

THE OLIVE BRANCH

Youth Magazine of the Seeds of Peace Program | Volume V, Issue I | Winter 2000/01



The Price of No Peace

Seeds of Peace in a Time of War

SEEDS OF PEACE respond to the escalation of conflict between
Palestinians and Israelis

ASEL ASLEH, 1983-2000: Seed of Peace, Victim of Violence

YOUTH PEACE INITIATIVE: Bridging the BALKANS

THE OLIVE BRANCH Survey: The Future of CYPRUS

HOLIDAY CULTURE Around the World



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THE OLIVE BRANCH

The Olive Branch is a quarterly youth magazine written and edited by youth from Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, FYROM, Greece, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Romania, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen, Yugoslavia and the United States, who are part of the Seeds of Peace program.

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COVER PHOTO: Palestinian Seed Mera al-Mukarker in the Beit Jala Orthodox Youth Center severely damaged by Israeli shelling. Israeli Seed Amit Caraco has a concrete wall

Letters

Passing the Test of Peace

Being a 2000 Seed, I didn't have enough time to base my relationships with Palestinians, or to see some of the "good times" that coming back from camp can offer. The events of the past month came out of nowhere and many times they broke every hope I had for peace in to fractions.

Looking back at the past month, and at my actions, makes me frustrated—not just because I saw the peace running away from the region, but because I was enough of a fool to be pushed towards the hate and anger in the atmosphere. I am disappointed in myself for taking a few steps backwards, and losing faith in some of the friendships that I have built. Thank G-d only some. In times like these what we learned as Seeds is put to the test. In times like these each of us should look at ourselves and ask, "Did I act in favor of peace today?" And each and every one of us should be able to answer yes. Nothing big is needed. Just a little something to take the process one-step forward.

Even though I felt what I was doing was wrong, I didn't see the importance of looking at myself, expecting the other side to take the step forward. Hopefully I will be able to overcome the mess I led myself into, and hopefully my country will be able to do the same.

Ariel Tal (Givon Hehadashah)

Don't Give Up!

Hey Seeds of Peace! How are you all doing? I am so sad because I heard from a friend that some Palestinian Seeds are going to quit just like that! Why? Is it all because of the war? Are you ready to give up on our pure dream of having peace? Are you able to forget all the nice memories that you had with your Israeli friends? When I see the TV or I hear in real life about all of the murdering, I struggle to keep my faith and to still live with my memories from camp in my heart. I right away check my email or just call an Israeli friend of mine to just protect my beliefs and my love!

I am a Palestinian, and I understand how you feel now, I truly do, but that is not an excuse to give up or hang up when your Israeli friend is on the phone. You cannot imagine how happy I was when I called Gal and laughed with him about stupid things, and when I talked with him about the situation here, and when we shared our fears



42nd President Bill Clinton received Seeds of Peace in May at the White House. From Left: Seeds Manal Abbas (Ramallah), Dalia Ali (Cairo), Jamil Zaiqat (Amman), President Clinton, Avigail Shaham (Jerusalem), and Jawad Issa (Gaza).

and our suffering. I talked for about an hour, and in this hour I felt what is peace! Peace is to find only love in your heart and forgiveness. Peace is to laugh with your "enemy." Peace is a smile that you have on your face!

Gal and I came to a solution to write as if you are one of the other side. Just be honest with yourself and write. If you need any help you can email me or email Gal, and you can send us what you wrote. If you want, I can send you something that I wrote! Guys, let's all make peace. I know how hard it is, but this way we can know that we are strong enough. That is where you can find the beauty of this war: to find peace and love in our hearts! I love you all, and I wish that I could be with you!

Lana Khaskia (Tira)

A Seed at Heart

Cherished Seeds, If I had one wish, it would be that for even just one day, you could give me your pain. I wish I could bear the burden you face every time you walk out your door. I wish you could see the world through my eyes and mine through yours. But I can't. What I can do is promise all of you that I heard you. I heard you and I will never forget. Every suffering child, mother, father, brother, sister, and friend has a place in my heart forever. I can promise you that no matter who you are or what your story is, you are welcome in my home, my land, my thoughts, my dreams and most of all my heart. Love has no boundaries, shows no sides, so I choose none. I receive and believe in all. The one thing I love and hate about people at the same time is that they never cease to amaze me. All of you amaze me. I thank you for living, striving, trying. I thank you for reading this, for listening and understanding. I thank you for being who you are, for doing what you can, and that's all anyone could ever ask.

I bought the Seeds of Peace t-shirt tonight. I will wear this t-shirt every night until there is peace in the Middle East (I'll wash it, though!).

I will NEVER give up hope. I know that must be easy for me to say, when I don't have to walk in your shoes every day, but I still think that if everyone has hope, then something positive is bound to happen. If strength of character were measured in pounds, and love and kindness were measured in time, one of you alone could hold up the world on the tip of your fingers for all eternity. Lovingly and forever yours,

Lauren May (Pennsylvania)

The Friend in the Picture

Dear Seeds, I want to tell you about something that happened to me about a month ago. One day, I got into an argument about everything that has been going on with a boy in my class. I told him that I went to Seeds of Peace, and that I learned a lot at camp, and that it was an amazing experience. I tried to make him understand what Seeds of Peace is all about, but he just would not listen to me. At one point of the argument I told him that I have a Palestinian friend from camp. I told him about my friend Marwah, who is one of my best friends from camp, and that she lives in Hebron, and that yes, she is a Palestinian, even though it may be hard to believe. I told him that we talk on the phone and not only about the situation, but also about other things like: school, friends, etc. He didn't believe me. The next day, I brought a picture of Marwah with me to school, and left it on his desk. When he came to class and found the picture, he didn't understand what it was about. I pointed at the picture and said 2 words: "That's Marwah." And that's all it took. We still disagree about different issues, but once in a while he comes up to me and "by the way," he happens to ask me: "so... how is Marwah doing? You know... the friend in the picture."

That's when I knew that I did a good job, and got him to understand and believe in what Seeds of Peace is about.

Tamara Bernstein (Jerusalem)

From the Editors

THE OLIVE BRANCH opens its fifth year of publication with something dramatically different. The new OLIVE BRANCH is redesigned and expanded to reflect the dynamic growth of Seeds of Peace. Since the publication of the first edition in 1996, 1000 new Seeds from twenty different delegations have become partners in peacemaking. This fifth anniversary OLIVE BRANCH was planned as a celebration of Seeds of Peace achievements: the completion of our first full year of nonstop activities at the Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem; Summer 2000, in which Seeds of Peace simultaneously produced three sessions of summer camp in the United States and a diverse, daily regional program for hundreds of Middle Eastern Seeds (see pp. 18-21); a Cypriot Seeds of Peace community three-years-old and thriving (see pp. 16-17); and the Youth Peace Initiative spreading Seeds of Peace throughout the Balkans (see pp. 14-15).

Suddenly, the explosion of violence in the Middle East cast a shadow on our celebration, on the lives of all the people of the region (see pp. 6-13) and the hopes of those who strive for reconciliation. The resumption of daily Israeli-Palestinian fighting has added importance to this edition. As local and international news media highlight calls to hatred and acts of violence, THE OLIVE BRANCH gives a platform for the voices of compassion, understanding, dialogue and tolerance. In this magazine, Israeli and Palestinian teenagers stand together for an end to violence, a respect for human life and human rights, and the renewal of communication between their peoples.

Our writers are not naïve adolescents. These young people live every day with the consequences of their leaders' failure to peacefully resolve conflict. As they document in THE OLIVE BRANCH, it is their homes that are shot at, their buses bombed, their neighborhoods closed off, and their friends killed. These are innocent teenagers who want nothing more than to live a life of peace. Instead they are forced to live in fear.

"Everyone talks about the concessions we make in negotiations, the 'price of peace.' With the life of my son, I personally paid the price of no peace." So said Aharon Barnea, a bereaved father and peace activist, to THE OLIVE BRANCH. The killing of beloved Arab-Israeli Seed Asel Asleh (see pp. 5 & 13) has made us all pay the "price of no peace." Asel was a paragon of the leadership desperately needed in his troubled region. At age 17, he had already built bridges between scores of Arab and Jewish friends, and opened the minds and hearts of hundreds of others to the simple fact of each other's humanity. He died as a result of hatred and violence; a victim of the injustice he worked to end.

On August 17, 2000, only a few months ago, several hundred Israeli and Palestinian Seeds gathered at the Center in Jerusalem for a Talent Show, singing, dancing, laughing, celebrating together their summer of remarkable achievements.

Asel shined onstage that evening, co-hosting the festivities with Israeli friend Talia Avidor. With that image before our eyes, of Asel smiling in front of the vibrant community of peace that he and hundreds of friends built together, we dedicate this edition of THE OLIVE BRANCH to Asel, and to all who refuse to give up hope and continue to stand for peace in their lives.



Asel with (from right to left) Seeds of Peace President and Founder John Wallach, Executive V.P. Bobbie Gottschalk, and V.P. and Camp Director Tim Wilson.

Statement from John Wallach, Founder and President of Seeds of Peace

Asel Asleh is the first Seeds of Peace graduate to have lost his life in the ongoing battle between Israelis and Palestinians. On behalf of Seeds everywhere, we mourn the tragic loss of this sensitive, caring and articulate individual. On behalf of the whole Seeds of Peace family, I extend our deepest condolences to his family and hundreds of Arab and Israeli friends. All of us have a responsibility now to remember Asel for his courageous acts of leadership and for overcoming the legacy of hatred into which he was born.

Asel was actively working for a better future not only for his friends in Seeds of Peace, but for all Arabs and Israelis. At camp, he learned to distinguish between the Israeli Government and their people. He said that while Israel had committed many injustices against him and the Arab people, the young man "playing baseball against me is not my enemy...and that's what is important."

Asel wrote that "Seeds of Peace is the best thing that happened to all of us." Why? Because he said it gave him hope. More important it gave him the chance to change the future so that other Israelis and Palestinians would not have to die. Asel understood that. "When we became Seeds we took in our hands a responsibility," he said. "It is our job now to do it the right way no matter what—a job we all made a commitment to, not because we have to but because we want to."

Asel gave a message to future generations. He had a vision of what peace would be like. "You will be able to live in a place where an ID isn't needed as well as passports or checkpoints," he wrote in THE OLIVE BRANCH. "When your voice becomes a voice of a leader, no one will care for your ID." Asel was already a leader. Our mission is to realize his dreams despite all the obstacles against us. I hope you will join everyone at Seeds of Peace. Together we can make sure that Asel's voice is never silenced.

As the Founder and President of Seeds of Peace, I have written to Israeli Justice Minister Yossi Beilin requesting a full, fair and thorough investigation of the circumstances that led to Asel's death and, if justified, appropriate punishment for those responsible. All of us who knew and loved Asel will be satisfied with nothing less. I have been assured that such an investigation is underway and that Minister Beilin has been and will remain in direct contact with Asel's family. I hope that Asel's loss will be a constant reminder of the need for greater understanding and reconciliation among all Israelis and between Israelis and all of the Palestinians and other Arabs who are part of the Seeds of Peace community.

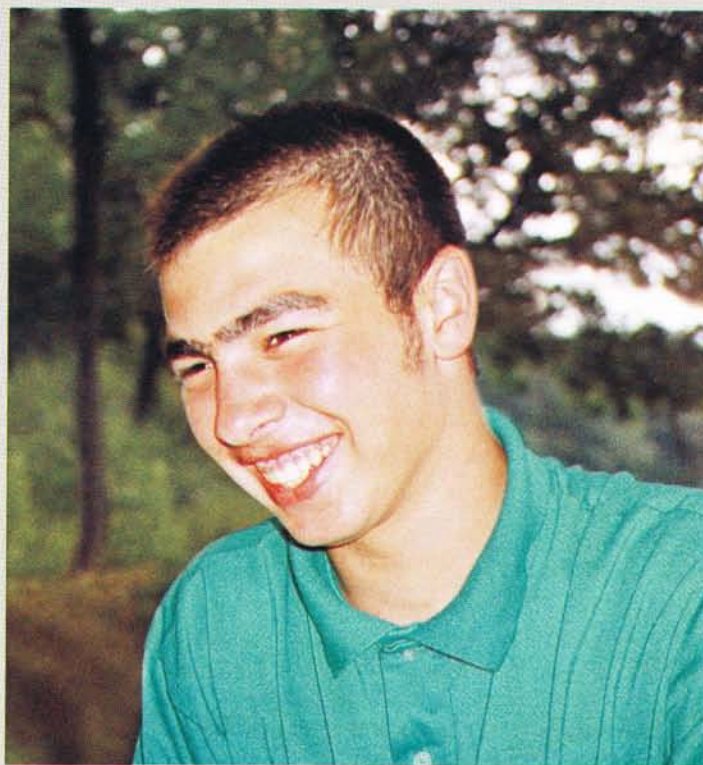


ASEL ASLEH, 1983-2000

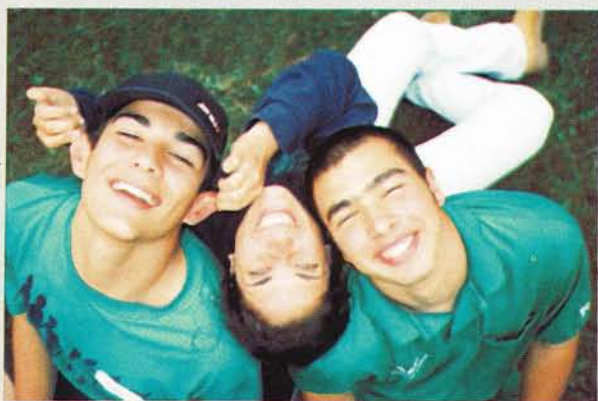
Asel Asleh, a 17 year-old Seed of Peace, from the Arab village of Arabeh in the Galilee area of Israel, died of a gunshot wound to the neck on October 2, 2000. He was killed by Israeli security forces less than a mile from his home, at the scene of a demonstration by Arab citizens of Israel. Asel's father, Hassan Asleh, and other eyewitnesses, testify that Asel took no part in any confrontation with police, and was standing alone when three officers attacked and shot him at point blank range. In the dozens of Israeli and foreign press reports on the incident, police sources have no statement as to why or how Asel died, though they claim that the demonstration at the site endangered the police.

Asel became a member of Seeds of Peace in the summer of 1997, and remained an active Seed throughout the rest of his life. In the days after his death, scores of Israeli and Palestinian Seeds from around the country mourned for him at the Seeds of Peace Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem. Many dozens of Israeli and Palestinian Seeds have traveled since to console the Asleh family in Arabeh, and condolences have poured in to the Seeds of Peace website from around the world.

The Israeli government has convened a Governmental Commission of Inquiry into the events in which Asel and 12 other Arab citizens were killed. Asel's family is leading a campaign to protest the killings. In a statement to THE OLIVE BRANCH, Asel's parents Hassan and Wajiha Asleh said: "We welcome all of Asel's friends from Seeds of Peace who have come to mourn with us. Asel spent many of his happiest moments with you, and you are welcome in our home as you were when Asel brought you here. We are not angry at any people or nationality, but at the policy which caused the killing of our son and other innocent people."



Over 100 friends and family contributed to a Seeds of Peace book of memories of Asel, "Tribute to Our Friend." For information on how to receive the tribute, write to: center@seedsofpeace.org



Asel's Activities in Seeds of Peace

- Israeli delegation, summer camp 1997
- Peer Support, summer camp 1998
- Program Leader, third session 1999
- One of 75 Seeds negotiating at the Middle East Youth Summit in Switzerland, May 1998
- Winter Workshop at Kibbutz Yahel, January 1999
- Homestay in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, July 1999
- Emcee of the Jerusalem Center for Coexistence Summer Talent Show, August 2000
- Originator of Seeds of Peace online correspondence which became SeedsNet
- Host and guest of dozens of Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian Seeds and families

So Close,

The View from Beit Jala

By Nageeb Makhoul

For me the fighting didn't affect me physically, but it affected me mentally. Since the fighting started, everyone in my family is afraid. Since the fighting started, my friends have lost hope in peace. That has hurt me more than a bullet; it killed the hope inside.

Every night, my brother is crying. We always hear the shooting, and he will go and hug someone and never let go. He cries. Whenever my mom screams, he cries more. I see so much fear in him that I cannot possibly explain. My grandparents were affected more than mentally. My grandpa's house got destroyed. Then, after a few days, my mom's family's house was hit also. My family is so angry, because they will not get any compensation. My grandpa is not rich, and cannot fix the house.

My friend's father – who I knew really well – was killed. The night he was killed, I asked my friend to call him, and tell him not to go to the street. But he was stubborn, and he went. He was a doctor, so he went to help his neighbors because their house was hit. But then a helicopter came, and hit him with heavy bullets. I went there after the shooting stopped, and they took the body. It was horrible. He was in many pieces. It is a thing that I hope you never see.

They lost their father forever, and they will never have him back. Who will support them? They were living in a bad situation, but now they are living in a worse situation. After he was killed, I spent a lot of time with the daughter. She asked me if I still believe in peace. I told her, we must hope in peace because I don't want other families to feel what you felt.

I think differently about the situation since I was in Seeds of Peace. Even though there is shooting on me, I understand that there are good people. When I got to meet Israelis and got to know them, I know that not all of them are shooting and are happy for the situation.

When I think about the people in Gilo, different images come into my mind. When there is shooting I think, "Oh my God, are they crazy? They are killing innocent people, small children, damaging houses." But when it's peaceful, I think we can stay together; we can keep living together. There is two choices: either complete war or complete peace. We can't continue like this where Palestinians shoot a bullet or two and Israelis respond with tanks and machine guns and helicopters.

I have a friend in Gilo. Amit and I were really good friends. I was planning on visiting her at her house, and I wanted her to visit me. One time we planned on meeting each other, and we did in Talpiot. We were really good friends.

Now, Israelis are afraid to call me. They think I am angry at them. Nobody calls me. I don't know what that means about our relationships. I don't care about what is happening, as long as they are good friends. I can't call Amit either. If her parents answer the phone, and they know that I am an Arab and I live in Beit Jala, maybe they will make problems for me, or for her. I am afraid to call her. But if I did talk to her, I would just ask her how she's doing and how she feels and how is her health. When I talk to any friend, it's like the same as talking to a friend from Beit Jala. I don't want to talk about the situation; I just want to talk. I'm tired from the situation. I'm really tired.



The View from Gilo

by Amit Caraco

Lately whenever people discover that I live in Gilo, they immediately show their sympathy and support. Who wouldn't? After all, in the past months, this formerly quiet area was transformed into a scary war zone.

The reality of the situation in my neighborhood has become a situation of war, and that is pretty scary. Even scarier is that people have accepted this state of constant conflict as normal. They are already used to seeing concrete bulletproof fences outside their homes. To me, it always will be strange.

A couple of days ago I picked up my little brother from school. When I arrived at the school, I saw all the windows blocked by sandbags. This is what the children see every day. We are always saying that children are the hope of tomorrow. Is this supposed to give them hope today?

I don't think anybody expected this to happen. We always think our home is the safest and most sheltered place, and this has been my home for ten years. I always enjoyed living here, and enjoyed the view of Beit Jala from my window. Even before joining Seeds of Peace, I was struck by how close the two neighborhoods were. At Seeds of Peace in 1999, I met Nageeb and Mera from Beit Jala, and we quickly became friends.

After camp, Nageeb and I kept in touch. Both because we have a lot in common, and because of the short distance between our homes, ours really was a special friendship. We both love music and partying, and we always have a lot of fun together. Nageeb even once said that he would come to my home, the first Palestinian who had ever said that. One of the things I love most about Nageeb is his ability to take tough subjects in a light way. We used to constantly joke that we were neighbors. Today, that is no joke. The first time there was heavy shooting, I immediately thought of Nageeb. I don't know why, but when I heard the shooting, I somehow felt that I was pretty much safe. A couple of minutes later, I called the Center to ask them to call Nageeb. I still do after every shooting.

I don't know why I can't call you Nageeb. I know am not guilty for what is happening, and I don't think you believe I am guilty. Still, I can't bring myself to call you. But I want you to know that I love you a lot and that I worry about you. I can only wish that things will get better very soon—for both of us.



Hadas, Shimon, Lior and Oded join Nageeb atop his roof in Beit Jala in 1999.

SO FAR...

Israelis and Palestinians are far apart politically, but often right next to each other physically. In disputed sections of Jerusalem, where one side's settlement is the other's neighborhood, the eruption of violence confronted Seeds with the contrast between the emotional comfort of friendships and the physical danger of hatred between close communities

by *Lama Mashni (Shu'afat)*

"If I am a Seed, then I am protected. If I am a Seed, then I am safe." All the time I thought this was true. But, in less than one minute, all my protection and safety shattered like a thin shell.

A sharp scream suddenly penetrated the northern windows of my house. We—my sister, brother, father, mother, and I—jumped from our beds towards each other's rooms. Each thought that the scream came from the other room. We all met in less than one square meter in the corridor, gazing in each other's eyes trying to find out what was the matter. Suddenly another scream broke out calling my father's name. We all, in one robot movement, headed to the window looking over my uncle's house.

We saw my uncle leaving his house, we asked him what was happening, and he told us that they were being attacked by a huge number of settlers. They were showering his house with rocks. His words were mixed with loud Hebrew words coming from the other side of his house. "Mavvet la-aravim"—"death to the Arabs."

Death had never before crossed my mind, but that night death was surrounding my house. My father's reaction was to call the police. The shouting reached the ears of young men in my neighborhood. Tens of them hurried to protect us, armed with rocks, iron rods and clubs. The police arrived, fully armed. They stood in between, their faces and guns towards the young Arabs, their backs towards the settlers.

The first thing that came to my mind at that point was that Asel, a late Seed, faced the soldiers and their guns too, and he was killed. He was wearing a Seeds t-shirt, but it didn't protect him. And I thought, was the same thing going to happen to me?

After the soldiers made the settlers leave, we couldn't sleep. I couldn't sleep. I wore my t-shirt that night. I liked to sleep in it. I felt protected and safe. I cried. Hot tears came down from my eyes burning my cheeks. I took off the t-shirt, for I realized at that moment that I'm neither protected nor safe.

by *Michal Szlak (Neve Ya'akov)*

When I came to Seeds, I was surprised that we overcame all of the differences in the Middle East. But then I came back to this sad situation, maybe in its worst time. Until my own house was under attack, I felt that the conflict had nothing to do with me personally. It seemed so far on the TV screen. But that ugly night has changed it all.

At about 11 p.m., when I was preparing to go to bed, we heard horrible screams of a huge Israeli group. They were throwing stones at Arab houses across my street. We called the police, and when they came, the group disappeared for a while. Then after half an hour, we saw an Arab group organizing itself.

We heard someone scream "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is Great) and from the window we saw a group of about 100 Arabs with hatchets, stones and knives. They started throwing stones at Israeli houses; then the Israeli group came back; and then they were throwing stones at each other while two police cars stood between them. My house was in the middle of all of that. That night, and the nights after, I was too afraid to sleep.

I went to the Seeds Center in Jerusalem where I met Lama, and heard that her house was also under attack the same night. We talked a lot about almost everything, and now I know I have learned two things from all of that: 1. still, even in these bad times, we should support each other; and 2. peace will come! But there is a lot of digging deep inside ourselves before it can happen. The past is behind us, and now there is a lot of anger everywhere. The only thing we can do now is understand each other's reasons, and try to stop the violence before it comes too close to us again.

On the night of October 9, rioters took to the streets throughout Jerusalem, attacking their "enemies" next door. An Israeli and a Palestinian Seed, who live five minutes from each other, recount the night that their homes simultaneously became targets



Michal and Lama with BBC WORLD anchor Lyse Doucet

photo: Bobbie Gottschalk

WHEN **BAD** THINGS

Dying for Peace

by Asad Hassounah (Ramallah)

We had some tough weeks here in the Middle East. I saw stuff that I wish no one will ever see. Stuff that will make each and everyone of us want peace. Stuff that I don't want to ever see again in my life.

September 30. I will remember that date for a really long time. I wished I would just die or vanish into thin air. I was there with my friend Nizar. He was only sixteen, and he never liked violence. He encouraged me to go to Seeds of Peace and see the world in another way. We were standing, watching what was happening, when a small child was shot in his neck just a few meters away from us. Nizar ran to help him, and before reaching him, he was shot in the head. It was so terrible to see. He fell into my arms, smiling, and told me, "This is not real peace that you went to the USA for." He closed his eyes and died peacefully.

I couldn't stand it. I cried and cried. Maybe from hate. Maybe from feeling that I am useless. Maybe... A million thoughts came to my mind. I finally stood up, and put myself on a straight path. Peace isn't something that is easily taken. We can't just throw peace away. We can't just lose hope about peace. No. Peace must be something you believe and trust in. But I couldn't sleep. I kept thinking of his last words. I just couldn't eat, sleep, read, think properly, or even talk. I felt like something was missing.

Four days later, I was finally getting back to my usual, but incomplete, life. Every night, I could hear gunshots from the settlement Psagot until the early hours of the morning. One night, I was sure I heard gunshots in our house. I came into my bedroom and saw three bullet holes in the wall of my bedroom. For my luck, I wasn't there and no one was hurt. But, doesn't the idea of bullets in your bedroom just scare you, and to avoid them you would just do anything?

On October 7, we were able to go back to school. The 46 guys in my class always hang out together. That Saturday, there was something missing. We counted our number: 36. Ten guys weren't there. Four were dead, the others injured. Luckily, the injured guys are coming back. But will we ever forget those four wonderful kids who were full of life? We went to the chairs where they used to sit, and cried. Why? Why aren't they here with us?

Life isn't what it used to be. People are scared of peace. People are afraid we won't get our full rights. Some just don't want peace. But they didn't go to the Seeds of Peace Camp. They didn't see that Israelis are humans. They didn't spend weeks playing with them, sleeping in the same bunk with them, coexisting with them. They don't know that peace is something we must always believe in. If we, the Seeds, don't stand up for peace, then who will? We must be the new generation that will make the difference.

You might think, "How can he go through all of this and still have hope for peace?" My father always told me, "Never give up on what you believe in." I will not give up because of my friend's last words, "This is not real peace." I thought about what he meant, and now I understand. There is another peace, that will assure us our human rights in living in peace. These times are a test to see how strong a person can be. Although he was dying, he told me to keep hope. His words meant that I should stand up for what I believe and what I am doing.

We must trust and believe in peace and do our best for the new generations. We mustn't give up. It's alright to cry. It's alright to be sad. But in order for it not to be like this forever, we must smile even as tears



are coming through, and do our best to accomplish where others have failed. Peace can bring hope, happiness, and love into people's hearts. Peace is a thing that we—the Palestinians and Israelis and the whole world—must trust. Peace is more than just a word. Peace is something we spent three and a half weeks for. The best three and a half weeks. We played, ate, made fun, but at the end, we all knew what we were there for: to give a whole new generation hope for peace.

New Year, Old Story

by Karen Karniol-Tambour (Netanya)

01/01/01: It's somehow easy to ignore what has happened here in the past few months. There is a war going on. Bullets are fired every single day. People are dying every single day. And our lives go on. The news barely reports it anymore. I go to school every day and barely think about it. My parents go to work every day and barely think about it. We simply add it on to our list of everyday worries. A few kilometers from home, there is a different world. What goes on in that world is not reality for us. We all go on with our lives, and hope that someone will cast the magic spell and make it all stop.

But then it comes right to your doorstep. When it's in your city, your home, your life, you can't ignore it anymore. There was a bombing in Netanya, my city. I was horrified when I heard the news. The bombing was right in the center of town, between the central bus station and the beach. I knew my grandmother and two of my best friends were there.

The news reported the street of the bomb, and I knew my grandmother wasn't there. However, I knew my friends were there. I was scared out of my mind. I called my friends frantically, and couldn't reach them. Their cell phones were busy, because everyone wanted to check if they were safe. I imagined the worst. When I finally reached them, they told me they had left just minutes prior to the bombing.

Last night we marked the end of the year 2000. I went to celebrate in a restaurant. I spent the last few moments of 2000 there, calmly sipping coffee and talking. It is now less than 24 hours later. It's the first day of 2001. There is now almost nothing left of that restaurant.

I look at the TV, and my city is like a nightmare. I just saw it last night, full of life, full of people celebrating. Now all you can see is smoke, burnt cars, shattered windows, frightened people, police cars and ambulances. Why does it have to be like this? Why do we have to live in fear? Why should people have to worry about whether or not their friends get blown up? Why should people see their city in such a horrifying state?

The violence goes on in a never-ending cycle. The political negotiations seem hopeless. Violence results in fear and pain. Fear and pain result in anger and hate. I feel so helpless. There is nothing I can do to stop bombs or bullets. I can't stop the situation from deteriorating. Politicians are raising the possibility of a war. No one has any answers. The end is not in sight. Why do we live like this? Why can't we live as two countries, Israel and Palestine, side-by-side, cooperating? I'm scared life will keep on like this. I'm scared that the dream we created at Seeds of Peace will never come to life. I'm scared no one will find a solution, or even want to find a peaceful compromise, they'll prefer to fight until they get everything. I'm scared we are facing years of death, fear, bombs, tears, pain, and gunshots throughout this holy region that we all love so dearly.



HAPPEN TO **GOOD** PEOPLE

A List of Friends Lost

by *Yael Yehezkeili (Jerusalem)*

When one life is lost, it takes a piece of all of us with him. In the case of David Biri, it took a big piece from all people he knew, as a son, as a brother and as a friend.

David Biri died in a bombing attack a few months ago at Tsomet Nezarim in the Gaza Strip. He was a brave man who always wanted to go first, too brave for his own good. When the first bomb went off, he was on one of the first teams to respond. He ran to see if anyone was injured, or in need of help. Before anyone could understand what happened, another bomb went off. David was right there. He was killed in that attack, in the midst of trying to help others.

The next day we got the sad news. David was a graduate of my scout tribe. After his death, we went to the scouts. There, all of us who knew him sat together in silence. No one was talking. You could hear only the pain in people's hearts. Everyone was in shock. Although I didn't know him well myself, it hurt to see those close to him in such shock and pain. He was so young. We could only think of the life he had ahead of him. Reminiscing... Thinking... Pictures of him running in our minds. Many of us hadn't lost anyone close to us, in our circle of friends. I couldn't help but think of my friends who will be in the army soon and my brother who is going next year. They are risking their life to protect us. Someday soon I will be in their shoes.

That week, I went to Shiva (traditional Jewish mourning) to visit David's little sister. I had been her counselor in the Scouts the year before. I knew in advance that I would not be able to express my feelings to her. What could I say to a ten year old girl suffering the loss of her big brother? I sat and wrote her a letter, trying to express my pain for what happened to her, and to let her know that I care.

A few weeks later, I was woken up with a call from a friend, telling me, "I have some bad news. Elad Hirshinson killed himself last night." That day I attended the second funeral in my life. Elad was David's best friend. I never before could think that one loss could bring a person to such sadness that his only release was to choose not to think or live anymore. Elad Hirshinson had already lost his brother in a bombing in Beit Lid in 1995. He had never gotten over that loss, and to him, David was the second brother to have lost his life this way. It goes to show that one person can be everything to another.

For me, having David, then Asel, my fellow Seed of Peace, and then Elad die made me realize that people are getting hurt on both sides. Each side only thinks they are the only victims, but actually both sides are. Everyone is hurting everyone. I hear a lot of Palestinians say that they are only throwing stones. But David wasn't killed by a stone.

I only hope that we will reach a time that we don't have to send children



to learn the art of fighting. That we will live in peace, and hopefully not know more young lives lost on a fight for a country as small and precious as this one. Today, we do our best to keep them alive in spirit, and we remember the good things we shared with them. They are still alive in our hearts and in our memories.

Shooting at My Dreams

by *Wafaa Takroori (Hebron)*

A person always wants back what he has lost or was taken away. And I have lost all my dreams. I used to dream of living in peace. And to have all of the nations live in this peace without war. Without killing. And to have people as friends, and not enemies. To love, and not to hate. I used to dream. No more.

Suddenly, all of my dreams were ruined. I come home early from school because the situation is so bad. In my home, I am scared because all around me I hear Israeli soldiers shooting everywhere. When this happens, I lay down on the floor to avoid the bullets that are shot, and try to stay alive. One time, while this was happening, I held my younger sister on the floor. I saw many bullets shoot through my room. Some glass broke, and so did some of the doors and lights. The bullets made holes in the wall. During all of this, thoughts of death raced through my mind, and I wondered if I would live to see the next day. It was horrible to see these Israeli bullets shoot through the air at the people who hoped they would one day live in peace.

Each bullet shot would kill one of my dreams. And at that moment, if

photo: Jared Fishman



Wafaa Takroori (author of this article, 2nd from left) and her family host Israeli friends (from left) Hagar, Anat and Amalia at her home in Hebron one year ago, during Ramadan 1999.

Each side only thinks they are the only victims, but actually both sides are. Everyone is hurting everyone

I was not careful, it would kill me too. During that one minute—which felt like one hundred years—my sister went unconscious and almost stopped breathing. I was so worried, even after she gained consciousness. What if I died, or one of my family? But we all believe in peace! Also, Asel believed in peace. But he died from the bullet of a nation he wanted to make peace with. Before that day, I believed there would be peace between us. During that minute I was afraid. Now, no more. No more fear, even if they drop a bomb on my head. Or shot a bullet through my heart. Before that minute, I had hope. But now, all my dreams have been shot down. Finally, I have one question: How can I make peace when the army might kill me at any moment without regret or remorse?

BEING A SEED OF IN A

Asking Smart Questions

by Rita Konaev and Maya Vaks (Afula)

Not like many people, we Seeds had the special opportunity to make friends with the enemy. Now that the situation is so hard, and no one really knows if it is going to get better, our friendships are under a test. There is no way to know if we are going to make it. Being in Seeds of Peace has put us in a position in which we have no answers to all of our questions, and our opinions about almost everything seem to contradict each other.

We are in a situation where we have to reevaluate all that used to be so clear to us. In many cases, we find that our opinions as Israeli Jews are in conflict with our opinions as Seeds. It is not rare that in the political discussions with our friends or in school that we find ourselves defending and justifying Palestinian causes. We try to do our best and show to everyone that there are too many people getting killed everyday. In school, when the discussions start, mostly we feel that we are alone and misunderstood, because every time we say something good about the "other side," we immediately become the traitor and the enemy of the state.

Each time that someone says something bad about the other side, we want to just jump back at them and say that their point of view is wrong. But when we think to ourselves, we realize they that they have the right to think that way, because they weren't at Seeds, and they didn't see what we saw. Sometimes it seems like we are all alone, and no one understands that as Seeds we have to stay faithful and loyal to two sides: our country that we love, and our friends that we made in camp.

But in spite of the loneliness, the confusion, and never having all the answers, being in Seeds these days is something special that gives us the opportunity to be unique and different. Maybe we don't have the answers to all of our questions, but at least we have smart questions, and it is better to have smart questions than to have stupid answers.

We Seeds are the hope of a peaceful future. The thought that we can coexist, and even be friends, keeps us believing that we will succeed in overcoming everything and continuing on our way to peace.

In the end, it doesn't matter that sometimes it is hard being a Seed,

because every time we feel hopeless and sad, we look back at the best summer ever, and think about the great friends we made and the memories that we have. It keeps us going. It is all worth it. It is one of the most precious things in our lives.

Hope and Reality

by Hisham Jarrar (Jenin)

I sit alone in my house after participating in the funeral of a kid who was killed by a bullet in front of me, as a response to his stone, which threatened the security of Israel. I had gone to the funeral, because I needed to see for myself what was happening to my people. After this scene, I sit lonely, remembering sounds of ambulances, screaming mothers, and children of victims, and I think of the fear that my little sister has every night when guns and cannons start shelling.

Wandering in the bleak city and looking at futile faces and tired bodies made me think of my reality, and made me think of who I am as a Seed of Peace, and what I should do as a peace and coexistence maker. I thought to myself, "Here my hopes of security and stability are being destroyed in front of my eyes after having built dreams of peace in the U.S.A." In spite of my questions during this horrible period, I still accept being a Seed of Peace. Even though Seeds of Peace is only a dream and a hope, I still offer peace as I live through this reality. I offer peace, even though we are starting again from the beginning.

Wandering in the bleak city, looking at futile faces and tired bodies...made me think of what I should do as a peace and coexistence maker



photo: Jared Fishman

Ramadan at Lana Khaskia's in Tira: From right, Mava, Lana, Ido, Bashar, Rita, and Elad,

I asked myself, "Am I alone in this peace? Where are the voices of my partners, saying they would do anything for peace? Do they not care to declare and expose the situation in order to achieve peace?"

"Maybe they cannot," I said. "They are waiting for the chance to express their feelings of sorrow, but they cannot. How could this be? Do they not live in a democracy, with fairness and human rights? So what is the aim of their silence? Is it possible that they do not know what is happening to their friends a few kilometers far away from them?" Of course they do not know what is happening. The tanks and rockets that guard them cause the blood and damage on our side.

Please, I am begging you my friend. This is an evocation from a human who was once with you together; who loved you, and you loved him. A person in whom you had planted the hope for a better life. Tell me, why, and return to me the hope...

PEACE TIME OF WAR



Peace with Justice

by *Badawi Qawasmi (Ramallah)*

I have been an active member of Seeds of Peace, since its start in 1993. I was present on the White House lawn for the historic handshake of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin and the signing of the Oslo Accords that set the "peace process" into motion. I, like my fellow Palestinians, was so hopeful then. It is our strong desire for peace that made us endure the hardships that came along with the process. Were we blinded?

The last weeks I survived, and you witnessed, the violation of basic human rights: seeing my holy sites violated, carrying my friends, their blood staining my clothes after being shot with live ammunition, feeling unsafe even at home. Perhaps this time my neighborhood will be the target of Israeli settler attacks? These would make anyone angry. I've experienced and continue to experience them.

At the time of this publication, over 350 Palestinians have been killed, over 10,000 have been injured among which 400 or more have been paralyzed, 50 have lost the ability of sight, and scores have lost their hands, their legs, their homes. As I wrote, missiles were being dropped in Beit Jala on civilian homes.

These days I am so scared. I keep watching members of my family, my friends and everyone around me. I have nightmares of settlers attacking my father on the way to work, or my little sisters on their way to school. Some people have tried to show that Palestinians are without feelings—that Palestinian mothers don't care about their children. This is a racist comment. Palestinians are the most sentimental nation on earth—we care about our children, all children. We love peace more than anyone because we were never able to live peacefully on our land. I pray that things calm down; that Israel stops its violence against us; that they work for peace rather than just talk about it.

In Seeds of Peace we give our leaders lessons on how to achieve peace. We are able to build a base of mutual respect and an understanding of other people's rights. I am disappointed to see that the Israelis I know through Seeds of Peace are only a minority in their community. It's clear these days that the military mentality is dominant in Israel.

I am a strong believer in peace. However peace starts with justice and a basic acknowledgement of my human rights, my rights to live on my land. I will commit myself to true peace based on UN resolutions. But if Israel disregards the basic rights of my people, I will have no choice but to fight.

My grandfather wished my father to live in liberated Palestine. My father told me the same thing. Twenty-one years have passed and I have yet to live in liberty. I have never felt a real sense of security or genuine happiness. I wish my children to be born in an independent Palestinian State. I hope they will lead a better life, a peaceful life, like that of all children of the world.



Wishing for Normal Life

by *Roy Cohen (Ashdod)*

Every single person in the Middle East is likely to lose someone dear to him due to a violent act at least once in his lifetime. In a constant state of violence between the two peoples, each side claims this piece of land, and uses religious or historical claims as they see fit. This struggle between different histories and different religions, started in the beginning of this century when the Jews started moving back to Israel, their historical land, after being humiliated, terrorized and slaughtered in the Diaspora, brought to its most dreadful extreme by the Holocaust. Ever since the return of the Jews to their land, the two peoples have lived in constant struggle.

It's almost impossible to find someone who hasn't had someone taken away from him before his time—someone who died due to an act of violence. It happened to me at the age of 16, on October 2nd 2000, when I lost a dear friend of mine named Asel Asleh, a Palestinian citizen of Israel who was shot in the demonstrations in the Arab village of Arrabeh.

"Normal Life" has a different definition in the Israeli vocabulary. Here it includes being a soldier, carrying guns, living in military bases for at least two years of your life. It also means living in constant fear that you will lose someone dear and close to you in the craziness revolving around you. Add to that the fact that Israel is one Jewish country, surrounded by Arab countries, and you'll find a very frightened people.

"Normal Life" takes on a whole different meaning when you're in Seeds of Peace. I started hearing many of my own people calling for violent acts after being disappointed by the Palestinians. After seeing them in violent riots, freeing Hamas terrorists, and reluctant to fulfill the truce they committed to in the agreement that was signed in Sharm al-Sheikh, people who are very supportive of peace got such a blow that they're now asking for non-peaceful action.

What do I think? Well, from 1997 to 1999 I spent a month and a half in

Maine every year getting to know more and more people.

I still care about these people, be they Palestinians or Egyptians, Jordanians or Israelis. Even in a time of war. I don't want anything to happen to them or the people they love. The other day I spoke to a friend of mine who lives in the West Bank. She's one of my best friends, and I love her dearly. I cried with her, over the phone about the loss of a cousin who died while protesting against Israeli soldiers. Being a Seed, I'm torn between my love for friends I have from the Palestinian people and my consciousness as an Israeli, between my acquaintance with extraordinary Palestinians who seek peace, such as Badawi, and the actions that the PLO is taking, which are weakening my certainty in the coming of peace to our region. But those people I know from Seeds of Peace, those friendships I made on Powhattan Rd. 183, Otisfield, Maine, still give me hope in peace. They can still give all of us hope in the likelihood of peace in the Middle East.



I still care about these people, be they Palestinians or Egyptians, Jordanians or Israelis. Even in a time of war. I don't want anything to happen to them or the people they love

THE STRUGGLE

Nazareth: A Tale of Two Cities

by Eldad Levy and Merom Lorenz (*Nazareth Illit*)

You can smell it in the air. The tension is still enormous. It feels like something is broken. When I look now from my house at the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth, everything seems quiet. Yet only a few days ago the streets outside of my neighborhood were blocked, Nazareth's sky was covered with black smoke clouds and police drove back and forth escorted by ambulances.

"The conflict has finally reached our town," I heard more than once. To be honest, it's not surprising. The "Arab-Israelis," as we call them, are part of the Palestinian people, divided by this land's wars. The border drawn by the '48 War determines who is Arab-Israeli and who is Palestinian. Drawing a line between an Arab from Nablus and an Arab from Nazareth doesn't make them different in religion or culture. I respect Arab-Israelis' right to protest when they felt threatened. But I expect them, living in the only democracy in the region, to protest democratically. The problem is the people on both sides who use violence to express their feelings. I expected Arab members of Knesset to lead a democratic, but still powerful Arab-Israeli protest. Instead, I saw leaders on both sides, such as Ariel Sharon and Abdel-Malik Dahamshe, using democratic rights to light the fire.

Our biggest loss, besides the loss of life, was the loss of trust between Nazareth and Nazareth Illit, two cities that have no border. Nazareth Illit has Arab residents, including Knesset member Azmi Bishara (whose home was attacked during riots by Jews). We depend on each other; Jews from Nazareth Illit shop in Nazareth, and tourists who come to Jesus's city stay in Nazareth Illit's Hotels. But no more.

The basketball court near Merom's home exemplifies the end of the relationship between Arabs and Jews. There, Arabs and Jews played basketball, with no politics. We simply played together—something both sides like and are good at. Nobody uses those courts anymore.

Who am I to sermonize about quiet protests after the clashes? Maybe it's a result of two weeks that we Jews lived under siege, fear, and threats. Some Jews wanted "retaliation," after Arabs threw stones on cars. Neighbors clashed in the streets. Two Arabs were killed in Nazareth. Jewish guys from my grade were arrested. Fear took over. Extreme opinions replaced moderation.

Jews felt betrayed by their Arab neighbors. Our relationship stayed good in the past, even during clashes in the West Bank and Gaza. This time the moderates were silenced by radicals. Although Jews suffered losses in the last couple of years, the Jews didn't "retaliate" in Nazareth. This time the Arabs felt the need to "avenge" their losses against Jews.

I asked what Jewish youth in my school think about the situation. Alex from 12th grade: "I'm really surprised. I feel sad about the loss of life of the Arabs, even if they threw stones. I think both sides are guilty, and on both sides there are people who are interested in blowing up everything we've reached. But most of the guilt falls on them. Their identification with the Palestinians doesn't justify such a reaction and that shows how they feel about us. At least now I know who I am living with..."

The problem is that that is one of the most moderate opinions. Guess how the more radical opinions sound. I know in Israel there is a terrible problem of inequality. Arabs are treated like second-class citizens and this must change immediately. But this is the only Jewish country and we're not leaving, just as the Arabs are not leaving. We better start thinking how we can live together.

Arab-Israelis do not live in an Arab country as they wish, but they are part of a country that accepts them and offers the best education, health, and social services in the area. Not only that, they are the only Arabs living in their homeland in democracy—not a full democracy—but better than the ones surrounding us. Their voices are heard without the violence.

I cannot justify the use of violence to make a point, or the use of lethal force to quiet a demonstration. I lost my friend Asel in this violence, and I absolutely condemn it. All of us have to understand that in democracy there's a way to protest and to quiet a protest, without risking anyone's life.

Democracy Means No Violence

by Naeima Hinnawy (*Deir Hana*)

You can't solve a problem in a violent way. It just makes the same problem much worse.

When I talk about violence, I am most upset that the police, representing a government that we elected, killed 13 Arab citizens. It is hard to feel that I belong to this country, even though this is my land. Our country was fighting our nation, and we were treated as enemies, not citizens. As a person who lives in a democratic country, I think it's our right to protest. But I'm against protesting the way some Arabs did. Most did not use violence, but some did. We are angry for good reasons, but damaging the banks and post office hurts buildings that serve us.

Some Palestinians think we are cheaters because we live in Israel. Our protests were to express our support for the Palestinians. It wasn't the right way, but we cannot find the right way, because no one listens to us! Israel is supposed to be democratic, but it acted democratic only for the Jewish citizens.

My family was born here. It is hard being separated from our own Palestinian nation, but this is our land. It is not just a Jewish country. I grew up in Israel, and I speak Hebrew most of the time and have many Jewish friends. I am not going to pick up and move to a state of Palestine. I always felt a connection to the people of both countries.

When Asel was killed, I lost my connection to Israel. The process of bringing it back will take a long time. My trust in the state is destroyed, and I think the discrimination against me will get worse. I am afraid to go to Jewish cities like Karmiel or Tiberias, where I was never afraid before. Still, I will go and proudly show my cross.

It is going to be tough. I still have many Jewish friends and I know many good people. But when I see pictures of the Arabs who were killed, I remember my friend. I will not forgive or forget. This should never have happened and must never happen again. Both peoples need to live, and neither have any other land or country. We must compromise, but in a fair way. I am asking God to please help us.



Naeima Hinnawy and fellow Seed Shani Manor

INSIDE ISRAEL

THE OLIVE BRANCH

Youth Newspaper of the Middle East/A Seeds of Peace Production



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Asel outlined his philosophy of identity in this letter to the "Coexistence Hotline" section of The Olive Branch. Asel wrote in response to Reem Masarwa, who had written to the previous edition's "Coexistence Hotline" seeking support, understanding, and answers to her own identity issues.

Coexistence Hotline:

Caught Between Worlds

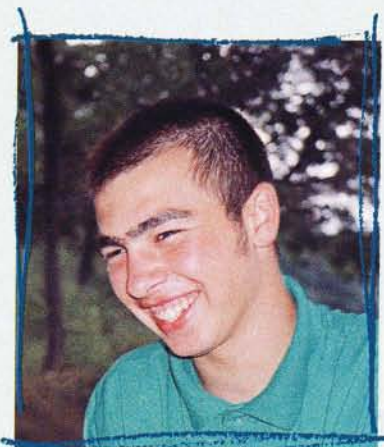
Yes, it's just me. My name is Reem, and I'm 17. Do you know me? Do you really know me? Although I don't like to talk about myself, I think that I have to try, because there are lots of questions in my mind, and I need someone to listen to me. Perhaps you'll find some answers for me.

I feel so confused. As an Arab, Palestinian girl living in Israel, I find it interesting but also difficult to have two different sides to myself. On one hand, I am a part of the Israeli society, and I carry an Israeli passport, but on the other hand I have a very strong connection to the Palestinians and to all the Arabs. I am still getting used to the idea that I have to work on these two things, and still be myself at the same time. We Arabs have to support and maintain our culture and tradition, but we are living in an open world. Things change all the time, and we have to be realistic and practical.

If you enter my room, you can feel and see an amazing meeting between West and East, old and modern, Palestinian tradition and American culture. There are books in many languages, from many cultures, lots of small masterpieces from many cultures, on the same shelf. And I love them all. The important thing is that they are not fighting. Not in my room.

They live in peace, with me and with each other: records of "Shalom Haver," are not shooting at those of Fairuz, as in real life. So, in short, I'm a girl who loves life, blue skies, lovely smiles, small and nice things, angelic faces, children, animals, and peace, as I have made in my room. Am I strange? Is it possible for these different worlds to live together? Please give me your advice.

Reem Masarwa, Arara



Olive Branch Readers Respond:

Lead Both Sides

When God first created this planet, and I have no doubt that He did, we can see that He never created it with borders, He never used checkpoints between countries, and I don't remember him giving us passports or ID's so we will be able to move freely.

This planet was a free place, but time came along and things changed, things happened ... who knew that things will turn up this way or the other? We all walk blind in the journey of life, we put our lives in the hands of others, as they did with theirs.

As an Arab-Israeli, simple questions like "Where do you come from?" and "Where do you live?" are the same questions that build homes and countries. An Arab-Israeli would

be one of those people who will try to avoid this kind of question.

A friend of mine was looking for an answer to the same question. Her name is Reem. Reem, as much as you want to face this kind of question, you will never get there. You are between worlds, as you said.

I don't agree that you are "caught." That looks like you don't want to be there, like these two worlds are leading you. You put your life in other people's hands once again, you are asked to walk in a way that you didn't choose. No one chose to be Chinese, Israeli, or Palestinian, we are just born like that. You will always be who you are.

I'm an Israeli? So how come the word Arab is still there? I can never take the word Israeli off my passport, or the word Arab, which I feel proud of every time I hear it. We can't change what we are, but we can change the way that we live in already, we can take our lives in our hands once again, we can move from a position of a viewer of this game to a player. We are no more asked to watch; we can make a change. We don't have to be caught; we can lead these two worlds, and still keep everything we had. The Arabic Fairuz records will always be there wherever you are, as well as the Hebrew Shalom, Haver.

We are not asked to forget everything, we are just asked to deal with them differently. When your voice becomes a voice of a leader no one will care for your ID, nothing will be right-doing and wrong-doing. You will be able to lead a place where an ID isn't needed, as well as passports or checkpoints. A friend once told me "Out beyond ideas of right-doing and wrong-doing, there is a field. I'll meet you there." Well Reem, I hope I will meet you there someday. Don't bring any thing with you, because you won't need it.

Asel Asleh, Arabeh

Reem: "As an Arab, Palestinian girl living in Israel I find it interesting but also difficult to have these different sides to myself...Is it possible for these worlds to live together?"

Asel: "We can't change what we are, but we can change the way we live...Move from a position of a viewer of this game to a player...We don't have to be caught; we can lead these two worlds, and still keep everything we had."

There are two sides. We should never wait for the other one to find us. We should start, and as both sides think the same, the search becomes closer.

Asel writing to his SOP friends.

BRIDGING THE BALKANS



In August 2000, Seeds of Peace and the Andreas Papandreou Foundation hosted the first Youth Peace Initiative in Olympia, Greece. At the two week program, 66 youth from nine different Balkan delegations faced their past and future, and learned to live together as one multinational community

Restoring My Faith in Humanity

by Dzemila Helac (Sarajevo)

When I first heard that I would go to Seeds of Peace camp I felt as if I had won a free trip. I didn't know it was a peace camp. Perhaps I wouldn't have accepted it if I knew. I thought that I was as tolerant and not prejudiced as I needed to be.

My first understanding of what the next seventeen days would be about was at the airport. There was a boy from a part of Bosnia-Herzegovina known as Republic of Srpska, or Serb Republic. I didn't notice he was the only one from there. Instead I noticed he was quite reserved. I didn't think of him differently because he was a Serb, but I thought he probably thought of me differently because I was not. A little voice in my head yelled that I had to be friendlier with him because, "I'm not prejudiced like them." I barely noticed he was the only one searched at the airport in Budapest, but I surely noticed he was let in Greece without a word while the rest of us were interrogated.

So we got there. A bunch of crazy Americans attacked us with ear-to-ear smiles and nothing but pure warmth. Man, I thought, are people back home so depressed, or are these people crazy? The first few days weren't easy for me. I was a little homesick, my every minute was planned, and everyone was so cheerful just like in a kindergarten. The coexistence was the only place where I could choose whether to do something or not. It was so painful to remember all the things I put behind after the war. In my country if you talk about the war, mass graves, and war crimes, you'll be considered anti-peace or deeply traumatized. If you want to be cool in Sarajevo, you have to be completely tolerant, forgiving, and forgetting. It was different in coexistence sessions. I felt free to be myself, even if it meant not being fashionably tolerant.

The camp made me think about my life from the time in ex-Yugoslavia when it was dangerous and shameful to say you were religious and when we were still proud of being Yugoslavian. I thought about the times right before the war when I was confused because some of my Serbian friends (I didn't even know they were Serbian at that time) didn't want to play with the rest of us because they felt threatened by us, or that's what they were told. It made me think of the time when Karadzic said that one



nation would disappear in Bosnia, and I didn't know what nation that was, or what nation I was, but the look on my mom's face said it was us. And I thought about the times when I wished all Serbs (except my cousins, friends and good people) would drop dead and make my life a lot easier. And I thought about the massacres and how part of me died then, and how what was about to become infinite hate became silence, sorrow, and ultimately just emptiness. There were no more words to express what was done and nothing can change that.

I never needed anyone to tell me that "they" are human and how all people are similar. I've always known that. But I had lost my faith in people, and I needed someone to restore that. The camp showed me that people can work together for a common cause, and that peace can be common cause again. It showed me that "they" isn't some phantom character. "They" are people of flesh and blood capable of all kinds of emotions, not only negative ones. After the camp, dealing with my trauma has become much easier, and I don't feel terrible if I think about the past. And the past is what I hope it is. Seeds of Peace showed me how the world isn't only black or white. I see more colors now, colors of peace and hope.

Finding Friendship

by Nita Gojani (Pristina)

I come from Kosovo, a region always in conflict. During the NATO strikes against Yugoslavia, I spent all my time in the capital Pristina. Many people call these 78 days "war," but war started long before the NATO strikes. Unfortunately, in some parts of Kosovo, people still aren't enjoying their life in peace.

My parents had Serbian colleagues and friends. When I was younger I had Serbian friends. But as we grew up the situation, or rather the society, politicized even the children. After the "war," after everything that happened during those 78 days, I lost somewhere the feeling of friendliness with Serbs.

Before I came to Seeds of Peace camp, there were fears inside of me. How would those from "the other side" react? I even had some doubts about my own reactions. At camp, I learned that they are just like me, and that different opinions don't make us strangers. I learned to listen to the others and found out that respecting doesn't have to mean agreeing. I learned that different approaches don't have to mean arguing. Some of us needed more time than the others to learn two important and difficult lessons—listening and respecting, and by the end we all left the camp knowing that we made a bunch of friends.

I knew the crimes done during the war were the fault of adults, and that



children had nothing to do with it, but still, there were times when I felt suspicious. Seeds helped me look at the world from someone else's eyes, to understand and see the others as individuals and not as part of a nation, to blame only the guilty persons and their supporters and not everyone who lives in the same country as they do.

Now, thanks to Seeds of Peace, I found the feeling I had lost before—the feeling of being friendly with Serbs. Friendship with the ones I met is not a problem, as I was afraid it would be. They showed me that they also experienced some of the fears I had during the war. I'm sure that I'm not the only one who made these friendships made at camp. The things I learned will help me be brave in continuing a normal life.

Peaceful Revolution

by *Xenija Smoljanic (Belgrade)*

During the last 12 years, the president of Serbia and Yugoslavia was Slobodan Milosevic. Throughout those years a lot of things happened. First, because of the bad politics of Milosevic and others, Yugoslavia fell to pieces. Then Serbs went to war with Croatia and Bosnia. In those wars, many Serbs lost their homes and lives. After that, came the major problem with Kosovo where there were many fights between Albanians and Serbs. This culminated in the NATO bombing. Milosevic always managed to stay in power, even through two elections. Through all that time, lives of people in Serbia grew worse every day. There were many peaceful protests, but unfortunately none were successful.

On September 24th, 2000, new elections were held. The two candidates were Milosevic and Vojislav Kostunica, the leader of Democratic Opposition Party (DOP). Over 70% of people voted. The elections went OK, but the vote-counting caused a big problem. The elections commission declared that there should be a 2nd round of voting. The DOP said they had evidence that Kostunica won a majority, and that he should be President without a 2nd round. Many people were unsatisfied. The DOP asked all who voted for Kostunica to go protest in the streets. From September 29th to October 4th, people lined the streets across Serbia, and miners from the town of Kolubara started a general strike that spread across the country. On October 5th, in front of the Parliament, over 500,000 people gathered. The demonstrators took over the Parliament and the national TV building.

Most of the demonstrators were students. They stayed on the streets until October 6th. That was the biggest crowd I've ever seen. The feeling was great. Seeing all those people fighting and shouting for the same thing: Democratic Yugoslavia! That wasn't the only thing students did. A few years ago, students established a movement called "Resistance." It was, and still is, very active in the political life of Serbia. Their symbol is a fist. From the moment the movement was established, it fought against Milosevic. "Resistance" kept reminding the opposition to unite in the fight against the government. The student movement



Elections in Kosovo

by *Zana Zeqiri (Pristina)*

February 1999. Peace talks between the Serbian government and the leaders of my people, the Kosovar Albanians, began in Rambouillet, France. At the same time, violence and displacement continued inside Kosovo. People were leaving their homes en masse, because of abuses of their human rights.

Due to the failure of the Rambouillet talks, the NATO air campaign began. Throughout the 78 days that it lasted, it was a symbol of hope and fear and part of a grim unforgettable story. For the Kosovar Albanians, it had a happy ending, as for the first time such a large number of refugees returned to their homes in such a short period of time. As soon as Kosovar Albanians started to return to their homes, many Kosovar Serbs were forced to flee. Many of them had to start new lives in Serbia. The "happy ending" was not happy for everyone.

The trouble is over; well almost. Even though I thought that youth had started to break away from politics, Pristina nevertheless awaited noisy crowds with pamphlets on its main streets. I was wondering whether it was a peaceful protest. I guessed it was not. As I had to cross the street, I had no choice but to hear them speaking. I grew more curious to hear what they were talking about. I concluded that it was a noisy display of a political party. A couple of them wished that the president would address the crowd.

Politics, politics, politics...

For those who have been raised in these circumstances, this word bears a heavy meaning. It is a complicated word. Is there any cake called politics? Hmm, probably not. Perhaps after the upcoming local elections, politics will have a different color to it. There are many political parties in Kosovo. Their names sound similar, they promise a similar future, but they have different approaches. In any case, they are all striving for democracy, something that Kosovars need most of all.

How does the war affect the elections? First of all, the war has changed our lives completely, while the elections are a hope for a better future. We believe that democracy will avoid war, and as a result we want a democratic Kosovar Albanian leader to lead our country in the future.



Seeds of Peace from Serbia and Kosovo report on the first democratic elections and hopes for change after enduring a decade of repression and war



photo: Ned Lazaris

CYPRUS FROM

Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Seeds of Peace polled more than 1,500 of their peers to discover how the youth of their divided island view each other, the conflict, and the possibilities of their future together. THE OLIVE BRANCH survey reveals that large majorities of youth on each side support communication with their counterparts and wish to see their leaders work harder to make peace

1. Have you ever met someone from the other side?	Yes: T/C: 38% G/C: 32%	No: T/C: 62% G/C: 68%	
2. If not, do you want to?	Yes: T/C: 78% G/C: 63%	No: T/C: 22% G/C: 37%	
3. If there is peace, would you live together?	Yes: T/C: 65% G/C: 73%	No: T/C: 35% G/C: 27%	
4. Would you work for peace?	Yes: T/C: 49% G/C: 52%	No: T/C: 13% G/C: 36%	Don't know: T/C: 38% G/C: 12%
5. Are the leaders doing enough for peace?	Yes: T/C: 20% G/C: 21%	No: T/C: 78% G/C: 77%	Don't know: T/C: 2% G/C: 2%
6. Do you want to see the other side of the island?	Yes: T/C: 81% G/C: 96%	No: T/C: 6% G/C: 1%	Have been: T/C: 13% G/C: 3%
7. Do you think the other side suffers?	Yes: T/C: 35% G/C: 52%	No: T/C: 31% G/C: 24%	Sometimes: T/C: 34% G/C: 25%

By Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Seeds, led by Charis Akhilleos (Nicosia) and Tanyel Cemal (Famagusta), and Seeds of Peace Program Coordinator Roy Sharone

This survey was prepared by a group of friends from Cyprus. Some of us are Greek Cypriots and some of us are Turkish Cypriots, but we are all Seeds of Peace. We did this to shed light on the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot youth's views of each other, of the conflict, and of the future.

We chose the questions together, and distributed the survey to high school students on both sides of the island. Our aim was to see what teenagers from both sides, who are never asked, have to say about the situation in Cyprus.

The polling process was a challenge. We asked hundreds of teenagers at school and in the streets, and used our own resources for photocopying and tallying. Schools were preferable because we could reach a large number of teenagers in a short time, but we also did surveys at the bus stop or visiting friends.

There were many obstacles to completing this

survey, because it was bi-communal work. It took time to receive approval from Ministries of Education, and we had some inconsistencies. We managed to poll more than 1,000 Turkish Cypriots and only about half as many (approximately 500) Greek Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriots came from Famagusta, Lefkosa, Erenkoy, Iskele, Kyrenia, Guzelyurt and other villages, while the Greek Cypriots all came from the capital Nicosia. The poll is not perfectly scientific. Still, we reached very significant numbers in both communities, and found some remarkable similarities and insights in the thinking of the younger generation. We learned a great deal through the process, and felt a special joy of completing a great project together.

Question 1: Have you ever met someone from the other side?

Tanyel: Although a two-thirds majority of both haven't met someone from the other side, the number who did is significant, considering that the island is divided and that there are only two places where it is possible to meet.

Charis: The small number of people who have met each other might explain the negative attitude reflected in questions to come, because people usually change their mind about the "other side" when they meet.

Question 2: Do you want to meet someone from the other side?

Tanyel: Again, approximately two-thirds on both sides want to meet. I think the main reason is curiosity. It shows an openness in our youth that is promising. We hope and encourage these teenagers to follow their curiosity.

Charis: A high percentage of Greek Cypriots did not want to meet a Turkish Cypriot. I often hear from Greek Cypriots that they hate Turkish Cypriots so much that they would never meet. The anger, bitterness and frustration created by past bloodshed has transferred to these youth.

Question 3: If there was peace, would you be willing to live together?

Tanyel: Considering what is said by media and governments, looking at the results and seeing that the majority are of the opinion that they *can* live together is interesting.

ALL SIDES

8. Who caused the conflict? Turkey, Greece, Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots, or Both sides?

Turkey:	Greece:	T/C:	G/C:	Both:	No answer:
T/C: 6%	T/C: 20%	T/C: 4%	T/C: 14%	T/C: 51%	T/C: 4%
G/C: 41%	G/C: 4%	G/C: 2%	G/C: 2%	G/C: 51%	G/C: 2%

Charis: A significant number, about one-third, said they wouldn't live together with Turkish Cypriots. Most probably have never met somebody from the other side and see all Turkish Cypriots as the enemy. Those saying they would live together must know someone with whom they'd like to live, or perhaps know stories about times of peace when Cypriots lived together in mixed villages.

Question 4: Would you ever work for peace between the two communities?

Tanyel: The majority of teenagers surveyed will work for peace, which makes me believe that our bi-communal work is very important.

Charis: Some teenagers believe that working for with Turkish Cypriots is selling out their country. Many believe that bi-communal activities are a waste of time. For me, what is important is that most of the teenagers do support bi-communal work.

Question 5: Do you think leaders and politicians are showing enough effort to solve the Cyprus problem?

Charis: The percentage of people answering "no" is definitely too high. It has been so many years now and the Cyprus problem has not been solved and people tend to blame the politicians for that. I do not really know what

the politicians should do; I do know, though, that if they cannot find a solution we should be the ones that make the difference.

Question 6: If you have not, do you want to see the other side of Cyprus?

Charis: All Cypriots grow up with the desire to go to the other side. However, I have realized that the desire to go to the other side has different meanings for different people. Some said they were satisfied by simply seeing the other side, while others would like to live there.

Question 7: Do you think the other side also suffers because of the conflict?

Charis: People who think that Turkish Cypriots do not suffer at all usually believe that we used to be less happy before, or that now we have everything we need. I believe that those who recognize the common suffering of the two sides are probably those who believe in peace between the two sides.

Question 8: Who is responsible for the Cyprus Problem: Turkey, Greece, Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots, or both sides?

OLIVE BRANCH: This complex question shows the complexity of the situation. Since the events of 1963 and 1974, all of the different groups cited in the question play major roles in the politics of Cyprus.

Tanyel: I was expecting that each side would hold the other responsible but to my surprise the majority said both sides are accountable. The highest results is what is taught in the high-school. We mostly hear about heroic stories from our "motherlands."

Charis: Something very encouraging is that the most common answer on both sides was "both sides," which shows that teenagers are starting to acknowledge that both sides made mistakes. A high number of Greek Cypriots believe that Turkey is responsible due to what Greek Cypriots are taught about the Turkish invasion of 1974.

Question 9: When do you think there will be REAL peace between Turkish and Greek Cypriots?

Charis: The fact that so many people said never reflects the pessimistic views that people have. Those who believe that there will be no real peace are people who do not work for bringing peace because they think that bi-communal work is not beneficial.

Tanyel: Never is a very strong word. Maybe if people would think a little longer before replying, they would answer a little differently. Still, half of the respondents see a different future as a possibility—but not soon.

9. When will there be real peace in Cyprus?

In 20 years:	My life:	My kids' life:	Never:	No answer:
T/C: 20%	T/C: 15%	T/C: 13%	T/C: 47%	T/C: 5%
G/C: 13%	G/C: 19%	G/C: 16%	G/C: 50%	G/C: 2%

Editors' Comments

The remarkably similar and consistent results emphasize the desire of the majority of youth on both sides for peace, and a disappointment with the current lack of progress creating doubt about realizing their aspirations for a future free of conflict.

In questions 2 and 3, majorities of roughly two-thirds on both sides express hope to meet and willingness to coexist. The numbers opposing bi-communal contact are also

consistent (the G/C are exactly the same), raising the possibility that the same people answered negatively on both. Similar proportions show sensitivity to the other side's suffering in question 7.

In questions 4, 8 and 9, a narrow majority of just over 50% choose a bi-communal direction in tough questions of past responsibility, present commitment, and hope for the future. 51% see both sides responsible, and state their willingness to work for peace.

Questions 5 and 9 are closely linked.

Majorities of more than three-fourths on both sides express disappointment with their leaders' efforts toward peace, and ask for more. This is perhaps the origin of the approximately 50% on each side who do not see real peace as a possibility in question 9. Seeing the shared aspirations of the majority of youth on both sides, as reflected in this survey, should provide real encouragement. With young generations on both sides expressing a clear desire to work for peace, the future may indeed reflect their vision.

Summer Briefs

The Seeds of Peace Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem hosted its first regional summer program in which over 350 Egyptian, Israeli, Jordanian, and Palestinian Seeds participated in a diverse array of activities at the Center and around the Middle East, together.

Media Workshop in Beit Jala

Held at the Talitha Kumi School in Beit Jala, the four day seminar focused on media perspectives on the Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Leading Israeli, Palestinian, and international media professionals guided 40 Seeds in a critical analysis of the role of the media in the Middle East, and how Israeli and Palestinian issues are presented internationally. Issues discussed included: the use of images, choice of words, the role of the journalist, political cartoons, and media's role in influencing public opinion. Lecturers included Avi Katz (Jerusalem Report), Baha' Boukhari (Al-Ayyam), Naser Ata (ABC News), Ehud Ya'ari (Israel Channel One), Daoud Kuttub (Al-Quds), and Yoram Binur (Israel Channel Two).

Jordan Trip

Jordanian Seeds welcomed 80 Israeli and Palestinian friends to a 5 day journey to the Hashemite Kingdom. Starting at Egyptian star Ehab Tawfik's concert at the Jerash Festival, the Seeds enjoyed historical and natural treasures and each other's company in Amman. His late Majesty King Hussein's tomb, Petra, and Wadi Dana.

Photography Group

Working alongside professional photographers Hally Pancer and Nayef Al-Hashlamoun, 12 Israeli and Palestinian Seeds developed skills and explored their own identities and each other's communities through the camera lens on field trips to Hebron, Tel-Aviv, and all sides of Jerusalem.

SUMMER @ THE



Fun at the Center

by Mai Abu Emara (Ramallah)

It came at last: summer vacation! No homework, no getting up early, no more school! But you need to do something in those happy months. Seeds have two choices: go to camp again, or sign up at the Center and get the most of your time over here. I chose the second and signed up for all the activities I could.

I'm going to tell you about two amazing ones where we learned new stuff and had lots of fun. First "PHOTOGRAPHY." That was Roy's group. You know him—that brilliant guy with curly hair! We met Hally Pancer and Nayef Hashlamoun, professional photographers who led us all the way. We looked at some—how should I call them?—different pictures. One was a woman with a weird friends (all psychos I suppose). Maybe it doesn't sound so, but we had lots of laughter.

We saw a students' exhibit at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It was very nice. We visited Muslim, Jewish, and Christian holy places in Jerusalem, and Tel-Aviv, Jaffa, Al-Aroub refugee camp and Hebron.

What did we do? We took pictures of everything that spoke to us and represented our personalities.

Hally and Nayef taught us all about how to take pictures: frames, light, and everything

photography group. Well I guess we are.

Did you ever watch a puppet show? Of course you did! Everyone knows puppets. The thing is that we got really close to this puppet business. In puppets we spent almost all our time in the Center with our dear counselor Jen. It was fun anyways.

What did we do? We watched a movie, and went to a Chinese puppet show in Holon. We discussed the past the present and the future. Then we made puppets with a white cloth and rubber bands. A professional puppeteer visited us and we made other puppets, this time with eyes and mouths. Then step-by-step we tried to make up different stories, which contained our thoughts.

In the end, we put everything we achieved in the script of our future puppet show. We did a good job. You'll know that when we become famous and rich because of this special achievement.

That was some of the greatest activities I've ever been too. WE HAD LOTS OF FUN AT THE CENTER.

Puppets of Peace or: Being a Child Again

by Iddo Felsenthal (Jerusalem)

At the end of my school year in the beginning of last summer I came to the Center and met Jen. We got to talk about the different regional activities and I asked:



CENTER 2000



photo: Roy Sharone

—"So, what do you think I should do this summer?"

--"Come to the puppets workshop!"

—"What? Why? I have nothing to do with puppets!"

—"Never mind, you'd like it. Besides, next year we will perform in front of children."

—"Oh, well, I have nothing else to do this summer."

And so I went to the puppets workshop with Jen and 11 other Seeds from '96 to '99, from places like Ramallah and Hebron, to places like Jerusalem and Rishon LeZion and even Afula. It was probably the best puppet workshop I've ever been to.

Almost every Wednesday I came to the Center to see a bunch of great people who can make me laugh like nobody can. Half an hour late, like always in Seeds, we sat down and did a lot of crazy stuff. From shouting at each other about the script and what it should be to playing with napkins pretending they were humans. It was wonderful and exciting. Like being a child again. Anyone who entered the room would have thought we were crazy, and of course he would be right.

But besides a lot of fun and crazy things, like making your own puppet out of a sock or a box, there were some serious things as well. How do you explain to a little child about life? About "the other side?" How can you make him understand something you don't fully understand? These are only some of the questions we had to deal with when we created

We used puppets as a way to reach children and grownups. With a puppet you can identify even if it is not human. Puppets are also very neutral, and it is an important thing in this conflict. After hard work that lasted six long meetings, after hours of laughter, craziness and frustration we came out with a script. I can honestly say that we've managed to deal with many problems and questions coming out with the best script we could have, and the best puppet show script SOP has ever had. Actually—the only one SOP has ever had.

I do hope that soon, we'll be able to come back and laugh and work a bit and come out with a puppet show based on the script we wrote three months ago—in another era.

The Jordan Trip

by Dana Gdalyahu
(Rishon Lezion)

It has been three months since I went to Jordan and yet it seems ages ago, a lot of



Mosaic Project

Working with Pieces for Peace, Israeli and Palestinian Seeds created a 300 meter mosaic for installation at a peace park on the Green Line, representing their shared vision for the future.

Art Projects

Artists Ellen Alt and Sliman Mansour led more than 60 Seeds in two long-term art projects. Teams of 3 designed mosaic panels for a tower to extend throughout the stairwell, and Seeds painted the Center wall with a mural depicting their various identities.

Puppetry Workshop

A group of 12 Seeds learned the art of puppetry, and designed their own show and puppets. They created a script without language, with themes of tolerance and understanding. The show is designed for Israeli and Palestinian elementary school students.

Music Session

Organized by Jethro Berkman and Ahsyia Posner, Seeds explored various music styles, wrote original songs, and ultimately performed at the first-ever Regional Talent Show.

Parent Encounters

3 different groups allowed Israeli and Palestinian Seeds of Peace Parents to meet informally and engage in dialogue to enlarge the coexistence community.

Talent Show

More than 200 Israeli and Palestinian Seeds closed the summer with a great celebration. Hosted by Asel Asleh, of blessed memory, and Talia Avidor, the first-ever Talent Show featured 20 acts that showcased the artistic and musical creations of the summer projects in a variety of musical performances, dances, comedy acts, martial arts displays and the mandatory "Back Street Boys" closer.



photo: Roy Sharone

things happened since then. One of the things, which made me stronger during these hard times, was my memories from the trip to Jordan. It was such a unique experience, and it was very special to share it with such wonderful group of people.

For five days we visited different sites of Jordan. On the first day we went to Jerash festival and heard Egyptian singer Ehab Tawfik's concert. We danced and sang, and had a great time for a couple of hours.

After visiting the city of Amman and the tomb of His late Majesty King Hussein, we arrived to Petra. Petra left me speechless. We spent a great day in Petra, and heard stories about it from our guide. After a nice meal, the "brave" ones rode a horse or a donkey and others just enjoyed the walk.

Wadi Dana was one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. In the middle of nowhere, it was just nature and us. We were amazed by the sky, the stars, the mountains, the valley. Spending the night in Wadi Dana was a great experience; you could feel the fresh air.

This is the story of Jordan, I might not remember it all, but I do remember the feeling of being welcomed and wanted in Jordan, something that makes a lot of a difference. We visited beautiful sites indeed, but what really mattered is that we, a group of people from all sessions and from different countries were having a great time. I wish we could all meet right now and see that the harmony from this trip as all trips is still there, and that nothing can take it away from us.

Bring-a-friend

by Saeed Saabni (Kafir Kara)

All this happened a couple of months ago. I have never heard about the SOP (Seeds of Peace) before. And one day I got a phone call

other. Believe me, it's not easy at all, but they are finding great success, because of their deep belief in what they are doing.

Something like this, politicians can never achieve. Peace is not signing an agreement between two sides. Peace is love. And love is what you find there at the SOP Center. It's like a huge family, where everyone is ready to listen to you when you need to be listened, and everyone smiles to you so you never feel alone.

They have given me a lot, and I want to thank them for that, and say: Hope you success, and hope the world love.

Music Project: Jammin' with Jamjoum

by Hazem Jamjoum (Amman)

The music program this summer was a surprisingly good experience. We were supposed to have a few songs ready to perform at the Talent Show. We, a dozen musically-inclined Israelis, Palestinians, and me, only met once a week, so you'd expect the songs we learned to be simple. That was not the case. We did do some easier songs, like the Green team's rendition of "Cecilia" with Jethro Berkman playing guitar. We also performed a very rhythmic a cappella song and a new Tomer Perry original, "Coming to the Center." The difficulty came with the Indigo Girls' song "Ghost." Simply listening to the song on tape was difficult, especially trying to figure out what notes the backup voices were singing, but thanks to Ahsiya Posner, Jethro and hours of practice, we pulled through. It gave us a great sense of achievement to learn all the songs and perform them at the talent show. We could not have done any of it, however, without Jethro and Ahsiya (thanks).



photo: Jen Marlowe





SUMMER @ THE CENTER 2000



Summer of Art

by Hagar Edelstein (*Macabim*)

Art is not identified with a certain culture or nationality. It's free of prejudices and has various interpretations. The same can be said for peace and its young pioneers. Seeds of Peace and art formed a profound combination this summer. In the art program, I saw two loves of mine—Seeds of Peace and art—create substantial results. Through art an individual can expose feelings, and group work can weave different people together.

The difference between children and adults is the difference between innocence and realism. The mosaic we created in Beit Jala expressed this innocence, but not a result of adolescence. On the contrary, it came from our maturity.

The theme was future vision, created after a coexistence discussion. As a starting point, we had to interpret fear and happiness through words. Some terms were common to us all. We molded our thoughts into one drawing, forming

Instead, we created a drawing that expressed thought in more than one way. From there, we began the actual framework of the mosaic.

Ten of us channeled our thoughts into sketches representing the group's ideas. We arrived at the point of implementing our ideas in mosaic stones.

Then we worked into the night, from dusk until dawn. It was an amazing experience. We shared this time in complete enjoyment—and we are very proud of our creation.

The mosaic shows our vision. The future is the light at the end of the tunnel. Our path is paved with sorrow and darkness, but the knowledge of the future guides us. The future should be as innocent as a child's world. The mosaic is colorfully filled with childish images. In this future, there will be no need for armies, and the world will reach the child inside a soldier. This is our prophecy, utopian as it sounds.

Art projects invaded the center throughout the entire summer. Every week Israeli and Palestinian Seeds came to the Center and created a wonderful diversity—both human and

tall mosaic tower and a large cement relief wall. Palestinian artist Suleiman Mansour, director of the Al-Wasiti Art Center in Jerusalem, and Israeli artist Ellen Alt directed the projects.

The cement relief wall is based on the theme of windows. The observer can see the windows as an internal view of himself or to view the external world. In each window, the creators explain how they view reality. The Tower is an eclectic piece of work that intertwines different approaches to reflect different individual and group choices. This fascinating piece of work shows integration between people. Like the biblical Tower of Babel, our tower is built from many different constituents. In contrast to the Tower of Babel, it shows the prosperity of diversity.

The summer has certainly been an amazing era for the regional program of Seeds of Peace, a period of time that we all crave to reconstruct. The artistic dimension of it functions as a reflection of this success. The fact that these projects aren't completed shows that our faith is preserved. It shows the need for a solution. We

HAPPY HOLIDAYS RAMADAN

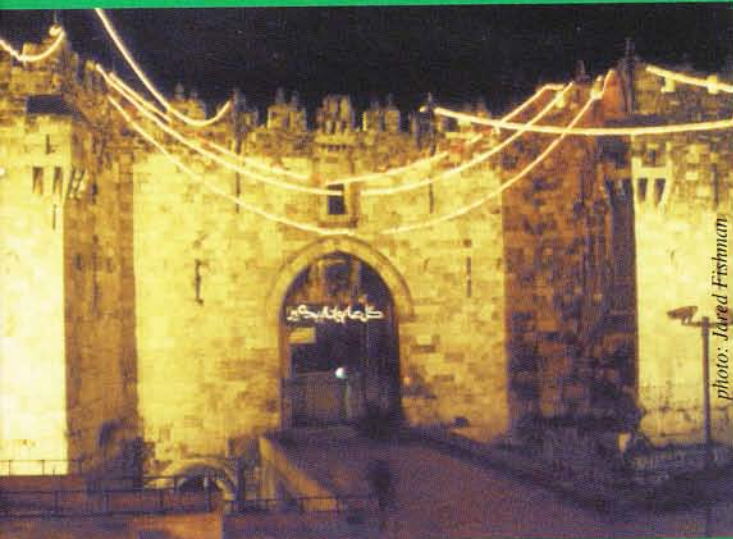


photo: Jared Fishman

Ramadan lights outside Jerusalem's Old City wishing everyone a good year

Egypt: RAMADAN KAREEM

by Mariam Bazeed and Fouad Marie (Cairo)

Islam is a religion of peace, good will, and mutual understanding, as is most apparent to Muslims during the holy month, Ramadan, when the holy Quran was first sent to the Prophet Muhammad. Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five "Pillars" of Islam, acts which every Muslim must perform. During Ramadan, Muslims cannot eat, drink, smoke, have intercourse, or perform any evil between sunrise and sunset. Before dawn, Muslims eat *S'hur*, a small meal to sustain them through the fast. After the *Maghreb* evening prayer, Muslims break the fast with a small morsel of food, pray, and then begin *iftar*, the evening meal. Ramadan is an exercise in self-restraint for Allah. Surah 183 of the Al-Bakarah section of the Quran teaches: "O ye who believe, fasting is proscribed to you as it was proscribed to those before you that ye may learn self-restraint." Through fasting Muslims also experience hunger, giving them more compassion for the poor.

This holy month brings a difference to the streets of any Islamic city. In Egypt, people try to keep Islamic behavior, by being friendly, peaceful and helpful. Men and women regularly walk in the streets reading holy Quran. Many women wear the *hijab*, Islamic head covering, during Ramadan, and mosque attendance increases. Many Muslims read the whole Quran at least once during Ramadan. At night people celebrate in huge tents, enjoying traditional Arab music, dances, food and smoking the *Shisha* until sunrise. Before dawn, *Mesaharati* walk in the streets drumming and singing hymns to wake people for *S'hur* and the *Fajr* prayers. In the evening, the cannons of Iftar fire from the great Al-Azhar Mosque in the old city of Cairo calling all Muslims to pray and break the fast.

The most important part of Ramadan is the spiritual aspect. It is a time of reflection on how to achieve purity of the soul, void of hypocrisy and interest in material gain; how to be a better person. In Ramadan, the true brotherhood of Islam is most obvious. In exchanging the traditional greeting of "*Ramadan Kareem*" one feels the bond between Muslims. Fasting, breaking fast, and praying together increase the sense of belonging. War and anything that causes pain is prohibited during

Ramadan. Both the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad teach peace. The spirit of Ramadan gives a chance to solve conflicts in a non-violent, peaceful way—the way preferred by Islam.

Turkey: RAMADAN BAIRAM

by Gizem Turkarslan (Istanbul)

In Turkey, we welcome Ramadan with great excitement, and end it with the big celebration, Ramadan Bairam. Istanbul has 15 million people, and it's almost impossible to go anywhere an hour before *iftar*. There are long lines at every bakery to buy the holiday bread, *Pide*, and *Gullach*, a special dairy dessert to join the dates on our *iftar* tables.

In the evenings, people gather in huge tents to enjoy themselves. Lots of fun stuff is going on, like men selling a gum-like candy called *macun*, which sticks to teeth and refuses to leave. We watch rope dancers, magicians, and comedy skits. We have two famous puppets, "*Karagoz* and *Hacivat*," who are placed behind a translucent screen with spotlights. Expert puppeteers move the puppets with a stick and tell comic stories, and kids love to watch the puppet show.

Bosnia: RAMAZAN

by Dzemila Helac (Sarajevo)

Ramazan, as we say in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is a special month. It brings more inner peace. Some people like the religious part, and some prefer tradition. For me, the most beautiful thing about Ramazan is that it's family month. Every year Ramazan starts with a philharmonic concert of Oriental, Bosnian, and classical music. Yellow lights decorate mosques and the old parts of town. People wake up early to eat for the sake of tradition. I have more free time, which I use to extend my poor knowledge about Islam and other monotheistic religions.

This year Ramazan is in winter, and days are short, so *iftar*, breaking the fast, is early. After *iftar* we go to the mosque or take a walk. Ramazan is the only time of year when mosques are full.

Weekends are the most important. That's when I go to my grandparents or we invite guests. As we wait for the call to prayer, little children go out in the garden and wait for the lighting of *kandils*, the lights on top of minarets. At *iftar* time, the *kandils* turn on, an old cannon fires, the *muyezin* calls, and we start eating. In Bosnia, the first course is always *topa*, melted cheese with *somun*, thin round bread. Dishes are Turkish with Arab and Greek influence. Most popular are moussaka, like lasagna with potato slices, vegetables filled with meat and rice, and Bosnian pies. For dessert, cakes made of pastry, nuts, and raisins and dipped in water with a lot of sugar. The most popular are *baklava*, *halva* and *ruzica*.

After *iftar*, I listen to the lecture of the mosque. Maybe I hear only the idealistic side of it, but the main topic is always the obligation for tolerance, respect and honesty, and that we should do more for others. They say that Muslims are lucky to be born as Muslims, but that it doesn't necessarily mean that those who call themselves Muslims are good. God wanted people to be different, and it's not our religion that matters, but what kind of person we are.

HANUKAH

HANUKAH in Israel: "A Great Miracle Was HERE"

by Miriel Bendersky (Tel-Aviv)

The Jewish holiday of Hanukah lasts eight days. It remembers the hero Yehuda Maccabi and his brothers, who purified the ancient Temple from its desecrators. During his time, around 160 BCE, Jews in the Land of Israel lived under Greek occupation. Antiochus, the Greek king, banned the Jewish religion, stole from the people, and his soldiers defiled the Temple. God answered the prayers of the Jewish people and sent Yehuda and the Maccabim to save them from cruel occupation.

The Jews were an impoverished minority then, without enough ammunition or people to fight the power of Greece. Against all odds the Maccabim gathered an army of rebellion. They had no chance to win, but nothing to lose, and they fought back. The real miracle is that they won. They fought not to conquer, but to live free as Jews and not under occupation. Victory came on the 25th of the Hebrew month Kislev, the first day of the holiday.

When the Maccabim entered the Temple, they found nothing but destruction. They wanted to light the Menorah, the eight-branched candelabra for religious worship, but found only a tiny can of holy oil. It should have lasted only a few hours, but it lasted eight days! This miracle revived the hope in people's hearts, and gave them power to fix what the Greeks destroyed. Most important, it restored faith in God. This holiday symbolizes the strength of the minority to fight against what's unfair, for what you believe in and not to give up even in the most difficult moments.

Each night we light a Hannukia, a small candelabra with eight branches, a ceremonial reminder of the Menorah; we light one more candle each night until the 8th day when we light all 8 candles. It's customary to eat foods made in oil like *sufganiyot* (donuts) and *latkes* (pancakes) to remember the oil miracle. Pocket money is given to the children to share the magical spirit of the holiday. Another custom is a top-spinning game called *Sevivon* or *Dreidel*. Each side of the top carries a Hebrew letter, the initials of the sentence summarizing the holiday: "A Great Miracle Happened Here."

HANUKAH USA: "A Great Miracle Was THERE"

by Emily Singer (St. Louis)

I'm not the most religious person, but Hanukah means a lot to me as an American, a Jew, and as Emily Singer. Many Americans think of gifts when thinking of the holiday season, but the main point of the holiday is

Avital Gan-El (Petach-Tikva) lights Hanuka candles



photo: Jared Fishman

CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS, Eastern Orthodox Style!

by Mirkica Popovic (Skopje)



Christmas Eve is celebrated in most countries on December 24, but by Eastern Orthodox Christians like us in Macedonia on January 7. The day before Christmas, the family is together and a pie with a hidden golden coin is served. Pieces of the pie are cut for God, the house, work, and a piece for each member of the family. After the pieces are divided, the one who gets the "Lucky Coin" is believed to have good luck for the whole year. That particular member says the Christmas prayer and pork is our traditional dinner. On the morning of January 7, young children go out in groups and do "round," something like "Trick or Treat" in the USA for Halloween. They go around and are treated with nuts, fruit, candies, and small money, while the children sing traditional songs. In addition to this tradition, the churches are decorated in a special way to look like the cave that Jesus Christ was born in. People—mainly the elderly—go to the churches and attend the morning service in the church. The celebration culminates in the evening when the whole family gets together, and the Christmas prayer is said by the member of the family who found the "Lucky Coin" on Christmas eve.

With reference to the traditions, there is a TV movie about Birth of Christ every year, right after the Christmas dinner. On the whole, Christmas is respected as a holy day and a ceremony that is an inseparable part of each Christian's life. Fate is what we have deep inside, what sometimes keeps us alive and enables us to go further more. Believe in yourself, but try to have faith in the one that believes in us! Merry Christmas!

NOT just to receive gifts. I'm not trying to be all cutesy and say "it's better to give than to receive." But Hanukah is a time for Jews to be with their families and think about our religion and history.

I have a big family in St. Louis. Every Hanukah, we have two separate parties at my house, one with each side of my family. Those are fun because we have all my relatives together with a fire going. We eat *latkes* (potato pancakes) that I help my mom make, applesauce, and other stuff that I never eat because I love my mom's applesauce too much. We light the Hanukah candles, play *dreidel*, and generally have fun together. The letters on the *dreidel* are different in America, because we are not in Israel: they say "A Great Miracle was There." At the end of the night, we open all of our gifts to each other.

Besides family, I invite my Christian friends so that they can experience lighting the candles, the Hanukah food, the family, and the presents with us. I love you all and wish you safety, health, and peace in the New Year.

WAR IN HOLY LAND CASTS SHADOW OVER HOLIDAY LIGHTS

Conflict Cancels Christmas in Bethlehem

by Mera Al-Mukarker (Beit Jala)

Bethlehem is of special importance to Christians all over the world because it is the place where Jesus Christ was born. Usually thousands of Christian pilgrims from around the world flock to Bethlehem. Last year, many special projects decorated Bethlehem and made sure the city suited the 2000th birthday of Jesus Christ.

For Christmas last year, 100 Seeds joined us in Bethlehem to celebrate the holiday. We ate a delicious dinner in Beit Sahour, then together walked around Manger Square, following a pink cell phone balloon, and looking for Christmas hats. It was so nice to see people having peace, and celebrating together—Christians, Jews, and Muslims. It was so important to bring people together to learn about each other, and to be able to do it in Palestinian territory.

Unfortunately, Christmas this year came in a hard situation, the situation in which we live and suffer every day. We can see sadness on the faces of people, even small children, this Christmas season. A person may ask why Christmas wasn't like last year? The answer for us is the Israeli attacks on the West Bank and Gaza since last September. Many people were killed and dozens of houses badly damaged or destroyed.

Beit Jala, which is in the area of Bethlehem and the city where I live, has been in many clashes with the Israeli tanks and helicopters, and the lovely nights have turned into a war scene. Missiles and bullets of all kinds lighted the fascinating dark nights. Every night since last September, the Israeli forces attacked Palestinian towns, because we defended our sacred places and we couldn't stay quiet while seeing the usurping of our rights and our loved ones put into jail or not allowing us to pray in Jerusalem in claiming that we don't have permissions.

When these massacres happen, and many martyrs fall, we can't feel happy or feel like celebrating. Bethlehem wasn't decorated with lights and fireworks like last year. My friends couldn't visit and celebrate and learn together. Few tourists came; only local people prayed in the Nativity Church. The closure of Palestinian cities and towns prevented Palestinians from coming to Bethlehem. I hope that peace will prevail in these holy places soon, and then we can live peacefully and happily.

Missing Muhammad's Maklube

by Dor Kaidar (Kfar Saba)

I know I haven't written in a while. I just never felt a need to write or didn't have the time. I really love you all and even though I don't write that doesn't mean I forgot you. I'll never forget you. Well, I read SeedsNet today, and I saw the happy Ramadan greetings and I couldn't stop thinking about last year. Last year, in the beginning of December, I went for the first time to a Palestinian



home. A home that I would visit two more times later that year. I went to visit my friend Muhammad—"Muh." It was me, Yair, Yonatan, Ned and Sami. The day was the first day of Ramadan and we came to eat with Muh and his wonderful family (whom I really love). Not only did I visit a Palestinian home, I even got to spend the first night (and first meal) of Ramadan. That meal was one of the best I ever had. Soup, meat, potatoes and above all, Maklube. It was the first and not the last time I ate this delicious thing. I remember how much fun it was being with Muh and his family (oh, and with Yair and Yonatan too!). Today, one year later I want to go back to Hebron, back to Muh's house, to be back with his family.

I want things back the way they used to be. I know it's impossible, but I'll be waiting. I don't know if it's going to be in one month, one year or even five years, but I'll visit him again in Hebron, and be with him and eat that Maklube again with him and his whole family. I won't miss it for anything in the world. So Muh, wait for me. I am coming...



Christmas Past: Israeli and Palestinian Seeds celebrate in Bethlehem, 1999.

by Rachel Culley (Mercer, Maine)

Now that people are getting ready for Christmas, Hanukkah, or fasting for Ramadan, I was thinking about the similarities of all these holidays. All have lights: On the Christmas trees, the Hannukah candles, and the light of daybreak and sunset for Ramadan. There is also the light that people bring at this time. This year, my holiday season will have a much stronger meaning. Instead of just thinking about fun with my family and the gifts I receive, I realize how friends from all over the world have given their light to me. I will pray that this light may continue, and grow stronger. Each of you will be in my heart and mind this season.



THE MEDIA'S MISREPRESENTATION OF MY SIDE

Israeli Case

by Gil Messing (Yavneh)

In this advanced phase of human society, media is one of the most powerful tools. Media can easily be used as a weapon, and cause irreversible damage, as is proven by the deteriorating international status of Israel since the beginning of clashes this September.

I paid close attention to the domestic and international coverage of the recent developments in the Middle East, and witnessed its damaging effect. The international media decided that there is a plain situation of victims and attackers, of rights and wrongs. Israel was chosen to be the attacker and the Palestinians the underdogs, and every broadcast is shown through that lens.

The coverage was often one-sided. There were pictures of unfortunately wounded Palestinians without questions about what happened before the person was injured. There were hardly any pictures of wounded Israelis. When Joseph's Tomb was attacked, there were few pictures of wounded soldiers or religious students. Reporters accused Israel of using gunfire against stones without showing Palestinians shooting at soldiers and settlements. There was almost no mention that the organizer of the violence, The Tanzim, is a department in Arafat's party, or that the



Palestinian Case

by Badawi Qawasmī (Ramallah)

As a child, I often watched Israeli news. During the first Intifada, I was proud to see Palestinian demonstrations. I would comment with a little smile, "That's my school. Everything started on that street. Others were on the other side, then the Israeli Jeep came fast and..." I never knew that the Israeli correspondent described the events as "terror" and "riots," reported fewer casualties, and never mentioned settler attacks or soldier cruelty. I wondered how others saw us in their TV's. I thought they were watching my story, but I was wrong.

Years later, still under occupation, I am observing international coverage of the new intifada. Sadly, in many reports, I find the same anti-Palestinian bias that exists in the Israeli media.

The day after Ariel Sharon's visit to al-Haram a-Shareef, 7 Palestinians were killed. CNN reported only two killed during "clashes," while eyewitnesses said they were killed praying. The report did not state that Israeli soldiers had broken into a holy place. How would they cover it if heavily armed Palestinians started shooting in a synagogue? When Palestinians liberated Joseph's Tomb in Nablus, CNN focused on violation of a holy Jewish site. They neither mentioned the Palestinians killed around this tomb, nor explained that it formed a military barracks in the middle of a Palestinian city.

The media voices accusations that Palestinians prevent settlers from praying at the tomb, yet forget that the Israeli closures of Jerusalem daily deny Palestinians access to their holy sites. The same channels only superficially covered radical Israelis calling "Death to Arabs," in Hebrew while destroying a mosque in Tiberias, with no translation.

The media covers in great detail the killings of Israelis by Palestinians, but not the daily aggression against innocent Palestinians: Settler attacks against villagers; the killing of babies, women and elders; the cutting of thousands of trees, the confiscation of lands, the humiliation at checkpoints. Where are the stories of the girl blinded when an Israeli soldier hit her with his gun, the mother of nine killed in Tulkarem, the 2-year old girl killed by settlers in Hares, and the 40-day-old girl killed in Hebron? What of the hundreds who lost their homes, their legs and eyes, the closed schools and universities, the lack of food and oil, the fear, the empty streets, or the nights lit by bombs?

The neglect of these stories distorts the larger truth: The Israeli army is forcibly occupying our land, and Palestinians are resisting aggression. When our leaders questioned President Clinton's proposals, countries in power and the world media rushed to criticize us, ignoring their duty in implementing the UN resolutions Israel has ignored for 50 years.

I have hundreds more stories; I ask you to seek the true stories. I hope the media, Arab media included, will start showing the stories that explain the core of conflict in Palestine. I call on foreign media to reflect truth to their people, and to stop using terms like "retaliation" to justify the Israeli military's attacks upon Palestinian civilians in our land.

I know it is very difficult for Israelis to read this, but I hope you'll think of how difficult it is for the people living it. Best wishes for a better reality.



*When the international media
functions as a transmitter of one-sided
opinions it becomes a problem*

Palestinian Authority has violated agreements by failing to protect the holy Jewish sites. There was no emphasis on Israel's three hour warning to ensure no human casualties (and there were none) before attacks over strategic zones in Ramallah and Gaza, contradicting propaganda that Israel wants to kill Palestinians. There was no emphasis on the proof that stones do kill, shown by the death of Behor Jan from Rishon Lezion.

Many communications experts consider Israel's public relations mediocre. The Palestinian public relations, run by Dr. Hanan Ashrawi and Dr. Saeb Erekat, ought to be role models for the Israeli side; I give the Palestinian side credit in this battle for international opinion. It seems that our situation is so critical that the IDF spokesperson suggested equipping the soldiers with cameras so the world will see, and then surely the international echo will sound completely different.

A fair media has an important role in forming opinions because it does not hide the information from the people, or the people from the information. The coverage of the events of the past few weeks has hurt the reputation of Israel unjustifiably, and the international media has supported actions that it condemns in different parts of the world. The international media is produced by people with opinions of their own, and when it functions as a transmitter of one-sided opinions it becomes a problem for the progress of the human mind and mankind. After the progress that human society has made since its creation, it seems that we started to walk fast, but unfortunately we walk fast backwards.

Faces in the Crowd



Charis Akhilleos (Nicosia) and Tanyel Cemal (Famagusta): Because of their outstanding bi-communal work in Cyprus, Tanyel and Charis were selected to represent the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities at the World Conference of Volunteer Work.



Bashar Iraqi (Tira): Bashar created a coexistence program to introduce teenagers from his town to non-violent conflict resolution.



Gil Naveh (Jerusalem): Gil, 17, won a lead role in the dance performance *Beasts*, produced by leading choreographer Ido Tadmor, performed in Tel Aviv's famous Suzanne Dallal Center.



Abdasalam Alkhatat (Nablus): Abdasalam, 18, was selected by the Novartis Pharmaceutical Company in Switzerland for a study scholarship in Basel.

Seeds United

On November 17, 2000, Seeds of Peace was awarded special mention for the Madajeet Singh Prize for Tolerance and Non-Violence presented by UNESCO. Seeds Netta Corren (Haifa) and Fadi Elsalameen (Hebron) addressed the United Nations

Netta Corren's Speech

Right now as I speak, miles away from here across a wide ocean, terrible things are happening. People are getting killed. Life is destroyed.

During the past weeks I had to face myself time and time again and ask myself some very hard questions. How on earth can I continue having faith in peace when all these horrors happen every day around us?

Last year, I attended Seeds of Peace camp. It was an amazing experience. Just the idea that such a big group of people from different nationalities that are in bloody conflicts with each other can sing together, and hug each other, is incredible. And for the first time, I actually realized that there are human beings across the border.

For a month, those human beings are your best friends. It's suddenly the easiest thing to bond with people when you all live and share the same reality, the same daily life experiences. I suddenly realized how easy and simple the whole thing could be if only we let it.

I came back from camp feeling that the sky had burst open and right there, a magical truth was exposed to me. Life in the Middle East adjusts you very quickly. Back home you can't see your friend every day nor can you talk to them on the phone. Each and every one of us has his own local friends, family, school and a

lot of daily obstacles. My friendships that I started at camp have moved to another level. A level of growing slowly but steadily. Mostly all the activities the Seeds of Peace Center in Jerusalem have pulled us in order to return our connections and bring us together again.

Throughout all the times we laughed and talked and exchanged ideas, I still had the feeling that I was missing something. Is this a real friend of mine or just my "Palestinian other side" friend. These human beings that I respect and appreciate and recognize, can they ever be as close to me as my Israeli friend back home?

My doubts accompanied me for a while until one day I remember very clearly. It all started when Seeds of Peace pulled a bring-a-friend program. The concept was that each Seed brings a local friend from back home and the whole group meets. The purpose is to open new people who are not connected to Seeds of Peace to new ideas and different perspectives of thinking.

Mai, a very good friend of mine, a Palestinian from Ramallah, called me in advance and asked if I wanted to do that with her. We set a date and on that day we met with a whole bunch of Seeds and I remember that day with a big smile. The four of us, two Israelis and two Palestinians, hung out together in the mall for a whole day. We talked about every topic possible and had such a good time. We discussed some really serious issues like boys, school, family and other matters that meant a lot to all of us.

And as I looked to the side for a moment I caught a glimpse of two of my best friends—one Israeli and one Palestinian—and the amazing connection they managed to establish. And at that I moment I really realized that I love them both the same way. No doubts, no limits.

Right now in a dusty divided desert-like land, people die. It's not an action movie, nor a horror book. It's real. And if anyone asks me how on earth can I keep my faith that things will turn out right, it's in the realization I felt that day. Knowing that I can still call Mai, and talk to her and cry on her virtual shoulder and laugh with her and yell and accuse and discuss and share the same pain we both feel is my source of belief and this is also where my optimism lies. In the very same core in which human beings

Address Nations



Netta, John Wallach, Fadi, Bobbie Gottschalk, at the UN

coming from different backgrounds, different cultures, different religions can still in spite of everything else hope together for a better future and believe, yes believe, in peace as they are laying on each other. This is real, just as the pain is and the suffering is. We might not be able to determine everything about our reality; there are things that are simply beyond us. But I do believe that each and every one of us is able to determine his own reality: the reality in his mind, and in his thoughts. This is the reality that could bring a better life for all of us.

May the dead rest in peace. But as for the living may they live, live, in peace.

Fadi Elsalameen's Speech

I was born and raised near the city of Hebron in the West Bank. I became part of Seeds of Peace when I was 13 years old in 1998. I would like to share with you some of the lessons I have learned in life, so perhaps you can learn too.

Seeds of Peace is a camp for teenagers from conflict regions of the world. Kids who are "enemies" discuss the issues of the conflict they live in. Palestinians and Israelis live in the same bunk, sleep right next to each other, and are scared to death of each other. All they know is that they are sleeping next to their enemy; next to the monster that has nothing else to do on earth, but to kill and humiliate him. Those thoughts are on every young man and woman's minds, before camp starts. In more than 50 years of struggle, they never realized that they are both keeping each other's freedom. They never realized that they both have the key to peace in their hands. They have never realized that every life lost is a loss for both sides, a step backwards from the goal; never an accomplishment.

It is hard to run such a great camp, where young kids who grew up as enemies become friends. After camp, you start thinking about the other side, as a group of people who are known to you. When I first thought of Israelis, all that came to my mind was soldiers and guns. Now I know there is something more important; I know I have friends. I know I'm thinking about human beings, who feel the same way as me. Seeds of Peace made me think about my enemy, and eventually realize there isn't a great difference between us. We are both human beings, who deserve to live in peace. We both have rights and we both should defend our rights.

We believe in these principles very strongly. Asel Asleh, the 17 year old Arab-Israeli Seed of Peace who was killed this fall, was an example. He always did whatever he could to keep the bridge of peace that he was building. Asel was killed and buried in his Seeds of Peace shirt.

In a conflict like this, ordinary people are victimized. They are the ones who lose, not the politicians or the military leaders. Ordinary people are the main targets, and the ordinary people are the ones who have no control. Those who have hope and goals for their lives are not the ones who wage war. It is waged by people who seek the power they do not have and have nothing to lose by attacking their enemies.

Until the two sides see their problems as shared problems and their goals as shared goals, fighting will go on. Seeds of Peace is trying to encourage understanding between the Israelis and Palestinians so they will see that both people live on the same land and are not going to move. Until both sides cease trying to have the whole thing for their side alone, the war will continue and innocent people will be its victims. The hope of Seeds of Peace is that, by fostering friendships, based on respect and understanding between teenagers from both sides, they will eventually develop into a network of adults who will be able to recognize their goals and problems as mutual, to be resolved together, without war.

I'm thankful to Seeds of Peace, for teaching me that no matter my country or religion, I am first a human being like everyone else. A human being who cares for all humans on this planet.

'Quote, unquote'

"We always hear about the 'price of peace.' But no one ever talks about the 'price of no peace.' With the loss of my son, I have paid the price of not having peace."

Aharon Barnea, a bereaved Israeli father, to a group of Seeds at the Bereaved Families Forum for Peace in Tel Aviv.

"What does it mean to fight humanely or inhumanely? We cannot use the word "humane" to refer to fighting since humans are the victims of these fights. I suggest we save the word "humane" and use it to describe acts that aim to save humans rather than risk their lives."

Shorouq Sweity from Jericho to her Seeds of Peace email negotiation group.

"Israelis and Palestinians think they have all the answers. Seeds of Peace gave us all the questions, but no answers. But it is better to have smart questions than stupid answers."

Inbal Shacked from Bet Aryeh at a Seeds of Peace discussion in November.

"I think your country may do stuff that I don't agree with, but I still believe that in each country there's good and bad kinds of people. I can't just generalize this problem and say I hate you because you are Israeli. This may have happened in the past, but not after Seeds Of Peace. Never."

Sarah Khatib from Amman on SeedsNet.

"This war has killed innocent people, strengthened the hate in Israelis and Palestinians, and stopped the peace process. Both sides don't stop shooting, both sides don't stop suffering. They see it as the only way. But it will keep on going on and on forever if we don't stop it."

Karen Karniol-Tambour from Netanya to her email negotiation group.

FROM SARAJEVO TO JERUSALEM

Amela Puljek-Shank (Sarajevo)

For weeks I fought the urge to deny the situation in Jerusalem. Seeing pictures on TV of lethal violence each day, dreaming how somebody wants to kill me or those dear to me; this returned me to the time of the war in my country, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The killings and the deaths are the same. Only the names and places are different. Part of me wants to switch off my brain and forget. I don't want to know about any more deaths. I am tired of counting how many people close to me have died.

It was first Nasmir, after that Samir, Adnan, Jasko, Rahman, Sinisa, Boban, Raza, Maja, Aida, Jelena, Duska, Nikola, Irfan. Name after name. All these people were close to me; all died between 1992-1994. When the war started, I thought it would stop in a month or so. Instead it took four years to end the violence and bring some peace. In these years I lost 15 close people. My cousin was cut in half by machine-gun fire, and my aunt died very shortly after, from sorrow. I will never see them, talk with them, have coffee with them. They are gone forever.

Every time I go to Sarajevo, I look at the pictures of my aunt and my cousin Imo. I feel how their whole family misses them, six years after their death. I remember Imo, our jokes and times together. The last time we spoke, I called to let him know that I was OK and nobody got killed in my town, Jajce. Last time I saw my aunt, I told her that I would come soon to visit her again. After three months, she was gone, he was gone, and I never said goodbye.

Every time I come to Jajce or Sarajevo, I visit the graves of friends and family. I sit at their gravestones and cry. I try to talk to them, to tell about my life, and I say goodbye. This helps heal my wounds. It helps me deal with the reality that death is everywhere and it happens to everybody.

*It took eight years for me to understand that
God grieved and cried for my enemy as for me.*

Watching the violence in Jerusalem reminds me of Bosnia. I can hear cries and screams, the sound of grenades, the sound of bombs. I can feel my fear of losing my parents, my sister, my life, and the phone ringing with news of another death. I don't know why the violence happened. One side said because the other side started it, or because of religion, or because my friend got killed. It is not important now. All sides were hurt and killed, felt fear and pain, and bled red blood.

I know what you are going through. It is so easy to learn to hate. It comes from the pain and the helplessness to change things or to bring a loved one to life again. For a time I hated the people that killed my friends. I did not know them, but I hated whole groups of people. I wished for them to be tortured and to see their loved ones killed. I wanted revenge. I wanted to see the other side suffer. I could not understand the killings that the other side did until I discovered that with my hatred, I had the capacity to do the same. I could become a good killing machine if I let my emotions rule me. I recognized that I was the same as the people from the other side that I hated and blamed for the death of my dear ones.

I realized that I have two choices: to build my life on hatred, and teach

my children to hate, and spread hatred and violence to their children, or to take the road of healing and possible forgiveness, where I will take personal responsibility for stopping violence by building trust, respect and possible love with people from the other side. I chose the second choice. I chose to create peace within me first, to go to therapy and heal my war traumas. I expressed my deep hatred, pain, sadness, and grief for years and lives lost.

Now I am facing my fear of death, and the reality that I will never see my dead friends and relatives again. I am left with memories and pictures of our times together. When I walk through the streets of my town, I can hear their voices, their laughs and almost touch them. These memories will always hurt and will always be with me. The difference is that I am accepting their death.

It took me eight long years to accept the reality. Eight years to start to love, respect, hear and create friendships with people from the other side. Eight years to start to heal and hope. Eight years to understand that my innocence is gone. Life as it was before the war will never return. It also took eight years for me to understand that God loves all people, no matter how we call God and how we pray to God. God grieved and cried for my enemy as for me. It took me eight years to understand that promoting, living and practicing peace is an everyday life choice. Sometimes I believe that peace is not an option, that we should just go and fight. What keeps me committed to peace are the miracles of God's presence in my life, of creation, of friends that I got to know from the enemy side, of my family that loves me and care for me, and of the grace of God itself.

It was hard to promote peace during the war in Bosnia, but I did it. I delivered food and medicine, sat with people and cried when their loved ones were dead even if they were "enemies." I lost a lot of friends who did not understand my actions. It scared the hell out of me every time the secret police summoned me to ask how I could be friends with the other side. I knew they could kill me. But I survived, and continued my way.

To live a life of peace is a choice that goes on as long as we live. It somehow continued even when I thought it impossible. In the middle of violence, all of us are asked to commit, or not to commit. You are the ones that make the choice. I know how hard it is to make that decision. Maybe some of you are not ready to make that decision yet; some of you may never be. Whatever your decision is, it will determine your future. I ask you to think about the consequences of your choice. I ask you to think about your future and future of others that will come after you and me. The violence can stop. The hurt, pain, anger, and hatred can be expressed in ways that are safe, without killing. I ask you to learn to express your emotions by being honest and clear about how you feel. I take the liberty to ask you, because of my war experience. But it is your decision and you have to make it on your own.

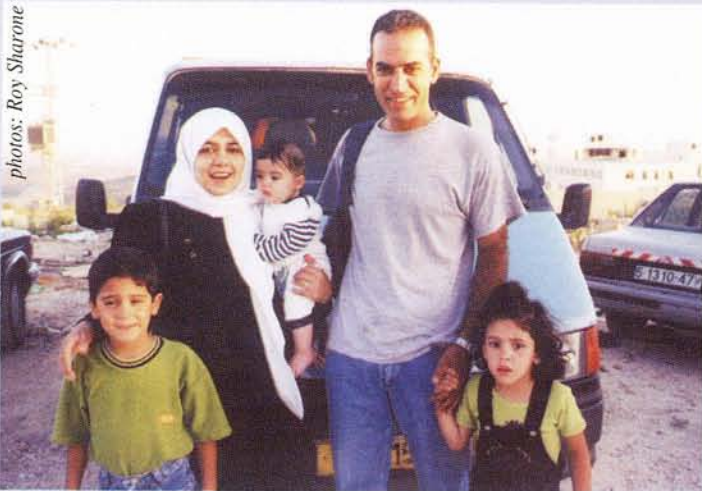
Whatever your thoughts may be, know that I walked through valleys of shadows and death. You can take this story and learn something from it, or you can forget it. I am praying for your safety and peace, for your care and comfort, and I am praying that God will provide you with love and peace within yourselves.

Amela Puljek-Shank, from Sarajevo, worked as a facilitator at this year's Youth Peace Initiative in Olympia, Greece.

WE WANT TO SLEEP IN PEACE



A group of Israeli and Palestinian Seeds with Ned and Sami in Ramallah



Sami and his family in Jerusalem

Sami Al-Jundi (Jerusalem)

October 8, 2000

Last week everybody was sad, and we knew that none of our lives could be "normal" again. Life here has turned upside down; there is war in the Middle East. This war is touching the hearts of the people in the Middle East. Everybody is afraid. Last night no one slept well (even me).

In the Old City of Jerusalem, where I live, the people were afraid because they thought the settlers would come to make trouble in Palestinian homes. In Gilo no one slept well because they feared shots, and felt the loud sound of the tanks. On the other side, in Beit Jala, no one slept because they thought the tanks would bomb their homes.

Three Israeli mothers don't sleep well, either, because they are thinking about their sons kidnapped by Hizballah. Also dozens of Palestinian mothers don't sleep good because they have lost their sons. Many people didn't sleep because they are at the hospital, Palestinian hospitals and

Israeli hospitals. And a lot of religious people, Jews and Muslims, didn't sleep well because they are thinking about Joseph's Tomb and Tiberias Mosque, both destroyed by mobs this week.

Many people don't sleep in Palestinian villages because the settlers go to make trouble there. Many settlers don't sleep because Palestinian groups are shooting at their settlements. And those groups don't sleep, and those settlers don't sleep. Azmi Bishara, the Palestinian-Israeli member of Knesset, didn't sleep because 300 Israeli kids threw stones at his house, then 300 Palestinian kids threw stones at the Israeli kids, and then all threw stones at each other. The family of an Israeli taxi driver from Rishon Lezion didn't sleep because he was killed when Arab-Israelis threw stones at his car. The family of a Palestinian guy in Bidea, the same night, maybe the same time, didn't sleep because he was killed by settlers that shot at people there.

A Palestinian group didn't sleep because they were shooting at an Israeli bus in Gaza Strip. They didn't sleep, they were busy organizing. And Israeli groups in the army didn't sleep because they were busy damaging two big buildings in Gaza. Hizballah didn't sleep. They were thinking where they can put the three kidnapped soldiers and about the Israeli guns that will maybe bomb Lebanon. The Israeli army didn't sleep because they were thinking about how they can reach Hizballah. The Syrians don't sleep either, because maybe they will also fight the Israelis.

Ned didn't sleep because all night he was thinking about this situation;

Many people don't sleep in Palestinian villages because the settlers go to make trouble there. Many settlers don't sleep because Palestinian groups are shooting at their settlements. Those groups don't sleep; those settlers don't sleep.

he got to sleep at 6 in the morning. In the Arab governments, no one sleeps, because they are thinking about the demonstrations in the Arab capitals, what they can do for the people, to take their anger far away. Albright doesn't sleep, not because it is day there, but because she is thinking about the situation here. At the Orient House no one sleeps, and in a lot of Israeli and Arab neighborhoods around the Orient House, because everyone was busy throwing stones at everyone else.

Now... what about Arafat and Barak? I think they still wake up and think about their people, what they can do to bring peace for their people. To bring peace for his people. To bring peace for his people.

Now we would like to sleep. And we hope for them to make for us a quiet situation in the Middle East. We want to sleep. If they don't sit together now, they must sit together tomorrow, or after tomorrow, or after one month, they just must do that quickly. We want to sleep. We want to sleep.

Sami al-Jundi, a native of Jerusalem's Old City, is a program coordinator at the Seeds of Peace Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem.

THE OLIVE BRANCH COEXISTENCE HOTLINE

The author of this letter faces a dilemma. He wrote to THE OLIVE BRANCH seeking support, understanding, and answers. We asked you to provide guidance

Dear Loay, I'm so sorry to hear about your situation, and I admire you for staying a Seed in these hard times. Just for you to know, when this whole war started, a group of Israeli Seeds had an emergency meeting in the Center in Jerusalem, and talked how to help you cope with what's going on. We thought about protesting—we decided not to. We thought no one will take us seriously and a group of Seeds marching is pointless. Maybe we were wrong. Maybe we didn't see that it can mean something to you. But try to understand Loay, that SOP is not a part of any government, it has no political power and influence (and don't ignore the 150,000 people, including Seeds, calling for peace in Tel Aviv few days ago.)

SOP's power is in friendships! I can't stop the violence. I can't stop the shooting. Arafat nor Barak will listen to me... I can do nothing but be your FRIEND! I'm more than deeply sorry, and I feel guilty for not calling you before. Please forgive me.

I don't want you to leave SOP. I think that if you lose hope, then you will stay with nothing. I want you to know that you are always in my heart and I am your friend! There is nothing more I can do, but I believe that friendship is the biggest and strongest hope and help that I can give. Try to hold on!

love, Eran Houja (Jerusalem)

Dear Loay, I am truly sorry that you had to go through such an awful thing and it is beyond me how you gathered the strength to see your home destroyed!

We didn't march for you, but it doesn't mean we don't care, because we do. Do you think that if we would have marched for you in protest then it would have helped? The destroying of houses in the Palestinian territories has become a sad reality that your people go through almost everyday. Believe me that we do care and when I hear things like that, I try not to sit back and

watch it happen. I protest in my own circle of friends, family, schoolmates and teachers.

The fact the first thing you took with you were the T-Shirts and SOP stuff is very cool!

Shirley Yehudai (Nahariya)

Dear Loay, I know hard it is hard to leave home, but one home can never be destroyed. The one in our hearts; the Seeds hearts.

Tell your dad that sticking to Seeds is better

Hello everybody: Yesterday, in the afternoon, we had call from the Israeli army telling us to leave the house because they want to destroy it. I didn't know what to do. I was so mad. First I took my brothers and sisters and put them in a car and sent them to our old house then I asked myself what is the most important thing I have to save. Oh...the Seeds of Peace t-shirts. I started to collect them when I remembered the yearbook and the directory. The night after we saw the destruction of our new house, my father told me, "you still want the Seeds of Peace? They did not do anything for us. Your friends from the other side did not even make any peaceful march." I did not know what I should reply to him.

Loay Zoroub (Gaza)

than losing hope. Maybe one day we'll do it!

Zeina Abu-Hassan (Amman)

Dear Loay, I would like to express my deep sorrow for your terrible loss. It is a nightmare that no one should go through. My deepest and most heartfelt wishes for you and your family.

You are a very brave and admirable person. It is hard to think, let alone think straight, during such situations. You acted in a mature, responsible and courageous manner, and you have my utmost respect. That you took your Seeds of Peace t-shirts, after first taking care of your siblings, shows a lot about who you are. We all know how hard it is to be 'Seeds' during such times. It must be even harder to remember

your 'green identity,' when your house is being destroyed right in front of your eyes, not by 'anyone,' but by 'the other side.'

Do not become discouraged. I think it is perfectly understandable that your father might feel this anger, frustration, and faithlessness under such circumstances. His words make complete sense, and come not because the Israeli Seeds were the ones demolishing your house, but because through while feeling helpless, one cannot look beyond what is in front of his eyes.

It is hard to defend a peace organization when the people you are supposed to be making peace with are destroying your home. Now that time has passed, sit down with your father, and explain how Seeds of Peace has affected your life, and that it was the first thing that came to your mind when you learned of the demolition order. Tell him of your new friendships, and the ties that have remained between you and your Israeli friends.

Although your Israeli friends could do nothing to stop the destruction of your home, and it seems that nothing is being done to improve the current situation, the opposite, is the reality. Just by believing in each other, and being

there for one another, we are doing more than our leaders will ever be able to do. You are strengthening the human relationship between our two peoples. You are paving the way for the our generation to bring the real peace. The peace that we experienced at camp, and the one we know is possible, even when all may seem lost.

Loay, I am glad that even through such an experience, you have not given up on Seeds of Peace, and the peace itself. You are a true inspiration, and living proof that if we believe in peace strong enough, there is nothing that can take that away from us. Remain strong and faithful, and may you and your family see better days ahead.

Yair Rachmani (Jerusalem)

NOT GIVING UP HOPE

by **Jamal Abu Zant**
(Tulkarem)



Since the violence broke out between Israelis and Palestinians, many have been killed, injured, and heartbroken over losing loved ones, friends, or even a fellow Seed. I lost a classmate who was shot in the head during a demonstration. Our home has been shot up by Israeli bullets. As if bullet holes weren't enough, my younger brother and sisters cry themselves to sleep asking what we did to make them shoot at us. They have problems concentrating on studying, are afraid to go out to play, and refuse to sleep apart from my parents. My Mom tries to make jokes and tells them that they're just shooting at birds for dirtying the cars. These things help, but no matter how we make light of the situation, there is no hiding the fear in our hearts when the shooting and bombing starts.

I noticed that after the recent hardships and test of wills, some of my colleagues have decided to give up participating in Seeds of Peace. When I asked them why, they said that the weeks we spent at camp with "the other side" were meaningless and we hadn't achieved anything. They said "the other side" still blames us and still thinks that they are the good, and we the bad people. It hurts to feel that after all those coexistence sessions and great times we had together, as brothers, sisters and friends, that they feel the same about us as they did before.

After hearing this I feel the need to speak out! I want to say that the current outbreak of violence and emotional outrage doesn't mean that we've lost our ability to understand. I know what you are going through, I am there too! Yet I'm telling everyone we must keep trying. It only takes faith and hope the size of a small seed to "make a difference." In these confusing times, we need coexistence more than ever. Be it at the Center or through SeedsNet, we must continue trying to understand each other's positions, fears, hopes, and yes, sometimes hatred for "the other side." We can't just quit now because things have gotten tough. No,

that's totally wrong, cowardly and hypocritical. We made an agreement to work toward peace, and the honorable thing to do is keep that agreement using the means given to us by Seeds of Peace. It's critical times like these when we need to work closer with Seeds of Peace, not turn our backs on it.

So let's sit down together once more and try to make "the other side" understand our feelings about what's going on. Perhaps we can help each other form independent opinions, instead of depending solely on the often-slanted media or politicians, as our only reference for information. Let's continue coexistence, not by fighting or shouting, but by understanding and listening to what the other has to say.

By doing this I believe that we can still have hope for peace between our nations and live in an atmosphere of respect and understanding. Even if it means doing it one Seed at a time. That would be my dream come true, as I hope it would be the dream of all Seeds of Peace.

by **Yair Rachmani** (Jerusalem)

Where does the peace process go from here? It is not so easy to answer. Many who considered themselves optimists now find themselves skeptics. The families of young peacemakers now find themselves mourning their loved ones, those who could have made the dream a reality and brought the peace.

First and foremost, an end to the violence and bloodshed on both sides is necessary before we can take that "first step." Many deaths ago, we were so close to finding peace. Now, we are closer to war. It is imperative to instill trust between the leaders, but more important, in the hearts of the people for which this peace is being built. With a foundation of trust, I am confident, the rest will follow. With trust, we can sit at the negotiating table sitting side-by-side, and not across from one another.

Another daunting question is whether we can continue on this road, and where it will take us. We don't have many alternatives: violence is not an option. I believe we can continue with the current peace process. Compromises are going to be made, but the solutions will be found. We are both here now. Who has more

right to this part of the land, and who does not, is an argument with no winners that will get us nowhere.

Common denominators must, and can be found. The love of the land is only one of many. Jerusalem, a controversial issue that negotiators tend to steer away from, is the key to our common goal. Our leaders do not need me to tell them this. Only when both nations realize that both peoples have the right to live in this holy city, as their shared capital, will the key be turned, and the doors opened for the peace.

Gaining trust will not be easy. It is a risk, for both nations, but it is one we must take. Both nations must show a desire, a strong and true will, to end the bloodshed. Both nations must bring this desire to the surface, and act upon it with great will and untiring determination, without further delay.

These peoples have to look at themselves, and realize the mistakes that have been made, and realize that there is no single nation who is to blame. The time has come for us to wake up from this nightmare, and learn from its ordeals, in order to ensure this violence will not happen again. Once we are able to admit to our own faults, will we be able to see what is necessary to fix them, and prevent them from happening again. Once our region is calm again, of course "calm" is relative in this part of the world, we can move forward, to allow the re-opening of borders, the re-employment of workers, and most important of all, the visiting of Arab and Israeli friends.

The peace will come, I have no doubt. Our job is to receive it with outstretched arms. The doors will open, my friend, all we have to do is walk through them...



Yair and friend Lama Mashni



“‘Enemy,’ it’s just a word that everyone uses, an excuse for hate... I just want to change my world so that it will become a better place, with no need for such a word.”

Asel Asleh, January 28, 1998