



KULANU

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The Miracle of Return and Its Widening Circle

by Kimberly Dueñas

How can it be that 500 years after the Spanish Inquisition, there are individuals who, though raised Christian, carry within them some deep-seated historic memory of a Jewish past and a heritage from which they were forcibly separated. Solomon Dueñas of Orange County, California is one of these individuals. The miraculous story of his return to Judaism is presented below by his daughter Kimberly, whose own commitment to her Jewish roots continues the miracle. Like a pebble thrown into a pool of water...creating ever widening circles, Kimberly and her father hope to assist a community of returnees and Jews by choice in Armenia, El Salvador on their journey of return. One might say that one miracle has begot another. JM



Sue and Solomon Dueñas in front of their bakery, founded in 1988 - Photo courtesy of Kimberly Dueñas

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My father Solomon Dueñas was raised in a religious Catholic family in El Salvador. But in spite of the priest's best efforts, he felt no connection to the church or to its ritual. Sitting in Mass and attending a confessional did not resonate with him. His passion, he says, was for the Bible and for the Jewish people described in its pages.

At 7, my father asked his mother, Margarita Dueñas, why he felt such compassion for the Jews. My grandmother explained to him that his feelings had a long

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history. That was the day my father learned that he had Jewish blood and that it was the spirit of his ancient heritage that was rising within him. Centuries ago, she told him, the family had lived in Spain in a flourishing Jew-

As he grew older, my father's interest in his Jewish roots deepened and he continued to feel a personal connection to the Jewish people. But although my grandmother was supportive and shared with him all she knew, many questions remained unanswered. Even with his limited knowledge of Judaism, my father decided that someday he would return to the faith of his ancestors.



The Dueñas, from left to right: Solomon, Samantha, 25, Sue, Danella, 28, and Kimberely, 22

ish community, but with the advent of the Inquisition, the family had fled. Convert, be put to death, or flee... those were the choices, she explained. The family chose to emigrate and hopefully to survive.

Eventually, the Dueñas family found refuge in El Salvador where they tried to maintain their Jewish faith. However, as the region became increasingly Catholic and less tolerant of religious differences, the family grew fearful they would be forced to flee again. Thus began the process of assimilation that culminated in their adoption of most, if not all, Catholic rituals and beliefs. Nevertheless, the family always remained cognizant of their Jewish roots, and surprisingly, some Jewish customs did survive.

My father's great grandmother, for example, always lit candles on Friday night. My grandmother did the same. Although she was unaware of its spiritual significance, she wanted to follow the family custom that had been handed down through the generations. Other family members, like my father's great uncle never worked in the fields on Saturday. When my father asked his mother why, she said that it was part of my uncle's traditional beliefs.

The opportunity came when El Salvador was shaken with political and social turmoil in the late 1960's-early '70's. The uncertainty and danger of those years provided my father with the incentive to leave home and to pursue a future in the United States. On arrival, he worked tirelessly to learn English, attend an American college and embark on a career as a baker. At the same time, he took classes at a Conservative Synagogue where he studied Hebrew and eventually fulfilled his dream of converting to Judaism.

My parents met at a community Passover *seder* in 1981. My mother, Sue Weinberg, a descendent of Russian and Polish Jews who immigrated to the United States in the late 19th century, grew up in Los Angeles working with her father at his produce market. Worlds away, my father worked on his family's farm in rural El Salvador. While their childhoods differed considerably, their spiritual identities and Jewish sensibilities were the same.

My parents' love for Judaism always filled our home. But I particularly cherish the joy that we all share on Friday night when my family welcomes the Sabbath. My mother lights the candles, calls the light of *Shabbat* into our home and recites the *bracha* (prayer). My sister Samantha raises a full glass of wine and blesses the fruit of the vine. And my father, the baker, proudly raises a fresh *challah* (traditional bread for the Sabbath). We all place our hands on the *challah* as he recites *Ha'Motzi* (blessing over the bread). But before he does so, my father closes his eyes, takes a deep breath and lets the blessing fall from his lips. He is excited as he says "amen" with a huge smile on his face and tears a huge piece from the *challah*, dips it into his wine and takes a long, meditative bite.

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Kimberly, center front, visits the Jewish community of Armenia, El Salvador

I have always been involved in Jewish activities and youth groups, so it was natural for me to participate in a ten-month, gap-year program for post-high school students in Israel. During my time there, I interacted with Jews from all over the world and learned the unique religious customs they brought with them. My experiences sparked my own questions about my Sephardic roots. What were my family's Sephardic traditions? How many members of my family left Spain? Was anyone left behind? When did the family convert to Catholicism? What Jewish traditions did they maintain? Were there many other Jewish families in El Salvador? How is it that my father is the only one out of all his siblings to embrace his Jewish roots? I felt as if half of my story was missing and I was eager to learn more.

Last spring, toward the end of my junior year at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles, one of my father's customers brought him an article from *KulanuNews*. My father was very excited when he saw the title: "El Salvador Jewish Community Emerges From Centuries of Isolation and Assimilation" by Rabbi Aaron Rehberg. As we read the article together about the small Jewish community in Armenia, El Salvador, I felt perhaps some of my questions would be answered. Ac-

cording to the article, many of the families in the community were descended from Spanish/Portuguese Jews who had fled the Inquisition and wanted to return to Judaism. I had such an urge to meet these people and to hear their stories. Coincidentally, I had planned a trip to El Salvador in June and hoped I could meet them then.

I contacted Rabbi Rehberg who shared with me how Kulanu has supported his work in Armenia, helping the community deepen its knowledge of Judaism and Jewish religious observance. Rabbi Rehberg put me in contact with members of the community and I arranged to visit them during my time in El Salvador.

The three weeks I spent in my father's homeland were transformative. I stayed with my *Tia* (aunt) Nina at her home in the town of San Juan Opico, a municipality of La Libertad, where most of my father's family resides. I was able to fully integrate into their world and I began to appreciate things that I had taken for granted on previous trips: the tropical, succulent fruit; the wild, verdant trees surrounding the towns, and the contagious warmth and affection of the people. I formed strong relationships with my family and learned their way of life. My *Tia* introduced me to our old family tradition

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of farming and even taught me how to make cheese. I explored the country with my cousins from the warm, tranquil beaches to the mountainous volcanoes. I met so many relatives who were eager to meet me, and I was equally eager to get to know them. I gained a greater understanding of the world my father came from and I also came to understand certain aspects of myself. I believe it is crucial for your personal development to understand your roots, because after all, it is where your story began. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to spend so much time with my relatives, especially my 94-year-old grandfather, who died soon after I returned home.

During my visit, I saw how central the Catholic faith is to the society of El Salvador, to the people of Opico and to my family. My aunt Tia prays daily and family members are active in the church. My family knows about my *Abuela's* (grandmother's) Jewish heritage and they are supportive of my father's decision to return to Judaism, even if it is not the path they choose to follow themselves. They feel very connected to Catholicism and it is an important part of their lives. At the same time, they admire my father's devotion to Judaism and our family's religious commitments.

It was the day after my 22nd birthday when I journeyed to Armenia with my cousin Aby. In the town square, I met Mikhael Alvarado and Orlando (an English speaker) who greeted us and told us to follow them to the "synagoga". They drove a blue pickup truck with us following closely behind. As we drove down the busy, narrow streets, I caught sight of a man with his *tzitzit* (fringes religious men wear) swirling in the wind. It was clear that Judaism was alive in this place.



Jewish children from the community of Armenia, El Salvador
Photo by Kimberly Dueñas

At the synagogue, 30 people of all ages were awaiting our arrival. When we reached the synagogue, five little girls ran to greet me with wide-open arms shouting "Shalom!" (hello). During our visit, community members shared stories with me about their community and I told them about my community back home. They were very interested to learn about my family's background and my time in Israel, my experiences at the university and teaching religious school. They described their evening services, the weekly Hebrew school for children, the *Shabbat* meals and holiday celebrations they share and, of course, *Torah* study.

On a tour of their synagogue and communal area, I saw their *kosher* kitchen, dining and baking areas and a corn mill. In the synagogue, a beautiful *Torah* sat in a place of honor. The children uncovered the *Torah* to show me the unusual art work around the case. There are some improvements the community would like to make in the synagogue including a study area for the children. The next day we returned for a *bar mitzvah* fiesta! We offered congratulations to the *bar mitzvah* boy in Hebrew and in Spanish, ate a delicious chicken meal, told jokes around the table and played *piñata* (a suspended

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*Armenia resident studying in the makeshift community library
Photo by Kimberly Dueñas*

decorated animal figure full of toys and candy that is broken open by children during celebratory events) the Salvadorian way.

On a personal level, my interaction with community members added to my Jewish story. My upbringing had consisted of mostly Ashkenazi religious traditions while the Salvadorian customs were cultural. So, for the first time in my life, my two worlds merged; my cultures no longer existed separately. Even the small details like saying “*Baruch Hashem*” (Blessed be G-d) in the middle of a Spanish sentence to emphasize a point resonated with me.

In Armenia I realized that no matter where you go in the world, you can feel at home in the local Jewish community. And it is this feeling that has prompted me to maintain a connection to the community, and hopefully, to take an active role in their future development.

Upon my return to AJU for my senior year, I have made continuing involvement with the community a priority. I am working on two projects: a sociological research project about the community and a fundraising project for their *Beit Midrash* (synagogue). I also plan to return to El Salvador in December (after my finals!) and work with Rabbi Rehberg on implementing education programs for the men and women of Armenia.

As for the fundraising project, I want to reach out to synagogues and organizations in Los Angeles to tell them about the Jewish Salvadorian story. I am hoping to raise funds for the upcoming *Beit Midrash* program as well as to gather educational ma-

terials from local synagogues and schools. Their support would benefit the community’s development.

My father is also eager to be of service. He would love to meet the community and teach them baking skills and business management techniques to improve their economic situation. That’s the widening circle of our family miracle...our helping other descendants to reclaim their heritage.

As I celebrated the high holidays this year with my family and friends in California, I thought about the remarkable community in Armenia. Though we are hours away from each other, we are celebrating our Jewish heritage and culture simultaneously. In meeting this community, I have learned that culture and faith can transcend even in the darkest days of history.

Passover in Mapakomhere, Zimbabwe

Some Highlights

by Sandy Leeder



Sandy Leeder in the village of Mapakomhere
Photo courtesy of Sandy Leeder

I must give Jack Zeller credit for my Mapakomhere Passover *seder* (ritual meal). In the fall of 2011, the two of us had visited Zimbabwe as Kulanu representatives and forged close, personal relationships with Lemba leaders. In contemplating what we might do to deepen our bond and to help community members on their journey of Jewish renewal, Jack had suggested we think about Passover. “The holiday is too good a teaching opportunity to miss,” he said.

So how do we teach Passover?

After considering the benefits and challenges of conducting a *seder* in Zimbabwe, and remembering the moon-lit *seder* I had prepared and led in the Niger desert during my West African Peace Corps days, I was prepared to give it a try. Jack was enthusiastic and the Kulanu board was ready to support the project.

*A group of Lemba Jews living near the Great Zimbabwe archaeological site have formed a congregation with the express goal of constructing a synagogue and returning to the faith of their fathers. The synagogue is being funded by Kulanu with the labor supplied primarily by the congregants themselves.

Pre Trip

First, I had to ask Lemba leaders if they wanted to hold a communal *seder*. Community leader Rabson Wuriga brought the idea to the members of the Great Zimbabwe Synagogue (GZS) congregation.* They agreed. It was estimated that 100 people would attend.

While the Lemba have an historical remembrance of a springtime, full moon Passover celebration, in which a lamb is slaughtered and eaten overnight, they had not celebrated the holiday for many years (see Dr. Rabson Wuriga’s *Of Sacred Times, Rituals and Customs. Oral Traditions of the Lemba Jews of Zimbabwe*), nor had they seen a *haggadah* (book of historic memory, prayer, story telling and ritual).

My second task was to send copies of the *haggadah* to Zimbabwe, so Lemba leaders could translate parts of the ritual into *Shona* (the language of Zimbabwe). My goal was to insert the translations into a master copy of the *haggadah*, which would then be printed for the *seder*.

The *haggadot* (plural for *haggadah*) arrived six weeks later. So much for advance planning.

My third task concerned the food. Following the *seder* instructions laid out in Exodus 12, which calls for roasted lamb, I asked Rabson to find some sheep** for the *seder*. One would think that buying sheep in rural Zimbabwe would be easy; it wasn’t.

Matza (unleavened bread) presented another challenge. Clearly, no store in Zimbabwe had *matza* on its shelves. We would have to either make it on site or I would have to bring it with me from Israel. We ended

**For those who know about these things, there is a current tradition not to roast meat for the Passover meal, especially sheep, to avoid the appearance that you are sacrificing a lamb in the ancient tradition. I obtained a verbal Rabbinic ruling that if we cut up the sheep before roasting, it would not be seen as a sacrifice.

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up doing both (see below). And what about the symbolic foods on the *seder* plate...bitter herbs and *charoset* (symbol of the mortar used by slaves to make building blocks)? I knew I could find wine and apples, but what about walnuts, raisins and dates?

Task number four was buying dinnerware. Many of the things we take for granted in Israel and the US were either non-existent in Zimbabwe or their cost was prohibitive. That list included plastic silverware, plastic or paper plates and cups for wine or soda. I would have to bring them with me too.

One last item...On our first trip to Mapakomhere, Jack and I wasted a lot of time driving back and forth from Mapakomhere to a guest house in Masvingo as there was no lodging in Mapakomhere. This time I knew I had to stay in Mapakomhere to plan the *seder*. I would need a tent.

Israel to Zimbabwe and Back

Dear Diary....

Sunday April 1, 2012, 8:30 pm: Jack drives me to the airport from Jerusalem and gives me a 2.5 kilo/ 5 package container of *matza* (to add to the 2.5 kilo box I already packed). He throws in packing tape, 100 plastic *kiddush* cups (for the blessing over the wine), 100 *kippot* (skull caps), and 5 *tallitot* (prayer shawls). Altogether I have a 20 kg standup tent, 225 plastic plates and bowls, 175 *kiddush* cups, a *shofar* (ram's horn), spoons, forks, bags of raisins, walnuts and dates, a cork screw, video and still cameras, clothes, *matza*, and and and... . Checking in was an experience. Let's not talk of the overweight charges.

Monday April 2: I arrive in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe after an all night flight from Israel, with a stop over in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Lemba leader Modreck Zvakavapano Maeresera picks me up at the airport and deposits me in Harare's Cresta



Sandy's Tent - Photo by Sandy Leeder

Hotel where I change my I-phone sim card to a Zimbabwe number, connect to the hotel's wifi, eat dinner and crash.

Tuesday, April 3: In the morning, Modreck and I take a taxi to the car rental dealer and I rent a Toyota 4x4 Pickup. Then we purchase approximately 20 liters of wine and blankets in a large Harare supermarket. We leave Harare about 11 am for the 4-hour drive to Masvingo. We are driving on a two lane highway and I have to remember to drive in the left lane. On route, we pick up Rabson at the Great Zimbabwe University where he teaches and drive to Masvingo for supper. Then the three of us find a guest house where we can spend the night.

From 8 pm to midnight Rabson and Modreck translate key parts of the *haggadah* into *Shona*.

Wednesday, April 4: After dropping Rabson at the University, Modreck and I go to a computer shop to print out the *Shona* translations we worked on last night, and for the next several hours, we cut and paste the translations and *Shona* biblical passages into a master *haggadah*.

Our next job is food purchases... We proceed to all three food markets in Masvingo where we buy 3 bags of apples, 6 100 lb. sacks of potatoes, 20 more liters of wine, 200 eggs, a dozen kilos of unleavened flour, 4 cartons of bittersweet chocolate bars, 4 light bulbs, 1 kg. ginger root, 4 dozen 12 inch candles, 1 plastic washing bucket and a kilo of salt. We also bought 3 foam mattresses for sleeping in the tent.

Modreck and I then drive to Mapakomhere where we set up the tent in the homestead of Daniel Zifungo, president of the synagogue. We arrange to meet with Mrs. Ruvarashe Mhuka, wife of the GZS vice chairman William Mhuka, to make plans for the *matza* and food preparation. Mrs. Mhuka assures me that she will organize the women in the village to fulfill all cooking responsibilities.

Thursday, April 5: When I awake, Daniel and his wife Esther Zifungo serve me coffee with some porridge, after which I visit the cement outhouse. Their daughter Prisca then brings me a bucket of hot water and I wash up. The shower area consists of a grass mat enclosure around a cement slab. By the way, there is no running water. It comes from a hand pumped well a few kilometers away. Water is transported to necessary locations in various ways: by cattle-pulled carts, wheel barrels and by women carrying buckets on their heads. The same goes for the firewood used to cook and to heat water.

My next job is to check on the secondary school that we are borrowing for the *seder* and to arrange the tables, desks and benches to accommodate the participants. I am happy that I had the instinct to buy light bulbs, as the schoolroom has none. Initially, the electricity doesn't work, but the watchman "assures" us we will have electricity for the *seder*. Even with 6 light bulbs it will be dark and I am really counting on the candles for light.

While setting up the schoolroom, I notice a circus size tent with a generator truck and speaker system being



*Lemba leader Rabson Wuriga at the future site of the Great Zimbabwe Synagogue
Photo by Sandy Leeder*

set up in the field adjacent to the school. It is a Christian church group from Masvingo doing outreach and celebrating Good Friday. I wonder whether their presence is a deliberate attempt at competing with our *seder*. I decide not to ask.

Later I meet with the women to explain how to bake *matza*. The women plan to gather on Friday morning to prepare the potatoes, eggs and *matza*. The men will roast the sheep.

That night the tent proves a perfect way to end the day. While it is not exactly cold, I am glad I bought the heavy blankets.

Friday, April 6: After my morning ritual of coffee, outhouse and outdoor bucket bath, I set out to make the final preparations for the *seder*. Before doing so, Daniel and William, GZS president and vice chairman, convince me to visit the site of the synagogue a half kilometer away. Synagogue members are clearing the site by hand. It is a joy to see the progress being made on the Great Zimbabwe synagogue project. Another milestone on the journey of renewal.

Back to the *seder* preparation....As there is no oven, the women are "baking" the *matza* on an open wood fire

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using a flat metal sheet as the baking surface. Unfortunately, my back woods *matza* making skills are limited. I'm glad I brought the boxes of Jerusalem *matzas*.

Next, I work with Prisca to make the *charoset*. She pounds the ingredients in the traditional wooden mortar and pestle used by African women to prepare their food. We peel and pound the apples and mix them with the walnuts, raisins and date paste from Israel and add the wine. Then she pounds the ginger for the bitter herbs, as horseradish is nowhere to be found. Later in the day a Lemba medicine man finds a local wild but edible green herb for dipping in the salt water.

I revisit the schoolroom to see if I can find more tables and chairs and to set up the candles. I place two 12-inch candles on each set of student desk-tables and melt them into place.

In the early afternoon, I hear from Rabson that Modreck's bus from Harare has been stopped at a police roadblock and the driver arrested. I suggest that Rabson await Modreck in Masvingo, as the dirt road from Masvingo to Mapakomhere is the least certain stretch to find a ride.

During the food preparation, the women complain that I have not provided them with drinks as I had done for the men, who would drink the wine. I call Rabson and tell him to purchase 6 cases of coca cola. There are only 3 cases to be found in all of Masvingo. We will also need dish soap to wash the cooking pots as well as the plastic plates and cups as they will be reused after the *seder*.

I am now getting nervous. Modreck is somewhere between Harare and Masvingo, hopefully with the 100 *haggadot*. What will I do if neither Modreck nor Rabson arrive in time for the *seder*? I have only one copy of the *haggadah*, no *Shona* translation and Daniel tells me people have a hard time with my funny English accent.

I turn my attention to the sheep... They are hanging on a nearby tree being skinned and cut up as per my directions. The men have slaughtered the sheep according to Jewish dietary laws (which is exactly like Lemba tradition) and they are ready to be roasted.

As the food preparation continues, it becomes clear that I do not have enough food for Saturday lunch, so I ask Daniel to buy 10 chickens, and, out of necessity, I adopt the Sephardic *Halacha* (law) which allows for eating rice on Passover. I find and purchase 5 kilos in



Preparing the sheep for the seder
Photo by Sandy Leeder

the local pub, the only store in Mapakomhere. Amazingly the women are able to cook the rice and prepare the chickens in record time.

It is getting late and I have had no word from Modreck or Rabson. I prepare 20 plastic *seder* plates each with bitter (ginger) herbs, the greens, the egg, sheep bones, *charoset*. Each table has a bowl for salt water and three Jerusalem *matzas*. I put out the *kiddush* cups and plastic plates. The only thing missing is the wine. It is almost sundown.

The plan had been to use the rental car to move the wine, but Rabson has the car. Daniel and I decide to

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have the men carry the wine bottles from his house to the school. I decide to use Jack's *shofar* and form a parade. With me blowing the *shofar* and the men carrying the wine, we parade passed the Christian Hallelujah Tent.

I have my own hallelujah moment as a few minutes after we arrive back at the schoolroom with the wine, Rabson and Modreck walk in the door. Modreck passes out the *haggadot*. We start the *seder* with the women lighting the candles that are on each table set.

Modreck reads the "order of the *seder*" in *Shona*, I make the *kiddush* in Hebrew and Rabson and a young female student read the four questions in English and *Shona*.

The *seder* continues according to the traditional order, with Rabson reading the blessings in Hebrew and then in *Shona* and the people eating the "strange" foods and making *matza* sandwiches, dipping, etc.

Modreck and other participants read from the *Shona* translation of Exodus, chapter 12, with its commandment that we celebrate the Passover and the redemption from bondage in Egypt. *

The meal is served. As the plastic *kiddush* cups are small, the celebration includes numerous toasts of *L'chaims* (To Life), and then, the old men break into traditional Lemba dances with drum and song. After a while, I join them.

When we finish the meal and it comes time to bargain over the *afikomen* (piece of *matza* hidden for children to find and receive a prize), I realize the children have been too polite to get up during the *seder* to look for it. Without an obvious "winner", I decide to give each of the 25 children his own chocolate bar, possibly their first. But as we are about to complete the meal, the older children, who had been carefully reading the *haggadah*, start to look for the *afikomen*. When one girl finds it, I celebrate the find and give her the prize money. Between the chocolate bars and the *afikomen* prize, I am sure there will be twice as many kids attending the next *seder*.

* I have inserted this passage into the *haggadah* to ensure that participants understand the importance of the *seder* in Jewish ritualistic observance.

That night, Rabson, Modreck and I sleep in the tent, satisfied we have conducted a very special *seder*.

Saturday, April 7: In the morning Rabson, Modreck and William Mhuka, vice chairman of the GZS, conduct Sabbath services. Daniel then reads a letter of thanks to me, calling me *Moshe* (Moses) and thanking Kulanu. It is clear participants understand the essence of the *seder* and how it is similar to their own story of isolation and redemption.

We enjoy our lunch of chicken and rice, hard-boiled eggs and wine and the *matza* the women baked.

Sunday, April 8: My time in Zimbabwe is coming to an end. It is time to leave. After breakfast we fold up the tent and store it at Daniel's home, ready for the next guests. We pack up the 4x4 and head back to Masvingo. I drop Rabson at the university and drive on to Harare with Modreck. The *seder* has been a great success. To see the Lemba villagers experience their first *seder* as Jews do the world over was emotionally fulfilling and a joyous occasion. I am touched with their comparing me to Moses. However, the *seder* is still the beginning of the Lemba journey of renewal, not the end. Kulanu will help them, but the journey is their own.



Lemba woman cooking over an open fire
Photo by Sandy Leeder

An Insider's View of the Zimbabwe Seder

By Modreck Zvakavapano Maeresera



Modreck Zvakavapano Maeresera

The lighting in the schoolroom was surreal, creating a dreamy, mystic quality. Perhaps it was the mixture of the few light bulbs hanging from the ceiling and the candles, which dotted the tables, arranged in a rectangular shape. At the center of the room, in the empty space a group of old Lemba men was dancing and singing. Among them was one white man also dancing to the rhythm of the beating drums and the traditional Lemba music. To an outside observer he must have looked comically out of place, but not to me. The scene was pregnant with meaning, and I was filled with emotion.

Our Lemba community had just participated in our first "traditional" *Pesach seder* (Passover holiday meal), using a cut and paste *haggadah* that I had helped assemble with my friend and colleague Rabson Wuriga and Sandy Leeder, a Kulanu volunteer from Israel. During the *seder*, Rabson had asked the four questions and I recited the *brachot* (blessings) over the wine. Both of us used Hebrew and *Shona* (local language of Zimbabwe). Community members took turns reading the answers to the questions in *Shona* using their copies of the *haggadah*.

Now we were done. The women were busy removing the dishes from the tables. The children were munching away at the chocolates and candies they had received as gifts. The men were sipping wine in small plastic *kiddush* cups. Looking across the room, I could see old man Chibaya looking at the dancers, a toothless grin on his wizened face. And at my side sat Rabson drinking in the festivities. His facial expression was quietly attentive, but in his eyes, I could see a look of satisfaction that told of the hard work and effort that he had expended to make this great event possible. Indeed Rabson,* more than any other person, had contributed to the success of this day.

And then my eyes returned to the white man dancing discordantly among the Lemba men, occasionally punctuating the rhythm of the clapping hands and the beating drums with a blast from the *shofar* (ram's horn) he had in his hands. For days Sandy Leeder had worked tirelessly to make sure that everything went according to plan. From the *seder* plates with symbolic holiday foods to the dinnerware and food preparation, to the tent and the purchase of wine and soda for *seder* participants and on and on, Sandy had worked in high gear to ensure the success of this special milestone in the life of our Lemba community.

The Lemba relationship with Kulanu began in 1996 when Kulanu first made contact with our Lemba brothers and sisters in South Africa through the late

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* Dr. Rabson Wuriga started working for the Lemba cause almost 20 years ago. At first he worked closely with the late Dr. Mathivha of the South African Lemba community who was committed to bringing the Lemba back into the mainstream Jewish community. Later, he served as the Coordinator of the Lemba Cultural Association (LCA), Zimbabwean Chapter. Today, he serves as the secretary of the Great Zimbabwe Synagogue steering committee and leads Shabbat services every week in the community. His contribution has and continues to be world changing for the Lemba community. Simply put, our engagement, and hopefully, reintegration with, the worldwide Jewish community would not be happening without his efforts. Dr. Wuriga is the author of the recently published book, *Of Sacred Times, Rituals and Customs, Oral Traditions of the Lemba Jews of Zimbabwe*, available through Kulanu and Amazon.com.

Professor Mathivha, a distinguished Lemba elder, and later with us, the Zimbabwean Lemba. Thus began our journey from isolated Jewish community to the path of renewal and hopefully reintegration into mainstream Judaism, the religion of our forefathers. It has been almost 20 years, but here we were celebrating our first *Pesach seder* as a community.

Thousands of years ago, *Hashem* (G-d) stretched forth His mighty hand and rescued the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt. And now thousands of years later *Hashem* had shown us that He does not forget his own.



*First Passover Seder among the Lemba in modern times
Photo by Sandy Leeder*

When we least expected it, Jews from another country reached out to us and invited us home.

For me, this *seder* has strengthened my conviction that the essence of Judaism is about looking after and caring for one another. This has been demonstrated by our friends in Kulanu and those who work with the organization.

We Lemba have been so removed from the larger Jewish world, with our culture and religion under siege from other religions like Islam and Christianity. We were like a pool of water that had no feeder streams, our culture stagnant, and no interaction with our co-religionists in the larger Jewish world. As a result, we lost a lot of the Jewish ritual practices of our faith.

Kulanu has provided us with a lifeline. When we least expected it, Kulanu leaders have reached out to us and extended their hands. The *seder* is a milestone on our epic journey back to Judaism.

Today, in this candle lit schoolroom, we began synchronizing our lives with the Jewish calendar and with Jews around the world. In this schoolroom, which coincidentally serves as a synagogue for the villagers on *Shabbat*, we officially marked the beginning of our return.

We have a synagogue to build, a school, a clinic. But most importantly, we have to relearn the Hebrew prayers, Jewish rituals and traditions, *Halacha* (Jewish law) in order to practice Judaism. But we will have the help of Jewish brothers and sisters who are eager to walk the way with us.

I looked again at Sandy Leeder, the white man who was dancing with a group of Lemba men. I couldn't help but feel that he was now one of us. There he was dancing to one of our most sacred songs. It was a sign to me that we Lembas were coming out of the cocoon that we had woven around ourselves for self-preservation. Maybe we too had something to teach our fellow Jews. They could learn about our Lemba culture and way of life and the many things that we preserved in their original form because of our seclusion.

We owe our thanks to Sandy who worked hard to organize this *seder*, to Dr. Jack Zeller, long time Kulanu leader and friend, and to every volunteer who works with Kulanu on behalf of isolated Jewish communities around the world.

The music stopped and Sandy lifted his glass of wine for a final toast. "*L'chaim*" to life, he said. Everybody lifted their glasses, and in unison, their eyes sparkling with happiness, drank their wine.

Outside the stars were shining and a cool April breeze caressed my face as I made my way towards the tent. I felt full, complete, at peace. There was one thought that kept recurring over and over again in my mind: "Jews do not forget their own."

Today I Am a Woman: Stories of Bat Mitzvah Around the World

Barbara Vinick and Shulamit Reinharz, editors

A Review by Blu Greenberg



*Panama: Katie receives a blessing from Rabbi Zlotovitz
Photo by Roslyn Zelenka*

This special book on the *bat mitzvah* ceremony (ritual celebration for girls reaching maturity within Judaism) is engaging and highly readable and a must read for girls and women of all ages. Its individual testimonies by women from around the world showcase how the *bat mitzvah* is practiced in diverse cultures and societies and represents the highly complex and rich facets of Jewish life in the 20th and 21st centuries. The stories bespeak the importance of *bat mitzvah* in a community struggling with issues of tradition and change, in a world of feminism, in an age of intermarriage, and

inside contemporary cultures that are porous and nonporous. These stories are also living proof that expectations matter, as girls, even shy ones, rise to meet them as never before in our history.

As the stories unfold throughout the book, the reader experiences the meaning and relevance of the *bat mitzvah* as it has and is being practiced around the world. Its themes include its transformative power as Jewish girls become women through the magic of ritual, the importance of *Torah* (five books of Moses) as a covenant between the generations and the novel phenomenon of Jewish women coming of age in a communal space. The book also covers the new responsibility of girls in learning and *davening* (praying), and offers descriptions of the interplay between Diaspora richness and isolation.

Every encounter touches the heart. Why am I so moved by a *bat mitzvah* in St. Thomas, where a 12-year-old delivers her speech standing in *shul* (synagogue) on a floor of sand, a carry-over from the Inquisition, to muffle sounds of Jewish

prayer? What emotion envelops me as I read of the *bat mitzvah* of a lonely Libyan girl, shouting her new Jewish freedom to all passersby in the Geneva airport, and almost risking deportation for it? Did I ever imagine when I heard the word Azerbaijan that there were Mountain Jews there who, until recently, married off their daughters at age 12 instead of marking the day of Jewish maturity in a protective ceremony? And what is that poignant combination of triumph and longing I feel as I look in on *bat mitzvah* ceremonies in post Holocaust communities?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

The stories in this book testify to the variety of Jewish life and the miracle of our survival in so many places despite our relatively small numbers. Yet, the cumulative effect of the testimonies also points up the amazing capacity of Judaism and Jews for self-renewal. Here is the story a twin *bat mitzvah* between American and Ukrainian girls, a powerful expression of *kol yisrael arevim zeh bazeh*, all Israel is responsible for one another, in all of its mutuality.

Here is a story of fathers teaching their daughters to read *Torah*, opening a Yemenite's father's eyes as well as the eyes of his very traditional friends and family. And for the first time in history, here are also stories of mothers teaching their daughters to *layn* (chant) *Torah*, a feat unimaginable when I was growing up, far less than a century ago.

Here, too, are the soul filling anecdotes of the love between parent and child, grandparents and their generations, G-d and community, with Jewishness as the thick thread that binds. Here is an acknowledgement of the central role rabbis play in the continuity of our people, rabbis in far flung places – with a special nod to Chabad – who totally dedicate their lives to nurturing the faith and spirit of their congregants. These stories remind us that we should not take our rabbis for granted.

You will surely read this book, as I did, through laughter and tears and the sweep of emotions about your own Jewish identity, the joy and pride and vulnerability of being a Jew. You will probably reread it, as I did, to be reminded of how fortunate we are to live at this time in human history – a time of growing gender equality -- as inheritors of and partners to a covenantal faith 4,000 years old.

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

In this issue of *KulanuNews*, three of our stories illustrate the wonderful partnerships Kulanu's regional coordinators and other volunteers have forged with local leaders.

In Uganda, for example, regional coordinator, Laura Wetzler teamed up with Dr. Liz Feldman and Hedy Cohen of the United States and Samson Wamani and Miriam Mulobole of Uganda to provide six deaf and deaf-blind children with an education for the first time in their lives.

Dr. Liz Feldman's five-year commitment to raise funds to support this project will end in 2013 and we are looking for a new volunteer or organization to take over the lead on fundraising for this special program. The cost will be about \$3000 a year for all six children to continue in school.

The two stories about the first Passover *seder* in Mapakomhere, Zimbabwe is another example of a unique partnership. This time it was between Kulanu board member and regional coordinator Sandy Leeder, who worked closely with Lemba leaders Rabson Wuriga and Modreck Maeresera



*Harriet Bograd, President of Kulanu
Photo by Viviane Topp*

to organize this extraordinary event. Our two articles on the *seder* bring together Sandy's interesting, and often humorous, description of his prep-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Uganda: Abayudaya Changing the Lives of Deaf Children

by Judy Manelis



Deaf Abayudaya students signing "hello"
Photo by Laura Wetzler

In 2008, during her yearly visit to Uganda, Laura Wetzler,* Kulanu's Coordinator for the Abayudaya Jewish community, visited the economically impoverished village of Namutumba. For the first time, community members introduced her to six hearing-impaired children ages 4-15 who had never attended school and whose communication skills were limited to a few signs recognizable only by family members.** Although Laura had visited the village before, she had no knowledge that these children existed. As in many societies with little or no experience meeting people with disabilities and superstitious of the reasons for them, families had kept the children hidden, fearful of exposing them to

possible ridicule or bullying by others. As Laura noted in a recent report, the six Abayudaya children "had never met other deaf children or adults" and "were vulnerable and withdrawn".

Laura could and would not leave these six children to a life of isolation and dependency. The children needed the opportunity to attend school, develop some practical skills and attend vocational training classes so they could achieve some level of economic security and independence. Just as important was giving them the self-confidence to communicate with others and to enable them to integrate more fully into the life of their community.

As a result of that initial meeting with the children, Laura began to search throughout eastern Uganda for a school that would be appropriate for these special needs children. She was accompanied on her quest by two Abayudaya students studying counseling at the university and by Hedy Cohen, a community volunteer and former deaf educator from Evanston, Illinois, who spends five or six weeks a year in the Abayudaya community working on health related issues. Their search led them to Sam Kateu and the Kavule Parents' School for the Deaf outside of Mbale. (See page 18 for a history of the school.)

But how would Kulanu support and oversee this very worthwhile project? In her determined and highly organized fashion, Laura created a proposal and budget that included tuition and boarding expenses for the six children, transportation, medical needs and parental visits. Sam Wamani, Abayudaya medical officer, would serve as the director and supervisor of the program. And Namutumba's own Miriam Mulobole, a pre-school

* Laura Wetzler is a Kulanu volunteer.

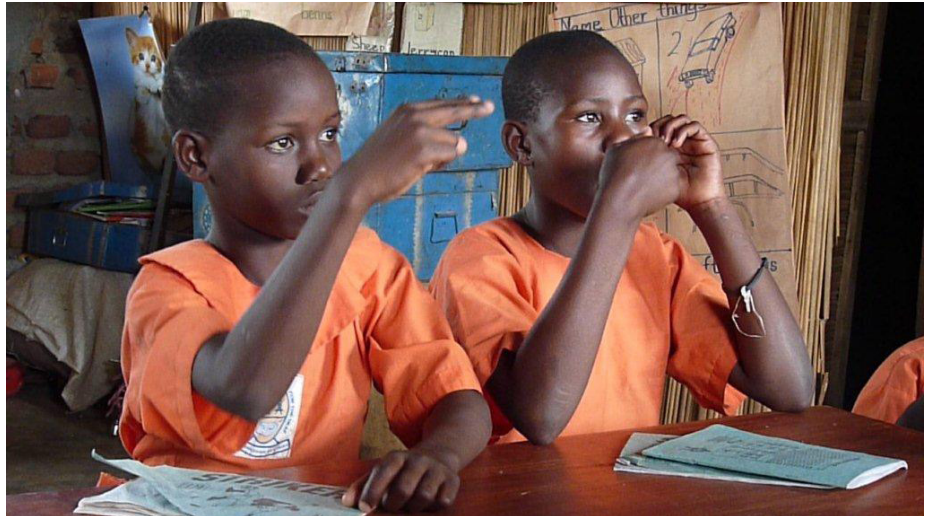
**The children were tested at a clinic in Tororo, Uganda. Doctors believe that the six children (three from one family) share the same genetic disorders: Usher's or Stargard's Syndrome. Three of them are also at risk for losing their sight in addition to their profound deafness.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

teacher at the Abayudaya elementary school and part time librarian, would serve as assistant director and monitor student progress.

But how to pay for it all?

Enter Dr. Liz Feldman, a family physician in Chicago. Dr. Feldman's mother-in-law had learned about the Abayudaya community while watching a video on television entitled "Yearning to Belong" about the Abayudaya community's conversion to Judaism. It was just the kind of story she thought her daughter-in-law would enjoy. She was right. When she saw the film, Dr. Feldman noted a name and number at the bottom of the screen for people who might want to help the community. The name was Laura Wetzler. Liz called and was referred to Hedy Cohen, also from Evanston, Illinois who, miraculously, lived only a few blocks away from Dr. Feldman and was deeply involved in the community.



*Kavule students practicing sign language
Photo by Lorne Mallin*

In the end, Dr. Feldman made a five-year commitment to raise the funds needed to pay for the deaf children's schooling at the Kavule School.

Not only did Dr. Feldman fulfill her goal of raising approximately \$2800/year (this is year number five) with the help of her synagogue community, but she discovered an organization on Facebook, the World of Children, that gave out humanitarian awards each year to men and women who had made a difference in the lives of children. Another miracle of coincidence! Working with Building Brighter Futures*, an English charity, Dr. Feldman nominated Kavule founder Sam Kateu who, in 2009, was chosen as an honoree. His reward: \$50,000 to pay for improvements and necessities in the school. Moreover, World of Children arranged for the Canadian



*From left to right, Ruth and Helen
Photo by Laura Wetzler*

*Building Brighter Futures has provided much needed help to the Kavule school, funding a four-room classroom building, providing electricity, paying teacher's salaries and giving school scholarships to needy students.

based Ryan's Well, a former recipient of their humanitarian award to donate a well costing \$14,000 that brought fresh water to the school.

Liz Feldman has visited Uganda only once. She spent three weeks working as a doctor in the Abayudaya community. She describes the visit as life changing.

"I had no concept of poverty. We talk about poverty in the US. But in Uganda, there was often no running water, no electricity, no sanitation. People don't know where their food is coming from." When asked if she wants to go back, she says ruefully, "I would love to go back and take my family, but the cost of the tickets is so high. Somehow I feel it would be better to donate the money than spend it on our trip."

In our conversation, Hedy Cohen shared with me what she has discovered in her seven or eight years as a volunteer in Uganda. "Schooling is very expensive in Uganda," she noted. "As a result, parents often cannot afford school fees. So in very poor families, children take turns going to school. Some children don't finish secondary school until they are in their mid-twenties. Also, they have an unusual system, if a child fails an exam, he/she has to repeat the whole grade again. Because of these issues and other problems, it is not unusual to find a classroom with children of all ages."

As a result of these educational norms, the diversity in the ages of the six special needs Abayudaya students, who had no prior education, did not create a problem. They were able to attend the Kavule School and participate in any class that met their individual needs.

In the three years since the Namutumba students have attended the Kavule School, they have made great progress. For Laura Wetzler, it is a joy to see "the huge change in the lives of these children". According to Laura, the children, now ages 8-20, "are communicating in the official deaf sign language used in Uganda as well as in written English. They are connecting for the



*Dr. Liz Feldman with Abayudaya children
Photo by Laura Wetzler*

first time with people outside of their families. They are blossoming. And they know they are not alone." With their education has come personal changes as well. "The children are now more outgoing and happier and have hopes of facing adulthood with real life skills."

Now that Liz Feldman's five-year commitment is ending, Laura would love to find another volunteer or organization to take on the fundraising responsibility for this project that is so dear to her heart. If you would like to get involved, contact Kulanu at: www.kulanu.org/contact

Do you receive emails from Kulanu, which we send about once a month? If not, would you like to? If so, please simply go to www.kulanu.org/contact and send us any message, and we'll be glad to add you to our list.

Kavule School



Sam Kateu
Photo by Judy Manelis

Before 1998, many deaf children in the area of Mbale, Uganda had little or no access to educational opportunities. Instead, they were placed in mainstream school-rooms that did not address their hearing loss. Inevitably, these children congregated in the back of their classroom, understanding nothing, unable to participate. They

were mostly illiterate.

Sam Kateu, a visionary and a humanitarian, who lived in Mbale, recognized the plight of these children. While some were neglected in mainstream schools, he saw others who were not going to school at all. They were left at home to tend the family's gardens or crops or to look after the animals. Kateu, who was himself disabled after suffering a career-ending injury, wanted to help.

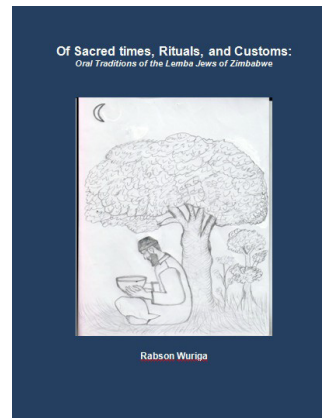
So, in 1999, with little money and no formal training in education, he opened a school for deaf children in his home. Thus began the journey of one man to change the lives of the community's deaf children. The school, Kavule Parents' School for the Deaf, began with eight children, and continued to grow as parents and families, who had been without hope of educating their children and without expectations that their children would ever be self-sufficient, sought to enroll them. By 2000, there were 13 children in grades one and two; by 2004, there were 36 in grades one through six; and by 2011, there were 70 children in grades one to seven. With the scourge of AIDs throughout Africa, it is not surprising that many of the deaf children in the school then and now are orphans who have no one to advocate for them. In fact, of the 70 children enrolled in 2011, 34 were orphans. JM

New EBook Publications

KULANU is privileged to announce its publication of three ebooks by members of the African Jewish communities of Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Ethiopia.

Of Sacred Times, Rituals, and Customs: Oral Traditions of the Lemba Jews of Zimbabwe

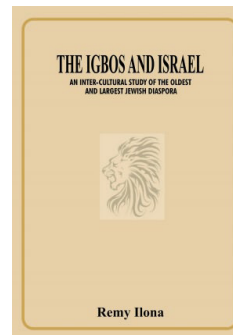
by Rabson Wuriga (July, 2012).



Dr. Wuriga, a scholar and a member of the Lemba community of Zimbabwe, shares his interviews with Lemba elders and his analysis of Lemba Judaic customs. Research was funded by the Institute of Jewish and Community Research.

The Igbos and Israel: An Inter-cultural Study of the Oldest and Largest Jewish Diaspora

by Remy Ilona (July, 2012).



In his book, Nigerian scholar Ilona presents, analyzes and compares Judaic history, practices and ideas with the oral history, culture and practices of the Igbo of Nigeria. Research was funded by Kulanu.

The Journey of One Man From the Sources of the Nile to Zion

by Yeshayahu Chane and Dalit Avrahamoff (Oct, 2012).

Author describes his role in assisting the Ethiopian Jewish community to reach Israel during Operations Moses and Solomon.

Support the work of Kulanu, Inc., a non-profit organization based in New York, NY, by purchasing these ebooks through the Kulanu web site:

www.kulanu.org/books

The preparation and publication of these three e-books was done by Dr. Carolivia Herron through her new company, EpicCenter Stories Publications.

Mission Accomplished: Documentary Film on Igbo Jewish Community

by Jeff L. Lieberman

Over the past few months, I have had the pleasure of sharing my new documentary film, “RE-EMERGING: The Jews of Nigeria”* with audiences around the country. The project was six years in the making and a labor of love. Surprisingly, it was the result of an e-mail.

One evening in 2005, I received an invitation to attend a lecture and slideshow given by Rabbi Howard Gorin on his experiences with communities in Nigeria and Uganda who were practicing Judaism. A local Los Angeles synagogue was hosting the Maryland-based rabbi, and on a lark, I attended. Over the course of an hour, I was mesmerized by Rabbi Gorin’s photos of these communities. To this day, one picture remains seared in my memory. It was a photo from Nigeria. At first, it appeared to be a hut in the forest. On closer inspection, the structure had a *Magen David* (Jewish star) over the front door. Rabbi Gorin explained that it was a synagogue.

Approaching Rabbi Gorin after his presentation, I asked him if I could join him on his next visit to Nigeria and put my video skills to work, perhaps for a documentary. I had never been to Africa, but was fascinated by the continent, and curious about what Judaism looked like so many miles away. Several months after meeting Rabbi Gorin, we were on a plane together, and subsequently arrived in Abuja, Nigeria to the friendliest, warmest welcome I had ever experienced.

From Abuja we traveled together, crisscrossing the country meeting several additional Jewish communities which embraced us with hugs, songs and “*Shalom*”. For many of these Nigerian Jews, Rabbi Gorin was the only rabbi they had ever met. And so, for a group of people trying to figure out Judaism on their own, our visit



*Jeff Lieberman with members of Tikvat Israel Synagogue in Abuja, Nigeria
Photo courtesy of Jeff Lieberman*

was a chance for them to absorb as much as they could about Judaism in the short time that we were with them.

Much of our time was spent with one of the larger congregations, *Tikvat Israel* (The Hope of Israel) in Nigeria’s capital, Abuja. Their synagogue was a one-room building built on the property of its owner, Habakkuk, a man in his 40’s who lives on the property with his wife and five children. Their home sits at the end of a long, dusty road full of potholes. In that neighborhood, chickens and children dart between creeping cars, goats wander through discarded trash and people transport all sorts of goods by cart or on their head.

To understand Habakkuk’s compound, think of a quiet oasis in the midst of chaotic activity. Here, under the shade of a big cashew tree, Jews from around Abuja gather to pray, eat, sing, dance and celebrate Judaism together. They have only a handful of prayer books, and only a few community members are able to lead services or read Hebrew, but they are completely committed to

* See “Among the Igbos of Nigeria During the Festival of Lights,” by William Miles, in the Fall 2011 issue of *KulanuNews*.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

living as Jews. As they joined together in singing “*Oseh Shalom*”, the sound is not only beautiful and distinctly African, but its familiarity brought tears to my eyes.

According to Habakkuk and others I interviewed, many Igbo believe they have a connection to ancient Israel. This common history, they say, is part of their oral tradition that has been handed down through many generations. They point out words in their Igbo language that sound like Hebrew. They also point out obvious similarities between Igbo and Jewish tradition like circumcising their sons on the eighth day of life, and practices followed by women during their menstrual period. While most Igbo practice Christianity, the result of years of missionary proselytizing in Africa, these Igbo have discovered Judaism on their own through the Internet or through friends and family members.

While it is difficult for any filmmaker, historian or rabbi to prove or disprove an Igbo-Hebrew ancestral connection, it is clear that these Igbo share a passionate commitment to Judaism. I was amazed at the sacrifices many of them are prepared to make to learn about and practice their Jewish faith. Many have become vegetarians since kosher meat is not available. Others travel long distances to gather for prayer, sitting through services without a *siddur* (prayer book). They abide by the laws of *Shabbat* (Sabbath), even going for a dip in the river, which serves as a *mikvah* (ritual bath), before services. They spend what time they have learning Hebrew, whether it be from each other or at the cyber café where they research Jewish law and practice. While they are proud to identify themselves as Jews, they recognize that Nigeria is often a battleground where religious extremists terrorize and murder each other. As a result, this small Jewish community knows it must balance pride with caution.

At the end of my first *Shabbat*, I was given a great honor: an Igbo name. My name is Chukwu Emeka, which means God made a special person. At that moment, I knew I carried a great responsibility...to educate Jews outside of Africa about this committed group of Igbo who have embraced Judaism. I have taken that mission seriously, and, though it was an arduous journey, I'm proud to have completed my film on the community. It appears to be inspiring and motivating audiences wher-

ever it is shown.* It is my hope that the film continues to spread the Igbo's story and helps them get the resources they want and need to deepen their knowledge and enhance their Jewish practice. More importantly, they wish for recognition and acceptance. Based on a few screenings I've had so far, it gives me great satisfaction to know that love has already begun to head their way.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

arations for the *seder* and an article by Modreck who describes his intense feelings about participating in his first *seder* and what Kulanu's role has meant to him. These articles are particularly exciting as we prepare for Modreck's history-making visit to the US in February and March. (When you read this, there still may be openings in his speaking schedule. Please check kulanu.org for more details.)

Other articles include the heart-warming story by college student Kimberly Dueñas about her father's return to Judaism and her own introduction to the emerging Jewish community of Armenia, El Salvador. In addition, we have a personal piece by Jeff Lieberman about the making of his film on the Nigerian Jewish community and Blu Greenberg's wonderful review of board member Barbara Vinick's new book on *bat mitzvah*. Lastly, Kulanu is proud to announce its publication of three ebooks by African authors from Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia. Enjoy!

Harriet

*I am happy to report that 700 High Holiday prayer books arrived in Nigeria in October, a gift from the Manetto Hill Jewish Center on New York's Long Island, with shipping paid for by a Los Angeles gentleman who had recently seen the film.



TODAH RABAH (THANK YOU), DONORS

Donations received between March 1 and November 20, 2012.

\$10,000+

The Irving I. Moskowitz Foundation (\$25,000); Bequest from the Estate of Roslyn Stone (\$31,765.24)

\$2,000-5,000

American Jewish University, sponsoring Brandeis Collegiate Institute 2012 summer program participants; Harriet Bograd and Ken Klein; Hope and Matthew Feldman; the Good People Fund; Harold Grinspoon Charitable Foundation - B'nai Tzedek Youth Foundation; Howard Metzenberg Philanthropic Fund, a donor-advised fund of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties; Leopold and Ruth Friedman Foundation; Paul O'Donohue; Ira and Marilyn Polon; Jack and Diane Zeller

\$1,000-1,999

Ahavath Achim Synagogue (Atlanta, GA); Anonymous; the Cherna Moskowitz Foundation; Congregation Hakafa (Glencoe, IL); Stephen Jacobson; Alan and Agnes Leshner; Millstein Charitable Foundation; Tara Parks; Larry Paul and Joye Newman; Temple Beth El Salinas Religious School - includes anonymous gifts (Salinas, CA); Leslie Sacks; Rabbis Gerald and Bonita Sussman; Karen and Andrew Thorburn; Woodlands Community Temple Social Action Committee (White Plains, NY)

\$500-999

Susan Beckerman; Irwin and Elaine Berg; Joe and Beth Fox; Rabbi Lawrence and Deborah Freedman; Andrew and Chanda Ginsberg; Kenneth Levien; Beth and Michael Moskowitz; National Center to Encourage Judaism; Newton Centre Minyan (Newton Centre, MA); Ruth and Haris Pitlick Fund.

\$100-499

For this list, please see the November 30, 2012 post on the Kulanu Blog, titled "Thank You Donors!" – www.kulanu.org/blog

Donations in Honor of and in Memory of...

These were received between March 1, 2012 and November 20, 2012. Please let us know if we have missed anyone (go to www.kulanu.org/contact) and we will list them in the next newsletter.

Donations in honor of someone

Donors are in italics.

***Note:** This summer, Kulanu chose to honor Aaron Kintu Moses and Naume Sabano of Uganda for their leadership of and commitment to the Abayudaya Jewish community. The online "**Tribute to Aaron & Naume**" can be found on the Kulanu web site at www.kulanu.org/tribute/tribute2012.php - please enjoy the lovely photos and messages submitted by Kulanu donors and friends of Aaron, Naume, and the Jewish community of Uganda.

Joyce Alpiner - *Isaac M Wise Temple*; An Anonymous Couple - *Anonymous and Anonymous, through the "I Do Foundation" and JustGive.org*; Nellie Beckerman - *George and Toby Wakstein*; Harriet Bograd, Serge Etele, and Mickey & Mordy Feinberg - *Susan and Leonard Merewitz*; Harriet Bograd and Ken Klein - *Nancie S Martin*; Ethan Ginsberg-Margo - *Carol Ginsberg*; Dolores Goldfinger - *Isaac M Wise Temple*; Sara Beth Goldstein - *"Grandpa Baruch" Goldstein*; Rabbi Margie Klein - *Mindy Murray*; Orli Kotel and Benjamin Finkel - *Harriet Bograd and Ken Klein, Ruth and Jacob Kaufman*; Sandy Leeder - *Tom and Deborah Weinreb Jacobsen (also in honor of their own 30th wedding anniversary)*; Judy Manelis - *Shelby Kashket*; Katelyn Mays - *Men Jelly*; Cindy Paisner - *Caryl Diengott*; Aron and Karen Primack - *Sabina Primack and Marshall Phillip*; Roberta and Lloyd Roos - *Barbara Terry Gaims-Spiegel and Robert M Spiegel*; Monte Schloss - *Andrew Beider*; Bonita and Gerald Sussman - *Eleanor Dovdavyan*; Michele Tamarren - *Barbara Vinick*; Barbara Vinick - *Myra Schiff*; Laura Wetzler - *Kenneth Lindauer*; Jack and Diane Zeller - *Ted and Roz Kram*; Jack Zeller - *Roz and Ed Kolodny*; Lenore and Marvin Zinn - *Corinne Belford*

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Donations in memory of someone

Donors are in italics.

Dora Bloch and Danny Bloch - *Lois and Harvey Gelb*; Moshe Cotel - *Harriet Bograd and Ken Klein, Martin and Amy Melman*; Adeline Donner - *Barbara H. Vinick*; Yetta and Melvin L. Gelfer - *Susan and Steve Goldberg*; Jerome M. Ginsberg - *Carol Ginsberg*; Ullah Green - *Miriam Rosenthal*; Hy and Nettie Kaplan - *George and Toby Wakstein*; Roslyn Malkin - *Sara Page Podolsky*; Eva Ginsburg Resnikoff - *Barbara . Vinick*; Allen Rosenfeld - *Ruth Lee Rosenfeld*; Josh Schonhaut - *Jerry Romain and Nick Russo*; Florence Shroder - *Mark Shroder and Susan Keller*; Zurita Simunek - *Judith Seed*; Shaina Rut Bat Yitzchak ha Kohen - *Heide Fuchs*

Campaigns & Mitzvah Projects

Brittany Davis (Dunn, NC): raised funds for the Abayudaya Schools as part of her Mitzvah Project; Brittany became *bat mitzvah* on May 5, 2012.

Rabbi Marcy Delbick (Salinas, CA): began raising money for the Dora Bloch Fund (which supports the residents of the Girls' Dorm at Semei Kakungulu High School in Uganda) in February as part of the Temple Beth El Salinas Religious School's fundraiser project. The project is currently half-way to the \$2,700 fundraising goal, and donations keep coming!

Lucy Markelis Dybner (Maplewood, NJ): raised \$2,218 (148% of her fundraising goal!) for the Kulanu-Abayudaya School Nutrition Program through her Personal Fundraising Page (www.tinyurl.com/lucysproject), as her Mitzvah Project. Lucy became *bat mitzvah* on October 27, 2012.

Fran Ransom (Canton, OH): raised \$1,305 for the Kulanu-Abayudaya Education Fund through her online Fundraising Page in honor of her adult *bat mitzvah*. Fran "Amirah D'vorah" became *bat mitzvah* on October 27, 2012.

Fall 2012 Kulanu-Abayudaya Speaking Tour Sponsors

Our thanks to all the organizations who hosted Aaron Kintu Moses during this year's tour! Speaking Tour proceeds benefit the two Abayudaya schools in Uganda.

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*Aaron Kintu Moses, director of the Abayudaya elementary school, with children on the playground
Photo by Alan and Agnes Leshner*