



# KULANU

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## ***El Salvador Jewish Community Emerges From Centuries of Isolation and Assimilation***

*By Rabbi Aaron Rehberg*

Introduction by the Editor

In addition to the approximately 60 families which make up the mainstream Jewish community of El Salvador, there are three smaller groups of Jews living in the south-central part of the country in the towns of Armenia, San Salvador and Nausalco. Here 260 men, women and children, most of whom are descended from Spanish/Portuguese émigrés fleeing the Spanish Inquisition, have embraced their Jewish roots and are following an orthodox life style. The rest are Jews by choice.

For the past 12 years, community leaders have taken to the Internet to learn how to follow Jewish law, how to pray, how to celebrate Jewish holidays and how to prac-



*Rabbi Aaron Rehberg with El Salvadoran Jewish children.*  
Photo courtesy of A. Rehberg

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tice Jewish traditions and ritual. As with the emerging Jewish community of Cameroon discussed in the last issue of the Kulanu newsletter, the Internet has provided the means for this small community to reach out and reconnect with its Jewish heritage.

In March of this year, Kulanu sent Rabbi Aaron Rehberg of Jerusalem to visit the community for one month to instruct community members in Jewish observance, law and ritual practice. Rabbi Rehberg, himself a descendent of *anousim* (Crypto-Jews), had visited the community for four days in 2008 on a fact finding mission and was the perfect choice for community mentor and teacher. Not only had he visited the community before and knew its members, but he could relate his own journey of return to Judaism with the path being followed by these sincere and devoted individuals.

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## *El Salvador, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1*

Rabbi Rehberg describes his month with El Salvador Jewish Community members (February 27 to March 27) :

*"Rabbino, Shalom!"* (Rabbi, hello) greets me as I arrive at the Comalapa International Airport in El Salvador.

It takes about half a minute for my eyes to adjust to the bright sun, which seems always to be at its height in this equatorial region. Once I can see clearly, I recognize 15 people from Armenia who have come to welcome me to El Salvador.

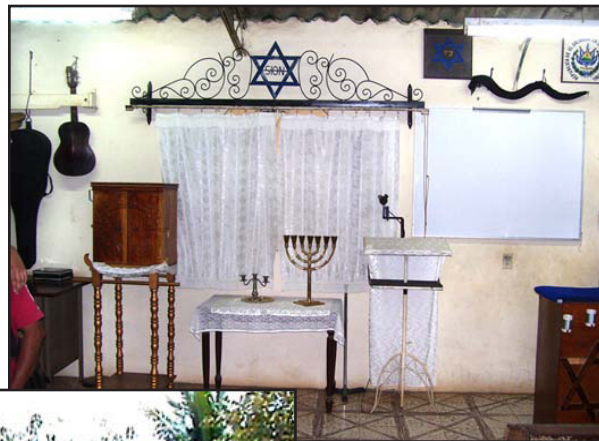
*"Como estan?"* I ask, 'how are you' in the plural form, very aware of my conjugation after completing two online Spanish study programs during the month leading up to this trip. As I am originally from New Mexico, Spanish was a required subject in school. I also picked up a little from my *abuelita* (grandmother). But El Salvador is my first immersion in a completely Spanish-speaking environment and I have been communicating with the community mostly through translators.

"Anna, Anna!"\* everyone begins to chant, not quite in unison. With that I am led to meet my volunteer translator for this trip. Anna Wilson, a petite British lady a few years older than myself, greets me with joy emanating from her eyes and good will written all over her face. I immediately begin to use whatever Spanish I know in order to communicate with community members, while Anna acts as a walking dictionary, correcting my grammar and translating. Her presence is a welcome relief and will help me make the transition from Israel and Hebrew to El Salvador and Spanish.

It is energizing to be back with this remarkable community. Why is this community so special? Perhaps it is the determination and the commitment that seems to permeate the atmosphere and lives of its people. A noteworthy example is the story of Mikhael Alvarado, a man in his mid to late 50s (I was instructed as a child

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\*Anna Wilson, a British citizen and professional translator with an interest in far-flung Jewish communities, met Kulanu president Harriet Bograd in England last year and volunteered to serve as translator for the first eight days of Rabbi Rehberg's stay in El Salvador.



*Synagogue interior and exterior.*

Photos by A. Rehberg



that it is rude to inquire after the age of my elders, so I never asked him his exact age), who is one of the community's founding fathers. Mikhael grew up in an *anous*

(Crypto-Jewish) family that remembered few Jewish traditions. His parents never told him that they were Jewish, only that they were not Christian. His mother used to light a make-shift oil lamp on Fridays. When he asked as a child why she did that, she said that her mother had taught her to do it but she didn't know why.

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*Mikhael began to suspect that his mother was lighting Shabbat candles.*

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When Mikhael learned about Judaism as a teenager, he began suspecting that his mother was lighting *Shabbat* (Sabbath) candles and that his family was most likely descended from Jews who had reached El Salvador while fleeing from the Spanish Inquisition. A visit to a synagogue in Guatemala with his then-employer, an Ashkenazi Jew from San Salvador, piqued his interest. His employer entered the synagogue to participate in the service, but as a non-Jew, Mikhael was denied entry. Although he had the feeling at the time that he was descended from Jews, he had yet to declare himself.

At the same time, he continued to pursue Jewish learning. Eventually, he was circumcised and went to the *mikvah* (ritual bath), in this case, a natural body of water. Throughout his life, Mikhael has received more

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## ***El Salvador, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2***

discouragement than encouragement from mainstream Jews. But despite many negative experiences, he continues to be one of the pillars of his community's growth and education and is fully committed to his Jewish heritage. It is his fondest wish to one day visit Israel.

The welcoming committee brought Anna and me to Mikhael's home in Armenia, as he was to be our host during our stay in El Salvador. The family served us a lunch that in their world was like a banquet meant for kings. Sitting in the house I could feel an aura of welcome and hospitality exuding from its walls. What I felt was the truth as every *Shabbat* the house is filled with guests. Even during the week Mikhael's hospitality is extended to the poor of his community who can come and eat at his table. It is clear that he and a couple of other self-employed construction contractors are the financial backbone of the community, and they are neither shy nor haughty in taking care of their less fortunate brothers and sisters.

Another one of the community's supporters is stone mason Mijael Guzman, who is currently working on a plan to aid other community members fulfill their hopes of financial stability and independence. Mijael's goal is to purchase two stone cutting machines and expand his business. He would buy stone at wholesale prices and then do the cutting as well as the actual masonry. He believes this business would create about 15 new jobs for community members, many of whom are out of work due to the economic problems in the country.

Mikhael's house has two bedrooms, a dining room separated from a small kitchen, a front room with a sofa (used as a living room) and a covered patio with unique, asymmetric wood chairs made by local Native Americans. The simple plastered brick walls are painted with a fresh coat of bright, coral blue paint. Heat radiates off the tin roof, whose only purpose is to keep the rain out. There is no insulation in the buildings here. During the day, people stay outside in the shade to avoid the suffocating heat of the indoors. Hammocks are common and set up in cool shady places where one can sleep away the oppressive midday heat. Anna and Mikhael's wife share one bedroom, divided by a false wall to give each woman privacy. I stay in the second bedroom. Mikhael sleeps on a couch in the parlor.

Armenia is more pleasant than other cities, for it has trees and green spaces to provide some shade and



*Rabbi Rehberg and two young men from the community. Photo by A. Rehberg*

cooling in the heat. Most cities don't. The neighboring city of Sonsonate, for example, has many cheaply painted brick and concrete structures reeking of car exhaust, which permeates the walls of local houses and buildings. Worst of all is the capital. After twenty minutes there, my head feels like it will explode from the auto fumes.

But the mountains are gorgeous and the volcanoes are covered in thick forest reaching toward the heavens. From their summits, one can look down into valleys below and see lakes and streams, fields of corn, forests of wild mango and coffee as well as poor overcrowded villages and deserts of asphalt and concrete soaked with the choking smoke from vehicles that would have been retired from the roads decades ago in a more developed country.

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*The mountains are gorgeous and the volcanoes are covered in thick forest.*

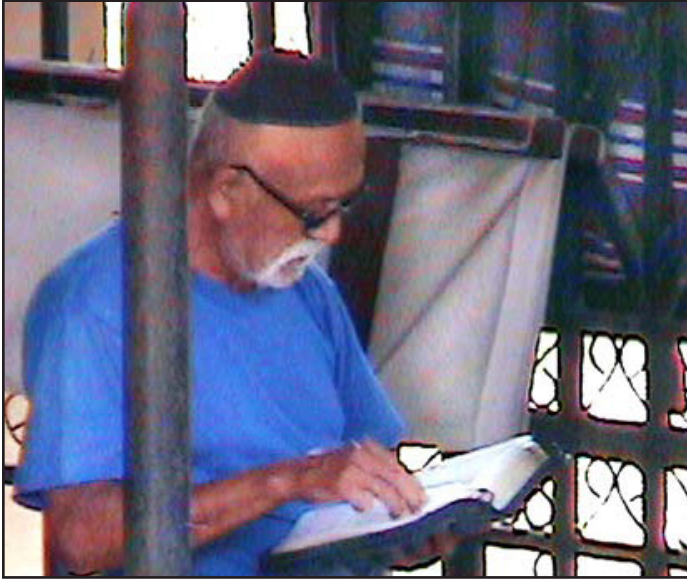
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Our meals here always consist of a corn product, mostly tortillas. But these are not the thin yellow tortillas we are used to in the more northern reaches of Latin America, nor those imported into the USA. Rather the tortillas here are the size of small pita and made of a softer, finer, white corn meal. A bean paste usually accompanies each meal. Here the beans are first ground before being cooked because it cuts down on cooking time, which is important in such hot weather and limits the use of expensive fuel.

In Armenia, the Jewish community has its own mill. Often, one of the more well-off community members will buy corn and beans in bulk, grind the meal and distribute it to the less fortunate. And by well-off, I mean those who are employed and make more than the \$150/month minimum wage. The way community members care for each other is one of the most inspiring aspects of this community.

Fish, homemade cheeses and vegetables are the food of choice here as there is no kosher meat in El Salvador. During this trip, I begin teaching Mikhael Alvarado

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 4*



*At study in the synagogue.* Photo by A. Rehberg

*shechita* (ritual slaughtering), a course which usually lasts one year if studying in Israel. This is a subject that he has a great desire to learn and we made good progress. The difficult part about slaughtering meat in the Jewish tradition is the knife. Not only does one need to learn how to sharpen it (a precise if not difficult task in and of itself), but one must also develop the sensitivity of checking the knife for inconsistencies in sharpness and kinks in the blade called *pigimot* (damages). As community members adhere to Jewish dietary laws, they have not been able to eat meat, which would have been *traif* (unkosher). As a result their *Shabbat* and holiday meals include varying types of grilled fish instead.

After we finish eating, we move on to the synagogue. Though the synagogue building is a modest structure, it is clean and orderly. The only books present are photocopied Hebrew/Spanish transliterated *siddurs* (prayer books), about six photocopied Hebrew/Spanish *chumashim* (five books of Moses), one photocopied *Kitzur Shulhan Aruch* (a guide to Jewish law) in Spanish only, and a single Hebrew/Spanish *Tanach* (Bible). While there I purchased a Hebrew/Spanish book of Psalms and a book in Spanish on the laws of family purity, which I left in the care of Leah Hernandez Grijalva. She is Mikhael and Loli Alvarado's niece and, although only 17 years-old, is a very mature young woman able and eager to assume responsibility for it. Leah wants to be a teacher and is one of two women I met who is studying at the university in nearby Sonsonate. The community shares one pair of *tefillin* (phylacteries),

each man taking his turn in the morning while saying *Shema* (a declaration of faith in the one G-d). I hope to procure several pairs of *tefillin*, *mezzuzot* (prayers affixed to the doorway) and even a *Torah* scroll before the end of the year.

Aside from three men in the community who can read Hebrew, everyone relies on transliterations during their daily prayer services. A young man named Yishai Avalos usually serves as cantor. During my stay I encourage him and instruct him on how to teach Hebrew reading to adults, give a *drash* (explanation) on the weekly *Torah* portion for *Shabbat*, and instruct the community in *halachic* (legal) matters with the aid of the *Shulhan Aruch* that they have.

His wife Elizabeth, along with his sister-in-law Sara, organize and maintain the community's financial records, while his brother Yosef aids him in instruction. Dolores "Loli" Alvarado instructs women in the laws of *nidah*, *mikvah* and *kashrut* (family purity, use of the ritual bath and the kosher dietary laws). While there, I also provide detailed, practical instructions of these laws with Loli helping to explain them to the other women.

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*On Shabbat all the families  
come together and share meals.*

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The synagogue is part of a compound, which is enormous by El Salvador standards. It sits on about an acre of land that includes the synagogue, three living units, the mill, a communal kitchen, several fruit trees, including a developing *etrog* (citron) tree and a giant *sukkah* (in this case a huge patio covered with palm fronds) where people can sleep when guests visit from other communities and groups of people can eat. It is here on *Shabbat* that all the families come together and share meals. It is also where they have begun to assemble each week for their children's Sunday school. There are usually about 12 family members visiting from the other two villages. They sleep in the *sukkah* area during their stay. On Sunday, parents study Hebrew with Yishai (sometime cantor).

While I am there, I organize classes for the children and for the adults. Yishai assists me in teaching the adults, each time gradually taking on more of the lead role. Together we work on how to use a mixture of group and individual instruction, audio, text and visual stimuli, new material and reviews, and to act with encouragement while offering a challenge. I must say he is a quick study and quite capable of leading the classes.

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## ***El Salvador, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4***

Among his current students are even a few from the neighboring community in Nausalco (where Loli is from), about an hour away from Armenia, and from San Salvador, an hour in the other direction. I am able to visit Nausalco during my stay. There I see a small synagogue, but can see the community has few financial resources. Hopefully, a way will be found for residents there to attend classes in Armenia.

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*The children's program is my main excuse for being here.*

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The children's program is my main excuse for being here, and a wonderful excuse it is. The first Sunday there are about 35 children in attendance. I put them in a class with David Guzman, the first community member who took the initiative to learn Hebrew on his own. David learned by using the Internet whenever he had the opportunity and by studying Hebrew materials left in the community by Christian missionaries. He is the unanimous choice because of his love of reading. At the beginning, he has two helpers, the two young women studying to be teachers at the university.

By the second week, the two neighboring communities are sending their children to Armenia on Sunday to learn. I believe there will eventually be as many as 70 or 80 children attending. David is recruiting his nephew, Rueven Beltran, to help with administrative duties and teaching. Reuven is a college graduate and has a burning love for Judaism and *Torah*. Malkiel Grande, whose children attend classes, assists the teachers.

When Ishai and Yosef were children, the community tried to put together a Hebrew school but lacked the organizational skills and experience to do so. This time around it should be easier because they are developing the tools to succeed. I tell David and the teaching staff that for the younger group, reading Hebrew is less important than using projects and games centered on letter recognition and sounds to encourage interest. For them, it has to be fun, I say, or else they won't pay attention.

I explain to him that once a child is eight or nine, then he/she can begin to read words and sentences. I also remind him that the children are also learning to read and write Spanish in school and they should not feel too overloaded. I suggest he read aloud to the children and have them repeat. Maybe provide them with goals and prizes. Tell them Bible stories and make sure they know the stories before they read them. I say it will



*Small members of the community.* Photo by A. Rehberg

help them in their learning. I also suggest they combine Spanish and Hebrew reading. I will probably have to remind him about these and other pointers. Thanks to Skype and email we can be in frequent contact.

Speaking of computers, Skype and the Internet... While in El Salvador, it became apparent that community members were dependent on Internet cafes that were unreliable and expensive and would be ineffective for research and long distance learning. With support from Kulanu, I am able to purchase a new computer for the community with multi printer/copy/scanner capacity and I install Skype for face to face communication once I am back in Israel.

Anna could only stay for part of the trip, but she didn't let her language skills become a crutch for me and instead prepared me to function on my own. Even after she had returned home, I continued teaching classes, interviewing community members and moving forward with the organization of the Sunday school.

Since returning to Israel, I have continued instructing Yishai, Yosef and the other teachers in Hebrew comprehension and instructional methods. They often have questions as they are preparing for the week's classes and a few other adult students can be seen huddling around their new computer to listen and learn. Skype

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## ***El Salvador, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5***

is an invaluable resource, as my progressing Spanish language skills still require some occasional hand gestures to be completely understood.

My positive feelings for this special community remain with me and I continue to be inspired by their good heartedness and generosity, their devotion to Judaism and their communal spirit of helping their neighbors. The community has already begun to give what financial support is possible to Yishai Avalos, their primary adult educator and cantor, who is married with two daughters. This is one more example of the strength of this community. It is well organized and functions very

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*Kulanu thanks the Good People Fund for its generous support of the El Salvador program.*

well with a clearly defined leadership structure that has been together and growing in their knowledge and observance of *Torah* and Judaism.

### *EL SALVADOR WISH LIST*

Can you help the emerging Jewish community in Armenia, El Salvador, find books and Jewish ritual objects? They observe Sephardic Orthodox practice and could use daily, weekly and high holy day prayer books and blessings after meals (preferably Spanish and Hebrew – some copies with transliteration). They also need *tefillin* and *mezuzot* and two copies of a *Tikkun* for Torah-readers (Hebrew only).

If you have access to these items, please contact Rabbi Aaron Rehberg (in Israel) at:  
elsalvador@kulanu.org.

## ***Announcing the 2011 Kulanu-Abayudaya Speaking Tour!***

Kulanu is delighted to host Aaron Kintu Moses, of the inspiring Jewish community of Uganda, who will be returning to North America to share the latest news of his community and of the joint Abayudaya-Kulanu education and sustainable development projects.

An experienced speaker and educator, Aaron is an outstanding leader of the Abayudaya Jewish community of Uganda. He has been director of education since 2003, and has also served as the community's acting spiritual leader while his brother, Rabbi Gershom Sizomu, pursued rabbinical training in Los Angeles.

We are requesting your help in identifying possible venues for this year's Kulanu-Abayudaya speaking tour which will run October 27 through November 20, 2011. Past tour schedules filled up in no time, so act quickly!

Mr. Kintu Moses will present a dynamic multi-media program updating audiences on the Kulanu-supported Abayudaya primary and high schools, which educate and feed 700 Jewish, Muslim and Christian children studying together in peace. He will also report on the child nutrition project; public health education and women's empowerment programs; on-going classroom, library, dorm and other school construction; as well as the village micro-finance, crafts, music CD, coffee, and eco-tourism self-help projects.

The educational program will be age-appropriate for all and can include a slideshow presentation and African Jewish music. You will be welcome to purchase CD's of Abayudaya music, hand-crafted *kippot* or other products from [kulanuboutique.com](http://kulanuboutique.com) to sell in conjunction with the presentation.

If your community or others you know might be interested in sponsoring a visit from Aaron Kintu Moses, please visit our website at [www.kulanu.org](http://www.kulanu.org) and read the full speaking tour announcement. From there, you can submit an online inquiry.



*Aaron Kintu Moses teaching children.  
Photo by joyofcolor.com*

## President's Letter

### *IN REMEMBRANCE:* **LYNNE ELSON**



In May, 2010, we were sad to learn that Kulanu supporter Lynne Elson had died. Lynne was an extraordinary woman and an inspiration. I always love telling the story of Lynne's first visit to Uganda in January, 2007 when she was 85 years old. Her visit was as a participant on Kulanu's Jewish Life in Uganda Mitzvah Tour. Lynn was so excited by what she saw that she returned to Uganda on her own in July, 2007 to teach for two weeks! The photos on this page show her teaching children and older adults who traveled from the northern town of Apac to Nabugoye Hill to study Judaism and to prepare for their conversion in 2008.

Imagine how moved I was when I learned from Lynne's family that she had arranged for Kulanu to receive a very generous gift upon her death. The gift, received in January, 2011, was more than \$32,000 – the largest gift we had ever received from an individual donor.

Lynne's generosity has allowed us to support special initiatives this year in El Salvador, Zimbabwe and In-

#### *Mazel Tov!*

Congratulations to Margie Klein, daughter of Kulanu president Harriet Bograd Klein and Ken Klein, on her ordination as a rabbi by Boston's Hebrew College. Margie served as a Kulanu volunteer in Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana, in 2001. A visit to her daughter in Ghana sparked Harriet's interest in and involvement with Kulanu. The rest, as they say, is history!

*Photos: (above left) Lynne Elson teaching Abayudaya children and (above right) standing with Aaron Kintu Moses, director of the Abayudaya elementary school, Uganda, 2007. Photos courtesy of estate of Roslyn Elson*

dia. Prior to her bequest, Lynne paid for vocational education, a land purchase for the Abayudaya elementary school and desks for a new classroom.

Working with Lynne was always a delight for me. She sponsored two speakers at her beloved Temple Adat Shalom in Poway, CA near San Diego. Israel Siriri visited from Uganda in 2008 and Shi Lei came from Kaifeng, China in 2010. Sadly, Lynne was not well enough to attend the 2010 event, but Shi Lei, who had been her friend for many years, visited her at her home just 10 days before her death.

When we were getting ready for Shi Lei's first speaking tour for Kulanu, I Googled Shi Lei and found an article about him by someone named Lynne Elson. I called Lynne to ask if the writer of the article was "our" Lynne Elson and she told me that Shi Lei was like a son to her. She had visited with him both in Kaifeng, China and in Israel, and they corresponded with each other.

Lynne's legacy of generosity and philanthropy and her commitment to Jewish communities around the world will be a lasting and blessed legacy.

*Harriet Bograd*

# ***Bene Ephraim: Notes from the Field***

*By Jobie Lay*



*Entire community gathers on Sukkot. Photo by community member*

"Do you like Indian people?" asked Yacob Yacobi with his signature, slightly mischievous grin. It was one of our last days staying in Bene Ephraim with the Yacobis, our host family, and it seems this question had been percolating for quite some time.

The answer, of course, was a resounding, "Yes we do!" The "we" in this case was a group of five: Hannah Davis, Maya Dicker, Saul Miller, Marianne Vaisenbrut and me. We came to India in April as part of a unique volunteer program, LeadEarth, run by Adam LeAdam (man to man) an Israeli NGO (non-governmental organization) whose mission is to help foster social change and improve the quality of life in developing countries. The focus of the organization has been India.

Our program was eight months in duration, with five months in Israel and three months in India, to study about and then volunteer with social and environmental change projects. We hail from three different countries and varying backgrounds, but all of us possess an interest in gaining field experience and building the skills necessary to be involved in sustainable development.

The small Bene Ephraim Jewish community, located in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, was our second stop in India. While there, we were hosted by the Yacobi family, whose small house sits adjacent to the community's synagogue. Bene Ephraim is part of Chembrole, a village of mostly Dalit (Untouchable) families—considered the lowest caste in India. Our first impression of the Bene Ephraim was very positive. We found them incredibly friendly, hospitable and helpful.

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*We found the Bene Ephraim incredibly friendly, hospitable and helpful.*

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Our visit to the community focused on three main goals: to check up on the status and progress of recent gifts and grants, to install solar panels on the roof of the synagogue and to conduct a survey on the overall quality of life in the community.

The first task entailed monitoring the progress of a recent grant from the San Francisco/Marin Jewish Community Teen Foundation of the Jewish Community

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## ***Bene Ephraim***, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Endowment Fund to purchase chickens. We visited all ten families who have received funding, and it was encouraging to see how pleased they were.

Each family used the money to buy chickens, construct a coop and purchase feed. Since the chickens were purchased only two months before our visit, it is impossible to determine if the project will be successful. We can report that many chickens are just beginning to lay eggs and have young chicks. The families plan to sell the chickens at around six months.

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*Many chickens are just beginning to lay eggs and have young chicks.*

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The community feels grateful to have been given the opportunity to develop a business and better their circumstances. While it is still too early to tell whether this will be a profitable project for the families, it is a low-maintenance way for families to earn secondary income. Once there is a report on the project, additional grant money will be used for the remaining families to purchase chickens.

Additionally, we spoke with community leaders regarding past grants that have allowed several families to purchase buffaloes and to sell the milk for profit. This grant was made by the Foundation for Remote Jewish Communities. Another grant was used to purchase bicycles, providing the children with easier transport to and from school.

Next, our group received a grant through Kulanu to install solar panels on the roof of the community's synagogue. The panels do not completely replace the current lighting system, but the building is now less dependent on the local electricity provider. We see this as a three-fold benefit: first, it should decrease the Jacobis' electric bills (while also decreasing their use of fossil fuels); second, there will be electricity despite the black-outs and power outages; third, the installation provided the LeadEarth group with a unique opportunity to educate the community about solar energy and its benefits, as well as offering some general education about the environment.

Our final goal with the Bene Ephraim was to better understand the community's quality of life and general needs by conducting a survey with some of the families. The community members who spoke English helped in translating the survey into Telugu, the common lan-

guage in the village. Our hope is that the information gathered through these surveys will help direct any future grants and volunteer projects in the community.

First, we found that many in the community have a great interest in learning more about Judaism, as well as learning to read and write Hebrew. Yehoshua Jacobi, a former member of their community who has been living in Israel for many years, visited the community recently as part of a grant from Michael Freund's organization Shavei Israel and Kulanu to help with this process. In addition, we arranged to send 25 prayer books and 25 *Chumash* (five books of Moses) to aid in the learning process.

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*Trash piles up...  
water is of poor quality...*

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By surveying over a third of the families, we were able to learn a great deal about the Bene Ephraim. Our program is heavily focused on environmentalism, so we were interested to find that in Chebrole, like many places in India, there is no waste management system in place, which means that trash piles up and then is usually burned. Water is of poor quality and scarce during the hotter months. Electricity is unreliable, and even more so during the dry season. The only affordable option for most families are the public schools, which provide a greatly inferior education compared to the private schools.



*Village area.* Photo by Rabbi Bonita Sussman

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## ***Bene Ephraim, CONTINUED***

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A large majority of the community works in agriculture as day-laborers, making between 100 and 300 rupees per day (equivalent to approximately \$2-\$6.50 USD). Some people refuse to work on *Shabbat*, which reduces their take-home pay each week. Medical check-ups are a luxury most families cannot afford; doctor visits are restricted to an as-needed basis. Most families are in debt, with no visible way, from their current wages, of paying back their debtors anytime soon.

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*Almost all of the families  
had a vision for a better way of life.*

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Thankfully, we also gathered very encouraging information about the community and their desire and willingness to improve their situation. When asked, almost all of the families had a vision for a better way of life or a second source of income. Many of the field laborers have an extensive knowledge of agriculture. They dream of one day being able to own their own land, where they can grow food for their family and sell the rest for profit. Other members of the community have experience with livestock and hope to create a larger-scale chicken or buffalo project.

We also discovered that the Bene Ephraim have a community cooperative project set up for individuals to borrow money for business plans—just like a microfinance loan. The goal of the cooperative is to provide the start-up capital to fund a source of secondary income so that families can build up savings instead of borrowing money when their roof needs repairing or they need to visit a doctor. The project is dormant right now, but they are eager to have it back up and running.

They also have ideas to benefit the entire community once the cooperative itself begins making money, such as supplementing the meager income of the several widows in the community so that they are better able to meet their basic needs. This is just one example of how considerate and community-minded the people of Bene Ephraim are. When asked in the survey what they would do if they had extra money from another source of income, many remarked that they had no specific plans but would want to share it with the whole community.



*At prayer in the sukkah, during Sukkot.*

Photo by community member

During our visit, it became apparent that the community's computer lacked a modern cellular modem, which limited their use of the Internet and their ability to do research and to use Skype for long distance Jewish learning. Kulanu paid for a new modem, a half year of unlimited Internet connection (the most the company would allow) and a microphone. We taught community members how to use Skype after installing it, as well as other skills.

As our two weeks were winding down and we began getting ready for our departure, it was clear that all of us felt very connected to the Bene Ephraim. We found them to be a warm and caring community, fiercely cohesive with no interest in competing among themselves. Rather, they are interested in sharing resources and skills so that everyone in the community benefits. All in all, they are an amazing community. We all feel we have found a new family and lifelong friends. We stand by our initial assessment that Indian people, and especially the Bene Ephraim, are the most genuine, loving and generous people that we had ever met.

As heartbreaking as it was to leave so soon, and with little tangible change, there was hopefulness too. Sustainable change must come from within, and the community has ideas for improvements. They are eager to gain the skills necessary to make change happen. With the aid of a few long-term volunteers, we are confident that sustainable development is possible and that their health and well-being will continue to improve.

# PLANNED GIVING

By Lawrence J. Gross, Esq.\*



Many charities are the beneficiaries of planned giving. A case in point was KULANU's recent gift of \$32,000 from dedicated supporter Lynne Elson, a special woman who believed in Kulanu's mission to help isolated and emerging Jewish communities world-wide. (See President's Letter, page 7.)

## **What is planned giving?**

Planned giving is nothing more than including charitable giving in your estate plan and/or related retirement plan. Charitable giving is generally tax deductible in the United States so long as the charity is recognized by the IRS – which KULANU is.

Before we get to retirement and estate planning, take a minute to think about giving appreciated assets. If you own an asset, such as stocks and bonds, real estate, a work of art or some other asset that has increased in value, and you donate it to a tax exempt charity (like KULANU), you receive a tax deduction for the appreciated value (not the lesser amount you paid for it) and pay no capital gains. So please send us your gold coins!

Here's a convenient way to donate appreciated stock: donate it to a "donor advised fund" run by a community foundation, Jewish Federation, Bnai Brith, or Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund and then advise the fund when you want your donated funds to be passed on to Kulanu or other charities. You only need to report one donation of stock to the IRS even if your gift eventually goes to many different charities at different times. You get the full deduction in the year you donate the stock to the donor advised fund. Using a donor-advised fund to donate appreciated stock saves you money and also saves a lot of work for you and for the charity that might otherwise receive your stock.

But back to planned giving. How is it done? There are generally five ways:

1. By a lifetime Trust.

2. By a provision in your will. This could either be a percentage of all or part of your estate, a dollar amount or a physical asset such as a marketable painting. One of my clients has made a percentage bequest in her will to KULANU.

3. By a retained life estate, usually in real estate. This means you have the use (and income, if any) of the property during your lifetime plus an immediate charitable income tax deduction upon making the gift. At your death (or after a period of years) the property goes to KULANU.

4. By making KULANU the beneficiary (or partial beneficiary) of your retirement plan/IRA or an insurance policy.

5. By creating a charitable annuity plan or joining in a charity's own annuity set up. At this time, KULANU does not have its own annuity structure but would work with you to help accomplish this goal.

An annuity is usually created by giving an asset or monies to a charitable annuity (a form of Trust) which promises to pay you fixed or variable periodic interest for a period of time (or for life) at the end of which, payments cease and the balance is retained by the charity. Be sure to discuss your personal goals and circumstances with your attorney or tax advisor. Here are two web sites that give more details about the options for planned giving:

*PlannedGiving.com: What is Planned Giving?*

<http://www.plannedgiving.com/whatisplannedgiving.php>

*The Ultimate Quick Reference Planned Giving Pocket Guide,*

<http://store.plannedgiving.com/>

<http://ww5.komen.org/Donate/PlannedGifts.html>

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*\*Lonny (Lawrence) Gross has been an attorney in New York City for 49 years; among his specialties are Estates and Trusts and Elder Law. He lived in Africa as a young man in the Peace Corp and last year returned to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.*

# ***Promising Anti-Poverty Project Initiated in Abayudaya Village of Namutumba***

*By Barbara Vinick*

Of the seven villages in eastern Uganda where members of the Abayudaya Jewish community live, Namutumba may be the poorest. Home to about 200 Jews scattered around the modest synagogue, Namutumba is several hours from Nabugoya Hill, the center of Jewish life in the region, and five miles from the nearest paved road. Running water and electric light are rare luxuries in the village where the main occupation is farming of robusta coffee, corn, cassava, millet, and sorghum. Malnutrition is not uncommon.

Through the years, Laura Wetzler, Kulanu's coordinator for the Abayudaya, had become acutely aware of the unmet needs of people in this outlying village. During the annual Abayudaya women's gathering in January 2010, Laura and Kulanu president Harriet Bograd continued discussions with women from the village about ideas for improving the quality of life in Namutumba.



*Construction underway.* Photo by community member

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*One idea had particular resonance.  
Would it be possible to build a grain mill  
near the village?*

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One of these ideas had particular resonance. Would it be possible to build a grain mill near the village? Farmers had to bring their grain four to six kilometers away on dirt paths that became muddy with the rains. And the flour was often contaminated by poorly-maintained diesel engines at the mills. A neighborhood grain mill would allow farmers to get higher prices when they sold the milled grain in town, and households would benefit from more available corn, cassava, millet and sorghum flour for cooking.

When they returned home, Harriet, with input from Laura working with a committee of women from the village and a local agronomist, drafted a proposal to South Peninsula Jewish Community Teen Foundation of the Jewish Community Federation near San Francisco. Part of a network of foundations managed by teenagers in California, these organizations seek proposals to improve the lives of Jews and non-Jews around the world, typically providing grants of \$10,000 or less.

It was thrilling to find out in May, 2010, that Kulanu's \$10,000 proposal for the grain mill would be funded. From May to January, community members and Laura had studied, researched, and consulted with engineers and agronomists. When they returned to Uganda in January, 2011, Laura and Harriet sat for hours with a small delegation of community members who made the trip to Mbale to plan the nitty-gritty details of the mill. In an amazingly brief but intensely focused period of time, the group finalized a detailed business plan along with a training program in accounting and business management. Responsible women in the community were designated to oversee the project. Even though we had not raised as much as was originally budgeted, the community chose to go forward with a pared-down budget.

Since then, the community members have worked together in a beautiful way, participating in eight full days of training in accounting and business, held right in Namutumba. After purchasing land near a small trading center on the road to town, they have constructed the grain mill building and installed most of the equipment, sending photographs documenting each step of the building process. They have tracked and promptly submitted detailed reports on every

***CONTINUED ON PAGE 13***

## **Promising Project**, CONTINUED FROM

PAGE 12

shilling they have spent. This is particularly impressive in an isolated location that lacks electricity and accessible computers.

Many poor communities have found it difficult to write business plans and financial reports for us. In this case, the credit goes to Yoash Mayende, a young Namutumba business student, who is earning his college degree through the Abayudaya higher education program. Though he will earn nothing from the project, he reports that it has been an extraordinary learning experience.

Here is an excerpt from Yoash's report:

"Compare this with an ant hill. In the same way, Namutumba community members...children, women and men were all working together to make sure it comes as a success for them and it really happens. I see so much collaboration and consultation. Nothing was done without consultation with one another.

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*Compare this to an anthill...  
Children, women, and men were all  
working together.*

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"[The mill project has] built more cooperation and unity among community members. They are working together, monitoring their own programs and administering the operations of everything. They have much trust that they are going to overcome some problems that have been affecting them as they have been sitting at home without work, without hope.



*Pitching the roof.* Photo by community member



*Planning details of the mill: (top row, from left) Laura Wetzler, Yosefe Mayende, Ruth Nabaigwa, and (bottom row, from left) Harriet Bograd, Yoash Mayende.*

Photo by Barbara Vinick

"The Mamas in our community had been working in the kitchen, in the garden, watching the children [with no hope of overcoming poverty]. As a result of this project, they are now participating in development projects."



*Yoash Mayende.*

Photo by Harriet Bograd

In early May, 2011, Kulanu received \$7800 in memory of Ruth Horak to complete the grain mill project and provide six months of initial operating capital. This will put the project on a much firmer footing. A portion of this grant will become a revolving investment fund for the community.

As we go to press, we are excited to report that the grain mill project is up and running several weeks ahead of schedule. Needless to say, we wish all the best to everyone involved and look forward to updating Kulanu supporters in future issues of the newsletter and in email updates.

# ***SHOAH: Turkey, the U.S. and the U.K.***

*By Dr. Arnold Reisman\**

*Reviewed by Steve Prowler*

The story of Turkey's role in aiding Jews during the Shoah (Holocaust) is all but unknown in the Jewish world. Although much scholarship has been devoted to the safe haven Muslim Turkey provided for Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition in 1492,\*\* few writers have detailed the extensive efforts by Turkey and its diplomats to assist Jews who sought refuge in Palestine during the bleakest years of Nazi Germany. Dr. Reisman, a Holocaust survivor himself, has devoted many years and written several books devoted to setting the record straight.

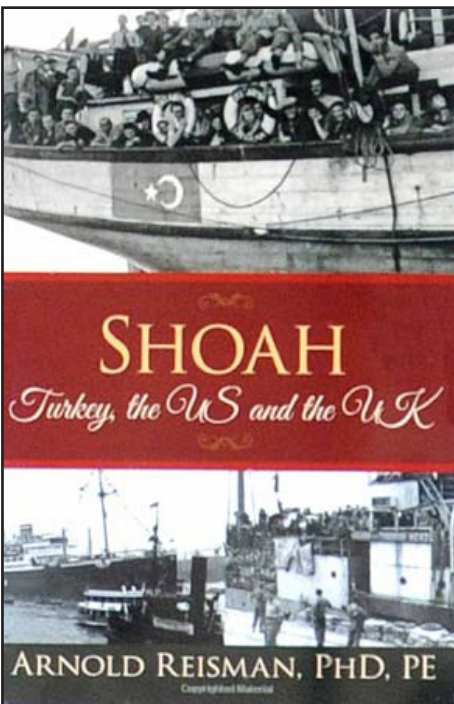
In *SHOAH: Turkey, the U.S. and the U.K.*, Reisman tells the remarkable story of the harrowing journeys of Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe via land, sea and rail through Turkey to Palestine both during and after the war and the important role Turkey played in these historic events. As a chronicle of a little known chapter of Jewish history, this extraordinary book includes the reproduction of hundreds of government memoranda, personal letters, telegrams, legislation, maps and charts. In addition, the text is documented with footnotes and an extensive bibliography. Appendices lead the diligent reader down additional avenues of study and appreciation. One of Reisman's goals is to contrast Turkey's humanitarian efforts on behalf of Jewish refugees with those of the United Kingdom and the United States.

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\*Kulanu is sad to announce the death of distinguished author and scholar Dr. Arnold Reisman in April, 2011.

\*\*1992 marked the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of Jews from Spain during the Spanish Inquisition and the arrival and welcome of many of those refugees to Turkey and the Ottoman Empire. To commemorate that event, a group of 113 Jewish and Muslim citizens of Turkey established a Quincentennial Foundation in 1989 to organize special programs on its anniversary. Celebrations of the Jewish-Turkish bond were held in Turkey, Europe and the United States during that year.

The depth and breadth of Reisman's research efforts is evident in his detailed recasting of many historic events, his unearthing of documents shedding light on the activity and outreach of the Turkish government and diplomats on behalf of Jewish refugees and the central role Turkey played in providing neutral ground to governments and organizations during the war. Some of this information has been overlooked or ignored by historians and some has been misinterpreted with an anti-Turkish bias, according to Dr. Reisman. Below are some of the more noteworthy examples of his presentation.



- The United Kingdom spared no effort in restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine during the British Mandate. As early as 1939, the British maintained a policy of barring Jews from entry into Palestine. Even while the war was raging and genocide was taking place, the Colonial Office issued very few permits for legal entry. At the same time that it was keeping Jews from entering Palestine,

Britain was eagerly exploiting Jewish antipathy toward the Nazis by employing Palestinian Jews and even some Holocaust survivors in their fight against the Nazis and to protect the British homeland.

With Hitler's rise to power in 1933, Turkey became the organizational center for a sizeable number of lifesaving transports. In one such effort, the Turkish government invited European Jewish scholars and intellectuals who were fleeing the Nazis and unable to travel to the US to relocate to Turkey. They were unable to go to the US because of restrictive immigration laws, State Department obstructionism and widespread anti-Semitic hiring bias at American universities and non-Jewish teaching hospitals.

- From March 1943 to May 1944, Turkish consulates in Paris and Brussels arranged for no fewer than eight groups, averaging about 54 people each, of former

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 15**

## **SHOAH**, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

Turkish Jews to be returned to Turkey and to freedom by rail in sealed wagons.

- A number of refugee ships from Rumanian and Bulgarian ports successfully passed through Istanbul waters on their way to Palestine. Because Turkey was the natural land and sea transit route for refugees from Eastern and Central Europe to Palestine, Jewish rescue groups based in Istanbul were able to organize trains and sea-going vessels to carry refugees to safety in and via Turkey.

- The government of Turkey permitted many refugees to remain in the country far beyond the limits of their transit visas to avoid being shipped to Cyprus by the British while attempting to enter Palestine.

- As Turkey was neutral in the war, the country was able to play host to the embassies and consulates of belligerent nations, the offices of the international Red Cross, representatives of the Vatican, intelligence services of neutral and occupied countries and governments-in-exile, agents and businessmen of many nationalities and loyalties. In short, Turkey became a center of espionage and political intrigue during the war. Most importantly, Istanbul was the center of a "human salvage operation" - the saving of Jewish lives.

- Reisman studied the horrific sinking of the Rumanian Steamer Struma on February 24, 1942, which resulted in the death of all but one on board. His research shifts the blame away from Turkey and documents what he called a preventable disaster.

The reviewer found two chapters in the book particularly noteworthy. In Chapter Five, Reisman includes intriguing stories about refugee ships that experienced gut-wrenching obstacles and tragedy as well as heroism and exhilarating success and safe passage. In Chapter Eight, Reisman profiles several Turkish consul-generals and provides a list of those who were heroic in saving countless Jewish lives.

The only shortcoming of the book was the author's use of a non-chronological retelling of historic events. It would have strengthened the initial chapters in the book had Reisman begun the book with his objective for writing it. This is found nearly hidden away in the book's epilogue. It states in part:

"Historians love to hate Turkey. Turkey's role during Shoah has been begging for reexamination, especially when viewed in the context of the U.S. and UK, individually and collectively, and what they did and did not

do in the same time period. It is disconcerting, to say the least, that with the legions of professional historians writing about the Holocaust, the subject of Turkey and her role rarely appears. If it does, then it is in connection with the (vessel) Struma and Turkey gets all the blame."

Historians, scholars, students and Jews everywhere will be enlightened by Dr. Reisman's fascinating presentation of a Muslim nation's remarkable contribution to Jewish survival. Reisman's contribution to Holocaust studies is of great value and hopefully will indeed set the record straight, as he intended.

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*Below: Telegraphed report to the New York Times, August 15, 1944, about the sinking of ships full of Jewish refugees. Reproduced from Reisman, SHOAH, p.307.*

**Refugee Boats Attacked**  
**By JOSEPH M. LEVY**  
**By Wire to The New York Times**

**ISTANBUL, Turkey, Aug. 15 (Delayed)**—Refugees from the motor boat Bulbul arrived overland in Istanbul today from the small Turkish port of Igneada on the Black Sea and with them arrived five adult survivors from the boat Meskure, which was sunk with 345 aboard by an unknown surface craft.

For two days these 410 Rumanian, Polish, Slovak and Hungarian refugees traveled from Igneada by oxcart to Tcherkeskoy, where special trains waited to take them to Istanbul. After the sinking of the Meskure, it was considered unwise for the Bulbul to continue its voyage.

The 345 refugees who perished with the Meskure include sixty orphans from Transnistria and forty other children traveling with their parents.

Abraham Bank Genadek, a Pole, who was hospitalized upon arrival here; Hertha Vliss, a Rumanian, and Ladislas Fulop and his wife, Veronica, Hungarians, were among the survivors. Mrs. Fulop, a champion swimmer, who is pregnant, swam about five hours before being rescued. Her brother drowned.

# ***A Rendezvous with History***

*By Rabbi Marvin Tokayer\**

It was Kulanu volunteer Irwin Berg who first introduced me to Shi Lei, a descendent of the ancient Jewish community of Kaifeng. I was visiting the city to continue my exploration of the 1000-year history of the Jewish community. When we actually met, Shi Lei could not stop asking me questions about Judaism, our history, our religious observance, Israel, everything Jewish that he could think of. And he listened carefully, absorbing everything like a sponge.

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*Shi Lei could not stop asking me questions about Judaism...He absorbed everything like a sponge.*

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Finally, I asked Shi Lei if he would be interested in studying in Israel for one year to experience the Jewish calendar of Sabbaths and festivals and study basic Judaism and Hebrew. Afterwards he would return to Kaifeng to teach the community. He agreed. In fact, Shi Lei studied in Israel for three years, a year at Bar Ilan University and two additional years in a yeshiva before returning home. I do want to stress that Shi Lei's parents fully approved of their only child going to Israel to learn about his Jewish heritage. While in Israel, Michael Freund, founder of Shavei Israel, kept a close eye on Shi Lei and facilitated his studies and experiences.

Recently, Kulanu sponsored Shi Lei on a lecture tour of the United States. It actually was his second Kulanu tour as he had visited the States the previous year, a tour that included Toronto, Canada. Each tour was a resounding success with rave reviews everywhere. I saw Shi Lei at the 92nd Street Y in New York City in February where he lectured to a packed auditorium. I was very impressed with his poise, his knowledge and his command of English. Shi Lei had indeed become the face of the Jewish community of Kaifeng.

In 1992, when Professor Zhao Xiangru, a retired professor of minorities in China, from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, was in New York, he visited the rare book room at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS)

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*\*Rabbi Tokayer served for many years as Rabbi for the Jewish community of Japan and is the founder and president of the Foundation for Remote Jewish communities, based in New York.*



*Radiating joy. Shi Lei holds part of a Kaifeng Torah covering commissioned by the Jewish Theological Seminary Library. Photo by Jahheal Massac*

library to see a Chinese *Torah* scroll from Kaifeng. Many people are unaware that artifacts of this historic Jewish community are in several institutions in North America. In fact, they can be found in The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto (See Kulanu newsletter, Fall 2010 issue), Southern Methodist University in Dallas, The Anglican Cathedral in Washington, D.C., Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, The American Bible Society in New York City, and, of course, at JTS. Each institution has either a *Torah* scroll and/or other Jewish artifacts from Kaifeng.

On this trip, it was Shi Lei's turn to visit JTS and to see an original *Torah* from his community. According to historic sources, the Kaifeng Jewish community had 13 *Torahs*, one for each of the 12 tribes of Israel and one for Moses. The JTS *Torah* was purchased in 1868 by Christian missionary W.A.P. Martin and was later sold to Judge Mayer Sulzberger of Philadelphia, whose entire Judaica collection is now part of the JTS Library. It is interesting that Judge Sulzberger offered

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## ***Rendezvous, CONTINUED***

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to return the *Torah* he had purchased to Kaifeng if and when the community rebuilt its synagogue. The JTS *Torah* is written on white leather rather than parchment and it is sewn together with silk thread, a distinguishing characteristic of all Chinese *Torahs*.

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*Shi Lei asked if the library had other items from Kaifeng.*

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As one can imagine, Shi Lei was very moved to see a *Torah* from his community. But just as exciting was the result of his inquiry if the library had other items from Kaifeng. The librarian brought out one volume from Kaifeng with several sections bound together. One of those sections was a rare Sukkot *mahzor* (special prayer book for the holiday of Sukkot).\*\* Imagine the look on Shi Lei's face when he saw the signature of the book's owner...his paternal grandfather. It truly was a rendezvous with history.

*Rear endpapers of Kaifeng 17th century volume, JTSL MS L119a, Pentateuch (Numbers). Photo by Jahheal Massac*

\*\*Scholars have studied a copy of the Kaifeng *Haggadah* as well as the community's Sabbath prayer book, to compare and contrast them with those of other ancient Jewish communities and to find clues as to the origin of the Kaifeng Jewish community, its customs and traditions. For some reason, this Sukkot *mahzor* has not been studied, either because of neglect or a lack of awareness of its existence.



*Shi Lei examining Kaifeng Torah with (from left) Kulanu supporter Shep Wahnon, Rabbi Marvin Tokayer and Kulanu president Harriet Bograd. Photo by Jahheal Massac*

# ANNOUNCING

## Jewish Life in Uganda Mitzvah Tour & Wildlife Safari 2012

Sunday, Jan. 15 - Monday, January 29, 2012



Photo by Stanley and Joanne Kay

Kulanu is excited to announce the 9th annual ***Jewish Life in Uganda Mitzvah Tour*** to the Abuyadaya Jewish community in Uganda. This is a perfect family Jewish heritage trip that combines up close and personal interactions with members of a vibrant and exciting Jewish community with an exotic wildlife safari. We guarantee you a life experience you will never forget!

The ***Jewish Life in Uganda Mitzvah Tour*** is led by experienced Abayudaya tour guides. Tour participants travel in air-conditioned vans and stay in friendly hotels and beautiful safari lodges, featuring hearty meals.

Extended stay options are available for additional fees as are opportunities for long-term volunteer service assignments.

### ***SOME TRIP HIGHLIGHTS:***

- Learn the history of this amazing community and enjoy the hospitality of Ugandan Jewish families
- Spend *Shabbat* in a rural African village synagogue
- Be honored guests at the fabulous Abayudaya Music and Dance Festival, exclusive to this tour
- Visit the famous Kulanu-Abayudaya “Delicious Peace” interfaith organic coffee project featured in Oprah Magazine
- Hear about Kulanu’s self-help business development and micro-finance projects in remote Jewish villages
- Marvel at the sight of baby hippos, elephants, giraffe, colobus monkeys, warthogs, antelopes, crocodiles and 500 species of birds all living in their natural habitat
- Cruise on a wildlife viewing boat and see the source of the Nile in Jinja town
- Discover the unique flora, birds, and wildlife of Uganda
- Visit colorful, bargain-filled arts & crafts markets in Jewish villages, in the bustling capital of Kampala and in Mbale town



Photo by joyofcolor.com

***Best of all,  
make a personal connection with our friends  
in this remarkable African Jewish community!***

Custom group tours are available at other times.

***For further information, itinerary, and prices,  
please see Kulanu’s website at:***

***[www.kulanu.org/trip](http://www.kulanu.org/trip)***



Photo by Laura Wetzler

# ***New Technology Links Isolated Jewish Communities for Long Distance Learning***

*By Judith Manelis*

When Eric Rothberg of Moorhead, Minnesota, left Kaifeng, China, in June, 2010, after a year of study at Henan University, he was eager to find a way to continue assisting the group of Chinese Jewish descendants he had met during his stay there. Eric, a senior at Minnesota State University Moorhead majoring in East Asian Studies, had been an eager and enthusiastic admirer of Chinese culture and a student of Mandarin Chinese since he was 14. But Eric was also a committed Jew. He had selected Henan University for his year abroad because he was aware of the 1,000-year history of Jewish settlement in Kaifeng and had read about the desire of some descendants there to learn about their Jewish roots.

As it turned out, Eric would not only meet Kaifeng's Jewish descendants but he would establish a Jewish school, Beth HaTikvah (House of Hope), and begin the task of teaching some descendants about Judaism and Jewish traditions. Some were atheists; most were very assimilated. To interest those who came, Eric began with songs, Hebrew language, and Jewish holidays and culture. The school would assist the Kaifeng community on their journey, but it would also involve Eric in a meaningful and exciting journey of his own.

As he began the task of organizing the school, Eric was able to enlist the help of several dedicated individuals: Rabbi Anson Laytner, president of the Sino-Judaic Institute; Michael Freund, founder and director of the Israel-based Shavei Israel; and long time friend of Asian Jews, Rabbi Marvin Tokayer of New York, all of whom would actively support Eric's efforts in the community. Additionally, a number of gracious Jewish congregations and individuals in the U.S., Israel, and Australia contributed Jewish books to the community. More recently, Harriet Bograd and Jack Zeller of Kulanu also have been supportive. By the end of his year in China, Eric had succeeded beyond his expectations. There were now approximately 50 descendants of Kaifeng Jews attending classes at Beth HaTikvah.

Before returning to the states, Eric realized the importance of continuing what he had begun and decided to set up a computer for long distance learning. He used a Chinese program similar to Skype, a fast Internet service and a projector so he would have face-to-face communication with his students in Kaifeng. Eric's Chinese was sufficient to conduct lessons in Mandarin, but with his school work and other responsibilities, he realized

it was important to find an additional Mandarin speaking teacher to help share teaching responsibilities.

Eric appealed to Kulanu founder and board member Jack Zeller, who suggested a Washington area woman originally from Taiwan who was married to a local orthodox rabbi. Her name: Denise Yeh-Bresler. Denise had recently retired and was looking for meaningful volunteer work when Eric called to see if she would be interested. She was. Eric had his second Mandarin speaking teacher for Beth HaTikvah.

Today, Denise and Eric share teaching responsibilities, with Eric focusing on English, Hebrew and traditional songs and Denise teaching holidays, life cycle events and the Jewish home. Classes meet weekly on Sunday mornings (for the teachers it is Saturday night!) with Eric and Denise alternating weeks. The classes have become so popular that participants sometimes number close to 20 individuals a session, with over 50 in all. Community members are deeply appreciative of the classes. (See photo on page 23 showing Denise Yeh-Bresler and Rabbi Jack Bresler at home in Maryland, projected on the wall in Kaifeng, China, joining in a Purim celebration with the community!) For Denise and Eric it is a rare and exciting opportunity to connect with an ancient Jewish community.

It is clear that technology has the potential to help Kulanu make Jewish education available to its isolated Jewish communities around the world. Needless to say, some infrastructure is necessary for the technology to work. Already Rabbi Aaron Rehberg is using the Internet to teach and train the community in El Salvador. (See article on page 1.) The Jewish community in Cameroon learned a great deal about Judaism and Jewish practice through the Internet before they ever contacted Kulanu. Today they are serving as Kulanu volunteers, advising people from other communities on how to find appropriate Jewish learning resources online.

It is clear other communities will follow. However, funds are needed to purchase the necessary equipment and pay for monthly Internet service. In addition, we are seeking teachers to help end the isolation of these communities and work with them to meet their learning goals. If you are interested in helping or in receiving help with online Jewish learning, please contact: [distancelearning@kulanu.org](mailto:distancelearning@kulanu.org)

# Thank You, Donors

The names below were entered between Jan and April, 2011. Please let us know if we have missed any people, and we'll list them in the next newsletter.

## **\$100-124**

The Altman-Arnov Charitable Foundation; Anonymous; Michael and Mary Baron; Allan J and Susan Oliff Carneol; Hedy Cohen; Sherman L Cohn; Steven Corn; Marguerite C. and Raymond J. Cross, Jr; Rabbi Everett and Mary Gendler; Jessica Goldhirsch; Stephen I. and Judy Gray; Walter and Florence Haas; Dr. Eugene H. and Esther C. Herman; Lynda L. Howland; Band and Susan Klein; Martin Okun; The Posner Family; Janet and Sidney Quint; Martin Bernard and Anne Rosen-sky; Rabbi and Mrs. Robert Saks; Linda E Saris; David Dr. Claudine Schweber; Barbara and Julius Shair; Bernard and Rena Shapiro; Herman and Cecilia Storick; Rabbi Peter Tarlow; Rosette W. Tucker; Jack S. and Stephanie J. Ventura; Joe M Victor; Carol Wolkove; Mishael Y'Israel; Howard and Miriam Young; Paula Gurlitz and Steven Zuckerman

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King David High School (Vancouver); Harriet Bograd and Kenneth Klein

## **\$32,578.70**

Roslyn K. Elson Trust

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Donors' names are in italics.

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David Wise – *Students of Ohr Chadash at Hillcrest Jewish Center; Steven M Zellman*

Jack Zeller, on his birthday – *Edwin and Roz Kolodny*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

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Zeller) – *Sonya Loya*



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Kulanu (“All of Us”) is a tax-exempt organization of Jews of varied backgrounds and practices, which works with isolated and emerging Jewish communities around the globe, supporting them through networking, education, economic development projects, volunteer assignments, research, and publications about their histories and traditions.

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## ***Volunteer Opportunities in Jewish Communities Around the World***

***Sewfi Wiawso, Ghana (English):*** rural community of 100 devout and observant Jews; need teachers of Hebrew and Jewish studies for children and adults; teacher of computer skills, financial reporting ([www.kulanu.org/ghana](http://www.kulanu.org/ghana))

***Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (English & Amharic):*** low income area of large city; formerly hidden Jews now going public; need teachers of Hebrew and Jewish studies; work with women's pottery collective ([www.kulanu.org/ethiopia](http://www.kulanu.org/ethiopia))

***Abayudaya, Mbale, Uganda (English):*** thriving Jewish spiritual community of seven villages near Mbale; much poverty; need teachers of any subjects from elementary to high school; accounting, bookkeeping, other skills; lots of possibilities here ([www.kulanu.org/abayudaya](http://www.kulanu.org/abayudaya))

***Saa, Cameroon (English & French):*** rural village located 70 km from capital of Yaounde with 50 practicing Jews out of population of 5,700; community members gather there for religious observance; some community members live elsewhere; formerly Christian community which embraced Judaism in 1998; although primarily self-taught from Internet, very knowledgeable in some areas; need teachers of English, Hebrew, Jewish studies, preferably French speakers; Jewish materials in French; advice on building *mikveh* (ritual bath) ([www.kulanu.org/cameroon](http://www.kulanu.org/cameroon))

***Andhra Pradesh, India (English & Telugu):*** a small rural village called Kothareddypalem with 120 Jewish families living in mixed community with Christians and Hindus; community called Bene Ephraim; need teachers of Hebrew and Jewish studies; help with economic development; ([www.kulanu.org/india/beneephraim](http://www.kulanu.org/india/beneephraim))

***Armenia, El Salvador (Spanish):*** small town one hour from San Salvador; mostly *anousim* (descendants from Spanish Inquisition); need teachers of Hebrew and Jewish studies; help develop religious school; computer skills (For more information on this community, see article on page 1.)



***Uganda:*** Kulanu volunteer Lorne Mallin with Abayudaya teenagers. Photo courtesy of Lorne Mallin

***Paramaribo, Suriname (Dutch & English):*** old, isolated and dwindling Jewish community experiencing some renewal; need teachers of Hebrew and Jewish studies for children and adults; possibly teacher training ([www.kulanu.org/Suriname](http://www.kulanu.org/Suriname))

***Mexicali, Mexico (Spanish & English):*** northernmost city in Latin America, two hours east of San Diego, with population of over 600,000. Jewish community made up of 40+ individuals, many of whom are *anousim* (descendants of Crypto Jews) who have formally converted; others are on road to conversion; community is inclusive, welcoming Jews of all denominations and backgrounds who are seeking their place in Judaism; need teachers of Hebrew and Jewish studies for adults and children and educational materials for youth in Spanish to advance their Jewish studies. ([www.kulanu.org/mexico](http://www.kulanu.org/mexico))

***Kaifeng, China (Mandarin and English):*** 1000 year old historic community of Jewish descendants who wish to learn about their Jewish heritage. Need teachers of Hebrew, English and Jewish culture ([www.kulanu.org/china](http://www.kulanu.org/china))

*Available accommodations vary from home hospitality to guest houses to hotels, depending on the community. Volunteers pay or raise their own expenses.*

*Additional information on these communities is available on Kulanu's website:  
[www.kulanu.org](http://www.kulanu.org).*

**MEET A FEW OF OUR INTREPID VOLUNTEERS**



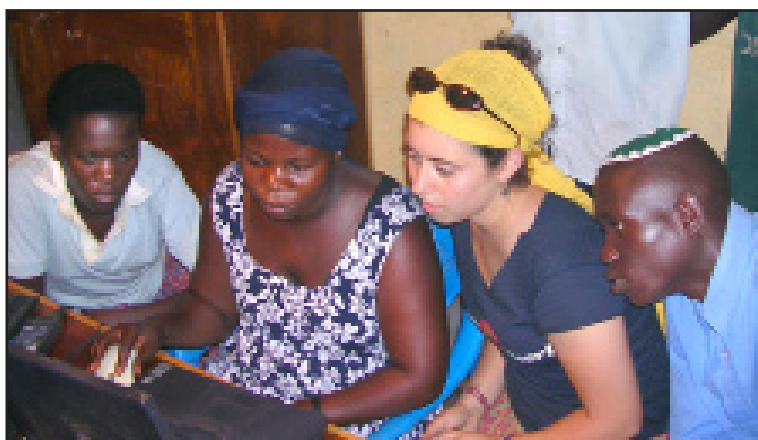
**Ghana:** Michael Ramberg studying with friends in Sefwi Wiawso. Photo by Ali Michael



**Ethiopia:** Dana Eitches greeting members of Kechene community, Addis Ababa. Photo courtesy of Dana Eitches



**Cameroon:** Rabbis Gerald and Bonita Sussman in town of SAA. Photo by Serge Etele



**Uganda:** Sarah Gold teaching computer skills to Abayudaya community members.



**India:** Rabbi Bonita Sussman and Bene Ephraim children sporting Purim masks. Photo courtesy of Rabbi Bonita Sussman



**China:** Rabbi Jack Bresler and Denise Yeh-Bresler from Potomac, MD, projected on the wall, celebrate Purim over online connection with the Kaifeng Jewish community. Photo by You Yong



**KULANU**

*Supporting Isolated and  
Emerging Jewish Communities  
around the Globe*

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## ***PROBLEM SOLVED!***

Many African girls stay out of school 20% of the time because they cannot afford to buy sanitary pads during their monthly period. This absenteeism has negative consequences for the girls' health and education and undermines their potential. AFRIPADS, a sanitary and reusable menstrual pad, manufactured in Uganda is making a great difference in the Abuyudaya high school and elsewhere in the country.

They do not waste a lot of money because we can use them for a longer time than the ones we have been using. Furthermore, they also help to gather blood better than those we have been using, because some of us have heavy periods. The new ones do not expose our clothes to blood as do the others. On behalf of the [students] we thank you for what you have done for us.

*Leaa Naigaga*

Kulanu congratulates Kulanu volunteer Lorne Mallin of Vancouver, BC, who raised funds from the University Women's Club in Vancouver to buy re-usable Afripads for the girls who live in the hostel (dorm) at Semei Kakungulu High School. SK High, the Abayudaya high school, serves Jewish, Christian, and Muslim students. Student Leaa Naigaga wrote:

We humbly take this grateful opportunity to thank the administration for providing us with the sanitary pads, which have made us comfortable in our study. Actually we have seen that this type of pad has more advantages than those which we have been using.

*Abayudaya girls with Afripads.  
Photo by Seth Jonadav*

