

"Israel and the World at the Dawn of 2008"



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1. THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

Participants were invited to identify, share and explore their experiences and preoccupations in their various social roles in the community.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In this part the participants were asked to collectively identify the major themes arising from the material of Part One. In collecting the points that arose from the discussion in Part One, 4 major themes were identified:

- 1. Apprehension concerning the future of our children* (i.e. how they are being parented, treated in hospitals, defended from being sent to unjustified war, educated and have other preferences than previous generations).
- 2. Devaluation of, and distrust in leaders, authority figures and systems* (i.e. decrease of Holding in systems; stupid and corrupted leaders; good old teachers as opposed to no need for teachers; inhumane doctors; mechanical-impersonal procedures; Celebes as scarecrow figures of influence).
- 3. Confusion as a consequence of flooding of data and opportunities* (i.e. difficulties in differentiation between good and bad in a post-modernistic world; infinite opportunities in the internet and communication; rapidly changing systems and priorities; changing identities and imposture; excess of protocols and procedures in medicine and other areas; abundant inaccurate police information about transportation changes during Bush's visit in Jerusalem).
- 4. Sensitivity to our status and comparing ourselves to other Western World countries* (i.e. efforts to look positive in the visitors' eyes; who is more personal and humane; who is less rigid and more flexible; had we refrained from participating in ILP2007 because of our preoccupation with the war in Lebanon?).

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part participants were asked to analyze the material from Parts one & two, and to work at providing psychological explanations that can be developed into hypotheses about what is going on in society. Participants were very lively involved but it was tremendously difficult to stay with analysis of one theme, not to mention developing it to hypothesis. There was an overflow of associations, partial discussions and explanations.

Analysis and Hypothesis 1

Analysis: The decision to transfer the event from Jerusalem to Tel-Aviv was taken under the effect of the authorities' 'hysteria' (there was no serious evaluation of the traffic volume in different areas of the city, just warnings and panic spreading), and the non-Jerusalemite expected participants, who were reluctant to come to Jerusalem during Bush's visit, fearing of getting stuck in traffic jams. It became clear that this was a false alarm. This last minute change diluted the number of participants from eleven to eight. Two of the missing expected participants were non-OFEK members. As if George Bush's visit in Jerusalem gave us an excuse to turn our backs on Jerusalem which symbolizes history and roots of Israel and also the present conflict with the Palestinians, and to look for shelter in Tel-Aviv – 'the only earthquake-safe place in Israel' – a superficial, modern, cosmopolitan non-stop buzz city, allowing an experience of retreat and temporal amnesia from personal, local and international distresses. T-A is also the economical centre of Israel, and most of the few positive associations were about the economical situation.

No interest was shown in the two unknown missing participants. One of them, professor of Psychology, expert in Negotiation, symbolically pointing to what is unconsciously known to us: a real discussion (and negotiation) must take place only in Jerusalem – in the hot-spot, the three-monotheistic-religions holy-city, and not in any retreat. The second missing participant was an Italian Origin Israeli female Psychologist, leading a popular program dealing with cultural issues from Psychoanalytic and other points of view. The third missing participant was the eldest member of OFEK and one of its founding fathers, very active and socially involved person, especially in projects dealing with the weaker and excluded sectors of population, including shared enterprises with Palestinians. All these can mean that we are refraining from dialogue with, and integration of, other sectors of the local society and shutting ourselves to the variable and changing environment.

The buzz in the event reminded the overdoing activity in T-A, leaving no time for consideration and reflection. This activity, referred to the more gifted and adaptive sectors of population, is taken as an expression of basic assumption Me-ness which brings with it a strong emphasis on personal growth and success but also alienation and weakening of social solidarity. An affluence of data and opportunities is well doing to the more gifted but confusing and alienating to the slower and less adaptive people in society.

Hypothesis: The anxiety and fears about the irresolvable local and global conflicts, are dealt with denial and hilarious activity (manic defences), creating an illusion of safe and affluent place on one end and problematic emotionally loaded place which is better to be abandoned, on the other end.

Analysis and Hypothesis 2

Analysis: Much ado about the traffic in Jerusalem during Bush's visit brings many to stay at home and to absent themselves from work.

No dreams were brought, and not a word about political irritating issues, like: teachers and universities' senior staff striking; legitimacy of the present government to continue after Vinograd Committee report; the helplessness and hopelessness in Sderot about Gaza's Kasams; the debate about the coming renewal of negotiation with the Palestinian Authority. The same with local politics in OFEK – no mentioning of a Board member

resignation (present in this event) and only indirectly insinuating to another member of OFEK, asked to quit the Board immediately after elected, finding he is not a Clinical Psychologist as presenting himself and condemned as an impostor. The same with major issues of International Relations relevant to the Middle-East: The nuclear threat of Iran mentioned only via “Bushism” – he pronounce “no-killer” or “nu-killer” instead of nuclear; the war in Iraq is mentioned only through the question ‘how the hell they think they can win in Iraq?’ (Americans being so rigid, sticking to their procedures).

Hypothesis: By blocking and controlling the channels of transportation (and transfer of associations) we control the anxiety but not confronting and coping with the problems – people refrain from work to be done.

Analysis and Hypothesis 3

Analysis: Postmodernism and PC do not allow to differentiate between who is good and who is bad, it's all a question of narratives, so no Father is there to save us from terror and violent threats: Bush is a little and stupid man, doesn't even speak English well; Olmert is a failure and corrupted; a literature professor, passed away already, mentioned as an excellent teacher, is also known as shitty character; a missing participant, a founding father of OFEK and very energetic and actively creative mind, is 96 years old – ten years older than he really is; Lionel is only copying and pasting, not integrating, when preparing the global report; we need no teachers – we can learn everything by our own, by the internet; the doctors don't see the patients anymore, they only sticks to their protocols and make a lousy work, traumatising children; the American bus driver (in a participant's description of an episode in her visit in San Francisco) is an asshole – he doesn't spontaneously take authority and ask people in his bus to help the handicapped child and his mother to get off the bus, he sticks to the procedures and call the firemen for help, he is only a screw in the system. And what about the child, is he a fault in the system? This is parallel to my pondering about not taking my authority to lead the event as I feel like doing it and instead I stick to Lionel's procedure, paralyzing myself and collaborating with the paralyzing forces in the group which is interested in how will be my report of the ILP, if it will reliably summarize what the participants said, but there is no real concern about the hypotheses, in fact the flooding of associations function as an attack (resistance – as one of the non-psychologist participants said) on the work of analysing and making hypotheses. As if the general motto is ‘No leader is really capable of leading’ – this must be very distressing to all of us and leave us with a world full of adored and loved evil-fathers threatening to destroy us (Bin Laden, Ahmedenijad, Nasrallah etc.) with no good-fathers for rescue (“no-killer” or needed “new-killer” as cited from Bush stammering).

Hypothesis: Disrespect to, and devaluation of The Father (the authority, the seniority) leaves us with no trusted leaders to navigate and protect us, arousing anxiety experienced as confusion and perturbations about our children's future. In consequence, we tend to stick to sibling groups and to rigid impersonal procedures.

Analysis and Hypothesis 4

Analysis: Nobody of the participants, except one, invited non-OFEK members to participate in the ILP, though they were encouraged to do so. Since these guest-participants didn't show up, nobody expressed any interest in them. On the other hand, OFEK members are encouraged to promote the GR workshops among their acquaintances – non-OFEK members, and there is an interest that as many new-comers as possible will participate in these one-time activities.

Talking about Internet opportunities, participants stress the easy but less personal ways of communication and their alienating effect – with no real intercourse.

The numbers 96 and 69 were mentioned several times, sometimes cynically and sometimes with good humour, as representing us in various ways.

Looking at this numbers symbolically, we cannot ignore the well known meaning of the complementary (pregenital) sexual pose 69, turning the couple to one unity of mutual pleasure with no complete intercourse, while 96 looks as turning backs, presenting the position of people sharing their beds out of necessity but in a non-intimacy relations – with no intercourse. It may be that we are fluctuating between these two extreme positions having difficulties to find the middle-way of true intercourse.

Hypothesis: The tendency to fluctuate between the 69 position of close, small communities shutting themselves to the external world, enjoying retreat of pseudo-unity and safety, and the 96 position of expanding which brings alienation and confusion, is defensive and easier than working the hard way to find the right intercourse among all sectors of society (local and global).

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