



Supporting Isolated, Emerging, and Returning Jewish Communities around the Globe

KULANU

“All of Us”

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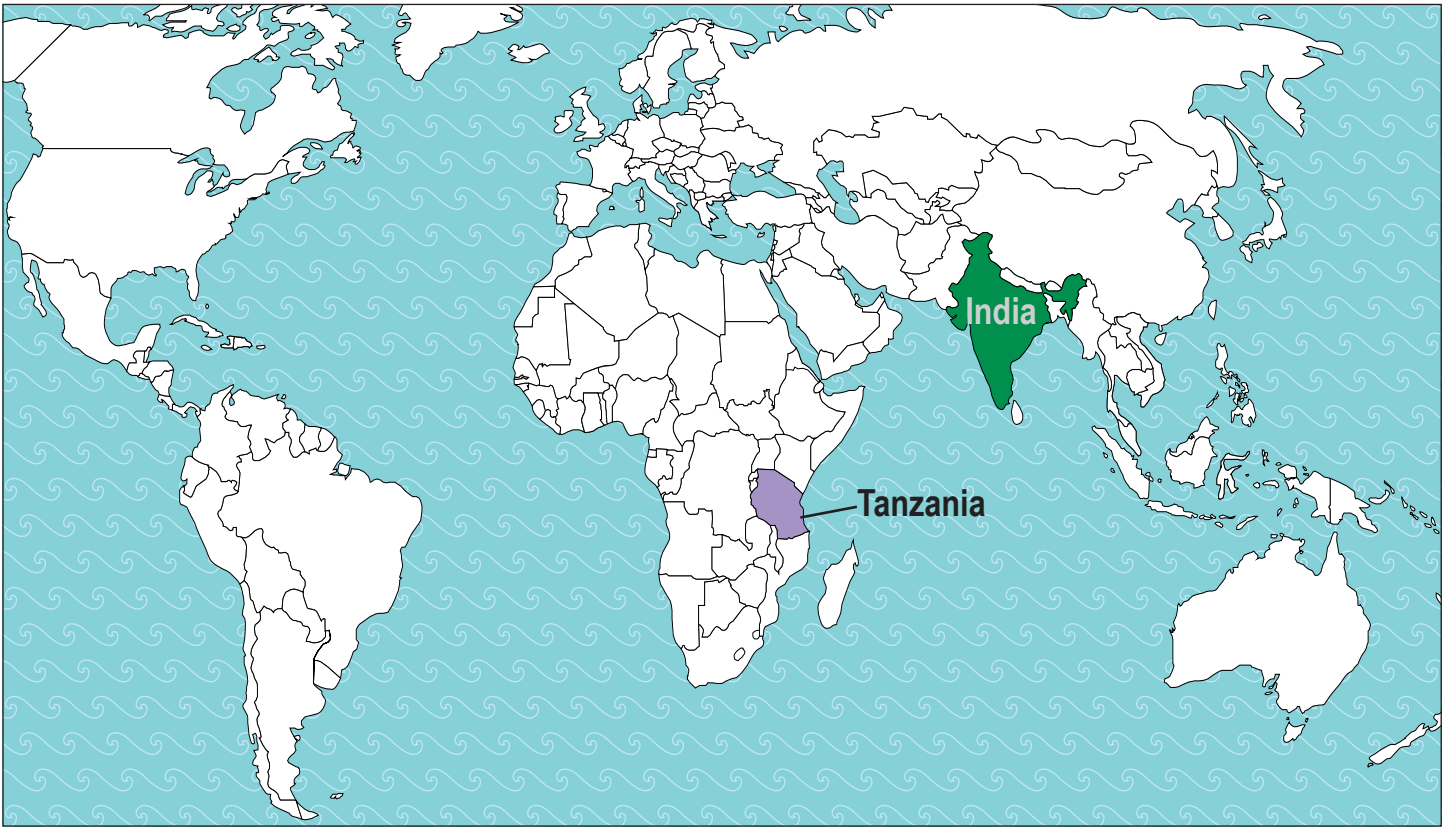
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Karl R. (with his hands in the air) completes his mikveh, and in a moment of great joy, proclaims, “I’m Jewish!” He is joined by Ben-Adam T., lay leader of the Ner Tamid chavurah in Germany (Conversion Class, Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud, Calabria, Italy with Rabbi Barbara Aiello), 2020. (Photo by Domenico Pulice) See story on page 9.



Where in the World is Kulanu in this Issue?

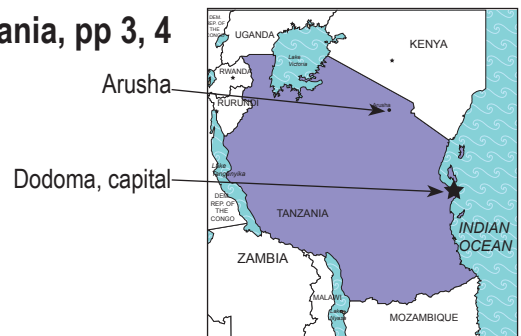
Kulanu is in touch with dozens of communities around the world. If a community contacts us, our first step is always to listen carefully to their needs. Afterwards, we brainstorm, finance, and carry out projects to help them further their study and practice of Judaism and build their communities. This map highlights communities featured in this issue. To see a full list of all our partner communities, visit <https://kulanu.org/communities>.



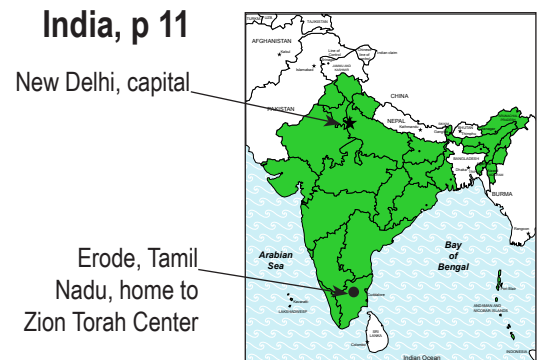
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Found in Tanzania

By Lili Kaufmann

Lili and her husband Barry have been active in the Tampa (Florida) Jewish community for the last 40 years. Lili currently is serving as a committee member of the Jewish Agency for Israel and on the Advisory Board of the Jewish Agency of North America.

When one journeys to Tanzania, it is usually to go on a safari or to go on an expedition to climb the legendary Mount Kilimanjaro — the highest peak in Africa. Indeed, this was my plan in September, 2000.

My journey to Tanzania began in September 2000 after traveling to Turkey and Israel. By the time I arrived in Arusha, Tanzania (after a 7 hour bus ride from Nairobi), I was only looking forward to meeting the group and finally achieving my goal of hiking “the mountain.” Little did I know that I would meet a religious Jewish Tanzanian. Peres Parpaih, a member of the tour company staff, heard me discussing my Israeli travels and was in awe that I was Jewish and had regularly traveled to Israel. He, too, was Jewish!

Peres was a college student at the time, and had aspirations to study law and further his Jewish education. He was of Ethiopian and Yemenite descent and longed to someday travel to Israel, especially because he had/has family there. At the time, he worked as a tour company staff member to support himself through school. He related how challenging it was to be Jewish in an overwhelmingly Christian country and to be fearful of his identity. He had to keep a very secular name to avoid rampant discrimination. He did not ask for financial help, but instead wanted religious items, especially “holy candles.” I truly was amazed at his humility and identity as a Jew.

Indeed, upon my return we sent many Judaic items, including the candles. My husband and I agreed that Peres was someone we should financially help as well, to help him achieve his educational goals. We continued our long-distance connection for many years as he struggled to stay in school and achieve his goals, despite the



Lili and Barry Kaufmann with Peres and Lilian Parpaih and one of their daughters just before the foundation plaque for the synagogue in Arusha was installed in 2016. (Photo courtesy Lili Kaufmann)

financial hardships. He kept us updated on his academic success and I hoped to travel back to be at his law school graduation. Regretfully, I was not able to travel then, but we received many photos of that memorable day. A number of years later, he married Lilian Efrat, an outstanding and capable young Jewish woman who is well-educated and also has her own career. Now they are parents of three beautiful daughters. Together, they have been building and growing the Jewish community in Arusha.

In 2016, my husband and I finally journeyed back to Tanzania. We were overwhelmed by their efforts to work in their careers, raise three children, build a synagogue on their property, and teach Judaism to a growing number of participants. A dedication plaque was placed on the synagogue, honoring and thanking us for our support. We realized how hard Peres worked to fulfill his dreams and goals of living his Jewish heritage and providing for the next generation. A year ago, they traveled to Israel where they reconnected with Yemenite relatives, as their eldest daughter became a bat mitzvah there.

Twenty years ago, the last thing I expected was to find a dedicated Jewish leader-in-the-making in Tanzania. As I read over our correspondence of the past twenty years, I realized that Peres had never wavered in his goals and focus which he had set his mind and heart on. Today, there is a strong and growing community, a result of hard work and a love of Judaism. *Kol HaKavod*, Peres (Yehudah Amir) and Lilian (Efrat)! *

The Jews of Arusha, Tanzania

By Peres Parpaih (also known as Yehudah Amir Kahalani, his Yemenite name), *Moreh* (teacher) of the B'nei Levi community in Tanzania

Israel is closer to East Africa and the Arab world than to any other country. Because of this geographic connection, Jews in Israel can travel by sea to Ethiopia, Yemen, Zanzibar, and Tanzania, and that is exactly what they have been doing for many, many centuries — before any great cities existed in Europe or America (see map page 2). Around the 1800s, there were a good number of Yemenites and Omanis in Tanganyika (now known as Tanzania). Among them were Jews from the cities of Mawza and Sana'a in Yemen, as well as Jews from Ethiopia. In 1942, more than 5,000 Polish refugees, including many Jews, settled in Arusha, Tanzania.



Yehudah Amir Kahalani (Peres Parpaih) with an old hanukkiyah, standing on the roof of Shalem Al Shabazi Mashta Bayit Al Salaa (Knesset). Behind is Mount Meru, January 2020. (Photo by Ari Greenspan)

My grandparents first arrived in Arusha from Zanzibar more than 150 years ago. They traveled to Zanzibar from Sana'a and Mawza as traders, and later entered the mainland seeking kudu (a type of antelope) horns for shofars to be sold to the Yemenite Jews. On this trip, they learned that there were some Moroccan Jews living in Arusha and Luria, and hence decided to stay and continued trading there until the end of World War I.

After the war, some Jews left Tanzania, while others remained. Others left soon after independence was declared in 1961. Those who remained, including the Beta Israel from Ethiopia, were still able to find Jews to marry, but eventually the majority went undercover and practiced Judaism secretly. Some even adopted Maasai (an ethnic group of Kenya and northern Tanzania) names and the language, as well as Arabic names and clothing (which was common in Yemen and Ethiopia). Despite all these changes, they never assimilated or converted, and continued keeping kosher and observing Shabbat and *Brit Milah* (circumcision ceremony). They even maintained the notable tradition of not mixing with women during prayer or shaking the hands of unrelated women. These traditions were transmitted through many, many generations — originating in Mawza, Taiz, and Sana'a in Yemen. Our community before the 1970s mostly used *Nusach* (texts of prayers) *Baladi* (traditional Yemenite) and *Shami* (Syrian Sephardic tradition) of the Yemenite Temani tradition. Nowadays, a few families can still chant in a traditional Tehamani tune. Since no *Baladi* (Teklal) Siddur has ever been translated into Hebrew-English, the



Some of the Bnei Levi Arusha Community with Rabbi Eytan Kenter (4th from right), from Canada 2019. He led a team of 38 to donate a Torah after the community had been in hiding almost 50 years without its most important treasure. The Torah was lost after people suspected to be missionaries attacked the shul in the early 1960s. The community scattered, went into hiding, and practiced secretly. Rabbi Eytan's team brought a Sefer Torah donated by Canadians. (Photo by Peres Parpaih)

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community has slowly adopted the Shami, which is the Sephardic Siddurim. It is 90% similar to our traditional Teklal, but I still prefer ours as it is simple to follow.

Relationships With Organizations Outside Tanzania

Before members of Congregation Kehillat Beth Israel from Ottawa, Canada, came to visit us in 2019 and deliver a Sefer Torah and Jewish ritual items, the only organization that ever was able to contact us was Partners in Torah from the USA in late 2017. The organization arranged for Rabbi Yerachmiel Landy to visit us. He has been studying with us online ever since, and shares his teachings with our community. My father, of blessed memory, was also a Torah teacher, so we inherited much of his teachings. They are mostly based on the teachings of the Rambam, *Moreh* (teacher) Shalom Shabazi, and the Midrash. We had not connected with any other organizations, and we never tried to look for one for security reasons.

On a personal level, for the last 20 years, the Kaufmann family, and Lili in particular, were the only people who stayed in contact with me after we met on Lili's Kilimanjaro trip in 2000. Lili and her husband, Dr. Barry Kaufmann, took great effort in assisting me throughout my education without me even asking. They kept writing to encourage me, and visited us twice.



Some members of the Bnei Levi Arusha Community with Ari Greenspan (to right of Peres), Ari Zivotofsky, and Netanel Kaszovitz (on left), January 2020. (Photo courtesy Ari Greenspan)

They have shown us that they are more than friends — they are a true family that has never left us alone. I cannot list what they did for me in particular, because it is endless. They understood and respected my religious life as inherited from my parents and Mizrahi customs. *[Editor's note: see article from Lili's point of view immediately preceding this one.]*

Despite the challenges of being Jewish, being surrounded by people who sought to destroy our heritage, and all other odds, we never took our difficulties as a negative, but rather as a positive opportunity to help us grow and become stronger. We made great efforts to avoid being known, despite our very active religious practices. We concealed them in secrecy for fear that we might be risking ourselves. Hence, we felt safer when we laid low in all our activities, until one day some friends from Israel warned us that it's even more dangerous to keep on hiding ourselves. We were very careful, particularly around the missionaries who have been trying unsuccessfully to convert us, since they have never been comfortable with us. Interestingly, the Muslims are friendly to us, and we have been protecting and helping each other. Sometimes, we even hold joint meetings. In 2015, the current Tanzanian government came to power, and President John Magufuli publicly announced his love for Israel. He immediately opened an embassy in Tel Aviv, encouraged Israelis to come to Tanzania, and decreed that if there were any Jews in Tanzania, they should be free to practice. From that day, we felt liberated once again, but others are still not convinced and remain in hiding.

Kulanu And the Arusha Yehudim

I was informed about the Kulanu organization by a friend from Israel in 2018, and also by Rabbi Landy, but we didn't have much information about their program and did not make contact. Around the end of 2019, I was told that Kulanu could send religious volunteers to help teach the community. Again I was slow to act since, whenever an opportunity of this kind would

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Jews of Arusha: *continued from previous page*

appear, I would recall my forefathers' teachings: we should not disclose to outsiders our secret of being Jewish without proof of their sincerity and until we meet them in person. This always made me extremely careful not to accept any invitation easily. I finally decided to contact Kulanu, with the aim and objective of connecting with Jewish volunteers to help teach our tiny community and strengthen us.

Baruch HaShem! Upon making contact with Kulanu, we promptly received a response. After answering some questions and submitting forms, I was contacted by Molly Levine and later by Moreh Ari Greenspan. This instinctively told me that yes, I should be free to tell him who we are. By then I realized that we are already known, as

there are some articles on the internet about our community.

We felt a bit insecure, as some members were complaining that we were breaking our fathers' promises and might endanger ourselves. Two Israelis, Zvi and Alon, visited us one Shabbat soon after. One of the community members jokingly said "Our lives were so peaceful when we were unknown." Zvi and Alon responded, "It's too dangerous to be underground and unknown. If something bad happened (G-d forbid) and other Jews did not know of our Jewish existence, it would be a bad experience." Such statements encouraged us and changed our way of thinking, but still we avoided attracting attention.

When Kulanu invited us to become a partner community, we saw an immediate positive impact. In early January 2020 (Jewish year 5780), we were visited by two tzaddik *moris* — great scholars as well as humble, loving, and very kind rabbis. They brought along with them traditional Yemenite Judaica items, flour for matzah, and others items. On top of that, they brought lots of wisdom, guidance, and teachings. Finally, after such a long time, we had kosher chicken as a result of this blessed visit. Since that visit, Moreh Ari Greenspan, Moreh Ari Z. Zivotofsky, and Rabbi Netaniel have kept in constant contact with us, guiding and teaching us, and sharing instructional materials. During this whole COVID-19 challenge in Tanzania, Moreh Greenspan was the only doctor who kept on advising us on what to do and how to protect ourselves as a community, and that has helped us a lot. Thanks to Kulanu, we now know the *moris*, and are very grateful for their help. Another positive impact is the article in Mishpacha Magazine, written by *Morim* (teachers) Greenspan and Zivotofsky (kulanu.org/tanzania). For the first time, we are on the map of the Jewish world. Those who have access to online information are now able to know of our existence. Thanks so much to Kulanu, and thank you Morim Ari and Ari. You have made a great impact by connecting us to our heritage.

*Am Yisrael Chai: The People of Israel Live. **



Bnei Levi Arusha Community, end of daily Shacharit, July 2017. (Photo by Peres Parpaih)



Bnei Levi community in Arusha, September 2020, second night Rosh Hashanah. (Photo by Peres Parpaih)

COVID Won't Stop Us: Online Jewish Learning

By Rebecca Sealfon

About the Author: Rebecca Sealfon is a member of West End Synagogue, a Reconstructionist congregation in New York City. A graduate of Princeton University's Creative Writing program, she has been published in the New York Daily News, Smithsonian magazine, and the Daily Beast.

It has been a very unusual year. Gatherings and trips have been cancelled and people have hunkered down at home. Many Jewish communities have had activities disrupted, if not discontinued. But Kulanu's Jewish learning has not stopped. Through Zoom and WhatsApp, Kulanu has continued its connection to many of the communities it supports all over the world.

Kulanu volunteers have been teaching a variety of courses. Some of these courses have been developed for specific communities, both before COVID-19 struck and some that were developed after the pandemic began. Other courses have been designed so that people from many parts of the world can dial into the same course. Instructors of these publicly-available courses include a bestselling author, a Northwestern University professor, and an ordained rabbi.

One of these instructors is Genie Milgrom, a former Kulanu board member, author, and current Kulanu coordinator for Latin American communities. From her home in Miami, Genie teaches online courses in Spanish about Jewish practice. Among her students are those from El Salvador and Honduras. For a course on *kashrut*, for example, she became certified as a *mashgiach*, a supervisor of kosher status in food service

establishments. Her husband Michael Milgrom, who is also a rabbi, teaches online, mainly in French to students from Africa. The courses are timed to accommodate various time zones.

Genie understood the need for Jewish education from her own experience. Like many of the people she works with, she is a descendant of *conversos* (Jews who converted to Christianity under pressure of the Spanish Inquisition) and overcame hurdles to join the Jewish people as an adult. After extensive research in archives in Spain and Portugal, she became the first person in the world to prove Jewish ancestry through Catholic records. This led to her bestselling book *My 15 Grandmothers*. A sought-after speaker on topics related to conversos, Genie has appeared before the European Union's Parliament and Israel's Knesset. Genie's website (geniemilgrom.info) includes recordings of her past presentations.

Rifka Cook (rifkacook.com) is another of Kulanu's online teachers. A native of Venezuela, she teaches in the department of Spanish and Portuguese at Northwestern University. While Genie Milgrom and her husband teach about traditional Jewish observances, Rifka's focus is secular; her students come from several different branches of Judaism. On Tuesday mornings and Thursday evenings, she teaches Hebrew language -- including conversational Hebrew -- in Spanish. On Sunday mornings, she teaches a special class on Jewish history for children, also in Spanish.

To join Genie Milgrom's or Rifka Cook's Spanish-language courses about Jewish topics or Michael Milgrom's French-language courses about Jewish topics, fill out the contact form on Genie's website.

Other instructors work to meet the needs of only one community. This past summer, Kulanu introduced Lindsay Goldman, a Jewish Theological Seminary rabbinical student, to the Bene Ephraim community of southern India. Lindsay taught Keziya Yacobi, a young woman who is one of the community leaders. Keziya

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Sixty students (men, women, and children) learn Hebrew in Spanish three times a week with Professor Rifka Cook from Chicago. Screen shot of the Zoom class, 2020.

Online Jewish Learning, continued from previous page

was most interested in learning conversational Hebrew and Shabbat observance, and Lindsay followed her lead. In her lessons, Lindsay discussed a variety of traditions, emphasizing that the community could choose a path that differs from “Ashkenormativity” -- the assumption that Ashkenazi Jewish customs from Eastern Europe are default Jewish practice. Judaism is enriched by existing within a variety of cultural contexts. Lindsay has yet to visit the Bene Ephraim in person, and looks forward to doing so post-COVID-19. She aspires not only to continue teaching the community, but also to keep learning from them.

Other “private” lessons have grown out of well-established relationships. Mickey and Mordy (Miriam and Mordecai) Feinberg, of Silver Spring, Maryland, have been traveling to visit and teach the Lemba community of Zimbabwe since they retired several years ago. Mickey, who has a Ph.D. in early childhood education and was an educational administrator, also authored *Torah Talk: An Early Childhood Teaching Guide*. Mordy is a learned teacher of Torah. During their past visits, they have taught children Hebrew songs, Torah stories, and holiday customs. Mordy has introduced some students to Torah tropes (marks for chanting). This past summer, their planned trip to Zimbabwe, which included bringing them a Torah, was cancelled due to COVID-19. Instead, they are teaching relatives of the community’s leader in online sessions. Eleven-year-old Aviv is enthusiastically preparing for his bar mitzvah, learning Torah trope with Mordy’s assistance. Ten-year-old Sophia and

eight-year-old Shlomo are learning the same Torah portion by choice. The Feinbergs describe them as “the most darling, wonderful children,” who are like their grandchildren. “They are smart, sweet, nice, and fun, and eager to learn,” Mickey says.

Some of the online learning began before the pandemic, and has become more central now. Last year, Kulanu provided the Jewish community of Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana with mobile phones. Immediately, the community created text chat groups about Torah, Hebrew, and general community information with the mobile application WhatsApp. Through these groups, volunteers in Israel and Nigeria respectively — Yitzhak Shmuel Dafne and Okumah Yom-Tov — teach this isolated community Torah; the community’s *hazzan* or prayer singer, Shmuel Tetteh, teaches the Hebrew language. Rabbi Eli Courante of Toronto, Canada also connected with the community and answered questions over WhatsApp. At the beginning of the year, he visited the Sefwi Wiawso community and became the first rabbi to teach in person. The WhatsApp groups allowed him to stay connected with the community before and after his visit.

When the pandemic hit, all gatherings in Sefwi Wiawso were cancelled. Christians could not go to church, and weddings and naming ceremonies were put on hold. Because of the WhatsApp groups, though, the Sefwi Wiawso Jewish community already had virtual resources in place. Jewish learning could continue at home in familiar formats.

Technology has already changed the cultural dynamics of world Jewry. Jews and would-be Jews who choose not to migrate to the main Jewish population centers are less isolated. Even through the pandemic, they still connect with Jews an ocean away. The Jewish people’s ability to quickly adapt to one more change of circumstance — the need to physically separate to prevent COVID-19 from spreading — demonstrates the resilience that has sustained us since ancient times. *



Two boys in Guatemala learn Jewish history in a Sunday class for children, 2020. (Photo courtesy Genie Milgrom)

Empowering Partner Communities Through Mini-Grants

By Hannah Lane

Hannah Lane is a communications intern at Kulanu. She is completing her Master of Communication and Media at Rutgers University this fall.

As Kulanu grows, we are always trying to improve the ways in which we support our partner communities. Often, community members will propose ideas for special projects, workshops, or events they would like to run, and need assistance in meeting their goals. Kulanu's newly established mini-grants committee allows our partner communities to receive funding for these types of smaller projects while giving them the ability to coordinate with the organization to ensure their project is a success. Kulanu has budgeted \$20,000 per year for mini-grants, each ranging from \$50 to \$2,000. The mini-grants committee puts the specific needs of each community at the forefront of the organization.

Some of the projects funded this past year have ranged in scope and size from an industrial printer for a youth center in Madagascar, to a conversion program for B'nei Anusim in Calabria, Italy, to shechita knives for practicing kashrut in Uganda! Sarapage Podolsky, the chair of the committee, feels that this new program

establishes a fair system for distributing Kulanu's unrestricted funds to communities across the globe. She explained, "I think it's important we have the committee because it helps us have tracking and visibility as to who is getting what. It makes it more equitable because there is not one community getting \$10,000 and another getting \$50. It means that many groups are able to get funding for the small things that they want. Big projects are separate and have their own system." The funding allocated to the mini-grants committee also allows Kulanu to meet smaller needs of partner communities that often go unnoticed, such as paying customs fees to receive donated items. Sarapage clarified, "People sometimes receive items, such as books or computers, and they need to pay customs. When a donor ships something large, the recipients might not be able to receive it at the post office without a little help."

One recent project that Kulanu funded is a **multi-service center for the Youth Association of the Jewish Malagasy of Madagascar**. The community was looking for a place to connect to the internet, print and copy documents, and produce locally made books for both sale and free distribution. The funding will allow the Jewish Malagasy community to have a space to work on important projects like the translation of classic Jewish books and siddurim and to ultimately strengthen their community.

Another project recently funded by the mini-grants committee was a **three-day workshop in Calabria, Italy** for 14 B'nei Anusim to formally reconnect with their Jewish roots. The program involved individual meetings with the participants and rabbis, a mikveh held in the Mediterranean Sea, and an all-day workshop for those waiting to appear before the bet din.

One workshop participant, Carlo Bloch from Salerno, Italy, always had an inkling of his Jewish heritage. Although he grew up in a Christian



Bet Din members for 2020 conversion in Calabria, Italy lead prayers and blessings prior to immersion: Rabbi Guy Hall (from London, UK), Rabbi Barbara Aiello, and Angela Amato, Bat Anusim and board member of Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud, Calabria, Italy. After the Bet Din oral examinations, candidates gathered at the Mediterranean Sea for their ritual immersion/mikveh. (Photo by Domenico Pulice)

Mini-Grants: *continued from previous page*

home, Bloch saw constant signs of his family's heritage such as his mother's refusal to eat milk and meat together and his family's excitement when fruit was first imported from Israel to Italy. After searching for a community that would embrace his complex upbringing and help him to formally convert to Judaism, Bloch stumbled upon Rabbi Barbara Aiello's program in Calabria. Bloch conveyed his enthusiasm about the program. "It was a beautiful and special experience. We met people from all over the world -- from Italy, Germany, the United States, and more -- who were converted by Rabbi Barbara. For three days, we were totally immersed within this experience, connecting with other Jews by choice who wanted to connect to their roots. It was the first time I held a Torah scroll in my hand." Helping communities run programs like this is at the core of Kulanu's mission and an important reason to receive mini-grant funding.

The process to receive a mini-grant begins when a community member submits a request online (kulanu.org/mini-grants) explaining their



Carlo B. (with Rabbi Barbara of Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud, Calabria, Italy) had just completed his conversion and then read from the Torah for the very first time, 2020. (Photo by Domenico Pulice)

vision for the project or event and why they are excited about it. Communities are encouraged to send their budget for the entire year alongside the request so that Kulanu is aware of the total amount they anticipate needing in the upcoming months. To aid in the process of assembling a budget, the request form includes a teaching video on how to create a budget spreadsheet. Learning the skill of budgeting helps communities to better understand their ongoing financial needs and plan for the future.

After the request is received, the committee meets to discuss whether the project aligns with Kulanu's mission of supporting isolated, emerging, and returning Jewish communities around the world. By having an open discussion, the committee can carefully assess each request and help in bringing each community's unique needs and goals to life. During the discussion process, the committee is in communication with that community's coordinator who can better determine whether the project is realistic and if the amount requested is appropriate. After the event or project is complete, communities are required to submit a short description of the project with stories, challenges and successes, photos, and receipts. This way, communities can help one another by discussing best practices for similar projects. Kulanu is excited about the future of the mini-grants committee and continuing to help our communities create a thriving Jewish life, one small project at a time. *



Above, some items in the printing center for the Youth Association of the Jewish Malagasy of Madagascar, 2020. (Photos by Moshe Yehouda)

Embracing the Joy of Judaism in Erode, India

Text by Judi Klover

Photos by Judi Klover and Moshe Samuel

In the previous Kulanu Magazine, I shared a short summary of my two brief visits in January and March 2020 with the Zion Torah Center community in Erode, Tamil Nadu, India. Join me again here in these pages for another glimpse of some of the people who are part of this committed neighborhood and community. To learn more about the founding of the Zion Torah Center, read “Praying for Zion in Tamil” by Ari Zivotofsky and Ari Greenspan: bit.ly/TamilZion.

When I visited in March 2020, construction had just begun on the community's new synagogue. It was designed by Moshe ben Samuel Devasahayam, son of the community's late founder. Windows are in the shape of the Ten Commandments and the ceiling reflects the 12 Tribes of Israel. Brass oil lamps and hanging diyas (small clay oil lamps traditionally found in India) represent the community's Tamil culture and traditions. On Shabbat, the Torah is decorated with garlands of jasmine and handcrafted fragrant incense sticks are burned to welcome the Shabbat Queen. And as this magazine goes to press, Hanukkah is being celebrated — on a small scale due to Covid — for the first time in the new synagogue. Future plans include building a mikveh and a Jewish library nearby. At the time of this writing, the new *aron kodesh* (holy ark) and the bimah are being built. Moshe told me, “Our goal is to reopen and dedicate our house to all who want to embrace and learn about Judaism. This center was founded by my father, of blessed memory. He longed to host Jews (including backpackers from Israel), and more than a hundred Israelis have visited us so far. We are honored to host them and other Jewish visitors from around the world.”

If you would like to visit or be a Kulanu volunteer in this community, this would be your “home away from home.” You will be warmly welcomed by Moshe, his mom Anne, his sisters, and the entire community.



Photos, top to bottom: ♦ On every Shabbat, the girls of the community, under the direction of Moshe's mom Anne and sister Yerusha, prepare lunch for everyone, March 2020.

♦ After Havdallah, a group photo with Moshe (left), March 2020.

♦ Falmon Jacob saying the kiddush at Shabbat lunch, March 2020.

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Starting to the left and down counter-clockwise:

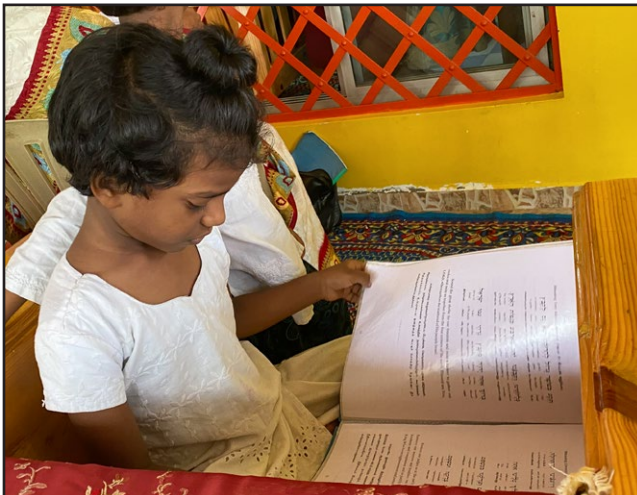
- ♦ Sharing Shabbat lunch, March 2020.
- ♦ Hanukkah 2019: all the diyas (oil lamps) are lit along with the hanukkiah. Those are wicks burning on the bottom diyas.
- ♦ Delivering many Judaica items donated by supporters from Oregon and the east coast of the USA, January 2020.
- ♦ Sam Deyvanayagam shares about the week's Torah portion, March 2020.
- ♦ Two friends after Havdallah, March 2020.
- ♦ Detail of the curtain covering the aron kodesh (holy ark).



Erode, continued from previous page

Clockwise around, starting top right:

- ♦ After Havdallah, Judi and these girls enjoyed playing some games and talking, March 2020.
- ♦ Shabbat Torah service, March 2020.
- ♦ Moshe lighting the first candle of oil for the community's first Hanukkah in the brand new synagogue. The hanukkiah was handmade in memory of Moshe's dad and founder of this community, Samuel Devasahayam, December 2020.
- ♦ First night of Hanukkah, 2020, in the new synagogue. All the diyas are lit, and so is the new hanukkiah!
- ♦ On the first night of Hanukkah, 2020 Rivka lights her hanukkiah.
- ♦ The children have been studying Hebrew and the prayers. Many of them, such as this little girl, can read Hebrew. In her siddur, prayers are in Hebrew and transliterated into Tamil and English. Moshe did most of the work, with some help from his parents. Now, the weekday and Shabbat siddurs and even a machor for Rosh Hashanah have all been transliterated. They are probably the first in the world to be written in Tamil! March 2020.



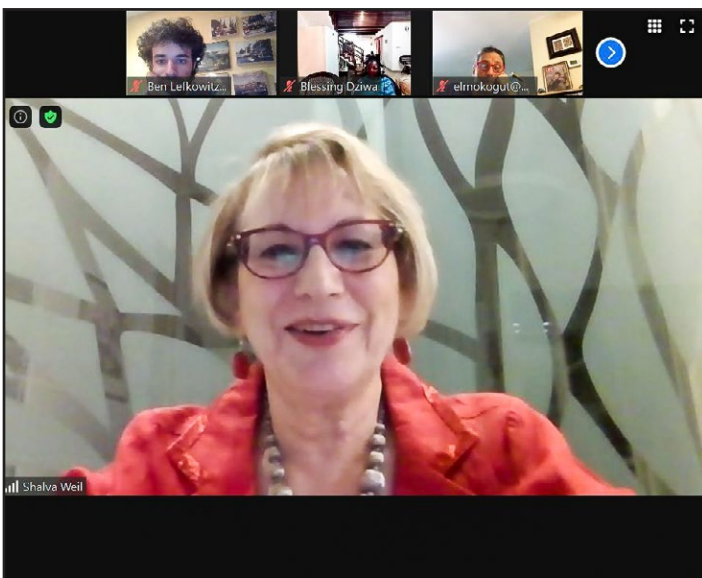
Online Speaker Series: More to Zoom than Meets the Eye

By Bonita Nathan Sussman

Bonita Nathan Sussman is a long-time volunteer with Kulanu and serves as the First Vice President as well as the liaison for Kulanu's new partner communities around the globe, the Kulanu Academic Cohort, and other stakeholder groups and organizations.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Kulanu's leadership, like so many other not-for-profit organizations, wondered if we would be operational next year and still be able to support isolated, emerging, and returning Jewish communities around the globe. Will people who are struggling to stay healthy, and possibly struggling financially, remain interested and connected to Kulanu's mission? Several staff and volunteers began brainstorming various ways for Kulanu to remain meaningful in the lives of our partner communities and supporters.

At that point, I began receiving personal emails to join Zoom sessions on many topics. I learned different cooking techniques, how to spice up my food, listened to various interviews, attended concerts of Yiddish music, and heard a program on Jewish opera stars. I found myself clicking on registration links for organizations I had never known of or thought about. Then came my "aha" moment: Could Kulanu do this too?



Professor Shalva Weil's presentation, "How the Bene Israel of India Became Mainstream," captured the attention of 231 attendees.

At the end of March, Kulanu's leadership met online and committed to creating an online speaker series. We did not fully understand what we were getting into: how to do it technologically, the time commitment involved in designing and marketing the program, finding presenters, setting dates, and what it meant to direct and produce a live show.

It was important to us that we choose representatives from three diverse partner communities to share first-hand perspectives about how their communities had been affected by COVID-19 and how they had been responding. We were moving with lightning speed because we presumed that the lockdown would be short-term and then life would return to normal; we wanted to reach as many people as possible while they were at home, and with a timely topic. Within four days of that initial meeting, we sent an email blast out to our mailing list inviting all to register for our first online speaker series to commence just a few days after Passover.

We began with a focus on the Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud in southern Italy, since Italy was one of the first and most impacted countries in the world. The community's leader and Kulanu's second vice-president, Rabbi Barbara Aiello, is extremely familiar with social media, including YouTube and podcasts. She agreed to speak about how the lockdown had affected her community. We knew we needed a rehearsal, a "dry run," to see how a Zoom presentation would actually work. We discussed when the microphones should be cut off, when there should be close-ups, how to work the chats, how to insert photos, and who would introduce the presenters and ask the questions. It was fairly easy since Rabbi Barbara is experienced with presentations, having done hundreds on her own.

It became more complicated when we featured members of Kulanu communities who had little background in making oral presentations. We developed a format. Harriet Bograd, Kulanu's

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Online Speaker Series, continued from previous page

president, would open the program, welcome viewers, and make introductions. I would often moderate the questions and answers and Harriet would officially close the program with an invitation for viewers to learn more about Kulanu. After the program ended, to get to know participants and increase our community of Kulanu friends, the audience and speakers were invited to remain online and join smaller “breakout” groups for a fifteen minute discussion. We’ve tweaked this process slightly, but basically used it for all of our subsequent Zoom programming later in the summer and fall.

At the end of our first Zoom program, someone asked, “What does Kulanu do?” At the time we were planning the program, we had assumed everyone who registered knew what Kulanu was about. This question made us aware that not everyone knows who we are, so we added a brief introduction to Kulanu which evolved into showing our new one-minute promotional video.

Zoom program invitations continued to fill up my inbox. I signed up for ones with titles that grabbed my attention and created in me *FOMO*, “Fear of Missing Out.” This inspired me to craft engaging programs which illustrated Kulanu’s mission in exciting new ways. Our programs have featured movers and shakers who share our mission. Rabbi Capers Funnye, a Kulanu board member and Chief Rabbi of the International Israelite Board of Rabbis, presented “The History of the Black Jews/Israelites in the U.S. and Africa,” particularly relevant with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. Professor Tudor Parfitt spoke about the conflation of anti-Semitism and anti-Black racism, which he studied and wrote about in his newly published book, *Hybrid Hate*. We were the first to have a video walkthrough of the personal collections of Rabbi Dr. Ari Greenspan who has traversed the globe collecting Judaica for over 30 years. We listened to Professor Shalva Weil, a world-renowned expert on the Jews of India, speak about “Mainstreaming Emerging Communities: The Case of the Bene Israel of India.” Genie Milgrom discussed her best-selling book, *Recipes*



A screenshot of Professor Tudor Parfitt's Zoom presentation on Jews, Blacks, and Race; 197 attendees signed on.

of my 15 Grandmothers: Unique Recipes and Stories from the Times of the Crypto-Jews during the Spanish Inquisition. Recently, Yehudah Kimani presented a virtual tour of his community in the highlands of Kenya, where we visited the synagogue, guest house, and future social hall and kitchen of Kehillat Israel Kenya -- Jewish Congregation of Olkalou. Finally, for our 14th program of the year, we met entrepreneurial women in a program entitled, “Woman Entrepreneurs of Uganda: Sanitary Pads, Soap, Masks, and More.”

The programs have been promoted on all of our social media platforms as well as in articles in Jewish newspapers. Our data shows that we have had 1,725 viewers on Zoom and more than 8,000 views of the recorded programs on Facebook, our web page, and on YouTube after the initial broadcasts. What began as an effort to secure Kulanu’s present and future resulted in one of the largest outreach and development projects that Kulanu has ever undertaken. The series exceeded every expectation that we could have imagined. Old friends reappeared and we were able to see their faces for the first time on Zoom. New friends joined us.

The ripples from each Zoom event have continued to be felt months after each presentation. New possibilities and new relationships have been opened to Kulanu through this successful online speaker series. We look forward to “seeing” everyone soon! *

Kulanu Notes

Kulanu Featured in Rabbis United Video



Kulanu's partner communities are highlighted in the video created by Rabbis United, a division of Stand With Us. The three minute video, entitled "We Are One," shares many perspectives of Jewish people around the world (such as of Rabbi Yonah Bookstein, pictured), including photos and videos from many Kulanu partner communities. You can view the video on their homepage: rabbisunited.com. Evey Rothstein, who led this project, was thrilled with the variety of material offered by leaders from Kulanu communities in response to her request for help.

Kosher Catering in Madagascar

In October, Rabbi Moshe Yehouda and his wife, Sekharah, launched the very first kosher delivery service in Madagascar. People can order full chicken, parts of chicken, chicken patty, falafel burger, and more! It is truly a team effort with Rabbi Moshe doing the shechita, which is the slaughtering process according to Jewish law of kashrut, and his wife salting the chicken and doing the packaging. The rabbi's niece delivers the orders. For the first time since their conversion with Kulanu in 2016, many members of the community are able to eat chicken for their Shabbat meal.



Zimbabwe Agricultural Project Update



Sophia and Shlomo help Grandma harvest kale

The Harare Lemba Synagogue community in Zimbabwe continues to work toward financial independence through agricultural projects both next to the synagogue in Harare and in their partner village of Bedza. The country and the region have experienced two years of drought and there are severe food shortages. However, the irrigation tubing, solar pump installation, and weirs (water reservoirs) previously supported by Kulanu have made it possible to produce crops throughout the year, and even during the 6-month dry period and droughts. Members of the synagogue and other community members worked harmoniously, skillfully,

and diligently to make this happen, and all continue to be grateful for Kulanu's support. The abundant water still seems like a miracle in a country where so many people and animals are suffering from lack of water. Their corn crop was a welcome success after an initial failed potato harvest. There is plenty of room to expand on this progress since only about 10% of their land is currently being farmed with these improved methods.



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Connections Make the Magic Happen



Elana Brody singing in support of the Abayudaya community

Kulanu is a small organization doing big work thanks to many partnerships and connections. Kulanu often works with other Jewish organizations to assist in supporting our partner communities. This year, we've been able to forge stronger relationships with the Commonwealth Jewish Council, the New York Board of Rabbis, the Cantors Assembly (for Coronavirus food relief in Uganda and Kenya), and the Friends of the Beta Israel of North Shewa (Ethiopia). The Cantors Assembly produced a video to benefit our partner community in Uganda, the Abayudaya, which can be viewed here: cantors.org/abayudaya.

The History of Kulanu's Logo

The familiar hands reaching up towards the menorah with the Hebrew letters spelling "Kulanu" in a circle have been used as Kulanu's logo since 2003. The design, created and donated to Kulanu by Judaic artist and educator Avy Ashery, tells the story of the continuation of the Jewish people through the work of Kulanu by choosing to show the menorah of the temple of Jerusalem as the artwork. You can see more of Avy Ashery's work online at asheryartprograms.com. We continue to be grateful for this special donation.



New Kulanu Videos



Set to the song Am Yisrael Chai, sung by the Jewish a cappella group Shir Soul, Kulanu's new introductory video shows photos from over 20 of our partner communities in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. The photos range from celebrating Jewish holidays to everyday life (such as in Nigeria, pictured to the left). The video, featured on our homepage at kulanu.org, runs just over a minute and a half.

Our amazing fall interns have also learned to make appealing videos for speaking events, holidays, and other occasions. The one we posted on YouTube for Simchat Torah received 1,268 views in just a few days! *

An Organizational History of Kulanu

By Ben Lefkowitz

Ben Lefkowitz is a young professional working in Jewish and Israeli policy. A product of the yeshiva day school system, Ben recently graduated from Wesleyan University and is now pursuing a Masters in Public Policy at Harvard University.

Introduction

With 26 years under its belt, Kulanu is not a new organization. However, a quick glance at the magazine archive (which is quite fun to scroll through, actually) says otherwise: Kulanu seems to always be on the verge of some revelation – it seems like, almost every year, a lost tribe, emerging community, or long-lost heritage is discovered. Having recently completed a summer internship with Kulanu, I decided to take a retrospective look at the organization itself over the years. I rummaged through the aforementioned magazine archives and conducted interviews with six key volunteers.

This article is a brief history and retrospective of the organization – how it evolved from 15 people in a living room to the ambassador of Jewish communities across the world to the mainstream Jewish world.



Jack Zeller, Monica Sisay, Diane Zeller, and Beejhy Barhany at a reception for Modreck Maresera as part of the Kulanu-Lemba Speaking Tour in New York City, February 2013. (Photo by Joan Roth)

Kulanu: Beginnings

The endeavor of connecting scattered and isolated communities to the Jewish mainstream is not new; the prophets and sages crafted policy geared towards Jews in far-flung locales.

For example, *Jack Zeller*, one of Kulanu's founders, introduced me to Benjamin of Tudela, a sort of Jewish Marco Polo. In the 19th century, Christian missionaries attempted to identify lost tribes from among their colonial subjects, partly out of New World-inspired religious fervor, and partly as a means of controlling their new subjects. The establishment of the State of Israel generated a great beacon, alerting all world Jewry that a mainstream, established Jewish community exists.

In the decades after Israel's establishment, Jews from Middle Eastern communities -- including Moroccan, Iraqi, Yemeni, Kurdish, and Persian – arrived as refugees to Israel and rejoined with Israeli-European Jewry after millennia of separation (and centuries of limited contact). However, there were still Jewish communities uncontacted, and here and there letters arrived at the Israeli Chief Rabbinate claiming to be from hidden or isolated Jewish communities. Rather than tossing them, the Rabbinate passed all these letters on to an Orthodox Israeli rabbi, Eliyahu Avichail. In 1975, *Rabbi Avichail* founded an organization, Amishav (Hebrew meaning “my people return”), to investigate the letters, claims, and reports. Amishav found incredible success, reconnecting with the Bnei Menashe (a community claiming to be a lost tribe residing in northeast India), as well as *conversos* (descendants of Jews forcibly converted to Christianity during the Inquisition), and the Jews of Kaifeng, China. To expand his support, Rabbi Avichail opened a branch in America: American Friends of Amishav.

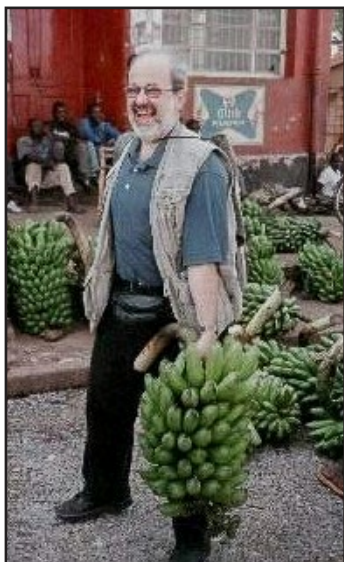
Somehow, Jack Zeller, a clinical pathologist and Jewish activist from Silver Spring, Maryland,

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and his wife, *Diane*, an African Studies scholar, wound up in Rabbi Avichail's house. Jack and Diane were very active in the American Association of Ethiopian Jews, an organization that played a critical role in the return of thousands of Ethiopian Jews to Israel in 1991, and sought to take Jewish outreach further, to more isolated communities. Jack became an integral part of Amishav USA, which was growing with support from Jews of liberal denominations (Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, etc.). Rabbi Avichail worked out of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate, however, and the increasing support from non-orthodox groups made his position precarious. In 1994, he asked Jack to continue Amishav USA's work, and the American group decided to change its name to be more inclusive, choosing Kulanu, which means "all of us."

In the same year, *Karen and Aron Primack*, also from Silver Spring, Maryland, found themselves at a lecture by Rabbi Avichail. The Primacks had lived in Uganda in 1971-72 as cancer researchers, and administered Peace Corps medical offices in Niger in 1991-92. They had seen Africa, but African Jewry was something new, exotic, and exciting.

Kulanu: 1994-2001



Aron Primack walking from the market with matooke, a type of banana grown in Uganda, 2002. (Photo by Karen Primack)

In its first few years, Kulanu was tiny and ad-hoc. About 70 people were signed up when Kulanu got its new name, but about 15 people were actually present for the name change. The Primacks hosted Kulanu events out of their living room, getting about 20-25 people to show up, maybe more if a movie was showing. The Primacks also established two crucial features of Kulanu: a

newsletter (the ancestor of this very magazine) and a website.

Things moved pretty slowly at first, especially before the inception of the website. The Primacks put ads in *Jewish Week* but didn't get much turnout. "We were working on the groups we knew about – Avichail's groups," Karen told me,

"but we were also sitting at our desk, twiddling our thumbs, waiting for what else was out there." Amishav's big focus had been the Bnei Menashe of northeast India and the conversos, and Kulanu didn't yet have its own direction. They had no real means of finding new communities – the communities came to them. According to Karen, "People just climbed out of the woodwork. And this was before the internet, so it was a mystery as to how they found us. But they wrote to us."

The operation itself was also lean, never purchasing an office or phone. "When we started printing the newsletter," Jack told me, "we folded the newsletter on my dining room table. Then we would put the pages into envelopes and we sorted them by zip codes. And then I would take them to a special post office that did bulk mail like that." Everything, from newsletter to community aid to accounting, was done by volunteers. "We wanted to maintain that if you gave us money, it would all be going to the communities," Jack explained.

Kulanu's first project independent of Amishav would be in 1995, with the Abayudaya of Uganda. In 1994, *Matt Meyers*, a junior at Brown



Karen Primack visiting the Abayudaya in Uganda with baby Aaron Schechtman Keki, 2002. (Photo by Aron Primack)

continued on next page

University, attended a synagogue service during his semester abroad in Kenya. The synagogue members were mostly white, but Meyers noticed a few Black Jews. Meyers struck up a conversation and learned that they had driven 14 hours from Uganda. Intrigued, Meyers and a colleague decided to visit the Jews of Uganda. “They were totally astounded,” Karen told me, “and the world hasn’t been the same since.” Meyers had connected with the Abayudaya, a then 75-year-old community of Jews in the heart of Africa, almost completely isolated from the world Jewish community. He had written letters seeking support to 150 Jewish organizations, of which only one responded: Kulanu.

In early 1995, a delegation of Kulanu members, including the Primacks, arrived in Uganda to visit the Abayudaya. The trip – the first-ever delegation of mainstream Jews to the Abayudaya – was an incredible success. The Primacks had seen Uganda, but the idea that an old and completely dedicated Jewish community had been right under their noses the whole time... well, you can read about their response in the summer 1995 Kulanu magazine, entitled “Visiting the Ugandan Miracle,” (bit.ly/summer95).

The success of the Ugandan mission and the slow growth of the internet began to attract more supporters and more contacts from isolated and marginalized Jewish communities. The Zellers and the Primacks were the powerhouses driving the organization: making and utilizing connections, coordinating events and support for communities, guiding expansion, and more. Karen Primack published a book in 1998, *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of*; edited and wrote for the Kulanu newsletter; and made the first recordings of Abayudayan prayer and song. In those years, the focus was on the Abayudaya, conversos in Brazil, and the Bnei Menashe, with hints of the communities in southern India and China appearing in the newsletter.

Kulanu: 2001-2007

As the internet took off, Kulanu saw gradual growth in its membership and partner communities. The biggest change to Kulanu in these years, however, was organizational development.

Harriet Bograd started with Kulanu in June 2001, when she and her husband visited their daughter in Ghana who was volunteering for Kulanu in Sefwi Wiawso’s Jewish community. Watching her daughter teach Ghanaian children, Harriet told me, was quite an experience. “You just never see a group of kids in Hebrew school in the United States quite as excited and involved as these kids were. And I was just so proud of her, and so proud of them, and so glad to be there.”

Harriet happened to be a “professional volunteer” with a degree from Yale Law School and with strong experience in running professional NGOs. She started a Yahoo group and email account for the Jews of Ghana and helped set up a challah-cover business that has since made \$50,000 for the community. Before 2001 was over, Harriet was invited to join the Kulanu board and she became treasurer of the growing organization. She soon took over the database and accounting



Kulanu President Harriet Bograd (in red) and Athalia Nalongo (foreground) dancing at the music and dance festival during a Kulanu Mitzvah Tour to Uganda in January 2012. (Photo by Steve Gray)

continued on next page

system and hired part-time employees, moving the organization's mailing address and main office to her home in New York City. "She had a way of finding very gifted, effective people," Karen told me. Harriet brought organization, professionalism, and dynamism to Kulanu. While volunteers were still the core of Kulanu, a couple of dedicated part-time employees would form an important administrative backbone.

In this period, Kulanu's strongest work was in Africa and with conversos. The highlight of Kulanu's work was with the Abayudaya. Karen arranged for a team of Conservative rabbis to oversee conversions in Uganda in 2002. During that visit, Kulanu members witnessed 300 conversions, seven weddings, and a community lit by joy and celebration. Early focuses of Kulanu, such as the Jews of China and northeast India, remained important but faded from priority. Instead, Kulanu largely left those to other Jewish organizations with special interests in those communities. Some communities gained more attention – the conversos of Portugal and Central America, returning Jews of Poland, and the Igbo Jews of Nigeria. Karen Primack published a second book in 2003, *Under One Canopy: Readings in Jewish Diversity*. However, exercising my power as Kulanu historian, I define this period as one of focus and professionalization, without much growth in the way of new communities.

Kulanu: 2007-2020

The last 13 years, on the other hand, have seen incredible growth in partner communities, supporters, and tools and technology. Part of the change was propelled by two dynamic volunteers: *Bonita and Rabbi Gerald Sussman*. Boni discovered Kulanu in a talk in 2007 by Abayudaya leader Aaron Kintu Moses (of blessed memory). Aaron wrote out Harriet's phone number on a napkin and gave it to Boni. A short time later, the Sussmans were on a plane to rural southern India, a Kulanu volunteer trip that

changed their lives. Having been welcomed into the Bene Ephraim community, they taught classes every night for three weeks covering Shabbat, all the holidays, and life cycle events. They planned

activities around the different holiday celebrations, including making masks for Purim, lighting Hanukkah candles, and baking matzah.

Up until 2007, Kulanu only accepted work with partner communities if there was a dedicated regional coordinator willing to act as a liaison. "I was shocked," Boni told me. "I said, I'll be the coordinator of all these new groups. Just give them to me." With Boni taking on any community that didn't have a volunteer regional coordinator, Kulanu was able to flourish rapidly. In the following years, Boni became Kulanu's First Vice President. She also took the lead on setting up the Kulanu Academic Cohort that tied the academic study of these communities with Kulanu in an official way, and she facilitated conversions in Africa and Latin America.

Moreover, there are several other elements to Kulanu's expansion in this period. Since 2007, Kulanu opened up to many more Jewish organizations, bringing in new sources of support and renown, and spreading its mission to establishment Jewish institutions. Boni now serves as Kulanu's external affairs "ambassador," working on building relationships with other Jewish organizations to introduce and integrate these communities into the worldwide Jewish community.



Bonita Sussman wearing her new Cameroonian dress in Cameroon, 2010. (Photo courtesy of Bonita Sussman)

The expansion of Kulanu's organization saw the creation of grant proposals, personnel, governance, and fundraising committees. In 2008, the board began to expand – a quick perusal of today's Kulanu board will show a list of diverse, active individuals, many of whom are from or represent Kulanu's partner communities.

Internet technology was perhaps one of the biggest changes external to Kulanu's organization. Internet access has not only connected more people to Kulanu, but has also connected more emerging, returning, and isolated Jews to Jewish religion, identity, and each other. The Sussmans shared their in-depth perspectives on this phenomenon and its implications, but for the sake of space, I'll offer only this quote from them: "What the translation of the Christian Bible did for the growth of Christianity, the internet did for the Jewish religion. [Now] you have open access to Jewish ideas in English and Spanish [on the internet]." We are seeing an unanticipated birth and revival of Judaism around the globe.

Kulanu is also no slouch when it comes to technology. "We make sure that each community has some way to communicate, whether it's with a smartphone or laptop or tablet; we make sure they have some kind of internet access through our technology fund," Harriet told me. With the internet and computers, Kulanu's more remote partner communities have access to communication with Kulanu and the worldwide Jewish community; Jewish education and practices; and income opportunities and learning of skills to combat conditions of hardship.

Kulanu has also used technology to expand its message to the mainstream Jewish world. The website was revamped a few years ago, and when the pandemic began, Kulanu began a semi-monthly speaker-series over Zoom. As of this writing, over 1700 individuals participated in the Zoom programs and there were more than 8000 views on Facebook and YouTube. In the last decade, the Zellers retired to Israel and

Karen Primack retired in 2010 after 14 years of magazine editing, but both the Zellers and the Primacks are still active. Harriet now serves as president, with Boni as first vice president and an evolving board. Kulanu's first few communities are still active participants in its mission and are joined by many more. We've also seen the emergence of vibrant Jewish communities in 33 countries, including Guatemala, Pakistan, the Philippines, Brazil, Cameroon, Indonesia, southern India, Madagascar, and Italy. Kulanu has expanded the vision of its founders.

A strong force for change, building stronger Jewish communities across the globe

As we've seen over this 30-year survey, Kulanu has grown a lot – from printing newsletters in a living room to friends and memories on almost every continent (we're still waiting for Jewish penguins in Antarctica). Its new scope, and the 30 years since its founding, has left new questions and challenges to be answered. There's the philosophical ("What does it mean to be Jewish"), the organizational-existential ("Is Kulanu just about supporting Jewish needs, or should it focus as well on economic support and development"), the structural ("What additional staffing and structure are needed for Kulanu to be ready to thrive without relying on current leaders?"), the anthropological ("How can Kulanu avoid acting in a colonialist or imperialist manner?"), and the strategic ("How do we get this person a visa?").



Rabbi Jerry Sussman teaching Serge Etelle in Cameroon how to put on tefillin, 2010. (Photo by Bonita Sussman)

continued on next page

Kulanu History: *continued from previous page*

Another important thing to note is that, for all its recent successes, Kulanu is still mainly dependent on passionate volunteers and patrons. It is critical that Kulanu attract young people to carry out its mission, and new donors to fit with its internal growth (organizational) and external growth (new communities).

I'll end this historical record with one "Jack-Zellerism" (apparently, Dr. Zeller is one of those mythical sources of quotes): "Kulanu is not an empire." I heard this "Zellerism" quite a few times, from quite a few people, and it seems a bit counter-intuitive at first. Kulanu has grown and expanded — not only in terms of organizational structure and capacity, but also in the number of communities with which it works. Kulanu and its partner communities are also beginning to attract attention in the press, in academia, and in Jewish life. *The Forward* has even heralded Kulanu as the key activist in "the New Jewish Diaspora." So is Kulanu an empire?

Exercising my right as a historian, I still say no. Kulanu is not an empire, because it does not have dominant authority. It doesn't assert itself into any community, and has no expectations for them. It doesn't push any denomination or philosophy of Jewishness, and does not push any agenda onto volunteers (who embody an incredible range of Jewish philosophies and denominations). Its mission and purpose, from its founding to now, has been purely to act as a connection, a publicist, and an unjudging benefactor for emerging Jewish communities. It has grown in capacity and prestige and partner communities, but has not altered the way it interacts with them.

The strength of our Kulanu board, staff, supporters, volunteers, and partner communities is not only that each of us has different images and ideas of what is important about Kulanu; it is that we ARE *Kulanu* — all of us — we are many different people working together to bring all of us together. *

Kulanu

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Kulanu ("All of Us") is a tax-exempt organization of Jews of varied backgrounds and practices which works with isolated, emerging, and returning Jewish communities around the globe, supporting them through networking, education, economic development projects, volunteer assignments, research, and publications about their histories and traditions.

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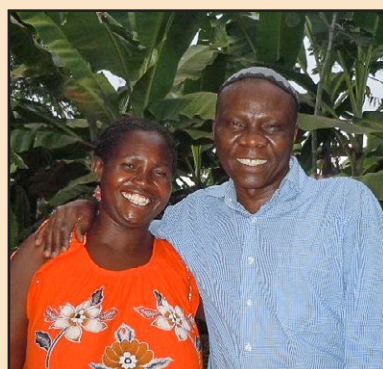
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Aaron Kintu Moses, of blessed memory

We mourn the death of Aaron Kintu Moses, who died on Sept 24, 2020. He was the founding director of Hadassah Primary School in Mbale, Uganda, which he opened in 2001. He was larger than life to his students and the many visitors that came to tour and volunteer, and his warm smile and friendly demeanor made everyone feel welcome in the Jewish day and boarding school, which educated 400 Jewish, Muslim, and Christian students. Over 25 years, Aaron helped thousands of young people gain an education who might not have had that chance. He is survived by his wife, Naume Sabano, and his wonderful children.

Aaron knew each Hadassah student by name and cared deeply about each one of them. His vision, leadership, and dedication to the school and community will be deeply missed.

Please take a moment to view Kulanu's video tribute to Aaron: kulanu.org/akm-tribute.



Photos, clockwise starting upper right:

- ♦ Aaron holding his son, 2012 (Photo by Harriet Bograd)
- ♦ With Harriet & Rachman Nachman, NYC, 2017 (Chaya Weinstein)
- ♦ In New York City with Beverly Koster (left) and Jeanne Bodin (right), Kulanu reception, 2017 (Chaya Weinstein)
- ♦ With Joan Levine & Yehudah Winter, Oregon, 2012 (Lorne Mallin)
- ♦ In the new Sarah Horowitz Memorial Library reading a book, 2017 (Harriet Bograd)
- ♦ Aaron was so proud of the school he founded, 2014. (Yehudah Winter)
- ♦ With his wife Naume Sabano, 2012 (Harriet Bograd)

