



Ameinu is Hebrew for our people. We are committed to peace, social justice and the centrality of Israel for the Jewish People.

From the President: Kenneth Bob



Dear Friends:

Our newsletters are put together without a specific theme; instead we try to provide an update to our members on activities and projects throughout the organization. However, as I reviewed this issue, an unplanned common thread emerged.

The topic of young adults jumps out from the pages in several places. Here on page 1, the articles by Judy Gelman and Brad Rothschild chronicle the improbable explosion of the social justice protests in Israel. Sparked by a Facebook message by 25 year-old Daphne Leef, the protests spread to tent cities from the north to the south, and resulted in massive demonstrations. The societal economic issues raised by these protests really hit Ameinu's sweet spot and we have decided to actively financially support these inspiring activists. If you have not yet had an opportunity to contribute to the Ameinu Social Justice continued "From the President" page 4

Demanding Social Justice: A View From the Ground

By Brad Rothschild

On Saturday night, September 3, 2011, I stood with my almost 11 year old son and 300,000 Israelis in Kikar Hamedina demanding social justice. Counting the 150,000 others demonstrating in other cities and towns around Israel that night, this was the largest rally in the country's history, with nearly six percent of the population having taken to the streets. To put it in perspective, this would be the equivalent of 19 million Americans demonstrating all at once.

The summer of 2011 will be remembered as the time when Israelis of all ages and political stripes decided that they had had enough. Enough of rising prices, enough of privatization that has benefitted the few at the expense of the many and enough of the feeling that they were being ignored and abused by their elected officials.

Seven weeks before, a young woman from Tel Aviv named Daphne Leef failed to find affordable housing. Feeling that she had no other options, she pitched a tent on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv and started a Facebook page inviting people to join her protest. Then a funny thing happened: first hundreds, then thousands of people began to join her. Rothschild Boulevard rapidly transformed into a large protest community, lined by tents from end to end. Protest marches were held on Saturday nights, and in early August, 300,000 people demonstrated around the country.

It was into this reality that I arrived in Israel on our annual family vacation in mid-August. Immediately upon landing, we went to Rothschild Boulevard to see it for ourselves. The streets were charged with electricity; tents were set up by a variety of organizations: Dror Israel, Hashomer Hatzair, Noar Ha'oved V'Halomed, the Reform Movement, Greens, communists, doctors, Arab-Israeli coexistence groups, demobilized soldiers, students, Chabad (yes, Chabad), animal rights groups, fathers who feel



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More than Cottage Cheese: Some Background on the Tent City Protests

By Judith Gelman

The June meetings of the Vaad Hapoel of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and the General Assembly of the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) presented a combination of deep concern about the upcoming UN vote and about international de-legitimization efforts, contrasted with extreme bullishness on the Israeli economy. A full half-day of the JAFI meetings was devoted to presenting the idea that Israel could leapfrog its way from ranking #38 to being one of the world's top 15 nations in quality of life, an economic measure based primarily on incomes, cost of living, health care, and other objective measures. Delegates to these conferences were expected to come home with great optimism about Israel's internal affairs; the only threats on the horizon were depicted as the hostile climate of the outside world.

Outside the meeting rooms, the first murmurs of protest had begun with the cottage cheese boycott, which followed the 30 percent rise in the price of this staple.

Three weeks later, the tent city protests were in full swing. The largest and most impressive was on Rothschild Blvd. Walking along the strip of 800 tents, one could get a sense of the history of these protests. At the beginning of the tents, the focus was the high cost of rent. Further along, other economic issues were included—the cost of daycare being among the most prominent. As the protest grew, the more recent arrivals often displayed signs about other social issues. By the end of the sea of tents, the signs

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Ameinu Mission 2011: 6 days in 10 pictures



The first stop on the Mission trip, the Museum at the Seam, provided a historic overview of the initial division of Jerusalem into East and West between 1948 and 1967.



Sara Benninga briefs the Ameinu Mission on Sheikh Jarrah, where Arab families have been evicted from their homes after the Supreme Court of Israel ruled that these homes belonged to Jews before the city was divided in 1948.



The Mission views East Jerusalem.



Ha'aretz columnist Bradley Burston addresses the Mission at dinner at Abu Gosh.



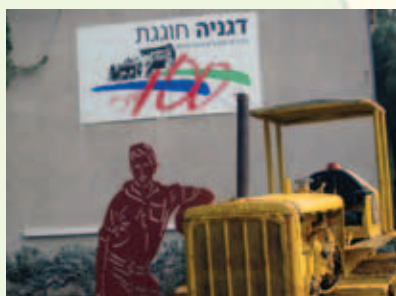
This urban kibbutz in Migdal Ha'emek is one of 160 such kibbutzim. Its members work and live together to establish an alternative to the land-based kibbutz, thus assuring a continuation of kibbutz values in a changing world.



Habonim Dror Shaliach Julian Resnick at the memorial dedicated to the 73 IDF soldiers killed in a helicopter crash during the second Lebanese war.



The Mission went to A Better Place where Israel is building electric cars that will be used around the world.



Mission participants visited Kibbutz Degania as part of a celebration of 100 years of the Kibbutz movement.



The closing celebration dinner at Kibbutz Gezer in honor of Habonim Dror's 75th anniversary.

Where There's a Will, There's a Legacy



Five years ago, as my wife Elaine and I were preparing to go to Israel for the World Zionist Congress, we realized that our wills were embarrassingly out of date. We had our lawyer draw up new ones.

In the process of updating critical elements, such as the designation of the executors of our estate once we're gone, we also included a provision to bequeath a significant amount of money to Ameinu. The act itself was easy to do once we made the decision. Making the decision was a conversation that helped us determine what as well as who was important to us. While Ameinu is our most substantial gift, we also included other organizations that are close to our hearts at the same time.

Of course we made provisions for our son, but beyond that, we also made a conscious decision to ensure that the ideals and values that helped guide our lives would prosper. Progressive Zionism has always been a core value for both of us and we hope that by bequeathing a portion of our estate to Ameinu, the good work we did with and for Ameinu will continue.

Two years later I learned that I was following in the footsteps of a beloved friend and dedicated colleague, Ben Cohen, who had also chosen to include Ameinu in his will and thus launched the Ameinu Legacy Circle. Ben and I have worked together for several decades in support of the Zionist movement both in and outside of Ameinu. I was very happy to join Ben as a charter member in the Ameinu Legacy Circle and I invite you to join us as well.

Surely Ben and I are not the only active members of Ameinu who have provided for the future of the movement through our wills—or who would be ready to do so now. If you have already had the discussion and have included a gift to Ameinu in your will, please fill out the Legacy Circle form and send it into the National Office so that Ben and I can welcome you to the Ameinu Legacy Circle.

To everyone else who is reading this article, please join us at this time to provide for the continuation and expansion of Ameinu's unique role here in the United States and in Israel. Ameinu is the leading progressive Zionist membership organization in the United States and as such its voice is heard where other progressive voices aren't. If the goals of Ameinu are a legacy that you would like to share please bequeath a gift to Ameinu. I think you will find, like I did, that leaving a portion of your estate to an organization that advocates for the ideals that you have lived by creates a lesson of love. By sharing the importance of that gift with your children, the gift grows.

Please don't miss this opportunity to leave one final lesson. Join the Ameinu Legacy Circle today.

It's really quite simple. Fill out the enclosed form; you have complete control of how much and how you want to bequeath. Send the form to the office and then simply tell your lawyer or whomever you have designated to prepare your will to include the following sentence in your will:

I hereby give and bequeath to Ameinu (tax ID #23-7301141), a nonprofit charitable organization, organized under the laws of the State of New York, with headquarters at 114 West 26th Street, New York, NY 10001 and its successor organizations forever the sum of _____.

If you would rather not require Ameinu to benefit from your bequest only after the proverbial 120 years, you can contact the national office now about other planned giving vehicles including gifts that will provide you with a guaranteed lifetime income while also supporting Ameinu. Call today to be connected with knowledgeable professionals who can help you determine which vehicle is best for your circumstances, for the movement, for your family and for yourself now rather than later. That will qualify you for membership in the Ameinu Legacy Circle.

Either way, let this be the year in which each of us assures the future of Ameinu!

Daniel Mann
Bethesda, MD



Planting Seeds of Social Justice



Top from the left - George Stevens, Leah Silverberg, Carmi Tint, Hyla Kemeny, Brianna Fowler, Ofir Elmalah (Israeli Madrich) and Yali Lamm
Bottom from the left - Sarah Michaels-Levy (Israeli Madricha), Bria Gray, Niki Egar, Adam Levi, Yonah Meiselman, Zak Greenwald

Adding to an already burgeoning urban kibbutz movement, 12 graduates of Habonim Dror North America are forming a garin (Hebrew for seed), to live in Israel. Having all participated in the 56th Workshop (Habonim Dror’s gap year program), this group has since taken significant jobs in the leadership of HDNA over the last few years, managing the rapid growth of several kinim (chapters) across the country and providing educational and organizational leadership at the Habonim Dror machanot (summer camps). This garin, whose members will begin to settle down in Israel in September, is the largest group of Habonim Dror graduates to move to Israel in decades, twice the size of Garin Alpayim (2000). They will be joining a group of 15 HDNA graduates (and more than 30 from various Habonim countries) already living in urban kvutsoth and kibbutzim.

Asked why they’re moving to Israel, group member Bria Gray, of Silver Spring, Maryland said, “We’ve spent four years of college building and contributing to Habonim Dror because we believe in its mission of Zionism infused with a character of social justice. For us, this was the next step in pursuing that aim.” The group has rented a large house in the Hadar neighborhood of Haifa. There, some will begin working immediately with Habonim Dror programs in Israel, while others will begin ulpan in Haifa. “This is all very exciting,” said Lonny Moses, the Meracez Ma’apilim (Youth Leadership Director) of HDNA. “We’ve been watching the growing social movement in Israel and we’re so proud to see a group of Habonim Dror graduates moving there at this time of significant change.”

From the President (continued from page 1)

Fund, to do so please contact our office.

When the Ameinu Board of Directors developed our new strategic plan two years ago, we outlined several areas of central importance. Among them was to develop meaningful, personal connections for American Jews with Israel, while another was our commitment to social and economic justice in Israel.

On page 7 you can read about how our agreement to take over the Kibbutz Program Center (KPC) in North America helps us fulfill these important objectives. In addition to the traditional Ulpan Kibbutz and Kibbutz Volunteer programs, we offer an array of programs that connect participants to social activists in Israel addressing environmental issues, Arab-Jewish co-existence, problems of poverty, and more.

But I have saved the best example of this sub-conscious theme of the newsletter issue for last. In the first item that I highlighted, we have put our fundraising muscles to work for an important cause in Israel. The KPC enables us to send young people to experience Israel and engage in important volunteer activity. Now the piece de resistance.

In the Jewish community today there is discussion about the relevance of Zionism and the importance of aliyah in that formula. While I am sure I will invite some heated responses, I will share a description I once heard from the great Israeli writer Amos Oz. He talked about a theater and likened the Diaspora to the audience and Israel to the stage. He suggested that just as the Diaspora is vitally important to Israel, there are great, front row seats in a theater where you can feel like you are in the play. He concluded by saying that while you feel “like” you are in the play, only if you live in Israel are you part of the drama.

Regardless of whether you like Oz’s analogy, I think we can all agree that it is important and, frankly, exciting when we can share the news found to the left of this column about the group of Habonim Dror members who recently moved to Israel. They have chosen to become actors at an important time in Israel’s history and we hope their progressive Zionist world view serves them well as they take their place on the stage.

B’vracha,

Kenneth Bob
President

Recent Events



New York

This summer, while on a whirlwind visit to the United States, Avram Mitzna asked to meet with Ameinu.

Born on Kibbutz Dovrat, Mr. Mitzna rose to the rank of Major General in the IDF and saw combat in two wars. He served as the popular Mayor of Haifa for two terms and represented Labor in the Knesset.



Since serving as Mayor of Yerucham, a struggling development town in the Negev, Mr. Mitzna, has become one of the leading figures in the newly energized Labor Party and was in a four-way race for Party Chairman.

As an outspoken leader of the opposition with a strong voice for a just peace and active negotiations with the Palestinians, Mr. Mitzna attracted about 50 people to the parlor meeting on the Upper West Side of New York City.

Mr. Mitzna shared his vision for Israel and the Labor Party and took questions from the spirited crowd who were quite interested in what the future would hold for both the party and the country.



Los Angeles

This year Los Angeles celebrated the 75th anniversary of Habonim-Dror with a Gala event honoring alumni Janet Farber, Rabbi Ronnie Cohen, and Seth Brysk.



Cultural programs this year included a tour of the Road to Freedom Exhibit at the Skirball Cultural Center and a presentation from Islamic scholar Reuven Firestone on the Arab Spring Revolutions.

Additionally, Ameinu Western Frontier hosted Stuart Schoffman, who gave talks on "Israelis, Palestinians, and the Muslim World: From Despair to Peaceful Co-existence?" and "Israel, Judaism, and the Jewish World: The Prospects for Pluralism?"

Chicago

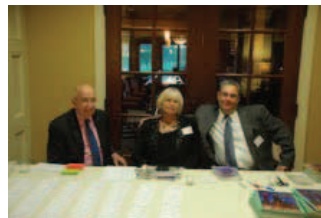
On Saturday evening, October 16, 2010, Midwest Ameinu sponsored a Gala Celebration of 75 years of Habonim-Dror. Held at the Evanston Golf Club in Skokie, the Gala provided an opportunity for Habonim alumni of varying ages from several cities to meet, greet, and reminisce.

More than a reunion, the evening honored three people whose leadership has contributed greatly to the development of Habonim and its Midwest camps, Rabbi Herbert Bronstein, Josh Orenstein, and Mira Sussman.

The Mondays with Ameinu lecture series, in memory of Daniel Greenberg, began its season with Anette Isaacs, who spoke on "Jewish Life and Remembrance in Berlin and Germany 65 Years After the War." The series continued with Aaron B. Cohen, whose talk focused on "the complex aspects of the roles played by individual Israelis--Jews, Muslims, Druze, and Christians, in the Jewish state they all call home."



Detroit



In addition to the Midwest Ameinu Gala, which was a highlight of the year for both Chicago and Detroit, Ameinu Detroit and several other Jewish organizations joined the local Jewish Community Relations Council in cosponsoring a public program, "Election 2010", held October 24 at Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills. The event gave voters an opportunity to hear from four candidates vying to represent the U.S. Ninth District, one of the more contentious races in the metro Detroit area.

Ameinu Detroit hosts regular social events with topics of discussion ranging from Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement to recent books. One new venture is Cafe Israel, co-sponsored with the American Zionist Movement. Cafe Israel hosts speakers in an attempt to "change the conversation about Israel and Zionism." Guests so far have included Israeli actor Ohad Knoller, social activist Carnit Arbel, and Israeli Air Force pilot Gilad Peled, who works with a mixed population of Arabs and Jews, migrant workers, new immigrants and old-timers, extensive poverty side by side with prosperity.



Social Justice (continued from page 1)

they are being unfairly kept from their children, mothers of children with special needs, and others. People milled around, some sat at their tent sites singing and playing guitar, others talked and smoked cigarettes. There were speakers and lecturers, discussions, films and dance. It was truly a sight to behold. To me, it felt like everyone who had any kind of grievance that had been pushed aside had finally come out and said, "Enough."

But there was something missing, as far as I was concerned. This movement took great pains to define itself as a social protest, not a political one. The traditional ideological battles of right and left as it relates to Israel's continued occupation of the West Bank were downplayed, much to the dismay of many on the left. This strategy was designed to ensure that the protests attract as wide a following as possible. While this makes sense from a sheer numbers perspective, I found it hard to talk about social justice without including the occupation as a subject for discussion. Israel is in desperate need of a change in national priorities. So much of the state's annual budget is allocated to the settlement enterprise, which truly benefits a small minority over the vast majority of the population; it is impossible to change the status quo without confronting this fact.



In late August, Palestinian terrorists attacked Israeli civilians near Eilat, and Israel retaliated by striking targets in Gaza. To perpetuate the cycle of violence, Palestinian rejectionists fired rockets and mortars at southern Israel and the Israeli government contemplated its next moves. Against this backdrop, many assumed that the usual Saturday night protests would be postponed because of the "situation." But it was decided that the protests would go on as planned, albeit in silence to commemorate those who lost their lives. Indeed, about 4,000 demonstrators marched in Tel Aviv the following Saturday, but the silence was broken by chants of, "In Israel and in the territories, we demand social justice," and "Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies." Some carried signs that read: "Mr. Prime Minister, you are responsible for welfare, education, and health, not only for security."

All of this was a prelude to the "March of the Million" that was to be held around the country on September 3. All of the efforts were being focused on this event as the organizers hoped to hold the largest demonstration in Israeli history. Summer was winding down, the school year had just begun and people were returning to their normal lives. I began wondering if this march would be the last act in a grand drama that was full of sound and fury but whose end, I feared, would signify nothing. As the day of the march grew closer and I spoke with more people, I regained some hope that this movement will outlast the end of the summer march. A man in his sixties told me that this was the beginning and not the end and that he was jealous of this generation because they succeeded in doing something that his couldn't. Another friend told me that the movement has to succeed because it was the last best hope for his beloved country.



As I stood in the square holding my son's hand and listened to the speeches that night in Tel Aviv, I imagined the Israel that 450,000 Israelis imagined as well. An Israel that is just and fair, an Israel that is free from hatred and fear, and an Israel, as one speaker said, that people are willing to die for but in which people want to live. For that night, it wasn't a naive fantasy. For that night it seemed entirely possible.

Tent City (continued from page 1)

included calls for animal rights, custody rights for divorced fathers, and compensation for art therapists.

But the protests consisted of more than young people sleeping in tents. There were also the impressive mass marches. The August 20th "Silent March" brought 30,000 people down Rothschild Blvd. to the beach where they broke into dozens and dozens of small (20-30 person) discussion circles to talk about how their personal economic situation is part of a larger economic picture. "Blue Shirts" (graduates of the Zionist youth movements) led many of these groups. Education about actions and alternatives, not slogans or music, was the focus of this march.



The tents are just the most visible sign of an awakening felt all over Israel that belies the optimism of the WZO and JAFI meetings. Israelis are coming together to send a message that something must be done to make it possible for the average hardworking Israeli to enjoy an acceptable quality of life. Only three weeks before, the government didn't seem to have a clue people felt that way.



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Kibbutz Program Center – Growing and Thriving

By Lauren Carel

Ameinu is now reaching the end of its first year as the program coordinator for the Kibbutz Program Center, one of the premier providers of short and long term Israel trips, both on and off the kibbutz. We currently send young adults to Israel on more than eight varied and unique programs.

Our most popular program, [Kibbutz Ulpan](#), focuses on Hebrew language education while living in the unique society that is the kibbutz. To learn more about Kibbutz Ulpan, we invite you to read through the blog post of recent KPC alum and Alumni Ambassador, Daniel Dolgicer. We also have numerous opportunities for [volunteers](#), [students](#), and others to take part in [environmental apprenticeships](#), [peace and co-existence projects](#), and [social activism](#) within Israel. For those who want a more personalized Israel experience, we have iTrack which lets participants create, build, and implement a unique and custom-made program.

In line with our focus on social activism and tikkun olam, we are thrilled to announce that we have two new 10-month service-learning programs in development that are set to begin in September of 2012. They will offer participants the opportunity to immerse themselves in communities in Israel's social and geographic periphery. These programs serve as a platform for developing Jewish leaders who have an understanding of social change, local community responsibility, and global Jewish peoplehood.

Our ability to offer these programs has been most rewarding and is a proud affirmation to the mission of Ameinu. We look forward to another successful year!



Kickin' it on the Kibbutz

By Daniel Dolgicer

As an Israeli-American, I've always desired to work on a kibbutz. It's something of a rite of passage for young Jews to live and work on one. Jerry Seinfeld, Sacha Baron Cohen, and Joe Lieberman are among the Jews who have volunteered on kibbutzim. Living on Ma'agan Michael, one of the largest and most prosperous kibbutzim in Israel, offers me a chance to better connect with my identity and ideology and participate first-hand in a movement that has been so formative to Israel's development.

Of course, living with one hundred other young people from around the world is a good time, too, and one of the reasons for my trip. I live with two roommates, both of whom are American. Groups of friends socialize every night, whether it be in the cafeteria (hadar ochel), or in the ulpan lounge (mo'adon), or in one another's rooms. On Thursday and Friday nights, it's a ritual to frequent the bar conveniently located on the kibbutz grounds. I enjoy the camaraderie of the group and the ease with which bonds are forged when people live in close quarters and spend their days with one another. I also appreciate meeting like-minded people from around the world; many new immigrants on the kibbutz are from Mexico, Venezuela, Germany, Switzerland, and a handful of other countries.

Yet we work hard, as well. In accordance with the communal ethos of the kibbutz movement, our work is dependent on the needs of the kibbutz at that particular time. The plastics factory is the economic juggernaut of the operation and most of the ulpanistim work there. I started working in the garden, but was quickly moved to kitchen duty. Since then I've been a regular on the "ramp," where most of my work involves unloading heavy packages, placing them on large, eight-wheeled carts, and shelving them in enormous freezers. Occasionally, I slice zucchini in bulk—all to the music on Galgalatz, Israel's most popular, army-operated radio station.

This hearty, physical work is in keeping with the selfless ideals with which kibbutznikim have traditionally lived, but the kibbutz movement is in flux as it moves into the 21st century. Some property is private and some people who live on the kibbutz work off of it. Yet I am still able to feel the roots of the kibbutz in daily life here.

At this point in my life, kibbutz is a fun place on which to live a young, active, socially robust lifestyle. It is a welcome respite from the hustle and bustle of New York City and a bit of time away from the convergence of high finance and big law. Work is hard, but not overly complicated, and free time is in abundance. Given my businessman's disposition, I don't see myself settling on a kibbutz permanently. However, I am certainly thrilled to have this experience in my personal history—something I am only able to do up to a certain age—and do what so many Zionists and Jews have done before me.

Daniel Dolgicer is an Israeli-American living in New York City. He is a real estate salesperson as well as a freelance writer and editor. He has written a number of pieces on contemporary Israeli culture and the American-Jewish narrative. He can be reached at DGDolgicer@gmail.com.



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Olameinu Fall 2011



Ameinu welcomes you!

The American Jewish community is changing and Ameinu is here to meet this challenge, providing a variety of programs and advocacy activities. We are proud to have college students, baby boomers, and veteran activists as members and supporters. Whether you are reaching out to the American Jewish community for the first time, or you are already engaged but searching for a new voice, Ameinu welcomes you!

Ameinu provides community. We have a national infrastructure where like-minded people gather. We offer a place—in person and online—for our members to discuss issues, hear speakers, celebrate life, and actively engage in American and Israeli causes. If you want to join the community, Ameinu welcomes you!

Ameinu provides liberal Jews with a voice in the American Jewish community. Ameinu works for a more democratic and inclusive Jewish community. Ameinu guarantees that a liberal voice and progressive values have a seat at the table within the organized Jewish community. If that voice echoes yours, Ameinu welcomes you!

Ameinu connects liberal American Jews with a progressive Israel. Our relationship with Israeli grassroots activists allows our members in the United States to impact Israeli issues. We have had a significant effect on poverty, women's rights, labor struggles, religious pluralism, Israeli Arab rights, and new forms of cooperative living. Ameinu links the American Jewish community with Israel through missions to Israel, speaking tours by Israelis, and national and international conference calls. If this sounds like something you are interested in, then Ameinu welcomes you!

Ameinu's Mission

Ameinu, Hebrew for "Our People", is a national, multi-generational community of progressive American Jews. Recognizing the unbreakable bond between the Jewish people and Israel, as well as the commitment to make our own country better, we mobilize American Jews who seek opportunities to foster social and economic justice both in Israel and the United States. As Zionists, we understand that a secure peace between Israel and its neighbors is essential to the survival of a democratic Jewish state. With this in mind, we build support within the American Jewish community for a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict.