



“The Spirit is Not in the I, but Between Me and You”

Report on the Meeting of Waldorf Kindergarten Teachers in Tiv'on Israel, October 2015

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The 2015 Autumn Early Childhood Conference, which was attended by about 200 participants, took place in Tiv'on, a small town in Galilee, on a beautiful Saturday in October. The theme of the conference, “I and Thou”, was inspired by the motto: “The spirit is not in the I, but between I and Thou”, a quotation from Martin Buber.

The conference was planned and organized primarily by Stefanie Allon, to fit in with the visit of the members of the IASWECE Council in Israel. Stefanie, who is a representative of Israel in IASWECE, was assisted by “the Kindergarten Circle.” (This “Circle”, a small and committed group of women, most of

them former Waldorf kindergarten teachers, took upon itself the task to connect, communicate with and professionally support preschool Waldorf educators around Israel.)

The representatives of IASWECE who came from different corners of the world, gathered in Israel (as they do twice every year, each time in a different country), for the purpose of joint studies, sharing reports on events in various countries and making decisions about matters which concern Waldorf Education around the world in years to come. In spite of the shortage of time and the vast range of topics, which needed to be dealt with, they generously donated a good portion of their precious time to local initiatives.



A break during the Waldorf kindergarten conference in Israel



IASWECE Council members visiting a kindergarten in Tiv'on

Some visited local kindergartens and schools in various places, many contributed from their skills, knowledge and wisdom by lecturing at the national conference, while others led fascinating workshops, which many Israeli kindergarten educators attended.

Several days later, although they must have been exhausted after a long working day, some of the representatives kindly dedicated some time in the late evening for an "informal" meeting with us, "the Circle". The inspiring conversation echoed some of the topics which came up during the conference, among them: the special needs of the very young as well as of the older children; the transition to school; the task of the educator in mixed age groups; arts and crafts - when, why and how to make use of them; the importance of guided games as well as free initiative play; developing the skill of child observation and working with parents, colleagues and other adults.

We also discussed some specific characteristics of pre-school education in Israel: dealing with constant fear as well as repeated and ongoing post traumatic situations in both Jewish and Arab societies; the question of the professionalism of the kindergarten teachers in light of the rapid

development of Waldorf Education (within 30 year more than 20 schools as well as dozens of kindergartens and play groups were initiated, with some of the teachers undergoing their training while already teaching). The main questions, however, remained the following: how to protect the children and preserve early childhood itself, how to maintain the freedom and autonomy of the educators, while helping them to become professional, and the question of education as a social impulse.

During the conversation it became clear that these questions are of international concern and we were warmly encouraged to keep in contact with IASWECE.

We felt not only inspired by the visit but also greatly supported at a difficult time, and for this we are most grateful. We hope that both the connections and the cooperation between the kindergarten teachers in Israel and the IASWECE members will prosper and be ever more fruitful in years to come.



Stefanie Allon and kindergarten teachers from Tiv'on