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AFRICAN

JEWISH VOICES



A New Dawn

The Journey of SAJA.
Trapped In Sudan.

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African Jewish Voices

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

AVRAHAM AVRAHAM

MANAGING EDITOR

NONSO EKWUNIFE

CONTENT DIRECTOR

ORA YOKHANAN

PROOFREADER

HANNA LANCER

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

ROSCABELMEDIA

PHOTO(S) CREDITS

**CAMP SARAH, ABAYUDAYA
COMMUNITY, JEWISH
NIGERIA BLOG, KALANIOT
BOOKS**

SENIOR CORRESPONDENCE

**DEBORAH ELOM
KISLON COHEN
ISRAEL BEN AVRAHAM**

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

**MODRECK MAERESERA
ISREAL ISIRIRI
CHAIM KIHUMBAH
NETZACH BAT HAVEL**

WWW.AFRICANJEWISHVOICES.COM

From the Editor

Since the formation of a great alliance between countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with a Jewish presence, things have shifted significantly into positions capable of reshaping the Jewish landscape. When challenges and limitations, two dominant forces, are met with practical solutions, we can lower the trajectory pathway to growth in our various communities. By responding to the Clarion call of a United African Jewry, we have begun crossing the chasm, expanding our network, and fostering more collaboration across borders.

Right now, we're witnessing several initiatives springing up to effectively address food insecurities, and this will make a huge difference in the world in the future. In the midst of all this happening, discussions are ongoing to uphold and strengthen the level of Jewish practice (Halacha and observance) that has recently put Africans in the spotlight, while some other parts around the globe are unfortunately experiencing a decline.

My dear readers, in the mood of the Purim celebration, let us celebrate the birth of the African Jewish Voices, a platform that is bringing together esteemed Jewish writers, thinkers, and storytellers from across the African continent. We're excited to introduce dedicated and passionate writers in our growing network through this inaugural magazine edition, covering different categories of stories about life in sub-Saharan African communities, written by Africans. May the wonder of the season inspire our media endeavors and lead us to even greater achievements in the years ahead.

Join us on this journey, and together, let us bask in the reality of the dawn of a new era unfolding right in front of us.

I wish everyone a happy Purim celebration!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Avraham Avraham". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first and last letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



A Mincha prayer held at the golf hotel in Abidjan on the final day of a historic pan-African conference in which the Sub-Saharan African Jewish Alliance (SAJA) was created with Jews from 10 African countries, Israel, the UK, and the United States.



ON THE CASCADING HILLS OF MBALE WHERE JUDAISM THRIVES

BY AVRAHAM BEN AVRAHAM



Sitting in the park shortly after the unveiling of the memorial plaque.

Road trips are great, no doubt, especially for a first-time visitor like me who is eager to set foot on the Abayudaya Jewish community but has to endure an overland journey of 6 hours taking off from Kampala, the capital of Uganda. While in Entebbe, the only spot with a commercial airport in the country, I had stylishly achieved a childhood fantasy: a swim looking more like a mikveh bath in Lake Victory, the world's largest lake. Call it a season of breaking records, because that's what it is, as I find myself in this part of the continent on a maiden visit.

Setting out on a long trip for the sake of Shabbat is an honorable thing to do. From the hilly side of Kampala, we drove through some scattered traffic jams before getting to Mukono, a district on the outskirts of the capital. As we drove east into the countryside, there was a good tract of lush, paved agricultural fields with sugarcane, coffee, rice, and tree plantations on both sides of the road. By the time we got to Jinja, my geography mental storage had begun to process why this country is referred to as the pearl of Africa, even though it's a landlocked country.

On the driving seat was Rabbi Gershom Sizomu, the chief Rabbi of Uganda, a former highly esteemed member of the Ugandan Parliament, and spiritual leader of the Abayudaya Community in Eastern Uganda. Other occupants in the car were Boyah and Dvora, two beautiful nieces of the Rabbi, his in-law, Ariel, and one other brother. This has been a normal routine for the Rabbi, covering at least a 12-hour roundtrip from his residence in Kampala to Mbale for weekly Shabbat and festivals.



A beautiful moment before the unveiling of the memorial stone and park

Focusing on the road in front without flickering his head, Rabbi Gershom continued to educate me:

“

AT A DISTANCE TO MY RIGHT, THERE YOU FIND THE SOURCE OF THE NILE. YOU CAN GO RIGHT UP TO THE SOURCE ON A HIRED BOAT, FROM WHERE THE NILE FLOWS OUT OF LAKE VICTORIA, PASSING UNDER THIS JINJA BRIDGE AS IT BEGINS ITS JOURNEY NORTHWARD DOWN TO EGYPT, MAKING IT THE LONGEST RIVER IN AFRICA.” “YOU MEAN THE RIVER NILE, WHERE MOSHE WAS PUT IN A BASKET?”

I interrupted. “Yes, exactly,” he responded with a Ugandan ascent,” which is the magic and uniqueness of Uganda,” he added.

As we reached the other end of the bridge, my Jewish sensitivity and reasoning were fully activated, linking this territory with key Jewish parameters. Could this be one of the reasons why some parts of Uganda were offered as a Jewish homeland in 1903 to Jewish refugees escaping rising antisemitism in Europe long before the establishment of the state of Israel? In 1976, there was an Israeli military raid in the airport at Entebbe to rescue Israeli hostages whose airplane was hijacked by terrorists loyal to Palestinian militia groups. Also to mention is the fact that thousands of Ugandan Jewish adherents survived a full-blown state-sponsored antisemitism persecution on the orders of the military junta head of state, Idi Amin, and were forced to flee and take shelter in the forest for several years faced with hunger, starvation, and infectious diseases. These are quite a number of historic Jewish pointers in one country alone!

Mbale, in eastern Uganda, is home to the Abayudaya (“people of Judah” in Luganda), who recently marked 100 years of existence dating back to 1919, when Semei

Kakungulu embraced Judaism. Born in Koki kingdom to the family of Semuwemba of the Ganda people, Semei escaped back to Buganda kingdom after his parents were executed due to a secret royal power tussle and was later appointed by the king of Buganda as a District Chief, a testament to his remarkable personality. He went on to become a brave military commander and worked with the British administrators to wage several wars against groups like the Moslem-Arab minorities and surrounding kingdoms that posed a threat to British rule. Despite his military exploits that paved the way for British rule over wide areas of the region and eventually annexing the Ugandan territory in 1894 as a protectorate, he fell out with the British authorities.

As a reward for his loyalty to the British, he desired to be acknowledged and treated as the Kabaka (king) of the eastern region of Uganda instead of his appointment as military governor of Eastern Uganda. Amid ongoing tensions over kingship, Semei kakungulu decided to sever ties with the British and return to Mbale, the town he founded. In the years that followed, scriptural texts from the Old Testament Bible appealed to his spirit, and he demanded the observance of all Moses commandments around the region.



The Stern Synagogue in Namugoye, headquarters of the Abayudaya congregation, gets a new giant menorah.

Leading by example, he carried out circumcision on not just himself but on all his sons in 1919, signaling his conversion to the Jewish religion. Despite attempts by Christian leaders to persuade Kakungulu to return to Christianity, he remained steadfast in his belief that observing Shabbat is an everlasting command from God, rooted in the creation narrative.

He is credited with writing a book, "Quotations from the Holy Book," a ninety-page book in Luganda, a guide to the Jewish religion, and a handbook for teachers in the community. Food for shabbat was prepared on Fridays, work began on Sundays, and the Abayudaya observed Shabbat diligently, punished violators, and only consumed meat that they had personally slaughtered. The community kept expanding and had reached around two thousand members by the time Kakungulu passed away in Mbale on November 24, 1928. Before and after his death, they continued to learn a lot more about Jewish laws and practices from traveling Jewish individuals and guidance from a number of teachers who followed in the path of leading the Jewish community.

Nine decades after the era of Semei Kakungulu, the oversight of the community of Abayudaya now lies on the shoulders of Sizomu Gershom, the chief Rabbi of Uganda, along with a host of other Rabbis and heads of other administrations.

It was a few minutes before sundown when we pulled up at the Rabbi's quarter on the hills of Nabugoye, at a height of approximately 2,350 meters above sea level. We began the ascent at the edge of Mbale town, passing through greenfield and quiet settlements, and then slowly moving up steeply paths to arrive at the hilltop headquarters of the Abayudaya Community. A major transformation has taken place in the area since Semei Kakungulu allocated this land for the community in the hills of Nabugoya.

A short distance from the guest house, an interlock pathway led us to the Stern Synagogue, where we gathered to celebrate Shabbat. We strolled down to the Rabbi's quarter for a delicious Shabbat meal of rice, matoke (pounded plantains), and chicken soup, right after the Kiddush. It was a memorable first time in the midst of the Abayudaya.

Everyone was filled, including the Rabbi's dogs, who happily were savoring the discarded, juicy chicken bones.

After a few moments of Torah, the place was engulfed with a melodious brikat hamazon and then the bidding of goodnight as everyone called it a day, dispersing in different directions.

For the Shacharit service, it was already announced that it would take place at the Namanyonyi Synagogue, which is a direction down the hills to another trading center in the next village. Over the years, the demographics of the Abayudaya have stretched beyond extreme distances in the north and towards western Uganda. Just like the Namanyonyi Synagogue, the Putti Community Synagogue is located at another distant corner off the town of Mbale, but quite bigger with a Jewish school, mikveh, and a modern synagogue building powered by solar electricity. Outside of Mbale, they can also be found in Namutumba and Bukedi, and even right up to northern Uganda in the faraway Apac. Migration and economic factors were identified as key reasons for the migration over time. Around central Uganda, there are active Jewish shuls in Mukono with traces of the Abayudaya and some new converts with no ties to Mbale, the cradle of Judaism in Uganda. Nevertheless, they've remained bonded and shared a commitment to strengthen and uphold the legacy of the Abayudaya and all other Ugandan Jews.



A Purim Shacharit service inside the Stern Synagogue in March 2023

The attendance at the Shacharit service at Namanyonyi Synagogue was twice as high as the turnout for the Kabbalat Shabbat the previous night at Nabugoye. The whole place was filled with devoted worshipers from different communities in a high-spirited service to make it a historic first one in East Africa for me. I couldn't help but wonder what Shacharit would be like on the hilltop at Nabugoye. The thought filled me with curiosity and excitement. However, before that could be experienced, the feast of Purim was approaching in the coming weekday.

On the eve of Purim, a crowd of young students graced the Stern Synagogue to mark the 2023 festival. They were students of Hadassah Nursery and Primary School, located at the foot of the hill. Most of them had colorful masks made from carbon paper on their faces as they listened to the reading of the megillah in the local language.



Hadassah Primary School students inside Stern Synagogue celebrating the feast of Purim 2023

The night was filled with excitement and joy as the children enthusiastically screamed whenever Haman's name was mentioned during the reading. The majority of the students came from diverse religious backgrounds, including Christians and Muslims. This unique mix fostered an environment of religious tolerance, cooperation, and unity, ultimately promoting peaceful coexistence among the different sects. The school ensures that all students are treated fairly and are given the freedom to practice their own religious beliefs, regardless of their background. School management receives support from various Jewish organizations, including Kulanu, a non-profit organization based in New York, as well as several other organizations and individuals from Israel.

In addition to the Hadassah school, the Jewish community also has another educational institution called the Semei Kakungulu High School. The secondary school has been a valuable addition to the community, with thousands of students graduating since its establishment in 1999. Making education and learning a priority has been the vision of Kakungulu, and hence it was a commendable thing for the generations that followed to name a school after him. This puts his memory in the spotlight, to be remembered not just as a colonial military governor but also as the forerunner of Judaism in Uganda and a lover of education. As one descends the slopes, one can see the Semei Kakungulu country lodge, which was constructed by his great-granddaughter Rachel Kakungulu. Behind it is the Kakungulus' 1920 home and burial site, which is now a popular tourist destination for historians.

Expanding upon Kakungulu's impressive track record of establishing numerous schools, roads, and hospitals in Eastern Uganda, a Jewish Health Center now stands proudly in downtown Mbale, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Rabbi Gershom. Since its inception, it has provided affordable healthcare options for the Jewish community, particularly for the elderly who are in need and facing financial challenges due to rising medical expenses. Alongside offering top-notch medical services, the Tobin Health Center uses medical specialists and nurses from the Jewish community. This way, there are available opportunities to provide job openings to health workers in the community.

The strength of a community is demonstrated by its capacity to tackle challenges that threaten our shared existence and well-being as Jews striving to succeed autonomously in a multicultural society. Health care, education, agriculture, development, security, and charity are essential components that contribute to the economic growth of a people. However, taking a broader look across other Jewish communities in Uganda and across sub-Saharan Africa, the challenges are remarkably similar. The reality on the ground in most African Jewish communities is far from where they desire to be in the future. Therefore, it is important to consistently strive to balance things up in ways that would take the community from where they are at the moment to where they want to be in the future. A future in which we envisage growth in the Jewish population, sustainable agricultural activities to address food insecurity, quality education, support for Jewish-owned startups and small businesses, and most importantly, the establishment of typical Jewish settlement communities where Jews can live side by side, strengthening and complementing each other to achieve a robust Jewish economy.

Ultimately, time is the price to be paid. Despite setbacks under Idi Amin's rule, the Abayudaya community has flourished for 105 years and spread to other regions of Uganda. The headquarters of Abayudaya, located on the hills of Nabugoye, serves as a remarkable model that could be emulated in

other regions of sub-Saharan Africa that have yet to experience living in a typical Jewish community settlement. With an elevation of around 2,350 meters, the view of the surroundings is truly awe-inspiring.

The peaceful atmosphere at the top, accompanied by the towering trees providing shade, is beyond compare. It brings joy and inspiration to me and countless others to explore and spend time in the beautiful hills of Mable, where Judaism is thriving.



Students of Semie Kakungulu High School, Nabugoye

A NEW DAWN FOR BLACK AFRICAN JEWS

By Modreck Maeresera



A goodbye photo at Addis Ababa airport in Ethiopia after the SAJA conference in Abidjan.

In December 2022, the capital city of Ivory Coast, Abidjan, was the setting of a historic event for black African Jewry. Black African Jews converged in Abidjan for the first-ever conference of sub-Saharan African Jews. Before this conference, these communities only connection to each other was through Kulanu, an organization based in New York, USA. Kulanu helps emerging, isolated, and returning Jewish communities across the world. Representatives from Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, and Kenya attended the inaugural conference for Sub-Saharan African Jews. Kulanu organized the conference.

The main objective of this conference was to connect these different African communities so that they could share challenges, experiences, successes, and resources. We were all connected to Kulanu, yes! But there was hardly any interaction between these communities, and that was a sad scenario that needed prompt rectification. If there was a need to develop our Judaism, shape our future, and create a lasting identity for ourselves as African Jews, there was a need to create a direct connection to each other, not through Kulanu as a conduit. The conference aimed to foster direct connections between the various African Jewish communities, allowing for more meaningful interactions and collaborations. By establishing these connections, the communities could work together to develop their Judaism, shape their future, and create a lasting identity as African Jews.

The representatives from the 10 African countries sat down and formed the Sub-Saharan African Jewish Alliance, or SAJA, after a week of interaction, idea sharing, and prayer.

We formed a board of directors and established working committees for critical areas to drive the growth and development of African Judaism.

Some of the work committees created included the religious development working committee, responsible for overseeing the growth and development of Judaism in SAJA communities; the economic working committee, responsible for developing projects and connections that would bring economic independence, sustainability, and self-reliance to SAJA communities; and the education working committee, responsible for developing and promoting Jewish education in SAJA, among other work committees.

With SAJA in place, it was evident that history was unfolding before our very eyes. We, as individual communities, lacked the strength to make our voices heard. Our efforts to develop observant Jewish communities in Africa didn't carry weight. However, together with a collective voice, collective effort, and collective dreams and aspirations, we became a force that would be difficult to ignore. For the black African Jews, things were never going to be the same again.

In the words of Bonita Sussman, the president of Kulanu, ***"substantial portions of the Jewish people have become secular. Large numbers of Jews have lost interest, and many are marrying out of the faith and many of the young are disinterested in Israel. One of the best hopes for the future of Judaism and the Jewish people is to be found in Africa. Sub-Saharan African Jews bring a new and fresh enthusiasm to Judaism. They serve as an inspiration to us and at some point, will become future leaders in world Jewry. Jews around the world will come to them to study Torah and look to them on ways to create vibrant communities"***



A SAJA initiated fish pond project in Cote D'Ivoire

After the conference, the newly set-up SAJA board and its different communities immediately got to work. Work committees overseen and supervised by SAJA vice president Sarah Nakintu from Uganda set out to develop thematic programs. We received acceptance as affiliates after the president of SAJA sent advocacy letters to Jewish organizations like Olam. Economic organizations like Innovation Africa have agreed to work with us. The collaboration with these organizations opened up new opportunities for us to expand our reach and impact. With their support, we were able to bring our vision of promoting Jewish cultural identity in Africa to life.

However, our biggest success was attracting the keen interest of Mr. Mark Gelfand, a Jewish philanthropist from the USA. Before the formation of SAJA, Mr. Gelfand was sponsoring economic development projects in Uganda, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe through his NGO STEMPower, in which he has established and set up STEMCENTRES in more than 30 countries in Africa. He holds the belief that merely establishing Jewish communities is insufficient; these communities require empowerment to achieve economic self-sufficiency. The biggest challenge that Saja and Mr. Gelfand are trying to combat is hunger. Most African countries are in a state of perennial food shortages, and under these circumstances, it is important that the Jewish communities we work with have food sovereignty. In Mark's words, economic empowerment must come first ahead of religious development. The Mezzuza can follow economic empowerment. In collaboration with

Mr. Gelfand, we have established irrigation projects in Uganda, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, and Cameroon. Tanzania and Ivory Coast established fisheries, while Nigeria initiated poultry projects. Many more SAJA countries are poised to reap the benefits of the Gelfand grants. The ultimate goal is to ensure that these communities are self-sufficient and no longer reliant on outside aid for their food supply. By focusing on economic empowerment first, we are laying the foundation for sustainable development and long-term success in these regions. This approach not only addresses immediate food insecurity issues but also creates opportunities for long-term growth and stability.



A SAJA project in one of the villages in Zimbabwe

The Gelfand grants have already made a significant impact, and we are excited to see the continued progress in the SAJA countries. The future for African Jewish communities has never looked brighter.

Through SAJA, we are unified, we can speak with one voice, we can decide which course to chart, and we can determine our future. Kulanu and other Jewish organizations there that have and will accept to work with us will give us the helping hand that we need, and the Gelfand Agricultural Projects are helping to create strong, self-reliant Jewish communities. It is indeed the Renaissance—the dawn of African Judaism.

We cannot undervalue the impact of these projects. Lack of access to clean water exacerbates Zimbabwe's serious cholera outbreak. Through the Gelfand grant, five communities got irrigation infrastructure and access to clean borehole water, which has helped alleviate the cholera problem. Southern Africa is experiencing its worst drought in living memory, and having functional irrigation projects creates fail-safe facilities for food production. The Gelfand grants are constructing a clinic and stem center in the Buhera district of rural Zimbabwe. Through these projects, Kulanu and the Gelfand food security grants complement each other. Kulanu's mezuzas will find well-established, economically self-reliant Jewish communities, and the mezuzas have a greater chance of remaining stuck on the doors.

The future for African Jewish communities has never looked brighter. Through SAJA, we are unified, we can speak with one voice, we can decide which course to chart, and we can determine our future. Kulanu and other Jewish organizations there that have and will accept to work with us will give us the helping hand that we need, and the Gelfand Agricultural Projects are helping to create strong, self-reliant Jewish communities. It is indeed the Renaissance—the dawn of African Judaism.



Shecheyanu-FSP poultry project,
southern Nigeria



An irrigation plantation project in Zimbabwe



Corn field ready for harvest in Zimbabwe

JEWISH CAMPING ARRIVES IN NIGERIA WITH OPENING OF CAMP SARAH

BY NETZACH BAT HAVEL



The Camp Sarah event in Tikvat Yisrael Synagogue.



Children pose for photos during the Camp Sarah event in Gihon Hebrew Synagogue.



Children in the Camp Sarah event

Upon learning about Camp Sarah, numerous questions immediately came to mind. I was intrigued to learn more about the organization due to the elegance of its name. Who is Camp Sarah? What makes Camp Sarah stand out? What challenges is Camp Sarah aiming to address through its activities within the Nigerian Jewish community? However, a chat with Camp Sarah's director, Debbie Isser, at Gihon Hebrew Synagogue in the Jukwoyi suburb of Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria, on Sunday, October 8, 2023, revealed its ambitious objectives for Nigerian and African Jews. The event was a Simcha Torah combined service program sponsored by Camp Sarah for Jewish communities in Abuja.

Camp Sarah, as I found out, is actually a Jewish organization dedicated to teaching Judaism to children aged 5–16 and fostering unity among Jewish communities for the betterment of all Jews. The service on Simcha Torah, being the first of its kind, united various synagogues in Abuja for a joint celebration.

Children were seen completing their painting task based on events from the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy.

People were singing and dancing to Jewish songs as they carried Sefer Torah in a procession through the streets of Gihon Hebrew Synagogue, attracting the attention of onlookers. While speaking during the event, Debbie expressed her vision for Jewish communities in Nigeria to mirror those in the US as well as other parts of the globe. In a serene atmosphere, she fervently explained the purpose behind launching Camp Sarah and the goals they strive to accomplish through its various programs.

Mrs. Debby mentioned that Camp Sarah began by sponsoring Jewish youths to attend summer camps in the United States before deciding to organize a Jewish summer camp in Nigeria after consulting with Jewish leaders such as Sar Habbakuk, the leader of Tikvat Israel Synagogue Kubwa Abuja, and others. According to her, the decision was made to have a lasting impact on native Jewish communities by educating young Jewish children about Jewish principles to improve Judaism globally. She suggested bringing summer camps to Nigeria instead of taking people to Jewish summer camps in the United States to have a greater impact and benefit more people."

Despite the director, Debbie Isser, mentioning that their programs will expand to other parts of Nigeria with Jewish communities, as of now, they have only held programs in Abuja. Camp Sarah is planning to expand its program for young Jews from Abuja to the eastern parts of Nigeria, such as Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, and other locations. The goal is to organize Camp Sarah programs on a Jewish community level across Nigeria. Debbie expressed her intention to expand Camp Sarah to different regions in Nigeria where Judaism is practiced, such as Anambra, Enugu, and Imo. She voiced her desire for every Jewish community to establish an independent Camp Sarah in Nigeria, aiming to introduce Jewish children to Judaism at a young age through enjoyable activities. Her plan involves organizing capacity building training for passionate Jewish youths from different Jewish communities in Nigeria. The training will focus on educating them about Camp Sarah's goals and how to replicate its programs in their own communities, along with teaching necessary leadership skills.

Camp Sarah has had a significant influence on numerous Jewish children, who have gained knowledge of the Hebrew language, Jewish stories, and participated in celebrations such as Hanukkah parties.

Ever since Camp Sarah launched their program for Jews in Nigeria in August 2023, they have been providing young Jews living in Nigeria with the chance to explore different forms of Judaism similar to those found in America. Camp Sarah's programs provide a fun way for young Jews to learn about Judaism and socialize with other Jewish children from different synagogues. The camping program debuted as a one-week program at Tikvat Israel Synagogue Kubwa, Abuja, in August 2023. Running from August 21st to 26th, the program accommodated forty campers who shared in living, learning, and celebrating together. The event served as a positive kick start that had a significant impact on the participants' lives. One of the participants revealed the significant impact the program had on her, particularly. According to her, the camp was instrumental in helping her learn to speak some Hebrew words. Attending the program was a delightful experience. Many thanks to Camp Sarah for organizing the camping event. I look forward to more in the future!

December 2023 saw Camp Sarah host a festive Hanukkah party for Jewish children in Abuja, Nigeria, to commemorate the holiday. At the event hosted at Tikvat Israel Synagogue, Debby shared with Israel Ben Abraham from Kosher World News that Camp Sarah aims to make sure Jewish children in Nigeria are connected to the global Jewish community. Mrs. Debbie emphasized the importance of their religion's history, highlighting the tradition of passing it down through generations. Several children attend schools where they could be the only Jewish students. It is heartwarming to see them unite and experience a sense of belonging to a broader community, not only in Abuja but on a global scale, preventing them from feeling isolated as children in a region where Judaism is still emerging. Our traditions, holidays, virtues, food, and activities are all shared. Hopefully, this will make them love Judaism and learn about it together. They will know they are not alone as Jews, wherever they are."

Children were seen learning how to build a wooden Hanukkiah. They participated in the dreidel game, encouraging the value of sharing among them. Younger students were assigned to a unique class focused on painting various events in Jewish history. A special performance was delivered by the Gihon Children to enhance the event. During Hanukkah, children were served traditional festival sweet foods like local kpuf-kpuf and potato pancakes. The children were taken to the field for some light physical activity. Debbie recounted the origins of Hanukkah to the children, highlighting the key figures who played a role in making the festival possible over 2000 years ago during her opening address. She emphasized the importance of Hanukkah in the modern world and in our personal lives, stating that it symbolizes the resilience of the Jewish people and their ability to endure despite challenges. Further discussions detailed a recap of the activities that took place during the children's program, along with future plans for Camp Sarah. The speaker mentioned having more than fifty children from three different synagogues present, with 35 children from Gihon Synagogue, one child from HaGadol International Synagogue, and the remaining children from Tikvat Israel.

"We started the program by re-telling the Hanukkah story to the children. We talked about what Hanukkah is all about. We talked about the holiday. That is what Hanukkah is all about; the story behind it is about 2000 years ago. And we talked about how it's been celebrated today."

Children from Gihon Synagogue performed a song. The song was truly beautiful and wonderful. I have a strong affection for them. Two children presented the story of Hanukkah. Following this, the children were split into two groups. Youthful participants were engaged in painting Hanukkah objects and Torah stories inside the synagogue using printed materials provided to them. The older children are playing the dreidel game inside the hall. By the conclusion of the program, every child will leave with a Hanukkiah and a packet of candles to partake in the Hanukkah candle lighting at home. The director of the camp also stated that they are planning to have more events organized during the coming festivals, and there are plans to organize leadership training for those working with Camp Sarah.

Speaking about the programs, he said, "It has captured the minds of the younger ones, who are the future of Judaism. Camp Sarah is the first of its kind." I was at the Camp Sarah Hanukkah party, and I witnessed how happy these children are. You know that the future of every nation or religion lies in their children, and Camp Sarah organizing these types of programs for children will help prepare these children to carry the touch of Judaism in Nigeria into the future. To me, it is a wonderful program, and I commend Camp Sarah for this program. After returning from the Hanukkah party, I conducted a session with the children to discuss what they had learned from the program. The children expressed their happiness while sharing how the program has had a positive impact on them. One individual shared that she learned how to build a Hanukkiah. Another individual mentioned that he learned how to play the game of dreidel. Some individuals reported meeting other Jewish children. This program is fantastic for children."

The children expressed a strong sense of community and belonging that they gained from being part of the program. Camp Sarah's initiative appears to be making a significant impact on enhancing the knowledge and respect for Judaism among Nigerian youth. The children showed an overwhelming feeling of pride in their Jewish identity and culture. This program offers educational opportunities and fosters a supportive and inclusive environment for young Jewish individuals in Nigeria. The children were thankful for the opportunity to connect with others who have similar heritage and beliefs. Camp Sarah's initiatives are evidently having a beneficial effect on the Jewish community in Nigeria. At Camp Sarah, the children's sense of community and belonging plays a crucial role in managing their dual identities as Nigerian and Jewish. Camp Sarah is molding the future generation of confident and devoted Jewish Nigerians by providing a secure environment for collaborations between Jewish children and fun-ways of celebrating festivities.

TRAPPED IN SUDAN

BY AVRAHAM BEN AVRAHAM

When Adane Mekonen left Oromia with a group of 50 individuals, including women, young boys, and girls, as well as men and fathers, they were uncertain about what the future had in store for them. The decision of whether to run or stay back and fight took a considerable amount of time to be reached. Regardless of the chosen course of action, there are consequences that exhibit a notable level of unpredictability. Unfortunately, in the absence of equitable assurance of justice in any scenario, the hard way often becomes the only way.

Only a tree would remain motionless even when faced with the threat of being cut down. As the adage above indicates, this particular group of defenseless Ethiopian Jews has experienced numerous threats over time. However, these threats escalated to a critical level, leaving them with no choice but to flee. The war was intensifying in the north, causing hostility to spread throughout the surrounding region. As a result, the only viable option for escape was to head westward. A direction into Sudan, at least a pathway to safety—escaping from government forces known for their aggressive nature.

It has been about one year since the commencement of armed conflict in Ethiopia, wherein government forces initiated an invasion of the Tigrayan region with the objective of engaging the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front defense force. This military operation was conducted in both the southern Amhara region and northern Eritrea. The Ethiopian-Tigray war has resulted in significant humanitarian consequences, as highlighted in a report by the United Nations (UN). The report states that more than 2.75 million individuals have been internally displaced due to the conflict. Tragically, there are also reports of at least 20,000 people who have gone missing and an estimated 250,000 lives lost.

Hostilities had escalated between the Ethiopian government and the Tigrayan northern region prior to the outbreak of COVID in early 2020. In November 2020, amidst the global race to develop a vaccine for the pandemic, federal troops launched an offensive, capturing and bombarding Mekele, the capital and hub of Tigray. In a surprising turn of events, the Tigrayans, after a period of six months, bolstered their forces and initiated a strategic offensive with the aim of reclaiming their territories.

West Wellega Bet Israel, Ethiopia



After regaining control of Tigray, the military's advancement into the regions of Amhara and Afar, along with the possibility of advancing into the capital Addis Ababa in the Oromia region, prompted a nationwide mobilization urging men to take up arms and protect the country from the northern forces.

After the coordinated military operation successfully expelled the Tigrayan forces from the regions of Amhara and Afar. Both sides were responsible for numerous cases of rampant human rights abuses and grievous war crimes. According to reports from refugees who have escaped conflict zones, there have been accusations against the Amhara militia for committing acts of ethnic cleansing against Ethiopian Tigrayans in the regions of Amhara and western Oromia. This is the account of how Adane and the members of the West Wolega Bet Israel community found themselves entangled in the tragedies of war and faced with the scourge of antisemitism.

In addition to witnessing war crimes, which the government never wanted revealed to the outside world, there has been a culmination of intensified antisemitic threats throughout the region. They witnessed a series of horrifying murders firsthand, including the mutilation of women's breasts, the brutal killing of children with knives, the gruesome act of ripping open the stomachs of pregnant women, the heart-wrenching sight of infants being discarded, and the merciless slaughter of young men and fathers as soldiers marched through Wolega in Western Ethiopia, where the remnants of its synagogue are located. The Jewish population was attacked, which led them to flee.



Outbreak of disease in the camp

After enduring a challenging journey filled with misadventures, pain, and fatigue, they finally arrived in northern Sudan at Galavat on March 20, 2022. Throughout their four-month escape from a war zone, they faced constant threats from multiple enemies. A team of United Nations personnel welcomed the group at the border and kindly escorted them to the Tigrayan refugee camp. This camp serves as a safe haven for thousands of individuals who have fled the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia, providing them with much-needed relief and support. Upon discovering that some of the Oromia escapees were Jewish, a significant number of refugees in the camp staged a revolt. They accused Jewish individuals of being evil and bringing bad luck, expressing their refusal to henceforth accommodate them within the camp. They proceeded to assault the Jews, who appeared weak, exhausted, and outnumbered. To gain control of the situation, the 48 Jewish individuals were relocated from the settlement and subsequently set up camp near a local police command post.

Antisemitism cases are characterized by a common thread: unfounded hatred towards Jewish people. In extreme situations, individuals who harbor hatred are motivated to attack, specifically targeting Jews with the intention of causing harm. Their mindset is programmed to rationalize and justify such extreme acts. During the Jews' escape from West Wolega, government forces apprehended three individuals. These forces had launched an attack on their village, resulting in the destruction of property and plundering. The situation escalated into a case of kidnapping, with the abductors demanding a ransom before releasing Mulat, Gashawu, and Habetamu. During the war, anarchy and lawlessness prevailed, empowering oppressors to mock, exploit, and extort unfortunate victims.

Because the Jews who were fleeing did not want to abandon the three kidnapped men, they made the decision to negotiate while in hiding, keeping a safe distance. The abductors initially demanded 300,000 birr per person, but later they insisted on a minimum of 300,000 birr for the release of all three individuals. Unfortunately, they received the distressing news over the phone that Mulat had been fatally shot. This tragic event occurred after a ransom of only 100,000 birr was deposited into a commercial bank account in Ethiopia. As the government forces closed in, urging them to surrender and be handed over to the Oromian forces, they made the decision to head westward towards the border. However, their journey took an unfortunate turn when they were arrested in Asosa, located in the Benishangul-Gumuz region. They were detained for a period of four months before eventually being released. Despite this setback, they persevered and managed to successfully cross the border into Sudan.

On April 15, 2023, an armed conflict broke out between two rival factions of the Sudanese military government: the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Violent clashes have erupted in multiple areas, including the capital city of Khartoum, the Darfur region, and the border territories shared with Ethiopia and South Sudan. The humanitarian crisis has escalated due to deliberate and indiscriminate attacks carried out by the warring factions. These factions include various militia groups that have aligned themselves with either the SAF or the RSF. According to the United Nations, the war has resulted in approximately 10,000 fatalities within a span of four months. Additionally, there are currently 3.4 million individuals who have been displaced within their own country and approximately 1 million people who have become refugees.

The scenario of fleeing from a conflict and subsequently becoming entangled in a fresh war abroad seemed unimaginable for the group of 48 exiled Jews. They are experiencing trauma, feel helpless, and are unsure about which direction to take. The situation in Sudan rapidly deteriorated as fighting escalated in the capital city of Khartoum and spread to other areas. Avoiding being caught in the crossfire between shooters on both sides or becoming victims of mass human rights abuses would be highly unlikely without another miracle. However, as the violence and lawlessness continued to escalate, they made the difficult decision to make an attempt to leave Umrakuba and escape Sudan.



Water from the well after a rainy day is used for bathing, washing, cooking, and drinking.

Due to their lack of funds and the need to rely on themselves, their situation quickly worsened, leading to a crisis and forcing them to endure impoverished living conditions. As they continued to suffer from severe hunger, their camp was also plagued by an outbreak of ulcers. The children would cry all day due to hunger, which forced desperate mothers to take risks by doing menial jobs or begging for food and money. It became a battle for survival, disregarding the cruelty and oppression unleashed by humans and going all out to hunt for food.

They are compelled to reside under the influence of the weather, and when heavy rain falls at night, their shelter proves inadequate, resulting in a leaking roof and flooding throughout the entire place. Mothers will have to carry the younger children while standing up all night if it rains during the night. The proximate well water frequently experiences contamination from runoff over an extended period, resulting in the utilization of muddy water for bathing, cleaning, cooking, and consumption. Due to the deteriorating living conditions, various illnesses have begun to affect the camp, posing the greatest risk to the children.

Due to a lack of funds and limited opportunities to earn money during a war, the situation became even more challenging. Additionally, there were no effective measures in place to address the outbreak of disease in the camp. Frustration and anxiety have also become prevalent among them, leading to a decrease in their overall morale. One of the most distressing aspects is that some of the women, who are also mothers, experience emotional distress after being sexually abused outside their settlement. Every day brings its own set of surprises and challenges, often with outcomes that are difficult to predict. The 48 Amharic Jews in exile in Sudan face significant challenges, and as one of them has described, their living conditions are extremely precarious, akin to being on the brink of life and death.

Every day brings its own set of surprises and challenges, often with outcomes that are difficult to predict. The 48 Amharic Jews in exile in Sudan face significant challenges, and as one of them has described, their living conditions are extremely precarious, akin to being on the brink of life and death. The Amharan Jews were a group of Beta Israel who resided in the northern regions of Ethiopia. They played a significant role in the governance of the Ethiopian Empire, which existed from 1270 to 1974 and is commonly known as the Solomonic dynasty. Over time, a significant number of their ancestors were compelled to convert to Christianity.

As a result, subsequent generations abandoned the non-Talmudic Judaism that the Ethiopian Jews had been practicing for more than a millennium.

During the final years of Emperor Haile Selassie's reign, a group of Amharic Jews were relocated from the Amhara region to the Oromia region as a result of a severe drought. This is how the Mekonen established their residence in West Wolega, located inside the Oromia area. However, the Jewish settlers in Oromia have forcefully migrated due to the Ethiopian conflict and are subsequently facing displacement as a result of another war occurring in Sudan.

In the midst of exhausting all available alternatives and enduring a profoundly destitute existence as disempowered refugees, they resolved to devise a strategy for departing Sudan, leveraging any available assistance at their disposal. Under the Israeli law of return, numerous Amharic and Tigrayan Jews were transported to Israel through the implementation of operations Moses and Joshua in 1987 and Solomon in 1999. Unfortunately, Adane's parents were among those who were left behind.

Evacuation Options for the 48:

The first choice is Eretz Israel. However, before proceeding, it is necessary to travel from Sudan to South Sudan in order to reach the Israeli embassy. This step is crucial for obtaining approval to enter the ancestral home of the Jewish people. However, since only two of them have passports, there will be a need to make use of various waivers and humanitarian provisions within the immigration law to facilitate the journey of the 48 to the promised land. However, the ongoing recent developments in Israel will play a crucial role in determining the outcome. One example is the protest by Ethiopian Jews in Israel, where they are advocating for Aliyah for their thousands of relatives who are still in Ethiopia. What are the chances that the 48 will be selected before those whose relatives are advocating in Israel? On Sunday, August 13, 2023, a large group of protesters assembled in Jerusalem to voice their demand for the Israeli government to take action and provide assistance to Ethiopians with Jewish heritage who are currently facing heightened risks due to the resurging armed conflict between opposing factions in northern Ethiopia.

If the process of moving to Israel is not feasible in the shortest possible time, again due to the ongoing Israeli-Hamas war, then considering the option of relocating to the Pearl of Africa could be an alternative. Uganda has experienced a period of stability lasting over three and a half decades. As a result, there is little chance of becoming involved in a third war after leaving Sudan. Additionally, there are two factors that work in their favor if they choose to extend their journey from South Sudan to Uganda. There are active refugee camps where individuals can be drafted if they have the right parliamentary connection to prioritize their case.

Furthermore, the Jewish community in Uganda will warmly embrace and assist the 48, ensuring their successful resettlement in Uganda. The Abayudaya communities in Mbale and the Jews in Mukono are known for their exceptional hospitality towards foreigners.

The consequences incurred by the Jewish community as a result of antisemitism are of significant magnitude, often leading to the phenomenon of migration as a prevailing outcome. During the tumultuous period of World War II, a significant number of Jewish individuals hailing from Europe embarked on a migration journey traversing the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean with the noble intention of seeking refuge and establishing new lives in the region of South Africa.

During the 7th century, amidst the Arab invasion of northern Africa, it is noteworthy that certain Jewish tribes hailing from Morocco undertook a migration towards the southern regions, specifically venturing into the western territories of the African continent.

The situation is similar for the 48 individuals who are currently trapped in Sudan. They are desperately seeking assistance to be evacuated from the war-torn country. The prospect of returning home is currently not under consideration, especially considering the unfortunate incident where the West Wolega Bet Israel synagogue was destroyed and burned down by government forces in 2021. Prior to the attack, there was a rise in antisemitism in the area due to radio broadcasts promoting hate speeches and anti-Jewish messages. These broadcasts unfortunately influenced many non-Jewish individuals, leading to tensions between the majority and minority communities. The situation became very intense when forces loyal to the government committed war crimes by invading the isolated Jewish settlements. They destroyed homes and even the synagogue, which houses precious religious items like siddurim, Torah scrolls, and Jewish books.

The 48 are living in constant fear due to the ongoing war in Sudan, which has seen a rise in reported cases of war crimes. Given the inherent uncertainty of each new day, there is a significant risk of being targeted, particularly for women who must travel over 15 kilometers outside their camp in Umrakuba to gather firewood. While there is still hope for an escape, it is clear that the intervention and assistance of the international Jewish community will be necessary. Much like the most recent rescue of 200 Ethiopian Jews from the Gondor region in northern Ethiopia, if the 48 individuals are also rescued, it would be reminiscent of the triumphant departure of Israeli captives from Babylon as they marched towards freedom and returned to the land of their ancestors.



A young boy stands outside his family's shelter in the camp.

A Jewish * Revival in an Unlikely Place: Jews in Nigeria Reclaiming their Heritage

By Israel Ben Abraham



A musical Havdallah service during youth Shabbat in Lagos

In recent times, a significant number of Nigerians, particularly those from the Igbo ethnic group, have been transitioning from Christianity and Messianic Judaism to Rabbinical Judaism. For those familiar with Torah prophecy, this event is not unusual as Hashem promised to gather His people from all over the world. Ovidai Okonjo Agbai, a key figure in the establishment of Judaism in Nigeria, shares a touching story about a Jewish visitor who was deeply moved by witnessing their Hebrew prayer service. The visitor expressed joy at seeing Hashem's promise of uniting his people from around the world coming to fruition in his lifetime.

There has been significant growth in Judaism in Nigeria over the past decade since the return began many years ago. In a 2013 article by Shai Afshai in the Times of Israel, it was reported that there were an estimated 3000 to 5,000 Jews residing in Nigeria from 2008 to 2013, with approximately 20 to 26 synagogues in the region as per a Harvard School of Divinity publication. In 2021, as per another report, the number of Nigerian Jews increased from 3,000 in 2008 to 15,000 in 2021. During this time, numerous Christian Sabbath churches transitioned to Judaism, and numerous young men switched from Christianity to Judaism. Adat Israel, situated in Ebonyi State, Nigeria; Kehilat Israel, found in Lagos State, Nigeria; Meir Elohim, located in Rivers State, Nigeria; and numerous others have transitioned from Christian/Messianic Sabbath to Rabbinical Judaism. It is estimated that there are around 90 synagogues practicing Judaism in Nigeria. This represents a significant increase from the 26 synagogues in Nigeria in 2008.

Nigerian Judaism is currently experiencing a resurgence with many referring to it as "the homecoming of the lost sons of Yacov." We currently have many families coming back with their entire family, including children ranging from 1 to 17 years old. We interviewed a man who returned with a household of 9 people. Several children have begun engaging in Jewish activities such as Torah and Hebrew language learning. During the 2023 Hanukkah week, one of them celebrated his bar mitzvah and has begun training to become a cantor.

In addition, several synagogues have initiated special classes for those returning, aiming to enhance their understanding of Judaism and nurture their Jewish practice. At Gihon Hebrew Synagogue, a new class named "Eden Hebrew Class" has been introduced to teach Hebrew language and Torah to children and returning adults. An African Jewish foundation named the

Avraham Ben Avraham Foundation has shown support and goodwill towards this initiative.

On Sundays at Gihon Hebrew Synagogue, visitors will encounter a diverse group engaging in interactive discussions about the fundamentals of Judaism with great enthusiasm.

Another community in Abuja, Nigeria, Tikvat Israel Synagogue, applied a different approach, which is the opening of their library to the public so that anyone who wants to read books on Judaism can have access for them—thanks to a new hall erected by Camp Sarah in the community. Camp Sarah is a Jewish organization that teaches Judaism and leadership to children below 15 years old; their programs started in 2023 in Abuja. It will be right to say that these approaches by some synagogues and organizations will help both old and returning Jews understand Judaism better. It will also help capture the minds of children, especially those who are returning with their parents, and convert them to the Jewish mind.

Speaking about the story of today's current mass return to Judaism, which is happening in Nigeria, it cannot be told without first expounding the story of the germination, growth, and spread of Judaism in Nigeria. The story would not be comprehensive without acknowledging the Jews who dedicated their time, talent, and resources to sharing the Jewish narrative with the world, even though evangelism is not fully endorsed in Judaism. Rhoda Cecil and others in the United States created tracts that, as some Nigerian Jews claim, played a role in their journey to discovering the truth and converting to Judaism. Additionally, it's important to point out individuals such as Rabbi Howard Gorin, who traveled to Nigeria during a time when Judaism was re-emerging in the West African country. Many credit his visits and support for elevating Nigerian Judaism to its current status. Also, people like filmmaker Jeff Liberman, who told the story of Nigerian Jews through the documentary "Re-Emerging: Jews of Nigeria" in 2012, Again, in 2011 and 2013, Professor William Miles, a Northeastern University Jewish Professor, released books he wrote on Nigerian Jews. One of them, "Jews of Nigeria: An Afro-Judaic Odyssey," was released in 2011, and the other, "Among the Jubos: During the Festival of Lights," was released in 2013.

It is regrettable that some individuals who played an instrumental part in the growth of Judaism in Nigeria cannot be mentioned in this article because of limited resources available during the writing of

this piece. Their experience and efforts, involving collaboration with numerous Nigerian Jews, will be prominently featured. I trust this will adequately honor their contributions to the development of Judaism in Nigeria. Among them are five Jewish men who visited the members of Gihon Hebrew Synagogue in a primary school in Jukwoyi, where they were holding their weekly Shabbat prayer services until the owner gave them quit notice because they do not believe in Jesus. The resurgence of Judaism we are witnessing today can be traced back to the 1980s. According to sources familiar with the movement in Nigeria, individuals such as the current leader of Gihon Synagogue Abuja, Peter Ovidai Okonjo Agbai, played a significant role in its establishment. Agbai, along with others like Law Oka and Kingsley Anyim, transitioned from different religious backgrounds to initiate the Jewish worship in Nigeria, with Anyim eventually becoming the chief chazzan of Gihon Hebrew Synagogue. In 1992, Emmanuel Abor's dedication to finding Jewish worshippers in Abuja Municipal by knocking on over 20 houses in Area 1 can be considered a noble sacrifice.

During an interview in Abuja, Nigeria, Elder Peter Okonjo Ovidai Agbai shared that his journey back to Judaism was influenced by a Jewish lady named Rhoda Cecil. After reading a tract she gave him, he began questioning his beliefs and practices as a Christian. He shared a short story about Law Oka, who has passed away, discovering Judaism while in prison and beginning to practice it in Nigeria when no one is talking about Judaism in Nigeria. "I came into contact with a religious tract from a sister in the USA. Her name is Rhoda Cecil. I think she is a Jew from America. It was Law Oka who gave me the tract. He got the tract when he was in prison in Nigeria. I read the tract and gave it to one of our brothers, Kingsley Anyim, who was still a Christian. We later went to our brother Law Oka, who gave us the tract—the same person who gave us the tract—to ask what he wanted to do with the information he got."

Agbai explains how they left Christianity to establish the first Jewish religious gathering in Nigeria. "We went to him to find out what his decision was after reading the tract. He didn't give us a positive answer—he was still undecided on whether to leave Christianity or not. However, he confessed that after studying the Bible portions provided in the tract, he found out that everything they said was biblically true. I told him it would be hypocritical to remain in Christianity after knowing the truth. By then, we have stopped going to church because it would be deceptive if we continued going to church after knowing this truth." "We then announced our desire to establish Jewish worship in which the name of Jesus would not be uttered. We agreed to start Jewish worship at his residence. So, we began meeting at his place every Saturday to observe Shabbat. We eventually discovered that the Hebrew language was vital to the worship. Before then, we had no idea of Sidur; all we did was meet on Shabbat and sing conventional prayers without mentioning Jesus; instead, we called on Hashem directly.

'Some of the returnees we spoke with expressed delight, great expectations, and a commitment to grow in their Jewish practice. Their behavior and confession make it evident that adopting Judaism is a worthwhile decision for them, as some of them admit to feeling at home in Judaism. When chatting with me, one of the returnees who converted from Messianic Shabbat to Rabbinical Judaism expressed joy and stated that he and his family have profited from what Judaism has to offer them thus far.

"My name is Yahudah, and I am an Igbo man. I was born a Christian, attended Anglican Church before joining Shabbat, and

have been a member of Messianic Shabbat for many years. While still in messianism, I was still hungry for the real thing. I feel like there is something missing spiritually. There is this yearning in my soul. Today I am here, and I feel at peace. I am here with my whole family. We are nine in number. My first son did his Bar Mitzvah a few months ago, and the rest of my family is learning Hebrew as well as the Halachot. I am so happy. I am grateful to Hashem for leading me into Judaism." I am happy with what we have learned so far.

One female returnee I interviewed shared that she embraced Judaism after initially resisting and rejecting the faith for years. According to her, her husband was the initial one to embrace Judaism, while she continued to practice Christianity. She claimed to have made every effort to convince her husband to stop practicing Judaism. Her husband never interfered with her practice of Christianity or pressured her to convert to Judaism. It was the transformation she witnessed in her husband's character that ultimately led her to embrace Judaism.

Another woman returnee who spoke with me said she joined Judaism after years of resistance and rejection of the faith. She said her husband was the first to join Judaism, while she remained a Christian. She said she did all she could to make her husband stop practicing Judaism. Her husband, on her part, never stopped her from practicing Christianity or forced her to join Judaism. She said it was the change she later saw in her husband's character that made her join Judaism.

"My husband was the first to join Judaism. When he told me about that, I felt disappointed because we are Christians. I was so angry with him that I was ready to fight him so he would stop practicing Judaism. I applied all forms of antics, but one surprising thing is that my husband never shows any form of anger towards me. As time went on, I discovered that my husband had positively changed character. He became a better husband and father at home. So, at a point, I was like, why don't you go to worship with him? He was surprised when I told him I wanted to follow him to worship. He was so happy. When I got to the synagogue, I felt the type of peace I had never felt before. That is how I became a Jew. I must confess that it has been a wonderful experience for me and my family."

Amidst the positive stories shared by the returnees and their emotional experiences, the mass return is presenting an important challenge to the global Jewish community due to the absence of a strong support system for their religious transition and practice in Nigeria. Challenges confront Judaism as a growing number of individuals return to the faith after living lives that were opposed to its teachings. It makes sense to acknowledge that the returnees are also encountering challenges. Going through a system lacking the necessary tools to fully understand the detailed facets of Judaism, particularly its stance on purification and separation laws. During an interview, a returnee named Onyema expressed his confusion about the explanations he received regarding the laws of cleanliness for women in Nida, the Sefar Torah, and the sanctity of the synagogue. One reason for this is the absence of a resident Rabbi who can provide guidance on such matters. Considering the challenges at hand, it is evident that global Jewry recognizes the importance of providing increased support from Jewish authorities for the ongoing mass return to Judaism in Nigeria. This backing is crucial to prevent any potential backlash from the returnees, who may be deterred by the current inconsistencies within the system.

NIGERIAN JEWS BEFORE THE ADVENT OF RABBI HOWARD GORIN

By Eben Cohen



Rabbi Howard Gorin and the late Asher

Historical records attest to the flourishing Jewish communities that once existed in several parts of Africa. The Jews of Morocco have a rich history that dates back to ancient times, with Jewish communities thriving there for centuries. During the medieval period, the Jews of Timbuktu were a significant Jewish community in West Africa. Other groups consist of the Jewish communities in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Ethiopia's Beta Israel, and the little-known Jews along the River Niger. These communities were all in Africa long before the introduction of Christianity and Islam, which eventually led to the conversion of many of them.

However, there is a common skepticism regarding the emergence of Nigerian Igbo Jews only after the 1990s. Yet, this perspective may raise doubts, particularly when taking into account the historical and cultural connections of the Igbo community. The Igbo people are one of the most populous and well-traveled tribes in Africa, boasting a rich history of engaging with other regions of the continent. The fact that they all lived in different towns and locales and nevertheless followed Jewish rituals and similar traditions indicates that these aspects could not have come from any other religion except Judaism. This suggests that the roots of Igbo Jews may have deeper historical ties to Judaism than previously thought, challenging the skepticism surrounding their emergence. Further research and exploration into the cultural practices and beliefs of the Igbo people could provide more insight into their unique connection to Judaism.

No synagogues or communities were built until the early 1990s. The Igbo tribe's elders and traditionalists have stated that, according to oral and written histories, the Igbo tribe was closely connected to ancient Israel. This narrative highlights the journey of the Igbo tribe from Sudan to West Africa, settling in the confluence area of the Omambala River before eventually splitting into groups and migrating to different destinations. The Igbo people's strong Jewish cultural identity may have led to their prolonged resistance against British missionaries before eventually adopting

Nigerian Jews prior to this moment over the past few decades, there have been no documented instances of thriving Jewish communities in Igbo land, yet many adults believed they had roots in Israel. In this modern era, vehicles, motorcycles, tricycles, shops, and offices in Igbo land are adorned with Israeli flags. Professor William Miles of North Eastern University Boston was taken aback by the sight of Israel flags on numerous tricycles when he visited the town of Aba in Abia State.

Based on a straightforward observation, there are more Israeli flags than the national flag on vehicles in Igboland. Although most Igbo people practice Christianity, a significant number maintain a strong belief in their ancestral connection to the biblical Israelites. The display of Israeli flags in Igbo land reflects a strong sense of pride and heritage. The Israeli flags displayed on vehicles, motorcycles, tricycles, shops, and offices visually symbolize the strong bond felt by the Igbo people towards Israel. This unique blend of Igbo and Jewish influences has created a distinct identity for the Igbo people, highlighting their historical and cultural ties to Israel.

The first Jewish Synagogue of Note

The Gihon Hebrew Research Synagogue, now located in Jikwoyi Phase II, Abuja, originally held services at Nyanya Primary School in the early 1990s. They later moved to a private school before establishing their current location. During those early days of their stay in a private school, they were visited by couples of Israelis who lived and worked in various companies, such as Etco, Bois, and Setraco, to mention a few.

A particular man by name, Doron, played a significant role in supporting Gihon Hebrew Research Synagogue to become a pillar of the community. Other Israelis in Abuja and Lagos started visiting Gihon because of this one man. Doron's wife made a special trip from Israel with her new-born baby. The Shabbat was truly memorable, not just because of the Israeli visitors, but also due to the timeless discussions sparked by the Parashah that remain vivid in my memory. Back then, the young man, now a successful chief hazan at the Gihon Hebrew Research Synagogue, showed exceptional intelligence in Torah even as a preschooler. That day, Doron quizzed the children about King Shlomo, likely to assess their knowledge. His answer attracted a big ovation as he boldly stated that "one specific thing he would always note King Shlomo for is his marriage with many women." With the help of Doron, after being introduced to the place by Kish Onyia, more Israelites such as Shimon, Dan, and others would occasionally join Doron in visiting Gihon. Traveling from Madallah town in Niger State to the synagogue for Shabbat used to be quite a journey, taking us hours to reach our destination. We were not financially buoyant, and Doron has repeatedly supported us and encouraged us to continue attending synagogue.

Other synagogues began sprouting right there in Abuja. Although those up-coming ones were not like Gihon, which started as an Orthodox Jewish community, as they are transitioning from Messianism to Judaism. In 2001, Kish and I had to stop attending Gihon because of the high cost of transportation and distance challenges, so we had to find one of the new synagogues. One location is in Madallah, where we reside, while the other is in Biazhin-Kubwa. We wanted to investigate whether they follow the same tradition as the Gihon Hebrew Research Synagogue. Upon learning that Tikvat Yisrael expressed interest in converting to Judaism, Kish directed the man, Habakkuk, to me for teaching. At the time of this chance, Kish was on the verge of traveling for his industrial training out of the country, so began the journey that later transformed the community today. They received a visit from Davison, an employee of the World Bank, in 2003.

In 2003, following Dr. Davison's visit to Tikvat Yisrael, news broke that a Rabbi from America would be arriving in Nigeria. He would be heading to Port Harcourt to meet with Dr. Essien Ben Yehudah, a respected academic at Rivers State University with a significant Jewish following in both Port Harcourt and his hometown, Ikporo Oboroyong, in Akwa Ibom State. Dr. Yehudah connected with Rabbi Gorin during his time in the United States and has extended an invitation for the Rabbi to visit his hometown in Nigeria. While staying with Dr. Yehudah, the Rabbi had some books to deliver to Remy Ilona, Kulanu's representative in Abuja.

The Rabbi departed from Rivers State in Akwa Ibom and was en route to Abuja to visit Remy Ilona. Upon learning that the Rabbi's flight was scheduled to arrive at Abuja airport by 5:00 p.m., Yeremyahu Molokwu promptly arranged for a Mercedes-Benz car to pick up the Rabbi. Among the crowd was Sar Habakkuk, filled with enthusiasm to greet the Rabbi, who also made his way to the airport. After many hours had gone by, the Rabbi's flight still hadn't arrived as planned. Consequently, some individuals who had gathered at the airport decided to head back home, assuming that the Rabbi may have decided not to travel to Abuja after all. Yeremyahu was the only one at the airport until around 8:00 p.m. when the Rabbi arrived. Yeremyahu shared that he recognized the Rabbi by the kippa on his head and greeted him with "Shalom." Following a friendly exchange, the Rabbi inquired about the whereabouts of others. Yeremyahu informed him that they had all departed as the flight was scheduled for 5:00 p.m. They eventually got into the vehicle and were driven directly to Tikvat, Israel, where he was accommodated. That evening, none of us managed to sleep because we were overjoyed about having a Rabbi. After catching a glimpse of us, he decided to call it a day because of the exhausting trip. The following day, our community buzzed with individuals who had caught wind of the news and gathered to meet with the Rabbi. He joined us for prayers and visited the Gihon Hebrew Research Synagogue and another Har Shalom Synagogue before calling it a day.



Sefer Torah in Lagos

Impressed by our dedication to Torah, he vowed to return. He noticed the lack of resources for our spiritual development. There are no siddurim available, and the ones that can be found are often worn-out photocopies or handwritten in some instances. We can only study from the Bible, but we have removed the entire New Testament, leaving only Genesis to Malachi. After witnessing this, Rabbi Gorin assured us he would respond promptly.

Rabbi Gorin's Second Visit

Since the Rabbi departed for the United States, his visit became a sensation. People began to be interested in Judaism more than before. Our communities flourished with the presence of people during Shabbats, weekly activities, Rosh Chodesh, and festivals. Rabbi Gorin's second visit in 2006 was remarkably grand, as he had sent a container full of articles and Jewish education materials, such as siddurim, tanach, chumash, and more. There is a growing fascination among many individuals for the Rabbi, who holds the distinction of being the first to distribute such a large number of books and materials.

This visit was even more special because the Rabbi was joined by a CBS reporter, Jeff Lieberman who became intrigued after seeing footages from the Rabbi's initial visit and asked to join him on his next journey. Jeff's visit was well received by everyone, particularly young people who viewed him as one of their own, sparking numerous new friendships. Jeff's professionalism shone during the Rabbi's second visit, causing a global stir. During this period, new songs that had never been heard in any Jewish community, both in Nigeria and other places, began to echo. Jeff Lieberman was instrumental in sharing them across the internet and social media.



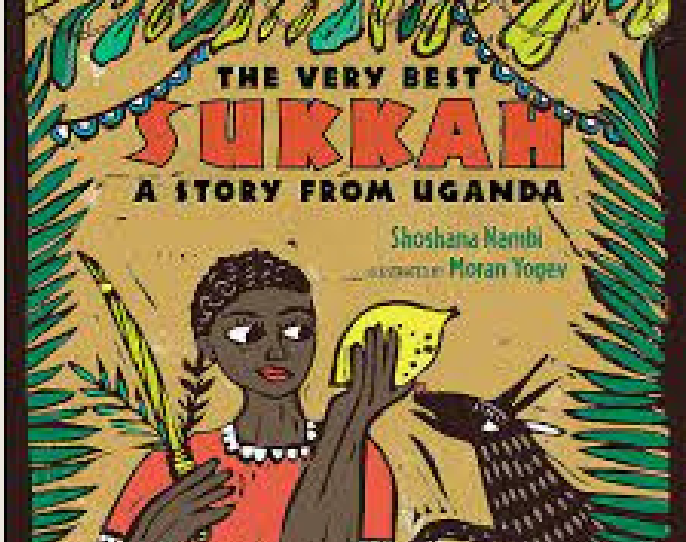
This trip allowed Rabbi Gorin to visit all the Jewish communities in Abuja before relocating to the Igbo heartland in the eastern region. He couldn't fly to Igbo Land because of the large crowds that were with him. Our journey was a great success, and our first stop was at the Shema Yisrael Community in Amuro, Okigwe, led by Elder Elam Ben Moshe. We departed for Port Harcourt to visit the Meir Elohim Community, led by Elder Asher Ben Eliyahu, and many others who are influential in the area. During this visit, the Rabbi met with traditional rulers in Rivers and Anambra states. There was a memorable visit to the governor of Anambra State at that time. In Anambra state, Rabbi Gorin also donated Jewish books to the Nnamdi Azikiwe University library. The Rabbi introduced unique activities that attracted many new faces to Judaism, making Shabbats and festivals bustling with newcomers to the Jewish community.

Rabbi Howard Gordon's third visit in 2008 was truly exciting, as he covered every state in the eastern region. Prior to this visit, he had previously dispatched another shipment of books and computers through Elder Asher Ben Eliyahu (now deceased). He had earlier made his intention to have libraries in every community he visited, even though his efforts were thwarted, making only about two or more Synagogues in the entire Jewish community he has visited to boast of libraries today. Rabbi Gorin visited Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Ebonyi, Rivers, Delta, and Akwa Ibom states, ensuring that the communities felt his presence. Upon his third visit, the synagogues he had previously encountered had grown in strength, more educated in Judaism, and populated in number, while the new ones eagerly awaited the arrival of the man whose reputation preceded him.

Many of those communities deeply valued Rabbi Gorin and honored him with chieftaincy regalia, referring to him as the Chief Rabbi of their community. This third visit, along with the second one, attracted many Rabbis to Nigerian soil as the buzz from his previous visits spread across social networks, the internet, and newspapers. Till today, the footprint of Rabbi Howard Gorin in Igbo land remains indelible in the annals of history. Many synagogues without prayer books, chumash, or other study materials could proudly attribute their possession to him. Some communities, like Dr. Yehudah and Meir Elohim, acquired even Sefer Torah through him. Following his visits, numerous other Rabbis, including Rabbi Moshe Oriel and Rabbi Nissin Kadosh, traveled to Igbo land. Since then, several Jewish communities have emerged and are making significant advancements, which is a testament to the individual who facilitated this development.

Despite the passage of more than 15 years since his last visit, Rabbi Gorin has left a lasting impact on numerous Synagogues across Nigeria, even those he never personally visited. In addition, even after retiring, he remains active by staying connected with many black African Jews through social media. He uses the online platform to share rabbinical teachings from a distance. Remarkably till date, some communities in Nigeria continue to receive festival supplies and support from him, along with book donations to Abayudaya Jews in Uganda, where he first learned about Jews living in Nigeria. Many Nigerian Jews who appreciate the rabbi's selfless sacrifice, can relate with the historic impact of the big change- a missing connecting bridge of knowledge, which triggered mass awareness and returning- helping the Igbos to cross the chasm that eventually changed the trajectory of Judaism in Nigeria.

THE VERY BEST SUKKAH



Written by Shoshana Nambi, a Jewish Ugandan author. Her first book, "The Very Best Sukkah: A Story from Uganda," is a tale meant for young readers. The storyline is set in eastern Uganda. The Very Best Sukkah is a unique story set in the Ugandan Abayudaya Jewish community, offering a fresh perspective in Jewish children's literature.

The storybook beautifully captures the essence of unity and togetherness, providing insight into the Jewish people's journey through the desert to Israel and the miracles that God bestowed upon them. This event marks the bountiful harvest and honors the historical journey of the Jewish people from Egypt to Israel through the desert. Hence, the celebration of the feast of booths, also known as Sukkot.

The book showcased a diverse cast of characters including Shoshi, Avram, Jajja, The Rabbi, David, Dina, Nalongo, Moshe, Daudi, Rebecca, Sarah, Yonatan, Isaac, and Nbilu the goat. Shoshi and her goat, Nbilu, triumphantly won the race against their peers at the start of the story. Jajja her grandmother scolds her, emphasizing that life is not a race. Shoshi's response quickly became one of my favorites. "It's not like I always have to win the race; I just like being at the front. The view is better there."

Shoshi, the lead character, lives with her grandparents in a small home surrounded by coffee trees in the Abayudaya Jewish community in Uganda. She lives with her brothers and together they abide by Jewish practices on a daily basis. On Shabbat, the rabbi speaks to his congregation as they sit beneath a mango tree. He points out that the solemn Yom Kippur holiday, which includes the feast of atonement and fasting, has come to an end. It was time to celebrate the successful journey of the Jewish people from the wilderness

to the promised land – it was time for Sukkot. Readers will discover various aspects of African Jewish life as Shoshi and her friends get ready for Sukkot. The tone of Nambi's writing is never didactic; instead, her characters are real people living in a particular town, where the kids count the stars in the sky and the local seamstress makes curtains for her sukkah.

Shoshi and her brothers build a sukkah (a temporary shelter) to celebrate Sukkot. They are eager for the rabbi to choose theirs as the best tent in the village. Every year, a competition is held to decide the most outstanding sukkah. After a storm destroys the structure of Daudi and his daughter Rebecca, the community moves past the competition to honor the holiday, and rebuild together. Everybody knows that the new sukkah that was built to replace Daudi and Rebecca's old ones—which were wrecked by the rain—is the most beautiful one because it reflects the skills in the entire community.

Shoshi depicted the character of a cheerful, responsible, and talented young lad. She asked insightful questions and, most importantly, held her religious beliefs in high esteem. "Every Friday, I race home from school to help my Jajja prepare our Shabbat meal. It's my job to mix cassava and millet flour to make the dough for the kalo bread." Mixing dough for challah (the baked Jewish bread for shabbat), visiting the synagogue, collecting piles of the Nsambya tree branches for building the sukkah, keeping her crying goat company during the heavy rain and thunder, helping build back Daudi's sukkah that was destroyed by the rain, and being satisfied with everything she did. That is a character with a kind heart and zeal towards everything concerning her religious beliefs she possesses.

Avram and David show qualities of reasoning, love, and support towards their sister. It was evident during moments like sitting on the grass counting the stars, supporting Shoshi in building their sukkah, and collectively gathering the Nsambya wood to help rebuild Daudi and Rebecca's sukkah. Jajja, their grandmother, not only listens keenly to her grandchildren, but also offers the most gentle and reassuring words. First, she points out the importance of understanding that life is not always a race. "Shoshi, you and your brothers did a great job on the sukkah this year. I think you have already won. Another comforting response from Jajja was when Shoshi asked if they were going to win the competition of who built the best sukkah. It was the best thing to say.

The Rabbi shows traits of a good leader, highlighting the importance of unity, similar to the symbolism of the lulav. The other characters in the story exhibit kindness, hard work, responsibility towards each other, and a strong commitment to doing good deeds. Nevertheless, each character plays a significant role in the fascinating and heartwarming story.

Another interesting angle to this story is that every character had something to do and made an honest living. "Each sukkah looks different, and each one reflects its builder's special skills and talents. Dina is the school's art teacher. Her family's sukkah is decorated with her student's colorful artwork." "Nalongo, the mother of twins and the village seamstress, has sewn beautiful curtains and pillows for the family's sukkah."

"And Moshe has sukkah filled with bowls of brightly colored fruits and vegetables from his own bountiful garden. He also offers a dish of roasted groundnuts for passersby to try. This teaches the need to do something honest. And the need to stretch out your hand when the need be. It also teaches the importance and beauty of individual skills and talents. We can't know it all. We need our neighbors and brothers. Throughout the year, Daudi and his daughter Rebecca run a stand in the village where they sell mouthwatering samosas. Daudi has saved money to buy fancy battery-operated lights and elegant crochet trim in the big town of Mbale to decorate his sukkah.

While constructing the sukkah, at first it was a competition to see who could win the best sukkah. Daudi and his daughter Rebecca put in extra effort and saved money to ensure their sukkah stood out. Regrettably, it was destroyed by the rain. However, since superstitions are common in most Jewish communities, it is not shocking that some Abayudaya residents wonder if their jealousy of Daudi's decorative sukkah led to its collapse.

It's lovely how they set aside the competition and work together to rebuild Daudi and Rebecca's sukkah. Upon arriving at Daudi and Rebecca's house with our branches, we are greeted by a large gathering of villagers. Everyone has something to share. Dina has a collection of her students' artwork, Nalongo contributes some pillows, and Moshe brings a dish of roasted groundnuts. The whole village works together to assist in repairing Daudi's and Rebecca's sukkah. Daudi distributes his tasty samosas for a snack, and a chorus of "Henei ma tov" fills the air.

This part of the story was the second most enjoyable for me. Success is achieved when everyone succeeds. This Jewish hymn, "Henei ma tov umah na'im shevet achim gam yachad," is widely recognized by Jews worldwide. This passage conveys the idea of the positive experience of brothers and sisters living together harmoniously. Representing the unity of love among the Jewish community worldwide. The Rabbi imparts a crucial moral in the Jewish story.

The significance of various individuals, each bringing their own distinctiveness, uniting to create an ideal community. It's impossible to accomplish everything on our own. This message about the lulav, with its three different types of branches intertwined, symbolizing unity in a community, is truly inspiring for our world. His teachings are inspired by the natural world and have strong connections to both traditional African and Israeli art. This passage beautifully illustrates a scene of unity and teamwork, where individuals come together to mend what's broken, offering support, sustenance, and harmony, with a focus on cooperation rather than competition. Both words and images convey the message that Jews worldwide should unite

like the various branches of the lulav. In ancient times, King David was defeated in more battles than King Ahab. David was considered righteous, and during his era, the children of Israel worshipped God but were never united. In the era of King Ahab, the Israelites practiced idol worship but remained united. Coming together in unity, they achieved victory in multiple wars with a few casualties.

The Rabbi concurs. Daudi and Rebecca's sukkah won! Displaying the lulav and etrog, the Rabbi showcases the significant symbols of the sukkot holiday. The process of making the lulav is demonstrated by combining three distinct branches and binding them together. Our community is a diverse group of individuals who are connected in a unique way. The Rabbi's message emphasizes the power of unity, drawing a parallel to the interconnected branches of the lulav. We can accomplish amazing feats and conquer any challenges that we face when we work together.

I really enjoyed the part in the book where Jajja asked Shoshi if she was sad for not winning the contest, and her response was, "But I did win." We all won. Everyone helped rebuild Daudi and Rebecca's sukkah, so everyone won the contest." She fell asleep with a smile on her face as her grandmother gently squeezed her hand. It was a fitting conclusion that brought a smile to my face.

I give the book a 5-star rating. The Very Best Sukkah tells a unique, insightful story. This text delves into the origin and distinctive culture of the Abayudaya, a Jewish community in Uganda. The cover art by Yogev is attention-grabbing with its vibrant colors, bold lines, and charming details. The captivating visuals persist as readers are introduced to a fun-loving girl determined to win a community contest. She exemplifies strength of character and compassion, guiding her brothers to school, synagogue, empathy, and kindness. She also has the most adorable pet goat! Standing out in a crowded market, The Very Best Sukkah offers a compelling narrative with beautiful artwork and the added bonus of expanding perspectives. This book's universal themes of perseverance and love will surely captivate readers from all backgrounds, making it a must-read for anyone, especially children seeking a heartwarming and motivational story. This timeless tale, The Very Best Sukkah, beautifully celebrates the power of family, faith, and community, making it a wonderful addition to any library or bookshelf.

Shoshana Nambi, aged 34, was raised in the Abayudaya community in eastern Uganda. Being a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College, she serves as a student rabbi at Rodeph Sholom, a Reform congregation on the Upper West Side, where Shoshi and her teenage daughter reside. The picture book, "The Very Best Sukkah: A Story from Uganda," delves into the Jewish holiday of Sukkot and the vibrant celebrations within her community, making it a captivating read. This children's book was honored with a 2023 National Jewish Book Award and recognized as a Sydney Taylor Honor Book. Furthermore, Nambi was part of the Ugandan delegation at the Sub-Saharan African Jewish Alliance conference held in Cote d'Ivoire, where she met with other African Jews from nine other African countries.

According to her, one of her greatest achievements has been transitioning from a small rural community in Uganda to the bustling city of New York with her daughter, describing it as an exciting adventure.

Nambi's journey has been marked by lots of exciting opportunities and well-deserved recognition for her work. Her story of overcoming challenges and achieving success is truly inspiring. Nambi's dedication to her work and commitment to creating an impact are truly inspiring. She excels at adjusting to and flourishing in unfamiliar surroundings, showcasing her resilience and perseverance. Nambi's experience in New York has been truly rewarding, as it has enabled her to strengthen her bond with her daughter and discover new interests together. She clearly prioritizes making lasting memories and treasuring special moments with loved ones.



A STORY FROM UGANDA

THE VERY BEST SUKKAH.

**By: Shoshana Nambi and Illustrated
By Moran Yogev.**

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AN ENCOUNTER WITH RABBI NETANEL AND JANICE AS 23 LOST JEWISH FAMILIES GETS A MEMORIAL PLACE IN MBALE

BY CHAIM G. KIHUMBAH



Moments after the unveiling of the plaque in honor of the 23 Jewish families

Having spent a considerable amount of time working as a media professional in Kenya and Uganda, I have recently found that my experience with Judaism has brought a new dimension to my work. It has inspired me to embrace the Jewish path and approach my work with renewed vigor. Recently, I was fortunate enough to receive an invitation to attend a special event happening after Shabbat on a Sunday blessed with delightful weather, a pleasant outdoor temperature of around 23 oC, and clear skies. The focal point of the event was the unveiling of a memorial stone at Nabugoye, situated in the historical town of Mbale, around 225 kilometers northeast of Kampala, the capital of Uganda. This location holds a significant role in the story of the Ugandan people as the cradle of Judaism. Semei Kakungulu founded Mbale in 1902, having a significant impact on the region's early development and contributing significantly to the expansion of the Abayudaya Jewish community. His contributions were instrumental in shaping the early development of the region and nurturing the growth of the Jewish community known as Abayudaya.

It was on the 3rd of March, and the remarkable event started inside the social hall at the Stern Synagogue, the headquarters of Abayudaya. More than 50 people from various communities and nations sat in a circle with a table in the middle, lit a memorial light under the sponsor's direction, and observed a minute of silence. Janice stepped onto the spotlight, ready to recount her experiences of living in Uganda during the 1960s. In addition to the story telling and candle lighting, Rabbi Netanel also shared a brief dvar Torah.



Rabbi Natenel from Kenya Jewish community

The ceremony then moved outside, where a memorial plaque was unveiled to pay tribute to the 23 Jewish families who lived in Kampala, the capital city. This plaque served as the final resting place for these families, whose lives intertwined with Uganda between 1949 and 1969. The plaque stands as a lasting tribute to the enduring legacy of the Kampala Jewish Community during that pivotal period. However, meeting and speaking to Janice and Rabbi Netanel for the first time was truly exciting. Janice shared personal stories of her family's experiences in Uganda during that time, adding a deeper emotional connection to the ceremony. Rabbi Netanel's presence and words provided a sense of continuity and remembrance for the Jewish community in Kampala.

The Legacy of the Kampala Jewish Community



Memorial plaque and park at the headquarters of the Abayudaya congregation

During the years from 1949 to 1969, a small Jewish community consisting of 23 families and around 67 individuals settled in Kampala, Uganda. The members of this group come from different parts of the world, such as Poland, England, East India, Germany, Romania, and Italy. Included in the group were Maurice Janies, Hannah Bernstein, Morris Kirbel, Isaac Aaron, Sarah Dokelman, Judah Solomon, and Fretz Metzler. They later passed away in Uganda and were buried in a Jewish cemetery next to the Christian cemetery in Kampala. When Janice, along with her parents Masur and Lily Helmut, arrived in Uganda in 1949, becoming part of the Kampala Jewish community, they actively contributed to its vibrancy and cohesion. One notable contribution was hosting Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur celebrations in their family home, which served as a gathering place for the entire community to observe these important festivals together.

Fast forward to 2005, and Janice Masur, now an adult, embarked on a journey to commemorate the legacy of the Kampala Jewish community. She started writing a book that would chronicle their rich history and profound experiences as a result of her discoveries and her desire to preserve their memory. Through her research, she discovered compelling narratives of strength, unity, and vibrant traditions, which deeply moved her and motivated her to revisit Uganda. Her aim was to pay tribute to the enduring heritage of the 23 families who once called Kampala their home.

Janice remains connected with several individuals who were once part of the Kampala Jewish community, despite their scattered locations. Janice keeps in touch with Hazel in South Africa, Daniel in Thailand, Rosanna, who might be in Durban, and Alexander, whose current location could be in Mozambique.

A deep connection is formed through their experiences in Uganda, creating a lasting bond that defies the constraints of time and distance. The memories of their vibrant community in Kampala are kept alive through this special connection. They still recall the various challenges the Kampala Jewish Community faced during its existence. These included the absence of Kosher meat, a lack of a resident Rabbi, and the reliance on Nairobi for any Jewish religious supplies or surprises. Despite these challenges, the community persevered, finding ways to maintain their religious and cultural traditions in a foreign land.

Before midday, the colorful occasion ended, presided over by Rabbi Gashom Sizomu, the spiritual leader of the Abayudaya at Nabugoye Abayudaya Congregation, and attended by Rabbi Netanel Kaszovitz from Nairobi. I had the opportunity to engage in conversation with Janice and her daughter Liora, delving into various topics of shared interest. Among the intriguing revelations was the existence of an inner circle within the Kampala Jewish community that fostered interactions with the Abayudaya. Furthermore, Janice shared insights about a group that predates the 1949 community, notably two gentlemen who engaged with Semei Kakungulu around 1920–1921. Rabbi Sizomu played a crucial role in the commemoration ceremony by offering the site for the plaque's installation. These revelations shed light on the intricate web of connections and interactions between different Jewish communities in Uganda, spanning decades and generations. The richness and complexity of Jewish history in the region are highlighted, serving as a testament to the enduring legacy of these communities. With this newfound understanding, I departed from the Abayudaya Congregation Synagogue, enriched by the stories and experiences shared and with a deeper appreciation for the mosaic of Jewish life in Uganda.

The Controversy Surrounding African Jewish Recognition in Israel

Rabbi Netanel Kaszovitz, a passionate spiritual leader of Kenya's Jewish community, offers deep insights into the rich tapestry of African Judaism. Rabbi Kaszovitz, along with his family, traveled to Africa to serve and connect with Jewish communities across the continent. Originally from Israel, they embarked on this journey with a strong sense of purpose and a deep desire to make a meaningful impact. Rabbi Kaszovitz has had the opportunity to connect with a diverse range of African Jewish communities, including the Abayudaya in Uganda, the Arusha community in Tanzania, and the Kenyan community. These communities have rich histories and cultural traditions that make them truly unique.

African Judaism is incredibly diverse, reflecting the rich tapestry of the continent. It includes both well-established communities and those that are just beginning to emerge. The Lemba tribe in Zimbabwe asserts a lineage dating back over 2,000 years, with one of its clans having a significant genetic marking, similar to the Israeli Kohanim. They claim to be descended from one of the lost tribes of Israel. Ethiopian Jews, known as Beta Israel, have a rich history that can be traced back to biblical times. They proudly claim their ancestry from the tribe of Dan and have a strong connection to the Solomonic lineage through Menelik I. The Igbo community in Nigeria has a strong historical lineage that can be traced back to the tribe of Gad through Eri. Alongside these ancient communities, emerging groups like the Abayudaya in Uganda add vibrant hues to the mosaic of African Judaism.

However, beneath this colorful tapestry lies a complex narrative of recognition and acceptance. Many African Jews grapple with questions of identity and legitimacy, facing barriers to inclusion within global Jewry. Rabbi Kaszovitz emphasizes the significance of orthodox conversion as a pathway to acceptance by the state of Israel, particularly highlighting the endorsement of the South African Beit Din, recognized by the Israeli Chief Rabbinate. Understanding African Judaism involves letting go of preconceived ideas and embracing the diverse nature of the continent. Rabbi Kaszovitz promotes the importance of connecting with African Jewish communities to cultivate a sense of unity and empathy among the worldwide Jewish diaspora. In closing, Netanel's insights provide a captivating account of the strength and unwavering spirit found within African Judaism. Through promoting open communication and embracing the richness of cultural diversity, we can strive for a more inclusive and united Jewish community. His recognition of Rabbi Rizkin's conversions in Uganda and Kenya highlights the continuous endeavors to enhance and authenticate African Jewish identities.



Janice lights a candle in memory of the 23 Jewish families.

The conflict between Israel and Hamas

Though standing over 5'5", Rabbi Netanel Kaszovitz possessed a slight build, yet his presence radiated a sense of athleticism and alertness. Suspended from his neck, a tag with the bilingual inscription "Bring them home" spoke to the deep-rooted focus of reuniting scattered Jews, including those still held captive in Gaza after October 7th, 2023. My curiosity extended to contemporary perspectives, particularly within the geopolitical arena. The ongoing war in Gaza loomed large, and I was eager to glean insights from Rabbi Kaszovitz's unique vantage point.

On October 7th, he reached out to the commanding officer of his unit. He shared how Israel had lobbied for Gaza to receive funding to rebuild its tourism infrastructure, only to witness Hamas divert resources to construct tunnels capable of accommodating the entire New York subway system. He expressed dismay at Hamas's conduct during the war, noting that the elected government had prevented citizens from seeking refuge in these tunnels, leaving them vulnerable. During the conflict, Hamas militants infiltrated Israel, indiscriminately targeting and killing civilians of all faiths, including Jewish, Christian, and Muslim individuals. Their atrocities included mutilating women's bodies and capturing infants, with one baby about to celebrate its first birthday in captivity.

Rabbi Kaszovitz expressed hope that the ongoing conflict would be the final one of its kind. He strongly emphasized Israel's dedication to preventing harm to civilians, asserting, "We have never intentionally targeted civilians, not even once, never!" Although recognizing some flaws, he emphasized the clear ideological contrasts among the parties involved. The question he posed was thought-provoking, urging us to reflect on our reactions if our loved ones were taken captive and subjected to torment. This challenged the idea of comparing the two opposing parties.

As the sun set on the commemoration ceremony and my interviews with Rabbi Kaszovitz, the unveiling of the memorial plaque marked not just the remembrance of a bygone era but also the celebration of resilience, unity, and cultural diversity within the African Jewish community. Across the span of our journey, from the humble beginnings of the Kampala Jewish community to the insights shared by Rabbi Netanel, one theme remained constant: the enduring spirit of African Judaism. By delving into the experiences of Janice Masur, Rabbi Kaszovitz, and the Kampala Jewish community, we are able to grasp the profound impact of memory and the significance of safeguarding the heritage left behind by those who came before us. These individuals' stories highlight the strength of marginalized communities and the importance of recognizing their valuable contributions to our collective past.

In addition, Rabbi Netanel emphasized the intricate nature of African Judaism, which encompasses a diverse range of traditions, identities, and challenges. The close connections between various Jewish communities in Africa highlight the importance of fostering mutual understanding and solidarity among the global Jewish diaspora. As we contemplate our journey, it is important to not only recall the past but also anticipate the future. Embracing diversity, fostering connections, and striving for inclusivity are essential goals for the African Jewish community and beyond. Through fostering open conversations, facilitating the sharing of diverse cultures, and championing fairness, we have the potential to create a global community that is more welcoming and unified. In the words of Rabbi Netanel Kaszovitz, "By fostering dialogue and embracing cultural diversity, we can work towards a more inclusive and unified Jewish community." Let us heed this call to action and continue to explore, learn, and grow together.



A lively day as the new park becomes open to the public



A spectacular evening view from the hills of Nabugoye



On their way to unveiling the memorial plaque

AN INTERVIEW WITH YATOV BEN ISRAEL, THE NIGERIAN REPRESENTATIVE TO SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN ALLIANCE (SAJA).

BY ISRAEL BEN ABRAHAM



From left: Yitzhak, Jator, Rabbi Birnbaum, Avraham, Shmuel, and Liz Ben.

Yatov Ben Israel is a multi-faceted individual with a diverse set of roles and responsibilities. Professionally, he is a civil engineer by training, utilizing his expertise in the field of construction and infrastructure development. However, his interests and impact extend far beyond his chosen career path. A passionate activist, Yatov dedicates his time and efforts to various causes close to his heart. He is an advocate for social justice, human rights, and community empowerment, lending his voice to movements that strive for positive change. In addition to his activism, he wears several other hats. Notably, he holds a significant position as the current Nigeria representative to the Sub-Saharan African Jewish Alliance (SAJA). In this role, he represents the interests of the Nigerian Jewish community on a regional level, fostering connections and collaborations across the diverse Jewish communities of Sub-Saharan Africa. With his multifaceted background, unwavering commitment to social causes, and leadership roles within influential organizations, Yatov stands as a prominent figure, leveraging his expertise and influence to make a meaningful impact on the communities he serves.

How did you become a Jew?

I will say that I was born a Jew. There's a reason for this: I was born to meet my father as a Jewish person. He was going down the old road and not the new one. He told us many times that the New Testament doesn't talk about God. God is only talked about in the Old Testament. He taught us to follow the path of Judaism, which is the way of the Hebrews. That's why I said I knew about Judaism when I was born and have been following it since then.

Sir, African Jewish Voices is aware that you visited Israel some time ago. Please tell us about your visit to Israel.

My visit to Israel was a great experience because, for me, it was a mitzvah. It was a mitzvah for me to visit the land of Israel in my lifetime. I was at a conference in Addis Ababa when I made up my mind to visit Israel, so I got in touch with Rabbi Uzzan of Chabad, Nigeria, and also my business partner in Israel, Rabbi Ruben Cohen, who is the CEO of Agro Fruits. They gave me all the necessary support, and I was able to get a visa in less than 24 hours.

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During my visit to Israel, I was able to attend a bat mitzvah at the temple mount on Monday after my arrival. I even visit Masada, where King Herod's Palace is located. It is one of the great historical sites because it served as a fortress for Jews when the Romans overtook Judea in the 1st century. I visited the market. I visited the Dead Sea. I understand that the Dead Sea is the lowest part of the world. I was warned not to allow the water to touch my eyes or my nose because it was so salty.

Also, I observed my shabbat in one of the Knesset in Tel Aviv. The shul is called Yakar Knesset. The Rabbi in charge is Rabbi Hananel. It was a great experience for me. I was supposed to visit Israel again in October, but unfortunately, the Hamas attack happened and it was canceled.

What has visiting Israel done to you as a Nigerian Jew?

My visit to Israel has assisted me to consolidate my faith and strengthened my decision as a Jew, knowing full well that we are isolated in Nigeria. Visiting Israel made me see what I used to hear physically. Seeing it physically assisted my spiritual standing as a Jew because my soul was able to feel, relate to, and connect with my faith. It also made me know that I was on the right path. Today, I am a proud Jew. It made me more Jewish.

Then, economically, because of my experience in technology and advanced security, my visit to Israel made me realize that I could partner with my brothers from Israel and turn the world around. It is a real one for me. If it is possible and if I have the means, I want to set up my investment and possibly send my children to Yeshiva. It has been a great experience for me

Can you tell us about Urhobo Jews, if there is anything like that?

Sometimes, when they say Igbo Jews, I want to appeal to whomever, for the purpose of documentation, that they should be called Nigerian Jews. I am not an Igbo man. We have people practicing Judaism and observing the torah among Ijaws and Urhobo. I have met a Yoruba man who is a Jew. You have Ijaws and people of other tribes practicing Judaism. I am an Urhobo man, and if you say Urhobo Jews, it's ok, but I am a Nigerian, so we should be called Nigerian Jews.

We will like you to tell us what your take is on the conversion requirement that is being demanded of Nigerian Jews.

Personally, I decided to convert because that is what we believe will reinforce our identity as Jews. It is a privilege for me. Ideally, as Africans, our tradition is intertwined with Orthodox Judaism, but we had the privilege of meeting with a Beth din of Conservative Judaism during our conversion. It was a great experience because it built you in line with your faith. Since we cannot prove the tribe from where our mothers come from, instead of continuing the unending and hard-to-prove tracing of whether we come from Israel or not, we decided to settle on conversion. So that is the reason I decided to convert.

We understand that you have a foundation you are currently overseeing; can you tell us about your foundation?

My father, Dr. Israel Abido, founded the Initiative for Progressive Judaism Development (IPJD) in the early 1990s. You have a lot of professors of Urhobo extraction from Agbor who worked with him in founding the organization. They decided to come together and have an organization that will help Judaism develop through teaching Judaism in universities as a course, building libraries, and generally encouraging Judaism practice in Nigeria. Also, the organization aimed to assist in Judaism development, the building of synagogues, support for festivals, and skill acquisition.

Can you tell us about traces of Judaism among Urhobo Jews, if any?

As for my father, who is the spiritual leader of our Knesset, people in the Delta political space call him Rabbi even though he did not attend yeshiva. So, like my father told me, our trace is to Judaism, and in line with our tradition and culture as Urhobo people, our tradition is intertwined with Judaism in the practice of eight-day brit milah for a male child, the niddah practice, and a whole lot of others indigenous tradition. Not all, but some of the things forbidden by the Torah were also forbidden in Urhobo culture. The most interesting thing is that we were told that Urhobo people are linked to the tribe of Ruben.

For instance, the Igbos are linked to the tribe of Gad, and the Urhobo are linked to the tribe of Ruben. According to the Torah, the tribes of Ruben, Gad, and some of Mannashe did not enter Israel; instead, they remained on the other side of Jordan as Moshe directed. If we examine it closely, we can see that the mythology may be true, despite the fact that we have little evidence to back it up.

What do you have to tell Jews in Nigeria with regard to ways to practice Judaism better?

My counsel to Nigerian Jews is to be truthful with one another. They should try to follow the mitzvot. They should understand what it means to be Jewish and united. Then, they should assist and encourage one another to see how we can best see our communities expand and, if feasible, create our own pattern of Judaism that is comfortable with our unique characteristics. For example, among Igbo Jews, Yoruba Jews, Urhobo Jews, and so on.

Going forward, we should endeavor to have our own Rabbi and possibly our own Sidur in our local language. This will allow us to concentrate more during prayer because it is claimed that we must concentrate when conversing with Hashem, and if you can concentrate better when praying in your native language, it will be beneficial to have Sidur translated into our local language.

The only way we can get there is to encourage communal practice by sponsoring one of our own to go to Yeshiva and become a Rabbi, so he can guide us on how to proceed so that we do not contradict the Torah. So, in general, my advice is that we must rise up to live as one, love one another, and engage in the community. Bezrat Hashem, we are looking forward to having a Kibbutz where Jews can live together as one—as a community. This will help us observe Shabbat well. You know that synagogues are very far from us here in Nigeria, and it affects our observation of Shabbat. Most of the time, we drive on Shabbat days, but if we have a Kibbutz, we will have a synagogue in our midst, so you don't need to drive to synagogue on Shabbat days. So that's my advice for them.

Can you tell us about the programs the organization is currently carrying out, if any?

We support some synagogues in the area of donation for Shabbat observation and festivals too. Sometimes we get hallah and kosher wine and distribute it to synagogues. We have collaborated with a couple of synagogues, like Meir Elohim in Port Harcourt, Tikvat Israel, and Gihon Synagogues in Abuja, respectively. We do it as Zadakah, and we fund it from the profit from our personal business. These are what we do currently.



Jator Abido holds the Safer Torah in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire.

What do we have to say about the practice of Judaism in Africa?

My advice is that we must be sincere in our purpose. Judaism in Africa should not be an avenue to make money, as some other religions do. It should not be an avenue for exploitation. You should not be a Jew in Africa because you want to go to Israel. We are all in exile. Going to Israel is a design by Hashem, and when the Mashiach comes, he is going to make His name known in the world and will gather us together. So, Judaism in Africa should be a way of life. We should be sincere in our purpose. We should sincerely practice Judaism and see the observation of the mitzvot as a way of life. If you do that, keeping the law won't be difficult for you. So, Jews in Africa should see the practice of Judaism as fulfilling mitzvah, and they should do it with joy and comfort.

EXCERPT FROM A BOOK BY ISRAEL SIRIRI, "WAY OF LIFE FOR ABAYUDAYA, THE JEWS OF UGANDA"

The Jews of Uganda are known as "Abayudaya," which in the native Luganda language means "the people of Judah." Unlike other remote Jewish communities whose origins may be lost in the mists of time, the origin of the Abayudaya can be traced to a specific person and date. Semei Kakungulu was not only the founder of the Abayudaya community but is also remembered as a major figure in Ugandan history. In the nineteenth century, in the area that later became Uganda, some tribes had established kingdoms in their territories, and others had not. Semei Kakungulu was born in 1869 in the Kooki Kingdom, which was later (1896) absorbed by the kingdom of Buganda. Kakungulu first rose to prominence through his hunting abilities, providing ivory to Kabaka (king) Mwanga, which he exchanged for foreign goods from Arab traders.

In the latter part of the 19th century, European powers colonized Africa, and this was accomplished not only by military actions but also by traders such as the British East Africa Company and by religious missionaries. The competition for this territory was between the British (with Protestant missionaries) and the French (with Catholic missionaries). Between 1889 and 1900, Kakungulu led Baganda soldiers in a series of military actions, which helped the British establish their control over the eastern region of Uganda, especially the Busoga, Bukedi, and Bugisu regions. The British recognized him, made him a chief in that region, and gave him and several of his followers land around Mbale. Semei Kakungulu moved with fighters and elders, both men and women; 1,246 armies and 4,321 additional non-military followers moved with him from Buganda to eastern Uganda. In total, he had 5,567 people.

In the course of this association with the British, Semei Kakungulu and other leaders who had been converted to Christianity were given the Bible translated into Luganda, which they used to study, discuss, and teach others. Besides being soldiers, in April 1893, Kakungulu and another 39 Baganda chiefs freed all their slaves. The denomination of Christianity that Kakungulu adopted, called Malakite, observed the Shabbat on Saturday and interpreted much of the Bible literally, and as they read the Bible, he started to encounter verses that prohibited eating certain animal meat, fish, birds, and insects. He also encountered verses about circumcision on the eighth day and observed the Sabbath on the seventh day.

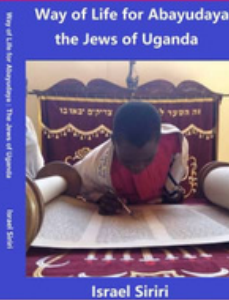
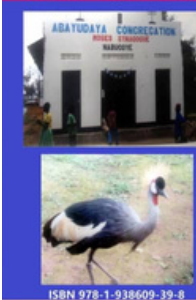
The community that Kakungulu established around Mbale followed this Malakite Christianity, and his reading of the Bible raised many questions in his mind, but when he started to challenge his friends as to why some practices commanded in the Bible were not put into action, he was told that these were only done by the Jews. In 1919, Semei Kakungulu declared himself a Jew; later that year, a son was born to him, and he circumcised him on the eighth day. It was at this point that he and his followers broke away from the church to start Jewish practice. This represents the beginning of the Abayudaya, which means, in Luganda, the people of Judah. Semei Kakungulu started by circumcising his eight-day-old son, who had been born to him at that time, as well as himself and his followers. They tore the New Testament pages of their Bibles, and the Abayudaya continue to do so today. In the beginning, it was not easy for them to follow Jewish practices because they had neither the Jewish calendar, nor prayer books, nor basic information about the Torah or Jewish law and practice.

Kakungulu continued studying at home with his followers until one day he was at a leadership program in Mbale town, which was also attended by an Indian Jew called Joseph, who worked with the water department in Mbale. Joseph sat at some distance and looked at Kakungulu in his unique traditional clothing (white kanzu) with a white rob (head wrap). He noticed that Semei was very careful in his eating habits, and this prompted Joseph to ask his neighbor who the man was. His answer was, "That is Kakungulu the Jew." Joseph replied, "The Jew? Is that man a Jew?" "Yes, if you want, go and ask him." At the end of the meeting, Joseph introduced himself to Kakungulu and made arrangements to visit him at his home in Gangangama.

WAY OF LIFE FOR ABAYUDAYA, THE JEWS OF UGANDA

Unique Jewish community in Uganda

ISRAEL SIRIRI



When Joseph went to visit Semei at his home, he found him with his followers in Bible study, something that amused Joseph. He had brought with him a Jewish calendar, a prayer book, and a tallit. This provided the right guidance for Kakungulu's journey. Mishael Bilogi, being younger than Kakungulu, learned Hebrew faster. He used to visit Joseph and learn with him how to read Hebrew and understand the meanings of some words.

Kakungulu established synagogues in Busoga, Namutumba, Nasenyi, Kabwangasi, Namanyonyi, Bukedi, Namagumba, Mbale town, and Nabugoye village, assigning to his students the duties of spiritual leadership. He had also allocated part of his land for the construction of Abayudaya headquarters on Nabugoye Hill. With his sponsorship, a spiritual foundation had been dug for the larger synagogue before his death.

Kakungulu had wealth in terms of cows and land that was given to him as a reward for his work. The Malakite Christianity that Kakungulu and his community had previously followed rejected modern medicine because it is not mentioned in the Bible. Kakungulu himself reported having lost a herd of cattle because he refused to inoculate them, and it is believed that tetanus and smallpox that invaded Uganda in 1928 could have been the cause of his death at that time.

Semei Kakungulu died at the age of 59 at 10:35 p.m. on Monday, November 24th, 1928, at his home in Gangangama. He was buried on November 27 in the presence of many people from different places who came to pay respect. It is noted that Semei Kakungulu loved reading the Bible, and he liked stories of King David. Sadly, his death left a big gap because he was the sole financier of all activities in the different synagogues.

Semei Kakungulu had 13 children, four boys and nine girls, and at the time of his death, one grandchild, Seth Kakungulu, but none of them followed their father's route (Judaism). It is believed that soon after he died, his children were taken to the Buganda kingdom, where they were cared for, taken to Christian schools, and taught Christianity. They married Christian partners, and this further made them forget Judaism. At that time, the family had not yet adopted Judaism enough to resist assimilation; this also affected many families. Although few of his descendants have kept his Jewish faith, Semei Kakungulu became the founder of the Abayudaya through his converts, whom we referred to as the founding fathers of the Abayudaya.



CONTRIBUTORS



Deborah Elom is from Ebonyi State, the eastern part of Nigeria. She holds a degree in mass communication from Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ebonyi State. With a wide range of interests, she enjoys writing, reading, cooking, entrepreneurship, and content creation. Her contents are centered around monologues, voiceovers, poems, novels, documentaries, and articles, as well as social media promotion, influence, and marketing. Deborah is currently a fashion entrepreneur and works with a law firm in Abuja, where she resides. She is from a Jewish background and has been writing for the Jewish Nigeria blog for over five years now. Her underlying passion is to influence lives through story-telling and someday own a kosher restaurant.

DEBORAH ELOM



Netzach Abraham is a passionate writer/author, singer/songwriter, nurse assistant, and aspiring nurse who is dedicated to care. She is an active volunteer with Doctors on Call Inc. and Communities Alliances and Network, Canada (CAAN), living her passion to provide quality healthcare to underserved communities. She lives in Abuja, Nigeria, with her husband, Israel Ben Abraham, who is the founder of Kosher World News and writes for the Jewish Nigeria Blog, and a former news writer with African Today News New York.

NETZACH BAT HAVEL



Israel ben Avraham is a Nigerian writer, author, blogger, media consultant and Jewish Journalist. He is the founder of the Kosherworld News Blog, and a news writer with African Today News and author of over four books which deals on marriage and relationship.

Isreal is currently a new recruit for the Avraham Ben Avraham Foundation and a guest blogger for the Jewish Nigeria Blog and one of the pioneer writers for African Jewish Voices.

ISRAEL BEN AVRAHAM

CONTRIBUTORS



MODRECK MAERESERA

Modreck Maeresera is the leader of the Harare Lemba Synagogue community in Zimbabwe, a Kulanu board member, and the current president of SAJA, the Sub-Saharan African Jewish Alliance. He has been a journalist by profession since 2007 and a writer for Kulanu magazine.



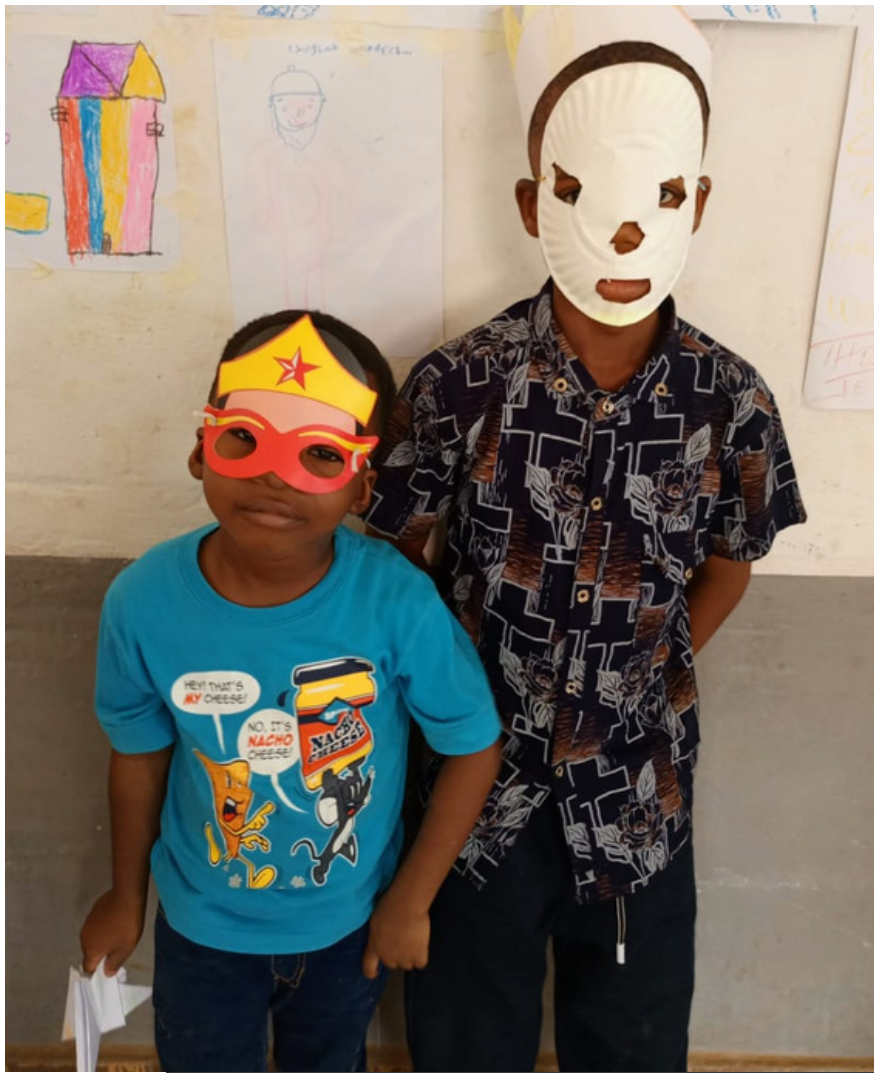
ISRAEL SIRIRI

Israel Siriri was born in Nabuli village to Magoba Rachael and Shadrach Siriri. His father was among the first converts of Semei Kakungulu, and his mother was the daughter of Rabbi Samsom Mugabe. He went to Nabuli primary school, Mbale secondary school for a lower secondary, and Wanale View for an upper secondary, and joined Bushenyi Technical College for a technical diploma in civil engineering and building. Israel served as a youth leader in the Kibbutzi movement and was later elected chairperson of the main leadership of the Abayudaya community for 6 years. He is the executive director of the "Light of Hope for Widows and Needy Children Foundation." He currently owns two businesses: construction and a shopping center in Mbale town.



CHAIM KILHUMBAH

Kenyan-born Chaim Kihumbah, formerly known as George Kihumbah, brings a vibrant blend of creativity and cultural insight to African Jewish Voices Magazine. With experience working in Kenya and later in Uganda for 10 years, Chaim's journey led him to embrace Judaism. Maintaining a robust online presence as George Kihumbah/Chaim Kihumbah, he bridges the digital divide, fostering dialogue and connection. As a film director, TV producer, media consultant, and writer, Chaim is deeply passionate about pan-African narratives, weaving captivating stories that celebrate the continent's diverse heritage. With a commitment to telling African stories the African way, Chaim's work embodies authenticity and resonance. His latest endeavor includes spearheading a YouTube channel dedicated to African Judaism, reflecting his dedication to exploring and amplifying lesser-known facets of African Jewish culture. Join Chaim Kihumbah on a journey of discovery and enlightenment through the pages of African Jewish Voices Magazine.



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