



Supporting Isolated, Emerging, and Returning Jewish Communities around the Globe

KULANU

“All of Us”

Contents

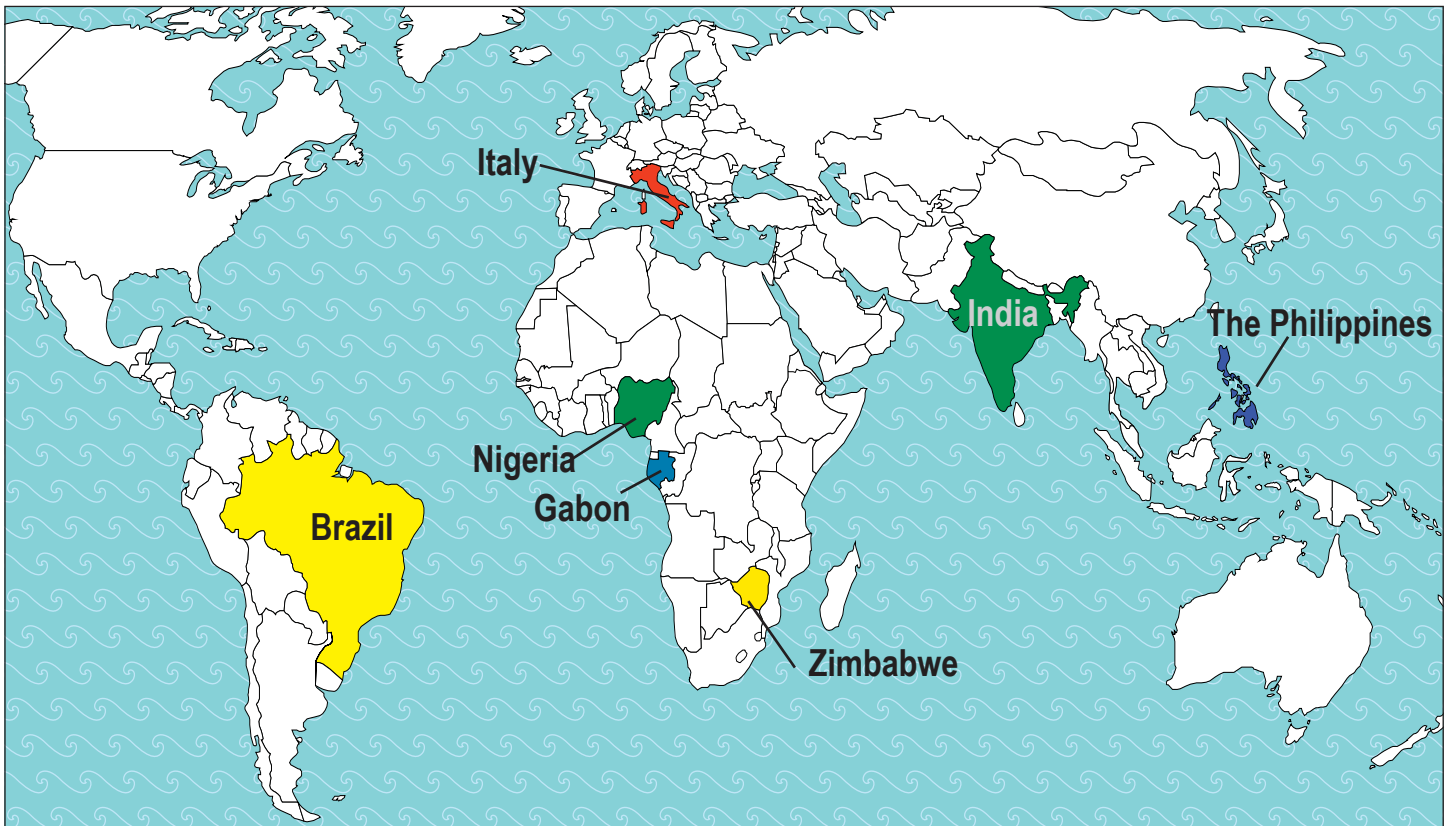
Map: Where in the World is Kulanu?	2
Kulanu Across the Globe	3
Indian Communities	6
Kulanu Notes	11
Remembering Elaine Berg	14
Zimbabwe Irrigation Project	15
Kulanu Global Teaching Fellows	18
Spotlight: Rabbi Barbara Aiello	21
Sukkot in Calabria, Italy	22
Thank You for Your Support	24

Sar Habakkuk Nwafor, the spiritual leader of the Tikvat Israel Community of Abuja, Nigeria, reading a Chumash. See story about his community on page 20. Photo by Shadrach Mugoya Levi.



Where in the World is Kulanu in this Issue?

Kulanu is in touch with dozens of communities around the world. When we are contacted, we learn what their needs are and do our best to find ways in which to help them further their study and practice of Judaism and build their communities. You can see on this map where the communities featured in this issue of Kulanu are located.



Nigeria, p18



Abuja, capital

Italy, p22



Rome, capital
Community in the Calabria region

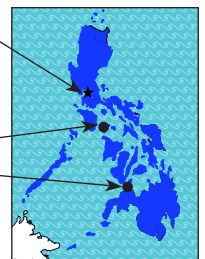
Harare, capital
and home to the Jewish community

Zimbabwe, p15

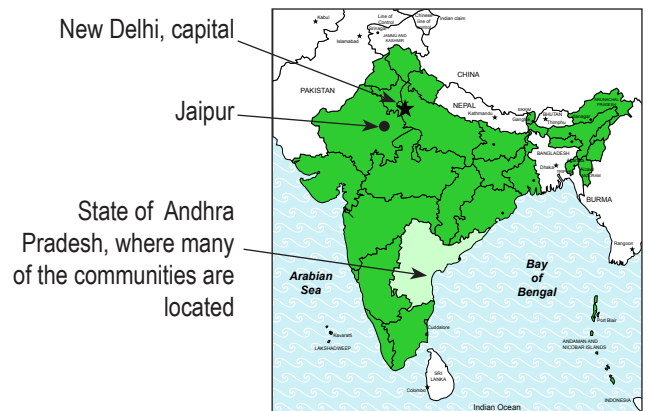


Philippines, p24

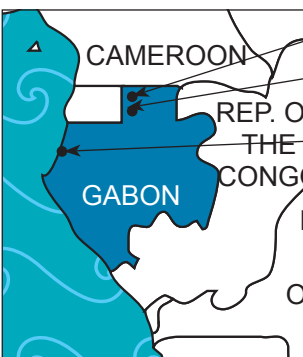
Manila, capital
Jewish community
meets in
Tablas, Rambon
and Mindanao



India, p6



Gabon, p18



Bitam
Oyem
Libreville,
capital

Brazil, p18



Brasília,
capital
Goiânia



Celebrating Kulanu's 25th Anniversary

Kulanu Across the Globe, a unique international initiative celebrating Kulanu's 25th anniversary, united more than 1,000 people from over 50 Jewish communities on five continents. Over the weekend of November 15th-17th, 2019, synagogues and organizations shared a variety of films, music, readings, and photographs to showcase Kulanu's work and Jewish diversity worldwide.

We wrote a d'var Torah for people to use which spoke about welcoming communities around the globe into the Jewish tent. But then I started to think about whose tent is this? Is it "our" tent that we're inviting "them" into? In my experience, I have been warmly welcomed into the tents of the communities that I have gotten to know and they've taught me so much about being Jewish.

Harriet Bograd, Kulanu's president, during her d'var Torah at West End Synagogue, NYC, USA



Kulanu President Harriet Bograd speaking at West End Synagogue, New York City, USA. Photo by Viviane Topp.



Ohr Torah Synagogue, Nigeria

We read the second poem, the story about the crypto-Jews, the children of the Inquisition in Spain, Portugal, and Latin America. We have just learned about them from the Kulanu Across the Globe event. This story really resonated with us. It's the same story of our African Jewish ancestors. Truly, it's as if the poem was written about us.

Avraham Ben Avraham, Nigeria

We heard stories of Jewish life from Africa and Asia to the Americas. The depth of their devotion and joy, and the challenges they face, are an inspiration and a reminder that we are all *Kulanu*.

Marty Stein, Oregon, USA

Kulanu has played the role of my mother.

Naume Sabano, Uganda



Tiferet Israel Synagogue, Sefwi Wiawso Jewish Community in Ghana



Harare Lemba Synagogue, Zimbabwe

continued on next page

Kulanu Across the Globe: *continued from previous page*

Kulanu has helped the Abayudaya community to escape isolation.

Jacob Mwosuko in Uganda



Hadassah Primary School celebrating in Uganda

The anniversary was great. The event created a sense of belonging and an atmosphere full of unity and oneness among Jews. Most Jews in this part of the world think and believe they are alone and are not recognized, which to an extent seems true. This event went as far as reminding and reassuring us that Jews in this part of the world are part of Jewish communities around the globe. We have high hopes that there will be stronger relationships and communication to keep the flame burning. Mazal Tov, Kulanu.

Yosef Zurishaddi Shmuel, Nigeria



Ohr Torah Synagogue, Nigeria

Kulanu Across the Globe was not only a celebration of Kulanu's 25 years of dedicated work throughout the globe to build Jewish community. It was, in and of itself, a labor of love and community-building! I got to meet so many wonderful people in Jewish communities around the world through our online meetings, and sharing videos and information. I also was thrilled to connect people from different Jewish congregations in New York City. The event was joyous and uplifting for all. I even got to try some new recipes!

Chaya Weinstein, New York City, USA



Friends of Kulanu at West End Synagogue, NYC, USA



Holding Kulanu booklets, Har Shalom Knesset, Nigeria



Tzion Kids Academy, Aba Abia State, Nigeria

continued on next page

Kulanu Across the Globe: *continued from previous page*

I've always been so impressed by the work that Kulanu does around the world in supporting isolated, but thriving, Jewish communities. These communities are so earnest in their efforts to lead a Jewish life in spite of many difficulties.

Susan Aronson, Oregon, USA



KATG Shabbat Services at Ohr Torah Synagogue, Nigeria

The Kulanu presentation was wonderfully informative and allowed me to understand the important work Kulanu is doing throughout the globe. I was especially impressed with ongoing projects and community support in central Africa, and in Nigeria specifically, since I have friends in the States who are of Igbo descent and have spoken often about the widespread belief in Nigeria that the Igbo are believed to have ancestral Jewish claims. Perhaps someday in the near future, I'll be able to visit these growing, vibrant communities.

Neil Davison, Oregon, USA

Kulanu has made me what I am.

Rachel Namudosi, Uganda



Tzion Kids Academy, Aba Abia State, Nigeria



Tzion Kids Academy, Aba Abia State, Nigeria



Lunch at West End Synagogue, NYC, USA included delicious recipes from the countries of our partner communities.



Tikvat Shofar women and children celebrating, Nigeria



Tikvat Shofar women making challah to celebrate Kulanu's 25th anniversary, Nigeria ✱

Spirit Floats on the Water

Indian Communities Search for Jewish Connections

Written by and photos courtesy of Dr. Eyal Be'eri

About the author: Dr. Eyal Be'eri of Israel worked for many years as an educational consultant in high schools, and for the past 15 years, Eyal has been spending time with Jewish communities in India. For the past 12 years, he has been researching the Pathan communities in India and formulating evidence of their Jewish origin. Eyal, studying at Ariel University's Israel Heritage Department, wrote a thesis in 2012 and his Ph.D. dissertation in 2019 about the Pathan family books and their customs similar to Jewish customs. Apart from his academic research, Eyal devotes his time to finding ways to build a bridge between the Pathans and the Israelis and is an active partner in the founding of the Israeli-Pathan Research Institute. He is married and the father of six children. Here, below, is an edited excerpt of Eyal's dissertation. To read the full dissertation, please contact contact Eyal through kulanu.org/contact.



The author, left, with Yehoshua Yacobi of the Bene Ephraim

Note About the Pathans

The Pathans, known by many names including Pashtuns, are one of four major Muslim communities in India who arrived in the 11th and 12th centuries from what is now Afghanistan and Pakistan. Much research has been written linking these people to the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. For many generations, there has been a vague knowledge of the biological connection between the Pathans and the Jewish people. In the encounters I have had with the Pathans over the past twelve years, I have found that the Pathans call themselves Bnei Yisrael, hold ancient genealogy books that indicate their origins from the Yehuda and Binyamin (as in the Hebrew

of the Torah) tribes, and even follow a series of customs that conform to Jewish, rabbinic, and Karaite customs. The table of evidence stands firmly on four feet: their Jewish customs, different from anything known in Islamic practice, their books of lineage dating back for centuries proving their ethnic roots, ancient history books dating from the 10th century on testifying to their Israelite origins, and their own self-definition as descendants of the nation of Israel.

Offering our Prayers in Andhra Pradesh

The city of Vijayawada in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India, had not yet borne the brunt of the winter of 2019, but the disrepair of the roads told us that the summer monsoons had indeed left their mark here on the east coast of India. The weather was pleasant. The sky was blue and a breeze blew through the coconut palms. Cone-like mountains arose in the backdrop, accentuating the valley at their feet. Hindu morning prayers echoed loudly from the temples, mixing with the sound of Christian church bells and the voice of the local Imam reciting the Koran melodically. We offered our prayers as well in this eclectic city, a city that has steadfastly welcomed the different religions of the people who have made this their home, accepting all of them without any unnecessary panic.

I was excited when we were picked up and escorted from the airport to our hotel by Dr. Yacov Yacobi. I traveled here with my esteemed mentor and friend, Rabbi Eliyahu Birnbaum, director of the Straus-Amiel and Beren-Amiel programs at Ohr Torah Stone in Israel, as well as with Rabbi Yaron Gilor from Israel and Yehoshua Yacobi, Dr. Yacobi's brother. Yehoshua has been living in Israel for many years. He and his brother grew up in the Bene Ephraim (Jewish) community here which we were on our way to visit. We came here after our third joint visit to the Pathan community in northwestern India,

continued on next page

Indian Communities: *continued from previous page*

the pinnacle of which was a two-day conference in Jaipur on the Israelite identity of the Pathans, their customs, and their old family books. The excitement I felt being with this community in Andhra Pradesh was matched by the enthusiasm I experienced in the community we had just come from, the Pathans in the Indian state of Rajasthan.



The author at the Pathans Conference in Jaipur with Rabbi Birnbaum (left); Sahabazda Shaukat-Ali Khan, founder of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Arabic Persian Research Institute in Tonk City; and Hassan Muhammad Khan (right), president of Anjuman al-Pathan in the State of Rajasthan.

The Pathans of Rajasthan

The Pathans we met are different from other communities we spent time with, for there were no Noahides or Jews among them. (Noahides are non-Jews who are followers of the seven laws of Noah and some Jewish laws and traditions. Also, see Kulanu's article in the Spring 2017 Kulanu Magazine, page 6, or on our website here: bit.ly/noah-vizag.) The Pathans want to build bridges with the Jews for one reason only: to preserve their unique Pathan identity so the future generations may know its authentic meaning. Today, the forces of modern life are taking their toll on the Pathans, and their customs, lineage, and self-definition are disappearing. There is a serious chance that by the next generation this identity will be forgotten forever, and its descendants assimilated either into the local religious Muslim culture or secular Hindu society. It is for this reason that the elders

of Anjuman Al-Pathan and their followers joined with us for the chance to give the youth basic knowledge of their roots, knowledge that will ensure that the torch of identity will be passed on to the next generation. Last August 2019 the presidents of the Pathan communities in several cities in Rajasthan, together with representatives from Israel, signed an agreement calling for the establishment of the "Israeli-Pathan Research Institute." It will focus on preserving, learning, and instituting the Pathan heritage for future generations. This is an important step forward and we are currently working to implement it. You can read my impressions of the Pathan delegation's 2015 visit to Israel: bit.ly/pathans-impressions.

The Two Bene Ephraim Communities of Andhra Pradesh

The first community we visited after arriving in Andhra Pradesh was that of Dr. Yacobi, the Bene Ephraim. Communities like his identify as the descendants of the tribe of Ephraim. In a course of events that remains unclear, they either came from Afghanistan, or came with a group of Spanish crypto-Jews in the 16th century. These communities had been considered for centuries to belong to the untouchable Madiga and Mala castes, the lowliest segment of Indian society. These communities of outcasts live in rings around the outskirts of the cities, living off menial labor in an effort to raise their socio-economic status.

Muslim rulers, including Aurangzeb (1616-1707), persecuted these immigrants in an effort to



Bene Ephraim Synagogue in Machilipatnam

continued on next page

Indian Communities: *continued from previous page*

convert them to Islam. Their stubborn refusal led to the decision to excommunicate and banish them from society in order to break their spirit. Success was only partial. There were some among them who converted to Islam, known to this day as “Laal Khani.”

On the way to this community, Dr. Yacobi informed us that he is the son of Shmuel Yacobi, the leader of the Bene Ephraim community of Machilipatnam (sister community to the Bene Ephraim of Chebrolu; in past issues of Kulanu Magazine, the Chebrolu community’s place of residence has also been called Kottyreddypalem). He recently completed his doctorate in Environmental Studies and visited Israel, completing his conversion to Judaism after studying in a seminary for converts.

The community centers were sprawling buildings, well-furnished, and surrounded by flowers. We reached the Yacobi house in the afternoon and were offered a good meal. When we finished, we were received in an official ceremony. We were draped in garlands and colorful new robes and

we listened to lengthy welcoming addresses. We responded with speeches of our own to the local community, praising their efforts and strengthening their spirits in English, aided by Yehoshua’s simultaneous translation into Telugu, the local language.

The same rituals repeated themselves in the Bene Ephraim community of Chebrolu. Shmuel, his brother Sadok, and their brother Aharon z”l had fulfilled the dream of their late father, Yacob Yacobi, and established the Bene Ephraim community here where he had led services.

Shmuel authored and self-published a book explaining the ancient Jewish lineage of these people who are of the Madiga and Mala castes (“The Cultural Hermeneutics,” 2002). Shmuel had recently immigrated to Israel with his wife, but returned to India for a visit. The community is led today by Sadok Yacobi, and it is easy to see that the members of this community are eager to get ahead academically and socially. Their greatest dreams are to formally convert and to visit Israel. We returned to the hotel at Vijayawada, almost two hours away, late at night to rest a bit before the conference of Bene Ephraim that was to be held the following day.

The Five Noahide Communities of Andhra Pradesh

After the conference, Rabbi Birnbaum travelled to New Delhi on his way home to Israel. I remained with Rabbi Yaron Gilor to visit five Noahide communities in the surrounding area of Andhra Pradesh: Eluru, Rajamundry, Tuni, Payakarao-Peta, and Nakkapalli. Some of them



Synagogue of the Bene Ephraim community in Chebrolu (Kottyreddypalem)



Dr. Yacov Yacobi at the synagogue in Machilipatnam



Yedidiah Raj and his son Baruch with the author, Noahide community of Tuni

continued on next page

Indian Communities: *continued from previous page*

have remained loyal to their unique path, carving out a lifestyle within the framework of the seven Noahide commandments. But others have asked to take a step further and join the world of Orthodox Judaism.

Each community greeted us warmly with singing and dancing. Our hosts were happy to meet their guests who came to visit them from Jerusalem. Everywhere we went, we sat around a table with a podium and were decorated with pashmina shawls. I found myself taking part in these ceremonies by conveying blessings from the Holy Land, sprinkling my speech with ideas from the Torah, and ending with a blessing for the community. On our first visit, Yedidiah, the leader of one of the villages, and his three sons, along with an orchestra, escorted us from the entrance of the village, with dozens of village women dancing around us. A memorable

moment occurred when a rather elderly lady somehow noticed that I was wearing sandals. She proceeded to bring a bucket of water, and despite my protests, she washed my feet. I couldn't really resist and risk insulting the woman or Yedidiah, who stood next to her.

The second visit to Yedidiah's community was a bit more modest. We went to the classrooms where I met with the youth and older pupils. I taught them the story of "The Treasure Under the Bridge." I hope they believe that their treasures are close to them, within their families, within their friends, and inside their hearts. Yedidiah told me that his community needs teachers who can teach authentic Judaism. Later during my visit, I met Ms. Michal Kohane, an Israeli rabbinical student sent by Kulanu to address this imminent need. (Read about Michal's experience as a Kulanu Global Teaching Fellow on page 18.)



The author with children of the Noahide community of Tuni



Some members of the Bene Noah Noahide community of Eluru



The author with some members of the Beth El Noahide Community in Visakhapatnam



Children of the Beth El Noahide community in Visakhapatnam standing by their model of Noah's Ark

continued on next page

Beth El Noahide Community in Visakhapatnam

Of all the communities we visited, the Beth El community in Visakhapatnam was the longest and most in-depth visit. We arrived on Friday, right on time for the Muslim muezzin's call for sunset prayer bellowing from the neighboring mosque. At 7pm we went from our room to the prayer room. Ovadiah, the leader of the community, made us feel at home, leading the prayers with a beautiful deep voice. After prayers, the community members stayed to study and we went to our room for dinner. As Shabbat ended with Havdalah, we sang together about Prophet Elijah and wishes for a good week, as Yedidyah played the organ and Rabbi Yaron accompanied on the guitar.



Beth El Noahide Synagogue in Visakhapatnam



The author with Beth El Noahide community members in their synagogue, Visakhapatnam

Many of the faces we met at the conference we already recognized. But even so, I still saw some newcomers. In my speech, I emphasized that we are all children of Noah. The Hindu “Noah” was named Manu. After the flood he came from the belly of a fish, being exploited by the Hindu god Vishnu. According to Hindu mythology, Manu (Noah) sat at Mount Manu-li, next to the northern city of Manali, and wrote the Manusmriti (ancient Sanskrit text of the Hindu laws).

After dinner that night, we celebrated the birthday of Ovadiah's mother, Naomi. My colleagues Rabbi Yaron and Yehoshua left for Israel, and I remained for another week. Most of the mornings I taught the Torah portion of Mishpatim at the school of the Beth El community. I tried to weave in some Jewish history and Israeli geography. The students were fascinated and eager to learn. One of the days I traveled with Ovadiah to the Araku Valley. We went to the Burra Cave, a lovely stalagmite cave. It was a wonder to find on the roof at the end of the cave the Hebrew letters of the holy name of God: **י-ה-ו-ה**.

Spirit Floats on the Water

The time came to leave the mountains and the ocean. Deep inside me, as I walked the streets of Vijayawada, Tuni, and Visakhapatnam and strolled through the villages, I realized that the spirit of God does float here over the water. This spirit helps men, women, and children who feel that they have been robbed of their identity to find it once more. Deep within them, they hear an inner voice calling out and telling them to join something old that is also new. *



Inside the Burra Cave, the Hebrew letters for the holy name of God

Kulanu Notes

A Learning Tradition Continues

Modreck Maeresera, leader of the Harare Lemba Synagogue in Harare, Zimbabwe, continues to work on reading Torah with *trope* (musical notes) with **Mordy Feinberg** (from Silver Spring, Maryland, USA). The two first started working together when Mordy spent a month with Modreck in Harare in 2015 (pictured). Mordy now sends Modreck weekly Shabbat Torah readings with trope via audio message. Modreck is then able to read for the congregation at the weekly Shabbat service.



Guatemala: A Special Visit for the High Holidays



Adat Israel Guatemala received a wonderful visit for the High Holidays. **Rabbi Mike Lotker**, a physicist and rabbi with rabbinic ordination from Hebrew Union College, led the High Holidays with Rebeca Orantes.

Jeannette Orantes, Kulanu Board member and president of the synagogue, shared, “His wisdom helped us to open our minds. We are very grateful to him and all the people that made his visit possible.”

Pan-African Jewish Conference

Kulanu’s first Pan-African Jewish Conference for our emerging Jewish communities is planned for May 2020 in the Ivory Coast of Africa. Organized by Kulanu Vice President **Boni Sussman**, along with **Dr. Ari Greenspan**, **Rabbi Dr. Ari Zivotovsky**, and **Rabbi Eliyahu Birnbaum**, and in conjunction with Ohr Torah Stone, the

program will include an intensive overview and practical course in kosher laws, general Jewish education, and many other aspects of Judaism and communal leadership skills workshops. This is the first time our African partner communities will meet to share and learn together.

Italy: The Rosh Hashanah Seder

Yes, it does exist! Just like its more familiar Pesach “cousin,” there really is a Rosh Hashanah Seder Plate! This plate graced the seder table at Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud (in Southern Italy) as its congregation celebrated Erev Rosh Hashanah with traditional Mediterranean foods that symbolize the birthday of the world. Kulanu’s second vice president **Rabbi Barbara Aiello** led the seder, welcoming members and friends from Naples (the “toe” of the Italian “boot”), Rome, and Tel Aviv.



continued on next page

Torahs Delivered Around the Globe



Gentleman from Oil City, PA donating a Torah. He and his wife drove to NYC and met Boni Sussman to deliver the two Torah scrolls.

Two Torahs donated by the Oil City Synagogue in Pennsylvania are being given to two partner communities. The representatives from the closing synagogue were moved and comforted by the fact that the Torahs would be cherished in their new homes.

One Torah was personally delivered by a Kulanu volunteer in December 2019 to an emerging community in the Philippines.

The other Torah will go to an Anousim (also known as crypto-Jews) community in Recife, Brazil in early 2020. The partner communities are honored to receive their own Torahs.



Torah crown and Torah from the closing synagogue in Pennsylvania

New Partner Communities



In one of Kulanu's new communities in the Philippines, a Filipino Jew in the sukkah holding a lulav and etrog



A group from one of Kulanu's new partner communities in Tanzania

Kulanu has begun working with communities in Tanzania, the Philippines, and Pakistan, providing funds for holiday celebrations in Pakistan and sending a donated Torah and prayer books to the Philippines. Vice President **Bonita Sussman** has been actively corresponding with people in these communities to help them along in their journey to Judaism. These three communities join our 30+ partner communities around the globe.

Genie Milgrom: US Speaking Events

Kulanu Board Member **Genie Milgrom** will be speaking at various locations in the United States to share her story as well as her new cookbook, *Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers*. Genie grew up Catholic but later in life converted to Judaism. She then discovered through genealogy and an impressive amount of research that she was Jewish on her mother's side going back fifteen generations. She spoke this fall at universities, museums, and synagogues across the United States.



Genie unrolls the scroll of her matrilineal lineage, her 15 grandmothers!

continued on next page

New Educational Videos in Multiple Languages

Spearheaded by the efforts of Kulanu Board Member **Genie Milgrom**, Kulanu has begun sharing videos about upcoming holidays in multiple languages. The first videos that were shared for Sukkot featured **Rabbi Elisha Salas**, **Rabbi Chaim Pais**, and **Michael Milgrom**. These videos (in Spanish, Portuguese, and English) were featured on the homepage in the blog (bit.ly/sucot-espanol-portugues) as well as in the Jewish Educational Resources section of our website (kulanu.org/resources). Additional videos will be shared throughout the year in multiple languages to ensure the inclusion of the global Jewish community.



Kulanu Project-Specific Fundraisers

Kulanu is able to do such amazing work because of supporters like yourself. Jewish communities around the globe are depending on Kulanu to fund needed projects. We are seeking additional funds for two projects to be successful. A project in Kenya (right) will bring that community together with a new social hall and kitchen (bit.ly/donate-kenya). A project in Uganda will provide students with new desks for the classroom and beds in dormitories (kulanu.org/hadassah-primary-school-fundraiser).



You can also quickly and easily make a fundraiser on Facebook to support Kulanu at bit.ly/KulanuFBFundraisers. This is a great way to celebrate your birthday (or any milestone) with “all of us!”

Madagascar Jewish Community Forms Vaad



Three leaders of the Madagascar community: Petoela, Ashley, and Touv'iah

In November, the Jewish community in Madagascar officially created a *Vaad*, the Hebrew term for a council, to deal with all communal and halachic (Jewish law) questions. The group will comprise a panel of ten or twelve members coming from the different groups in the capital city. One objective of the *Vaad* is to begin a weekly community journal or monthly magazine, in addition to publishing halachic guidance and producing books locally, such as the Mishneh Torah, Shulchan Aruch, and many other classics being translated by **Rabbi Moshe Yehouda**. *

Remembering Elaine Berg



Elaine and Irwin Berg, January 2019 in NYC. Photo by Chaya Weinstein.

Elaine and her husband, Irwin Berg, were among Kulanu's original volunteers. We are very sad to say that Elaine died of cancer in New York City on October 29, 2019. We all sorely miss her.

Elaine was a dedicated Kulanu supporter for 25 years. She was a true trailblazer, arriving in Uganda on the first-ever

Kulanu trip to the Abayudaya community in 1995. Her videos of their welcome songs (bit.ly/1995Welcome) captured a historic moment in the history of the community and of Kulanu. Her connection to the Jewish people around the globe did not end with Uganda. She and Irwin traveled to Suriname, Turkey, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Mali, Brazil, India, and China to learn about life in Jewish communities abroad. She will be remembered as a true friend to so many and her love lives on in the many videos she shared including the Lemba singing in Zimbabwe (bit.ly/LembaSongs) in 2013 and interviews at the Jewish Africa Film Festival (bit.ly/ElaineVideos) this past January.

Touching tributes poured in from around the globe:

"It is so sad to hear about the passing of a very wonderful soul. I remember Elaine from when she came to Uganda during the first Kulanu trip and from when I lived in NYC in 2001. I had keys to her apartment and I felt very much at home May we be comforted among the mourners of Tzion"

~Rabbi Gershom Sizomu for the Abayudaya in Uganda

"My memories of Elaine stretch from Uganda, Suriname, Turkey, and Zimbabwe. But it is more than memories because what they did was to provide footsteps for others to follow. I look

down and cry but find consolation in all her footsteps."

~Jack Zeller, Kulanu's founder and President Emeritus

"How sad. Please convey to Irwin that we have loved the two of them since we slept on the floor together on Nabagoya Hill in 1995. Our hearts are so heavy." ~Karen and Aron Primack, Secretary and Vice President of Kulanu until 2008

"We at Hadassah School are disheartened to learn of the death of our friend Elaine. I remember her visiting Abayudaya in 1995 with the first Kulanu delegation, and how I stayed with her and Irwin at their home in New York in 2011. With the tremendous work she has done to educate Americans about the Abayudaya community, we will greatly miss her." ~Aaron Kintu Moses, Head of Hadassah Primary School for the Abayudaya in Uganda

"Elaine has been such a support to me. She was an experienced CEO of hospitals and the regional organ bank, and she supported and encouraged my leadership in Kulanu. She was my caterer and my supporter when we had Kulanu receptions at my home, baking kosher cakes and cookies, and would set up and clean up so I could give my full attention to our guests. I could also count on her to take visitors from our partner communities on a tour of the Museum of Jewish Heritage or to host them in their home or offer them meals."

~Harriet Bograd, Kulanu President

"We at Harare Lemba Synagogue feel the enormity of our loss. Elaine was the personification of Kulanu objectives and ideals and dedicated her life to helping isolated and emerging Jewish communities come back into the fold. She and Irwin volunteered a whole month teaching the Harare Lemba community, encouraging us on our journey. Elaine was Jewish to the bone and wanted to see Judaism grow and Jews flourish. You may be gone but we feel your love, and the fruits of your work remain. We will strive to fulfill your wonderful dream. Farewell, Elaine. May your memory be forever blessed. You will always be our heroine." ~Modreck Maeresera *

Bedza Irrigation Project in Zimbabwe

By Modreck Maeresera, Kulanu Board Member and President of the Harare Lemba Synagogue in Zimbabwe

In 2017 and 2018, Kulanu, in partnership with the Harare Lemba synagogue, carried out two development projects in the Bedza Lemba community in Zimbabwe. These projects involved building two weirs, or concrete dams, in two of our streams so that our livestock would have a source of water throughout the year, including during droughts. Our community, with funds raised by Kulanu through its donors, successfully carried out these projects. Today, where the livestock used to die during drought, there is now abundant water to last through the dry season and even through drought years. This has a very huge impact on our community as a whole. Children who used to miss school to take cattle long distances to drink water can now focus on learning and playing. The village cattle herd that was shrinking is now growing. This is a miracle in a community that values cattle. Our livelihood comes from using the cattle for milk, to till our land, and to provide manure to fertilize the fields.

The success we had building the weirs had far-reaching effects on the whole community. Seven villages of people with different political, religious, and ethnic backgrounds came together to undertake a project that changed their lives.



Harare Lemba community members planting potatoes

Lemba Jews, Muslims, Christians, and practitioners of the African traditional religions came together to confront a common enemy: water shortage. We had succeeded beyond expectations and in the process managed to save the village herd as well as to save our children



In the Harare Lembe community, the land was laid with drip lines and prepared for planting potatoes. This will help the people finally attain food sovereignty and stave off starvation.

from the long trips taking our cattle to distant watering holes while they missed school. This was proof that the villagers could achieve much by working on our own rather than depending on the dysfunctional government that fails to provide its citizens with basics.

One very vital effect was that the water harnessed by the weirs fed underground aquifers such that the borehole drilled in the community now has abundant water to last throughout the whole year — even in the dry season. In December 2018, a capacity test done on the 50-meter deep borehole concluded that we can pump 7,000 liters of water per hour from the borehole without exhausting the flow. The borehole is fitted with a diesel generator that can pump 300 liters of water per hour and that effectively means we have more water than we can pump out.

It is this success that inspired the next project. It gave us the confidence to do more to take control of our lives. Summed up by the weir project manager Mr. Esmond Zvakavapano, “This is a start but doesn’t need to be the end. We can have three more weirs in this stream, and we can start a fishery and a vegetable garden. We need to

continued on next page

Zimbabwe Irrigation: *continued from previous page*

have something to occupy ourselves with, even in the dry season. Most men, for lack of anything else to do, spend the whole dry season loafing around. Young people leave the villages for the city. Hopefully, if we have a way to meaningfully contribute to our community throughout the year, it will restore our dignity and pride as people.”



Water storage tanks used for the irrigation project

Our success with water broadened the horizon of possibilities for us. Where the weirs saved the livestock from droughts, the borehole can be used to start an irrigation project that can save the people from famine. We have enough water to irrigate 10 hectares of land (a hectare is approximately 2.5 acres) and we have the potential to effectively and permanently deal with our food insecurity problems by producing our own food. This is especially vital in a community that always looked to donors to provide them with food during droughts and famine times. This need is made all the more clear by the current drought. Many families are without any food; without donor aid many face starvation. This has highlighted the need to deal with this problem once and for all. We have the most important resource —water— and with enough financial resources we can insure ourselves against droughts and famines like we did when we built the weirs. We will never have to live with the fear

of not having enough to eat or the fear that our children will be forced to drop out of school because all our community’s resources need to be channeled towards food.

In 2016, the Harare Lemba synagogue community was saved from one of the worst droughts in living memory by a food distribution program sponsored by

Kulanu. However, because of climate change, droughts and famines are going to be frequent and we can’t always depend on donors and Kulanu. Fortunately, Bedza village is becoming more independent because our land can be much more productive with abundant water. In 2017, with money raised through Kulanu, we fenced 10 hectares of land in Bedza and installed main drip pipes on five of those hectares and installed drip lines in two of those hectares.

“...we will be able to produce food for our needs and we won’t always have to look to donors for food aid.”

Now, as 2020 approaches, our plan is to use the land and the water in Bedza to produce food for the Harare Lemba synagogue community, with the latter leasing the land from the former. The Zvakavapano family, who owns the land where the development is taking place, will benefit from the fence and drip infrastructure, and in return they will lease 10 hectares of the land to the Harare Lemba Synagogue to produce food for its use for seven years for only \$1 per year.



Mr. Obey Kandawasvika (with hat), the program manager, helping service the diesel generator

continued on next page

Zimbabwe Irrigation: *continued from previous page*

Half the food will be used for the Shabbat lunch program at the Harare Lemba Synagogue as well as for distribution to the Harare Lemba Synagogue community. This will effectively eliminate our food problems since we will be able to produce food for our needs and we won't always have to look to donors for food aid. The other half will be sold and the money will be used to fund operations at the farm. That way we will meet our objective to provide food for our community as well as to make sure the project will be self-sustaining.



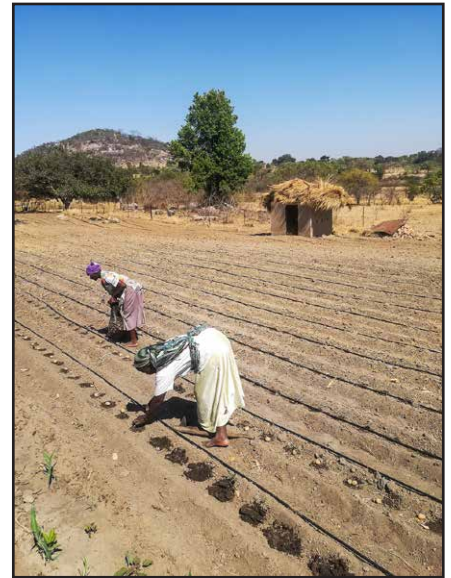
Land prepared for planting

The crops we have targeted for production are beans and potatoes. A Harare Lemba Synagogue member who is experienced with drip irrigation has relocated to Bedza to manage the project. In November 2019, Mr. Obey Kandawasvika, the manager, and his team finished planting potatoes on two acres of land in Bedza and they are laying more drip lines so they can plant the next batch. Kulanu has raised funds to start production work on 1.5 hectares and, God willing, if enough funds are raised we will put the 1.5 hectares into full production before expanding to cover the whole ten hectares. Our immediate needs are to add 25 liters of storage tanks so we can have enough water stores. We also need to replace the diesel generator with a solar generator. Solar generation

is cheaper and more effective in the long run.

Around Pesach (April) 2020, we will harvest our first potatoes! That will mark our freedom from food shortages and dependence, and it will mark the success of a project that will give us food security.

We are confident, with the help of our friends and sponsors, that we will make it happen. It is our hope that hunger will be a story of the past, and that, as we did on the weirs, we will be celebrating finding lasting solutions to problems that confront us. It is our desire that we won't be mourning about how circumstances beyond our control are ruining our lives. We will be celebrating having taken destiny in our hands and cushioned ourselves against future food shortages by giving ourselves food sovereignty. ✨



Community members planting potatoes

Help us support the Harare Lemba Synagogue community to fight famine

We need an additional \$20,000 to ensure the success of this life-saving project.

Please go to <https://kulanu.org/donate> to donate online or learn where to mail a check. Write "Lemba" in the comments online or the memo field on your check.

Kulanu Global Teaching Fellows (KGTF)

By Sophie Ostrow

Sophie is currently volunteering for Kulanu as a program and communications intern while she completes her degree at Yeshiva University. She aspires to work in communications in the Jewish non-profit community.

Lighting the Shabbat candles, reading the weekly Torah portion, and blowing the shofar are Jewish practices that move and inspire many around the world. Learning about why we do them is another beautiful aspect of Judaism that should be spread throughout the worldwide Jewish community. Kulanu's global impact is constantly growing in many ways, but through our Kulanu Global Teaching Fellows (KGTF), we see our mission flourishing throughout the world.

Jewish communities around the globe called and Kulanu answered. Launched in 2017, a total of nine rabbinical students have participated in KGTF program and this year, for the first time, two African rabbinical students served in two

other African countries. These isolated, emerging, and returning communities where the Fellows volunteer have a great passion for Judaism; it is extremely important to them that they continue to enrich their knowledge of their faith. Many of these communities have very few Jewish educational resources, yet they practice Judaism on a daily basis. At Kulanu, we make every effort to respond to calls from our communities who desire to learn more about Judaism, and KGTF does just that.

Our four 2019 KGT Fellows are rabbinical students from around the world. They served in Nigeria, Brazil, India, and Gabon, ready to make an impact from the moment they landed. All of our Global Teaching Fellows have described their time in these communities as impactful, inspiring, and amazing, and each one had a unique experience that drove their passion for Jewish teaching and learning even further.

India

Michal Kohane (of Israel) from Yeshivat Maharat in Riverdale, New York, served in the southeastern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Through her blog she kept while she was there (miko284.com — search the Archives links for July 19th through August 16th, 2019), she shared about the women of this community, and their Jewish role there. “They do their tasks with pride and humility, not grudgingly with a puffed breath under their chin, but with grace and delight. It’s their honor to walk in Abraham and Sarah’s footsteps. What can be better than to be busy with

was something that she had never witnessed in her time there. While they knew about daily Jewish practices, they yearned to learn how to make challah. “Failure was not an

option. Anything would be a success. If it doesn’t work, we would have learned how not to do it next time,” the women told Michal.

These women were honored to have a maharat (woman rabbi) teach them Talmud, Tanach, and mitzvot. As a woman who was inspired to take her love for Judaism to the next level by going to Yeshivat Maharat, Michal was moved to do the same for the Jewish women in this part of India.



Jewish women in Eastern India learning how to make challah with Michal Kohane



Michal sharing her knowledge with students

the work of Hashem? They feel lucky,” Michal wrote. She explained how the women in her community stopped their work one evening, which

Brazil

Natan Freller, from the Ziegler Rabbinical School in Los Angeles, was a Kulanu Global Teaching Fellow in Brazil. Natan is originally from an involved Jewish community in Brazil which made his teaching placement unique. “I never had the opportunity to work with emergent communities there. This was an eye-opening experience for me. I got to meet amazing people who care deeply about their community and



Natan, back left with glasses, with the Jewish community in Goiânia, Brazil

have been dedicating their lives to learn how to “do Jewish” where there are no other Jewish communities in their area. I developed meaningful



Members of the Brazilian Jewish community practicing melodies for Kabbalat Shabbat; the instrument being played by the woman on the left is a cavabanjo — a Brazilian instrument, a mix of cavaquinho and banjo.

relationships with that community and have kept in touch with them since we first met. It is beautiful to see them growing,” Natan said. In Brazil, Natan focused on physical Jewish practices, such as shechita (kosher slaughtering). “Kulanu contributed a special knife that came from Israel and I taught them how to provide kosher meat for their community,” Natan explained. This is the perfect example of what the KGT Fellowship is all about: providing actual resources for Jews around the globe who lack them.

Gabon

Amir Etele, a student at Ohr Torah Stone Yeshiva (Israel) and our Fellow from Cameroon, went to the neighboring African country of Gabon with items such as a shofar, copies of Jewish texts, and a Havdalah candle. Something unique about our Fellows, which Amir exemplified, was how they tailor their teaching and learning to the community that they are spending time with. For example, Amir brought a French-Hebrew Tanakh because the people of Gabon speak French.

A special aspect of the Fellows’ job is to bring



Barukh, from Gabon, learning to blow the Shofar that Amir brought to their community

resources that are accessible to the members of the community they are working with.

Amir also arrived in Gabon with the goal of

specifically teaching about the shofar. He tells the story of how he did not know how to actually

blow a shofar, so Raizel, a member of Beth Yeshourun in Cameroon, helped him teach that practice in Gabon. This is something that made Amir’s mission so unique. He utilized different community members’ established skills to teach others who wanted to learn. This Gabon community used to be a practicing Christian community. They now are a community of fifty practicing Jews who are constantly craving to learn more and access Jewish resources. Amir was an excellent teacher who helped this community deepen their connection to Judaism.



Congregants gathered in the prayer hall after a weeknight service for a Torah lesson taught by Amir

Nigeria

Shadrach Mugoya Levi, a rabbinical student with the Aleph Rabbinical Program who learns remotely in Namutumba, Uganda, traveled to Nigeria to serve. “My village community in Uganda has received support from Kulanu and this summer I was able to give back to another African Jewish community. Thanks to Kulanu, as an African Jew I have come full circle,” Shadrach shared. He taught High Holidays and Festivals, Halakha, Shabbat, Brit Mila, and many more topics to the Jews in the Nigerian community. “I enjoyed the teaching, mostly about Brit Milah,” Shadrach told us. He really enjoyed the questions that the community members asked him because it gave him the opportunity to reach out and ask other rabbis, which expanded his knowledge as well.



Members of Tikvat Israel Community celebrating Shavuot



Shadrach teaching his community members in Nigeria about Jewish holidays and practices



◀ Mother and child in Nigeria's Jewish community

▶ Shadrach with Jewish community members in Nigeria.



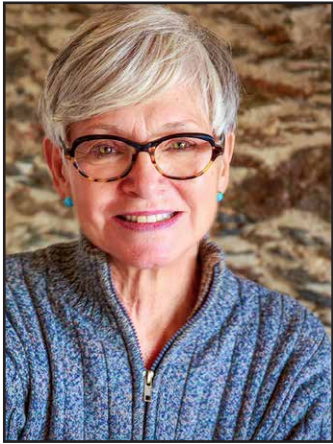
Looking Ahead

Though their Kulanu Global Teaching Fellows experience has ended, our Fellows wish to continue their work with the global Jewish community in the future. Whether that be through the Kulanu Global Teaching Fellows program or simply by spreading awareness of the communities they served to others across the world, we have no doubt they will continue their

important and meaningful work.

We are excited to begin recruiting for the Summer 2020 Kulanu Global Teaching Fellows program. If you are an interested rabbinical student who wants to have a direct impact in Jewish communities worldwide, we encourage you to apply at bit.ly/kgtf-app. *

Volunteer Spotlight: Rabbi Barbara Aiello



Rabbi Barbara Aiello is Italy's first and only woman rabbi and vice president of Kulanu's Board of Directors. She serves the "b'nei anusim" congregation Ner Tamid del Sud — The Eternal Light of the South — a recognized Reconstructionist synagogue and the first active synagogue in Calabria, Italy in 500 years since Inquisition times.

How did you first hear about Kulanu?

In the early days of the internet, I stumbled over a site that mentioned Kulanu and I was fascinated. It was the mid-1990s and I was working in St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands serving as a Hebrew school teacher and workshop leader at the synagogue there. At that time, I met many people whose roots went back to the Inquisition, islanders whose ancestors were part of the many Jews who disembarked in Charlotte-Amalie. Some of these "lost" Jews frequented the synagogue so when I discovered Kulanu, I felt that I had found kindred spirits in the quest to bring lost Jews back to Judaism. When I returned to mainland USA, I maintained my relationship with Kulanu and tried to meet with founder Jack Zeller. It was long before cell phones, and we lost each other while trying to meet in National Airport in Washington D.C. and never did meet in person. I stayed in touch via the Kulanu newsletters and remained fascinated with Kulanu's unique mission.

What inspired you to begin volunteering for Kulanu?

When Harriet Bograd became Kulanu's president, I saw that Kulanu was about to grow by leaps and bounds. And indeed it did! Communication with Kulanu supporters became more regular and contained such interesting information. I was also inspired by Karen Primack's book (*Under One Canopy*) and was honored to contribute our story to it. When Karen and Aron came to

visit us here in Calabria, Italy, their enthusiasm was contagious. I became a member of Kulanu's Board of Directors, a position that brings me great joy, especially working with a group of dedicated and talented board volunteers. Volunteering for Kulanu allows me to have a direct impact on sharing Kulanu's mission.

What is it about Kulanu's mission that appeals to you personally?

As a "bat anusim," or "daughter of ancestors who were forced into Christian conversion," Kulanu's emphasis on Jews from diverse backgrounds appealed to me and, moreover, touched my heart. Having grown up in a Sephardic synagogue in an eastern US city where there was a large Ashkenazi Jewish community, when the Jews there heard my last name, "Aiello," the response would be, "You're Italian — you can't be Jewish!" Kulanu's mission is personally refreshing for me. I feel that I have "come home," and as a result can relate to Jews who are culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse.

How has your volunteer work impacted your life?

Kulanu's mission has always included positive outreach. I feel that when I organized our anusim synagogue here in Calabria, Italy, thirteen years ago (Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud), Kulanu's successes motivated me to move forward.

What do you wish others knew about Kulanu?

Kulanu's worldwide reach is tremendous. The "isolated, emerging, and returning" message is very important so that mainstream Jews, especially those in North America, understand that we have brothers and sisters around the world just waiting to be Jewish if only we would extend the hand of Jewish welcome. Kulanu has a 25-year record of outreach success. As we face an increase in Jewish complacency, Jews need to know that, thanks to Kulanu, there are many Jews around the world excited and enthusiastic about being Jewish. This work is life-changing! *

Sukkot in Calabria, Italy:

Bringing Our Traditions Home

By Rabbi Barbara Aiello (learn more about Rabbi Barbara on preceding page)

Photos by Domenico Pulice

Here in Calabria, we stand in solidarity with Jews all over the world as we celebrate the festival that my daughter often called “Jewish camping.” We Jews are eating and even sleeping outdoors in a temporary little hut called a *sukkah* as we observe the holiday of Sukkot.

In all of the Torah, the *sukkah* is the only structure that we are commanded to build. The Torah requires us to construct the *sukkah* in a manner that allows us to see through the roof and look up to the stars so that we can fully experience our connection to the natural world.



Building and decorating the sukkah in Calabria, Italy

The *sukkah* reminds us of the time when we Jews lived in the wilderness and it asks us to remember how fragile and how temporary all buildings really are — even those constructed with bricks and mortar or with stone, steel or cement.

The blessings under the *sukkah* are as important as the structure itself, especially the ceremony that features a strangely shaped fruit and a bouquet of branches — Jewish symbols that offer an important lesson.

Interestingly, the Sukkot fruit, called *etrog* in Hebrew and *cedro* in Italian, is native to

Calabria. A fabulous *etrog* farm, which appears to be operated by Orthodox Jews, functions only several miles from our synagogue in a town called Santa Maria del Cedro. I am often asked if I collect my *etrogim* there. Sadly, no. As a woman rabbi who wears a kippah, I was prohibited from entering the farm!

Under the *sukkah* we wave the *etrog* and the *lulav*. This activity celebrates the four natural species: the *etrog* (the citrus fruit), the myrtle branch, the willow branch, and the palm branch. The three branches are held together in the woven container called the *lulav*.

- ☞ The small, almond-shaped leaves of the *myrtle* branch symbolize our eyes, reminding us that we must not close our eyes to injustice in the world.
- ☞ The leaf on the *willow* branch, long and thin, represents our mouth — meaning that it is not enough to acknowledge injustice. Instead, when we’ve seen injustice, we must speak up against it.
- ☞ The *palm* branch, long, stiff, and unbending, symbolizes our backbone and tells us that we need strength to stand up to injustice and strength to take action.
- ☞ Finally, when we take the branch bouquet called the *lulav* and hold it against the *etrog* fruit we notice that the *etrog* is shaped like the heart muscle, meaning that all we do to make the world a more just place must be done with love and compassion — with a good heart.

Here in Calabria at Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud, we Calebresi enjoyed our mountain-top *sukkah*, built beneath the *pergola*, the grape arbor where we regularly make our Shabbat Kiddush blessings. More than fifty of our members, friends, and neighbors joined together

continued on next page



Miki Abramo in Calabria, Italy

to celebrate this joyful Jewish festival and to emphasize this happy occasion. We used paper in the shape of apples to record our thoughts on what is good about our world.

From *genitori e nonni* (parents and grandparents) to *fiume e montagne* (rivers

and mountains), our sukkah decorations were inscribed with personal blessings and messages of hope.

In the glow of a bright full moon, we dipped apples in honey, enjoyed music and song, visits from biblical guests (*ushpizin*, a 16th-century custom which originated among the Kabbalists), and shared family stories and precious memories.

We are Italian *b'nei anusim*, and thanks to help and encouragement from Kulanu we are beginning to discover and embrace our Jewish roots. We are reclaiming traditions that were stolen from us during Inquisition times — and the tradition of Sukkot is only one of many Jewish celebrations, festivals, and memorials that point the way to our return to Judaism and offer us a heartfelt “Welcome Home.” *



The author (Rabbi Barbara) lighting the Sukkot candles with Lena

Kulanu Board Of Directors And Officers



President

Harriet Bograd

First Vice President

Rabbanit Bonita Nathan Sussman

Second Vice President

Rabbi Barbara Aiello

Secretary

Barbara Vinick

Treasurer

Sandy Leeder

President Emeritus

Jack Zeller

Other Board Members

Rabbi Capers Funnye, Judi Kloper,
Rabbi Elie Lehmann, Modreck Maeresera,
Genie Milgrom, Jeannette Orantes,
Daneel Schaechter

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, emerging, and returning 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

To report changes of address:
kulanu.org/contact

For further information:
kulanu.org

Magazine Editor

Judi Kloper

Layout and Photography Editor

Lisa Yagoda



Supporting Isolated,
Emerging, and Returning
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
Boston, MA
Permit No. 52955

Thanks to Your Support, Kulanu Welcomes a New Community



A Jewish mother and father in the Philippines bless their children on Shabbat

As we welcome a new Kulanu community, we welcome your donation to help isolated, emerging, and returning Jewish communities worldwide.

**Be a part of the Kulanu family.
Make a difference. Donate today.**

<https://kulanu.org/donate>

The friendship that Kulanu has shared is very important because many organizations ... are too busy to get to know or assist new or emerging communities. Many small communities around the world may feel isolated and may not know where to turn for help... One of the great things that Kulanu does for communities like ours is to let them know that they are not alone.

*Rabbi Coalesce Brown, Q'hilot
Benai Yisrael, Mindanao,
Philippines*

Kulanu is a great organization and our community is extremely joyous and proud to be part of the Kulanu family.

member of Benai Yisrael

They have opened their arms to us with various types of support, including a Torah scroll from Oil City, Pennsylvania, and Siddurim from Canada!

member of Benai Yisrael