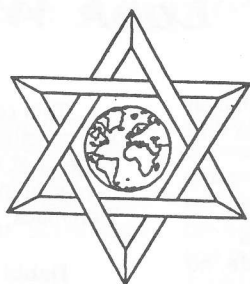


Kulanu



Helping Lost Jewish Communities

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MEETING NOTICE ON P. 6

Autumn 1997

The Lemba and Am Yisrael

By Shmuel Ben Pinchus

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, newspaper correspondent Carel Birkby visited the Lemba in the Northern Transvaal near the Limpopo River (which forms the boundary between South Africa and Zimbabwe). He wrote about this tribe and noted that they were coppersmiths and traders and wondered, "Who were the forefathers of the black Jews?"

The Lemba observe certain customs which are suggestive of a possible Jewish origin: circumcision, avoiding pork, ritual method of slaughter, avoiding eating meat and milk simultaneously, recognition of the new moon, respect for parents, and the method of burial of their dead.

The Lemba Cultural Association was established in 1947 by Mutenda Bulengwa on a farm near a town called Elim in the Northern Transvaal. Bulengwa had worked in the kosher kitchen of Dr. and Mrs. Cohen in the town of Louis Trichard and had noted many similarities between the customs of his own people with that of the Jewish traditions observed by the white owners of the farm. The association meets annually at the same site, and the capital city of the Lemba (and associated Venda tribe) is Thohoyandou.

In a recent article on the Black Jews in the South African *Sunday Life* magazine, Andrew Beattie noted that the Lemba (also called Balungu, "white man"), were the only blacks to have had developed skills in pottery and worked with iron implements prior to the arrival of the white colonists in the Transvaal. In an interview with Professor Mathiva, president of the Lemba Cultural Association, he learnt that members of the Lemba firmly believe that ancient Jewish settlers from Yemen traveled down the coast of Africa to reach the interior of the southern parts of Africa.

The surge of interest in this group was sparked by a recent report by Jenkins and Spurdle on the genetic features of the Lemba that comprise over 35,000 individuals. Their genetic makeup shows many similarities to Ashkenazi Jews (as compared to other black Africans). Genetic traits do not on their own qualify an individual or group for *halachic* acceptance into Judaism. However, this new scientific material does offer some credibility to the claim of the "lost tribes".

What is important is to determine whether the members of the group are interested in learning and adopting a Jewish way of life and becoming part of Am Yisrael. Preliminary discussions with members of Kulanu have indicated a positive response. The Lemba want to learn Hebrew and explore their ancestry and connection to the Jewish people in greater depth.

SAUDADE: Nostalgic Longing

By Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausenbaum

For me, with a Portuguese heritage, the last five years have become a particularly poignant voyage of discovery. For the first time I can talk about my family "secrets" without ridicule. The haunting soulfulness of the Portuguese *Fado* (folk music) reminds me of others like me, struggling to make sense of the secrets from a forgotten past, born out of a people who have almost disappeared, and my *Saudade* (Nostalgic Longing) for the past continues.

Like me, many people throughout the world are discovering their family secrets for the first time. Amongst them have been a priest in the USA, who, on discovering his roots, left the priesthood after 11 years; a grandfather in New Mexico, who, while dying, whispered to his grandson, "We are Jews"; and a community in Portugal that rejoined mainstream Orthodox Judaism after 500 years of isolation. It is estimated that in Brazil 34 million and in Portugal more than half the population are from *anusim* heritage (forced converts from Judaism to Christianity).

The Jews have been a part of the Iberian Peninsula for 3000 years, having arrived there with the Phoenicians, living and trading within organized communities. Judaism flourished as the only monotheistic religion before giving birth to Christianity and later to Islam. The Iberian pagans converted to Judaism readily, as did the people of North Africa. The influence of the Jewish religion, culture and language on the Mediterranean Basin was entrenched during the seven centuries of Carthaginian rule (813 to 146 BCE). Long after their defeat by the Romans, the Punic language (the West Semitic language of Carthage) continued. An interesting theory is that Hebrew might well have been the language of the Mediterranean Basin if the Romans had lost the

(cont., p. 5)

AN IMPORTANT REMINDER!

If you contribute money to the United Way campaign, you can WRITE IN Kulanu as your preferred charity! As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Kulanu can receive United Way contributions that are earmarked for it as follows:

When you receive your United Way appeal, select the "OTHER" category from the list of charities and WRITE IN the name AND address of our organization: Kulanu, 11603 Gilsan St., Silver Spring, MD 20902.

WHAT BETTER CHANUKAH GIFT?

Not only is it unique, Jewish, aesthetically pleasing, educational, and inspirational. Buying it also enables one to support a worthy cause! Chanukah is celebrated December 23-30 this year. What better Chanukah gift than "Shalom Everybody Everywhere!", Kulanu's recently released recording of the music of the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda? (Net proceeds go to the Abayudaya.)

Please note from the order form on page 4 that the recording can now be charged by e-mail on your Visa or MasterCard.

♪ "It is one of the most wonderful, heartfelt and spiritual collections of music that I have ever listened to. The compilation is very exciting, and I would like to introduce it to the congregations where I serve as hazzan and teacher. I am also one of the members of the Robyn Helzner Trio and could see us introducing some of this music into our repertoire." Michael Stein, Washington, DC

♪ "When I first found your site, with the Ugandan Jewish music, I played it in front of my daughters, ages 8 and 2, and they asked to hear it again at least five times! We often listen to it and seem to feel the depth of the voices. It is a moving sound and I felt that the first time I heard it I knew I wanted to publicize them on our Jewish radio show." Shana Linsker, Olympia, Washington

Afraid of the Internet? Look What You're Missing!

By Karen Primack

I can't program our VCR, and my grown children are definitely better versed in computers than I am, but I do manage to use our middle-aged Mac to put out this newsletter. I guess I just overcame my fear of Things Technical because the word-processing features proved to be such a time- and labor-saver.

But whether we will benefit from a word processor or not, there is an even BETTER reason for all of us to get up to date, no matter what our age: **The Internet!**

Senior citizen groups, including the Jewish Council for the Aging, are beginning to push World Wide Web use and teach computer courses so their members can stay in touch with out-of-town friends and relatives, maintain their independence, be informed consumers, avoid isolation, keep mentally active, or just be part of contemporary society.

And there are many more ways Kulanu supporters can benefit from the web. Just keep reading!

Truly a Distinguished Listserv Community!

Kulanu's listserv subscriber roster continues to grow and now numbers some 130, sending messages from 16 countries -- Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, England, France, Ireland, Israel, Mali, Mexico, the Philippines, Russia, Spain, South Africa, and the US.

We include scholars and researchers, at least six rabbis, journalists (including a retired correspondent of *The New York Times*) and several descendants of Crypto-Jews. Our university student and professor subscribers are from at least 10 institutions. The listserv coordinator is **David Turetsky**.

A "Real" Community

One of the regular participants on Kulanu's interactive listserv recently contributed this comment:

"Once again I'm discovering that being involved with 'virtual' Jewish communities -- such as Kulanu -- very much satisfies many of the same needs that 'real' Jewish communities do. I'm still very-much involved in my temple and in other 'real' groups. In some ways, my involvement in Kulanu is MORE dynamic and certainly more regular.

"There are books and issues to discuss, holidays to celebrate, concerns about members, etc. It's NOT entirely a substitute, but for those with few or no other options, I would hope that it can be satisfactory and satisfying and can reflect the ways in which Judaism and being Jewish deals with all of that."

A new subscriber wrote, "Judaism is a very dedicated interest of mine. I am anticipating many hours spent at this site and perhaps some future opportunity for involvement. Well, there goes eating and sleeping!"

And another comment, from a rabbinic subscriber: "Thanks for allowing me to begin to learn about other Jews, most of whom I knew nothing about. Amazing, after so many years of study, how little we know."

And, from another: "It is because of the Internet that I have become more observant and have dug deeper into my Jewish roots. I am glad to be on the Kulanu list -- I live in an isolated area."

Check out the listserv at Kulanu-L@ube.ubalt.edu.

Special Listserv for Anousim

A special listserv has been set up so that descendants of "Marranos" or *Anousim* (forced converts) can communicate about common problems in privacy. The special listserv was conceived by Kulanu activist **Robert Feron**.

"The list will cover topics of interest to people of *anousim* ancestry and those investigating potential Jewish roots, such as genealogy, history, customs, personal stories, religion, and conversion," announced **Mary DeMarco**, the special listserv's coordinator.

To subscribe to the English-language list, send e-mail to anusim-owner@wesleyan.edu including your name, email address and, if possible, a short introductory statement. To subscribe to the Portuguese-language list, send the same, in

Conversion Resource Center

This center provides advice and information to people who are considering converting or have converted to Judaism. Its web page is at <http://www.convert.org>. For questions, contact the center at inform@convert.org or at 74 Hauppauge Rd., Rm. 53, Commack, NY 11725 (516-462-5826).

E-Mail Curriculum for Conversion

Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn has developed a detailed curriculum and reading list for those who wish to study Judaism with a possibility of conversion using the Internet. Although it is an "e-mail" curriculum, personal interaction with Rabbi Cukierkorn is still required at the beginning and end of the course. And it also requires attachment to a Jewish community. The English-language web site is:

<http://www.ubalt.edu/www/kulanu/reform.html>. The Spanish-language web site is:

<http://www.redestb.es/personal/victorino/menu1.html>. For more details of the curriculum (and any possible exceptions!), please e-mail Rabbi Cukierkorn at jjacques@pgh.net. Rabbi Cukierkorn is a founding member of Kulanu and is rabbi at Temple Beth Israel, a Reform congregation in Sharon, Pennsylvania.

Jews of India Home Page

Learn about the history of the Jews of India on a new web site, which will also give updated information about New York activities: <http://members.aol.com/fmoon101/jews.html>

Kulanu in Web Book

The acclaimed new book, *Judaism on the Web* by Irving Green, names Kulanu as one of the top 500 sites on the Jewish Web! Here is journalist **Ruth Silverman's** appraisal of the book:

After much speculation about the new book, Judaism on the Web, I can tell everyone, first-hand--IT'S TERRIFIC! I can't recommend this book highly enough for anyone who wants to know how to find other excellent Jewish sites (and their URL's) on the rapidly expanding Internet.

The impact of the Internet on the Jewish community is only beginning to be felt. Kulanu should be proud to be associated with such an outstanding example of communication and activity.

Kulanu is described in five paragraphs in Chapter One (Jewish History). The book is divided into five sections, Jewish World, Jewish Year, Jewish Culture, Jewish Intellectual Life, Current Issues, and an Appendix--Finding What You Want on the Internet and the World Wide Web.

*It's nice to see a short summary that includes a surprising amount of information on several of the communities in which Kulanu is involved. AND it concludes in a highly complimentary fashion. The website's positive impact can be attributed to the hard work of Kulanu's "web master" **David Turetsky**.*

Judaism On The Web is now in the religion section of bookstores nationwide. Published by MIS Press, its ISBN # is 1-55828-515-6, and the list price is \$16.95. An excellent resource.

An Ingathering of 600,000?

It is anticipated that 600,000 Jews will assemble on the Internet during Jewish Web Week, next February 22-27. Some say it will be the first time so many Jews have acted together in one effort since Sinai.

Conceived by Martin Kaminer and adopted at a conference at Brandeis University last June, the 613 websites to be included (out of a total of 5000 Jewish sites) will run the gamut from the four "movements" of Judaism to yeshivas to the UJA, to groups in Israel and Europe.

Kaminer notes that for many assimilated Jews contact with the Jewish Internet is often a first step toward interest in Judaism, and that 85 percent of all American Jewish homes with children are linked to the Web.

Jewish Genealogical Info

A very focused group for Jewish genealogical research is Jewishgen, whose web site is <http://www.jewishgen.org> and whose listserv is at listserv@apple.ease.lsoft.com

A Visit to Portuguese Crypto-Jews -- 80 Years Ago!

By Mark L. Berch

(Editor's note: The author, a patent examiner residing in Silver Spring, Maryland, happened to be reading a 1926 copy of The Menora Journal and came across an article about Samuel Schwartz's 1917 trip to Belmonte. It's not unusual to hear about contemporary visits to the Crypto-Jews of Belmonte, but now we can compare visits occurring 80 years apart.)

In 1917, the Polish Jew Samuel Schwartz set out to Belmonte in northern Portugal to investigate the possibility of so-called "Marranos" remaining in Iberia. You might think that the initial problem would be determining whether these inhabitants really were Jews, but his first problem was just the opposite. It was the womenfolk, especially the older women, who presided over the religious rites and led (from memory) the prayers. But they had no awareness of Jews or Judaism outside of their Marrano villages, nor any knowledge of the Hebrew language. What few Hebrew words that were scattered in their prayers were usually more or less deformed, of unknown meaning to them, and were generally assumed to be Latin. Add to that the fact that Schwartz knew none of their Portuguese prayers, and the inbred Marrano suspicion, and the result was that Schwartz was absolutely unable to persuade them that he was, in fact, a Jew.

Finally, the oldest matriarch asked him to recite a prayer in the Hebrew language. Though he could see no point, he recited the *Shema*. At the word "*Adonai*", the women touched their eyelids with their fingers. He was immediately accepted as a Jew, for he had uttered God's name. The power of prayer indeed!

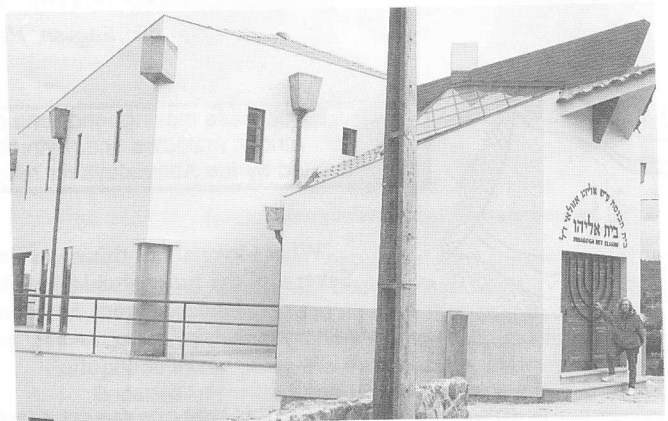
He investigated this community and seven others. He found the Marranos to have striking Semitic features. Here he found families who considered themselves "*judeus dos quatro costados*" --- Jews on four sides --- i.e. with parentage entirely free of mixed marriage. Some had Christian last names, such as Cruz (Cross), just as Christian Portugal had families named Cohen and Maimon. The Marranos were mostly artisans (such as tinsmiths), small merchants and small manufacturers. Marrano intellectuals were lawyers, magistrates, professors, journalists, public officials, actors and doctors. A number were army officers who had fought in WWI. In Covilhan he found the textile industry almost entirely Jewish --- just as in Lodz, Poland. His very rough estimate was "at least 10,000 Marrano families."

The pressures of secrecy and effects of isolation had produced a very restricted form of Judaism. Objects which could betray --- *shofar*, *tallit*, *lulav*, *t'fillin*, *siddur*, *sukkah* -- were totally unknown. Circumcision "is now totally unknown to the great majority of Marranos." Belief in a return to Zion and in the Messiah remained. They did not eat fish lacking scales, or rabbit. Pork was avoided on holy days and in the weeks preceding Passover and Yom Kippur. There was no ritual slaughter, but a prayer was said prior to slaughter (and prior to meals); meat was salted and thoroughly bled. Meat was forbidden on Sabbath and Holy Days, perhaps a remnant of the loss of ritual slaughter; they were astounded to learn of the heresy of Jews in other places eating meat on such days.

On holy days, they gathered in small groups and prayed three times in Portuguese. The leader, usually a woman, recited, and the others repeated in a low voice. The men covered the head with a linen napkin, which Schwartz took to be remnant of a *tallit*. He noticed that the Psalms were almost completely removed from their liturgy, which he attributed to the fact that spies from the Inquisition would recognize them.

This fear affected other holidays as well. Since spies would be watching carefully during the first two days of Passover, no *matzah* was eaten then. Not until the third night was the Passover feast observed and *matzah*, called *pao-santo*, ("holy bread") eaten. The day was selected as the 14th day after the first new moon of April, as they lacked a Jewish calendar. Anyone who failed to refrain from eating pork during the 30 or 40 days prior to Passover was barred from the Passover feast;

The *seder* ritual itself was unknown. Instead, they gathered in a room specially whitewashed and set with separate dishes. A white cloth was set on the floor, and all Marranos were dressed exclusively in white. In white basins, flour and water were kneaded and prayers recited. A small ball of dough was consigned to the fire (perhaps from both the burning of *hametz* and the laws of *hallah*). If the ball detonated in the oven, this miracle was taken as a sign of divine favor. If it failed, others rushed to help with supplications, until everyone had been countenanced with an explosion. They then embraced and congratulated each other, and gaily set about to bake the unleavened dough.



Bet Eliahu, dedicated in Belmonte in December 1996, 79 years after Schwartz's visit. (Photo by Manuel Glassman)

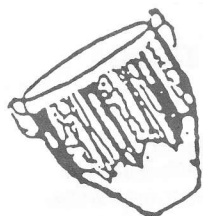
While these were "poorly baked and no doubt rather indigestible," Schwartz considered them to be made with true devotion, and closer to the original *matzah* than the current "machine turned concoctions." Any leftover *matzah* could not be eaten outside of Passover and was preserved or burned. No work was done during Passover week; they had picnics, excursions, dances and thrice-daily prayer. It was a time of fraternity and gaiety with its own rituals, such as a reenactment of the Red Sea crossing, and was the most important of the Marrano festivals.

The Sabbath was also observed, although a complete abstinence from work was seen only in the four or five Sabbaths preceding Passover and Yom Kippur. On Friday evening a Shabbat olive oil lamp was lit, using special wicks prepared only by the most pious, usually older women. Saturday meals consisted of cold fish and vegetables. Sabbath ended with the first stars, but *havdalah* was unknown.

Yom Kippur was called *Dia Grande* (Great Day) or *Dia Puro* (Pure Day); the latter Schwartz takes to be a corruption of "Kippur." It was celebrated on the 11th, not 10th of Tishrei, presumably to throw off the spies. On Yom Kippur eve homes were illuminated with lamps in remembrance of the dead, a full fast was observed for those 10 and older, and *t'filla*, lasting all day, included a prayer "for the salvation of our brothers who are prisoners of the Inquisition." They pardoned each other's offenses and effected a general reconciliation. At the end, a prayer was said for the first star seen, bread was chewed but then thrown into a fire, and a meatless meal, prepared the previous afternoon, was eaten.

The week following Yom Kippur was considered a holiday, perhaps the last remnant of Sukkot. There was also a Feast of Esther, but of the remaining holidays, nothing remained. On the 25th day after the New Moon of December a "Little Noel" was observed, which may have been a vestige of Hanukkah or of "Nittel Night", a German-Jewish Christmas eve celebration.

Marriages were celebrated in the home. The formula "*Hare et Mekudeshet...*" was preserved, but the *chuppah* was



KULANU

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—David Shneyer, Judaist, cantor, founder and director of Am Kolel Judaic Resource Center

On this tape one can get a taste for Jewish music in a refreshing flavor unlike any other in the world.

We've had fun trying out one of these melodies in our synagogue!

—Ethan Seidel, rabbi of Tifereth Israel Congregation, Washington, DC, piano graduate of Oberlin Conservatory of Music

ABAYUDAYA

The history of Abayudaya dates from 1919, when an eastern Uganda governor, Semel Kakungulu, read the Bible and realized nothing but Judaism from his study. He and his followers self-converted, and a core of 500 has maintained their commitment to Judaism up to today, despite severe impediments, including extreme poverty and the anti-Semitism of Idi Amin. In June 1995 a Kulanu teaching and fact-finding delegation visited the Abayudaya in Uganda and found a community with a deep understanding of and commitment to Judaism. Kulanu is assisting the Abayudaya with school education and Jewish education in preparation for formal conversion. PROCEEDS OF THIS RECORDING GO TO THE ABAYUDAYA.

KULANU is a nonprofit organization of Jews from varied backgrounds and practices dedicated to helping lost and dispersed remnants of the Jewish people and assisting those who wish to (re)join the Jewish community. For further information, contact KULANU at 11603 Gilsan St., Silver Spring, MD 20902, tel. 301-681-5679; fax 301-681-1587; Kulanu@ubmail.ubalt.edu; <http://www.ubalt.edu/www/kulanu>.

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SAUDADE -- Nostalgic Longing (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 1)

war at Carthage! As Max I. Dimont once wrote so aptly, "The furniture in the western world is Grecian, but the house in which western man dwells is Jewish."

That Portugal may have been Jewish before becoming Catholic helps explain why the first 11 printed works in Portugal were written in Hebrew, the first being the "Pentateuch". The Moors who conquered the Iberian Peninsula did so with the help of the Jews, who welcomed them by "opening the cities' gates". Many Jews from the Iberian Peninsula who had gone to North Africa joined the Moors and the Jewish Berbers fighting together under the crescent to help conquer the Iberian Peninsula. So began a period known as the Golden Age for Jews, Muslims and Christians alike.

In Portugal, the oldest country in western Europe, her borders unchanged for 800 years, there was hardly a noble or aristocratic family that was free of Jewish ("tainted") blood. Important positions -- physicians, lawyers, writers, navigators and explorers in the Americas and Africa, financiers and army personnel -- were occupied by *Conversos*. Much of the financing in Europe and the New World was controlled by Portuguese *Conversos*. The Spanish (and others) were known to complain that you could not do business unless you had a "Portuguese" partner ("Portuguese" being synonymous with "Jewish").

Portugal is often described as having a rich and romantic past. For me, it is painful and tragic. Although I was baptised in the Catholic Church, I converted to Orthodox Judaism, the religion of my forefathers, almost 30 years ago and often still experience the frustration, humiliation and shame suffered by my family (and others) for centuries. My very own origins, history and culture have been effectively obliterated and it is, for me, a continuing and haunting loss.

My cousin, who died recently, was a devout Catholic but had requested a plain box and a simple burial. There was to be no adornment, no jewellery, no rosary.

My grandmother, whose name I bear, was thought to be odd in the village where she found secrecy and anonymity because once a year (on the Day of Atonement) she used to disappear for a whole day and night. It is with pride that I remember my grandmother Rufina, who in spite of the danger to her life, managed to keep her faith. How pleased she would have been had she known her humiliation had not been in vain. That today, many years later, her granddaughter (Rufina) observes the *antepura* (Yom Kippur, Day of Atonement) openly as a Jewess of Portuguese heritage.

Whenever I visit Portugal, a feeling of *deja vu* overcomes me -- remnants of the past remain, of the period when Jews dominated life in Portugal. Saturday is still called *Sabado* (Sabbath) and Sunday (Domingo) is the first day of the week. A town outside Lisbon sells pastries packed in blue and white paper decorated with a Magen David. In Madeira, art and craft shops also feature this emblem. This beautiful island also knew fear and became a hiding place for many Jews. Unlike the Jews of some places in Portugal, the Jews of Madeira did not manage to sustain their religious identity. Today they are devout Catholics as once they were devout Jews, and the Jewish cemetery lies forgotten, neglected and in ruin. The irony is that the Jews as a people had been in Portugal long before those who expelled and persecuted them.

The mystery and tragedy of History continues: Portuguese babies often sport a dark gray or blue birthmark on the lower or upper back or leg. These stains remain some months and often years before fading. They are common in Oriental and Sephardi Jews to this day and if seen on a Portuguese baby, hint at a *Converso* origin. The marks are called Mongolian spots but are better labelled Semitic or sacral spots and are often dismissed as "family" birth marks.

On the 17th March 1989, the president of Portugal, Mario



Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausenbaum

decline of Portugal to the "expulsion" and persecution of Portugal's Jewish citizens. There had been no expulsion, only the forced conversion en masse of the Jews of that country. It is this important fact in history, often ignored, that is responsible for most Portuguese today being the descendants of Jews.

Because of my heritage I have a desire to make my local (South African) Portuguese community aware of the history they were never taught but often guessed at. Many of South Africa's 800,000 Portuguese descendants have some awareness of, and often a pride in, their possible Jewish heritage, although it is seldom discussed in the predominantly Catholic community. I plan to organise a number of programs using Kulanu slide shows on Portugal, Brazil, Peru and Mexico to make my fellow descendants aware of our secret Jewish history. At the moment I have a local radio station interested in having a call-in talk show on Crypto-Judaism in Portugal.

By getting the local Portuguese community involved and interested in our shared history we could also possibly generate some funding for the Jewish cemetery in Madeira, at present at risk of vandalism, and in total neglect. I hope to be in Madeira in the spring of 1998 to collect budget figures for the restoration of the Jewish cemetery.

When looking at a map of Portugal, it is easy to see that the main centres of the Inquisition -- Lisbon, Evora and Coimbra -- formed the heart of the country, the heart that destroyed its own people. Yet Portuguese Judaism miraculously continues, especially in the community of Belmonte in northeast Portugal, where Crypto-Jews, in December 1996, rejoined mainstream Orthodox Judaism after 500 years of secrecy and fear. Living and hiding in the charming town, high in the Serra da Estrela (Mountain of Stars), they managed with faith and perseverance to maintain some part of their religion all this time. As is often stated, they were Jews in all but name and Christians in nothing but form. A prayer said by Crypto-Jews on entering a church featured the secret words: "I come here to worship neither wood nor stone, I come only to worship you, Highest Lord, who it is that governs us."

A Request to Those with E-Mail

If you are on the Kulanu mailing list (you're on it if you regularly receive this newsletter) AND if you have electronic mail, please send your e-mail address to DiZeller@aol.com. This will enable Diane Zeller, our Communications Director, to

KULANU BRIEFS

Next Kulanu Meeting: Dec. 25

The next Kulanu meeting will be held on December 25 at 12 noon at the Primack home, 1217 Edgevale Rd., Silver Spring, Maryland. Call 301-565-3094 for directions. Speaker to be announced. Dairy/pareve potluck brunch!

Jason Lindo Returns -- After 500 Years

Jason Lindo shared his joy on the Kulanu listserve with the following message:

Thank you everyone for your good wishes. Today I went before the Bet Din. When the rabbis called me back in to present me with my certificate of conversion, my rabbi blessed me and then said, "Jason, after 500 hundred years of exile for your family, welcome home. It is a miracle that against all the odds, a small strand of Judaism remained. Today your exile has ended." I cried. Tomorrow morning I go to the *mikvah*.

When I told my cousin, who is our *chazzan*, that I was surprised how emotional I got, he said, "I'm not, after all, you received your Jewish soul." That pretty much encapsulates how I feel. I now hope I can live up to the good example you all have set in Kulanu; and that I can help other Portuguese *anousim* find their way back home.

We're Still Growing

Diane Zeller, Kulanu's Director of Communications, reports that at latest count Kulanu supporters on our mailing list reside in 20 countries, on six continents. Those represented are Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, France, Ghana, Greece, India, Israel, Kenya, Namibia, Mali, Mexico, Mozambique, Poland, Peoples Republic of China, Russia, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Please let Diane know if there is a change in your address.

If you wish to continue receiving the newsletter, please remember to donate to Kulanu at least annually.

India Facts

*In India, the Jewish literacy rate is 99.9%, compared to 46% among non-Jews.

*ORT India offers complimentary tours to 40 Jewish sites in Bombay and kosher meals cooked in India's only kosher kitchen. (ORT can be reached at 68 Worli Hill Road, Worli, Mumbai-400018, INDIA (tel, 4962350 or 4968423, fax 4968457 or 3647308, email jhirad@glasbm01.vsnl.net.in).

**Kol India*, a quarterly publication of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of Bombay, which includes information such as the above facts, may be ordered by sending a check for \$10 (by registered airmail) requesting a subscription to *Kol India*, to the American Joint Distribution Committee, 3 Rodef Shalom, 23 Dadoji Konddev Road, Byculla, Mumbai 400 027, India.

More Music from India

Sunrose Cassettes of India will soon release two audio cassettes of Bene Israel liturgy, "Shabbath Semiroth" and "Tehelim". For order information, contact Nora Talker, Sunrose Cassettes Co., 4/270 Abhruday Nagar, Mumbai 400 033, India.

Visiting Jewish Morocco

Richard Gold, a USAID economist who has worked in Morocco, has donated to Kulanu a 21-page unpublished monograph on the Jewish sights of Morocco, including history and background. "Morocco is the only country in the Arab world both rich in Jewish history and with a living Jewish community...Only by seeing Morocco through Jewish eyes can one understand the deep attachment of the Moroccan Jewish diaspora to their homeland," he has written. Gold has given us permission to

A Chapter in South Africa?

Rufina B. Silva Mausebaum of Johannesburg would like to form a Kulanu chapter in her area. If you have friends or relatives in South Africa who are interested in Kulanu issues, please have them contact her at rufina@netactive.co.za or PO Box 85359 Emmarentia, Johannesburg 2029 South Africa.

Of Portuguese-Jewish ancestry, Rufina is currently working to raise awareness and money for the neglected Jewish cemetery in Madeira.

Elderhostel Is Really Up on Things!

Elderhostel has just run its second solidly booked tour of Jewish Heritage in Iberia. The 20-day program of lectures and travel in Portugal and Spain included visits to Tomar, Castelo de Vide, Cordoba, Toledo and Girona. For information about future trips for folks over 55, contact Elderhostel International at 75 Federal St., Boston, MA 02110-1941 (tel. 617-426-7788).

Fein Writes on Brazil

"Backing Up 500 Years" is the title of Judith Fein's latest article about Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn's work with Brazilian Marranos. It appears in the August/September *Hadassah Magazine*.

This follows her article, "A Journey to Hidden World," in the Summer 1997 issue of *The Jewish Traveler* on Cukierkorn's 1996 tour to the Jewish sights of Brazil.

Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies

Readers interested in Crypto-Jews have much to gain by joining the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies and receiving their excellent newsletter, *HaLapid*. To join the SCJS, send \$20 to Arthur Benveniste, 333 Washington Blvd. #336, Marina Del Rey, CA 90292.

Off to Mozambique

Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn has received a grant from The Schermer Trust to cover a fact-finding and teaching trip next summer to Mozambique, where an estimated 40 families who are descendants of European Jews live. He also hopes to extend his trip to include contacts with the Lemba and with descendants of Portuguese Crypto-Jews in South Africa.

A Ladino Film Discovery

Wandering down the street in Manhattan, two Kulanu enthusiasts came upon a commercial movie theater showing the film *Like a Bride (Novia que te Vea)*. Since the publicity stated that the film was in Ladino and Spanish, with English subtitles, they of course decided to see it. Directed by Guita Schaffer, the film portrayed the story of two Jewish girls in Mexico in the 1960s -- one from an observant Ladino-speaking Sephardi family from Turkey, the other an Ashkenazic Jew whose family had assimilated into Mexican society. The girls meet in a Zionist youth group, and later, as adults, discuss the paths they have taken. The filmgoers were unable to learn when or where the film was produced. They say the movie may not be a cinema masterpiece, but that it is well done and certainly a must for Kulanu types!

Distinguished Panel at Library of Congress

Kulanu should certainly be proud of three of its supporters who performed expertly in their roles on the Library of Congress's panel on Crypto-Jews, offered as part of the agency's observance of Hispanic Heritage Month on Oct. 13.

Ana Kurland conceived of and implemented the program, which featured Prof. Regina Igel discussing some facets of Portuguese Crypto-Jewish history and modern problems, and Jonina Duker, who addressed the challenges of Crypto-Jews

KULANU BRIEFS (CONT.)

David Gitlitz, author of the award-winning book "Secrecy and Deceit: The Lives of the Crypto-Jews", also appeared on the excellent panel. (The book most recently won the 1997 Lucy Dawidowicz Prize in Jewish History.) We trust he will soon be an "official" Kulanu supporter, too!

New England Activity

Steve Gorban and the group "Sepharad 92 The Next 500 Years" is uncovering links among New England Jews, Portuguese, Azoreans, Madeirans and Cape Verdeans. By bringing out the shared "Saudade" (nostalgic longing) from the historical links established during the exile in Portugal and its colonies during the Inquisition, and exposing the Ladino language and songs brought from Spain, both the Portuguese and Jewish communities are realizing their closeness. Gorban says, "Through Kulanu, *All of Us* can accomplish the retelling of history, while at the same time make a better present and future through a more informed understanding of who we are and where we come from." The hope is that people who feel this connection will be encouraged to come back to their Jewish roots, or at least be made aware of this history.

Future programs will feature reports on synagogue and cemetery restorations in the Portuguese colonies, performers such as noted Sephardi singer Judy Frankel, and speakers such as Dr. David Gitlitz and Dr. Richard Lobban.

Gorban encourages Kulanu supporters and other interested people in New England to become part of this active group. Contact him at sgorban@juno.com or call (508) 997-7006. His mailing address is: Steve Gorban, 144 Huntington Ave., No. Dartmouth, MA 02747.

A Data Base of Jews in Shanghai

As one of the 20,000 mainly Western European Jews who survived the Holocaust by making their way to Shanghai, Walter H. Silberstein has spent the last six years trying to keep track of and arrange reunions for his Shanghai cohorts. He has managed to set up an address data base of over 900 former "Shanghaianders" which he is willing to share with others trying to locate a long lost friend or relative. He can be contacted at 826 Lombard St., Philadelphia, PA 19147, phone 215-925-0116; whs@mail.med.upenn.edu.

Hantman Teaching

Kulanu archivist Joseph Hantman is teaching a six-session course on "Little Known Jewish Communities Around the World" this autumn at the Saul Bendit Adult Institute in Bethesda, Md. Topics will include the unique Jewish communities in India, Crimea, China, Ethiopia, and Uganda, as well as the Ten Lost Tribes and the Khazars. At the same time, he will be teaching an eight-session class at the JCC of Greater Washington on "World Jewish Currents," which includes the role of emerging Jewish communities in Africa, India and South America.

Gifts to Uganda

Through the largess of a group that calls itself "The Disenchanted Jews of New Mexico," the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda will receive by airmail a large package that includes school supplies, a family *tallit*, a History of the Jewish People, a menorah with candles, and original Jewish jewelry. The group selected the Abayudaya as recipients of its charity donation for the New Year "because everyone in our group was touched by their story and their songs."

The Lemba Make Headlines

The cover story of a major South African Sunday news magazine, *Sunday Life*, features a four-page article by Andrew Buthe, a historian, on the Lemba, a group of people who practice Judaism in South Africa. The article discusses the Lemba's origins, beliefs, and practices.

"South Africa's Black Jews." The story appeared in the September 14, 1997, issue of *Sunday Life Magazine*, which is carried in three major South African newspapers.

A New York Chapter -- At Last!

The October 26 kickoff meeting of the Greater New York chapter of Kulanu was an outstanding success, attracting an overflow crowd in the Manhattan apartment of Irwin and Elaine Berg. Organized by Gladys Schwartz and Kathleen Teltsch, it attracted new faces as well as well-known activists including Bene Israel leader Romiel Daniel, China writer Ray Kaplan, Peru activist Rabbi Myron Zuber, Crypto-Judaic listserve coordinator Mary DeMarco, Florida organizer Yaakov Gladstone, Timbuktu photographer Josh Klein, American Jewish World Service official Bruce Cohen, and Kulanu vice presidents Barbara and Julie Shair -- to name a few! Guest speaker was Schulamith Halevy.

The next meeting will be held in January. For meeting information (after Dec. 15), please call 212-889-7093 or 201-696-2941 or 212-724-9887.

Photographs Needed

Judith Weiss Cohen, editor of *RI Jewish Historical Notes*, is seeking photographs of Crypto-Jews from Brazil, Portugal, Cape Verde, and the Azores for a forthcoming publication. She can be contacted at the R. I. Jewish Historical Assoc., 130 Sessions St., Providence, RI 02906.

New Sephardi Publication

David Hirsch, Middle East bibliographer at UCLA's research library, highly recommends *NASAWI News*, a new publication of the National Association of Sephardic Artists, Writers, and Intellectuals. Included are articles on *anusim*, Jewish multiculturalism, and Hirsch's recent trip to Jewish communities in Iran. Subscriptions are \$25 per year, \$35 for two years. For further info, contact editor Jordan Elgrably, Ivri-Nasawi, 1033 N. Orlando Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90069 (tel 213-650-3157; fax 213-650-3146).

Mazel Tov!

*To Rabbi Richard and Barbara Schachet of Nevada on the marriage of their daughter Lori.

*To David Turetsky on his appointment as Assistant Professor of Information and Quantitative Sciences at The Merrick School of Business at the University of Baltimore. He will continue as the Kulanu Listserve coordinator.

Visit -- and "Adopt" -- a Community

It commonly happens that a community becomes adopted by one or more Kulanu friends and the attachment becomes tight and life-long. One of the Kulanu *chaverim* has adopted the community in Trujillo and Lima, Peru, and has been working almost continuously to help. One such help: to have the principal rabbi of Lima recognize the as-yet-unconverted community. Until he does, there can be no *bet din* that would permit them to make *aliyah* to join their kin in Israel, mostly in Elon Moreh.

It would be wonderful if each of us could travel to a community, develop friendships, and become an activist for the community. This is absolutely necessary since Kulanu has no paid secretariat to do these things. We are all volunteers. If not us, nothing.

If anyone is going to Peru (or one of our other communities in Mexico, Uganda, India, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Brazil, Mali, Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Africa or China) for any reason or has a friend or relative going, do not let an opportunity pass for bolstering those who practice Judaism with faith and love. They are often considered rejects by surrounding communities.

LETTERS TO KULANU

A Zimbabwe Congregation

Kindly convey our gratitude to the New West End and Central London synagogues who donated *siddurim*, and the Pinchus Memorial Fund. It is good just knowing we have some friends or fellow Hebrews who can think of us whilst being so far from us.

We have been having a lot of European Jews visiting, including a few from Israel and Morocco. It is good to find that so many people coming from so many different cultural and racial backgrounds are all in unison insofar as keeping the ancient spiritual traditions of our forefathers is concerned.

We are at the moment involved in a project of extending our tabernacle which has become small particularly for the major festivals, when all the Zimbabwean Jews of African origin gather. We have just completed moulding thousands of bricks and start building in the ensuing weeks. This project is costing us a lot of money which the congregation are contributing and we will welcome any form of assistance from fellow Jews. We are raising the cash (15,000 pounds) bit by bit as we build.

We also would appreciate books for learning Hebrew and on Judaism, and *tallitot*, *mezuzot*, and skullcaps.

May HaShem be with you.

Rabbi Ambros Makuwaza

(Editor's note: Religious articles may be sent to Rabbi Makuwaza at Temple Bethel Congregation, Rusape No. 1 Tabernacle, PO Box 207, Rusape, Zimbabwe. Tax-deductible contributions to Kulanu may be earmarked for the synagogue expansion.)

A Zimbabwe Congregant

I'm a 40 year old Zimbabwean (Black) and am a member of the Rusape Congregation of Temple Bethel, comprising local Africans of Hebraic origin and adherent of prophetic Judaism. We descend from the ancient House of Israel and I am doing my own research into our history, culture, and gathering proof that we do indeed descend from the House of Israel. Our leader or shepherd is Rabbi Ambrose Makuwaza.

I am informed your organization helps Jews in Africa and other countries. Most of our congregation are poor and would appreciate any help from fellow Jews. In my individual capacity I need a typewriter and a simple computer for my research, and musical instruments particularly saxophones, trumpets, guitar and an organ. For my research I need to do a lot of traveling to Ethiopia, lower Egypt, Uganda, Israel and perhaps even America.

Shalom,

Shlomo Bothwell Guwazah

(Tax-deductible contributions to Kulanu may be earmarked for Mr. Guwazah's research into this Jewish community's origins.)

An Indian Yom Kippur

The essence of Kulanu is alive and well in New York. Here I was, sent by my job to the Big Apple for three months, during the High Holidays yet. Going to a "routine" service without knowing anyone was not an exciting prospect. So, I thought about what I had read in those exciting newsletters my wife edits and realized that there is a Bene Israel group in New York. As you know, these are Jews from India, whose Jewish ancestry goes back many centuries. (Coincidentally, I attended a Bene Israel *bris* in Bombay several years ago.)

So, Karen and I, along with our daughter Gretchen, attended remarkable Bene Israel Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur services at the Village Temple, near our hotel. The *machzor* was a Portuguese-Spanish one, and every prayer was recited at least once. The melodies were often very different from anything we had ever heard. Only the Kol Nidre prayer was chanted in a familiar Western melody -- at the beginning; it quickly changed to a more Indian mode. The congregational participation was dramatic. Although there were no more than 100 people, all followed and participated, including the women. Men and women sat on separate sides of the small chapel, without a men's and women's section, as is the case in many synagogues.

The Yom Kippur services started at 7:30 a.m. and continued, without a break, through *Ne'ilah*, ending at about 7:15 p.m. The tireless leader was Romiel Daniel, known for his beautiful recordings of Bene Israel music (see below). He honored me with the first *aliyah* during the first Torah service. The *haftarah* trope was extremely melodic, and much of the *haftarah* was rendered with the leader and congregants singing the text responsively!

At the end of the service, the entire congregation broke the fast together with grape juice and a plastic container of Indian pastries. Wonderful!

Aron Primack

Silver Spring, Maryland

(Editor's note: Since the Bene Israel population in India has decreased to about 6000 -- compared with a peak of 30,000 -- Romiel Daniel produced two recordings to preserve the Yom Kippur and Shabbat melodies that have been passed down from generation to generation. The audio cassette "Yom Kippur & Selichoth Melodies of the Bene Israel Jews of India" is available for \$12, while the CD "Shabbat Shalom from India" costs \$15 [prices include postage and handling]. Send checks in the name of Romiel Daniel to him at 95-19 64th Road, #19D, Rego Park, NY 11374-3143.)

Rabbi Zuber's Work in Peru

Recently I read an article on the Kulanu website by Rabbi Zuber about the Jews from Cajamarca, Peru, and was really touched by the facts he narrated. I myself am a Peruvian-born Jew, and in a way part of that community that discriminated against those people on their arrival to Lima. That fact couldn't be more true.

They arrived seeking to participate in the rituals of the Sefaradi shul, at the time when I was studying there for my bar mitzvah. Just the sight of them, sitting in a secluded corner and watched sourly by all the other participants, filled me with a great deal of confusion. They prayed more devoutly than us, they never spoke during prayer, and they knew far better than us all the chants. But because they were different, they were set apart.

That image left a scar that I haven't been able to heal. After my bar mitzvah, I stopped going to the shul and slowly left the life inside the Jewish community in Lima. I have lived outside Peru for three years already (right now in Madrid, Spain) and I don't feel I'm missing anything. The people I grew up surrounded by are more concerned about car brands and fur clothes than helping a fellow Jew. And seeing it from afar, it seems even worse. I want to express my gratitude to Rabbi Zuber for all the help he has given to this people. Maybe Jews like Rabbi Zuber are what we all should look up to.

Allan Batievsky

Madrid, Spain <allanbat@arrakis.es>

Stan Klein's Reading

I read Stanley Klein's Reading (see p. 10 of this newsletter) on a radio program (live, call-in secular radio) in Houston this morning, and we spent three hours talking about the issues of religious freedom and forced conversion in honor of the *anousim*. There was an ex-Catholic Priest (who is a regular on the program one or two times per month) who was supposed to have joined us, but he called in and said after listening for an hour that he didn't want to "chime in" because we were doing so well without his input. I also read excerpts from an article published in the magazine *Jerusalem Reports* (from Jan. 1996) about the Catholic Church's formal renunciation of the Inquisition and their historic condemnation of the Jews. The whole thing was very provocative (intellectually) and we got LOTS of callers and good discussion going. Thank you Stan, for a very wonderful reading!

Yaffah Batya DaCosta

Dallas, Texas

Prayers of Portuguese *Anousim* in Contemporary Brazil

By Schulamith C. Halevy

(Excerpted from a talk given before the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies in August 1997; Halevy is an Israeli scholar and poet specializing in contemporary Crypto-Judaism.)

Anywhere Spanish or Portuguese is spoken, there remain descendants of Jews forced to convert to Catholicism during the Iberian persecutions of the 14th and 15th centuries, who have maintained their Jewish heritage or some form of Jewish identity. Such *anousim* can be found today on the Iberian Peninsula and throughout the former Spanish and Portuguese dependencies -- from Brazil to Manila.

After a lecture I gave in Chicago, I was approached by Iunis, a Brazilian man who sought confirmation for his feeling that his family is descended of Jews. From what he related to me, I was unable to offer any confirmation of Jewish heritage. Not deterred, Iunis returned with his mother, Dorvina.

Dorvina, herself, gave no credence to her son's suspicion. Dorvina's family, which originated in northern Portugal, had been in Brazil for some three centuries.

At first, our conversation revealed relatively little by way of crypto-Jewish practices; just a few traditions having to do with death, burial and mourning which echoed possible Jewish customs. As we were discussing prayers related to death and mourning, I showed her a copy of prayers recorded from *anousim* in Belmonte, Portugal (from Maria Antonieta Garcia's book). Dorvina looked astonished and said these prayers were oral, and are not supposed to be published. In a moment, she was marking which of the prayers were familiar and which were not. She explained that the prayers were kept hidden from the priest and that she never heard nor saw any prayers of this nature in the convent. Dorvina further indicated that there was a special way to say these prayers, and chanted some into my tape-recorder, with her eyes closed, making the same gestures and intonation as do Jewish women in Belmonte, Portugal, today.

Even when seeing the prayers in print, Dorvina did not immediately understand that these were recorded as specifically Jewish prayers. She was never told that she was of Jewish extraction, and the "quaint" customs she remembers from her childhood did not come with any religious explanation.

Dorvina came to me to accommodate her son, and did not at all think that there was a Jewish background in her family. When I asked Dorvina why the priest was not allowed to know about these oral prayers she reminded me that there was an Inquisition in Brazil. This seemingly anachronistic anxiety is very common among *anousim*, but in our case Dorvina, who was not aware of a Jewish background in her family, was unable to give any reason for the fear and secrecy.

It was the use of traditional prayers, by Dorvina and others, that seemed to break new ground. Dorvina, and the other women I interviewed, knew shorter versions of the prayers than those in the published collections from contemporary Portugal, but the most significant difference was the time and circumstances in which these prayers were said.

Although the prayers for rising and washing, for safe travel and for nightmares were typically recited at the appropriate time, prayers for holy days and the Sabbath were said almost exclusively in connection to death and burial.

Moreover, the name Adonai is not familiar with the *anousim* from Brazil who recognized the prayers. This name is replaced with Deus or Senhor despite the fact that the name Adonai can be found in Brazil on anything from barber-shop signs to Masonic lodges.

The fact that the prayers were not identified as Jewish and were preserved and recited mainly in connection to death and in contracted form indicates that in all likelihood the prayers were not imported to Brazil in recent time but indeed were brought along with the *anousim* when they first arrived, and are diminishing and getting lost over time along with the other traditions. Hence the

I do hope that with future discoveries and systematic evaluation we will, at the least, learn to distinguish between pre- and post-exilic prayers. I have little doubt that some of the prayers we are recording today were composed by women and said at home before the expulsion and forced conversions, akin to the *tehinnot* (private devotions) in Yiddish. Such distinctions will help shed light on subsequent influences on and by prayers of surrounding cultures.

In Brazil many of the Jewish customs were preserved under a guise of superstitions and precautions related to health. So it is with the superstitions regarding pointing at stars or sweeping the floors; so it is with the belief that eating seafood without fins and scales, and mixing meat and milk are dangerous for one's health. Dressing a religious practice with such explanations, can help to protect the secrecy of those practicing it. At the same time it facilitates its dissemination outside the original group, and the preliminary evidence indicates that indeed this happened to various degrees with customs originally identified uniquely as Jewish. This process is fascinating in its own right, and not only from the perspective it gives in the studies of the *anousim*.

I met a woman in Bahia whose family is of Portuguese origin. At first she told me she could not recall where she recognized the Belmonte prayers from. Only after I indicated that I was aware she told a common friend that she was of Jewish extraction did she volunteer more information. She is married to a Spaniard who does not like Jews and is afraid to expose her identity, but she displayed excited curiosity toward the information I had and the prayers, several of which she remembered. She told me that as a child, on Sunday mornings before going to church, she was obliged to sit and copy such prayers in a notebook and decorate the pages nicely. The notebook was then locked in a drawer and never shown to strangers.

Anita Novinsky, the pioneering scholar from Brazil, informs me that a student of hers is now recording oral histories from people who claim to be now recording oral histories from people who claim to be Crypto-Jews. This marks a wonderful new development indeed, but I have encountered problems in doing similar work elsewhere. Those who claim to be Jewish and seek this kind of "hearing" are often people who wish to gain acceptance as Jews. Such people may have read or heard about practices considered Jewish, and it is not impossible that they embellish their personal histories with some of this new information. This phenomenon is very common in regions where publicity invades and distorts, and the ties to Judaism become something exotic or otherwise worthy of attention. New Mexico in the US is an example for this process. The process can develop almost unconsciously among those who must struggle for recognition.

Consequently, there is great merit in recording traditions from elders who do not claim to have a Jewish heritage, and are not aware of any particular interest on the part of the people doing the documenting. There are elders who belong to communities that are likely of some Jewish background and have preserved some of the heritage. Although indeed the majority of the *anousim* in Brazil settled in the north, the little I saw bears witness to the fact that there is much to learn from and about *anousim* in the South as well. Therefore extra care must be taken in selecting control groups, and I remind you again of the degree of spread of some of the *anousim* customs in Brazil and the channels for this process that still need further examination.

The field of study is wide and filled with more information begging to be uncovered. Brazil, with its large and multi-cultured population is brimming with fascinating knowledge -- not only from documents of the Inquisition, but also from people living today. However, transmission of the old traditions is breaking down and the knowledge is fast disappearing.



Greetings from Namibia!

By Lucy Steinitz

(The Steinitz-Kiebusch family is spending 13 months in Windhoek, Namibia, where Lucy is a volunteer at a residential treatment center for delinquent youth, Bernd is working on the Government's computer system, and the children are attending school.)

Although we have never been much for sending of Rosh HaShanah Cards in the past, this year we couldn't resist the probability of being your most far-flung well-wishers of a *Shanah Tovah* -- and so we wish our friends at Kulanu all the best for a joyous, healthy, and peaceful New Year. We also take this opportunity to ask forgiveness from any of you we might have wronged, even inadvertently, during the past year.

We are well, despite the sudden onslaught of summer weather. (The fact that we are below the equator disorients us constantly -- in the oddest ways. It's not just that the water goes down the drain the other direction, or that the night-time constellations are unfamiliar. But now, for example, with the gardens in full bloom and days growing longer (and hotter), it really feels more like Pesach than Rosh HaShanah. But the calendar keeps us on track, and so we're trying to "get in the mood"; the kids and I made several loaves of round *challah* for the holidays, careful to preserve the last of our honey and apples until Wednesday night.

From what we have been told, Namibia's tiny Jewish community pulls together in unity for the High Holiday celebrations. Services are held in the single remaining synagogue (Orthodox) and a fair amount of socializing goes on among the member families. (We were the 19th and most recent family to officially join the congregation.)

A generation ago the Jewish community was much larger. Photographs in the synagogue board room show how vibrant the congregation's Hebrew school looked at its height in the 1960s and 1970s -- there were 120 families then, with smaller communities in several outlying towns. Political and racial unrest in the 1980s and early 1990s caused many white families to leave Namibia (and South Africa), resulting in the now-weekly struggle to achieve a *minyan* on Friday nights. (I keep telling the community leaders that if they started counting women they would grow in both numbers and strength, but the old guard -- none of whom actually practice Orthodox Judaism anymore -- won't hear of it.)

The congregation benefits from the generosity of a single prominent family and a relatively large endowment; annual dues are less than \$25, and that includes one-on-one tutoring for the children by the rabbi twice a week in our home!

As an egalitarian Jew sitting upstairs in the women's section of Ezrat Nashim, my mind often wanders to relevant issues -- the importance of maintaining community unity in an otherwise isolated situation; how and when one should "pick one's battles"; and, above all, how one develops a sense of tolerance and patience when one is a guest abroad. None of these sentiments comes easy to me, so I view this as a valuable opportunity for self-growth.

Then, too, we are grateful for the acceptance and support we have found in this little community, which (among other things) offers us a sense of "grounding and perspective" in our incredibly varied and cross-cultural environment. **Here are people we can trust, who also trust and welcome us as part of a world-wide extended family.** We've gotten good and reliable practical recommendations from them and we feel accepted in the congregation for who we are. We have brought non-Jewish (non-white) families to the synagogue. Being the first Jewish family that most of our new acquaintances have ever met, our friendship has also taken on something of an ambassadorial aspect!

A READING:

We Must Deny Victory To the Inquisition!

By Stanley Klein

(Kulanu activist Stanley Klein saw the need to succinctly but comprehensively inform his local congregation about the history and current significance of Iberian Crypto-Judaism. The reaction to his Reading was impressive, and many asked him to reprint it so that others may also address congregations and other groups on this crucial and rapidly-emerging issue. Here is his Reading.)

Five years ago we observed the 500th anniversary of the edict in Spain that Jews leave, convert, or die. This year we observe the 500th anniversary of a "convert or die" edict against the Jews of Portugal, many of whom -- up to 300,000 by some estimates -- were refugees from Spain. But this is not a story of ancient history. Many people think the *anousim* --- from a Hebrew word meaning "forced ones" -- disappeared into the mists of history. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is a story of the here and now. Because, you see, the Judaism of the *anousim* did not disappear. It went underground and has stayed there, weakened but alive, for hundreds of years.

The Inquisition was not a short-lived event 500 years ago. The persecutions and pressured or forced conversions started almost 800 years ago. In North America, it was Mexican independence in 1821 that freed the last prisoner jailed by the Inquisition for practicing Judaism. Religious freedom in Spain itself was not finally decreed until 1966.

Today we are witnessing what may be a great awakening. Trying to escape the Inquisition, the *anousim* went to places like Brazil, the Azores, Central America, and Mexico. The former Mexican province of Nuevo Leon -- which included the present states of California, Colorado, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, was founded by *anousim*. Their leader died in an Inquisition jail for failing to denounce his relatives, one of whom was later burned at the stake for practicing Judaism.

In these and other places, people are beginning to realize that there may be a deeper meaning to those family sayings and practices that have been carefully and secretly handed down from generation to generation. These sayings and practices are many and varied. Some families have only a few, others several. In some families the fact of their Jewish heritage is secretly passed down; in others only the saying or practice remains, without the knowledge of its source. Some of the practices are familiar to mainstream Judaism. For example, these include fasting on a date approximating Yom Kippur, refraining from bread for a week at about the time of Passover, avoidance of blood in eggs, and covering mirrors in a house of bereavement. Others -- such as saving fingernail and hair clippings for burial or burning, and scalding meat after salting it to remove the blood -- are traceable by researchers to obscure rabbinic rulings not observed today by most Jews.

Rejoining mainstream Judaism is not easy for the *anousim*. After hundreds of years, the fear of discovery and retribution remains great and the social pressures and fear of rejection remain strong. We must approach the *anousim* with understanding and compassion. The solemn Kol Nidre prayer we recite on Yom Kippur eloquently recalls their pain. We who are devoted to denying the Nazis a victory must not allow the Inquisition to get away with one either.

A Heifer for the Abayudaya?

By Arlene Gardsbane, DVM

(The author has a private veterinary practice in Silver Spring, Md.)

There we were, two nice Jewish girls and longtime friends from America -- who happen to be veterinarians -- visiting the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda, for both work and pleasure.

Beth Miller, who works for Heifer Project International projects, invited me to come along to visit the Abayudaya, the now-famous Jewish community in eastern Uganda, who have been practicing Judaism since the early 1900s.

We were welcomed into the Moses Synagogue by men in kippot singing traditional Jewish songs, and by women with babies on their backs. The synagogue is a simple building of bricks and mud, complete with a Torah, but with a dirt floor and no electricity. As the blessings were chanted we could only imagine that this was how our ancestors prayed. The Africans' lives echo the Torah and the festivals; on Sukkot they pray for a good fall harvest, for without it, they will go hungry. We observe these holidays whereas they live them as our ancestors the Israelites lived them.

Our visit was not only a social visit, but also an opportunity for Beth to meet with Abayudaya women to discuss Heifer Project International, an international development organization that works in more than 50 countries to address hunger and malnutrition through small-scale livestock projects. Under this unique program, a cow or other appropriate animal is given to a family so that the family may learn to feed itself. The animal is not a handout, but rather a "living loan" that is repaid when the family "passes on" the first offspring to another needy family.

The community was excited that a representative of HPI would be visiting. They had seen successful heifer projects in neighboring villages, and the women knew how important the benefits could be. The Abayudaya were amazed that some of the HPI representatives were Jewish women from the USA!

HPI-Uganda works primarily with dairy cows and goats. One HPI dairy cow (comparable to a Holstein cow in the US) will produce 20 to 30 liters of milk during its peak production -- ten times as much as the native bred cows can produce! This surplus of milk improves the quality of life not only for the family with the animal, but also for their neighbors.

Over and over in other Uganda communities, we saw orphans receiving help and nourishment from HPI cows. I saw how proud the women and their families are of their cows and what wealth the cows have brought -- wealth measured not in cash but in pride at their self-reliance and respect in their communities.

My support of HPI is long-standing, so that when Beth called to suggest the trip, I didn't hesitate. But the trip has left me with unsettling thoughts and feelings about my own Jewish beliefs and practices. I think often of the Abayudaya struggling to maintain a

Jewish existence and to be accepted by world Jewry. And I think about other families I met throughout Uganda proud to be a part of HPI and of their accomplishments under this program.

My hope is that one day the Abayudaya will be seen around the world as an authentic Jewish group with a sustainable financial and social basis reinforced with a successful Heifer Project.

(Editor's note: Beth Miller reports that HPI has approved the concept paper for a heifer project for the Abayudaya -- especially important since coffee, the community's cash crop, will experience a drop in prices due to a market surplus. However, seed money of \$10,000 is needed before the project can start.)

The Abayudaya community chose a dairy cow project because of the strong local market for milk, and for the immediate nutritional benefits, especially for malnourished children and pregnant and nursing women. This project would also be managed by the Abayudaya Women's Association, which will provide an opportunity for the women to have a large and important public role.

Checks to "Heifer Project International" may be sent to 1015 Louisiana St., Little Rock, AR 72202. For further information contact Beth Miller at 501-376-6836 or at bethm@heifer.org.)

Bad News -- and Good News

The bad news is that Kulanu was unable to raise enough money in its Lorna Margolis and Clara Shair Memorial Fund for Abayudaya Orphans Education to keep all qualified Advanced Level (AL) secondary students in school this term. Particularly disappointing is the fact that Esther Kaliesubula, the first female in the Abayudaya community to pass exams to enter AL, which prepares students for university, was not able to attend school due to lack of sufficient funds; she has purchased some books and is studying on her own.

The good news is that (1) unprecedented numbers of needy Abayudaya youngsters -- now 164 -- are attending school, including many in secondary school and several in the pipeline to attend university; (2) small stipends are sufficient to allow primary students to buy school supplies now that the government has begun to provide for free primary education; (3) Kulanu stipends allow secondary students to pay their school fees (we wish it were also enough to pay for supplies); (4) Gershom Sizomu is expected to graduate from university next August; (5) Lucy and Bernd Kiebusch-Steinitz have generously donated \$500 for girls' higher education, which will enable Esther to begin Advanced Level classes next term; and (6) Kulanu supporters will undoubtedly be generous in their end-of-year contributions to this worthy cause!

Tax-deductible donations to Kulanu may be earmarked for Abayudaya education.

Think of memorializing a loved one with a Kulanu endowment. Consider including a bequest to Kulanu in your will.

SUPPORTER APPLICATION

☐ We would like to become a Supporter of KULANU (Mail to KULANU c/o Hantman, 3520 Tarkington Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20906)

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

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

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Belmonte 80 Years Ago

(cont. from p. 3)

removed from the house; upon returning from the cemetery, mourners washed their hands. Deep mourning was observed for one week; the nearest kin sat on low benches; fasting was done on specified days afterwards. The family of the deceased was obligated to furnish a poor person of the community Sabbath meals for one year, and to clothe him head to foot; they were also required to bestow alms throughout the year. When death was imminent, those who knew the ritual were quickly summoned. This gave rise to the popular gentile notion that those summoned were ritual suffocators, who had come to prevent the dying person from making a death bed compromising confession to the priest (and thus, originally, to the Inquisition).

In fact, secrecy, at one time a necessity, had become part of the Marrano concept of Judaism, even though their existence as Jews was, in 1917, no longer secret to neighbors. Thus, they were astounded to learn that Jews elsewhere made no attempt to keep anything secret.

Schwartz's one concern lay with intermarriage. While "still rather rare 20 years ago," by the time of his 1917 visit it was becoming common. Schwartz expressed the concern that "if no action is taken this ancient relic of a once glorious Portuguese Jewry will completely disappear."

Finally, as much as we may be enchanted and moved by the Marrano life, it is essential that we not forget the horrifying circumstances that brought it about. One example will suffice. Schwartz was delighted to discover a trove of 32 17th century Marrano prayers. How did this come about? On January 9, 1674, 22-year-old Brites Henriques and her family were arrested. They were all tortured and either put to death or imprisoned for life. At the "trial" Brites defiantly flaunted her loyalty, and recited all the Marrano prayers she knew. The court reporter diligently wrote them down. Centuries later, Schwartz unearthed this record of the evil proceedings and found her community's *T'fillah*.

Volunteers Needed in Uganda!

Are you a qualified **seder leader** who would like to spend next Pesach leading the first Abayudaya community seder?

Are you a **physician** who would like to assess medical needs among the Abayudaya and treat where feasible?

Kulanu cannot furnish financial assistance, but can help with logistics and can promise a rewarding experience!

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Kulanu ("all of us") is a tax-exempt organization of Jews of varied backgrounds and practices dedicated to finding lost and dispersed remnants of the Jewish people and assisting those who wish to (re)join the Jewish community. Kulanu is undertaking a variety of activities worldwide on behalf of these dispersed groups, including research, contacts, education, conversion when requested, and relocation to Israel if desired.

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Edited by Karen Primack

Kulanu

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