



## India Journal

By Rabbis Bonita and Gerald Sussman

*(Editor's note: If you are seeking a true adventure, a way to help others, and a life-changing experience, Kulanu may be your ticket! This moving account is but one example. Rabbis Gerald and Bonita Sussman worked with the community of Telugu-speaking Jews in Kothareddipalem, Andhra Pradesh, India, from July 19 to August 7. Sadok Yacobi is spiritual leader of their congregation, Bnai Yacob.)*

### Part I



In the succah

We finally landed in Guntur yesterday at around 3:30. On the way we were greeted with flowers by Sadok's daughters and nephews in Hyderabad when we changed planes. A delegation of people from the community including Sadok's family met us when we landed in

Vijayawada and accompanied us by cab to Guntur, where we are staying in the Hotel Geetha. They were very happy to greet us and also gave us flowers.

It is hot, but not hotter than NY in the hottest part of the summer. Our hotel has marble floors and a good pure-vegetarian restaurant downstairs. Sadok found us transportation in a car to ride the 20 minutes from Guntur to Kothareddipalem. We plan to spend Shabbat with them in the village.

They were very happy to get the *chumashim*, tapes, and other books and things that we had brought. We brought them a paper Sefer Torah of reasonable size and explained to them that they could use this as a symbol for a Sefer Torah

Sadok's daughter Kesia thought we could teach in the evenings for 4-5 hours after people have finished with their work. We planned a course around the holidays and life cycle. We added to the stash a havdalah candle, a seder plate, *haggadot*, hand-baked matzah *shemurah* from Israel, and other odds and

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Learning to make matza

## Jewish Learning Takes A Village

By Michael Ramberg

Kulanu has worked with the Tiferet Israel Jewish community of Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana, for nearly 10 years now. Over the years the community has pursued Jewish learning through every means available, picking the brains of Jewish visitors from around the world, poring over the books received as gifts, and exploring the Internet. A few years ago they sent a delegation to the Israeli embassy in the neighboring Ivory Coast but were not granted a visa. For several years they have been asking Kulanu to send another teacher, and this summer I had the honor of serving them for two months.

I arrived in Sefwi Wiawso on a Thursday and after Shabbat services on Saturday morning, community president Joseph Armah encouraged me to start teaching that week. I had four groups of dedicated students: children, adolescents, adults who came in the morning, and different adults who came in the evening. Before our classes started I asked each group of adults what they wanted to learn and what I should teach the children, and I asked the adolescents what they wanted to learn. They requested classes on topics including Shabbat, conversion customs, Modern Hebrew, marriage and b'nai mitzvah rituals, kosher slaughter, and mourning rituals.

My partner, Ali Michael, came to Sefwi Wiawso two weeks after me and, after consulting with male and female community leaders, started teaching classes in typing and emailing. The students in these classes, Abigail Aidoo, Patrick Armah, and Joseph Charm Mintah, will help spiritual leader Alex Armah to respond to emails. Community elder Isaac Mintah told me that he and others believe that every member of the community, no matter how young, deserves a voice in community decisions. This is a great example of the community's commitment to democracy.

At the request of the women, Ali helped them start a women's group to celebrate Rosh Hodesh, the festival of the new moon, marking the start of a new month on the Jewish calendar. Gladys Armah, Mary Mintah, and Florence Aidoo presided over Rosh Hodesh celebrations, enjoyed by women and girls, with prayers, singing, dancing and juice and biscuits.

Ali also worked with master tailor Ben Baidoo and Alex to track expenses and profits for the community business, making beautiful African fabric challah covers and kente-cloth tallitot (available at [www.kulanuboutique.com](http://www.kulanuboutique.com)).

Throughout the summer, classes had great attendance, which is a powerful testament to the community's desire to learn. Adults and children have enough work, much of it very strenuous farm work and

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KULANU ("ALL OF US") is a tax-exempt organization of Jews of varied backgrounds and practices dedicated to finding lost and dispersed remnants of the Jewish people and assisting those who wish to (re)join the Jewish community. Kulanu is undertaking a variety of activities worldwide on behalf of these dispersed groups, including research, contacts, education, conversion when requested, and relocation to Israel if desired. This newsletter is published quarterly by Kulanu, 165 West End Ave., 3R, New York, NY 10023.

# The Media Love the Abayudaya

## Big Fish Media Digitalizes Ugandan Music

On October 10, Big Fish Media of Los Angeles ([www.bigfish-media.com](http://www.bigfish-media.com)) announced its new collaborative work with Kulanu in helping to spread Abayudaya music to the world. The company's efforts center on the Grammy-nominated 22-member Kohavin Tikvah Choir, whose mission is to use their music to introduce the Abayudaya to the world, including other Jewish communities.

Big Fish Media will distribute the music of the first Abayudaya recording, *Shalom Everybody Everywhere!* to all major outlets, including iTunes, Amazon, and eMusic, enabling the choir to truly reach a global audience. The recording has been reaching a limited audience since its distribution by Kulanu began in 1997.

Steven Corn, Big Fish Media co-founder, also announced that all revenue generated by these sales will go to Kulanu to assist the Abayudaya. "We are happy to donate our time and expertise to this most worthy of causes," he said. Corn visited the community in Uganda last July.

## Updated Abayudaya Film To Air on ABC

Diva Communications has updated its documentary telling the Abayudaya story for the ABC-TV Network. "Yearning To Belong," a 60-minute film on the conversion of the Abayudaya of Uganda to Judaism, replaces the earlier and shorter "Moving Heaven and Earth."

In February of 2002, a Jewish *beit din* (religious court) made up of five rabbis from the United States and Israel flew to a remote area in Uganda to conduct a formal conversion of over 300 Abayudaya, welcoming them into the community of world Jewry.

The new documentary records this momentous event as well as examines the difficult question: "Who is a Jew?" For although the Abayudaya have completed the halachic requirements, including a symbolic circumcision and a mikveh or ritual immersion, some in the world Jewish community still will not accept them as Jews.

Interviews include Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, Executive Vice Presi-

dent of the New York Board of Rabbis and host of WABC Radio's long-running "Religion on the Line"; Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, Chancellor Emeritus of The Jewish Theological Seminary; and Rabbi David Ellenson, President of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. A roundtable discussion among Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Rabbis highlights the range of acceptance of the Abayudaya conversion.

In addition, current photos from the Abayudaya community underline the importance of support by Jews from around the world.

The documentary shows the ritual conversions, family interviews with the Beit Din, the mikveh and river immersions and the individual stories of the village members. In addition, it presents the story of the spiritual leader Rabbi Gershom Sizomu, who is currently studying for ordination at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, as well as the amazing celebration when a Torah is donated to the community and the first wedding is held under a sugarcane chuppah.

See <<http://www.divacommunications.com/Abayudaya.htm>

## Online Photos, Videos, and Music

1. **Kulanu-Abayudaya Slide Show** (revised 2007) <http://www.kulanu.org> → "communities" → Abayudaya then choose "Abayudaya Slide Show 2006"
2. **Trailer of "Uphill Movie,"** (2007) made by Will Galperin, age 17 <http://youtube.com/uphillmovie>
3. **Trailer of "Yearning To Belong"** (2007) by David and Debra Vinik <http://www.divacommunications.com/Abayudaya.htm>
4. **Trailer of "Delicious Peace Grows in a Uganda Coffee-Bean"** (2007) <http://youtube.com/mirembekawomera>
5. **Search for "Abayudaya" on Itunes,** and you'll find three CD's! One of them, "Abayudaya - Music from the Jewish People of Uganda," was nominated for a Grammy award in world music.

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## My Reprise Visit to Uganda

By Lynne Elson

I first heard of the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda at a talk given by Ed Samiljan at Temple Adat Shalom in Poway, California, in 2004. When I learned about their history, I was fascinated and said to myself, "I must meet these amazing people." The first opportunity came in January of 2006, when Kulanu told me about the annual Jewish Life in Uganda Mitzvah Tour and Wildlife Safari. I participated in the trip and it was an inspirational experience. (See p. 16 for information about the 2008 trip.) Our time was spent mostly learning about the Abayudaya community and becoming acquainted with the people, their customs and culture. I wanted to return at a future date so that I could contribute what-ever talent I had to their lives.

I arrived in Mbale on Thursday night, July 5, 2007, after a tortuous 12-hour drive from Nairobi, Kenya, and stayed at the Mt. Elgon Hotel, where I was warmly welcomed by some of the staff who remembered me from last year's visit. It's comforting to see people who know you in a foreign place, especially if you are traveling alone and are a bit wary about it. I settled in with my mos-



quito net, ready to go up to Nabugoye Hill the next morning.

My dear friends Samson and Dinnah came to the hotel and drove me up to the Hadassah Primary School, where I met with Headmaster Aaron Kintu Moses to discuss my program and to leave all the books and supplies that were donated by the children of Temple Adat Shalom's religious school. (More about that later.) It was so good to see Samson and Dinnah and Aaron. I feel as if I'm part of this community.

In the afternoon, I went up to Nabugoye so as to get there early enough before Shabbat services in order to meet all my friends from last year, and to catch up on how their lives were progressing. It's heartwarming to see the growth in individuals and the development of the community. Of note, Sarah, a teenager whom I met last year who was instrumental in the publication of the girls' teen magazine at that time, has grown into a poised young woman with ambitions toward the study of law at the university. Also, Israel's wife, Tihira, is studying nursing, which she had mentioned to me as a goal last year; Samson Wamani finished medical school last year and now runs the new local clinic. His main focus is taking care of malaria problems and teaching about family planning and AIDS. Rahel is now

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# A Time of “Firsts” for South Italy

It’s a time of firsts for the Jews of Calabria, the region of Italy in the deep south or the “foot of the boot.” Rabbi Barbara Aiello, whose Jewish ancestors were once crypto or secret Italian Jews, became the first woman rabbi and first Progressive rabbi in Italy just three years ago. She was spiritual leader of Synagogue Lev Chadash in Milan and served havurot in Florence, Rome, Padua, and Turin.

This year, with the help of the Vuolo-Bernstein Family Foundation, she established the Italian Jewish Cultural Center of Calabria (IJCCC) along with Synagogue Ner Tamid del Sud, the first functioning synagogue there since Inquisition times. In May, as Aiello relates, this synagogue “hosted the first Jewish wedding to take place in Calabria since the long arm of Torquemada reached into Sicily and Calabria, forcing Jews to convert or be killed.” The wedding was held at Nicastro, the old fortification from the first century that overlooks the ‘Timpone,’ the Jewish Quarter that dates from the 9<sup>th</sup> century and is still intact. The castle looked down upon what was once the original synagogue (it is now a Catholic Church). As Aiello describes, “In this beautiful setting Andrew Ewart and Lupe Torres were married under the chuppah. They exchanged wedding vows using the ancient Italian Jewish practice of wrapping the couple in the tallit, symbolizing God’s loving embrace.”

In June, Ner Tamid del Sud hosted its first bar mitzvah, when Tyler Waldman was so honored. According to Aiello, “The family chose Calabria because the parents wanted their son to fully experience what it is like to be Jewish in an isolated and lost community. It is their hope that the experience in Calabria will make him more appreciative of his Jewish heritage.”

Local Calabrian historian Professor Vincenzo Villella has been instrumental in documenting the Jewish presence in Calabria since ancient times. Prior to the Jews’ expulsion from Spain and subsequent forced conversions during the Inquisition, the Jewish population of Calabria was nearly 50 percent of the total.

Now, with the advent of the IJCCC, *synagoga* Ner Tamid and a rabbi living and working in Calabria, the Jews of Calabria have the opportunity to reconnect with their roots and traditions that character-

ize them as the oldest Jews in the Diaspora. During this process, Aiello has heard many fascinating family histories, and is planning to write a book about them. She cites two examples:

“In Sicily one of my students, Saro, was present as his father was dying. Over and over his father repeated ‘*Elohim, Elohim.*’ This was many years ago and Saro had no idea what the word meant or even what language it was from. Fifteen years later, when the Internet came to Sicily, Saro began researching his father’s dying word, and reconnected with his lost Jewish heritage!

“Then, just three weeks ago, an elderly woman on my street (in Calabria) passed away. I was friendly with her so her son invited me to the house. He told me that there would be no funeral in the local church because ‘*non siamo una parte della chiesa*’ (we are not a part of the church). I went to the house and found everyone sitting on low chairs with all the mirrors covered in black. We were served hard-boiled eggs and told to return for *Tredicesimo*, the 30-day anniversary that ends the mourning period! *Sheloshim?* Seems like it. When I spoke to the son about these customs and mentioned that they are Jewish traditions, he said, ‘I always thought we were Jewish but my parents would never be specific. They were afraid.’”

These stories remind Aiello of her own family history, and of her responsibility. She has told Kulanu:

*As a Jew with “Marrano” roots, I am especially blessed to have the opportunity to serve Jews in Italy who long for a connection to traditions and a heritage that were so cruelly taken from them centuries ago. I collect oral histories of my people... from Sicily to Sardinia to Calabria ... where families have heard something somewhere about “gl’ebrei,” about being Jewish, and are hungry to recapture their heritage. My own father often said to me, “Cara mia, once we had a rich and colorful tapestry to pass on. Now I give you only a few threads...” But for me these threads are precious. They represent the revival of Calabrian Jewish heritage, a step forward from isolation into the Calabrian sun, and for this reason they are pure gold.*

For more information, contact [rabbi@rabbibarbara.com](mailto:rabbi@rabbibarbara.com) or visit [www.rabbibarbara.com](http://www.rabbibarbara.com).



## HAPPY CHANUKAH!

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All proceeds help Kulanu and the communities we serve. See page 15 for the order form or go to [www.kulanuboutique.com](http://www.kulanuboutique.com)

# KULANU BRIEFS

## Cemetery Volunteers Needed for Jamaica

CVE, a non-profit organization since 1991, recruits volunteers to work on historic preservation and genealogy projects throughout the Caribbean ([www.cvexp.org](http://www.cvexp.org)). The organization is calling for volunteers to work in Jamaica January 27-February 2, 2008.

Jews fleeing from persecution in Europe settled in the Caribbean, and in Jamaica as early as 1530, where they played important roles in commerce and the sugar industry. The Hunt's Bay cemetery is the oldest Jewish cemetery in Jamaica, and was the burial ground for Jews from Port Royal and Kingston. The work will survey these graves, and field work will include mapping, copying inscriptions, and other information about the graves.

Accommodations will be at the Jamaica Pegasus in downtown Kingstown ([www.jamaicapegasus.com](http://www.jamaicapegasus.com)). The trip will coincide with the annual conference of the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean, and participants will have the opportunity of attending events and meeting the attendees.

Costs: \$ 900 double occupancy, and \$ 1200 single occupancy. For more information contact Anne Hersh at [ahershcv@comcast.net](mailto:ahershcv@comcast.net).

## Ugandan Guest House Is Funded

Last year, we reported that teenagers from the Jewish Youth Philanthropy Institute had donated \$3000 for an Abayudaya Guest House, to be matched by other donations. We are pleased to announce that the Institute for Jewish & Community Research has not only matched the \$3000, but has supplied the \$50,000 necessary for completion of the project. The Abayudaya are grateful to the teens for getting things started! We'll have a picture in the newsletter when this important project is finished.

## Action for Portugal to Pardon Barros Basto

Isabel Lopes, Barros Basto's granddaughter, the Portuguese Friends of Marranos, and the American Friends of Marranos are launching a global petition to the government of Portugal requesting that Captain Barros Basto's name be cleared and an official apology made to him and his family for the humiliation, hurt and pain that it, the Army and the Church had inflicted upon them. Barros Basto led many *Anousim* in Portugal to come out of 400 years of hiding to return to the practice of Judaism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Speakers Spread the Word

Navras Jaat Aafreedi, Ph.D., an Indian Pashtun scholar, spoke at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Midwest Jewish Studies Association in Evanston, Illinois on October 21. His topic: "Traditions of Israelite Descent Among Certain Muslim Groups in India." He is seeking other speaking opportunities and study grants while he is in the US. He can be contacted at [aafreedi@gmail.com](mailto:aafreedi@gmail.com). His blog is at: <http://navrasaafreedi.blogspot.com/>.

On November 25, Mara Cohen Ioannides will discuss her children's book, *A Shout in the Sunshine*, at the Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum at 280 Broome Street in NYC. The book is about how a young Romaniote boy and his Sephardic friend overcome conflicts in Salonika in 1492.

"The Global Jewish Village," a program of Congregation Darchei Noam in Toronto, presented Kulanu president Jack Zeller as its Scholar-in-Residence the weekend of October 27-28. Zeller spoke about Kulanu and Jewish diversity.

Ethnomusicologist and musician Judith Cohen, together with her daughter Tamar, gave a discussion and concert of Sephardic and Sephardic Diaspora songs at the Miles Nadal JCC in Toronto on October 28.

Gilya Gerda Schmidt, of the Univ. of Tennessee, spent five days this summer at a seminar on Teaching the Holocaust at Shanghai University. She was the only American academic involved.

Sophie Judah, author of *Dropped From Heaven*, spoke at the JCC of Greater Washington on November 1 and at the Rego Park Jewish Center in NY on November 11 about how first-hand experiences helped her develop the ideas for this collection of short stories.

The Manhattan JCC presented a special program, "Jews Without Borders," on October 18, featuring Loolwa Khazoom addressing Judaism's multicultural heritage.

On October 12, Rabbi Reeve Brenner addressed his congregation, Bet Chesed in Bethesda, Maryland, on "DNA, the Lemba, and the Exodus -- How they fit together."

Writer/scholar/activist Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz (founding director of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice) read from and spoke about her new book, *The Colors of Jews: Racial Politics and Radical Diasporism*, at Simmons College in Boston on October 23.

Prof. Jorge Martins presented a series of lectures on Jews in Portugal at Lisbon's Republic and Resistance Museum. On October 3 the topic was "Jewish Presence in Portugal," on Oct. 10 "Anti-Semitism in Portugal," on Oct. 17 "Filo-Semitism in Portugal," and on Oct. 31 "Virtual Tour of Jewish Lisbon."

Juan Mejia, Francine Gaillour, M.D., Vanessa Paloma, Gail Gutierrez, and Dr. Ron Duncan-Hart were the featured speakers at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Sephardic Anousim Conference, sponsored by Bat-Tzion Hebrew Learning Center in conjunction with Congregation B'nai Zion in El Paso, Texas, August 10-12.

Adam McKinney spoke at the Manhattan JCC on November 15. His topic: "Belonging Everywhere: A Jew of Color and His Journey to the Jews of Ghana."

Rockville, Maryland's Magen David Congregation initiated "Sephardic Tradition Nights with Rabbi Maroof" for children aged 10-14, starting September 4. Rabbi Joshua Maroof's congregation can be reached at [magendavid@mdscbe.org](mailto:magendavid@mdscbe.org).

Dr. Kenneth X. Robbins spoke on "The Jews of Cochin and South India" at the Library of Congress in Washington on October 11. The lecture included a film and a slide show.

At an international conference, "Jews and Muslims in the World of Islam," held at the University of Maryland August 26-28, featured speakers included: Prof. Michael M. Laskier, Prof. Jonathan Ray, Dr. Hilary Pomeroy, Prof. Hanna Kasher, Dr. Michael Katz, Prof. Hananael Mack, Prof. Phillip Lieberman, Prof. Brannon Wheeler, Prof. Shlomo Z. Havlin, Dr. Shimon Shtober, and Dr. Avraham Ofir Shemesh.

## Aiding Xu Xin's Recovery

In September, renowned scholar on Jews in China, Prof. Xu Xin, underwent surgery in China for a brain aneurysm. During his long recovery, his family suggests that he would enjoy audio books and CDs with a Jewish theme. Later, the material could be passed on to Nanjing University's Jewish Studies library and/or used in classes. The mail address is: Prof. Xu Xin, School of Religious Studies, Nanjing University, Nanjing, 210093, China.



# KULANU BRIEFS

## African Jews on Youtube

Several videos on Ethiopian Jews in Israel and on Jews in Nigeria can be seen on Youtube, the Internet's popular repository for short amateur videos. Some of them are by Sandy Leeder, Kulanu's Coordinator for the Lemba. One of them has been seen by over 105,000 viewers! Here is a sampling:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OER3InvFLqI&mode=related&search=\(Ethiopian Jews davening in Sfat, Israel\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OER3InvFLqI&mode=related&search=(Ethiopian+Jews+davening+in+Sfat,+Israel))

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQ\\_PYNIIdyKU&mode=related&search=\(2005 Beta Israel Festival in Israel\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQ_PYNIIdyKU&mode=related&search=(2005+Beta+Israel+Festival+in+Israel))

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sa69tpr6Te4>  
(30 years of Ethiopian Aliyah)

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=82yuti11uJU&feature=Playlist&p=00070C59763C520F&index=5>  
(Nigerian Jews)

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=7-cBOjP1kpw&feature=Playlist&p=00070C59763C520F&index=0>  
(Shabbat services in Nigeria #1 -- links for #2, 3 and 4 are there)

## Mazal Tov!

On the birth of **Namukose Osheru**, daughter of Abayudaya headmaster Seth Jonadav in Uganda in August.

On the birth of **Leah Mollie Nilson** daughter of Kulanu activist Julia Chamovitz and Brad Nilson, in London in August.

## Condolences

To Elaine Berg on the passing of her mother, **Gussie Yastrab**, in New York in October, buried in Israel.

To Beth Shalom B'nai Zaken in Chicago and many synagogues and schools in Nigeria on the death of **Jane Dele Osawe**. She was responsible for building the first high school in her Nigerian clan and she funded numerous scholarships in Nigeria and Cameroon, but she was also known for her devotion to African Jewish causes and was in the process of building a Jewish school and synagogue in her Nigerian village.

## Refuah Shleyma

To **Carol Carter** and to **Xu Xin**.

## Todah Rabah!

*Donations should be made payable to Kulanu and mailed to Harriet Bograd, Kulanu Treasurer, 165 West End Ave, 3R, New York, NY 10023. Like many nonprofits, Kulanu charges 10% for overhead from restricted donations that we receive.*

**Todah rabah** to the **Estelle Friedman Gervis Charitable Foundation** for its \$35,000 grant for a dormitory, land purchase, and kitchen for the Abayudaya primary school. The dorm will be named in honor of Estelle and Robert Gervis.

To the **IDT Charitable Foundation** for its \$25,000 grant to assist the Tutsis.

To **Miriam Lipson**, who raised \$3087 through asking for wedding shower gifts to go to the Abayudaya Vocational Education Fund.

To **Juliana Moskowitz**, who sold coffee and raised donations for the Dora Bloch Memorial Fund (for Semei Kakungulu High School nutrition). Her Bat Mitzvah was in Richmond, Virginia. She has raised \$262 so far.

To **Joshua Posner**, who has raised \$731 so far for Kulanu (as well as to restore his synagogue in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, after last year's floods). His Bar Mitzvah was in Baton Rouge

in November.

To **Rabbi Shoshana Hantman** of New York, who secured permission to have a Kulanu newsletter placed in each registrant's packet at the 2007 meeting of the Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education (CAJE). When she heard that 1400 copies would be needed, and that Kulanu only had 400 available, she printed the other 1000 at her own expense for \$780, and shipped all the copies to the conference in St. Louis, Missouri..

To the **Forest Foundation** for its \$5,988 donation.

To these donors of \$1000-2000: **Aron & Karen Primack**, Anonymous, and **William & Gail Moskowitz**.

To these donors of \$500-999: **Congregation Bet Mishpachah**, **Saul Heiman**, **Lakeside Congregation for Reform Judaism**, **Metropolitan Educators' Council of New York City**, **Anonymous**, **National Center to Encourage Judaism**, **Sylvia Shor**, **Temple Beth Am**, **Temple Sinai Religious School**, **Emily Chaya Weinstein**, and **Woodlands Community Temple**

To these donors of \$125-499: **Joan Bronsiegel**, **Bonnie Cham**, **Rabbi Scott L. Glass**, **Congregation Shir Tivkah**, **Howard Diner**, **Geoffrey & Nancy Stone**, **Harold Grinspoon Charitable Foundation**, **Anne Katz Jacobson & Robert Jacobson**, **Michael and Marilyn Lipson**, **Judy Neri**, **Lawrence M. Pinsker**, **Erica Rosenberg**, **The Mary Fund**, **Arlene Rubel**, **Anita and Louis Salomonsky**, **Barbara & Louis Sklar**, **Tenet Healthcare Foundation**, and **Gilbert & Lil Zinn**

And to the \$100 Club: **Melvin Abrams**, **Michael & Mary Baron**, **Hilda Blyn**, **Florence Bolnick**, **Norma Brooks**, **Lynne (Roslyn) Elson**, **Richard & Adrienne Freiberg**, **Linda Greenberg**, **Scott and Melissa Gullquist**, **Melissa Hawthorn**, **Marcus & Rachelle Hirsch**, **Karen Hoffman**, **Carl Kaplan**, **Sumner and Phyllis Levine**, **Alvin and Gloria Lipson**, **Linda Mantis**, **Caryn and Jeff Margolis**, **Alberta Marsh**, **Louise Robertson**, **Ruth Rose**, **Fred & Sondra Ross**, **Charles Scheidt**, **Seattle Jewish Community School**, **Sherman & Rita Shapiro**, **Shomrei Torah Synagogue**, **Dorothy Siegel**, **Peter Silverglate**, **Nancy & Howard Starnbach**, **Rabbi Gerald & Bonita Sussman**, **Temple Beth Am**, **Temple Emek Shalom**, **Daniel Wein**, and **Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Zemboch**.

## HAPPY CHANUKAH!

Remember to buy and use **Mirembe Kawomera Coffee**, grown by Abayudaya farmers and their Christian and Muslim neighbors and sold in many synagogues and other outlets as well as on the web at <http://store.thanksgivingcoffee.com>

# ISABEL LOPES, THE INNKEEPER OF TORRE DE MONCORVO

By Fernanda Guimarães

Translated by Manuel Lopes Azevedo

(excerpted from [www.ladina.blogspot.com](http://www.ladina.blogspot.com))

For a traveler who arrived in Torre de Moncorvo in the Trás-os-Montes province of northern Portugal in the 1550s, the best place to stay in town was Isabel's Inn. To do justice to her fame, it must be mentioned, that her Inn functioned like a central clearing house for information on Marrano practices, even like a cultural centre for the New Christian community.

It was there that we hear for the first time news about the Lisbon massacre of New Christians in 1506 (in 1497, all Jews in Portugal were forcibly baptized and were henceforth known as New Christians and, later, Marranos) or the news of the rupture of relations between the King of England and the Pope in Rome. It is also there that strange words appear, such as *tani* (fasts) or *canarim* (a person from India, applied pejoratively to Old Christians), and stories with a messianic flavor that then filled the cultural universe of the New Christians persecuted by the Inquisition.

Isabel Lopes, the innkeeper, was born in Torre de Moncorvo in 1516. Her parents were Jewish, forcibly Christianized in 1497. Isabel had two sisters, both married and living in a village within the limits of Bragança (also in Trás-os-Montes), and three brothers, all of whom were in the lands of India, and from whom she had not received any news for years.

Isabel married Pedro Lopes in 1532 and from him had several sons and one daughter, Leonor Lopes, who married Gabriel Rodrigues, also a New Christian, originally from Galiza. Isabel became a widow after 18 years, re-marrying in 1552 with João Rodrigues Trindade, a widower from Miranda do Douro. His first wife was called Isabel Gonçalves and bore him two daughters and four sons. One of the sons, born in 1535, was named Francisco Rodrigues Trindade.

Francisco was an accomplished student at Coimbra University, as were many other New Christians in the 16th century. He came to stay for a spell (45 or 50 days) at his father's house around the time of Passover in 1553. His relationship with his stepmother was "very friendly," according to him, but was characterized by Isabel as consisting of "great fights."

Francisco Trindade later headed to Lisbon, where he became an assistant of Dr. Monção, the curate of the church of Madalena (next to the former Great Judiaria of Lisbon). Almost two years later, on the 3rd of January, 1555, he presented himself to the *casa do despacho* at the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Lisbon to denounce, for practicing Judaism, his stepmother Isabel Lopes, her daughter and the son-in-law Leonor Lopes and Gabriel Rodrigues, as well as a notary from Miranda do Douro, Diogo Mendes. As a result of the denunciation, Isabel Lopes and the Gabriel Rodrigues were arrested and jailed at the prison of the Inquisition in Lisbon on the 2nd of April 1556.

The proceedings of each one of the cases mentioned will not be examined in detail; instead some of the more unusual aspects will be highlighted. First, it should be emphasized that the New Christians of this era were very mobile. Gabriel's parents lived in Salvaterra, kingdom of Galiza, opposite the village of Monção and they already had lived on the island of Terceira, Açores, where Gabriel himself is thought to have been born and baptized. With respect to Gabriel, a tailor, Francisco makes the following denunciation (*cited from Inquisition documents*):

*He said that everything the pope did was deceitful, because he did everything for money, and gave the example of the King of England and Queen Mary, who were not able to marry without dispensation from the pope, who would not grant it without copious amounts of money; and then the king made a submission without identifying themselves as King and Queen, and the pope immediately conceded for*

*little money, and then the king said to the people that everything was a mistake, that nothing could be done in Rome without money.*

It does seem a bit strange that an ordinary tailor in an inn in northern Portugal should be so well informed about international events such as the politics of Henry VIII, King of England, who abandoned the Catholic religion and established the Anglican Church. The New Christians must already have developed trustworthy international information networks. Portuguese New Christians, posing first as Catholics and then as Protestants, had settled in England since Elizabethan times.

(Continued on page 14)

## Marrano Customs at Yom Kippur in Carção

By Manuel Lopes Azevedo

Our dear friend Fernanda Guimarães continues to bring to the light of day the lives of the Marranos of Portugal during the time of the Inquisition. She is one of the few people heroically struggling every day to remind the world of a forgotten people. Unlike the victims of the Holocaust, there are no memorials to honor the victims of the Inquisition, nor is there a day in the Jewish calendar commemorating their plight. As observed by Alexandre Teixeira Mendes in the recent book, *Barros Basto, the Marrano Mirage*, "Marranos are not only exiles amongst the nations, they are also exiles amongst the Jewish Nation."

Lately, Fernanda has been researching the Inquisition cases of the Marranos of Carção, a small village in the district of Vimioso, in the northern province of Trás-os-Montes (Behind the Mountains). There are over 200 files in the Torre de Tombo, the national archives. Although the (un)Holy Office of the Inquisition was a terrifying iron monster, the Inquisitors kept meticulous records, allowing us, 400 years later, to get a glimpse of the lives of its victims.

Everything was recorded by the Inquisition scribes: oral examinations, witness statements, confessions, prison behaviour, and the proceedings themselves. Comprehensive inventories were made of the prisoners' assets. Genealogical inquiries were extensive. Staff doctors were required to be present at all torture sessions, often leaving meticulous observations of each victim. Each file has a surprise: a recipe of a prohibited dish, a Hebrew prayer, the location of a secret cemetery, a victim gone mad, a corrupt official, a connection to the Diaspora, a legend or myth, etc. Each case has a unique story, not of an anonymous number, but of a real life drama undiminished by the passage of time.

There was something special about the Marranos of Carção. They were proud of their ancestry and defiant of the Inquisition. The local priest feared they would piss in his "holy wine". They bribed a couple of the Inquisitors. They continued their practices in secret even after 14 of their own were burned alive in one day by the Inquisition. Carção's **present coat of arms consists of what appears to be mezuzah and a menorah.**

For Yom Kippur, *O Dia Grande* (The Big Day), the men were to abstain from chewing tobacco. Rinsing of the mouth and washing of hands was permitted. Fifteen days prior to Yom Kippur, no meat was to be consumed. At the end of Yom Kippur, the fast was broken with a meal of boiled cod and chick peas, a national staple today.

Some of Fernanda's publications are available at [www.Ladina.blogspot.com](http://www.Ladina.blogspot.com). She is available for hire for private research of Inquisition files. As Fernanda and other like-minded people work diligently, giving unstintingly of their time to dignify the history of an exiled people, more details will be revealed about their (until now) mostly obscure lives which will give purpose and meaning to the Marranos of today. We are grateful to all those who refuse to allow the Inquisition to succeed.

# PUBLICATIONS OF NOTE

A multicultural children's book, *Hanukkah Moon*, by **Deborah da Costa**, describes Isobel's celebration of Hanukkah with her Aunt Luisa from Mexico, who observes a little-known custom of the Latin community. For ages 6-10, published by Kar-Ben.

**Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz's** new book, *The Colors of Jews: Racial Politics and Radical Diasporism*, has just been published by Indiana Univ. Press. It presents the voices of Jews of color from Iberia, Asia, Africa, and India and argues that Jews are an increasingly multiracial people.

*The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: My Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World*, a memoir by **Lucette Lagnado**, was recently published by Ecco. It tells of her Jewish family's flight from Egypt with Nasser's rise to power in fascinating detail (e.g., their jewels and gold coins were hidden in sealed tins of marmalade).

*A Spirited Exchange: The Wine and Brandy Trade Between France and the Dutch Republic in Its Atlantic Framework, 1600-1650 (The Northern World)*, by **Henriette De Bruyn Kops**, was just published by Brill Academic Publishers. The author reports to Kulanu readers that Chapter 5 discusses the Sephardic communities of French and Dutch port cities, their role in evading the Spanish trade embargoes of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, and their working relationships with Dutch international merchants.

A long-awaited biography, *Barros Basto, the Marrano Mirage*, by **Alexandre Teixeira Mendes**, was just published in Portuguese by Ladina. An English translation is planned. It is described as a "passionate" book that brings the hero to life. The author accompanies Barros Basto in his youth, in his conversion, during the war, and in his rescue work. The book was launched on September 2 at Porto's M'kor Chaim synagogue, built thanks to Barros Basto.

India-born **Sophie Judah's** *Dropped from Heaven* contains stories about everyday life among India's Bene Israel Jews in a fictitious village. The 19 inter-connected stories poignantly depict this 2000-year-old community's clashes with modernism.

*The Judeca of Nicastro and the History of Calabrian Jews*, by **Vincenzo Vilella**, written in Italian, is available on CD with English translation. It includes towns and villages with historical Jewish presence as well as lists of common Italian Jewish surnames. Translated from the Italian by Roberto Tonetti and Rabbi Barbara Aiello. Available at [www.rabbibarbara.com](http://www.rabbibarbara.com).

*AWAS – The Growing Up Years*, by the late Bene Israeli film journalist, writer, and painter **Bunny Reuben**, is an autobiographical account published by Virgo Books in Mumbai. It contains stories of Reuben's youth and describes life in Konkan villages of India.

A staff article, "Poland's 'Hidden Jews' To Convene in Krakow," was published by the *Jerusalem Post* on October 22. It discusses a conference of more than 100 people from Poland who recently discovered their Jewish roots. Shavei Israel sponsored the gathering to help the attendees deal with their newfound identity.

An October 19 article in the *Jewish Journal*, "Ethiopian Jew Finds Harmony in Spite of Turbulent Past," by **Celia Soudry**, tells the story of talented Los Angeles musician Alula Johannes Tzadik, who was raised in an Ethiopian orphanage and educated in Germany. (One of Alula's CDs, *Make Joy Not War*, is available at the Kulanu Boutique.)

"Community Finds New Life in Castro-less Cuba," by **Nathan Guttman**, appeared on Forward.com on September 19. The author reviews the record growth of Cuba's Jewish community in recent years. The community flies in Latin American rabbis every two years to lead conversion classes and circumcision of the men (last January 73 men participated). Today the community numbers about 1,500. The goal is to attract young Jews who grew up in homes without Jewish practice or with only one Jewish parent.

JTA ran **Larry Luxner's** article, "In a Corner of the Caribbean, Trinidad's Jews Keep the Faith," on September 17. It discusses Trinidad's 55 Jews, who have no synagogue, but do have B'nai Shalom, an informal Jewish organization that meets in members' homes for occasional services and Jewish holidays. The Jews keep a low profile because of the country's turbulent racial history and a 1990 uprising by a radical Muslim sect.

**Sam Ser's** "Shalom, Javier: The Joy of Judaism" appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* on August 30. It describes the Machon Miriam conversion class and ulpan in Jerusalem, run in Spanish and Portuguese under Ra'anana Birnbaum. Established by the organization Shavei Israel, it serves students from Latin countries, including *Bnai Anousim*.

**Etgar Lefkovits's** "118 Bnei Menashe Immigrants Arriving in Israel" appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* on August 24. The new arrivals from northeastern India are coming as tourists, not immigrants, since India bars conversions. The operation was organized by Shavei Israel.

**Beth Schwartzapfel's** article, "In India, a Historic Community Watches Its Numbers Dwindle," ran on Forward.com on August 22. It describes the formerly flourishing Jewish community of the Alibag area, 22 miles southwest of Mumbai. Now the synagogue seldom attracts a minyan. The remaining four families are expected to leave eventually, following most Bene Israel families who have already emigrated to Israel.

"India's Jews," by **Gary Weiss**, ran in the August 13 edition of *Forbes*. It argues that, despite its Hindu-Muslim problems, India's religious tolerance is notable and is exemplified by its treatment of its tiny Jewish minority. Weiss notes, "India may be the only country in the world that has been free of anti-Semitic prejudice throughout its history."

**Nissim Moses's** "Bene Israel of India" appeared in the Summer issue of *Avotaynu*. The article describes the history of the Bene Israel and the origin of their family names, which have Hebrew roots. It also describes a communal family tree databank that is being developed.

**Yuxing Zheng's** "Grandma Fills Void in Uganda" appeared on SanDiego.com on August 1, detailing Lynne Elson's experiences teaching Hebrew to the Abayudaya as a volunteer.

"Here's a Radical Idea: Conversion Can Save Us" is the name of an opinion piece by **Saul Singer** of the *Jerusalem Post*. It appeared in the *Washington Jewish Week* on July 26. It reviews the period of 200 BCE-70 CE, in which proselytism increased the Jewish world population about 500,000 (out of 4-8 million). Singer suggests setting a goal of sustained 2% growth, which could result in 30 million Jews by 2050.

# LETTERS TO KULANU

## University Education for Nine Abayudaya Students

I am so happy to report that, with the help of our committed donors and newly constituted generous leadership in Boston of Clare Villari and Cindy Paisner, we have been able to raise, and in July, to transfer, the amount of \$16,940 for university tuition. It is wonderful that the number of Abayudaya students studying in university has now grown to nine and our hope is that these men and women will use their education to strengthen the community.

I remain committed to this important project, continuing my fund-raising role and dedicating all of the funds generated by the Smithsonian Folkways CD of Abayudaya music to support university education. I think this is a good time for us all to begin to think creatively about how to support this project as more students are able to attend university.

My sense is that a range of new friends and visitors have come to know the community and this would be an important time for people to send suggestions of friends who could join this project, sponsoring a student and providing substantial support. It is a tribute to the community that new students are committed to attaining an education, and we want to make sure that we do the thoughtful planning now to assure that funds will be available to support them in the future.

God willing, I hope to be back in Uganda in January. In the meanwhile, we welcome your thoughts and suggestions to expand the base of support for this essential project. (I can be reached at [jsummit@tufts.edu](mailto:jsummit@tufts.edu).) May we be privileged to continue this work together.

*Rabbi Jeffrey Summit  
Newton, Massachusetts*

## Gratitude from Ghana

Shalom to you all. We the Jewish community in Ghana at Sefwi Wiawso wish to thank all members of Kulanu, the president and all the executives. Due to your help, Michael Ramberg and Allison Michael came to perform what they know to our community.

Their stay has helped us to move forward in our business, our Hebrew studies and, most of all, the children. They also taught us to prepare our financial reports and how to run our community projects.

And we know this will not be the end of sending teachers to the community. It is also our duty to continue to teach what they have thought us so that we may profit from their time and the money that they have spent on the community.

This is the congratulation letter from the community.  
*President and executives  
Jewish Community  
Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana.*

## Taddesse in Ethiopia

Finally I made the decision to move to Ethiopia. I am renting my North Carolina home and shipping all my personal belongings to Ethiopia. I am going to be a gentleman farmer.

Menbi and I have bought a piece of land and started growing garlic and other vegetables for sale. This is our first year of operation. The garlic is already sold. It will be harvested in September. Next year we will expand production and explore the export market.

This year has been very hectic for me -- working in Afghanistan as acting chief of party for USAID Infrastructure Rehabilitation Pro-

ject (\$ 1.5 Billion over five years) and settling in Ethiopia. I have not had a chance to do anything meaningful with my fellow Ethiopian Jews in Addis Ababa beyond attending a couple of informal meetings. Since everybody is cautious about the political environment, it was suggested that we incorporate a community organization to move forward. That will be our next major task. Registration with the government and obtaining a license will allow us to conduct fund raising and building of a community center and to meet free of harassment.

On the personal side, I am looking for American and Israeli partners to expand our agro-industry activities -- vegetable production and export; small ruminants (sheep and goats) production and export; and dairy processing (goat cheese and cow cheese production and marketing).

You guys have a wide network both in US and Israel and I humbly request you use that network to find us business partners as well as others who could provide us technical assistance. Since Israel has advanced the art of sustainable agriculture it would be very beneficial for us to link with investors or ag experts in Israel

Also we have leased 1,000 square meters of city property to build a 3- to 4-story building for offices, retail space, restaurants and any other purpose. This is a neat project if we can get a Jewish investor to work with us. I know many Israelis are looking to invest in Ethiopia; however, I have no link to them and I am asking for your assistance. Please let me know, through the Kulanu office, what you think and how you can help advance our dreams.

*Sam Tadesse  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

## Upcoming Children's Siddur

I am attempting to make a children's siddur (prayer book) with pictures of Yemenite, Sephardi, African-American, Ethiopian, and biracial Jewish children. (I would like pictures of Ashkenazi children too!)

This project started because my daughters turned 3 on Rosh Chodesh Elul, and I've been hunting for a siddur to give them as a present. But nothing reflects how they are, how they look. I'd like to try and change that for the sake of all the other children out there.

Qualification for the pictures: I'd rather the child looks alive and vibrant, happy and clean. Even if its a staged shot, that's okay.

Desired Pictures:

child(ren) saying Sh'ma  
child(ren) doing Natilat Yadayim  
child(ren) kissing tzitzit  
child(ren) reading the Torah  
child(ren) giving tzaddakah  
child(ren) preparing for Shabbat  
child(ren) helping parent(s)  
child(ren) eating various foods (different brachot)  
child(ren) praying  
child(ren) playing  
child(ren) playing with pets, or being kind to animals  
child(ren) doing chess

Thanks so much!  
*Miriam Lindenberg  
Chaim Vital 11; Apt 16  
Kiryat Moshe, Jerusalem 95470  
Te: 02 651 4311  
Email: nevemiriam@yahoo.com*



## BOOK COMMENT

# THE BIBLICAL HEBREW ORIGIN OF THE JAPANESE PEOPLE

By Joseph Eidelberg (Gefen 2005)

*A Review by Irwin M. Berg*

Before writing this review, I sought out what others have written about this book. I found very little that was useful. This did not surprise me because few would have the qualifications to evaluate *The Biblical Hebrew Origin of the Japanese People*.

According to author Joseph Eidelberg, the mysterious origin of the Japanese people can be traced to the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Eidelberg finds similarities between ancient Israelite and Japanese traditions, religious ceremonies, and historical names. To support his thesis, he analyzes haiku poems, Kana writings, Shinto religious ceremonies and hundreds of Japanese words with Hebrew and Aramaic. Very few people -- and I am not one of them -- would have the expertise in linguistics, and ancient Israelite and Japanese practices to judge the multitude of proofs offered. Only with respect to the historical saga on how the Israelite tribes got from Northern Israel to Japan do I feel competent to comment, and here I have found weaknesses and errors of fact in Eidelberg's book.

Between 735 BCE and 722 BCE, Assyria conquered northern Israel and forced the ten northern tribes of Israel into exile. In the words of the Book of Kings, the Assyrians exiled them to "Halah and Habor by the river of Gozan and in the cities of the Medes." According to Eidelberg, Halah, Habor and Gozan are all in Afghanistan. There the exiles lived for about 800 years, intermarrying with local peoples including the Khalkhans, Uighurs, Uzbeks and Turkmen. From references to the Book of Chronicles (written about 400 BCE), Josephus' *Antiquities* (written about 90 CE) and to II Esdras (written about 100 CE), Eidelberg concludes that the Ten Lost Tribes were not lost at all but maintained contact with their brethren in Judea.

Sometime during the Han Dynasty of China (200 BCE – 200 CE), Eidelberg writes that a climatic disaster overtook the western provinces of China and Central Asia "forcing people to abandon their towns and villages and seek refuge in other lands; among such people may have been the Ten Tribes of Israel." On their migration eastward a small group remained in the Chinese city of Kaifeng while the main body continued to Korea. (Kaifeng is significant because it had an identifiable Jewish community in 1605 when it was "discovered" by a Jesuit priest). Having learned about the "empty islands of Japan," these refugees from Central Asia landed on the Japanese islands and "within a relatively short time" transformed them into the land of Yamato – the name of ancient Japan.

In Yamato tradition, the "children of the heavenly deity" conquered a land inhabited by the "Ye bisu" (Jebusites according to Eidelberg) which the gods had promised to their ancestors (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob according to Eidelberg). Later, Emperor Sujin fought in Yama-Shiro of Idomi. "Yama-Shiro" for Eidelberg is "Mount Seir" and "Idomi" is "Edom," the place where King David fought one of his battles.

Certain practices and traditions of Shinto show a Hebrew origin according to Eidelberg. One of the sins cleansed in a General Purification ceremony is the offense of sowing two kinds of seeds in the same field. (Cf. Leviticus 19:19). During a period of sudden darkness, the sun goddess was beseeched with words that have no appropriate meaning in Japanese but which Eidelberg transliterates into Hebrew that resolves the mystery. The Japanese incantation sounds like the following: "Hi-Fu-Mi-Yo-Itsu-Mu-Nana-Ya-Kokono-Towo," which Eidelberg transliterates into Hebrew as "Haifa, mi yotsia; ma na'ne ykakhina tavo," meaning "The beautiful (goddess), who will bring her out? What should we call out to entice her to come?"

Using a series of ground rules for exchanging, changing and eliminating sounds, the book presents 500 Japanese words said to be of Hebrew origin. Eidelberg relies on the cumulative effect of so many similar words to rule out the possibility of coincidence. An example of

what Eidelberg says cannot result from coincidence is the following: "Mikado," an epithet applied to the Emperor of Japan, and "Mi Gado," Hebrew for "he who is prominent," used for King Solomon.

In short, Eidelberg rests his theory on four premises:

1. The Ten Tribes of Israel were not lost but continued to maintain a strong sense of identification with their biblical past.
2. One or more of these tribes were exiled by the Assyrians to the western border of China, where they intermarried with the people they found there without losing their separate sense of identity.
3. These tribes in their new abode in Central Asia maintained contact with the people of Judea for over 800 years despite the distance between them and only lost such contact when they left Central Asia for Korea and Japan.
4. The migrants preserved, in the Shinto religion and in Japanese culture, alphabet and language their origin as the tribes of Israel exiled by the Assyrians in 722 BCE.

While for lack of background I cannot evaluate Eidelberg's fourth premise, I do feel that his first three premises are not supported with objective evidence.

An analysis of these premises must start with an examination of the few written sources which are available. In the words of 2 Kings 17:5-6, 23: "... the King of Assyria ... carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes ... So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day" (See also 2 Kings 18:11 and 2 Kings 15:29).

In the opinion of most authorities, Halah, Habor and Gozan are places within the Assyrian Empire of northern Iraq and Syria. The Medes lived along the eastern edge of the Assyrian empire or along the Iraq-Iran border. Eidelberg places Halah, Habor and the River Gozan in Afghanistan.

A parallel passage, I Chronicles 5:26, states that Israel remained in those same places "unto this day." Considering that Chronicles was written about 200 years after the Book of Kings and more than 300 years after their exile, Eidelberg concludes that the Ten Tribes of Israel maintained contact with Judea from their redoubts in Afghanistan. Quoting Josephus, writing about 90 CE, that the Ten Tribes were "an immense multitude" living "beyond the Euphrates" (*Antiquities*, Bk 11, Ch 5, Sec 2) and II Esdras 13:39-47, written about 100 CE, which placed them in a region called Arzareth (said to be a corruption of Hazarajat in Afghanistan), Eidelberg further concludes that contact continued into the first years of the Common Era.

Eidelberg fails to take into account that the foundation for the belief in the continued existence of the Ten Tribes is the religious imperative that God would keep his promise to reunite all the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is reflected in prophecies in Isaiah (11:11), Jeremiah (3:14, 18 and 31:7-8) and Ezekiel (37:16-24). The religious imperative requiring their survival (for an ultimate reunification) continued into later Jewish writings (Genesis Rabah 73:6) and even into early Christian writings (Acts 26:6-7, and Epistle of James 1:1).

Eidelberg has made a serious error in stating that a small group of the migrating tribes reached Kaifeng during the Han Dynasty. (200 BCE – 200 CE). It is generally agreed by scholars who have studied the Jews of Kaifeng that they settled in that city between 960 and 1126 CE. It appears that they came from Persia, and their reasons for going to Kaifeng were commercial. From their 13 Torah scrolls and their liturgical texts, they were a Rabbinic Jewish community, but their contact with the outside world was cut off during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE).

(Continued on page 12)

# Jewish Learning Takes a Village (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

household chores, to keep them busy from the first light until after dark, but they made time for an hour or more of class four to five days a week. The first topic that Alex, Abigail, and Akiva Kina asked to study was conversion. By studying ancient and contemporary Jewish conversion customs they started to determine a process they could use to help any of their neighbors who are interested in converting to Judaism. The Jews are a tiny minority in their community and would love to increase their numbers.

For years now the community has been slaughtering its animals according to its understanding of *shechita*, the laws of kosher slaughter. Joseph, Ben, and Isaac, the adults who attended the evening class, asked



The author with Alex Armah

me to teach them about *shechita* as a refresher course. Now, I should admit to you as I admitted to them, I know almost nothing about kosher slaughter, but with my university education and a year of rabbinical school I could read Rabbi Isaac Klein's *A Guide*

to *Jewish Religious Practice*. I tried to translate this into comprehensible English. After a week of classes on this topic the community gathered on Friday afternoon to slaughter a sheep using their refreshed knowledge of *shechita*. As we had studied, they got a long knife and made sure it was as sharp as possible, then recited the blessing, and with one swift, smooth cut ended the sheep's life, after which they salted and soaked the meat.

One thing *A Guide* doesn't teach you, however, is how to remove the sciatic nerve, which is how the rabbis interpreted the commandment that we not eat a certain part of the animal in remembrance of Jacob's wrestling match with the angel (Gen. 32:33). According to *A Guide*, this is a very delicate procedure which only a really expert *shochet* can perform and which a book can't explain. In fact, due to the difficulty of this procedure, in many Ashkenazic communities the entire hind quarters of an animal are considered unkosher. When my mother would help me to understand which cuts were kosher, she told me to make sure they came from the front of the animal.

Based on the Ghanaian Jewish community's understanding of *shechita*, however, there is no need to get rid of so much meat. Ben and Joseph, the men in charge of slaughtering the sheep, proudly showed me their way of fulfilling this mitzvah: they removed a piece of the sheep around the hip, which is what they understood to be required by Genesis 32:33, which says Jews should not eat "the sinew of the thigh vein." They then went on with their work of finding a use for almost every single part of the animal.

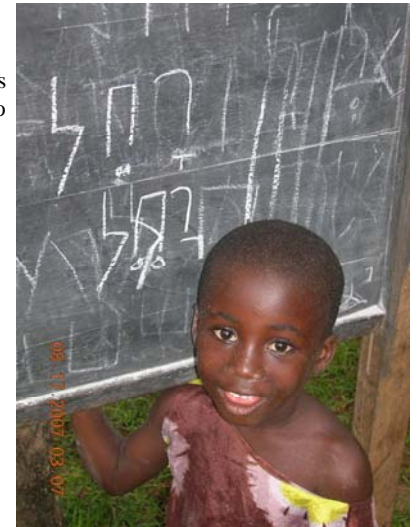
This week of learning on *shechita* exemplifies the synergy of knowledge that ran throughout all of the Jewish learning that happened in Sefwi Wiawso this summer. While I could read *A Guide*, I wouldn't have had the first idea how long to sharpen a knife on a stone before it is fine enough to make one clean cut across the throat of a sheep. Nor would I know what to do after that point with the blood, the head and the hair. How could I know whether internal organs looked healthy or sick? I was able to access knowledge that enriched the community's

understanding of *shechita*, but ultimately, it was their practice and knowledge that made anything that I had to teach complete. And in that relationship, in all our learning, they taught us more about Jewish practice than we taught them.

The community's dedication to learning paid immediate dividends. After just a few weeks of studying various service arrangements, their services included Torah blessings in Hebrew said from the bimah and singing *Adon Olam* to end their Saturday morning service. Our study of the parts of a service led the adults to decide to assign roles like opening and closing the ark, parading the Torah, and reading the Torah and haftarah. By the end of the summer most of the adolescents could read Hebrew from their siddur and three adults had begun learning to translate Biblical Hebrew. I hope and suspect that one day they will have the resources to create their own translations of Bible passages into the local languages Sefwi or Twi, so they won't have to rely exclusively on Christian missionaries' Bible translations. Alex had read about Simhat Torah and after he rehearsed it with Akiva, Charm, Abigail, and me, they celebrated it for the first time this year (after our departure). I expect their celebration of Simhat Torah (which means "Rejoicing in the Torah") to be wonderful: they love the Torah and love to sing, the perfect recipe for a truly uplifting Simhat Torah.

I was most impressed by the community during the hardest part of my stay. In the winter before I went to Ghana, my grandmother was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. She chose to enter a hospice and during the spring semester I visited her several times. Each time we visited we feared it might be the last time, especially the visit I made just before leaving for Ghana.

Unfortunately, we were right—in late July I got an email letting me know that my grandmother had died. Since the community's founding in 1977, only one member has died, the founder, but the members of the community supported Ali and me in our time of need better than I could have ever expected. They surrounded us with warmth and support and a combination of local funeral customs and Jewish customs. Several elders and youth visited me as soon as they heard the news and brought me food and drink. They waited for me to call my family and then escorted me back to Joseph Armah's home, where he had already arranged for a "machine," a large sound system, to blare "old timers" music, the local custom for announcing a death. Mercifully, this incredibly considerate but jarring tribute didn't last long and I could sit in silence and receive condolence visits from members of the community. Word went out that I would like to hold a *shiva* minyan that evening and when the time came the room had filled with adults, adolescents, and children. Together we said the evening service and Ali and I said *Kaddish*, joined by some other adults who previously didn't know about *Kaddish*. For the next three days I sat *shiva* and each evening and morning a minyan gathered for a short service. When our *shiva* ended we felt like the transition from mourning to healing had begun, thanks to



Rachel Armah learning to write her name in Hebrew

# India Journal (Cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

ends. Now that we have met the community, we have lightened our load of luggage.

## Shabbat in the Village

Shabbat in the village was quite an experience. We were greeted with flowers by a delegation and escorted to the synagogue with drums with a big welcome sign on the front gate. The synagogue consists of a one-room concrete building with electricity but no running water. It doubles as the home of Sadok and his family. When Shabbat or anything else occurs, they move their two cots to the side, and various things are put on shelves. Living in the shul involves a tremendous lack of privacy and having to set up and dismantle things frequently.

We slept in the shul while Sadok's family slept in the courtyard. This experience isn't for everyone. We and their rat slept in the shul together. We have become quite fond of the lizards too. The outhouse has a toilet that is non-flushable. It is hot and has lots of flies. There is no running water, refrigeration or Western comforts. They cook on one small gas burner.

Around 60 showed up for Shabbat morning. The place was completely full with everyone sitting on the floor except for us, Sadok, and one of the elders. There was no room for anyone else. Their davening consists mostly of translations of sections of the service in Telugu. The children all read Hebrew and know *brachot*. The women sit separately from the men during the service and they (including the girls) cover their hair with the saris. The girls make the blessing on the tallit too.

They know that they should not cook on Shabbat, but since there is no refrigeration they do. They also have someone who is a *shochet* though I doubt that he is aware of all that we consider to be involved in kosher slaughter. Food for us has not been a problem, since we eat at the pure vegetarian places. The food is familiar to us, having patronized the kosher South Indian places in NY over the years.

On Shabbat we went over the Holidays picture book Kulanu members sent with us and I explained *Yom Hashoa*, *Yom Haatzmaut*, *Yom Yerushalayim* and *Yom Hazikaron*, which they knew nothing about. We also taught them havdallah, which they will now do.

We are teaching children. We bought a wooden *aleph bet* block set and everyone picks out the letters of their names. The blocks have *nekudot* too and they find them as well. Also we bought a beautiful children's book which those who know English translate for the others. They recited the months and days of the week in Hebrew for us.

Sadok told us that there are about 15 children from the community attending school. Sadok took a loan for his children's education and is paying 120% interest. The local newspaper says they are beginning to put legislation in place addressing these money-lending practices.

As soon as we heard the congregation daven, we decided we wanted to record their liturgical music. There are some good singers who could sing for a recording. They do a wow *Shema* and *esa ainai*, and *yevarechecha*. As of now we are not planning professional recording. The most we could do is tape recording. We have a digital camera that also videos small segments, and we will take short videos.

We will also record the songs we taught them so they will have them there. Everyone is eager to learn songs. So far they have learned *Shabbat Shalom*, *Am Yisrael Chai*, *Shalom Chaverim*, and *Eretz Aavat Chalav Udevash*. We also sang *Hinay Matov*.

We bought the best tape recorder we could find, and we set up a recording session, but were rained out. On the next night Sadok

brought in the best singers, including his sister, but the lights went out. We went ahead anyway – they sang by candlelight. We recorded their music, some in Telugu. Jewish Telugu songs, imagine that! We feel it is a treasure. There is about 45 minutes of it.

## A Year of Holidays

We observed one actual holiday while we were there -- Tisha B'Av. It seems to be a new holiday for them. We explained it and told a long version of the story of *Kamtsa* and *Bar Kamsta*. We sang *im eshkachech yerushalyim* and read excerpts from *Aichah* and *Kinot*. Quite a few I'm told fasted though I'm not sure if they meant from eating and drinking or just from eating.

We are teaching the holidays in their order, starting with Succot. We had the children draw pictures of their succah, which we hope to bring home. They signed their names in Hebrew

When we taught about Chanuka, we made *levivot* (latkes) for everyone. I bought lots of potatoes and onions; Mrs. Yacobi and daughters peeled, I chopped onions, and we made *levivot* for about 50 people. The women were given the recipe for next Chanuka.

In addition to Chanuka, we taught about Purim. I bought some magic markers and the kids made masks of Indian Queen Esther and Mordecai.

Sadok's wife asked to learn matza baking. Till now they just used *chapatis* (flat Indian bread made with oil, flour, and salt), but there is a picture in that above-mentioned holiday book that shows an Indian woman baking matza. She is wearing a sari and has a star on her forehead. This picture is captivating to them as well as to me.

Last night was extraordinary. In response to Mrs. Yacobi's request for a matza recipe I bought the roller and a fork to put holes in it, and she had the flour. (In India they don't own forks, only spoons). We didn't have an oven, so we took a flat skillet (like one you could make pancakes on) and put a lid over it so it was enclosed like an oven! The matzas came out looking perfect! Mrs. Yacobi's daughters helped too.

We also brought the leftover hand-baked matza *shemurah* that we had from Pesach. This box came from Israel to the US and then to India! We gave out this matza too. They made a *shehecheyanu*. I must say that this matza baking was one of the most meaningful experiences of my life. Just to watch this all happen for the first time in the community. Mrs. Yacobi will teach all the women how to do this and they will have real matza this year, not chappati as they were used to.

In addition to our regular curriculum for adults, other issues came up. I don't feel competent to teach *shechita*, though they seem to be willing to learn. We did teach about tefillin, which was unknown to them, and we showed a wedding. Jerry went over items in the rabbis' manual with Sadok and is giving him a copy.

On Monday, Sadok invited us to a *chanukat habayit* in someone's newly built home. This man went into the construction supplies business a few months ago and must be doing well, in that he moved out of his one-room clay and thatched house to a four-room brick and concrete one. Jerry was asked to bless the house and be the first to turn on the electricity.

Afterwards two gentlemen came to meet "the grand rabbi who

(Continued on page 12)



Rabbis Bonita and Gerald Sussman

# India Journal (cont.)

# Japanese (cont.)

(Continued from page 11)

was visiting" and asked what you need to do to become Jewish. They were involved with a "Yeshua" group. One was a Christian and the other of Hindu background originally. The Yeshua stuff led them to look at Judaism and they have been studying on their own. This is a new issue for Sadok to deal with, especially since they seem to be more educated, well off and of a higher caste background. Jerry told them that they should leave it up to Sadok for guidance.

## Aliya?

Upon our arrival, Sadok said he thought they all were anxious to get on with the program of formal conversion and ultimately to emigrate to Israel.

It turns out that not all are interested in making aliya. Some do want to make aliya or at least be buried in Israel. There is so much adjusting to do and problems to overcome. I am not sure what kind of Israeli rabbis would convert them since their practice is not mainstream on different levels. Also India doesn't allow others to come in and convert people, which is another issue in the newspapers these days. The truth is while their lives are very difficult, whose life isn't on some level? They have family, community and friends, and lifelong connections. Besides, there is the money issue of getting to Israel, which to them seems insurmountable. Also, for now they are not as threatened as one may think. Jews have been protected here for many years and while they are a tiny, tiny minority, most people think they are just another Christian sect, of which there are many. They have a great relationship with the police and do not live in fear at all. Except for one terrorist incident three years ago, they would say there has been no discrimination at all.

One of the elders spoke quite eloquently that they are waiting patiently for being gathered into the land of Israel, as had been prophesied, and that if they were not so privileged, their bones should be bought there, as in the story of the Biblical Joseph.

It is interesting that in the Indian Jewish history book that we read here, it says that the Bene Israel originally did not know Hebrew and kept only the same few mitzvot until they were instructed by the Cochini Jews several hundred years ago. Jerry got the impression that they claim to have over the generations observed the Shabbat, circumcised their boys, and slaughtered animals in a special way.

Not too long after our arrival, I sent the following note to the spiritual leader of the Bene Israel congregation in New Delhi:

**Dear Mr. Malekar,**  
**We would like to thank you for your warm welcome in New Delhi and taking the time to meet us. I regret not being able to spend Shabbat with your lovely community.**

**We had a lovely Shabbat in the village of Kothareddipalem. The group is impoverished yet has a noble and gentle manner and lovely children who can read Hebrew perfectly. I think they would very much benefit from being part of the broader Indian Jewish community.**

*(Part II will appear in the next newsletter. It will cover encounters with the local police, peeks into some village homes, and thoughts and actions dealing with the community's economic development.)*

(Continued from page 9)

So while I am fascinated by the evidence presented by Eidelberg of the culture, alphabet, language and religion of Japan pointing to the origin of the Japanese from the Ten Tribes of Israel, I find that he fails to support that thesis with any reliable historic evidence. Nor is Eidelberg the first to assert such commonalities between Jews and newly discovered peoples. Both Spanish and English colonists in the New World, many of them quite erudite, found the resemblances between biblical Jews and American Indians in language and culture as Eidelberg finds with the Japanese. Still if there are commonalities between the Ten Tribes of Israel and the Japanese that defy happenstance, perhaps he is correct after all.

Eidelberg is not the first to identify the Japanese with the Ten Tribes of Israel or with Jews. According to Tudor Parfitt in *The Lost Tribes of Israel*, that identification goes back to 1849 in an article printed in London. But the first full-blown development of the connection between the two peoples was made by a Scottish missionary writing in 1875. Subsequently several Japanese have supported the common ancestry theory, including Saeki, Yoshiro (1871-1965), Oyabe, Zen'ichiro (1867-1941) and Kawamorita, Eiji (1891-1960). The common denominator between all these theorists was that they were Christian. Their ideas now form the beliefs of two Japanese Christian sects, the Makuya and the Beit Shalom. The Makuya adopt Hebrew names, observe the Sabbath, keep a form of *kashrut* and read from the Jewish prayer book – the *siddur*. They are now, according to Parfitt, 60,000 strong.

There are examples in history where small, highly motivated groups have managed to preserve their separate identity amidst a large and more powerful majority. There are other examples in history where such small religious groups have won over the majority into taking on the identity of the minority. Eidelberg assumes that through intermarriage the Ten Tribes became a people powerful, large and motivated enough to invade, conquer and settle Japan even though no such extraordinary event is recorded in any historical anal.

Today, throughout the world, there are numerous peoples who claim to be descended from the Ten Tribes of Israel or whom others maintain are so descended. Among them are the Igbos of Nigeria, the Pathans of Afghanistan and Pakistan; the Shinlung, Maggidim and Afridi of India, the Maori of New Zealand, and the Tutsi of Rwanda. The Igbos, Shinlung, Maori and Tutsi are Christians; the Maggidim are Hindus. With the exception of the Pathan and Afridi, who are Moslem, there are movements among the others to return to what they feel is their ancestral religion. What these people appear to have in common is that they are minorities under siege in their own countries. They share a longing for the events foretold by the Hebrew Prophets which will compensate them for suffering.

That power is not limited to people in Third World countries. In addition to some Japanese, some British believe that their Celtic ancestors intermarried with the deportees of Northern Israel. The belief influenced the Book of Mormon. And we have mentioned that both Spanish and English colonists in the New World found resemblances between American Indians and Jews in their languages, appearances and parallel practices.

In his book *In Search of A Lost Tribe of Israel*, Hillel Halkin calls two findings paramount:

1) No people, Jewish or Gentile, could be proven to descend from Assyrian exiles. There is not a single document or artifact that can establish a lost tribe.

2) The belief among certain peoples is so strong, clear and ancient that their claims should not be automatically dismissed.

In the opinion of this reviewer, suspension of judgment is appropriate, but a degree of skepticism is also fitting.

# Reprise Visit to Uganda (cont.)

(Continued from page 2)

a full-fledged teacher in a school in Mbale. Dinnah, Samson's wife, wants to study catering to be prepared when the new guest house opens in a few months. I could hardly believe all the changes and progress that had occurred since I was in Nabugoye last year.

When Shabbat services began, as usual, the women gravitated toward the left side and the men sat on the right side of the synagogue. The services are mesmerizing to me—thrilling! Such “*ruach*” (spirit), and the voices are magnificent—they harmonize and sound professional. Seth beats out the rhythms with his hands on a table. The congregation all joins in with several of the psalms sung to African music. All the women and children together said the blessing over the Shabbat candles. Aaron had all the guests introduce themselves—there were a few Americans and three men from the Ugandan village of Apach—about 200 miles north—who were here to represent the 90 people of their community who are in the process of converting to Judaism. All told, over 200 people crowded into the unlit synagogue. Samson, with his characteristic kindness, brought me a more comfortable chair and I sat next to Dinnah, his wife. I felt as if I'm one of the extended family—enfolded in their love and warmth. The whole service and the singing moved me to tears. On the way to the car, Samson came to hold my hand and help me navigate the uneven ground in the dark. I returned to my hotel room exhausted with emotion.

The next morning, I was driven up that rut of a road to the synagogue for Shabbat services. Again, such a moving service—all the men wearing *talesim* and kippot, the singing and drumming of the rhythms on the table. The Torah service was long—the whole *parasha* of Pinchas. A young man chanted most of it, then a visiting American chanted some and lastly, an American Cantor Weiss chanted the rest. All chanted from the Torah. Rahel read the Haftorah portion in Luganda—Samson translating into English. I was honored with the third Aliyah.

It tugged at my heart to see the little ones coming to their fathers, who in turn would pick them up—sometimes one in each arm—and continue praying, without losing a beat. There are so many children—all of them dressed up for Shabbat. Most of them are so quiet and respectful. I was told that each family averages seven children, plus the ones who are adopted from parents who have died. After Kiddush outside, guests were invited to Rabbi Gershom's house for lunch, which consisted of plates of rice, matoki (green banana-like fruit), avocado, cooked greens, pineapple, bananas and bread. The Abayudaya are mostly vegetarians, have only one set of dishes and observe the laws of Kashrut. On the grounds, there were small groups gathered to discuss or study various topics—much like an open-air yeshiva. I returned to the hotel for a short nap and a walk, then dinner of grilled tilapia and chips.

On Sunday, my day off, I tried to relax, catch up on some chores, write in my journal and take a short walk. Then, out of the blue, a young volunteer from the East Coast, David Eleff, showed up at the hotel. He had walked here from Nabugoye Hotel. He informed me that after he had heard about my interest in teaching beginning Hebrew to adults, he had set up a class for 4 days, 3 hours each day, from 2 to 5 p.m. The class will include the three visitors from Apach and two from Nabugoye. It was “*basherte*” (fated). They wanted to learn Hebrew and I wanted to teach and here we were together! I'm so excited. Now I have to refresh my lesson plans and get ready for my first class tomorrow—Monday.

While I was waiting for my drive, Dinnah came to visit, ostensi-

bly to straighten out my concept of who is related to whom in the community, so I made up a list that has helped me keep track of those people that I know. However, I think that Dinnah really wanted to let me know that she would very much like to enroll in a vocational course to learn the catering business, so that she would be prepared to service the new guest house when it opens for business in a few months. I told her that I would contact Kulanu in order to see if this can be done.

I'm holding my classes in the Nabugoye Synagogue. Of course, it's not a real classroom, so I had to adapt and substitute. I found a rather dull chalkboard and some chairs. No desks, but I brought paper and pencils and, most importantly, the books. I am using *Derech Bina* (Way of Wisdom) which I've used quite successfully for the past 11 years when teaching adults at Temple Adat Shalom. Since the books are to be used over again, my students had to do the writing exercises on separate sheets of paper. The work that I placed on the chalkboard was difficult to see, but my class tried very hard to absorb what I was telling them and showing them, so that at the end of the four days—three hours each day, I felt as if I had come close to achieving my goal of teaching them all the letters, vowels, and enough vocabulary, and important prayers and blessings to give them a good foundation from which to grow. They were even able to read some of the blessings and prayers from the prayer book—in unison, as a group. The three students from Apach intend to continue learning Hebrew when they return to their village, and also to teach others what they've learned. In order to do this, I felt it necessary to allow them to take back with them the books and many study sheets that I had brought along. I felt as if I had given birth to a whole new blossoming Jewish community in Uganda. I hope that I hear about their progress in the future.

One morning, I visited the Hadassah Primary School. As I had mentioned earlier, I had brought gifts from our religious school to the students at Hadassah Primary School. After Aaron Kintu Moses introduced me—and kindly mentioned that I had bought the desks that they were using when I visited last year—

I talked a bit about the students at Adat Shalom and suggested that they write thank you notes in three languages—English, Hebrew and Luganda (their language). Well, the enthusiasm with which these 5<sup>th</sup> graders tackled the assignment was heartwarming! They did indeed say thank you in three languages, and they used their newly acquired gifts of colored pencils and crayons to decorate their charmingly enhanced art work and designs. I walked around the room as they were working, making genuine complimentary comments and, after more than 30 minutes, was rewarded with some lovely mementos to take back to the children at Adat Shalom. Perhaps this will elicit some future pen-pals?

I took many pictures—the lovely grounds at Nabugoye, people on *boda-bodas* (bicycles used for carrying a passenger on the back), people that I know, children in school and out of school, buildings and new construction, the synagogue, interesting sights such as a woman washing clothes by bending over several pans filled with water on the grass, and of course, my class. Students wanted a photo to take back with them, and since they didn't own a camera and I don't have a Polaroid, I promised to send copies in care of Aaron so that when they next return to Nabugoye, he would give the copies to them. They were so appreciative of me and what they had learned that week that I was overwhelmed with emotion when we said our good-byes.

I wish that I could say that I will return to the Abayudaya at a future date, but at age 85, one has to let the future be in God's hands.



Musical practice in synagogue

# Isabel Lopes, the Innkeeper (cont.)

(Continued from page 6)

The Inquisitors wanted to be certain about Francisco's denunciation, so they convoked a session on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1556 with the defendants and the denunciator, to confirm the accusation that he had made at the *casa do despacho*, with Gabriel being present. This was a highly unusual procedure because the procedure of the Inquisition was to withhold the identities of the denounciators from the defendants. We are not aware of any other such case.

Gabriel denied the accusation and said that it was all an invention and the fruit of hatred, since on many occasions he fought and yielded a knife with the father and the brother of Francisco Rodrigues Trindade and one time he was even wounded in a finger and was put in the jail of Moncorvo. The case proceeded and Gabriel was freed after abjuring *de levi* (slight indication of Judaizing) on the Mesa (Table, the court or "bench" of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition where judges, prosecutors, lawyers, notaries, scribes, and the defendants sat).

The denunciations against Isabel included allegations arising from "confidential" conversations with her stepson about the coming of the Messiah which so mesmerized the New Christian cultural universe at that time. Francisco alleged that,

*The said Isabel, his stepmother, said that Christ was not the son of God, but rather Our Lady was married with Jose, that they had a blacksmith as a neighbour; and Jose being out of the house, the said blacksmith had been spying on her; and as he saw him outside the house, he entered and had carnal relations with her. And upon Jose returning home, he became aware that she had committed a bad sin; and then Our Lady told him the truth, how she had sinned and the blacksmith had slept with her. And Joseph told her not to be afraid, that he would not defame her; saying, his stepmother said that at that time women who committed adultery were stoned.* (from Inquisition documents)

It was without a doubt, the negation of the Mary's virginity and

the divine nature of Jesus, a basic tenet of Christianity, that aggravated Isabel's case before the Inquisitors.

With the imposition of the Inquisition in Portugal in 1536, the New Christians must have felt like they were re-living the captivity of Egypt and Babylonia. However, there was great faith that the end of this captivity was nearing its end and that the Messiah was about to arrive. He would come as a great king, form a powerful army, and establish a great Jewish Kingdom. Amongst the many versions of the coming of the Messiah, there was a widespread belief that the Messiah had already been born but was imprisoned in Rome.

Isabel denied everything, and in her defense invoked the testimony of many important people of Torre de Moncorvo. Isabel recounted many scenes of being hit by her husband, always because of his children, e.g.:

*She threw them out of the house many times and did not consent to them being at home; and one day she had so many fights over throwing out the said graduate, her stepson, that he, Francisco Rodrigues, gave her a great big slap on her face and the defendant took a sword to kill him and advanced towards him and would kill him if he did not flee out the door; and he, the graduate, fled and never returned home and became her capital enemy (...) therefore, no credit ought to be given to the testimony of that graduate, Francisco Rodrigues.* (from Inquisition documents)

Who should the Inquisitors believe? Should they keep Isabel imprisoned, subject her to torture, or oblige her to admit her guilt, denounce more people, and oblige her to ask for forgiveness of her guilt? At this time, in the early stages of the introduction of the Inquisition in Portugal, the well-oiled machinery of the (un)Holy Tribunal was not fully developed, possibly due to the huge bribes being paid by the "Men of the Nation" to the Pope and Cardinals in Rome.

Isabel Lopes was freed, after abjuring *de vehementi* (strong indication of Judaizing) for suspicion of heresy. She was a remarkable woman.

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## It Takes a Village (cont.)

(Continued from page 10)

our tradition and our Sefwi Wiawso community.

The community's mourning practices were one of many times I got to admire and learn from their positive relationship with Judaism. The Jews in Sefwi Wiawso know how much they don't know, and they know they don't do things like most other Jews. While a lack of traditional Jewish knowledge and a preference for the non-traditional has at times made me and many other American Jews feel ashamed and inadequate, the Jews of Sefwi Wiawso simply resolve to do their best and learn more over time. This mix of confidence and humility is one of the community's many qualities I would like to foster in myself and share with other American Jews.

Ali and I were incredibly fortunate to spend this summer working with the Jews of Sefwi Wiawso. They greatly enriched our sense of Judaism's richness and diversity. We are grateful to Kulanu for making this possible and hope Kulanu will continue to support exchanges between the Tiferet Israel community and its fellow Jews from around the world.



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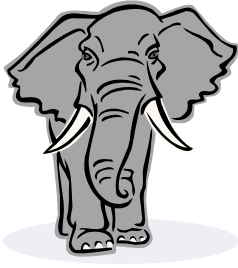
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