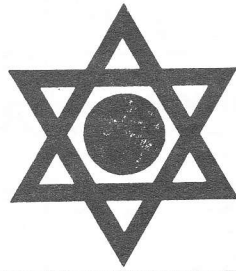


Kulanu

"all of us"



Helping Lost Jewish Communities

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Autumn 1995

Meet the Telugu Jews of India

By Jason L. Francisco

(Editor's note: The author, a documentary photographer, is currently living in Detroit and working on a project covering the American "Rust Belt.")

When I arrived in the villages of rural Andhra Pradesh, in southeastern India, in the summer of 1994 to begin a year of photographing and researching the lives of working families, most people assumed I was an itinerant Christian priest.

Approximately 70 percent of the untouchable communities in coastal Andhra district is Christian, which is to say 30 percent of the entire population. Although the Bible is widely taught, it took me some time to discover the Telugu word for Jews, *yudulu*, which was not a commonly used word anyway. Most people, including the Christians I came to know, had never heard of Judaism, and seemed to think it was a Christian sect. I figured I was probably the only Jew in the state.

(cont., p. 7)



PHOTO BY JASON FRANCISCO

Telugu Jews Moshe Kedari and Abraham Kafthori.

NOVEMBER 20

Prof. Xu To Speak on Chinese Jews

Distinguished Professor of Judaic Studies Xu Xin will speak about the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng at a public gathering at 8 pm on Monday, November 20. The talk, sponsored by Kulanu and Ohr Kodesh Congregation, will take place at Ohr Kodesh at East-West Highway and Freyman Drive in Chevy Chase, MD. Dr. Xu, who is the director of the Center for Judaic Studies at Nanjing University, will include in his talk a discussion of the present generation of Jews in China.

Xu, a non-Jew who has written extensively about various Jewish topics including anti-Semitism, will also speak on Sunday, November 19, at Washington Hebrew Congregation, 3935 Macomb Street, NW, Washington, DC. His topic there will be Jewish diasporas in modern China.

Xu is the author of numerous books and articles, including the newly published *Legends of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng*, published by KTAV. It is co-authored by Prof. Beverly Friend. (See review in this newsletter.) A handsome edition with illustrations, it would make an excellent Chanukah gift. Autographed copies of the book will be on sale at the Ohr Kodesh lecture. (Readers who cannot attend the lecture can order the book through Kulanu. Send a check for \$22 made payable to "Kulanu" for each copy desired.)

Zuber Reports on Peru

Lubovitch Rabbi Mendel Zuber, known to Kulanu readers for his work preparing about 300 Inca Indians in Peru for conversion and *Aliyah*, has joined the ranks of Kulanu's distinguished rabbinic advisors.

Zuber, who lives in Monsey, New York, traveled to the quarterly Kulanu meeting in Northern Virginia in October. One of the purposes of his trip was to alert both Kulanu supporters and officials at the Israeli Embassy about the spiritual needs of those Incans remaining in Peru practicing Judaism under adverse circumstances.

(cont., p. 9)

WHAT IS KULANU?

Kulanu ("all of us") is a tax-exempt organization of American Jews of varied backgrounds and practices dedicated to finding lost and dispersed remnants of the Jewish people and assisting those who wish to return to the Jewish community.

RABBI AVICHAIL REPORTS

Australia and India and Uganda

By Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail

Peace and blessings and all that is pleasant.

In Australia I had about 15 radio appearances and an hour on television, and I gave about 20 lectures. Articles were written in the Jewish and general press. As of today, we have many Australian supporters of our activities.

A *Bet Din* is prepared to travel to India to oversee conversions if the Chief Rabbi approves.

I returned from Australia, and found Kulanu's FAX on the matter of the Abayudaya. Evidently, it was arranged by Providence that I should be at the home of a special person, a Jew named Hershey Worch, who is the Rabbi of Hillel House in Melbourne. The reason for my acquaintance with him and my stay at his home was the Abayudaya. He traveled (to Uganda) after the delegation of Kulanu and conveyed information about them to me. (*His account begins on p. 5.*)

I have known about the Abayudaya over 20 years. A little over a year ago, the *Aguda L'Ma'an HaGer* (Association for the Convert) turned to me on this matter.

I expressed my agreement to the circumstance that if two of the Abayudaya will come to Israel, I will find a program of Jewish study for them and assist them to become converted if they are suitable.

If the Abayudaya want to convert, we must consider exactly how to accomplish this. I must inform you that the conversion process in Israel today is very difficult and complicated. For example, the authorities will not allow a conversion process to begin unless that person has been in Israel at least one year, and permission to stay in Israel for one year is very difficult to obtain ("Catch-22").

Furthermore, as I understand official Israel today (especially the Ministry of Interior) and the social fabric and attitudes of the general public, I suggest that the best course of action is to send a teacher (preferably a married couple) to teach them there for at least one year. This is of course contingent upon the understanding that they want to convert. I do not yet know just how to organize this conversion, but when they do convert I do not think that they should remain in Uganda. At that point they should make Aliyah.

A good year to the members of Kulanu!

(Editor's note: Readers' tax-deductible contributions to Kulanu can be earmarked for Abayudaya education, which could cover sending two members of the community to Israel for study, sending a teacher to Uganda, and/or paying school tuition and expenses for students in Uganda.)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

An Appeal for the Shinlung

As you may know from previous newsletters, the Shinlung Jewish community (the Bnei Menashe) of northeastern India -- who are of Chinese extraction -- never comes to Israel according to the Law of Return. The reason is this: The community is very proud and does not want to be accused of abusing a law that is already criticized as being too generous. This is quite painful since the Shinlung feel awkward whenever they do something which diminishes their historic claim to Jewish origins.

Therefore, the day after Shinlung arrive in Israel they begin work to support themselves, at the same time that they begin absorption and formal training for conversion by the chief rabbinate. It is a remarkable feat when you consider how much money the Jewish Agency (through your federations) spends for absorption centers to the same end.

The one expense that the Shinlung need help with is transportation costs to Israel. **There are now 30 Shinlung who are ready to leave for Israel and there is a \$5000 shortfall in transportation expenses.**

While at earlier times the impediment to their arrival lay with unsympathetic ministries, the current impediment is something WE can easily overcome.

I am asking those in Kulanu who believe in the legitimacy of the Bnei Menashe or Judaism-by-choice (take your pick) to act now to help keep the Chinese Diaspora Aliyah alive.



In Israel, Rabbi Avichail confers with Shinlung immigrant Ophel on the occasion of his son's brit.

High Holy Days Among Spanish Marranos

By Gloria Mound

(The author is executive director of the Institute for Marrano (Anusim) Studies in Israel.)

Five centuries ago, the Days of Awe among the Spanish Marranos were indeed regarded as such by them, but uppermost was FEAR, from being discovered by the Inquisition.

Therefore, the fact that Rosh Hashanah is but 10 days apart from Yom Kippur made most secret communities weigh which of the two festivals was paramount. The fear was to take time off from work twice in such close succession, whatever excuse they wished to make, or if self-employed, to be seen desisting from work first for two consecutive days, and then another day but 10 days later, was for the majority just too risky.

And so in the passage of very few years after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and particularly in the Balearic

KULANU BRIEFS

Next Meeting

The next Kulanu meeting will be held January 28, 1996 at 1 p.m. at the Primack residence in Silver Spring. Call 301-565-3094 for directions. Please mark your calendar now, as there will be no further notice.

Yasher Koach, Lucy!

Dr. Lucy Steinitz, a member of Kulanu's mission to Uganda, did not just write a magnificent cover story about the Abayudaya for the *Baltimore Jewish Times*. She also donated the proceeds -- \$700 -- to Kulanu, to be used on behalf of the Abayudaya.

HELP WANTED!

Kulanu is seeking a rabbi, rabbinic student, or experienced Judaics teacher to spend three or more months living in a Ugandan village among the Abayudaya. The village has no electricity or plumbing and transportation is difficult, but the people are kind, intelligent, and eager to learn more about leading Jewish lives in preparation for formal conversion.

The language used will be English.

Former participants in Peace Corps and similar programs will be particularly prepared; others may face a few surprises. Applicants with a public health, health education, or medical background will be particularly useful.

Cultural sensitivity is imperative.

Kulanu will pay transportation and a modest stipend. The real rewards will be living the adventure of a lifetime, and performing a mitzvah of gigantic and historic proportions! How often does anyone have the chance to make such a tremendous difference in the lives of 500 people?

Interested persons are invited to send a cover letter and resume to the Kulanu office. For further information, call Karen Primack at 301-565-3094 or Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn at 703-370-5191.

Want To Go to Uganda?

We originally thought we would plan another Kulanu mission to visit the Abayudaya in Mbale, Uganda, next summer. But much interest has been expressed in going sooner.

If you might be interested in a trip this winter (late 1995 or early 1996), or in the summer/fall of 1996, please indicate, in

traveling, how long you can be away, what you are able to teach (Judaic subjects and/or agriculture, craft and health subjects), what your Third World travel experience is, and what other sites you would like to include (e.g., African or European side trips). Please send this information to Karen Primack c/o the Kulanu office.

Kulanu is unable to subsidize travel costs. The round-trip airfare from New York to Entebbe ranges from \$1500 to \$2900. Land arrangements, which are relatively inexpensive in Uganda, depend on length of stay and quality of accommodations.

You are also encouraged to visit the Abayudaya on your own any time. They will warmly welcome any American Jewish visitors. Further information is available from the Kulanu office.

Kulanu Slide Show Available

Kulanu has recently assembled a slide show that covers some of the people of most interest to our organization. The slides are of people from India, Mexico, Brazil, Uganda, Portugal and Peru. This project was made possible by a generous donation from Dr. Jules Harris.

If your organization would like to have the slide show presented, please phone our speakers' bureau coordinator, Jonina Duker, at 301-530-2361 (afternoons and evenings only).

Certificates Available

Certificates are available from Kulanu to honor special occasions (birthdays, anniversaries, bar/bat mitzvahs) or in memory of a friend or relative.

These certificates measure 8"x11", are in color, feature a stylized representation of Jerusalem's cityscape, and are *extremely* attractive. They were designed by Jeri Lande.

To order a certificate, please send a minimum \$18 donation to the office, indicating your name, recipient's name and address, and whether it is "in honor of" an occasion or "in memory of" someone.

Film on Caucasian Jewry in Process

A new educational TV documentary is in process. Filmed in Oni, Georgia, a small city in the upper Caucasian Mountains bordering on Chechnia, the film will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Oni's synagogue and the 2600th year of residence of a Jewish community in that area. The documentary will be available for showing at community events beginning in late 1995 or early 1996.

The documentary, which includes interviews with community leaders, residents and government officials, focuses on the past, present and future status of the Jewish community in Oni.

The film is being produced by Documentaries International Film and Video Foundation, a Washington, DC-based foundation which has produced five earlier documentaries dealing with the issue of rescue activities for Jewish fugitives from the Nazis during the Holocaust period.

The Foundation welcomes inquiries about its work and future programs. Contact its president, Sy Rotter, who is also the film's producer, director and writer, at 202-429-9320, FAX 202-659-2667.

Mazel Tov!

Kulanu's youngest supporter, Jared Duker Lichtman, was born on October 12. Mazel Tov to the proud parents, Alan Lichtman and Jonina Duker, Kulanu speakers bureau coordinator.

"Thou shalt surely open thy hand"

This newsletter issue seems to offer more opportunities for giving than most. Your dollars and in-kind donations of prayer books and ritual objects can help isolated Jewish communities -- some of them very poor -- from India to Uganda, from Peru to Ghana. Aside from the end-of-year tax incentive (contributions to Kulanu are tax-deductible), please remember that some of these opportunities may not exist a few years down the road, because these communities may not survive.

"There Is No Merit But in Action"

By Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn

(Editor's note: The author, a Rabbinic Advisor to Kulanu, led Kulanu's mission to Uganda in June. He is associate rabbi at Beth El, a Reform congregation in Alexandria, Virginia.)

Kulanu's visit with the Abayudaya Congregation in Uganda last June continues to be a great success. I say "continues" because the interest it generated has not abated.

Our mission was featured on National Public Radio and Israeli television. Avi V. Stieglitz wrote a story for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that appeared in several Jewish newspapers. An interview of trip participant Irwin Burg appeared in the Hebrew weekly *Maariv America*, referring to a "charming tribe" whose members "know more Hebrew than many Jews in America." The cover and three pages with pictures were devoted to this story. In addition, Karen Primack was interviewed for a story in the *Baltimore City Paper*.

The most exciting coverage has come from the *Baltimore Jewish Times*. Not only did it publish a six-page cover story by Dr. Lucy Steinitz, with eight pictures; it also printed a follow-up letter to the editor by trip participant Janet Kurland and ran a very favorable editorial about the Abayudaya (reprinted on this page)!

As a result, Kulanu has gained a tremendous amount of positive attention. Let us not forget, however, that people have short memories, and that the Abayudaya needs are many. Here are a few suggestions for individuals and groups interested in helping this remarkable community:

(1) **Educational needs.** The Abayudaya chairman wrote to me that there are over 100 orphan children that lack the funds to go to school. It costs \$36 per year to send a child to school. There are also a few Abayudaya who would like to attend university. That will cost about \$2000 per student per year for tuition alone.

(2) **Penpal program.** Irwin Berg is trying to establish a penpal exchange between Abayudaya children and North American Jewish children. We should try to promote this idea in our synagogues and communities.

(3) **Lectures and articles.** We should try to promote the Abayudaya cause by arranging lectures in our synagogues, ICCs and federations,

should also make our rabbis, lay leaders and other Jewish professionals aware. And we should try to bring their story to local and national Jewish publications.

(4) **Travel to Uganda.** Many people have already asked me to lead a second mission to the Abayudaya. I believe that would be very productive, especially if that mission were to be formed of lay and religious leaders who could, upon return, have a greater impact on their local congregations and communities. Even without a group mission, however, knowledgeable Jewish individuals and families willing to give and receive knowledge from the Abayudaya will always be welcome there.

(5) **Fundraising.** It says in the Talmud, "When there is no Torah, there is no flour; and when there is no flour, there is no Torah." In other words, in order to attain our objectives we need money. We encourage the formation of Kulanu "chapters" across the US and around the world to engage in education about and fundraising for the Abayudaya. We hope to produce cassettes of Abayudaya music (settings of Jewish

liturgy to African melodies and rhythms). A few hand-made kippot, knitted by the Abayudaya and their friendly Muslim neighbors, have been sold. Rabbi Hershy Worsch has suggested setting up looms so they may weave *talesim*. The Abayudaya themselves have some ideas, which mainly focus on their local economies, such as setting up a film developing lab.

(6) **Spreading the word.** We should increase our lobbying efforts on their behalf. Make your rabbi, federation executives, friends and family aware of the Abayudaya cause. I also believe we should open contacts with the closest Jewish community to the Abayudaya, in Nairobi, Kenya. They are the ones that could help the most. Perhaps the second Kulanu mission to Uganda should visit and confer with the Nairobi congregation about joining with Kulanu in this endeavor.

I know my list is demanding. Let us remember the saying in *Pirkei Avot*, "It's not incumbent upon you to finish the job, but neither are you free to desist from it." So, let's take upon ourselves doing a little on behalf of our Abayudaya brothers and sisters, who are in so much need.

If You Will It, It Isn't A Dream

Last week's cover story, "Members of the Tribe," was the inspirational tale of the Abayudaya, a community of Ugandans who have been practicing the rituals of Judaism since 1919 and who wish for nothing more than to be formally converted.

Our thoughts turn to these astounding people, brought vividly to life in prose and pictures by Dr. Lucy Y. Steinitz, who spent a Shabbaton with the Abayudaya in June. It was a spiritually enriching encounter for Dr. Steinitz and a traveling party that included two of her colleagues from Jewish Family Services of Central Maryland. She returned to Baltimore praising the Abayudaya's "faith, courage and dignity," in their embrace of Judaism's practice and teachings.

We couldn't help but note the irony. The Abayudaya, oceans away from Jewish museums, libraries and schools, are more Jewishly literate than some American Jews who live around the corner from a synagogue or temple. They hold dear what many here take for granted — or squander.

When the visitors departed the Abayudaya village, the people called out "Send us teachers!" While we can't easily make that happen, it is our hope that area teachers in day school, Sunday schools and after-school programs will consider creating lesson plans around the Abayudaya. And we hope that someone's class will send a



da, or, perhaps, a shipment of used *siddurim* (daily prayer books) or *chumashim* (the five books of Moses).

At a minimum, we hope that children and adults will write words of encouragement to the Abayudaya, in their quest to convert, under the guidance of rabbinic authorities. The Abayudaya can be reached directly at: P.O. Box 225, Mbale, Uganda.

When it came time to leave the Abayudaya, Dr. Steinitz was reminded of one of Theodor Herzl's teachings. "As we waved, I called out to them: 'Im tirzu ain zo, aggadah!' If you will it, it isn't a dream!"

High Holy Days Among Spanish Marranos (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 2)

One of the most thrilling reports of Marranos praying together in secret was reported in the 1930s, when Ezriel Carlebach, editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward* in New York, found himself in the capital of the Balearic Isles, Palma-de-Majorca, on Kol Nidre night. The biggest problem for the American was to convince the Chuetas that he was indeed a Jew, and wished to pray with them. After so many centuries the Chuetas knew almost no Hebrew, but the one common word between them and Carlebach was Adonai. Later, when this had convinced them, Carlebach saw how the prayers, even in Spanish, still had the form and order of the service that so many Jews around the world know.

We are told that the original Kol Nidre prayer was composed by those suffering the Inquisition.

In my visits and studies to the more tolerant smaller Balearic Isles, especially Ibiza and Formentera, the third and more jovial Festival of Succoth, with its pastoral, agricultural emphasis, seems to have been far easier to observe.

To this day, one village has a Fiesta, which is set by the moon's cycle and usually seems to fall on the intermediate days of Succoth. There is a procession around the village, with a proportion of the men dressed in creamy white shawls fringed at the corners. In their arms they carry an exact replica of the *lulav*, but the *etrog* is missing. Another nearby place has a 16th century folk song of how the Jews, Moors and Christians celebrated Fiestas together at the time when, officially, no practicing Jew was allowed to live in Spain!

Here in Israel we are free to observe our festivals, but if our forefathers in times of danger had not somehow remembered and tried to practice, would there still be Jews and a State of Israel? I admit I stand in Awe of their tenacity and faith, and I try to remember them in my own prayers.

(Editor's note: An article by Haim Shapiro in the Jerusalem Post of October 3, 1995, described an ancient secret Yom Kippur ritual still practiced by Marrano families in northern Portugal. Women gather together and braid oil lamp wicks while reciting 73 blessings, possibly corresponding to the number of the names of God. The practice is noted in the Shulhan Aruch. In addition to Belmonte and Oporto, holiday activities were held in Gurada for 600 crypto-Jewish families who live in the Portuguese towns of Fundao, Pinhei, Meda, Traconso, Idanha, Penamacor and Vilarinho dos Galigos, as well as in the Spanish province of Galicia.)

Another Traveler to Uganda

By Rabbi J. Hershy Worch

(Rabbi Worch lives in Caulfield, Victoria, Australia. This article contains excerpts from his writings following his trip to visit the Abayudaya in August.)

It is difficult for me to describe in words without hyperbole my own reaction to their faith and conviction. Here are the remnants of a people, reduced in every way but their indomitable spirit, looking to the world as the last means of preserving the threads of worship and joy in the One God, the Living God, the Jewish God.

"Reduced," I say, because it is not at all clear to me that we are not already too late. Were we to take a *Beth Din* there tomorrow, and were we to educate them in the practice of Judaism, and were we to convert them en masse according to the *Halacha*, can they ever be a viable community of Jews? They are already so reduced in number, so reduced in means and circumstances.

The Jews of Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula may indeed have been poor, but they had a Jewish culture nearly 3000 years old. Rabbis, *yeshivot*, traditions and infrastructure. Scribes, *dayanim*, *chazanim*, *paytanim*, makers of *tefillin* and parchment, *shochtim*, *cheder rebbes* and all the accoutrements of a Jewish society designed to last until the coming of the Messiah.

Semei Kakungulu, who died in 1928, has left the Abayudaya with 20 acre plots of arable earth, scattered hither and thither in Mbale district, and the vision of a glorious ideal, Judaism. For the awareness of the existence of these people to have manifest and registered itself in our consciousness the way it has done, they have already had to travel an immense distance.

The long and short of their story is this:

They are ready to die for the sole reward of being Jewish.

They are willing to die out rather than intermarry with their neighbors.

They are ready to let go of all they have received in the oral tradition of their own elders in order to be accepted into the Family of the Jewish people.

According to the *Halacha* as it is understood and administered today, if a group of people considers itself Jewish and is willing to die for this belief, even though they are not

The Abayudaya have a uniquely African culture of music, food and clothing. They have a very fragile clan network based upon family ties and leadership hierarchies. It would be cruel and ill-advised to threaten their existence by removing the youngest and fittest, or interrupting their lives in any major way. To introduce someone into their community as teacher and guide, who is insensitive to the beauty and fragility of the Abayudaya tradition would be an ever bigger crime.

The first and most important job is to provide the Abayudaya with means to improve their health, living standards and comfort level, as well as to create their own wealth....

* * * * *

For days we had talked of the *mikveh*. How many cubic yards of earth would need moving? What type of brick might be used to line the pit? How best to cover the finished *mikveh* and how to capture the rainwater?

This is rural Uganda, bricks are made from the wet clay earth you walk on. Air-dried beneath banana leaves in the sun, then stacked in kiln-shaped piles, they are fired in the open air. Families gather to chop firewood and make bricks. Fathers and sons squat for tedious days and nights, stoking and tending, coughing by turns and dreaming of their brick-house. The outside layer of bricks rarely survives the firing process, the rains will come and they will be reduced first to mud and then to the red dusts of Africa. Bricks from the center of the stack may have those properties we, in developed countries, associate with building bricks. They will have been adequately baked. Most, though, will not carry much weight before crumbling, decaying rapidly in water.

The Bayudaya village at Gangama sits on a hill. Drilling down, through to the water-table might involve 50, perhaps more, meters of boring at \$50 to \$80 a meter, perhaps more.

If the *mikveh* is to be one of stagnant water, how would hygienic standards be maintained? In a village without running water, what bathing facilities could be realistically designed alongside the *mikveh*, that might prevent contamination? How many pits would have to be dug?

The more we talked about these problems, the more complex, difficult and unattainable appeared their solution. They understand exactly what are the ramifications of having a kosher *mikveh*, and how impossible it will be to achieve recognition as a Jewish community without one. They had only

BOOK COMMENT

Semei Kakungulu, Jewish Warrior?

Kakungulu and the Creation of Uganda by Michael Twaddle, Ohio University Press (1993).

By Irwin M. Berg

(Berg, a New York attorney, participated in Kulanu's mission to Uganda in June.)

I first heard of Semei Kakungulu when reading the Kulanu newsletter of Winter 1994-95, which described him as a "local warrior and governor" who "studied and meditated on the Old Testament, adopted the observance of all Moses' commandments, including circumcision, and suggested this observance (for) all his (formerly Christian) followers." As a student of Jewish history, I knew that such a person was rare -- although not unknown -- and I was much intrigued.

This summer I visited the Abayudaya -- the descendants of the followers of Semei Kakungulu who adopted Moses' laws as a way of life. I met and spoke to Africans who are passionate about their commitment to Judaism, and I also met two descendants of Kakungulu. My interest in this "local warrior and governor" soared.

After learning that a book had been written about Kakungulu, I purchased a copy at a book store in Kampala, Uganda. Later, I saw the same book being offered for sale at the airport bookstore in Entebbe. Before I read the first page, I knew that Kakungulu was an important and famous, as well as a unique, person.

I have no background in Ugandan political or religious history. Therefore, this article cannot be a critique or even a review of Michael Twaddle's book. Nor is this a summary of that book because the author was primarily interested in Kakungulu's contribution to the creation of Uganda. This article reflects my interest -- the historic, social and religious forces as developed by Twaddle which induced Kakungulu to lead a Jewish life and to create a community of followers to carry on after his death.

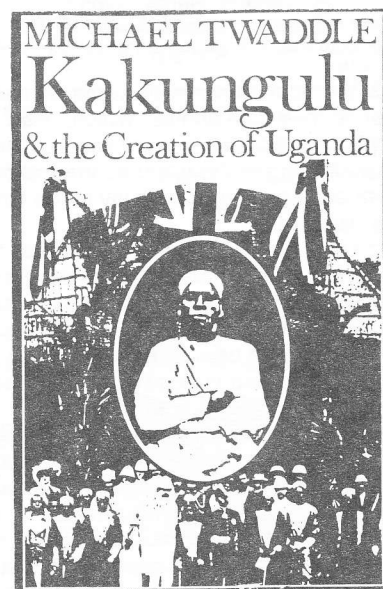
Kakungulu (1869-1928) was a warrior and statesman of the powerful Baganda tribe. During the 1880's he was converted to Christianity by a Protestant missionary who taught him how to read the Bible in Swahili. Because he commanded many warriors, because of his connections to the Bugandan court and because he was a Protestant, the British gave Kakungulu their support. He responded by conquering and bringing under the British sphere of influence two areas outside of the Bugandan Empire, Bukedi and Busoga. These areas were between the Nile River's source in Lake Victoria and Mt. Elgon on the Kenyan border.

Kakungulu believed that the British would allow him to become the king of Bukedi and Busoga, but the British preferred to rule these areas through civil servants in their pay and under their control. The British limited Kakungulu to a 20-square-mile area in and around what has now become Mbale, Uganda. The people who inhabited this area were of the Bagesu tribe -- rivals to Baganda. Nevertheless, Kakungulu, with the help of his Baganda followers -- although much reduced in numbers -- was able to maintain control so long as he received British support.

Beginning about 1900, a slow but continuous mutual disenchantment arose between Kakungulu and the British. In 1913, Kakungulu became a Malakite Christian. This was a movement described by the British as a "cult" which was "a mixture of Judaism, Christianity and Christian Science." Many who joined the religion of Malaki where Kakungulu was in control were Baganda.

While a Malakite, Kakungulu came to the conclusion that the Christian missionaries were not reading the Bible correctly. He pointed out that the Europeans disregarded the real Sabbath, which was Saturday, not Sunday. As proof, he cited that Jesus was buried on Friday before the Sabbath, and his mother and his disciples did not visit the tomb on the following day because it was the Sabbath, but waited until Sunday.

Under pressure from the British, who wished to limit his holdings, Kakungulu, in 1917, moved his principal residence a short distance further from Mbale into the western foothills of Mt. Elgon to a place called Gangama. It was there that he started a separatist sect initially known as Kibina Kya Bayudaya Absesiga Katonda (the Community of Jews who trust in the Lord). Recruitment into this Bayudaya community came almost exclusively from what remained of Kakungulu's Baganda following.



The Bible, as a result of the teachings of the missionaries, was held in high regard among the Christians of Uganda. The missionaries had stressed the truth of the Bible by declaring that it came not from the Europeans but from an alien race, the Jews. The purpose of the missionaries was to impress upon the Africans that the Europeans too had found truth from a foreign race. But because of this emphasis, the customs and manners of the Jews became of great interest to Kakungulu's followers. In Michael Twaddle's opinion, Kakungulu's conversion to Malakite Christianity was caused by his disappointment with his treatment by the British authorities, but his subsequent formation of the Abayudaya community was principally the result of his closer reading of the Bible.

Meet the Telugu Jews of India (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 1)

When a friend informed me after several months that a Jewish family was living nearby, I attributed it to communication difficulties. **I was shocked when I was greeted with a hearty "shalom" and found a mezuzah on the door of the family's house. I was introduced to the world of a tiny Jewish community which makes up in effort and desire what it lacks in certainty about its destiny.**

Shmuel Yakobi, currently living in the city of Vijayawada, is one of six children of an "untouchable" family. His father was able to enlist himself in the Indian Army during the Second World War, to acquire an education and after the war to find work as a schoolteacher. For generations his family, like virtually all untouchables, worked as farm laborers, sometimes as bonded laborers.

The family had practiced Christianity for several generations, and when Shmuel Yakobi, the oldest, received an education, he decided to become a Christian preacher, which afforded training in English (the language of the Indian ruling classes), as well as a good salary. As his career progressed, he felt a growing disaffection socially and spiritually with his Christian world. **In the early 1980s, while still a preacher, he made a trip to Jerusalem, where he encountered Judaism for the first time. He recognized the Jewish people intuitively as his own, and returned to India intent on leaving Christianity and living as a Jew.**

Shmuel Yakobi in time convinced his siblings and approximately 30 families in his home village of Kottareddipalem, near Chebrolu, Guntur District, to join him in living as Jews. His two brothers, Sadok and Aaron, became leaders with him in the community. **The brothers studied and taught Torah, and began to teach themselves Hebrew with materials Shmuel Yakobi brought from Israel.** In two subsequent trips to Israel, Yakobi acquired a beginning knowledge of Jewish customs and prayer.

For economic reasons Yakobi's formal break with Christianity was long. His financial connections were critical to the building of the community's synagogue in Kottareddipalem, The House of the Children of Jakob, which opened in 1992. He also founded an independent open university offering correspondence courses in Torah and Hebraic Studies. Calling the community the Council of Eastern Jewry, Yakobi slowly began to navigate what he calls the lost history of Jews in south India.

He believes that Jews migrated from northern India, perhaps Afghanistan or the North-East Frontier region (Manipur, Mizoram) sometime during the 9th or 10th centuries C.E., and settled around the area of Nandial in what were at that time nascent Telugu-speaking areas. He claims currently to be writing a comparative philological study of Hebrew and Telugu, which argues that Hebrew is the unrecognized source of many words in proto-Telugu, the still-unreconstructed Dravidian language that anteceded Sanskritic influences. Yakobi also claims that Telugu Jews for centuries formed a distinct *kulam* (birth-marriage-occupation group, or as it is often poorly termed, caste). They maintained, he says, distinct customs, eating habits, occupations, and literacy in Hebrew. He is currently unsuccessfully appealing to the Archeological Survey of India to fund investigation.

To the rest of Hindu society, the Telugu Jews, if they did exist historically, were grouped with outcasts, and associated particularly with the Madiga community of untouchables. Thus the community was assimilated into Christianity when colonial missionaries reached the Telugu areas during the British period. Why the community might have been assimilated precisely then, after so many centuries, remains an important question. One provisional answer might be as follows (according to my own reasoning):

and widely produced a feudalization of agrarian relations. Such pressure has in many respects not subsided, and it is clear today that poor rural Indians need material and financial relief wherever they can get it. Well-funded and eager Christian missionary groups happily service desperation across India, building homes and schools in exchange for a pledge of loyalty. It seems possible that sheer economic need broke apart a 19th century Telugu Jewish community, driving many of its members to embrace Christianity, along with millions of other poor Indians. However, this remains to be determined.

Is the community actually the progeny of the Lost Tribe of Ephraim, as Shmuel Yakobi believes? I was shown no Hebrew Torah or distinctively Jewish ritual objects, and am under the impression that these have not survived. Neither was I shown genealogies. Most of the artifactual evidence of the community's history seems to be in the form of folklore, sometimes scraps of folklore, and perhaps linguistic analysis.

My own opinion is that the importance of the community for world Jewry lies not in its history, which cannot be documented. Rather, its importance lies in the spiritual and ethical practice it has developed, which is, to me, within Jewish tradition. Moreover, by being Jews this community challenges other Jews to honor their own Jewish commitments.

Telugu Jews are unquestionably among the poorest Jews in the world. Like other rural Indian untouchables who depend on farm labor for a living, most of the families survive on less than \$300 per year, lack access to the most rudimentary health care, lack housing adequate to the seasons, lack balanced nutrition, are easily driven into debt at interest rates as high as 120 percent, from which they never emerge, and become subject to the harassment of thugs and collectors.

I believe that their spiritual efforts, given these pressures, prove central to their lives. Their Judaism is virtually devoid of Talmudic and rabbinic influences. Rather, it focuses on God's power and commitment to His people, and on the ethical imperatives of the Prophets. **The community cherishes the Biblical account of the Exodus, and identifies deeply, I would say ardently, with its promise of liberation.** This promise forms the backbone of the community's spiritual life; in group and individual prayer these Jews plead to God for it, demand their right to it, thank God for it, and struggle to be patient for it. For them, the living God delivers signs and responses to their prayers daily, in small ways. Sadok Yakobi, the resident leader of the community, whom the community supports with weekly donations, spends his days moving from hut to hut leading prayer and giving support. Though neither a preacher nor a healer, he tells many stories of having witnessed miraculous healing, as well as small, inexplicable changes of fortune, which he and the community attribute to God's direct intervention. **Sadok is convinced that the power of the community's prayer and the faithfulness of the God committed to them are responsible for their survival under otherwise insufferable conditions.**

The community distinguishes itself from its Christian neighbors by keeping the Sabbath and major Jewish holidays, and following Jewish dietary laws. (Keeping the Sabbath is no mean feat: landlords and factory owners continuously threaten to fire Jewish workers for not working a seven-day week). The more learned members of the community are engaged in ongoing, intensive discussions with one another and with their neighbors about why Jesus is not the Messiah, about the meaning of redemption, and about direct communication with God. These discussions appear to have been vital to the community's development. They continue as lively spiritual investigations.

I spent three Sabbaths with the community. I studied

Women-to-Women in Uganda

By Rhoda Posner

Sitting on the rocks under the trees overlooking the valley on a Shabbat afternoon, three of us (Lucy Steinitz, Janet Kurland and I), staff members of Jewish Family Services in Baltimore and members of the Kulanu delegation to Uganda in June to visit the Abayudaya, indigenous Africans who have been practicing Judaism since 1919, when their leader embraced the religion. We were joined by 20-25 Abayudaya women and a scattering of babies to talk about issues Jewish women to Jewish women. Sarah Nalunkunia served as the translator from English to Luganda.

Arrayed before us was a group of women, most in besutis (their traditional dress with puffy sleeves), and with their heads covered by colorful scarves. They were of varying ages, from early teens to senior citizens, and appeared to sit with the most senior and respected women closer to us and the others farther away. The children freely wandered back and forth from one woman to another.

We opened the discussion by saying how much we were enjoying our visit. We said that we know that women sometimes don't speak as freely when there are men present and that they might have several questions that they would want to discuss. The women laughed readily at this, acknowledging their understanding that women-to-women we can relate differently. We told them that we, too, are mothers and, in one case, a grandmother, and that we were open to any questions they might ask -- they did not need to feel shy.

After hesitation, one of them asked us to start talking in order to stimulate the discussion. We briefly talked about the importance of the home in Judaism, the role of women in the traditional home, and the three mitzvahs given primarily to women: To light candles, to bake challah, and to go to mikvah. This introduction led to more questions and a discussion.

One woman's concern was with lighting candles. It appears that they keep candles burning for their dead for seven days. However, they are short candles and find it hard to keep them burning. They were amazed that we, in the United States, use a candle that burns for seven days.

They asked what to do if one prays for something and doesn't get it. They wanted to know what to do if one makes an oath and then can't keep it. They had several questions about when and how one can cook on the Sabbath. They had several questions about what to do if they don't have the money to do what is required because Uganda is very poor.

They shared with us the ceremonies that they use for baby naming and a Bat Mitzvah, and one of the younger women described her recent Bat Mitzvah. They asked questions about when women are allowed into the synagogue; it is their custom for women not to enter when they are menstruating.

In our discussing the need for education among women, we learned that almost all could read Luganda, about five could read English, and two said they could haltingly read some Hebrew.

Our answers to them tried to acknowledge their struggle and their efforts, to encourage learning and preservation of their uniqueness as a culture, to empower them to be active partners in their community's decision-making process, and to develop rituals to meet their own needs when none exist.

We were impressed by the ambiance of the session -- the easy manner in which they talked and laughed, the children weaving in and out among their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts, and the babies being nursed. Those who had a long walk home and needed to make it back before dark excused themselves and left early.

Their final question was whether it was okay to tell the men what we had talked about. We assured them it was. One of the male leaders had previously shared with us the struggle they have had in trying to go against the dominant culture in their area by allowing their women to eat meat (as men do) and to learn

The discussion with the women alone was much different from the formal ones at which both men and women were present but mostly the men participated. While the men seemed primarily interested in interpretations of the Bible and in the rituals and *halachah* of Judaism, the women wanted to know about the practicalities of applying these things in their complex lives.

The best summary was offered by Sarah's comment that we are really not so different. It did appear that, from halfway around the world and from different racial and cultural backgrounds, a group of women had gotten together to talk about mutual concerns.

Telugu Jews (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 7)

day. Our sessions were provocative and beneficial to all. Abraham and Reuben Koshi, elders of the community, are dedicated students of Hebrew. Sadok's son, Yakob, knows rudimentary Hebrew well.

The Sabbath services are original, beautiful and moving, much of them dedicated to song. The congregation poignantly and powerfully sings the Hebrew of the Psalms to Telugu folk melodies. The synagogue itself is a spare structure of bricks, a large room with a high ceiling and a single table on which stands a perpetually burning flame. It is the only brick building belonging to the community (all families live in mud and thatch huts), and people are exceedingly proud. Next door to the synagogue lives a Hindu family which donates its electrical connection to the synagogue on the Sabbath, providing everyone with the pleasure of electricity once a week (an irony much appreciated when I explained that many Jews will not turn on an electric switch on the Sabbath).

Most of the members of the community in Kottareddipalem, as well as a small number of related families living near Ongole in Prakasham District, are eager to integrate into world Jewry.

The community faces religious intolerance, particularly from the local Christian clergy, which uses the emergence of the Jewish congregation to tighten Christian solidarity through anti-Semitism, something they are remarkably quick to learn despite their admitted ignorance of Judaism.

Slowly the community's existence is being recognized by other Jews. In early 1994 three Israeli rabbis visited the synagogue for a day, and this year a group of Israeli tourists visited. Shmuel Yakobi's son has emigrated to Israel and obtained Israeli citizenship. These positive developments were offset, however, by a series of articles from Israeli sources appearing in Indian newspapers in 1994, claiming that the Council of Eastern Jewry considered all Indian untouchables to be lost Jews, and proposed a mass exodus of millions of untouchables to Israel. Yakobi denies these claims, but such rumors are apparently strong enough in Israel to block even tourist visas to Indians.

I was altogether impressed by this isolated community's Jewish commitment, sincerity and generosity. My respect and admiration for their effort and initiative increased as I came to know the members personally. Whether they are the Lost Tribe of Ephraim or not, they are a young community of devoted Jews, suffering, surviving, practicing what is perhaps a kind of Jewish liberation theology.

(Kulanu would like to help this community by sending them Jewish books and religious objects. Tax-deductible cash contributions to Kulanu may be earmarked for the Telugu community. Donors should contact Bob Lande at 301-585-5229.)

Another Traveler to Uganda (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 5)

Old Mishael sat listening. He understood nothing of our conversation, belonging as he does to that generation of Bayudaya who refused primary and secondary education in Christian mission schools. The self-educated Bayudaya, generally, can speak, read and write six local languages and Swahili, but the youth have English and Hebrew as well. Mishael is mostly blind; cataracts, viral infection, improper nutrition, who knows? On the morning of my departure I gave him 40 pounds sterling to have his eyes examined by an optician. Did he use it for that purpose? Who knows? Perhaps he has some need more pressing than mere eyesight? I cannot fathom the poverty of these people. Every time I think I have its measure, I stumble over a new, previously unthinkable possibility.

Mishael knows the Hebrew Scriptures. A lifetime of study has made the Bible as familiar to him as the footpaths of his mountainside. When Mishael asked me a question, I reached automatically for my *Chumash* with Rashi commentary.

The first time I found him learning in the synagogue, he was making hard work of reading the Hebrew Bible text. At first I thought his reading skills might be poor, but wondered why the young men hung on to his every stuttered word. It was his eyesight that was failing, not his language skill. It is his chief joy in life to learn the *Chumash*. Oh how he knows it! The very first question he put to me was this:

Quoting the text from Genesis, "God said, Let us make man."

He asked, "Who was God talking to, and why ask their permission?"

I showed him the answer in the 11th century *Pirush* of Rashi, the most influential and favorite scholar of the Franco/German school, whose commentary is printed in virtually every scholastic edition of the Bible. If I had endowed Mishael with millions, or invested him with the power of prophecy, he could not have been better rewarded. What a smile! To think that he had a thought run through his head like the one Rashi thought?

"Tell it to me again," he said. "Tell it to me one more time."

I soon grew to appreciate the speed of his mind, his wit and erudition. It was easy to forget we were in the heart of post-colonial, post-Idi Amin, post-AIDS-epicenter Africa, that this man had no idea what a *cheder* room with a pot-bellied stove smelled like. That he had never seen or heard a *shofar* blowing, tasted *kiddush* wine, *challah* bread or seen a *sefer* plate.

Aron Kintu Moses, sitting next to me, took the duty of translator. He explained to Mishael the essence of our discussions about *mikveh*, responding at length to Mishael's questions about my specifications for the mikveh. I was paying only minimal attention to their conversation when I heard Mishael's characteristic laugh, followed by rapid speech and excited gesticulation.

"Mishael says he can lead us to a place near here where there is a *mikveh* just like the one of which you speak," Aron told me.

A lifetime of study has made the Bible as familiar to Mishael as the footpaths of his mountain.

"Let's go," I said, getting to my feet.

It was uncanny to watch Mishael, the blind old man, complete with white stick, leading us barefoot down the hill.

machetes, called pangas, they were stripping the foliage from a freshly felled tree. We looked at it with dismay. A beautiful jaxfruit tree, cut down for firewood. The ground was strewn with unripe fruit, useless, wasted and testament to the most ignorant and foolish of Sub-Saharan agrarian policy. Our small company of Bayudaya men turned away in disgust; there was nothing to say.

We continued tramping through the increasingly taller grass. We hopped and skipped over a small stream of water hidden in the thick underbrush around our feet. Mishael knew exactly where we were going. He stopped suddenly, pointing with his stick to a tall thicket of elephant grasses and reeds.

"This is where Kakungulu dipped my mother," he said. "He had his workers dig this pool right here for that purpose."

Aron, Jonadeb, Gershom, Samson and others began pulling the foliage out by its roots. Two of them ran off, returning swiftly with pangas borrowed from the tree-felling children. There was a growing excitement as we found water. Mishael shouted encouragement to the young men hacking away at the jungle-like growth around the mikveh. And, lo, there it was -- undeniable, irrefutable, almost inconceivable -- a bubbling spring of natural, living water, about eight feet across, the ultimate *mikveh*. The ultimate *mikveh*.

(Editor's note: The next issue will feature Rabbi Worch's moving account of introducing "Shabbos Cholent" to the Abayudaya!)

Incan Jews (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 1)

When he reached Trujillo, Peru (a 17-hour ride from Lima), in 1988, he found that a former Catholic named Villaneuva had formed a Jewish community of 500, located in three towns. Although the people were observant, the synagogue in Lima shunned them and did not assist them with formal conversion. **With Zuber's help, 300 of the community studied, were converted by an Israeli *beth din*, and moved to Israel.** Zuber reports proudly that, after five years, only three or four families reconsidered and moved back to South America.

Now, he says, many of the 250 Incans practicing Judaism in Peru (some who remained behind and others who have joined the Jewish community) are eager for formal conversion and relocation to Israel. **Zuber is anxious to find a rabbi or teacher (a married couple would be ideal) to go to Peru to lead services and educate the community further.**

In addition, he says, the Incans are in desperate need of a Torah scroll, Spanish-Hebrew prayer books, *tephillin* (which can be repaired if necessary), and *talleisim*. And the Incan women would greatly appreciate Jewish jewelry, such as necklaces with a Star of David.

The community is so poor that a mother sold her jewelry so her son could have a suit for his bar mitzvah. Some women only own one dress; for Shabbat they turn it inside-out so it will appear different. A man's typical wage for day work is \$1.50 a day.

Kulanu has undertaken to assist this community and urges contributions of religious articles or cash.

Kulanu president Jack Zeller also accompanied Zuber to the Israeli Embassy in Washington to meet with Barukh Binah, director of public and interreligious affairs, and his associate, Jodi Joseph.. They spoke of the success of the Incan community in Israel, most of whom have settled in Elon Moreh, and requested consideration regarding conversion and immigration of the individuals in Peru. The request will be forwarded to Jerusalem for consideration.

For further information, or if you would like to help,

Jewish Warrior? (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 6)

In 1922, at Gangama, Kakungulu published a 90-page book of rules and prayers as a guide to his Jewish community. The book set forth Jewish laws and practices as Kakungulu found them in the Old Testament, although it contained many verses and sections from the New Testament as well. Despite this interest in Jewish practices, there does not appear to have been any direct contact between Kakungulu and Jews before 1925.

Beginning about 1925, several European Jews who were employed as mechanics and engineers by the British chanced upon the Christian-Jewish community near Mbale. Jews such as these, during what appear to have been chance encounters, told Kakungulu about Orthodox Judaism. As a result, many remaining Christian customs were dropped -- including baptism. From these encounters, the community learned to keep the Sabbath, to recite Hebrew prayers and blessings, to slaughter animals for meat in a Kosher manner, and some Hebrew.

Kakungulu died on November 24, 1928. Michael Twaddle concluded that at his death, the Abayudaya "remained a mixture of both Christianity and Judaism, with faith in Christ remaining prominent in Kakungulu's beliefs."

Kakungulu is buried a short distance from the main Abayudaya synagogue behind the unpretentious home in which he lived during the last years of his life. The grave, which I visited, has a stone which reads:

SEMEI WAKIRENZI KAKUNGULU

*A Victorious General and
Sava Chief in Buganda*

Administrator of Eastern Province 1899-1905

President of Busoga 1906-1913

Died 24th 11 1928

In a tantalizing footnote, Twaddle states that, after Kakungulu's death, the Bayudaya community divided into those wishing to retain a toehold within Christianity and those wanting to break those ties completely. If so, then during our June 1995 visit, we met only the latter.

Leadership of the Abayudaya community has passed to a group of young married men whose goal is to end its isolation from world Jewry. One of these leaders told me that Twaddle's book, based on interviews held in the 1960's, is outdated. Whenever and however they learn of Jewish prayers and practices, these young men have adopted those prayers and practices into the Abayudaya ritual.

Their knowledge of Hebrew is self-taught and growing. Although the young men know far more about Jewish practice and prayers than their elders, they show great respect and deference to the men who led them after Kakungulu's death. On a visit to the Abayudaya village of Hamanyony, we met Samson Mugonge (the Samusoni Mugombe who was interviewed by Twaddle) now over 80 years old and in ill health. He was introduced to us as "our spiritual leader" and a man who "studied with Kakungulu."

BOOK COMMENT

A Delightful Introduction to Chinese Jews

Legends of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng, by Xu Xin with Beverly Friend, illustrated by Ting Chen, KTAV Publishing House, 1995.

Reviewed by Jack Zeller

Chinese and Jewish. To most American Jews this seems an unlikely combination. However, the topic is an old one, going back to the major role of Jews in the silk trade to China that long preceded Marco Polo's visits.

Many sources are available in English, thanks to the efforts of the Sino Judaic Institute and to the 1992 conference on "Jewish Diasporas in China: Comparative and Historical Perspectives," sponsored by the John K. Fairbank Center for East Asian Research at Harvard University.

Written records are few about the origins of this community, but it is known that in the 8th century Rhadinites, a Persian Jewish community of traders, were well established in the silk business. Most likely, the permanent Jewish communities are a derivative of their activities.

An important source of information is the body of legends passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Professor Xu Xin has written a book about legends of the most famous of the cities chosen by Diaspora Jews, Kaifeng. He collected many from meetings with the community elders, from the famed Wang Yisha (emeritus curator of the Kaifeng Museum, whose legends had not previously been written in English) and from other scholars who had also visited Kaifeng and interviewed Jewish descendants.

Professor Xu has blended these legends into a single book that provides a historical flow from the Jewish origins in the 10th century to the present. Although the author has taken some artistic privileges to make the legends readable, he has been very true to their essence because he believes (as do other historians) that legends are an authentic historical form that also conveys values and conflicts as well as information.

The reading is delightfully easy and concise. This makes the reader proud of both the civility and dignity of the Jewish and Chinese cultures. For those who have often noted the similarity of behavior of Chinese and Jews, this book provides added impetus and information to casual observations.

The book will be sold by Kulanu during Dr. Xu's visit to Washington, at Ohr Kodesh on Monday evening, November 20, at which time it will be autographed. The book can be ordered through Kulanu; send a check for \$22, payable to "Kulanu" for each copy desired. The book is also available from KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 900 Jefferson Street, Box 6249, Hoboken, NJ 07030-7205 (201-963-9524).

LETTERS TO KULANU

School Fees Needed

Once again I would like to express my gratitude to Kulanu for the spiritual and material support that you are extending to us. I wish everybody there a sweet year.

When I recently counted Abayudaya children who could be at school I discovered that a very great number have dropped out from school, and many more will drop out due to a lack of school dues. So here I request your help in this matter. I think it would be very helpful for Abayudaya's youth to achieve their education.

In your letter you wanted to know the number of people we would expect from your next visit. I assure you that we will welcome as many visitors as Kulanu can send.

J. J. Keki

Chairman, Abayudaya Cong.
Mbale, Uganda

(Editor's note: For a tax-deductible contribution to Kulanu of \$36, you can send one Abayudaya child to school. for one year. Rarely can such a modest contribution make such a difference in a young person's life! Earmark your Kulanu contribution for Abayudaya school fees.)

Ugandan Thank You's

Thanks to the Lord who led the Kulanu members to the Abayudaya community. Isolation was pulling us by the neck towards the foot of Mt. Elgon. Now we are placed on the peak of it, and everybody can see us, starting from our (village), expanding up to the whole country (Uganda) and going as far as the whole world. People know our existence through the effort of the Kulanu members.

In our country lecturers earn a lot of money per hour. How many hours

did (Kulanu delegates) spend as a labor of love? Who could pay for those lessons?

Coming to the subject of textbooks (the Jewish books that the Kulanu delegation gave to the congregation) -- it was like a super market!

We still dream that you are with us at the hill, viewing the beauty of Mt. Elgon.

I hope my thoughts in the form of thanking the members will be directed to every Kulanu member's ears.

Uri Katula William
Mbale, Uganda
* * * * *

I am very happy to see Kulanu's great concern for us. I thank Kulanu for their contribution to support the needy.

Jewish life is full of struggles but our motto remains "we shall not give up."

Our Rosh Hashanah has been very wonderful. I wish all the Kulanu members and all other Jews in the U.S.A. a happy new year, and may all be inscribed for life on Yom Kippur.

Israel Siriri
Mbale, Uganda
* * * * *

I am so grateful for the kindness you have shown to the Abayudaya Congregation through me, by endeavoring to raise funds for my tuition at the university. I am also aware of your efforts to have the orphans and needy Abayudaya attend school.

I am now at Nkumba University of Commerce in Entebbe, studying business administration. Business administrators are highly demanded in Uganda.

I spent the \$1000 from Kulanu for the first term's tuition, but some other requirements are still unmet. However,

all this is covered by my excitement to be at the University.

Gershom Sizomu
Entebbe, Uganda

(Editor's note: Gershom's university scholarship was made possible by Kulanu's Lorna Margolis and Clara Shair Memorial Fund for Abayudaya Education. Tax-deductible donations to Kulanu can be earmarked for this Fund.)

Judaism in Ghana

The name of our group is House of Israel (Zion). It was founded in 1976 by the late brother Aaron Ahomtre Toakyirafa. This brother Aaron, one day in 1976, had a vision about the lost tribe of Israel. Aaron was able to tell us about our ancestors who were scattered to so many lands from the Bible in the Old Testament. He opened our mind to know that all he taught from the Old Testament was the customs and the traditions that our forefathers were doing during 30 years past, when Christianity was not much in our area here. We then knew that through this Christianity we lost our customs, so we started practising Judaism up to date.

Aaron Ahomtre obtained an address from some American Jews and he wrote to them and they delayed for about two years before he had a reply from them. Yet all those days we were still practicing Judaism. Their reply made us very happy since they also cling to the Old Testament. When brother Aaron Ahomtre died, I stood at his position to maintain the group. I am brother David G. Ahenkorah, a teacher. Kofi Dwateng is secretary, Joseph

(cont, p 12)

SUPPORTER APPLICATION

☐ I/We would like to become a Supporter of KULANU, 1211 Ballard St., Silver Spring, MD 20910

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone(s): () _____ day () _____ evening

LETTERS (CONT.)

(cont. from p. 11)

Armah is chairman, Joseph K. Nippah is adviser, Isaac Aidoo is treasurer.

None of us speaks Hebrew; some of us can read and write. Others can't do so. We meet every Sabbath and the holidays. We cling only to the Old Testament. Therefore, we only believe in one God who created the Heaven and the Earth. None of our members practise any other religion or believe in any created image. We have few prayer books, not in sufficient numbers for us. We all wish to convert to Judaism. We are ready to cooperate with you in every way and request help from you.

Our meeting place for every Sabbath service is done in a classroom. With its problems we are making our own meeting place for the Sabbath and the holidays.

David G. Ahenkovich

Sefwi Kliawso, Ghana

(Editor's note: Can any of our readers help by donating religious books or visiting this group in Ghana?)

High Hopes in India

I am in receipt of three issues of your valuable magazine *Kulanu*, for which I am really grateful. I xeroxed many copies and distributed them amongst our Menashe Communities. Everyone expresses their gratitude to you. *Kulanu* is quite informative and helpful to us in knowing the developments of the lost Jewish communities throughout the globe. This magazine *Kulanu* encourages us in building our faith, performing

mitzvot, and in fulfilling the laws of Torah. It is a boon for us.

The report of Rav Eliyahu Avichail on the possible appointment of one Israeli Rabbi for Manipur and Mizoram has rocked the entire community with joy and high hope, "*Barukh HaShem*." We are eagerly waiting for this day to come.

I am eagerly waiting for the next issue of *Kulanu*. Long live *Kulanu*! Please contribute more information which will be helpful for new converts like us.

Maccabin Hazzan

Kangpokpi Beith Shalom

Manipur, India

Report from Brazil

Every week I receive letters and calls from people interested in my book about the Marranos, which was published with a generous grant from *Kulanu*. I received a letter from Brussels (Belgium) of a local Sephardic newspaper that wants to write about it, a fax from a young woman (maybe Brazilian) from Miami, and a letter from a bookstore in Milan (Italy) wanting my book.

There will be a book fair in "A Hebraica," a nice, modern Jewish club in Sao Paulo, and I am going to distribute autographed copies of my book.

I would like to translate and publish some articles from *Kulanu's* newsletter in *ISRAEL*, the magazine I publish.

My best regards to all my *Kulanu* friends.

Helio Daniel Cordeiro

Sao Paulo, Brazil

Shinlung Kudos

Shalom. I am writing in reference to the Bnei Menashe that have recently been discussed in your newsletter.

First, my own personal endorsement -- I have been an *Oleh* here for two years. I made *Aliyah* from upstate New York with a background in law enforcement and as a lifelong farmer.

I have studied with the Bnei Menashe in *ulpan*, worked with them on a job, *davened* with them in *Beit Kneset* and lived with them in the community, and on all counts, and many more, they are good people and an asset wherever they are. Well worth whatever support that they can be provided.

They have just organized an association among themselves for mutual assistance and local leadership. Their goal, and mine as a friend of many, is to enable other members of the community in Manipur, India, to make *Aliyah*.

There is much that can and needs to be done to help bring the Bnei Menashe home. Rabbi Avichail in Jerusalem, through Amishav, is a good start.

Be well and be blessed.

Yaacov Levi

Kiryat Arba, Israel

ל"ו

Yitzhak Rabin

Deadline for next issue: January 15, 1996

Edited by Karen Primack

Kulanu

Helping Lost Jewish Communities

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