



## NEXT MEETING — SEE PAGE 8 JOIN US ON A TRIP TO UGANDA — SEE PAGE 3

### Johannesburg Zionists Invite Lemba Speaker!

On October 15, 1999, Dr. Rudo Mathivha was the invited guest speaker at the Zionist Lunch Club in Johannesburg, South Africa. Dr. Mathivha, a specialist ICU pediatrician at Chris Hani-Baragwanath Hospital, is a member of the Lemba community. The daughter of Lemba Cultural Society president Professor G.E.R. Mathivha, she spent a number of years studying in the US and has presented and published numerous medical research papers internationally. Here is her historic talk:

Shalom Aleichem!! Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you. Some of you may already be familiar with the subject I am going to discuss, but if you are not, then we will work through this together.

As told by my father, and his father's father, and his father's, father's father, and many more before them:

Approximately 2,500 years ago, a group of Jews left Judea and settled in Yemen. The tribe was led by the house of Buba and we are told that this move was to facilitate trade. In Yemen they settled in a place and built a city called Senna 1. They were then known as the BaSenna (the people from Senna). When conditions became unfavorable (and not being a historian, I can not give you exact details of what

*(Continued on page 12)*

### Weren't Sephardim Holocaust Survivors, Too?

By Yitzchak Kerem

*(Editor's note: The author, editor of the monthly academic e-mail publication "Sefarad, the Sephardic Newsletter" since 1992, is associated with Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, Greece, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the University of Denver.)*

More than 50 years after the end of the Holocaust, Sephardic and Oriental Jewry are barely recognized as survivors and their experience usually is not portrayed in Holocaust museum commemoration, in the general Holocaust historiography, and even in specialized anthologies in the fields of literature, poetry, feminist studies, and music.

The issue is compounded by the fact that thousands of Sephardic Holocaust survivors have still not received reparations from Germany for their suffering and loss of family members and property. The Claims Conference, and German, Israeli, United States, Greek, and

*(Continued on page 11)*

### LEARNING FROM GHANA'S JEWS

By Michael V. Gershowitz

*(Editor's note: The author, a management consultant to educational and non-profit organizations, lives in Des Moines, Iowa.)*

#### Part I

Imagine a community of people who have never had a Sefer Torah, but know Torah -- by heart; who don't know the word "kosher," but keep kosher; who until recently didn't know they were "Jews," but live a thoroughly Jewish lifestyle; and who claim to know the most impenetrable of Jewish secrets -- how to pronounce God's name -- but, out of reverence, don't. Ridiculous, you say? Ghana, I say.

My 10-year-old daughter, Abigail, and I spent a weekend with this community of 70 families this summer. Although my primary purpose in Ghana was to lecture at two of Ghana's universities, the highlight of the trip unquestionably was the visit to the Jewish people,



David Ahenkorah and congregants.

and the Shabbat we spent with them was among the most beautiful and inspiring I've ever experienced.

Over the past 20 years, I've gotten into the habit of spending Shabbat with the local Jewish communities wherever I've traveled on business or pleasure. Many of the communities are quite isolated, such as the American communities in Fairbanks, Alaska; Maui, Hawaii, or Fargo, North Dakota, or elsewhere, including Budapest; Manaus, Brazil; Alexandria, Egypt; and Guadalajara, Mexico, where my wife and I honeymooned

over Rosh Hashanah 19 years ago. In short, there are Jews almost everywhere -- not in large numbers, but communities.

So, two years ago, when I visited Ghana for the first time, I expected to find a synagogue in Accra, the capital. To my surprise, I didn't. There's no Ghana listing in the *Jewish Travel Guide*, so I figured I'd call the Israeli embassy. Another surprise: There is no Israeli embassy in Ghana; the two countries haven't had formal relations since 1973. I spent Shabbat alone. But on my return home, *Moment* magazine carried a brief article on a Jewish community in the Ghanaian hinterland that had just been visited by an Ghanaian-American Jew. *Moment* put me in touch with Kulanu, whose head, Jack Zeller, gave

*(Continued on page 14)*

# LETTERS TO KULANU

## Headed for South Africa

By Chanukah I will be in South Africa near the town of Louis Trichardt in Northern Province, beginning a project with the Lemba. Our goal with the project is to establish an active Jewish presence within the Lemba in the Northern Province, establish Jewish congregations, and ultimately to send a group to *Eretz* in five or six years for yeshiva study and ordination to return and serve their community. I wish to see all congregations with their own Lemba leadership. This is a long-term project. Many of the Lemba will never be more than nominal congregants, many are now Christian and will remain so, many are very interested in becoming fully observant Jews, and many are in between. I hope to be able to offer something to all.

We are going to be putting up a Lemba web page and shortly there will be a Lemba Chat List for those interested.

For those not familiar with me, I am an Israeli/American. I made aliyah in the early 90s and returned to the US to get some more computer training. I have been a supporter of Kulanu for several years. My degrees are in Animal Science and Fisheries Science and I expect to be doing some advisory work with the Lemba in both fields. I am a *Ba'ale Teshuva* of some 12 years now, of Sephardic background, but grew up in a secular household.

There are a number of humanitarian projects we are looking at, including agricultural support, a clinic, tourist projects, and a Jewish school. Upon arrival much time will be spent in assessing these areas for what is doable.

Right now, our need is for 200 *siddurim*, along with *machzorim* and other books for congregants. We have focused on the ArtScroll Series as it is the easiest one to work with in teaching Hebrew to those who have never had any exposure to that language. It also has excellent commentaries throughout. We are also seeking a Talmud, tzitzit, taleisim, defillin, and other ritual objects. These holy items will be taken care of in the manner required by halacha. All contributions are tax-deductible in the US.

I am committing to at least three years of my time in South Africa, and probably will be staying longer. I will also be needing some funding for support while there, and we require a vehicle for the project, either a van or pick up to reach the outlying communities and for project use. Other equipment needed is a TV/VCR to use for class work (I have many videos for training, and we will be getting more). I am taking my own computer and printer for project use and communication with supporters through the internet. In approximately six months we will be looking for short-term teachers to come and teach in specific areas, and also expect to be "cycling through" young visitors from *Eretz* to help with conversational Hebrew. I would like to see at least one more full-time person there in at least six months as the workload is going to expand exponentially.

Please feel free to contact me at Lemba21@hotmail.com or fax 212-439-6107 or regular mail at LEMBA21, 12-2 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10028.

*Yaacov Levi*

## Lemba Youth Meets White South African Jews

I went to Venda one weekend recently, and we had some Jewish people (Betar Youth Group) to come and meet the other "Black: Jews" and teach them the Jewish ways. We had about a hundred people on the farm. The mood was very vibrant and happy. It was as if all these people knew each other for ages.

We had all the elders and the delegates from Johannesburg. The only person missing was Shimon Wapnick. I am sure he would have loved to have been there. Such meeting will be a usual occurrence in

Page 2

the future.

Lets keep the communication open at all times.

*Chamberlain Selamolela*

<chambrey@power.co.za>

## White Youths Meet the Lemba

Dear Dr Jack Zeller (president of Kulanu):

Although we have never met before, I have heard so much about you and not only hear, I have benefited from your incredible generosity. It is due to this that myself as well as a few friends from Betar managed to go and visit the Lemba one Sunday.

The trip was very interesting and although time was limited (a 10 hour drive and people also having other commitments) we made the most of the situation and established what will hopefully become a regular fixture on the monthly calendar.

With this in mind, we are extremely grateful for your generosity and for your interest to allow us the opportunity to reunite bonds with lost brothers and sisters.

*B'Virkat Tel Hai*

*Ryan Perel*

## Dancing on Yom Kippur

I spent Yom Kippur this year with the Ethiopian Jewish community in Rehovot.

In their tradition it is called Astar'i or Astasreyo (probably from the Ge'ez root "saraya" meaning "to forgive", used in Lev. 16:30 and 23:27). They fast strictly and spend all day in the prayer-house (a community-centre hall). The two priests and some of their students stayed there all night too. At the end of the fast, each family brought bread and beer before the priests who said a blessing, and then the whole congregation broke their fast together in the prayer-house. I really liked that - great feeling of community!

One of the most interesting aspects was their dancing. At intervals throughout the day, men and women together performed a lively rhythmic circular dance - leaping with both feet simultaneously, hands stretched downwards in front of them with the palms towards the body and moving up-and-down in a kind of digging movement. Very African-looking, but quite different from the usual type of Ethiopian shoulder-shaking dance. They told me they only perform this particular dance on Astar'i. The reason they gave was to fulfil the Biblical commandment "you shall afflict your souls", which they interpret (in addition to fasting) that you should tire out your body. They say the purpose of the dancing is to make them tired. However, from what I saw it seemed to have the opposite effect! They were happy and smiling, and the dancing seemed to energize them! (The women insisted that I join in too - and I must say the physical activity made a welcome change from sitting and standing. It was an easy and enjoyable fast!) My guess is that the reason they give is a rationalization of what is probably an ancient traditional practice.

According to my Encyclopedia Judaica, in Second Temple times, Yom Kippur was regarded as a festive day, and the daughters of Jerusalem would dress in white and go out and dance in the vineyards. I don't know whether there's any connection, though!

Do/did any other Jewish communities dance or celebrate Yom Kippur with joyful activities?

*Margaret Hayon, Haifa, Israel*

## Conversions in Brazil

I would like to let you know that I've received the Volume 6, Number 2 of the Kulanu newsletter. It's always a pleasure for me to receive it. I would also like to let you know that me, my wife, and others six "chavrim" did the

(Continued on page 7)

## **A New Guest House, a Promising High School and 12 Heifers**

*By Aaron Kintu Moses*

I would like to introduce myself as the head of the Guest House project and at the same time I would like to report that the Guest House has opened, though there is much to be done such as furniture, bedding, power installation, and installation of running water. A fee of US dollars 10 per night will be charged to every visitor and this will help in solving the above requirements. Currently the Guest House has a bath room, a latrine, three bedrooms, one large sitting room/dinning room and a fenced compound. Visitors shall be required to register with the local authorities for security purposes.

We have a fully licensed high school headed by Gershom Sizomu aimed at satisfying the academic and religious interests of the Abayudaya community as well as other academic and vocational programs. However, there is much to be done in order for the school to be accredited -- more classrooms, office, library, laboratory blocks, computers, staff room and staff houses. In addition to the above, we are required to pay 1200 US dollars in teachers salary arrears.

We recently hosted officials from the Ministry of Education who were pleased by the academic performance of our students, which gives me courage to conclude that our school stands a chance to become one of the best schools in Mbale if the above requirements are met.

Semei Kakungulu High School is the only high school founded by Abayudaya congregation in Uganda. It is pleasing to see our children study in an environment which is religiously friendly to them and where we are respected. We have great hopes for this school.

I would like to report that since the resignation of JJ Keki as chairman of the community, there has developed need for another leader who is expected to work hard towards the goals and aspirations of the community. I have been requested by a number of people to volunteer as chairman, an obligation I have accepted. I will let you know when this takes place.

I'm happy to report that the illiteracy rate since the institution of orphans' funds by Kulanu has declined. As a result many people, including those who had previously dropped out of school, have gone back to classroom, especially the women. As of now we have Gershom as the only college graduate, but Uri is expected to graduate next year, Seth and I have entered colleges this year, and seven members are expected to enter college next year!

The Abayudaya Women's Association, under the leadership of Naume Aaron, has received 12 heifers as a donation from Heifer Project International. Beth Miller, the director of HPI, deserves compliments for the above achievement.

I'm writing this letter from Makerere University, where I'm attending the orientation program for fresh students. I'm however sorry to make it known to you that I have not met my tuition obligations for year 1. This puts me in a risk of forfeiting my place as stipulated in the admission letter. I regret any inconveniences caused to you as a result of this information.

About our hand loom project, I'm glad to report that we are producing cotton cloth designed to suit *Tallitot*, which can be sold to improve the community income.

## **Giant Strides in Abayudaya Education**

*By Matthew Meyer*

When I first met Gershom Sizomu in 1992, in a chance meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, he told me of his dream to be the first recognized rabbi from Uganda. We contacted the University of Judaism and several other rabbinical training institutions. But at every turn, we were stopped. We did not have the money. Gershom considered himself Jewish, but few outside Uganda did. Eighty years ago Gershom's grandfather adopted the Judaic teachings of Ugandan leader Semei Kakungulu. Without any formal conversion, Gershom fails to meet virtually any standard of Who is a Jew. As his rabbinical dream began to fade, Gershom sought funding to study his Advanced Levels and take the highly competitive exam to qualify for a place in a Ugandan university.

Sponsorships, first by generous individuals directly and then through the Lorna Margolis Memorial Education Fund, gave Gershom the opportunity to continue his studies. He performed well on the difficult exam and was offered placement at his nation's finest university, Makerere University, about 150 miles away in Kampala. Several

months later, however, he decided to move back home to Mbale and continued his studies at Islamic University, the only university in Mbale. Though he still retained the position of spiritual leadership in the community, he began to focus on developing a secular career. He studied Economics and eventually completed his degree at the university's Faculty of Education. When I returned to the community two years ago, Gershom no longer spoke of becoming a rabbi. He was going to start the best high school, and the first Jewish high school, in Mbale, the third largest city in the country of 18 million.

At first, I considered such a vision little more than a pipe dream. I encouraged him to focus on his studies, which included student teaching in an Mbale secondary school. Once he was graduated, Gershom told me of his plans to build and develop a Jewish high school on Nabugoye Hill. Last I had heard, early this year, the community was struggling to start its first high school, and Kulanu had offered some assistance.

This past July I returned to the community. I arrived in Mbale early one Thursday morning. From the town, I took a *kamunye* mini-bus about three miles along rough dirt roads to Makudui Trading Centre on Bufumbo Road. When I arrived, children in the trading center came running up to me.

"Shalom, Shalom," the children, who are not Bayudaya, said. These days, when foreigners come to Makudui, everyone knows where they are going. Neighboring hostilities of past years among adults in neighboring Christian and Muslim communities towards the Abayudaya have given way to their smiling children, eager to greet and welcome Jewish visitors and perhaps learn some Hebrew, as well. I noticed a new sign in the trading center. SEMEI KAKUNGULU HIGH SCHOOL, it said, with a Jewish star beside it. Just as I began to walk up Nabugoye Hill, Sez and Moshe, two students who have been able to resume their studies with Margolis Fund assistance, approached. They joined me as we walked up the hill.

Seven years ago, I first made this journey, travelling to the top of Nabugoye Hill, the geographic center of Judaic practices in the Mbale  
*(Continued on page 6)*



*Gershom Sizomu*

**Do you want to visit the Abayudaya and their new Semei Kakungulu High School? We are planning a learning and teaching venture to Mbale, Uganda, to spend ten to fourteen days at the end of May and beginning of June, 2000. If interested, email Matt Meyer at meym@mich.edu or contact the Kulanu office. The cost will be approximately \$3000 per person, which includes a minimum donation.**

# Helping New Jews from Peru, Majorca and India

By Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail

You may recall that some 10 years ago, we succeeded in converting a group of Bnei Moshe in Peru upon the recommendation of the Chief Rabbinate. We converted two groups who immigrated to the community of Elon Moreh in Samaria in Israel. Last week, I took part in the deep mourning for the youth David Gera, of blessed memory, who passed away from cancer and left behind a pregnant widow and two young babies. I represented Amishav at the eulogies, and my heart was broken together with those of all of Elon Moreh. The weeping was intense. The following day, I was at the wedding of Chana, daughter of Abraham Ziko, a leader of the Bnei Moshe. I recall how she was just a girl of 12 when she first arrived, but now she is a young woman, and she has married Michael Orkize, who came with the second group of Bnei Moshe. The joy of the wedding in Tel Aviv was great. At the wedding was Rabbi Uriah, who was the rabbi who presided over the rabbinical court that converted the two groups. It is possible that he will leave again for Peru within the next few months for the same purpose.

In 1981, a first attempt was made by Amishav to work among the descendants of the Marranos (*anousim*). Some ten years later, we were partners in the conversion of the community in Belmonte, in northern Portugal. I was subsequently involved in repeated attempts to restore the descendants of the Marranos of Majorca, the *Chuetas*, to the Jewish people, but I did not succeed in doing so. Now, at the initiative of Michael Freund, and with the participation of Rabbi Nissan Ben Avraham (a wonderful descendant of Marranos who converted to Judaism in Israel and now has a huge family here with 10 children), we shall try again to obtain a large sum of money to build a Jewish center in Majorca. It will be headed by Rabbi Nissan Ben Avraham and another Marrano descendant who has converted. At the center, those interested will be able to hear lectures and attend classes on Judaism, view movies about Israel and take part in activities aimed at restoring Judaism to the *Chuetas*. We would most appreciate Kulanu's participation in this important project.

We are now trying to work on the issue of rights for Bnei Menashe with the various Israel Government ministries, the Jewish Agency, and the Knesset. The second group of 35 Bnei Menashe was due to arrive in Israel in early October. The family of Michael Menashe of Ofra, who have been living as refugees in New Delhi, lost their passports (or perhaps they were stolen) and we are trying to arrange for them to come with the third group before the end of the year (the third group will consist of 45 people). We are attempting, together with Kulanu, to raise the necessary funds to bring them to Israel.

# CASA SHALOM Update

By Gloria Mound

(Editor's note: Dr. Mound, executive director of CASA SHALOM, is a Research Fellow with the University of Glasgow.)

CASA SHALOM's 1999 Seder was a huge success. We helped more Marranos than ever in the Island of Ibiza to celebrate the Festival. We had 25 Seder participants (would have been many more but there was a severe flu epidemic) and also distributed *Matzot* to 38 more families.

I also am most happy to tell you that our project on early Marrano immigration with the University of Miami has proved most fruitful. We have established Jewish links in Florida 150 years further back than hitherto known — to the first Spanish Governor — so we have a completely new time scale as to when Jews were in the State! Most importantly, we have now found, as we previously suspected, that when there was the large immigration from the Balearic Island of Minorca to Florida in 1760, during the period of the British occupation of both Florida and Minorca, quite a number of the settlers were of Jewish origin, and some continued with Jewish customs. In this connection we are working with Cuba, too.

Very recently two families have come forward who are descended from some of this group -- one from Cuba and one from New Orleans. In the latter case the mother herself formally re-converted back to Orthodox Judaism some 30 years ago. This lady, who now resides quite near to the headquarters of Kulanu, has been most open with me and we have found thrilling links to her family and the early Florida settlers.

As you can imagine, all this research is causing considerable excitement in Florida as well as the Balearics. My Florida lectures last February were a huge success. In some cases people were turned away as the halls were overflowing. I return again to there in November and again in February. Hopefully one of the visits will be combined with visits to Washington, Baltimore and New York.

In our daily work we are more than ever trying to help individual *Anousim*. We entertain them when they visit Israel. We keep in constant touch as much as possible with whosoever needs us at all times. In February we expect three young men from Colombia, Spain and Florida, to start conversion classes here in Israel.

CASA SHALOM (the Institute for Marrano /Anusim Studies) is URGENTLY IN NEED OF SUPPORT. My husband and I still take no salary, and our only computer is failing. Without a new machine we shall have to close down altogether. Yet we pray our progress will receive enough support to continue.

Do not hesitate to question us further on any matter, but we beg you not to forget us. Contact us at [marrano@gezernet.co.il](mailto:marrano@gezernet.co.il) or PO Box 66, Gan Yavneh, Israel 70800.

# Jodensavanne Dig Yields City Design

By Rachel Frankel

On September 14, 1999 Jodensavanne, along with ninety-nine other monuments world wide, was announced on The World Monuments Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites 2000-2001. As director architect of the Jodensavanne project, I, together with *Stichting Jodensavanne* [Foundation for Jodensavanne], sponsored/nominated Jodensavanne for the List. The World Monuments Watch identifies cultural heritage sites that are urgently at risk and seeks funds for their rescue. An expert nine-member panel from around the globe determines the list from among nominations sent in.

Today what remains of Jodensavanne [the Jews' Savannah] is an evocative brick ruin of the formerly monumental synagogue, *Beracha veShalom* [Blessing and Peace], and the surrounding grand plaza upon which Jews gathered from their neighboring plantations. Built in 1685, *Beracha veShalom* was the first synagogue of any architectural significance in the New World. In an unprecedented and bold urban design, the synagogue and its broad open plaza were constructed at the center of an idealized geometrical town plan featuring a monumentally-scaled rectilinear village square met by four cross streets with large houses built at each corner. Unlike synagogues

(Continued on page 5)

# Jodensavanne Dig Yields City Design (cont.)

(Continued from page 4)

preceding it in Europe, the sanctuary of *Beracha veShalom* had no separate auxiliary buildings buffering it. Rather, all functions of the synagogue, including its Hall of Justice and Schoolroom, were combined in one building. Also unique at *Beracha veShalom* was its unusual annex that served as the women's gallery.

In addition to the remains of the synagogue and town plan, and testament to the longevity and wealth of the settlement, three overgrown cemeteries remain at Jodensavanne. Two of the cemeteries are Jewish. They hold hundreds of European-fabricated marble and blue-stone graves. All but two of the almost 700 tombstones are rectilinear slabs of stone roughly two meters long by one meter wide, laid horizontally. Hebrew, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Aramaic and French language epitaphs, inscribed artfully on the tombs, pay tribute to the deceased. Some tombs have illustrative imagery. Others, in apparent opposition to rabbinical rule on burial placement arrangement, align with the north-south axis. These cemeteries served Suriname's Jews, including some of African descent, for over 200 years. Today they reveal the cultural practices, religious beliefs, and political strategies of those who rest buried there. The third cemetery at Jodensavanne, rapidly decaying, had been thought to be the burying ground for Jodensavanne's enslaved people and their descendants and is referred to as the Slave or Creole Cemetery. Research in this cemetery has led me and my team to conclude that the cemetery was for Jodensavanne's free non-Jews, most of who had mixed Sephardic-African ancestry. The team refers to the cemetery as the Freeholders Cemetery. It has unusual and artistically crafted wood and concrete grave markers as well as tombstones that resemble those at Jodensavanne's Jewish cemeteries. The Freeholders Cemetery was founded no later than the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and was used until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

By the 1660s, the few hundred recently settled Sephardic Jews of Jodensavanne held privileges granting them rights, exemptions, and immunities both as an ethnic minority and as Dutch burghers, allowing them to live their lives as an autonomous religio-cultural enclave. These privileges were the most liberal Jews had ever received in the Christian world. Jodensavanne's Jews referred to themselves as "The Portuguese Nation," a refugee group born from Spain and Portugal's Expulsion and Inquisitions. These Sephardic Jews came to Jodensavanne directly and indirectly from Amsterdam, Dutch Brazil, Cayenne, Livorno and other places in Europe and the Americas. Many of Jodensavanne's Jews had *Converso* (New Christian) and *Crypto* (secret) Jewish pasts. Some perhaps were of Spanish nobility.

In contrast, most of Jodensavanne's few thousand Africans lived enslaved. Despite *halakot* [Jewish law] limiting human bondage to seven years, Jodensavanne's Jewish slave owners, like others in the Americas, typically held their enslaved perpetually, even bequeathing their enslaved to heirs. Historically, Jewish slave masters circumcised and converted their enslaved such that they would become part of the Jewish community upon their emancipation. There is some evidence of this at Jodensavanne but primarily such circumcisions must have been performed on the offspring of Sephardic slave owning fathers and enslaved African mothers. These Sephardic slave masters often raised and educated their offspring as Jews. The offspring participated as such in the congregational religious life of Jodensavanne. However, eventually, Jodensavanne's "Negro Jews" were identified as *Congregantes*; distinguished from Jodensavanne's European-descent Jews who were known as *Jahidim* [full members of the congregation]. *Congregantes* were excluded from certain privileges of the religious community. It is possible that the Negro Jews were denied full rights because they were recognized as converts, as their mothers presumably were not Jewish. This convert status is consistent with the status given to Amsterdam's 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century New Christians who converted back to Judaism. Alternatively, the reason for the identification of a

second class status for Jodensavanne's Negro Jews might have been purely racist-based.

By the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Jodensavanne had already become a place of nostalgia for Suriname's Jews and more or less a ghost town with only a few dozen or so older Jews remaining.

This past August, I organized a third expedition to Suriname, this time to document the so-called Second Cemetery of Jodensavanne. Prior expeditions, in 1997 and 1998, documented the remains of *Beracha veShalom*, the synagogue; Cassipora Cemetery, Jodensavanne's first cemetery; and Jodensavanne's Freeholders Cemetery. This most recent expedition was conducted under the auspices of *Stichting Jodensavanne* [Foundation for Jodensavanne]. *Stichting Jodensavanne* provided indispensable logistical support and significant funding for the expedition. Adriana van Alen, Archivist for the Jewish Community and Caretaker for Paramaribo's historic Jewish cemeteries, performed the role of Project Director. Philip Dikland of the Suriname-based KDV Architects directed the field surveying and drafted a scaled plan of the cemetery. Both van Alen and Dikland provided their skill and tireless energy *gratis*. Patrick Brunings of Suriname was Project Photographer. Dr. Aviva Ben-Ur, again thanks to funding from the Mitrani Family Foundation, transcribed the epitaphs of each tomb. CVE Volunteers, including Irwin and Elaine Berg and Jessica Siegel of New York; Cedric Menig of Suriname; Sarah Patterson, Peace Corps Volunteer currently serving in Suriname; and Marty Zimmerman of U. Michigan documented the art and architecture of each tomb and helped with the epitaph transcriptions. Once again The International Survey of Jewish Monuments provided support for documentation expenses and Kodak generously donate all the film.

Following are some of the findings and questions as written by Dr. Aviva Ben-Ur:

1. Children, and on some occasions young men ("*mancebos*"), often bore last names that differed from those of their fathers. For example, one epitaph describes the little child "Rephael del Castilho," son of Moses Robles de Medina. Did some children inherit the maiden names of their mothers solely? Were these children of "mixed marriages" involving an African-origin non-Jewish mother and a European Sephardic father?
2. The title "junior" sometimes appeared on epitaphs of males. Was this Portuguese term used to distinguish father from son? Was this a term introduced by Portuguese secret Jews who had led Christian lives, or was it already in usage among Portuguese Jews before forcible conversions to Christianity?
3. We transcribed a number of lovely poems, primarily in Spanish and Hebrew.
4. Unlike the cemetery at Cassipora, the occupations of a great many Jodensavanne Jews are noted in their epitaphs. For example, the tombstone of Meir HaCohen, who is identified as the rabbi, judge, and teacher of Jewish law of the *Beracha VeShalom* synagogue. The epitaph specifies that he served for 12 years. Jacob Henriquez de Granada is described as the captain of the Jewish community ("*capitan de la burgeria Judaica*").
5. Sephardim who lost more than one child "recycled" the first names of their deceased children, as did non-Jews of medieval and early modern Europe. For example, the cantor D. B. Louzada lost a daughter Judith in 1781 and another by the same name in 1785 (assuming that these children did not have different mothers).
6. Cause of death is rarely given. One exception is Esther, wife of David of Isaac Cohen Nassy, who "expired of the cruel smallpox epidemic that destroyed Suriname in the Savanna on the 27th of November 1789." Her surviving husband, Doctor David Nassy, inscribed a poem in Portuguese in her memory, signed "your afflicted husband." His epitaph, unfortunately, is partially effaced. (Continued on page 13)



# Abayudaya Education (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

region. I specifically remember children along the way, young and old, Christian, Muslim, and Abayudaya. Few of them could attend school as their families simply could not afford to pay school tuitions. Most primary schools cost about \$25 annually. Children in homesteads on and around Nabugoye Hill had little opportunity to get a formal education. As a result, back in 1992, I recall that at midday there was little activity on top of the hill. A few children played in an open area beside their mud synagogue. On *erev Shabbat*, on Friday night, the hill would come alive with music and dance as community members walked to synagogue from miles away. But after *Shabbat* all would return home.

As Sez, Moshe, and I ascended the hill, I quickly saw how things had changed. On this Thursday morning, the top of Nabugoye Hill bustled with activity. Teachers taught hundreds of students, from five- or six year-old children to 25-year-old adults, some seated in makeshift classrooms outside beneath trees, while others studied using the light of the sun in open-air brick schoolhouses. The fortunate teachers had chalk and a blackboard, but others did not. I later was told that as many as 700 students study daily now atop Nabugoye Hill.

Nabweya Primary School, re-started about six years ago with the assistance of Kulanu, has over 600 pupils. Shortly after the school's rebirth, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, announced an ambitious plan of Universal Primary Education nationwide. The govern-

**To contribute directly to Semei Kakungulu High School, send all contributions to Kulanu, payable to Kulanu, clearly noted that the donation is earmarked for the high school. Every penny you donate will go directly to the school. To contact the school directly, write Semei Kakungulu High School, Box 225, Mbale, Uganda.**

ment began to fund primary schools, attempting to provide all citizens with at least a primary education. After some initial difficulties, the UPE mandate is starting to have an impact in the most rural Ugandan villages. With the government's assistance, a new brick building slowly rises atop the hill, soon to be the new Nabweya Primary School. It sits right beside the old mud synagogue, now a patch of grass upon which a mud hut once stood. It was within that tiny hut that the Abayudaya prayed each *Shabbat* for decades. In the meantime, many of the Nabweya students have class outside. Others sit at old desks or on the rocky floor of an eroded concrete schoolhouse that barely remains standing.

On a far side of the hill, students are crowded into the two-room brick schoolhouse of Semei Kakungulu High School. Under Gershom's leadership, the high school was officially registered last April and has about 75 students and 14 teachers. While the fledgling school is low on supplies and low on funding, both students and teachers enthusiastically participate in the location's newest institution. But neither teachers nor Gershom nor members of the school organizing committee hesitate to highlight some of the school's problems. Teachers work for months without payment. Chemistry and Physics classes are taught without lab equipment. Few students have any books. Most students can afford to pay only a fraction of the school's tuition, less than \$50 annually. Gershom is left with the difficult tasking of kicking out students who do not pay. There is no Hebrew teacher for the school whose headmaster still dreams will be the first Jewish high school in Uganda. But within that setting, in spite of and because of that setting, education thrives.

Students in classes as small as five or six engage in discussions on everything from modern economic systems to mathematical equations

to English grammar concepts. There is a debate club and a music and drama club, regularly writing and performing productions that create an electricity on Nabugoye Hill that the Abayudaya have become known for.

The high school has two buildings, one named Kakungulu House and the other named Kulanu House. The high school, in many senses, is a regular Ugandan village school. There is no electricity and little contact with the world outside Nabweya Sub-county. A single pick-up truck serves to transport the few materials and goods needed by the school. The truck never has more than two gallons worth of gas for lack of cash.

According to Gershom, the school's most pressing needs are science supplies to start an experimental lab, electricity, and teachers' salaries. With electricity, the school will be able to include evening and night classes in its educational program and expand its capacity to build both science and computer laboratories. A Kulanu supporter's generous donation of funds for electrical installation will go a long way toward making electricity possible. Not a single high school in Mbale has a computer laboratory.

Students also participate daily in physical education activities. While the activities are not formally coordinated, almost all of the high school students spend most of their time out of class playing a wide variety of sports on Nabugoye Hill. While the most popular game is soccer, the pupils participate in a number of sports that are unique to rural East Africa. The week prior to my arrival, Semei Kakungulu High School had a school-wide sporting competition. Many students and teachers enthusiastically recounted how the students on the Kulanu House team defeated those on the Kakungulu House team. And Gershom joked that it was to Kulanu's credit that Kulanu's House was victorious. Several prominent local education officials attended the awards ceremony, giving additional legitimacy to what was once only Gershom's renegade venture, a disappointing "B Plan" to his preferred life as a rabbi.

Gershom's rabbinical dream is now as distant as ever. Hopes of rabbinical study abroad have faded, and he now speaks of developing his school as a source of community, religious, and national pride. Occasionally, though, he is reminded of the need that he saw as a boy, but has not been able to fill. After school one day, Gershom pointed to his son Moshe's back, as the young man walks home in the distance.

"There," he asks, "do you see Moshe? Maybe Moshe will be a rabbi. Or maybe a teacher."

**Have you ever visited the Abayudaya? Do you have photos, stories, or other thoughts you would like to share with the new and improved, soon to be online, Abayudaya web site? If you do, please send or email them, with your name, to: Tamar Kemp, PO Box 103, Kutztown, PA 19530, blueday70@hotmail.com. Credit will be given, but photos sent will not be returned unless a size-appropriate S.A.S.E is included. Please include brief descriptive caption with each picture.**

# A Modern Look at Pearl Buck's *Peony*

Reviewed by Gretchen Primack

It's not surprising that Pearl Buck would choose to delve into cross-religious subject matter in her 1948 novel *Peony*, set in seventeenth century China. After all, her parents were Christian missionaries who brought their young daughter to China, where she stayed for most of her life. The fact that the religion she highlights in the book is Judaism is a bit more astonishing.

Many Kulanu newsletter readers may already be familiar with the history of Jews in China, especially since the 1995 publication of Xu Xin's impressive *Legends of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng*. Pearl Buck's story centers on one Jewish family, the House of Ezra, a family with roots four generations deep in China. The head of the household makes an excellent living as a trader, whose caravan of goods arrives yearly via the Silk Road. His mother is Chinese, but his father married him to a Jewish woman who insists on keeping a traditional home. Their only child, David, is entering manhood, and the story centers on the personal and cultural pressures brought to bear on him as he decides how to lead his adult life.

*Peony* is a sort of "Upstairs Downstairs" meets "Fiddler on the Roof." The title character is a Chinese bondsmaid, sold to the family as a child, who has grown up with David and now fallen in love with him. Not only would a marriage between the two violate strict class divisions, but Madame Ezra's fervent wish is to see her son wed the Rabbi's daughter Leah, and perhaps succeed her father as leader of the Kaifeng Jews. Madame Ezra is all too aware of the growing rates of intermarriage and disinterest among community members ("Even the sound of the chanting (in synagogue) had grown weaker as more years passed... The very building was falling into slow ruin."). She longs to see a revival of traditional ways among her people, and feels an "unchangeable difference between the Chinese and us. We are the children of the true God, and they are heathen."

Any lover of Jewish fiction—or history, for that matter—is used to reading about Jews living in a greater culture of non-Jews, and the anti-Semitism that arises. There is a striking difference here, in that the Chinese appear entirely comfortable with the Jews who have settled in Kaifeng. Any wariness long ago dissolved as the Jews proved themselves good neighbors and business partners. Ironically, it is this tolerance that has led to the weakening of the community. Jews in hostile cultures, the book suggests, are more likely to retain a separate identity. They are bound to others within their community through this external conflict, and also forced in many circumstances to live apart and become more or less self-sufficient. In China, Jews interacted with kind neighbors until their distinct cultural identity began to be subsumed by the greater culture. How interesting, then, that the book begins with the family gathered around the table on Passover, recounting the story of slavery to freedom. The Jews fled Egypt, threatened with destruction at worst, permanent bondage at best. Jews in peaceful China were threatened with a different kind of destruction—yet one that could be equally fatal to their culture.

David, oblivious at first to places in which Jews were targets of discrimination and violence, is willing to assimilate. He is captivated by the daughter of the wealthy Chinese businessman Kung Chen, and struggles to decide whether to pursue her and thus establish himself in mainstream Chinese society, or follow his mother's wishes and delve deeper into Jewish faith and practice. This struggle of love versus duty takes up the bulk of *Peony*; after its resolution, the book gathers a burst of speed and quickly covers two more generations, illustrating the effect of David's decision.

Along the way, Buck creates convincing arguments for various facets of David's internal conflict, so that the reader feels the magnitude of his dilemma. Of course, this reflects on the greater historic picture, which is what makes *Peony* an interesting read. For instance, the discussion of Buddhism versus Judaism, exemplified in a conversation between Kung Chen and the old Rabbi, who is irate

that Chen has entered the synagogue. The Rabbi purports to understand God's will, but Kung Chen disagrees that humans can know of a world beyond this one. The Rabbi cries, "Beyond this earth we *can* know! It is for this that God has chosen my people..." Kung Chen replies, "God—if there is a God—would not choose one man above another or one people above another," further enraging the Rabbi.

Such exchanges lead Kung Chen to examine the spate of anti-Semitic rampages reported in Europe. He feels Jewish victimization stems from belief in their own special status as Chosen People. "None on earth," Kung Chen concludes, "can love those who declare that they alone are the sons of God." An interesting philosophy, but one with its own irony here, since the Chinese had accepted the Jews with little trouble. True, they thought of them as foreigners, a rather odd and "sorrowful" people who "worship a cruel god" (Kung Chen), but this didn't stop him from agreeing to join their two families and become like a second father to David.

Of course, the personal interactions and character development help keep us involved in this historical novel, although the melodrama sometimes reaches a fever pitch. We feel for many of these people: Peony herself, trapped in the social constructs of the time; Madame Ezra, longing to live among her own, searching for salvation through her son; "heaven-good" Leah, hopeful she can escape the gloom and poverty of her father's house; David himself, suffering through his choices when he really just wants to be a young man of the world.

In the end, it is one of Ezra's associates, Kao Lien, who sums up the difficulty Jews of the time had in finding a life path. "Everywhere I find them," he tells Kung Chen, "the Jew of the Covenant, and the Jew who wishes only to be human and like any other man."

---

## LETTERS (cont.)

(Continued from page 2)

GUIUR (conversion) at Recife (Pernambuco, Brazil) on the 14 AV of 5.759 with the liberal Rav. Leonardo Alanati from Minas Gerais (Brazil).

Geraldo Apoliano Dias (Efraim ben Avraham Avinu)  
Recife, Brazil

### Collecting for the Abayudaya

I have received \$130 for the Abayudaya from a couple of the women on the Bnot Yisrael email list, with which I purchased -- and am sending as well -- 13 *seferim Tehillim*, one *Pirke Avot* and one *Shema* book. Along with these, I will be sending gently used college textbooks. Another woman from another list sent Jewish books as well as secular children's books. Donna Halper is sending me a shipment of books. I will ship these in a Post Office "M" bag.

Do you have anything you would like to donate? It would be a wonderful mitzvah to help out these fellow Jews who are living their lives serving HaShem. And we who are more financially secure here in the USA have an obligation to help. I am not asking for money, but for Jewish books, or any college textbooks or high school textbooks that you would like to donate for the new Abayudaya school. Also if you have any *talesim*, that would be great.

Please send books to me; it's a lot cheaper than sending them to Uganda! Send to: T. Kemp, PO Box 103, Kutztown, PA 19530. Thank you for your generosity.

Tamar Kemp, [blueday70@hotmail.com](mailto:blueday70@hotmail.com)

# KULANU BRIEFS

## Next Kulanu Meeting

The next Kulanu meeting will be held on December 19 at 11:30 a.m. at Temple Shalom, 8401 Grubb Road (at East-West Hwy.), Chevy Chase, Maryland. **Rick Gold**, who recently moved back to the US after serving in the Foreign Service, will speak on the Jews of Timbuktu, Mali. Gold, a 19-year veteran of the Foreign Service, has served in the Philippines, Mali, Senegal and Morocco. In 1984-85 he oversaw famine relief efforts in Ethiopia and Sudan, during which time he made contact with Beta Israel preparing for the Operation Moses airlift. In Morocco he worked closely with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in distributing US Government food assistance to Jewish schools, hospitals, and homes for the elderly. He is married to a Moroccan woman, and they have two children who are proud of their Moroccan, American and Jewish heritages. For information, call 301-681-5679.

## TODAH RABAH!

Our heartfelt thanks to Washington philanthropist **Abe Pollin** for his \$5000 grant to Kulanu. And to **Jonina Duker and Alan Lichtman** for their contribution in honor of Aron and Karen Primack. And to **Elaine Hilsenrath, I. Michael Goodman, Lorraine Lighold, Selig Eisenberg, Temple Emanuel Brotherhood, and Scott J. Weitz** for their generous gifts. And to **Rose Bromberg**, who donated 125 Haggadahs for Kulanu's communities abroad. And to **Dr. Mark Lukens**, who sent 17 High Holiday prayer books to the Lemba collected from colleagues. And to the **Huntington Jewish Centre**, Huntington, New York, for sending a parcel to the Lemba containing *tzitzit*, kippot, small Torah scrolls, taleisim, and books. And to **Tifereth Israel Synagogue** of Des Moines, Iowa, which shipped 200 *Sim Shalom siddurim* to the Jewish community in Sefwi Waiwso, Ghana. And to **Sharon Halper**, who sent *tefillin* and a Bible to Songbung Beith Shalom Synagogue in India. And to **Thomas Carter, Rabbi Nissim Wernick, Chaim Engelberg, Dr. Murray Morgenstern, Bill Fern, Lax and Ellen Shneider, Dr. Selig Eisenberg, Dr. Stanley Klotz, Lorraine Leighold, Rabbi Myron Fenster, the Brotherhood Synagogue, and Sid Birnbaum** for their generous contributions for Uri Katula's scholarship through Kulanu. And to **Yaakov Gladstone** for sending books, Chanukah materials and kippot to the Jewish community in Ghana. And to **Carolyn Goldman** for her generous contribution for Samson Ben Shadrak's tuition. And to **Irwin and Elaine Berg** for their generous contribution for the new Abayudaya high school.

## Officer News

Kulanu welcomes a new vice president for outreach: **Moshe Cotel**, who has taught at the Peabody Conservatory of Music for the past 28 years. He will take early retirement from Peabody at the end of the current academic year to become a full-time rabbinical student. His Judaically-inspired musical compositions include an opera, *Dreyfus*, as well as *Trope for Orchestra*, *The Night of the Murdered Poets for Narrator and Chamber Ensemble*, and *Haftarah for Piano Solo*.

We also welcome **J. Hershy Worch** as vice president for Pathan affairs. Rabbi Worch, who writes poetry and music, also serves as one of Kulanu's rabbinic advisors. He has visited and taught the Abayudaya in Uganda, and got to know Pathan students while a Hillel rabbi at the University of Illinois.

And we must say goodbye and a hearty "Thank You!" to **Jonina Duker** as our speakers' bureau coordinator for many years. Jonina will continue to stay active as a resource for Jewish genealogy and as a speaker.

## Cotel a Hit at NHC Summer Institute!

Kulanu VP Moshe Cotel, attended the week-long National Havurah Committee Summer Institute which was held at Hofstra University in August. Moshe did a workshop on Jewish music from Uganda featuring the Kulanu-sponsored recording, *Shalom Everybody Everywhere!* which introduced the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda. Moshe also read excerpts about the Abayudaya from the Kulanu book, *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of*. This presentation received an enthusiastic response from a group of havurah Jews from all over the United States. In fact, Moshe was asked to make a second presentation for the children's program. The kids, ages 10-12, loved it, and were dancing and singing along with the Abayudaya. Moshe was then asked to make a third presentation for the even younger kids! Many people attending the Summer Institute took Kulanu order forms in order to obtain their own copies of the recording. This warm welcome accorded to African Jewish music sung in Hebrew, English and Luganda confirmed what Moshe told his audience in his introduction: "The songs of the Abayudaya will lift your hearts."

## Monthly Death Report in Addis Ababa

Kulanu has just received the death report for the month of August 1999 in the Jewish/Falash Mura community in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Eleven people died, ranging in age from 15 days to 85 years. All deaths were due to either tuberculosis or pneumonia.

## SSPHS Call for Papers

December 1, 1999 is the deadline for submissions of papers for the annual meeting of the Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies (SSPHS). The meeting, to be held in New York April 27-30, 2000, will address three themes: Brazil at 500, Carlos V and His World, and the Iberian Peninsula at 1000 and/or 2000. The SSPHS strongly encourages the submission of complete or partially complete panels on these or other topics relating to the Iberian World. Proposals should include a 250-word abstract for each paper and a one-page CV for each participant. Conference participants must be SSPHS members. For questions and submissions contact Sara Nalle, Dept. of History, William Paterson Univ., Wayne, NJ 07470, nalle@frontier.wilpaterson.edu, fax 973-720-3079, tel 973-720-3049.

## A Travel Resource

In a recent column on "Short trips, tips and tours," travel columnist Lewis Lachter listed among travel resources Kulanu's book *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of*. The column ran in the *American Jewish World* in Minneapolis/St. Paul and other Jewish papers. The book may be ordered on page 16 of this newsletter.

## Update on Iranian Jewish Prisoners

Rumors continue to abound concerning the wellbeing of the Iranian Jewish prisoners. However, the international campaign to free the prisoners is beginning to bear fruit. Both the president of Austria and Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, as well as a spokesman for a French parliamentary delegation, have all recently publicly declared that the president of Iran is aware that there is no truth in the charges against the Iranian Jews and has told them so. Let us hope that means they will be acquitted in a fair trial, although recent experience makes that a remote possibility at best.

## Web News

Stevy Epstein's new web page about the **Bnei Menashe** is located at <http://www.thebigdipper.net/menashe>. It contains pictures, history, recent information, and how to contact the Bnei Menashe and Amishav.

The **Conversion to Judaism Web Page** <[www.convert.org](http://www.convert.org)> has

(Continued on page 9)



# KULANU BRIEFS

(Continued from page 8)

had close to 150,000 visitors. The web page provides information and advice for potential converts free of any pressure, no matter where they might be in their spiritual search. The web page lists 250 rabbis willing to help. A spokesperson for the web site noted that these new converts are revitalizing Judaism. One is running a newsletter, another a clinic for Jews by Choice, still another runs an anti-missionary web site. If you know people seeking information about conversion to Judaism, please let them know about the web page or have them contact Barbara Shair at shairsware@aol.com.

Rufina Mausenbaum's beautiful web site about **Portuguese Anousim**, <http://www.lusoamerican.com/saudades>, now has its own forum discussion board. From the home page, click on "Forum" to reach the discussion board. Rufina plans to expand the web page to cover more aspects of Sephardic culture and history, and she welcomes help and input.

Jews from around the world will discuss Jewish unity in its broadest terms in the **Jewish World** group. Highlighted will be ethnic, cultural, and regional differences and similarities among Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Ethiopians, Lithuanians, Tunisians, and Jews from distant locations in the Diaspora. Subscribe to Jewish World by sending a blank e-mail message to <mailto:JewishWorld-Subscribe@eGroups.com>. The moderator can be contacted at [grossman@post.com](mailto:grossman@post.com).

The new **KHAZARIA-ANNOUNCE** list brings readers information about the history and archaeology of the Turkic-Jewish kingdom of Khazaria, a world power in eastern Europe that flourished as an independent state from the 7th-11th centuries. To subscribe to KHAZARIA-ANNOUNCE, visit <http://www.onelist.com/community/khazaria-announce> and click "Join Community," or send a message to [khazaria-announce-subscribe@onelist.com](mailto:khazaria-announce-subscribe@onelist.com).

The web page for the **Resource Center for Afrikan Jews in the Americas** is <http://www.fortunecity.com/millennium/zebedee/67>. While it focuses on returnees from the West African diaspora, it also addresses all Black Jews, be they returning *anousim*, Sephardi, Maghribi or Mizrahi. Another web site of interest to **American Jews of African descent** is <http://hometown.aol.com/shahanna/myhomepage/index.html>.

**Jewish Communities of the World** is an uncommonly rich web site of just that – Jewish communities from Kaifeng to Estonia, Tahiti to Manchuria! Visit at <http://www.haruth.com/JewsoftheWorld.html>. An equally rich site for **Sephardic communities and organizations** is located at [http://www.haruth.com/Sephardic\\_Stuff.htm](http://www.haruth.com/Sephardic_Stuff.htm).

Jonah Lissner's comprehensive article, "**Jewish Roots in Turkmenistan: An Historical Overview**," can now be found on Kulanu's web page, [www.ubalt.edu/kulanu](http://www.ubalt.edu/kulanu).

EEJH is a mailing list for the discussion of Jewish history and culture in the lands of **Eastern Europe**. To subscribe, send a message to: [eejh-subscribe@onelist.com](mailto:eejh-subscribe@onelist.com). Or contact one of the co-moderators at [kbrook@khazaria.com](mailto:kbrook@khazaria.com) or [bgdobbs@globalserve.net](mailto:bgdobbs@globalserve.net).

## Kulanu's Anusim List Explained

The ANUSIM list, which currently has 248 subscribers, is for those who know/think/suspect or are interested on whether they have Jewish ancestors that were forced to convert under duress and kept Jewish practices to any extent. Although the list will mainly focus on feelings, thoughts, and learning about Jewish practices by those descendants, scholars and those interested in the subject of crypto-judaism are welcome as long as they respect those who wish for anonymity. All branches and aspects of Judaism can be discussed, except for messianic (i.e. Jews for Jesus), as long as it does not 'take over' the real subject, Anusim. Persons wishing to learn more about these can

find it on other sources. Since most participants will possess varying levels of knowledge of Judaism, questions at all levels are welcome. Participants will not be urged to convert to Judaism if that is not their wish. Those simply seeking to learn about their ancestors and how they lived are welcome. The list will have a web site at <http://members.tripod.com/~anak/anusim.htm>. To subscribe to this list, go to: <http://www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi?listname=anusim>.

## Chinese Professor Seeks Contact

Prof. Qun Zhang of China Textile University in Shanghai is seeking someone who can help him in his research on American Jewish literature. He finds that the availability of this literature in China is limited and is seeking a connection with scholars and institutions in America. Contact him at [qzhang@ctu.edu.cn](mailto:qzhang@ctu.edu.cn).

## Romaniote Exhibit

"The Jews of Zakynthos" is a new exhibit at Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum at 280 Broome St., NYC (212-431-1619). The exhibit follows the odyssey of the Jews of the Greek Island of Zakynthos who flourished under Greek, Russian, French, English and Venetian rule and even survived Nazi Germany, thanks to the acts of Righteous Gentiles. The exhibit is open Sundays 11am-4pm through May 15, 2000.

## Turkish Experience Highlighted

The JCC of Northern Virginia recently held several events on the Jewish Turkish experience. Events included an evening of art, music, dance, and food; a photographic exhibit; a cooking demonstration; a home visit; and an art exhibit.

## Beverly Friend Retiring

Although she will continue editing *The China/Judaic Connection*, Dr. Beverly Friend has retired from her full-time position as Professor of English at Oakton Community College. *China/Judaic Connection* will eventually convert to an electronic form. The url is <http://servercc.oakton.edu/~friend.chinajews.html>.

## Cukierkorn Teaching and Writing

Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn is teaching a multi-part course on unusual Jewish communities around the world, sponsored by the Jewish Educational Institute in Pittsburgh. The course is based on the book *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of*, of which he is a co-author. He is also working on a basic introduction to Judaism for Spanish-speakers.

## A Surprising Video Discovery

While browsing at Blockbusters for a rental film, your editor came upon a promising pick – *The Heritage*. The video, a 1993 Israeli film with Avi Toledano, wove together beautifully a modern Israeli-Italian love story with flashbacks from the same family's history in Toledo, Spain, 500 years earlier. A perfect discovery for Kulanu types!

## Write for Your Synagogue Bulletin!

Yaakov Gladstone's article "All of Us," about Kulanu's work with the Abayudaya and other communities, appeared in his synagogue's quarterly bulletin. And Jack Zeller wrote an article about the

(Continued on page 10)

# KULANU BRIEFS (cont.)

(Continued from page 9)

Bnei Menashe for his synagogue's monthly newsletter. If 100 more of us did the same thing, Kulanu's work would be much better known and appreciated!

## Articles and Books of Note

**Elli Kohen's** *Ladino-English, English-Ladino Concise Dictionary* has just been published in paperback by Hippocrene Books. It lists for \$14.95 but is available for \$11.96 through Amazon: [www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0781806585/ref=s\\_e](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0781806585/ref=s_e)

According to a recent JTA article by **Julia Goldman** ("Ethiopians in Israel Plead for Their Relatives," in *Washington Jewish Week*), more than 700 Ethiopian Israelis gathered in Tel Aviv during October to raise public awareness of the 11,000-25,000 "Falash Mura" in squalid conditions in Ethiopia waiting for passage to Israel. Most are practicing Judaism and/or want to return to Judaism, and many have relatives in Israel.

**Ana Kurland's** article "Seeking Place as a Jew among 'People of the Forced'" appeared in the *Washington Jewish Week* in September. Kurland, who operates Kulanu's *anousim* listserve, wrote of her Roman Catholic childhood in Puerto Rico and her eventual realization that she is a descendant of Crypto-Jews.

**Wendy Elliman's** article, "Menashe's Children Come Home," appeared in the October issue of *Hadassah Magazine*. That issue also featured Ruth Mason's "Seeing Ethiopian Stars," a beautifully photographed article about the prominent place of Ethiopians on Israel's theater, dance, music and television scene. And the November issue of *Hadassah* focuses on Sephardic heritage.

**Daniel Shoer Roth's** lengthy article in the *Miami Herald*, "Dade Attracts Hispanic Jews," discusses the influx of Latin American Jewish immigrants to the Miami area. Out of Dade County's 74,500 Jewish families, up to 6000 are of Hispanic heritage, 100 having arrived from Colombia this past summer.

Listed among the best of the newest books catalogued at the Jewish Theological Seminary Library, the largest Judaica library in the Western Hemisphere, is *Passion Memory and Identity: Twentieth-Century Latin American Jewish Women Writers*, edited by **Marjorie Agosin**. This collection of essays, written by a distinguished group of literary critics, explores the Jewish woman's experience in Latin America.

**Margaret Ramirez's** lengthy article, "Renewing a Jewish Heritage," appeared in the *LA Times* in September. The article told the discovery-and-return stories of two Southwesterners and also discussed the controversy surrounding whether returnees' stories should be considered legitimate and whether returnees should go through a conversion ceremony.

"Group Bearing Jewish Traditions Discovered in India: Descendants of the Tribe of Menashe Reside in Eastern India," is the title of **Yair Sheleg's** article in *Haaretz* in August. The article reviewed the history of the Shinlung and described Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail's work in helping them return to Judaism and to Israel.

**Einat Fishbain's** recent *Haaretz* story, "Try the Beloved Country," discusses the case of Nigerian Paulus Amanugo, who has been undergoing Orthodox conversion in Israel for six years. While rabbis are convinced he is suitable for and ready for conversion, the Interior Ministry repeatedly blocks his right to convert.

## Committee of Jews from Arab Lands Forms

The American Sephardi Federation has formed a new committee to organize and help Jews who lived in Arab countries. The new entity

is called The International Committee of Jews from Arab Lands. Those who may be entitled to compensation for being forcibly expelled from their homes in these countries should contact the American Sephardi Federation, 305 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, New York, NY 10001. Those in Israel may phone 972-6-679-7727.

## Lemba Express Gratitude

Professor M.E.R. Mathivha, the president of the Lemba Cultural Association, wishes to thank all who have sent books to the Association. He specifically acknowledged **Dr Mark Lukens, Morris Baker, Mr and Mrs H. Gordon, Mr Joe Green, Mr and Mrs. Erwin Newman, Rubin Salutsky, Mr and Mrs Robert Jacobs, Mr and Mrs Lazarus Scott, Mr and Mrs Julian Bloomfield, Mrs Morris Baker, Mrs. Joe Rosenberg, Mr and Mrs Julius Wides, Mr and Mrs Max Krane, Mrs Bertha Perlmutter, Mr and Mrs Nathan Golton, and N. Frankel**. The Lemba are a large community and it will take a long time and a lot of generosity to build libraries for each of the scattered communities. So, please keep the books coming. If you are not sure what to send, call Professor Mathivha directly, tel: 0159 41610 in South Africa. Another source of information for the Lemba Cultural Association needs is Dr Gedzu Mathivha [gedzu@qedi.co.za](mailto:gedzu@qedi.co.za), who is now a member of Kulanu's list serve. Or contact Yaakov Levi and Shimon Wapnick at [Lemba21@hotmail.com](mailto:Lemba21@hotmail.com), tel 914-594-4044, fax 212-439-6107, Lemba21, Box 132, 1202 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10028.

## Synagogue Brought to Israel

The Tzedek V'shalom synagogue in Surinam, South America, complete with all its contents, has been transferred to the Israel Museum. The transfer was the subject of three years of negotiations between the Museum and the Surinam authorities. In addition to the 263-year-old synagogue, ancient Torah scrolls, benches, the podium, and other sacred articles were brought to Israel.

## 400 Cuban Jews Make Aliyah

During the past year, 400 of Cuba's estimated 1500 Jews have immigrated to Israel. It is believed that pressure from Fidel Castro's personal friend, Margarita Zapata (the Jewish grand-daughter of a Mexican revolutionary), as well pressure from economic sanctions resulted in Castro permitting Jews to emigrate to Israel. It is estimated that another 200 will emigrate by next June. The new *olim* are at an absorption center in Ashkelon.

## Mazel Tov!

To **Jonina Duker and Alan Lichtman** on the occasion of their marriage. And to **Chaim and Estelle Strauss** on the bar mitzvah of their grandson **Josh** and bat mitzvah of their grand-daughter **Jill** in Jerusalem. And to **Alex and Mia Gladstone** on the birth of their grand-daughter **Aiden** in Toronto.

## Refuah Shleimah

Our best wishes for a speedy recovery to two Abayudaya women who are seriously ill, **Erina Wamani and Damati Nanzala**. And to **David Mausenbaum** of Johannesburg. And to **Janet Kurland** of Maryland.

## May Their Memory Be for a Blessing

Condolences to the families of **Max Kurland** of Maryland, **David Gera** of Elon Moreh, Israel, **Doris M. Vidigal** of Maryland, and **Enosh Womani** and **Esau Sinyanga** of Uganda, and **Evelyn Engelberg** of Montreal.

(Continued on page 13)

# Holocaust Recognition (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Italian governments have been anywhere from apathetic to hostile in relating to appeals by Sephardic Jews. Recent attempts by numerous individuals and organizations to appeal to the World Jewish Congress to retrieve Swiss bank accounts of annihilated Sephardic Jews from the Balkans encountered deaf ears. Numerous so-called "good-willed" lawyers, U.S. state insurance regulators, politicians like Giuliani or Alphonse d'Amato, and State Department negotiators have also been unresponsive to Sephardic/Oriental Holocaust survivors' appeals and unconcerned with assisting this part of the Jewish people, which is a majority of Israel, as well as French Jewry.

Media attention in Israel and previous intervention through the European Community in the late 1980s and 1990s have received paltry results. The *Canadian Jewish News* refused to publicize an investigative article on the subject after it was researched and prepared for publication. The institutions of Montreal Jewry have continuously refused to deal with problems of Sephardic Jews who have continuously been refused reparations. Salonikan Jews are organized in Israel and through their organization, they received reparations if they were in a death camp. Most of those living in Israel from over 30 destroyed Greek Jewish communities, whether they survived Auschwitz/Birkenau or other concentration camps, most often do not receive reparations since they are represented by no one, and the Claims Conference, Israeli government, Yad Vashem Archives, World Jewish Congress, and other self-interest reparations collecting organizations usually have ignored them.

Through friendship circles in the United States, many Salonikans received reparations since the 1950s, but those outside these friendship circles in North America or other parts of the world have continuously been refused reparations. Survivors from Rhodes or from more than 30 pre-WWII Jewish communities of Greece are not organized, have no representation, and more often than not do not receive reparations. The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece has been disinterested in pursuing this issue and only recently has the Jewish community of Thessaloniki, after a new change in leadership devoted to Jewish life and education, taken an interest in this issue affecting them and tens of thousands of former Salonikan Jews or their heirs throughout the world.

In Israel, with its Oriental Jewish majority, which is marginalized politically and in many spheres of society, the subject of Oriental Jewry has faintly, if at all, appeared in Holocaust commemoration. In the early 1980s, as a lecturer of the Education Department at Yad Vashem, I was forbidden to lecture on Sephardic Jewry in the Holocaust. Despite the fact that Tunisian and Libyan Jews were deported to European death camps or died by the hundreds and thousands in labor camps, they are hardly mentioned, if at all, in Israel's Holocaust museums of Yad Vashem and Lochamei Getaot. While Yad Vashem recognizes mainly rescuers of Ashkenazic Jewry as Righteous Gentiles, with its paid staff of at least four workers, it has never financed attempts to locate the thousands of Greek, former-Yugoslavian, Albanian, Italian, and North African non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews in the Holocaust. The speakers of the Israeli Knesset, Shevach Weiss, and Dov Shilansky paid lip service to Greek Jewish Holocaust survivors on television, but refused numerous attempts to act on the behalf of the Sephardim who have been continuously refused reparations when applying in Israel.

Kibbutz Lochamei Getaot has a permanent exhibition of photos on Salonikan Jewry in the Holocaust, but unfortunately has not wanted to display under glass related collected and donated artifacts. Their refusal to display artifacts, as well as Yad Vashem's continual similar refusal, has dissuaded many Sephardic Holocaust survivors to donate again and has left the latter with the feeling that the establishment does not consider them Holocaust survivors since they are not Ashkenazi. Such rejection, whether in Israel or abroad, also

gives the Sephardic Holocaust survivor the feeling that his or her Jewishness is being questioned and negated.

The new major Holocaust museums, with official United States government recognition, have also greatly discriminated against Sephardic Jewry. The U.S Memorial Museum, although approached numerous times since its planning phase, refused to post pictures of Greek Jews as Mengele medical experiment victims, planners and participants in the Birkenau uprising in October 1944, and Auschwitz inmates in the Warsaw Ghetto and their role in the two Polish resistance revolts in Warsaw in August and October 1944. Until 1999 the museum rejected giving space to Sephardic Jewry at its weekly lectures and academic conferences, while it has devoted great resources for non-Jewish victims of genocide and mass-killing. Only with presentations by Michael Bar Zohar on the role of King Boris in avoiding the deportation of Bulgarian Jewry from the Old Bulgaria, Joshua Plaut on the dying Jewish communities of Greece, the summer 1999 foreign Sephardic and Oriental Holocaust researchers project, and the October 1999 month series of lectures, exhibition, and concert on Greek Jewry in the Holocaust, has the museum shown a change in attitude, but no significant change has taken place in the permanent or temporary exhibitions, or in its publications. Not only are the Sephardim of the Balkans not included in the museum's publications on the Holocaust, but the Holocaust, deportations, forced labor, and anti-Semitic events of North Africa (in particular in Tunisia and Libya) and Iraq are not part of the staff's orientation or cognizance.

Despite attempts for years by Sephardic Jews and researchers to put Sephardic Jewry on the agenda of the New York Holocaust Memorial, there has been little progress. Complete unwillingness to interview Sephardic Auschwitz survivors since its inception has resulted in their total absence in the museum monitors and walls. There is no mention of the Sephardim and North Africa in the portrayal of the survivors after the war, nor of their migration to the United States. There was also no mention of Sephardic Jewry as being affected by the Holocaust in the opening ceremony on September 11, 1997, despite efforts to include in the program all the different Jewries affected from Northern Europe.

The new British museums will be little better. When a Holocaust museum is conceived by an architect and curators start working, the agenda becomes set and Sephardic and Oriental Jewry have never been included anywhere in the world at this phase. After this early phase, there is little time or room for change. The Imperial War Museum is willing to exhibit a Jewish star from Greece, but it's not willing to represent the Sephardim of the Balkans or North Africa in any significant or representative fashion. As in all the other Holocaust museums, the survivor will be portrayed as Ashkenazic, primarily Eastern European, Yiddish-speaking, and fair skinned. The museum in Manchester will be no different.

The Holocaust Museum in Capetown will have some space devoted to Rhodian Jewry, since their diaspora congregation in Seapoint, Capetown, is an integral part of the local Jewish community, but no other Sephardic-related themes will be presented. In Sydney, Australia, the Hungarian Holocaust survivor community dominates the input of the Jewish museum, and numerous attempts to put Sephardic Jewry on their walls have been rejected.

In Melbourne, the Polish-dominated community is more open to including Sephardic Jewry. While its tiny Holocaust center has not been willing to finance Sephardic acquisitions, it has photocopied some pictures from Greece, Bulgaria, and the ex-Yugoslavia for its walls. The new Jewish Museum has expressed some interest in putting Greek and Sephardic Jewry on its agenda (but substance 13)

# South African Zionists Invite Lemba (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

went wrong; but let's just say they could no longer call Yemen home), the House of Hamisi took over the leadership and led the people across into Africa.

Once in Africa, the tribe split into two sections: One group settled in Ethiopia and the other group went further south along the East Coast. They settled in what today is known as Tanzania/ Kenya and built Senna 2. Here they prospered and increased in numbers.

I'm afraid the travel bug bit once again and they were on the move. A small group went and settled in Malawi and Kenya. Their descendants are still residing in these countries up to today and are generally known as BaMwenye (lords of the land). The remaining group, under the leadership of the house of Bakali, moved on and settled in Mozambique. Here they built Senna 3. Even today, the BaSenna are found in Mozambique.

After many years, part of the tribe, now under the leadership of Seremane (which is the house I belong to), moved further south to settle in Chiramba in what is known today as Zimbabwe. They were known as the Ba-Lemba. Our people still live there up to today. Some of the tribe moved south again and eventually settled in South Africa (Venda, Louis Trichardt, Pietersburg and Tzaneen).

This story has been told to all Lemba children from the time they are able to comprehend. It is told so that we know where we come from, who we are and how we live. It is told and shall continue to be told/written so that future generations are not lost, never to be found again.

Do I believe this? Oh Yeah! My father told me, and now there is scientific proof for the non-believers: The Lemba males possess the Priestly *Cohanim* gene on their Y chromosome (from work done by Jenkins and Spurgle at Wits University).

Old maps of the Holy Land have now revealed that there was a place called Lemba way back BCE. Which brings us to my generation! Pretty cool and interesting, huh?!

- 1) We believe in only one God, Nwali. He is the creator of all things. Over time, due to certain circumstances, a number of Lemba have been baptized as Christians.
- 2) One day per week is considered holy: On this day we praise Nwali and thank him for looking after us. We teach our children to honor their mothers and fathers.
- 3) Circumcision: We circumcise all our males. It used to be done in the home by chosen elders. The male was circumcised at the age of 8 years (did we get that wrong over time?) Nowadays, some do it in hospitals. There is a strong move to bring this back to the home.
- 4) Dietary laws: We do not eat pork or any of the creatures prohibited by the Old Testament. We have our animals slaughtered by designated people and bled. We do not mix milk and meat ever in our meal planning. We wash our hands before we handle food or cooking utensils and we thank Nwali before eating.
- 5) Calendar: We used to observe the moon to guide us in observing times. Everyone has a calendar nowadays.
- 6) Burial: We have special burial rituals. Our graves are dug with a shelf on the side where the body is laid. The head must always face north where we have come from. Today, we put tombstones with a Star of David on them.
- 7) Lembas are encouraged to marry other Lembas. A non-Lemba woman can be instructed in the ways of the Lembas if she is to marry one. She has to learn the religious laws, dietary laws, etc. She may not bring any kitchen utensils from her maiden home to her new Lemba home. And she is to bring her children up according to the Lemba tradition. Sometimes she is asked to shave her head before being admitted to the Lemba home.

There are about 700,000 of us in Southern Africa. We know who we are. It would be grand if we returned to the broader global Jewish community. Even though we have safeguarded our traditions for this long, we do not want to risk losing them.

We all meet once a year for a cultural conference up in the Northern province. We are in the process of building a temple and hopefully a conference center. One of us who owns a farm wants to establish a kibbutz on the farm. We plan to get people to come and instruct us in Hebrew, teach us about Torah.... teach us what was lost along the 2500 years of having been separated from the main body of Judaism.

We are receiving help, support and encouragement in our project by a few good people, like Dr Shimon Wapnick, Dr Jack Zeller and Yaacov Levi, who will soon be joining us as our teacher. These people, together with organizations like Kulanu, are in the forefront collecting books and *siddurim*.

## AFTER THE FIRE

By Clara Castelar

We've lain in this bed of ashes for thousands of lifetimes,  
Crushed by the weight of our fear.  
No ladder fell from the sky bearing  
Archangels willing to be pummeled.  
We didn't have the heart to pinion the cherubim  
Who dared to check our attendance at autos-da-fe.  
We slept beneath the rock of our regrets,  
learning to dream.  
Our wishes are simple now,  
We want to be granted the gift of welcome,  
The benison of forgiveness,  
The blessing of rest after our struggle.  
How shall we reclaim what was ours before the fire?  
All we have left is the tiredness of centuries  
Spent holding keys for doors that won't open for us.  
We are weary of waiting for a bridge to cross this vacuum  
An absence of mercy created around us.  
How long shall we atone?  
Must we make our way to God inch by inch,  
Hoisting ourselves, hand over bloody hand, on the rope  
of your doubts?

# Holocaust (cont.)

*(Continued from page 11)*

acts have yet to be seen.

The director of the Australian War Memorial in the capital city of Canberra responded to my appeal with a disheartening comment that the subject of Greece and the annihilation of its Jews was of no interest to its commemorative museum.

In Canada, little has been done to commemorate Sephardic Jewry's suffering in the Holocaust. The Vancouver Holocaust Museum has been continually uncooperative and unwilling to sponsor lectures on Sephardic Jewry in the Holocaust, host a relevant exhibition, and put the theme of Sephardic Jewry in the Holocaust in its education projects. Toronto simply has ignored the subject, and the Winnipeg Holocaust Center is too new and poor to consider integrating such a southern topic on its list of priorities. The only exception is Montreal's small Holocaust museum, which exhibits several photos and memorabilia of Sephardic Jewry and has filmed several interviews with local Sephardic survivors.

The Spielberg Survivors of the Shoah program has demonstrated its lack of commitment to film Sephardic survivors and most of those known to researchers will not be videoed throughout the world. The flippant Hollywood producers of the project do not see the importance of interviewing these survivors. Many Oriental Jews, and rescuers and resistance members connected to saving Oriental Jewry in France and North Africa, when suggested to the project as film interview candidates, were refused on the grounds of not being relevant to the Holocaust experience.

The farther away in the periphery from the Polish center in Holocaust commemoration, the greater the omission. Those in the Balkans, Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Middle East are considered by the establishment as "faintly" related at best. The Holocaust crushed great and prolific Sephardic communities in Greece and Yugoslavia, as in Poland and Lithuania.

The unwillingness of museum directors, curators, and educators; community leaders; academicians; politicians; and the media to include Sephardic and Oriental Jewry as an integral part of Holocaust commemoration derives from any slew of reasons -- xenophobia, prejudice, ignorance, pettiness, apathy, cynicism, unwillingness to divide center stage, competing agendas and priorities, belittlement, insensitivity, and more. The "others," the Sephardim and Oriental Jews, the minority of the Jewish minority, are little understood and still barely studied.

While the Sephardic Holocaust experience is a non-issue for most Jews, its omission and neglect is extremely painful for Sephardic survivors and their descendants. Many Oriental Jews in Israel feel unconnected to the Holocaust, because the educational system drilled it into the baccalaureate examinations as an Ashkenazi phenomenon. They were never taught that Moroccan Jews died in labor camps under Vichy fascist rule or under the Italians in Libya in the Giado concentration camp or in other camps, or that more than 176 Jews died in the 1941 Nazi-inspired "Farhud" riots in Baghdad.

Just as Kulanu has made a difference and prompted concern for Crypto-Jews, lost Jewish tribes, and people around the globe adopting Judaism, hopefully this article will help advance some corrections to past injustices in Sephardic/Oriental Holocaust commemoration and reparations.

# BRIEFS (cont.)

*(Continued from page 10)*

**Laura Stone**, a Converso, who was born in Panama and lived in Sierra Vista, AZ, and was an active participant in Tucson's Kulanu Chapter, passed away recently. When she returned to Judaism, she was welcomed by her rabbi and congregation as a returnee without the need for formal conversion. She went on to study and became a bat mitzvah. The chapter will miss her and remember her best for sharing the stories of her childhood.

# Jodensavanne (cont.)

*(Continued from page 5)*

7. The two most sensational tombstones are those of two young men, Emanuel, son of Aron Pereyra, and David Rodrigues Monsanto, both of whom were murdered probably by either enslaved African-Americans or by marauding "Bush Negroes." Emanuel's epitaph indicates that he was "killed by the cruel rebelling Negroes...may his blood be avenged," while David's indicates that he perished at the hands of the "rebellious Negroes in the flower of his youth."

8. The oldest tombstone dates to 1684 and belongs to Isaac Haim De Aguilar. Thus, the Jodensavanne cemetery was established 20 years after the one at Cassipora, at the latest.

*Copyright Aviva Ben-ur and Rachel Frankel 1999. May not be quoted or reprinted without permission of the authors.*

# Learning from Ghana's Jews (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

me the leader's name and address. Before going, I exchanged several letters with the head of the community, David Ahenkorah.

Our congregation in Des Moines, Iowa, Tifereth Israel, recently replaced its *Sim Shalom siddurim* (prayer books) with the new edition that includes the Matriarchs. Rabbi Neil Sandler suggested that the Ghanaian Jews might need some. Indeed, they did: Their supply of prayer books consisted of just a handful, in assorted editions and most in poor condition. Tifereth Israel shipped out 200 of its *siddurim*, about 10 years old but in excellent shape. I hand-carried six for a ceremonial presentation; the rest were shipped and arrived a few weeks after my visit.

## Getting There

The trip to Sefwi Wiawso, the Jews' village, was an adventure, to say the least. It's very remote. To give an orientation: Ghana is shaped like an upright rectangle, roughly 300 miles wide and 500 miles tall -- about the size and shape of Minnesota. The Atlantic coastline forms the southern border, while the rest of the country is bordered by three other African states -- Ivory Coast on the west, Burkina Faso on the north, and Togo on the east. Accra, the capital (population 1.7 million), is along the coastline. Sefwi Wiawso lies in the Western Region, about 100 miles inland and 80 miles east of the Ivory Coast border. See the map below.

David Ahenkorah had instructed us to travel inland to Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city, 170 miles from Accra -- a four to five hour bus ride -- and then catch the 2 PM First Class bus to Sefwi Wiawso, which would get us there at 5:30. He hadn't realized that the day before our planned trip to his community, a Thursday, we would be in Takoradi, not Accra. The ride from Takoradi to Kumasi



was also four to five hours, and I was concerned about missing the 2 PM connection, so the evening before, I checked the bus schedule. To my surprise, there was one direct bus daily from Takoradi to Sefwi Wiawso, at 9 AM, avoiding the need to go through Kumasi (which, incidentally, is a lovely city -- but that's for another article). I was told to be at the bus station by 6 the next morning to be sure of getting a seat.

The bus was filled by 8, and we left at 8:30 for what the driver said would be a six hour drive. In reality, the roads were in such poor condition -- mostly one lane, unpaved, rutted and muddy -- that the trip of perhaps 150 miles took over eight hours. The scenery was pretty but not spectacular -- flat, forested, with small villages every few miles. The last few miles were the best. The bus veered onto a side road that ascended a small mountain. There were views down into the valleys on both sides as the road snaked higher and higher. The main street ran along the crest. The setting reminded me of Tzfat, the mountaintop city in Israel.

That's where the bus let us off. David's instructions were to ask for Kofi Kwateng's store, near the bus stop. He didn't give the name of the store. As we got off the bus, three or four adolescent boys walked by and I asked if they knew Kofi. Immediately, they picked

up our suitcases and carried them across the street and down the block, dropping us and the bags in front of "Shalom Enterprises." Clearly, we were at the right place! Kofi had kept the store open waiting for us, but he immediately closed the shop. "We must hurry, it's almost Shabbat," he remarked. He hailed a taxi, we bundled the suitcases into the trunk, and we drove off, down the hill, to a house under construction -- almost but not quite completed, but useable for a few days. It was being built for a Jewish family that had not yet moved in.

"We should take baths before going to the synagogue," Kofi said, "but candle lighting is in ten minutes." Abby and I quickly changed into Shabbat clothes and walked down the hill to the synagogue. It was almost dark, and the synagogue had no electricity. We could dimly see the faces of men, women and children, illuminated by the Shabbat candles. The service was in English, using the text of an old American *siddur*.

The service was followed by a Shabbat dinner of peanut soup, fried fish, rice and steamed veggies, with Coca Cola to drink and fresh fruit for dessert.

## What an Observant Jew Eats in Ghana

En route to Sefwi Wiawso, I had deliberated the etiquette of refusing non-kosher food: Should I explain about *kashrut*? Should I claim to be a vegetarian? Or to have a stomach problem that precluded my eating meat? Or should I poke around at the meat, pretending to eat it? My fears were quickly allayed, on two counts: They don't eat meat on Shabbat, and when they do during the rest of the week, it's kosher.

Anticipating my concern, David explained, "You don't have to worry about our meat. It's slaughtered in accordance with Jewish law. And," he added for emphasis, "we don't buy any of our meat from the Christian butchers in town, because they don't know the proper way to slaughter it."

The Jews of Sefwi Wiawso slaughter chickens, goats and sheep. They don't eat beef because, during a time of persecution 400 years ago, in Mali, Jews were not allowed to own cattle for several generations. During that time, they lost the knowledge of the proper way to slaughter cattle, so when the prohibition was finally lifted, they were unsure of how to kill a cow.

Most of the food we ate that weekend was typically Ghanaian -- peanut soup, boiled, roasted or fried meat or fish smothered in spicy peanut or palm nut sauce, rice or potatoes, boiled greens, and fufu. Fufu is an acquired taste. It's a gelatinous blend of plantains and cassava that's fairly tasteless by itself but acquires the taste of whatever it absorbs. Peanut soup quickly became popular in our family and among friends. It's easy to make and delicious. Use creamy peanut butter, seasoned with garlic, ginger and pepper to taste. Bring a pot of water to a boil, add the seasoning and slowly stir in the peanut butter until it melts, one part peanut butter to six parts water. If you add too much peanut butter at one time, some of it will stick to the bottom of the pan and burn. As with chicken soup, you can add other ingredients as the soup simmers -- chicken, potatoes, carrots, and so on. That's what Ghanaians do.

Goat and sheep are a major protein source throughout Ghana. You see them wandering at large in all but the major cities. (This series continues with Part II in the next newsletter.)



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

# It's the End of the Calendar Year Again!

*By Jack Zeller*

This has been an amazing year for Kulanu! Our Diaspora communities are on the move and we race till breathless to keep up with all of the spiritual and communal renewals anticipated for 2000/5760.

The Abayudaya have a guest house to provide hospitality to a growing number of Western visitors. Their high school is accredited and their students pass the university admission exams with predictable regularity. Nonstop efforts by Matt Meyer, Yaakov Gladstone, and Karen/Aron Primack are bearing fruit. The monies for electric power donated by Dr. Irene Vogel and envisioned by Rabbi Hershey Worch are ready to be implemented.

The elders and younger leaders of the Lemba community in South Africa and Zimbabwe have accepted the Kulanu offer to make an organized effort to unite our communities. Dr Shimon Wapnick and Rufina Mausebaum have worked almost incessantly toward this end. Imagine Lemba and South African Jewish Youth spending a weekend together this summer to celebrate their common identity, and Dr Rudo Mathivha, a foremost Lemba leader, addressing a South African Zionist luncheon as the guest of honor!

Rabbi Avichail has finally made headway with the Ministry of Interior to permit Bnei Menashe to emigrate from India to Israel.

In Peru, there are some pleasant expectations on the horizon, thanks to Bob Lande, Shlomo Mirkin, and many others.

Many journalists now call Kulanu. It used to be the other way around. Wendy Elliman wrote "Menashe's Children Come Home" for *Hadassah Magazine* in October and Jonathan Marshall wrote "Havdallah in Uganda" in *Reform Judaism* in the spring issue. All

convey very sympathetic and uplifting messages to others who have never heard of our Diaspora. No longer can we say that we support "lost communities." Let's say "emerging communities."

But in one critical way Kulanu has failed. We have promised more than we can deliver. The high school in Uganda still lacks electricity, laboratories and computers. Abayudaya food supplies are still precarious. Agricultural education, waiting on the wings of Israel's agricultural genius, is incompletely funded. The Lemba have asked for teachers and we are not able to fund although we have more than one very able candidate ready to leave. The Bnei Menashe in Mizoram and Manipur are not able to arrive in Israel due to a shortage of funds, not a lack of good will in the Israeli ministries.

Please consider a year-end gift to help us pay for the Lemba, Abayudaya and Bnei Menashe renewals. We need more money this year than before. It costs at least \$25,000 per year to support a teacher for the Lemba or Bnei Menashe. We need about \$800 dollars per person for plane fare for the Bnei Menashe. The Abayudaya school needs almost \$10,000 per year to be sure that every child has an education through high school. And there's lots more. Please feel free to call me if you want to talk about Kulanu's future and your role in it. And, please write yourself a large tax deduction. It is an investment with a big dividend both now and for generations to come.

**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.**

## SUPPORTER APPLICATION

**\_\_\_ I/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 \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE(S): ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ (DAY); ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ (EVE)

INTERESTS AND AFFILIATIONS USEFUL TO KULANU'S WORK \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ \$25 SUPPORTER    \_\_\_ \$36 SPONSOR    \_\_\_ \$100 PATRON    \_\_\_ \$200 BENEFACTOR    \_\_\_ \$1000 SUPPORTER FOR LIFE

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ EARMARKED FOR \_\_\_\_\_

# The K U L A N U Boutique

***Jews in Places You Never Thought Of***, a new book published in February 1998 by KTAV in association with Kulanu. The 305-page hardback includes descriptions of personal interactions with returning and emerging Jewish groups around the world. Based on Kulanu newsletters, with expanded articles and new material, it also contains over 30 photographs, essays about the significance of these communities to modern mainstream Jewry, and suggestions for ways individuals and groups can get involved! *Proceeds support Kulanu's programs.*

***Shalom Everybody Everywhere!*** the acclaimed recording of the unique sounds of the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda. Hear traditional Jewish liturgy and new compositions set to African melodies and rhythms, sung in English, Hebrew, Luganda, and Swahili. *Proceeds benefit the Abayudaya.*

***Hand-Knit Ugandan Kippot*** available in small, medium and large, some in dark colors, others in bright colors, some in the traditional skullcap shape, some in the pillbox or Bukhara shape. *Proceeds benefit the Abayudaya.*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Tel# \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

	Number	Cost Each	Shipping/handling	Total
<i>Jews in Places You Never Heard Of</i>	_____	\$29.50	\$3 in US & Can. \$4 outside	_____
<i>Shalom Everybody, Everywhere!</i> CD	_____	15.00	\$2 in US, \$3 in Can. \$5 elsewhere	_____
Cassette	_____	10.00	ea. addl. \$1 in US & Can., \$2 elsewhere	_____
<i>Kippot of the Abayudaya</i>	_____	10.00	\$2 (ea. addl. \$1)	_____
Indicate SML, skullcap or pillbox, dark or bright color: (sorry, no returns!)				
_____			GRAND TOTAL	_____

Please make checks payable to "KULANU" and mail to 1217 Edgevale Road, Silver Spring, MD, 20910-1612. Allow up to 5 weeks delivery but orders are generally filled within 5 business days.

Deadline for next issue: January 15, 2000	<b>Recycled paper</b>	Edited by Karen Primack
---	-----------------------	-------------------------

## Kulanu

*Helping Lost Jewish Communities*  
11603 Gilsan Street  
Silver Spring, MD 20902-3122

Nonprofit Org.  
US Postage Paid  
Suburban MD  
Permit No. 05107

Address Service  
Requested