



# KULANU

Volume 20 Number 1 Spring, 2013

## ***Re-joining the Family Progressive Judaism in Poland***

***by Rabbi Haim Dov Beliak  
Introduction by Judy Manelis***

*In 1979, as an executive in the public relations department of national United Jewish Appeal (UJA), I was asked to organize and lead a mission of editors and publishers of American Jewish newspapers on a trip to Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania and Israel. The name of the trip was "From Destruction to Redemption". In Poland, we would visit the one remaining synagogue in Warsaw, where once there were 300 synagogues and shteibelackh (small synagogues) sprinkled throughout the city; the Rappaport memorial sculpture to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; Mila 18, where Jews were assembled for transport to the concentration camp; the Jewish Historical Institute, which houses remnant identity cards and documents of Jewish communities in Poland and other lands destroyed in the Holocaust; and, of*



*Rabbi Haim Dov Beliak, envoy of the World/European Union for Progressive Judaism to Beit Polska, the Union of Progressive Jews in Poland, Beit Warszawa, 2011.*

*course, Auschwitz-Birkenau, the death camp where "Arbeit Macht Frei" (work makes man free) stands above the gate welcoming its Jewish victims.*

*None of the writers (myself included) had been in Poland before. As we were 18 in number, we called ourselves the chai group\*. For all of us, our trip to the geographic center of the Holocaust was surely one of the most emotional and devastating experiences of our lives. Subsequently, we all wrote articles about our visit. I remember one sentence from my own article. "We did not see one Jewish child in Poland."*

\*The Hebrew word for life is chai. However, all Hebrew letters have a numerical equivalent. In the case of chai, the chet is 8; the yud is 10. Together they equal 18. Thus both the word and the number 18 have significance in Jewish life.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

### ***IN THIS ISSUE***

<b>Re-joining the Family—Progressive Judaism in Poland .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Southern Italy Jewish Renaissance .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Tribute to Kulanu's President .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>A Guatemalan Love Story .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Beit Din Visits Nicaragua .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Jewish Tourism Returns to Burma .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Thank You Donors .....</b>	<b>21</b>



*Severyn Ashkenazy*  
*Photo Courtesy of Mr. Ashkenazy*

*Because of that profound experience 34 years ago, it is particularly gratifying for me to publish this article by Rabbi Haim Beliak about his work in Poland revitalizing Jewish communities and synagogues. JM*

Poland is the birthplace or origin of many of North America's Jews. Some scholars even believe that 70-80% of American Jews have roots in Poland. Certainly, we know that the great intellectual and religious movements of Zionism and Hassidism flourished on Polish soil. In fact, Polish lands were once a place where Jews survived and even prospered. Of course, this was all pre-Holocaust.

Today, most Jewish tourists to Poland come on memorial visits... to cemeteries, to former shtetls (small Jewish villages) empty of Jewish residents, to the streets where the Warsaw Ghetto once stood or to Auschwitz to see the barracks, and crematoria and say Kaddish (prayer for the dead). These visitors are only vaguely aware that there are more than just memorials in Poland. I am writing this article to report that there is a miraculous and heartwarming revival of Jewish life now underway.

The surprising story of individual Jews and small communities, who are finding their way back to Judaism in the geographic heart of the Holocaust, is a testament to Jewish survival and Jewish spiritual endurance. Hopefully, in the future, visitors will not only visit sites connected to the Holocaust, but will visit a small but determined Jewish community just now emerging.

### **Let me start at the beginning.**

In 1995, a loosely organized progressive Jewish congregation called Beit Warszawa was founded by Severyn Ashkenazy, 76, a Polish born Holocaust survivor and successful businessman, who returned to Poland in 1993 to reclaim family property. On his arrival, he sought to meet members of the Jewish community, only to be told that there were very few Jews remaining in Poland and that they were either elderly survivors who were dying or young Poles who were leaving the country. It seemed that there would be no next generation of Jews in the country.

But Ashkenazy persisted.

For the first few years after his arrival, he focused his efforts on providing a nourishing Sabbath dinner with a Jewish cultural program for those Jews who self-identified and would show up for the evening. Initially, attendees admitted to only a passing curiosity about Judaism and Jewish culture. In time, however, many admitted that they were not merely curiosity seekers, or what I like to call Jewish cultural anthropologists, but that they yearned to return to their Jewish roots. Eventually, out of the Sabbath dinner and program a bone fide Jewish congregation and gathering place was born.

Currently, the congregation is led by Israeli born Rabbi Gil Nativ who came to Warsaw with his wife Ziva in August 2012 to serve as the rabbi of Beit Warszawa. Rabbi Nativ was ordained by the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem, a Reform seminary. Today Beit Warszawa sponsors Sabbath services, Hebrew classes, a children's Sabbath school, a summer day camp, holiday and Jewish learning and cultural events and conversion classes.

In 2005, Ashkenazy founded a US nonprofit organization, Friends of Jewish Renewal in Poland, to raise funds to support what was becoming a growing Jewish community. Three years later, in 2008, Ashkenazy

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**



founded Beit Polska (House of Poland) to minister to the Jewish population of Warsaw as well as to encourage the formation and support of other Jewish congregations elsewhere in the country. Since its inception, Beit Polska has become the umbrella organization for all progressive Jewish communities in Poland and has trained, together with the Friends of Jewish Renewal, 15 lay cantors and five teachers who teach an Introduction to Judaism course. Lay cantors are taught by Cantor Mimi Shefer, a professional singer and cantor who lives in Berlin.

The current chair of Beit Polska is Piotr Stasiak, a physicist turned businessman turned Jewish community leader. In the last two years, the number of Progressive congregations/havurot in Poland has grown from one to seven. In addition to Beit Warszawa, they are: Beit Lublin, Beit Lodz, Beit

Poznan, Beit Gdansk, Beit Plock, and the newest addition, Beit Bialystok, founded in August, 2012. I know that some of these city names are known not only for the vibrant Jewish communities that once inhabited these places, but for the ghettos that were built in their midst during the Holocaust. We also know that large numbers of Jews died in each of them or were deported to the concentration camps. The revival of Jewish life in these places adds to the miracle of their existence.

My own involvement in Poland began in 2008 when I spent several months in Warsaw as a sabbatical replacement for Rabbi Burt Schuman, who played a key role in the development of Beit Warszawa. I found the experience of supporting a Jewish religious and communal revival in Poland truly gratifying and determined to stay involved. I returned to Poland in 2011 and 2012, spending about ten months there altogether.

I was sponsored by a one-time grant from the World Union for Progressive Judaism and the European Union for Progressive Judaism. Today I serve as execu-

tive director of Beit Polska and spend six months a year there as a volunteer. My mandate is to continue to nurture existing congregations and to look for opportunities to create new ones.

When I am not physically present in Poland, I keep in



*Worshippers at Beit Bialystok break off pieces of challah after Friday night worship.  
Photo by Andrzej Górski*

touch on a daily basis with leaders of all seven communities. My usual schedule is rising at 4 am California time (which is 1 pm in Poland) and working until 12 noon. My “off hours” are spent trying to find funding to support the revival. To say that my work in Poland has become my life’s mission would be an understatement.

### **Response to Revival**

The response of many members of the organized Jewish community to the phenomena of individuals reclaiming their Jewish identity has often been confused, dismissive, and skeptical. Some organizations have tried to capitalize on this phenomenon by seeking to regain public Jewish property. Others saw an opportunity to connect with the burgeoning Jewish community and to foster an old world, 19th century form of Judaism. This does not appear to be representative of what Jews in Poland are looking for today.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

When I talk to North American congregations about the work of building a Progressive Jewish community in Poland, I often encounter a range of responses. Some individuals cannot get beyond their unresolved mourning and grief. Others are skeptical and full of questions. (Why didn't "they" move to Israel? What is their motive for connecting to Judaism? Why did their grandparents convert to another religion? Why did their grandparents support communism? "They" are simply seeking some advantage! ) Often, anger and ignorance combine to create a wall of disassociation and rejection toward the very people we should be embracing! The happy news of reuniting with lost brothers and sisters is sometimes met with hostility and suspicion. Thank goodness there are those who recognize the miracle of return and want to help these congregations flourish.

## **Today**

### **Step-by-Step Program**

Two step-by-step programs are currently being run in Warsaw. One is a ten-month weekly class of 28 sessions that integrates Sabbath and weekend learning opportunities. The classes are taught in Polish and are the equivalent of An Introduction to Judaism course.

The second program, also taught in Polish, is given monthly during a series of intensive weekends and is geared more for residents of other communities in Poland, who travel to Warsaw to learn and to be with other Jews.

Motivation is obviously high for those students who must travel great distances to attend. Graduates of these two Step-by-Step programs also participate in



*Prayer leaders Anna Jagielska-Riveiro and Piotr Kondrat at graduation ceremonies in July 2011 at Beit Warszawa*

local Sabbath discussion groups in their respective communities. Teachers include Joanna Auron, artist and cultural historian from Bialystok; Piotr Mirski, a graduate student in Lublin, who is also a musician, and Ola Blecharczk, a graduate student in Poznan.

Students who complete this program have been empowered to form their own communities/havurot/congregations. It has been exciting to see the individual and community growth that has resulted.

## **NOW WHAT?**

Although funding from our initial benefactors continues, it is insufficient for the growing needs of the congregations. Recently I applied to Kulanu for a grant to support our newest congregation in Bialystok.

While Kulanu has spread its remarkable efforts throughout the world, in Africa, Asia, South and Central America, Europe and Southwestern United States, rebuilding Jewish life in Poland, a place of such historic Jewish importance, fits Kulanu's mandate of support-

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 5**

ing isolated and emerging Jewish communities around the world. The small Jewish communities of Poland are isolated, even geographically from each other, and emerging, just as are communities in more “exotic” locations. Kulanu responded with a small grant for our newest Bialystok Congregation.

As we look to the future, we are wondering how we will find the funds we will need to sustain this incredible renaissance. One wish is that rabbis and teachers will come to Poland from other countries and donate their

time, so we can train local teachers to continue this revival. Perhaps Jewish congregations from around the world will partner with individual congregations here to help them grow and to become self-sustaining. We are looking for ideas, partners, funds. If you can help us in what I see as a holy mission, please contact Judy Manelis at Kulanu.

*For more information on the Polish Jewish community, please go to: [www.JewishRenewalinPoland.org](http://www.JewishRenewalinPoland.org) and [RabbiBeliak@jewishrenewalinpoland.org](mailto:RabbiBeliak@jewishrenewalinpoland.org)*

In August, 2012, Rabbi Beliak met Joanna Auron, who came to Warsaw from Bialystok to interview for the Step-by-Step program described above. She was well informed about Judaism. After Rabbi Beliak and Piotr Stasiak talked with her, they decided to help her develop a local Progressive (Reform and Conservative) community in Bialystok. Here are some comments from Joanna Auron:

*...I am so very grateful that we were offered this chance at being Jews together. The Judaism Step-by-Step course and the Shabbatot we hold - thanks to Beit Polska's support of Beit Bialystok- are the first time since the 1950s that Bialystok Jews have been able to study and pray together in a semi-public and openly religious setting. 50 years of silence. And now - Jewish songs, Jewish voices raised in prayer. Imagine.*

*...I do hope more people will come forth and join us. I think this will take some time. The Jews who live here have gotten used to secrecy, and loneliness. They have made their lives as comfortable as possible in the situation in which they have found themselves, and are reluctant to risk losing both the safety that comes from blending into the background and the comfort of having arranged one's inner life to fit external circumstances. I am, however, optimistic. After only 5 meetings and less than 2 months, we had 6 Jews in the room. Not yet a minyan, but, still, an exhilarating sight indeed - us praying together in this room in Bialystok, in a city people call “emptied of Jews”. \**



*Joanna Auron-Górska and her daughter Martyna, 6.  
Photo by Andrzej Górska*

*\* These days there are between 12-15 people for Shabbaton weekends in Bialystok. Some people do not feel free to come. Often people will come and then not return again. Sometimes there are*

*internal pressures from spouses or family not to attend. “Being out as a Jew” is not always a benefit in Poland. These are small communities still traumatized by whisper campaigns.*



# ***Rabbi Barbara Aiello and Southern Italy A Story of Persistence and Faith***

***by Judy Manelis***



*Rabbi Barbara Aiello  
Photo by Kimberly Dyer*

*What does it mean to dig into historic records of the dead looking for Jewish names? What is it like to hear references to unknown family histories, secret customs, isolated incidents that parents and even grandparents tried to hide from their children, neighbors? How would we feel discovering hundreds of villages, which for centuries were heavily populated with Jews, but are now judenrein, or empty of Jews. I have used the German word judenrein on purpose here because one might think the previous questions were referring to the Holocaust. In fact, I am referring to the Spanish Inquisition of 1492 and its aftermath.*

*But oh, the similarities: villages or former shtetles without Jews...Jews burned at the stake or in the crematoria...families who survived by hiding, by passing*

*as Christians, and/or by keeping their Jewish faith and ancestry secret to protect the lives of their children... And oftentimes, these similarities had the same result... the diluting or loss of identity and historic memory of their Jewish descendants.*

*It is startling to compare these two tragedies...the murder of 6 million Jews during the Holocaust of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the forced conversions, exile and auto de fés experienced by Spanish and Portuguese Jews who faced the Inquisition beginning in 1492. A span of five hundred years separates these two world shattering events in our history ...and yet, and yet...and yet...*

*On page one of this issue of KulanuNews Rabbi Haim Beliak talks of the miracle of Jewish rebirth in Poland... individuals discovering their Jewish identities or hidden history more than 80 years after the Holocaust. And here on page 6, we focus on the work of Rabbi Barbara Aiello who is ministering to Bnei Anousim (forced ones, descendants of Crypto Jews) who are discovering their Jewish identities or hidden histories more than 500 years after the Inquisition. Both Poland, where Jews lived for 1,000 years, and Southern Italy, where Jews first settled during the time of the Maccabees, were decimated by anti-Jewish legislation, exile and murder. Here in Calabria and Sicily, as in Poland, there were once vibrant and heavily populated regions at one time home to thousands of Jews... Palermo, Siracusa, Naples, Nocera, Serrastretta, Messina, Lamezia, Puglio...one could go on and on.*

*Rabbi Barbara, like Rabbi Haim, believes she has found her life's work, and that God has placed her in Southern Italy at this time in our history. Her task is not to reverse what happened to our people, which, of course, is impossible, but to modify or temper the harsh realities of history, to stem our losses. The Jewish history in Southern Italy, as in Poland, not only resulted in the murder and forced conversions of millions of Jews, but deprived the Jewish people of millions of their descendants.*

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 7**



*Angela Amato (right), a Bat Anous who has embraced her Jewish roots, smiles with delight as her son Alessandro carries the Torah during his Bar Mitzvah, the first such celebration at the New Tamid del Sud synagogue in Serrastretta. Rabbi Aiello (left) officiated.*

*Photo by Domenico Pulice*

Rabbi Barbara Aiello, or Rabbi Barbara as she prefers to be called, has been deeply engaged with Jewish outreach in Southern Italy for ten years. What began as a personal journey to share her family story of Crypto Jewish observance and survival with the people of Calabria, and to inform them about large scale Jewish settlement in the region in former centuries (a fact largely forgotten by present day residents), became her life's work. It also signaled the beginning of the anousim\* movement in Italy. KulanuNews interviewed Rabbi Barbara in 2008. It is time for us to check in on her to see where her journey began and where it has taken her.

In a recent interview, Rabbi Barbara talked about her own family heritage and anous background, which is what brought her initially to the village of Serrastretta in the Calabria mountains. The

---

*\*Crypto-Jews, conversos, anousim, marranos are all terms used to describe the Spanish and Portuguese Jews who were forced to convert at the time of the Spanish Inquisition.*

village, which is surrounded on two sides by high mountains, is difficult to reach, making it a perfect "hiding" place for the five Jewish families that founded the town some 500 years ago. There they were able to live as Crypto-Jews far from the prying eyes of the Inquisition. One of those original families was named Aiello.

Rabbi Barbara's father Antonio Abramo Aiello was born in Serrastretta

in 1911 and immigrated to the United States with his parents in 1923 when he was 13 years old. The family settled in Pittsburgh near the relatives that had sponsored their immigration. The family, which had observed Jewish rituals in secret even as late as the 20<sup>th</sup> century for fear of unleashing anti-Semitic responses from their neighbors, had some difficulty adjusting to the freedom of the United States.

Rabbi Barbara's grandmother, Felicia Scalise, for example, insisted on lighting her Sabbath candles in the basement of her Pittsburgh home. Crypto Judaism was the only way she knew how to live her Jewish faith.



**CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**



For Rabbi Barbara, her father's stories of his secret life in the village of Serrastretta, his weekly trips to Timpone, the Jewish quarter of the neighboring village of Nicastro to study Hebrew, probably in

house where he studied Torah so many years before, he was overcome.

It was important for Antonio Aiello to share his message of Jewish continuity in Calabria with his daughter. He wanted her to know and to transmit the message that throughout the centuries, Crypto Jews had somehow found each other, stayed together and hung on to their Jewish traditions. And they did it all secretly and underground.



*Shabbat services in the Ner Tamid del Sud sanctuary.  
Photo by Domenico Pulice*

preparation for his Bar Mitzvah, and his deep and abiding interest in his rich ancestral roots, became an important shared experience between father and daughter. That relationship was the motivating force so many years later for the work that followed. "I am very grateful to my father. His interest in our Jewish past and anous history has carried me through all these ten years."

Antonio Aiello always believed there were still many hidden Jews living throughout the Calabria mountains. And whenever he traveled back to Italy with his family, up to his death in 1980, he would share stories of his anous family history. Those moments were always full of emotion. On one of those occasions, Rabbi Aiello accompanied him on a trip to Timpone. When he walked through the town gate and across the narrow bridge which led to the Old Jewish Quarter, and recognized the roof of the

public worship or Jewish expression, it is difficult to fathom how so many isolated families, unable to express their Jewishness in public worship for 500 years, clung stubbornly to an ancient tradition integral to their identity. Of course, in time, many families maintained the rituals but lost the connecting threads that identified them as Jews and bound them together. Nevertheless, just before he died, Antonio Aiello begged his daughter "not to forget (her) people. You have an obligation to reach out to them," he told her. And thus, began Rabbi Aiello's journey and mission.

When Rabbi Aiello gave her first public speech on her roots and Jewish anous history in Lamezia Terme, a medium size city some 23 km from Serrastretta, more than 100 people crowded into the local church to hear her presentation. "The response was just

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 9*





*The town of Serrastretta.  
Photo by Domenico Pulice*

"I was not there to proselytize," Rabbi Aiello noted, "and he was not threatened by my presence."

Even today, Rabbi Aiello's goal is not to convert practicing Catholics to Judaism. It is to bring the residents of Calabria and Sicily knowledge of who they are and to educate the general population of the history of their

amazing," said Rabbi Aiello. So many people came to hear me speak that I was literally mobbed. People wanted not just to talk to me, but to touch me." It was obviously a very personal issue for many of them. It was clear that some suspected they had Jewish origins but were not sure. One woman came up to Rabbi Aiello after her talk and said, "I always felt we were Jews. People told me that was not possible, that I was crazy, but I just knew." This scene has been repeated in some form or other over and over again in the last ten years. As time passed, it became obvious to Rabbi Aiello that her father had been right. There were hidden Jews or Jewish descendants all over Calabria.

Rabbi Aiello credits local parish priest Monsignor Natale Colafanti of the Lamezia Terme diocese for his warm welcome and his heart felt opening remarks when he introduced her to the audience that evening. He said to those in attendance that he believed everyone should know where they come from, (even if that meant local parishioners had Jewish origins).

region. "If some people, and a few have, decide to embrace their Jewish heritage, that is wonderful," she commented, "but that is not my goal."

In the last ten years, Rabbi Aiello's interactions and outreach with local residents has changed considerably. "Initially, my approach was all wrong," she said. "I was setting up road blocks for myself. I would ask direct questions such as, 'do you think your family was Jewish?' In some cases individuals didn't know their families had been Jewish or that they had been conversos (secret Jews). They would simply say no and the conversation would be over.

Then, I began to realize that many of them were doing things that they didn't realize were Jewish in origin. At that point, I began asking questions like: What do you do when someone dies, what are your mourning rituals? What do you do when a child is born? What do you do when a boy turns 13? No one had asked such questions before.... It was clear to me at that point that my role was to ask questions and to listen and listen and listen." The answers were astounding.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**



*Lorenzo de` Medici, who worked with Rabbi Barbara to discover his Jewish roots, plans to build a synagogue for B'nei Anousim in Nocera, Calabria, Italy.*

*Photo by Vanessa Dyllyn*

Mourning rituals, for example, included sitting on low stools and covering mirrors. Aiello admitted it was a slow process. "I had to establish credibility and familiarity," she noted. "But eventually, people warmed up to me. I was one of them after all. I was Italian, spoke the language. My father was born in Calabria as were my ancestors. And in the case of anousim, my family practiced Judaism in secret too."

What makes her mission particularly sweet is that Rabbi Barbara, now a fulltime resident of Serrastretta, lives in a house that has been in her family for 450 years. The synagogue she founded Ner Tamid du Sud (the eternal light of the South) is on the first floor and was used as prayer room in ancient times. It was where her great grandfather prayed.

Last summer, at the annual cultural heritage festival held in Serastrate, Rabbi Aiello was asked to participate for the first time. A visit to the synagogue was just one of the many opportunities the town gave

visitors for "show and tell." During the two days of the festival, Rabbi Aiello gave 26 presentations with 15 people each. When you do the math, you find 390 people visited the synagogue during those two days. "People were so excited to hear about the Jewish history of the community and to see what was going on in the synagogue," she commented.

During our conversation, Rabbi Aiello shared with me two very poignant events that took place during the festival. "One woman came to the synagogue bringing with her an ornate piece of jewelry, a cameo with a star of David on it instead of a face and several gold chains. The cameo had been in her family for many generations, she said. Although she didn't know what the star represented, she was told to never, ever let it go. When the woman entered the synagogue and saw the Star of David on the wall, she began to cry. A second visitor, a young man brought with him a gift from his grandfather. He didn't know what it was. But I did. It was a yad (pointer used to read the Torah)".

Among those who asked Rabbi Aiello for help researching family history was Lorenzo de` Medici, descendant of the famous Renaissance de` Medici family. There have been rumors over the years of the family's Jewish origin and Lorenzo always felt the family was Jewish. He asked Rabbi Aiello to research the de` Medici maternal line as well.

Using Inquisition records, researchers discovered that a de` Medici matriarch carried the surname "Gatto." The Gattos were a prominent Jewish family in Spain during the Inquisition period. Ancient documents recounted that an entire branch of the Gatto family was arrested for Judaizing. They were jailed, convicted and later burned at the stake for refusing to renounce Judaism. Researchers also discovered that the de` Medicis of Spain, along with survivors from the Gatto family, escaped first to Sicily and then to the Italian mainland. It has been well documented that the original Lorenzo de' Medici saved 230 Jews in Livorno, Italy during the Inquisition.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 11**



Today, Lorenzo, along with his father, an award-winning engineer, have built a resort in the beach community of Nocera. They are now working on the construction of a synagogue to serve the coastal villages of Calabria, just as the Ner Tamid du Sud in Serrastretta serves the mountain communities. The synagogue is expected to be completed this summer.

In small Italian towns, the post office is a central meeting place for village residents. A bulletin board is where residents post all town news and happenings. It is there that Rabbi Aiello posts information on all services, holiday observances and special events. After ten years, Torah study weekends often attract 60 people from all over Calabria. Regular Sabbath services can attract as many as 40 individuals. In addition to her activities based in Serrastretta, Rabbi Aiello has established chavurot\* in Naples and in Palermo in Sicily. The two chavurot are run primarily by lay leaders when she is not visiting. While conversion is not a personal goal, Rabbi Aiello has facilitated the conversion/return of 78 individuals to Judaism.

As a descendant of anousim herself, Rabbi Aiello's is particularly sensitive to the needs of anousim. "Judaism cannot be imposed on people who have an anous background," she said adamantly, "it has to be revealed. My job is to be open and to extend the world of Judaism to those who express interest... to make Judaism attractive and alive. ..and then to let them be as Jewish as they want to be. I do not criticize people's kitchens. I will teach anyone who expresses interest and then it is up to him/her to apply what he/she has learned to family life. I believe God put me in this place. It is not always easy. We are 3,000 feet up in an isolated village. You can understand why Jews chose this location. For me it is difficult. There is no heat. I have a wood-burning stove. I remain far away from major cities. But it is my father's legacy. It was revealed to me and now it is my responsibility to reveal it to others."

---

*\* a small group of like-minded individuals who worship together and celebrate Jewish holidays together.*

## **Questions and Answers:**

**Who supports the work of Rabbi Aiello in Southern Italy?** Support comes largely from donations, the translation of documents, genealogical research for those seeking information on their Sephardic Jewish heritage, historic tours of Sephardic sites in Southern Italy and Bar/Bat Mitzvah and wedding celebrations. While Italian law stipulates that the government fund all houses of worship, it recognizes only orthodox Jewish institutions.

**What would Rabbi Aiello do with more funds?** She would translate Reform Jewish prayer books into Italian. She has permission to do so, but lacks the funds. She would translate study guides and teaching materials into Italian for the teaching and learning of Hebrew. She would rent buses to bring individuals interested in attending her weekend Shabbatons from other villages up the mountain to Serrastrette .

**Where does Rabbi Aiello's greatest support come from?** According to Rabbi Aiello, support comes from local Crypto-Jewish individuals and from families who often tiptoe into the synagogue and want to know who they are and where they come from. In addition, it comes from Italian-Americans whose families immigrated to the United States from Calabria and Sicily. These areas were (and still are) the poorest regions of Italy. As a result, the majority of Italian-Americans in the US trace their heritage to Southern Italy. Since both Sicily and Calabria once had a high percentage of Jews, there is a great possibility that many Italian-Americans have Jewish roots.

---

For more information on the work of Rabbi Barbara, please go to: [www.rabbibarbara.com](http://www.rabbibarbara.com)

## *Tribute to Harriet Bograd*

This year, Kulanu's Board of Directors has chosen to honor our president Harriet Bograd in an on-line tribute journal. We believe that Harriet's 70th birthday celebration would not be complete without recognition by her colleagues and friends for the remarkable work that she has done and continues to do for the isolated and emerging Jewish communities that Kulanu serves.

Harriet has worked tirelessly from the very moment she began her association with Kulanu in 2001, often at the expense of her own personal life and commitments, to bring positive change economically, religiously and educationally to Kulanu communities. For the Jews of Ghana, Uganda, Cameroon, and Zimbabwe in Africa, the B'nai Ephraim in India, the Jews of Armenia, El Salvador in Central America and the fledgling Jewish community in Kaifeng, China, just to name a few of Kulanu's many communities, Harriet has been a tireless and dedicated crusader on their behalf.

Harriet is a networker par excellence, a computer whiz, a peacemaker, an administrator, an organizer, a manager, a financial maven, a friend to both colleagues and the many Jewish community leaders that we work with around the globe. She is a soother of hurt feelings, a consummate politician, a loyal colleague, a creative and resourceful leader and a successful fundraiser. She inspires by example and quietly but forcefully reaches out to potential volunteers, funders, Jewish leaders and colleagues to get the work of Kulanu done.



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

Board member Bonita Sussman said recently that Harriet "has brought individuals and communities from the most unlikely places closer to Judaism and the Jewish people. Her work in a very real sense is the fulfillment of those prophetic visions which speak of the ingathering of the Jewish people from literally the ends of the earth."

The Board of Kulanu agrees.

Congratulations, Harriet, and Mazel Tov

---

*Donations to the main online tribute journal will be welcome until June 7. After that, Kulanu will continue to accept donations for an addendum. To donate and contribute your good wishes, go to [kulanu.org/tribute](http://kulanu.org/tribute).*



# *A Guatemalan Love Story*

*by Rabbi Elyse Goldstein\**



*Rabbi Goldstein reads a blessing to Dina Rodriguez at the mikveh  
Photo by Rabbi Ruth Abusch-Magder*

My love story with Guatemala begins ten years ago, when my dear friend Adrienne Rosen went to Guatemala to find her adopted daughter Alana's birth family. On her trip, Adrienne was overwhelmed by the incredible poverty she found in her daughter's birth town, La Union. So profound was her experience there that she determined to help the community in her daughter's honor. Thus was born Access Education Guatemalan Children's Fund, whose goal is to build schools in rural towns like La Union, for education is surely a way out of the cycle of poverty into which her daughter had been born and others would suffer for their lifetimes.

Adrienne asked me if I would be on the Fund's Board of Access, and I said yes. I must admit that I never gave Guatemala much thought. To me it seemed far away, scary (from what I had read), and I don't even

speak Spanish. But I did it for her. What a surprise to find myself four years ago on a mission to see the new school the Fund had just sponsored. In planning the trip, we opened it up to the public. Seven Jewish women volunteered to join us.

Knowing that our mission was now in the spirit of tikkun olam (the Jewish directive to repair the world), I wanted to make sure we had Shabbat with "the Jewish community". When I searched the internet, I found three congregations: Chabad, Centreo Hebreo, the orthodox synagogue in Guatemala City; and a small group of Guatemalans trying to embrace Judaism, who then called themselves Casa Hillel. As our trip was composed of Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist women, we chose Casa Hillel as probably the closest to

our religious orientation. At the same time, we did not know what to expect. From the Casa Hillel website it was unclear whether or not the group was Messianic, B'nai Noach (a quasi Jewish group who follow "Noahide" laws while remaining Christian) or Anousim (Crypto-Jews) discovering their ancestral roots in Judaism. To be frank, we were nervous.

We arrived on Friday evening for Kabbalat Shabbat (welcoming the Sabbath), having brought gifts of challah and tallitot (prayer shawls). Do you believe in love at first sight? I do now. I had never before met a group like this one. It was almost like meeting our big extended family; they hugged each of us as if we were long-lost relatives. Together we sang every prayer tune we all knew—and they knew many!— and led a pretty standard Reform service. We danced together, and through the barrier of language, a few of our Spanish-speakers and a few of their English-speakers, we forged a tie that is almost impossible to describe. Something clicked that night. They became our Guatemalan family and we became their Rabbi and teachers.

---

*\*Rabbi Elyse Goldstein is the spiritual leader of The City Shul in Toronto Canada and the founder of Kolel: The Adult Centre for Liberal Jewish Learning where she was director and principle teacher for 20 years. In 2005, Rabbi Goldstein was awarded North America's highest honor for Jewish education, The Covenant Award For Outstanding Educators. In 2012, she agreed to serve at Kulanu's regional coordinator for Guatemala.*

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 14**

The 24 congregation members include four families with children, a number of single men, one single mom, and one gay man, who sought out Judaism when it became clear that Reform Judaism accepts homosexuals as equal and valued in the sight of God.

Only one person in the group can trace his ancestry back to Jews in pre-Inquisition Spain, though some have memories or beliefs to suggest that their families were Jews in the past. One is fully Mayan in ancestry. Most came from evangelical and Catholic backgrounds and were frustrated by what they perceived in their churches as hypocrisy, greed, sexual abuse, and/or a suppression of free thought and free inquiry. There are several members who were born Jewish and have joined the congregation because it is wonderful place to pray and a loving and embracing community.

Once in a while someone on vacation or on a tour will find the congregation and after one Shabbat with them, is also changed forever. This community adores Jewish ritual and prayer and practice it with full and unabashed joy. They have had many, many doors slammed in their faces in the past. And yet they somehow believed that one day, someone would see their sincerity and that Hashem (God) would answer their prayers.

My own life has been deeply touched by them, by their willingness, their passion for Judaism, their patience, their desire. Sometime after this mission they hesitantly asked if I would continue to teach them and lead them from afar and I said, without hesitation, "si". From then on, it has been a love story.

### **Connections:**

Recently, I flew to Mexico to be at a conference of Latin American congregations along with the president of our Guatemalan community and her husband, where we found both resistance to the community (Are they legitimate Jews? Who are they? Why do they want to be Jewish?) and warmth and support. We found a donor in Canada who generously sponsored seven teens from the community to attend Jewish summer camp in

Toronto, where they were able to attend synagogue services and sightsee.

During the spring break from university studies, I sent my son, a Jewish Studies major in college, to teach in the community for a week. And I was able to convince two friends from Toronto vacationing in Guatemala to teach members at the synagogue on Shabbat. Last Rosh Hashanah, when my colleague Rabbi Diana Lynn told me she had no pulpit responsibilities for the High Holy Days, I suggested she go and serve them, which she did through the help of Kulanu.

These were all gratifying experiences, but nothing could prepare me emotionally for the transformative weekend of February 8-10, 2013, when, with the generous support of Kulanu, I was blessed and honored to officiate at a formal conversion ceremony there.

Rabbi Ruth Abusch-Magder and Rabbi Claudio Kogan (a Spanish speaking Rabbi and mohel) accompanied me to Guatemala to make the requisite three rabbis for the Beit Din (house of law or Jewish religious



*Congregant Alvaro Orantes dances with Rabbi Ruth Abusch-Magder after the Jewish wedding ceremonies  
Photo by Rabbi Goldstein*



court). We prepared all the traditional and essential elements: the prospective converts took a written exam (in Spanish) which all of them passed with flying colors; they learned how to chant Torah and three of them did it for the first time ever at the Shabbat morning service; each person went before the Beit Din to be questioned on both their sincerity and their knowledge; each adult male—there were 12 in all— had hatafat dam brit (a symbolic circumcision) on Sunday morning after which we all drove 40 minutes to a fully natural mountain thermal pool (a baptismal site!) and immersed in the “mikvah”, one candidate at a time. That same evening the whole community went back to the synagogue where three couples were married under a chupah (wedding canopy) with a proper and traditional ketubah (marriage document) in Hebrew and Spanish.

The highlight of the weekend was certainly the pre-mikvah service on Sunday morning, where a community that had been up until midnight the night before with the Beit Din, and whose men had gone through hatafat dam at seven a.m. that morning, stood as Jews at Sinai and received the Torah. With a Sefer Torah (Scroll of Five books of Moses) dressed in Guatemalan fabric in front of the room, and the three Rabbis as witnesses, they sang Shema Yisrael (the seminal Hebrew prayer in praise of the oneness of God).

Those who had converted took pledges of loyalty and fidelity to Judaism, promising to build Jewish homes and raise Jewish children. They searched their hearts and their souls and placed their lot and their fate with the Jewish people under all circumstances. They sang “Ozi v’zimrat Yah: God is my Strength” with full hearts and tears streaming down their eyes. All I can say is: the Jewish people are blessed with groups like these. My life as a Rabbi is much richer because of them.

We have formally chosen the name Adat Israel: Asociación Judía Reformista de Guatemala as the name



*Congregant Jamie Guiterrez chants Torah for the first time  
Photo by Rabbi Ruth Abusch-Magder*

of the congregation. (Adat means congregation.) Our application to the World Union for Progressive Judaism was accepted, giving us recognition as Guatemala’s official Reform congregation. Nineteen people converted that special weekend; there are eight more waiting who need more time to prepare. We hope — and pray—to make this visit again next year with another Beit Din to convert those patient and practicing souls. And more will come--of this there is no doubt. The hunger for a pure spirituality in Latin America is strong. The need for Jewish leadership in this area is clear. The opportunities for outreach to this small and emerging community are abundant. They speak the language of Divine calling; of persistence, faith, and hope. All of us doing this work understand that language fluently.

## *Beit Din Visits Nicaragua*



*Reading from the Torah on Sukkot in 2012*

In December 2012, Kulanu board member Rabbi Bonita Sussman and her husband Rabbi Gerald Sussman of Staten Island, New York visited Nicaragua in response to a request by Kulanu South American coordinator Daneel Schaechter.

Schaechter had been in touch with Kurt Preiss, the current president of Congregacion Israelita de Nicaragua (Israelite Congregation of Nicaragua), who requested help in normalizing the status of some members. The small congregation was composed of the remnants of the Jewish community that had been established at the turn of the 20th century by European refugees and destroyed during the country's civil war. Preiss hoped that the process would also stabilize the community.

According to Preiss, many of the most active and devoted members of his congregation were unable to participate fully in congregational life, be counted in a minyan (ten people required for communal prayer) or given an aliyah (be called to the Torah to recite blessings). Although self-identifying as Jews and living Jewish lives, they nevertheless were considered “participants” rather than full members of the congregation. The reason was that their mothers or grandmothers were not Jewish according to Jewish law. As orthodox and conservative Judaism recognizes only matrilineal descent, and the congregation is traditional, these individuals were not considered Jewish either.

Many of the “participants” even had Sephardi or Ashkenazi names and heritage. And all of them had un-

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 17*



dergone years of study in the hope that they might someday appear before a Beit Din (Jewish court of law) and undergo a formal conversion according to Jewish law.

The rabbis Sussman decided to help by taking on the task of convening a Beit Din of three rabbis, with orthodox credentialing, prepared to travel to Nicaragua for the purpose of converting those individuals who were deemed ready to do so. Beforehand, however, Bonita developed a comprehensive set of protocols for the conversion process, which included a lengthy questionnaire for prospective converts to fill out prior to the arrival of the Beit Din. Their essays, studied by the rabbis before their trip, would begin the process of evaluating the knowledge and commitment of prospective converts who would be interviewed in person once the three rabbis arrived in Nicaragua.

In the end, the Beit Din converted 14 individuals including a little girl and a boy of five years old who underwent a circumcision to be eligible for conversion. The male adult candidates who were already circumcised underwent a hatafat dam brit (the drawing of a drop of blood in token of the covenant of circumcision) and everyone was immersed in the mikveh (the ritual bath that had been built from specifications and a blueprint given to the community by mikveh experts).

The next day, community members gathered to receive the documentation of their conversion in a public ceremony. The event concluded joyously with the rabbis



*Some of the children of Congregacion Israelita de Nicaragua*

conducting three marriages of chuppah and kiddushin (Jewish wedding canopy and special wedding blessings).

It is wonderful to report that through the efforts of Kulanu, the community has been given new life. The congregation now regularly holds services and classes; the chevra kaddisha (burial society) was reestablished to bury their teacher who just died, and this spring the community celebrated their Pessach seder and Yom Hashoah commemoration with full hearts. An additional post script: one newly converted member has donated 4000 square feet of property to build a synagogue since members have been meeting in each others homes. JM

---

For more information on the congregation, please click on this web site, created by Kulanu volunteer Odelia Sussman Epstein:

<http://congregacionisraelitadenicaragua.weebly.com>

# ***Jewish Tourism Returns to Burma\****

***By Karen Primack  
Photos by Aron Primack***



*Two Burmese silver cases for the congregations two remaining Torahs, down from 126 Torahs in former times*

*On a recent trip to Asia, Aron and Karen Primack scheduled a stop in Burma. Although they had traveled extensively throughout Asia, they had never visited Burma. In recent decades, the country was under the rule of a tight military dictatorship, whose leaders were not welcoming to outsiders, particularly those from western democracies. In addition, many visitors were loath to travel to Burma, when the world-renowned opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi was under house arrest.*

*Three or four years ago, in a surprise turn around, Burmese governmental leaders began relaxing restrictions,*

---

*\*Burma was renamed Myanmar by its military rulers in 1989. But the name change is not as radical as it seems. The English name for the country is Burma, but both Burma and Myanmar are used in the Burmese language to describe the country.*

*freeing political prisoners and encouraging tourism, They even freed long time opposition leader and Nobel Laureate (1991) Aung San Suu Kyi from detention in November of 2010. It seemed like the time was ripe for a visit. Burma, a country known for its unique cultural heritage, its gentle and religious population and its magnificent architecture, offered the Primacks a special opportunity to visit Burma before the country becomes inundated by a wave of tourists. But there was an added attraction for the co-founders of Kulanu: for almost two hundred years the country had been home to a small Jewish population. JM*

*Prior to our trip to Burma in January of this year, Aron and I were in touch with Sammy Samuels, a former resident of Burma who now lives in New York City and*

***CONTINUED ON PAGE 19***



works as a travel agent and a business consultant. His company, Myanmar Shalom Travels and Tours, was established, he says, “to keep the Jewish spirit alive in Burma”. The firm’s profits support the country’s only functioning synagogue.

Samuels returns regularly to Burma to visit his father Moshe Samuels, who still lives in the capital of Rangoon (Yangon), where he ministers to the few Jews still in residence there as well as to visiting tourists. Samuels has assumed responsibility for the care and maintenance of the one remaining synagogue in the country and the Jewish cemetery. He also carries the history and legacy of Jewish Burma in his very presence, as both sets of his grandparents migrated to Burma in the 1890’s from Iraq. Sammy was born and raised there.

We had arranged to meet Sammy in the synagogue, known as Musmeah Yeshua, which is located in the midst of the city’s crowded market district, on a block containing a mosque and a dozen fishing net dealers. Our visit was informative as well as exciting as it gave us the chance to view one of the historic landmark buildings of Rangoon. And a Jewish one at that.

According to Sammy, the first Jews to arrive in Burma were from Rumania. The exact date is unknown, but according to historic documents, a Solomon Gabirol served as a commissar in the Army of Burma’s King Alaungpaya (1752-60). The second group was composed of Sephardi Jewish traders from Iraq led by David Sassoon, known both in Burma and in India as the Baghdadis. These businessmen were involved in a lucrative trading network that stretched across Burma, India, and the Middle East.

At its peak, the Jewish community numbered only 1500-2000 Jews, small by most standards. And over the years it dwindled, first with the Japanese invasion in 1941 when many Jews and Burmese fled for the safety of India. The second emigration of Jews took place in 1962 when the military Junta took over the country.

Sammy, who is in his early 30s, says the community’s last rabbi left the country in the 1980’s and that his bar mitzvah was the last one held in the synagogue. However,

visitors, and even rabbis, visit the community from time to time.\* Services are still held on Friday evenings and High Holidays.

The community now numbers a mere 20 Jews, although the congregation swelled to 46 at a recent service, when a Brandeis University group visited. Originally, Musmeah Yeshua was an orthodox synagogue where women were



*Sammy Samuels sits in Burma’s Musmeah Yeshua synagogue*

ensconced on the balcony and men in the main sanctuary. Today, with so few Jews attending services, women now sit in the main sanctuary.

Perhaps with the country’s change in fortunes, more Jewish visitors and even residents will find their way to Burma. Since the freeing from detention of Aung San Suu Kyi, and her election last year to the Burmese parliament, the feeling is palpable that democracy is on its way. Posters of Suu Kyi with Secretary Hillary Clinton and President Barack Obama are posted everywhere since their recent visits to the country.

It is not easy to capture the beauty of the Musmeah Yeshua synagogue, but I will try. One of the first things you notice when you enter the synagogue are the elegant

---

\*See “A Bucket list Visit to Distant Jewish Communities” by Rabbi Stephen Leon in the Spring, 2010 issue of KulanuNew.

***CONTINUED ON PAGE 20***



*Inside the main sanctuary, Karen Primack with Sammy Samuels*

Among the 138 guests were Muslim, Christian, Bahai and Buddhist leaders. The Minister of Religious Affairs lit one of the Chanukah candles.

### **Future of the Community**

Jewish businessmen are beginning to visit Burma and Sammy predicts some will decide to set up shop. He believes it will take two to four years to get a business established, which would swell the Jewish population, if only temporarily. Expatriates can be found at the US and Israeli Embassies and at local businesses. Sammy says the US Ambassador to Myanmar is a Jew. In the meantime, tourists will continue to visit this beautiful country and Jews will find their way to the Musmeah Yeshua synagogue.

columns and arches and the blue trim on the ivory walls. There are stained glass windows created by Burmese artisans and local quarried marble adorns the floors. Unusual gold railings on the bimah are actually painted concrete rather than metal.

The cane and wood benches in the sanctuary are arranged in family enclosures rather than rows. The bimah is located in the middle of the sanctuary, in the style of old Baghdad synagogues. Currently there are two Torahs in round silver cases, down from 126 in former times, when it was the custom for each family to donate a scroll in memory of a loved one.

The synagogue building dates from 1896 (an earlier version of the synagogue was built in 1854) and is a national heritage building. Interestingly, the synagogue is owned by the government, as are all religious houses of worship. It is a matter of public policy.

The Jewish cemetery is another matter. The Myanmar government has directed that all cemeteries of whatever religious persuasion be moved out of the capital city, where land has become scarce. Christians and Buddhists have already done so, but Jews and Muslims are appealing the order because Judaism and Islam dictate against the removal of bodies already interred.

In 2011 Musmeah Yeshua Synagogue hosted an interfaith Chanukah celebration at a Rangoon/Yangon hotel.

*Recommended references: Almost Englishmen – Baghdadi Jews in British Burma by Ruth Fredman Cernea.*



*Shoshannah Nambi  
Photo by Lorne Mallin*

Kulanu is thrilled to announce that the next Abayudaya speaking tour will feature young activist Shoshannah Nambi. Warm and articulate, Shoshannah will be the first woman to represent her community on this annual Kulanu-organized tour. A product of the schools that Kulanu

helped to create, Shoshannah is among the first Abayudaya women to graduate from university. As the mother of a daughter now in the elementary school and as an administrator in a community health program, Shoshannah will present a fresh perspective on the roles of women in the Abayudaya community and the challenges they face. The tour will run from Thursday, October 3 to Monday, November 4, 2013. This tour will fill up quickly, so please make plans with your community group to reserve a date as soon as possible. For details, see the home page of our web site, [kulanu.org](http://kulanu.org).





## THANK YOU, DONORS!

**Donations received between November 21, 2012 and April 28, 2013.**

**Please let us know if we have missed your name or contribution (go to [www.kulanu.org/contact](http://www.kulanu.org/contact)) and we will list you in the next newsletter. Thank you!**

### **\$15,000 +**

Anonymous, the Coexist Foundation (for their gift of \$15,000 to the Abayudaya and \$4,000 to Kulanu), Louis Weider

### **\$10,000**

The Werner and Phoebe Frank Family Foundation; The Estelle Friedman Gervis Family Foundation.

### **\$2,500-5,000**

Gotham Drywall, Inc; The Marilyn and Ira Polon Philanthropic Fund of the United Jewish Endowment Fund of the Jewish Federation; The Ben and Esther Rosenbloom Foundation; The Matthew and Shelly Stein Philanthropic Fund, a donor advised fund of the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund, The Otto and Marianne Wolman Foundation.

### **\$1,000-2,499**

Shane Binder; The Enablement Fund of Morgan Stanley Smith Barney GIFT, Inc; Dr Jules and Mrs Josephine Harris; The Glatt-Holtz Gift Fund, a Fidelity Charitable donor-advised fund; The Kanter Family Gift Fund; Marie-Chantal and Judah Klausner; Lois Levy; The Howard Metzenberg Philanthropic Fund, a donor-advised fund of the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund; Aron and Karen Primack; The Samiljan Family Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation; Karen and Andrew Thorburn; Gail B. and Mel Werbach; Ronnie Williams and Suzanne Arnopolin; The Marvin Wolf Fund of the Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee; Jack and Diane Zeller.

### **\$500-999**

Anonymous; Congregation Darchei Noam (Toronto, ON); Congregation Hakafa (Rabbi Bruce Elder - Glencoe, IL); Hope and Matthew Feldman; The Frank Family Foundation; Dr Evelyn Hutt; Marcia Kaplan; Louis Blumengarten; Irwin and Elaine Berg; Nina Horak; Alan and Agnes Leshner.

### **\$100-499**

For this list, please see the May, 2013 post on the Kulanu Blog, titled "Thank You, Donors!" - [www.kulanu.org/blog](http://www.kulanu.org/blog)

### **Donations in Honor of and in Memory of...**

**\*Note:** This summer, Kulanu is honoring our president, Harriet Bograd, for her years of service (and her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday!). Contributions to Kulanu's 2013 Tribute Journal in honor of Harriet Bograd are accepted until June 7, 2013, and will be "published" online in the form of a virtual scrapbook of memories from Harriet's friends and family, and from members of the larger Kulanu community who wish to pay tribute to the woman who is helping change the face of global Judaism. Check out the virtual journal – and submit your own gift and message to the Journal or Addendum – on the Kulanu web site at [www.kulanu.org/tribute](http://www.kulanu.org/tribute)

### **Donations in honor of someone**

*Donors are in italics.*

Rabbi Barbara Aiello - *Congregation Darchei Noam (Toronto, ON)*; Ariel, Shira, and Hallel Cohen-Goldberg - *Susan and Steve Goldberg*; Jared Cole - *Cheryl and Alan Kristal*; Sam Cole - *Cheryl and Alan Kristal*; Beth D'Addario - *Allen J Greenberger*; Matthew Feldman - *Beverly Feldman, Gail Margulies*; David Friedman - *Sara M Friedman*; Rabbi Scott Glass (Temple Beth-El, Ithaca, NY) - *Linda and Stephen Pope*; Bob and Shirley Goldman - *Susan and Michael Goldman*; Hayden Gutt - *Gail and Stephen Erlitz*; Avi and Hili Kister - *Henry Z Kister and Susana Chang-Kister*; Linda Kornberg and Steve Glantz - *Lewis and Monica Fried Kornberg*; Sandy Leeder - *Nina G Wouk*; Judy Manelis - *Wheaton College Hillel, Hillel Council of New England*; Alan H Mankoff - *Susan Lippman*; Dr Brian Primack and family - *Marcia Kaplan*; Dr Marshall Primack - *Linda Joan Freitag*; Karen and Aron Primack - *Judy Manelis and Shelby Kashket*; Fran Ransom - *The Sisterhood of Temple Israel of Canton (Canton, OH)*; and Alex, Ami, Asia, Autumn, Dad & Kai (Ransom); Joyce Sasson - *Myra Schiff*; Linda Sidell - *Hedy Cohen*; Tziporah and Rabbi Gershon Sizomu - *Werner and Phoebe Frank*; Alan and Andrea Titelbaum - *Jodi Coburn*; Barbara Vinick - *Marla Belostock, Pamela Fox, Helaine Hazlett, Charlotte Ikels, Harriet Bograd and Ken Klein, Marian Leah Knapp*,

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 22**

*Sandra and Alexander Lindsey, Alberta and Roger Lipson, Martin and Ruth Weinstein; Huguette Weider - Louis Weider; Jack Zeller - Stewart and Myra Deutsch*

**Donations in memory of someone**

*Donors are in italics.*

Nellie Beckerman - *George and Toby Wakstein; Arlo Boggs - Laura L and Arthur S Brecher; Rabbi Moshe Cotel - Maarin and Amy Melman; Charlotte Dubin - Leah Prawda, Jane Prawda; Roslyn (Lynne) K Elson - Shane Binder; Sorke Gladstone - Yaakov Gladstone; JJ Greenberg - Blu and Yitzhak Greenberg; Bernard Jacowitz - Jerry Romain; Hyman and Nettie Kaplan - George and Toby Wakstein; Estelle Katz - Anne Katz Jacobson and Robert Jacobson; Herman and Betty Liss - Michele and David Tamaren; Monet Milligan - Orlando Milligan; Mary Polon - Ruth and Harris Pitlick; Mortimer S Smith - Aleene Smith; Tzwa bat Tshura and Boaz Ben Tzwa - Rosalyn Sherman, Ben Weider - Louis Weider.*

**Mitzvah Projects & Fundraising Campaigns**

Sam Levy (New Rochelle, NY) – Sam put an exciting twist on his Kulanu Mitzvah Project: he's going to hike Massada in Israel to raise funds for the two Abayudaya schools in Uganda! This is a first for Kulanu, and we're delighted to announce that Sam's Personal Fundraising Page has already raised \$1,380 toward his \$1,800 goal. Sam became *bar mitzvah* on April 20, 2013. *Mazal tov*, Sam!

Temple Beth El Salinas Religious School (Salinas, CA) – Rabbi Marcy Delbick continues to lead the school's Kulanu Fundraising Campaign in support of the Dora Bloch Fund. The Dora Bloch Fund is designated for the students residing in the girls' dormitories at the Abayudaya schools in Uganda, and seeks to provide these students with three meals a day every day; an important need to fill in this impoverished African community. As of this printing the school has raised \$2,017.22, which is 74% of what it costs to fund this program for a year!

Hillel Day School (Farmington Hills, MI) – The fifth and sixth grade students at Hillel Day School are leading a "Clean Water in Uganda" fundraiser, to raise the money needed for the Abayudaya community to purchase a manual borehole pump and a water tank so they have access to clean water in Uganda. The fifth-graders are participating in a 'Battle of the Books' tzedekah project,

and the sixth-graders are selling water bottles and asking for donations to raise funds for water sanitation in this remote African Jewish community. Thanks, Hillel Day School, for addressing this urgent need!

**Winter 2013 Kulanu-Lemba Speaking Tour Sponsors**

*Our thanks to all the organizations who hosted Modreck Maeresera of Zimbabwe during his first U.S. tour, or who hosted live broadcasts of Modreck's talk at the 92nd Street Y. Speaking Tour proceeds benefit Kulanu's work with the Lemba Jewish community of Zimbabwe.*

The 92nd Street Y - New York, NY; Jewish International Connection of New York (JICNY) - New York, NY; Mary D. Fischer Theater - Sedona, AZ; Anshei Israel - Tucson, AZ; Temple Shalom - Chicago, IL; Temple Anshe Shalom - Olympia Field, IL; Jewish Home Assisted Living - River Vale, NJ; Temple Sinai - Toronto, ON (Canada); Lakeside Congregation - Highland Park, IL; Congregation Solel - Highland Park, IL; Congregation Hakafa - Highland Park, IL; University of Texas in El Paso (UTEP) - El Paso, TX; The Inter-American Jewish Studies Program and The African American Studies Program at UTEP – El Paso, TX; Congregation B'nai Zion - El Paso, TX; Congregation Brith Shalom - Bellaire, TX; Jewish Federation of Greater Houston (Yom Limmud Conference at Congregation Beth Israel) - Houston, TX; Temple Anshe Shalom – Delray Beach, FL; Florida International University (FIU) in Miami Beach, FL School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) – Miami, FL; The Center for Humanities in an Urban Environment at FIU – Miami, FL; The African and African Diaspora Studies Program at FIU – Miami, FL; The Program in the Study of Spirituality at FIU – Miami, FL; The Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU - Miami, FL; Temple Emanu-El - Staten Island, NY; Temple Isaiah - Lexington, MA; Temple Emunah - Lexington, MA; Ohr Kodesh Congregation - Chevy Chase, MD

**Additional Speaking Events:**

Thanks to Wheaton College Hillel for hosting Kulanu board member and KulanuNews editor Judy Manelis, and to Congregation Darchei Noam in Toronto for hosting Rabbi Barbara Aiello.



## KULANU BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

*President*  
Harriet Bograd

*Vice President*  
Judith Manelis

*Secretary*  
Barbara Vinick

*Treasurer*  
Peter Persoff

*President Emeritus*  
Jack Zeller

*Other Board Members*  
Sandy Leeder, Rabbi Stephen Leon,  
Andria Spindel, Marcy Stein,  
Rabbi Bonita Sussman

*Honorary Board Members*  
Aron Primack, Karen Primack

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.

This magazine is published by :  
Kulanu, 165 West End Avenue, 3R  
New York, NY 10023

Report changes of address to:  
[database@kulanu.org](mailto:database@kulanu.org)

For further information, see:  
[www.kulanu.org/about-kulanu](http://www.kulanu.org/about-kulanu)

Magazine Editor: Judith Manelis  
Layout and Photography Editor: Serge Etele

## GIFTS *and* BULK ORDERS



from **kulanuboutique.com**

Buy Kulanu products from around the world:

- As gifts for friends and family
- To add diversity to your Judaica shop, synagogue craft fair or school market night.
- For Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrations and other special occasions.
- For your school or social action committee fund raising projects.
- You can re-sell these special products and donate the profits to Kulanu, or keep the profits to support your organization.

The Kulanu Boutique now has bulk rates available online! Visit [www.kulanuboutique.com](http://www.kulanuboutique.com) for these great deals and more!

From Ghana: Check out our beautiful embroidered challah covers and kente cloth tallitot!

Proceeds from the sale of these unique products benefit the communities that made them and Kulanu's work with isolated and emerging Jewish communities around the world.



**KULANU**

*Supporting Isolated and  
Emerging Jewish Communities  
around the Globe*

**165 West End Avenue, 3R  
New York, NY 10023**

*(212) 877-8082*

**Address Service  
Requested**

**Nonprofit Org  
US Postage Paid  
Buffalo NY  
Permit No. 558**



*Bat Mitzvah photograph: Nabagoya Hill, Uganda.  
Celebrating their Bat Mitzvah with Rabbi Gershom Sizomu  
are, from the left: Naume Sabano, Yael Keki, Athalia Nalongo Musenze, Tziporah Naisi  
Photo credit: Aaron Kintu Moses*