

The JEWISH FRONTIER

SUMMER 2005

Democracy is “Bustin’ Out All Over,” or is it?

“Anxious to legitimize its costly war in Iraq, the Bush administration is claiming credit for the democratic contagion which they view as driven by the successful elections in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

Dr. Heny L. Feingold

Ameinu Conference Call with Admiral Ami Ayalon

“We Israelis see Hamas as a terror organization, which it is. But we must understand that Hamas is not only a terrorist organization.”

Go to Nineveh

“Jewish prophecy, in contrast to pagan prophecy, knows no fatalism. There is no Fate within the whole Jewish concept. There is no faith in blind decrees.”

Hayim Greenberg

*With Kenneth Bob, Daniel Mann, Steven J. Weinberg,
Daniel F. Polish, MJ Rosenberg, Judith Gelman,
Roberta Fahn Schoffman, and Hayim Greenberg*

JEWISH FRONTIER

— Summer 2005 —

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Ameinu Launches

by Kenneth Bob

Two years ago the predecessor of Ameinu, the Labor Zionist Alliance (LZA), began a process of self-evaluation and strategic planning to see how it could better serve the American Jewish community. The result was the establishment of Ameinu, sporting the tagline: "Liberal Values. Progressive Israel." Ameinu can now benefit from a rich 100-year history in America while creating new programs and recruiting new members.

Preceding the organizational launch in March of 2005, committees were established, comprising veterans and new activists, to address a wide variety of issues including outreach, publications, website, marketing, programming, infrastructure and advocacy. With most of the pieces in place, Ameinu was introduced to the broader community.

A series of ads were placed in Jewish and Israeli English language publications to familiarize readers with our new name and identity. At the same time we launched our new website with content that is regularly updated, sometimes several times a day. At this writing, we have recorded over 35,000 visitors to the website, allowing us to touch a wider audience than possible in the past. In addition, we put out a weekly email newsletter that provides news updates and action alerts to interested parties.

Building upon these initial steps to build awareness about Ameinu, we initiated a project that had both an element of outreach and advocacy, commissioning a public opinion survey among American Jews to measure support for the disengagement plan and related topics.

The survey results were not surprising—by a margin of 3-1, those surveyed support the plan and were cautious about other peace-related moves. With Sharon meeting Bush in late April as we released the report, the survey received significant coverage both in America and Israel, including the *New York Daily News*, *Ha'aretz*, *Forward*, *Jerusalem Report*, *Jerusalem Post* (twice), *New York Jewish Week*, *Washington Jewish Week*, and more. To put it simply, Ameinu created the news!

Continuing our advocacy in support of the Gaza disengagement plan, we authored and distributed two

opinion pieces that were printed in the Anglo-Jewish press around North America.

In the area of programmatic outreach, we held a series of activities tailored to serve the broader Jewish community. A few examples include:

1. Ameinu hosted Ami Ayalon, former director of the Shin Bet and co-founder of the People's Voice initiative, on a five-day speaking tour of the United States. Appearances included public events at synagogues, interviews with journalists, presentations to foreign relations councils in New York, Washington DC and San Francisco, meetings with the State Department and Bush administration officials, and a presentation at the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations.
2. Los Angeles Ameinu hosted their Frontiers of Learning Seminar with MK Colette Avital as the guest speaker. We had a good turnout both among our members and people from the community, with Americans for Peace Now joining as a co-sponsor.
3. Detroit Ameinu had a successful two day tour with Daniel Levy and Rafi Dajani of the Geneva Peace Initiative. The tour, which consisted of a public meeting, a dinner event, and a university gathering, was co-sponsored by Brit Tzedek V'Shalom and the Union of Progressive Zionists (UPZ).

A key element of the Ameinu activity has been our financial and organizational support for the Union of Progressive Zionists (UPZ), a new group providing a home on campus for liberal American Jewish students. After a successful inaugural conference in October, the UPZ is now sponsoring speakers and providing resources on over 60 campuses. Together with our partners, Habonim Dror, Hashomer Hatzair, and Meretz USA, we are having a real impact on American campuses.

The net result of all of this early activity is that Ameinu is attracting new members, talented activists, and the attention of people in both America and Israel. Response indicates that there is certainly interest in the American Jewish community for the activity and advocacy that Ameinu has to offer.

KENNETH BOB *is the national president of Ameinu.*



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Jerusalem Program

Zionism, the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, brought about the establishment of the State of Israel, and views a Jewish, Zionist, democratic and secure State of Israel to be the expression of the common responsibility of the Jewish people for its continuity and future.

The foundations of Zionism are:

1. The unity of the Jewish people, its bond to its historic homeland Eretz Yisrael, and the centrality of the State of Israel and Jerusalem, its capital, in the life of the nation.
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exemplary society with a unique moral and spiritual character, marked by mutual respect for the multi-faceted Jewish people, rooted in the vision of the prophets, striving for peace and contributing to the betterment of the world.

4. Ensuring the future and the distinctiveness of the Jewish people by furthering Jewish, Hebrew and Zionist education, fostering spiritual and cultural values and teaching Hebrew as the national language.
5. Nurturing mutual Jewish responsibility, defending the rights of Jews as individuals and as a nation, representing the national Zionist interests of the Jewish people, and struggling against all manifestations of anti-Semitism.
6. Settling the country as an expression of practical Zionism.

The Jewish Frontier Update

The preceding article provides an introduction to and update of the ambitious strategic plan adopted by the Labor Zionist Alliance—now renamed Ameinu—at its national convention in New York last year and now being implemented under the leadership of national president Kenneth Bob and executive director Jamie Levin.

A key emphasis of that effort is the enhancement and expansion of the organization's communications, which is being coordinated by a new communications committee chaired by a national vice president, Martin Taft of Los Angeles. That group has been working for the past year on a range of programs and activities, including the development of a state-of-the-art website, the modernization of the organization's database, and the upgrading of its publications. I chair the latter project, with priority accorded to the renewal of the Jewish Frontier.

This magazine has now entered its seventh decade of service to the movement and the Jewish world and has outlived a half-dozen somewhat comparable journals that have gone out of existence or changed direction significantly. In the 1980s and 1990s Nahum Guttman served as editor and faithfully produced issue after issue while also raising the requisite funds.

DANIEL MANN *is a former president of Ameinu.*

We will always appreciate his dedication and leadership. When he felt that he could no longer fulfill his position, the publication was buffeted by a series of personnel problems and appeared sporadically, although the editions that were published were well received. We have just concluded the demanding search process for a new editor (see below for announcement). In the meantime, Professor Henry L. Feingold, chair of the Editorial Board, has voluntarily put this issue together, with assistance from Ari Chester and Jamie Levin. I have agreed to follow Henry's example in getting out the next issue to coincide with the Jewish New Year. Following the appearance of that edition we will renew the billing of subscribers.

A significant contribution to this process was made by a special Publications Task Force—a truly blue ribbon panel drawn from the Ameinu constituency and representing a range of age cohorts and communities across the country. Among the participants were the founder of a major educational publishing firm, the editor of an important Haggadah, prolific authors of books and essays, the chair of the editorial boards of two separate Jewish journals, practitioners in Jewish communal service and education, and—no less important—editors and publishers of local Ameinu publications and other concerned leaders. It may be

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*We are pleased to announce the appointment of **Mark A. Seal** as the new editor of the Jewish Frontier. Mark Seal brings to this position a unique combination of significant professional experience in the American Jewish community, including the publications of several national agencies, and deep roots in the Labor Zionist movement. He has held key executive positions in the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, HIAS, the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, and the American Jewish Congress. His volunteer responsibilities included service as national treasurer of Americans for Peace Now, and this fall he will become the new chair of the Habonim Dror Foundation. In the 1970s he lived at Kibbutz Gezer, and he and his family now reside in New Jersey.*

We welcome Mark Seal as the most recent member in a distinguished roster of editors, and wish him hatzlachah rabbah—great success—in leading the renewal of this venerable journal.

Democracy is “Bustin’ Out All Over,” or is it?

The Bush administration speaks endlessly of a great breakthrough in its struggle to bring “freedom and democracy” to the oppressed of the world. The congratulatory talk is based on the recent rash of elections and expressions of popular will in massive street rallies in societies that knew little of such heady things. Even Saudi Arabia has now allowed limited local elections, and waving Lebanese flags the people of Beirut have staged massive demonstrations forcing the Syrian military to leave. The Beirut crowds are not as large nor the flags as aesthetically pleasing as those from which they took their cue held earlier in Kiev. They hint that something new is happening. The colored flag waving by beautiful young people looking like jean-clad American teenagers appear to be almost staged by an American casting agent. But are we really witnessing the long-awaited turn-of-the-corner to a brave new world?

Anxious to legitimize its costly war in Iraq, the Bush administration is claiming credit for the democratic contagion which they view as driven by the successful elections in Iraq and Afghanistan. Better than the missing WMDs, originally submitted as the *casus belli*, Washington has hit upon the role of liberator, a more compelling cause for intervention in Iraq. The Bush administration is bringing democracy to the world whether the subject nation likes it or not. It is reminiscent of Theodore Roosevelt’s claim in that when the “ties of civilization” have been loosened, as they were in Santo Domingo in 1904, America has a “mandate of civilization” to intervene. We will teach Latin American nations democracy, he is purported to have proclaimed, “if we have to break every bone in their bodies.”

But “the times they are a’ changing” and political tectonic plates on which the world order sits seem finally to be moving. A window of hope has opened

in the Middle East. After decades of low-level war in which thousands of innocent lives were given up on both sides there is finally some movement. Naturally there is also fear that it is an illusion and the light we see at the end of the tunnel is merely another train coming in our direction.

Placing these events in historic context allows us to tighten our grip on reality, to keep our heads when all around us others seem to be loosing theirs. Never mind that good things are rarely wrought by such demonic means as preemptive war, though the Bush administration claims that its botched costly intervention will bring democracy in its wake. It is not an unfamiliar claim in American history. The idea of “making the world safe for democracy” is one of the oldest themes in American foreign policy which oscillates between realism and idealism. But the “Velvet Revolution” we witnessed in Czechoslovakia and the youthful enthusiasm of Tianament Square as well as Kiev and Beirut does in fact have an American origin. But it is not in the Oval Office, which is in fact in the process of curtailing the democratic process domestically. These images are familiar to us because we saw them in the civil-rights struggle and the anti-war movement which wracked America in the sixties and seventies. It seems as if the sight of a protester placing a flower in the barrel of a national guardsman rifle impacted on the entire world as did lilting songs like “Where have all the young men gone?” Today the likeliest place to hear “We Shall Overcome” may one day be on the streets of Moscow. American songs of protest and hope have become the currency of change the world over. The street crowds sing our songs and use our icons. In Tiananmen Square the students carried a paper machete Statue of Liberty. The contagion started here and was transmitted by the new electronic communications including cable and the internet.

We watch what is happening while hoping against hope that this time it will sustain itself. We tell ourselves that elections are important so much so that the most repressive despots stage them and

DR. HENRY L. FEINGOLD, *distinguished professor of American Jewish history and a former president of Ameinu, is the chair of the Editorial Board of the Jewish Frontier.*

manipulate huge majorities for the reigning leader. The accoutrements of democracy are easily mimicked. Like Stalin and Castro, Iraq's Saddam received huge majorities before he was toppled by U.S. intervention. Syria's Bashar Al Assad, the inheritor of a new dynasty, is shown speaking in a beautifully appointed Parliamentary chamber and Hitler threatened the destruction of European Jewry from the rostrum of the Reichstag. Elections, it seems, are credible only when they come at the end of a process of liberation, not as its first step.

Elections are the most visible part of a going democracy but when the instruments of the state's power, especially its control of the media, are wielded by the party in power, they can be easily manipulated. Syria's Bath party turned out larger street crowds than those who had on the previous day demonstrated for the removal of Syrian troops. A government controlled from Damascus was quickly reinstalled. Unaccompanied by such institutions like a free press, the rule of law, and especially the concept of the empowered citizen, elections have little meaning by themselves. Ideally elections should be the last step in a delicate process which when successfully completed finds the loosing party converting itself into the loyal opposition assured that it will be protected and its rights as a minority safeguarded. In Iraq the Sunni opposition organized around the Baath party, long accustomed to rule rather than to govern, could not accept its loss of power engineered by a hated foreign power and did not willingly convert itself into a loyal opposition despite Shi'a assurances of its representation and a share of power.

The problem is aggravated when the prior history has been one of repression which requires some righting of past wrongs. In Argentina and Chile the search for justice sometimes threatens to become a force for destabilization. The victims of the former regime cry out for vengeance for the loss of their loved ones. They insist, with some truth, that a new order cannot be built without addressing the former injustices. That is the reason why Bishop Tutu's Commission of Reconciliation, which acknowledges the crimes of the former apartheid regime and calls for Christian forgiveness, is being emulated elsewhere. It turns out that "Democracy" is at its heart a process of "civilizing" the polity by transforming the naked struggle for power, which lies not far beneath the

surface of all societies, into something manageable. If those in power press their interest too far they risk destabilizing the system. That is possible even in "old" democracies like our own. One can truly wonder whether the American democracy could survive a drastic weakening of the Social Security support system under the guise of privatization. The American work force is already among the least secure in the industrial world. The stakes of failure are very high.

Finally there is the problem of the unpredictability of the response of a truly free electorate. Popular democracy can be fickle. The democratic process can yield unacceptable, even immoral, results. During the years of the Holocaust the American electorate, acting through a freely elected Congress, was adamant in its refusal to admit Jewish refugees fleeing for their lives. The new democratically-elected Shi'a government in Iraq may call an end to democracy by establishing a theocracy of mullahs. Democracy means uncertainty. There is then ample reason to be skeptical, or at least to withhold judgment regarding the current rash of Democratic "victories" and even more about the motives and thinking of this administration which paradoxically has become a crusader for democracy. In the end we are happy that a bloody dictator has been toppled but we realize the it would have been better had the Iraqi people done the toppling and in the process of doing so built the political musculature requisite for a working democracy. We welcome the election of a more moderate pragmatic political leader to finally create a peaceful Palestinian state for Israel. But we are also aware of how poor are the odds for its thriving after four decades of rule by youth gangs. There are many scores to settle and a normal Palestinian civil society has yet to be built.

The penchant for elections is a welcome sign but caution is indicated especially in the Islamic world where a hatred of Israel can easily deflect the spirit of comity and openness that are everywhere the hallmarks of the democratic system. The Administration's touting of a democratic achievement stemming from a war entered into for other reasons seems unlikely. We are a long way from it. The origins of the current craze for elections stems not from the Iraqi war and occupation but from a less imperial America, the one that continues to wage its own struggle to extend its democratic system at home. 

Ameinu Conference Call with Admiral Ami Ayalon

Admiral (retired) Ami Ayalon toured the United States on behalf of Ameinu this past April. Ayalon spoke to Jewish communal leaders (the Conference of Presidents), think tanks (the Council on Foreign Relations, The Middle East Institute), synagogues (Temple Emanuel, NJ; Adat Shalom, DC; SAJ, NYC) and the media (The Washington Post, C-Span, and the JTA) in his relentless effort to pursue peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The following is a transcript of his conference call with Ameinu leadership on Sunday, April 10, 2005. His bio follows the article.

My parents came to Israel in the 1930s. My father was an illegal immigrant and my mother came as a child to study in Jerusalem. Together, they helped to create a kibbutz in the Jordan Valley. My father retired several years ago at the age of eighty, and has since been a carpenter on the kibbutz.

I joined the Navy and served for thirty-two years. I retired in January 1996, within a few months of the assassination of our prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin. Upon retirement I planned to enter private enterprise, but I soon received a telephone call in the middle of the night from Rabin's successor, Shimon Peres, asking me to become the director of the Israeli Shin Bet (internal security). This was a strange request, since I had refused the offer when it came from Prime Minister Rabin twelve months earlier—an offer which, to this day, I regret turning down.

I assumed the role of director of Shin Bet for four and a half years. The first ten days were very painful days for Israel. Between the last week of February and the first week of March 1996 we lost fifty-five people to terror, with 215 people wounded. It was clear that unless we faced this wave of violence the whole peace process would collapse.

Indeed, after one year we dramatically reduced the level of terror. Between 1998 and the start of the

Intifada in 2000, we brought terror to levels that seem amazing low by today's standards. In the twelve months before the Intifada we lost only one Israeli citizen as a result of terror. This was especially staggering, since the previous year had seen the loss of more than one thousand Israeli citizens to terror.

How were we able to reduce terror? This is an important question because if we understand what happened then we will be able to repeat it. This is something that we have been trying to do with the People's Voice campaign over the past three years. Let me tell you why terror levels fell. It did not happen because of the Israeli Shin-Bet. I was the director most of the time and I can tell you that. Also, Avi Dichter who replaced me is a very good director. From an operational point of view the Israeli Shin-Bet is doing an excellent job.

There are reasons other than the Shin Bet that terror levels fell. In particular, our analysis found three variables that we think contributed to the lower levels of terror. The first was Palestinian public opinion, as it was measured by Dr. Khalil Shikaki. The second factor was the terror policy made by Hamas, and the third factor was the prevention and security policy of the Palestinian Authority. As we understood it then, when support for the peace process was high among the Palestinians, the Palestinian Authority made an effort to prevent terror, while Hamas used terror less often.

Allow me to explain. We Israelis see Hamas as a terror organization, which it is. But we must understand that Hamas is not *only* a terrorist organization. It is also a way of life and a religious movement. Hamas has charities, they have municipal organizations, and they have financial organizations. Hamas will not fight against the will of the Palestinian street. They will not use terror when Palestinians do not approve of terrorism as a legitimate tool. Now,

when Palestinians see progress in the political process (the peace process) they do not approve terror as a legitimate tool. Thus, when the Palestinians felt like they were achieving freedom and an improved economy, they did not approve of Hamas, nor of the use of terror. For this reason the PA could fight against terror and Hamas without being perceived as Israeli collaborators.

I used to meet with the Palestinian security leaders monthly—people like Jibril Rajub, Mohammad Dahlan, Hamin al-Hindi and others. We met to share information and cooperate in fighting terror. They used to tell me, “We are not meeting with you and sharing information because you are paying our salaries.” They used to tell me that they did not view themselves as the South Lebanese Army. They cooperated with me because they understood that at the end of the road they will achieve their freedom as a result of the process which included fighting terror. What we understood then was that the hope of the Palestinian people was the main reason why we were able to reduce the level of violence the way we did it during the late 1990s. This is the main assumption of the People’s Voice campaign. We have to create hope among Palestinians and Israelis alike, because this will create the necessary energy to do what needs to be done. For the Palestinians in particular, this means fighting terror the way they did in the late 1990s.

The People’s Voice is based on two assumptions. The first is to start from the future and go backwards: meaning to describe the future—where we want to go—to create a hope for our vision of the future. Only then can we go backwards and see what needs to be done to reach the future. The second assumption is that we must go back to the people. This means that only the people are able to show the way forward to our leaders. Our leaders use diplomacy, they keep their cards close to their chest, and by doing so they are not able to deal with the future and to tell us where we are heading. When we launched our initiative three years ago we faced difficulties, including opposition from our side. We were not very popular. On the Palestinian side they faced not only opposition but also violence.

Today, according to our polls, between 68 to 75% of the Israeli public approves of our six principles for negotiation of a final status agreement between Palestinians and Israelis. If we add to our six principles two additional points (a security fence along the agreed border and security guarantees made to Israel by the international community), we reach beyond 75% approval rate.

The public-approval rates among Palestinians are very similar. This represents a dramatic change that has taken place over the past four years. What we see today is that the two people not only agree to a two-state solution, but both agree and are ready to pay the price in order to get there. Most Palestinians understand that a Palestinian state alongside Israel will mean giving up the right of return to Israel. Israelis understand that in order to get where we want to be—which is for Israel to be a safe and democratic home for the Jewish people—we must give up most of the territories, most of the settlements, and we must share Jerusalem. This was not as clear three or four years ago but according to the polls this is the price Israelis and Palestinians are willing to pay for peace.

I want to finish by saying that these principles resonate beyond the Israeli public today. Our principles are penetrating the political community as well. If you listen to Likud members of Knesset and ministers like Ehud Olmert, Tzippi Livni, Meir Shitreet, and Micki Eitan, you will hear that they accept our six principles. They didn’t see the light one morning but they understand success in future elections—whether in twelve months or two years—will depend upon accepting what the Israeli public believes will lead to stability and security.

Despite the fact that the present situation is not very hopeful, I am still optimistic. If we see the disengagement plan in the context of the six principles of the People’s Voice, we will see that this is the first step on the Road Map leading to a two-state solution. I believe that we shall see stability and security in my generation if the disengagement ends

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Catching Up With Israel: Ameinu's 2004 Mission to Israel

Why did Ameinu call its winter '04 mission "Catching Up With Israel"? Don't we Zionists already know all there is to know of significance about what's going on in Israel? Ask the members of the mission—including people who have lived for years in Israel during various segments of their lives—and you may be surprised at the answer.

Israel's Volunteers

Does Israel have a thriving voluntary sector? Surprisingly, the answer is yes. We visited three organizations that are attracting volunteers in record numbers—including high school youth—to help disadvantaged Israelis organize to obtain all that they deserve as Israeli citizens. You'll soon likely be hearing a lot more from organizations the likes of Yedid, NISPED and AJEEC.

American Habonim graduate Vivian Silver, now executive director of the Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development (NISPED), hosted us in their Beersheva volunteer center where we talked with Jewish and Arab teens who volunteer together many hours per week to help others.

Israeli-American grassroots organizer par excellence, Sari Rivkin, Executive Director of Yedid, took us to the heart of Israel's gathering social revolution. At Yedid's Haifa Advocacy Center—a beehive of volunteer neighborhood organizing and service activity—we saw how a national advocacy and

community organizing center with eighteen subsidiaries across the country can allow each local center to address local issues in a way that suits the home-grown leadership of that branch.

Sapir College

What's it like going to college for the vast majority of Israelis who don't study at Hebrew University, the Technion or the other three or four better-known schools? We spent a morning among the thousands of students at Israel's largest public institution of higher learning and you've never heard its name. It's Sapir College and over 7,000 post-secondary students are working toward a wide variety of degrees in a dynamic student-faculty environment.

According to our host, Sapir Board of Directors Chair Shai Hermesh, the initial buildings of Sapir College were constructed with funding from the Labor Zionist Alliance New York Region, one of LZA's most successful Israel partnerships. That was back in the 80s and 90s when Shai Hermesh was the legendary Labor Party mayor of the Shaar Hanegev Regional Council. Today Chaver Hermesh is breaking new ground as the Labor Zionist treasurer of the World Zionist Organization/Jewish Agency for Israel.

The Kibbutz Movement

Is socialism dead in Israel? Not if you've met the far-sighted publishers of *Chevra*, Israel's new social-democratic magazine published by Yesod, the organization of modern Israeli Social Democrats. Udi Manor, leader of Yesod and Editor of *Chevra*, outlined Yesod's success in building an intellectual foundation for a resurgent social-democratic movement in Israel.

STEVEN J. WEINBERG is a member of the Ameinu Executive Committee, and the leader of Ameinu's missions to Israel.

Is the kibbutz movement dying? Changing, yes. Dying, I doubt it. Not after what we saw and whom we met. Muki Tzur, the down-to-earth philosopher and historian of the kibbutz, spent a day helping us catch up with the evolution of the Kibbutz Movement

He took us to visit a thriving traditional kibbutz, Ein Hashofet, which not only is a model of economic success, but is also a model of social success—especially when it comes to its treatment of its aging population of veteran founders. Veteran chaver kibbutz, Chanan Cohen, was our principal host for the tour.

For contrast, he took us to visit one of Israel's urban kibbutzim—Kibbutz Tamuz tucked into a neighborhood in Beit Shemesh. Assembled to dialogue with us at Kibbutz Tamuz by the indefatigable Osnat Elnatan were representatives she is working with from all over Israel—the vanguard of an unbelievable movement of young Israeli pioneers eager to “settle Israel's social frontier.” Included were representatives of the three garinim (settlement groups) from Habonim Dror North America that have joined this movement over the past five years.

These young Israelis are in the process of developing a network of urban kibbutzim in Israel's chronically undeveloped “development towns” and in the poorer neighborhoods of Israel's larger cities. Aliyah to kibbutz may take on new meaning once this youthful network of urban kibbutzim has established itself. The energy and commitment of these youth could only bring one back to the much heralded idealism of earlier Israeli pioneers.

At another point in the mission, the world secretary of Habonim Dror, Silvio Joskovitz, explained to the group how this oldest Zionist youth movement of ours is constantly reinventing itself to take on the challenges of Israeli society. Along with our mission tour-guide who is also World Treasurer of Habonim Dror, Rami Tzdafi, he praised Habonim Dror North America for the quality of its Jewish and Zionist education and for its results in training American Jewish leaders and young people committed to a lifelong relationship with Israel.

The Fence

What about the “fence” being built between Jewish and Palestinian populations? If you want to learn about the fence up close and personal, you have to pick a section and meet the people who lived first with the Green Line, then with the occupation, and are now adjusting to the fence and its implications for both the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Highway 65 through Wadi Ara (between Hadera and Afula) serves both Arab villages and Israeli kibbutzim just outside the Green Line. Lydia Eisenberg, journalist and teacher from Givat Haviva, the Kibbutz Artzi educational center located in that area, took us to these villages and settlements, introduced us to Israelis and Palestinians affected by the old border and by the new fence and let us learn first-hand about the unceasing efforts by real neighbors to work together across whatever border that governments erect.

Late one evening, the Mission members were treated to a high-level presentation by Ron Schatzberg, a representative of ECF, the think tank that has developed the definitive model of how and where to build a separation fence that contributes to peace rather than diminishes its chances. We saw detailed maps to which only the IDF had previously been privy. We learned how Israel's security needs can be balanced by those of the Palestinian villagers for access to land and services.

Talking to the people who are determining the route of the fence and visiting the Israeli and Palestinian communities directly affected by one northern segment of the West Bank fence, we learned how different reality is from what we read in the news—even the Israeli news.

Across the Green Line, constructive interaction between Israelis and Palestinians never stopped, and it will be these “border relationships” that promise to become the basis for a wider, grassroots reconciliation between the two societies once their leaders allow it to flower.

Israel: The Progressive Landscape

Are you curious about the young idealists changing Israel's social landscape?

Are you looking for an opportunity to "catch up" with today's Israel?

Will your child be in Israel next year on a Habonim Dror Program?

Is it time for that unforgettable first trip to the Jewish State?

Join the Ameinu-Habonim Dror Mission to Israel

Ameinu, through its close partnership with Habonim Dror, is offering a customized 10 day trip to Israel for Habonim Dror alumni, Habonim Dror parents, and Ameinu members. The trip will bring participants face-to-face with today's Israel. This is a behind-the-scenes Israel trip that only Ameinu and Habonim Dror can arrange and is guaranteed to recharge your progressive Zionist batteries.

**The trip will take place Thursday, December 22, 2005 to
Tuesday January 3, 2006**

Israel: The Progressive Landscape will be split between 6 initial days of exciting group program travel and 4 days for participants to visit and travel 'on your own' (with optional guided trips available upon request).

The cost of the trip (**\$1990 per person, double occupancy**) will include airfare from New York, hotel accommodations and breakfast for the entire 10 days as well as the entire cost of the initial 6 day tour.



for more information contact:

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Ameinu is a tax exempt not-for profit organization. Speak to your tax adviser as to the deductibility of this trip

Arab Israelis

What about Israel's citizens who are Palestinian Arabs? What changes are taking place in the Arab sector of Israeli society? We met with Amal Elsana Alhooj, a young Bedouin woman who is leading her people into the Israeli mainstream. Yes, you heard right. Amal is a woman—a young woman—who nonetheless has the inner strength and raw talent to overcome deep-seated traditional social values of male authority and lead her people fearlessly into the future. If the development potential of the Negev is ever to be fulfilled, it will be in partnership with this populous, increasingly self-conscious, and politically evolving Bedouin community, and thanks to leaders like Amal whose partnership we value.

Israeli High-Tech

Heard of Israel's high-tech revolution? Heard that fully twenty-two of the top one hundred private companies in Europe that play a leading role in innovation and technology, as determined in April by tech journal *Red Herring*, were Israeli companies—more than any other European country except Britain?

We met with Prof. Mark Spigelman and a delegation of the scientists doing stem cell research and studies of ancient diseases at Hadassah Hospital—research that hasn't even been published yet. All we can tell you from their hard-to-believe reports is “stay tuned.” Once you learn about these new technologies up close and personal, you understand that their overwhelming power is as unstoppable as it is revolutionary. We were amazed and excited to discover the leading roles being played by Israeli scientists in Israeli labs.

Progressive Zionism

Many American Jews keep the *Haaretz* English website bookmarked on their web browser and link to it regularly for consistently intelligent insight into events unfolding in Israel and the Middle East. The editor of that website is another American-born and Habonim-trained one, Brad Burston,

who met with the mission and gave us a unique perspective on current events in Israel and how *Haaretz* covers them.

Guy Spigelman, editor of the new Labor Party English language newsletter, *Revival*, and Australian Habonim alum discussed his bid for a Knesset seat within the context of an evolving Labor Party. By the time the mission passed through Knesset security for its final event, a question-and-answer session in the office of leading Labor MK Colette Avital, they were honed by their experience “on the road” for a meaningful dialogue.

All this may give you a taste of what this Ameinu Mission was like, why we called it “Catching Up With Israel” and how it changed the lives of those who experienced it.

It's been a wrenching four years since the giddy expectations of the summer of Camp David and the incredulous despair at the outbreak of the Intifada that September. Especially for progressives, who want to view the world as a march “upward” toward societies that translate the highest ideals of the Jewish prophets into earthly domains, this turn of events, and the upsurge of anti-Semitism that has come in its wake, have challenged our souls.

Ameinu's mission as the standard-bearer of progressive American Zionism is, as another famous American progressive would say, to “Keep Hope Alive.” American Jews must do what we can to sustain those policies and programs of both the American and Israeli governments that can be seen as part of the solution rather than part of the problem, and we must also look beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the deeper issues facing Zionism in the maturing State of Israel.

Recognizing that even staunch progressive Zionists had found it difficult to visit Israel as frequently during the Intifada as before, there is that none-too-subtle undertone in the “Catching Up With Israel” message that means: “Hey! isn't it time we started returning to Israel?” Hopefully here, the success of the Mission speaks volumes to our fellow Jews

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Philip Roth as a Zionist Fabulist

I am not an expert on Philip Roth. I do not pretend to have read all his work—nor liked everything I read. But I did read his most recent novel, *The Plot Against America* (Houghton Mifflin, 2004) and I enjoyed it very much. It is not a great book, or an earth-shaking book. But it is certainly held my interest and turned out to be fascinating. In fact in a way it is remarkable. I couldn't help but wonder is this the same Philip Roth who was the *enfant terrible* of Jewish-American life not all that long ago. Do you remember when his early collection of short stories, *Goodbye Columbus*, raised such a furor? Roth was denounced by national Jewish defense organizations, condemned from pulpits, called a danger to Jewish life and an enemy of the Jews: he portrayed Jews in a bad light, held us up to ridicule. Later, his novel, *Portnoy's Complaint*, was similarly denounced. Jewish spokespeople hurried to separate the community from the offensive tract. Those whom we paid to worry about such things, worried that it was going to bring public opprobrium upon us all and cause anti-Semitism.

I couldn't help thinking of all that as I read this book. How things have changed! Obviously Roth's

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work was never a threat to Jewish life. But if I am reading some of his most recent work correctly, he is saying something very different than his early critics could have expected. And maybe he has been all along. First let's look at this most recent book, *The Plot Against America*. The book is a kind of



historical fiction—a personal memoir of events that never took place. Roth imagines an America of 1940 in which Roosevelt is defeated in his bid for re-election by a landslide. And he is beaten by Charles A. Lindbergh, who was in fact as well as in this book an isolationist at best, an admirer of the Nazis, and (judging by his public statements and

what was written in his actual diaries, which Roth quotes accurately) an anti-Semite. Roth weaves actual events and people into this fable to tell what happens to a young imaginary Philip Roth and his family under a Lindbergh administration.

He recounts the humiliations they endure, the attacks on Jewish individuals, and the actions against Jews as a group. He envisions the economic disadvantages they have to endure and even enforced relocation: people forced to leave the homes they have lived in for perhaps their whole lives and sent to live in other parts of the country where there are no Jews so as to be helped along in the process of assimilation to American life.

In large part it is a reflection on how different types of people—and different types of Jews—respond. Some resist, some acquiesce, some simply collapse, some die, and some collaborate. Roth paints a picture from the inside about what such an experience could be like. His great success is that he makes you feel your own way into what it would be like to live under these conditions—conditions which, let us hasten to remember, if not actually endured by Jews in America were the all-too-real fate of millions in Europe.

When the book came out it raised a great deal of excitement. Many readers saw it as a political parable about the presidential election campaign which was then under way in the United States. The young energetic, photogenic candidate, depicted as not especially bright, manipulated by ruthless advisors, given to speaking in simplistic platitudes, and literally sailing above the realities of the day-to-day challenges the country was facing somehow made some people think of more current events. The campaign made up of slogans rather than ideas, images rather than realities, and pieties rather than substance, somehow gave people the impression that Roth was writing a parable about election 2004. Well, who can ever know exactly what an author had in mind—even the author. Roth insisted that he was not writing about the last presidential election. And maybe he was not. But I believe that Roth had something else very much on his mind when he wrote *The Plot Against America*. Absolutely it is a fable—a parable.

But not primarily about American politics. As I read the book, it dawned on me that Roth is a great Zionist fabulist. He lays out his agenda at the very beginning of the book:

Israel didn't yet exist; six million European Jews hadn't yet ceased to exist, and the local relevance of distant Palestine (under British mandate since the 1918 dissolution by the victorious Allies of the last far-flung provinces of the defunct Ottoman Empire) was a mystery to me. When a stranger who did wear a beard and who never once was seen hatless appeared every few months after

dark to ask in broken English for a contribution toward the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine, I, who wasn't an ignorant child, didn't quite know what he was doing on our landing. My parents would give me a couple of coins to drop into his collection box, largesse, I always thought, dispensed out of kindness so as not to hurt the feelings of a poor old man, who, from one year to the next seemed unable to get it through his head that we'd already had a homeland for three generations. I pledged allegiance to the flag of our homeland every morning at school. I sang of its marvels with my classmates at assembly programs. I eagerly observed its national holidays, and without giving a second thought to my affinity for Fourth of July fireworks or the Thanksgiving turkey or the Decoration Day double-header. Our homeland was America... Then the Republicans nominated Lindbergh and everything changed (page 4-5).

We take it for granted that we are secure here, that America is our home:

Lindbergh was the first famous living American whom I learned to hate just as President Roosevelt was the first famous living American whom I was taught to love. His nomination by the Republicans to run against Roosevelt in 1940... assaulted that huge endowment of personal security that I had taken for granted as an American child of American parents in an American school in an American city in an America at peace with the world (page 7).

But below the surface lurk all kinds of forces that could erupt and turn against you:

When Lindbergh wrote proudly of "our inheritance of European blood," when he warned against "dilution by foreign races" and "the infiltration of inferior blood" (all

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Hebron Horrors

The Sharm el-Sheikh summit in February 2005 was a success by almost any reckoning. But let's not get carried away. Even the complete end to terrorism and reprisals would not signify an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It would only free the two sides to start negotiating over the issues which produced the violence in the first place.

This reality was brought home to me during my stint as an official US observer of the January 9th Palestinian election. Our eighty-person National Democratic Institute group was broken into forty teams and then dispatched throughout the West Bank and Gaza. My partner and I were assigned to a dozen polling places in Hebron, the second largest city in the West Bank.

Hebron is a city considered holy by both Jews and Muslims because of the presence there of the Cave of Machpela, traditionally thought to be the burial place of Abraham, the patriarch of both Judaism and Islam. Predominantly Arab, Jews also lived in the city, adjacent to the tomb, until 1929 when a pogrom launched by Arab fanatics resulted in the murder of 69 Jews and the end of the Jewish presence in the city. In 1967, following the Six Day War—with Israel now in

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control of the West Bank, including Hebron—ultra-religious Jewish nationalists pressured the Israeli government to permit Jewish settlers to reclaim, and move into, properties that had belonged to the Jewish community prior to 1929.

The government refused. It arranged for Jewish worship inside the tomb but not for civilian settlement inside the city, which it considered to be both impractical and provocative. Only a tiny group of extremists (many from outside Israel) had any interest in living inside Hebron and—in the midst of a city of 160,000 Palestinians—they would need to be defended by hundreds, if not thousands, of soldiers.

The settlers moved in anyway, establishing illegal outposts in the heart of Hebron, which have been tolerated by successive Israeli governments for thirty-six years. Following the Oslo agreements, the Israeli army withdrew from all Palestinian cities except Hebron, where troops remained to defend the settlers. In 1997, the Israeli army withdrew from 80% of Hebron, remaining only in an area labeled H-2 which includes the Cave of Machpela, the Casbah (Arab market), and the Jewish settlements. Some 400 settlers live in H-2 in the midst of 30,000 Palestinians. Last month, I visited H-2 despite being told by an Israeli friend that it is “the worst place in the West Bank.” How so? “The settlers there are religious fanatics and dedicate their lives to terrorizing the Palestinians with the goal of driving them all out. The

Palestinians can't fight back because the army won't let them. On top of all that, the settlers hate the soldiers almost as much as they hate the Palestinians because the soldiers try to curb their activities. These soldiers are in a situation where they have to defend fanatics who routinely refer to them as Nazis."

"But," he added, "so long as the settlers are there, the soldiers must remain as well. Snipers, shooting from the hills, have killed Jews [including a two year old, Shalhevet Pass] and, so the soldiers need to be there, no matter how much they hate it."

I walked into the heart of H-2 following a short inquisition by an IDF soldier. My first stop was the Ibrahami Mosque, which encompasses the Tomb of the Patriarchs. As I walked down the steps toward the mosque, a young Palestinian made the point of informing me that I was following the same route Jewish zealot Baruch Goldstein took when, in February 1994, he burst into the mosque and shot dead twenty-nine Muslims at prayer.

Goldstein is a hero to the Hebron settlers. His burial place (in a tourist park named after Meir Kahane) was turned into a shrine where settlers annually celebrate Goldstein's murder spree with parties and games. (In 2004, police arrested some of them for holding an illegal celebration of both the Goldstein murders and the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin). For Palestinians, of course, the Goldstein massacre is a symbol of the ultimate threat.

I left the mosque and walked through the mostly deserted Casbah toward the settlers' neighborhood. There wasn't much to see, just settlers strutting around with rifles and a few Arabs trying to sell their wares in what was once a thriving market and is now mostly abandoned. And there is the graffiti in English and Hebrew promising death to all Palestinians.

But the most striking thing is the steel mesh screens that the Arabs have installed just above the heads of pedestrians to protect them from the garbage and excrement routinely dumped by the settlers from their second-floor windows. The screens catch all sorts of disgusting stuff and lethal objects like cinder blocks,

although liquid debris does make its way to the ground or on the heads of anyone below. It's an appalling sight. Imagine looking up and seeing and smelling the foulest debris just above your head, stopped only by mesh. But then everything about H-2 is appalling, including the fact that Israeli soldiers are forced to serve there.

Last summer a group of seventy soldiers who had served in Hebron created a photographic and video exhibit at a Tel Aviv college about their experiences there called, "Breaking Silence." The exhibit, which was a huge success, described from the soldiers' point of view the dehumanizing experience that serving there had on them. Many spoke of the fear they had—not only of the Arabs or of the Jews—but of being terribly transformed as human beings by the experience.

One soldier spoke of being frightened by the "rush" he felt from giving Arabs orders. "I was ashamed of myself the day I realized that I simply enjoy the feeling of power...Forget for a moment that I think that all these Jews are nuts and that I believe we should leave the territories. But how dare [a Palestinian] say 'no' to me? I am the Law! I am the Law here! "Once I was at a checkpoint, a so-called strangulation checkpoint, blocking the entrance to a village. On one side a line of cars wanting to get out, and on the other side a line of cars wanting to get in. I stood there, gesturing 'you do this,' 'you do that.' You start playing with them, like a computer game. 'You come here, you go there.' You barely move, you make them obey the tip of your finger. It's a mighty feeling."

A second soldier wrote: "The thing that...affected me emotionally...was when we had just arrived in Hebron. I was on guard duty, when suddenly, from one of the small streets, a settler girl shows up and shouts at me very urgently: 'Soldier, soldier, come quickly, there's an Arab here who's attacking a girl.' I got very alarmed and advanced with my weapon cocked. The scene that unfolded was of an Arab with his two children. He's trying to protect them from another settler girl who's throwing stones at them. I

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Journey to Gush Katif

Little suggests that only weeks remain for Ganei Tal, a religious moshav in southern Gaza. The lawns are watered and fresh flowers fill the gardens. The major clue that change is coming is the stream of Orthodox tourists making pilgrimages of support. Tourists never visited Ganei Tal before talk of disengagement—even now, visits by secular, pro-disengagement groups are so rare that FOXNews and Ha'aretz accompanied the tour I joined in late June.

Continuing life in Ganei Tal as if nothing is happening is a purposeful strategy. “The army will find us going about our everyday life—we will not prepare in any way” is how our host, Michael, described it. No one in Ganei Tal plans to raise a hand against a soldier; men and women here serve in the army and their lives in Gaza have only been possible with IDF protection. Resistance means making no plans for life after disengagement and waiting for soldiers to carry them away. According to Michael, no one has filled out

compensation forms, chosen a new home, or registered children in new schools. He says he will not pack as much as a toothbrush.

We met Michael in his hothouses. His workers dug up, trimmed, and packed his amaryllis bulbs as he spoke. This frenzied activity is excusable because this is his regular harvest season. Still, time is of the essence—in six short weeks, the IDF will start removing settlers and then packing their household goods; they will not harvest crops.

We began our encounter warily, but committed to listen politely. Expecting a hostile response, Michael seemed nervous as he recited the arguments against disengagement—Gaza appears in the Torah and so it is part of the Jewish homeland. Palestinians never inhabited these previously barren sand dunes. The settlers’ hard work created productive communities. The workers want their employers to stay. Disengagement rewards terror. Abandoning Gaza is the first step to losing Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem.

When we did not challenge his arguments, our host grew more comfortable and told us his own story.

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Originally from South Africa, he settled in Ganei Tal twenty-three years ago. Using his engineering degree, he created a high tech farm: hot water pipes buried in the sand warm his bulbs in the winter; drip lines water them; an aerial system sprays nutrients. He can replicate his greenhouse inside Israel's 1967 borders, but without the subsidies he received in Gaza, the capital cost may be prohibitive. The operating costs will be higher too—his Palestinian workers earn just a third of Israel's minimum wage. Growing amaryllis bulbs has been quite profitable for Michael in Gaza, but it could be a losing proposition inside the green line.

For a second time in his life this 56 year-old man faces the prospects of starting life over again, but this time with a less profitable business, in a new community, and in a smaller house. This time he will not be an idealistic pioneer raising his young family. Instead, he is a disillusioned middle-aged man who feels betrayed by his government. But the government did not betray him—before he moved to Gaza, Michael, like all settlers, signed a statement acknowledging the government's right to remove him in the future. Now, the government is calling the option; his family's heavily subsidized lifestyle must end so Israeli troops can leave Gaza.

Governments around the world uproot their citizens for more mundane reasons than security. The US Supreme Court recently affirmed New London, Connecticut's right to evict homeowners to make way for a shopping mall. In China, one million people must move to make way for the Three Gorges Dam hydroelectric project. However, in China and Connecticut, no one argued that God gave them the right to stay.

In Gaza, anti-disengagement advocates wrap their arguments in Torah, even though Gaza's biblical pedigree is weak. The Torah mentions a *kfar darom* (Southern Village), Samson destroyed a Philistine temple in Gaza, and Abraham farmed land near Beersheba (25 miles outside of the Gaza Strip). Hardly proof that it is Jewish territory. Still, religious settlers claim Gaza as part of the Jewish people's God-given territorial inheritance. For them, God trumps the Israeli government in determining the

boundaries of the Jewish homeland. This religious rhetoric has real consequences: most secular settlers will be gone before disengagement begins; most religious settlers will stay until the end.

Experts who studied the evacuation of Yamit recommend that communities move intact so that evacuees can adjust to their new lives together. However, communities like Ganei Tal, who refuse to discuss the future, may end up divided. Families in these communities have not found housing or new jobs within Israel proper. Their children are likely to start school late, making the transition more difficult. Even the dead, being evacuated along with the living, cannot be reburied until their community chooses a new location.

At one point, Michael, who refuses all contact with the disengagement planning authority, complained that no one has told him the size of his compensation package. Refusing to cooperate and then blaming the government for the results is illogical, but anxiety about the future is natural among those who have made no plans for the day after. And those who plan for their future, or leave early, are seen as traitors.

Leaders of the settlers' movement, who live in the West Bank, show little interest in helping those who must soon leave their homes to adjust. Instead of helping Gaza's settlers prepare for new lives, these leaders hope to bring tens of thousands of people into Gaza in order to make disengagement as difficult as possible. These outsiders are not necessarily committed to the nonviolent approach championed by Michael and may escalate the conflict.

No one really expects to stop disengagement. By massive opposition in Gaza, the leaders hope to preclude future withdrawal from the West Bank. Gaza's settlers are just pawns in this larger battle. After Gaza is empty and the leadership goes home to the West Bank, their pawns may suffer the results of their lack of preparation for years to come. Sadly, the more psychological scars the evacuees carry after disengagement, the better it will be for the settlers' movement as they fight any future moves to leave the territories. **11**

Disengagement: A View from the Home Front

Four weeks before the evacuation of Gaza began, a leading Israeli anchorman said that his station would be treating the impending disengagement as an Israeli story alone. "This is all about us. This is not about the Palestinians—unless, of course, they make it their story." Defying all of the worst-case scenarios thus far, and with greater speed and better organization than anyone could have anticipated, Israeli security forces safely evacuated the entire Gaza Strip in just 4 1/2 days. Followed by the quick undoing of the four settlements in the northern West Bank, which brought the final toll to 9,000 residents and 6,000 infiltrators, the whole operation was completed in less than a week.

For months leading up to this historic event, many of us held our breath; prayed that nothing would block the disengagement, nothing would disrupt this move. Former Minister of Finance Netanyahu's unexpected departure from the government intended to boost his

appeal among the right wing of his party while giving a prime time blow to the pull out, didn't slow it down. Nor did the cold-blooded Jewish terror attack against Arabs on the Egged bus in Shfaram or the shooting spree directed at Palestinians in Shiloh that came later, derail the process. And still, we held our breath, waiting for the beginning so we could arrive at the end.

Throughout the months and weeks of waiting, the massive information campaign had come into our living rooms, night after night, showing us the intricate preparations being made for this unprecedented endeavor. The police, the soldiers, and the government apparatus, the social workers, the moving companies, and the building contractors – all called into service. Frighteningly realistic simulated attacks by settlers were rehearsed with such vigor that the security personnel surrounding Defense Minister Mofaz during a visit to a training center in the desert were forced to draw their guns at the young actor-soldiers. Even eighteen horses that were conscripted for the showdown underwent in-depth training in anti-protest combat. Horses, we were told, do not react to psychological warfare or relentless taunting; they are

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single-minded and will perform loyally under the worst of circumstances.

It was not a horse, in the end, that carried the troops at Kfar Darom, but a Trojan crate that lifted them onto the roof of the synagogue to battle the delinquent warriors armed with acidic solutions, motor oil and rocks. The Masada of the Disengagement, a self-styled Gush Ghetto revolt in which the spitting and spewing of curses and insults topped off the abhorrent expropriation of historic Jewish symbols and narratives. And yet, to the astonishment of the people of Israel who were glued to their television screens, unable to turn away from the surrealistic scenes, Israel's finest did not fight back. The strategic planning by the IDF and the national police had paid off in spades. The tough, macho Israeli army and police had become, before our very eyes, an uncannily cool-headed security force dressed in sunglasses and sunscreen, able to withstand the worst their fellow Jews had to offer: the wailing of pregnant mothers, the begging of frightened children, the pleading of bearded grandfathers. Neither the accusation of "Nazi traitor" nor the promise of eternity in hell prompted anything but understanding and compassion from the troops.

No one was exempt from the powerful emotion this produced—not viewers, not participants, and not even the press. A quiet respect spread across the nation, in a country where patience is not a commodity, where tolerance has evaporated, where raw nerves dictate behavior. Many of us couldn't help but wonder what went on in those training camps. Were our boys and girls drugged, we jested, were they hypnotized? Where did they get that kind of self-control, that degree of human empathy, that level of understanding and selflessness, that ability to put themselves in the other's shoes, the amazing capacity not to lose it?

One young pilot who evacuated settlers in Neve Dekalim and Gadim, and spent thirteen hours with one family alone, credited the intense physical, psychological and sensitivity training the soldiers underwent for enabling them to weather the insanity. The soul-searching, he explained, continued even as they surrounded the settlements in the first ring. Many of the hours waiting in the hot August sun were

spent in conversation about the moral implications of their actions, the validity of the democratic process, the fundamentals of Zionism, and, whether this trauma will irrevocably divide the religious and the secular camps. But how did you not lose control, even once, I asked incredulously. It's the uniform, he said, and the responsibility that comes with it. It was seared into our brains that our duty here was not to falter. And if we did, an officer was there to relieve us on the spot.

The remarkable responsibility demonstrated by the soldiers and officers alike was in stark contrast to the stunningly irresponsible behavior of the rabbis of the settlement movement. With messianic intensity, they invoked the Almighty and issued defiant commands: Don't pack up; don't stop planting your fields; don't think about leaving. Disengagement will not happen. So, in spite of twelve months of appeals by the Disengagement Authority to sign up early for housing and compensation, or for assistance in finding new jobs and new schools, the settlers heeded the misleading words of their leaders. The dramatic portrayal as victimized refugees, and the cynical exploitation of their children, left much of Israel furious. As for the rabbis and other true believers, they were already regrouping and reclaiming theology.

There will be many lessons of this historic unraveling. Some will focus on the need to reinforce democracy so that the rule of rabbis will never again threaten the rule of law. Others will take a hard look at the lost hilltop youth, who mistook messianism for Zionism. Some will ask whether this means we can just easily pull out of other settlements in the West Bank. Or, if the exemplary restraint and respect demonstrated by the soldiers in "Operation Sensitivity and Determination," as the disengagement was called, can be transferred to the checkpoints and lead to a more humane and respectful approach to Palestinians.

Whatever we finally make of this departure, we owe a tremendous debt to the men and women who so proudly represented their country in a heart-wrenching exercise that may just lead us to reason and hope. ■

Go to Nineveh

In the last issue of the Jewish Frontier we initiated the project of re-issuing significant essays by Hayim Greenberg, founding editor of this journal and pre-eminent ideological leader of American Labor Zionism. As stated there, our plan is "to reprint some of Greenberg's most significant articles, with new commentaries by selected individuals, as well as a few of his shorter pieces, which were fascinating vignettes of his surroundings or incisive comments on a wide range of topics."

In this edition we are offering one of the best examples of the latter category, "Go to Nineveh," Greenberg's commentary on the Book of Jonah, one of the major biblical readings in the Yom Kippur service. This brief piece raises questions of both Jewish readiness and wariness to accept the good intentions and deeds of non-Jews. Think about current, perhaps relatively enlightened Palestinian behavior, on the one hand, and the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, on the other, and you will appreciate the timeliness of this essay, originally written in 1942.

In the next issue, we plan to reprint one of Greenberg's most seminal and still pertinent essays, "Jewish Culture and Education in the Diaspora," and to invite comments on that piece, which can be found in any anthology of his writings. Readers of the Jewish Frontier are invited to submit their comments (500 to 1500 words in length), preferably by email to executive@ameinu.net; by fax to (212) 675-7685; or by mail to Jewish Frontier, 114 West 26th Street, Suite 1006, New York, NY 10001.

The book of Jonah, read in the synagogues every year on the Day of Atonement, has a lasting moral quality which overshadows all the scholarly discussions as to when and by whom it was written. The Cabbalists and early Christians put a mystical interpretation on the book and connected it with their ideas on the immortality of the soul. But anyone approaching the book without preconceived ideas can see that there are no mystical elements in it.

The style is simple, transparent, and not charged with any particular allusions. The story itself is straightforward and its moral is obvious. Once a man is endowed by God with a prophetic spirit, then he remains, willy-nilly, a servant of the Lord for the rest of his life. No rebellion on his part can change this.

Jonah, the son of Amittai, revolted against God. He wished to place his own will, his own prejudices, and his limited concept of justice above God's command. Should he "go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim against it," that it should be destroyed by God's wrath? Why should he? Nineveh was the capital city of Israel's mightiest enemy, a city rotten with sin and crime, for did not God Himself say, "their wickedness is come up before me"? Then let the wicked perish without prophecy, without a warning.

To be sure, God did not send him there merely as a bearer of evil tidings, to inform the inhabitants that the final sentence from which there is no appeal had been passed upon them. He suspected God of "weakness" and a desire to act not according to the strict letter of the law, of seeking to avert a punishment which He had already decreed upon the people of Nineveh, "for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and compassionate, long-suffering, and abundant in mercy, and repent Thee of evil." Jonah was afraid that perhaps the inhabitants of Nineveh might repent on hearing his prophecy and God would alter his decision. To use later terms, he considered himself the bearer of "the attribute of justice," and suspected God of being inclined toward the "attribute of mercy." What he forgot was that mercy and forgiveness were in themselves part of a righteous judgment.

Jonah had another motive for refusing to go Nineveh. Nineveh lay outside the land of Israel, an alien city of

pagan, unclean worship. But he was a prophet of Israel and for Israel. He believed that the spirit of prophecy was given to him with the understanding that he pour it out only upon Jewish soil for Jews to hear, that the Gentiles had no part in it. True enough, nearly all the prophets had spoken their word about alien lands and alien peoples. Thus Habbakuk's main theme was the Chaldeans, Obadiah's was Edom, and Nahum's Nineveh itself. But these were prophecies made to the Jews, not directly to the Gentiles. With the possible exception of Elijah whom God once sent to idol-worshipping Sidon, Jonah was the only prophet sent abroad with a direct mission to the uncircumcised. And even Elijah was not sent to the community of Sidon. His mission, as related in the First Book of Kings, seems to have been concerned only with one individual among the non-Jews, the sick child of the Sidonese widow whom he had brought back to life. But Jonah was sent not to an individual but to the whole unclean community of Nineveh whom God should have destroyed long before. To bring to them the prophecy of destruction was risky. They might repent their sins: God might harken to their prayer and Nineveh might be saved.

“Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord,” rather than carry out his mission. A later commentary spoke of that flight saying that Jonah would rather have perished in the sea than bring misfortune upon his own people by effecting the salvation of Nineveh. Another commentator, evidently more prosaic, says that Jonah paid a sum as great as the value of the whole ship, for his trip from Jaffa to Tarshish, so strong was his desire to see God's condemnation of Nineveh fulfilled. At any rate, he did not want to help save Nineveh. (Signs of this Jewish “particularism” or “chauvinism” may be seen much later in the New Testament: Jesus himself emphasized on several occasions that he was sent only to the “lost sheep of Israel” and commanded his disciples not to go to the Gentiles with their tidings of gladness.)

Jonah fled, but can one flee from God's command? A week later, legend tells us, the storm affected only that one ship, and all other ships proceeded on their way peacefully. Moreover, the fish which swallowed Jonah had been prepared for that task from the very first day of creation. “And the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.” The prophet was not to

know of any limitations on the message he was to carry. He must carry it also to the lands of the uncircumcised. And if he wanted to narrow his horizon and narrow his heart, God would show him what narrowness was. He was not to reach Tarshish, and soon God was to hear his prayer “out of the fish's belly.”

The rebellious prophet received his punishment by being incarcerated for days and nights in the dark dungeon of the fish's belly. A later commentary says that after the sailors on the ship had seen Jonah spewed out on dry land by the fish, they went to Jerusalem, had themselves circumcised, and devoted themselves and their wives and their children and their belongings to the service of the Lord. This showed that even these uncircumcised, sinful people were not beyond salvation, and what happened to them could also happen to the inhabitants of Nineveh. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was also their God and if they did not serve Him today they would be ready to serve Him tomorrow. “Go to Nineveh,” He told Jonah.

But the story of Jonah is more than a protest against narrow nationalism. Its moral deals also with the very essence of Jewish prophecy. The prophet is not merely one who predicts events which will or which must occur in the future. If he were no more than that, there would be no difference between a prophet and a pagan oracle. For the oracle there is no “if.” It only knows that thus it will be under all circumstances, no matter how man should act or fail to act. The decree which the pagan oracle knows is categorical and absolute and ultimate. Neither human will nor even the will of the gods can alter it. It is Fate, unchangeable and immutable. A decree of this sort is independent of punishment and retribution, of sin and innocence. The catastrophe predicted by the oracle is not a punishment for transgression, and has very little relation to morality or immorality. Not only with primitive peoples but even with such civilized people as the Greeks, Fate was outside of morality. This is evident in all of Greek mythology as well as in the highly developed tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The essence of classic tragedy is in a large measure the problem of the “innocently guilty,” of the criminal who is such against his own will and his own intentions, of the

helpless individual whom Fate itself leads to sin and crime and misfortune against all his efforts to avoid them. The best-known example of this is the legend of King Oedipus.

Jewish prophecy, in contrast to pagan prophecy, knows no fatalism. There is no Fate within the whole Jewish concept. There is no faith in blind decrees. But there is Providence watching and listening over the world. Providence may be appealed to, may be prayed to, may be moved to do man's desire, if that desire is just and pure. Jewish prophecy, therefore, is by its function and its character conditional rather than categorical. Jonah wanted to see an immutable decree in God's decision to destroy Nineveh. Had he been certain that God interpreted the decision in the same way, he would not have fled to Tarshish.

Therein lay his transgression. Instead of being a prophet whose prophecy would bring warning and move the sinful to repent and to purge themselves of their sin, he preferred being an oracle, a golem through whom spoke the blind, brutal future. By this he lowered the prophetic calling; he destroyed the conditional nature of God's decrees. He confused God's hatred of evil in man with God's hatred of the evil man, as if the evil man were evil in essence and beyond hope, and condemned forever to be wicked and with no road of repentance open to him. By his disbelief in repentance and in God's "duty" to accept it and to "rend the evil of His decrees" he became a blasphemer, closer to paganism than to the Jewish God. Still greater was his crime in not wanting to see the uncircumcised of Nineveh begin believing in his God and proclaiming a day of fast, clothing themselves in sackcloth, the king of Nineveh shedding his mantle, and covering himself with sackcloth and sitting in the ashes on the ground. He was unwilling to rejoice with God at the sight of the drama of human repentance and cleansing. It was for this narrow-minded, unprophetlike inability to rejoice with God that he was severely reprimanded. "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither made it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night, and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle."

That is why the book of Jonah fits so well into the Yom Kippur service. The very sense of the Day of Atonement is faith in Providence and denial of Fate; faith in repentance and in its redeeming power, hatred of evil in man and hope that man will ultimately overcome that evil. The moral horizon of Yom Kippur is wide and distinct, limitlessly universal in the perspective of which the barrier between one of the Covenant and one of the uncircumcised is obliterated. "And all species may fear Thee, and all creatures may they all become one community to do Thy will with a whole heart." And God is praised for His quality of forgiveness on Yom Kippur: "Thou extendest Thy hand to the sinners and Thy right hand is extended to receive those that return to Thee." For on that day prayers are offered also for the wicked. "For Thou wishest the repentance of the wicked and Thou dost not desire their death, for as it is said, God said, 'As I live, says the Lord God I do not desire the death of the wicked, but the return of the wicked from his ways'." On Yom Kippur prayers are offered for Nineveh, for all the Nineveh of the world. 

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DANIEL MANN

The Jewish Frontier Update

of interest to note that the vast majority are also alumni and/or parents/grandparents of Habonim Dror.

From the outset the task force agreed that we should continue publication of the *Jewish Frontier*, described variously as Ameinu's literary, political, ideological, or intellectual journal and as the "voice of the movement." There was a range of suggestions concerning frequency, but in the end they coalesced around four times a year. And after a spirited exchange the group agreed that we should produce the *Jewish Frontier* primarily in printed form, with complementary and supplementary use of Ameinu's website. The Communications Committee endorsed these conclusions and reported them in turn to the Board of Directors of the organization. I am grateful to all my colleagues for their contributions to this endeavor.

Let me conclude with a message from a devoted friend of long standing and fellow leader in Ameinu, Anne E. Goldman, who has agreed to

head up a renewed fundraising program for the renewed *Jewish Frontier*:

Welcome to the celebration of the eighth decade of the Jewish Frontier, the prestigious periodical of American Labor Zionism, and welcome to Ameinu, the successor organization to the Labor Zionist Alliance. The *Jewish Frontier* will play an important role in reaching new readers of all ages who will learn of our roots, our history, and our present and future activities in the Jewish community. In its pages our members and friends will have a valuable source of information and an opportunity to exchange ideas. I invite you to join me in giving gift subscriptions to friends and family, particularly to young people, and in making contributions to this journal to celebrate Jewish holidays—beginning with the next edition—as well as to honor or memorialize fellow members.

Please keep in touch with Anne and me. Many thanks in advance for your participation in this challenging effort. JE

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AMI AYALON

Ameinu Conference Call with Admiral Ami Ayalon

up being a step in the right direction. If, however, disengagement leads to the creation of additional settlements in the West Bank, then there will be no security, no stability, and the economy will go into further decline. We will have repeated the same mistakes that we made in the past. This is why the People's Voice is so important.

Let me finish just by saying that after sailing for thirty-two years in the Navy I learned that if a captain does not know where he wants to sail, then no wind on earth will be strong enough to bring him there. It is not important from where we withdraw but to which direction we head. The six principles proposed by the Mifkad Leumi, the People's Voice, set forth a direction.

Biography of Ami Ayalon

Born in 1945 and raised in Kibbutz Ma'agan, retired Admiral Ami Ayalon was drafted into the Israel Navy's elite commando unit Flotilla 13, becoming a commissioned officer. He distinguished himself in hundreds of secret missions, winning Israel's highest military honor, the Ribbon of Valor. Ami climbed through the ranks, becoming chief of the Israel Navy. Additionally he took a BA in economics and political science from Bar-Ilan University, an MA in public administration from Harvard University, and studied at the United States Naval Academy in Newport, Rhode Island.

After the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Ami was asked to direct the Shin Bet internal security service. The Shin Bet was streamlined, playing a key role in reducing the level of terrorism in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, largely through effective cooperation with the Palestinians.

Upon bringing his security career to a close in 2000, Ami formed the People's Voice, a grassroots lobby for Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation, with Al-Quds University President Prof. Sari Nusseibeh. More than a quarter-million Israelis and 160,000 Palestinians have signed onto the campaign. JE

Summary of the Statement of Principles:

Two states for two nations.

Permanent borders based on the June 4, 1967 lines (with the possibility of equitable exchanges of territory for reasons of security, demography or territorial integrity).

Jerusalem is to be an open city and the capital of both states. Arab neighborhoods will be under Palestinian sovereignty, Jewish neighborhoods under Israel. There will be no political sovereignty over the Temple Mount / Haram al Sherif.

Palestinian refugees will be allowed to return to the territories of the Palestinian state only, Jews to the territories of Israel. An international fund will be established for the compensation and rehabilitation of Palestinian refugees.

The Palestinian state will be demilitarized.

Upon implementation of the Statement of Principles, when a peace accord is signed, the claims of both sides shall terminate and the conflict shall end.

Catching Up With Israel: Ameinu's 2004 Mission to Israel

about the simple and straightforward importance of visiting Israel regularly.

But on a deeper level, Ameinu is grappling with a much more nuanced problem. For American Zionists who are not planning aliyah, what sorts of relationships with Israel and with Israelis can Ameinu facilitate that achieve our essential objective? Namely, how can we mobilize the progressive Zionist elements among American Jewry to effectively support the new and the established progressive Israeli institutions that are responsible for moving Israeli society toward our common progressive Zionist goals?

Ameinu sees the need for establishing ongoing personal relationships between our progressive North American Jewish community and the people behind the progressive movements that are beginning to transform Israeli society. Ameinu believes that both groups can learn from and support each other.

Transforming Zionism

To date, American Zionist organizations have mobilized support for the Israeli government and/or specific Israeli institutions. This is the level of “official Zionism” that most American Jews know and understand and support. But given all of the paradigm shifts in how American progressives view Israel, this purely institutional Zionist relationship with Israel is proving to be less and less satisfactory. Just as the famous fundraising maxim teaches us that “people give to people, not to institutions,” we are learning that when it comes to sustaining the Zionist movement, “Jews support their fellow Jews, not their national institutions.”

So how can we transform the Zionist movement from a “people-to-national institutions” relationship model to a people-to-people movement? For clues, it may be useful to examine the experience of Ameinu members with long-standing personal relationships with Israelis.

The few thousand Ameinu members and Habonim Dror alumni who have lived in Israel for any length of time

or who have developed personal relationships with Israelis who lived in America point Ameinu in the direction we need to be going. While these relationships tend to be random—based on where we lived in Israel, where we worked, or where our shlichim were from—our affinity for like-minded people probably skewed these relationships in favor of secular, progressive Israelis. The advent of email and the sharp drop in the cost of intercontinental phone calls and travel, has allowed these long-distance personal relationships between Labor Zionists and their Israeli friends to be sustained with much less effort and with much greater levels of contact.

What can Ameinu learn from these existing personal relationships that can be applied toward a significant broadening of the circle of such relationships? How can Ameinu foster the establishment of significantly larger numbers of ongoing personal relationships between our progressive North American Jewish community and the people behind the progressive movements that are beginning to transform Israeli society?

The truth is that we are not sure we know how to do this. No one does. We need to invent this together, for the benefit of the progressive Jewish community in America and for the benefit of the folks Ameinu met in Israel and the excellent work they are doing.

The Jewish Frontier has been a vehicle for discussion among progressive American Zionists for over seventy years. Let this report on Ameinu's recent Mission to Israel and the larger issues that it raises for Ameinu's goal of widening personal-political connections between progressive American Zionists and their Israeli counterparts serve as a starting place for just such a discussion. **■**

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AJEEC www.nisped.org.il/info/englishajeeec/mission.htm
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Philip Roth as a Zionist Fabulist

phrases that turn up in diary entries from those years), he was recording personal convictions shared by a sizable portion of America First's rank-and-file membership as well as by a rabid constituency even more extensive than a Jew like my father, with his bitter hatred of anti-Semitism—or my mother, with her deeply ingrained mistrust of Christians—could ever imagine flourishing all across America (p. 14).

Of course Roth's book is a fiction, a story. And yet Roth intends his book to teach us something too. The Jews of Germany imagined themselves to be secure, proud citizens of what they thought as their homeland, joyous participants in what they thought of as their exalted culture. And then the unexpected happened. So Roth's book is about what if the unexpected happened here. Here is how he puts it:

A new life began for me. I'd watched my father fall apart, and I would never return to the same childhood. The mother at home was now away all day working at Hahne's... And the father who'd defiantly serenaded all those callow cafeteria anti-Semites in Washington was crying aloud with his mouth wide open—crying like both a baby abandoned and a man being tortured—because he was powerless to stop the unforeseen. And as Lindbergh's election couldn't have made clearer to me, the unfolding of the unforeseen was everything. Turned wrong way around, the relentless unforeseen was what we schoolchildren studied as "History," harmless history, where everything unexpected in its own time is chronicled on the page as inevitable. The terror of the unforeseen is what the science of history hides, turning disaster into an epic (pp.113—114).

And that is precisely the Zionist message: the unexpected can always happen. No matter where you

imagine yourself to be at home, your situation is far more precarious than even you know. Jewish life is always insecure. That is what Zionist ideology has believed. And that is what Roth seems to be trying to smuggle into our consciousness in this book.

The Zionist critique is that Jews are never really at home in the Diaspora. Comfortable as it may be, secure as they may imagine it, ultimately things will fall apart for them. Wherever Jews are living really belongs to someone else. They are really not at home, maybe even not really wanted. The Zionist program is to get Jews to wake up to the reality of their situation. In the book, after one particularly trying experience, Roth describes the reactions of the father of the fictional family:

"We knew things were bad," my father told the friends he immediately sat down to phone when we got home, "but not like this. You had to be there to see what it looked like. They live in a dream, and we live in a nightmare" (p.76).

Roth, who began the book by describing America as home in almost rhapsodic terms, ultimately comes to describe it in different terms:

As I am already overwrought... I break down uncontrollably alongside the ticket booth, in plain view of all the gentiles hurrying home from their downtown offices for a carefree spring weekend in Lindbergh's peacetime America, the autonomous fortress oceans away from the world's war zones where no one is in jeopardy except us [*italics mine*] (p.203).

No Zionist ideologue could have put it better. And I am sure it is no accident that the most odious character in the novel is Rabbi Lionel Bengelsdorf, a fictional New Jersey Rabbi who is a staunch anti-Zionist, intensely assimilated. As the novel unfolds, Bengelsdorf collaborates with Lindbergh on an assimilationist program to make Jews feel more at home in America. The first time we meet Bengelsdorf, he is thus described:

In his sermons and talks calling “the development of American ideals” the first priority of Jews and “the Americanization of Americans” the best means to preserve our democracy against “Bolshevism, radicalism, and anarchism,” he frequently quoted from Theodore Roosevelt’s final message to the nation, in which the late president said, “There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is American, but something else also, isn’t an American at all. We have room for but one flag, the American flag” (pg 34).

Bengelsdorf is even more explicit about what he believes and what he does not believe:

“I am here,” Rabbi Bengelsdorf told the News, “to crush all doubt of the unadulterated loyalty of the American Jews to the United States of America. I offer my support to the candidacy of Colonel Lindbergh because the political objectives of my people are identical with his. America is our beloved homeland. America is our only homeland. Our religion is independent of any piece of land other than this great country, to which, now as always, we commit our total devotion and allegiance as the proudest of citizens. I want Charles Lindbergh to be my president not in spite of my being a Jew but because I am a Jew—an American Jew” (pp. 35–36).

Change the words a little bit and you can hear some proud citizen of Berlin saying much the same thing in 1929. Roth establishes that attitude as the great fallacy against which his novel argues. Incidentally, one great hero in the book is another real New Jersey Rabbi Joachim Prinz, an outspoken Zionist.

The book is such a positive and loving picture of Jewish life that some people have wondered if Philip Roth has turned over a leaf—perhaps he is making atonement for his earlier offenses. But as I read this book I suddenly recognized that you can see a pattern in some of his earlier work. In an earlier book, *The Counterlife*, in the section evocatively called

“Christendom.” Roth presents a meditation on the submerged hostility of non-Jews (in this case, the English) to Jews in their midst. He seems to argue that all non-Jews have a residual, if sublimated, disdain for Jews. Reacting to the hostile actions of a British woman in a restaurant, the protagonist’s non-Jewish English wife seeks to dismiss the event as meaningless; to which he responds:

There you are wrong—there you are either innocent or blind in both eyes. She looks over here and what does she see? Miscegenation incarnate. A Jew defiling an English rose. A Jew putting on airs with a knife and a fork and a French menu. A Jew who is injurious to her country, her class, and her sense of fitness. I shouldn’t, inside her mind, be at this restaurant. Inside her mind, this place isn’t for Jews. Yes... she’s probably slow on the uptake, this old babe. In the old days it wasn’t like that, and clearly there are still people who object to Jews in such places... (p. 294).

The entire section seems to be devoted to the protagonist’s shocked discovery of something like this: No matter how nicely they (in this case, the British, but implicitly any culture) treat you, no matter how much you feel at home, they will always hate you and never fully accept you.

Elsewhere in his book Roth has this powerful definition of Zionism itself. In the early part of the twentieth-century Zionist theoreticians said that their project was not merely about the land, but about creating a new Jew, totally different from the one who had lived in the ghettos and shtetlach of Europe. Listen to what Roth says:

Zionism, as I understand it, originated not only in the deep Jewish dream of escaping the danger of insularity and the cruelties of social injustice and persecution but out of a highly conscious desire to be divested of virtually everything that had come to seem, to the Zionists as much as to the Christian Europeans, distinctively Jewish behavior—to reverse the very form of Jewish

existence. The construction of a counterlife that is one's own anti-myth was at its very core. It was a species of fabulous utopianism, a manifesto for human transformation... (p. 147).

In *The Counterlife* Roth celebrates re-imagining one's self as a form of liberation. His protagonist, Nathan Zuckerman (who frequently serves as Roth's fictional alter ego), praises Israel as "a whole country imagining itself, asking itself: What is this business of being a Jew?"

Roth sounds remarkably like the most orthodox of Zionist theoreticians. At its core this remarkable book is Roth's sustained exploration of what it means to be a Jew in the world. The most developed and compelling answer he offers is to come home to Zion. In fact one of the more tender scenes in the book is when his protagonist visits the Western Wall in Jerusalem; he says, "It was more impressive than I'd anticipated." He later describes, almost lovingly, a Jew in prayer at the wall (p. 86). We can't help but being moved. Similarly, in *American Pastoral*, he presents us with the inexorable power of assimilation, as the centrifugal force of American life pulls people away from their Jewish identity. Is that not what Zionist theoreticians have been warning us of all along? Then there is *Operation Shylock*, which is its own powerful sustained meditation on the subject of what it means for Jews to have a state: all the implications and ramifications to returning from exile. And remarkably the fictional conceit of this book is that Roth is an agent of—and taking orders from—the Mossad (the Israel intelligence service).

Perhaps we should have seen all this coming from the time Roth wrote *The Ghostwriter* in 1979. There he reflects on the furor caused by his earlier work. His offer was exactly the one that the father, the protagonist Nathan Zuckerman (yet again serving as Roth's fictional alter ego), charged him with:

Your story, as far as Gentiles are concerned, is about one thing and one thing only. It is

about kikes. Kikes and their love of money. That is all our good Christian friends will see, I guarantee you. It is not about the scientists and teachers and lawyers they become and the things such people accomplish for others. It is not about the immigrants... who worked and saved and sacrificed to get a decent footing in America... (p. 94).

Or as Zuckerman's mother puts it more directly: "Nathan, is this true? That to him it looks like you don't really like Jews very much... Nathan, tell me something... Are you really anti-Semitic?" (p. 108). To which, by way of reaction, is Roth Zuckerman's recognition that "It was not the Irish I had maligned and misrepresented, but the Jews. Of which I was one. Of which, only some five thousand days past, there had been one million" (pp.110—111). The central dynamic of *The Ghostwriter* is a fantasy Roth creates about Anne Frank, wherein his alter-ego Zuckerman becomes obsessed with a young woman who is in fact, or in his imagination, Anne Frank, surviving the Shoah and grown up. Roth causes us to reflect on the difference between what he reconstructs as the assimilated Anne and her more intensely Jewishly identified sister Margot. Implicitly the book is devoted to reclaiming the Jewish core of the drama of Anne Frank and to rescuing it from the universalizing impulse of the arbiters of American culture, so many of them Jews. This failure to maintain the authenticity of one's identity is a specifically Diaspora weakness: inability to acknowledge one's identity, or the fear of revealing it. You can almost hear the denatured Diaspora Jew compared unfavorably to the authentic and healthy self-affirming Jew of the Jewish state. Certainly there was that scene in Portnoy in which the healthy vigorous sabra girl soldier is thrown into encounter with Portnoy, the depicted, impotent visitor from the Diaspora.

Can we see a straight line between this analysis of what Roth declares the most important Jewish book of the twentieth century and the fable he weaves about the fictional young hip Roth in Lindbergh's

America? And in truth this analysis does not deviate an iota from the standard Zionist assertion of the untenability of Jewish life in the Diaspora. And, in truth, now that we see this pattern in Roth we can see that *Goodbye Columbus*, itself, reads like another facet of Zionist thought: the invective of Zionist polemics against Jews in the Diaspora. One dimension of Zionist ideology (as for example in Shmaryahu Levin's *Childhood in Exile*) teaches that life in the Diaspora makes Jews degenerate, stultified, materialistic, cut off from values or, at the least, terminally bourgeois. And aren't those exactly the Jews Roth has given us in *Goodbye Columbus*? Zionists spoke of the "unnaturalness" of Jewish life in the Diaspora. And can we not suggest that it is that unnaturalness that is limned in such devastating detail in Roth's earliest work?

We live in a particular moment in Jewish life. Throughout the 20th century you could find vigorous presentations of the Zionist case. The Jewish world was awash in Zionist ideological debate, journals of Zionist thought, Zionist pamphlets, Zionist books. Today you can find precious little of that. That whole sector has fallen almost silent. Some say we live in a post-Zionist moment. In Israel to be told that you m'kashkesh b'Tziyonut (blather on Zionistically) is to be subject to derision. We don't hear Zionist ideological discussion. Hardly anyone is representing the case for Zionism. Where can you go for a good presentation of the Zionist position these days? Amazingly enough, the *New York Times* best-sellers list!

What a remarkable turn of events. We all know Roth writes novels of ideas. It turns out for a while they have been Zionist ideas. Maybe Roth is an agent of the Mossad or at least of the World Zionist Organization. No matter what, may he be granted many more years of Zionist ideological productivity, strength, continued skill, and commitment to the cause. And may he continue to teach the lesson that all of us need to be reminded of. ■

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MJ ROSENBERG

Hebron Horrors

blow my fuse and start screaming at her....She's screaming back that they are Arabs and should be killed...and the father, poor guy, says, with helpless eyes, 'We're used to it, we've been here a long time now, it's alright.' "

A third soldier spoke of the day a group from abroad came to visit Hebron for the Jewish holidays. "One morning, a fairly big group arrived, around fifteen Jews from France. They were all religious Jews. They were in a good mood, really having a great time, and I spent my entire shift following this gang of Jews around and trying to keep them from destroying the town. They just wandered around, picked up every stone they saw, and started throwing them at Arabs' windows, and overturning whatever they came across.

"There's no horror story here: they didn't catch some Arab and kill him or anything like that, but what bothered me is that maybe someone told them that this is one place in the world where a Jew can take all of his rage out on Arab people, and simply do anything. Come to this Palestinian town, and do whatever they want, and the soldiers will always be there to back them up. Because that was my job, to protect them and make sure that nothing happened to them." Note that this soldier said that he had no "horror story" to tell, just an ordinary day for soldiers, not to mention Palestinians, in Hebron. And that is, of course, the greatest horror. That is why Hebron is significant. In one neighborhood, in one city, on any given day, anyone can experience the occupation at its worst—terrible for the Palestinians and terrible for the Israelis too.

The Sharm el-Sheikh summit was a start toward a full ceasefire and the end of the Intifada. But it won't change much in Hebron or in the rest of the West Bank either. As for Gaza, Ariel Sharon is getting out. That is if extremists in the Knesset, and settlers very much like their brethren in Hebron, let him. But a start is certainly better than the status quo. If anyone tells you that the status quo is tolerable, just tell them about Hebron. ■

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