



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

KULANU

“All of Us”

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Limud Mallorca and the city hall of Palma in Majorca, Spain, work together to bring public school students cultural education such as Jewish, Converso, and Chueta walking history tours around the Jewish Quarters of Palma.

Pictured is the wall of the Mt. Zion Church which sits on top of the site of the extinguished medieval Great Synagogue of Palma. As a symbolic way to connect to these medieval Jews of Majorca, students place notes in the cracks of the wall. The personal notes are a mix of hopes, wishes, dreams, or desires for the students, their families, their communities, or the world at large. Story page 12.



A Philosophical History of Kulanu

By Ben Lefkowitz (see page 11 for bio)

Introduction: What is Kulanu?

That's the question I've been trying to answer through these histories. In the Fall 2020 issue, I wrote about *how* Kulanu came about. In this issue, I'm writing about *why* Kulanu came about — what drove Kulanu's founders back then, and what drives the volunteers today. The hope is that readers can read both of these articles and come to a conclusion about what Kulanu is, exactly. Reflecting on an organization's history and mission is a blessing in a world that rarely stops for definition or self-reflection.

I found a myriad of motivations for Kulanu's existence, many which seemed contradictory or polar opposites. It seems that the name *Kulanu* — Hebrew for *All of Us* — reflects not just the diversity of the Jewish people, but also the diversity of beliefs within the Jewish people. *All of us* also implies that Jews of diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and visions can work together toward common goals and the common good, and I believe that describes this organization exactly. What follows are descriptions of the major value and motivational categories I found in my interviews, although dividing interviewee quotes into these categories was a bit like dividing an atom. The categories represent strands of thought, not distinct camps of belief.



Founding members of Kulanu Karen and Aron Primack in 2010

Curiosity and Fascination — Jews in Places You Never Thought Of *

It's no secret that, for most American Jews (and many Israelis), the fact that there are Jews in places we often wouldn't expect is astounding. What I discovered through my interviews is that this aspect was the introduction to Kulanu for many of its founders and volunteers. **Karen and Aron Primack**, for example, first joined Amishav, Kulanu's sibling organization, after hearing a talk on lost tribes. Another founding member of Kulanu, **Bob Lande**, told me about the initial American reaction to a visiting Ethiopian Jew, sometime in the late 1970s or early 1980s. "At the time, nobody knew what an Ethiopian Jew was. It was just a totally exotic thing," Bob said. "He blew the minds of everybody in the audience." Especially for American Jews — who tend to have a very particular image of what a Jew looks like and does (Yiddish, bagels, Mel Brooks) — isolated, emerging, and returning Jewish communities can act as a shock that expands our ethnic and spiritual imagination of what a Jew can be.

The important thing to note here is that curiosity often served as the *initial* motivation — the poster on the wall — for many Kulanu devotees. The cultural differences involved in Kulanu's work, and often the shock of first reaching an unknown community, tend to make headlines. There is, however, much more meaning and purpose to Kulanu. For those I interviewed, a core mission quickly emerged from initial excitement. I believe, however, that the initial emotion of meeting a Jew very different from many of us carries a deeper lesson. From the first moment of realization, it takes a cudgel to our pre-conceptions of religion and peoplehood, our assumptions about Ashkenazi normativity and Judaism, and our place within history.

* This is a nod to Kulanu's first book *Jews in Places You Never Thought Of* by Karen Primack, published by Ktav Publishing House, 1998, © Kulanu, Inc.

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Jewish Solidarity

One of the driving sentiments behind Kulanu is a sense of Jewish solidarity and peoplehood. **Jack Zeller**, a Kulanu founder, told me:

Kulanu is valid, and Jews helping other Jews is valid, because Jewish parochialism is old, tried, and true. And it works. It works for everybody who's participating. It enhances life. It gives life meaning and it makes your identity stronger.

Kulanu arrived at a particular time in Jewish history. In the five decades before its founding, the Jewish world experienced the Holocaust (1941-1945), the elation of the founding of the State of Israel (1948), the Six Day War (1967), the crises of the Yom Kippur War (1973) and the Soviet Refuseniks (1970s-80s), the Ethiopian Aliyah operations (1984 and 1991), and the American march against anti-Semitism spear-headed by organizations such as B'nai Brith and Hadassah. This period led to the development of responsive and effective Jewish philanthropic institutions, and the maturity of a generation of dynamic and dedicated Jewish activists. Many of Kulanu's founders were among that generation of Jewish activists and were particularly involved in the fight for Ethiopian Jewry. They viewed support for other isolated, emerging, and returning Jewish communities as the logical next step for Jewish action. I speculate that the Refusenik crisis, and perhaps Jewish revivals like the Ba'al Teshuva movement, play a role in Kulanu's Jewish-activist DNA, although my interviews didn't quite reach this subject. Many members also grew a strong Jewish identity in

Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform summer camps, such as Ramah.

Of course, what differentiates Kulanu from the rest of recent Jewish activist history is its insistence on expanding peoplehood, and the solidarity that follows, to communities the mainstream Ashkenazi community refuses to see, disputes, or ignores. "If someone wants to be Jewish, if someone wants to claim their Judaism, or become Jewish, fine," Aron Primack told me. "We don't ask the question: Who is a Jew? Once you've said you are a Jew, you want education — we're happy to give you education."

One sub-theme I want to mention is Kulanu in the context of historical Jewish persecution. Many interviewees saw their own history in the persecution that isolated, emerging, and returning Jewish communities face today. Karen Primack and Harriet Bograd both drew parallels between the horrific persecution that the Abayudaya (Ugandan Jewish) community experienced under Idi Amin, and the Spanish Inquisition. **Rabbi Gerald Sussman** likened an Indian Jewish community which he and his wife visited in 2007 to the Pale of Settlement:

In a way, it didn't feel alien, because I remember my father growing up in the shtetl. Also, no running water and washing clothes in the river. Some of the things he would talk about, that's what people were actually doing. So I felt that they're not so different from us.

In a sense, many of Kulanu's activists, volunteers, and donors are motivated by a sense that the Jewish "past is never dead. It's not even past." More directly, by combating modern Jewish persecution and poverty, they are answering the question, "What would you have done?" for the horrors of Jewish history, and writing better endings to the stories of that history. I myself felt a sense of shock, too-close-to-home, upon reading about how Ethiopian Jews were labeled as hyenas and other magical creatures. It felt similar to my mother's experience in Atlanta, where she was often asked if she had horns.



Founding members of Kulanu Diane and Jack Zeller

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Humanitarianism, Anti-Poverty, and Human Rights

In the history of Jewish philanthropy and activism above, I left out something crucial: Jews were involved not just in Jewish causes, but in the fight for human rights, freedom, anti-poverty, and dignity in America and globally. Jews were cornerstones of America's civil rights, workers' rights, and women's rights movements. Once America's philanthropic global presence grew, Jews found themselves on the front lines of humanitarian causes all around the world. Kulanu's current president, **Harriet Bograd**, describes herself as a "professional volunteer" with extensive experience in NGOs. The Primacks had worked primarily for global humanitarian organizations such as the Peace Corps and Doctors Without Borders before coming to Kulanu. One veteran Kulanu volunteer, **Sandy Leeder**, was right beside Martin Luther King Jr. during his "I Have a Dream" speech, and served in the Peace Corps in Niger.

What I found through my interviews is that many Kulanu members were motivated to help emerging, returning, and isolated Jewish communities, not just out of a sense of Jewish solidarity, but also feminism, disability rights, anti-poverty, and pure human goodwill. Karen Primack shared:

My background is in civil rights law. I became interested in Kulanu largely because I thought that people ought to be able to choose their own religion. And so it interested me that there were people in different parts of the world who were having trouble in that respect.

While Kulanu was originally founded as an organization to support isolated, emerging, and returning communities in terms of Jewish growth, it quickly expanded to supporting education, skill development, hunger relief, and limited infrastructure and development projects.

The results speak for themselves. Today the Abayudaya, the Jewish Ugandan community that Kulanu has supported since Kulanu's inception, is a growing beacon of light. Unlike many historical Ashkenazi communities, the Abayudaya are not isolated; they are intertwined in a neighborhood that contains Christians, Muslims, and traditional Ugandans as well as Jews. For the Abayudaya, an elementary school, for example, is most effective if it benefits their non-Jewish neighbors, spreading the benefit and increasing the Abayudaya's standing with neighbors. Similarly, providing only Torahs, prayer books, and synagogue funding to a community in the midst of a severe famine is ineffective, and many Kulanu board members support direct relief in some situations. Ideally, community development and extreme poverty relief extend Jewish



Rabbi Gerald Sussman and Kulanu's current first vice president Rabbinit Bonita Sussman during their 2007 visit with the Bene Ephraim community in Andhra Pradesh, India



Kulanu's current president Harriet Bograd on her first ever Kulanu visit which was to Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana in June 2001. Pictured is Ken Klein (Harriet's husband), Margie Klein (her daughter), Harriet, and community leaders Kofi Kwarteng and David Ahenkora.

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solidarity and provide necessary prerequisites to communities' Jewish growth. However, there are numerous challenges and obstacles that hinder the success of such development and relief work.

The decision to provide support beyond Jewish education, recognition, and spiritual/ethnic growth, is one ultimately made on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the community in question. Harriet phrases it like this: "We decided that we were not a [purely] religious organization in selective cases." Boni provided a similar definition:

Kulanu is an organization primarily interested in supporting isolated, emerging, and returning Jewish communities in their spiritual and ethnic Jewish journeys, but occasionally makes exceptions and delivers more broad support, when appropriate, to a specific community's circumstance.

Kulanu is undeniably an organization focused on Jewish growth. The fact, however, that many of its founders and members have backgrounds in global human rights and development and come to Kulanu out of a sense of shared humanity, implies that humanitarian relief is a part of its DNA, though not its primary mission. As Kulanu evolves, whether its mission will broaden or focus remains to be seen, and likely depends on the next generation of Kulanu leadership.



Kulanu founding member Bob Lande and his wife Jeri in Israel in 2004 with a member of the Shinlung (aka Bnei Menashe) community in northeastern India. This woman and members of her community were among the earliest of the Shinlung to make aliyah to Israel.

Jewish Revival and Preservation

Kulanu's support for its partner Jewish communities is directed primarily by the needs and interests of the communities themselves.

The communities Kulanu connects with and supports are already Jewish or arrive at the decision to become Jewish before contacting Kulanu. Kulanu itself takes pains not to push or promote a particular Jewish agenda, tradition, or denomination.

Many of Kulanu's founders and volunteers, however, believe that Kulanu's work serves not just its partner communities, but the Jewish religion and people in general. On this topic, I've heard two major arguments. The first: that the return of disparate and new communities is necessary or helpful to rebuild the Jewish people in the wake of the Holocaust and decimation of Jewish communities in Arab lands. Kulanu First Vice President **Boni Sussman** explained to me that Kulanu "will provide the future leadership of the Jewish people, the *talmidei chachamim*, communal leaders and thinkers," claiming that she first heard the idea from her husband, Rabbi Gerald Sussman. Boni continued:

After the destruction of Jewish communities in the Holocaust and in North Africa, we need to create new Jewish communities. We've established the State of Israel. So we have a homeland.

We're working on that. And now we have to grow the people.



A member of our Costa Rica partner community receiving food relief package during the COVID-19 food shortage

The second and less obvious reason: that Kulanu offers a revival in the context of waning (or perhaps changing) Jewish identity in America, in particular the threat that America's liberal denominations, such

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History of Kulanu: *continued from previous page*

as Reform and Conservative Judaism, now face. There are now Reform and Reconstructionist communities in Guatemala and Italy, and Conservative communities in Kenya and Uganda. Kulanu is non-denominational, and never emphasizes a specific denomination when working with communities seeking Jewish growth unless asked by that community to do so. That being said, most communities Kulanu works with seek to become Orthodox, or retain their own traditional practices. It is heartwarming, however, for many liberal denomination rabbis to see eagerness to practice their brand of traditions, and Judaism in general, in the wake of fast-emptying synagogues.

Additionally, although I haven't seen this particularly in Kulanu, I speculate that some Sephardic Jewish leaders view fringe Jewish communities, such as those of returning Spanish conversos, as a potential demographic for Sephardi traditions to flower. Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef advocated strongly for Ethiopian Jews, I believe in part because he saw value in the recognition and return of communities with strong non-Ashkenazi traditions.

Kulanu's founders and leaders tend to view Kulanu's mission of Jewish growth in the context of widening assimilation in America. This sentiment is not just intellectual, but often emotional; Kulanu members are often touched by

the deep yearning for Jewish culture and learning they find in partner communities. Boni Sussman remarked, "We're used to having people run away from the Jewish community. We did all these little *trickeluch* to keep them hooked in. The established Jewish world is not used to having groups banging on their doors for acceptance."

On her first visit to a partner community in Ghana, Kulanu's president Harriet Bograd attended a Jewish class her daughter was teaching. She was struck by the children's enthusiasm. Harriet shared:

You just never see a group of kids in Hebrew school in the United States quite as excited and intensely involved as these kids were. And I was just so proud of my daughter, and so proud of them, and so glad to be there.

Karen Primack told me the story of **Matt Meyers**, the first Ashkenazi Jew to discover (and be discovered by) the Abayudaya:

When Matt Meyers first connected with the Abayudaya, he said that he was sort of not observing Judaism – he had lost interest. And when he heard the Abayudaya on their Shabbat, he was just totally enthralled and turned around.

Bob Lande described Kulanu as an inspiration to the American Jewish world:

One of the reasons why I helped form Kulanu was the idea that there are these people all over the world who want to join the Jewish people, and so many people in the United States are throwing their Judaism away, they don't see anything of value . . . My hope is not just to strengthen the Jewish people, by whoever, whatever individuals or groups want to join, but to be an inspiration to people everywhere. There's all these people all over the world who want to join us, be part of us. Let's re-examine what we have. And hopefully, some of those assimilating Jews in the United States will find out that this is something worth having, worth strengthening their bonds to.

Rabbi Scott Glass, a member of the 2002 Ugandan beit din that converted many Abayudaya, offered a deeply felt reflection:



Since its inception, Kulanu has supported the Abayudayan Jewish community in Uganda, to which these three children belong. Photo by Chaya Weinstein.

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We rabbis work all our lives to instill Jewish values and practices. We minister to people who are generally secure, educated, and comfortable, and we are so often thwarted by just that comfort, safety, and enlightenment. Our people are often hard-pressed to see their tradition as something to be treasured and appreciated. And here, in the poorest corner of the world, under the worst conditions, were people who expressed, with simplicity yet with eloquence, their great devotion to God, Torah, Israel, and Shabbat. Nothing I have read, nothing I had heard, could have prepared me for this heartfelt, unquestioning, unwavering faith.

Jewish Diversity and Jews of Color

Kulanu is a global organization and works with communities in places as disparate as Western Europe, Indonesia, and Peru. In all of Kulanu's communities — both the isolated and returning, and the emerging — unique Jewish traditions survive, or emerge. Enter the synagogue in Zimbabwe's Lemba Jewish community and you can catch Jewish prayers sung to Zimbabwean rhythms. Visit the isolated converso communities in Latin America, and you can find traditions that existed in Spain 500 years ago.

Many of Kulanu's community members are Jews of color in countries often overlooked by the mainstream Jewish community, such as Zimbabwe, the Philippines, or India. Kulanu's work to help these communities develop their Jewish identity, and to legitimize them in the

mainstream, adds incredible diversity and options to the Jewish people and religion, and challenges racist and "Ashkenormative" concepts of Jewishness and Judaism. Harriet Bograd gave me a glimpse of what these communities offer the Jewish community:

I think that we contribute to the Jewish people by bringing all kinds of talents and resources and leadership and vision . . . and passionate music that we didn't have before. And, as Boni likes to say . . . after the Holocaust and the decimation of Jewish communities in Arab lands, the idea [is] that we're establishing Jewish communities that have their own richness and variety. I think it's a big contribution to the Jewish world.

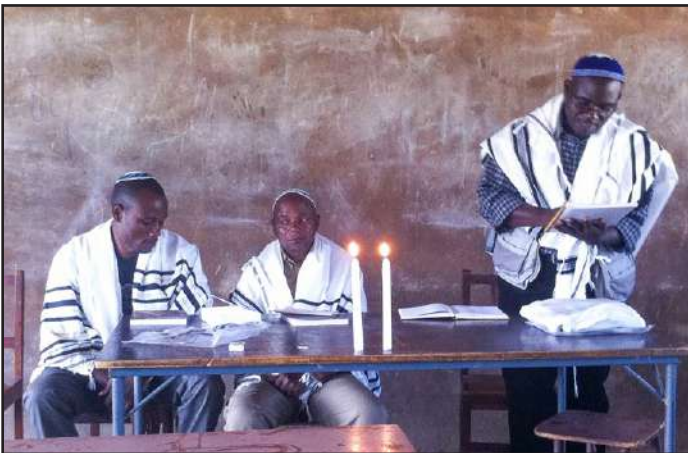
Harriet also added, "I think acknowledging that we're not all white is important." Boni specified that in her opinion, Jewish diversity includes cultural diversity as well. She told me:

Jewish diversity means to me not so much people of color, but people from many different backgrounds and cultures. Few think of Jewish Italians, or Jews from Iceland or Madagascar.

Bob Lande, an activist involved in the Ethiopian aliyah before co-founding Kulanu, told me about the early attitudes towards Ethiopian Jews and Kulanu's partner community in Peru:

. . .The Orthodox were not [always] as friendly and welcoming . . . And the Reform, too — there were just any number of people who just looked at Ethiopian Jews and said, "I don't care about this halacha business. You don't look Jewish to me." Ethiopian Jews used to be a real issue within the Jewish community. "These people are Black and do we really want them?" The community I worked with the most was a group of converts in Peru, and the mainstream Jewish community in Peru wanted nothing to do with them. They were poor and they were brown and they were suspect. [Established Peruvian Jews] were often not friendly, [and] they would not let [Peruvians] come to their synagogue. Now most of them ended up making aliyah . . . People who were brown and who were Black — a lot of American Jews did not welcome. It sounds incredible today — but believe me — that was true 30 years ago.

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Shabbat Service in Mapakomhere, Zimbabwe, during Pesach 2012. As in many places, the local culture has influence, so some Jewish prayers here are sung with Zimbabwean rhythms.

Bob put this in the context of Kulanu: one way of understanding its mission is “putting the issue of these communities onto the Jewish agenda. And then making them a higher priority. Convincing the Jewish establishment to help them.”

In recent years, the mainstream Jewish community has belatedly begun to recognize the existence and legitimacy of Jewish communities of color. In this respect, Kulanu’s leaders and visionaries are two decades ahead of the curve. Today, Kulanu is even more of a model of Jewish diversity; partner community members sit on its board, as does the esteemed African American **Rabbi Capers C. Funnye Jr.**, Chief Rabbi of the International Israelite Board of Rabbis. Kulanu has generally led by example rather than politics, promoting Jewish diversity and dignity for Jews of color by its support for those communities, and by publicizing their existence.

Simple Human Connection

Many of my interviewees came to Kulanu out of a sense of curiosity, or sought to benefit the Jewish people and religion, or humanity as a whole. One of the major reasons these activists have stayed with Kulanu so long, and one of the most common themes I’ve heard mentioned, is the friendships made, and the pure joy of Kulanu activities. When the Abayudaya community



Rabbi Capers C. Funnye Jr. has worked with Kulanu to promote Jewish diversity and dignity for Jews of color.

had its first mass conversion, Kulanu members present had the chance to attend five weddings in the span of a few days! Other Kulanu volunteers love hosting members of partner communities in their houses — a few have guest rooms that are constantly occupied. Harriet described it as:

Just a joy . . . Jack [Zeller] talked about this being about kinship; it’s like we find relatives all over the world. We’re in a time when people are lonely from COVID-19. I’m never alone, because I just have a sense of this whole network, of being a worldwide caring community.

She went on to tell me an incredible story about a “Kulanu Across the Globe” celebration when a young woman from Nigeria read a poem by Schulamith Chava Halevy, a descendant of the Inquisition. You can read the poem, *Your Reflection in my Mirror*, here: bit.ly/HalevyPoem. The Nigerian woman thought at first that the poem was about her community and Jewish experience:

Eventually, she realized they had so much in common with all these other communities in Latin America, and all these different places [that] had the same dream and were working together. It just meant so much to her. Not just that she was connected to mainstream Jewish communities, but she was getting access to other communities that had this similar yearning. It was just a very powerful moment for me to see her so moved . . . She said she thought what was so beautiful about our work was that people are discovering their Judaism. And when you’re with people when they discover something so important about themselves, it’s wonderful to be there with them.

Kulanu members have built incredible connections with Jews in far-away places. They have not only witnessed history on a national and community scale, but a personal one as well.

Conclusion: What is Kulanu?

As we have seen, there are many motivations and values behind Kulanu’s origins and present-day activity. As I mentioned above, these values can sometimes even appear contradictory. An American Jew can see in an isolated Jewish community both a fresh and alien take on Jewish identity, and their own grandparents’ shtetl. Kulanu members include those deeply invested in Jewish peoplehood and “parochialism,” and those deeply invested in alleviating global human suffering. In my interviews, I’ve heard desires to

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both preserve, and to expand or affect, the Jewish people and religion. There are Orthodox and secular members working side-by-side.

I suspect, however, that these disparate motivations are not necessarily exclusive (see Rav Kook's *Fourfold Song* at bit.ly/fourfoldsong). I also believe that what's true for Kulanu is true for Jews overall: put three Jews together, you get four opinions. Throughout Jewish history — from the Israeli War of Independence to your local synagogue — Jews are able to cooperate and work cohesively due to trust and shared goals, whatever the underlying reason.

"I don't care why or what you're davening, as long as you answer amen to kedusha." That principle of Jewish organizations not only applies to Kulanu — it is Kulanu's strength. It can attract a wide array of supporters and volunteers and stay dynamic and flexible because it is defined more by its mission and actions than by a strict core philosophy. It helps that Kulanu is a relatively small organization (in terms of administrative structure, not impact) that looks for activist board members, relies on long-term volunteers, and tends to attract dedicated and involved donors and supporters. It's a bit of a synagogue, and a bit of a family.



Carlito during Sukkot in the Philippines, 2019. Kulanu has helped this community find their Jewish identity and legitimize them to others. Photo by Coalesce Browne

In the journal article *Moral maps and medical imaginaries* (2012), anthropologist Claire L. Wendland describes doctor swaps between hospitals in Malawi and America as built on "moral maps." Malawian doctors working in America, she found, viewed American medical practice as "authentic." In the United States they

had access to the highest equipment, the best-trained aides, the most scientific know-how, and educated and obedient patients. American doctors working on an exchange program in Malawi, though, also felt that they were experiencing "authentic" practice: in overcrowded and underfunded hospitals, they felt like superheroes, performing constant improvised life-saving procedures instead of plastic surgery operations or other non-dire uses of their skill. Wendland describes the doctors as making "moral maps." Each group viewed the foreign situation as the "authentic" practice and their efforts there the most "moral" use of their profession.

I'd like to apply this moral map concept to Kulanu. We often perceive Kulanu through its benefit to its partner communities — a charity, a philanthropy, a service to Jews around the world. However, as we've seen above, Kulanu activists and leaders also gain from Kulanu's efforts: the expansion and preservation of Jewishness, the fulfillment of tikkun olam, the historical catharsis of resisting modern pogroms and inquisitions, the experience of a more exigent Jewish life, curiosity, friendship, and meaning. Many members of Kulanu's partner communities draw a moral map to mainstream Judaism through Kulanu by learning about and adopting some American establishment or Haredi forms of Judaism, or perhaps by gaining official recognition from establishment and global Jews. So too, Kulanu members often draw a moral map to the partner communities. They see a Jewish spirit they rarely find at home, and sometimes a full reincarnation of their ancestors' Judaism, lives, and even their persecution. Kulanu's volunteers and its partner community members seek Jewishness in the other.

All of this is to suggest another definition of Kulanu's values and value: Kulanu is not a destination, but a web. It links the mainstream Jewish community with its most disparate diasporas; Kulanu is the communication between these Jewish communities, and the benefits that result from it. *

Kulanu Notes

Torah Donation to Honduras



Kulanu is very proud to have made possible a Torah donation to Comunidad Sefardita Ortodoxa de Honduras. The Torah was donated by Congregation Beth Shalom of Whittier, California. Two different ceremonies were held, one in the United States and one in Honduras. Representatives from Congregation Beth Shalom, Kulanu, Ohr Torah Stone in Israel, and Comunidad Sefardita Ortodoxa de Honduras were present.

Visit kulanu.org/torah-donation-to-honduras to view videos of the ceremonies.

New Staff Roles at Kulanu

As part of our long-term effort to make Kulanu more structured and sustainable, Kulanu has promoted Molly Levine to Deputy Director and has hired Keshi Taryan-Kigel as Multimedia Manager.

Molly Levine joined our staff as Kulanu's Communications Director in 2018 and became



Deputy Director in 2021. She holds a Master of Arts in Global Marketing Communications and has an extensive background working in international nonprofits, having worked for StrongMinds (Africa), The Partnership for Jewish Learning and Life, Global Nomads Group, Seeds of Peace, and the Peace Corps (New York City office). Molly also served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Mauritania from 2000 to 2002.

As Deputy Director, Molly works with the president and the board to direct the internal affairs and external communications of Kulanu. She supervises staff and interns, manages all of our communications, takes a leading role in online programs, fundraising, and press relations, and assists with budgeting and financial oversight.

Keshetnitzah Taryan-Kigel joined our staff as an intern in 2020 and became the part-time



Multimedia Manager in 2021. Keshi earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts (New York City) in 2018. Since then, she has worked at GiGi's Playhouse NYC, at Dixon Place, and at the Familial Dysautonomia Foundation, before finding a home at Kulanu.

As Multimedia Manager, Keshi curates Kulanu's photography collection and creates weekly graphics for Kulanu's Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter platforms.

New Board Members Appointed

Kulanu strives to have a diverse set of board members to lead the organization. Each board member brings their own insight and perspective to ensure our mission is achieved. On the next page, please see the short biographies of the most recent people to join the board. You can visit kulanu.org/board to see the entire list.

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Dr. David Breakstone recently completed his tenure as deputy chair of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Israel, culminating two decades of elected office in Israel's National Institutions during which he also served as Vice Chairman of the World Zionist Organization, Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael (JNF),



and Keren Hayesod. As such, for the past 20 years, he has been intimately involved in effecting policy on a wide array of issues on the agenda of world Jewry. A great deal of his energies have been invested in developing ties with and advancing the cause of small and emerging Jewish communities around the world.

A passionate Jewish educator with a doctorate in Contemporary Jewry and Israel education from Hebrew University, Dr. Breakstone was also the conceptual architect of the Herzl Museum and Educational Center in Jerusalem and in the past served as Director of Hebrew University's Pedagogic Center for Jewish Education, Associate Dean of The Schechter Institute for Jewish Studies, supervisor of the TALI Education Fund, and Director of Ramah Programs in Israel. He is also a member of the directorates of Yad Vashem, the Ethiopian National Project, the Schechter Institute for Jewish Studies, and Nativ: the National Center for Jewish Studies, Identity, and Conversion.

Dr. Breakstone has published widely on matters of Israel and contemporary Jewry and as a columnist for The Jerusalem Post and a blogger for the Times of Israel, he continues to address contemporary issues in Israeli society and Jewish life worldwide. David, his wife, Gabriela, 5 children, and 15 grandchildren live in Israel.

Lili Kaufmann currently serves as a committee member of the Jewish Agency for Israel which oversees the joint government programs of Aliyah and Social Welfare. Initially involved with both the Russian and Ethiopian aliyah 25 years ago, she became aware of the various Jewish communities in Africa during



a trip to Tanzania to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. Although her connection to the Jews of Tanzania was unexpected, it has become a most rewarding experience, and with her assistance the Jewish community in Arusha has become a Kulanu partner community. She and her husband are founders of the second Reform congregation in Tampa, Florida. Lili has also served as president of multiple organizations including president and campaign chair of the Tampa Jewish Federation.

Ben Lefkowitz is a graduate of the Modern Orthodox yeshiva day school system. He graduated from Wesleyan University in 2020 with a degree in the College of Social Studies and a certificate in Jewish and Israel Studies; he is currently earning a Master of Arts in Public Policy at the Harvard



Kennedy School in Boston. Ben hopes to start a career in Israeli civil service or Jewish NGOs once he completes his Master's degree. He loves to write, and he's thus far written 2 articles about Kulanu's history for this magazine. You can read one on page 2 of this issue, and the other appears in the Fall 2020 issue. In his spare time, he likes board games, Dungeons and Dragons, travel, and Celtic music. *

Reviving Jewish Life in Majorca

Photos courtesy of and article by Dani Rotstein

Dani Rotstein, originally from Woodcliff, New Jersey, is a graduate of Wesleyan University with a degree in Film Studies, and lived in Madrid for one year as part of Wesleyan's study-abroad program. Later, he began his career as a television commercial producer while living in Miami for six years. Dani has been living in Majorca, Spain with his wife and son since 2014.

Editor's Note: Majorca (this is the British spelling, although the official spelling is "Mallorca") is a small island off the eastern coast of Spain (see map on page 14). However you spell it, it is pronounced my-YOUR-kah.

For millennia, the Jewish people have overcome darkness. We have prevailed against those who sought to destroy us in each generation by carrying our beliefs, traditions, culture, and, most importantly, our strong sense of peoplehood, forward. Rabbi Hillel reminds us in Pirkei Avot 1:14: "If I am not for myself, who is for me?" implying that each one of us can carry the torch

and lead our communities out of the darkness. And this flame can continue to glow when we are connected and dare to share the beauty of our people with the world around us.

My Journey to Majorca

I was raised with a strong sense of Jewish identity, though I was never that observant. Growing up in New Jersey, my parents sent me to a Jewish sleepaway summer camp where I befriended other Jews from around the country and learned the song, "Wherever you go, there's always someone Jewish." At 18 years old I had the unique opportunity to live and learn in Israel, embarking on the Young Judea Year Course program. There, I strengthened my relationship with Israel and the Jewish people. From learning Hebrew and being able to communicate with my Israeli grandparents, to training with the Israeli Air Force for a week, to living on a religious kibbutz, it was the best year of my life. As I witnessed Jews from around the world come together in Israel, it opened my eyes to the value of our Jewish family — for myself, my friends, and the global community.

After returning to the United States and graduating college, I worked in film production in Miami and New York but started to feel a need for change. I was missing that same sense of fulfillment that I had experienced in Israel.

I was overworked and desperately needed a break from the rat race of New York City. In college, I had studied abroad in Madrid and had enjoyed it so much — I knew that Spain was calling to me, and I was ready to go.

I've now been living in Majorca, Spain for five years, and I have again found my purpose in the Jewish community.

Originally, I thought that there were no Jews in Majorca. I was quickly proven wrong when I found out about a volunteer-led synagogue with a small group of followers on the island. As I sat at one of the services, I learned that not everyone

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The author, Dani Rotstein, exploring the secret passageways under the old bakery on Leathermaker Street that is located on the site of a no-longer-visible synagogue from the late 1300s

there was Jewish. There's a group of people on the island known as Chuetas who identify as Catholic yet quietly preserve the light of a Jewish community nearly forgotten. The Chuetas are descendants of Majorca's medieval Jewish community and some feel connected to their Jewish ancestry to this day. This finding blew me away as I thought about how powerful Jewish history is: these people are reviving a nearly dissolved Jewish legacy from over 600 years ago!

I was invited to attend once-a-month Shabbat dinners with a small group of Chuetas who had converted and/or returned to Judaism. I looked forward every month to spending time with them, learning from them, and hearing incredible untold family stories. I would bring with me my non-Jewish girlfriend at the time (now wife and mother of our son) who had also begun to express an interest in learning about Judaism as I was expressing an interest to reconnect with my own Judaism. You see, history and culture and what binds us together as a people with a collective shared past — that is what excites me. And who better to learn from than a group of people that were reconnecting to their ancestors' faith from centuries past!

Therefore, I became more involved, determined to instill around the island the passion for Jewish life in the people who were practicing Judaism in various ways. I started by hosting challah-baking workshops and Purim parties, and from there, the excitement spread to others. Our numbers kept increasing, and we became a tighter-knit community. In fact, we're currently up to 60-70 attendees at our Shabbat dinners.

Limud Mallorca

My wife and I founded Limud Mallorca (limudmallorca.com), a non-profit Jewish cultural association intent on bringing Jewish culture and life to disconnected Jews living on the island, families of mixed-marriages, and those non-Jews interested in learning about and connecting with Jewish values and history.

We organized multiple learning conferences that are trilingual — in English, Spanish, and Mallorquin (a dialect of Catalan that is spoken on the island). We are a volunteer-run organization that is now working with the Palma City Hall and organizing cultural activities and social events: documentary screenings, book presentations, choir concerts, lectures, seminars, holiday celebrations, and community Shabbat dinners



A memorial to the crypto Jews burned at the stake in Plaza Gomila in May of 1691. More about these terrible “Autos de Fe” can be found here: <https://bit.ly/AutoDeFe>.



Visitors to the island exploring the different markings noting Jewish heritage around the island. This golden plaque is in the shape of the Iberian peninsula and says SEFARD in Hebrew placed here by the Red de la Juderias de España.



A group of both Jewish and non-Jewish local residents went on Dani's first walk and talk experience around the Jewish Quarters of Palma, December 2018. It was part of the Jewish community sharing the local island's history through the perspective of a community member.

at different vegetarian restaurants around the island. Last year the city of Palma's Department of Education asked us to visit public schools and conduct workshops centered on Holocaust education.

Our first educational conference was in May 2018 and we expected around 20 or 30 people, but we ended up with over 85 attendees from around the world! The following year, more than 150 people attended. Soon after our first event, the president of the local synagogue, La Comunidad Judia de les Illes Balears, decided to resign and nobody wanted to fill his shoes. I decided to step up to the task and was elected to sit on the synagogue's board of directors. Leading alongside me were three Jews by choice, two of whom were Chuetas. This was the first time in over 600 years that Mallorquin natives with Jewish ancestry were once again a part of the leadership of the local Jewish community (the shul had been started in the 1970s by British Ashkenazis who had retired and moved to the island and ever since then had been led by Jewish expats or Spanish nationals from outside the Balearic Islands).

In August 2018, not only was a new board elected, but two Chuetas traveled to Israel to be married under a chuppah — the first-ever Chueta wedding to take place in Israel.

The other noteworthy event was the inauguration of a memorial in Plaza Gomila remembering the Crypto-Jews who were burned at the stake in 1691. A memorial had been under petition for at least 40 years and finally manifested itself in the same month as the synagogue board elections and the wedding in Israel, as well as other events. We are living through watershed moments in Mallorquin Jewish history.

Visiting Majorca?

Throughout this time, I was still working as a TV commercial producer, but after volunteering with the synagogue and Limud Mallorca, I decided to make the final leap of faith — to leave my job and open up an educational tourism company called Jewish Majorca (www.jewishmajorca.com).

Our mission is to offer an interactive learning experience that engages both visitors and residents alike and sparks further curiosity into the subject. We opened in May 2019 and had a wonderful first summer and already had bookings for a 400 person Kosher for Pesach holiday in 2020 along with multiple Bar Mitzvah cruise trips and Jewish destination weddings planned. All of this was stopped in its tracks due to the arrival of Señor COVID. Instead of shutting down operations and giving up our dream, we decided to adapt and innovate.

We now offer Zoom virtual tours to different communities around the world and even have a standalone Live Walking Virtual Tour that we have been able to share with many different congregations. The fact that international tourism has been temporarily closed down has actually encouraged us to do what we have always been wanting to do — go online and share the Jewish, Converso, and Chueta history of Majorca to the global audience.

Throughout my life, I have been blessed to witness the beauty of Jewish life and the immense power of a connected community whether in NYC or in Israel. And now, on the tiny island of Majorca, I hope to continue sharing that light with others, showing that anyone can come together and live in harmony. My experience in Majorca shows how the spirit of the Jewish people lives on in each one of us. Together, we can help to reignite the flames of Majorca's Jewish community and unite the global Jewish community. ✱

► Watch a video presentation by Dani Rotstein about the Jews of Majorca! bit.ly/MajorcaJews



Map of Spain with arrow pointing to the island of Majorca.

Book Review: Hybrid Hate

Hybrid Hate: Conflations of Antisemitism & Anti-Black Racism from the Renaissance to the Third Reich

By Professor Tudor Parfitt

Book Review by Rabbi Gerald Sussman

Hybrid Hate, published by Oxford University Press in November 2020, shares many of the characteristics of the previous works of its author, Tudor Parfitt, Distinguished University Professor at Florida International University, in that it explores a topic that is of much interest and of societal significance. Professor Parfitt is a British historian, writer, broadcaster, and traveler who is a leader of an interdisciplinary network of scholars who study Jewish communities throughout the world. Here, Professor Parfitt gives us a work that can add to our understanding of antisemitism and racism, subjects of much societal attention and debate and which transcend the academic realm.

The academic side of this book offers brilliant use of little-known sources including debates between scholars and thinkers from the 16th to the 20th century, the examination of works that are virtually unknown today. The book describes the confluence of anti-Black racism and antisemitism. But it does more than that: it gives important insight into the history and ideology of both racism and antisemitism that, to my knowledge, has been largely overlooked.

Racism and antisemitism have different sources. Antisemitism is at its root based on Christian doctrine about the role of Jews in the crucifixion of Jesus. Racism comes from the attempt of Europeans to understand people with whom they increasingly came into contact during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries — people who they perceived as very different from themselves. It served as a justification for essentially unequal relationships such as the slave trade and, eventually, colonialism.

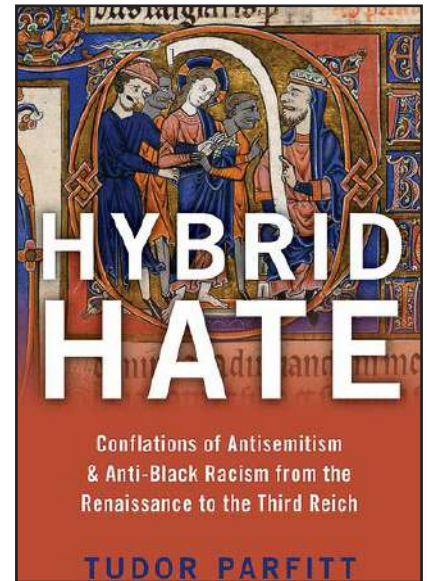
Parfitt connects racism and antisemitism with differences in the understanding of the Biblical story of creation. Was all mankind descended from Adam and Eve and the descendants of Noah, as in the Biblical narratives of creation

and the flood? Or were the different races the result of different and separate acts of creation resulting in the races being essentially different?

The question became relevant as voyagers of exploration encountered peoples of different types. This brought about a questioning and a reinterpretation of the Biblical narrative. Perhaps, as some theorized, there were separate acts of creation that served to explain these differences. Those who maintained the belief that humanity had one common origin came to be known as “monogenists,” while those who maintained that humanity had many different origins came to be known as “polygenists.”

Simply put, the monogenists believed there was something that we call common humanity while the polygenists believed that racial and ethnic groups differed in their essential nature and abilities and held little in common. Professor Parfitt traces the history of these debates from the 16th-century scholar Paracelsus to the mid-20th century when it found expression in the Nazi racial theories.

The Enlightenment of the 17th century jolted the foundations of reliance on Holy Writ. This meant that the sublime Biblical story of creation could no longer be conscripted to explain human origins. This reliance on the Bible, in itself, was a chief factor for the rise of racism, insofar as it fostered a belief in separate racial origins. The Enlightenment also jolted the widespread



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reliance on the notion that Jews should be hated because they killed Jesus.

It is noteworthy that European scholars and intellectuals came up with the polygenist theory just at the time when Europeans began colonialism and the slave trade, which were based on unequal relationships between Europeans and Africans and others. Polygenist theory was used as a justification for American slavery and is cited by some current white supremacists as a justification for their beliefs.

It is also worth noting that those who worked for racial equality in the mid-twentieth century American civil rights movement frequently referred to Biblical texts which teach the equality of all humankind and would use phrases such as, “We are all the same under the skin” which was based on the monogenist idea.

Polygenists and monogenists held conferences, wrote books, and had academic discourse and debates on these theories. Scientists of the time took sides in the discussions.

The study of Western racism has tended to concentrate either on the hatred, persecution, and murder of Jews or the hatred, persecution, and enslavement of black people. Scholars engaged in the field of antisemitism are rarely engaged in the field of anti-black racism, yet the connections between the two are intimate and instructive.

— from the prologue of *Hybrid Hate*

The doctrine of the eternal guilt of the Jews for the crucifixion and the idea that Christianity had replaced Judaism put Jews on the bottom rung of European society. Some even proposed the idea that the creation story in the Bible was true for Jews only and that Europeans resulted from a separate creation. By the same token, many Europeans just could not believe that they had the same origins as people who were Black.

Thus, Blacks and Jews were united in their inferiority.

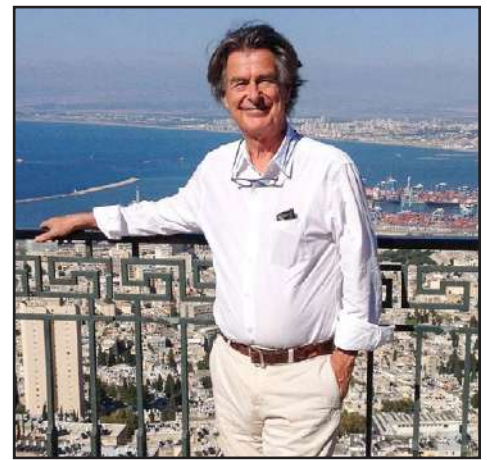
For the monogenist, the discovery that the Jews of West Africa and the Jews of Cochin in India were Black was proof that color was based

on environmental factors such as climate. The polygenists responded that most Jews are white, but some are dark-skinned because they must be descended from Black converts to Judaism and mixed marriages.

In the course of the 19th century, Jews were increasingly considered to be Black by Europeans. Jew-hatred became conflated with racial hatred. This meant that Jews shared the negative qualities that were ascribed to Blacks because Jews were Black. There were frequent comparisons of Jewish and African facial features as well as statements that Jews shared inferior intelligence with Africans. The problem of the seemingly white appearance of European Jews was dealt with by declaring Jews to be of mixed Black, Asian, and white heritages. Jews were said to be chameleon-like in that they frequently were able to hide their blackness.

As the 19th and 20th centuries wore on, the connection of Jews to blackness increased with more researchers stating that Jews shared Negroid blood with the inhabitants of Africa. Jews were both a mongrel race and purely Black at the same time.

The rise of Nazism conflated Jews and Blacks even more strongly. Our author cites numerous scholars and public figures who proclaimed the racial sameness of both Jews and Blacks. Nazi racial policies, however, concentrated on Jews as



Professor Tudor Parfitt, author of *Hybrid Hate* and more than 25 other books

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there were few Blacks in Germany at that time. Jews were said to share the aggressiveness as well as being sexual predators as Blacks were commonly thought to be. Many of the anti-Jewish policies looked toward American racial policies as a source of inspiration. Reverberating in today's white supremacist belief system, Jews were thought to pull the strings behind the actions of "Negroes." Thus, while ragtime music was the product of Blacks, Jews turned it into jazz with the underlying purpose of subverting German Aryan culture. The book ends at this point having illustrated the intertwined nature of anti-Black and anti-Jewish ideologies.

Professor Parfitt's book opens the door to an understanding of the roots of antisemitism and anti-Black racism through the uncovering of

hitherto unknown sources which are plentiful and heavily footnoted. It is interesting to note that the debate between monogenists and polygenists still exists today. In an age when finding one's genetic roots has become a popular activity, one wonders how the study of genetics will influence and enlighten our understanding of the subject.

View Professor Parfitt's presentation, *Jews, Blacks, and Race*, as part of Kulanu's Online Speaker Series: bit.ly/ParfittVideo.

*Rabbi Gerald Sussman, author of this book review, is the Rabbi of Temple Emanu-El Staten Island. He is a Kulanu rabbinic advisor and has traveled with his wife Bonita and Professor Parfitt to Papua New Guinea, Madagascar, and Nicaragua. **

Kulanu's Online Speaker Series

kulanu.org/recorded-sessions

Our online speaker series library is packed with dozens of hours of fascinating and engaging recorded conversations and information.

Relevant to this issue of Kulanu magazine, you will find interviews with Professor Tudor Parfitt (article immediately preceding), Dani Rotstein (article page 12), Sandy Leeder and others on the backstory of the Ethiopian Operation Moses (article page 18), and a chat with the Primacks and Zellers about Kulanu's early days (article page 2). Plus there is so much more!

Get notified when there's a new speaker event so you can watch live and ask questions! Go to kulanu.org/contact to be added to our email list.



Kulanu and Jewish history come to life wherever you are!

Volunteer Spotlight: Sandy Leeder

Kulanu's vice president Bonita Sussman interviewed Sandy Leeder, who has been an esteemed member of the Kulanu board of directors and treasurer for several years, in honor of his 78th birthday. In spring 1983, as an activist for the American Association for Ethiopian Jews (AAEJ), Sandy took part in the underground rescue of Jews from Ethiopia (the Beta Israel) to Israel via Sudan. This was before Operation Moses, which took place the following fall. His first experience in Africa was as a member of the Peace Corps in Niger. During his tenure on the Kulanu board, Sandy has directed his focus and support to the Lemba of Zimbabwe, a major population group in the country, with Jewish congregations in Harare and rural districts. Genetic research has bolstered their oral history of descent from ancient Israelites. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Bonita: You have played a part in Jewish history and are an inspiration to many. You are known for your work with Ethiopian rescue. Briefly tell us about it.

We weren't going to be traveling with Ethiopians, as it was too dangerous. Rather, we were going to take them to a bus or truck that would take them to Juba (Sudan), their destination. I wound up with a group of Beta Israel from the refugee camp at Gedaref (Sudan) on the Ethiopian border, two Ethiopian guides, a Toyota van and 1,000 kilometers of no-road to Juba. How was I supposed to put these 18 people — including babies and old people — on a bus or truck when they didn't even know where they were going? So I decided that I cannot leave them as planned, but rather that I have to keep going with them.



Sandy Leeder in Ethiopia, 1983.

Whether I will run out of gas, or whether I can make it across the Sudan swamp, and how we'll get there doesn't matter. So that was a very important little decision. We made it to Juba at the southern tip of Sudan and then the next AAEJ team brought them to Nairobi and then to Israel.

(Editor's note: For more on this see our online speaker series program "The Backstory of Ethiopian Operation Moses: Witness Accounts" bit.ly/EthiopianMoses.)

Bonita: Please tell me about your work in Niger.

I joined the Peace Corps in 1967 for two years of service in Guecheme, Niger. I worked as an agricultural extension agent for peanut cooperatives. We oversaw the weighing of the peanuts at the year-end harvest and we sold agricultural supplies. I lived in a grass hut. I had a horse. I had no communication with anybody except for an occasional Peace Corps volunteer who might come by. I lived with the Fulani tribe, herders who are relatives of the Ethiopians on some level. They were not Jews. Food was cooked on an open fire, the women got water from the well. Reminiscent of Rebecca in the Bible, one day I almost fell off my horse when a young woman, a girl about 16, comes up to me at the well and says, "Do you want some water? And can I water your horse?" I developed a real understanding, on a very visceral level, that although these people were poor with no money, they were rich in culture. For me, just living there was the fundamental experience.

Bonita: What are your goals for the Lemba?

In 2002, I traveled with Rabbi Leo Abrami on a Kulanu-sponsored trip to South Africa to meet the Lemba. I have been working with them since. They initially were a group of traders, merchants, and metal miners who traveled between their home in Yemen and southern Africa. Some event, probably the Islamic invasion of Yemen in about 1,000 CE, caused them to be stranded in Africa. They relied on secrecy to keep their

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advantage in metal work, stonework, and warfare methods. They've kept an enormous amount of halacha (Jewish law) orally and they have ancient traditions that we modern Jews have lost. My goal is that they understand themselves and join the wider Jewish community. It would be a shame for them to just drift off because they don't have a way of reconnecting. So we, Kulanu, can provide that way of reconnecting.

Bonita: What do you think is your biggest accomplishment with the Lemba so far?

Well, one thing is finding Modreck Maeresera (now a Kulanu board member) who has been able to put together an operating synagogue in Harare. They're working on translating the siddur (prayer book) into Shona. Hamlet Zhou, a Lemba musician, is writing music, putting the Hebrew service in the rhythm of Zimbabwean music and making it unique for them. But the community is especially fragile now because of the coronavirus and because communication is so difficult in Zimbabwe. It costs money to get to synagogue and they don't have the technology — the bandwidth or equipment — to make up for the lack of gatherings. And it's on top of agricultural disasters, like droughts and locusts. I think Modreck thinks we're getting closer. But it is just going to be a long process. The danger is that communal structures break down as people move to cities and a lot of communal life is at risk.



Sandy's heroic rescue of Ethiopians took place in the spring of 1983, before Operation Moses. This is the van he rode in with many Ethiopians being taken across the Sudanese desert at night to get to the coast where they were taken to Israel.

Everything they do is now going to be subject to change very quickly.

Bonita: Let's have a few words about your projects of development in Zimbabwe.

Jack Zeller (a founder and former president of Kulanu) is very interested in food and food security.

He and Harriet Bograd (Kulanu president) have organized some major agricultural development projects. They're not tremendous in scale, but for the people we're dealing with, they are major improvements to their lives. By damming up a river and creating a reservoir, they now have the water for their cattle and don't have to go for 20 miles looking for water. Now they can capture the fertilizer near the reservoir and also save a lot of time for the kids who water the cattle but who need to be in school. The dam, as well as drip irrigation projects, are increasing food security, as they are now able to grow two crops, corn and potatoes. So there's a lot of good things happening on that level. We're not talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars, but rather something that can be managed by a few people who are willing to put their time in. Big projects in Africa, and probably most places, do not lead to viable development. My observation of development in general is that it doesn't work. The development is going to happen, but it's not going to be with NGOs doing it. It's going to be the people doing it.

Bonita: What would you like to see happen to sustain Judaism among the Lemba?

I would like the Lemba to modernize a couple of their practices in the area of circumcision,



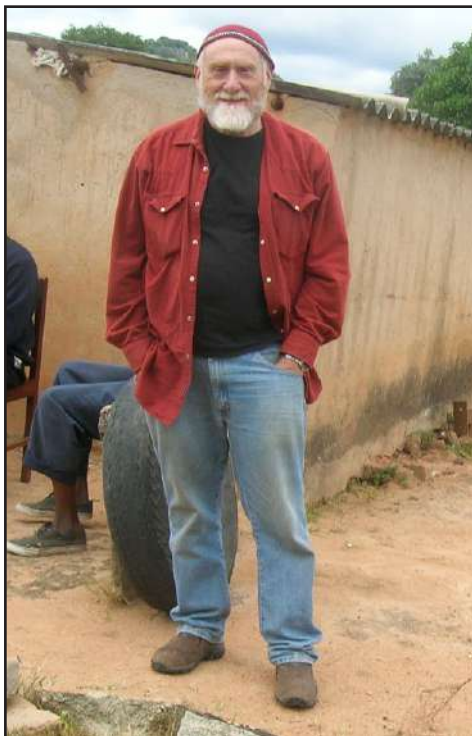
Sandy in Cote d'Ivoire, 2017. Photo by Boni Sussman.

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in the area of kashrut, and schochet (ritual slaughter) training. It would be great if they can actually know who they are so as not to get confused with Islam or with the African churches. But, as we know, it takes a lot of resources and money to educate people Jewishly. And so we've got a problem. Most Lemba in Zimbabwe are very poor. And most of them out there in the Zimbabwe bush don't know what constitutes a Jewish education. Not too many people are going and looking to help them, and know what to do. So it's up to us at Kulanu.

Bonita: I know you're attracted to the idea of lost tribes. Why the attraction?

I was (initially) intrigued by a Hadassah Magazine article about lost tribes being found in Africa. I believe that the Jewish people are a tribe or an affiliation of tribes. When people decide that they want to become Jews, they are not only agreeing to follow rituals, but are actually agreeing to joining the Jewish tribe. I believe we are historically tribal, that we get confused as to whether we're tribal or spiritual. So that if we find those tribes or groups of people who have



Sandy while visiting with the Lemba community in Zimbabwe, 2012

maintained their Jewish practices, we owe it to them to help them come back. God has given me the opportunity to work on bringing the Nidchai Yisrael (Lost Tribes) back into the wider Jewish community, and I think it's a great thing that I can work on this and actually have an effect.

Bonita: Tell us about your family.

My ex-wife and I were together for 30 years. We have four children.

The oldest, Asher, works at Trader Joe's. My next in line is Shira who

is going to graduate school in public administration. She's got cerebral palsy and gets around in a wheelchair. Akiva graduated from law school and works in the law department of Coinbase, which just went public. He has three young boys and lives in Portland, Oregon. Shoshana, the youngest, just earned a PhD in psychology.



Sandy Leeder in Ethiopia, 1983.

Bonita: Did you always plan to make Aliyah?

The idea comes from Tesfaye Aderajew, a young Ethiopian man who was supposed to be my translator on the (Operation Moses) Sudan trip. He gets thrown into the bus up front with me. (He didn't really speak good English — he didn't speak very much at all.) Later on in San Francisco, we're raising money together. And he says, "Okay, you did all these things to get the Ethiopians to Israel, what about yourself?" I worked for and was a partner in a real estate development company, specializing in partnership taxation. I decided that I could live outside the United States with an internet connection and that Israel would be the place. Tzfat was intriguing in 1985 when I first visited. In 2006 I met a friend from Berkeley, California who now lives there. She pointed to a house and said to me, "This is the house you're gonna buy." Tzfat is a beautiful place, and, frankly, underrated. It's got a great community and we love it here.

Bonita: Thank you, Sandy, for this wonderful interview. Happy Birthday! *

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2021 Holiday Photos from Around the World

Jews celebrate Purim and Pesach all around the world! Here are some photos of celebrations from a few of our partner communities in 2021. Clockwise starting top right:

Purim with the community of Neve Shalom Synagogue in Suriname, South America, photo provided by Jacob Steinberg

Purim in Indonesia's Kahal Kadosh Shaar HaShamayim Synagogue, photo provided by Yaakov Baruch

Baking matzah for Pesach in Ethiopia, photo by Ari Greenspan
Passover seder in Tanzania

