

KULANU ACROSS THE GLOBE READINGS

These reading can be used during the service or as part of a discussion. We've selected short pieces that represent different community experiences.

Thank you letter to Kulanu from Rabbi in Madagascar

Shalom Uvrakha to all of you! I'm Rabbi Moshe Yehuda Musan Gilay from Belgium, and it has been two years now that I took the decision to settle here in Madagascar. I'm truly honored to share a few words for the 25th anniversary of Kulanu, your wonderful organization.

When I came here two years ago, I found a community fuelled with Torah and Mitzvot, and you could feel how proud they were to be Jewish, and see how their jewishness infuses their daily lives. There is a teaching in the Talmud that says that one reason of our exile is so that we will bring with us a lot of converts. When I see what the Malagasy Jewish community is becoming and the path they are following, I'm more and more convinced that you took the best decision by opening to them the doors of the Jewish family. If you hadn't decided to be involved with them long ago, it's not an exaggeration to claim that most of them, if not all, would have been lost to Judaism. But you gave them life. What they are is all thanks to you! You believed in them and are supporting them in so various ways, that their gratitude to you is eternal. So, on behalf of all the Malagasy Jewish community, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the care and love you're showing them.

This year, you're celebrating your 25th anniversary. It was at the age of 25 that the Levites had to begin serving God, and through this they were also serving the people. On Elul the 25th began the Creation of the world. And finally, on Kislev the 25th begins Chanukah. The common point between these three events centered on the number 25 is light. One of the tasks of the Kohanim, belonging to the tribe of Levy, was to kindle the Menorah, whose light was reverberated to the outside despite being lit inside the Beit HaMikdash.

Concerning the Creation of the world, the first sentence ushered by God was “Let there be light”. And we know from the Meforshim that we’re speaking of a special, spiritual light. As for Chanukah, its connection with light is obvious.

What I can wish you for your 25th anniversary is that you will receive throughout this year Siyata DiShmaya to kindle more lamps in other remote places of the world, where people longing for Judaism could be found. And may your light continue to give its bright Ad Ki Yavo Shiloh, Bimehera V’Yameinu. Amen, Ken Yehi Ratzon!

[Click here for the PDF.](#)

From Rabbi Scott Glass about the Abayudaya Jewish Community in Uganda

...we rabbis work all our lives to instill Jewish values and practices. We minister to people who are generally secure, educated and comfortable, and we are so often thwarted by just that comfort, safety and enlightenment. Our people are often hard-pressed to see their tradition as something to be treasured and appreciated. And here, in the poorest corner of the world, under the worst conditions, were people who expressed, with simplicity yet with eloquence, their great devotion to God, Torah, Israel, and Shabbat. Nothing I have read, nothing I had heard, could have prepared me for this heartfelt, unquestioning, unwavering faith. There are some who would attribute this to a lack of sophistication, education, and literacy. Nothing can be further from the truth. What we would find is that while there were many, especially among the older Abayudaya, who lacked formal education and some who were illiterate, they were, almost without exception, possessing a keen intelligence, unexpected sophistication and a surprisingly high level of Jewish literacy.

Luganda Four Questions (The local language of the Abayudaya Jewish Community in Uganda)

Ma Nishtana in Luganda

Translated by Gershom Sizomu

Compiled by Murray F. Spiegel and Rickey Stein

Lwakiy ekyiro kyino kyanjawulo kubiro ebilala byonna? Mubiro ebilala byonna tulya emigati emizimbulukuse oba egitali mizimbulukuse; mukyiro kyino tulya emigati egitali mizimbulukuse zokka. Mubiro ebilala byonna tulya enva zonna zonna; mukyiro kyino tulya enva ezikawa zokka. Mubiro ebilala byonna tetukoza omulundi nogumu; mukyiro kyino tukoza emirundi ebiri. Mubiro ebilala byonna tulya tutudde oba nga tweganzise; mukyiro kyino tulya tweganzise.

Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights we may eat either leavened or unleavened bread, but on this night only unleavened bread. On all other nights we may eat any species of herbs, but on this night only bitter herbs. On all other nights we do not dip even once, but on this night we dip twice. On all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night we all recline.

Gershom Sizomu is the spiritual leader of the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda. He founded the Semei Kakungulu High School, Uganda's only Jewish parochial high school. He is an accomplished singer, musician, and songwriter. He is currently studying for rabbinic ordination at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles.

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Kibbutz Galuyot (Gathering of Exiles)

Kibbutz Galuyot -

Gathering of Exiles

The *Kibbutz Galuyot* (gathering of exiles) is the tenth blessing of the Amidah wherein appeal is made to the LORD to return the Jews from the affliction of Galut.



Blessing Ten: Kibbutz Galuyot

תִּקַּע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל לְחֵירוּתֵנוּ וְשֵׂא נֵס לְקַבֵּץ

le-kabbeits neis ve-sa le-chei ru-tei nu ga-dol be-sho-far t-ka'
to gather banner and put for our freedom great the shofar Sound

גְּלִיּוֹתֵינוּ, וְקַבְּצֵנוּ יַחַד מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ.

ha'-arets kan-fot mei-'ar ba' ya-chad ve-ka-be-tsei nu galuy-yo-tei nu
of the earth corners from the four together and gather us our exiles

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה, מְקַבֵּץ נִדְחֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

yis-ra'el 'a-mo mid-chei me-ka-beits Adonai at-tah ba-rukh
Israel of His people the scattered Who regathers Lord are You Blessed

Translation:

Sound the great shofar for our freedom and raise a banner to gather our exiles and unite us together from the four corners of the earth. Blessed are You, LORD, who regathers the scattered of His people Israel.

קִיבוּץ גְּלִיּוֹת:

תִּקַּע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל לְחֵירוּתֵנוּ וְשֵׂא נֵס לְקַבֵּץ

גְּלִיּוֹתֵינוּ, וְקַבְּצֵנוּ יַחַד מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה, מְקַבֵּץ נִדְחֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Click on the image above to view the [original webpage](#).

Your Reflection in my Mirror (Poem by Schulamith Chava Halevy)

By [Schulamith Chava Halevy](#) ([Click here for the Spanish version.](#))

As toward a stranger I was destined to wed

Tentatively I approached —

Hope and trepidation.

I prayed that as in ancient legends

Perhaps we knew each other in a different life.

For long parted souls look not into the future,

But the past.

Our eyes met and immediately we knew

How could we forget!

Six hundred years ago we basked together

In the Spanish golden sun.

We sang the same romances, shared our wine.

In the splendor of Granada

How peacefully we sailed upon the dream

Of harmony and cultures shared,

Of human paradise.

Then the storm hit.

Stunned and confused we ran

And as we fled

Our hands tore apart

And torrential waves

Of people and events

Swept over us.

We lost one another

Five hundred years ago.

We took another step,

My feet still unsure,

The sands so soft and wet still

From the ebbing tide

How dare I look?

I could not know what's left to recognize

In the wreckage

And how to make the leap

Across half a millennium.

But even as our frames held on to solid ground

We could hear the flutter of our souls,

Never minding time or place

They embraced in a flight of fantasy.

Soaring high above the anger and the fears

And all the distances and walls

That five hundred years apart have built

We whirled by new landscapes

Of lives we might have lived,

People whom we might have been.

We wept by one another's sorrows

Gathered flowers in one another's childhood fields.

When it came time for me to go,

I discovered that you

Had polished my spirit into

A brilliant gem

And from each of its myriad facets

You shine

To the farthest reaches of my

Ancestral memory.

When it came time for me to go,

I did not know yet to thank you enough

For the many new lives,

All the joy and the pain

Your courageous voyage gave me

To hold me till we meet again.

Nineteen ninety-three

Five hundred and one years.

Where are you now?

What new stations did you cross

In your lonely pilgrimage?

And did you mend your heart

— I recall the ripping sound, when it overflowed

Above the graveyard

Did it heal soft and large, with room enough for me

That I may always walk with you

(I could not hear your answer when I called).

Five hundred years and one, how is your strength

Do you walk always with your soul

And do you travel in your conscious hours or your sleep?

For stay, we know, our spirits will no more.

Five hundred and one years.

Do you still look for my reflection in your mirror?

Jewish in Africa (Poem by Kokasi Keki)

Poem by Kokasi Keki*

Kintu's family lives in a village called Nangolol

Kintu is a teacher

He is reading

Kintu, he counts the days

When six days pass,

he celebrates Shabbat with his family

Naome, our mum, learning to be a cook and caterer

is cooking matoke on a charcoal stove

Kokasi, the first born, is 11, and in P5 class

He helps his mother carry water from the borehole

Katalima, the second born, is 8, in P2 class

She sweeps the room

Deborah, last born, is soon to be three

and walks in and out of nursery class

Deborah sings songs for Chanukah

Today we are celebrating Chanukah

Today, we are going to light seven candles

Katalima lights the candles

*This poem is the First Prize Winner from the 2002 Kulanu International Competition for Young Writers. The author was 11 when the poem was written.