler, with her characteristic modesty,

has issued a statement giving others much of the credit:

I would like to thank the Kulanu board for this award. Jack Zeller and Karen and Aron Primack have created a unique grassroots volunteer organization, where anyone is welcome to come and learn to be of use. This organizational openness is rare, and in a post-9/11 America, vital to many of us. How else could a musician who tours in 150 concerts and lectures each year, learn development work, hands-on, in Africa? The three years I have volunteered as Kulanu Coordinator for Uganda has been an unsurpassed practical education that has opened my eyes to a world I never would have known otherwise. I am grateful to Kulanu and to the Abayudaya community for teaching me so much and for being patient with my learning about Jewish life in Africa.

At the risk of seeming ungracious, I must admit to being upset at the erroneous impression this honor may give to others about the limited nature of my role. No one works alone in Kulanu.

It is the Abayudaya leadership who carry out projects in Uganda. It is their vision, hard work and success on the ground that continues to inspire us. We celebrate their many accomplishments over the 11 years of this Abayudaya-Kulanu partnership. This honor belongs to them.

It is Karen Primack's gift as a writer and manager that has moved us into the new world of foundation grants, helping us to do so much more. It is Harriet Bograd, Kulanu treasurer, who is responsible for facilitating the exponential growth of Kulanu's work in the last four years. Everything happens through Harriet's brilliant, exuberant multi-tasking expertise and guidance.

We are so moved by the high school students like Max Yadin, raising money for textbooks and the bar mitzvah kids who

send donations; the Kulanu volunteers who go and share skills; the generous Kulanu supporters like Barbara Lubran, Roberta Roos, Jeanne Bodin and Alan and Reena Steinfeld, and so many other synagogues, foundations and individuals, who fund our projects.

What could be done without this enormous network of folks from all over the world? Not a thing.

Something special is going on here in this joining of so many different people of good will, who spark and learn from each other and take direct action doing "tzedekah" (justice) work across oceans and continents. I am so grateful that Kulanu exists and I am proud to be one of many Kulanu volunteers.

Big News for Mirembe Kawomera Coffee

By Laura Wetzler

Great news from the Kulanu coffee project: Mirembe Kawomera Coffee Cooperative -- Abayudaya Jewish, Muslim, and Christian farmers working together -- have purchased their own piece of land in Uganda!

In a moving ceremony, Mirembe Kawomera coffee farmers, some of whom are preliterate and could only sign their names to the contract with a thumbprint, became proud owners of a small piece of land with good road access in Namonyonyi. This momentous event was made possible thanks to you, the coffee project supporters, and the generous \$1 per bag rebates sent back to the farmers for development by the Thanksgiving Coffee Company.

The farmers are saving to eventually build a coffee warehouse and office on the land, dig a clean water well and sanitary facilities, improve communications capability, as well as secure business and literacy training. These improvements are needed in order for the farmers make best use of the international export opportunities afforded them by our coffee project.

Farmers worked with Kulanu Coordinator for Uganda Laura Wetzler (yours truly) on preliminary five-year planning in January, and Ben Corey Moran of Thanksgiving Coffee is now in Uganda expanding this vital development work. We hope to interest other international NGOs.

Mazal tov to JJ Keki, Paul and Joan Katzeff, Ben Corey-Moran and Holly Moskowitz of Thanksgiving Coffee, and to all you Kulanu coffee mavens who drink Mirembe Kawomera kosher, fair trade, organic coffee and have gotten it into institutions around the country!

We are proud that this Kulanu project is being studied as a model of peace making and has been featured on BBC and other news outlets around the world.

Perform a mitzvah with every cup! Please help us keep it going. **If there is no consistent, on-going market our peace project will wither on the coffee branch.** Please reorder! We would love to see our coffee served at every synagogue, church, mosque, college and organizational event in the country but we can't do it without your continuing efforts. Please follow-up with folks you know at synagogue and at work. Be a nudge for a good cause. Gift bags of Mirembe Kawomera ("delicious peace") kosher, fair trade organic coffee are also available. Contact: www.thanksgivingcoffee.com or (800) 648-6491 (Pacific Time). Thanks!

“This Disc Really Is a Gift to Humanity”

(This touching online review (at amazon.com) was filed by Pharoah S. Wail of Smithsonian's 2004 recording, Abayudaya - Music from the Jewish People of Uganda.)

Place me squarely in the pack of people who love this cd. I picked this one up in early 2004 and have been loving it ever since. I listened to it again last night and earlier today and felt it to be even more powerful than usual.

I'm surprised one reviewer remarked about the rather low-tech recording. This disc is as good as you can imagine a field-recording sounding. If you let yourself go, you are right there in that little temple with these fantastic singers. There is as little distance between performer and listener on this disc as is possible. Their voices are all around you.

The breakdown is like this... 2 songs in English, a few tunes of very bad keyboard-dominated Afro-pop, one great tune with singing and drumming, a couple with acoustic guitar, and the rest is some of the most beautiful vocal music I've ever been lucky enough to experience...

I can't even really find the words for this disc. This is a brilliant Ugandan folk choir, I guess I'd call them. This music is love and extended-family as song.... Some of my all-time favorite call-and-response happens on this disc. These young women are in that upper tier of the best that humans have to offer each other.

This is deeply spiritual community music of the highest order. There is something so gentle and pure and seemingly innocent about this music. It breaks my heart every time I hear it. It's the sweet soul of a community purely translated into sound without ego. I can feel like the whole of the world is going straight down the toilet in a swirling flush of cultural and environmental destruction, of greed and violence and pain. Then I listen to this disc (aside from the keyboard-pop which I skip) and I get to have over an hour where I'm again reminded of the beauty that humans are occasionally able to create and/or be a part of. There are a couple tunes here that have made tears stream down my face every single time I have heard them. I'm honored just to be the same species as the people recorded for this cd. For me this disc really is a gift to humanity. It touches me as deeply as anything ever has.

This is IT, folks. If track #14 is the last thing I hear in the waning moments of this, my earthly existence, I will be going softly into my goodnight with tears on my face and a smile in my heart.

LETTERS TO KULANU

Please Help the Children of Belmonte

The 200 halachic Jews in Belmonte, Portugal, desperately need help to keep their children Jewish. The adults and the children have had a modest synagogue since 1996 and have had a number of rabbis sent to them from Israel. Because all their resources are used to maintain their synagogue and to pay the rabbis when they are there, they do not have the funds to hire a Jewish Studies teacher.

In November 2005 I began to raise funds for the purpose of hiring a teacher. We now have \$6,110 in the Jewish Education Fund, which is kept at the American Sephardic Federation, in New York. Those wishing to contribute (tax deductible) are requested to make all donation checks payable to the American Sephardic Federation, *earmarked for "Belmonte Education Fund,"* and to send to: Randal Belinfante, American Sephardic Federation, 15 West 16 Street, 6th floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.

The Jewish children in Belmonte also need coloring books and stories about our Jewish holidays (preferably in Portuguese or Spanish, or with lots of pictures). Since I am going to Portugal very soon, these can be mailed to my address: Yaakov Gladstone, 310 Lexington Ave., Apt. 5D, New York, NY 10016.

The Jewish children of Belmonte are also OUR CHILDREN. If we will not help this small community with Jewish Education, there is a danger that they will not have a Jewish identity and will easily assimilate. It will be a tragedy not only for this brave community that defied the Inquisition and lived a double life in fear for 500 years, but also for the Jewish People.

*Yaakov Gladstone
New York, NY*

Sephardic Minyan in Shanghai

The Shanghai Jewish Center is pleased to announce the formation of a Sephardic Minyan. Prayers, meals and classes will be at the Center's new building in Shanghai's Hongqiao area. Besides the Sephardic prayers and classes, we will enjoy the tastes of Sephardic foods, while singing our *pizmonim*.

During the early 20th century, Shanghai was the home to many Sephardim, and we are proud to revitalize Sephardic traditions in this city. Our Minyan is formed with the blessing of Rabbi Shalom Greenberg of the Shanghai Jewish Community. Rabbi Shalom and his wife Dina have devoted themselves to revitalizing Jewish life in Shanghai. They have organized a flourishing and active Jewish Community, with a school, a restaurant, daily *minyanim*, and soon to be completed state-of-the-art *mikveh*.

The inauguration of the Minyan was on the 15th of Sivan, June 11, 2006. We were honored and grateful to have the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Shlomo Amar, join us to officiate at this memorable event.

If you would like to help this Minyan develop, please contact, in the US, Albert Sassoon at asassoon@outerlimitinc.com or, in Shanghai, Maurice Ohana at ohanasia@hotmail.com. If your travels bring you to Shanghai, please join us! You will have a memorable Shabbat. For reservations and hotel accommodations, please contact us by email or through our website, <http://www.chinajewish.org/>.

*Maurice Ohana, president
Shanghai, China*

Rosh Hashanah gift ideas from the Kulanu Boutique —

Aish Chai lapel pins

Books

CDs

Challah Covers

Kippot

Tallitot

All proceeds help Kulanu and the communities we serve. See page 11 for the order form or go to www.kulanuboutique.com

KULANU BRIEFS

New Abayudaya Slideshow Online!

A new Kulanu-Abayudaya Slideshow can be viewed online at <http://kulanu.phanfare.com>. It includes more than 100 photos, including many by professional photographer Chaya Weinstein as well as ones taken by Kulanu's Uganda Coordinator, Laura Wetzler, and other Kulanu visitors and volunteers. There is one wonderful picture by Hadassah Nakizah, a student who studied with Weinstein when she taught digital photography at Hadassah Infant School.

The show is divided into separate sections on an introduction, synagogues, life cycle events, holidays, Hadassah Infant School (grades N-6), Semei Kakungulu High School, health and sanitation, water and electricity, Abayudaya Women's Association projects, Mirembe Kawomeri coffee project, school construction, computer training, and the Abayudaya Mitzvah Tour tourism project.

Kulanu hopes the slideshow will be used in classrooms and synagogue groups and viewed by prospective donors, visitors, volunteers, and others interested in learning more about the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda and about Kulanu's partnership with the community.

The slideshow is hosted by phanfare.com, a new Web site that hosts nonprofit organizations' photo albums at no cost. All rights are reserved, as these photos are copyright by the photographers.

Harriet Bograd is working on making the slideshow available on CDROM as well. If you want to order a copy, please contact her at harriet@kulanu.org. The fee is \$20 plus \$4 shipping and handling.

Abayudaya Headmaster To Visit US

Abayudaya primary school headmaster Aaron Kintu Moses will be making his first trip this autumn to the US to raise funds for Abayudaya-Kulanu education programs. He will give an upbeat, informative presentation on the latest news from the Abayudaya community. Funds raised on the tour will be used for a capital campaign to help the community build decent classrooms, dorms, and sanitation facilities, as well as to pay teachers, buy textbooks and supplies, and feed hungry students.

Organizations wishing to sponsor a donor event (he will probably be coming in October and November) should immediately contact Peggy Zilbermann at pzilbermann@worldnet.att.net. Please help us help Abayudaya schools, which educate African Jewish, Muslim and Christian students together in peace.

A Blog for Jews by Choice

A new blog (web log for discussions) aims to give those who are looking into becoming a Jew by Choice, or who have done so, a way of exploration and dialogue. Founder Chris Converse explains, "My desire is for those who read this to write in the comments section their thoughts, comments, doubts, insights, experiences, and so on so they can be published here. Together we help each other." The Internet address is: <http://jews-by-choice.blogspot.com>.

CDs en Espagnol

The organization Shavei Israel has released a 3-CD set in Spanish on Jewish thought and philosophy entitled *Nuestro Pensamiento* (Our Thought). The set contains a series of lectures on prominent Jewish thinkers from Biblical times to the 20th century by Rabbi Alfredo Goldschmidt, Chief Rabbi of Bogota, Colombia, and director of that city's *Colegio Hebreo*. The series also explores Kabbalah, Hasidism, the Enlightenment, and Zionism. The set will be offered for sale at www.shavei.org.

This series follows a 7-CD set in Spanish released last year by

Shavei Israel. The previous set, *Nuestro Judaismo* (Our Judaism), features lectures by Rabbi Goldschmidt on fundamental aspects of Jewish practice.

Speakers Spread the Word

More than 500 years after the Jews were given proffered baptisms (submit to baptism or leave the country), a Jewish genealogy group is forming in Spain. The Jewish community of Barcelona invited an American, **Dr. Jeffrey S. Malka**, to speak to the group recently about Sephardic genealogy and discuss with them the formation of a genealogy group. Malka is the author of *Sephardic Genealogy: Discovering Your Sephardic Ancestors and Their World*.

Co-sponsored by Be'chol Lashon as part of the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival's "Spotlight on Ethiopian Jews and Jews of Color" in July, the film *Sisai* was followed by panel discussions on race, adoption, and Jewish identity with director **David Gavro**, his brother **Sisai Bayo**, **Dr. Ephraim Isaac**, and others.

The Jewish Studies Center in Washington presented a 5-session series in May and June on Jewish Cultures Across the Globe. Courses included "The Evolution of Sephardic Names in the Diaspora" with **Jeffrey Malka**, "The Jews of Iraq from the Establishment of the State of Israel until Now" with **Maurice Shohet**, "Judaism in Transylvania" with **Larry Stern**, "The Jewish Community of Nigeria" with **Rabbi Howard Gorin**, and "The Jews of Turkey" with **Amalia S. Levi**.

Ehav Eliyahu spoke about Jewish Migrations into West Africa on May 17 at Congregation Shearith Israel in NYC.

Michael Freund spoke at the opening ceremony of Shavei Israel exhibition tracing the history and experience of Bnai Anousim over five centuries. Titled "The Journey of Spanish and Portuguese Bnai Anousim: Past, Present and Future," the show opened on May 25 and ran through July at the Dona Gracia House in Tiberias, Israel.

Indian Jewish Congregation Expands Activities

The Indian Jewish Congregation of USA is increasing its religious and social activities to ensure continuity of its members' Indian Jewish Heritage. For 11 years now, religious services for the High Holy Days have been conducted for the community in New York. This year Rosh Hashanah services will be held September 22 at 7 pm and September 23 at 8 am. Yom Kippur services will be held October 1 at 6:15 pm and October 2 at 7:30 am. Location is the Village Temple, 33 East 12th St., NYC.



Torah dedication in India

For further information, phone Romiel Daniel at (718) 897-8718 or David Galsurkar at (718) 252-7864. The services are free, but donations are welcome.

The IJC of USA last year collected funds so that it could send two *Sifrei Torah* to the Beth El Synagogue in Panvel, Mumbai.

This synagogue had lost all its six *Sifrei Torah* in the heavy rains of 2005. This was greatly appreciated by the community in India, and has given an impetus to do more for the community in India as well as in the US.

KULANU BRIEFS

In June of this year, IJC of USA participated for the first time in New York's Israeli Day parade to show its solidarity with the state of Israel and other Jewish communities all over the world. This participation also helped to increase awareness among American Jews of other Jewish communities across the globe with a common history but with different traditions.

Jewish Heritage Tour in Southern Italy

A Jewish Heritage Tour in Southern Italy in October will be guided by Rabbi Barbara Aiello in Calabria and Dr. Laura Supino in Rome, Fondi, and Naples. The tour focuses on the oldest places of Jewish presence on the Italian peninsula, as well as the emergence, after 500 years, of Jewish life in remote parts of Calabria, the toe of Italy. Shabbat is spent in Naples at a morning service and an afternoon walking tour. The tour extends from October 18 to 25, and includes all 4-star hotels and meals (vegetarian, dairy, kosher fish). The itinerary includes two nights each in Rome, Naples, and Amalfi, and one night in Nicastro, Calabria. The cost is \$4455 per person, not including airfare. For further information, contact Laurie@AmalfiLife.com or tel 718-797-9300.

Kaifeng Documentary Film in Preparation

Noam Urbach has been filming a full-length documentary for six years in Israel and China about the descendants of the Kaifeng Jewish community. Urbach is seeking financial assistance to complete the project. Contact him at nurbach@gmail.com or see www.KaifengJerusalem.com

Mazal Tov!

To **Irwin and Elaine Berg** on the birth of their grandson **Zachary David Berg**, son of **Avi and Lisa Berg**, in New York in April.

To **Daniel Lis** and **Nora Barman** on their recent marriage in Basel Switzerland.

Refuah Shleyma

We wish a speedy recovery to **Herman Storick** and to **Joe Hantman**.

Condolences

The whole Lemba community of Zimbabwe is mourning the passing of Mr. **T. Chinyoka**, president of the Zimbabwe Chapter of the Lemba Cultural Association.

The Jewish Community of Algarve, Portugal, is mourning the death of **Isaac Bitton**, who raised funds for the restoration and maintenance of the historic Faro Jewish Cemetery; the cemetery museum had been named in his honor. He also acted in the award-winning film *Without the Past*, an overview of the history of Portugal's Jews.

Todah Rabah!

Todah rabah to **Anne Katz-Jacobson**, who served as a health volunteer for six weeks this spring with the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda. She used her expertise as a nurse midwife and teacher to increase community knowledge of health issues, as well as to develop and sustain the health education through the development of community health workers and a school health associate. In addition to providing health education to teenagers, women, and health workers, she also met with providers of health care and teaching and used resources in the larger community of organizations such as Mbale Hospital and the AIDS Information Center.

A very special *todah rabah* to **Alan** and **Rena Steinfeld**, who

donated \$16,000 for a well in Uganda.

And to these donors of \$500: **Estelle Friedman Gervis Charitable Foundation** and the **Leo S. Guthman Fund**.

\$1,000 -- \$4999 -- **Woodlands Community Temple, Tikvat Israel Congregation, Chaverim Kol Yisrael/Jewish Life Network, Jack and Pauline Freeman Foundation**.

\$500 -- \$999 -- **Hope and Matthew Feldman, Anne Katz Jacobson and Robert Jacobson, Woodlands Community Temple, Emily Chaya Weinstein, American Jewish World Service, Irwin & Elaine Berg, Temple Emanu-El, Tikvat Israel Congregation, West End Synagogue**.

\$101 -- \$499 -- **Jewish Community Religious School, Jeanne Bodin, Mordechai and Matlee Yadin, Lenore and Morris Levin, Lionel Okun, Temple Emanu-El, Laura Wetzler and Madelaine Zadik, Harold Gidish, Hope and Matthew Feldman, Hope and Matthew Feldman, Lois and Harvey Gelb, Judith F. Helzner, Elizabeth B. Lewis, National Center to Encourage Judaism, Shaare Torah, Inc., Rabbi Scott L. Glass, Gillian Overland, Gillian Overland, Sherman and Rita Shapiro, Donald Duprey and Andria Spindel**.

To our \$100 club -- **Michael and Mary Baron, Sandor and Florene Bernstein, Fran and Ken Finkelstein, Tim and Carol Hayes, Debra Heffernan and David Benko, Joel M. Kadleman, Andrew and Lauren Kline, Drs. Edwin and Roz Kolodny, Judy Neri, Jack and Helene Shrago, Temple Isaiah, Jack and Stephanie Ventura, and Elliot and Lori Yadin**.

Anthropologist (cont.)

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are about 2000 Israelis living in Nigeria doing business. The Israeli presence in Nigeria is important in the dynamic development of the country's economy, and Nigeria was one of the first African countries to renew its diplomatic relations with Israel in 1994. Prominent Igbo had played a vital role in the renewal of diplomatic relations. The ambassador went so far as to describe the Igbo as Israel's main constituency in the country. One reason may lie in the economic cooperation that existed between the Igbo and Israel before the Biafra crisis (1967-1970), but another reason is clearly related to the widespread and deep sentiment of the Igbo that they come from Israel.

One shouldn't expect to encounter the majority of Igbo practicing rabbinical Judaism. Most belong to a variety of Christian churches and know relatively little or nothing about the difference between Judaism and Christianity. Nevertheless, there is a deep resentment against the Christian missions to the Igbos, and the Igbo hunger for information on Judaism and Israel is what every Jewish community in the Diaspora dreams of.

But Judaism has started to emerge, and I was able to witness that the next Shabbat morning touring three congregations. Like everywhere else, one finds two Jews stating three opinions. Every congregation represented a different way of connecting to Judaism, partly due to interactions with Western Jewry.

At the Gihon community in Abuja, one could describe the orientation as somewhat Orthodox. Their services seemed well organized, and with the newly thatched roof one could describe this place as the Grand Synagogue of Abuja (even though it was a single room with the walls made of mud). As they started to sing beautiful songs (in Hebrew) after the service, a cold shiver ran down my back. But time was

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Providence Synagogue Sponsors Abayudaya Teach-In

Kol Hakavod to the Temple Emanuel community of Providence, RI, Cantor Brian Mayer, and Rabbis Wayne Franklin and Alvan Kaunfer for sponsoring an Abayudaya “teach-in” weekend May 5-7, featuring singer and lecturer Laura Wetzler, photographer Richard Sobol, and musicologist Rabbi Jeffrey Summit.

Approximately 350 congregants enjoyed lively discussions, lectures, an art exhibit, Ugandan cuisine, and a musical celebration concert. Funds were raised for Abayudaya-Kulanu projects and Abayudaya college scholarships.

Cantor Mayer opened the weekend by singing Abayudaya melodies for *L’cha Dodi*, *Hiney Ma Tov* and *Adon Olam*. Reports were that his beautiful voice filled Temple Emanuel’s domed sanctuary.

Laura Wetzler, Kulanu Coordinator for Uganda, was invited to present three Shabbat learning sessions and a Sunday afternoon concert of Jewish music from around the world. After services Friday night, Wetzler began with “Abayudaya History 101,” featuring news and photographs of the latest Abayudaya-Kulanu projects, a display of Ugandan instruments and crafts, and a question-answer period, ending with the singing of an Abayudaya song. During services Saturday, Wetzler gave a short talk entitled “Mitzvah Work: Best Antidote to the Evening News,” sharing personal experiences from her four years as a volunteer with the Abayudaya and Kulanu. After Shabbat lunch, an extensive Q&A session was held.

Congregation volunteers prepared Shabbat dinner and luncheon for over 250 people. Tables were festooned with Ugandan flags and African plants. The East African cuisine featured *matoke* (mashed plantain), *posho* (corn mash tampanade), and chicken in peanut sauce; Abayudaya Mirembe Kawomera Coffee was served.

Photographer Richard Sobol’s magnificent photographs of the Abayudaya community were on exhibit in the temple gallery. After havdalah, Sobol and musicologist Rabbi Jeffrey Summit of Tufts Hillel narrated a slide show from their book, *Abayudaya: Jews of Uganda*, and played examples from the Grammy-nominated field recordings collected and edited by Summit in the Smithsonian CD *Abayudaya: Jewish Music from Uganda*. Abayudaya Mirembe Kawomera Coffee, ordered from Thanksgiving Coffee Company, was served and available for purchase. Abayudaya kippot were also available, as were the Sobol-Summit book and the CD (royalties from which are donated by Sobol and Summit to Abayudaya community projects. (Summit has often been recognized in these pages for the tremendous mitzvah of organizing support for six Abayudaya college students in Uganda)

Wetzler’s sold-out concert, accompanied by multi-percussionist Robin Burdulis, capped the weekend. Wetzler sang songs from her three CDs, featuring world beat music from Jewish communities in Uganda, Ethiopia, Morocco, Tunisia, Spain, Italy, India, and elsewhere around the globe, as well as original songs. Cantor Mayer and the Temple Emanuel choir also sang three Ashkenazi cantorial pieces heard in the synagogues of Johannesburg and Capetown, South Africa.

Kulanu hopes this Providence model will catch on with congregations everywhere! Such “teach-in” weekends can result in a fabulous participatory event, combining *tikkun olam* fund-raising with an educational celebration of Jewish history and cultural diversity through the arts.

(The artists can be reached at these email addresses:

laura@laurawetzler.com

rmsobol@aol.com

jsummit@tufts.edu

Gala for Ghana: Prescription for a Success

Kudos to Meryl Klein, a student at University of Vermont, and Susan Leff, Hillel director at UVM, for their successful Gala for Ghana program on April 30. They set out to raise \$300, and ended up raising \$4600. But they accomplished much more.

Klein had visited Sefwi Wiawso during a semester studying at the University of Legon in Ghana. She writes, “When I visited Sefwi Wiawso I felt at home for the first time in Ghana. The community was welcoming and loving, and along with all of that they valued education and Judaism in a way I have never seen before. Hearing David Ahenkorah speak about how we are one people who will forever be connected, I was so deeply touched, a feeling that stayed with me even as I returned to the United States months later.”

When she came back, Klein persuaded her Hillel to organize a community event to raise money for the Sefwi Wiawso Jewish community.

Hillel director Susan Leff describes the surprisingly elaborate process:



Gala attendees dancing to the West African Beats of Burlington’s own Jeh Kulu

Meryl has just told us (the student board) about the isolated Jewish community of Sefwi Wiawso (House of Israel) in Ghana. There is a sudden swing in mood and we reach a consensus...and suddenly the Gala for Ghana is born. ...I know intuitively that this project has legs and will get up and walk. By the time the meeting has ended we have a committee.

I handed the oversight of The Gala for Ghana over to a community member/part-time faculty member, Gary Visco ...a retired project manager from IBM and the next thing I knew, these students have spreadsheets, lists of goals and objectives, a timetable and a plan. I was impressed with their goals: in addition to having a party, raising money to buy ritual objects for the community and to educate our university community about the diversity of Judaism, these students intended to reach out to the local community to include and educate them.

High school students from Young Judea were recruited to help create educational art projects that were to serve as decoration at the gala, the local African drummers and dancers, Jeh Kulu, were hired to entertain. Rachel, Meryl and Kate were busy writing letters to the synagogues to inform them of the event. Rachel arranged to be the speaker at the monthly Lunch and Learn

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Historical Reflections on Who Is a Jew

By Irwin M. Berg

(Part II of a two-part series)

At about the time the Roman Empire became Christian, there grew a reluctance among Jews to accept converts. A change in attitude had occurred. There is good reason to believe that the change resulted more from disappointment that so many converts and God Fearers abandoned Judaism and became Christian than from a fear of retribution in a Christian world in which Jews had no defense against bigotry, prejudice, plunder, and murder.

The conversion of the Khazars, a Turkic people, in the 8th Century CE does not represent a break in this anti-conversion bias. The Khazars were a powerful military empire at a junction in the Ukraine and Southern Russia between the Byzantine-Christians and Arab-Moslems. Little is known about why they converted; with whom they were in contact when they converted; and what happened to their Jewish descendants when their empire collapsed. Some conclusions one can give with a measure of confidence. The conversion of the Khazars to Judaism had little effect on other Jews. Except for an exchange of correspondence between Hisdai Ibn Shaprut of Spain and King Joseph of the Khazars, there appears to be little contemporaneous acknowledgement by Jews anywhere of their conversion. No welcome mat was extended to them like the one to Queen Helena of the Adiabene in 46 CE, when she visited Jerusalem after her conversion to Judaism.

After the Khazars, other groups have come to the conclusion that their lives should be regulated by the Hebrew Bible, and as a result, they have come to observe the Sabbath, dietary laws and circumcision. In the 17th century, the followers of John Traske left England for Holland to worship as Jews. In the 19th century, Russian Sabbath observers known as the Subbodniki sought to live as Jews, and some over time converted. Subbodniki still survive in Russia today, and many have emigrated to Israel. In 1919 an African military leader, after reading the Old Testament in Swahili, declared himself to be a Jew. He and his followers -- who today number about 800 -- are known as the Abayudaya of Uganda. Many of the Abayudaya were converted to Judaism by a Conservative Beth Din in 2002. A proselyte community in San Nicandro, Italy, was accepted as converts to Judaism in 1944, although they proclaimed themselves Jews in the early 1930s. There are Black Hebrews in the United States; American Indians in Mexico and Peru who profess to be Jews; and Christian sects in Japan who have taken a deep interest in Judaism.

All these groups appear to have come to Judaism on their own accord with little or no contact with the Jewish community. It would be unfair to assess Jewish reaction to those groups as though they all came from one pot since each group presented, and some continue to present, different issues to the Jewish community. But one theme pervades all of them: the initiative has rested with them, and only those groups who persevered despite threats from their neighbors and indifference from Jews have eventually been accepted as Jews.

Orthodoxy tends to reject welcoming back broken or lost branches of Jews who cannot prove an unbroken line of Jewish mothers and also tends to discourage the conversion of gentiles. From the Orthodox point of view, only those most committed to an unchanged and unchangeable Torah will be able to pass Torah to the next generation.

But is one survival strategy good in every place and time, no matter the circumstances? Although not generally acknowledged, an argument can be made that our diminutive numbers are less the result of persecution than of voluntary abandonment. Nor is the voluntary abandonment which we witness today throughout the Jewish world something new; it is as old as the period around the Common Era when Jews in large numbers forsook Torah for Hellenism and then for Christianity.

I view it as self-evident that we must avoid dividing the Jewish

people; or at the very least, we must avoid the unbridgeable chasm over Who is a Jew. We must find a way that those who wish to become Jews can do so in a form and manner that they will be accepted by Jews of all persuasions without unduly discouraging those who sincerely wish to join the Jewish fold. But for the sake of unity, there is a need by some to exercise forbearance and by others to exert creativity on the issue of conversion.

People all over the world -- in Asia, Latin America and Africa and even in North America -- are discovering Jewish origins or desiring to convert.

For those who claim Jewish origins, there are several *halakhic* (Jewish law) problems to overcome: (i) For those who converted to another religion under pressure but nevertheless consider themselves as Jews, *halakha* nevertheless requires an unbroken line of Jewish mothers or a formal conversion for their acceptance as Jews. (ii) For those who never converted to another religion but did not know or did not consider themselves bound by the oral law, there is the problem of *mamzeruth* (bastardy) which would result from the divorce and remarriage of an ancestor without an *halakhic* "Get" (instrument of divorce).

The requirement for conversion is viewed as an insult for many who have preserved their Jewish identity in secret for hundreds of years at the risk of life and limb. It is a particularly sensitive point with *Anousim* (or so-called Marranos) of Portugal and Brazil. Although the Orthodox establishment recognizes the Ethiopian Beta-Israel as Jews, some in the ultra-Orthodox community place them in the untenable position of either requiring them to convert as if their long history as Jews was false, or considering them Jews with the right to marry only among themselves or other *mamzerim* because there is no assurance that the divorces of their ancestors complied with *halakha*.

Africans who claim Jewish ancestry and are willing to undergo conversion have a problem getting an Orthodox Beth-Din to acknowledge them. The Abayudaya of Uganda, who make no claim of a Jewish origin, are capable as a community of observing all Jewish laws and desire to do so, but they have been rejected by most Orthodox groups. That neglect may have led them to accept conversion by a Conservative Beth-Din. For the Orthodox, their conversion is invalid, creating a rift in the Jewish world over that seemingly unbridgeable question of "Who is a Jew?"

For the first time in over 2000 years, Jews are a majority in their own land, protected by a government of their own. This is a historic change in circumstances offering Jews an opportunity to adjust old survival techniques to the new circumstances. Whether Orthodox or non-Orthodox, committed Jews can now afford to show understanding and innovation without jeopardizing Jewish survival. A lack of understanding and inflexibility will continue to erode Jewish numbers. The only circumstance more dangerous to Jewish survival is to split asunder over the issue of Who is a Jew.

We need a leader of deep insight and profound piety to lead us out of this dilemma. My model is Hillel, who advocated many creative reforms to adjust to the economic and social conditions which Jews faced at the time of the Common Era. He was opposed by Shammai, the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) of his generation. Hillel's views were finally accepted, but only after several generations. I would like to give an example of a Hillel-like judgment that was made in our generation. In the mountain village of Belmonte, Portugal, 200 people, although ostensibly Catholic, maintained that they were Jews who were forced to convert to Catholicism in 1496, but claimed never to have intermarried with the general population in the intervening 500 years. A ruling of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchic, *Z"l*, brushed aside issues of proof, accepted the oral traditions of the *Anousim* of Belmonte, and declared that formal conversion was unnecessary. The issue of *mamzeruth* was not raised in the ruling because, having been married in a church, the *Anousim* of Belmonte were considered unmarried under Jewish law. On the other hand, the Orthodox Rabbinate in Israel re-

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Anthropologist In Nigeria (cont.)

(Continued from page 5)

short and we had to leave for another congregation. Sar Habakkuk's congregation could be described as Conservative, and Sar Habakkuk has built up a beautiful compound. Remy Ilona also brought me to his own congregation, which puts its emphasis on incorporating prayers in Igbo language and Torah studies. Their prayers were said to Chukwu (the Almighty). Due to ongoing destruction of places of worship this particular service took place under the open sky between mud huts and under curious eyes of the neighbors.

Poverty and lack of access to information and learning materials are just two of the problems the Judaizing communities are facing in Abuja. My impression was that it's not conversion that most Igbo will seek, but access to information and a reconnection to their own traditions.

From Abuja we left for three Igbo states (Enugu, Anambra and Abia) in the Southeast of the country. We went to the towns of Awka, Nnewi, and Okigwi and visited the priests of NRI as a first stop. Being the only white for a week was a special experience at first, but I never had an unfriendly encounter and I almost forgot about it in time. I felt especially welcome as a Jew and Israeli. I particularly remember a driver of the famous okada bikes in the city of Enugu asking me which tribe I was from. Replying that I came from Israel, he responded that he was Jewish too and that we are all one.

I can't recall meeting a single Igbo in the Southeast who did not state that he or she came from Israel. A highlight of my visit was my meeting with NRI elders, said to parallel the priestly clan of the Levites, near the town of Awka. The NRI are often described as the most important keepers of Igbo traditions, responsible for performing rituals of purification in other Igbo clans. The meeting was accompanied by the traditional breaking of the cola nut, the palm wine offering, and prayers to Chukwu. I also had the opportunity to speak with really old people, which is rather a rare sight in Nigeria (the average life expectancy is about 50 years and most people seem to be in their 20s).

A meeting was held with other members of the clan with discussions on how to ensure that Igbo traditions won't be lost and how a reconnection of the children of Israel could be consolidated. As was mentioned before, the issue at hand is not necessarily to convert to rabbinical Judaism (although I am sure that thousands of Igbo would like to do that), but rather how to reconnect to other children of Israel and their own traditions. These traditions are under threat of being lost to the new generation under the pressure of Christian churches and also because of lack of written sources.

Many participants in the discussions complained about the current state of Igbo affairs in Nigeria. Throughout many discussions I noticed that Igbo felt threatened by Islamic developments in the northern states of Nigeria. A popular saying in Nigeria is that a place is not fit for human habitation if no Igbo man can be found there. In most of Nigeria's cities a considerable proportion of the population is Igbo. Thus many Igbo people up north may have witnessed the recent introduction of Islamic Sharia law and fear the repetition of ethnic persecution under the pretext of religion. The memories of Biafra are still an open wound, and every family has a story to tell.

Speaking also to non-Igbo resembles talk about the Jews in Europe. Their economic power is feared and they are said to control positions of power. Does this sound familiar to you? Many Igbo are traders and "overrepresented" in Nigeria's growing "Nollywood" film industry.

Next to similarities of Igbo customs to Jewish customs (like observing the laws of *nidda*) parallels in experience can also be found and are expressed repeatedly. In Nnewi we met an Igbo businessman from Williamsburg, New York City. This was a spontaneous meeting and this man confirmed having noticed similarities of custom between the Jews in Williamsburg and the Igbo. He was eager to buy Remy Ilona's book, which by then had been sold on many occasions.

From Nnewi we went on to visit Remy's clan, Ozubulu. At Okigwi we also met his niece, Uchenna. Remy also showed me the burial place of his parents in the family compound. It was so touching to see the still fresh earth on his mother's grave. This is also the location where he intends to open an Institute for Jewish and Igbo Studies in the future.

One purpose of my trip was to get in touch with the academic world in Nigeria. We visited Abia State University and Nsukka University, and I also had a meeting with a lecturer at Ibadan University later on in Abuja. In those discussions, as in others, I encountered skepticism that the Igbo came from Israel. Nevertheless, towards the end of such discussions people shifted to ascertain the importance and urgency of such a discussion and that more research has to be done about it since every Igbo child will learn at an early age that he or she is from Israel. Even with people who are skeptical about the Igbo-Jewish link, news about events in Israel is eagerly followed and sympathies are expressed in a way one may not encounter in other parts of the world.

The lack of access to information may well be symbolized by one encounter Remy Ilona and I had in a bookshop in Enugu. After a spontaneous discussion with the shop owner and another Igbo author in which both ascertained that they were Jews, I noticed a book about Adolph Hitler on a bookshelf. This was a pure piece of Nazi propaganda with a foreword by Joseph Goebbels. I asked the shop owner about it and he explained to me that he of course knows about the *Shoah* but that this book was the only one on Hitler he had been able to find.

After an exciting week in the Southeast (traveling to prayer over rutted roads, tasting Igbo foods, and enjoying the cordial hospitality of all the people we met) we went back to Abuja for the remaining days. There I had some last interviews with leaders of the congregations I had visited the week before plus another visit to an "ultra-Orthodox" community.

Many Igbo are waiting for the aid of Western Jewry and are looking for rabbis to come or synagogues to be built. As an anthropologist I had to take a scholarly approach, but in the eyes of many I was also perceived as a delegate from Western Jewry and Israel, which in some ways I also was. My argument then that Western Jewry is probably not too eager to proselytize seemed to be out of place when encountering so many people waiting for more information on Judaism and emphasizing that they are already Jews and wouldn't need to convert. Considering the economic power of the Christian churches in Nigeria (it is a whole industry where big money can be made) and the reluctance that parts of Western Jewry may show towards accepting the Igbo as brothers and sisters, the struggle of Judaizing Igbo will be a long one. But those people I encountered were very dedicated to a Jewish (re)naissance, and we know of other people who have dedicated their lives to dreams that became reality.

As I was made to understand by Remy, Kulanu has helped a lot, and this could mean that Western Jewry may enter in a big way. These and other thoughts accompanied me as I was brought to the airport by Remy Ilona and his friends -- the same people who had picked me up on the first day and who had become so dear to me. In the plane I also made a personal wish to return to Nigeria soon.



PUBLICATIONS OF NOTE

✍ The July 5 *Jerusalem Post* carried "Let My People Come: Why is Israel Blocking Bnei Menashe Aliyah?" by **Michael Freund**. The 218 Bnei Menashe were formally converted back to Judaism by Israel's Chief Rabbinate last autumn. Fortunately, this was followed up in *The Jerusalem Post* on July 19 with **Michael Freund's** "Something To Cheer About," disclosing that the Absorption Ministry had relented and would allow the converted Bnei Menashe to return to their ancestral homeland.

✍ "Midwife Shares Knowledge To Help Uganda's Jews," by **Etanjalie Narraph**, appeared in the July 13 *Riverdale Press*. It details Anne Katz-Jacobson's determination to help the Abayudaya after hearing a synagogue talk by Chaya Weinstein. With 34 years' experience as a midwife, Katz-Jacobson taught teens, women, and sometimes men about childbirth complications, body changes, HIV prevention, sexuality, violence and protection, menopause, and family planning in Uganda.

✍ On July 8, the *Washington Post* published **Mike Karsnak's** "Singer's Ethnic Fusion Produces 'Kosher Gospel'" about Joshua Nelson, an African American Jew who combines his love of Judaism and gospel music. Nelson has a band, the Kosher Gospel Singers, and recorded two CDs: *Mi Chamocha?* and *Hallelujah, It's Shabbos*.

✍ The Summer issue of *Jewish Action Magazine* contains **Yitta Halberstam's** article, "The Prince of Light," a lengthy profile of Rabbi Natan Gamedze, an Orthodox rabbi who was born a prince of Swaziland.

✍ **Dina Kraft's** JTA piece of June 13, "Birthright Israel Participants from India," discusses Zohar Reuben's experiences as one of 40 Bene Israel Jews from Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Ahmadabad. Reuben said he was excited to be in a place where Jews are in the majority.

✍ "Young Brazilian Anousim Visit Israel on Birthright" appeared in *Israel National News* on June 8. It reports on three Anousim from Recife who accompanied dozens of other young Brazilian Jews for a 10-day visit with the Taglit-Birthright program.

✍ "Russian Runaround" by **Wendy Elliman** appeared in the May 2006 issue of *Hadassah Magazine*. The article is about Shavei Israel's efforts on behalf of the 15,000 Subbotnik Jews in Russia who are anxiously waiting to make *aliyah*. The Subbotniks are descendants of Russian peasants who converted to Judaism two centuries ago, and for the past few years they have been inexplicably denied the right to move to Israel by the government.

✍ "Celebrating Being Black and Jewish, by **Kristin E. Holmes**, appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on May 27. It discusses Congregation Temple Beth El, an unassuming African American synagogue near Philadelphia that held a joint Shabbat service with Tiferes B'nai Israel, a white synagogue nearby.

✍ "Pessah in Cuba: A Tale of Two Synagogues," by **Jaron Gilinsky**, appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* on May 9, telling of a Chabad-led seder for 50 people at Synagoga Adath Israel in Havana.

✍ The Associated Press issued a report on May 9 titled "Authorities in Tajikistan Begin Razing Country's Only Synagogue." About 480 Jews, mostly elderly and poor, live in the country. In April, the synagogue's mikveh, classroom, and kosher butchery were demolished.

✍ **Joel Clark's** March 28 JTA article, titled "Jews Who Fled Arab Countries Take Campaign to European Union," discusses a meeting Jewish representatives had with EU Paliament members to demand restitution. The campaign was initiated by Justice for Jews from Arab Countries and the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries to document human rights violations and loss of assets.

✍ According to a web magazine interview story by **Marco Virgona**, singer-actress Heather Marley (Bob Marley's second cousin) claims that the Marleys were Syrian Jews who migrated from the

Middle East to England and then to Jamaica. The full article can be found at <http://www.bobmarleymagazine.com/interviews/heather.htm>. And the February 5 *Jamaica Observer* carried an article about a reggae group touring Israel. "Israel's Vibrations: With Marley in the Holy Land," by **Roger Steffens** reports on the tour of The Life of Bob Marley in the Middle East, which covered 1000 miles in Israel and appeared at the Israel Museum and the Jerusalem Cinematheque, among other venues.



Happy
New
Year!!

Ghana Gala (cont.)

(Continued from page 6)

at the Conservative synagogue and Meryl prepared her presentation for the gala evening.

Even working with the food-service staff to choose a menu of Ghanaian food was used as an opportunity to teach and learn. They needed to raise money for the event (tickets are set at \$5 so as not to exclude anyone but this leaves a large gap) and they form partnerships with Alana, Student Life, the Center for Cultural Pluralism, and the SGA Program Board and wrote a grant. They made contact with nearby colleges and with the newspapers.

Held on April 30 in Cook Commons Dining Hall, the Gala for Ghana was a huge success. Everyone danced and ate and learned about another culture, and donations to the Ghanaian community poured in from people we didn't even know, in Texas and Minnesota as well as from students and community members. About one-fourth of the people attending were not University students but were community members, including several members of the local Ghanaian expatriate community. The food was wonderful and the art projects were fabulous!

I am very pleased for these students and what they achieved but I see an even greater success: the elements of this event came together to teach lessons that I never imagined and to forge relationships with communities both diverse and far-flung and very close to home, but outside of the usual sphere of the university student. Relationships were formed based NOT solely on doing "for" someone but doing "with" many people and the result is an expanded and enriched community for all.



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Historical Reflections on Who Is a Jew (cont.)

(Continued from page 7)

quires a formal ceremony for the Falush-Mora (Ethiopians who were forced to become Christian in the 19th and 20th Centuries), but the ceremony eliminates the issue of *mamzeruth*.

Opportunities in the past have been lost. We should do our best not to lose any presented to us today. Perhaps we should, as my correspondent suggested, accept that Isaiah was referring to all the spiritual descendants of Jacob as the "other part of his people" whom God would redeem. Perhaps these spiritual descendants should include not only the "mixed multitude" that followed Moses into Sinai but every "mixed multitude" that joined and will join the Jewish people by accepting Naomi's God as their God and the fate of Naomi's people as their fate -- and at the same time by using Hillelian creativity to avoid the obstruction of *mamzeruth*.

Progress Among the Lemba (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Lemba still tend to live near mountains and rivers.

Wuriga says he is still comparing his upbringing with customs he reads about and sees modern Jews doing. One Passover, he recalls, an uncle slaughtered a sheep. They would do kosher slaughtering facing east. To celebrate the New Moon, the first person to see the New Moon would go to the chief, who would send three witnesses to confirm the sighting. If confirmed, the first person would blow the shofar and sing songs and receive gifts.

Lemba have drifted away from their observances and have become more and more private. Wuriga is trying to convince the elders to give up their secrecy but congratulates them, acknowledging that "they have moved an inch."

In 1985, a vice president of the Lemba Cultural Association told the chief that there was no secondary school, and the chief gave the 300-family community in Mapakomhere a piece of land for a school up to Form 4 (11th grade). As national coordinator and fundraiser of the Lemba Cultural Association and a member of the Mapakomhere Secondary School, Wuriga has taken an active interest in the school's development. The community wants to expand to Form 6, to add computers (there are none), and to increase participation by women. The school population is more than 600. There are no Lemba courses, but no pork is served, and the library will have books on Judaism. He hopes it will become a boarding school serving men and women between 14 and 21 years old -- teaching Lemba religion and culture.

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