

HUG Intro - Stephen Pincus

I want to say to each and every one of you – whether you came here today from nearby or very far away - thank you!

Thank you for being here.

It's been quite a journey.

A journey that for many of us began like Gaby Aizenman's – a friend twisted our arm to go with them to a meeting, a seminar, a machaneh.

The sands of Nahoon, of Leaches Bay, of Onrust, may have long disappeared from our sandals. But the silly songs and skits are deeply etched into our souls.

Like the bonfires that Jonny Swerdlow lit on the main mifkad in 1973 to mark the tragic deaths of Dudi and Neil. Which ignited in us a purpose and a passion that has lingered – sometimes faint, sometimes (like today) bright and bold – through our meanderings, our dreams and ditherings, our failures and frustrations, our successes and our sorrows.

Over 300 unique individual journeys in this room – but also a collective story, the story of the Habonim family that connects us.

There are many ways to tell this story. You will read one in this book compiled by Brad Gottschalk, one of the exceptional group of current movement leaders here with us today. A collection of reflections by almost every living Habonim mazkir – 60 in all – from Avi Hechter in 1953 to Mira Rudnick, incoming MK for 2023. It is, as Brad puts it: “a tapestry spanning time, encapsulating changes and similarities over nine decades.”

But what is the thread that holds this tapestry together?

No doubt each of us has our own personal response to this question. And perhaps that in itself is the point.

I found one especially poignant response in these words of Caryn Tamari, MK in 1992: “Working together with Betar and Bnei Akiva taught me **there is not one way.**”

Another is Pam Peled's wistful lament, in last weekend's Jerusalem Post, for the coalition government which showed that “you **can** disagree through discourse, dialogue and dignified discussions.”

And another is the special work of Daniel Hasson, segan MK in 1999, in supporting and bridging Jerusalem's diverse communities.

You will hear shortly from our current mazkir klali – Aaron Kruss van der Heever – a remarkable leader who with his chevre is rebuilding a movement ravaged by a global pandemic, within a less than hospitable community. In a few weeks Aaron will lead the chevre back to Onrust, after a three year hiatus, at Machaneh Hashiva Ha'Baiyta.

Some of us have been fortunate to get to know these incredible young people over the past couple of days on mini-kaleidoscope. Hopefully each of you will find a few moments today to meet them - they will renew your confidence in the movement's future.

This gathering was conceived at a meeting on Kibbutz Yizreel after Kaleidoscope 2017. The idea of marking Habonim's 90th with more than a conventional reunion led to a unique journey of its own.

A five year journey of countless meetings; of plans, preparations, and postings; of websites, newsletters, videos and social media groups; of decisions and revisions which a global pandemic did reverse.

Then came HED: at a time of profound disconnection, over 2,500 chevre from around the world gathered in over 60 richly diverse sessions.

And so to a-guard, mini-kaleidoscope and HUG.

So many chevre have invested so much passion and energy in this journey that mentioning a few will no doubt miss some important contributors. For this, I apologize.

But, on behalf of us all, a huge THANK YOU:

- to Benzie and Kibbutz Tzora for your hospitality
- to manhiggim Wayne and Errol for your leadership
- to rosh HUG Hilary Herzberger for your devotion to every detail
- to madrichim extraordinaire Mark Kedem and Felicity Swerdlow for your creativity and guidance
- to gizbar Mark Finky and organizer Paul Horwitz for your patience and persistence
- to Simmy for your ongoing mentorship and advice
- to Bruce, Cecil, Estelle, Hillary Mayer, Howie, Jackie, John Eliasov, Jonny Zausmer, Maresky, Richard, Shelley, Steve Hellman, Valerie, and the many others who have contributed to the success of the project
- and last but certainly not least – to fellow traveler Dave Bloom for everything – it's a joy and a privilege to work with and learn from you.

The Habonim journey has always been about the future rather than the past.

So – what's next?

A few hours from now, do we all return home, and that's it?

I'm sure many of you have creative ideas of what we could do together.

As a start, I'd suggest three pathways:

1. First, we can walk the talk. Hilary and Bruce and the HUG committee have curated a very special "open space" program for later this morning. We will be exploring a rich and diverse range of projects that Habonim chevre are involved in. We hope that this will lead to collective action.
2. Second, we can support the movement at a moment in time when it most needs that support. It's a precious treasure that has deep meaning for each of us. In a moment we will hear more about that from Wayne and Aaron.
3. And third, we can continue this journey. Over the past few years we have crystallized something quite special. We'd like to hear your ideas for what HED or kaleidoscope or this Habonim community might

look like going forward. Please spend a moment jotting down any thoughts you have about this in the booklet at the registration table or speak to Paul Mirbach who will be collecting these ideas.

Meanwhile - how should we celebrate this milestone?

We know we can't go home again. But can we recapture some of the magic?

We know it's unhealthy to wallow in nostalgia. But should we not permit ourselves just a taste today?

We know that self-satisfaction doesn't become a chaver Habonim. After all, aren't we supposed to be perpetually dissatisfied with the status quo?

But, as we look ahead to the centenary of this amazing movement, it's impossible not to feel awe at what a unique family of builders – OUR family - has built over these past nine decades.

And so, in addition to our usual greetings - Aleh uv'neh! Chazak V'Ematz! Aleh v'hagshem! - just today, let's say:

Chevrei Habonim – Kol hakavod!

Thank you – and have a wonderful day.