



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



Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Ameinu newsletter, *Olameinu*. The name means "our world" in Hebrew and we hope to use this venue to share information on our local and national activity with our members and supporters.

In reviewing the content in this issue, I am struck by the broad range of our ongoing educational, advocacy and charitable activity. Highlights include our demonstration in Annapolis in support of the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, our contribution for a library in a community center in a Negev Bedouin village and our campaign against inhumane labor practices by the leading kosher meat manufacturer in this country.

You will also find items which represent our response to recent studies regarding the drop in identification with Israel and Jewish identity among the younger generation. Ameinu has programmatic initiatives to address this challenge, including support for Habonim Dror, the Zionist youth movement, and the Union of Progressive Zionists campus network, as well as our Israel mission specifically for people in the 27-40 age range.

If you are not already involved with Ameinu activity on a local or national level, I invite you to join our Ameinu Activist Network (see page 2 for details). As a membership organization, Ameinu's strength lies with grassroots activists like you.

Ameinu Takes on Agriprocessors

by Brad Rothschild

Ameinu's commitment to social and economic justice has found expression in its recent actions in response to firsthand accounts of mistreatment of workers at the Agriprocessors kosher meat facility in Postville, Iowa.

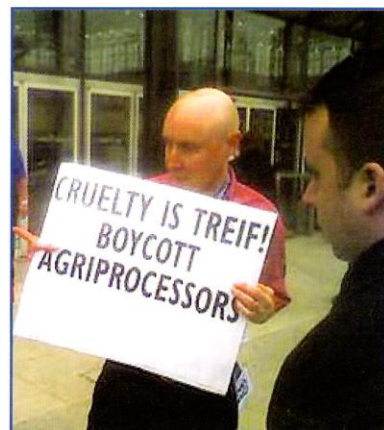
Agriprocessors is the largest kosher slaughterhouse in the US, claiming to provide sixty percent of the beef and forty percent of the chicken to the domestic kosher market. In May 2008, federal agents arrested nearly 400 Agriprocessors employees—about two-thirds of all employees at the plant—charging them, among other infractions, with immigration violations and identity theft.

At the May Ameinu board meeting, Avram Lyon, an Ameinu board member and a consultant for the meatpacking union United Food and Commercial Workers,

presented a shocking eyewitness account of the events in Postville. Lyon described the abuses that the company has inflicted on its employees—the dangerous work environment, the sexual harassment, and the hiring of underage workers. He also told of the government's harsh response—the detainment of the immigrant workers without thought for the families left behind with no means of support, and the intended deportation of the workers following the completion of their prison sentences.

Following Lyon's testimony, the organization took action. On June 16, 2008, Ameinu issued a statement calling on its members and on all Jewish organizations to refrain from buying any of the Agriprocessors brands of kosher meat. In the statement, Kenneth Bob, Ameinu President said that "It's unfathomable that a company devoted to selling glatt kosher meat can be so inhumane to the people working for it. The entire Jewish community should stand up and say, 'enough.' Mistreatment of employees goes against our heritage, our religion, and our conscience." Early response to the call to action has been positive, and the statement has been picked up by the Jewish press in the US and Israel.

Also in June, Congregation Ansche Chesed on New York's Upper West Side hosted a talk by Avi Lyon entitled, "When is Kosher Meat Treif? A First-hand Account of the Agriprocessors Meat Packing Story." A rapt audience listened as Lyon recounted his experience. Lyon rhetorically asked the crowd, "How can this be kosher?" The Q & A session that followed was deeply impassioned, with audience members wondering why the bodies that certify kashrut have not revoked their hechsher from Agriprocessors. Ameinu is wondering the same and hopes that the Jewish community will stand together to demand that Agriprocessors change its ways.



Habonim Dror North America in the Summer and Beyond! Gil Browdy – Mazkir Tnuva

Habonim-Dror is ready for an exciting summer! Our seven summer camps across North America will be providing over 2,000 campers the very best in Jewish camping.

Our summer camp in Israel, MBI, is set to leave, with 135 excited participants eager to learn about Israel and the movement, while creating lasting friendships with movement people from across North America! And when the summer ends, Workshop 58 will set sail (metaphorically – we fly now) with 35 movement leaders heading to Kibbutz Ein Dor for their year-long leadership training program.

September will also see a new national leadership of the movement as Jamie, Kenan, Michael and I step aside for Shawn Guttman as Mazkir Tnuva (National Director), Itamar Landau as Merakez Ma'apilim (Leadership Development Director), Shani Bob as Merakezet Tochnot (Israel Programs Director), and Yelena Adelman as Gizbarit (Financial Director). We are very excited about their starting in their positions, not only because we are so very tired, but also because we have the utmost confidence in them.

Personally I am excited to see them ensconced in their new positions, for I will be making aliyah and living in a kvutza in Tel Aviv while continuing my work with the movement in Israel.

The movement is doing well! We continue to thrive, with healthy numbers and exciting local activities; the movement leadership continues to grow and strengthen as Workshop improves as a program, and young Jews across North America are becoming more Labor Zionist all the time!

Like What You See in the Newsletter? You, Too, Can Become An Ameinu Activist

Ameinu is a grassroots membership organization. It depends on people like you for its strength and support. If you are not already a member, please use the enclosed envelope to join today. If you are already a member, consider using the envelope to send a donation to support one of our ongoing programs. If you haven't done so already, you can also mark the envelope or go to our website www.ameinu.net to register for our free E-newsletter, where you can read weekly reports of ongoing developments and in-depth background pieces.

But supporting Ameinu means more than "sending in the envelope."

Become a member in the Ameinu Activist Network

- Become a local point person for new members of Ameinu
- Receive and distribute copies of our brochure and our booklet, *Progressive Zionist Answers to the Anti-Israel Left*
- Be invited to conference call briefings by Israeli insiders and Members of Knesset

Contact our office (212) 366-1194
or email office@ameinu.net to join the network.



Israel @ 60, Never Too Old To Change! Tammy Shapiro, UPZ Director

You're never too old to change! At least this is what students from across the country will tell Israel this summer, as the culmination of the Union of Progressive Zionists' (UPZ) spring campaign, when student representatives deliver approximately 500 birthday cards to the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C. The birthday cards wish Israel a happy 60th birthday, and call for a freeze to settlement expansion as a necessary step towards another 60 years in peace and security.

The UPZ, of which Ameinu is one of four founding organizations, is a national network of student activists who advocate and educate for peace and social justice in Israel and Palestine. UPZ students planned and implemented this campaign in order to send a message to the Israeli government, and educate their peers on campus about the dangers to Israel's existence caused by settlements and a decades-old occupation.

As part of this campaign, the UPZ hosted Hagit Ofra of Peace Now's Settlement Watch for a 2-week, 11-campus speaking tour this past April. Ms. Ofra spoke about her experience monitoring the illegal growth of settlements in the West Bank and the impact this expansion has on the U.S.-brokered peace negotiations.

The UPZ looks forward to becoming an even louder voice this fall!

Ameinu to Participate in The International Dor Hemshech Conference in Israel

Dor Hemshech, the leadership development initiative of the World Zionist Movement for participants aged 27–40, is holding a four-day conference outside of Tel Aviv, and Ameinu has reserved several places for age-appropriate members. The conference will be held from December 8 through December 12, with Ameinu adding on several days either at the beginning or the end for exclusive programming.

The 120 conference attendees from the United States, South America, Europe and Israel will benefit from unique peer-to-peer meetings with the principals of exciting new start-up companies and not-for-profit agencies, as well as enjoy cultural events and free time. Ameinu delegates will also have a chance to meet with movers and shakers in the Israeli political and social reform arenas.

Deep discounts and subsidies are available, but openings for conference registration are very limited. For further information and to register, please contact the Ameinu office without delay. (212) 366-1194 or email: office@ameinu.net.

New Resource:
*Progressive Zionist
Answers to the Anti-
Israel Left*

GET YOUR COPY NOW!!!

Ameinu's latest publication, *Progressive Zionist Answers to the Anti-Israel Left*, is now available.

The booklet addresses the eight most frequently cited criticisms of Israel by its harshest critics on the left.

The booklet is intended to help those who align themselves with the liberal side of the political spectrum on domestic and international issues to reconcile a commitment to liberalism, equality, and human rights with attachments to ethnic groups and nation-states.

We at Ameinu, as Progressive Zionists, believe that our commitment to the universal values of liberalism and equality can be reconciled, in theory and in practice, with our particularist attachments to the Jewish people and to Zionism.

If you would like a copy of this booklet for yourself, or multiple copies to distribute, we are happy to offer you the following rates:

- 1 – 10 copies at \$2.00 apiece
- 11 – 50 copies at \$1.75 apiece
- 51 or more copies at \$1.50 apiece

These prices include the cost of shipping.

Simply call our office at 212-366-1194 or email office@ameinu.net to place your order.

Book Review:
A Pigeon and a Boy by Meir Shalev
Review written by Fran Assa

If the following quote appeals to you, you'll love *A Pigeon and a Boy*:

And what he saw then, he never saw again after. The children especially going to school, the bluish doves flying down from the roofs to the pavement, and the little loaves covered with flour, thrust out by an unseen hand, touched him.

It's taken from Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, and it is the kind of writing that resonates throughout the new English translation of Meir Shalev's recent work.

The book begins with a flashback to the 1948 War of Independence in which Palmach fighters, trying to aid the besieged Jews of Jerusalem, come under heavy Arab fire. In the midst of the carnage, a homing pigeon is suddenly released and soars aloft, causing astounded soldiers on both sides to pause momentarily in their battle. While the pigeon will have no influence on the course of the battle, it will determine the life course of the protagonist of the story, Yair Mendelsohn.

The pigeon is central both to the plot and form of the novel. From the opening chapter, the story unfolds like a Bach fugue, journeying gracefully back and forth in time as we go from the War of Independence to Yair's internal struggle for independence and his discovery that the key to understanding himself can be found in that battle.

In most of the chapters, Yair addresses his dying or dead mother. Never at ease in either his childhood or his married home, like the emblematic homing pigeon, Yair yearns for a home of his own. Midway through the book he takes steps toward rebuilding his life by building his dream home. In reality it is his girlfriend, the contractor, who does the building.

Shalev's writing, like Tolstoy's, is visceral. We experience the night sky, the cries of jackals, the rustling of wings and leaves, and especially the bird life of Israel. We experience these things much as we would in reading Tanach, its pages filled with references to the landscape and nature, and with naturalistic poetry.

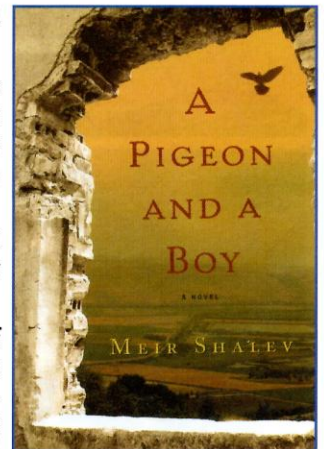
Indeed there is scarcely a page that does not in some way resonate to the Bible. Like the Tanach, the book abounds with motifs of doves, barrenness, and fecundity: Abraham, who made an offering of doves, and of course the dove that appears in the story of Noah, who is seeking a home on which to land his ark. The house that Yair needs for his emotional survival is like the ark, and the description of its construction is as detailed as that of the ark. As in Genesis, Yair and his girlfriend attempt to build their own Gan Eden where they can start anew, naked as Adam and Eve, "...and nobody's going to drive us out of here," she says.

There is also Greek and Christian imagery. Yair is the antithesis of Odysseus, but both of them, like homing pigeons, yearn to return to their real home. In Christian art, the Holy Spirit is shown as a dove that descends amidst beams of light onto Mary in paintings which tell of the annunciation of Jesus' mysterious birth. Yair's birth is the mystery of this story.

There is a magical element to the storytelling, as there is to a great deal of Yiddish and Hebrew literature. After all, before Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck, there was already a talking snake.

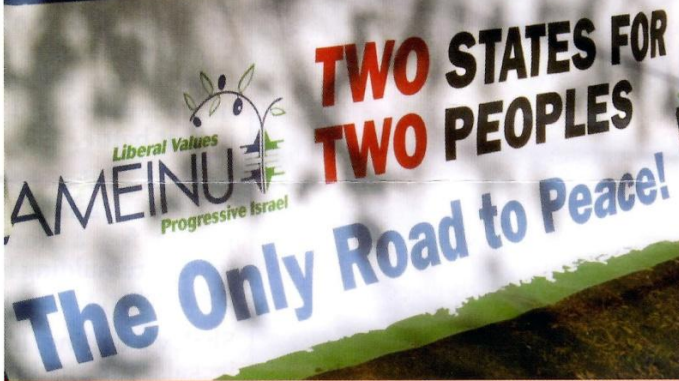
My biggest criticism of this lovely book is that the women have a tendency to sound like prophetesses. This is probably intentional, but after a while it can be a bit grating.

Evan Fallenberg's translation is as literary as the original, rhythmic and richly vivid. *A Pigeon and A Boy* was originally published in 2006 in Hebrew as *Yona V'naar* by Am Oved Publishers Ltd., Tel Aviv and is published in English by Random House, Inc., New York.



Recent Events

Washington, DC



Ameinu greeted the Annapolis Peace Summit with speeches and song in support of the initiative. Our leadership in the organization of the only pro-Israel, pro-peace rally in support of negotiations was recognized publicly by all those who joined us at the rally.



A private meeting with MK Colette Avital in the days leading up to the Annapolis Summit gave a group of Ameinu activists a chance to learn about the ongoing efforts behind the peace process.

A brunch with Hagit Ofan (in red), the Director of Settlement Watch. Hagit's expert testimony about the settlements, outposts, checkpoints, roadblocks and the security barrier provided nuanced understanding of some of the challenges blocking the road to peace.



Detroit



Sara and Bernie Schiff were presented with an award by Michigan State Senator Gilda Jacobs (r) at the Detroit Ameinu Awards Luncheon. Harriet Gelfond (not pictured) was also honored. The keynote speaker was Ameinu President Kenneth Bob.



Ameinu Detroit co-sponsored a multimedia presentation on Kibbutz in the 21st century by Micah Balf, a member of Kibbutz Maagan Michael.

Los Angeles



Ameinu Los Angeles hosted a select group representing the progressive Jewish community at an intimate meeting with Member of Knesset Ophir Pines-Paz of the Labor Party.



The Annual Awards Dinner on January 29 was chaired by Ettie Taft (l), who presented the Ameinu Tzedek Award to Carol Koransky, the Executive Director of the Valley Alliance of the Jewish Federation. Zev Yaraslovsky (r), representing the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, presented Norm Kane, an Ameinu board member and President of the Habonim Dror Camp Gilboa Corp., with a special award for his support.



March 9 Spring Seminar: Ameinu co-hosted, with the Progressive Jewish Alliance, an all-day seminar with J.J. Goldberg of the *Forward* newspaper.

Chicago



Tammy Shapiro, Director of the Union of Progressive Zionists, spoke to a new Ameinu chapter in development.



Ameinu had a booth at the Chicago Jewish Folk Arts Festival.

New York



(left to right) Kenneth Bob, Matan Vilnai, Rabbi Eric Yoffee
Matan Vilnai, Deputy Defense Minister of Israel, took time out of his schedule while in New York to brief Ameinu leadership, at an event co-sponsored with the Reform Movement. Vilnai's analysis of the situation at hand was incisive and revealing.

Avram Lyon presented an eyewitness account of the Agriprocessors labor scandal to a full house at the Anshe Chesed Synagogue. The event, co-sponsored with Hazon, was part of the Ameinu call to boycott Rubashkin products until safe and legal working conditions are restored in the Agriprocessors plant.



Ameinu Director Hiam Simon (l) with Gavri Bar-Gil

Gavri Bar-Gil, a Secretary General of the Combined Kibbutz Movement, who has written for Ameinu and addressed the Board of Directors in the past, gave a lunch briefing co-sponsored by Ameinu, Hashomer Hatzair, and Meretz USA. In a presentation entitled, "The Kibbutz: Reports of Its Death Are Greatly Exaggerated," he described the state of the Kibbutz Movement in Israel today, including the urban collective efforts.



Ameinu co-sponsored a public session with the Co-Directors of the Israel Palestine Center for Research and Information, Gershon Baskin and Hanna Siniora. The well-attended event allowed a wide audience to hear an accurate description of the situation in Gaza and the West Bank and the prospects for the next steps toward understanding and common ground with Israel.

Ensure Ameinu's Future: Join The Ameinu Legacy Circle



Meet Ben Cohen—Ben is a charter member of the Ameinu Legacy Circle, the recently created society of supporters who have committed a portion of their estates to Ameinu.

Benjamin Cohen entered the world of Ameinu even before there was an Ameinu, and it changed his life forever. At age 13, Ben became a member of the Young Poale Zion Alliance. He was a delegate at their 1935 convention in Buffalo, New

York, when Habonim was created, and immediately became a founding member. Just seven years later, Ben joined other young Labor Zionists at the Hechalutz training farm in Creamridge, New Jersey in preparation for kibbutz life in what was still Palestine. It was at Creamridge that Ben met and married the love of his life, Harriet, with whom he began and raised a family, all of whom live an active Zionist life.

Ben and Harriet made aliyah in 1949, shortly after the creation of the State of Israel, where they lived for over 10 years. Ben has been a dedicated volunteer for Labor Zionism in all its different incarnations his whole life. Whether it was called Poale Zion or the Labor Zionist Organization, whether it was known as Farband or the Labor Zionist Alliance, it didn't matter. Ben gave his all to the movement, serving as a board member and an officer in many of the agencies of the Zionist world. And when the LZA became Ameinu, Ben was there, just as he was back in 1935 in Buffalo, a witness to the change. Ben says that he has watched the Labor Zionist movement develop and change as the needs of the community change. It is because of the movement's ability to always be relevant that Ben has decided to become a charter member of the Ameinu Legacy Circle. He knows that his gift will help to carry on his dedicated service to the Jewish people and progressive Zionism.

Ben is proud to be a charter member of the Ameinu Legacy Circle. He recognizes that making a bequest to Ameinu is an option open to virtually everyone and he invites you to join him. No matter the size of your estate or your age, your generosity will be remembered and honored in your lifetime and your good name and your good deeds will live on.

The essential first step is the creation of a valid will. No one should be without a will. It is the only way of ensuring that the people and causes you hold dear will be supported after you are gone. A will is the foundation of sound estate planning and allows you to decide how and to whom your estate will be distributed.

When your will designates Ameinu as a beneficiary, along with your loved ones, you pass on a legacy that is more than just financial. Listing Ameinu transmits your values along

with your equity. Pass on that which you hold as important and valuable to the generations that follow. Your generosity will be recorded and honored in your lifetime with an elegant certificate of participation.

A properly drafted will is essential. Your will should be prepared with the assistance of an experienced attorney and with the utmost attention to detail. Once written, it should be reviewed and updated periodically to be certain that it continues to reflect your circumstances and concerns.

To remember Ameinu in your will, have your lawyer include the following:

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.

Ameinu will serve the Jewish community for years to come, thanks in large part to the generosity of those who have joined the Ameinu Legacy Circle. Our next issue of this publication will list all these important supporters to properly honor those who are helping to ensure that future.

Join those who enrich the world today and make a difference for tomorrow.

For more information about joining the Legacy Circle, call 212-366-1194 or email office@ameinu.net

The Judi Widetzky Ameinu Young Leadership Fund Daniel Mann—Chair



chair of the World Labor Zionist Movement and also served twice as a shlichah in the United States and as a volunteer leader of several international women's organizations.

Ameinu has established a special fund in memory of Judi Widetzky z"l, who passed away suddenly in June.

As a young child in the early years of the state, Judi came on aliyah with her family from Minneapolis to Moshav Beit Herut. As she reached adulthood she became an active member of a generation of younger political leaders. From 1992 to 1997 she served as co-

The Judi Widetzky Ameinu Young Leadership Fund will be used for young leadership missions to Israel and related activities, which will focus on themes that both Judi and Ameinu share, e.g. religious pluralism, social-democratic values and women's rights.

Tax-deductible contributions may be sent to the national office of Ameinu designated for the Judi Widetzky Fund.

Ameinu Establishes Library in Bedouin Community Educational Activity Center

By Vivian Silver, Executive Director, Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development (NISPED)

Children of all ages in the Bedouin villages of the Negev lack basic provisions for play and recreation – both within their homes and in the community. In response to these needs, NISPED initiated the *Community Educational Activity Center Program*, establishing centers in two villages, Hashem Zanah and Qasser al Sir. Ameinu's Los Angeles members have joined the effort, raising money to establish a library as part of this center.



Qasser al Sir, with a population of some 3,000, is one of the largest Bedouin villages. Although incorporated into the *Abu Basma Regional Council*, and hence an officially recognized village, its municipal infrastructure is so rudimentary that for all intents and purposes it is not that different from 'unrecognized' villages.



The Center was constructed on land donated by the village, and consists of a well-equipped playground, playing fields, and a building for indoor activities. The program is designed to meet the needs of children of all ages: from a play group for toddlers and their mothers to organized activities and sports for school-aged children. The program is locally staffed, with training

provided by NISPED. A group of high school students from the community is being trained as junior counselors who will conduct after-school activities for the younger schoolchildren.

The Center is located near one of the two schools serving the community. As is the case in most of the schools in the Bedouin community, it has no library—so that in effect, schoolchildren have no contact with the world of books, with the exception of their textbooks.

With the help of the Los Angeles branch of Ameinu, NISPED will establish a lending library of 300-400 books in the *Community Educational Activity Center* in Qasser al Sir. The grand opening of the library will include various community activities encouraging a love of reading and books, such as workshops where participants will write and produce their own books, relating their personal and their community's stories.

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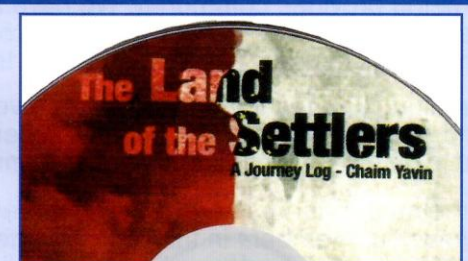
Ameinu Launches Online Educational Video Campaign

Ameinu, working with Chaim Yavin, Israel's foremost newscaster, have distilled his five-hour miniseries, "The Land of the Settlers," into a 90-minute DVD. This new DVD, available for the first time, explores the tensions, emotions, and too-frequent violent conflicts of the Palestinians and Israeli settlers living on the West Bank.

In order to realize the objectives of Zionism – to live as a normal people in a Jewish state guided by the prophetic principles of justice – Israel must reach an agreement with the Palestinians on a two state solution. Such an agreement

must guarantee security for Israel and create the opportunity for economic viability for the Palestinians. The situation on the ground today, the strident voices of extremists on both sides of the divide, keep us from moving toward that goal.

To raise the level of pro-peace, pro-Israel concern in America, Ameinu has extracted four trailers from the DVD and is rolling them out on the internet. It is our hope that these trailers and the DVD they come from will add to the understanding of the need for progress for the future, to protect the lives and the safety of everyone involved.



Visit www.ameinu.net/yavin to see the first of these trailers. You can order your own copy of the full 90 minute DVD right from the website or by calling (212) 366-1194.



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Olameinu Summer 2008



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, then 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, then 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 supports the move toward peace between Israel and her neighbors. Ameinu brings leading Israeli politicians to the United States with whom we share a vision of a secure Israel at peace with its neighbors. Together, we provide analysis and advocacy related to the peace process. If this, too, interests you, then Ameinu welcomes you!