



בניית עתיד משותף بناء المستقبل المشترك

Building A Common Future

*Evening Program
and
Reconciliation Resource*

November 15, 1997
Clarion Hotel, Millbrae, California

*On the occasion of 420 Jewish and Palestinian Americans, and others, coming together to
change the nature of their relationships and help invigorate the public peace process.*

بعيداً عن المعتقدات والأعمال الصالحة والضارّة هناك حقل ،
أراكم هناك.
جلال الدين الرومي

מעבר לטוב ולרע, לצדק ולעווללה, ישנו מקום. שם נפגש.
ג'לאדין רומי

**"Out beyond ideas of rightdoing
and wrongdoing, there is a field.
I'll meet you there."**

Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-1273)



***"There are some things that only governments can do,
such as negotiating binding agreements.
But there are some things that only citizens outside government can do,
such as changing human relationships."***

Dr. Harold Saunders, Former Assistant Secretary of State, Negotiator of Camp David Accords

**Jewish and Palestinian Americans
welcome you**

Building A Common Future

An Evening With
Ambassador Dennis Ross
Special Middle East Coordinator, U.S. Department of State

Hosted by Ronald Young
Executive Director, U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East

**Saturday evening, November 15, 1997
Clarion Hotel, Millbrae, California**

*Sponsored by the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group
celebrating five years of talking, listening, and cooperating*

Co-sponsors: Palestinian American Congress · Jewish Community Relations Council · Foundation for Global Community



Evening Program

6:00

Registration and Reception

Visual Presentation: *"The Faces of Our Peoples"*

7:00

Gather in Dining Room

Welcome

Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group

Dinner and Getting to Know Each Other

A time for listening, and for discovering one another in a new way

Evening host: Ronald Young

Executive Director, U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East

Israeli-Palestinian Cultural Interlude

From Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam village,

Nazih Mugraby, Palestinian musician, performs his original peace song, and joins Shai Schwartz, Israeli storyteller, with an excerpt from his program, "Weaving"

Honoring Citizen-Initiated Reconciliation Projects

Building Bridges

While learning together, Muslims, Jews, and Christians in Duluth, Minn. finally traveled in 1996 to the Middle East. They returned home to hold workshops on their belief in the inevitability of peace in the region. While speaking at four universities, five congregations, and four radio stations, they brought to their city a collaborative exhibit of Israeli and Palestinian artists.

Building Bridges for Peace

For four years Israeli and Palestinian teenage girls from the Middle East have been brought together with each other and with Jewish, Arab, and other ethnic Americans at a summer camp in Colorado. They return home to continue with regular meetings in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Denver.



Compassionate Listening Project

Rabbis and other American Jews in community leadership are invited to travel to Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza for two-weeks. With training in compassionate listening and dialogue, the delegations hear leaders' and other citizens' core concerns, feelings, and interests, then return home to advance Jewish-Palestinian healing and reconciliation.

Cousins Club of Orange County

Jews and Palestinians, Muslims and Christians, have met for "dialogue and action" monthly since 1988 in southern California. They educate themselves, sponsor large public meetings, counter cliches and misinformation in local newspapers, and give legislators reasoned views of mid-Eastern affairs. Speakers are provided for schools, churches, and synagogues.

Interfaith Witness for Peace in the Middle East

For five years IWP has been a S.F. Peninsula interfaith meeting ground of those working for Israeli-Palestinian peace through education, conferences, and public events.

Jewish-Arab-Muslim American Association

In Santa Clara County, California, an informal community of Jews, Arabs and Muslims have worked for four years to form new friendships and to develop projects for the benefit of their local community. JAMAA recently sponsored a one-day conference at Stanford University, "When Jews and Muslims Got Along."

Middle East Peace Program

Through dialogue, educational outreach, and Middle East travel programs, this branch of AFSC has continued for twenty years to discover a common meeting point to address the aspirations of both Palestinians and Israelis, and to challenge the conventional assumptions that deprive each other of seeing their humanity and common aspiration.

Project Understanding

In central New Jersey, Orthodox, Conservative, Reform Jews, and Muslim and Christian Arabs, have met monthly for four years in one another's homes to better understand one another. They sponsor panels and films in interactive public programs once a quarter, and travel to Washington to meet with their elected representatives.

Seeds of Peace

For four years teenagers from the Middle East and Balkans have been brought to a summer camp in Maine to turn hate and distrust into communication, understanding, empathy, cooperation, and hope. There are over 300 Seeds of Peace graduates. Former Secretary of State Christopher recently said of them, "By developing new friendships, they are demolishing old prejudices." And a recent Arab graduate told President Clinton at a special ceremony, "Peace between people is more important than peace between government."

Women's Interfaith Dialogue on the Middle East

For over 20 years, WIDME has brought together men and women from different backgrounds to share and learn about Middle East issues and the peace process. They support and reinforce organizations working toward Middle East reconciliation, support Israel's right to secure borders and the Palestinians' right to determine their future, and present programs encouraging dialogue on issues affecting the Middle East.

Honoring Ambassador Dennis Ross

Special Middle East Coordinator, U.S. Department of State

Ambassador Ross's reflections, with time for questions and answers

Invitation to engage further in the public peace process

❖ In-home Jewish-Palestinian meal-sharing evenings ❖

Closing



Listening

I want to write about the great and powerful thing that listening is. And how we forget it. And how we don't listen to our children, or those we love. And least of all — which is so important, too — to those we do not love. But we should. Because listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. Think how the friends that really listen to us are the ones we move toward, and we want to sit in their radius as though it did us good, like ultraviolet rays.

This is the reason: When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand. Ideas actually begin to grow within us and come to life. You know how if a person laughs at your jokes you become funnier and funnier, and if he does not, every tiny little joke in you weakens up and dies. Well, that is the principle of it. It makes people happy and free when they are listened to. And if you are a listener, it is the secret of having a good time in society (because everybody around you becomes lively and interesting), of comforting people, of doing them good.

. . . We should all know this: that listening, not talking, is the gifted and great role, and the imaginative role. And the true listener is much more beloved, magnetic than the talker, and he is more effective and learns more and does more good. And so try listening. Listen to your wife, your husband, your father, your mother, your children, your friends; to those who love you and those who don't, to those who bore you, to your enemies. It will work a small miracle. And perhaps a great one.

*Brenda Ueland (1892—1985)
From The Art of Listening*

**"The Talmud says that
we were given two ears but
only one tongue
to teach us that
we should listen twice as much as we speak.
The key to all good human relations is in listening."**

*Rabbi Phillip J. Bentley
Temple Sholom, Floral Park, NY*



Dialogue

*Dialogue is to love,
what blood is to the body.
When the flow of blood stops,
the body dies.
When dialogue stops,
love dies
and
resentment and hate
are born.
But dialogue can
restore a dead relationship.
Indeed, this is
the miracle of dialogue:
it can
bring relationship into being,
and it can
bring into being
once again
a relationship that has died.
There is only one qualification
to
these claims for dialogue:
it must be mutual
and
proceed from both sides,
and
the parties to it must
persist relentlessly.*

Reuel L. Howe
The Miracle of Dialogue, 1963



"Suppose we were able to share meanings freely without a compulsive urge to impose our view or to conform to those of others and without distortion and self-deception. Would this not constitute a real revolution in culture?"

David Bohm, Changing Consciousness, 1992

Dialogue

To inquire and to learn

To unfold shared meaning

To integrate multiple perspectives

To uncover and examine assumptions

Discussion and Debate

To tell, sell, persuade

To gain agreement on one meaning

To evaluate and select the best

To justify/defend assumptions

"Dialogue is about what we value and how we define it. It is about discovering what our true values are, about looking beyond the superficial and automatic answers to our questions. Dialogue is about expanding our capacity for attention, awareness and learning with and from each other. It is about exploring the frontiers of what it means to be human, in relationship to each other and our world."

Glenna Gerard, 1995



Behaviors That Support Dialogue

Suspension of judgment when listening and speaking. When we listen and suspend judgment, we open the door to expanded understanding. When we speak without judgment, we open the door for others to listen to us.

Respect for differences. Our respect is grounded in the belief that everyone has an essential contribution to make and is to be honored for the perspective which only they can bring.

Role and status suspension. Again, in dialogue, all participants and their contributions are absolutely essential to developing an integrated whole view. No one perspective is more important than any other. Dialogue is about power with, versus power over or power under.

Balancing inquiry and advocacy. In dialogue we *inquire* to discover and understand others' perspectives and ideas, and we *advocate* to offer our own for consideration. The intention is to bring forth and make visible assumptions and relationships, and to gain new insight and understanding.

We often tend to advocate to convince others of our positions. Therefore, a good place to start with this guideline is to practice bringing more inquiry into the conversation.

Focus on learning. Our intention is to learn from each other, to expand our view and understanding, not to evaluate and determine who has the "best" view.

When we are focused on learning, we tend to ask more questions, try new things. We are willing to disclose our thinking so that we can see both what is working for us and what we might want to change. We want to hear from all parties so that we can *gain the advantage of differing perspectives*.



“Some deep-rooted human conflicts are not ready for formal mediation or negotiation. People do not negotiate about their identities, their historic grievances, their dignity, their fears. But they can talk about them and listen to their adversaries. Sustained dialogue can provide a context for changing relationships within a dialogue group and for designing steps to change relationships within the larger body politic.”

Dr. Harold Saunders, former Assistant Secretary of State, Negotiator of Camp David Accords

Five Stages of the Public Peace Process

Overview

Stage One: Deciding to Engage

Stage Two: Mapping the Relationship Together

Stage Three: Probing the Dynamics of the Relationship Together

Stage Four: Experiencing the Relationship by Thinking Together

Stage Five: Acting Together

Overview

The public peace process is based on the assumption that there are things governments can do that people cannot; and there are things people can do that governments cannot. Public dialogue and action is based on the assumption that citizens have the freedom to be innovative and to create new, deeper relationships. While governments are the official bodies that make peace agreements, newer ideas and sustainable implementation depend on public consent and involvement. Thus citizens have a critical role in peacemaking, sometimes called “citizen”—or “track two”—diplomacy.

Dr. Harold Saunders, former Assistant Secretary of State under President Carter, has had extensive experience in both citizen dialogue and in official diplomacy, as with the Camp David Accords. He first described citizen involvement as the “public peace process.” With former Russian diplomat Gennady Chufrin, he delineated the interconnected Five Stages of a Dialogue Process leading to reconciliation and collaboration.

Stage One: Deciding to Engage

The decision to engage is the first requisite to the public peace process. Sensitive to political or even physical risks, citizens may be reluctant to talk with “the enemy.” The most likely participants are those who have courage, and who recognize that current methods are not working and could lead to future failure, even disaster. Potential participants will look for a trustworthy, competent convenor and a safe, neutral location. Helpful groundrules will include participants representing themselves, not organizations; sensitive listening; and confidentiality.

Stage Two: Mapping the Relationship Together

The dialogue opens with a period of expressing and exploring each party’s interests, defining the context and scope of the relationship. The central task is to map the relationship together, and starting to understand how specific problems and underlying interests define the relationship.



In time, the nature of the discourse must be changed to unload and transform the dehumanization and demonization that has marked the past. Dealing with participants' life experiences and feelings is important. There may be feelings of gratitude for the opportunity of finally being together face to face, or fear of failure. In the relationship, the earliest feelings to emerge might be anger, resentment, and blame. Hurt, sadness, and guilt could be less forthcoming in the beginning. From the expression of strong feelings, participants can learn to probe for deeper causes or needs rather than letting blame block further discussion.

Dialogue is different from traditional negotiation, which deals with exchanging formal positions and technically defined issues. Dialogue focuses on the state of the relationship and its potential for change. It requires that participants (1) value the relationship and studying it, and (2) will ask themselves, and each other, what underlies the expressed emotions and positions evoked by an issue. They thus learn about underlying needs, and discover essential dynamics of the relationship. Too often groups skip over this critical work by looking for "solutions" before they have experienced the realities of the relationship.

Stage Three: Probing the Dynamics of the Relationship Together

The purpose of each side in Stage Three is not to present or persuade but to understand and reflect back fully how the other's mind works, the other's frame of reference. In addition to the discoveries about the relationship from Stage Two, the diversity of experiences and perceptions that make up the relationship are better understood.

The parties begin to identify with each other. As they expand their own identifications to include one another, they are laying the foundation for problem-solving together. Again, it is essential to take this time to understand the relationship, and overcome the old tendency to "not waste time."

Stage Four: Experiencing the Relationship by Thinking Together

The fourth stage has the participants examining together how to deal with a practical problem. In this process, they further experience the relationship itself. One approach could be to divide into subgroups to create scenarios and their stepwise implementation, describing how each party's interests would be affected, and how resolution and reconciliation would be served. The group could then choose its favorite scenario and course of action.

This collective thinking can lead the group as a whole to change systemic flaws or get around obstacles. Perhaps only one step can be taken, but in time that may make further steps possible. But now a new relationship and process is in place for further progress.

Many dialogues stop at this point, if they get this far. Some group participants may share their insights with policy makers; others take fresh understandings into their own constituencies; still others see their work together as establishing a model for others.

Stage Five: Acting Together

The ultimate group experience would be to move out from such meetings and act together to have a concrete impact - to change the relationship and effect a visible social outcome. They could carry out scenarios proposed in Stage Four; take their fresh understandings to community institutions; creatively interact with government officials; or implement the Five Step Public Peace Process with an expanded group of new citizens. The parties, to some degree, have now experienced transforming blame into responsibility, enemies into partners. They have modeled the process of dialogue and reconciliation, thus dispersing this practice into their evolving, diverse culture.



Conflict Resolution Basics

1. Attack the problem, not the person.
 - Define the problem.
 - Explore each person's perception of the problem.
 - Seek to understand and respect each point of view without judging.
 - Use good communication skills, including:
 - Active listening
 - Summarizing what the other person has said
 - Clarifying
2. Concentrate on interests, not positions.
 - The position is the outcome you are interested in getting.
 - The deeper interest is why you want that outcome.
 - Interests are usually related to our basic needs, such as *security, shelter, food, water, self-determination, dignity*. When we focus on interests instead of positions, we can start to find solutions.
3. Come up with options in which both sides can win win-win options.
4. Cooperate together to solve the problem fairly.
 - A fair solution respects the interests of both sides.

***"You can't assert yourself in the world
as if nobody was there.
Because this is not a clash of ideas.
There are people attached to these ideas.
If you want to live without violence,
you have to realize that
other people are as real as you are."***

Clifford Geertz, anthropologist



מה ששנוא עליך -- לא תעשה לחברך.
זאת התורה כולה. יהדות, רבי הלל

מאכרמה ، لانفعلة لأخيك الإنسان. هذا هو مجمل
القانون. الباقي تفسيرات. اليهودية ، حاخام هילל

**"What is hateful to you, do not do to
your fellow men. This is the whole Law.
The rest is only commentary."**

Judaism, Rabbi Hillel

אל תאמר עם מיטיבי איטיב ולמשנאי ארע. אמור:
למיטיבי ולמשנאי טובה אגמול. איסלם, טירמיזי

لاتقل اذا عاملنا الناس بإحسان ستحسن معاملتهم. وإذا اساؤا إلينا
سنسيئ لهم. بل قرر ، اذا أحسن الناس إليك فإنك ستحسن لهم ،
وإذا ظلموك ، فلا تظلمهم مرة أخرى. إسلام ، ترميزي

**"Say not, if people are good to us, we will
do good to them, and if people oppress
us, we will oppress them; but resolve that
if people do good to you, you will do good
to them, and if they oppress you, oppress
them not again."**

Islam, Tirmizi



***"If you don't talk directly,
it will be very hard
to get peace."***

*Ms. Isis Nusair
Palestinian, native of Nazareth*

***"I think that we and the Palestinians are
prisoners of the situation.
We are prisoners
of our history,
of our psychology,
and we need someone from the outside
to make us sit together
and
to look into each others' eyes.
This is something we haven't done
for many years."***

***"We must allow ourselves
to open up to our neighbors
and
make the enemy our partner."***

*David Grossman, Israeli novelist
The Smile of the Lamb; The Yellow Wind; See Under: Love*



The other peace process

Seconds after Noam Friedman opened fire in the Hebron marketplace, images of the shooting, and its aftermath, were already being flashed on TV screens around the world.

The international news media are always poised and ready to record and broadcast violent clashes between Jews and Arabs in the territories. But are they as ready to report on peaceful relations that will be equally inevitable someday?

Just two weeks ago, I spent a day in Ramallah with a group of Palestinian and Israeli educators. Our purpose, in a seminar cosponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Palestinian Peace Information Center and the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel was to examine the way Israelis and Palestinians view one another in preparation for the era of peace.

Even in the face of tragic murders I am convinced we must persevere, involving more and more Israelis and Palestinians in paving that twisting and bumpy road. One of these days — or months, or years — we'll get there.

The job of educators, religious leaders and community organizers is not to bring peace: that is the realm of politicians and diplomats. Our mission should be to get ready for the day their efforts finally meet success by working to establish peaceful relations among neighbors.

The social framework needed for that won't build itself. There is too much fear, too much hatred, too much suspicion on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides of the checkpoint.

At the high school I visited in Ramallah, students and teachers still reeling from last September's violent clashes with the IDF told me that as long as they lived under "occupation" they were not willing to consider the feelings of their Israeli counterparts.

I thought about my daughter who, throughout her army service near Bet El, travelled in cold fear of terrorist attack every time she left or returned to her base.

And I put a challenge to my Ramallah audience: Can you understand that there are two sides to every checkpoint? Are you willing to join with people willing to see beyond the physical barrier

RON KRONISH

of the army roadblocks?

SOCIOLOGIST Bernard Sabella is one of those people. In a recent seminar with Palestinian and Israel educators held in Jerusalem, he reported on a survey he conducted among his students at Bethlehem University in which he found that their dominant image of a typical Israeli was either a

**Parallel to
the politicians'
intricate dance,
others are quietly
helping the two
sides to view each
other as people**

soldier or settler.

On the other hand, he also found some students who were open to having meetings with "other Israelis." Dialogues with groups of these "other Israelis" have actually been going on for years — usually quietly and without publicity. Indeed, they are probably what enabled the Oslo peace process to start rolling in the first place.

Still, despite the dialogues and the meetings, stereotypes and misperceptions persist.

I've heard it said many times that "Palestinians want justice, and Israelis want security." What a ridiculous, false comparison! Both populations' dream of peace includes justice and security — and, no doubt, a wide range of other shared visions and aspirations.

Those of us willing to work together now, in a peace process parallel to the one being conducted by the politicians and diplomats, can find common ground as we begin the delicate process of viewing one another as neighbors instead of enemies.

We can begin with something as simple as the teaching of Arabic.

Majd-el-Haj, professor of sociology at the University of Haifa, explained to a conference I sponsored two years ago that the main purpose of teaching Arabic in

Israeli high schools is to prepare students to serve in IDF intelligence units.

Now is the time to think about how to change that concept and push for curricula that will help our young people understand and relate to their Arab peers and neighbors in a new era of peace.

A greater challenge will lie in figuring out how to accept each other's view of contemporary history.

Israelis and Palestinians currently have their own vastly differing interpretations of events; the dates are the same, but the significance is totally different.

Preparing for peace means realizing that we do not have to accept each other's rendition, but we do have to understand that it exists, and learn to "rewrite history" by synthesizing the two viewpoints.

One need look no further than the model of Eastern Europe, when the walls of Communism came tumbling down, to see how propaganda and misinformation can be discarded once it is no longer needed.

Those of us working here in the field of interreligious and intercultural relations see that there are actually two peace processes.

One, featuring the intricate choreography of politicians, diplomats and analysts, captures the headlines. The other, often unnoticed, demands the cooperation of educators and religious leaders, kibbutzniks as well as urban intellectuals, opinion-molders as well as ordinary citizens.

Their combined efforts to build peaceful relations among neighbors will ultimately prove to be every bit as important as the political and economic frameworks already being devised for the betterment of all people in this part of the world.

The seminars in Ramallah and Jerusalem are a start; similar programs are beginning across Israel, and in the Palestinian Authority.

In this "other" process no one will get killed, and so you won't see us up there in the headlines. But quietly, steadily we are working to ensure a better future for all God's children in this region.

The writer, a rabbi and educator, directs the Jerusalem-based Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel.



Tuesday, January 16, 1996

Oasis of Peace In a Desert of War

Experimental Arab-Jewish community in Israel strives to foster mutual trust between cultures

By John Battersby

Staff writer of The Christian Science monitor

NEVE SHALOM/WAHAT AL-SALAAM, ISRAEL

THIS community of Jews and Arabs plays a small but vital role in forging the mutual trust vital to an enduring Mideast peace. Residents from both cultures have chosen to live and work together to create a microcosm of tranquility here.

Since the village of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salaam was founded near Latrun in 1972, it has established a School for Peace to spread its influence through a series of peace workshops attended by some 15,000 Israeli Jews and Arabs and Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank.

The Israel-PLO agreement signed in Washington on Sept. 28, the second phase of the gradual granting of autonomy to Palestinians, contains for the first time a clause that stresses the need for peace education. This is precisely what the community has been trying to do for 10 years.

Some 26 Israeli-Arab and Jewish families live in the village, which includes a conference center, a kindergarten and primary school founded in 1984, and the School for Peace. Last week, the school held a conference on the impact of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. His death in November had a huge effect on the students here, as it did on all the youth of Israel.

"On the night after the assassination, leaders of the community met and discussed what the lessons of his death were and how they could be incorporated in the education programs at the school," says Coral Aron, spokeswoman for Neve Shalom and widow of the late Pinchas Aron, a cofounder of the village.

The kindergarten and primary school are the only ones in Israel based on a binational and bilingual educational program for Jews and Israeli Arabs.

Children here are raised to respect one another's traditions and culture while maintaining their identities as Jews and Arab Muslims and Christians. The school has about 100 pupils.

"In 10 years, we have created a revolution," says Ms. Aron. "We have established an Arab-Jewish school with at least two-thirds of its pupils from outside the community," she says. The school has more Arab than Jewish applicants but tries to maintain a 50-50 ratio.

Some Israeli schools accept Arab pupils, but there is no teaching in Arabic, and their cultural, religious, and traditional needs are largely overlooked.

What makes the Neve Shalom school different is that here, Arab and Jewish teachers instruct in their own languages. Students are taught their own culture and traditions and to respect those of others.



"We are not a Jewish school. We are not an Arab school. We are an Arab-Jewish cooperation school," says Abdessalam Najjar, an Israeli Arab and founder of the School for Peace. He hopes that others will look to Neve Shalom as a model for joint Arab-Jewish education.

Mr. Najjar says that the essential element of the Neve Shalom school is that it does not try to play down differences.

"The objective here is to make people aware of their differences," Najjar says. "If we give legitimacy to our differences, then we can enrich each other and increase the area of mutual cooperation." His 14-year-old daughter, Shireen, was one of the first pupils to graduate from Neve Shalom in 1994. She now studies at a high school in the nearby Israeli-Arab village of Ramle.

Critics of the school say it is not fair to students: How will they cope once beyond the support system of the utopian village?

So far, only eight students have completed the full cycle at Neve Shalom and now attend ordinary Israeli schools. All are far ahead of their peers academically, but they have found it difficult to adjust to a far harsher and less caring society.

Najjar says he is very proud of his daughter Shireen but sometimes is a little afraid of her complete lack of fear. Shireen, who speaks fluent Hebrew and is sometimes mistaken for a Jew, is strong in her Arab identity and optimistic about the future. She says she will bring up her children as Arabs but with an understanding of Jewish culture and traditions.

"It is very important that they know Jewish children," she says. "It must be part of their daily lives."

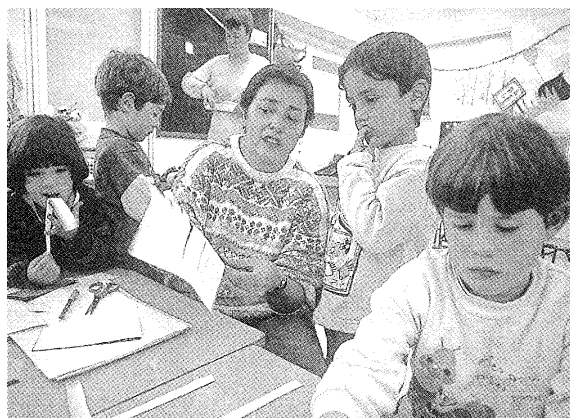
Nir Sonnenschein, a Jewish graduate of Neve Shalom who now attends school on a kibbutz, says he has not decided what he will do when he is called up for national service in the Army, but he accepts the need to maintain security and stability until peace between Arab and Jew is achieved.

"I don't want to serve in the occupied territories," he says. "It would cause a lot of conflict."

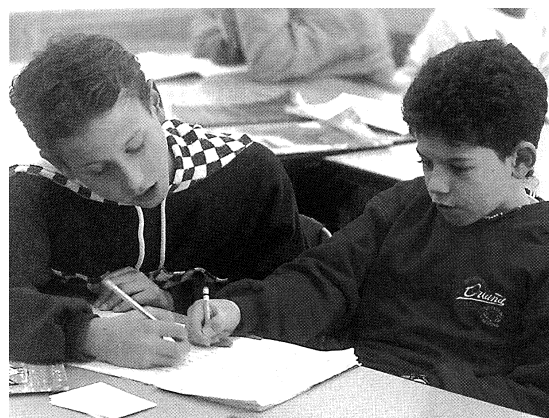
Shireen and Nir say they could see getting involved in a cross-cultural relationship, but neither would seek it. Both sets of parents are uncomfortable with the idea.

"I'm his mother... I'll support him," says Nava Sonnenschein. "But it's not a very realistic possibility. The communities are so far from each other in so many ways. We have a long way to go."

Najjar agrees. "Our goal is to enhance our national and religious identities through living together, not becoming each other."



OASIS OF COOPERATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: In the village of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salaam, Jews and Arabs strive to create a community of trust. Its ideals are fostered in an integrated elementary school (kindergartners above) and a School for Peace.



BEST FRIENDS: Omer Karta Shwartz (left), a Jew, and Rami Mana, an Arab, sit side-by-side in English class in the village's elementary school.



A New Language in the Middle East

by Samira Fadil

The human being is gifted with two distinct organs, the mind and tongue. With these we can demonstrate our personalities perceptions, feelings, fears, hopes. All the ideas and experiences the mind observes must be expressed outwardly in order to reach other people. To succeed in doing that, humankind needs to effectively use language in its written and spoken forms.

We Do Not Yet Know Each Other

During the many years of my career as a Hebrew teacher for Palestinians in Gaza, and as an Arabic teacher for the Jews and foreigners at Ulpan Akiva in Israel, I have heard the same kinds of questions and comments expressed by both sides, showing how ignorant we are about one another. We know nothing about each other, in spite of being the children of sister Semitic languages and having the same cultural roots.

Realizing the need for overcoming this obstacle, and believing in the power of education, I felt encouraged to endeavor to find a way that would bring people Palestinian teachers of Hebrew, and Israeli Jewish teachers of Arabic, among others to meet, talk, and learn. Let me share you one of many exemplary experiences I have witnessed at Ulpan Akiva School. There, the rules insist that at the dormitory, students from different countries share the same room.

The Palestinian and the Israeli

In 1988, a Palestinian student was due to share his room with an Israeli army officer. As soon as the Palestinian knew that, he decided to leave and go back to Gaza. On the next day, when the Israeli knew what was going on, he burst out laughing, as he himself was thinking the same way and had already decided not to allow the Palestinian student to live with him. He had been alarmed by the feeling that he might be stabbed by the Palestinian. When they both talked frankly and honestly, they felt able to overcome the barriers of fear and doubt.

This example shows that we should listen and talk to each other using intelligible language, because it is the first step in the way of understanding. Being born in this area of bitter strife and suffering, I have always fostered a profound appreciation of lofty ideas and supreme values such as those advocated by Grundtvig, founder of the Folk High School (*F.H.S.*) *Education for Life*.



Sitting Down Together

This is the kind of education that we need in our part of the world. We need to sit around tables and put down our own ideas, beliefs, creeds and dogmas, putting aside any traces of fanaticism and radicalism. We need the spirit and notion of the Folk School in this turbulent region. Holding these ideas in mind, we, a group of educators, founded the Palestinian Abraham Center (F.H.S.), the first of its kind in the whole Middle East last year. And we are the more proud for our achievements which have benefited hundreds of Palestinians, some Israelis, and foreigners who live in Gaza.

We believe that peace in our area has started as a result of the great efforts of wise and brave citizen—leaders, and some perceptive government representatives, who have shown their understanding for the true needs of the Middle East. Together, we are learning that there is no peace without security, and no security without peace.

The New Language

So, we in the Abraham F.H.S. in Gaza have realized that language study has a profound effect on peace. The language skill that has to be learned is *dialogue* listening and discussing the ideas of both sides in spite of the differences of opinion. This is a new scene in our part of the world. This language of communicative dialogue can build mutual trust and a promising future.

This could take a long time, maybe two generations. But we all have to start to teach *the new sound of the new language called Peace*.

Samira Shaa'ban Srur Fadil is Director of the Palestinian Abraham Language Center in Rimal, Gaza.



Girls' camp strives to bridge prejudice

Israeli, Palestinian teens coming

By Virginia Culver

Denver Post Religion Writer

A program bringing together Israeli and Palestinian teenage girls hundreds of miles from their homelands will begin its fourth year in Denver next week.

On Thursday, 32 girls from the Middle East will arrive in Denver for a three-week experience with 22 girls from the Denver metro area. The program, Building Bridges for Peace, puts the visitors in the same mountain camp with Anglo, Hispanic, Jewish, Muslim and black girls from Colorado.

The mix isn't easy and in the past has resulted in fights, resentment, tears and tension. But it has also resulted in friendships that cross cultural lines and continue despite political and military conflicts.

Building Bridges was the brainchild of Melodye Feldman, a former social worker, who contends that the best way to work for peace is to get young people talking to one another — especially those from cultures they traditionally have demonized.

First encounters

Building Bridges features two weeks at Shwayder Camp near Idaho Springs and a trip to Elitch's. The girls attend religious services together and a final banquet.

For the Middle Easterners, the airplane ride to Denver often marks the first time either the Palestinian or Israeli girls have spent much time with someone from the other ethnic group.

The tension starts on the plane sometimes and doesn't let up at Shwayder, where the girls share meals, talks, tears, hurts and prejudices. Feldman is unflappable during the experience. She never expects the event to be a tea party, and it isn't.

She figures if she can just keep the girls talking, even if they're fighting, they can come to an understanding and consider the possibility that their counterparts are human.

For some, even that is a new experience.

Life-long friendships

During the camp session, the girls also learn communication skills and how to open intercultural dialogue.

The makeup of the group changes each year, but some "alums" have returned as counselors. For others, the associations go well beyond the Denver experience.

They have visited one another's homes and holy shrines and called one another when political or terrorist activities occur.

The Middle Eastern girls continue regular meetings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and the Denver girls have regular meetings here.

Mollie Jacobs, a Denver girl who participated in the 1996 program, said the experience showed "those who were taught too late could learn to love, and a common desire for peace became our binding to one another. I don't believe the friendships that were started will ever die," she wrote in a Bridges newsletter.



OPEN FORUM

'This Passover, let us determine to build bridges of understanding'

On Passover and Peace

By Lionel Traubman

I AM A PEDIATRIC dentist. I know something about "root cause."

If a 2-year-old child has cavities everywhere, I look at his or her relationship to sweet foods and drinks. If my young patients are personally troubled, I usually see troubled relationships at home or school. When my nurses and I need to resolve how we work together, we first sit down and carefully listen to one another. "Shema, hear," Judaism instructs us. Health and survival itself, experience tells us, depends on relationships.

When I look for answers to "impossible" problems with "irreconcilable" differences, like Israeli-Arab conflicts, I go deeper — to religion, to the root source of my tradition of wisdom.

If we accept Abraham's profound insight that all is one, then we know that we are neighbors forever — all the nations, races, religions, species. There is no independent survival any more. And in my life of working with others, especially adversaries, nothing replaces face-to-face dialogue.

We Jews and Arabs have a shared history, homeland and destiny. Yet we do not know each other. Rarely have we had meals or serious conversations.

But there are some Jews and Arabs — not enough — who are beginning to get together with their "enemies." They talk in earnest and truly get to know each other, in Israel and also in America. They create models in dialogue, redefining what is possible. They prove that relationships make the difference.

Andrew Bard Schmookler, a Jew and a leading intellectual integrator of the 20th century, is concerned about the way we've been talking to each other in half-truths, shouting across a cultural chasm, perpetuating contempt for each other in a cultural war. He says we must challenge ourselves to talk to each other



BY TOM MURRAY/THE CHRONICLE

across the chasm. What can you teach me? What can I learn from you?

At this Passover celebration of freedom, perhaps more than ever, we will feel the urgency to finally end the military occupation and the terrorist killings of innocent civilians. This culture of war, fear, revenge and hopelessness is bondage for all.

"What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow men." This is the wisdom of Rabbi Hillel 2,000 years ago, when asked about the essence of the Torah itself. To this the beloved Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph later instructed us simply, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

Now, in the 20th century, with its own political realities, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook has given us a wonderful contemporary Kabbalah wisdom relevant to the "expanded identification" we all need to embody to bring the peace process to life forever. This brilliant scholar and mystic is remembered for his ability to bring together battling religious and social factions, making harmony out of seemingly irreconcilable differences. Born in 1865, he was the chief rabbi of

Palestine until his death in 1935.

Rabbi Kook's "Song of Songs" is an appeal for community, for inclusive citizens. It concludes: "There is one who ascends with all these songs in unison — the song of the soul, the song of the nation, the song of humanity, the song of the cosmos resounding together, blending in harmony, circulating the sap of life, the sound of holy joy."

If we, and all humankind, allow Jewish wisdom to touch our minds and hearts, it can change us and give us the courage to approach our relationships differently and better. We can live our lives knowing that there is no individual survival. "We" means those living at our side, our Arab neighbors, with their own ancient traditions and wisdom. We

must now have the courage to see them and meet them as people. What can I learn from you? What can we create together?

We have returned to the land of Israel. But spiritually, we are not quite yet out of the wilderness. At Passover it is well to recall how our courage and passion for freedom launched us out of Egypt, and how we were carried as "on eagles' wings" to freedom for the purpose of being "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." Priests, of course, bring people closer to the highest, the profound, God. We can do that. We can be an inspiration to the whole planet.

This Passover, let us determine to build bridges of understanding across personal and cultural chasms, turning strangers into neighbors, enemies into partners, finally freeing ourselves from the slavery and great costs of alienation. What is ancient and profound in Judaism is, after all, what really works in everyday life.

Lionel Traubman is a dentist who treats infants and children in San Francisco.



Jews and Palestinians Cooperate for Peace

It has been three years since a group of Jews and Palestinians first met in the living room of Len and Libby Traubman in San Mateo, California, to dialogue about peace in the Middle East. The pivotal question: Could they learn to hear each other and work together, with give-and-take, toward some agreement? Or would they deadlock in bitterness and mistrust?



Palestinian and Jew—Elias Botto and Hilde Gattman—sit side-by-side during serious discussion in the dialogue group.

The initial meetings were not easy. Some of the early participants left in frustration over the slow going or because they were not willing to listen to people from whom they had long been alienated. A few left because of outside pressures from friends or business acquaintances who felt that engaging in such a dialogue was a form of betrayal. But in six months, a core group of a dozen Jews and Palestinians was fully engaged in the dialogue process. Today, the group has grown to ten Palestinians and ten Jews, along with ten “others” who have proved essential by providing a neutral and stabilizing element.

“I felt like giving up a few times,” said Libby, one of the “others,” who, with husband Len, a Jew, and fellow Foundation for Global Community member Carol Kittermaster, got the group started. “It was harder to get the Palestinians involved, but we just hung in there. We kept after key people, saying, ‘We really need you. You can make a difference.’ And one night a whole group of Palestinians came; that was a turning point.”

Though there is no lack of emotion when the group meets, there is always a feeling of mutual respect, even friendship. As one Jewish member, Don Stone, said: “I’ve never known any Palestinians first hand. Normally we just don’t associate with each other. I had not



appreciated their humanness nor how like us they are. We share many of the same values; we're very similar in many ways." Henriette Zarour, a Palestinian, remembers thinking: "How am I going to sit with the enemy in the same room? It was very tense, but after a few sessions, we got to know each other, and now we're like family. I open my heart." Several of the wives, including Henriette, were quiet in the early days, but now speak out forcibly, not only in their living room meetings, but in public events as well.

The dialogue group has explored Islam and what it's like to be a Muslim, lit Hanukkah candles in a Palestinian home, attended synagogue together, and placed a display of Palestinian art in a local temple. But the principal focus has been on how best to contribute to the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. To make any headway, members had first to confront their stereotypes of each other. The key was the dialogue process the group agreed to follow, which requires setting aside one's own judgments and opinions in order to seriously take in what the other is saying.

People spoke from their own experience about what it's like to live under oppression, and the need to live in a safe place. They talked about articles they had read, news events, what they believed and why. And they had insights: "Is that how you see us? Do you mean *all*

your people feel like this?" But perhaps the largest single insight came even before the group started when the Traubmans made a presentation to a local audience about a trip they had made to the Middle East. At the end of the evening, a Palestinian rose and heatedly objected that the presentation was pro-Israeli, only to be countered by a Jew who claimed it was pro-Palestinian. "It is in the eye of the beholder," observed a member of the audience who decided then and there to join the dialogue group: "You hear what you want to hear."

A high point of the group's work together was a joint letter written to 90 leaders in the Middle East and U.S. about the need for the peace process to continue. The final wording of the letter was agreed upon only after some heated discussion, but in the end it was signed by every group member but one, who said, "You can send it without my signature; it's OK."

continued on next page



As their first joint outreach activity, the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group hosted 60 people at a formal evening presentation/dessert, sharing their success at working together, and demonstrating hope for a peaceful outcome in the Middle East. Talks by dialogue group participants were followed by discussions at each table and an invitation to attend a similar group.

Here, Henriette Zarour contributes a Palestinian dessert to a table laden with Jewish and Palestinian delicacies.



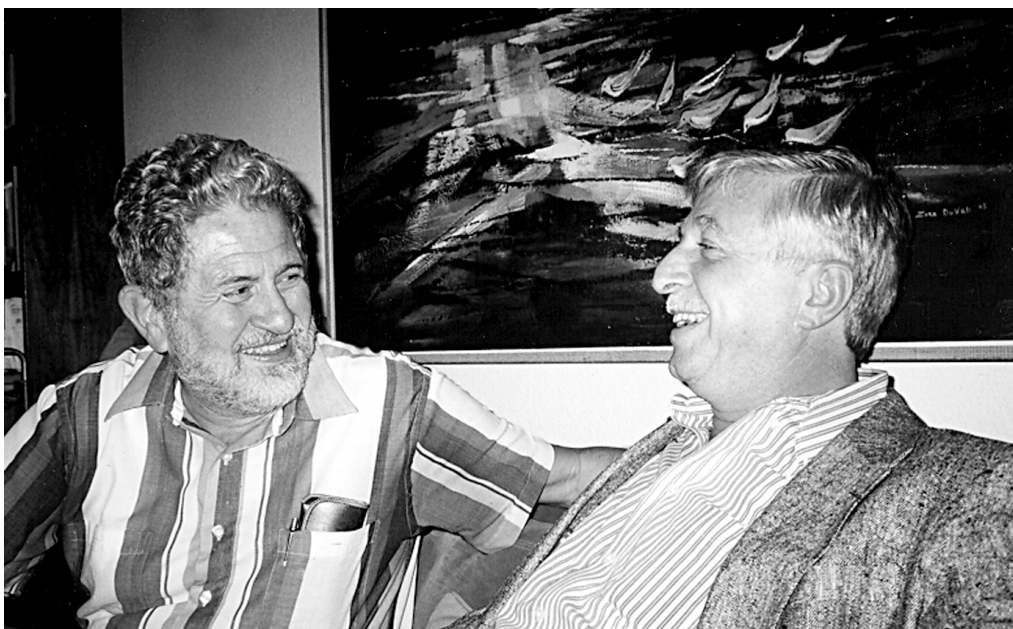
"The responses to the letter got everyone excited," said Libby Traubman. "It energized them, and it also helped establish the group's credibility."

In another action, the group last year raised \$21,000 in cash and medical equipment to give to two hospitals, one in the Gaza Strip and another in western Jerusalem. This year they plan to raise funds for the specific needs of two nursery

schools, one teaching Palestinians, the other Israelis; everything they do is done equally.

When asked what's next for the group, they insist that disbanding is not an option. "We like each other too well," one explained, "and we want to be a model; it's essential that people know it's possible to overcome prejudice and work together."

— Mac Lawrence



Don Stone, a Jew, and Adham Salem, a Palestinian, share a lighter moment.

TIMELINE May/June 1996



Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group

In July, 1992, here on the San Francisco peninsula, as part of a larger public peace process, we invited American Palestinians and Jews to begin a long-term dialogue together to discover common ground and improve the environment for reconciliation here in America.

Today we are about 20 Palestinians and Jews, and 10 "others." Many participants have come and gone from our group, taking the experience with them.

In 1997, after 60 meetings and five years, we have moved from caution to integrity, from alienation to familiarity, from ignorance to understanding, from confrontation to collaboration. As a result, we have:

- **Learned** about listening, integrity, persistence, and dedication.
- **Written joint letters** to leaders in the United States and the Middle East, including over 90 leaders and opinion formers in Washington. The final contents of these messages were hard-won after much conflict, dialogue, then agreement, before we all placed our signatures.
- **Attended synagogue together**, and placed a ground-breaking display of Palestinian art in a local temple.
- **Participated in our local Palestinian Cultural Days**, and presented an educational table to inform and invite new Palestinians to participate.
- **Given public introductory presentations for new people.** Typically 50-80 attendees sit at round tables, eating home-made Palestinian and Jewish food and becoming acquainted. Several of us give talks about our personal dialogue group experiences, then the people at tables begin moderated, sample dialogues of their own.
- **Helped the local Israeli Consulate**, at its invitation, with Jewish-Palestinian cultural activities which it has begun to initiate.
- **Sent \$1,300 cash and \$20,000 worth of medical equipment** to two hospitals, one in Gaza, and another in western Jerusalem.
- **Launched a new "spin-off" dialogue group.**
- **Been interviewed on a local television talk show** for 30 minutes about the history, principles, and activities of our dialogue group and the public peace process.
- **Raised \$10,000 for schools in need**, equally, in Netanya, Israel and Ramallah, Palestine. For their part, the two faculties began meeting in their own new face-to-face dialogue process.
- **Co-sponsored an educational fundraising event for Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam** (Oasis of Peace), a model village where Jews and Palestinians live and learn together. Two hundred attended.
- **Published an editorial article**, *On Passover and Peace*, in major metropolitan newspapers.

We encourage others to initiate dialogue where they live.

*Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group
1448 Cedarwood Drive, San Mateo, CA 94403
Voice: (650) 574-8303 • Fax: (650) 573-1217
Web: <http://www.igc.org/traubman/>
E-mail: LTRAUBMAN@igc.org*



The Song of Songs

*There is one who sings the song of his soul,
discovering in his soul
everything—utter spiritual fulfillment.*

*There is one who sings the song of his people.
Emerging from the private circle of
his soul—not expansive enough,
not yet tranquil—he strives for
fierce heights, clinging to the
entire community of Israel in tender love...*

*Then there is one whose soul expands until it
extends beyond the border of Israel,
singing the song of humanity...
his spirit spreads,
aspiring to the goal of humankind,
envisioning its consummation...*

*Then there is one who expands even further
until he unites with all existence,
with all creatures, with all worlds,
singing a song with them all.*

*There is one who ascends
with all these songs
in unison—the song of the soul,
the song of the nation, the song of humanity,
the song of the cosmos—resounding together,
blending in harmony, circulating the sap of life,
the sound of holy joy.*

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook
20th Century Kabbalist

From *THE ESSENTIAL KABBALAH: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism*
by Daniel C. Matt, Ph.D., HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1995

NOTES: Born in 1865, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook was the Chief Rabbi of Palestine until his death in 1935. A brilliant scholar and mystic, he is remembered for his ability to bring together battling religious and social factions, making harmony out of seemingly irreconcilable differences.

Love Is My Creed

My heart is capable of every form,

*a cloister of the monk,
a temple for idols,*

*a pasture for gazelles,
the votary's Kaaba,*

*the tablets of the Torah,
the Koran.*

Love is the creed I hold:

*Wherever his camels turn,
love is my creed and faith.*

Ibn al-Arabi
13th Century Islamic mystic

From *MYSTICAL DIMENSIONS OF ISLAM*
Annemarie Schimmel, UNC Press, Chapel Hill, 1975

NOTES: Born in 1165, Abu Bakr Ibn al-'Arabi was one of the most important mystical Islamic theologians and thinkers. With a cosmology relevant for our times, he was preoccupied with the idea that the individual must overcome mere beliefs in specifics of religion and limited identification, and rather immerse one's total being with God, the whole of life.



Thank you

**Charles & Gerry Gensler
Mervin & Roslyn Morris
Sally Lilienthal's Ploughshares Fund
Matilda Linn**



**Mahmoud Kaddoura, Translator
Maureen Kushner, Conflict Resolution Through Humor and Art
Ricki McGlashan Graphics
Edna Shochat, Translator
Teri Whitehair, Event Coordinator**



**EarthSeals ■ Rafeek el-Madhoun ■ Bob Hammond
Paul Hwoschinsky ■ Casey Kasem ■ Raquel Newman ■ The Owl Fund
Peninsula Community Foundation ■ John Swartley**



American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam

Dedicated to supporting, through educational outreach and fundraising, the School for Peace and the Primary School of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam.

Interns for Peace

Becoming professional coexistence leaders, over 200 Arab and Jewish peace "interns" in Israel, Palestinian Gaza/West Bank, Jordan, and Egypt have engaged 80,000 Jews and Arabs in business, cultural, educational, women's, and community development to create inter-communal projects that meet the needs of both peoples. Participants become lifetime advocates of coexistence.

U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East

Representing 2,300 American Jews, Christians and Muslims, including national and local leaders in each community, USICPME is committed to working together for negotiated peace between Israel, the Palestinian people and the Arab states. It initiates programs of dialogue, education and advocacy across America in support of U.S. policies for peace in the Middle East.

And our co-sponsors . . .

Palestinian American Congress

The PAC is the principal voice of the Palestinian community in the United States. It coordinates and organizes projects and programs to meet, and speak out on, the political, educational, cultural, financial, and social needs of the Palestinian people. Dedicated to democracy and to building an independent Palestinian State, and to national and human sovereignty and rights for all peoples, PAC's leadership is elected from local chapters and at its national convention.

Jewish Community Relations Council

The JCRC is the central public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community. It represents more than 80 synagogues and Jewish organizations in the Bay Area on issues that impact Jews as individuals and as a community here and in Israel. Educational programs for both Jewish and general audiences are a centerpiece of JCRC activity and are aimed at mobilizing action.

Foundation for Global Community

With its Center for the Evolution of Culture in Palo Alto, the mission of this nonprofit educational movement is to discover, live, and communicate what is needed to build a world that functions for the benefit of all life. Its work spans half a century, involving individual spiritual growth, social action, grassroots education, and mediation of international conflicts.

Additional copies of this publication are available from

Foundation for Global Community/Middle East Dialogue, 222 High St., Palo Alto, CA 94301



