



We Were Dreamers
Israel
June 2015

Beyond the Dream



Beyond the Dream

Israel revisited



DREAMERS

This book is about Dreamers. Young Jewish people who in the racial turmoil of Southern Africa in the '70's and '80's channeled their hopes for a better, fairer world into their dreams for the young State of Israel. 30 years later what became of those dreams and what has become of the Dreamers?



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The 'Dreamers' Photobook

The Journey

The Dreamers project was intended as a nuanced, multi-dimensional exploration of a broad range of themes and narratives, an imaginative alternative to a conventional Israel "mission."

This record of the program, creatively assembled by Robbie Cowan with the help of several other participants, reflects something of the uniqueness of the experience.

Many thanks to Julian Resnick for inspired hadracha, Gary Sussman for tireless support, Israelexperts for smooth organization, and all my fellow Dreamers for making the journey a dream-like reality.

Stephen Pincus, December 2015

The 'Dreamers' Photobook

Over five short days in June 'We the 'Dreamers' covered a huge amount of ground; geographically, intellectually and emotionally.

On returning from Israel, I knew that I wanted to find some way to capture the richness of our experience and the connection we share with Israel and with one another. This photobook is an attempt to do just that

I was only able to assemble this account of our trip thanks to Gene Teeger's wonderful photographs, Sheryl Schkolne's detailed notes and Richard Schwartz's valuable insights.

Robbie Cowan, December 2015



We Were Dreamers

Israel June 2015



Return and reflection

HOME. LAND. PEOPLE.

The Jewish Agency was unquestionably at the centre of the project to create a Jewish homeland. From 1908 it was the primary mechanism for acquiring land in British Mandate Palestine, for organising and promoting 'aliyah' and for providing the co-ordinating framework to challenge and ultimately seek the end of the British mandate. It would ultimately provide the organisational infrastructure for the new State of Israel.

Land. At the centre of the political, military and moral conflicts that Israel faces today is the question of a land claimed by two people and controlled by one. Who is the native and who is the settler and how do thousands of years of history intersect in this place and at this moment? What is clear, is that these questions, nearly 70 years on, pose fundamental questions for the future of Israel as a Jewish homeland and as a democratic modern state.

ISRAEL AND SOUTH AFRICA

For South Africans the question of how a single land is shared amongst different people resonates with familiarity.

Gidi Shimoni notes 'Herein alone lies the relevance of comparison (of South Africa) with Israel, for it must be acknowledged that there is a large political and civic sector of Israel which, for reasons of fundamentalist religious faith or zero-sum survivalist strategy, is obdurately intent on perpetuating and buttressing this occupation regime as a permanent de facto annexation. This sector is assertively represented by several ultra-nationalist and national- orthodox religious parties in the present government. Theirs is manifestly a policy and vision that replicates the theory and praxis of the reformed phase of South Africa's apartheid policy, which was adopted as a survivalist strategy but ultimately abandoned out of enlightened realism, if not moral compunction.

Characteristically, they too cast about for spurious arrangements calculated to ensure Jewish control and privilege – for example non-sovereign cantonized autonomy, devoid of Israeli political rights, or relegation of citizenship and electoral rights to the adjacent Kingdom of Jordan'.



1948

"The State of Israel is established! This meeting is adjourned."

*David Ben-Gurion
14 May 1948*



2015

In the Ben-Gurion room of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem



The Big Issues

Perspectives from:
Alan Hoffman - CEO Jewish Agency
Natan Sharansky - Chairman Jewish Agency
Rabbi Yehoshua Engelman
Jonny Ariel
Professor Gidi Shimoni

With timely interventions from Edwin Erlich!



AUTO EMANCIPATION

Once I believed I needed to live in that place. Then
I believed I could live in that place, subject to one
or two conditions. Then I believed I could never
live in that place. Then I stopped believing,
Now I could, but don't really want to; guilt
is gone from yes, guilt is gone from no.
I'm tired of all this back and forth; just
let me be. You don't know what a
pain it is, always to come from
elsewhere.

Richard Schwartz



Where the Rocks Tell Stories

Jerusalem, where each stone tells a story.

Rocks with echoes from past millennia that shape how things are today - rights and loyalties, beliefs and actions.

So smart are these wizened stones that they tell different people different stories. It all depends what they wish to hear.





Wall to wall



Lefr: Seated at the Southern Wall of the 2nd Temple

Above: The security wall which separates Israel and Palestine



In a bit of a State!

Our first stop, Palestine.

Carved from an ancient map of this ancient land is the patchwork quilt of Palestine.

Palestine!! The cause celeb of the 21st century. The albatross that weighs heavily on Israel's neck. The other side of the story which pierces our collective conscience, when we dare to let it.

Palestine. The very word sticks in the throats of those who call it Samaria and Judea. Nevertheless to 1.3 million people who live on the Jordan River's West Bank this place is home. Palestine, where people dream of the future, mourn the past and fear the present. Where olive oil and blood mingle in the dust. A country, a state, an occupied territory. Whatever its status, it is a land with a people.



Hope springs

On a dusty hilltop, with one man's vision and a wad of Qatari funding, a town is built. A new Tel Aviv or Modiin, architectural, sophisticated, urban and urbane. At Rawabi, Palestine says to Israel whatever you can do we can do too. We too have dreams.... we too are dreamers.

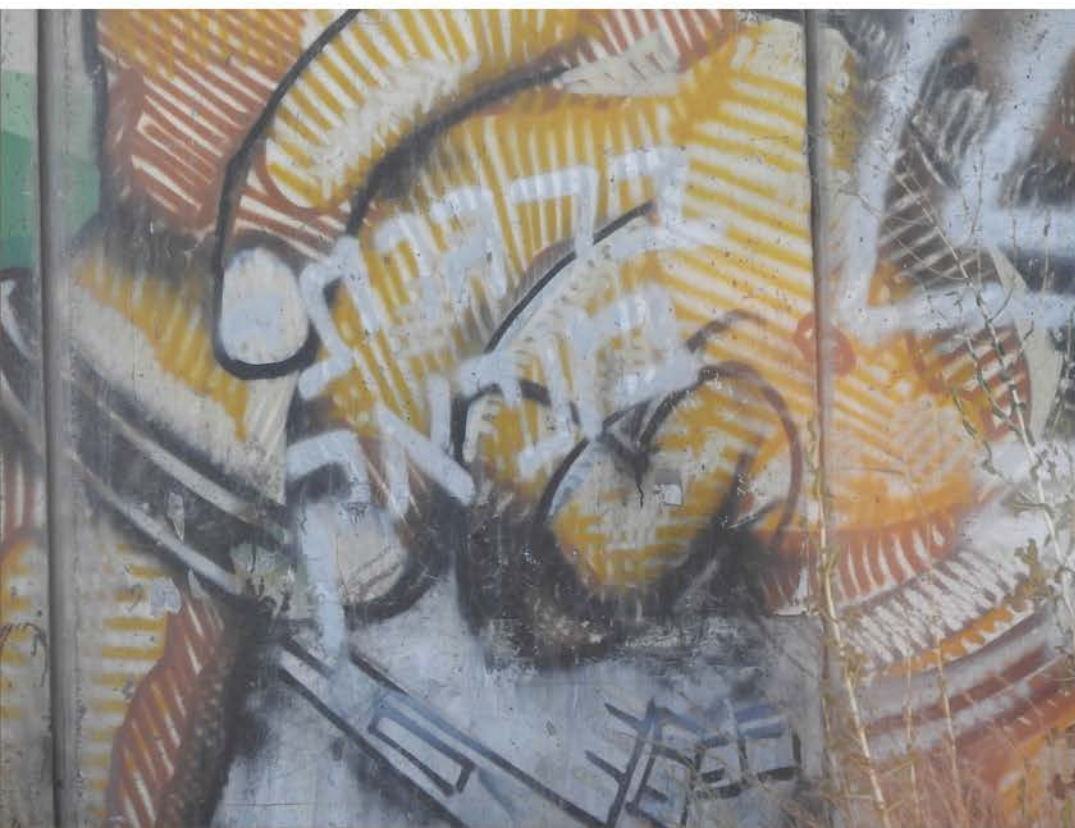




RAWABI

'Our vision is to materialise the Palestinian State through the creation of projects such as Rawabi. We want people to believe in the future. We want people to believe peace. We believe in a two state solution and we want to see that materialise. I hope I will be able to share that with my children, but under the present political impasse and the freezing of the political process I don't see this happening.'

Bashar Al Masri - CEO



.....And hope sometimes fades

The 'Wall' represents the endless challenge of balancing the real existential fear that marks the daily life of so many Israelis, with the inalienable rights of Palestinians to live in freedom and dignity.



Marwan Barghouti

مروان البرغوثي

15.4.2002 - 15.4.2007

15.5.09

17.09.2011

15.4.2010

DEATH TO ISRAEL!



RAM

Arabic calligraphy

**'If you want to make peace
you don't talk to your friends.
You talk to your enemies.'**

Moshe Dayan

A meeting with Nabil Shaath

Many might regard Nabil Shaath, former Foreign Minister of Palestine and lifelong member of Fatah, an enemy. Even if this were true, in our frank encounter with him, he seems to be an enemy worth talking to. Warm and open, even peace seeking and West leaning. He represents that part of the Palestinian narrative that talks of Oslo, of two states living side by side, of mutual goals and common enemies. Yet, it's only one part of a complex narrative. And there is no telling who controls how the story will unfold or who it will be that completes it.





In Ramallah

Past Members of Habonim meet the former Foreign Minister and Palestinian Chief Negotiator.





رسالة

عبد الحكيم
الملك
الملك

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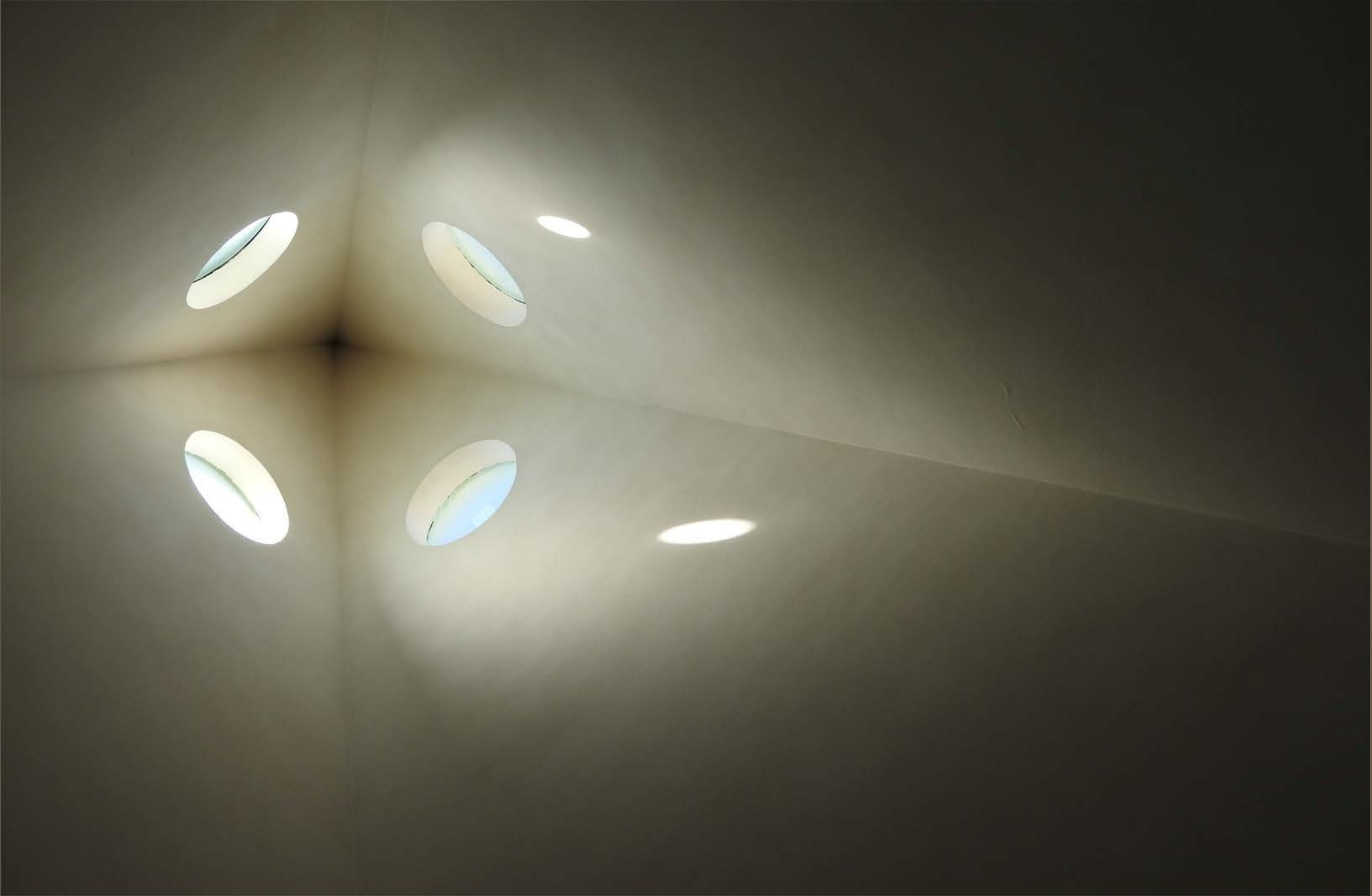


PALESTINE

WAR CRIMINALS

NO NEW NEGOTIATIONS

The
pales
only



On three things is the world sustained, justice, truth and peace
Pirkei Avot

People of the Book

The Supreme Court of the State of Israel

In conversation with Asher Grunis former Chief Justice.

Possibly unique in its accessibility, the Supreme Court's fifteen judges draw on a patchwork of law (Ottoman, British and Israeli).

Steeped in Jewish history and values, the Supreme Court, shores up the eroding banks of Israeli democracy. It is frequently called upon to protect the rights of citizens and those living under occupation. It now has to protect itself from Government interference in the appointment of judges, to preserve its independence.

Our many texts would be of limited worth were it not for the courage independence and clarity of these fifteen men and women.



On The Seam

At the Mandelbaum gate, the previous divide between East and West Jerusalem. The current divide between West and East.

The Museum on the Seam



Faith

For many years sponsored by a German family the Museum now faces closure.

The family are said to have cut their funding following the last war in Gaza.

Maybe they too have lost faith in the institutions of power

**We love and hate them.
Admire and scorn them.
We trust in them and believe their promises,
as we watch them being led handcuffed
and humiliated.
The exhibition coincides with a time of crisis
in the local and global leadership;
since the outburst of the Arab spring,
a bloody war is being waged in the Middle East
over the shape of the ruling authorities.
In Europe and in Israel leaders are being tried
in court and in the Far East horrendous crimes
are being committed to ensure the safeguard
of the existing leadership.
In these times of confusion, due to the lack
of morality and clear ethical codes on behalf
of a leadership detached from its people,
we face the danger of losing faith
in the institutions of power.**

Raphie Etgar | Curator



And a less obvious seam too.

Perhaps reflecting the very questions it poses, the building which is home to the Museum has it's own story.

The building which today houses the Museum on the Seam is, in fact, owned by the Baramki family. It was designed by Andoni Baramki, then a young Palestinian architect who designed many of Jerusalem's houses. In 1934 he built it and rented it to two Palestinian families who were forcibly expelled from the house in 1948. The Baramki family lived in a rented house nearby and, like hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, were forced to flee their homes in search of temporary safety during the violent spring of 1948. Denied return to their home, the Baramki family lived as refugees in Gaza before moving to the village of Birzeit, north of Ramallah, in 1953. Following Israel's occupation of the West Bank in 1967, all members of the Baramki family with the exception of son Gabi—his parents, brother and sister- managed to obtain Jerusalem ID cards and live in East Jerusalem. Dr Gabi Baramki, who was 18 when his family fled Jerusalem in 1948. A former vice president of Birzeit University, he now lives in Ramallah.

After 1967 when the family was able to cross over to the west side of the city, Gabi's father, Andoni, fought for his right to his house. He went to the Israeli Custodian of Absentee Property, presented the deeds to his house and his identification documents. According to Gabi, "My father, a 6'4" tall man, stood in front of the Custodian and told him: 'I'm Andoni Baramki and I want to return to my house.' The Custodian looked back at him and replied: 'you are absent.'" The family then turned to the court but received no justice there, either. "You will get your house when there is peace," the judge told Gabi's father. People often told Gabi that his father, a very well-known figure in Jerusalem, "stood in front of the house for hours looking at it the way Romeo used to look at Juliet." Andoni Baramki was never allowed to set foot inside his house again. He died in 1972.





ועדת החוץ והביטחון

لجنة الخارجية والأمن

Foreign Affairs & Defence Committee

2750



The Knesset - MK Danny Danon

Now Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations. A master of obfuscation, deviation and avoidance, we can only hope he will be more persuasive at the UN than he was with the Dreamers.







People of the Bus!

Growing up in Habonim meant growing up on buses. Our memories are bus memories. Buses at Onrust, buses in Israel, buses to this seminar or that Veidah. We sang on buses, slept on buses, argued, fought, loved and laughed.

Where the bus was going seemed somehow less important to us. It was our bus and these were our people. Maybe that was why we became Dreamers. The journey was as at least as important as the destination.

With each stop there would be something; to learn, to debate, to marvel at. Always knowing that our time was short, the bus moves on, And so it was with the Peace Land bus.

It is 2015. Nothing has changed and everything has.



The Dreamers



The Dream

At rest alongside the waters of the Kinneret lie the real Dreamers. Those whose thinking and labour were at the heart of what was to become Israel.

More than a homeland they sought to create a new social order, based on equality, fairness and respect. To define a new kind of Jew. Secular, strong, intellectual and determined.

The Challenge

Muki Tzur has inspired many generations of youth movement chaverim, with his social philosophy so deeply rooted in the experience of the Kibbutz.

His uniquely allegorical delivery is at once moving and challenging. Abstract, piercing and personal.

It would be fair to say after spending time with Muki, no one is left untouched.





טייבה כצולסון

אשל דייכלין





Mount Nebo

What we call Israel is only in its beginning...The society gave birth to the state and now the state has to become the society.

One can retire on Mt Nebo and look at the promised land and dream about it. But very few ever cross the Jordan to actually realise the dream - Muki Tzur



The Road to Damascus

As Syria implodes a new set of geo-political complexities and risks unfold on Israel's northern borders. The rise of ISIS and the FSA and the entry of Al Qaeda affiliates threatens the status quo that has existed with Syria since 1973.

Beyond the tended fields lies a war zone and a waste land.



An Uncomfortable Truce

Until quite recently the idea of a 'peace deal' with the Syrians involving Israeli withdrawal from the Golan was a possibility. The proliferation of the Syrian conflict not only makes this impossible but also underlines the strategic imperative to control the higher ground.

The demilitarised zone that has separated Israel from Syria since 1973 is no more. The UN troops have withdrawn from Syria and now observe events from the safety of the Golan.

An uncomfortable truce continues to prevail. At least for now.



PIZZA MOZZARELLA
made in Coffee Annan





Kibbutz Yizreel

Children of the Dream

They came, settled and prospered. A generation of Bogrei Habonim for whom being in this place then and now, was not a matter of dreaming but of what they saw as their responsibility, their duty, their life. And with all the challenges for many it continues to be a beautiful life.

Sacrifice

To the people on Yizreel, Neil Freed and Dudi Silbowitz were family. Loved, respected and always remembered.

Dudi and Neil were also to become deeply embedded in the consciousness of subsequent generations of Habonim chaverim. Their story became our story. Humbled by the commitment of their generation, saddened by the tragedy of their death and inspired by the dreams for which they paid the ultimate price.



Kiibbutz Yizreel uniquely...
echoes the hopes and aspirations of our younger days. Moreover, so many of the chevrai meshek in one way or another played a fundamental role as our own educators and madrichim.





Real and Present Danger

What land for what peace?

Beyond the West bank lies Jordan, and beyond Jordan Iraq.

When the rhetoric is left to one side, there remains a real and vital existential dilemma.

Without peace the future of Israel is uncertain. But would a change in the status quo bring peace or certainty?

And if peace, who in the mayhem that is the Middle East, could guarantee and protect that peace?



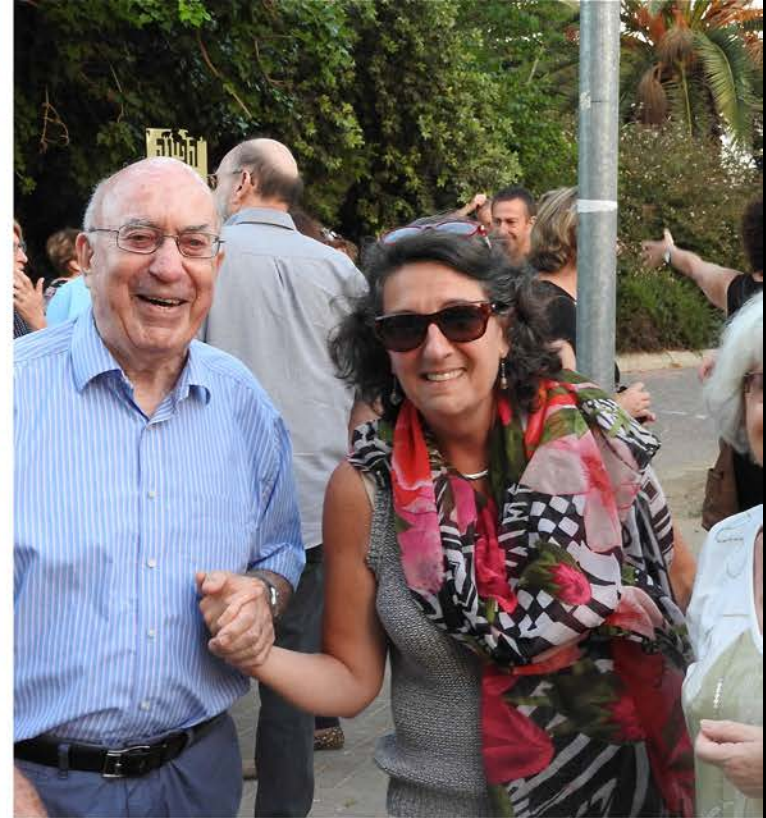


Expert Briefing

In depth discussion with Col Miri Eisen and Col Ron Shatzberg highlighted the complexities and military imperative to seek a peace deal with Palestine. Former Yesha Council Chair outlined the settlers' viewpoint.

There is consensus that a stable and strong Kingdom of Jordan is a fundamental foundation stone of any possible future peace deal. Stability that post 'Arab spring' no one now takes for granted. The risks are great.

Peace is elusive as ever!



Old friends

*Time it was and what a time it
was it was...
A time of innocence, a time of
confidences
Long ago it must be, I have a
photograph, preserve your
memories
They're all that's left you.*

- Paul Simon





Voices of Peace

Abie Nathan's Kol Shalom Peace Ship may have stopped broadcasting many years ago, yet throughout Israel there are many people who champion and fight for an equitable Peace between Israel and Palestine, between Arab and Jew.

In the words of Ari Shavit -

"The great challenge for Israel is that there's an inherent contradiction between our values which are basically democratic, liberal, humane values and the brutal reality we live inand the challenge is to find a way to reconcile them in the best way possible, not to lose our soul and not to lose our values while we defend our lives and protect our future."

Words and actions

We listened to the words of people, as diverse as Yuval Diskin, former Head of Shin Bet, writers Yossi Klein-Halevi and Etgar Keret, film-makers Sigal Yehuda and Mor Loushy, educationalist Ruth Calderon and social activists Didi Maimon and Leora Kessel. Each travel their own path, but in common they share a commitment for change.

These people are part of a broader coalition of Israelis who work hard to steer Israel back to its democratic roots, who seek a fairer society, a resolution of the occupation and a lasting peace, unfashionable though this may be.

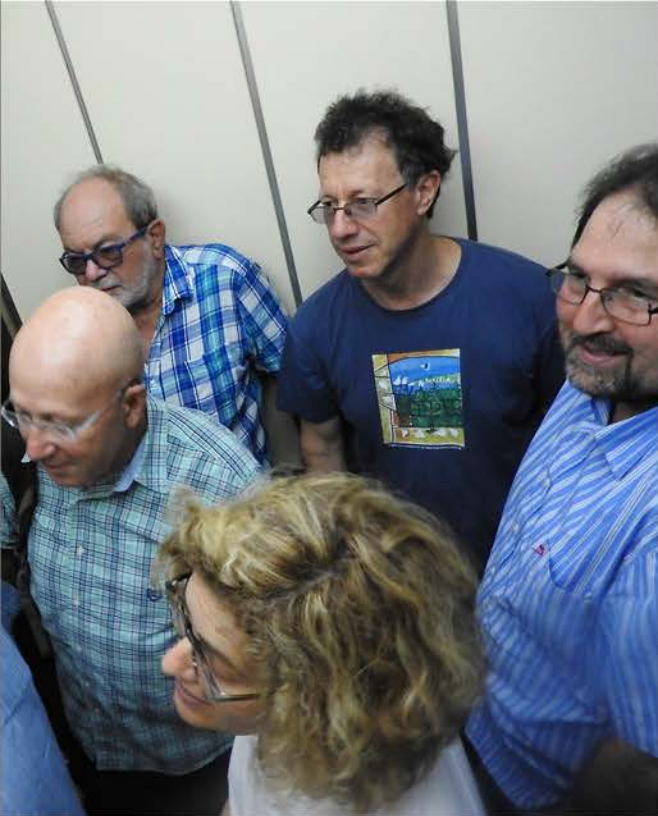


Standing up

As the government moves to consolidate the power of Israel's right-wing, there is a systematic assault on NGO's, anti-occupation organisations and often a demonisation of those seeking peace.

20 years after Oslo, with scant progress, the cycles of violence continue. On both sides the deeds and words of extremism smother the deeds and words of those people who care as deeply for the moral fabric of their society as they do for their own security. They are strong vibrant, committed and numerous. They too are Israel.

Courage in Israel takes many forms.



Down to business

A generation of Israeli entrepreneurs have not only dreamed the impossible, but have found ways to turn those dreams into world class enterprises.

Israel tops the World Economic Forum league table on R&D investment, clearly evident in the 5000 start-ups that operate in Tel Aviv with success stories from Amdocs to WAZE.

AMP law in Tel Aviv hosted a morning in which a number of leading private equity deal-makers and start-up founders shared their perspectives and experiences.





The future is today

Indeed, what makes the current Israeli blend so powerful is that it is a mashup of the founders' patriotism, drive, and constant consciousness of scarcity and adversity and the curiosity and restlessness that have deep roots in Israeli and Jewish history. "The greatest contribution of the Jewish people in history is dissatisfaction,"

Shimon Peres quoted in Start-up Nation



And so.....

The trip was titled 'We were Dreamers'.

Yes, it is true we once dreamed. Dreamed of a better world and dreamed of creating that world in Israel. Maybe it was our tender years that made this all seem so simple back then. Or maybe it was just a different historical moment, a time when everything seemed possible.

In these five days, we understood first hand, the complexity, and the conflicting cocktail of religious and political narratives that make this place, so impossible, so captivating and so beautiful.

If we are still Dreamers, our lot is to dream the impossible dream. Our challenge may be to acknowledge in the words of Muki Tzur.....'what we do with the dream is our problem...because dreaming involves sleep and the Jewish people have to be awake'.
No doubt, these five days left us more awake!



