C.A.L.L.

Communes At Large Letter

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNES DESK

YAD TABENKIN

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Dear Readers,

By the time you are reading these words, I'm likely to be already rubbing shoulders with community scholars and members of communities from all over the world at the 11th ICSA conference taking place at the Findhorn Ecovillage in Scotland.

The International Communal Studies Association has close ties with the International Communes Desk, boasting mutual members, whilst it's no coincidence that the headquarters of both organisations are situated in Yad Tabenkin near Tel Aviv.

I'm excited and honoured to be representing the Desk, and specifically the Israeli communal scene, and am looking forward to re-engaging with old friends, whilst hoping to establish new contacts worldwide.

As you have surely noticed, to celebrate this International Communities Fest, we have put together a bumper issue of C.A.L.L., with no less than 8 pages more than usual. I hope you'll agree that the material here is too good to be cut, lurking in the virtual recesses of my computer, never to see the light of day again.

In relation to the conference, we have an article by the current President of ICSA, Jan Bang, about his time living on kibbutz in the 1980's and 90's. We also have a piece on the community hosting the event, Findhorn, which celebrates its 50th year of existence.

Elsewhere, we visit communities in Germany, the USA and Latvia, and hear about initiatives to build new communities in Africa.

I'd also like to mention the texts from the ICD Study Group. For the past year we have been discussing ideas such as human nature and community, equal human worth, faith and being emissaries in the wider society. Hopefully, by sharing the texts we used as a basis for our conversations, you, our readers, will be inspired to join us in this stimulating dialogue. Thoughts and responses please.

And finally, I'm also celebrating my own little milestone; I have now been editing C.A.L.L. for a decade. I'd like to thank all those who have supported me through this wonderful experience. A special mention goes to the two Yoel's: Dorkam and Darom, who have been with me every step of the way. If this is indeed to be the last issue to which they contribute material, I offer my thanks for all their hard work, and wish them good health and continued involvement with us at the International Communes Desk.

You can send us your suggestions, corrections, contributions and retributions regarding C.A.L.L., to the usual email address,

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Earlier this year, we received the sad news of the passing of Josef Ben-Eliezer from the Maple Ridge Bruderhof in the USA. Josef was an inspirational figure for all those who knew him. He had a deep love for Israel and all those who work for peace here. We reprint a review of his autobiography which appeared previously in C.A.L.L. (his book can be purchased from http://www.plough.com/he/ebooks/m/my-search), followed by an article written by his son, Efraim, reflecting on their last father and son trip to Israel.

Book Review: My Search by Joseph Ben-Eliezer

No person's life is a simple story. The many stories in this autobiographical memoir, however, paint a picture of a life with far more twists and turns than most. This short, simple, well-written book is the story of the first 30 years of Joseph Ben-Eliezer's life, from his birth in Germany to his decision to join the Bruderhof community.

That, of course, is not half the story. Even though it covers only the first part of the author's life, Ben-Eliezer is involved in many important historical events, both as a child and as a young adult seeking meaning. The bulk of the book describes his experiences as a Jewish boy exiled to Siberia, Uzbekistan and Iran during the Holocaust. This section alone is a fascinating account of the difficulties faced by Polish Jewry at the time, and the harrowing stories of their escapes from the Nazis. Arriving in Palestine as a teenager, Ben-Eliezer then begins his search for a life of values and togetherness. He becomes a farmer, soldier, laborer and revolutionary, embracing pacifism, secularism and Communism along the way. Traveling back and forth between Israel and Europe, he is unable to find community or peace of mind no matter where he goes. In the end he rejects secularism and joins the Bruderhof.

Those looking for a history of orphans in the Holocaust or of the Bruderhof will not find it here. In fact that is one of the book's virtues, constantly pulling you along with Joseph on his journeys without commentary or long-winded descriptions. It takes only an hour or two to read the whole thing. Ben-Eliezer's memoir will probably not give you much insight on how a person comes to live a certain way or on the individual's role in history. There is a sense that the author himself doesn't know why he searches, what he is looking for, or how he finds an answer in the end. Nonetheless his story makes for absorbing reading, hard to put down and harder to forget.

Robin Merkel, Kibbutz Mishol

Sharing in Israel by Ephraim Ben-Eliezer

November 27, 2012

"Is this your first time in Israel? Really? How do you like it?" Then they wait breathlessly for an answer.

I am 39 years old, the son of a Polish Jew who fought in 1948 for the Jewish State. I learned that in Israel you don't take the above question lightly. They are asking for my endorsement of their life, country and policies. After some consideration, I usually said "It's a beautiful country", which it is.

Joseph Ben-Eliezer, second from right, and his son Ephraim, sitting next to him, enjoy a meal at the urban kibbutz, Mishol.

But Israel is more than beaches, mountains and banana groves. It is also more than rocket attacks and bombing raids. When the state of Israel was refounded, there was a clear sense that this wasn't just going to be another country like the other 195 already in existence. There was a great amount of idealism and a longing for justice and brotherhood. Bankers, lawyers and musicians left highly-paid jobs and joined 'ghetto rats' to work the same beautiful soil that their ancestors worked on years ago. The drive for personal gain at the expense of others was frowned upon – surely not by everybody – but it was enough to flavor the entire nation. Together, men and women drained the swamps, made the deserts bloom, and still had enough energy left to dance all night. All this I learned from my father, and together we went to Israel to seek among the ruins for traces of this spirit.

The kibbutz movement, which since 1910 has braved its way through many wars and uncounted hardships, was the obvious place to start. This movement has held aloft the flag of equality and sharing among men and women for over 100 years. Martin Buber famously said, "The Kibbutz is the only Utopia that has not failed". Although the majority of kibbutzim have recently privatized, the leaders of the remaining sharing movement are bravely soldiering on. We were told by some that we should not be so naïve as to think that there is still anything alive here. Let me put it this way: To the

extent that even a few strive to live for equality, the world continues to marvel. This movement continues to be an example to the rest of the world that claims it can't be done. Yes, the sharing is not perfect, but we noticed embers of the original spark, and we were encouraged.

What is more, thousands of 'youth movement' graduates are now seeking to redefine what community and sharing mean. They are setting up small cells of ten people who live together in sharing community. These join together with other cells to form a bigger kibbutz. Unlike the former traditional kibbutz, it often has no distinct address to call home, but is immersed in an urban neighborhood and in the hearts of the members. Their mission? Education. Through proper education, they feel they can change society. They are creating teachers and educators who are making radical changes in the lives of many disadvantaged immigrants, children from poor homes, and in some cases Palestinians and Druze. They hope that some of these children will grow up to form the next generation of teachers and so widen the circles of influence in society. Far from perfect, the vision is amazing and they've been at it now for over 15 years… Will it really change Israeli society? We certainly hope so.

Why should I be interested in these community attempts?

Living in community myself, I know that it is never easy or straight forward. It requires a constant listening to the spirit that moves between people and steering by the wind of the good spirit. It means sacrifice, trust and commitment. It also means balancing home and solid family life with the desire to "change the world…" This means that unless a clear line is drawn on morals and values that we all know are right, our own perversity rots into our work and our mission. Finding this balance is not easy and needs daily re-centering.

Does this Israeli attempt at community have anything to do with us Christians?

Absolutely! We visited one of these communities in Nazareth, close to the place where Jesus gave his first sermon (Luke 4). There he proclaimed the return of property to original owners and the freedom of slaves – in other words: equality and brotherhood. As we discussed this over dinner, they understood instantly. This is not a Jewish / Israeli phenomenon; this is as Christian as it gets and exactly what the first Christians practiced.

So, do I like Israel?

Yes! But with that 'yes' goes a caveat. Jew and Palestinian, religious and secular, rich and poor all need to find a way to live in harmony and true justice. Rather than the constant news feed of individualism and bloodshed, the world needs to hear of Israel as an international leader in cooperation and sharing. My journey, and what I learned is a great encouragement: There are the beginnings of a different way.

I Live with Another Man's Wife

The challenges and rewards of intentional community.

By Matt Conner
http://www.relevantmagazine.com

Actually, I live with three men's wives. Of course, my own is also there, along with the others' corresponding husbands, so it's hardly as scandalous as it could sound. Then again, judging by the response of most people around us - including our families - you'd think I'd left it at the first statement…

Oh yes, the questions: Oh my goodness, what do you do about bathrooms? We have three and manage just fine. How can you possibly have any privacy? The house is plenty big, although you can expect some level of sacrifice there. And money? We all throw into a common purse.

"Wouldn't it be great if we could just say good night and head upstairs rather than having to drive home?" was the commonly stated question among my wife and me and some of our best friends. Another foursome of married couples approached us once they heard we were spinning the idea in our own heads. And after three months of brainstorming and planning, we moved in together.

In this economic climate, and with my job as a part-time pastor, it also helped that my wife and I could live for a few hundred bucks a month - which includes everything from groceries to Internet access. In our scenario, each couple pays the same amount over what we need, giving us a monthly grant to give away to a neighbor in need or a non-profit. We've covered our neighbor's electric bill, given money to a local women's shelter and sponsored a family for Christmas. Communal living has provided our group the ability to be generous.

And even though I enjoy a wonderfully healthy marriage, there are moments when outside support is necessary for my role as a pastor and as a regular person. Within our house, we've enjoyed times of singing together, impromptu prayer sessions and accountability. Some serious hardships have surprised a few in the house, and having close, committed relationships at arm's length eases the pain and provides perspective, reminding us we're in this mission together.

Difficult conversations confronting someone for the things they are (or aren't) doing. Worse yet, being challenged by someone you live with because you're injuring the community with an attitude or behavior. These are the common currency in an economy of communal living. Your heart is exposed. Your best intentions are found lying on the floor. And there's no place to hide in the open garden you've created.

When forgiveness flows within the community, the individuals within finally come alive. A resolved conflict breathes new life into the house, and it's clear that all the verses I was forced to memorize as a kid regarding settling things and not allowing bitterness to take root actually held meaning for real life.

However, finding God in the community usually isn't about times of praying together or staying up all night worshipping - at least not in our house. For us, it's about finding God in the mundane approaches to daily living together - cooking and cleaning, chore lists and game nights, crowding around for a Bourne marathon or our weekly obsession with Lost.

We've centered more discussion on chores and how to treat specific belongings than anything else. "Would you mind bringing back the entire set of dishes up in your room?" "Can you please remove your laundry within 14 days of drying it?" Of course, these statements sometimes come without the proper precursors of politeness, leading to moments of tension between the party concerned and the party who could care less. And how is someone to respond when others living in the same place mistreat his or her possessions? It's a lesson in ownership - that offers another place of forgiveness.

It's in these daily things, these little things, that love truly takes root. It's in the unglamorous, boring routine that your heart really begins to change. I had a different mindset when we first began - believing that living together with other Christians in the same life stage would lead to all-night talks about how church should really be and how we would inspire one another.

But I was wrong - about a lot of things. I had no idea how selfish I could be and how hard parts of my heart were. I didn't know I could be loved and forgiven in such deep, meaningful ways. And I also didn't realize there could be such joy in sharing life so intimately with others.

When it's all said and done, living in community seems to be as honest an approach as you can get to living out the Gospel. Those who go down that path experience joys and sorrows in a whole new way, finding a deeper level of living. When it comes down to it, the most I could want with my life is to live as authentically for the Gospel as I can. For us, communal living is the way to be faithful to that calling - intentionally placing ourselves in a position to be personally challenged and united together in a common mission.

Israel's kibbutz movement makes a comeback

After years of decline, more people are joining kibbutzim than leaving – with waiting lists growing

By Harriet Sherwood - guardian.co.uk, 23 July 2012

After decades of declining numbers, bankruptcies and privatisation, Israel's kibbutz movement is undergoing a remarkable revival, with rising numbers wanting to join the unique form of collective living.

The population of about 143,000 is the highest in its 102-year history, after growth of 20% between 2005 and 2010, according to the official Kibbutz Movement. More people are now joining kibbutzim than leaving – a reversal of the crisis years – and the influx of working-age adults and young children is helping to redress the balance of an ageing population.

Most kibbutzim have implemented reforms to become commercially viable and stem decline. Liberalisation – including permitting differential incomes and home ownership – has increased their attractiveness to newcomers reluctant to commit to pure communal principles.

Only about 60 of Israel's 275 kibbutzim still operate a completely collective model, in which all members are paid the same regardless of their allotted job. Most of the rest have introduced wage differentials for people employed by the kibbutz – but, more importantly, many members now work outside the kibbutz and contribute a proportion of their salaries to the collective.

Other measures have included selling kibbutz businesses, charging for meals and services, and recruiting agricultural labourers from south-east Asia. The changes, necessary for survival, have been painful, particularly for a generation of kibbutz pioneers wedded to a socialist-Zionist dream.

Amikam Osem, who has lived at Kibbutz Afikim for 50 years

Increasing numbers of families are attracted to kibbutz living by the quality of education, environment, space and security. But, according to Amikam Osem, a member of Kibbutz Afikim near the Sea of Galilee for 50 years after marrying a kibbutznik, the most important reason was a sense of community. "This is the principle of kibbutz life – mutual help and responsibility for each other." A kibbutz, he said, was like an orchestra with people playing different parts "but together we create something meaningful".

In the last two years, Afikim's membership has increased from 500 to

600, and there is now a waiting list of people wanting to join. Many are the children of members, wishing to raise their own families in a co-operative environment. Others have never previously lived on a kibbutz.

Afikim operates a progressive taxation system: the more you earn, the more you pay into the collective fund. There is a "safety net" minimum income for all, and the kibbutz subsidises healthcare, education, social needs and care for the elderly. The kibbutz owns and runs several successful businesses, plus dairy and fish farms, and grows dates, bananas, avocados and olives on its land.

The heavily subsidised dining room – the heart of the kibbutz – is open every day for lunch, and twice a week in the evenings.

Before being accepted as members with full voting rights, candidates rent homes on the kibbutz. Most members now own their own homes, which can be bequeathed to their children or sold back to the collective. Occasionally a candidate family decides that kibbutz life is not for them; sometimes the kibbutz admissions committee rejects candidates as unsuitable.

"Now we could double the size of the kibbutz if we wanted to," said Yaniv Osem, 50, Amikam's son and the elected head of the kibbutz. "But we need to be careful." Those with criminal records, a history of financial mismanagement or antisocial behaviour were not invited to join.

There was no bar on unconventional family units, including same-sex couples, he said. "It's like an excellent country club, but with a safety net. It's the most secure place in the world."

"Here in the kibbutz, we're not neighbours – we're partners," said his father. "The kibbutz movement is in a process of change in which there are many different directions. But the thing that unites all kibbutzim is mutual responsibility."

Between forkfuls of subsidised salad at a window table in the vast dining room, Vered Ofir, 45, a fitness instructor and mother of four, reflected on her family's decision to embrace communal living.

Vered Ofir, 45, whose family became members of Kibbutz Afikim last year.

"It was a big change for us, it took a while to adjust. But we wanted to live in a community, among friends," she said.

The standard of education attracted her, plus the fact that "the babies had a great place to be while I was at work".

But, she added: "Not everything is easy. Sometimes everything is too close; our business is everyone's business."

After three years of mutual sizing-up to see if the family and the kibbutz were a good fit, the Ofirs became full members of Afikim last year. A few weeks ago, Ofir's parents arrived with the hope of joining the community.

For Ofir, who was born and lived most of her life in Tel Aviv, mutualism outweighs the drawbacks of kibbutz life. "Cities can be very lonely places. Here I have my own life, I work outside the kibbutz, but there is a community. It's a very positive thing."

Findhorn at Fifty

The Foundation is still going strong

The Scots Magazine – March 2013

"Everyone is welcome, and welcome to come again". If the Findhorn Foundation needed a motto, this would be the one because on my arrival I was greeted like an old friend and made to feel very much at home. The relaxed, informal atmosphere a far cry from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

However, despite its success and longevity, the Foundation began almost accidentally. In 1962, Peter and Eileen Caddy and Dorothy Mclean came to live in Findhorn Bay Caravan Park, they did not intend to build a community. But the garden they planted began to flourish, attracting many people to come and visit, then to live and work with them. Peter and Eileen have since passed away, but Dorothy still lives in the community. Their legacy is a thriving spiritual community, learning centre and Eco-village and one that is home to over 400 people from all over the world. Together, and with the thousands who visit each year, they creatively explore how to live more consciously and sustainably on this planet. Everyone knows one another and everyone supports one another, and there are no cliques or folk with individual agendas. It's very much a case of all for one and one for all.

Michael and Gail Shaw have been members of the community for over 30 years, meeting and getting married at the Foundation in 1979. He is from Paisley, she from Boston, Massachusetts but both found the experience of Findhorn immediately captivating. "I had heard about it and came up for an experience week," says Gail. It involved meditation and sharing with folk and I thought 'Yes, I'm going to live here'. Once I tied things up in London where I lived, I took three courses here and Michael was teaching one of them. That was it!"

Mo Farey is originally from Seattle but settled in Findhorn last year after living in Spain and London, and works at the Communications Department at the village. Since she arrived, she has felt at peace with the world, but does security come with contentment? "No," she says. "Not security, because you have to give up a lot to live in this lifestyle. I feel support in an immense amount within the community. I feel more engaged, more aware, more involved!"

As you would expect, recycling plays a major role in the life of the community; and a wind turbine provides energy, with almost 30% sent back to the national grid. There is an ecological sewage treatment called the living machine, the first of its kind in Europe, where plants and bacteria break down the waste, similar to decomposition in the natural world.

Gail sums up the Foundation succinctly. "Findhorn is a group of groups all under one umbrella. One incredible family, where everyone is a brother or sister and you live your life your particular way. It's a wonderful place to live. For more information go to www.findhorn.org

Findhorn hosts the next ICSA Conference from 26-28 June 2013. The ICD will be there – will you?

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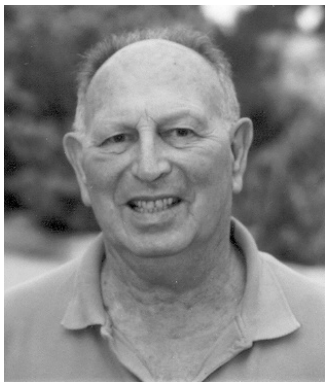

The Communitarian Scene from all Over and Under
Compiled (and partly translated) by **Joel Dorkam**

When I first started this column, about 20 years ago, I made a solemn decision to avoid referring either to politics (pfui, a rotten game) or to my own Kibbutz, Palmach-Tsuba in the Judean Hills (one of the best, undoubtedly). On the whole, I believe I have kept my word, which I figure now grants me the privilege of performing a glaring exception to the rules, considering the sadly regrettable fact that this might quite possibly be my last contribution for our beloved C.A.L.L., for reasons beyond my control, thank you very much for asking. Which reminds me of our 'adopted' son Chris from one of several American fundamental Christian groups we took in for the fruit-picking season. They were strictly forbidden to drink alcohol, to smoke even tobacco, to have sex or to gamble. One weekend he disappeared for several days and upon his return it was evident how he had spent it. We asked him cautiously "Chris, what about the rules?" and he replied with that wily smile of his: "Well, the rules are flexible!"
First the good news: despite the rumours circulating of late, the kibbutz in general and mine in particular seems to have recovered, on the whole, from the recent crisis, and the shrinking demographic trend has been reversed (see the article on Page 8). Part of the proof is that most communities have growing waiting lists of both singles and families applying to join. Tsuba alone boasts a waiting list of about 40 families-on-hold, remarkably almost half of them kibbutz kids who have tried living outside and have realized that they would prefer to return home. Trouble is, there is no housing available just now, and some of the would-be new members will have to wait a couple of years…. or maybe set up tents or caravans!

Why a World That Wants and Needs Community Doesn't Get It

By Tim Miller

Published in issue #151 of Communities magazine. It is an edited version of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Communal Studies Association, New Harmony, Indiana, October 2, 2010.

I believe that people the world over long for community. While that assertion is just about impossible to test, a number of indicators point in that direction. Social alienation seems to me widespread, with large numbers of people dissatisfied with the prevailing way the world is organized. They may have radically different visions of an ideal world, but a fair number, it is reasonable to guess, see lack of community as a cause of much of the restlessness and anomie we see all around us. The kinds of community that can bring meaning into life are many, but it is another fair guess that more than a few of those longing for community see intentional community as something that could put meaning and fulfillment into their lives.

Communal Aspirations

One bit of evidence for the desire for community can be seen in the classified advertising section, called "Reach," in *Communities* magazine. In every issue there are ads seeking members for established communities, but also quite a few ads for new communities, typically ones that have not yet been actually launched, but concrete visions of community, at least, in the minds of would-be founders and members. In the Fall 2010 issue of the magazine, for example, people were invited to help start an ecovillage and retreat center in Kansas, a desert community in Arizona, a cohousing

community in California, an urban cooperative in Hawai'i, and a shared household in New Jersey.

Another bit of evidence for community-mindedness is the traffic on the Fellowship for Intentional Community website. As of October 2010, that site attracted about 66,500 hits per month, or about 2,200 a day, with 6.5 page views per visit, and the numbers for 2010 were up 11 percent over 2009. While not everyone visiting the site is in the market for community, surely the numbers reflect to some degree interest in intentional communities - if not living in one, at least wishing.

The Hard Numbers

For all of the interest there seems to be in intentional communities, however, the number of persons actually living in intentional communities is tiny - a very small fraction of 1 percent of the population. Counting the number of active communitarians is a daunting task, to say the least, but the numbers are not large.

I decided I would count up the population of the hundreds of American communities in the 2007 edition of the *Communities Directory* (the new 2010 directory was not yet out when I did my counting, but I don't think the results there would be very different) and in round numbers that would come to something like 10,000 adults living in communities of five or more members each in the United States. But there are so many problems with the numbers that getting within even a couple of orders of magnitude is dubious. For example, the Adidam community lists its population at 1060. But that apparently includes many locations, the majority of them outside the United States. On the other hand, the Bruderhof communities don't provide any numbers at all, and that group of communities, with a membership thought to be in the low thousands, has enough members that its numbers alone would have quite an impact on any total figure. And the most important skewing factor of all is that huge numbers of communities choose not to be listed in the directory.

So I took another path toward trying to make an estimate. The Catholic religious communities keep pretty careful track of their numbers; in 2007 they reported 13,428 priests, 60,715 sisters, and 4,904 brothers, for a total communal population of 79,048. [Source: http://www.usccb.org/comm/catholic-church-statistics.shtml (4/22/2010)] There are two other groups of communities with five-figure populations, the Mormon fundamentalists, who are thought to have perhaps 30,000 communal members, and the Hutterites, who have around 15,000 in the United States. So that puts us at around 125,000 communitarians. Now, here is the wildest guess of all: I'm going to conjecture that there are 5,000 other intentional communities averaging 10 members apiece, which would be another 50,000. Add that to the 125,000 we already have, and, just to be cautious, let's report the total as a range: 150,000 to 200,000.

The point of all this guesswork is to say that not a lot of people live communally. Given an American population of over 300 million, 150,000 is fewer than 1 in 2,000, less than 1/20 of 1 percent of the population; 200,000 is fewer than 1 in 1,500.

Recently, I was told in strictest confidence that one of my friends at the Catholic Integrated Community, who goes by the name of Ludwig Weimer (an ex-hippy turned Catholic priest,

only the 68' haircut remains) has begun researching the fascinating topic "How much Community does a human being need?" Now is it possible that Janel Healy of Twin Oaks possesses some kind of telepathic affinity to Ludwig Weimer of KIG? The fact is that her piece in Communities #152 - Fall 2011, carries a somewhat unusual caption that befits the debate and provides as good an answer as you would expect from such an unusual personality:

Balancing act: How much are you willing to share?

I think it's safe to say that you are an idealistic person. As a supporter of Communities, you've probably thought long and hard about how to live a life that's more just – and just better – and it looks like you've come to the conclusion that living communally may be the answer.

But how "communal" do you have to get before you're truly living according to the ideals of Right Livelihood?

Ask this question to someone who's living in an income-sharing community, and the answer may sound a bit extreme. At neighbouring egalitarian communities Twin Oaks and Acorn, located in rural central Virginia, all the "big stuff" is cooperatively owned – from houses and cars to bank accounts and businesses. For some of these communes' members, environmental concerns are motivation enough to share almost everything. Valerie, who's been living at Twin Oaks for two decades, believes, "Anyone who wanted to be living according to the Right Livelihood would share cars. It's much less of a footprint on the earth." For others, such as Tom from Twin Oaks, it's all about the worker-owned business. "Income sharing itself is right livelihood," he asserts. "We don't have an ownership class, so we're not working hard to make others rich. Here, workers are managers – not just tools for producing capital."

When it comes to supporting good causes, income sharing is a testament to "power in numbers." If your economic unit is two people, your chief concern may be keeping your "unit" afloat financially. You may not have much leeway in terms of choosing a job that fits in with your values, nor time to volunteer or money to donate. But when your economic unit is say, 25 people (Acorn's current population), the group has more resources, time, and skills to put towards endeavors its members believe in. And when your economic unit is nearly 100…well, take it from Twin Oaks – you can pool your resources so efficiently as to live on about $5,000 per person per year. Those who are sick, elderly, or otherwise unable to fully pull their weight can be supported by the dozens of members who can, and the group has even more freedom to decide how to invest its money, time, and resources positively.

However, even though income sharing can be a successful way to band together to provide a secure and moral livelihood for a group, it's not easy. In fact, as a relatively new member, I must say that adjusting to life at Twin Oaks is still an ongoing challenge. It's been difficult getting used to having little financial autonomy. I feel frustrated that public possessions at Twin Oaks can get trashed easily – people tend to forget about the personal responsibility that comes with collective ownership. And I can't help but feel uneasy that folks who aren't working as efficiently as they could be are getting the same amount of "labor credits" as those who are.

I also sometimes find myself wondering what more I could be doing for the world. Am I living as closely to the notion of

Right Livelihood at Twin Oaks as I could be? How far out does one have to reach in order to be living responsibly?
I've come to realize that living in an income-sharing community as well as living by the guidelines of Right Livelihood are delicate balancing acts. There's no manual specifying how to embody Right Livelihood in every situation, nor is there a manual on how to thrive within the challenging environment of an income-sharing community (although Twin Oaks does have a 200-page book of community policies). I'm starting to understand that it's all about perspective, and about finding satisfaction, not guilt, in challenging yourself to do the best you can do. And living in an intentional community – especially in an income-sharing community, where collectivism can allow for a greater expression of values – provides the challenge to raise the bar in terms of responsible living.

And now for the bad news: it seems to me that it only requires a casual glance at the political and/or criminal columns in any of the daily newspapers lying around, or 5 minutes viewing the T.V. news, to understand what I'm getting at. So why waste good paper and computer time, not to mention the Editor's limited amount of energy? Once again, the so-called 'superpowers', together with the would-be-powers (who have managed to get their paws, mostly illegally of course, upon weapons of mass destruction) are playing the murderous game of brinkmanship, without fully considering the dangers involved, to their own nations or to the entire globe. Allow me a last call to whoever is supposed to be running this show, be it God, or the Messiah or whoever: Now is your last chance to rescue mankind from total annihilation - provided that we are worth saving? Maybe the world is better off without these two-legged monsters? Please, take a good look and make up your mind, soon, before it is too late.

The first time I heard, or read (my memory isn't what it used to be, sorry) about Camphill communities, what they are doing and how they keep trying to do it, I felt immense admiration and respect toward Camphillers. My second thoughts, however, were that only a very small number of people would be able to really put into practice that kind of altruism, and only for a limited period of time. Secretly, I hoped to be proved wrong; it was such an inspiring, innovative project. But I wasn't too surprised when I found in the Camphill Communications of Nov/Dec 2012 a report by Hartwig Volbehr, as follows:

Camphill communities were founded to respond to the needs of society. One of these needs was the disabled people. When most Camphill communities started, those people very often had a desperate destiny within homes which could not master either their needs or their gifts. Within a Camphill community they could find a meaningful life by family-like sharing and by doing useful work according to their faculties.
Today most of these people are not given away by their families, but stay at home and visit special schools and workshops. They are integrated in a certain way. So they do not come to Camphill communities as a child or a young adult, but only if their parents become too old or die. Most of them are over fifty years old, not really trained in social situations and meaningful work, or they are too old to be integrated into a working process.
In addition most of the villagers who have been in a Camphill community nearly from childhood have become rather old and are not any longer really able to work. They need physical care and some occupation to give their life a bit of rhythm and daily exchanges.
So we have come to a point that Konig's original idea of family and work sharing seems not to

be really livable any longer. In much of Camphill today most work is done by co-workers and employees coming from outside. Camphill communities become more and more organisations with a kind of occupational therapy. This is the destiny of most Camphill places, for example in Switzerland.
The question is whether the fundamental idea of family sharing in the former way will be possible any longer. Young co-workers are less able or not willing to live this kind of close family sharing, because it does not meet their very individual imaginations and expectations. All of us become individual beings with different ideas of life compared to former generations. This is not a deficiency but a new task and challenge. The children of co-workers and houseparents have individual habits and are not to be integrated so easily into the concept of family sharing, especially when they leave childhood. Children become self-conscious very early and have a strong will to go their own way. The villagers in the meantime know about their rights – whether they understand them or not. Thus many houseparents are over-burdened with all the special and individual wishes, needs and rights.
The consequence of that is that we have to think about how we can bring together the needs of society and the potential of Camphill. We have to think about new forms of living together and how we can shift to a new understanding of life sharing without giving up the idea of a meaningful life together.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in 1933, at about the time we, the DISPEKER family fled from Germany, together with thousands of other Jews, for dear life- leaving behind homes, relatives, friends and possessions becoming rootless, wandering emigrants without any rights ☹

"The man who fashions a visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others, and by himself."

Sadly, last week we received the very last issue of the KIG-Newsletter "Quarterly", which itself was an offshoot of the late "Gemeinde Heute". Although nowadays this has become a frequent occurrence, it came to me as an unexpected shock to witness one more step in what appears to me an accelerating process of the unraveling of a formerly close-knit community. Usually the reason, or the excuse, for shutting down a newsletter is either financial or personal, or lack of interest amongst the potential readers; but that doesn't seem to apply in this case, and the argument appearing in the editorial looked to me, to say the least, a bit peculiar. It went like this: it opened with an outline of the KIG's numerous activities during the last 60 years, which are, I have to admit, quite impressive. Next came a report about the waning impact of the Christian Church across Europe, as a growing number of baptized believers leave the faith.

And then the crunch: following Pope Benedict's opening of the Year of Belief, we too consider ourselves "on a pilgrimage across the deserts of the present world, for which you take along only essential equipment – no hiking pole, no bag of provisions, no bread, no money and no second shirt". And "How can you live, without hoping for miracles? We are quite confident that the Lord will let grow new life out of bare land and stones". Go figure!

Here we reach the end of Kaleidoscope #36, a lucky number for the Jews. I want to thank everyone that have sent us their newsletters and pamphlets, enabling us to cull tidbits for ours. Thanks to my colleagues, including those who departed and by now read us from up above. And a special thank you to Anton Marks, with my best wishes for carrying on editing "C.A.L.L.". Yalla Bye, Joel Dorkam

Kibbutzim in Africa?

By Rafael Medoff/JNS.org

They may not wear those classic blue "kibbutznik hats," but some Ethiopian's, Sudanese, and Eritreans may soon be establishing Israeli-style communes in eastern Africa.

It's part of an innovative project launched by young Israelis to deal with the problem of the tens of thousands of African refugees who have slipped across the Egypt-Israel border during the past several years.

The search for a long-term solution inspired Pesach Houspeter, chairman of Dror Israel and Uriel Levy, chairman of the Dror-affiliated Combat Genocide Association, to conceive a project to give the refugees agricultural and other training in Israel, so that when they return to their homelands, they can build a better life. "Some of the Africans have spoken to us of their great admiration for the kibbutz system," Houspeter explains. "So we thought - why not show them how it's done, so they can do it themselves?"

Under Dror Israel's auspices, several dozen young Africans in Israel are now studying community development and strategies for economic and social independence that they intend to implement on the Israeli-style kibbutzim they hope to build back home.

An activist of the Dror Israel-affiliated Combat Genocide Association with homeless Darfurian refugees.

"They are also being educated in methods of social cooperation that will encourage them to refrain from taking revenge on those of their countrymen who harmed them or their families," Houspeter says. Dror Israel hopes to send Israeli volunteers to Ethiopia and South Sudan to lend a helping hand.

2013 Twin Oaks Communities Conference

The Conference is a chance for communards, people interested in exploring community and folks who are involved in other community-oriented projects or businesses to get together and share ideas. There are formal workshops and sessions as well as many informal opportunities to cross-pollinate with other community minded folks. The conference will be over labor day weekend, 8/30-9/2, right here at Twin Oaks Community.

www.communitiesconference.org

Our very own Michael Livni of the International Communes Desk visited Twin Oaks community – Here's what he discovered…

Twin Oaks, (TO), the veteran commune of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities in North America, was founded in 1967. Its 460 acres (1840 dunam) are located outside of Louisa, Virginia, between Charlottesville and Richmond. Fortuitously, my cousin Gordon, lives half an hour away in Palmyra. On Saturday, May 19th (organized tours take place on Saturday from 2 pm to 5 pm) Gordon, my partner Brenda and I drove over for the tour led by veteran TO member Valerie Renwick. We stayed on for supper and after supper I made a presentation on Kibbutz Lotan to some 25 interested members – but that is not part of our story here.

Some Background on Twin Oaks.

TO was founded by a group of people who wished to realize the ideal of a utopian community based on ideas of controlling the social environment. They were inspired by the utopian novel, **Walden Two,** written by the behavioral psychologist, B. F. Skinner in 1948. In his novel, Skinner posited a somewhat authoritarian and hierarchical society with behavioral rules of positive and negative reinforcement. The authoritarian and non-egalitarian aspect was hardly compatible with the spirit of the late 60's. However, TO did adopt some of the **Walden Two** organizational format as well as terms used in the book such as planners, managers, councils (boards) and labor credits.

TO has 90 members and 13 children. There are also "visitors" who have opted for a mutual acquaintance experience of three weeks. Currently (July 2012) there is a waiting list of 12 candidates for membership and the list is expected to grow. The average member stay at TO is eight years. Twenty members have been at TO for more than ten years. One member remains from the founding generation.

Michael Livni hosted by Valerie Renwick at Twin Oaks

TO limits its membership to 90 – 100. It strives for a male/female balance. Children are limited – one child per five adults. TO accepts children if they desire to become members but there is no expectation that children will be a major element of future membership.

On two occasions TO has been proactive in initiating additional egalitarian communes – East Wind in Missouri (1974) and Acorn (1992) just 12 kilometers from TO itself.

Economy

The money income of TO amounts to about $5,000 per member per year. This is misleading. For example, add the fact that TO is 75% self-sufficient in food. This is a decision made on principle – even if it is not always economic to be self-sufficient. The crops from fields and orchards, the meat and milk products from 30 cows and the poultry products are not considered as income – even though their direct expenses and labor are budgeted.

The main income is from the branches which produce tofu and hammocks. The hammocks are TO's signature branch even though currently tofu makes more money. Additional branches include a book-indexing service and seeds.

Twin Oaks have been making hammocks since 1967

Members work 42 hours a week and every hour constitutes a "labor credit". The 2012 labor budget is 188,660 hours. On average, TO members take six to eight weeks of vacation every year. This is possible only because in reality most members accumulate extra credits over and above 42 per week and then use them for vacations. 15,000 hours are budgeted for pension. From the age of 50, every member is credited with one hour per week as pension. In effect, at age 55 a member will work only 37 hours and five hours will be budgeted for pension. In addition, senior members can work full hours or more – and take longer vacations.

TO maintains 16 cars and vans. They serve all needs including private needs of members. Members are charged 35 - 67 cents per mile (1.6 km.) depending on the size of the vehicle. Pocket money per member is $85/month. Clearly, it pays to pool vacation trips if cars are allocated.

After being challenged in court by the Internal Revenue Service, TO was granted 501 D status basically like a monastery with a "common purse". TO bookkeeping makes out a form for every member as if he/she was making $5,000 a year. This is below the threshold for paying income tax.

Life in TO

TO members live in residences. No two residences are alike. Typically, seven to nine members live in a residence – each has his/her own room. If there are children, they too will have a room. There is a small kitchen as well as a common "living-room" area. Members eat breakfast in the residence but lunch and supper are served in the Kitchen

Dining Complex. The Complex is also where many meetings and cultural events (such as my slide show on Lotan) are held. Many adults have partners, a few are formally married. Everyone has their own individual room. Partners may or may not live in the same residence. There are those with partners outside of TO.

The TO residences are "bathed in green". Every effort was made to maintain forest around the buildings. A number of residences have solar panels. There is also a small solar panel farm in one of the fields.

TO is egalitarian and non-hierarchical. Ongoing coordination and management is handled by managers who oversee each main work and domestic area of the community – e.g. hammocks, tofu, child care, health, mental health, new members, and "process". ("Process" deals with interpersonal problems or problems between a member and the community.) Larger decisions that affect the community as a whole are handled by a team of three planners. Planners rotate every 18 months.

A great deal of time is invested in ensuring the involvement of the entire community in the decision making process. Planners may meet two or three times a week for two to three hours. A special "O & I" (Opinion and Idea) Board enables members to express opinions and woe to the planners and managers that ignore the input. An average of 15 members participate in general meetings.

Child Care and Having Children

In TO's early years there used to be comprehensive child care modeled on the example of the kibbutz. A special building, named "Degania" after the first kibbutz, was built for the purpose. Today it is used for partial day care only. Children today (remember – there are actually very few) live in the residences in their own room where at least one of the parents also lives. However, every child also has a "Primaries", one for each day – "crucial others" for the child in addition to the parents. The Primaries can function as surrogate parents when necessary. The comparison is made of uncles/aunts or grandparents in an extended family. This is part of TO's self-image.

At present, TO children are home-schooled.

Having children on TO involves a process over and above the biological act of procreation. A request to have (or adopt) a child is submitted to the entire community via the Child Care team. You have to have been a TO member for two years. You have to have had significant (positive) experience as a Primary. The child-adult ratio (1:5) has to be maintained. The Child Care team processes the application and is responsible for the final decision. Nevertheless, refusal to grant permission to have a child is a rare occurrence.

For further information and background reading: www.twinoaks.org
Also: Kat Kinkade. **Is It Utopia Yet?**, Twin Oaks Publications, 1992.

Welcome to "Kibbutz Shorts", where we discover what's new on the Kibbutz in an update from around Israel.

Compiled mainly from the Kibbutz weeklies by Yoel Darom, Kibbutz Kfar Menachem

Treason or Renewal?

Last century's eighties was a period of spiritual and organizational upheaval in the Kibbutz movement. Dissatisfaction and doubts, especially from the younger generation, who have now taken on the leadership positions in each Kibbutz and also in the movement as a whole, have led to new ways of leading a collective life, and – as we have explained here more than once – have won the upper hand in most kibbutzim.

The main thrust of this revolution has led to the loosening of the collective forms of kibbutz life and the introduction of more "freedom", more space for the individual, for the family, for 'myself'. This has not been easily achieved. Intense struggles broke out in many of the kibbutzim, with about 3/4 eventually following the new trend, 'betraying the old, traditional ways' and building a new kibbutz collective, whose first 'achievement' was the abolition of all children sleeping together in their 'house', and not with their parents. This had been, for many decades, a must for all.

The main reason for communal children's houses was that the tiny and sparse 'rooms' (not houses!) of the parents were physically unable to accommodate their offspring. However, over the years, this circumstance developed into an established theory of 'kibbutz education'. One of the accompanying difficulties with this new trend was the need to enlarge all Kibbutz-parents' houses.

Slowly, more and more 'privatizations' were introduced: private money, personal choice of work (not necessarily on or for the Kibbutz), differential wages and more. Many were quite happy with these changes; others considered themselves to have been betrayed.

Now a new position has been voiced by many: we are the majority so do not call us 'destroyers' but rather 'renewers'; ours is the collective form which suits these modern times, we are the true future of kibbutz. At a recent convention of 'The Renewed Kibbutz', all of the personal and organizational 'achievements' of the New Kibbutz were proudly celebrated, however some dissatisfaction could also be heard. Many were looking for a more ideological and spiritual renewal, not just technical improvements. ***Ayala Gilad*** from Kibbutz Ein Gedi wrote: "Do we have any strength left for us to return to the kibbutz its intrinsic message, its ability to form and strengthen a new identity, a new spiritual dimension?"

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Between Honey and Sting – Joel Dorkam's Autobiography

Joel Dorkam's name is probably well known to all readers of C.A.L.L.: Ever since its first appearance 18 years ago, there has not been a single issue that has not included a contribution from him, always a most interesting combination of communal news and philosophy. Now, at quite advanced age, Joel has written and published (in Hebrew and very soon in German, and I hope that we don't have to wait too long for the English version!) his own, fascinating and tear-jerking autobiography, which bears the poetic title "Between Honey and Sting". It begins in pre-Nazi Germany, continues in France, fleeing to Spain and at last arriving in the new-born State of Israel, where the family finally settle down. Joel decides to join a new kibbutz near Jerusalem, and his achievements, tasks, the leadership positions he holds, and all the challenges that these entail, make up the main part of the book. If you read Hebrew – buy it now, if not, you'll need to wait impatiently for its translation.

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Physicians for Human Rights

Shulamit Melman (51), has been working for years as a Physiotherapist in her kibbutz, Ein Shemer, amongst other places. She is now a volunteer in the 'Physicians for Human Rights' organization. "It all started", she says, "when a friend of mine said: Most of our parents – of the founding generation of Kibbutzim - did a lot of voluntary work, so it's about time we followed their example. Without any hesitation I joined the P.H.R. who mostly work, Jews and Arabs together, in the occupied territories. For me, the very fact that we act together in the most needy parts of the Palestinian population, is in and of itself a political act against the occupation, and we feel that this expression of solidarity with Palestinians - not through slogans but through health care – may also go some way towards creating a more healthy political climate.

Every Shabbat (Saturday) a whole group of us go to one of the distant villages – Jewish and Arab doctors and nurses together, to take care of those who don't usually get sufficient medical attention.

Again and again I learn how alike we all are, and wish that other activities like this would exist - not just to shape the present, but also for the sake of a better future!"

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Does Communal Life Contradict Human Nature?

This philosophical question has been asked in relation to kibbutz life from its very first day, but ***Eli Goren*** (Kibbutz Geva) says that it is a ridiculous question. Is capitalism the true expression of human nature? Are hundreds of thousands of community volunteers – either within or outside of the Kibbutz – being untrue to human nature?

Eli also rejects the modern outlook that man's natural position is individualistic. Does a person being part of a community stand in opposition to nature? Even the changes that many kibbutzim have undertaken in the last few decades do not stand in opposition to the fact that communality is part of human nature, and not it's opposite.

From the International Communes Desk (ICD) Study Group

In CALL #35 (Fall 2012), we presented an excerpt from Martin Buber's essay, "True Community". Buber claimed that the existence of true community depends on land in common, work in common, way of life in common and belief in common – faith in common ideas and ideals. In his book, **I and Thou**, Buber expanded on this idea of common ideas and ideals as commitment to infinite purpose, commitment to an "Eternal Thou". This brings us to the question of Faith and intentional community.

Can there be intentional community without faith? Can there be intentional community without the personal commitment of the individual to invest part of his/her life energy in the realization of ideals in his/her personal life? Can there be intentional community without a group of people sharing over-arching ideals. Ultimately, in the real world, the question arises: In order to be viable does intentional community as a way of life require a **movement of such communities** in order to be viable and impact on society? We leave this last question for a future issue of CALL.
In this issue we bring excerpts which deal with the question of faith. The German-American protestant theologian, Paul Tillich (1886- 1965), in his book, **The Dynamics of Faith** (1957), delves into the question of what true faith means. Tillich contrasts true faith with idolatrous faith such as faith in "the Nation" or "success" .

The kibbutz movement could not have emerged as a seminal influence on the emerging state of Israel without groups of individuals prepared to dedicate themselves to ideas and ideals – what the philosopher, A. D. Gordon termed "Life Eternal." Gordon's concept of integrating "life of the hour" with "life eternal" provides an understanding of the mind-set of the first generation of the kibbutz pioneers (*chalutzim*). The current crisis in the kibbutz movement can be interpreted as a crisis of faith. (See also: "100 Years of Kibbutz: Now What and for What? ", CALL #33, Winter 2010/2011).

The state of Israel could not have emerged without a humanistic belief in the individual – and his/her ability to realize a distant dream. Two poems, "I Believe" by Shaul Tchernichovsky and "You and I" by Arik Einstein – almost 100 years between them - express that spirit.

Excerpts from:
Chapter 1, WHAT FAITH IS.
Paul Tillich, THE DYNAMICS OF FAITH, Harper Torch Books, 1958

FAITH AS ULTIMATE CONCERN
Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned: the dynamic of faith are the dynamics of man's ultimate concern. Man, like every living being, is concerned about many things, above all about those which condition his very existence, such as food and shelter. But man, in contrast to other living beings, has spiritual concerns – cognitive, aesthetic,

social, political. Some of them are urgent, often extremely urgent, and each of them as well as the vital concerns can claim ultimacy for a human life or the life of a social group.

If it claims ultimacy it demands the total surrender of him who accepts this claim, and it promises total fulfillment even if all other claims have to be subjected to it or rejected in its name. If a national group makes the life and growth of the nation its ultimate concern, it demands that all other concerns, economic well-being, health and life, aesthetic and cognitive truth, justice and humanity, be sacrificed. The extreme nationalisms of our century are laboratories for the study of what ultimate concern means in all aspects of human existence, including the smallest concern of one's daily life. Everything is centered in the only god, the nation - a god who certainly proves to be a demon, but who shows clearly the unconditional character of an ultimate concern.

But it is not only the unconditional demand made by that which is one's ultimate concern, it is also the promise of ultimate fulfillment which is accepted in the act of faith. The content of this promise is not necessarily defined. It can be expressed in indefinite symbols or in concrete symbols which cannot be taken literally, like the "greatness" of one's nation in which one participates even if one has died for it, or the conquest of mankind by the "saving race," etc. In each of these cases it is "ultimate fulfillment" that is promised, and it is exclusion from such fulfillment which is threatened if the unconditional demand is not obeyed.

An example – and more than an example – is the faith manifest in the religion of the Old Testament. It also has the character of ultimate concern in demand, threat and promise. The content of this concern is not the nation – although Jewish nationalism has sometimes tried to distort it into that – but the content is the God of justice, who, because he represents justice for everybody and every nation, is called the universal God, the God of the universe. He is the ultimate concern of every pious Jew, and therefore in his name the great commandment is given: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." (Deut. 6: 5). This is what ultimate concern means and from these words "ultimate concern" is derived. They state unambiguously the character of genuine faith, the demand of total surrender to the subject of ultimate concern. The Old Testament is full of commands which make the nature of this surrender concrete, and it is full of promises and threats in relation to it. Here also are the promises of symbolic indefiniteness, although they center around fulfillment of the national and individual life, and the threat is the exclusion from such fulfillment through national extinction and individual catastrophe. Faith, for the men of the Old Testament, is the state of being ultimately and unconditionally concerned about Jahweh and about what he represents in demand, threat and promise.

Another example – almost a counter-example, yet nevertheless equally revealing – is the ultimate concern with "success" and with social standing and economic power. It is the god of many people in the highly competitive Western culture and it does what every ultimate concern must do: demand unconditional surrender to its laws even if the price is the sacrifice of genuine human relations, personal conviction, and creative *eros*. Its threat is social and economic defeat, and its promise – indefinite as all such promises – the fulfillment of one's being. …

Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned. The content matters infinitely for the life of the believer, but it does not matter for formal definitions of faith… (From pp. 1-4)

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…In the act of faith that which is the source of this act is present beyond the cleavage of subject and object. It is present as both and beyond both.

This character of faith gives an additional criterion for distinguishing true and false ultimacy. The finite which claims infinity without having it (as, e.g., a nation or success) is not able to transcend the subject-object scheme. It remains an object which the believer looks at as a subject. He can approach it with ordinary knowledge and subject it to ordinary handling. There are, of course, many degrees in the endless realm of false ultimacies. The nation is nearer to true ultimacy than is success. Nationalistic ecstasy can produce a state in which the subject is almost swallowed by the object. But after a period the subject emerges again disappointed radically and totally, and by looking at the nation in a skeptical and calculating way does injustice even to its justified claims. The more idolatrous a faith the less it is able to overcome the cleavage between subject and object. For that is the difference between true and idolatrous faith. In true faith the ultimate concern is a concern about the truly ultimate; while in idolatrous faith preliminary, finite realities are elevated to the rank of ultimacy. The inescapable consequence of idolatrous faith is "existential disappointment," a disappointment which penetrates into the very existence of man! (From pp. 11-12)

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A.D. Gordon (1856 – 1922)
The Here and Now Which is "Life Eternal*– Not a Sacrifice, (1911)

Insofar as I have not yet experienced a change in my purpose for living, there is no reason for me to seek a new life, for I wll not find it. A new life is first and foremost a new purpose for living. This idea is very simple and yet despite this it is no wonder that many people do not understand it and consider it to be a strange idea. They say that it is up to the individual who works to clarify for himself what it is that he wants – if he wants to work and live by/for himself , or if he wants to work and live so that others

may live; that is to say for the general good and for the good of future generations. These types of questions distract the mind of man from the essence of it all – from life of the hour, which contains life eternal for insofar as life of the hour is itself real life, it contains life eternal. **

The individual who seeks a new life for himself does not seek it the heavens or in the air but rather in that same life which he is trying to renew by way of the work he does , by the conditions under which he lives and by the struggle he undertakes to remove obstacles from his path.

There are those who think that one who seeks to live for the sake of life eternal has no need for life of the hour. In their opinion, one who seeks to live for the sake of life eternal is looked upon as a "sacrificial lamb"***, the atonement for the Jewish People. He sacrifices his life in the here and now – hence he no longer lives. This viewpoint appears to be heroic, yet in truth it is passive. It exists by force of a decision made in the past, but true strength is constant activism.

Few are those who actually seek out new life, more than a few are "sacrificial offerings", and many more seek a new life in thought only.* New life requires ongoing activism, for passivity will not bring the renaissance of a people. One who wishes to live a life for the sake of the eternal is neither a sacrificial lamb, nor an atonement for the Jewish people. Neither does he sacrifice his own life of the hour, for life of the hour in the here and now which has a purpose is, in fact, life eternal.

There are two paths before us in the Land of Israel: the path of life in Exile with Exilic wisdom, with its Exilic feeling and rationale and with the force of Exilic actions as distinct from the path of renaissance which we wish to follow. Let each one choose whichever he will choose, but let him be aware what he has chosen, and let him know that whoever has chosen the path of renaissance will not follow the path of Exile. Exile is always Exile, and in the Land of Israel there is no less Exile than anywhere else. The price for choosing renaissance is giving up the way of life in Exile and in truth, this is not a heavy price to pay. One must not think that he who desires the life of the future must deprive himself of life in the here and now.

One who desires life must seek life, but he must seek it in a different manner. He must seek a different life, that is to say, a life with/for another purpose. The lover is satisfied with a piece of dry bread and a humble tent together with his beloved more so than with a life of delights in the palace of a king without her, for only life in proximity to his beloved is for him real life. He who loves also seeks luxury and abundance in life, but only while close to his beloved and anything which distances him from his beloved distances him from his life. And so it is with spiritual love. One who desires a life impressed with the stamp of the renaissance chooses that life whether it is a good life or a humble life and spurns life which is not impressed with the stamp of

the renaissance, which is thus neither life eternal nor life of the hour in the here and now.

*Translator's Note:
The Hebrew terms, "Chayei Sha-ah" (חיי שעה) and "Chayei Olam" (חיי עולם) have been translated as "life of the hour" and "life eternal" respectively. A rendering of "life in the here and now" and "life everlasting" or "life forever" is also possible. In the Hebrew, these terms also imply the contrast and the tension between the finite and the infinite. The concept of "Chayei Olam" is also cognate with the term "Tikkun Olam" (תיקון עולם), to mend, to transform, to perfect the world. In Jewish tradition this is the Divine purpose of human existence.

**emphasis in the original.

***"sacrificial lamb": A metaphorical reference to a person or animal sacrificed (killed or discounted in some way) for the common good. The term is derived from the Biblical tradition where a lamb is brought to the temple to atone for certain sins. (Leviticus 5: 5-6. The concept is also associated with the binding of Isaac – Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son, Isaac, at God's behest (Genesis 22.}

Shaul Tchernichovsky, 1875 – 1943

I Believe
(1894, Odessa)

Laugh, laugh at all my dreams!
What I dream shall yet come true!
Laugh at my belief in man;
At my belief in you.

Freedom still my soul demands
Unbartered for a calf of gold.*
For still I do believe in man
And in his spirit, strong and bold.

And in the future I still believe
Though it be distant, come it will
When nations shall each other bless,
And peace at last the earth shall fill.

(Translated from the Hebrew)

*"calf of gold" refers to the story of the golden calf, Exodus 32: 1-6.

At the foot of Mt. Sinai, in the absence of Moses, the Israelites are prepared to worship a golden calf – symbolic of the material and idolatry,
Arik Einstein, 1939 –

You and I

You and I we'll change the world
You and I – and all will follow
Others have said it before me
But it doesn't matter
You and I, we'll change the world!

You and I we'll try from the beginning
It'll be tough on us, it doesn't matter
It not so terrible!
Others have said it before me
But it doesn't matter
You and I, we'll change the world!

Compiled by Michael Livni, Kibbutz Lotan

Here at the Communes Desk, discovering new communities to add to our international network is always exciting. When it's the first such commune from a particular country, it's doubly so. The piece below comes from an ecumenical commune in Latvia called "Kristian David School".

Since 1991, we have run a state accredited primary boarding school. We have 40 children in total (including some pre-school age kids), plus about 20 adults. Most live in the commune/school permanently, whilst some live in private homes. Many children are orphans who have been adopted by one of our commune members/teachers. Apart from the school, we have a farm with 20 cows, some pigs, chickens, ducks and a horse. We strive to be self-sufficient, but we haven't yet succeeded in developing anything that can bring in enough income; we are too busy with the day-to-day operation of the school. We therefore rely on external donors to cover our bills which amount to about $4000 a month for the whole commune. We have about 50 ha of land, including a forest where we get wood to heat our homes with.

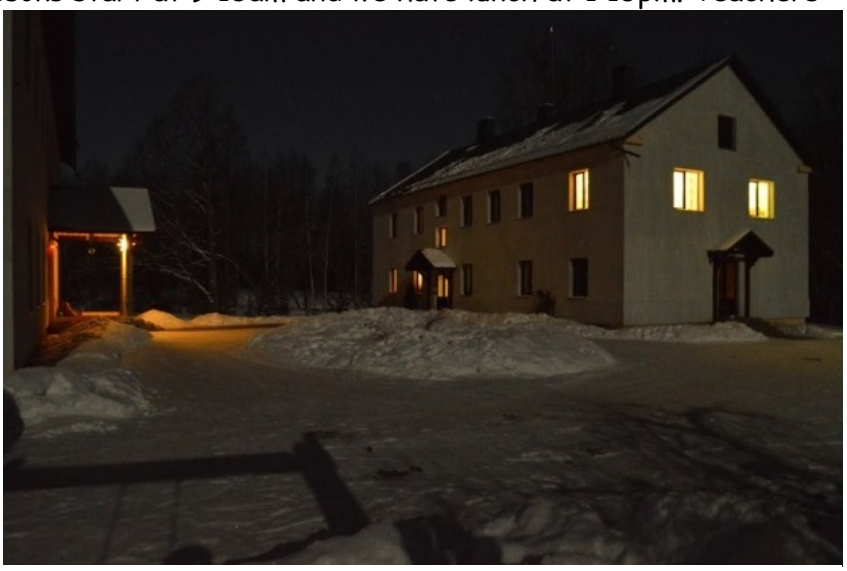
Our day to day lives differ from person to person. Some people work mostly in the school, some primarily on the farm. We have 2 locations 30 km apart. In one we have a school which consists of a dormitory and a school building. We recently acquired another 2 storey building to give teachers/community members the opportunity to have some privacy. The second floor is uninhabitable, as it is in the process of being renovated. Ironically the building is presently occupied by the children; they find a way to occupy every free space.

The second location was where our school was originally situated, but is now used for farming and as a place for children to go to after school or on the weekends. We have a large farm there, including buildings for storage. There is also a garage (we have old cars and tractors which, as much as possible, we repair ourselves) and 3 houses where adults and children live. One of the houses we tried to expand, but had to stop due to lack of funds, since we decided to focus on investing in the school buildings. It has remained half-built for about 10 years.

We have two people in each location (the school and the farm) who do most of the repair and maintenance work. They are overworked, but there are not many people who have appropriate skills as well as the will and dedication to do such work without material rewards. Obviously, other people help out with the more labour intensive or lighter repairs. We grow most of our food organically – fruit and vegetables such as carrots, beets, beans, peas, potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes, pumpkins, apples and berries - strawberries, some cherries, and a couple of hundred black currant and red currant bushes. We try to conserve this food for winter by deep freezing it or by making jams, juices, marinades, pickling and the like. We have about 10 dairy cows, the rest are calves or bulls. From the milk we make our own butter, cheese, cream and cottage cheese, which can later be processed into pastries. We bought a soft ice cream machine, and we have been treating our kids to ice-cream for some time now. Bulls are grown for beef.

Daily routine in the school

Teachers wake up at about 6:30am and gather at 7am for prayers. Some teachers then prepare breakfast, whilst the rest tidy the school or the dorms. At 8am children wake up and make their beds and tidy their rooms. Some children also peel potatoes for lunch. At 8:30am we have breakfast followed by a morning prayer. Cars bring that mornings milk from the farm, together with other milk products and pastries which are prepared there. Some teachers (i.e. our history and music teachers) live and work mostly in the farm location and come to lessons from there. Lessons start at 9:15am and we have lunch at 1:15pm. Teachers who have no lessons that day prepare the meal. Lessons end at about 3pm. Then children have free time or they can go to the farm location if they wish, to do some work there. At 4:30pm we have a light meal and then the children do their homework under the supervision of the teachers. At 8pm we have an evening prayer, and then we go to bed. Washing up and other small chores are performed by students. For bigger jobs we mobilise everyone. For example, potato harvesting is the biggest task of the autumn, and everybody participates. Harvested potatoes are then sorted into 3 categories: for consumption; for animal feed; and for replanting next year. Students can participate in any work and thereby learn many useful practical skills. When our children leave school, they are not afraid to wield an axe, use a chainsaw, a drill or a scythe and various other tools. They also can learn to drive tractors and cars. The bigger children, as well former school graduates, help with hay bailing.



Community school building

We celebrate Christian holidays - Christmas, Easter, Pentecost. Also summer solstice/midsummer (most important Latvian holiday) is celebrated.

We have many friends in foreign countries - mostly Europe (Germany, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Russia, the Netherlands) who help us financially, materially and spiritually. Recently a truck from Germany brought us new and used clothes, shoes, personal hygiene products, washing powder and more.

Making music is an integral part of the commune. We sing in both morning and evening prayers. We have a brass ensemble which participates in brass camps and festivals. Children learn to play brass instruments (tuba, trumpet, trombone, flugelhorn) or the drums, accordion, guitar, recorder etc.

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KOMMURAGE, INTERCOM and the KOMMUJA NETWORK

By ICD Member Michael Livni

The Kommuja Network in Germany numbers some 500 members in 34 different communes. The members of the network have all consciously opted out of the normative (competitive) society in favor of a modest collective life. One of the largest of the Kommuja communes is Niederkaufungen (C.A.L.L. #32 – Summer 2010). Six of these communes are located in Lower Saxony, some 160 km/ 100 miles West of Berlin. They are organized into a local network – "Intercom" with some 50 members in total. The Intercom network meets monthly. The meeting site rotates among the member communes.

In June 2012 I spent four days visiting Kommune Kommurage. During this time I also visited two other Intercom communes – Karmitz Clan and Krumme Eiche. My stay on Kommurage was coordinated by Kerstin Mally. I had hosted Kerstin, together with Patricia Saif from Niedkaufungen, on Kibbutz Lotan two months previously. (Patricia and Kerstin were also guests at a meeting of the International Communes Desk during their stay in Israel.) Kerstin practices acupuncture in Luechow – a neighboring town. All members of Kommurage do outside work. For example, Kerstin's partner, Hans, does accounting and business consults. All income is pooled. There is enough flexibility so that time can be allocated for work in Kommurage . Mondays is devoted to a meeting in the morning and maintenance work and new development in the afternoon.

ABOUT KOMMURAGE

In 2009 the core members of Kommurage joined together and established a registered non-profit association ("Verein") and bought 7,500

Central Building, Kommurage

square meters of land (7.5 dunam) in a small village, Meuchefitz. The land included a large old farmhouse parts of which date back 200 years as well as a few smaller buildings. Part of the area is forested. Firewood is harvested from the forest. The property cost 120,000 Euro. One member put up 80,000 Euro and shortly thereafter left. Kommurage is paying him back in installments. All members pay rent to the Verein which formally owns the property. The old farmhouse is the center of the community – it contains the communal kitchen, meeting space and some residence rooms, a shower and toilet facilities. At the time of my visit, only the central building had toilet and shower facilities. Most Kommurage

members live in small mobile homes ("Bauwagen") which in the past served construction companies. Each member has his/her own wagon – about 15 square meters in size. The Bauwagen is also the dominant form of residence in other Intercom communes that I visited.

The inside of Kerstin's Bauwagen

Currently Kommurage has five full members as well as two additional adults with their two children as "guests" undergoing a trial period. The total annual cash income of Kommurage is 70,000 Euro. This money goes into a joint account – separate from the bank account of the Verein. However, Intercom communes maintain a barter economy of goods, services and labor amongst themselves without any formal attempt to record transactions. I estimate the Kommurage economy to be a third greater than its cash income.

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Members are involved in "left" political activity – depending on their personal interests. However, in recent months there has been a general consensus in Intercom to backstop protests against nuclear plant activity in the area. Intercom also prioritizes anti-fascist activity. Parliamentary activity is shunned in principle. Intercom favors "street politics" – demonstrations and protests. The Green Party is being viewed as having been coopted to the establishment.

KARMITZ CLAN and KRUMME EICHE

I visited two other Intercom Communes – Karmitz Clan and Krumme Eiche.

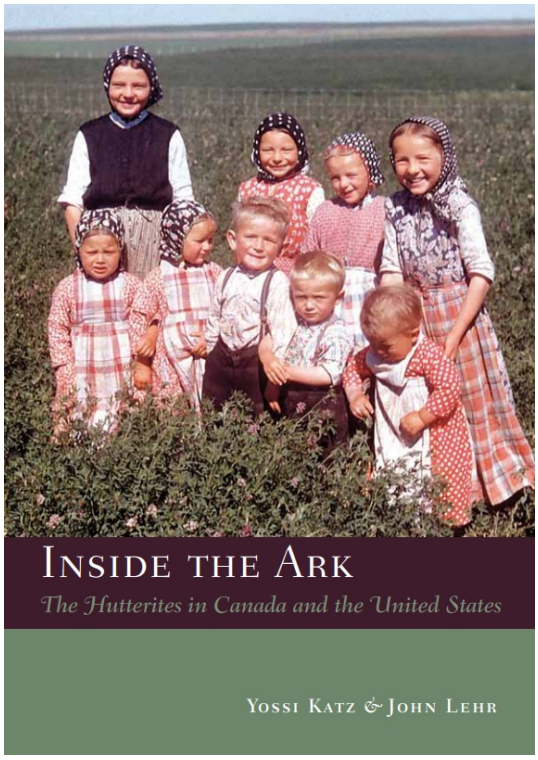
Karmitz Clan has nine members - including one couple, unmarried. As at Kommurage, there is a central building supplemented by five "Bauwagen." My guide was Christine – she had been to Israel for a number of months and had worked as a WOOFER on Moshav Eidan. Karmitz Clan has an area of three hectares (30 dunam). One-third of the area is forested. The garden and the orchard in particular are mainstays of the economy. Apple juice is a major product. Karmitz Clan provides part of the food for other Intercom communes within the barter economy.

Krumme Eiche is based in a former country hotel. Its area of four hectares is also partially wooded. Two of the communes' members are cooks. Krumme Eiche's signature economic activity is catering. There is a mobile kitchen which can produce up to 3,000 meals at festivals and political rallies. On the afternoon and evening of my visit, Krumme Eiche hosted all of Intercom for afternoon coffee and dinner. In addition, a seminar group for non-violence and women's rights consisting of foreign participants from Asia and Africa visited and toured the commune.

Book Review: Inside the Ark by Yossi Katz & John Lehr

At a hefty 400+ pages, Inside the Ark traces the religion, history, economics, education and governance of the Hutterite communities in North America. Today numbering 40,000 souls, living in 480 colonies, the Hutterite community was originally formed in 1528 in the Czech Republic. Mostly due to religious persecution, but not only, the Hutterites found themselves wending their way through Slovakia, Romania, Russia, and eventually into North America at the end of the 19th century. Today, three quarters of them are situated in Western Canada, with nearly all the rest in the Northern United States. In addition, there is a lone colony in Japan.

Inside the Ark takes its title from the analogy that sees the colonies as a "heavenly ark on an often-stormy secular ocean". Authors Yossi Katz and John Lehr take us sailing through the turbulent history of the Hutterites – from protection under the Russian nobility to high profile court cases, defections and the fear of the influence of the world wide web.



With access to a treasure trove of internal documents previously unseen, and invited into the homes of the subject of their research, Katz and Lehr have succeeded in piecing together a rich and enlightening picture of the Hutterite way of life – past and present, and outlining their main challenges for the future.

I have to admit that the best bit of the whole book can be found not in the main narrative, but in the extensive appendices (In fact, the appendices make up just under half of the book). Dan Katz, the author's fifteen year old son, writes a piece about his experiences of spending time living with the Hutterites during the frequent family visits which occurred for the purposes of research. Here, Katz Jnr describes, amongst other things discovering contraband (personal cd players and cameras) in the locked wardrobes of the Hutterite teenage boys.

We've been fortunate at the International Communes Desk to have hosted co-author Yossi Katz at our meetings on more than one occasion. His presentations on his research into the life of the Hutterites have always been enlightening and absorbing.

Back to Kibbutz

By Jan Martin Bang

I was lucky enough in my life to have been a member of Kibbutz Gezer for nearly 16 years, and even though it's now over 10 years since we left, coming back to visit is still a strong and inspiring event. Once you have been a kibbutznik, you remain marked for life. Maybe others not, but I was, forever infected by The Great Dream. Even if only for occasional flashes, for me this remains forever. Here are some of my flashes.

Jan Martin Bang

In the early years of Kibbutz Gezer, there was a large board at the entrance to the dining hall. On it were horizontal tracks, each one denoting a branch or work place. Every member had a wooden counter with his or her name on it, and every evening the work organiser would shuffle the counters around according to the needs of the different branches. Next morning, when you came in to breakfast, you could check where you were working that day. A fairly simple system, one that gave a lot of flexibility, and typical of a young, idealistic community.

When we came to Kibbutz Gezer there were only very basic facilities in our houses. It was quite complicated to cook any serious meals there, and anyway, meals were provided in the dining hall. I enjoyed a certain feeling of ideological asceticism, eating off trays with plastic crockery, rubbing shoulders with people in their work clothes from the different branches. The dining hall was crowded, there were more members joining every year, people kept having babies, and parking prams became an issue.

It was intensely social. Supper nearly always took a couple of hours. A lot of time was spent talking to people, sometimes moving from table to table in order to get together with different people as they came to eat. And afterwards there was always the outside crowd, sitting around smoking and watching our kids play together. The dining hall really provided the physical framework for an intense community building activity, a space for social interaction.

Kibbutz Gezer was never a religious community, though there were always religious people living there. The culture is decidedly Jewish, with celebrations marking the Jewish calendar, and with Hebrew the main language. At about the same time as the Christian Easter in the spring, Passover is one of the great Jewish festivals, the high point consisting of a celebration dinner, the Seder, during which the Israelites' exodus from Egypt is recounted. This lasts several hours, with readings, discussions, presentations and drinking of at least four glasses of wine. In Gezer's third year we were there as

volunteers. We were gathered together in the dining hall, perhaps a hundred people all together, getting into our first glass of wine, when one of the members in charge of fields came in to announce that there was rain being called for, and that there were thousands of bales of hay scattered about the fields, having been cut, dried and then baled that day:

"I don't want to interrupt the Seder, but I would invite anyone who wants to help to come back to the dining room afterwards in their work clothes, and we'll get what we can under cover before the rain comes."

The Seder continued, with most people drinking their four glasses of wine, and several of us being much more generous. After the dishes were cleared, and the place tidied up, people began drifting back in their work clothes, more and more of them. It seemed as if everyone came back. So many that a kitchen crew was assembled to make hot coffee and soup, and the electricians zipped off to their workshop to rig up arc lights around the barns. The rest of us divided into work teams, each one with a tractor and a wagon, and off we drove into the fields to load up bales.

Each time we returned with a loaded trailer, we were greeted by steaming cups of soup and coffee, and lit up barns to stack into. Enthusiasm, fun, and dedication pulsed through the crowds. When the dawn came, most of the bales were in, and as we stumbled home, exhausted, we met the morning milkers on their way to the dairy.

This story from Gezer will be recognised and shared by those who were there. It's a bond between us, a shared history, a consciousness of the group. As such, much higher value than the hay bales. It's difficult to estimate the value of such community biographies. My intuition tells me that the strength of a community is only partly based on material and measurable things like financial success or building mass. More and more, experiencing and observing community, I see that there is something beyond, behind or above the material which gives the community its soul, its essential life force, its individuality. Part of this individuality is the shared and remembered history. It may often feel like endless hours of overtime, but it contains moments that will live on in our consciousness.

When we moved to the kibbutz in 1984, we were already a nuclear family, and had no intention of being anything else.

Jan and Ruth - Kibbutz Gezer back in the day

The kibbutz had voted for children living at home a few years earlier, and we were happy with that. Every morning Ruth and I went off to work, the children went off to school or kindergarten. Breakfast and lunch were eaten together with our colleagues, most people came home around 4 or 5 in the afternoon, had free time together, and supper was eaten in the dining hall between 6 and 8. When the children were small, and needed help choosing and eating supper, they generally ate

together with their parents. Later the kids began eating together with their friends from the kids houses. Many families ate together in the dining hall, some families ate supper at home. What the kibbutz gave was the opportunity to choose, to be either with your friends or your family, a safety valve that probably helped many families get through those periods when one member needs a little more space, a little privacy.

When we became members of Kibbutz Gezer in 1986, the community was growing rapidly, just topping 100 full members, not counting those in the process, volunteers and children. There were over 200 people actually living there in total. I remember being told that it was one of the most rapidly growing kibbutz communities in the country. There were really no limits to growth, we were applying for loans to build a new dining hall, and were planning for a 400 to 600 seating capacity. A new neighbourhood had just been built, another one was being planned, and additional income generating enterprises were being contemplated.

Candidates for membership were not just individuals and young families, groups also came. They were organised through the kibbutz movement, some came from abroad, others were young Israelis. Their initial application was as a group, but each person had to go through the candidacy and membership process as an individual. Not everyone stayed. A group of Brazilians came just before we arrived, several of them became members, but within a decade there was not a single one of them left on Gezer.

I look back to this time as the golden age of the kibbutz, there was a real feeling of vitality, a strong radical ideology, and life was generally fun. Festivals were attended by most people, with the kids often playing a central role by presenting some song or play or other show. Celebrations helped to cement the community together, and often ended with big, long and loud rock parties, where the drink flowed freely.

On the kibbutz, when we joined, we did not have the freedom to add on to our houses. If you felt you needed extra space, a room for your kids, for example, the issue had to go through members and building committees before anything was done. Larger families were given extra space, but it was a long procedure. Gradually there developed a feeling that this was all a bit old fashioned, and that people should be able to do things themselves. I walled in our back porch, which was OK as long as there were big gaps open to the world. During the winter, however, the rain might blow in, or it got too cold to sit outside comfortably. I put in some simple doors and windows, and got a lot of criticism. My defence was that all the work had been done in my spare time, using largely found materials, and any purchases I made came out of my pocket money. The counter argument ran as follows: I was using my skill to enhance my standard of living above that of other members. Another member, lacking the handyman skill that I had, would be forced to hire a builder to do the same as I had done, and that, we all agreed, was stepping over the line of acceptability.

The times were changing on the kibbutz while this argument ran, and soon afterwards a more open policy was accepted. It was interesting to see how

standards of living began to diverge when members could bring in outside money and outside contractors to begin changing their houses. Today, with a total change from income sharing to a private economy, some people on Gezer live in large villas, while others still live in the old style basic housing. But to be fair, even today, the rich are hardly rich, and the poor are not so badly off.

Even with larger groups, the tendency was for smaller subgroups to establish themselves. My own experience of kibbutz life was that meal times were very important for getting things sorted out prior to actual decision making meetings. We all ate together in the dining room. On Kibbutz Gezer we were well over a hundred people. On some kibbutzim there were up to two thousand people eating together. Whatever the size, the natural thing was to relate to the people at your table. Breakfast and lunch tended to be with your workmates, we started work before breakfast, and usually went down to eat as a group. Around the table it was natural to chat about work things, and the end of the meal was often a quick round of who does what for the rest of the day.

On the other hand, supper on the kibbutz tended to be eaten with your personal friends, but not so much with your family. Once the kids were old enough, they wanted to eat together as a group, not be stuck with boring old grown-ups. One of the regular topics of talk around the table were the issues of the day, what kind of choices were facing the community, and what our response was to be. Here issues were thrashed out, opinions were exchanged and weighed up, and individuals often began to form their own responses.

In later years the dining room closed and families were forced to eat at home separately. Sometimes smaller groups would get together to eat, these were often splinter groups who gathered together round an idea or an issue, and there was not the same opportunity to meet people you disagreed with. Whether this was a contributory factor to the conflicts that developed at that time is hard to say objectively, but my feelings at the time, and these are reinforced by later reflection, were that there was a loss of unity. One of the comments that I hear from my friends still living there is that the sense of community has been lost since the dining room closed.

Coming back to kibbutz is like coming back to the mother ship. Whichever way you cut the cake, the fact remains that the kibbutz experiment in communal living was the largest and longest and deepest attempt at alternative intentional community in the 20th century. To have been a part of that experiment was a privilege, an honour, and a learning experience like no other.

Jan Martin Bang grew up in England where he was active in the Cooperative and Trade Union Movements in the 70's. He moved to Israel in 1984 and was a kibbutz member for 16 years. Since 1993 he worked on environmental projects within the Kibbutz Movement. In 2000 he moved to Solborg Camphill Village in Norway with his family, where they lived for 8 years. He now lives next to Solborg, edits the Norwegian Camphill Magazine and still retains strong connections to the community. He is President of the International Communal Studies Association and has written 5 books on community and ecology.

C.A.L.L.

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