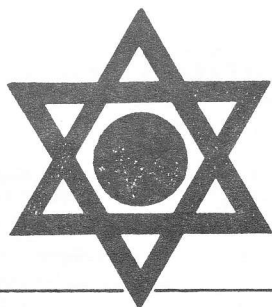


# Kulanu

"all of us"



*Helping Lost Jewish Communities*

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## Shabbes Cholent in Uganda?

*By Rabbi J. Hershy Worch*

*(Worch, a Lubavitch rabbi living in Australia, visited the Abayudaya in Uganda last August. Following, in Part II, are excerpts from his writings. Part I, describing his discovery of a 70-year-old mikveh, appeared in the previous newsletter.)*

It was more than three hours past midnight on a Friday night. I am in Africa, a few minutes north of the Equator, close to the source of the River Nile. I am sitting on a wicker chair with my friends the Bayudaya. As I told a story, all around me on the red earthen floor they were taut with listening. The oldest and youngest of the group snored softly on their bamboo mats. I finished my story.

The dark was overwhelming, palpable; I could not make out a hand in front of my face. It was time for us to retire, to rest, to sleep. But we were much too excited.

"Shall we dance?" I asked. For an answer there came a swish, a rustling of clothing, shuffling feet, and we were dancing. Mine were the only feet in shoes that night as we all danced and danced.

I began singing a simple melody I remembered from my childhood. I had heard it from the Sekulener Rebbe 30, maybe more, years ago. We held hands and stomped our feet, singing quietly, "U'Vyoim Ha'Shabbes, Shabbes Koidesh, Sissu V'Simchu..."

A little to one side stood the women, Mamma Debra, Mamma Naom, Mamma Erina and other intrepid mothers of the tribe, swaying, listening, humming, with their fingers interlaced, their heads nodding.

These women, the tribal mothers, fast too much. If one has a bad dream she declares a fast. When prayers must be answered -- a child is sick, a crop is failing -- they fast, days and weeks. And perhaps I am too judgmental, but I gave them a rabbinical ruling: Fasts may be subsumed by cash. A few shillings donated to charity is equal to one day of fasting.

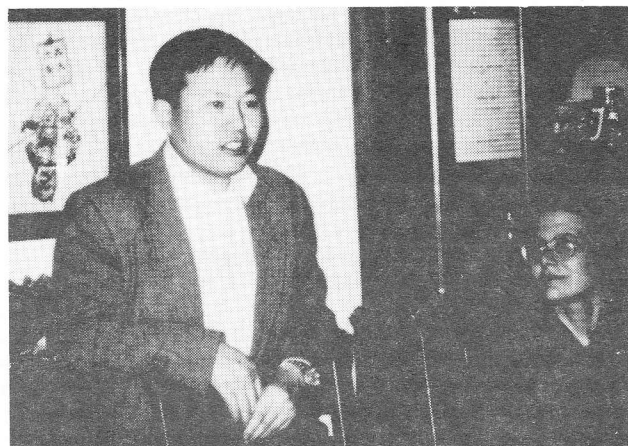
I had thought of telling them about the popular European Jewish sublimation, "chai" the number "18", but I stopped myself just in time. There are nearly one thousand Ugandan Shillings to the dollar, but 18 is much too much to suggest as a *pidyon* (redemption) to these holy women who survive by subsistence-farming.

Eventually we slept. In the morning we prayed and I read the Torah. They asked me to speak yet again after *davening*, but I had already explained the Torah readings as I had gone through them. "Any rabbi," quipped I, "can speechify at the drop of a hat. But only a truly great rabbi knows when to be quiet."

\* \* \* \* \*

Actually, I was aware all the time that most of the congregation had been walking since dawn to reach the central synagogue where the services were being held that day. None of them had eaten or had anything to drink. I suggested we meet again to talk after lunch.

(cont., p. 7)



*Xu Xin has the rapt attention of Kulanu's Jeri Lande.*

## Jews Have Been in China A Long, Long Time

*By Karen Primack*

Scholars are divided in their opinions about when the first Jews came to China.

Some think they came in biblical times, and even theorize about one of the Ten Lost Tribes settling between Tibet and Sichuan.

So said Prof. Xu Xin at public lectures in the Washington DC area on November 19 and 20. Xu is a professor of English and Jewish Studies at Nanjing University in the Peoples Republic of China.

There is unanimous agreement that Jews have been in China *at least* since the 6th century. One of the earliest pieces of evidence is an 8th century letter written in Persian Hebrew by a Jewish merchant in China, probably a trader on the Silk Road.

(The Silk Road, which extended from China to the Mediterranean Sea, was built by the Romans in the second century B.C.E. and was used for 1200 years. Extending 2000 miles, through mountains and deserts, it enabled Western goods to be traded for Chinese silk for Roman nobles. Jewish merchants traded chiefly in cotton, perfume, and spice.)

In addition, Hebrew prayers were found in northwestern China by British scholars -- prayers written on paper; this is the earliest report of the use of paper for Hebrew prayers. Also, a 9th century Arab traveler wrote about his experiences, which included a report of a massacre of Christians, Moslems and Jews in southern China. Marco Polo also made mention of Jews in China.

(cont., p. 8)

## WHAT IS KULANU?

Kulanu ("all of us") is a tax-exempt organization of American Jews of varied backgrounds and practices.

## AVICHAIL REPORTS

### *Menashe Rites of Passage*

By Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail

Baruch Hashem, the Shinlung (Bnei Menashe) families that arrived here in Israel last April have successfully undergone the process of the Giur (conversion), and all had Jewish marriage ceremonies.

J. K. Gangte, a Menashe leader, arrived last July with his wife. They immediately went through Giur, and also had their marriage ceremony performed along with the young couples in Gush Katif -- one of them was his son! Six children of theirs are now living in Israel, three of them married with children, and Yehuda, one of the four sons, currently in the military.

In November we had two joint weddings of young people in Gush Katif. One of the young men is Yoel Misao, who recently completed his military training, married Idith. The other couple is Stanley and Rina Sharon; Stanley is the boy who was seriously wounded by an Arab terrorist's knife 18 months ago in Gush Katif.

The first complete family of official new Menashe immigrants, Yehuda Vaiphei with his wife and two children, arrived in September.

Four families, comprising 16 souls, arrived from Manipur in December, and we hope to bring the remainder of the group (14 people) waiting to make *aliyah* in February or March 1996.

The Haukip family, from the new group, is blessed with a new baby girl, and also Mr. Sharon Benjamin and his wife Suzanne are blessed with their second newborn daughter.

Three young Menashe families in Gush Katif will soon have their own greenhouses, currently under construction.

We hope to function with the authorization of the Chief Rabbinate and the Ministry of Interior to bring, as soon as possible, the parents of each young immigrant, as well as their remaining children.

### **93 Ugandans in School!**

Joab Jonadav Keki, chairman of the Abayudaya Congregation in Mbale, Uganda, recently reported that Kulanu funding has enabled a substantial number of children without means, many of whom are orphans, to attend school.

A total of 82 primary school age children received partial tuition assistance of \$6.25 each (out of a total tuition of \$12 per student). In addition, 11 senior school students received \$37.50 each; complete tuition at this level is \$55 per student.

Contributors can be proud of enabling a total of 93 Abayudaya children to go to school. On the other hand, much remains undone. Our goal is to pay **total** tuition for **every** child whose family or guardian cannot afford it.

Also, we have been advised that our **Lorna Margolis and Clara Shair Memorial Abayudaya Education Fund** did not have sufficient funds to enable any of these students to buy needed uniforms and books. A further goal of Kulanu is to supply these as well as tuition.

For about \$20, a primary school student can be set for the year. The figure would be closer to \$70 for a senior school student. By US standards, school tuition is certainly not costly, but by Ugandan standards it is extremely expensive.

The Margolis-Shair Fund is also enabling one student to attend college in Uganda. Hopefully, two or more students will be eligible for college next year. Most of the tuition and supplies for one student are covered by our contribution of \$2000 per year.

Readers are invited to earmark their tax-deductible Kulanu contributions for this education fund. Your donation is tantamount to "adopting" a student. For a contribution of \$200, you can make a difference in the lives of TEN youngsters.

## Let's Go to India!

By Jason Francisco

(The last newsletter contained a detailed article by Francisco on his encounter with the Telugu Jews in southeastern India.)

I would like to reiterate the Telugu Jewish community's commitment. I believe they have made an irrevocable choice to be Jewish -- a choice that they treat as a destiny. I am convinced they will strive to live as Jews regardless of whether other Jews ignore them, and regardless of resistance from surrounding communities.

A visit to the community by a Kulanu delegation would, I am certain, be joyously received. Such a visit would serve several functions. The community's knowledge of Jewish observance is still young. All members express eagerness to learn. A Kulanu group's insights on the Sabbath and holiday observance, for example, and on liturgy, would be extremely meaningful to all. Any gifts of books and religious articles would be received gratefully.

I would like to make some sundry suggestions for a Kulanu trip to India:

Round-trip air fares from New York to Delhi can be found for as low as \$700-800.

The darga of Hazrat Sarmad in Delhi is worth a visit. Sarmad was a Persian or Armenian Jew who came to Delhi in the early 18th century as a trader, and became a well-known mystic and a close associate of Aurangzeb's brother and rival, Dara Shikoh. He was executed with several associates of

(cont., p. 9)



Rebecca Kohari, a Telugu Jew.

PHOTO BY JASON FRANCISCO

### **China Trip Announced**

You are cordially invited to join Prof. Xu Xin and other adventurous souls on a fully escorted tour of Jewish historical sites in China.

The dates are April 28 through May 15, 1996. The cost is \$3595 per person, which includes international round trip air fare from Seattle, all accommodations, three meals per day in China, and tours, transfers, guides, and admission tickets within China.

The itinerary includes visits to Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing, Kaifeng, Xian and Hong Kong.

A deposit of \$500 is required to reserve space, which is limited.

Contact China Educational Travels, Ltd., 4545 Davis St., Skokie, IL 60076 (800-343-6030 or 708-675-

## KULANU BRIEFS

### Next Meeting

Please mark your calendar now, as there will be no further notice. The next Kulanu meeting will be held April 21 at noon at the Zeller residence in Silver Spring. A light lunch will be served. Call the Kulanu office for directions.

### HELP!

Kulanu has received several excellent proposals for ways to help our communities become self-sufficient. These have ranged from growing coffee and building a schoolhouse in Uganda, to funding a small sandal-making factory in India. Being a young organization, Kulanu is, unfortunately, not yet in a position to fund these.

However, we feel sure that some of you out there know of appropriate grants we could apply for. Please contact the Kulanu office if you know of a funding source that would be compatible with our mission.

And you experienced grantwriters out there, please identify yourselves!

### Samra Publishes

Dr. Myer Samra, an anthropologist at the University of Sydney who has done field work on the Bnei Menashe in India and Israel, has had two articles about the Bnei Menashe and Rabbi Avichail's work searching for "lost" Jewish communities published in the Jewish press in Australia in recent months. The articles coincided with Rabbi Avichail's recent lecture tour in Australia. Samra's pieces appear in *New Moon* ("Australia's Jewish lifestyle magazine") and *Generation* ("a journal of Australian Jewish life, thought and community").

### Ritual Objects to Uganda

Thanks to the generosity of Irwin Berg, ritual objects (20 *tallitot*, 11 pairs of candle sticks, 144 Shabbat candles, a Torah *yad*, and 12 *kiddush* cups) are on their way to the Abayudaya. Berg, a New York attorney, was part of the Kulanu delegation to Uganda last June.

We are also grateful to Ner Tamid Congregation in Baltimore for its donation of 160 *chumashim* and various other religious book, which Kulanu is shipping to Africa and India.

### Support Needed for Marrano Studies

Memberships in Casa Shalom are being offered so that its programs can continue. Casa Shalom, known also as the Institute for Marrano-Anusim Studies, is located in Gan Yavneh, Israel. Gloria Mound, the executive director and a well-known scholar on the Jewish history of the Spanish Balearic Islands of Ibiza and Formentera, says that "without support, all work will regrettably shortly cease, because sadly praise is not sufficient to keep us functioning."

A tax-deductible membership contribution of \$36 entitles a member to a free publication and reduced rates for publications, tours, and genealogy searches. Checks may be sent to Casa Shalom at PO Box 66, Gan Yavneh, Israel 70800.

### 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.

### 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

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).

### Want To Go to Uganda?

We would like to plan another Kulanu mission to visit the Abayudaya in Mbale, Uganda.

If you might be interested in a trip in the next 12 months, please indicate, in writing, when you are interested 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.

### Mazel Tov!

*Mazel tov* to Rachel and Ed Eitches on the arrival in December of Kulanu's youngest supporters, Naomi Shira and Elyse Jamila.

### 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.

### Newsletter Submissions

Your editor would greatly appreciate it if lengthy articles for this



# Xu Xin, the Man

By Karen Primack

Why would a non-Jewish English teacher in the Peoples Republic of China study Hebrew and Yiddish and talmud, meet four presidents of Israel, establish a Jewish Studies program at Nanjing University, translate part of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* into Chinese, and author a book on the *Legends of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng*?

Prof. Xu Xin's personal story is as fascinating as his lectures about Jews in China.

He modestly claims that he was in the right place at the right time -- when three events coincided. **One:** having taught himself English with a gramophone and records from the 1940s and '50s, he was able to get into a university and he became a teacher of English in China in 1977. **Two:** the Cultural Revolution was just ending in 1976, finally allowing the re-introduction of Western subjects, including literature, and the dissemination of "outside" news such as who wins Nobel Prizes. **Three:** the Nobel Prize for literature was awarded to Saul Bellow in 1976 and Isaac Bashevis Singer in 1978.

Up to that time, Xu explains, Chinese students in his generation had never learned anything about Judaism except the Bible; a Chinese encyclopedia described Hebrew as a dead language. But after excitedly reading Bellow and Singer -- and then Malamud, Roth, Salinger and others -- he decided to specialize in post-war Jewish American literature. And then he studied Judaism "to have a better understanding of these stories."

Another fortuitous event was the arrival in 1985 of an American professor to teach in Nanjing for a year. The professor was a Jew from Chicago. Xu and the professor became fast friends, and the following year he arranged for Xu to teach English composition at Chicago State University, where his students were 95 percent African-American.

During his two years there, Xu lived with a Reconstructionist Jewish family and "had much contact with Jewish culture." They celebrated all the holidays and he attended a bar mitzvah in Milwaukee. Realizing that Judaism is "one of the sources of Western civilization," Xu resolved to teach about Judaism in China.

## **No fewer than 1000 students showed up at one of his lectures**

In 1988, Xu spent 10 days in Israel -- prior to the time China and Israel had relations -- to speak at Hebrew University. He emphasizes that his trip was not a secret. The *Jerusalem Post* reported on his talk, and upon leaving Israel he insisted on having his passport stamped.

Back in China, his students wanted him "to talk about Israel." No fewer than 1000 students showed up at one of his lectures. Xu also added modern Hebrew literature (in English translation) to his course list; the course covered the works of Agnon and 50 other writers. He also translated many of these stories into Chinese. He found himself "the sole expert" on modern Hebrew literature in China!

In April of 1989, just two months before the Tiananmen Square demonstration, Xu set up the China Judaic Studies Association. Although all exhibits and lectures had to receive prior government approval, Xu argued that the study of Judaism was a foundation for understanding Western civilization, and he was successful in organizing a major exhibit of Judaic Studies in China, as well as a program

The Association also organized a Holocaust exhibit in China, which attracted 80,000 visitors in seven weeks. The exhibit was covered by Chinese TV and press.

Realizing that there was no Judaic reference book available in Chinese, Xu decided to write a Chinese version of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. He and a team of three labored for three years to produce a 1000-page, one-volume encyclopedia with 1600 selected entries. Although his salary in China is only \$50 per month, he had to promise his publisher that he would come up with \$10,000 to meet

**Membership in the China Judaic Studies Association promotes this and other remarkable work by Xu Xin. To join and to receive a bi-annual newsletter, checks should be made out to Xu Xin and mailed to Beverly Friend, Ph.D., Oakton Community College, 1600 Golf Rd., Des Plaines, IL 60016.**

**Membership in the China Judaic Studies Association costs \$20. A \$35 contribution will pay for a copy of the Chinese version of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* to be sent to a Chinese university library in your name. A contribution of \$5 will pay for a copy of Xu's Chinese-language booklet *Anti-Semitism: How and Why* to be sent to a university library in China.**

**To order a copy of *Legends of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng* (in English) send a check for \$20 to Dr. Friend, made payable to Xu Xin.**

publication costs. He supplied a \$1000 down payment from his American earnings and raised the additional \$10,000 from "donors all over the world."

Xu's academic reputation has been widely recognized both in and outside China. He was invited to participate in a conference on whether China should establish relations with Israel. (He argued that China could play a role in the Mideast conflict; that recognition would improve China's image since Israel had influence in the US; and that ties would improve trade relations between the two countries.)

In 1992 he was invited to speak at a Harvard University conference. He returned to Israel in 1993-94, where he met three Israeli presidents and conferred with the Chinese ambassador to Israel. He was invited to do research at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati this year; he took time out over the summer to study Yiddish with YIVO at Columbia University. Currently he is a visiting scholar at Harvard. He will return to China in April.

Xu attributes Chinese students' interest in Judaism to the fact that both the Jews and the Chinese are ancient, continuous civilizations that have had an important impact on world civilization. And he attributes the lack of anti-Semitism in China to the fact that most Chinese do not have a religion.

He sees his university students as the future leaders of his country and feels it is "important to teach them about Judaism." He would like to give a seminar for professors who teach history so that the story of Jewish civilization can be incorporated into their courses.

A tireless advocate, Xu hopes one day to have a Chair of Judaic Studies so that he can teach about Judaism full time.

He has many plans -- his only limiting factor is funding. He is seeking "a few thousand dollars" to sponsor a Chinese student at Hebrew Union College; the college will waive the tuition, but living expenses are needed. He is also seeking \$12,000 for research on the history Jews of Kaifeng. The knowledgeable museum curator emeritus there is getting on in years, and the families are dying out. His new book, *Legends*



## CONFERENCE REPORT

### Cultural and Medical Discoveries Described in Tucson

*By Israel Rubin*

Last November I enjoyed the privilege of attending the annual conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, a group whose primary focus is research. Dennis Duran, a Converso who shared his emotional experience of discovering his Jewish roots and identity, was elected to be this year's president.

The many diverse presentations included a recently completed video, "The Secret Jews of the American Southwest," which contains several interviews with Conversos. This video brought the audience to its feet. Eve Harris, the producer, never anticipated such an enthusiastic response and was unable to provide enough copies of the video for purchase by those attending.

One of the most startling pieces of research was presented by Dr. Kristine Bordenave, a physician at the University of New Mexico. Twelve people in New Mexico came down with pemphigus vulgaris, a rare skin disease. The anthropologist who interviewed the 12 patients found a common element -- 10 of the 12 were Conversos! In a match of DNA with a DNA marker for Ashkenazi Jews, 9 were identified as Ashkenazi Jews!

Another exciting part of the conference was Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn's talk about the Abayudaya in Uganda. He described this "Jewish" community's way of life as they attend synagogue, observe Jewish dietary laws, follow the Torah, and learn Hebrew. He also showed a video of the visit to the Abayudaya by the Kulanu delegation last June.

Emilio and Trudy Coca presented a slide talk on Jewish symbolism in Southwest cemeteries. They researched hundreds of Catholic cemeteries in Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico and found many tombstones decorated with Jewish psalms, sayings and symbols.

Melissa Amado, director of the Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives at the University of Arizona, who was in Israel during the Tucson conference, had one of her assistants demonstrate on a laptop computer a great deal of data and photographs that the Bloom Archives has available to users of the World Wide Web. Anyone who has personal data and/or photographs of Jews of the Southwest should submit them to Melissa Amado, Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives, 1052 N. Highland Avenue, Tucson, AZ 83721 (520-621-5774).

Judy Frankel discussed and sang Sephardic and Ladino songs. Rabbi Cukierkorn called it "certainly one of the best presentations of Ladino music I have ever heard." For those interested in such music, her tapes are available commercially from Globe Music in New York, NY.

## THE NEXT CONFERENCE

### Looking Ahead to Brazil

*By Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn*

It was a real privilege for me to participate and lecture at the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies annual conference in Tucson, Arizona, on November 5-7. The Society is a sister organization to Kulanu inasmuch as it researches lost and dispersed Jewish communities.

Kulanu was also represented at the conference by Israel Rubin (who lives part of the year in Tucson and who has started a local Kulanu chapter) and by Joan and Yehuda Barch from Columbia, Maryland.

The conference was very informative, the speakers were all first-class scholars, there was a great deal of camaraderie among the participants, and it was really fun! I encourage Kulanu members to consider attending the Society's annual meetings, which alternate one year in the United States and one year abroad.

Since there is such an interest on their part in the Marrano phenomenon in Brazil, I was requested to organize and lead their next conference in my native Brazil. The trip is set for October 15-30, 1996. Please call me at 703-307-5191 if you would like an itinerary.

### Jewish Highlights of Brazil October 15-30, 1996

Fly from Miami to Sao Paulo (5 days), where you will participate in the first Marrano conference in Brazil, as well as tour the city and experience the sights and sounds of Jewish Sao Paulo, including Congregacao Israelita Paulista, a Jewish congregation of over 2100 families.

Fly to Manaus (3 days), gateway to the Amazon and home of a unique Jewish community of Sephardic Jews originally from Morocco, who settled here 100 years ago, during the rubber boom.

On to Belem (3 days), a city tour and visit to the synagogue and cemetery of this oldest Jewish community in Brazil.

Fly to Recife (3 days) to meet the interesting city and its people and visit the first synagogue in the Americas.

Fly to Natal (3 days) to see the first organized Marrano synagogue in Brazil, then motor to Caico, a unique area where 70 percent of the white population have Jewish origins.

Fly on to Rio De Janeiro, where you may choose to stay for a 3-day optional tour.

## Kulanu on the Web

*By David Turetsky*

Kulanu has just instituted its own page on the World Wide Web.

In coming weeks, current news, special postings, back issues of the Kulanu newsletter, including pictures, graphics, and perhaps even voice, will be accessible using the hypertext technology of the World Wide Web, which is rapidly taking hold as the Internet access medium of choice.

Information from specific newsletter issues and articles will now be able to be accessed more directly by issue or article title, rather than having to search chronologically through archives. As the body of material expands, articles will also be indexed by subject area and other logical groupings. Part of the magic of the Web is that it permits unlimited cross-linking of material, so a reader can pursue research according to his or her own interest and preference.

The Kulanu Web facility is in addition to the current Kulanu listserv, Kulanu-L, which broadcasts any material received to all subscribers. In contrast, the Web site must be specifically accessed in order to view its contents.

To access Kulanu on the Web from a text-based browser like 'Lynx' or graphical browsers like 'Mosaic' or 'Netscape', the URL

## Menashe Organization Convenes

The newly settled Shinlung immigrants in Israel have received wide praise for their industriousness and intelligence. Now they can also be praised for their organizational skills.

In his opening speech, the chairman of the Shevet (tribe) Menashe community, Mr. Sharon Benjamin, noted that the organization would function to enable the members to get to know one another better (since they are scattered all over Israel), to determine how the group can function more effectively and cooperate more fully with Rabbi Avichail, and to determine how they could help the families yet to come.

Plans include learning about fundraising, learning to give tzedakah, informing the Israeli government about the Shevet Menashe, and "forgetting our sub-tribes and living in peace since we are a family."

## VIEWPOINT

SHULA MULA

### What Happens to a Dream Deferred?

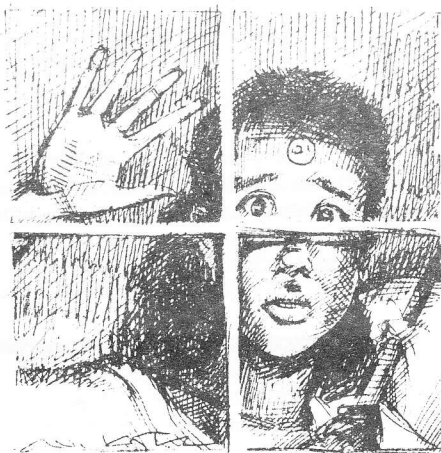
**I** REMEMBER, AS A YOUNG child in a remote village in Gondar province, dreaming of Jerusalem. The Temple was still standing, and I did everything I could to remain good and pure, so that I would be worthy of standing in its courtyards. I fantasized about the people of Jerusalem, and of one thing I was sure: The Jews were impatiently waiting for us to join them.

These were the dreams of all Ethiopian Jews. During the long trek to Sudan and the months we spent in refugee camps, where nearly one-tenth of all Ethiopian Jews died of hunger and disease, dreams of Jerusalem sustained us while we waited for the planes to take us to our homeland.

Now, 10 years after Operation Moses and four years after Operation Solomon, most Ethiopian Jewish teenagers in Israel share a different feeling — one that is deeply disturbing to me, several years their senior. Far from a dream, the feeling is one of disillusionment and of rejection by Israeli society. These teenagers are fast adopting an identity that is neither Israeli nor rooted in Ethiopian Jewish tradition. Instead, they turn to images of African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans, with their history of black separateness and oppression, and find in them a reflection of their feelings about their place in Israeli society.

How did this happen, and so fast? Some might see an inevitable rift between whites and blacks in an interracial society. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ethiopians Jews, especially the young ones, came to Israel with high motivation, a burning desire to become Israelis, and a sense of identification with the Jewish people. Beneath the surface of today's alienation, those feelings still exist.

They should have been met with visions and strategies designed to close educational gaps, to make Ethiopians part of the Israeli mainstream, to use our tremendous potential to help us connect a past we were proud of to a bright future in our land. Instead, government and Jewish Agency policies have led directly to the vast majority of Ethiopian students finishing high school without passing the matriculation exam, the minimum requirement for going on to any form of higher education. This year, only 7 percent of Ethiopian 12th-graders passed these exams — by far the lowest percentage of any ethnic group in Israel. The same policies have led to a burgeoning dropout rate,



### Ethiopian Jewish teenagers feel rejected by Israeli society

and a growing problem of juvenile delinquency and even serious crime.

The full extent of policy failures is described in a report called "Creating an Underclass" recently released by the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews. Among the findings: Ethiopian children have been segregated in "absorption" classes with inferior teaching staff for years because of fears of "white flight." Approximately 40 percent of Ethiopian schoolchildren lack basic books and school supplies, and 20 percent of the second- through fifth-graders can't read. Privately funded programs have proved that with intensive help in the basics — Hebrew language, mathematics, English — they can overcome educational gaps within three years, yet the government has yet to adopt such programs.

Perhaps the most astounding policy failure is that virtually all Ethiopian teenagers were placed in boarding schools designed for and still partially populated by the toughest welfare cases in Israel. These schools become "ghettos" — most Ethiopian teenagers were placed in schools and classrooms 70 to 90 percent black. The students, many of them highly intelligent, were collectively tracked for "vocational studies" that offer no chance for higher education and little hope of even getting a

job. The result: a growing dropout rate, alienation and crime.

I was one of the exceptions. I was placed, purely by luck, in a school that did offer preparation for the matriculation exams. Like most Ethiopian immigrants who get offered the chance, I passed — and am now studying at the Hebrew University. Since I began speaking out on the dangerous trends I have outlined here, some of the people who helped me on my path have accused me of ingratitude. But I have no choice but to say what I know is true. Without a strategy designed to overcome educational gaps and integrate students in society, the alienation that has taken root will grow into a poisonous flower.

This means tragedy for Ethiopian Jews, and for Israel. It doesn't have to be this way. Our vision of Jerusalem, our desire to become an integral part of Israel and the Jewish people while maintaining a connection with our own unique history, is still a powerful force. But it must be met with vision and desire on the part of the government, or the dream will fade forever.

Shula Mula studies education at the Hebrew University. She is the star of "Black Natala," the first Israeli play about Ethiopian absorption.

*Editor's note: Our decision to reprint this Jerusalem Report piece predated the crisis in Israel over the government's decision to discard blood donated by Ethiopians due to increased risk of AIDS. It is now more important that this thoughtful article by Shula Mula be read. The problems it describes have been cited as the "real" reasons for the Ethiopians' emotional demonstration following the blood policy disclosure.*

*The Israeli Ministry of Education has instituted some improvements in recent months, including programs to ensure elementary school children receive intensive help in early grades in basic skills and subsidized preschool education programs. However, insufficient funds have been made available to transform the educational situation of Ethiopian children.*

*The New Israel Fund has granted support to two Ethiopian Jewish organizations in Israel that have Ethiopian leadership and are worth supporting: "South Wing to Zion" and the "Association for the Advancement of the Ethiopian Family and Child." Each can be specifically designated for support by sending contributions to: New Israel Fund, 1625 K Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20006. For further information about these two organizations, readers may e-mail to Israel: shatit@shatit.nif.org.il or public.ed@nif.org.il*

*The Jerusalem Report has often taken a sympathetic position to new*



## A New Ritual for Passover -- Honoring the Return of a Lost Tribe

(The following is suggested as a Pesach Seder reading just before the recitation of Dayenu.)

From the time of the Assyrian Exile in 722 B.C.E. until the present, segments of the Jewish people have been forcibly separated from us through persecution and expulsion.

One such segment previously lost to the Jewish community is a people now known by at least three names: Bnei Menashe (since they trace their ancestry to the tribe of Manasseh), the Shinlung (after caves in which they once found refuge), or the Chikimi (after the Chin, Kuki and Mizo ethnic groups from which they spring). The Bnei Menashe believe their ancestors were exiled in 722 B.C.E. and wandered across many lands. They live now in a mountainous region on the India-Burma border. Knowledge of various ritual observances was handed down orally for twenty-six centuries. Since 1993, approximately 160 Bnei Menashe have immigrated to Israel, worked to support themselves, and studied for conversion (back) to Judaism under the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate in Israel. We recite a poem that, according to tradition, accompanied the Bnei Menashe throughout their migrations:

## Red Sea Song\*

*We must keep the Passover festival  
Because we crossed the Red Sea on the dry land  
At night we crossed with a fire  
And by day with a cloud  
Enemies pursued us with chariots  
And the sea swallowed them up  
And used them as food for the fish  
And when we were thirsty  
We received water from the rock*

We pause during our Seder to reaffirm our unity with the Bnei Menashe and with C'lal Yisroel, all the Jewish people:

## We and They\*\*

As we have wandered, so have they  
As we have suffered for our beliefs, so have they  
As we have retained our faith, so have they  
As we have clung to our precious identity, so have they  
As we long to lead Jewish lives, so do they  
As we believe in the Promised Land, so do they  
As we pray "You are One", so do they

May those among the Bnei Menashe, and anyone else who desires to return to or turn to Judaism, celebrate  
Passover Seders next year in peace and tranquillity

לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם:

\* E. Avichail. *The Tribes of Israel*, 1990.

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# Kulanu



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## Shabbes Cholent in Uganda (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 1)

Only five or six people could eat at one time, there being only five or six plates on which to serve food to the 60 or 70 people gathered there. The elderly and very young were fed first. When Sarah, the reigning *baale-bosteh*, served the *cholent* which I had so painstakingly prepared, it was greeted with hostility and suspicion. What kind of *Shabbes-goy* was I, cooking on *Shabbes*, they wanted to know. What kind of fraudulent Judaism was I trying to sell them here in Uganda, they demanded.

You should have seen the grin on the faces of the young leaders of the community as they showed their elders the *Shabbes-oven* I had built into the packed earth floor of my bedroom, a shining smile that went from ear to ear. Eighty years they have waited for my cholent, can you imagine, the first hot food on a *Shabbes* morning for 80 years! Prometheus had no such thrill. Perhaps Moses, watching the Israelites licking their fingers over Manna in the wilderness may have had such *naches*, maybe.



Lifting the Torah at the Abayudaya Moses Synagogue

Most people know nothing about *cholent*, and those who do probably consider it no more than an odd quirk in the Jewish diet, something akin to *gefilte-fish* or *latkes*.

To a hushed audience I explained the significance of the food they were eating. How Rabbinical Judaism, the *Halacha*, the Talmud well nigh demands hot food on *Shabbes* morning. This is how we Orthodox Jews may be distinguished from Karaites, Samaritans and other fundamentalists who rejected the Oral Torah. The hushed silence broke into a thunderous applause.

On Friday I had been driven into town. First I bought a new cooking pot with lid and a ladle, wondering all the while how I might *toivel* it in which *mikveh*. The pot resembled something you might buy in a hardware shop. It was made in someone's back yard from salvaged materials. Hub caps, engine blocks, bulldozers, who knows what goes to make up a brand new cooking utensil in that part of the world? It was unusable in its pristine state. The inside was scoured crudely as though turned on a lathe and hollowed with a blunt instrument. I decided to glaze it as I might a new cast-iron skillet. I went looking for some peanut oil or any kosher edible oil that can withstand high temperatures before igniting. The smallest quantity I could purchase of oil of whose *kashrut* I was

campaign for a Parliamentary seat ) helped me avoid those beans on sale which had been sprayed with chemicals and which were for planting only. He showed me those unsprayed, healthier-looking items which might be used safely for eating. I found good kidney beans, red and white, black-eyed peas and other local varieties of legume.

Onions, garlic, salt, pepper, cloves, cumin and other more esoteric ingredients made up the remainder of my shopping list. I had bottled water purchased in Entebbe on the way from the airport and a bottle of Carmel grape juice, which had traveled rather well from Manchester, England. Two huge loaves of rye bread I had commissioned at the vegan village of Salem-Cologne, where I was renting a grass-thatched hut. I was about ready to begin cooking for *Shabbes*!

I wanted to avoid getting in the way of the women hard at work in the smoky communal kitchen, so I was given a small portable stove made from condensed-milk tins. It was an ingenious contraption standing perhaps 20 centimetres off the ground, and fueled by charcoal purchased from the charcoal maker down the road. The main problem with that particular purchase was finding the plastic sack in which to take my charcoal home. Nothing is simple or swift in rural Uganda, where untreated water must be carried on someone's head three kilometers from a water hole shared by umpteen villages after waiting in line all morning to fill the jerry-can.

Once the pot was bake-blazed with cooking oil, after I had extinguished the blaze and waited for all the components to cool off again, I boiled some water in it. Then I borrowed a hammer and closed off all the tiny holes leaking the precious water from my new cooking pot. Locals told me that they would use grains of soft rice to plug such holes, but my less elegant and more violent solution had quite solved the *mikveh* problem, once and for all. A pot made by a Jew does not require immersion in a *mikveh*, and by that time I was sure the pot was my own creation!

\* \* \* \* \*

After lunch on *Shabbes* afternoon I met with all the women who had come for the *Halacha* learning. That was when I told them about the *tzedakah* (charity) in lieu of fasting. They asked me for the *Halacha* concerning marriages between consanguine cousins of the first remove. I described a *chuppa* marriage ceremony, the spiderweb-spinning, circling of the bridegroom by the veiled bride who is led by her mother, holding candles. The placing of the ring, the reading of the *ketubah*, the seven benedictions and the smashing of the glass beneath the foot of the bridegroom.

There was much deep sighing and wistful remembering as I spoke. Bayudaya women have no wedding rings or jewelry made of precious metals, yet they have romance. They live in mud huts and dream of sufficient candles to light their Friday nights, when most actually make do with smoking naphtha lamps and crude wicks which reek and blacken the ceiling. I am referring to those affluent Bayudaya who can afford lighting lamps at night.

"Please," they whispered, "send us someone who will teach us how to use the *mikveh* properly." They discussed the *Halachic* difficulties around the care of their beautiful wavy black hair on *Shabbes*. When hair cannot be brushed without pulling out hair, it may not be brushed on *Shabbes*. At that gathering they decided to adopt a special *Shabbes* hairstyle, which would be arranged on Friday into tiny plaits and ribbons, obviating the need for combing on *Shabbes* altogether.

And all the time I am thinking in Yiddish: "*Wher kan schatzen a Yid?*" (Who can take the measure of a Jew?)

\* \* \* \* \*

# Jews Have Been in China (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 1)

## Kaifeng Attracts Jews

Up to the 11th century, these Jews were merchants and traders who came back and forth to China, but during the 11th century, the first group of Jews came to Kaifeng to stay, and they followed their traditions for many hundreds of years. Much literature has been left about them. Although the first arrivals were chiefly single men who had traded on the Silk Road, seventy families with women and children were also among the early Jewish settlers.

Xu reminds his audiences that "China was rich then, and it was a good place to live and to do business." It was the time of the Song Dynasty, whose capital was Kaifeng, a very prosperous international city with a population of 1.5 million.

Jews met the Song emperor, who encouraged them to "observe and hand down your religion here," as a stele (stone pillar) of the time relates. Because he could not pronounce their names, the emperor gave the Jews seven family surnames, which gave them legitimacy. "If you do not have one of these seven family names, you are not considered Jewish," Xu explains.

The first synagogue was built in Kaifeng in 1163.

The Jewish community was influenced by Chinese culture, including Confucianism and the Chinese classics, which had to be studied for the imperial examinations, for official appointments, and for social status.

The community grew, and more and larger synagogues were built. By 1500 the population peaked at about 5000. Kaifeng was repeatedly destroyed by the flooding of the Yellow River, which killed many, including Jews. The floods of 1663 alone killed more than 100,000 people; only 2090 Jewish families survived. Kublai Khan then moved the capital to Peking.

The Jews always intermarried in China, for the Jewish community was never large enough to marry among themselves. However, it was the Chinese custom for the wife to take the husband's religion. This enabled Jewish traditions to be maintained for seven centuries.

The 16th century saw the beginning of the decline of the Jewish community of Kaifeng. Hebrew was not really spoken anymore. Assimilation occurred because Jews spent more time studying for Chinese classics examinations and less time studying Judaism. They also adopted Chinese names. The Jews were known as Wei Wei (meaning "from the West") or a Chinese expression that translated as "the sect that plucks out sinew," in reference to one of the rules of *kashrut*.

This community was first discovered by Christian missionaries at the end of the 16th century. An historic meeting between Jews and a Jesuit missionary took place in June of 1605, and according to Xu, ever since then missionaries and scholars have always sought out the Jews of Kaifeng. At first there was great interest in the Jews among Christians because they believed that these isolated Jews would still possess an original Torah, not changed by rabbis during the Talmudic period, who, they thought, removed references to the coming of the Messiah.

In 1722, Christian missionaries drew a diagram of the old synagogue; it is now used by the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv.

Xu found, to his delight, 59 books written by Chinese Jews of Kaifeng in the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati, where he has studied. One of the books, written in both Hebrew and Chinese 400 years ago, traced 10 generations of a family. In addition, three steles of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries report on their history.

The Kaifeng synagogue was repaired or rebuilt several times until the 19th century, when the last rabbi died and Hebrew was no longer taught. (Hebrew had been taught continuously for 700 years.)

## The Modern Era

Meanwhile, the 19th century saw a westward migration of Jews, especially from Germany, and, between 1820 and 1920, a movement of Sephardi Jews in Mesopotamia eastward to India, Malaysia and China.

After the Opium Wars of the mid-19th century, in which China was defeated by Britain, China was forced to open its doors to Western society. Among others, the Sassoons arrived in Shanghai, liked it, and brought in their friends and relatives. By 1900 there were 700 Jews in Shanghai, along with synagogues, a Jewish cemetery, and ritually-slaughtered poultry. In the 1930's the Sassoons donated millions of dollars to help Jewish refugees from Europe.

Pogroms in Poland and Russia in 1905-1917 brought a new migration of Eastern Europeans to Shanghai. By 1930 there were 4000 Ashkenazic Jews there, who survived by setting up small businesses. They established many facilities and a Jewish press. These Jews were early Zionists. According to Xu, Chinese president Dr. Sun Yat-sen published a letter in 1920 supporting Zionism.

In 1937-39, refugees from Nazi Germany and Austria found all doors closed to them except the doors of Shanghai, the only city in the world that did not require a visa from these Jews. By 1941, some 20,000 of these refugees' lives had been saved.

Another Jewish community came to Shanghai in 1942: all the faculty and students from the renown Mir Yeshiva of Poland. Although Shanghai was occupied by the Japanese by then, the Jews were ghettoized and allowed to study and worship. These scholars were virtually the only ones who survived as a group after the war; the Mir Yeshiva students and teachers were largely responsible for the continuation of Ashkenazic yeshiva learning in the US and Israel after the war.

By 1945, there was a Jewish community in Shanghai numbering 30,000, with its own autonomous government presiding over marriages and burials. Today, Xu says, some Chinese still remember their Jewish neighbors.

Another Jewish community settled in Harbin, in northeastern China, after 1898, when this city was chosen as headquarters of the East China Railway. Many people were brought in from Russia, including Jewish merchants. In 1903 the Jewish population reached 500, in part because the Jews were never discriminated against by the Chinese, as they were by the Russians. Xu notes that, during the Chinese-Russian War of 1904, Jewish soldiers stayed on in Harbin and brought their relatives from Russia. By 1908, Harbin's 8000 Jews enjoyed a better life than they had in Russia.

However, the Japanese invasion of northern China in the 1930's resulted in a diminution of the Jewish community in Harbin. After 1945 most Jews had emigrated to America, Canada, Australia or Israel. By 1950 the majority were gone, and the last synagogue service was held in Harbin in 1956.

## Today

In China today, the descendants of the Jews of Kaifeng pass remnants of this heritage from generation to generation through oral legends, which enable them to keep a sense of Jewish identity. Xu comments that "even today some have a strong sense of Jewish identity," and even list "Jew" as their ethnic group in the official government census, even though such a listing is discouraged (China does not want to encourage ethnic divisions among its huge population.)

Xu estimates that there are 400-500 descendants of Kaifeng Jews in China today.

Xu also reports that in the last 10 years, some Jews have come back to China for business reasons, and those in Hong Kong are not leaving, holding hopes that the business prospects will remain good after China's takeover of the city in 1997. There are 1000 Jewish diplomats and business people

## MY FAMILY TRADITIONS

### The Sons of Joseph and the Diaspora

c 1995 by Melvin J. Laney

*(The author is Kulanu's general counsel. The policy of this newsletter encourages readers to share their family traditions, whether or not proven as factual.)*

Part of the work of Kulanu is to collect the traditions of people who are outside the mainstream of Jewish thought, and thereby expand and enrich the meaning of the Diaspora. To the many other traditions that Rabbi Avichail and Kulanu have collected -- the Ethiopian Jews, the Shinlung Menashe, the Afghan tribes -- I now add the traditions of the Sons of Joseph.

Rabbi Avichail's book, *The Tribes of Israel*, refers to the Sons of Joseph on page 43, and includes a source stating that the Yusuf-Sai (Sons of Josef) are among the bravest of the Afriti families in Afghanistan (page 94). But I believe this is the first report of the history of the Sons of Joseph in Ireland, England and America.

As with all traditions of the Diaspora, whether collected by Rabbi Avichail or by others, there is always the question of how much credence to give them. I make no claim that the traditions of the Sons of Joseph are true. What meaning to give these traditions is a matter for conjecture. I claim only that these traditions were passed down by generations of my ancestors, and that I in turn have passed them on to my children. Unfortunately, historical records to validate these claims go back only a few hundred years.

My ancestors claimed to be descendants of the biblical Joseph who was sold into Egypt. They say Jacob took only two of Joseph's sons for the House of Israel, and gave the birthright of Abram to Joseph's other sons, to live separate and apart from the House of Israel, as Joseph had predicted in his dreams.

My ancestors believed that before the Diaspora the Sons of Joseph visited with the Children of Israel. However, there was continual bickering and enmity between the Children of Israel and the Sons of Joseph. The Sons of Joseph made predictions and the Children of Israel rejected them even as they were made.

Eventually the Sons of Joseph predicted that the Northern Kingdom would be sent into exile. Some of the Sons of Joseph went with the Northern Kingdom so that one day these people could be reclaimed. Eventually the Southern Kingdom was also sent into exile.

My ancestors say that the Sons of Joseph operated trade routes with bases in Egypt, along the coast of Africa, across the Mediterranean, around Spain, and up to the British Isles and Ireland. During the Diaspora they claim the Sons of Joseph settled Jews along these coastal trade routes.

As traders from Egypt, the Sons of Joseph were the natural enemies of Rome. The Laney coat of arms honors their fight against Emperor Maximinus in 311 C.E. in Northern Wales. During this fight Catherine of Alexandria accused the pagan Emperor Maximinus of persecuting the Sons of Joseph because of their religion. The Emperor ordered Catherine broken on torture wheels. The wheels broke, and Catherine was beheaded instead. The Sons of Joseph carried Catherine's body to Mt. Sinai. Later Emperor Justinian I built a tomb for Catherine on Mt. Sinai. When Rome spread the doctrine of Christianity by military force, the Sons of Joseph retreated to their bases in Eire, England and elsewhere, retaliated against Roman shipping, and predicted the eventual fall and rebirth of Rome. It also appears they became Freemasons in their fight for religious freedom.

According to my ancestors, for many generations a branch of the Sons of Joseph transported the King of Spain and his troops to Ire (Ireland). Eventually the King of Spain was defeated and an Irish chieftain married his daughter into

## Be a Kulanu "Activist"!

Readers will find in this issue ideas for trips to India, China, Uganda and Brazil. Kulanu supporters will also be welcomed by developing Jewish communities in Mexico, Peru, Portugal, and other corners of the world.

To earn the hallowed designation of **Kulanu Activist**, you should travel to meet in person some of the communities we are assisting. In many cases, the opportunity of these individuals to meet mainstream Jews from far away is a pleasure that cannot be overemphasized. Isolation, even more than physical need, is a severe problem in many of these "outposts" -- but one that is easily ameliorated.

We regret that Kulanu has no funding available to subsidize trips. Our activists pay their own way. If you wish to travel to a community for the purpose of teaching about Judaism, you might want to talk to your tax adviser as to whether part of the trip would be tax deductible.

If you cannot afford a trip right now, Kulanu has volunteer opportunities for you to consider while you are saving up. Corresponding with individuals in these communities, writing grant proposals, giving talks at synagogues and community groups, writing articles, sitting at a Kulanu table at Jewish festivals -- these activities could enable you to qualify as a **Kulanu Activist** as well! *Bon voyage!*

## Let's Go to India (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 2)

Dara Shikoh when Aurangzeb seized power in 1757. Sarmad was responsible for a translation of the Torah into Persian, and wrote the chapter on Judaism for a book of comparative religion, the *Dabistan*, commissioned by Dara Shikoh. (A reference on Sarmad: Walter Fishel's "Jews and Judaism at the Court of the Mughal Emperors in Medieval India," *Islamic Culture*, 25:105-31.) Also, there is one synagogue in Delhi, whose shammash is a man by the name of Ezekiel Issac Malecar.

I understand that there is a fairly extensive collection of Jewish materials at the National Library in Calcutta -- so a brief stop there might be worthwhile en route to visit the Bnei Menashe in Manipur and Mizoram. (See "Invitation from Manipur" on p. 11 of this newsletter.)

From Calcutta the trip to the community of the Telugu Jews is easy and direct. The Coromandel Express runs from Calcutta down the east coast of India to the city of Vijayawada, which is approximately 45 kilometers from the community. The community lives in the village of Kottareddipalem, which is a kilometer from the town of Chebrolu. Bus service between Chebrolu and Guntur (and between Guntur and Vijayawada) is frequent. I believe it is possible for those interested to stay in the village itself, in the homes of community members. I stayed with Sadok Yakobi's family each time I visited. Those who do stay in Kottareddipalem should be prepared for rather basic accommodation. There is no running water; there are no outhouses; there is generally no electricity. There is a small brick structure next to the synagogue in which hand baths can be taken. I advise that everyone drink boiled or purified water and carry their own drinking water with them when visiting the village -- simply to spare the members of the community the trouble of boiling gallons of water daily. The best months for visiting are November to February.

From Vijayawada the journeys to Cochin and to Bombay are easy. In Bombay I suggest a visit to the Fort Synagogue near the Prince of Wales museum in the Colaba section of the city. The leader of the small congregation is an amiable and knowledgeable man, Freddie Sopher. I spent a memorable evening with him discussing the history of the Iraqi Sephardim in Bombay and western India.



### **Passover Suggestion**

We wish our Kulanu readers a happy Pesach 5756! We are pleased to enclose in this newsletter a flyer containing the Kulanu ritual for Passover we introduced last year to honor the Bnei Menashe. We encourage you to make copies of the flyer to post at appropriate places and to distribute at seders you host or attend.

## **Sons of Joseph (Cont.)**

(cont. from p. 9)

in Southern Eire. In Gaelic the Sons of Joseph were called Dubslaines, "the dark-haired ones of Slaney." Their English surname was Laney.

My ancestors say that the Sons of Joseph frequently acted as spiritual advisers. In the Middle Ages they hoped the Protestant Reformation in England would allow monotheism to be openly practiced again. Benjamin Laney (1591-1675), the personal adviser to Kings Charles I and Charles II, was appointed successively as the Bishop of Petersborough, Lincoln, and Ely, and argued strenuously for religious freedom in the Councils. However, the doctrine of the Trinity once again prevailed and religious freedom was again restricted.

As religious dissenters the Sons of Joseph were some of the first to seek freedom in America. Bassingcourne Laney married Katherine Poling, the daughter of Edmund Poling, and provided for her in his will when they sailed for America with the James town Colony in 1607. Other relatives followed. In 1619 Captain Christopher Laney (Lenne) was elected to the House of Burgesses. Despite their best efforts, religious freedom was once again restricted. In 1670 the Laney's helped found Charles Town Colony to reassert their freedom. They also supported Quaker meeting houses as another way to promote freedom. Many Laney's served during the Revolutionary War. Titus Laney received a retroactive pension of \$120 in 1836 at the age of 102. He claimed he was too ill to work regularly. (Archives, Columbia, S.C.)

In 1784 the state legislature of North Carolina, in general assembly at Newbern, the state capitol, held a hearing on a criminal matter and called Solomon Laney as a witness. Some members of the legislature objected that Laney was a Jew, that he was constantly transporting other Jews to the state, and that he did business with Jews. While Laney admitted bringing Jews to the Carolinas, he insisted that he was a Son of Joseph and not strictly a Jew himself. He demanded the right to testify. A divided general assembly voted to accept Solomon Laney's testimony, but as evidence of their continuing division the official record states that "Mr. Laney, a Jew, was sworn...." The Laney's always accept this distinction with pride.



### **We Need You!**

If you haven't made a donation to Kulanu in the past year, please do so at this time. It's "purge" season, and if we haven't heard from you for a while, you may be dropped from our mailing list.

If there is a mistake in your address, let us know. And, although we hope this couldn't be true, if you no longer want to

### **THEY ARE STILL THERE:**

## **Jews in Ethiopia Yearn for Israel**

*(The following is a letter from a Jewish child in Ethiopia. It was written in Amharic and then translated into English by a teacher at the Beta Israel School in the NACOEJ -- the North American Conference of Ethiopian Jews -- compound in Addis Ababa. It is addressed to Andy Goldman, who ran the compound for NACOEJ for three years and who now oversees its day-to-day activities from Washington.)*

To Dear Brother Andy,

How are you? I miss you. We have not seen you for a long time.

I am in the Beta Israel school. I like school. We are learning the lessons that the teachers are giving us. My father and my mother always tell me to go to school and so I do. I am one of the best students. But I am sad that you are not here.

When we lived in Gondar my father was a farmer and I helped him. When I started in the Beta Israel school here in Addis Ababa I could not read or write and now I am all the way in grade 6.

When we first came from Gondar, our parents used to beg other people to write letters for them to our families in Israel. Now everything is changed. They don't beg. It is us their children who write letters for them now. We bless you and NACOEJ for that because you started our school. You saved us from the darkness of being illiterate.

My father is working in the embroidery and my mother is watching my brothers and sister. But life in Addis is sometimes hard. It is very cold and many have been getting sick from the cold.

Sometimes people hit us and call us Falasha (stranger, alien). I am proud to be a Jew. I like it when people call me Jew, but I do not like to be Falasha. I pray to go to Israel. In Israel I have grandparents, uncles, aunts. I miss them. I want to go to Israel because Israel is the country that God chose and gave to our father, Abraham.

It has been four years since we came to Addis Ababa so we could go to Israel. Our brothers, sisters and others have already left. I day dream my leaving for Israel, and even in the nights I dream the same thing. We always pray, God willing, that He would help those of us who have remained behind here to leave for Holy Israel.

I wish to see Jerusalem.

Name Withheld

*(Tax-deductible contributions to Kulanu can be earmarked to support the wonderful work of NACOEJ.)*

## **Xu Xin, the Man (Cont.)**

(cont. from p. 4)

Xu will lead a tour of Jewish historical sites in China next April (see p. 2). In addition, he is organizing an international academic conference at Nanjing University in October 1996 on Jewish contributions in world civilization. The conference is being co-sponsored by Tel Aviv University and Hebrew Union College.

Xu has had to become an experienced fundraiser to support his projects. One of his favorite causes is seeking living expenses for Chinese students who want to pursue Judaic scholarship abroad. He notes that only 5 percent of the population has been to college, and that they are the ones who will have a "big voice" in world affairs. Students in China are

# LETTERS TO KULANU

## Grateful in Mizoram

We are very grateful to receive your mailed box containing books on Jewish subjects intended for use by children and adults. We, shevet Menashe, will use them at once, especially for children's Sabbath school.

We all express our gratitude to you and all those who donated these materials, especially to the Oakland Jewish Congregation of Queens, NY.

We anticipate and pray to HaShem that the Bnei Menashe may reap benefits from them.

Thanks, Todah Rabbah, and next year in Jerusalem.

Chazan Gideon Rei  
Mizoram, India

*(Editor's note: The Indian community has a vast need for Jewish books. If you have any books to donate or know of a synagogue with surplus books, or would like to earmark a contribution to help pay for shipping, please contact the Kulanu office.)*

## A Chinese Thank-You

I just want to let you know that my visit to your city was very delightful and enjoyable. I do not remember ever having had such a good time in my life elsewhere. I truly felt much honored to be able to meet you and and to talk to Kulanu.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you once again for your hospitality, generosity, and friendship. You are certainly the most caring and sharing people who made all this possible.

I believe there are many things we could do together to bring the Kaifeng Jews back to Judaism. I will certainly do my best to help in the future when needed.

Xu Xin  
Cambridge, Mass

## A Telugu Thank-You

Baruch HaShem. Shalom On behalf of Telugu Jews I thank you for publishing about our poor and needy congregation. And I also thank Jason Francisco in this regard.

As I do not know high level English, I am very sorry that I cannot express my aims and my thanks giving suitable and correct words, with my full heart.

I should and must undergo some short-period training in Torah under any rabbi in the USA (at least one or two months) if any sponsor could come forward to arrange a trip for me for the sake of our congregation and also for the sake of HaShem. In this regard, I need your kind help. I should see the way of worship at present in American synagogues.

Sadok Yakobi  
Andhra Pradesh, India

## Invitation from Manipur

We would be very happy to have you come to visit us and we are looking forward so eagerly for the day when we might see each other.

The State Capitals (Imphal, Manipur and Aizawl, Mizoram) can be visited by you as tourists for five days, provided you can be issued visas by the State Governments and I will be able to arrange for your Imphal trip.

In Imphal, you can stay either in the State Guest House or in one of the two hotels where foreigners used to stay. Since your stay at Imphal will be confined only in plain areas, one day will be enough for sightseeing and another day may be spent in meeting the Menashe Jewish communities of Manipur, who will come from their respective places to Imphal.

I'll be too glad to do anything for your visit to Imphal.

T. Hangshing  
Sadar Hills, Manipur

*(Editor's note: Anyone potentially interested in a Kulanu trip to India should contact the Kulanu office.)*

## Ugandan Comment

The Abayudaya could not imagine the agony of Rabin's death. It is more hurting for a Jew to kill a Jew in this modern world of creating peace. Inform us more about the political situation in Israel.

Uri Katula Williams  
Mbale, Uganda

## Services Offered for Aspiring Converts in Israel

Our organization, the Friends of Righteous Converts in Israel, has been functioning to serve the Bnei Menashe group in Jerusalem. Almost all of them have achieved conversion and are part of the State of Israel. There have been a number of weddings amongst and between group members as well as with Israelis of other ethnic groups. A service was made available for Bnei Menashe to receive advice and guidance on educational and vocational interests. We can be proud of our contribution to the wellbeing, morale, and economic condition of the Bnei Menashe.

There are many individuals from different countries and continents studying in Jerusalem to convert, to join the Jewish people in Israel. We could be of assistance to these aspiring converts just as we tried to be for the Bnei Menashe.

We would like to hear from your readers about whether to broaden our concern for all converts who might wish to call upon us for help and guidance. Please write to the Friends of Righteous Converts in Israel at PO Box 7589, Jerusalem 92428 or call (in Israel) 619-049 or 243-664 or 718-564 to share your opinions.

Elimelech Richman  
President  
Jerusalem

## SUPPORTER APPLICATION

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

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# Rubbing Shoulders with Menashe, Chinese and Ephraimite Jews in Israel

*By Craig Scaletto*

I recently returned from a 2-month visit to Israel. As a supporter of Kulanu, I felt this trip held added significance. In addition to meeting and working with Rabbi Avichail, I was able to make personal contact with many members of the Bnei Menashe, Chinese Jews, and a member of the Telugu Jews of India, known as the Bene Ephraim.

The enthusiasm and commitment of all of these Jews to Israel and Judaism was amazing, and for anyone who has any doubts about the sincerity of these people to Judaism, I challenge the skeptics to spend some time with them.

The reality is that Jews in America, Israel and elsewhere could learn much from the Bnei Menashe, as Jewish groups struggle to find answers on how to instill a sense of Jewishness into today's youth. The Bnei Menashe could serve as the prototype for Jewish pride and commitment. From young to old, their enthusiasm remains tireless.

It was in Jerusalem where I met the first two members of the Bnei Menashe: Samuel Gangte and Sela Allenby. They both were eager to answer questions and were very knowledgeable about the history of the tribe. Later I was able to visit them at their yeshiva. Another member of the Bnei Menashe told me that the Benei Menashe built the Great Wall of China as slaves!

In the short time they have been in Israel, the Bnei Menashe have made much progress. All of them have completed their conversions and some have gone on to the Israeli army, including two in the elite Golani brigade. Many have married Jewish immigrants from other countries. The first Bnei Menashe sabras have also been born.

Samuel expressed a little disappointment in some Israeli youth who seem to lack any Jewish identity, but his hopes remain high as he stresses the importance for him to set an example as a good Israeli citizen.

I asked whether any of the anti-Menashe propaganda and the lack of acceptance on the part of the Israeli government discouraged the Menashe or

caused any regrets. They acknowledged the problem but remained in good spirits as their faith in God and His prophecies assured them that one day all the Menashe will be in Israel. They were also glad to know that Kulanu and many Jews around the world accept and care about them and thus they are not fighting alone.

Yeshua Yacobi is the only member of the Bene Ephraim to immigrate to Israel at this point. Yeshua has also completed his conversion and is looking to the future of his fellow Ephraimites in India. His father Samuel is the head of the community and is currently having a hard time in even obtaining a visa to visit his son in Israel.

In the case of the Ephraim, it is equally sad to hear that the government of Israel is going out of its way to maintain a racist policy of exclusion when it comes to Eastern converts of Jewish descent.

A member of the Chinese Jewish community who wishes to remain anonymous has also experienced difficulties with the government, which he could only attribute to racism.

As a supporter of Kulanu, I want to stress that in the case of the Chinese Jew, the Ephraimite and the Menashe, all found no problems in being accepted by Israeli people, religious and non-religious. Their yeshivas and rabbis were also very accepting.

The problem of racism is clearly isolated to the few people in the government who, unfortunately, hold positions of power.

It is important for Kulanu to become a strong voice within the Jewish community and as more Jews in America and Israel become aware of what is going on, I am sure they will join in the fight to make Israel a nation that accepts Jews and Jewish converts, no matter where they come from.

*(Editor's note: The Shemoneh Esrei prayer "Al HaTzadikim" EQUATES the righteous, the pious, elders, scholars, and righteous converts as worthy recipients of God's compassion. Kulanu urges Israeli government officials to heed a rabbinic tradition that is both generous and egalitarian!)*

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Edited by Karen Primack

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**Kulanu**  
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