

UNDER THE GUN: THEATRE IN ISRAEL DURING THE INTIFADA

Too grand a title, not comprehensive study, but perceptions from my own, albeit limited experience, of a highly polarizing and tangled situation. I hope to spark discussion, and to complicate the prevailing view of Middle East realities. Israel is a place of competing narratives, mutually exclusive and bitterly opposed. In the past 2 years, my own views have altered dramatically, and I hope to both give an overview of some grassroots theatre work and to offer thoughts about my own work and political changes.

I spent this past year in Jerusalem, and my views are shaped by the fact that what I experience of Israel is not the euphoria of potential peace, but a total breakdown of hope. In my two previous visits, first to direct a show for an International Festival in Jerusalem, and a year later, during the summer of Camp David II and Barak's proposal of a land give-back of unprecedented proportions, I already felt the winds of despair. That was followed by Taba, an offer that amounts to sovereignty over 100% of territory almost all of it contiguous. Now, after 9/11 and the Intifada have left an indelible imprint, my own views are shaped by an urgency and anger that didn't exist 2 years ago. The anguish I feel – all Israel, and all Palestine, feels it too.

Living in Jerusalem is pure schizophrenia – ideals wounded, naivete stripped, coming to terms with the new understanding that there are many, many, who want to murder me because I am a Jew in Israel, to murder me, my children, and the country that is now my home. Dr. Hagai Agmon-Snir, of the Jerusalem Inter-Cultural Center, a man deeply committed to empowering both nations, says “Many of the people who are committed to dialogue feel that although they are against inhumane actions, normal human feelings of revenge and hatred fill their hearts during the harsh events around us. The contradiction...causes paralysis and anger...”

Supporting discarded initiatives, learning that instead of the transfer of resources that should be taking place, billions are pocketed by the Palestinian people's own corrupt leaders, bearing up under massacres of children on the streets of Jerusalem, I feel

betrayed, deluded by my own desire for co-existence. I support a two-state solution, but I learn that for many Palestinians, only one state. I hear it repeatedly, directly, it's the official PA line. A colleague who lived 3 years in Ramallah tells me, before I arrive, that the settlers, the sliver of right-wingers who cling to land on the West Bank, are right – the Palestinians will never give up their dreams of Haifa, Tel Aviv. Call it Palestine, she advises, not Israel, when you speak to my friends in Ramallah. There is no Israel on Palestinian maps. An Islamic encyclopedia I read in South Africa, published in England, has no entry for Judaism, and its 3 pages on Jerusalem never mention Jews. I am enraged, by politicians, by the level of violence and the racist bloody rhetoric from the Palestinian leadership, warlords and thugs who thrive on the horror. Misery for all. There's only one answer, sane people have proposed it, and it will prevail in the end, if there's not a total bloodbath first. But so far, the leaders have walked away.

The maximum we can give and still survive is less than the minimum they will accept. If that's so, then what? If we can't negotiate, they want to do away with a Jewish state, & will not end the attacks, then what? What choice is there?

Dr. Agmon-Snir, writing about Muted Voices says: “we belong to different identities and nations, and our first concerns are for our brothers and sisters from the same nations. But there is another “us” and “them” – we who want to find a peaceful solution that takes into account the needs of the other, and “they” who want to destroy the other nation.” Is this a symmetrical struggle, with equivalent forces for peace on each side? I wish it were.

Like many Israelis, I work w/Palestinians, many wonderful people who have legitimate claims for justice and a homeland, who have every right to self-determination, but who do not acknowledge that the merciless terror perpetrated by their leaders is not trivial, not just a matter of statistics as one East Jerusalem woman told me (what are your chances of getting blown up? My son waits 3 hours at a checkpoint, it's humiliating...). I am part of an Initiative on Shared Responsibility, but I hear nothing from Palestinians about their responsibilities. To negotiate. To speak against terror. To compromise, negotiate, go

on. Schizophrenic - I want peace, work towards it, and also I find myself hating, want to hit back, wanting revenge. Our country is being murdered.

There are agonies on both sides, of course. I get emails from Bethlehem about the siege. It's awful, my friend says, why are you doing this? Today the tanks are not fighting terror, but hurting children, preventing food and milk, cutting water and electricity is not fighting terror, demolishing houses and damaging trees and humiliating men, and discriminating people is not making peace or calm, the situation is increasing violence and reaction. Little kids and old people, who don't care about politics, are being punished, they can't go out, no one collects our garbage. It's awful to hear. He talks about peace, sees the Saudi proposal as a light in the darkness, but seems never to have heard of Taba – much the same offer. Asks no questions @ his leaders. My friend in Bethlehem doesn't criticize, doesn't speak against terror, corruption, exploitation by his own brutal and self-promoting leaders. Both sides are enraged, traumatized. And too many on each side trivialize the agony of the other.

I lived this bloody year in Jerusalem. My family and I are going back, we will try to stay and make a life. It is the only place I know where we can live a Jewish life. I did a lot of theatre, far more than I anticipated: I directed a dance/theatre work at the Jerusalem Theatre, the kickoff event for a major city Festival. The piece, based on the story of Bat Yiftach, combined Flamenco & Oriental dance and included Arab musicians from East Jerusalem. Bat Yiftach tells the story of Jephthah's daughter, sacrificed to God because of her father's arrogance. She has no future because her father made an oath to God that he should never have made.

I also formed a Women's Theatre Collective which produced "MANICURE" (an outrageous look at an outrageous situation, about a woman, her life and her laundry, under the circumstances), performed in kitchens and basements by a core company of 4 actor/directors on the insanity of living through this quagmire, this quasi-war. We spent 6 months of intensive rehearsal, co-wrote, co-directed and performed the play for women only to SRO in a process that sustained us artistically and emotionally during very dark

days. Our process began with my impulse to explore women and war, led us through Greek texts to the Tanach – to deep textual and performative explorations of women in Tanach – Chava, Sarah, Deborah and Yael. As the days got eerier and our lives more painful, the darker explorations were subsumed into what became a surreal comedy about a woman held hostage by her house, which is crumbling around her. We also held staged readings of provocative work, including *The Prisoner's Dilemma* by David Edgar, a play (done recently by RSC) @ the impossibility of hearing each other when a cycle of retributive violence prevails, and we are planning our next show for January 2003.

I wrote: a radio play about grieving for strangers, and a full-length called *Pulling Apart* about grieving for ourselves; @ the “situation” and my relation to it as a Diaspora Jew, examining my connection to history and the heart. I taught a course in theatre as social action at Tel Aviv University, lectured at Bar-Ilan University and gave a # of acting workshops. I observed intercultural theatre projects between Palestinian and Jews as they developed over the course of this dreadful year, sitting in on rehearsals, workshops, performances, in Jaffa, Jerusalem, Kfar Tbor, & Bethlehem. I saw a lot of work, most memorably a raw, funny, honest piece at a max security prison in Ramla, where the men – lifers – put their crimes, their shame and guilt, their remorse, their humor and their yearning, on stage. And, I participated in dialogue groups and peace initiatives.

My feeling is this: The work of building bridges has for the most part failed. We are farther and farther apart. In light of the crisis, the severe breakdown of trust, there must be a re-evaluation of “co-existence” work, and theatre’s role in peace efforts; many projects have simply collapsed. Those that continue are more honest, no longer dreamy-eyed utopias of pretended embrace. Those projects that survive are multi-vocal, and give voice to the anguish and desires of two peoples, that face the contradictions. There is intercultural dialogue, though only projects between Arab and Jewish Israelis function now. In spite of the fact that it is hard to talk, hard even to leave your house, some projects continue. There is also a deep need for breathing space, for irony, a release through bitter humor, cultural re-construction and self-evaluation, an interest in culturally specific work and intra-group dialogue.

My paper today looks at 3 areas: 1) co-facilitated educational theatre in which teens are guided through a structured experience in dialogue, cultural awareness, and building trust, leading to group-created performance; 2) grassroots and alternative theatre companies, outside of the mainstream theatre establishment and often with insufficient financial means, but representing groups with little or no access to main stages (e.g. among Ethiopian and other immigrant theatre, women's theatre, and theatre of and for the religious communities; and 3) my own work, exploring the "matsav" this year.

The guiding question is: What – if anything - does theatre contribute in times of political and social crisis, at a time of maximal tension, when national will and identity are contested in the most urgent way. Are we all just talking to ourselves? Spinning our wheels, marking time til peace can again be imagined?

Since the Oslo Accords, intercultural theatre in Israel had aimed at building bridges and establishing dialogue among Jews and Palestinians, to air grievance, move toward understanding through equal status contacts, and create the conditions for equal participation and the renegotiation of national dreams. Joyce Klein, an educator and theatre director who has been working in Jerusalem for the past 12 years, talked of her friendship with a young Palestinian who was 18 when he joined her theatre company. He came in very angry, and like all the participants, spoke of his dreams. His dream was Haifa, his dream was Tel Aviv, but time, he, like the others - Jews and Palestinians – learned to give up some parts of their dreams. That's what had been accomplished, then. Today, he is a lawyer in Palestine, he and Joyce are still friends, & he tells her he only learned the terms of Camp David II and Taba in the Israeli news, and he didn't believe them to be true. When last year, at a meeting with one of Arafat's negotiating team, those same terms were explained to him and others, they asked – why didn't we accept this? No answer was given.

Now, since the collapse of peace talks, and the radicalization of the Israeli and Palestinian "street" nationalistic rhetoric and the desire for revenge has taken hold. Theatre may

reinforce larger divisions, it becomes an engine of in-group solidarity. By privileging one set of voices over another, it can deepen pain and rage.

As things keep heating up, there seems little point to “dialogue”- less and less to talk to about. Theatre seems inadequate, the ruptures are so profound - And yet dialogue and coalition building offer the only hope for positive, restorative action during the breach.

Amidst the stalled, disintegrating efforts at conflict negotiation, bridge building, cooperation and dialogue, some projects do continue to function. Virtually all cooperative ventures between Palestinians and Israelis have come to a crashing halt, not only because emotions are so raw, but also because of the threats from within Palestine to anyone who “collaborates” with Israel. (The Arab musicians who played for Bat Yiftach couldn’t let their names be on the program, out of fear of being associated with Israel. The same issues have existed for years, I’m told, long before Intifada II, companies that toured Europe would negotiate over the wording on posters – Palestinians actors, performing with Israelis, were not willing or not allowed to have their names associated publicly with Israelis, tho international funders called for such. According to Paul Heritage, working of a project for BBC one company in Ramallah refused to have their work televised, as the program would feature an Israeli company in another segment. The point is to allow no legitimacy to the state of. Israel.

Projects between Israeli Arabs and Jews function, though not without substantial tension. The Arab Israeli situation as a minority within a majority Jewish state is often described as a dilemma of one’s state being in conflict with one’s nation. There is a dismal record of civic non-equality within the state of Israel, which has resulted in large scale discrimination in fiscal support, educational allocations, participation in civil government, rate of economic development within the Arab sector, and so on. Over the past ten years, there have been substantial gains in these areas, but the current crisis has exacerbated problems and created a new sense of militancy among Israel’s Arab citizens, many of whom now identify themselves strictly as Palestinians of Israeli citizenship.

I make the distinction between the struggle between Israel and Palestine, and the problem of equality for minorities within a Jewish state, because the two issues, though intertwined and overlapping, present different faces in intercultural theatre and conflict resolution. There is a great struggle in Israel to balance democracy and identity – much like the situation in Muslim states since their inception. Bernard Lewis, in *What Went Wrong*, describes how in (almost all) Muslim states, where all law is Sharia (holy law), and non-Muslims are categorically and legally of exist with few rights, lower status and no privileges, the issue of enfranchisement of women and non-Muslims is of pressing concern. In Israel, a democracy that recognizes the rights of non-Jews, the question of how to reconcile religious and secular law, how to incorporate minority interests, is still being negotiated. The rights of the Arab minority and their access to economic resources had been ignored for too long, and continue to be of enormous concern.

One of the big questions in this atmosphere of anger, mutual hatred, and complete political collapse, is what, if anything, is being accomplished by co-existence projects? There are no sure answers, but theatre programs seem in general to be relatively successful at fostering reconciliation and dialogue. Because theatre is fundamentally concerned with “making something” which reflects many voices, the workshop format seems to encourage constructive interaction and trust-building.

The work is difficult, painful, contentious, explosive. Dialogue has b/come sharper, angrier. There are still reasons (for some) to talk: to salvage something from a deteriorating situation, to accept the fact that one way or another, we have to live together. To explore for themselves ways in which they are internally conflicted (the other guy is not as absolutely monstrous as I am led to believe. Too often what they get at home and in the media is a one-sided view of the conflict).

The work must be multi-vocal; interestingly, that is actually fostered by the present crisis, because both sides are simply too upset not to speak. Theatre companies like Arab-Hebrew Theatre in Jaffa use individual stories, developing them for the stage and presenting them to a bi-cultural audience. Their recent work, *Longing*, is a series of

interconnected monologs on the subject of exile, based on actors' own stories or those of their relatives. The theatre, which has been 10 years in existence, began co-productions with the Arab Theatre of Jaffa 3 years ago in an historic building in old Jaffa. The present work presents the stories of 2 Palestinians, a Jewish family from Uzbekistan, and a Jewish woman who returns to her birthplace, Berlin.

A P. tells of his grandfather who didn't live to see the emptying of the village. Now he's getting married, so he goes to his grandfather's grave, and he talks @ his life & what is gone, now the village is an artist's colony. He comes for his blessing, gets into the grave with him, is yelled at by the old man's ghost who can't believe that the land has been lost. The actor/grandfather pulls up the cross on his grave and it becomes a sword, and he – the actor- yells at us: Who belongs here? Where are you from? He seems to “threaten” the audience with his rage. He's angry. And we are frightened. It's effective.

The immigrant Russian family plays itself on stage, young couple with their 4 year old boy They tell their true story: The wife is not Jewish, and they had trouble, at first she wasn't allowed to come when she was pregnant, then she couldn't get a job here. (Of course there are no jobs here for anyone).

An older woman left Israel and returned to Berlin, but she feels she doesn't belong there either. She shows slides of her favorite children's books from childhood, but the culture is German, alien. In the language itself, the echoes of the War are too strong. She seems to belong nowhere.

2nd P: His uncle now works the fields as a laborer on lands he once owned. 50 years it's been in the courts, to resolve who owns it.

The company also presents in schools, *We just present stories, there are facilitators in schools to deal with the after effects* says Igal Ezrahy. “Our job is to hear e/o's stories, to make theatre, not to solve problems. We work together, on an equal footing, in a way that is not patronizing.”

I mention something that happened at my son's school, a group from The Peres Center for Peace performed. P. actors tell about their lives. One lost her home, another says I am stopped at checkpoints, but a 14 year old boy sat in the audience is crying, his closest friend was murdered the week before in the Ben Yehuda bombing, and he felt he was being preached at, not listened to. The teacher was upset & spoke to the actors, in the 2nd performance they were able to listen. I asked Igal @ this. There is no equivalence here, no symmetry, the Ps are "underdogs." And then he walked away from the interview.

A company whose work I didn't get to see – because my invitation to their show in Ramallah was not accompanied by any assurance of my physical safety, at a time when Jews had been lynched there, is ASHTAR - TO model company of strong reputation. I spoke w/the leading actor, and my friend, a Finnish man fluent in Arabic who frequently served as my translator, reports on seeing one of Ashtar's performances:

Play (written by the company members) called "Abu Shaker's Affairs 2001", was directed to a young audience. It is about a Palestinian family facing problems during the 2nd intifada. A simple story is presented; then the actors start over and the audience members stop the action when they wish, come on stage and become the character they thought should have acted differently. "It was very fruitful indeed. I was amazed to see so many young spectators get on stage and act out stuff. Obviously, the play had a very strong Palestinian undertone but it did take into account subtle realities. For example, the main character Shakir was lured into committing a crime (Israelis came across as the bad guys); he was sent to gaol but was promised he'd get out if he'd report about certain activities to the Israeli intelligence.

The obvious response from the kids was that Shakir should not accept dirty money from the Israelis - until one kid said "but wait a minute, Shakir's family are poor because his father lost his job; and he was working for the Israelis - so the family had actually been helped out by them. They're not all bad." This point, however, was not subject to

discussion. The penalty for collaboration of any sort is death and total exclusion of the surviving family, and the audience of course is fully aware of this.

There are a jangle of perspectives and offerings. There are well-meaning works that speak about love and peace and justice – the message (and it is mostly message in such plays), which is if we all love each other the madness will end, feels stale, disingenuous..

So far I've spoken of the professional stage. Other work comes out of what are called Grassroots Coexistence Projects. Since 1989, these programs include coexistence education for educators, community leaders and students w/in formal school settings, and joint Arab/Israeli programs, many directed at teens and using performing arts as medium.

A crucial element is compassionate listening, which allows each individual to express his or her own story as part of a national story, without privileging anyone's "pain" or asserting a single narrative as truth. Direct political discussion is rarely productive in so heated an atmosphere; to hear specific grievances, to examine individual experiences within the political context, proves wiser. A project in which young poets read and translate each other's poetry, for example, has participants work on personal material within clear guidelines. The process allows the group to work through issues and conflicts in a non-direct way, channeling energies enables a dialogue to happen. Goal oriented projects, which provide a motive to continue to an endpoint, and a shared experience of "making, doing" are generally positive for the participants. Facilitated "doing", combined with expressing, listening and processing, offers a strong working model for both professional and educational groups.

This said, there are numerous obstacles to the non-professional workshop projects aimed at Jewish and Arab teens. First of all, in this climate, there is a great reluctance to "leave the house." Our women's theatre group decided to perform in people's living rooms, partly because no one was going out much, and partly because the perimeter of our houses seemed to be hemming in our lives. One of the major Festivals of this kind of

student work was cancelled, because of the security situation. A meeting to set up a network for special needs populations was cancelled. Peace has been cancelled.

Also, given the pain all sides were experiencing, there was a real difficulty in talking. “I don’t want to talk, I can’t bear to be with *them*” – I was in a town right near Jenin the day the IDF went in, most of the Jewish kids in the theatre group didn’t come that day – their brothers were sisters were in the army. During the workshop we heard that 17 boys had been kidnapped, anxiety was very high, anger, tension extreme.

Most of the Arab kids could relate to the suicide bombers.

A/G says: Ambulances can’t get out of Jenin.

Another says: I’m afraid they’ll take my home away.

A/B: A J boy isn’t stopped, I’m stopped. At the mall, I’m stopped for 2 hours, they didn’t understand what I was carrying (some electric equipment).

Jew/Boy: I’m afraid to travel at all, I’m afraid to take a bus.

Arab Boy: They’re afraid of me? I’m proud of it.

Jewish Girl: What would happen to me if I went to Ramallah?

Another JG: You want me to say that all I have is yours, but it isn’t.

A/B : More contemplative, We need each other. A Jewish doctor takes care of me.

Bedouin boy, Moshe (serves in the army) After Jenin, they’ll go to Schem. Everyone’s gonna pay (for this, the suicide bombers).

This is war, they say, to each other. They are giggly and frustrated and despairing and energized all at the same time. .

Arab boy: Why they do the bombs, you must see behind it. Understand why.

Power/Powerlessness Improvs: Let me sit in your chair. Let me use your phone. Same ticket for a seat at the movies – it's about to start

During the break they socialize separately, there is no interaction. The facilitator, an Argentinian Jew who was under martial law for being a Jew & a long hair, said he is getting ulcers b/c of all the hatred, b/c he must listen and not take sides. His son goes in the army this year. .

This workshop is part of a year-long theatre process developed by City of Peace which engages teens in intensive workshops exploring issues of power, violence and racial equality. The groups develop original scripts which are staged in venues around Israel. City of Peace operates according to a model developed in DC by actor/director Paul Griffin, & is used to deal with racial issues in inner city schools. The program is in its fourth year in Israel, and it functions through the sponsorship of the IACC (Matnasim), an umbrella organization for 180 centers and 400 schools, @ 1/5 Arab. Ir v' Shalom is under the direction of Revital Levy.

City of Peace is aimed specifically at youth, and uses theatre as a model of fostering inter-group relations. There is a detailed operational plan followed over the course of a year, put into practice by group leaders, in conjunction with teachers from Arab and Jewish home schools. Most trainers have no background in theatre, which does present some obstacles. The program is phased, and follows a precise time-table (ideally).

- Recruitment of production team, selection of a spectrum of youth from the participating communities
- Creation of an advocacy group of parents to support and provide resources
- Establishment of local support committees
- Marketing, publicizing, raising community profile of program

Groups meet weekly over the course of six months, with the goal of building a final full-length performance presented in their communities. The process includes:

- Community building, introducing basic theatre skills
- Self: Exploration of personal, social, and cultural identity
- Other: Stereotypes, identifying and confronting our views of others

During this phase, groups are asked to consider and respond to a series of ?s; for example, the teens sit in 2 circles – Arab kids form an inner O and Jewish kids the outer. Facilitator says to the inside O: Please stand if the statement you hear is true for you. Stand only if you want to, outside O don't say a word. Then switch.

“Please stand if you were ever called names or ridiculed b/c you are Arab. Notice who is standing. Who is not. Notice how you feel.

‘Please stand up if you ever felt discriminated against for being Arab’

‘...if you were ever beaten by a Jewish person for being of a different faith’

‘ ...if you were ever **condemned**, called names or treated in a negative manner because you were an Arab’ etc

The groups change places, and the Jewish kids are asked to consider in what ways they have been responsible for racism. (Several Jewish kids expressed their feeling that the structure was one-sided. During one session, a massacre of Jews took place half an hour up the road, in Afula. This wasn't reflected in the workshop, though the J. teens talked about it among themselves. .

During the year, the groups move from work on::

- Power and powerlessness, examining basic dynamics of power. Models: One has power, the other doesn't, or power is shared. Later, they work on:
- Life Stories: Everyone gets to speak from their perspective, their truth.
- Conflict Resolution: Development of scenarios of conflict, using role play, true life models.
- Scripting, based on improvised material
- Rehearsal (after 4 months of process)
- Producing and performing

Currently the program operates in 9 community centers, bringing together Jewish and Arab, religious and secular, new immigrants and Sabra, affluent and disadvantaged youth. The goal is to sensitize Jewish Israelis to the very real discrimination against Arab citizens of Israel, and among people who value justice, it is effective. :

“I am sitting there, looking down for shame as I see the reactions. Me, a young Jewish Israeli girl for the first time I felt anger and contempt for the Jewish Israeli society that I belong to: how could it be possible that such things are allowed to happen?”

Another project, Peace Child works in coexistence education through theatre and the arts. Founded in 1988 by the late Habima actress, Yael Drouyanoff, the program developed from a workshop in Jaffa to a nation-wide enterprise. The 14th Season presentation “Workshop Ghosts” is a series of monologs and scenes in Hebrew & Arabic, We see the mother of a “shaheed” and a mother from a settlement, victim of an attack on a disco and victim from Jenin, 2 mothers say the same words about their children. A girl went out for pizza, now we see, she stands, she is without a leg. A boy who went to a demonstration ended up getting killed. The characters dead or wounded. A boy says, *That's the way it is, when you have to cry you cry and when you have to shoot you shoot.*

Melisse Boskavich, coord: This has been the hardest year, the kids often didn't want to return, but they did, and then there'd be another pguah, and the cycle would start again.

Talking is the point: I gave a lecture to a Women Studies Program at Bar-Ilan Univ. The instructor, Susie Handleman, uses a pedagogical tool that asks students write letters to the authors they are reading. One woman, a middle aged P., wrote her letter to Alice Walker, in which she said that she, Walker, had it easy since at least she could s. After a year of not talking, the explosion came. But, when I came in, they were then ready to interact, play, speak, be open.

NOTZAR THEATRE - YAEL BERNLAND, TAMAR MILLSTEIN

Another Grassroots Coexistence Programs is run by Notzar Theatre (means Created). The company performs in the huge old Alhambra opera house, a concrete cave, once an abandoned drug hangout; reclaimed and refurbished by the actors. Now filled with community and professional companies: dance, theatre poetry. Artistic Dir. Dalit Millstein is one of the 4 founders. She explained, they staged Edward Bond's War Plays as "an antidote for the Gulf War." Last year, Penthisilea, a love story played out against a war matrix, and it explores "the will to dominate." Currently, Yerma, @ man who tends his fields and not his wife. She makes Juan the central character, sees it as appropriate in this parched country.

The company works in Jaffa, which they see as an ethnic microcosm of Israel, and they connect to the community through educational projects. They work in local schools, and for their (very poor) constituents, "theatre is like a foreign country." The Arab-Jewish encounter is through making theatre – they work in co-facilitated groups, video, theatre, doing projects together.

The work – run by the company of 20 actors - reflects the daily, personal, preoccupation with basic survival. Notzar says its project is the "encouragement of a tolerant and attentive dialogue btwn...Jews and Arabs," although in a video workshop I attended one

of the (Jewish) actors from Notzar privately expressed a distinct bias against the male Jewish students present in the group.

The company works in their space with mixed groups, and directly in schools as well. The actors are the principal facilitators in the schools, but Notzar brings in professionals social workers and specialists in group process for training sessions, and always uses two co-facilitators in mixed group interactions.

Similar work is taking place with grade school children at the Arab-Jewish Cultural Center in Jaffa, and numerous places around the country. According to Jessica Davies, US Vice Council, and others, projects with children are problematic for a number of reasons: parents and peers object to the interaction with the “other” group, lessons learned in groups contradict and conflict with perceptions at home, etc. The projects aimed at youth are valuable, but questions remain.

SOL CASTRO, education director of the Matnasim, says “We are spinning our wheels, but even that’s better than nothing. There has been a breakdown of all trust. Palestinians filling the gaps we (Jews) have left. But, Castro – a strong critic of Israeli gvmt, who is committed to a secular Israeli state, says, there is no peace possible with Arafat, there is no partner. Since Oslo, we’ve paid a heavy price and gotten no return. Barak couldn’t give away assets and get nothing in return – So, now we are set back to pre-48.

There are many people working to end the cycle of retributive violence, and to minister to the shocks and trauma that this social psychosis is causing. Noah Salameh, who runs the Center for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation in Bethlehem, is an impressive voice.

The Center works with Israelis and Palestinians on both sides of the “green line,” primarily teaching non-violent strategies for conflict negotiation to Palestinian youth; and offering training in Peace and Reconciliation studies to teachers, social workers and other

professional service workers. Dr. Salameh co-facilitates conflict resolution work with Israeli and Palestinian security forces, community leaders, and youth groups.

Dr. Salameh, a P. who spent 15 years in an Israeli jail, has made a commitment to ethical and non-violent action. He is a courageous man now doing exceptional work in impossible circumstances, and along with his Israeli counterparts continues trying to find ways of defusing the endless cycles of revenge, supporting democracy and legitimate aspirations, and building co-existent states

He explains that P. culture is violent, and his goal in working with young kids is to change behaviors by teaching conflict negotiation skills. He Works w/5 Pal. Schools in Bethlehem area, Trains counselors/group facilitators; teachers; students.

Doesn't use arts, though role play, dialogue, and interpersonal interaction, are central.

Pal. Culture is non-demonstrative, he says; emotions are not shown, feelings not expressed publicly, and there is an emphasis on fear as the mode of commanding personal respect. So a show of fear, especially for boys, is not acceptable.

One female student, who attended workshop on personal dignity, and inviolable safety, was subsequently beaten by her father. Who can guarantee her safety at home? Noah brought the father in to talk too, to gently challenge the culture of beating.

You have to create an atmosphere that is safe, he says. Words aren't enough.

His goal with Pal/Israelis is to change attitudes. Move through stereotypes, listen to each other. "Here you are all equal," he tells them. "Even the soldier has no gun." The same principle applies w/in school settings. Listen to the other side tell his story. You have no obligation to agree, but you have to listen. This is grass-roots diplomacy.

There must be an opportunity for the weak side to speak. Why should I knock you when I'm angry; Listen! He teaches kids: 5 levels of listening, 5 words in Arabic.

Dr. S helps students to come to a definition of negotiation, then prepare for negotiation step by step, stating their own goals and objectives and those of their opponents

- I. The idea is to Define the Objectives - Ours and the other guy's
- II. Explore ways to succeed
- III. Learn to give others the oppty to get what they need.

I attended IBDA – Community Center for Deheisha Refugee Camp Murals of towns long gone. Pictures of martyrs on walls. Well treated, as long as I don't say I am a Jew.

Growing involvement of women in religious & spiritual life. Continuing change in status of these women. Women writers are examining the change in status over these past decades, and they grapple with issues of identity We begin to see a lot of theatre by women for women. Interested in spiritual uplift, elevating themselves Also: struggles w/religiosity. Constraints on expression. Insulated nature of their lives, plus now dealing with the stress of the settlements.

Rabbis have been obliged to consider halachic implications of theatre (now created & performed, by and for orthodox women). Judaism has always been hostile to theatre (the HU girl asks me how can I be observant and an actress?). Rabbis have no bkgd in theatre, but they must decide on issues of content & performance – movement, costumes, acting). Fear in the community is that theatre may be “vehicle for dissidence & rebellion.” Thus, the actor/creators try to “adhere to the consensus” of the community re: what is appropriate. At Emunah, the Head of Theatre stopped the girls doing original monologs b/c the issues that came up were rebellious/”bad girl” stuff.

But-Carlbach, plus the large baal tchuva movement, allow for flexibility and invention.

In the basement of a community center, stuffed full w/150 ultra-Orthodox women & girls, Nekeda Yehudit: – Jewish Point performs. Dina Shochav & Dina Derosh are grandmas, and wonderful actor/clowns, who adapt stories from Mishnah and other sources, string up their portable backdrop on curtain rods, set up some Parcans, and play to adoring audiences in Jerusalem & often in the settlements. At the performances I see, girls giggle at the video camera, the excitement is palpable, the audience fully engaged.

The stories, several from Israeli author David Zaretsky, are simple and delightful. A poor Israeli woman gets a box of clothes from her sister in Chicago, Rachel and Rivka first compete then share at eh market, (a tourist shows up, LO PHOTO yells Rivka). They play all the characters, including men – Dina’s performance of an old man Davening is superb. The audience is cheered by the celebration of love between partners, friendship, joy.

Taba proposal 97% of West Bank & swap 1-3% of equivalent land – refugees would have unrestricted access to living in Palestine, though not automatically b/c citizens of Israeli. Arab Jerusalem w/b Pal., they’d have the Mount but not the Western Wall. The Ps didn’t sign, didn’t offer a counter proposal, and now they have thrown a war at us. The Palestinian behavior – suicide/homicide bombings, non-negotiation - is not impulsive but within the framework of a policy.

This "war" – what are its goals? Why aren’t the Palestinian people informed, why is money frozen and or embezzled by Arafat and his “Tunisian gang”? Where are the moderate Palestinian voices? Why the endless preaching of vitriolic anti-semitism in schools? The worst damage to the Palestinians (and us) is the effort to plant and grow great hatred in Palestinian children. This is the worst possible legacy, seeds of hate.

This war is a great ordeal for Israel, and a complete disaster for the Palestinians. Arafat struggles for the "Palestinian cause" rather than for the Palestinian people. Because of

this, he is ready to put them through great suffering. When a Palestinian child is hurt Israelis consider it a failure while Palestinian "leaders" see it as an opportunity.

Schizophrenia – I support Palestinian moderates, peace activists, those wanting to talk, heal, build, find some way to make it work. And at the same time, in the same breath, I am filled with bitter rage, I am spitting mad, and I want revenge. I don't recognize myself. Two days after I go to Bethlehem, listen to small children extol the virtues of martyrdom, a 71 year old polio stricken man is butchered, a man who spent 20 years building houses in Beit Jalla, but they slaughtered him because he was a Jew.

I believe and believed in 2 autonomous states, with viable and contiguous borders...but I believe that a Jewish state can and must exist, and what I have come to believe, is that the leadership of the Palestinian people and of the surrounding Arab nations do not share that vision - whatsoever. Quite the contrary.

The professionals, the educated, the business men, among these people there are moderates, who were the bridge builders. But the very rich are profiting from this, and the very poor see no hope for themselves unless Israel is destroyed. It's what they've been taught in schools, and through experience shaped by Arafat's corrupt regime and Israeli arrogance and over-reaction.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Arab leaders rejected the notion of a unique Palestinian Arab identity, insisting that Palestine was merely a part of "Greater Syria." Until the Zionist enterprise got underway, Palestine was stagnant, malarial, and sparsely inhabited. Its Arab population (600,000) was small and declining. With Jewish development, came economic opportunity and better living conditions. When Israel declared Independence, surrounding Arab countries declared war, and perhaps 750,000 P. fled and/or were driven from their homes. In 1950, after losing the war, Jordan annexed what is now the West Bank, and Jews were evicted from those lands; and some 600,000 Jewish citizens of Arab countries were driven from their homes and deported, penniless. 2 stories – 2 sets of refugees.

BERNARD LEWIS: WHAT WENT WRONG?

Conclusion: "...the eclipse of what was once the greatest, most advanced, and most open civilization in human history."

"If the peoples of the ME continue on their present path, the suicide bomber may become a metaphor for the whole region, and there will be no escape from a downward spiral of hate and spite, rage and self-pity, poverty and oppression, culminating sooner or later in yet another alien domination; perhaps from a new Europe reverting to old ways, perhaps from a resurgent Russia, perhaps from some new, expanding superpower in the East. If they can abandon grievance and victimhood, settle their differences, and join their talents, energies, and resources in a common creative endeavor, then they can once again make the ME, in modern times as it was in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, a major center of civilization. For the time being, the choice is their own."

:There is a spiritual crisis – hatred has made monsters, we suffer a spiritual wounding.

A P. mother of a shaheed (bomber) says: Our children are in heaven, yours are in hell

The Twilight of Jewish Philosophy (Tamra Wright) – Emil Fackenheim, in God's Presence in History, states the 614th commandment – "A Jew may not respond to Hitler's attempt to destroy Judaism by himself cooperating in his destruction. In ancient times, the unthinkable Jewish sin was idolatry. Today it is to respond to Hitler by doing his work." ...the words "never again" which the J. people are commanded to utter after the Holocaust, commits them to struggle against any new humiliation inflicted on them, and on any other humiliated people." This is the crisis for Jewish Israelis – that the two commitments, both mandatory, may be mutually contradictory and utterly opposed.