



## Thousands of Books for Zimbabwe Lemba

By Relly Coleman

My family and I visit Zimbabwe often. Four years ago, in a personal quest in search of the Lemba, an African community with Jewish roots, we visited the Lemba village of Mapakomhere. It was for me a transformative experience. Not only did we find a wonderful, welcoming group of people, but we found a community struggling to educate its youth and in desperate need of books. For me, it was an “aha” moment of “I can do this.” The education of the children of Mapakomhere became my mission and the beginning of an incredible journey.

On returning home, I sent a couple of boxes of books to the village and **Books-for-Zim** was born. Four years and thousands of books later, I can report that we have expanded and improved the quality of education for the children and youth of Mapakomhere. In the process, I have discovered an extended family.

On our first visit, we found schools with a paucity of educational materials, no library, and a secondary school that ended in grade 10. Without the upper grades, village children were unable to sit for A-level exams—a prerequisite for university admission. Books were old, scarce and often obsolete. We initially focused on sending books to the secondary school, but it became apparent early on that the elementary school needed help as well. It made sense to support both schools and thus encompass the complete education system of the village.

What a joy it is to see the changes in the village. In March of this year, we returned for our third visit to Mapakomhere. Our arrival was greeted with great joy and friendship. The villagers put on a day long welcome with all

the students, teachers, elders and parents in attendance. The community slaughtered a goat and two chickens for the celebration, which they served with pumpkin and sadza (a local staple made of cornmeal). There was singing, dancing, drumming and a six-part skit by the students of the elementary and secondary schools as well as speeches by the headmasters, elders and other tribal dignitaries. A public request was made to the headman (village chief), who agreed to allocate land



*A warm welcome by the kids of Tadzembwa school, who surrounded the author on her arrival*

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## Honor Anousim On Tisha B'Av

Next December Rabbi Stephen Leon will introduce a Resolution at the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism biennial convention to honor the victims of the Spanish Inquisition on Tisha B'Av. (This is a solemn fast day that mourns the destruction of the First and Second



*Rabbi Stephen Leon*

Temples on the ninth day of the month of Av.) Leon's Resolution, which would apply to Conservative congregations, would also honor *Bnai Anousim* who have returned to Judaism.

The text of the Resolution reads as follows:

**Resolution on the observance of Tisha B'Av to be a day to commemorate the Spanish Inquisition and the return of the Anousim to Judaism**

*Whereas the holiday of Tisha B'Av recalls the very day that the expulsion of the Jews from Spain took place in the year 1492; and*

*Whereas many Jews were forcibly converted to Christianity publicly, but continued to practice Judaism in secret; and*

*Whereas many of the descendants of these Jews who are called B'nei Anousim have returned formally to Judaism today, and many are in the same process,*

*Now, therefore be it resolved that the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism calls upon all of its affiliated congregations to formally observe Tisha B'Av on an annual basis as an occasion to educate its members about the history and events of the Spanish Inquisition regarding the Jewish people, and to inform its members of the return of the B'nei Anousim to Judaism today; and*

*Be it further resolved that the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism helps to provide programs, speakers, films, and other appropriate materials for such Spanish Inquisition and B'nai Anousim commemorations on Tisha B'Av.*

Leon's synagogue, Congregation B'nai Zion of El Paso, Texas, will be receiving an award at the December convention for its annual *Anousim* conferences. For the past nine years the congregation has brought in speakers, films and programs about the *Bnai Anousim* during the Tisha B'Av service. Congregants have listened to Yaffa DaCosta, Sonya Loya, Art Benvenisti, Richard Santos, Rabbi Juan Meji, and Trudy Alexy, z"l, author of *The Mezuzah in the Madonna's Foot*. They have also viewed such films as *The Longing* by Gloria Bohm, about Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn's work with *Anousim* in Latin America.

"Tisha B'Av is the perfect time to mourn the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and to celebrate the return of their descendants, the *Bnai Anousim* of today," Leon notes. "The response to our programs has been wonderful."

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Come with Us to Ethiopia AND Uganda!

*By Harriet Bograd*

My husband Ken and I are avid travelers, and we were so tempted by two trips scheduled for next January, we plan to do both, all on a single plane fare!! Here's why:

### **Uganda**

Laura Wetzler's "Jewish Life in Uganda Mitzvah Tour" to visit the Abayudaya in eastern Uganda is almost legendary. Where else can you combine a fabulous safari adventure on the Nile, complete with crocs, hippos, lions and giraffes, with touring coffee lands with Oprah-famous "Delicious Peace" interfaith coffee farmers, visit two Kulanu supported Jewish schools educating and feeding 700 Muslim, Jewish and Christian kids a day, meet inspiring women's and youth groups, and learn about model Kulanu *tikkun olam* programs fighting poverty in Africa through small business and micro-credit? And where else can you meet new and beloved Abayudaya friends, join in a mitzvah day, enjoy exotic Ugandan cuisine, celebrate an Abayudaya Shabbat, and *shepp nachas* at an Abayudaya African Jewish Musical Festival organized especially in your honor? See for yourself. Come, and bring your friends and family on this extraordinary Jewish heritage trip. The Uganda trip is planned for January 10-23, 2010.

### **Ethiopia**

A new trip to Ethiopia will probably begin around January 3, 2010. The main attraction will be a visit with the Beit Avraham, the "Kechene" Jews you might have read about in our last newsletter, who are also known as Moretes. These Jews migrated at different times, some as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, from Axum and Gondar to Shewa and the Addis Ababa area. Over the decades, some intermarried with Christians and were buried with them. Others rejected Christianity (and the land ownership that it promised) and observed Jewish rites secretly. There is now a new movement to return to the ancestral religion openly, so it is time for us to go to meet them and encourage them!

The short version of this trip, for those of us going on to Uganda on January 9 or 10, will include visiting the Beit Avraham and other sights in and near Addis Ababa, as well as Adadi Mariam, a Jewish construction of the 11<sup>th</sup> century that is now a church, and the Melka Kontur prehistoric site, home of *homo erectus*. (Fortunately, a direct, short flight goes from Addis to Entebbe, Uganda).

Those remaining in Ethiopia will continue on to the Ambover Jewish community and synagogue, Bahardar, and Gondar's medieval castles (built with Jewish free manpower). We will visit Gondar's Jewish compound, where thousands of "Falash Mura" are awaiting permission to immigrate to Israel. We will then visit Lalibela, whose famous rock-hewn structures were built by the Zagwe Jews who ruled Ethiopia for 200 years. We will conclude the tour in Axum, the cradle of the Jewish Empire in Ethiopia and the place believed by some to house the Arc of the Covenant.

Kulanu's Ethiopia Coordinators, Sam Taddesse and Yohannes Zeleke, will be planning the trip and guiding us. Taddesse, who lives in Addis, is in frequent contact with the

"Kechene" Jews. The long tour will conclude around January 13, but participants may travel more on their own. Various tour ideas are presented at <http://mogilee-lodge-and-tours-ethiopia.com>.

Several Kulanu leaders hope to be joining Ken and me on the Ethiopia trip, including Jack and Diane Zeller and Karen and Aron Primack. Please join us on one or both trips! Please email us at [tours@kulanu.org](mailto:tours@kulanu.org) to let us know of your interest as soon as possible.



## **Kulanu Needs a Volunteer Newsletter Editor**

Serving as the volunteer Editor of the popular Kulanu quarterly Newsletter, which is distributed in hard copy to 1,500 people, and electronically to thousands more, will allow you to communicate with fascinating Jewish personalities around the globe. The position will enable you to make hundreds of friends, hear amazing stories, and feel more connected to the work Kulanu does and the people who make it happen.

Karen Primack, our volunteer Newsletter Editor of the past 15 years, is phasing this role out of her multitude of Kulanu activities, but is happy to guide you in this rewarding mitzvah, which is crucial to Kulanu's success. The Kulanu Board will consider one editor, co-editors, or an editorial board of writers, editors, and layout designers. Writing experience is a must; editing and desk-top publishing experience is helpful. This position can be performed anywhere! Check out our present and past Newsletters at [www.kulanu.org](http://www.kulanu.org).

**KULANU ("ALL OF US"), a tax-exempt organization of Jews of varied backgrounds and practices, networks with dispersed and emerging remnants of the Jewish people and raises awareness of and support for emerging communities through education, research, and publications about their histories and traditions. This newsletter is published quarterly by Kulanu, 165 West End Ave., 3R, New York, NY 10023, data-base@kulanu.org. See [www.kulanu.org/about-kulanu](http://www.kulanu.org/about-kulanu).**

# Uganda Coffee Co-op Scores with USAID

By Ben Corey Moran

Exciting news from coffee growers of Uganda: after nearly two years of project development, The Peace Kawomera Cooperative is about to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the US Agency for International Development (the development wing of the State Department) for a \$250,000 infrastructure development project.

Just writing those words is a little surreal. It's been a long time coming, three trips to Uganda, countless hours meeting, emailing, listening to one another on scratchy Internet and cell phones. Most of all, it's been a tireless effort led by JJ Keki and Muhammed Kakaire Hatibu, Peace Kawomera's chairman and secretary manager, respectively.

The project will finance the construction of a world-class coffee processing and storage facility, which will avail the farmers of the best tools of the coffee trade. Now, for the first time in the history of coffee cultivation in Uganda, farmers will be able to bring out the full potential of their heirloom Bugisu Arabica varieties. The Cooperative will collect freshly picked, ripe cherries, and then control the process of depulping, fermenting, washing, and drying in a centralized facility. Based on the development of similar processing techniques in neighboring Kenya and Rwanda, we expect the washing station to dramatically improve the quality of the farmers' coffee. And we're looking forward to paying more for each pound of coffee we buy.

None of this would be possible if it were not for the support of our loyal customers, who not only lined up to build a market for this young cooperative's coffee, but also enlisted the power of their coffee buying dollars, through our profit sharing partnership, and over the past five years, raised over \$100,000 which bought the land and building materials that gave USAID the confidence they needed to invest further in this remarkable endeavor.

It's almost too sweet to believe...but then it gets even better. Our most recent arrival samples from our two incoming containers (75,000 lbs) arrived. I roasted them immediately, and cupped them yesterday. They are great. Sweeter than ever before, with more clarity and complexity, and a fuller expression of their unique character. All of this was made possible by better management of coffee buying, which the cooperative initiated themselves. And this was using their old machinery and processing methods...if the coffee is already improving this much, imagine how it will taste next year!

Many thanks to Laura Wetzler and Kulanu for their tireless work and for forging the initial connection with the Uganda-based USAID office. As with everything we've been able to do in Uganda, none of this would be possible without their contribution.

*(The author is a coffee buyer for Thanksgiving Coffee in California).*

# Impressive Developments In Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana

By Harriet Bograd

I'm delighted to report on these dramatic developments in Ghana:

## Alex Armah is back in Uganda

Alex Armah has returned to Uganda for an additional six months of study with Rabbi Gershom Sizomu, thanks to funding from Bechol Lashon. (As you may recall, Kulanu paid the travel and living expenses for Alex to study in Uganda for four months in 2008). We expect this to be another wonderful opportunity for Alex to build his skills as a teacher and leader for the Sefwi Wiawso Jewish community.

## Kulanu sent \$10,189.72 to the community

Kulanu sent \$10,189.72 to the community recently, raised from the sale of beautiful embroidered challah covers and Kente cloth tallitot. Since this program began in 2001, we have paid the community a total of \$34,059 for challah covers and \$4,740 for tallitot. At the request of some of the community members, we had been holding on to these sales proceeds for several years, until all were confident that conflicts in the community had been resolved and that the community had strong decision-making procedures in place to control how the money is used. On the day I sent the money, I really felt moved with gratitude and appreciation of the progress that the community and Kulanu have made working together. The community's tailor, Ben Baidoo, deserves special praise for his wonderful craftsmanship in making these challah covers and tallitot. *If you would like to purchase these challah covers or tallitot, visit [kulanuboutique.com](http://kulanuboutique.com).*

## More medical supplies are on their way

Thanks to Sid Rosenzweig and Lynda Howland and to Anita Tarab, who travels back and forth to Ghana, for arranging to bring a suitcase of medical supplies to the community to donate to the hospital in Sefwi Wiawso. Sid and Lynda have helped a number of Kulanu's travelers obtain medical supplies to take to communities we work with.

## We have a slideshow

Thanks to Anita Tarab, we have a new slideshow about her visit to Sefwi Wiawso on the Ghana page on Kulanu's web site ([www.kulanu.org/ghana](http://www.kulanu.org/ghana)). The slideshow is also posted on our Facebook page, at [www.facebook.com/kulanu](http://www.facebook.com/kulanu).

## How you help make this work possible

New people are welcome to join our online Ghana working group by sending an email to [ghana-shalom-subscribe@yahoogleroups.com](mailto:ghana-shalom-subscribe@yahoogleroups.com). Also, we would be delighted to have you join the community of supporters of Kulanu's work, or renew your support! It is easy to donate online at <http://www.kulanu.org/donate>. Donors receive Kulanu's quarterly newsletter, and make it possible for us to continue our work connecting Jews around the globe.

## ***Have you donated in the last year?***

Kulanu is a very small organization with very big dreams, and we rely on our community—the “all of us” referred to in our name—to fund our activities.

We at Kulanu hope you enjoy receiving this quarterly newsletter and reading fascinating stories about our organization's work partnering with Jewish communities and Jews around the world – we certainly love sharing them with you.

Rising postage and other costs have forced a difficult decision on us—to **limit our distribution list to current contributors and lifetime supporters**. (Our overseas partner communities will continue to receive copies of the newsletters without the need to donate.)

**We hope that if you have not contributed to Kulanu in the past year, you will consider making a generous gift at this time.**

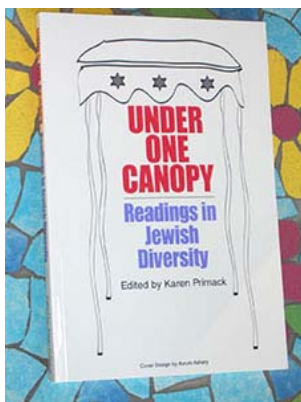
# KULANU BRIEFS

## A New Kulanu Coordinator

Kulanu is pleased to announce the appointment of **Rabbi Larry Goldstein** as our Coordinator for Puerto Rico and Special Project Consultant for Anousim communities. Goldstein recently retired as an architect for the United States General Services Administration in their New York City office. During his 35 years working for the federal government, he also managed to complete his rabbinic studies and was ordained by Rabbi Meir Gruenberg, the Kayzmaker Rav, in 1991. Among his many accomplishments, Goldstein organized a daily *minchah* minyan near his office, a Hebrew language club for lunchtime study, and religious classes for adults. Since relocating to Puerto Rico a year ago, he has been teaching religious classes both in person and by telephone and contributing greatly to the work of Kulanu in Puerto Rico and South America.

## Marketing Opportunity

Kulanu's online Boutique carries lovely Judaica products and fascinating books - check them out at [www.KulanuBoutique.com](http://www.KulanuBoutique.com). Many items are made by the communities we partner with in various countries, and all purchases benefit Kulanu and the work we do with these Jewish groups around the world.



We are seeking a volunteer with marketing or business experience to help us promote the Boutique. Our first priority is marketing bulk sales of the Kulanu-published book *UNDER ONE CANOPY – Readings in Jewish Diversity* (<http://www.kulanuboutique.com/servlet/Detail?no=10>), edited by our own board member Karen Primack, to places such as synagogues, senior centers, Jewish education committees, and book clubs. Your ideas are wanted! To apply for the Marketing Volunteer position please fill out our application form, located at <http://www.kulanu.org/getinvolved/volunteerapplicationform.doc>.

## Kulanu's Popularity on the Web

Kulanu's website ([www.Kulanu.org](http://www.Kulanu.org)) is so popular that it had 2,646 visits from 88 countries in the one-month period from April 23 to May 23, 2009! More than half of the visits (1,560) were from the US, but Spain, Israel, Canada, and the United Kingdom also had more than 100 "hits" each. Following next, in order of "hits," were the Czech Republic, India, France, Australia, Germany, Turkey, Uganda, Poland, Brazil, Italy, South Africa, Mexico, Indonesia, Taiwan, the Netherlands, Belgium. Have you visited lately?

From Kulanu's April 3 debut on Facebook until July 7, we had accumulated 288 "fans," including 209 from the US, 19 from Israel, and 13 from the UK. And Harriet Bograd wants you to know that you can now use a text message to become a Kulanu fan on Facebook by texting "fan Kulanu" to FBOOK (32665)!

## Online Opportunities

To receive Rabbi Peter Tarlow's bilingual (English and Spanish) weekly message with the *parsha* of the week, please write to [ptarlow@tamuhillel.org](mailto:ptarlow@tamuhillel.org). He is rabbi at the Hillel of Texas A&M Univ. and is active in *Anousim* education.

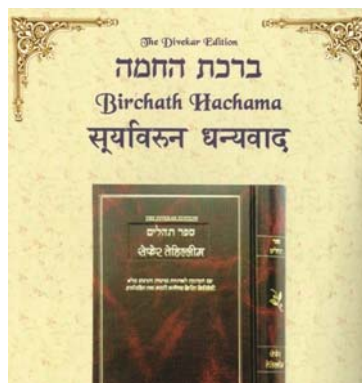
Avishai Mekonen's beautiful photographs of Ethiopian Jews assimilating in Israel can be viewed at [http://www.avishaimekonen.com/slideshows/sevengen\\_exhibition/exhibition\\_photos.html](http://www.avishaimekonen.com/slideshows/sevengen_exhibition/exhibition_photos.html). They were recently on view at the Manhattan JCC in an exhibit titled "Seven Generations: Photos and Video by Avishai Mekonen."

The bilingual website of the Reform/Liberal Comunidad Brit Brajá de México, [www.comunidadbeithabritmexico.es.tl](http://www.comunidadbeithabritmexico.es.tl), contains information about the congregation and about Reform conversions under Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn, who is rabbi at the New Reform Temple in Kansas City, Missouri, as well as at this Comunidad.

## Descendants of Cape Verde Jews Sought

Descendants of Jews from Cape Verde are urged to contact the Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project, a nonprofit organization established in 2007 by Carol Castiel. One of the Project's twin missions is to preserve the islands' small Jewish cemeteries that record the presence of Jewish immigrants from Morocco and Gibraltar beginning in the mid-1800s. The other mission is to tell the story of Cape Verde's Jewish heritage by publishing a book based on archival research and testimonies of descendants; this story has yet to be fully researched and documented. See [www.CapeVerdeJewishHeritage.org](http://www.CapeVerdeJewishHeritage.org).

## A Marathi Blessing



Kudos to Erna and Sam Daniel Divekar of New York, who sponsored the publication of a *Seder Birchath HaChama* (prayerbook for the Blessing of the Sun) in Marathi, the Indian language of the Bene Israel Jews. The edition, which also includes Hebrew, English, and transliterated Hebrew versions of the prayers, is being distributed by Shmuel Ben-Shalom, PO Box 5866, Jerusalem Israel (tel 054-8435855). A copy has been provided for the Kulanu library.

## Past Events

Last Shavuot, multiracial Jewish families came together for an evening of fun, learning, and sharing views about merging one's Jewish identity with other ethnic, cultural, or racial identities. Young adult facilitators from the racially diverse community guided celebrating the holiday of receiving the Torah with music, ice cream and socializing. Sponsored by the Jewish Child Care Association/Ametz Adoption Program and Bechol Lashon.

On June 1 in NYC, Romiel Daniel, president of the Indian Jewish Congregation of USA, led an evening of reactions and reflections on the tragedy of Mumbai and on Jewish life in India. Co-sponsors were the Manhattan JCC, Kulanu, and the IJC-USA.

Hindu-Muslim Friendship in Lucknow sponsored an evening dedicated to Jewish-Muslim relations in memory of Daniel Pearl on June 27 in Lucknow. The evening featured the screening of the film adaptation of Daniel Pearl's widow Mariane Pearl's memoir *A Mighty Heart*. (Daniel Pearl was an American journalist who was kidnapped and murdered in Karachi, Pakistan, while serving as the South Asia Bureau Chief of the *Wall Street Journal*). The evening was organized by Navras Jaat Aafreedi.

# KULANU BRIEFS

## Erratum

The article "El Paso and Ruidoso: Centers of Learning for *Anousim*," which appeared in the Spring 2007 Kulanu newsletter, was attributed to the wrong writer. The correct author is Harry A. Ezratty. See the revised article at this web address: [http://www.kulanu.org/anousim/el\\_paso\\_anousim.php](http://www.kulanu.org/anousim/el_paso_anousim.php)

## Refuah Shleymah

We wish a speedy and complete recovery to **Yaakov Gladstone**.

## Condolences

Thousands are joining his family in mourning the passing of **Gary Tobin**, founder and president of the San Francisco-based Institute for Jewish & Community Research (IJCR). Kulanu president Harriet Bograd conveyed this message: "All of us at Kulanu honor the memory of Gary Tobin and send our condolences to Diane Tobin, Gary's children, and the staff of IJCR/Bechol Lashon. Gary's work with his beloved wife, Diane, in establishing and nurturing Bechol Lashon has made a huge difference for the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda and for Jews in many other faraway places, as well as in America. May his memory be for a blessing."

**Rabbi Gerald Sussman** mourns the untimely death of his sister **Ruth Fagan**.

## Mazal Tov!

Kulanu has awarded **Yaakov Gladstone** a Certificate recognizing his Lifetime Achievement in the cause of Jewish Diversity. He has developed assistance programs for the Jews of Belmonte, Portugal, the Jews of Uganda and Ghana, and many others. He was the founder of *Hatzaad Harishon* (the First Step) in the 1960s in New York, a group that brought together black and white Jews. He led active Kulanu chapters in New York and Florida for many years. The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College has an annual Yaakov Gladstone Award for Fine Teaching which "honors Yaakov Gladstone whose life exemplifies fine teaching in the fullest sense."

Kulanu board member **Rabbi Stephen Leon** gave the opening prayer at the U.S. House of Representatives on July 22. Kulanu president Harriet Bograd has said, "We all congratulate him on this honor! Rabbi Leon has been a leader in welcoming *Anousim* (also known as Crypto Jews) back into the mainstream Jewish community."

**Beejhy Barhany** (director of BINA Cultural Foundation) gave birth to a boy, **Perstah Ori John**.

Mazal tov to **Shoshana Li**, a descendant of the Jewish community of Kaifeng, China, who recently made aliyah and married an American Jewish immigrant to Israel. The wedding was organized by the Shavei Israel organization.

Mazal Tov to Kulanu Board member **Judy Manelis**, who recently celebrated the marriages of her children. Daughter **Aliza Kaplan** married **Sean Coyne** in December, and son **Seth Kaplan** married **Estera Gertopscaia** in June. Both couples have settled in Brooklyn, NY.

## Todah Rabah!

**Firozah Najmi** of Forest Hills, NYC, asked bat mitzvah guests to donate to Kulanu, and in her *d'var Torah* she discussed Kulanu in relation to her *parasha* with thoughtful insights.

**Leti Gomez** included a note in her bat mitzvah invitation asking friends and family to donate to Kulanu in lieu of gifts.

Abayudaya kippot were featured, and enthusiastically well-

received, at the bar mitzvah of **Sam Schonfeld** in Mt Kisco, NY. Sam was inspired by his older brother Matt, who also distributed Abayudayan kippot at his bar mitzvah three years ago.

The **seventh grade class of teacher Brian King** at the Milwaukee Jewish Day School, which had met our Abayudaya speaker last fall, started a fundraising drive and website, [voiceofthechildren.net](http://voiceofthechildren.net). They raised a total of \$14,594 from January to June 2009 and donated \$2,000 to Kulanu for the Abayudaya schools. Their web site is awe-inspiring!

We are grateful to these donors of 1,000-1,999: **Congregation Beth Israel (Milwaukee WI), Falmouth (MA) Jewish Congregation Religious School, Judy Featherman, Lionel M. Lieberman, Temple Israel (Norfolk VA), Peggy and Mark Zilbermann**

And these donors of \$500-999: **Jack and Pauline Freeman Foundation, David Holtz and Diane Glatt, St. Mark's United Methodist Church (Sacramento CA)**

And these donors of \$125-499: **Stuart R. and Charna Cohn, Lynne Elson, Hope and Matthew Feldman, Will Galperin, I. Michael Goodman, The Sarick Family, Elizabeth and Gary Schonfeld, Temple Isaiah (Lexington MA)**

And to the \$100 Club: **Carl Eisenberg, Fredman Family Charitable Trust III, Sharon R and Rabbi Scott L Glass, Linda and Steve Hill, Amy E. Kahn, Norma Markell, Sherman and Rita Shapiro, Judith Spier.**



## A Black Jewish Community in Paris

By Cynthia Weisfield

A fascinating article about a nascent black Jewish community in Paris has come to Kulanu's attention, thanks to Guysen News International. Called the Jewish-Black Fraternity, the group is composed primarily of nearly 300 converts to Judaism from Ethiopia, elsewhere in Africa, and the Antilles. The leader, Guershon Nduwa, born in the Congo, converted 28 years ago.

The group's goal is to build a synagogue and community center in Levallois-Perret, a commune in the northwestern suburbs of Paris. The main impetus is to provide a much-needed formal presence for black Jews in France. But another factor is that they are not currently part of organized French Ashkenazic and Sephardic Judaism.

Nevertheless, there is some discussion within the group itself about the significance of the project. It would be a comfortable place, free from staring worshippers in other synagogues. But there is concern that it would also lead to a further separation among French Jews even though the facility would be open to all. Nduwa has arranged concerts of Jewish-Ethiopian Reggae, Black Jewish Rap, and Jewish-Spanish music to raise money.

We will contact Nduwa and keep our readers informed. Both Guysen News International ([guysen.com](http://guysen.com)) and the Jewish-Black Fraternity ([fjn-123.com](http://fjn-123.com)) are websites in French, but have English sections.

## Book Comment

# BURNT BREAD AND CHUTNEY: Jewish Roots in India

Reviewed by Steve Prowler

*Burnt Bread and Chutney*, by Carmit Delman, is a vivid memoir of an American woman of light and dark Jewish lineage who must grapple with years of painful identity issues. As the daughter of an Ashkenazi (Eastern European) father and a dark-skinned mother from western India's Bene Israel community, Delman traverses widely disparate cultures in the Old and New Worlds--physically, emotionally and spiritually.

As the story develops, we wonder how Delman will ultimately resolve the questions of who she is and where her true home really lies.

The author was motivated to describe her childhood-to-postgraduate years after serendipitously uncovering the diary of her deceased great-aunt, Nana-bai, by whom she was raised and mentored (along with her parents). Excerpts from the surprising diary appear at the beginning of chapters. A personal trauma that her aunt suffers as a young woman ripples through Delman's self-reflection and evolving perspectives on life.

In her formative years, the author and her siblings were nourished on their mother's hearty Indian cooking, replete with that country's native ingredients and spices. After the family's brief sojourn in Israel--in which their dream of *aliya* has been dashed because of "petty bureaucratic" obstacles--they find themselves back in the U.S., where Delman's food predilections gravitate to authentic American foods: the ubiquitous hamburger, hot dog, potato chips, and "shopping mall food."

Predominant in the author's unsettled youth is an uneasy but growing consciousness of conflicting cultural values. The conservative Old World (Indian) beliefs and taboos, as taught and reinforced by Nana-bai, are juxtaposed against relatively flexible and permissive American standards.

It is on her family's extended car outings that Delman can absorb popular entertainment like arcade games, Star Wars, and Cabbage Patch dolls, albeit under her parents' watchful supervision. American culture, folklore, and history are perceived as pieces of an intriguing "foreign" culture in their midst. Yet, "We did not partake of them," she recalls, and so we had a little less to talk about with people who did. There was always an awareness of 'here' versus 'there.'"

The distinctiveness of their racial blend was not a factor until one day, when Delman began to feel fully out of place--even among other Jews. "Maybe if we had been accepted at face value as regular Jews," she wonders, "the sense of America would have been more natural. But from the earliest age I remember feeling different, even from the American Jewish community. So that brand of Americana, with New York's Lower East Side of Yiddish and bagels and lox so thick in its veins, seemed unattainable to me also."

"Why don't you look Jewish?" people often asked us. "What does Jewish look like?" we wanted to say in return. "Judaism is a religion, it is not a look."

"But they asked this because most of the Jews they saw around them in America were descended from Eastern Europe and they assumed that those people defined Jews all over the world. When we explained that we were the mixture of an Indian Jew and an Eastern European Jew, people automatically identified us by the brownness and what made us non-white. Their assumptions drew a distinct line between us and them."

In the "Kin, Not Kind" section of the memoir, the author takes us back one generation for a sobering glimpse of Nana-bai's experiences

growing up in Bombay (Mumbai) in the Bene Israel community. The Jews there are said to be descendants of the survivors of an ancient shipwreck. As the author explains in the preface, the Bene Israel "evolved quite uniquely, without many of the holidays, rituals, and rabbinic rulings introduced meanwhile in the general Jewish Diaspora. ... They adopted the local language, Marathi, and manners of dress like the sari, along with some of the other Indian customs; they... mostly kept to themselves. They maintained the few ancient Jewish rituals which could be passed on." At the same time, they absorbed Indian influences in prayer melodies and rituals, fasting, pilgrimages, and caste-like ways.

The prejudice and persecution that affected other Diaspora Jews was manifested differently in Western India. As the writer describes it, "Because they were not persecuted by non-Jews for their beliefs, the way that Jews in other countries often were, the Bene Israel achieved a solid relationship with the general Indian community and succeeded in the military, medicine, and the arts. They faced another kind of discrimination, however, because once they reconnected, the dark color of their skin and their centuries of isolation sometimes led other Jewish communities to look down on them and question their Jewish purity."

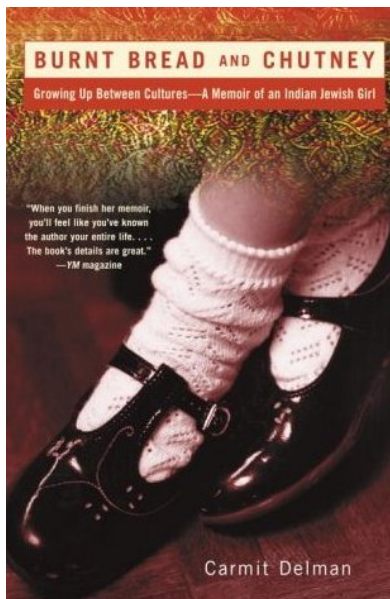
What we do learn, sadly, is that Nana-bai's life was virtually ruined by subservience to her spouses, malicious gossip from female relatives, and the shame of unwanted polygamy. The author provides us with an astounding perspective on her great-aunt's "dirty little secret": "Long ago in India, Nana-bai and the girl she grew up with as her sister were married at the same time to the same man. . . Most nights the husband stayed at the mansion with his first wife and children. He took them wandering about the city to enjoy fairs and music. . . since they were spoiled by his money, overfed and always needing to feed more, that household was filled with pettiness and arguing. And so the husband turned with other needs to Nana-bai, whom he kept moving from one hovel to another in the slums of Bombay. . . It was usually the first wife who maddened him, whining for trinkets and making fusses over the servants. But in the end, naturally, he came to the second wife to take out his anger. . . As it happens in small communities, all the Bene Israel soon knew about our family. First wife. Second wife. Who was favored. Who was beaten. And they, too, felt free to follow suit with their own snubs, preferences, and indignities. "

Shifting forward to her high school years, Delman tells how she spent summer vacations working on Israeli kibbutzim. Internally, she remained quite ambivalent about her preferred home. "Part of me could never be a kibbutz adult," she says. "American cities, American Judaism, academia, and the luxury of a surplus culture, all molded my lifestyle and expectations. . . And yet, in many ways, another part of me, stunted in growth, continued--and probably always will continue--to be an original kibbutz child. . . and I remained that kibbutz child at heart because, despite all the grown-up jumbled ideas I tried to impose upon Israel, still when I thought about that place, that home, it was with utter longing."

By her college years, she was still caught between the opposing moral forces from her Old World upbringing and her growing instinct toward complete autonomy and assimilation in the liberal American culture in which she lives.

At last, the author comes to realize after college that, what Nana-bai wanted most from her niece was that the younger woman would

(Continued on page 10)



# Publications of Note

Compiled by Morton Simon

✍ *A Scapegoat for All Seasons: the Dönmes or Crypto-Jews of Turkey*, by **Rifat Bali**, Isis Press (2008). The book's first part describes the status and history of the Doenmeh in contemporary Turkish society, while the second part contains verbatim oral histories the author has collected from descendants of the Sabbatean sect.

✍ *Jews and Judaism in African History*, by **Richard W. Hull, PhD**, Markus Wiener Publishers (2009) emphasizes the important role Jews played in the cultural development of Africa from ancient times to the present.

✍ *From Ghetto to Ghetto – An African American Journey to Judaism*, a memoir by **Ernest Adams**, published by *iUniverse.com* (2009). The author, a psychologist, devotes equal time to his life in Harlem before Judaism and his life as a Jew, discussing racism openly

✍ *The End of Judaism in Islamic Lands*, in French, edited by **Shmuel Trigano**, published by Denoel. Ten historians at French and Israeli universities address the disappearance of the Jews from Arab-Muslim territories, a civilization of 20 centuries condemned to exile. For further information, see <http://www.fjn-123.fr/spip.php?article125>.

✍ JDUB Records has released *Songs from the Garden of Eden*, an illustrated book with a CD of lullabies and nursery rhymes written in Hebrew, Yiddish, Arabic and Ladino, in the original language and English translation. <http://store.jdubrecords.org/index.asp?PageAction=VIEWPROD&ProdID=207>

✍ *The Others Within: The Marranos*, by **Yirmiyahu Yovel**, Princeton Press (2009), retells the history of the Marranos and then speculates that Marranos had long been the “Other,” experiencing a fractured identity, social displacement, and spiritual homelessness. Yovel says that these experiences anticipate Western modernization, with its cultural and religious restlessness, breakdown or mixture of legitimizing traditions, rise of a secular urban culture, et al.

✍ “Recognizably Jewish: 2 African Communities’ Struggle for Recognition” by **Yoav Acoustica (Guttman)**, *Blogspot.com*, May 17. The alert reader will enjoy answering: “When does American aid overstep itself and create a situation in which the original and authentic African Judaism they practiced become overwhelmed by “middle-class American Judaism”? Another stimulating, two-fold question the author asks is: “(1) Can the House of Israel and Abayudaya maintain their Judaism and their Africanism and (2) Can the Lemba ever return to Judaism?” My favorite is “Will there be a day when world Jewry talks about Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Afriki?” <http://yoavguttman.blogspot.com/2009/05/recognizably-jewish-2-african.html>

✍ “Interior Ministry refuses to recognize marriage of Nigerian converts” by **Dana Weiler-Polak**, *Haaretz.com*, May 18. After being turned down by the Interior Ministry, the Tel Aviv court, orders the Interior Ministry's Ramle branch to reverse an earlier decision and accept the conversions of a Nigerian couple, hence their marriage, as legal. A week later the Ministry replies back to the couple that they would appeal the legal ruling and in the mean time the case would remain undecided.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1086334.html>

✍ “The secret Jews of the Southwest” by **Amy Klein**, *JTA*, May 18. The principal of this well written article is Rabbi Stephen Leon of El Paso, Texas. Then come Blanca and Cezar Carrasco, and Margarita

and Victor Luna, Crypto-Jews who now attend Rabbi Leon's B'nai Zion congregation. However, Elay Romero would prefer to retain his affiliation with the Catholic Church even if his investigations confirmed that he had Jewish blood. The goal of Juan Pable Mejia and Sonya Loya is to bring awareness about the Inquisition and Crypto-Jews on par with Holocaust remembrance. Yisrael Greenberg is a member of Chabad of El Paso and he would make no effort to bring the Crypto-Jews back to mainstream Judaism. Most remarkably, Rabbi Stephen Leon believes, “God said to me, ‘I cannot bring back the 6 million who were killed in the Holocaust, but there was another group before who are alive in much larger numbers than Holocaust survivors because it's been 500 years, generation after generation of generation,’ he said. ‘Their souls are still alive. ... You have to do something about it.’”

<http://jta.org/news/article/2009/05/18/1005189/the-secret-jews-of-the-southw>

✍ “So you think you're a Crypto-Jew?” by **Amy Klein**, *JTA online*, May 18. The author interviews Stanley Hordes, considered by many to be one of the foremost experts on the Crypto-Jews, and author of *To the End of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico* (Columbia University Press, 2008). His next study is on the Crypto-Jews of the Spanish Caribbean: Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and pre-British Jamaica.

<http://jta.org/news/article/2009/05/18/1005191/so-you-think-youre-a-crypto-jew>

✍ “Social rights group: Schools don't teach Ethiopian aliyah” by **Ruth Eglash**, *Jerusalem Post*, May 20. Yitzhak Dessie, director of Ethiopian social rights group Tebeka, deplores the Israeli government's pace in the march to recognize Ethiopians' place in Israel's cultural history. Speaking at Jerusalem's Mount Herzl cemetery, he cries out to the establishment that there remains a need to recognize his people's struggles as part of the formal educational curriculum. “The Steering Center for Ethiopian Immigrants in the Education system” ([www.kidum-edu.org.il](http://www.kidum-edu.org.il)), currently provides materials and training on Ethiopian history and culture to approximately 50,000 students <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1242212427231&pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FPrinter>

✍ “Shake a Family Tree and a Jew Falls Out” by **Adam Rovner**, *Jewish Daily Forward*, May 22. Rovner meets with **Cynthia McLeod**, author of “*Hoe Duur was de Suiker (Cost of Sugar)*?” published in Dutch by Conserve (1995). The book is set in the Jodensavanne (Jewish Savannah) of the Dutch colony of Suriname. McLeod traces her heritage back to Jewish forebears. “Every Surinamese has Jewish blood,” she says. McLeod explains that Jewish plantation owners of the 18th and 19th centuries kept slave mistresses with whom they had children. The Jews of Paramaribo (called Parbo for short), and to a lesser extent Jodensavanne, don't know or feel lost. What they do know and feel is that their Jewish community is in its twilight years. Lily Duym claims descent from Isaac Abravanel, the renowned Jewish scholar who may have financed Columbus's voyage of discovery. She says to Rovner, “My family just runs the synagogue, and what I need is a rich rabbi to retire here” and take over. <http://www.forward.com/articles/105939/#post-comment>

✍ “Witnessing their coming home” by **Shoshana Tita**, *Washington*

(Continued on page 10)

# LETTER TO KULANU

## Volunteer Writes from Ethiopia

Soon after my arrival, Sam Tadesse and I met with 13 members of the North Shewa Zionist Organization (the founders of the local congregation). From the meeting it became clear to me that these people are devoted to Judaism and the uplifting of the tens of thousands of Jews around them. I see my role in the next three weeks as being their advocate by helping them articulate clearly in writing the problems they face and the solutions to address them.

The primary goal will be to write a proposal with them outlining the most pressing needs of this community today. Together, we have broken them down into three distinct categories, which we will detail in the proposal. These categories are strengthening the synagogue, creating technical workshops, and securing Jewish burial grounds.

The second aspect of my project will be to provide a detailed narrative history (along with photographs) of this specific movement. Since the definition and state of "Kechene Jews" are complicated and at times unclear, I believe it is essential to transcribe the story of the synagogue and movement in their own words. In turn, this will offer anyone who potentially wants to help alleviate their problems the necessary context.

I am very optimistic that the time I spend working with them will be productive.

*Dana Eitches*

*Kulanu Volunteer*

*Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*



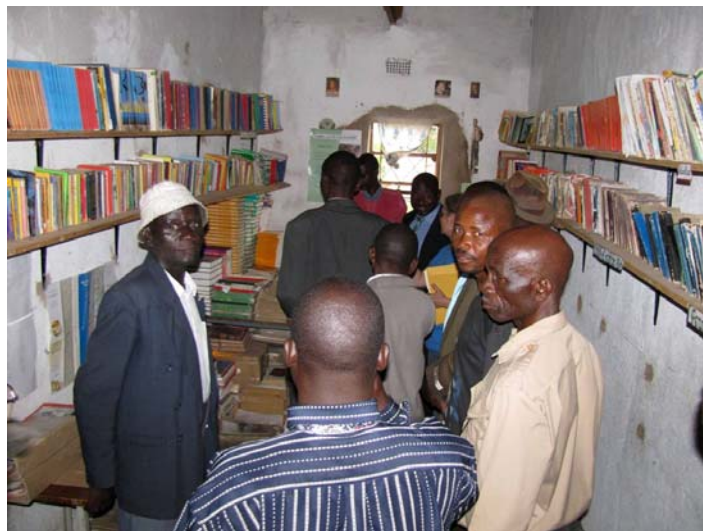
*Kechene child (photo by Amy Cowen)*

## Books for Zimbabwe (cont.)

*(Continued from page 1)*

for a community library (the next project).

We all felt pride when the graduating class was introduced to the assembly, as these were the first students to complete the first "6<sup>th</sup> form" (12<sup>th</sup> grade). It had been the vision of the headmaster and Lemba leaders to expand the school to the 12<sup>th</sup>



*The library created with the books.*

grade. With the help of our books they have done so. This year for the first time students from the village will be taking A-level exams which will qualify them to apply for the university, a remarkable achievement in and of itself.

Common questions to me are: Where do your books come from and what kinds of books do you send to Zimbabwe? Our books come from many sources. They are gifts from local schools that have upgraded their own textbooks, interested publishers, authors, library sales and private donations. We have been sending text books for all grade levels in the sciences, mathematics, English, and world history; reference books for all levels; an Encyclopedia Britannica; a World Book encyclopedia; educational board games and school supplies, novels and reading materials for all grade levels from pre-school to adult. When we can, we include teacher guides and other teaching resources, lesson plans, tests, etc. As you can imagine, everything is very much appreciated.

During the last four years, many thousands of books have been sent to the village, changing the future for its children and creating incredible excitement in the region. Our efforts have been recognized by other villages in the country, Lemba and non-Lemba, and requests have been coming from village elders to assist their children. In response, we sent books and materials to schools throughout Zimbabwe. The most serious problem we face at present is the rise in shipping costs. Favorable book rates of the past have been suspended and the cost of shipping has gone way up. Kulanu contributed to postal expenses in 2006 and 2007, which was a wonderful help. Needless to say, we welcome donations. If you are interested in this project, my contact information is: [aidwithbooks@hotmail.com](mailto:aidwithbooks@hotmail.com).



# Homage to a Resourceful and Resilient People

By Dolores Sloan

In 1996, I decided to make that long awaited trip to Spain. I had earned enough mileage points to fly free on Air France. With a summer break from work, off I went for a five-week journey.

I had heard about the Sephardic Jews and the remarkable culture they had established in the Spain of the Middle Ages, but knew no details other than the fragmentary knowledge I had gained as I scanned hurriedly through Jane Gerber's *The Jews of Spain*, bought just before departure, too late to digest. Today, the Spanish and Portuguese Tourism Offices have available brochures for tourists such as me about sites related to Jewish history in their country, but there were none in 1996.

Much earlier in life, when I was eight or nine years old, my mother had given me a book called *The Little Spanish Dancer* and said that my grandfather had shared with her his belief that the family came originally from Spain. The book she gave me had a chapter telling of the Jewish people in Spain from their Golden Age to their persecution and subsequent expulsion from the land in 1492, but the eight-year-old child was more interested in the fictional story of Pilar and her magic castanets than in the sad background information. It was stored in residual memory, to be remembered many years later.

I traveled casually, deciding spontaneously where to go next as I looked through guide books or talked with other travelers. My journey began in Madrid, from whence I took a day trip to Salamanca, attracted by what I had heard of the university so well regarded from the Middle Ages to today. There, I saw the name Abraham Zacuto for the first time. It was on the front of a library of the University in large, decorative letters. Inquiring within, I learned that he was a Jewish astronomer who had once been a professor at the venerable university and that his work had advanced the science of navigation. I made notes to find out more later. I could not know that, four years later, I would be holding a 1502 edition of his celestial almanac in my hands in the archives of the library.

Then I went on to Toledo, where the narrow streets of the former Jewish quarter and the bridges over the public passageways from building to building resonated with my romantic spirit. It was in Toledo that I first saw the name Isaac Abravanel, and learned that he came from a most distinguished family, had been financial adviser to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, and was remembered for his service to his people. In the dimly lit, wide-open space of the El Transito Synagogue, I visualized Abravanel and others like him praying at Sabbath services, seated along the sides of sanctuary around the *bima*, where the cantor stood. I could not enter the other Jewish site in Toledo, the twelfth century synagogue now called Santa Maria la Blanca, as it was reserved for a wedding party the day I arrived.

In Toledo, my lodging was only one-half block from the Plaza Mayor, the great square of the city. I would enjoy gazpacho or lunch at the restaurant of my choice, unaware that it was here, and in plazas like this throughout Spain, that *auto de fés* were carried out between the late 15th and the early 19th centuries. Here, Jews and others, tried by the Inquisition and declared heretics, were strangled or burned at the stake. Although ignorance allowed me to enjoy my wine or the entertainment of performing artists in the lovely, open plazas during my first visit, enlightenment would prevent an innocent diversion in the journeys to follow.

Next, I found myself in wonderful Cordoba, with its great mosque from the days of the ruling Umayyads, the people of mixed Arab and Berber ancestry, who had built a city where thousands of books and many libraries spoke volumes about the values of its rulers. I was

thrilled by the statue of Maimonides in the old Jewish Quarter, by a restored synagogue on the Calle de los Judios, and by the nearby streets which bore Sephardic Jewish names.

I was seeing, in each step of the journey, the remnants of the culture of the Sephardim, and I was eager to know more. In Granada, for example, I came upon a monument to Columbus. There was the name Luis de Santangel carved on the base, along with others who had contributed to the success of the navigator's voyage. Walking around the monument, I noticed a statue with Santangel's name appended. It showed the man who, I would learn later, was the influential *converso* courtier to the Catholic rulers, placing a box in the hands of a page. I would learn later that it contained the funds he was loaning the monarchs to enable the voyage—and Spain's vast empire-to-be in the New World. Later I would learn he was of a prominent mercantile family from Valencia who had converted to Catholicism during the early 15th century, when mob action and persecution often gave Jews the choice of "convert or leave."

And so it was, throughout my journey, coming across sites and reminders of a glory that was, a glory of the Jewish people—my people—that I had never been told about, not in Sunday school, nor from family conversations about Judaism. I did remember, then, my mother's words about our possible Spanish heritage, which made me all the more interested in finding out more.

I returned to Santa Fe and went to the library to find books. I scoured local book stores and searched *Books in Print*. It was not yet time for the Internet to make instant encapsulated information available to me at the click of an icon. I found nothing other than brief biographies or narratives in encyclopedias. I had not yet discovered that an organization named Kulanu was carrying much information on the subject in its newsletter. If there were no books available in English for the general reader to learn about the Sephardic Jews, well then, perhaps I should write one. I'd learn through the research and write about it as I went along.

I scrawled the first words of that book on the back of a book festival program in March of 1997. Somewhat edited since first penned 12 years ago, those words began what would become my Preface to *The Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal*.

At a conference during the summer of 1998 on Luis de Santangel and the Sephardic Jews, I met scholars from Spain, Israel, and the United States who presented papers and discussed sources with me. Also, the Internet was offering more resources from researchers and universities. I found Kulanu and its newsletter, with articles by writers such as Karen Primack, Michael Freund, and Rufina Bernardetti Silva Mausebaum, that would serve as resources for my final chapter.

Finally, the book was completed after delays in research and development made necessary by my teaching at a local college. Then I faced a new kind of delay, from publishers not ready to accept what they considered a niche book. Finally, ten years after the initial effort, an editor from McFarland & Company showed interest and guided me toward a simple rewriting that resulted in *The Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal*.

The original title was *Love Song for Sefarad*, as the book was intended as homage to the Sephardim who gave Iberia that name. Indeed, the most important reason for writing *The Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal* is to honor a resourceful and resilient people.

Resourceful? Resilient? Read the evidence in my book!  
(Dolores Sloan is author of the newly-published book *The Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal: Survival of an Imperiled People in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Jefferson, NC & London: McFarland & Company 2009.)

# Publications of Note (cont.)

(Continued from page 7)

*Jewish Week*, May 27. This anecdotal story concludes with: “This awakening of the descendants of Jews 500 years later has led many to formal conversions... We see that prophecy of the hunger to return to Judaism manifest itself in those anusim who are reclaiming their stolen past.” <http://www.washingtonjewishweek.com/main.asp?Search=1&ArticleID=10821&SectionID=58&SubSectionID=&S=1>

✍ “First black female rabbi to take N.C. pulpit,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)*, May 17. Alysa Stanton, who was ordained in June 6 at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, has accepted a pulpit at the Conservative and predominately white Congregation Bayt Shalom in Greenville, NC. Stanton, who is African American, is a convert and a trained psychotherapist.

✍ “Decline Of A Black Synagogue” by **Eric Herschthal**, *NY Jewish Week*, May 29. Harlem’s Commandment Keepers synagogue, the nation’s oldest African American congregation, was founded in 1919 by Rabbi Wentworth Arthur Matthew, a West Indian immigrant born to an Ethiopian Jewish father. He sought to bring his followers into the fold of mainstream American Judaism for many years, beginning with the civil rights era and ending with his death in 1973. Aided by his friend, the Conservative New York Rabbi Irving Block, Rabbi Matthew repeatedly applied to the New York Board of Rabbis and B’nai B’rith, but was denied each time. The boards’ official reason for rejecting him was that he was not ordained by one of their affiliated seminaries. Today, the Israelite Rabbinical Academy and its affiliated Israelite Board of Rabbis are the functioning home of Rabbi Matthew’s brand of Judaism. There are about ten congregations in New York with rabbis ordained by the Israelite Rabbinical Academy. None are members of the New York Board of Rabbis, although some say they participate informally with other New York Jewish congregations. Intramural animosities have driven the congregation’s fate and fortune into the New York courtrooms [http://www.thejewishweek.com/viewArticle/c36\\_a369/News/New\\_York.html](http://www.thejewishweek.com/viewArticle/c36_a369/News/New_York.html)

✍ “School Built on Cemetery Provides Lesson in History” by **Victoria Burnett**, *New York Times*, July 1. When it was discovered that Jewish graves dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century were being moved to make way for a modern school the clamor reached from New York and Canada to Israel. Months after contractors inadvertently exhumed over 100 Jewish remains from graves near Toledo, Spain, last year, the bones are being reburied close to the original graves but clear of the

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## Burnt Bread (cont.)

(Continued from page 6)

transcend the cultural values, shame, and stigma that had affected her so terribly as a second wife. Delman equates her great-aunt with “the haunting matriarchs I read about in books, who passed on painted, cryptic, purposeful messages to empower the women who came after them to rise above where they themselves once were. That, it seemed, was Nana-bai.”

The book includes an enlightening interview with the author and a section of questions and topics for group discussion.

construction site. Some people complain that this sets a bad precedent, a second expulsion from Spain; others are happy that the contractors were truthful about their findings. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/02/world/europe/02toledo.html?scp=3&sq=spain&st=cse>

✍ “Being of service: A Vancouverite goes to Africa” by **Lorne Mallin**, *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, CBC/Radio-Canada*, July 7. Lorne Mallin’s communiqué reminds me of the kind of note I would write home my first summer at Habonim Camp Moshava, “Hi Mom, having a great time. Having much too much fun here. Gotta go now. Love, Morton.” Only this is more like ‘Hello World. *You* wish you were here! Take a look at these pictures of beautiful people. You have to come here and live this. Love, Lorne.’ Mallin’s volunteer experience with the Abayudaya at Namanyonyi Hill, Mbale, Uganda reads like an awakening – a real feel-good article.

[http://www.cbc.ca/news/citizenbytes/2009/07/being\\_of\\_service\\_a\\_vancouverit.html](http://www.cbc.ca/news/citizenbytes/2009/07/being_of_service_a_vancouverit.html)

✍ “Post-Racial Rabbis – Alysa Stanton and other black rabbis enter the American Jewish mainstream” by **Jeremy Gillick**, published by *Moment Magazine*, July/August 2009. The author notes that Gershom Sizomu was ordained by a Conservative Jewish seminary and returned to Uganda to lead the Abayudaya whereas Alysa Stanton was ordained by a Reform seminary and took a pulpit in a predominantly white community in Greenville, North Carolina. He notes the Israelite Rabbinical Academy, founded in 1925 by Wentworth Matthew has ordained 46 rabbis since its founding — including Rabbi Capers Funnye, cousin of First Lady Michelle Obama – yet Matthew himself was self-ordained and his congregation, The Commandment Keepers, is not recognized by the New York Board of Rabbis and B’nai B’rith. **Jeremy Gillick** does a very good job of untangling this bit of modern history and setting the record straight. There is a lot of good information here and the article is very much worth reading – twice.

<http://www.momentmag.com/Exclusive/2009/2009-08/200908-Post-Racial-Rabbis.html>

✍ “A Pintele Yid – Stories of Conversion,” by **Joanne Palmer**, appeared in *Voices of Conservative/Masorti Judaism* (Summer 2009). It includes a segment on Rabbi Antonio DiGusu, who grew up in a Catholic family in Sicily, and at 16 decided he had to learn Hebrew. Then, to his parents’ chagrin, he decided he had to practice Judaism (as he understood it). At the University of Rome he learned more about Judaism and then went to Israel. He converted in Rome in 1990 and led a Jewish community in Naples. He then moved to New York and was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Since his family came to Sicily from Spain in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and adopted a blatantly Christian name, he now realizes he could be descended from secret Jews. His parents’ priest told them that what was happening to their son “was coming from God and that they couldn’t stop it.” [http://www.uscj.org/A\\_Pintele\\_Yid\\_Stori8062.html](http://www.uscj.org/A_Pintele_Yid_Stori8062.html)

✍ **Uriel Heilman’s** “Israel Begins Verification for 3,000 more Ethiopians”, *JTA* July 15. Three Interior Ministry representatives were reportedly going to Ethiopia to see whether some of the thousands of “Falash Mura” can come to Israel under the family reunification provision of Israeli immigration law. This is an easier test for many than the Law of Return provision, in which potential immigrants must prove their Jewish lineage. <http://jta.org/news/article/2009/07/15/1006569/does-the-return-of-israeli-immigration-officials-return-to-ethiopia>

# "We Are Extensions of God's Arm"

## Abayudaya Jews Deliver Food to Ugandan Villagers Facing Famine

Members of the Abayudaya Jewish community on July 29 delivered 2,420 pounds of food relief they donated to hungry families in Acegerekinei, a village four hours' trucking distance from their base in Mbale. There are an estimated three million in Uganda facing starvation in a worsening famine, and Acegerekinei is in Katakwi, one of 17 hardest-hit districts that the government says



are experiencing famine.

A village elder thanked the Abayudaya for coming "and for rescuing us" at a gathering in the shade of a large tree

next to mud-hut homes with thatched roofs in this remote village in northeastern Uganda.

In response, Rabbi Gershom Sizomu told the 65 families gathered on the ground, "Central to our Jewish values is saving lives. We wish you well and we pray that God brings this to an end."

The villagers all clutched cards from the Ugandan

Red Cross, which is helping coordinate relief, entitling them to a share of the corn flour and beans that the Abayudaya trucked in. The Abayudaya first embraced Judaism in the 1920s and now include about 1,000 members in several villages.

The Red Cross chose the most vulnerable in Acegerekinei to receive relief – the elderly, the disabled and those suffering from HIV/AIDS. They lined up as best they could, some in wheelchairs fashioned out of plastic lawn chairs. Each family received about 33 pounds of corn flour to make corn porridge and the staple dish called *posho*, plus about 3.3 pounds of beans.

"Our community responded overwhelmingly to the call to donate," Sizomu said. "Everybody wanted to help." The response was considerable from a community that in large part lives on subsistence farming. Mbale district has less rain than normal but crops are still growing.

"I believe that life takes precedence over everything," Sizomu said. "God is not going to stretch out His hand physically, so we are extensions of God's arm."

The rabbi's son Igaal, 15, helped distribute the food. "It felt good to donate," he said. "If we get hungry, maybe there would be others who would help us."

To contribute to the food relief, donate at [www.kulanu.org/donate](http://www.kulanu.org/donate), and write "Uganda Emergency Fund" in the comments field.

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