

Lesotho

Africa – Southern Africa

Teaching the Bahá'í Faith

Bahá'í Geography - Lesotho

Africa

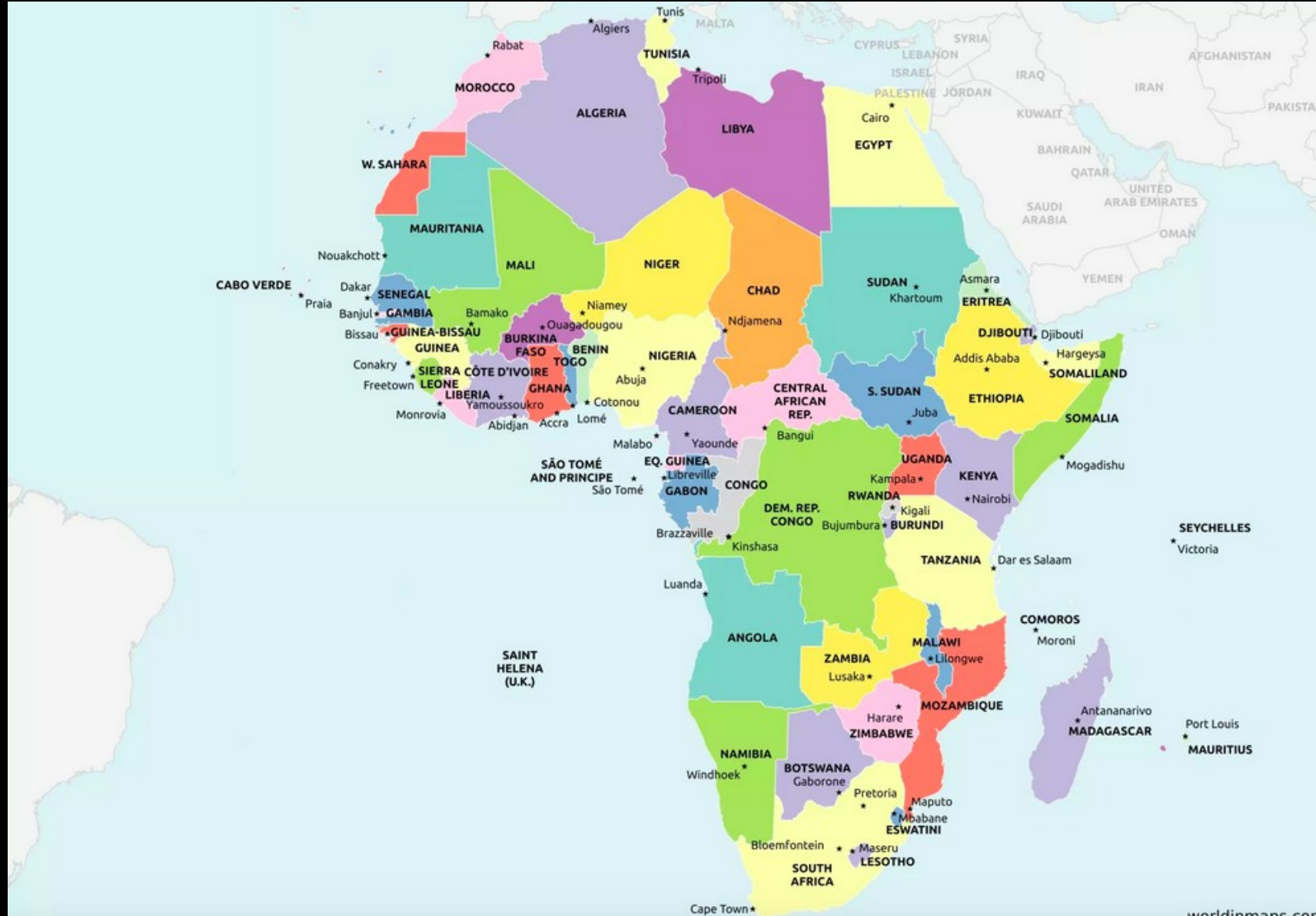
Similarly, if possible, they should travel to the continent of Africa, Canary Islands, Cape Verde Islands, Madeira Islands, Réunion Islands, St. Helena, Zanzibar, Mauritius, etc., and in those countries summon the people to the Kingdom of God and raise the cry of “Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!” They must also upraise the flag of the oneness of the world of humanity in the island of Madagascar. It is said that in South Africa, a diamond mine is discovered.... Perchance, God willing, the mine of humanity may be discovered and the brilliant pearls of the Kingdom be found.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan. Tablet to the Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, 11 April 1916)

Lesotho

The Kingdom of Lesotho, formerly Basutoland, is landlocked in South Africa, in the Maloti mountains, the highest in southern Africa, with the lowest point in the country at 1,400 metres, and an area of 30,000 sq km. It is periodically subject to drought. Its population is about 2 million. It declared independence from the United Kingdom in 1966.

Map of Africa



Lesotho





Lesotho



Lesotho



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Knights of Bahá'u'lláh

Frederick Laws (1913-1987) and Elizabeth (1888-1978) responded to Shoghi Effendi's call for pioneers to Africa before the Ten Year Crusade. They crossed the Atlantic with Fred Schechter on the *S.S. African Sun* with a car and trailer, joining the Bahá'í community in Nairobi in 1953.

Fred and Beth
Laws with
Fred Schechter
on
S.S. African Sun
1953

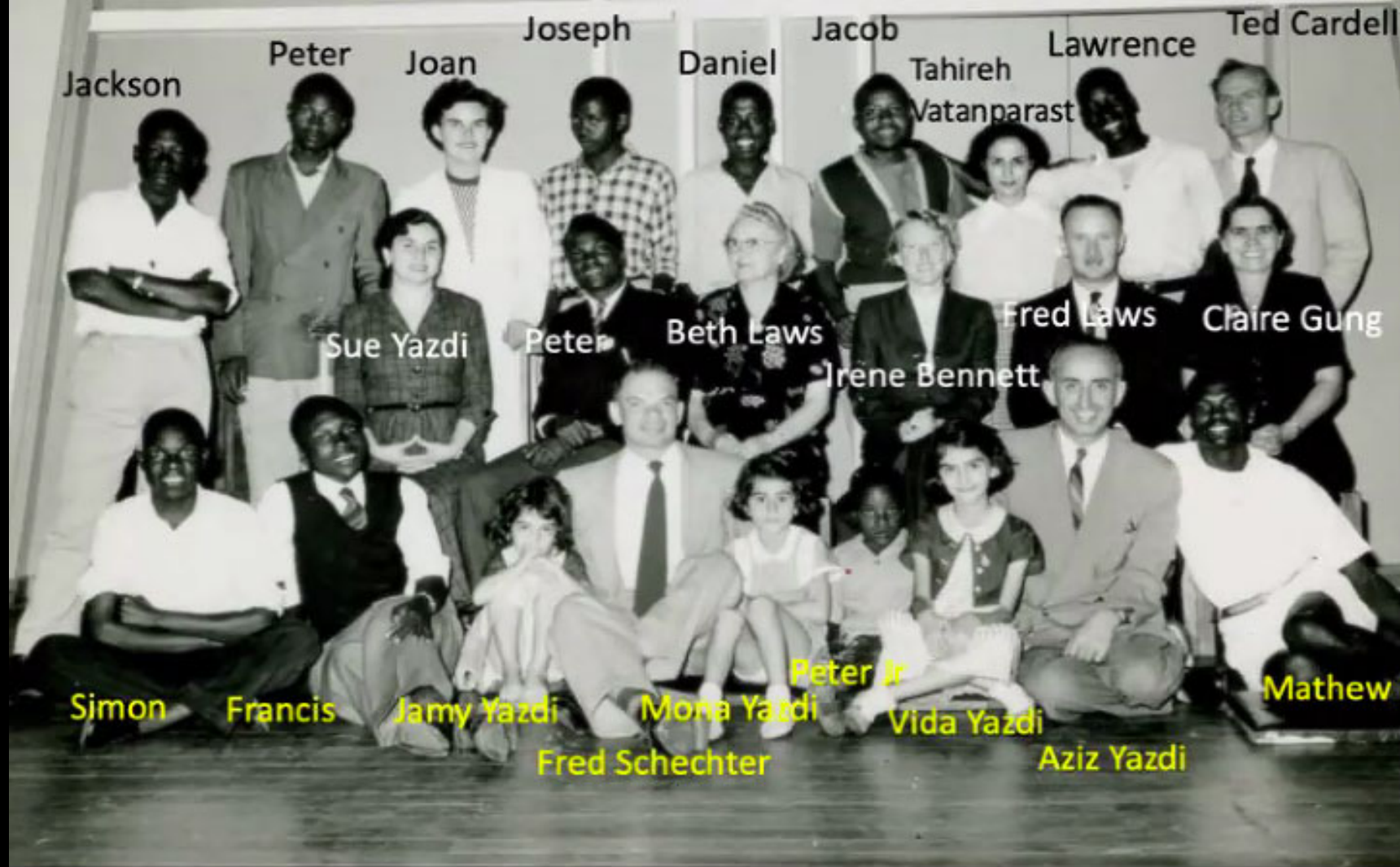


With Fred and Beth Laws

Fred and
Beth Laws
in Nairobi
1953



Fred and
Beth Laws
in Nairobi
1953



Nairobi – Public Meeting May 3, 1953



Frederick
Laws



Elizabeth
Laws



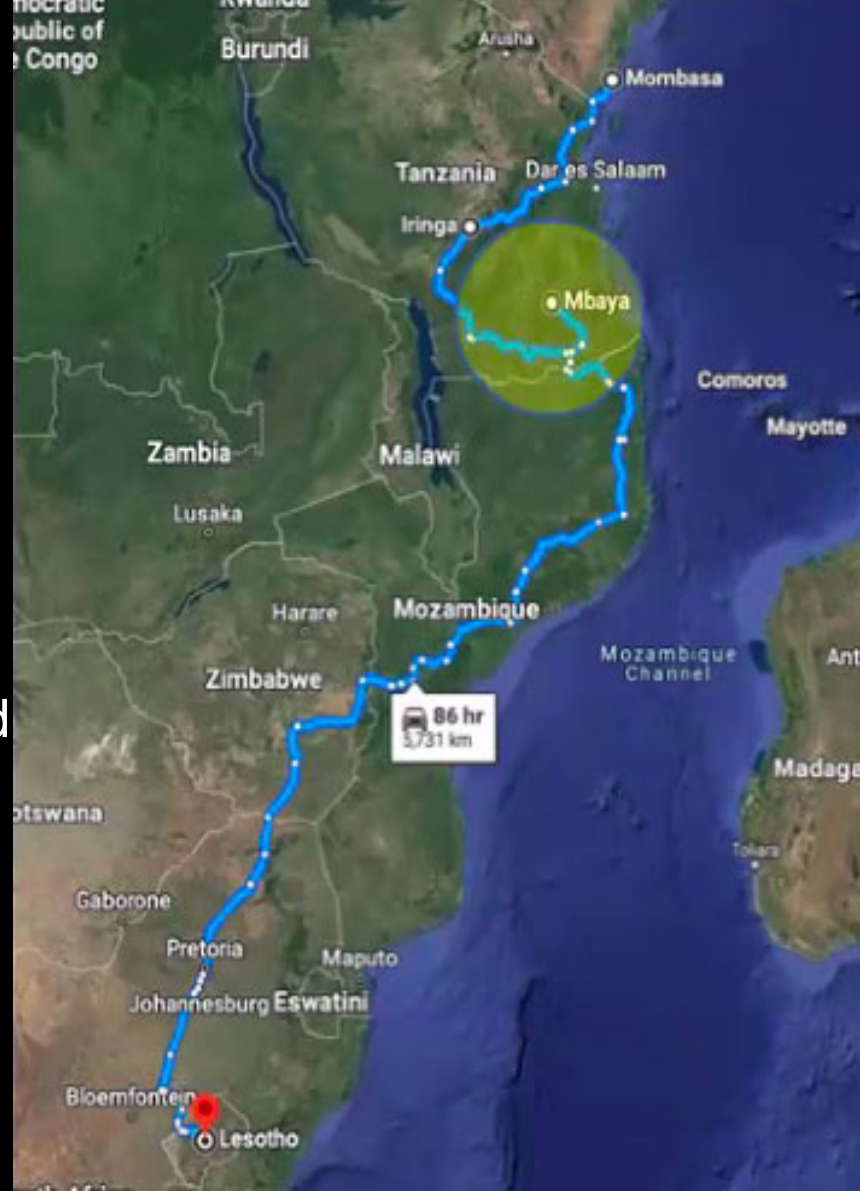
Fred and Beth Laws

When the goals of the Ten Year Crusade were announced, they volunteered to go to Basutoland (now Lesotho), built a little house on the trailer, and drove 4,000 km to Basutoland, arriving on 13 October 1953.



Fred and Beth Laws

Driving to
Basutoland



Fred and
Beth Laws
with car
and trailer



Fred and Beth Laws

Report on pioneers dispersing from Nairobi 1953

- 2 -

application two books of Baha'i administration, and the laws and regulations of the Baha'i Spiritual Assemblies.

This bit of news, although, I suppose is not full recognition of the Baha'i Faith as such, it nevertheless is extremely welcome in these very very troubled day, when everyone is suspected and all organizations frowned upon.

Lately, the situation in Nairobi has become worse and the army had to come in and give a helping hand to the police. The latest form of protest decided upon by the africans and unanimously carried are the boycotting of buses, the stopping of smoking and the stopping of drinking beer and light refreshments. You cannot find one single african contravening these decisions and you will be surprised of the effect. The bus company had to suspend several lines, the East African Brewery has suffered so much that its shares fell from 52 shillings to 25/-. Its is feared that pretty soon there may be a general strike of all africans!!!!

Another very lovely news is a beautiful letter from our beloved Guardian, addressed to the Secretary of the LIA of Nairobi. This letter is full of love and bounty from the Guardian

As for the other pioneers, of course our first and the leader of the group, Mr. Fred Schechter is now in French Somaliland, Mr. and Mr Laws have left by car last saturday for BASUTOLAND. I have just recieved a letter form them from Mbeya just before they crossed the frontier from Tanganyka to Northern Rhodesia. Miss Claire Gung left Mombasa by sea for Beira and from there by Rail to Southern Rhodesia. Last I heard from her was yesterday, she was in Dar-es-Salaam and met the friends there. Ted Cardell is now on the Atlantic Ocean, heading for Cape-town and from there by Rail to Windhoek, the Capital of South-West Africa.

As for the internal extension work, when the declaration signed by Moody Averi, brother of the Nyankia African member of the Legislative Council, is confirmed by the Africa Committee, we shall have four centers besides Nairobi, in other words 5 centers in Kenya. Next week, two of the Nairobi Baha'is, technical assistants at the railways administration, will after passing the examination of the administration's technical college be transferred to outside Nairobi at one of the railway stations, thus adding two new centers to the present number.

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and from

there to Dekkar, Rio de Oro, Spanish Sahara and Asmara.

Every one here sends you his love. Tired Cannot write

Love, Hov

Knights of
Bahá'u'lláh
from
Nairobi
1953



Fred and Beth Laws

Teaching the Faith was not easy, since whites and blacks could not mix under apartheid. After nine months accomplishing little, they drove down a dirt road with their house trailer and stopped in front of the tree-shaded home of Mary and Chadwich Mohapi.



Lesotho

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Chadwich Mohapi

“One day in the afternoon... my wife and I were sitting outside in the sun when we saw a strange car... people of European descent came from the car. We then sent our first son, Selai, to find out where they came from: he came to us with them... they asked us if they could be permitted to have the use of one wall over which they could put a canvas for the day (for shelter).”



Lesotho

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Chadwich Mohapi

“We asked them who they were, where they had come from... we wanted to know their intentions. They told us they had come from a far-off land, that they were looking for people to whom they could teach the Word of God. Clowningly, I said ‘You can come and live with us in this rondoval (round hut) over here!’ They said they would be grateful to do that.”



Rondoal in Lesotho

Chadwich Mohapi

“We asked them, ‘How are you going to live with black people? Don’t you know that we do not love white people? We have never stayed with white people before.’ They said that did not matter to them, they could live with us. I said to my wife, ‘Let us try this out and see whether these people are genuine... we were puzzled because we had been joking and they had, in innocence, taken us seriously. We were now surprised and also frightened.’”



Lesotho

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Chadwich Mohapi

“That very evening they invited us to dinner in the rondoval with them. We were afraid of going in there with them, but we saw what beautiful faces they had... they served us with meals instead of us serving them with meals. The following morning they invited us for breakfast and through the great love they showed they made friends with our young children by the end of the second day.”



Lesotho

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Chadwich Mohapi

“We still asked ourselves what these Europeans wanted living amongst us. The eve of the third day they invited us not for a meal but for prayers. We were greatly surprised. It appeared to us that we had come by a bone that had a very nice marrow in it. Then they stayed and they became our real friends. We gave them new names – the man, Lerato (Love), and the lady, Malerato (Mother of Love).”

(quoted in Earl Redman. 2017. *The Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*. Oxford: George Ronald, pp. 114-115)

Teaching the Bahá'í Faith

Only after making friends did the Laws begin to teach the Faith. When Mary and Chadwich fell ill, the Laws took the children into the rondoal and cared for the parents.

Other Africans saw black people and white people living together and the Mohapi home became a centre from which the Faith spread to other parts of the country. By April 1955, there were about 70 Bahá'ís in Basutoland and the Laws were adopted as honorary Basutos. After two and a half years the Laws pioneered to other parts of Africa.

Shoghi Effendi on teaching in Africa

... the whole object of the pioneers in going forth to Africa, is to teach the coloured people, and not the white people. This does not mean that they must refuse to teach the white people, which would be a foolish attitude. It does, however, mean that they should constantly bear in mind that it is to the native African that they are now carrying the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, in his own country, and not to people from abroad who have migrated there permanently or temporarily and are a minority, and many of them, judging by their acts, a very unsavoury minority.

Shoghi Effendi on teaching in Africa

Africa is truly awakening and finding herself, and she undoubtedly has a great message to give, and a great contribution to make to the advancement of world civilization. To the degree to which her peoples accept Bahá'u'lláh, will they be blessed, strengthened and protected.

(From a letter dated 4 June 1954 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles Africa Committee)



Lesotho