

## ☐ LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

While the transition from LZA to Ameinu had been in the planning stages for a long time, we finally took the wraps off Ameinu and introduced this old-new organization to the public a little over a year ago. For that reason alone, this is a good opportunity to reflect on what we have accomplished thus far and where we are headed.

With our tagline declaring: “Liberal Values, Progressive Israel”, we have set for ourselves a lofty goal: to help liberal American Jews develop a personal relationship with progressive Israel. Built upon the historical base of 100 years of Labor Zionism in America, we have chosen a wide range of programs and methods to achieve that objective.

One obvious approach has been through advocacy around the issues that matter to our membership and followers. In her article on page four, Judy Gelman touches upon some of our significant achievements, including coalitions we have built with other Jewish organizations; speaker tours with leading Israeli politicians like Ami Ayalon; and our unique contribution to American Jewish discourse regarding the Gaza withdrawal. In addition, you, as an Ameinu member, have a “place at the table” in the organized American Jewish community through our participation in the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, AIPAC, JCPA (Jewish Council on Public Affairs) the AZM (American Zionist Movement) and others.

People often ask me to explain the difference between Ameinu and other – what I would call, “left of center” – American Jewish organizations. Depending on the specific organization, I would provide different examples, but the main one is that many of those other American Jewish organizations are only focused on the issue of peace between Israel and her neighbors. While this issue is certainly important to Ameinu, we see Israel as a place with many other aspects and challenges. To that end, Ameinu has established strategic relationships with two Israeli organizations – NISPED and YEDID – that we believe exemplify the best of grass roots activism in Israel. As the article by Simmy Ziv-el on

Liberal Values  
**AMEINU**  
Progressive Israel  
114 West 26th Street Suite 1006  
New York NY 10001  
t 212.366.1194 f 212.675.7685  
www.ameinu.net

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page three explains, it is our objective to support their efforts through financial assistance, educating American Jews and volunteering our skills and labor to their endeavors.

There is no question that the best way to personally connect with progressive Israel is to go visit it yourself. For the past two Decembers, over 100 people have participated in our Ameinu Mission to Israel. I believe we provide a special opportunity for people to get off the “beaten tourist path” and interact with Israelis creating a better Israel, as the article by Steve Weinberg on page six describes.

A key element of the Ameinu approach is providing programming, content and enrichment in many forms. This includes local activities in both existing and new communities, as listed in the article on page six. An important part of this programming is that it is not focused only on our members but is also part of an outreach to the broader Jewish community. For example, we have partnered with synagogues and other Jewish organizations to bring speakers to audiences who normally do not always hear from progressive Israelis. We also do not rely only on “in-person” programming, as we have used the web to bring quality content to our members and followers. Our weekly e-newsletter and the Ameinu website publish new articles and items of interest on a weekly basis and the response has been very gratifying. The numbers tell the story: we hosted over 70,000 visitors to the site in the first year.

To continue the theme of content, after a period of inconsistent publication, we have hired a new editor and renewed regular publication of our print journal, the Jewish Frontier, as well as the newsletter that you hold in your hands. Through all of these media of communication, we will strive to keep our members and supporters informed and updated on the news and issues of the day.

While it may be a cliché to say that “the future is our children,” we not only believe that but practice what we preach. Ameinu helped found and continues to fund the Union of Progressive Zionists, an exciting campus organization that you can read more about on page four. In addition, Ameinu supports Habonim Dror North America, the progressive Zionist youth movement along with its seven summer camps throughout North America and its four Israel youth and student programs.

With the recent election of the first Ameinu board of directors (see complete list on page ten) we are on the path towards the integration of new leadership with our veterans who continue to contribute to the success of the organization. I invite anyone reading these words to contact Jamie Levin, our executive director (executive@ameinu.net) or me (kennethbob@gmail.com) and ask how you can get involved with Ameinu and help us fulfill our mission.

**Kenneth Bob**  
*National President*

## WHY PARTNER?

By **Simmy Ziv-el, Vice President and Chair**  
**Israel Connections Committee**

At first glance it may seem odd that the renewed and reborn Ameinu has undertaken to partner with two Israeli organizations, Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development (NISPED) and YEDID, so early in the rebirth process. After all, one might posit, shouldn't we first get our own house in order with respect to organizational functioning, adequate funding, consistent policy making and so forth before we start worrying about other organizations? The purpose of this short article is to explain the rationale for the creation of Ameinu's Israel Connections Committee, our decision to seek Israeli partners and the reasons for our first foray with these two organizations in particular.

Israeli society has changed dramatically over the past decade in general and over the past two years in particular. This, in turn, has jumbled the political landscape in ways we were unlikely to anticipate as recently as 10 years ago. These changes have occurred on both axes that drive all political activity, namely the Israel-Palestinian axis and the social and economic policy axis.

On the first axis, as we have seen with the formation and success of Kadima, the old left-right divide between Labor and satellites and Likud and satellites has dissolved, with a realignment that is more accurately defined as pragmatists vs. ideologues. On the second axis, we now see many parties competing to represent Israel's growing underclass: in the elections, three parties that did well – Shas,

the new Pensioner's Party and the Labor Party headed by Amir Peretz – all claim to represent Israel's poor.

As a result of this jumble, the political parties, including Ameinu's historic ideological home, the Israel Labor Party, are no longer the exclusive wall-to-wall embodiments of all that the term “Labor Movement” once connoted.

I therefore believe that as a Diaspora-based, values-driven organization we need to create connections with grass roots organizations that embody the values we purport to represent. Political organizations are dynamic but our values should be eternal. This does not mean that we should not have organizational and political ties with the Israel Labor Party. Of course we should, and will: we are not naive about the importance of political power. But for our membership and target membership, a living relationship with YEDID and NISPED can be personally meaningful and very effective. This, in turn, will deepen our involvement with both Israel and Ameinu.

*For more information about the activities of Nisped and Yedid please visit [www.ameinu.net](http://www.ameinu.net)*

## AMEINU SUMMER 2006

*President* Kenneth Bob

*Executive Director* Jamie Levin

*National Staff* Brendon Nafziger

*Newsletter Editors* Jamie Levin and  
Brendon Nafziger

*Thank you to everyone who helped edit and proof-read the newsletter: Ken Bob, Nomi Colton-Max, Brad Rothschild, and Andrew Taylor.*

## AMEINU'S VOICE IS HEARD ON CRUCIAL POLICY ISSUES

By Judith Gelman, Vice President and Chair  
Policy and Advocacy Committee

Ameinu's Policy and Advocacy Committee jumped right into action as the transition from LZA to Ameinu began in 2005. About a year ago, as part of a coalition of Jewish groups promoting more active involvement by the Bush administration in pushing Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, we sent representatives to meet with Elliot Abrams, who was then Special Assistant to the President for Near East and North African Affairs. Soon after that, we sponsored Israel Labor Party candidate Admiral Ami Ayalon's speaking tour in connection with the "People's Voice" peace initiative.

Last spring, as the Disengagement from Gaza loomed, we commissioned a survey of American Jewish attitudes towards Israel's unilateral action. This survey received very good press coverage and put Ameinu's new name in the public eye for the first time. Our survey, showing strong American Jewish support the disengagement and future negotiations, was the much-needed counterargument to Zionist Organization of America's claims that American Jews opposed the move.

From Amir Peretz's ascendancy in the Labor Party and Yassir Arafat's death to Ehud Olmert's becoming acting Prime Minister, this year has been volatile, even by Israeli standards. For the many months leading up to and following the disengagement, the Policy and Advocacy Committee mostly reacted to

developments in Israel. To position ourselves for a more active posture in the future the Committee put together two internal general policy platforms to guide us: one on Israel and one on American domestic policy. Our goal is to have at least one US domestic policy issue and one Israeli domestic policy issue as our focus for advocacy in the coming year.

## PROGRESSIVE ZIONISTS ORGANIZE ON CAMPUS

By Mairav Zonszein, UPZ Director

The Union of Progressive Zionists kicked off the academic year with its second annual conference from September 16 – 18, 2005. The student leadership conference, entitled "Vision for a Progressive Israel," convened one hundred students and activists from across the United States and Canada for a weekend at the Pearlstone Retreat Center in Reisterstown, Maryland. The participants learned from some of the most prominent figures in Israeli and Palestinian peace activism, and formulated regional and national campaigns to further UPZ's goal of promoting peaceful, nuanced, civil and inclusive dialogue on campus regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

During the fall Semester, UPZ's campus groups engaged in a variety of activities, including campaigning for the Hatikva slate in the World Zionist Congress Elections and organizing memorial ceremonies for the tenth anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination.

Numerous movie screenings and dialogue meetings were organized by UPZ campus groups, including screenings of At the Green



Line. Producer Eyal Dimant accompanied his movies at these events at campuses such as NYU, University of Michigan, New Paltz and Clark.

In January, UPZ – in partnership with the Hagshama Department of the World Zionist Organization – brought 40 American Jews aged 18-26 on a UPZ programmed Birthright Israel trip entitled "Peace, Pluralism and Social Justice."

The trip included meetings with Knesset members, a tour of the Wadi Ara with Lydia Eisenberg of Givat Haviva, a meeting with representatives of the Parents Circle-Families Forum, a meeting with Anat Hoffman of the Religious Action Center and a workshop on Israel advocacy with former UPZ activists.

The start of the Spring Semester saw the launching of UPZ's "100 Peace Accords Campaign," in which Jewish students on campuses throughout the United States and Canada began negotiating peace accords with Muslim-American counterparts.

The campaign's goal is to educate and advocate about the urgent need for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The project calls for partnership building between individuals and groups on campus who will research, develop, and negotiate a two-state peace agreement based on model accords and documents such as the Geneva Accord, The Saudi Initiative, the Ayalon-Nusseibeh Principles, and the Road Map.

The project will culminate in a one-day event in Washington in May. Through this project, UPZ aims to strengthen moderate voices on campus calling for dialogue and peace. UPZ aims to further empower its active students through national action and to recruit new students through their involvement in the campaign locally.

Currently, UPZ is one of the sponsors and local organizers of a speaker tour brought by the One Voice Movement. A young Palestinian and Israeli duo of trained speakers have already spoken on campuses in Canada and Washington and are slated to speak in New York, Boston and the Midwest throughout the Spring Semester.

## AMEINU HOSTS POLITICIANS, ACTIVISTS, WRITERS AND MORE ON PROGRAMMING AGENDA

*From building relationships with Members of Knesset, to forging partnerships with Israeli not-for-profits; from hosting speaking tours of leading Israeli journalists and politicians to training the next generation of young activists – this has been a breakthrough year for Ameinu. Below find a sampling of some of the things we did last year, and get inspired for what’s to come in 2006!*

- **Ina Friedman**, a correspondent with the *Jerusalem Report*, gave four lectures in February. Two lectures were delivered at the **Ameinu LA Winter Seminar**, one was delivered to a joint Ameinu-Meretz leadership group in New York and the last took place at the **Manhattan East End Temple**.
- In January, Ameinu leaders took part in the first ever **UN Holocaust Memorial** at the General Assembly building in New York. The memorial was organized by the **Conference of Presidents** of Major American Jewish Organizations.
- In December, **Judge Stephen Adler**, President of the **Israeli Labor Court**, briefed a large audience about labor rights and the status of migrant workers at the Ameinu offices in New York City. Judge Adler’s speech was co-sponsored by the National Committee for Labor Israel.
- In November, **Martin Ben-Moreh**, the director general of Meitar the College for

## AMEINU MISSIONS TO ISRAEL 2006: ISRAEL THE PROGRESSIVE LANDSCAPE

By Steven Weinberg, Vice President and Chair  
Mission to Israel Committee

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This past winter, Ameinu hosted its most successful Mission to Israel ever. Seventy-five participants from across North America joined us to experience Israel and explore the challenges facing progressive Israelis as they work to promote peace and better their society.

Bringing our participants together with today’s Israel is a difficult task. But Ameinu did what it does best. We connected American Jews, with leading Israeli grass-roots activists, thinkers and politicians. During our five days of touring, we wanted the participants to gain real, first-hand understanding of Israeli social justice activism; the Peace Process; the contemporary Kibbutz movement; and the struggles of our ideological ally, the Labor Party.

The Mission consisted of:

- A visit to the headquarters of a Bedouin self-help organization in the city of Lakia that is sponsored by the Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development (NISPED), one of Ameinu’s new strategic partners.

- A day spent volunteering with YEDID, a leading Israeli grass-roots self-help and advocacy organization and another Ameinu strategic partner.

- Meeting with leaders of the Labor Party and the World Zionist Movement.

- Trips to a “traditional” farming Kibbutz and an Urban Kibbutz, the exciting future of the Kibbutz movement.

- Time in the Kinneret Cemetery where many Israeli pioneers are buried.

- Conversations with the English editor of Ha’aretz online.

- A tour of the Seam Line, a major part of the “security fence” that cuts through several Jerusalem neighborhoods.

Perhaps the greatest testimony to the unique perspective that Ameinu provided to its Mission participants was that even our tour guides and bus drivers had to admit that we took them to places that they had never seen!

The Israel Connections Committee of Ameinu is developing meaningful relationships with our Israeli partners aimed at year-round programming and interaction. Next year’s Ameinu Mission to Israel will build upon what our last two missions have accomplished and will further perfect Ameinu’s ability to facilitate the development of personal relationships between Israeli and American Jews.

Judaism, briefed a joint Ameinu/Meretz audience about the status of cultural Judaism in Israel.

- In November, Ameinu and the New Israel Fund co-sponsored a **Rabin Memorial**. The award-winning Israeli film **Out for Love, Be Back Shortly** was screened and the Director, **Dan Katzir**, was available for questions. Chicago hosted their own Memorial event with the screening of **Chaim Yavin’s** breakthrough documentary **Land of the Settlers**.

- In November, **Miri Gold**, a reform rabbi who is fighting the **Israeli Supreme Court** for official recognition, briefed Ameinu Detroit about her case. Miri also answered questions for national members via teleconference.

- In November, Housing Minister **Isaac Herzog** briefed Ameinu leadership about the aftermath of disengagement.

- In November, **Vivian Silver of NISPED** (the Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development), an Israeli not for profit that promotes social justice and economic development, spoke about Tikkun Olam. Vivian spoke to UPZ college students at NYU and Ameinu members in Manhattan. NISPED is a strategic partner of Ameinu.

- In October, Chicago hosted a Gala **‘100 Years of Zionism’** celebration.

- In October, New York Ameinu leaders met with **Ron Werber**, one of the leading election strategists of the Israel Labor Party.

*Continued on next page...*

• In October, **Amnon Hadary**, author of the recently released book *But Is It Jewish? Affirmations of an Unrepentant Zionist*, toured New York, Chicago, Washington and Pennsylvania on behalf of Ameinu.

• In September, the **Union of Progressive Zionists** (UPZ) hosted its **annual conference** in Maryland with over 100 student activists in attendance.

• In August, Los Angeles hosted its **Summer Seminar** which featured **Professor Ari Nadler** of Tel-Aviv University. Prof. Nadler's discussion focused on the disengagement plan.

• In July, **Amal Elsana-Alh'jooj**, the director of **AJEEC**, the Arab-Jewish Center for Equality, Empowerment and Cooperation, spoke to an Ameinu audience in New York. She spoke about Bedouin empowerment in the Negev.

• In May, Ameinu Detroit hosted **Daniel Levy**, one of the chief negotiators of the **Geneva Initiative**, and **Rafi Dajani** of the **American Taskforce on Palestine**.

• In April, **Labor MK Colette Avital** briefed Ameinu LA members at their **annual seminar** on disengagement and steps toward peace.

• In April, peace activist and former chief of internal security **Ami Ayalon** made a cross country tour on behalf of Ameinu. Ami spoke to policy makers, newspapers, lobbyists and state department personnel as well as local community leaders and members of Ameinu. Ami made stops in New York, New Jersey, Washington, and Los Angeles.

## EYE ON ISRAELI CULTURE

By Steven Hancoff

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*Excerpts from a longer article that appears on the Ameinu website.*

The Israeli music scene is, to my ear, the most dynamic in the world. I'm not talking here about the rightly celebrated Perlemans, Zuckermans, et al., although there are plenty of world renowned Israeli classical musicians and composers.

Israel has so many great contemporary singer/songwriters: Chava Alberstein, Achinoam Nini, Shlomi Shaban, David Broza, Ehud Banai, Matti Caspi, Shalom Chanoch, Arik Einshtein and on and on. Melodies are so often imaginative, harmonies intricate; chord structures interesting, technical production qualities first-rate. Topical songs are poignant rather than accusatory or harsh. Has anybody heard the words Achinoam Nini set to the music of Bach's Ave Maria? "Hey there, Maria... things are looking pretty bad down here. . ."

Just as groundbreaking to me is the instrumentation, which is often virtuosic. On a given cut, you might hear a sitar, African percussion, Arabic drums, a classical string quartet, horns and acoustic and electric guitar and bass.

Then there is the resurgence of ancient liturgical music, much of it thought to have been lost, and much of it from the tradition of Jews from Arab lands.

And this does not begin to describe the dance, poetry, drama, jazz and progressive rock scenes. Bat Sheva Dance Troupe danced at Timna, in a performance that was attended by thousands. Avishai Cohen and Geva Alon, to name but two, are as good in their respective fields (jazz trumpet and rock lead guitar) as any.

As it happens, a close friend of mine, painter Howard Fox (Toronto Habonim-Dror 1970's), had a gallery show opening a couple of days after our arrival. To find the address of the gallery, we looked in the Haaretz weekend guide. There were two pages – both in small-print – of that week's openings! There is some great art coming from Israel, a lot of very good art, and tons of, well, art.

And novelists? Shalev, Yehoshua, Grossman, Agnon, Oz, Megged (and I know I am omitting plenty), from a population of 6 million people!

It's an amazing outpouring of extraordinary creativity.

Then there is the physical Tel Aviv itself. Of course, there is the Mediterranean beach front. But more than that, by virtue of its extensive Bauhaus architecture, parts of Tel Aviv have been designated, and therefore protected, as UNESCO World

Heritage sites. Walking more or less aimlessly around Tel Aviv, we could not help but be struck by how the city, once ramshackle, is becoming beautiful. For example, the old Florentine neighborhood, adjacent to the more upscale Neveh Tzedek, until recently was a dilapidated warehouse and housing district for foreign workers. No more. Now, I suppose because rents are less expensive than in many other neighborhoods, Florentine is becoming a residential haven for university students. And new galleries, shops, bookstores and cafes are springing up all the time. Adjacent to Florentine, a bit further away from Neveh Tzedek, is Shapira, also full of warehouses and small car repair joints. Ehud Banai, whose studio is in Shapira, explained to me that Shapira is "still the East Village. Florentine is Soho." And Shapira too is beginning to come alive as a more welcoming neighborhood, with more commodious apartments and interesting places for people to gather.

Let me not forget food. The Israel of falafel, humus, and shwarma is now an anachronism. The tradition that on graduating from the army many Israelis travel for six months to a year -- most often to Asia or South America because they are less expensive and more exotic destinations than Europe or America -- means that young Israelis have tasted cuisine from everywhere, and they have not only brought these foods home, but also combined them in new and delicious ways, as part of the ongoing Israeli cultural renaissance.

**AMEINU MEMBERSHIP  
ELECTS NEW BOARD  
OF DIRECTORS**

*In January the results of the Ameinu Board of Directors election were announced. A substantial number of members participated in the first ever internal Ameinu elections. We are pleased to announce the 2006-2008 Board of Directors which is comprised of new and veteran activists alike.*

- Kenneth Bob** *President*
- Judy Gelman** *Vice President and Chair of the Executive Committee*
- Martin Taft** *Vice President Communications*
- Simmy Ziv-El** *Vice President Programming*
- Gordon Silverman** *Vice President Fundraising*
- Nomi Colton-Max** *Vice President Membership and Outreach*
- Samuel Norich** *Vice President*
- Steven Weinberg** *Vice President*
- Harriette Leibovitz** *Secretary*
- Barbara Zabitz** *Treasurer*
- Jeffrey Mallow** *Immediate Past President (ex officio)*
- Alex Sharon** *Mazkir, Habonim Dror (ex officio)*

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Stephane Acel   | Daniel Mann     |
| Ben Cohen       | Aviva Phillips  |
| Daniel Fleshler | Brad Rothschild |
| Ted Friedman    | Jeremy Salinger |
| Jerry Goodman   | Lee Silverglade |
| Nomi Jay        | Hiam Simon      |
| Norman Kane     | Ettie Taft      |
| Haya Laufer     | Andrew Taylor   |
| Avi Lyon        |                 |

**FROM THE FORWARD: BERNIE WEISBERG, LABOR ZIONIST (OBITUARY)**

**By Anthony Weiss**

Bernie Weisberg, former national director of Young Judea and the Labor Zionist Alliance, died on February 22nd at the age of 82.

Born in Maine, Weisberg attended Yeshiva University as an undergraduate and considered becoming a rabbi. However, when the school newspaper refused to publish an editorial he had written that supported the establishment of a Jewish state, Weisberg decided to forgo a rabbinical career. He was in the midst of studying for a doctorate in literature at New York University when he left to become national director of Young Judea in 1955. In 1974, he became assistant director of the LZA (renamed Ameinu in 2003), and two years later he was appointed national executive director.

In 1980, he married fellow Labor Zionist Bea Chankin Weisberg and moved to Los Angeles. He became executive director of Los Angeles office of the LZA. In 1985, Weisberg became the local director of the American Zionist Movement, and remained with the organization until the office closed in 1990. He then retired.

Even in retirement, Weisberg remained active in Jewish affairs. He served as president of the Los Angeles chapter of the LZA, served on the board of the Los Angeles Jewish

Federation, and participated in a number of other local Jewish organizations.

One of Weisberg’s legacies is that the Labor Zionist movement remains influential in Los Angeles. His wife, currently executive director of the Los Angeles chapter of Ameinu, told the Forward that when Weisberg moved to Los Angeles he was adamant that the LZA “must be involved where the power is: the Jewish Federation.” The organization followed his suggestion, and Chankin Weisberg said that to this day, “everybody thinks we’re 20 times bigger than we are, because we come out.”

Weisberg is survived by his wife and by two children and two grandchildren from a previous marriage.



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- Couple Membership (\$60)*
- Sustaining Membership (\$100)*
- I would like to contribute an additional \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Ameinu Development Fund.**

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**Ameinu**  
**114 West 26th St, Suite 1006**  
**New York, NY 10001**  
**USA**

Tel: 212.366.1194  
Fax: 212.675.7685  
executive@ameinu.net  
www.ameinu.net

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