



JERUSALEM INTERNATIONAL YMCA

TOWER VIEWS INTERNATIONAL

FALL 2008

JERUSALEM INTERNATIONAL YMCA BULLETIN

LETTING GO WITH LOVE

Jerusalem is one of the most beloved, historic cities in the world. This fabled city seems to be an unfinished symphony in search of its composer. I love getting in early to hear the symphony players tune up before a performance. If you listen carefully through the chaos, you can hear various musicians and their unique instruments. For me, it is one of the most beautiful beginnings to set the stage in anticipation of harmony before the last note is played.

As we celebrate the New Year and Id el Fitr in Israel, the time has come for me to end my assignment here in Jerusalem. I leave with the eager anticipation of greatness yet to come for the Jerusalem International YMCA. Please welcome back Mike Bussey (Director General of JIY, 1990-98), who returns for a brief assignment to help staff transition to a new beginning. As with all of Jerusalem, there is unfinished business—we are just tuning up.

I could not leave without visiting Peniel, our beloved retreat on the shores of Galilee. MaLes and I enjoyed the quiet serenity along with our other guests from around the world. After paying my respects at the grave site of Dr. Archibald Harte inside the Harte Memorial Chapel, MaLes and I enjoyed our final drive to Jerusalem through the Jordan River Valley.

From the ministry of Jesus to the eclectic confluence of faith traditions and culture in Jerusalem, the YMCA advances a most unique mission and purpose. So, I let go with love where we all begin: In the quiet of this day, may you know the greatness of His Spirit within you and may all your hopes fly on the wings of possibility.

Shalom, Salaam, Peace be with you always...

NORRIS D. LINEWEAVER
Director General
Jerusalem International YMCA



JIY MULTI-FAITH DELEGATION AT YMCA EUROPE FESTIVAL

In August, Khader, Raed and Atalia, three young JIY staff members, represented JIY at the YMCA Europe Festival held in Prague, Czech Republic. The week-long event, hosted by YMCA Europe, was attended by more than 7,000 young people from YMCAs around the world.

The JIY delegates learned about the issues and priorities impacting youth from different regions, exchanged ideas and jointly brainstormed on solutions for the challenges faced by youth.

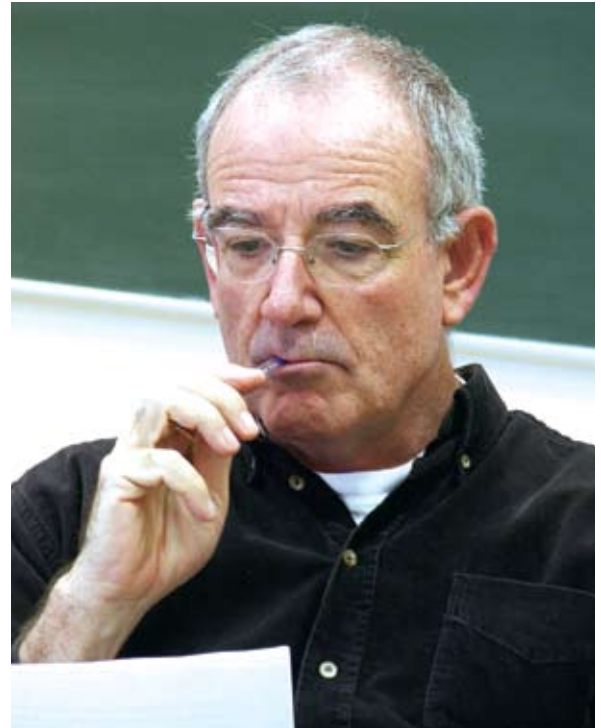
They shared stories and information with their foreign colleagues about the inspiring, mission-driven coexistence work performed daily at JIY and invited their new acquaintances to a firsthand Jerusalem experience.



THE MISSION OF THE JERUSALEM INTERNATIONAL YMCA:
*To put principles of faith into practice through programs that encourage personal growth,
promote tolerance and build health of spirit, mind and body for all.*

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JIY ANNIVERSARY STAMP



Professor Gabi Shefler, carillon musician.

JERUSALEM INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL SALUTES JIY'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

The language of culture is universal, perfectly suited to promote and cultivate mutual understanding, respect and tolerance. From August 30-September 12, JIY warmly welcomed the 11th Jerusalem International Chamber Music Festival, held at its grand auditorium. The festival included 14 chamber music concerts, master classes and open lessons tutored by the festival artists. This year's theme was the exploration of nationality through music, with each concert showcasing the work of a particular nation.

On September 9th, a special concert, performed jointly by Arab and Jewish musicians, was dedicated to the 75th anniversary of JIY's landmark building, established on April 18, 1933. Through this performance, the festival saluted JIY for its successful history of building bridges between all communities in Jerusalem.

As an additional treat, Gabi Shefler, a psychoanalyst and professor of clinical psychology from Jerusalem, performed carillon concerts, paying homage to one of JIY's cherished assets—the magnificent carillon in its bell tower.

ANNUAL SUPPORT CAMPAIGN

We hope you will join our campaign and support the work of JIY, including our programs designed to develop peace leadership skills among young people. For more information on how you can help, visit www.jerusalemymca.org.

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of JIY's landmark building as well as 130 years of service in Jerusalem, the Israeli Postal Authority has issued a special stamp and first day cover in honor of JIY. This tribute not only celebrates two significant milestones, but it also recognizes JIY's past and present role in promoting peace and understanding in the Holy Land. If you are interested in purchasing this special souvenir, please contact Mona Hamuri at Mona.Hamuri@ymca.net for details.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE TAKES PLACE IN JERUSALEM

During the week of June 22-26, more than 160 delegates from around the world attended the International Conference of Christians and Jews in Jerusalem. JIY staff members participated in three of the conference sessions, one of which included a tour of JIY's Peace Preschool and a meeting with MVP graduates.

HOLLAND KOOR CHOIR PERFORMS AT JIY

In a memorable performance, more than 250 members of the Holland Koor, the largest Christian choir in Europe, appeared in JIY's concert hall on June 16, accompanied by local Israeli choirs. The Koor's impressive repertoire included psalms and hymns. Special risers had to be built to accommodate the large number of performers. The hall was filled to capacity with approximately 550 persons in attendance, and the atmosphere was electric.

YOUTH DIALOG PROGRAM SENDS DELEGATES TO INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS

A diverse range of youth dialog groups meet weekly at the JIY. The groups help Israeli and Palestinian teenagers get to know each other and learn to listen to one another. This past summer, 60 JIY youth dialog participants, led by a pair of certified group facilitators (an Israeli and a Palestinian), traveled to three foreign destinations, where they were hosted by local families.



Members of the JIY Youth Dialog program in Lausanne, Switzerland.

PHOTO: Sylvie Berkowitsch Gassenbauer

LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND

During this intense 12-day trip, 30 Israeli and Palestinian youth, with five facilitators and four peer leaders (graduates of previous years), participated in a number of activities, including dance and movement workshops, meetings with youth of diverse religious backgrounds, a tour of the United Nations facility in Geneva and a three-day retreat in the Swiss mountains.

The central feature of the journey was a series of dialog sessions, held every day in the peaceful, neutral Swiss environment. In one session, groups of teens of the same religious background were asked to prepare a talk explaining why they deserve to have Jerusalem as their capital. The twist: as in professional debating, each group had to defend the reasons of another group. Muslims defended Jewish reasoning, while Jews defended the Christian cause and Christians advocated for Muslims. It was a powerful experience in which the teens were compelled to put themselves in the place of the other.

This year's trip far exceeded organizers' expectations and prompted the participants to embark on an additional series of joint meetings. In addition, several of the teens' mothers asked JIY to establish dialog groups for themselves. The mothers' group has been going strong ever since and is now ready to follow in their children's footsteps for a week-long work session in Lausanne, at the invitation of local hosts.

This project was made possible thanks to the generosity and devotion of an outstanding group of motivated and committed people from Lausanne, who created Coexistences (www.coexistences.ch), an association devoted solely to enabling Israeli-Palestinian dialog groups to work together abroad in an optimal environment. Coexistences took care of every detail, from fundraising to coordinating the host families and programs.

The project also was made possible due to the willingness of 30 committed Israeli and Palestinian teenagers, five professional facilitators and four motivated peer leaders, all eager to engage in multicultural dialogue despite conflict between their people.



JIY teens visit Paris, France.

PHOTO: Sylvie Berkowitsch Gassenbauer

PARIS, FRANCE

The second JIY youth dialog group to embark on an international adventure included 15 Israeli and Palestinian teens who were accompanied by experienced facilitators (one Israeli, one Palestinian and JIY's Director of Youth Coexistence programs). The trip included daily



group discussion and theater workshops followed by visits to monuments, museums and other places of interest throughout Paris.



Members of the JIY Youth Dialog program in Paris, France.

PHOTO: Sylvie Berfrowitch Gassenbauer

The main discussion topics were:

- **Holocaust memory**—The values underlying the acts of the “Righteous among the Nations” who endangered their own lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. (Meetings were held at the Memorial de la Shoah.)
- **Multiculturalism of Modern Europe**—The values underlying the creation of a united Europe 60 years after WWII and what Middle Eastern teens can learn from the tolerance and mutual understanding of such an open society. (A lecture and discussion were held at the House of Europe).
- **The French Republic**—The values underlying the establishment of the French Republic: *égalité, fraternité, liberté*, including taking religion out of national politics and learning about secularism and its meaning in the modern world.
- **The North African Arab community in France**—The values brought by the Muslim immigrants to France and their impact on French society. The meeting took place at the Institute of the Arab World and included a visit to the Great Mosque in Paris.
- **Different narratives of the Middle East conflict**—Participants presented a coherent look at the conflict for their hosts.

This JIY coexistence dialog journey was made possible through the Fondation pour la memoire de la Shoah

and the vision and generosity of Raphael Nicole and his mother, Tsourith, who founded Coexistences Paris (www.coexistencesparis.fr). They recruited committed and warm-hearted families, who opened their homes and their hearts to the Jerusalem youth. The families encouraged friendship between the teens and their children and gave them the opportunity to get the most out of such a rich and demanding project dealing with history and memory.

MASSACHUSETTS, UNITED STATES

Artsbridge, an American nonprofit organization (www.artsbridgecamp.org), employs art as a tool for promoting coexistence. This summer, 14 Israeli and Palestinian youth participated in a three-week summer camp in Massachusetts, USA. In the mornings, they studied art with professional teachers, and in the afternoons they attended dialog sessions with facilitators and enjoyed a variety of recreational activities, including a tour of Boston. During the 2008-2009 school year, the participants will serve as counselors in weekly extracurricular arts groups offered to children from low socio-economic neighborhoods.

The unique character of this program is the opportunity for Israeli and Palestinian youth to learn and work together alongside top-level professionals in arts and film, resulting in a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The professional team, directed by Artsbridge founder Debbie Nathan, uses a carefully designed dialog technique that enables each participant to express himself or herself and to be heard, thus addressing one of our biggest challenges in building dialog groups. Participants’ responses were amazing. Debbie will teach the method to JIY staff during the year.

FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

As word of JIY’s quality coexistence programs for youth spreads, new contacts are formed with friends and supporters in the U.S., Canada and Europe, who subsequently establish relationships with JIY staff in order to explore new types of partnerships.

These special instances, in which people from near and far extend a helping hand and recognize the efforts being carried out at JIY to promote peaceful coexistence in the region, give us the strength to continue this challenging task. Each of these initiatives requires financial backing. Outside support is always welcome and ensures the viability of these important programs for years to come.



PHOTO: Rachelle Oseran

FUN AT SUMMER CAMP

JY's three summer camp sessions took place in July and August. The camp offers Jerusalem's children of all faiths a wide range of stimulating and age-appropriate activities, including high-quality sports, arts and crafts, and swimming lessons. More than 250 children could be seen (and heard) playing, drawing, jumping, laughing and getting to know one another on JY's grassy lawns, in activity rooms and in its fitness facilities.

A special bonus this year included professional individualized swimming lessons led by swim coaches and instructors from the Zinman Academic College at Wingate. JY cultivates yearlong cooperative initiatives with this fine fitness institution, including mutually enriching exchange through courses offered to instructors and coaches. During the intense 220-hour summer course held in August, 18 instructors and coaches enjoyed sharing their swimming knowledge with the campers in the pool.

MODERATE VOICES FOR PROGRESS (MVP)

LAUNCHING OF 10TH MVP GROUP

In cooperation with the YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh (USA), a new MVP group, with members recruited from the field of the performing arts, is underway. The group continues our mission of providing Christian, Jewish and Muslim youth with opportunities to meet and work with professional colleagues from different backgrounds.

The facilitated dialogue will combine theater practices and group dynamics. Participants will explore the "sheer screen" within themselves and between themselves and others. They will learn to understand themselves, the "other" and how both sides live. The group also will learn how to use the performing arts to transform and promote the creative interpretation of personal, social and political stories into theatrical texts and events.

U.S. YMCA communities planning to host MVP groups during 2009 include Hartford (Connecticut), Nashville (Tennessee) and Tulsa (Oklahoma).

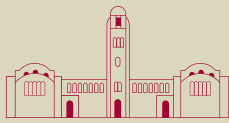
JY SWIMMERS EXCEL AT OLYMPICS AND BEYOND



From left: Nimrod Shapira-Baror, Boaz Talski, Jowan Qupti, Barri Avnerre (JY Director of Aquatics)

- At the Beijing Olympics, Nimrod Shapira-Baror, 19, a Jewish JY swimmer, represented Israel, setting new Israeli records in the 100- and 200-meter freestyle and reaching the Olympic semi-finals. Hamza Abdo, a Muslim swimmer who has trained with the JY team for several years, represented Palestine and set a new Palestinian record in the 50-meter freestyle.
- Three Jerusalem swimmers participated in the European Youth Championship held in Belgrade. Jowan Qupti, 18, a Christian swimmer who has been with the JY since age 7, finished 8th in the semi-finals of the 200-meter breaststroke and will be training at Irvine College (California) next year. Uri Smoilitch, 17, a recent immigrant from Russia who reached the semi-finals, and Danielle Klinger, 15, (at JY since age 8), also participated in the European championship. Uri and Danielle will continue their training at the Wingate Institute's Giftedness program.
- JY swimmers featured prominently at a recent Israel swimming championship, with an outstanding performance by 17-year-old Maya Fleisher, who won the silver medal in the 100-meter breaststroke.

JY thanks Head Coach Barri Avnerre for his devoted work with the swim team over the past 32 years and wishes him the best of luck and success in his new position as Director of Aquatics.



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READY FOR TAKEOFF— AND A NEW SCHOOL YEAR—AT JIY'S PEACE PRESCHOOL

Neal Oseroff, a virtuoso artist with over 20 years experience drawing murals in Washington, D.C., has beautified the walls of JIY's Peace Preschool with a series of magnificent, aviation-themed paintings. As a father of five, Neal chose flight for his subject because he finds it stimulating to surround children with sophisticated yet playful images. The young ones are then inspired and free to make innovative connections in their minds. In a special place like JIY, even the artwork serves to bridge gaps and foster mutual understanding.



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