



אגודת המפגש הבין דתי (ע"ר) جمعية اللقاء بين الديانات
INTERFAITH ENCOUNTER ASSOCIATION

Activity Report for the year 2001

The Interfaith Encounter Association was established by a group of long time activists in the interfaith dialogue field, who came together in the summer of 2001 in order to significantly widen its traditionally very limited circles and turn it into a tool for social change. In order to achieve that goal two main emphases were put: a. equal participation of Jews and Arabs from the outset (including at least half Arab Board Members); b. activities among the wide public with three aspects – 1. intensive: as many activities as possible; 2. effective – interactive activities that change attitudes and open hearts; 3. attractive – interesting activities that will draw new people into the circles of dialogue.

During the six months that passed since the IEA was established we completed the official processes of registration and developed the Board according to the first emphasis, with 5 Jews, 5 Muslims, 3 Christians and 1 Druze.

We also had several activities:

“Different and Equal – Towards a Human Globalization” - a study day on the rainy Wednesday of 19 December 2001, at the Marriott Hotel in Nazareth with some 50 participants. Presenters were Rabbi David Bigman, Head of Shiluv Yeshiva in Ma'ale HaGilboa, Sheik Hamed Kiwan, Imam of Majd El Krum and Fr. Dr. George Khoury, President of the Greek-Catholic Court. Following the panel, participants divided into small discussion groups. Some of the groups discussed the utopia of a just society, using role-play. The group I participated in took a personal path: each participant started with where s/he is and where he wants to be in life and then reflected on the society and on the day's topic. This group concluded its session by reciting together a special Jewish-Muslim Sufi Zikr, composed by Prof. Fenton.

Women's Interfaith Encounter in Jerusalem - an enthusiastic group of thirty Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Jerusalem women; coordinated by Elana Rozenman, Hanan Totary and Lina Yassin. The groups started its activity on 20 December 2001 in a study evening about "Holidays of the Season from the Woman's Perspective: Ramadan, Chanukah, and Christmas", presenting the courage it took every woman to attend such a gathering in the



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midst of the difficulties and violence in Jerusalem. Women commented on the enjoyable atmosphere of women studying together, since interfaith gatherings are so often dominated by men. They expressed and demonstrated the importance of openness, curiosity, respect, and tolerance towards each other's religions. Because of the unanimous desire to continue the process, an interfaith planning group was set up to select topics for further study and find interested teachers and participants. Following that determination a second study evening took place on 19 February about "The Creation of Woman in the Bible and the Koran and how it affects the way the religions relate to women". The next meeting is planned for 18 March about "Easter, Id al Adha, and Pesach from the Woman's Perspective".

Several activities are planned for the near future:

"Can Jews and Christians Experience Something of the Other's Inner life?" - a discussion on 14 March between Yossi Klein Halevi, author of the recently published book, "At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for God with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land," and Brother Jack Driscoll, director of the Bat Kol Institute - a Christian-sponsored Jerusalem center that promotes the study of Judaism by Christians - and former president of Iona College in New York.

"The Humanity of the Other" - an Interfaith Israeli-Palestinian weekend retreat, first such event that is open for the wide public since the break of violence in September 2000. It is organized together with the Nablus Youth Federation and is planned for the end of April.

"Facing violence as a way to peace" - A Middle Eastern conference with participants from Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Jordan and Cyprus. Part of the Europe & Middle-East conference of the United Religions Initiative in Berlin in early April.

Yehuda Stolov

Director

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