



## Remembering Rabbi Moshe Cotel

By Harriet Bograd

I am very sad to announce that Rabbi Moshe Cotel died suddenly and unexpectedly on the morning of October 24 while *davening*.

Rabbi Cotel and his family and my family have been close friends for more than 25 years, and he is the person responsible for getting me involved in Kulanu. Rabbi Cotel served on Kulanu's board of directors from 2002 through 2007. His death is a great loss.

A precocious pianist and composer, Moshe studied at Julliard and taught Composition at the Peabody Conservatory. His many compositions include an opera, *Dreyfus*, about the anti-Semitic Dreyfus affair in France in the 1890s.

He took early retirement to go into the rabbinate. In 2002, while still a rabbinical student, he traveled to Uganda with a team of rabbis and others organized by Kulanu, to serve on a *beit din* that affirmed the Jewish identity of hundreds of members of the Abayudaya community. He completed his studies and was ordained at the Academy of Jewish Religion, and has recently been serving as rabbi at Temple Beth El of Manhattan Beach in Brooklyn, NY. Still an acclaimed composer and pianist, he had been traveling the country performing "Chronicles: A Jewish Life at the Classical Piano."

We extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Aliya Cheskis-Cotel, and his son and daughter, Sivan and Orli. The family welcomes contributions to Kulanu in memory of Rabbi Moshe Cotel.



## Olmert Agrees to Aliyah of Bnei Menashe from India

According to an August 20 article in *Maariv*, outgoing Prime Minister Ehud Olmert agreed to allow all 7,232 Bnei Menashe living in India to make Aliyah. The article's author, Eli Bardenstein, reported that Meir Shitreet, Minister of the Interior, and Eli Afflalo, Minister of Absorption, would fly to India to meet with the Bnei Menashe after the High Holy Days, and would then bring the decision to the Prime Minister for formal approval. It was anticipated that the Aliyah would occur gradually over a two-year period.

In anticipation of this decision, the organization Shavei Israel, which has been fighting for admission of Bnei Menashe to Israel for over 10 years, conducted a precise census of all the Bnei Menashe in India and prepared a closed list that clearly names those who can make Aliyah.

Michael Freund, founder-chairman of Shavei Israel, welcomed the news with this statement on August 20:

*There has been a momentous, even historic, breakthrough in my efforts to bring the Bnei Menashe of northeastern India, who claim descent from a Lost Tribe of Israel, home to the Jewish state.*

*For the past 12 years, I have lobbied and cajoled, nudged and pressed the Israeli government to open the gates and to allow the entire Bnei Menashe community to return to the land of their ancestors, Israel. Now, at last, this dream may be about to come true...*

*Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has acceded to my request and has agreed to bring the remaining 7,000 members of the Bnei Menashe community on Aliyah.*

*This is a heroic act of Zionism, and it will constitute the fulfillment of the centuries-old yearning of the Bnei Menashe to rejoin the Jewish people.*

At press-time, Freund informed us that, as of October 28, no Aliyah has commenced:

*Because of the political turmoil here (Olmert's resignation, and now we are headed for elections...), the cabinet did not meet to pass a formal government resolution yet, which is necessary to get the Aliyah started. We are pressing to try to get them to do so, but at this stage, it may only be after the election.*

Stay tuned!

## A Ghanaian Learns in Uganda

By Alex Armah

*(Alex Armah is a leader of the Jewish community in Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana. With Kulanu's help, he went to Mbale, Uganda, in July to study Judaism for four months with Rabbi Gershom Sizomu, and was among the 250 converts there. Here are excerpts from some of his weekly messages to friends and supporters)*

Shalom. This is my first report to you. It is wonderful to experience such an occasion with the Abayudaya community in Uganda. On Monday visitors started coming from the U.S.A. Some also came from African countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia, and people from nearby communities in Uganda. The guest house was full of rabbis.

The conversions started on Wednesday; the 250 members who came for the conversion are now Jewish, and each person is happy to be a Jew. The conversions were done before the ordination of our African Rabbi Gershom. I was also converted, to have my Hebrew name.

I was surprised to see officials from the Government of Uganda and from Islamic and Christian religions. On Thursday a long bus of students from many Jewish communities from the U.S.A., Canada, and Israel came to welcome our African Jewish Rabbi. African drummers and the Abayudaya high school choir came with their welcome songs for the rabbis.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

# *Kudos to Kulanu Youth!*

By Harriet Bograd

One of the greatest pleasures in my work for Kulanu in recent years has been working with young people—bar and bat mitzvah candidates, high school students and college Hillel groups—who have elected to do a special fundraising mitzvah project.

Now, I am delighted to announce several new youth initiatives.

We are in the process of creating a working group of Jewish educators, clergy, parents, and youth leaders to advise us on the development and distribution of materials related to our mitzvah project program; to help us locate, evaluate, and develop resources for schools, camps, youth groups and individuals; to help us plan outreach to these groups; and to advise us on development of web-based information useful to these groups.

In recent months, we've received requests from families, camps, and schools for materials they can use to teach about Jewish diversity. We want to continue to improve and enrich our responses to these requests, whether these take the form of developing appropriate materials or identifying the best resources available.

In recent months, there have been some great and exciting stories shared by our volunteers.

One of my favorites came from Temple Beth Avodah in Newton, MA. Their rabbi/educator dresses up as "Ofra Winberg" and does a talk show with the students talking about Jewish values and Jewish heroes. This year, their focus is on Jewish communities around the world and so Ofra is "traveling" the world, visiting different communities and sending letters, videos and audio tapes back to the students. When she "visits" the Abayudaya, she will be using Kulanu materials to educate her students.

Another favorite: the older campers at Camp Herzl in Wisconsin organized a fundraising walk, which they called *Holchim L'Chaim*, We Walk for Life. The campers selected three organizations to benefit, including Kulanu. Around the track, they had "fact signs" that educated the campers about the work of the three organizations.

High school students at Temple Beth-El in Ithaca, NY, have held concerts and sold CDs of their music to raise money for the Abayudaya health fund.

After 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at The Leo Baeck Day School in Toronto studied the Abayudaya as part of their curriculum on Jewish diversity, they all bought Abayudaya kippot to wear at their graduation ceremonies.

Bar and bat mitzvah candidates around the country have raised thousands of dollars to support Kulanu programs by asking their friends and family to send donations in their honor. Some students have sold items, including Mirembe Kawomera coffee. See Juliana Moskowitz's article about her project on this page.

I could go on and on. Each story, and each opportunity to encourage young people, to paraphrase Gandhi, "to be the change they want to see in the world," is wonderful. Hearing and reading the excitement in the kids' voices as they begin to realize their own power to change the world is heartwarming. Supporting these efforts will be an important part of Kulanu's program in the coming months.

Interested in helping with this effort? Would you like to serve on our Youth Participation workgroup? Please send an email to [hbograd@kulanu.org](mailto:hbograd@kulanu.org), telling me about your interests and skills. Feel free to attach a resume or CV, if you wish.

**KULANU ("ALL OF US"), a tax-exempt organization of Jews of varied backgrounds and practices, finds lost and dispersed remnants of the Jewish people and assists those who wish to (re)join world Jewry. Kulanu is undertaking a variety of activities worldwide on behalf of these dispersed groups, including research, contacts, education, and conversion information if requested. This newsletter is published quarterly by Kulanu, 165 West End Ave., 3R, New York, NY 10023.**

## KULANU'S YOUTH HONOR ROLL

**Juliana Moskowitz** of Richmond, Virginia, who sold coffee and raised \$2,826 in donations through her Bat Mitzvah Project to benefit the Dora Bloch Memorial Fund (for Semei Kakungulu High School nutrition). See her story below.

**Joshua Posner** of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, whose Bar Mitzvah Project raised \$2,523 for Kulanu and also raised funds for restoration of his Baton Rouge synagogue after the 2006 floods. His bar mitzvah was in November 2007.

**Efrayim "Effie" Sztokman** of Modi'in, Israel, who raised \$265 for Kulanu by requesting donations in lieu of gifts for his June 2008 bar mitzvah.

**Zak Cohen** of New York City, who raised money for teachers' salaries at the Abayudaya primary school in honor of his December 2007 bar mitzvah with the Abayudaya Congregation in Uganda. The previous year, Zak's family also donated funds to build a two-classroom block at the elementary school. Zak's *dvar torah*, delivered in Uganda, was published in our Winter 2007-08 newsletter.

**Isaac Kort-Meade** of Santa Rosa, California, who raised \$1,000 for the Abayudaya Education fund by selling Mirembe Kawomera coffee as his Mitzvah Project. His bar mitzvah was in September 2008.

**The campers at Camp Herzl** in Wisconsin, guided by counselor **Neili Rosenbloom**, who raised \$835 for Kulanu through their *Holchim L'Chaim* ("We Walk For Life") fundraising walk during summer 2008.

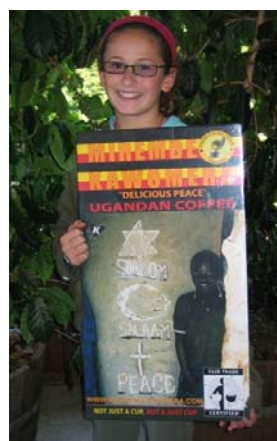
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## A Bat Mitzvah Project about Coffee

By Juliana Moskowitz

I live in Richmond, Virginia, and I am in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Rudlin Torah Academy. In October 2007, I celebrated my Bat Mitzvah.

My sister Holly works at Thanksgiving Coffee, a fair trade coffee



company. Her job is to educate about and distribute Mirembe Kawomera Coffee from Uganda. Mirembe Kawomera translates into "Delicious Peace" and this is a fitting name. The coffee is grown by a co-op of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian farmers and is a remarkable example of friendship and cooperation. When the coffee is sold through the Thanksgiving Coffee Company, they give a dollar back to the cooperative; this is on top of buying the coffee at a fair wage. Holly had gone to Uganda to teach and learn from the Abayudaya, who are a group of Ugandan Jews. When she got there she saw how impoverished they were.

Children literally go hungry. Malaria is a constant threat. As a toy they kicked around an empty plastic jug. They can't even afford to buy shoes. Some have two different shoes, and some only have one. Her time there was life changing. What she saw was a group of people practicing Judaism; rejoicing through prayer and song, celebrating their lives against all odds. She had an amazing experience.

When my family and I began to think about a Bat Mitzvah project it was important to my parents that I take it seriously and undertake something that really would make a difference. My mother and Holly knew that no matter how I raised money it should go to the Jewish

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## UGANDA TRIP REPORT

# Adult Literacy, Women's and Youth Conferences, Micro-Finance and More!

By Laura Wetzler  
Part II

(This concludes Laura Wetzler's two-part article on her sixth visit to the Abayudaya community, in January 2008. Wetzler is Kulanu's Coordinator for Uganda.)

### Adult Literacy

I worked with Adult Literacy teachers and Aaron Kintu Moses to create an ongoing schedule of support meetings for these young teachers working in isolation in the villages. I was happy to be greeted by and speaking with elders who are learning English and to deliver gifts of new books to the program.

### Deaf Education

When I was out in Namutumba at the farmer workshop, I was introduced to five beautiful hearing-impaired Abayudaya children, with a request for help. These lovely kids, aged 2-12, have been struggling to learn at the local Namutumba public school in classes of over 100 hearing students. Parents feared to send these vulnerable kids to the Abayudaya schools, which have no special ed teachers on staff, 70 miles away, so very far from the children's home. After some inquiries and a search across eastern Uganda on motorcycles (don't ask) with medical volunteer and former deaf educator Hedy Cohen, and student counselors-in-training Susan Sabano and Miriam Mubole, we found the Kavule Parents School for the Deaf.

There we met the headmaster Helen Ariozet, a lovely lady who herself had studied at a school for the deaf in Kenya and could read and write in English, Luganda, and Swahili. Ms. Ariozet gave us a tour and told us this was one of only two schools for the deaf in Uganda. We met the school director and got information about the program, tuition, and boarding. Working with parents, Abayudaya medical director Samson Wamani, and other Abayudaya leaders, we created a pilot year program to oversee the care and education of these five students at the Kavule School, budgeted at a total of \$2000 per year for all five children. Where else can such a relatively small sum have the potential to do so much?

When I arrived home I was lucky to find Dr. Liz Feldman from Chicago, who generously made a five-year pledge to support the first Kulanu Abayudaya Deaf Education Project. We could not have begun the project without such a pledge to sustain it. Kulanu, parents, Samson Wamani, and Miriam Mubole (a college student-teacher from their home village) will monitor the children's progress and the school carefully and see how they adjust in their first really appropriate school learning environment. We hope for the best and pray this is the beginning of something wonderful for these Abayudaya children. In addition, we are trying to network with US deaf education teachers to facilitate a Uganda-requested exchange program and collaboration with this very poor rural school. Please let us know if you have any contacts in the deaf community who are interested in volunteering.

### Health Assistance

In addition to her generous 5-year commitment to the Kulanu-Abayudaya Deaf Education Project, Dr. Liz Feldman will be also coming to Uganda next January to volunteer. She will work closely with Samson Wamani, who runs the innovative and successful Kulanu Abayudaya "**Train the Trainer**" **Public Health Education Project**, training teenagers from Semei Kakungulu High School to teach vital public health information on safe sanitation practices, malaria and HIV prevention and treatment resources, first aid, and family planning back to their home villages, through music and drama.

A great pleasure on my trip this year was connecting with American surgeon and volunteer from Duluth, Dr. William Portilla, who had contacted me before coming to Uganda. After joining us on Shabbat, Dr. Portilla invited young Wamani to meet administrators and sit in at

the Mbale Cure Hospital, where Dr. Portilla was donating his skills and time teaching and operating on Ugandan children needing cleft palate surgeries. You meet the most terrific people when you volunteer in Uganda!

### Women's Conference

Samson Wamani was the featured speaker at the January Women's Association Conference, sponsored by Kulanu through support from Roberta Roos and Jeanne Bodin. His topic was appropriate local diet and treatment of diabetes in a rural village environment. Several community members have been diagnosed with diabetes, a dangerous disease if left untreated. Medical volunteer Hedy Cohen consulted on family planning and a village HIV testing. I worked with the women on issues of concern to them and reported on Kulanu Abayudaya projects throughout the villages. A young Kulanu Bar Mitzvah, Justin Beckerman, had created hand-made *m'zuzot* for the community and I was delighted to deliver them to the Abayudaya mothers, who were happy to receive them.

These women's conferences play a vital role in the community as they are among the few times in the year the very hard-working, very overburdened farm women of all the different Abayudaya villages get to see each other, due to the expense of transport. They plan and facilitate the conference themselves and discuss issues and share ideas. They begin with a *dvar Torah* and reports from each synagogue, and the discussion topics beyond the invited speakers include lively debates filled with joy and laughter about women's work, home, and village life. Kulanu is proud to sponsor these women's empowerment

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## **Calling All Supporters: Have you donated in the last year?**

Kulanu is a very small organization with very big dreams and we rely on our community—the "all of us" referred to in our name—to fund our activities.

We at Kulanu hope you enjoy receiving this quarterly newsletter and reading all the latest news and fascinating stories about our organization's work partnering with Jewish communities and Jews around the world – we certainly love sharing it with you!

Every three months, we mail nearly 2,000 newsletters, with copies going to our supporters, friends and the communities we work with. Many of those newsletters are going to individuals who may have supported us in the past but have not made a recent contribution. Rising postage and other costs have forced a difficult decision on us—to **limit our distribution list to current and lifetime supporters**. Our overseas partner communities will continue to receive copies of the newsletters without the need to donate.

**If you haven't donated in the last year, please consider making a generous gift at this time.**



# KULANU BRIEFS

## New: Kulanu Updates/Kulanu Blog

We have begun to send out occasional Kulanu news updates by email. If you want to receive these, please send an email to [data-base@kulanu.org](mailto:data-base@kulanu.org), and write "please send Updates" in the message.

We are very excited to announce that we have inaugurated the Kulanu blog with the help of volunteer Matthew Feldman. See [www.kulanu.org/blog](http://www.kulanu.org/blog). Its main purpose, for now, is to give online access to these Kulanu Updates, and to allow readers to add comments. If you missed the earlier Updates, you can read them in our blog. The blog format also makes it easy for readers to spread the word about Kulanu – just click "share this" after any item.

## The Good People Fund

The Good People Fund – "Doing a World of Good Through Tzedakah" – has listed Kulanu as a "Suggested Tzedakah Organization" (go to [www.Goodpeoplefund.org](http://www.Goodpeoplefund.org) and click on "Our Programs"). Also see the website's August 5, 2008, calendar entry for an excellent report by executive director Naomi Eisenberg about Kulanu, including a journal by Alex Armah, the Ghanaian Jew who studied, with Kulanu's assistance, at the Abayudaya yeshiva in Uganda.

## Indians Launch Political Party in Israel

Indian Jewish immigrants to Israel have launched a political party, Shivtei Israel (Yachad), in Be'er Sheva to compete in upcoming municipal elections. According to party head Abraham Nagaonkar, they will push for better educational facilities, more scholarships to promising students, opening museums to preserve Indian cultural heritage, better maintenance of synagogues, and more employment, cultural, and sports opportunities for teenagers, including a cricket field. More than 5,000 Indians have registered as party members, out of a total of about 10,000 in the city.

## UNIZIK to Establish Jewish Studies

Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK), in Awka Nigeria, is establishing an Institute of Jewish Studies similar to the Confucius Institute in the University. The Institute of Jewish Studies will receive books that Rabbi Howard Gorin of Tikvat Israel Congregation in Rockville, Maryland, donated to Anambra State government.

## Chanukah Gift Suggestions

This year Chanukah begins on the evening of December 21. As always, the best gifts are available at [www.KulanuBoutique.com](http://www.KulanuBoutique.com), where you will find offerings from our Kulanu communities around the globe. We are expecting one new addition to our Boutique any day now: A new CD from Abayudaya leader and coffee co-op founder JJ Keki and family members Rachel Namudosi Keki and Maccabee Kizangi. The title is "Lecha Dodi," and it will feature songs from Abayudaya Shabbat services. Look for it on our website.

## Speakers Spread the Word

**Rabbi Barbara Aiello** of Calabria, Italy, will be in the US December 11-April 15 for a chaplaincy. She will be available for talks on the *Anousim* of southern Italy. Contact [rabbi@rabbi-barbara.com](mailto:rabbi@rabbi-barbara.com).

**Janice Fernheimer** will discuss "Hora-dancing in Harlem: Hatzaad Harishon, Zionism, and the Rhetoric of Black Jewish Identity" November 19 at 5 pm at Golding 107, Brandeis University. Hatzaad Harishon, a biracial non-profit organization that promotes unity among New York City's black and white Jewish populations.

**Jennifer Abadi** will speak about Syrian-Jewish food at the Man-

hattan JCC on November 12. She is the author of *Fistful of Lentils: Syrian-Jewish Recipes from Grandma Fritzie's Kitchen*.

"The Syrian Jewish Community: Force or Fossil?" was the topic addressed by a panel at the Manhattan JCC on October 28. The panel included **Rabbi Ezra Labaton, Rabbi Dianne Cohler-Esses, Sara Labaton, and Mark Kligman**.

On six Thursdays, October 30-December 11, **Dr. Jessica Marglin** will lead a series on "A History of the Jews of the Mediterranean" at the Manhattan JCC. It will include early encounters between Jews and Muslims and their relationship in the Medieval and Early Modern periods, as well as case studies of the Golden Age in Spain, communities in Palestine, Syria, and Morocco, and other examples of Jewish life in the Islamic Mediterranean.

Israeli singer **Mor Karbasi** appeared in the Sephardic Song Festival on September 28 at Spiegelworld Tent, Pier 17, NYC. A descendant of Moroccan and Persian Jews, she sang in Spanish, Hebrew, Ladino and English. She has been described as "one of the great young divas of the global music scene."

**Jonina Duker** gave a slide lecture on August 11 at the CAJE conference in Burlington, Vermont, entitled "Help Repair the World, One Sip at a Time." She discussed the Mirembe Kawomera Coffee Cooperative in Uganda (involving Jewish, Christian, and Muslim farmers) in order to inspire the creation of a concrete social action project for students and congregants.

**Jonina Duker** will also teach a 6-session fall course titled "Lost and Found: Jews in Remote Places of the World" at the Saul Bendit Adult Institute at Beth El in Bethesda, Maryland. She will discuss methods for identifying Jewish descent in communities in the American Southwest, Brazil, Ethiopia, India and China, as well as communities who have chosen Judaism in Uganda and Peru. **Mollie Berch** will teach at the same site a literature course on "Exploring the 'Other' Jews, the Sephardim." Authors to be covered include Ruth Behar (Cuba), Andre Aciman (Egypt), Ruth Knafo Setton (Morocco), and Primo Levi (Italy), and others from Turkey, Bulgaria, Mexico, Syria, Israel, Greece, and Guatemala.

On October 27, author **Miquel Segura** began a two-week tour throughout Spain to promote the Spanish version of his book *Raíces Chuetas, Alas Judías (Chuerta Roots, Jewish Wings)*. The book, originally published in Catalán, is the definitive work that describes the phenomenon of the Chuetas, the secret Jews of Mallorca, who have maintained their unique Jewish identity since the Inquisition.

**Rabbi Steve Leon** and **Dr. Stan Hordes** were keynote speakers on Crypto-Judaism on October 25 at the joint convention of the Texas Jewish Historical Society and the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society in El Paso, Texas.

DC's Jewish Studies Center is presenting a 5-part series on Jewish Cultures Across the Globe at Adas Israel. On October 29, **Saúl Sosnowski** spoke on the Argentine-Jewish Community; on November 5, **Carol Castiel** discussed the Jews of Cape Verde; on November 12, **Maryl Levine** will speak on Mountain Jews of Azerbaijan; on November 19, **Daniel Pinto** will discuss Jews of Brazil; and on December 3, **Miriam Israel** will speak about the Jews of Chile.

**Devin Naar** lectured on Sephardic Immigration from Greece to the United States at Kehila Kedosha Janina, NYC, on September 7. The speaker is the author of "From the Jerusalem of the Balkans to the Goldene Medina: Jewish Immigration From Salonika," soon to be published in the *American Jewish History Journal*.

**Riki Mulu**, founder of the organization Chassida Shmella, along with an Ethiopian Kess from Israel, presented an Ethiopian Shabbat dinner at the Manhattan JCC on September 19.

**Dr. Ruth Fredman Cernea** spoke about the Baghdadi Jews in British Burma at the Library of Congress in Washington DC on September 9.

# KULANU BRIEFS

## Exhibit on Crypto-Jews Tours Brazil

For the second year in a row, an exhibition entitled "Crypto-Jews: The Flame that the Inquisition Could Not Extinguish" recently attracted large crowds in its tour across Brazil. The exhibit, designed and produced by the organization Shavei Israel, traces the history and experience of the *Bnai Anousim* (descendants of forced converts during the Inquisition). It includes maps, illustrations, and photographs, with explanatory panels in Hebrew and Portuguese that tell the story of the *Bnai Anousim* and their struggle over the centuries to preserve their Jewish identity. A Spanish-language version has previously been shown in Israel and in Spain. The exhibition traveled to Porto Alegre, Curitiba, Recife, and Sao Paulo.

## Condolences

**Dr. Richard Winer** of Marblehead, Massachusetts died recently at the age of 81. A Kulanu member, Dr. Winer had a strong interest in the history of Jews in general and the history of Jews in Salem, Massachusetts, in particular. A long-time president of the North Shore Jewish Historical Society, he hosted a slide show and presentation of the Abayudaya for an audience of about 100 local residents.

**Eugene Adams**, a generous Kulanu donor, recently passed away. See the tribute to him in LETTERS, page 9.

**Rabbi Moshe Cotel**, a former Kulanu Board member, died on October 24. See tributes on pages 1 and 6.

## Mazal Tov!

Congratulations to the first two Bnei Menashe to become a *shochet*, **Allenby Sela** and **David Haukip**. Sela, who is of Mizoram origin, lives in Sederot, and David Haukip, who is of Manipur origin, lives in Bet El.

And to **Moses Sebagabo**, who has become the first graduate lawyer in the Abayudaya community.

And to Kulanu activist **Jonina Duker**, whose son **Jared Duker Lichtman** became Bar Mitzvah in October.

And to Kulanu activist **Ann Katz Jacobson**, who has become a grandmother. **Hannah Rachel** was born to Sara and Peter Hazzard on August 2 in London.

**JJ Keki**, founder and director of the Peace Kawomera Cooperative, has been formally invited to attend United Religions Initiative's Pilgrims of Peace: Many Paths, One Purpose Global Assembly in December in Mayapur, India. The Peace Kawomera Cooperative has been named a Cooperation Circle, the organization's designation for a group of people who are diverse in religion, spiritual practice, ethnic background, and tradition, but have a desire to build bridges of understanding, respect, and dialogue for interfaith peace. Congratulations to JJ and all members of the Peace Kawomera Cooperative! (Go to [www.mirembekawomera.com](http://www.mirembekawomera.com) to order the Cooperative's delicious coffee)

## Todah Rabah!

Todah Rabah to **Barbara Gervis Lubran** and the **Estelle Friedman Gervis Family Foundation** for their generous \$35,000 donation for the construction of a desperately-needed new Abayudaya boys' dorm and updated kitchen at the Hadassah Primary School. The dedication will be early next year.

The **Estelle Friedman Gervis Family Foundation** also answered Kulanu's appeal for extra funds for nutrition at schools when prices suddenly skyrocketed. Their generous \$5000 matching grant was responsible for adding \$10,000 to the Abayudaya students' food budget. (A reminder to our readers: Funds are continually needed to help feed and educate 600 kids in the Abayudaya schools.)

Many thanks to our worldwide web-savvy volunteers who have

given their time to the kulanu.org website, as well as to Kulanu's new Blog ([www.kulanu.org/blog](http://www.kulanu.org/blog))! **Gus Mueller** of Hurley, NY, started us off by teaching us how to decipher myriad aspects of website management and design and did a major revision of the website code. **Angel Liu** of Taiwan helped lay the groundwork of converting to our new website format. **Matthew Merewitz** of Philadelphia introduced us to the realm of online social networking and its potential for spreading the word and garnering support for Kulanu. **Miguel Vicuna** of Madrid, Spain, has been an ongoing source of expert help, updating many web-pages and resolving many problems – we also appreciate his enthusiasm for learning about Judaism and Kulanu's work along the way. **Matthew Feldman** of Philadelphia single-handedly created the Kulanu Blog and has been patiently supporting its evolution. Kulanu staff member **Katie Rosenthal** took over management of the site this past spring as a novice, but with the help of these individuals she has learned so much, and she looks forward to making Kulanu's Internet presence a strong part of the work we do to connect Jews around the world.

To **Allison Blakley, Dawn Allen, Mia Graff, and Bari Bagby** of Northbrook, Illinois, who commemorated their adult b'not mitzvah by raising a total of \$2,644 for the Abayudaya Education Fund. Their August b'not mitzvah were held at Shir Hadash Reconstructionist Synagogue.

To **Dr. Elizabeth Feldman** of Evanston, Illinois, who raised \$5,395 for Abayudaya deaf education, emergency health fund, and health communications, and who arranged for medical officer Samson Wamani to spend a month in Chicago teaching and learning in hospitals, clinics, and doctors' offices.

Kulanu is extremely grateful to the **Better Way Foundation** for its \$2500 grant.

To **Jessie Brooks** for her generous donation in memory of her mother, Christiana Brooks, of Jamaica.

Thanks to Toronto's **Cari Gombinsky** and **Solutions Immigration Consulting Inc.** for their generosity in providing professional services to prepare the Canadian visa application for Abayudaya speaker/visitor Israel Siriri.

Todah rabah to the **high school students of Rabbi Scott Glass** at **Temple Beth El** in Ithaca, NY, who raised \$418 for the Abayudaya Health Fund by holding a fund-raising concert.

Each year the **Am Chai Tzedakah Collective** in Evanston, Illinois, has a campaign to raise funds for Kulanu. Todah rabah to the eight members who responded, contributing a total of \$406.

Todah Rabah to these donors of \$1000-\$2000: **Ria and Mike Gruss, Isaac Kort-Meade, Edward and Rae Samiljan, Temple Beth-El, Woodlands Community Temple, Aaron and Marjorie Ziegelman.**

And to these donors of \$500-999: **Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center, Beckerman Family, Irwin M. and Elaine R. Berg, Cameron B. and Marilyn Hendershot, Hannah Klein, Temple Isaiah, The Good People Fund, David H. Wise.**

And to these donors of \$125-499: **Bruce Aaron, Anshei Chesed – The Conservative Synagogue of Cape Cod, Elena Barrett, Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah, Amy R. Brenner, Camp Ramah in Wisconsin, Rabbi Sigma Coran, Congregation Hakafa, Lynne (Roslyn) Elson, Hope and Matthew Feldman, Dr. Elizabeth Feldman and Jay Shefsky, Elkan and Zelda Gamzu, Jeffrey S. and Judith L. Goldman, Herzl Camp, Harriette Hirsch, Lori Kyomi and Mark M. Spiegel, Ellen Levitt, Millicent M. Milbauer, Aron and Karen Primack, Marion Kaplan and Jonathan Allan Reiss, Joyce Sirlin-Rand, Jacob Steinberg, Michael L. Sullivan, Melissa Masters Surette, Temple Sinai Religious School, Dr. Shoshana Elkin Waskow.**

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## IN MEMORIAM

(We are re-publishing this article from the Summer 2003 Kulanu newsletter in memory of Rabbi Moshe Cotel)

# We Live in Miraculous Times

By Rabbi Moshe Cotel

(Excerpted from an ordination speech the writer, a Kulanu board member, gave at his graduation from the Academy for Jewish Religion in May 2003)

We live in miraculous times. Last year I was in northeastern rural Uganda serving on a Bet Din, a rabbinical court, which officially welcomed the native Abayudaya Ugandans into the worldwide community of the people Israel.

When I asked one old man at that time, an ancient man who had lived through the persecutions of dictator Idi Amin - a tyrant who had banned Judaism throughout the country - why he would want to be part of a people universally despised and persecuted throughout history, he replied in a quiet but firm voice and with clear blazing eyes: Because I fear Adonai.

Judaism is coming alive throughout the developing world. I know that this is true because I have seen it with my own eyes; I have heard it with my own ears. I believe that in a hundred years a typical Jewish face will be the face of Africa; in a hundred years a typical Jewish face will be the face of Asia.

We live in miraculous times and I wish to be part of this miracle. But the miracle has another side to it—and while there are signs that Judaism is awakening in places throughout the world where we never thought a native Jewish community could exist—here in America, in the highly developed technological world, there are disturbing counter-currents.

A whole new generation has come into being, not across the ocean, but right here in our midst—Generation X, divorced from communal Jewish life and all but written off by our own vaunted Jewish establishment. This is the other side of our miraculous time. American Jews have never been more powerful, more secure, more integrated into the whole of society—and yet our young people are opting out in droves.

We must find a way to make Judaism relevant to our own alienated young here in the U.S. And, paradoxically, we must also find a way to make Judaism inclusive for countless seekers around the world for whom our theology of liberation, based upon the Exodus from Egypt, is an inspiration.

I intend to devote the rest of my life to wrestling with this paradox—inreach at home, outreach abroad. Our great religion has been reinvented and reinvented again by each succeeding generation of Jews. And now, we have to gather our strength to reinvent Judaism yet once more.

## A Ugandan Learns in Chicago

By Samson Wamani

(A member of the Abayudaya community, Samson Wamani graduated in 2006 as a Medical Clinical Officer at Kampala International University. He serves as Health and Medical Director of the community's Sha'arei Refuah Health Center near Mbale, Uganda. He was invited by Elizabeth Feldman, MD, and the UIC/Illinois Masonic Family Medicine Residency Program at Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center (AIMMC), to spend a month in Chicago in a series of informal medical education experiences.

Last week was another exciting week in my American life.

On Monday, Dr. Shoshanah Waskow set the educational pace for the week. I saw pediatric patients with her in her office. She is very warm and so willing to explain every detail of the questions I asked. I found it very helpful because I see more pediatric patients in my clinic than adults. She showed me so much about making young patients comfortable in order to do a thorough examination. I was briefed on how she keeps her patient records, which is one of the most important things I feel I have to learn here. Dr. Waskow is in the process of establishing a new electronic record-keeping system for herself, so I hope to emulate her process of record-keeping on paper with an eventual transition to an electronic system.



Samson Wamani (Photo courtesy of Diva Communications)

I took a day off from clinical observations on Tuesday to organize a power-point presentation called "Primary Health Care in Rural Uganda, the Daily Life of a Ugandan Rural Doctor," which was due the following Friday.

Wednesday Dr. Judi Gravidal from Lutheran Hospital contributed so much to my expectations. In the morning, I was welcomed at a faculty administrative meeting. This was very informative to me because I am also the administrator of my health unit. They presented a model of communication that I realized is so important to employ with my own health clinic staff. I attended a cardiology lecture about resuscitation and emergency care, which was followed by surgical and obstetric lectures. The lectures were very informative to me and I feel I added so much to my knowledge in these topics.

On Thursday, I went to the Veteran's Hospital with Dr. Terry Unterman, an endocrinologist. We saw many patients there with diseases including diabetes and hypo- and hyperthyroidism. The issues of diabetic management were of particular interest to me as there is an increasing number of diabetics within my own community. In the afternoon of that day I was at Cook County Hospital. I attended student presentations about patients with hyperthyroidism, and then went for case management in the Emergency Rooms.

The next morning, as part of the residents' continuing education program at Illinois Masonic Hospital, I gave my power-point presentation and talk about primary health care in Uganda. I was said to be a good teacher and the audience responded well.

These experiences are greatly helping me to improve my skills in clinical patient care. I am also learning new methods of keeping patient records; this is crucial to improving the quality of care and service delivery to the people I serve back in Uganda.

## HELP WANTED!

Dear Readers:

Next spring I will have served 15 years as your **Volunteer Newsletter Editor**. At that point, I would like to let another lucky person take my place communicating with fascinating Jewish personalities around the globe! This position has enabled me to make hundreds of friends and hear amazing stories. It is always gratifying to see the concrete fruits of one's labors, and there is plenty of room for creativity.

The Kulanu Board will consider one editor, co-editors, or an editorial board of writers and editors. Writing experience is a must; editing and desk-top publishing experience are helpful. I'm available to help the transition go smoothly.

This is a rewarding mitzvah, and one crucial to Kulanu's success. Send questions to me at [newsletterA@kulanu.org](mailto:newsletterA@kulanu.org).

L'shalom,

Karen Primack

# ***Update on Prof. Xu Xin and a Remarkable Endowment***

*By Beverly Friend*

I am delighted to report that Professor Xu Xin seems to have made a complete recovery from his cerebral aneurysm and is in excellent health as he resumes teaching, writing, and planning for the future. I had the pleasure of joining him August 1-4 in Seattle, where we attended the board meeting of the Sino Judaic Institute (see <http://www.sino-judaic.org>). Amid their many activities, the organization currently is developing scholarships for university students and Kaifeng descendants to further their Judaic studies, working on a new grants policy, and researching, mounting, and funding a panel on Jewish-American adoptions of Chinese children. (According to the U.S. State Department, 66,709 orphan visas for mainland Chinese adoptees were issued from 1991 to 2007, with a significant percentage to Jewish adoptive parents.)

Following Seattle, Xu headed for Los Angeles to meet with Guilford Glazer, who has made a second donation of \$100,000 to Xu's Institute for Jewish Studies at Nanjing University.

In addition to leading Judaic tours in China, the latest with a group from Australia, Xu has resumed his own travels. He visited London on behalf of the Glazer Institute of Jewish Studies to meet with Naim Dangoor and his son in order to set up an endowed chair for a Professor of Monotheism (see below). Following that, Xu visited Kunming in Yunnan Province for five days to teach classes on the Holocaust and Anti-Semitism.

Back in China, Xu is resuming work on two books and working diligently while friends and family (unsuccessfully) attempt to get him to slow down and take it easy. It was wonderful to see him so thriving and active once again.

It is my pleasure to convey this news about the endowment granted for the study of Monotheism at the Institute for Jewish Studies at Nanjing University. The Exilarch's Foundation has made a generous initial endowment to the Institute to establish the Naim Dangoor Fund for Universal Monotheism Studies. Matched by University funds, the new program will enhance the Institute's research and teaching of the core concepts of three monotheistic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Philanthropist Naim Dangoor, an Iraqi-born Jew who moved to Britain in 1964 and became a successful property investor and developer in London, created the Exilarch's Foundation in 1978. This grew into a major philanthropic institution providing support for education and other causes in the UK and in Israel. Dangoor received the Order of the British Empire in 2006 for his generous contributions and far-reaching vision of today's world.

Income from the endowment will be used to create a better understanding of the world by the Chinese people. It will also advance efforts to recruit and retain a distinguished director, who will be given the title Naim Dangoor Director of the Institute for Universal Monotheism. Xu Xin said, "This gift of an endowment from the Exilarch's Foundation will enable us to extend the scope of the Institute of Jewish Studies. It will enhance our ability to collaborate with other institutes, and with various doctoral programs in co-sponsoring programs and in training and encouraging students to carry out research on Universal Monotheism -- important to understanding the world civilization in general -- and seek to find a universal project for world peace that recognizes the significance of each human being throughout the world."

## **U.S. SPEAKING TOUR**

### ***A Non-Jew Dreams of Bringing Jewish Studies to India***

*By Dr. Navras Jaat Aafreedi*

I was not born in a Jewish family, yet a tradition of my people's origin connected me to Israel. I grew up in a city in India where there were no Jews, yet I got interested in them. Jewish Studies are not available in Indian universities, yet I found a way to research the Indian Jews and the probable remnants of lost Israelite tribes in India for my Ph.D. at the University of Lucknow, India. I did not have the means to go to Israel for higher studies, yet I managed to get there through a scholarship from the Israeli Government and a grant from the Tel Aviv University for my post-doctoral research on the "Traditions of Israelite Descent Among Certain Muslim Groups in India." I could ill-afford to go to America to present the paper I produced as a result of my research at the conference of the Midwest Jewish Studies Association in Illinois in October 2007, yet I made it there, thanks to the financial help from the association and to the honoraria I got from the lectures I gave, very kindly organized by Kulanu.

#### **Muslims of Israelite Descent**

I spoke at a number of venues in America during my three and a half month stay there. At the conference, I presented a paper on the "Traditions of Israelite Descent Among Certain Muslim Groups in India," viz., the Kashmiri in Jammu and Kashmir, most of whom are Muslim, and the three Muslim groups in India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, viz., the Qidwai/Kidwai in Barabanki; the Pashtun/Pathan in Malihabad (District Lucknow), Qayamganj (District Farrukhabad), Shahjahanpur and Rampur (also found elsewhere in India); and the *Bani Israil* in Sambhal (District Moradabad) and Aligarh.

All of these groups have had traditions of Israelite descent for centuries. Two of them, the Kashmiri and the Pashtun/Pathan, trace their lineage from the lost tribes of Israel. The Pashtuns/Pathans in India have largely lost their traditions of Israelite origin, yet it is still strong in their native places, Afghanistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan.

By the way, Pathans, Pashtuns, Pakhtuns and Afghans are names which are often used interchangeably. To be precise, those who inhabit plains and open plateaus are entitled to the name Afghan, which has a far wider connotation than just being a subject of the modern state of Afghanistan, founded only in 1747. The northern highlanders call themselves Pakhtuns, while the southern highlanders are known as Pashtuns. Unfortunately, Pashtuns/Pathans are the same people who largely fill the ranks of the Taliban today.

While the Qidwais/Kidwais trace their genealogy from a Sufi of Jewish descent, Qazi/Qadi Qidwatuddin of Rum (modern Turkey), who settled in India in 1191 CE, the members of the *Bani Israil* clan of Sambhal (District Moradabad) and Aligarh claim descent from a Jewish *sahaabi* (companion of Muhammad), Abdullah Ibn-i-Salaam. According to them, their ancestors settled in India a millennium ago to propagate and preach Islam.

#### **Jewish Contributions in Film**

My next presentation was at the Samuel Rosenthal Center for Judaic Studies, Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, where I spoke on the Jewish contributions to the world's largest film industry, the Indian cinema. Jews played a crucially important role when the Indian cinema was in its infancy by giving it most of its earliest and some of its finest female actors, in a country where it was considered demeaning for women to indulge in performing arts. Most of these actors had come from the Baghdadi community, which settled in India in the 1830s. Sadly, these Jewish actors largely could not continue with their successful film careers once the talkies were introduced, because of their lack of fluency in the local languages.

#### **Establishing Jewish Studies in India**

Between these two presentations, I met the Chicago Area Director of the American Jewish Committee, Emily Solof, with whom I

*(Continued on page 9)*



# LETTERS TO KULANU

## A Nigerian Jew in Uganda

Sometime in July, I had the opportunity of visiting the Abayudaya in Uganda for the installation ceremony of Rabbi Gershon Sizomu as the Chief Rabbi of Uganda, all courtesy of Rabbi Howard Gorin. There were four of us from Nigeria, including Shmuel from Bayelsa State. We arrived at Entebbe via Lagos and Nairobi. The Abayudaya had somebody waiting for us at the airport with a van. We boarded and traveled through Kampala. Lake Victoria was a beautiful sight. It took us about four hours traveling from Kampala to Mbale district.

The beauty of the Abayudaya community fascinated us when we arrived at Nabugoye. We were received warmly by their leaders. The Abayudaya are quite an impressive community. I first read about them in 2004; I had collected some Kulanu newsletters and had read about a Beit Din that had converted hundreds of Abayudaya.

Never in my wildest dream did I think that I would some day visit this wonderful community. There is a health center, a primary school with boarding facilities, a high school, guest house, shopping plaza, a newly built yeshiva, and a magnificent synagogue, all within the community. The synagogue is located on a hill surrounded by beautiful valleys.

We met a Beit Din session going on there, and we had the honor of passing through the Beit Din after Shmuel read the e-mail Rabbi Gorin sent him, in which he urged us to pass through the Beit Din and the accompanying rituals. He advised that we shouldn't view it as if we are converting, but rather we should see it as the completion of our *teshuvah* (Returning). We went through the Beit Din, did the *hatafat dam brit*, and were later taken to the mikveh. When we immersed, there were shouts of *mazel tov* to every one of us after the rituals. When I was asked by the Beit Din the reason I want to convert and become Jewish, my reply was that I have been practicing Judaism for a while now, likewise other Ibos in Nigeria who have started going back to their Jewish roots; so unlike the Abayudaya, we are of the Jewish stock. My tribe, the Ibos, believes that they have Jewish origin because of the striking similarities between our culture and the Jewish culture. The quest for the Jewish origin of the Ibos brought my parents in contact with the Jewish faith, so my family has been observing Jewish laws and festivals ever since. So if going through a Beit Din would certify me as a Jew, I wouldn't mind. The rabbis were impressed with us. Personally, I felt fulfilled after having gone through the process.

For the installation of Rabbi Gershom Sizomu as the Chief Rabbi of Uganda, many rabbis flew from across the globe for the ceremony; there were people from Ghana, Israel, Ethiopia, Tanzania, America, and so forth. I really did admire Rabbi Gershom; he is such a charismatic and dynamic leader with a good heart, and he is going to be playing a very challenging role in his community and in Africa.

I also attended the Pan African Jewish Alliance meeting and had the pleasure of meeting Rabbi Capers Funnye and other distinguished personalities. The Institute for Jewish & Community Research and PAJA have done quite a lot for the Abayudaya and they hope to do the same with the Nigerian Jewish community, too.

The Sunday before we left Mbale we attended a Hebrew class at the Jewish high school and the Hebrew tutor, an Israeli volunteer, was surprised that Shmuel and I could make a little conversation in Hebrew. The Uganda visit was quite a memorable experience for me and it's still very fresh on my mind. And I came back with a beautifully knitted Abayudaya *kippa* so I would have a piece of the Abayudaya with me here in Nigeria.

The Jewish community here in Nigeria is bigger, with diversity and ethnic and ideological differences. Would a group of rabbis flock here and convert hundreds of Ibos and other Nigerians who have been practicing Judaism for decades? Would that solve the Nigeria Jewish problem?

Nathan Daniel  
Abuja, Nigeria

## Seven Generations of Ancestry

I am writing to introduce and ask you to support my photography and sound project, *Seven Generations*. Through photographs, sound recordings, and video, *Seven Generations* explores a dying Ethiopian Jewish oral history custom while examining the relationships between the elder and younger generations of Ethiopian Jews in Israel. As an artist from this community, my works present a unique perspective on the compelling issues that the Ethiopian community is struggling with.

This project is the focus of my current Six Points Fellowship, a partnership of Avoda Arts, JDub Records, and the Foundation for Jewish Culture, made possible with major funding from UJA-Federation of New York. For more information, please see the synopsis below and visit my website, [www.avishaimekonen.com](http://www.avishaimekonen.com), and the Six Points Fellowship website, [www.sixpointsfellowship.com](http://www.sixpointsfellowship.com).

I am very happy to announce that this project, *Seven Generations*, will have the opportunity to be seen by the public at an upcoming solo exhibition at the Manhattan JCC opening in February 2009.

*Seven Generations* explores the assimilation of the Jewish Ethiopian population in Israel and the loss of traditions integral to their identity. At the crux of the project is the ancient tradition of counting, in which the elders of the community name members of an individual's ancestors back seven generations. It has been practiced mainly by *kessim* (Ethiopian rabbis) and elders for centuries in Ethiopia. This practice continues in Israel, where the Ethiopian Jewish community has relocated in waves since the 1970s and, most dramatically, in 1984 and 1991, when thousands were brought from Sudan and Ethiopia to Israel in undercover airlifts. While the older generations still count, keeping alive the community's past, this aspect of the culture is lost on the youth.

Through the videos, photographs, and sound recordings that comprise *Seven Generations*, I hope to help this endangered practice emerge in contemporary customs. The project is timely, because many of the Ethiopian Jews still practicing counting are beginning to die. The rituals of counting seven generations of ancestry ensure generational continuity and that Ethiopian Jewish history will not be lost.

To help support this project and the exhibition, I am currently offering limited edition prints of the photographs. Please contact me if you are interested in purchasing a photograph and being part of this important project. For a full selection of available prints as well as information on sizes and purchasing, please visit: <http://www.avishaimekonen.com/prints.html>. Your support will help make *Seven Generations* possible!

Avishai Mekonen  
New York, NY

## Samson Wamani Shines in Chicago

I am writing to tell you all what a wonderful experience it was to host Samson Wamani in Chicago for a month of informal medical education, and to thank those of you who contributed in one way or another to his trip or his education/support along the way.

We had set up three weeks' worth of various medical encounters for Samson. Everyone who met him commented to me about his intelligence, curiosity, enthusiasm, warmth, perceptiveness and spirit. One of my friends, for example, is a Harvard-trained pediatrician who had Samson follow her for a day in her private suburban pediatric office. She noted afterwards, "He is so incredibly bright -- he got the big picture right away, on a deep level, and asked extremely important questions, both clinically and administratively."

Samson also rose to the occasion three different times to offer an excellent lecture about primary health care and the HIV/AIDS situation in rural Uganda, which was extremely well-received. He was an

(Continued on page 9)



# A Non-Jew Dreams of Bringing Jewish Studies to India

(Continued from page 7)

shared my vision of establishing Jewish Studies as an academic discipline in Indian universities. It is sad that a secular state like India, which has had a Jewish presence for more than two millennia and still has five Jewish communities, does not have Jewish Studies as an academic discipline, while Islamic Studies is available at all major Indian universities.

Jews in India are politically insignificant because of their miniscule numbers, while the Indian Muslims (13% of India's 1.1 billion people) are the second biggest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia. Hence Indian politicians have feared losing Muslim votes if they introduced Jewish Studies. That is also the primary reason why India did not have diplomatic ties with Israel for 40 years, until the Madrid Conference and the disintegration of the USSR.

It is time for Jewish Studies to be introduced into Indian universities with special emphasis on Indo-Judaica, and that such a center be established, preferably in Lucknow or Delhi, right in the center of the Muslim heartland of India.



Dr. Navras Aafreedi

Such a center could go far in the betterment of Jewish-Muslim relations, eradicating the stereotypes of Jews that exist among Indians in general. (Indians generally know Jews only through secondary sources that are often not fair to them, viz., the press and mass media, literature like the *Merchant of Venice*, and films like *Mr. & Mrs. Iyer*.) While most Indians are absolutely ignorant of Jews and tend to mix them up with Zoroastrians or Christians or Muslims, the Muslim Indians are just as antagonistic to them as the Muslims anywhere else in the world, because their perceptions of Jews are largely based on the misinterpretations of the Qur'anic references to Jews. The center's location

in India's Muslim heartland would make it easily accessible to the Muslims there and help us change their negative perceptions. Also, this center could help to make the Afridi Pashtuns/Pathans there conscious of their putative Israelite roots and stimulating their interest in tracing their probable Israelite ancestry.

## Afridi Pathans

I next spoke at the third-oldest Jewish congregation in America, Mickve Israel in Savannah, Georgia, on the "Theory of the Israelite Origin of Afridi Pashtuns/Pathans." Afridi is one of the biggest, and politically one of the most influential, of the 60 Pashtun/Pathan tribes found in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Afridi were estimated at around 275,000 in 1962, and their present population is about 315,000. This is part of the total Pathan/Pashtun population of 20 million, as estimated in 1986. A sprinkling of Afridi Pashtuns/Pathans is also found in India, in Malihabad and Qayamgan, cities being marketed as international Jewish tourist destinations by Shai Bar Ilan Geographical Tours and Eretz Ahavati Nature Tours of Israel (the first tour to these exotic locations is scheduled for November 2008).

Afridis settled in India mostly between the years 1748 and 1761. Their tradition of Israelite origin finds mention in a number of texts dating from the 10th century till the present day, written by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars alike. Even modern scholars like the Israeli Shalva Weil consider them the "best candidates" for the status of the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. Jewish immigrants from Afghanistan testify to the prevalence of many Jewish rituals and customs among them, viz., the lighting of candles on Shabbat, keeping of long sidelocks, wearing of shawls resembling the *tallith*, circumcision on the eighth day after birth, and Levirate marriage.

## Judaizing Movements in India

The very next day I spoke on Jews and the Judaizing Movements in India. Indian Jewry can be broadly divided into three distinct groups – numerically the largest, the Bene Israel, the smallest, the Cochini, and the last to settle in India, the Baghdadi. Apart from these, two Judaizing movements have emerged in India, the Bnei Menashe in the northeast and the Bnei Ephraim in the south.

## LETTERS (cont.)

animated, confident, and engaging speaker -- flexible, answering questions along the way, but remaining focused on his material. He received extremely high marks on our speaker evaluation forms.

Samson was equally impressive to the non-physician friends he met. He visited several synagogues, was asked (with no preparation) to speak about his community, and did so quite beautifully. He was a magnificent and graceful representative of the Abayudaya in every setting. We look forward to ongoing communication with him in the years ahead.

Elizabeth Feldman, MD  
Chicago, Illinois

## An Ardent Fan

My son, Jacob, turned 4 years old in October. We have exposed him to music from around the world. He used to love Japanese Taiko drums. Then he loved African music. Then, interestingly, The Clash and Pink Floyd!

When I first put on the Abayudaya CD, he loved it. He says it is one of his favorites. He also loved the Abayudaya *kippa* we bought (too big for him, but he still loves it!). He even has one of the postcards of Abayudaya children on his wall in his room. He is excited that I can send a message to the Abayudaya telling them he likes their music.

I only recently learned about the Abayudaya and never realized how fascinated my son would become. But I thought that the Abayudaya would like to know that a small child named Jacob in New York City listens to their singing very often and has a postcard of their children on his wall.

David Michaelson, Brooklyn, NY  
(father of Jacob Willam Michaelson, fan of the Abayudaya)

## Remembering Eugene Adams

Kulanu mourns the sad, sudden loss of **Eugene Adams** of Piermont, NY. Eugene made a generous contribution, with others, to help Abayudaya and Kulanu build the new girls dorm at Semei Kakungulu High School in Uganda. Thanks to this support, economically impoverished Abayudaya girls from remote rural villages 50 miles away will have a safer place to live while getting their education on Nabagoye Hill.

I spent wonderful time with Eugene. He discovered Kulanu through volunteers Gil and Lil Zinn, who invited me to brief him on our projects, and he offered his support. This was Eugene's first involvement in *tikkun olam* work in Africa and he seemed to love it. He told me he wanted to do something to help that would honor his parents and his heritage. It was a privilege to work with him on this mitzvah and I will miss him. We send sincere condolences to his family and may his memory be for a blessing.

Laura Wetzler, Coordinator for Uganda  
Cummington, Massachusetts

# The Kaifeng Stone Inscriptions, by Tiberiu Weisz

A Review by Irwin M. Berg

In a review for the Kulanu newsletter of *The Biblical Origin of the Japanese People* by Joseph Eidelberg, Autumn 2007, I wrote:

*Eidelberg has made a serious error in stating that a small group of (Israelites) reached Kaifeng during the Han Dynasty. (200 BCE - 200 CE). It is generally agreed by scholars who have studied the Jews of Kaifeng that they settled in that city between 960 and 1126 CE.*

Well, Tiberiu Weisz in his book, *The Kaifeng Stone Inscriptions*, is a scholar who, although disagreeing with Eidelberg in significant respects, agrees that Jews first reached China during the Han Dynasty (200 BCE - 200 CE). In an article in *Covenant Magazine*, Weisz expands on this thesis and on his proofs. Indeed, he even goes much further. His analysis of Chinese and Hebrew sources led him to a link between biblical wisdom literature and the Chinese *Annals of the Way and Virtue*, written between 604 and 531 BCE.

In dating the Jews' arrival in Kaifeng, Weisz relies principally on the stone inscriptions made by them. The Jews of Kaifeng engraved their history as well as their beliefs and customs on four stelae, dated 1489, 1512, 1663, and 1679. Bishop Charles White, head of the mission of the Canadian Church of England in China, who lived in Kaifeng for 25 years, described the stelae as grey limestone slabs about five feet in height sitting on a stone base of 20 inches. Bishop White was one of the first scholars to translate the stelae into English. According to Weisz, the Jews had already been in China for 1500 years when the first of the stelae was erected. The impulse to erect the stone after so many years came from a recognition in the community that their Jewish lifestyle was eroding and a fear that an end was near.

Weisz' arguments in support of his assertion that Jews first reached Kaifeng during the Han Dynasty rely upon his reading of the inscriptions. In part, that reading amounts to a different translation and in part to his tracing structures and quotes to ancient Hebrew documents. He traces the last segment of the 1512 inscription to the pre-Yavneh version of the Amidah prayer that was composed by the Great Assembly (c. 500-300 BCE). That older version did not include the benediction against heretics (*birkat haminim*) which was added in the 1st Century CE, after the rise of Christianity.

Some of the inscriptions he simply translates differently from other scholars. The 1489 stone tells the story of a meeting by an Emperor of the Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE) with 70 Jewish families, all of whom have Chinese family names. Weisz, in his translation, has the Emperor say to the 70 Jewish families, "You have returned to my China." Bishop White, Jewish scholar Donald Leslie, and several Chinese scholars have translated the same sentence as "You have come to our China."

Weisz writes that the word "*gui*," which others translated as "come," means "return" in the context of those who at one time had been under Chinese administration but fell under the influence of foreign tribes and then, after the Chinese reassert control over them, willingly reaccept Chinese rule. Weisz places the "return" recited in the 1489 stone as taking place during the reign of Emperor Taizong (976-998 CE), the second emperor of the Northern Song Dynasty.

In further support of a "return," Weisz points to a religious persecution of foreigners in China during the years 841-845 CE that caused many to flee westward. These refugees could have had Chinese names and might have been well acquainted with Chinese culture and the teachings of Confucius. And Emperor Taizong is known to have welcomed back those who fled during the years of persecution. Weisz also points to practice of "kneeling" during worship mentioned in the 1663 stele. According to Weisz, "kneeling" was the mode of Jewish prayer from the time of Ezra the Scribe (c. 450 BCE) until it was prohibited by the rabbis in the Third Century CE.

He also points out a reference in the 1489 stele to Levites and Priests (more about the "Priests" below). Weisz traces the origin of the Kaifeng Jews to a group of Priests (*Kohanim*) and Levites living in Babylonia in the 5th Century BCE who opposed Ezra's decree against inter-marriage and refused to set aside their non-Jewish wives. This group, instead of returning to the land of Israel, left Babylon for India and then migrated to Central Asia. While in Central Asia, they came under the jurisdiction of the Han Dynasty.

In the 1489 stele, the 70 families recite to the Song Emperor that their origin was in India and that they were Levites and "*Wusida*" which Weisz translates as "Priests." While acknowledging that other scholars concluded that the word "*Wusida*" was an honorific title, Weisz says that the word "*Wusida*" has a Persian origin meaning "spiritual leader."

In the light of his new translation of the inscriptions and his distinctive understandings of them, Weisz writes that it is "evident" that the Kaifeng colony of Jews has roots in Babylonian exile. For him, the stelae show that the Kaifeng Jews made efforts to follow biblical commandments but were unaware of the Oral Law. At the same time, the inscriptions showed that the Kaifeng Jews were well versed in Chinese classics and customs as well as Jewish classics and customs and were long assimilated into the Chinese community at the time other scholars believed that they had just arrived in China.

Not mentioned by Weisz are the dozens of hand-written manuscripts left by the Kaifeng Jews in addition to the stone inscriptions. There are known to be 13 Torah scrolls, two Passover *haggadot*, prayer books, and several other documents in Hebrew. The failure to analyze these manuscripts is astonishing since Jewish manuscripts can be dated from the size of the parchment and of the pages, from the shape of the letters and words, from the vocalization and accentuation signs above and below the words, from vowelings of letters, and from the ritual discernable from the manuscripts.

Scholars who have studied the manuscripts of the Kaifeng Jews have noted similarities to the Torah, *haggadot*, and prayer books in use among Iraqi and Persian Jews. Furthermore, if Weisz is correct that "*Wusida*" is a Persian word used in the 1489 stele, then also missing is a discussion dating the use of Persian or Judeo-Persian by Jews in the east and its introduction in Kaifeng.

Lastly, there is the issue whether the stelae are reliable as history. The 1489 stone states that the founder of the Ming Dynasty (1328-1398 CE) donated the land upon which the Kaifeng Jews built their first Temple. All scholars, including Weisz, acknowledge that land was donated by the earlier Song Emperor sometime around 1163 CE. Thus the stele, which is our primary source of knowledge about the origin of Jews of Kaifeng, must be read with caution. Did the Jews in seeking the approval of their sovereign, date the gift of land to a Ming Emperor while that dynasty still ruled over them; and did they date their entry into China to the time of Confucius, China's greatest and most influential philosopher, in an effort to show that they were as Chinese as their neighbors?

Whether Weisz' research is compelling will require a review by a scholar whose knowledge of ancient Chinese classics and Middle Eastern sources and documents equals that of Tiberiu Weisz. This reviewer does not hold himself out to be such a scholar. Still the questions raised in this review are troubling and need to be addressed.

*The Kaifeng Stone Inscriptions* by Tiberiu Weisz, is published by iUniverse, Inc.



# PUBLICATIONS OF NOTE

✍️ **Ariel Sabar's** *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq* has just been published by Algonquin Books. The author grew up in Los Angeles and was not interested in his Kurdish-Jewish heritage until his son was born.

✍️ **Lisa Alcalay Klug**, who describes herself as Ashkefardic, is the author of a new humorous book, *Cool Jew: The Ultimate Guide for Every Member of the Tribe*. It celebrates Jewish cultural pride with assorted short essays, lists, photos, and original illustrations. Klug has informed us that Kulanu is mentioned in the book, which was published in August by Andrews McMeel.

✍️ *Jacob's Legacy: A Genetic View of Jewish History*, by **David B. Goldstein**, was recently published by Yale Univ. Press. The author, a distinguished geneticist, applies genetic methods to the discovery of Jewish origins, including those of the Lemba of Southern Africa.

✍️ Four new books on the Jews in India are available through Amazon.com: *Dropped from Heaven* by **Sophie Judah**, *The Last Jews of Kerala* by **Edna Fernandes**, *The Girl From Foreign: A Search for Shipwrecked Ancestors, Forgotten Histories, and a Sense of Home* by **Sadia Shepard** and *Baghdad to Bombay – In the Kitchens of My Cousins* by **Pearl Sofaer**.

✍️ "An African Homecoming," by **Ruth Eglash**, appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* on October 16. It reported on Carolivia Herron, an African American Jewish convert and retired Harvard University professor of Comparative Literature, who spent two weeks documenting Ethiopian Jews' oral history in Israel. (Her book titled *Always an Olivia* is available at [www.kulanuboutique.com](http://www.kulanuboutique.com).)

✍️ "The Ibos of Nigeria: Members of the Tribe," by **Marc Perelman**, appeared in the October 2 *Forward*. It reports on one of the 30,000 Nigerians who claim Jewish roots. Efraim Uba, a former Pentecostal preacher who convinced his congregation to embrace Judaism, founded the Association of Jewish Faith in 1999 with 20 congregational members.

✍️ The *Smithsonian Magazine* of October 2008 featured **Jeff Wheelwright's** "The Secret Jews of San Luis Valley." It discusses Dr. Ruth Oratz's role in connecting Hispanic women suffering from a certain type of malignant breast cancer common in Ashkenazi Jews with the women's unknown Jewish heritage. Tying this information with rumors of some hidden Jews in New Mexico's San Luis Valley, Hispanics in the area are "coming to grips" with their history.

✍️ The cover of the September 29 *Jerusalem Report* features a photo of Africans dancing and the heading "The New Members of the Tribe – Uganda's Conservative Jews." Inside, **O. Stav Hillel's** article, "Who Is an African Jew?" discusses a two-day beit din that conducted 250 conversions, and Rabbi Gershon Sizomu's installation near Mbale, Uganda. Several visiting American rabbis presided over the events, and leaders of other religions in Uganda participated.

✍️ **Joseph Leichman's** article, "Songs of a Lost Tribe's Longing," appeared in the September 12 *Forward*, describing a new CD produced by Shavei Israel of the music of the Bnei Menashe of northeastern India. Some 7000 are waiting to make Aliya, while 1000 of their friends and relatives have already done so. The CD, titled "Aliya, Aliya," uses Israeli and Indian styles to make the case for their Aliya and to raise funds for their anticipated move to Israel.

✍️ "Found: Ancient Capital of 'Jewish' Kazar Kingdom," by **Ze'ev Ben-Yechiel**, appeared at IsraelNN.com on September 8. It discusses putative findings by a team of Russian archaeologists of the long-lost capital of the Khazar Kingdom in Southern Russia, just above the Caspian Sea. The findings include Khazari huts inside a triangular brick fortress. From the 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Turkic Khazars dominated the Pontic steppe and North Caucasus regions. Some believe that the Khazars embraced Judaism.

✍️ "1000 Jews Cannot Be Wrong," by **Rami Tal**, appeared on Ynet-

news.com on September 1. It reports that there are currently 1000 descendants of Kaifeng Jewry, many of whom are rediscovering their roots, and some of whom are considering formal conversion and making Aliyah. However, according to Michael Freund of Shavei Israel, the Israeli government is ignoring these Jews, possibly to avoid offending China.

✍️ Mirembe Kawomera Coffee was featured in the August 2008 issue of Opra Winfrey's *O Magazine*. "Not Just a Cup, but a Just Cup," by **Charles London**, discusses JJ Keki's interest in bringing peace to the world through his interfaith coffee cooperative in Uganda.

✍️ "Discovering Jewish Jamaica: A Historical Tour," by **Shelly R. Fredman**, appeared in the July 17 *Forward*. It tells of a transplanted American in Jamaica, Dr. Paul Rhodes, and his Jewish cultural tours of Jamaica. Currently 200 Jews live there, and there has been a continuous Jewish presence in the country for 350 years; a Jewish cemetery has graves dating back to the 1500s.

✍️ A July 18 JTA article, "Conservatives To Open African Yeshiva," reports that the Conservative Movement will fund an egalitarian yeshiva near Mbale, Uganda. Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism, and USY International President Adam Berman traveled to Mbale for the dedication by Rabbi Gershon Sizomu. Similarly, the press has taken note of the Beit Din of Conservative rabbis going to Uganda: "Africans Convert in Uganda Ceremony" was published by JTA on July 15. "Wisconsin Rabbi To Aid in Ugandans' Conversion," by **Tom Heinen**, appeared in the July 5 *Journal Sentinel*.

✍️ **Michael Freund's** "Why Is Israel Ignoring China's Jews?" appeared in the July 15 *Jerusalem Post*. Freund notes that the Israeli Government (including its embassy in Beijing) has been ignoring the descendants of the Kaifeng Jewish community, perhaps out of deference to Chinese sensibilities. But, he notes, "Against all odds, Kaifeng's Jews struggled to preserve their Jewish identity

✍️ "Uncovering the fate of Crete's Jews" by **Shulamit Reinharz** appeared in *The Jewish Advocate* of July 3. It reports on the little-known fate of the Jews of Hania, Crete, during World War II. The Jews were rounded up on May 20, 1944, and incarcerated at a local concentration camp. They were then transferred to Iraklion, from where they began sailing to Auschwitz Birkenau, but the boat sank and all the Jews drowned.

✍️ **Nissan Shtrauchker's** "I Now Pronounce You Conned" appeared on Ynet news.com on July 1. It alleges that Ethiopian couples have testified that a scam is occurring whereby, months before the marriage, betrothed couples are assured by Rabbi Yosef Hadana, chief rabbi of the Ethiopian community in Israel, that everything is in place and they could proceed with wedding plans. Then, a few weeks before the elaborately-planned wedding, Hadana finds a problem with the Jewish status of the potential bride or groom. He then refers the couple to Rabbi Shalom Tsadok, of the local council Bnei Ayish, who offers to solve the problem by arranging a fake wedding for the guests on the planned day. He suggests that the fake wedding be officiated by his son, Rabbi Shilo (Shaul) Tsadok for \$900-1200. After the sham wedding and a proper conversion, Hadana can hold a genuine wedding ceremony in his office for an additional fee. Following exposure in the newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*, the three rabbis are facing scrutiny by the Chief Rabbinate and the Attorney General.

✍️ According to **Moirra Schneider's** July 1 JTA article, "Zimbabwe Jews Holding Out," the 320 Jews in Harare and Bulawayo are staying put despite the serious economic and political situation. There is little fear of physical danger, but there is a mood of resignation and despair.

# AMONG MAROONS: Discoveries of Color, Judaism and Slavery

By Shai Fierst

(Excerpts from an article that appeared in *WorldView Magazine*, published by the National Peace Corps Association. The article was dispatched by the author from Paramaribo-Zuid, Suriname, on October 15, 2007.)

I contemplated lying. As a new Peace Corps volunteer, I would be living in a village comprised of descendants of runaway African slaves, called Maroons, within the confines of the Amazon rainforest in Suriname. Who would check my background? In any case, I tried to be honest, but I probably should have lied, even if just a little.

When I arrived in the village, one of the first questions they asked me was whether or not I had a woman. Creativity and instinct failed me in that I did not respond with a description of a wonderfully beautiful fictitious woman. Instead, I said that I was not in a relationship, and had no intention of taking a wife back with me to the States. I explained that I am Jewish, and that my family insists that I marry another Jew.

“We are Jews.”

What?! “I am a different kind of Jew.”

“You are a white Jew and we are black Jews. You do not want to marry a black Jew?”

“It's not like that,” I replied. An awkward silence soon followed, as I failed to explain myself.

When I was invited to serve in Suriname, I knew very little about the country. Minimal research showed me that Suriname is not in Africa or Southeast Asia, but actually in South America. It has a diverse population, an abundance of languages, it was a Dutch colony and an English colony for a period of time, and it has quite a bit of bauxite. I have later been told that 80% of aluminum used by the U.S. in WWII was from Suriname. I also learned that there had been a significant number of Jews living in the country, though their numbers had dwindled in recent times, and that those Jews comprised the oldest continuous Jewish settlement in the Americas. Assuming I had a thorough Jewish education, I wondered why I had not heard the Suriname Jewish history before.

Before I left the States, I read conflicting texts depicting the Jews of Suriname as having laborers or slaves. After arriving, a lecturer on local Suriname history reiterated that the Jews of Suriname had slaves. I assumed that it was just a few isolated incidents. The information did not resonate with me. Historically, I was taught that we Jews were the persecuted, not the persecutors.

The two largest groups of Maroons in Suriname are the Saramaccans and Aukans. I live with the latter, who are also known as Ndjukas. During training and integration into the three Ndjuka communities that I live and work with, I continue to find remnants of the Jews. There are 12 different tribes, or clans, of Ndjukas that formed when they escaped slavery by fleeing into the bush and building communities. One of the twelve tribes is called Dyu (pronounced Jew), and the members of the village that I live in happen to be of the Dyu clan. I do not see people lighting *Shabbat* candles or wearing yarmulkes, but I do find subtle and not-so-subtle connections.

Within my first few months, I visited a village along the river, deeper and more isolated in the rainforest. The village, which sat atop an oasis of white sand, had been interested in having a Peace Corps volunteer. In order to build a relationship and set the stages for contact with our office, I visited with several of the village elders and the head of the women's group. Her last name: Jew.

The more I hear, the more uncomfortable I feel. A widely used derogatory term for the Ndjukas, and actually all Maroons, is *Jewka*, which I am told is a reference to the slaves that disposed of the Jews' excrement. The legacy of the Jews is clearly not limited to the Aukan Maroons. The Saramaccan language is heavily influenced by Portuguese, the apparent effect of Jews who found their way to Suriname

after the Portuguese Inquisition. The first documented slave rebellion in Saramaccan oral history and Dutch written history took place at a Jewish plantation.

The mourning process for Aukans reminds me of the Jewish mourning process of sitting *shiva*. In Jewish custom, we don't celebrate the life of the dead with all-night parties, but they do here and they call it *broko deis*, or break the days. Jews share with them the custom of having visitors, eating well, and not doing work for a given period of time. The mourners in both cultures sit on distinctly low stools and, originally, all Aukan mourners were forbidden to look at mirrors and men forbidden to shave, just like *shiva*.

The day after burial, there is traditional drumming, singing, and dancing all night. On nights like that, I feel as though I am in Africa, not South America. On the eighth day after a person's death, there is once again traditional music, and, additionally, powerful speaker systems are usually brought in to blast contemporary dance music all night long.

Jewish influence also impacts local diet, such as a local traditional food called *pom*. I have been told that the dish, which is especially made by Aukans for the New Year and consists of a grated root mixed with roasted chicken, originates from the Jews and is a form of a Jewish *chulent*. Coincidentally, it is my favorite food in Suriname.

The word *treif* is commonly used in the local languages to indicate a food allergy. Many Aukans say that pig is a *treif* for them because it makes their skin break out into white splotches. A word related to kosher, *kaseri*, is used with less frequency. *Kaseri* indicates the rules of conduct, including diet, one must abide by when undergoing bush medical treatment. The matrilineal head of the village that I live in is a bush doctor. Maroons in Suriname, by the way, are matrilineal societies like the Jews.

Aukan and other Suriname Maroon customs surrounding menstruation also imply a Jewish influence. When a Maroon adult woman “receives moon sickness” she does not enter her home, must not touch men, does not cook, sleeps in a special building with others who are menstruating, and ritually cleanses herself when she “comes outside.”

Regardless of the unnerving information I am accumulating, I try my best to positively represent the United States and my own culture within the United States as a secular Jew, and as a child of the founders of a kibbutz. The villages and I completed a large-scale water project so that the three villages will drink cleaner rain water as opposed to drinking from the local river. When researching the purchasing of the rain-collecting durotanks, I eventually found the main distributor of durotanks in Suriname. When I heard his last name and began negotiating on the phone, I began to wonder. And when we met at his warehouse I found out that he was in fact Jewish and had previously been the president of the local synagogue. We exchanged words in Hebrew, listened to classical music, discussed Israeli politics, and the importance of Shabbat and family. During our conversations we found out that we had the same birthday on the following day. The prices for the durotanks and his help throughout the project ensured its success.

In addition to the water project, I teach English, work at a local boarding school, lead a preschool, promote health, such as HIV/AIDS awareness, and facilitated a women's income-generation cassava mill project. I am trying.

When I leave the bush and am able to go to the capital, Paramaribo, I attend services at the Neve Shalom Synagogue. The other synagogue in Paramaribo, called Zedek Ve Shalom, is now used as an internet café, its furnishings currently located at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. Some of the existing members of the Suriname Jewish community, those who have not left or completely assimilated into the local population, go to synagogue Saturday morning and Friday nights two times a month. They fill a few rows of the majestic synagogue, which one can imagine used to be full of hundreds of Jews observing

(Continued on page 14)



# A Ghanaian Learns in Uganda (cont.)

*(Continued from page 1)*

What I have learned about Rabbi Gershom is that he is a lovely man with the spirit of God, who fears God and is a hard worker towards the service of God. In honor of Rabbi Gershom, I hope all the Jews in Africa will come together as one community.

The rabbis did not come only for the ceremonies, but also to share Torah, Mishna, and religious ideas with the whole community.

The community has done something that is marvelous in the eyes of many people here in Uganda. They have a school that comprises Jews, Muslims, Christians, and other students within the district.

\*\*\*\*\*

The reason why I am here in Uganda is to study and go back to my community and teach. It has been my dream for many years. Studies begin every day after the morning service at the synagogue with Rabbi Gershom and some members of the community. And then I have time to study on my own. We have started with Hebrew. On Shabbat, after the Sabbath service, we all have our lunch and then come back for studies. I am so happy that we have lunch with the whole community,



*Alex Armah*

and that the youth have someone teaching them. The community sometimes divides into two groups, male and female, for study and after that they all come together for discussions

\*\*\*\*\*

I was going around the compound of the community on Friday and I saw some foundations of buildings. I asked about their use and the answer is that they are for the clinic and doctor's bungalow. I could see that the rabbi has a future vision for the community. Later, I saw the rabbi and some of the community members standing near his house. He called me over and told me a community member had passed away, so we are going to the burial. This is my first time to witness burial of a Jew.

\*\*\*\*\*

I still praise the community leader Rabbi Gershom for his good work. Is not this the community that was harassed and sent to prison by its neighbors in years past? Now these are the people giving the nearby towns water to drink.

Yesterday was a day to remember the destruction of the Second Temple. So we fasted on Tisha B'Av. And most of the Jewish students came from Mbale for the morning service. We all sat on the ground, and only the rabbi sat on a low stool. You could see the faith that people have in this Jewish community.

I was so happy to be called to bless the Torah on Shabbat. Many of the things the Abayudaya community does on Shabbat we also do in Ghana. The big difference is that they know more of the Hebrew so they did all the service in Hebrew. They sing in Luganda and Hebrew. The rabbi translates some prayers into English for those who cannot understand Hebrew or Luganda.

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I visited one of J.J.'s coffee farms, behind his house, and it is wonderful work that this man has done. Apart from the coffee, he has also planted banana, which is the food all the people here are used to. He earns money from the sale of the bananas. His father introduced him to farming in his youth. Can you imagine that this busy man has also attached bee-keeping to his farming? I saw something black on top of a tree and he told me it is a bee hive. He has harvested it only once, and got six liters of honey from it. And it is his plan to increase

bee-keeping, but he needs capital to start.

I met some visitors who came from U.S.A., Canada, and France. The one from France was surprised that there is a Jewish community in Ghana.

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Since I came to the community, not a single week goes by that you will not see the leaders of various committees having a meeting in the synagogue or at the library, discussing how to develop the community and how the various projects will help. I am learning from the community leaders and the executive as well. Due to their good work, people are now drinking good water, have good health and have schools as well. When I go back to my community, I am going to work with my leaders to develop our area and move the community forward.

\*\*\*\*\*

I am learning from the Talmud, the Mishna, and the Torah, as well as Hebrew.

Some visitors came to the community and donated sportswear to the high school. They are also helping to construct a football field for the school. The rabbi and the headmaster of the school are now working hard on the field with the contractor.

I am now learning from the Moslems and the Christians in the community how they feel when they are at the Jewish school. I met one of the Christians and he told me that he is happy to be in the school because there is no discrimination there. Now the Jewish people here have created a good relationship with the Christians.

\*\*\*\*\*

On Thursday, I went to see one of the Torah readers, Isaac, and told him I wanted to read the Torah on Shabbat. He then encouraged me and he let me practice with him for about 30 minutes. Then he left me alone to study. I kept on reading till Friday night, when I told the rabbi that I wanted to read from the Torah on Shabbat. The rabbi also encouraged me. On Shabbat, the rabbi read the first and the second parts and then called me and blessed me, and the community also sang a song to welcome me, because this was my first time reading from the Torah scroll. And I was able to read my portion. I know by the time I leave to go back to my community, many things will have changed. I give thanks to my rabbi for giving me encouragement day in and day out. May the Almighty bless him and give him peace.

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## BRIEFS (cont.)

*(Continued from page 5)*

And to the \$100 Club: **Deidre and Craig Berkowitz, Joseph I. Berman, MD, Allison C. Blakley, Dr. Palmer Blakley, Jeanne and Murray Bodin, Harriet Bograd and Kenneth Klein, Ruth Bowman, Fredman Family Charitable Trust III, Drs. Roberta P Glick and Terry Gene Unterman, Jackie Goodman, Frances E. and Dr Michael P. Grossman, Stephen P. Heller, Marietta and Jay Hendorffer, Norma Markell, Sonia R. and Sam Movsas, Marvin and Beth Najberg, Michael Ophir, Barbara K. and Edward Rachlin, Joseph G. Rappaport, Rockdale Temple, Charles E. Scheidt, Julie Shefsky and Chris Froeter, Shomrei Torah Synagogue, Mel Siegel, Rosette W. Tucker, Barbara H. Vinick.**

# Maroons (cont.)

(Continued from page 12)

holidays and spiritedly praying, as small children played with the sand floor and mothers looked on disapprovingly from the balcony. The Jewish community has been incredibly kind to me during my time here, inviting me to become a member of their community from day one. Certain leaders of the congregation are descendants of the Abarbanel family, one of the most esteemed Jewish families from Spain that traces its lineage directly to King David and was forced out of Spain as a result of the Inquisition.

The first Jewish settlers in Suriname arrived in the early 1600s and began life in Torarica, the first capital of Suriname. Torarica, Portuguese meaning "rich Torah," is no longer inhabited, though the name is used by the most prestigious hotel in Paramaribo. Another settlement of Jews was farther up the Suriname River and called Joden Savanne, otherwise known as "Jerusalem by the river-side." Today at Joden Savanne, amidst the bush spilling into the river, a dock and steps lead up to remains of a large red brick synagogue, followed by hills of Jewish graves surrounded by the rain forest. Estimates are that by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Joden Savanne was home to 40 plantations, 600 Jews, and more than 9000 slaves. I wonder if the Jews in Suriname, some of whom were direct descendants of King David, really thought that they had created a new Jerusalem and did not have to wander anymore. The decline of the sugar cane industry, slave rebellions, and a substantial fire all contributed to the end of the Joden Savanne settlement. Members of a nearby Amerindian village now maintain the grounds.

This article barely grazes the surface of the Jewish legacy in Suriname. The Jewish community should be supported with visits, documentation, and funds. Suriname Jews would love for you to become a member of their community and stay at an apartment next to the synagogue; and they will even show you around the country. The Suriname Jews' place in Jewish history must not be forgotten, even if their legacy is controversial. If you are interested in supporting the Jewish community in Suriname, please contact me at shai.fierst@gmail.com.

# Coffee Project (cont.)

(Continued from page 2)

high school in Uganda so that the students can have at least one meal a day. Together we then decided to sell Mirembe Kawomera coffee and give the profit to the Dora Bloch Fund, which helps feed hungry students and support Abayudaya schools. We sold the coffee for a year -- at craft shows, through the internet, interfaith groups, the local Jewish Community Center and to anyone who asked us how my Bat Mitzvah plans were going. Our house smelled like coffee and my parents drank many bags of it. At the end of it I had sold over 660 bags of coffee, raised \$1,300 through coffee sales, and then made another \$1,401 through contributions. Together we have helped to serve countless meals.

I want to thank every single person who bought Mirembe Kawomera coffee from us or gave a donation to the Dora Bloch Fund. Whoever gave should feel very good. This is a great cause. It is an amazing thing that three different religions can come together to create peace. It is important that through Kulanu and the Dora Bloch Fund, we have been able to help feed these teenagers who desperately need nourishment.

I feel great for everything I have done to help. I learned a lot about marketing; it requires a lot of hard work and following through. I learned a lot about having to speak to adults and speak in front of groups, which is not always easy for me. I was so thankful that my parents and sister made this a family project. I know that this money will benefit the students at the Semei Kakungulu High School in the village of Namanyoni. If you would still like to give to this cause, you can send a check payable to Kulanu and earmark it for the Dora Bloch Fund. If you would like to talk to me about this project please Email me at [mouthyana@yahoo.com](mailto:mouthyana@yahoo.com).

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## Searching for Subbotniks in Subcarpathia, Ukraine

By Michael Nosonovsk

The Subcarpathian Rus (Ruthenia) is a region with an unusual history. Populated mostly by Slavic-speaking Rusyns, whose language is similar to both Russian and Ukrainian, the area had belonged to Hungary until the World War I, when it became a part of Czechoslovakia.

In 1945 it was annexed by the Soviet Union and became a part of Soviet Ukraine, known as the Transcarpathian Oblast, and in 1991 it became the most western province of Ukraine, separated from the rest of the country by the Carpathian Mountains.

Prominent Jewish communities, such as Munkatsch (Mukachevo) and Ungwar (Uzhgorod), emerged here in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Much less is known about originally non-Jewish groups converting to Judaism in the region. While the communities of *Gerim* exist in Romania, including neighboring Transylvania, another part of historical Hungary, and in Ukrainian Crimea, little is known about such communities in the Subcarpathian Rus.

During a field trip to the region in August 2008, organized by the Moscow Center for Jewish Studies ("Sefer"), we were informed by the head of the Mukachevo synagogue, Abraham Leybovich, about several Rusyns from neighboring villages who were interested in converting into Judaism. According to Leybovich, there is an entire village with 200 Subbotniks (Observers of the Sabbath). Our informers mentioned

the village of Ilnitsa, a couple of miles from the town of Irshava, as the place where the Subbotniks live.

Visiting the village, however, indicated that local residents call "Subbotniks" Christian Adventists, a congregation counting more than 300 members. According to their leader, Ivan Kapitan, the Adventist community was established in 1912 in the mostly Greek Catholic village by a local resident who served in the Austrian army and got acquainted with the tenets of the Adventism. Several decades later a small group of dissidents with their leader Pilipko broke away from the community, forming today a community of 50-60 members. Our informers insisted that the group is still Christian.

When asked about Subbotniks who do not recognize Jesus, they mentioned a small group of "Jewish" Subbotniks (of Rusyn origin) mostly in the neighboring village of Dishkovitsy. We did not have an opportunity to visit Dishkovitsy and talk to the group, but we interviewed a member of the group who attends services in the Mukachevo synagogue. According to our informants, the Jewish Subbotnik community of Dishkovitsy includes several dozens of families and was formed about 10 years ago. The matter requires further investigation.

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# UGANDA TRIP REPORT (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

conferences as we have been told by Abayudaya women they have developed valuable leadership skills from presenting and speaking for the first time in front of a large group at the women's conferences.

## Micro-Finance Projects

Women leaders are playing an important role in our micro-finance projects, especially farmer Ruth Nabaigwa, the leader in the most remote village of Namutumba. I wish you could hear the stories of how the recipients of these small loans work them into profits that they are able to turn back into feeding their families and planting for next season. It is inspiring to hear the challenges these farmers face and how they overcome them and strategize to get their produce to market at the best time for a good result. These micro-finance projects are doing well as pilot projects but we need your help. Joseph Mubale, who is our coordinator with Naume Sabano, has been expanding his bookkeeping skills through an accounting course and is a wonderful teacher in the community. Kulanu is helping to administer the Independent Development Accounts Growth Through Savings Program created by Ken Schultz, a very longstanding friend of the Abayudaya community, that provides donor matching funds to help coffee co-op farmers learn how savings accounts can help plan for the future. Contact me for more information on how to use micro-finance of small

business to fight poverty. We really need your help.

## Youth Counseling

Mama Rebecca Nantabo is doing a great job in our Mama in the Schools Youth Counseling Program, sponsored by Estelle Friedman Gervis Family Foundation. Two wonderful high school graduates waiting to head off to college are spending the year learning youth counseling skills at a local program and assisting Mama Rebecca. We are very proud of Abayudaya students Susan Sabano and Suzanne Nambi for their dedication to the community. Rachel Namaudosi Keki, who recently completed her college studies in education, is also serving the community as volunteer coordinator working closely with Kulanu to place US volunteers.

Kulanu sponsored an Abayudaya Youth Conference at SK High School that was enormously successful with the kids. Samson Wamani, Mama Rebecca Nantabo, Hedy Cohen, and I facilitated a dialogue on teen sexuality issues, and the students asked very good questions. These rural high school students are struggling with a changing African society of cell phones, computers, and TV in Mbale town and mud huts back in their village. The kids expressed their gratitude for Kulanu Abayudaya programs and the Youth Conference, and especially our school child hunger project feeding students at the two Abayudaya schools.

## SUPPORTER APPLICATION

I/WE SUPPORT KULANU'S WORK. (DONATE ONLINE AT KULANU.ORG OR MAIL CHECK WITH THIS FORM TO KULANU, C/O BOGRAD, 165 WEST END AVE., 3R, NEW YORK, NY 10023)

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**Recycled Paper**

Edited by Karen Primack

## Kulanu

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