



## Philosophy for Children: A Meeting Point between Cultures and Identities

By Dr. Jen Glaser

A hush falls over the crowd as a child takes the microphone and offers his insight into the question of whether God is real, and whether it is God or people who need to bring peace into our world. Passing the microphone, another child responds "But God can't do everything – there are things we need to do for ourselves." One child is wearing a *kippa* and speaking Hebrew, the other is speaking Arabic. As the 12 children continue to talk together, a translator moves from one language to another, ensuring that the children understand each other's words. For the International audience the dialogue is also translated into both English and Spanish via headphones. Both children are 8 years old and they are 'doing philosophy'.

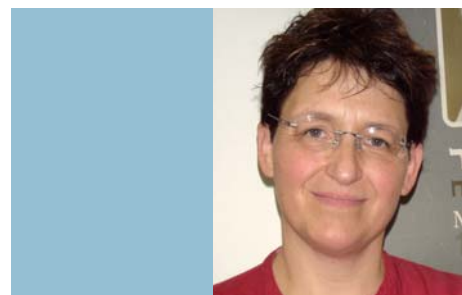
The conversation is taking place between students from Efrata Religious State School and from Issawiya Girls Primary School, in the Melton Centre Pedagogic Centre. For the past year these children and others have been taking part in the program "Children Do Philosophy",

a joint project of the School of Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israeli Centre for Philosophy in Education – 'Philosophy for Life' which is being conducted in partnership with the Melton Centre.

The context for this dialogue was the 13<sup>th</sup> bi-annual 'International Council of Philosophical Inquiry with Children' Conference, which took place at the Melton Centre between June 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>. Entitled *Philosophy for Children: A Meeting Point between Cultures and Identities*, the Israel conference offered an interdisciplinary investigation of the connection between philosophical inquiry, identity and culture through four lenses: Dialogue; Culture, Language and Identity; Citizenship; and Religion, Reason and Spirituality.

Philosophical inquiry begins in wonder and aims at truth and meaning. Bringing philosophy into classrooms of all ages, the goal of Philosophy for Children, is not to teach Plato, Maimonides or Kant, but rather to provide a place where children can engage in a search for meaning about issues that concern them. Philosophy offers a way of talking about such questions as: 'Do you have to like your friends all the time?', or 'What makes something fair?' or 'What makes a person a good person?' The central pedagogical tool and guiding ideal of Philosophy for Children is the community of inquiry. In the community of inquiry, students act together to generate and then answer their own questions in a critical, creative, collaborative and caring way.

Through learning how to engage in a deliberation that is both open-ended and rigorous, children acquire the qualities that



make for good judgment in everyday life. These qualities are critical for any Jewish education which seeks to initiate the next generation of our people into forms of Jewish life. In an open world where living a given way of life is a choice, having the skills to think in a serious and rigorous manner through questions of meaning, of how we ought to live and how we decide what is important to us, is not a luxury but a basic need.

This challenge is also not a unique one – it is a challenge that faces any culture which seeks to educate its young to find a place within a living tradition. Co-sponsored by the Melton Centre for Jewish Education and the Israeli Centre for Philosophy in Education, the ICPI conference in Israel attracted over 80 international scholars and educators from 22 countries, together with 60 Israeli scholars, educators and university students, and provided a unique opportunity for the Jewish educational conversation to be brought into serious dialogue with individuals coming from different educational and cultural contexts around common issues, practices and challenges. Participating countries included: Australia, Austria, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland,

## International Advisory Board

Mr. Jonathan Brodie, Chair  
(Washington DC, USA)

Mr. Isaac Bloch  
(Herzliya Pituach, Israel)

Ms. Nancy Hamburger  
(Washington DC, USA)

Mr. Jeffrey Mahemoff  
(Melbourne, Australia)

Mr. Gerald Rothman  
(London, UK)

Mr. Michael Shine  
(Raana, Israel)

Mr. Joseph Steiner  
(Toronto, Canada)

We are very grateful to our International Advisory Board, as well as to the Mandel Foundation and the David & Inez Myers Foundation, for their generous support of our programs and activities.



Mr. Roger Sutcliff, Dr. Jen Glaser & Dr. Howard Deitcher opening the conference



Children Doing Philosophy



○ Closing the Philosophy for Children conference

## International Advisory Board

The Melton Centre's International Advisory Board met in Jerusalem in June for 2 days of discussions on current and planned programs and activities. The Board was joined by Mr. Aryeh Rubin from Florida, USA, founder and director of Targum Shlishi – Third Interpretation: a private philanthropic foundation dedicated to providing a range of creative solutions to problems facing Jewry today, who participated in the meetings as an observer.

In addition to meetings with key Melton faculty, the Board met with Profs. Shira Wolosky & Reuvan Hazan and with Prof. Israel Bartal, the Hebrew University's Dean of Humanities, as well as with Ms. Hagit Guiora, an organizational consultant who has been working with the Centre, and with a number of participants in the Senior Educators Program.

Mr. Jonathan Brodie has taken over from Mr. Jeffrey Mahemoff as Chair of the International Advisory Board. We are very grateful to Mr. Mahemoff for his dedicated and sage leadership over the past years



○ Back row: Dr. Howard Deitcher, Mr. Jonathan Brodie, Dr. Zeev Mankowitz, Mr. Jeffrey Mahemoff, Mr. Isaac Bloch, Mr. Michael Shine, Mr. Joseph Steiner. Front row: Ms. Vivienne Burstein, Ms. Nancy Hamburger, Ms. Carmela Hariri, Mr. Aryeh Rubin

Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, South Korea, Spain, Russia, USA, and Wales.

The conference was opened by Dr. Howard Deitcher, Director of the Melton Centre, Dr. Jen Glaser, co-director of the Israeli Center for Philosophy in Education and Roger Sutcliffe, President of ICPIIC. Professor Joel Westheimer, holder of the University Chair in Democracy Education at Ottawa University, Canada, was the keynote speaker. Addressing the question of citizenship – and the kind of citizen we should be actively cultivating through education – his speech had implications for the kind of active participation we might cultivate both in the civic sphere and as 'citizens' of the Jewish people.

During the conference we were privileged to hear from a number of outstanding academics and practitioners, including Jane Roland Martin, Professor Emerita of Philosophy at the University of Massachusetts in Boston who

joined us via video conference, and Ann Margaret Sharp, Professor of Education at Montclair State University and one of the founders of the Philosophy for Children movement. Topics of presentations in the 41-session conference spanned theoretical issues and research in philosophy for children; analysis and reflection on practice; and examination of issues in teacher education. In addition, participants spent a morning visiting schools engaged in the Philosophical Inquiry with Children project, and met in discussion groups to consult about work in progress.

Immediately following the conference, a two-day Post-Conference Seminar explored what the methodology and practice of philosophical inquiry with children offers Jewish education. This seminar brought together educators and academics from Israel and around the world to explore the connections between Philosophy for Children, Religious Studies, and Jewish Education.

## Visitors & Departmental Seminars



**Prof. Kieran Egan** and his associate **Dr. Sean Blenkinsop**, both from Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, addressed Melton's Departmental Seminar on *Imaginative Education*. Prof. Egan & Dr. Blenkinsop are Co-Directors of the 'Imaginative Education Research Group' at Simon Fraser University.



**Prof. Ellen Goldring**, Professor of Education Policy and Leadership in the Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, was a visitor of the Centre at the end of May. Prof. Goldring addressed Melton's Departmental Seminar on *Research in Jewish Education: Less may be more*, participated in our Doctoral Seminar on *Paradigms of Research in Education: The case for mixed methodologies and collaboration*, and spoke to the School of Education's Departmental Seminar on *The Measurement, Assessment, and Study of Educational Leaders in the Era of Scientific Research*. She also met individually with Melton faculty and doctoral students.



**Prof. David Schnall**, Herbert Schiff Professor of Management and Business Administration at Yeshiva University's Wurzweiler School of Social Work and Dean of the Azrieli School of Jewish Education, addressed Melton's Departmental Seminar on *The Right to an Education in American Law and Jewish Tradition*.



**Dr. Caren Schnur Neile**, a Senior Fulbright Specialist, Artist-in-Residence and founding Director of the South Florida Storytelling Project at Florida Atlantic University, spent 2 weeks at the Centre in May as a visiting scholar. Dr. Neile is the founding managing editor of *Storytelling, Self, Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Storytelling Studies*. Dr. Neile met with Melton faculty, held workshops with students in Melton's Lindenbaum and Senior Educators Programs, and spoke at Melton's Departmental Seminar on *Why Storytelling?*



**Dr. Alick Isaacs**, Melton Centre faculty member, opened the 2006/07 Departmental Seminar series with a discussion of *From Zionist Education to Teaching Israel: Changing Paradigms in the Approach to Israel in Jewish Education in the Diaspora*. Dr. Isaacs and Dr. Alex Pomson are running Melton's 'Israel Engagement' project in all Jewish day schools in Australia.

## Faculty News

Three senior Melton faculty members are retiring from the Hebrew University this year. We salute them at the dawn of this new phase of their careers, and thank them most sincerely for the tremendous contribution they have each made to the Melton Centre.



**Dr. Zeev Mankowitz** has been a faculty member of the Hebrew University since 1978 and of the Melton Centre since 1982, serving as Director of the Centre from 1993-1999. He taught for many years at the

Rothberg International School and served as the Director of its Division of Graduate Studies. Zeev's research interests and publications have focused on the Holocaust & immediate post-Holocaust period in Europe, social memory, openness and commitment, the relationship between identity and community in contemporary Jewry, and the challenges of teaching Jewish civilization. He has taught courses and led seminars on, inter alia, Pluralistic Approaches to Jewish Education; From the Holocaust to the Establishment of the State of Israel – Educational Issues; and Educational Approaches to Identity and Memory in Contemporary Jewry.

**Prof. Immanuel Etkes**, the Bella & Israel Unterberg Professor of Jewish Social and Educational History, has been a faculty member of the Hebrew University since 1967, both in the School of Education/Melton and in the Department of the History of the Jewish People. His research and publications have focused on



Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies on, inter alia, Tradition and Modernity in Jewish History in the Modern Era; Education and Religion: Autonomy and Authority; and Torah Studies, Mysticism and 'Tikun Hamidot': A Comparative Discussion of Hassidism in Lithuanian Yeshivot and the Musar Movement.



**Prof. Dalia Ofer**, the Max & Rita Haber Professor of Contemporary Jewry – Holocaust Studies, has been a faculty member of the Hebrew University since 1983, both in the School of Education/Melton and the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry. She has served as Head of the Academic Committee of the Melton Centre, Director of the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, and Chair of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry. Her research and publications have focused on the Holocaust from a number of perspectives, including a focus on children and women, the construction of memory and commemorative patterns in Israel, the impact of the Holocaust on the

ideology, society and education in modern Eastern European Jewry, Hassidism, the Musar movement, and the Eastern European yeshivot. He has taught courses and led seminars in the School of Education and the

Yishuv in Palestine and early years of Israeli statehood, the individual and the collective in Eastern European ghettos, and Immigration to the Yishuv and the State of Israel. In the Institute of Contemporary Jewry and School of Education, she has taught courses and led seminars on, inter alia, Memory, History and Education: Israelis, Jews and Palestinians, in the First Two Decades of Statehood (with Prof. Adel Mana); Teaching the Holocaust in Light of its Historiography; and Contemporary Jewry and Jewish Education

## Post-Doctoral Fellowship at the Melton Centre



In the 2007/08 academic year, the Centre will for the first time be sponsoring a Post-Doctoral Fellowship designed to enable a scholar to prepare academic publications based on his/her doctoral dissertation and to conduct new research. Dr. Darya Maoz has been accepted as Melton's Post-Doctoral Fellow for next year. Darya received her PhD in 2005 from the Hebrew University's Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, and her proposed research agenda focuses on an analysis of the educational approach of Habad towards young secular Israeli travelers in South-East Asia.

## Focus on a Program: The Senior Educators Program The Class of 2006/07

Returning to North America and assuming new positions are: David Abusch-Magder, who will be the Principal of Solomon Schechter of Metropolitan Chicago; Judi Berland is the Assistant Education Director at Temple Sinai, Washington, DC; Jonathan Fass is now the Director of Jewish Education at the Jewish Community Center of Houston; David A. Israel will be returning to Stamford where he will assume a new position as Director of Community Education and Advancement at the BiCultural Day School; and Leah Jacobson will be returning to Seattle in a new position of Middle School Judaica Teacher at the Seattle Hebrew Academy.

Returning to Brazil are Renata Hitelman who will be resuming her position as Hebrew Teacher in the Hebraica and Beit Yaacov Schools in Sao Paulo, and Rafael Bronz who will be returning to Rio de Janeiro where he serves as Student Counsellor and Mediator at Colegio Israelita Brasileiro A. Liessin. Rodrigo Weiner, originally from Rosario, will remain at the Melton Centre for one more year to complete his MA in Jewish Education.

Rabbi Bryan Opert has moved to Australia to assume the position of Rabbi and Jewish Studies teacher in Yavneh College, Melbourne, and Adina Bankier-Karp has returned to her previous position as Jewish Studies teacher at

Mount Scopus College in Melbourne, Australia. Ilya Barkusky has returned to Russia where he is teaching History in various educational institutions. Agata Rakowiecka is in Poland where she will be assuming a senior position of responsibility within the Warsaw Community, and Agnes Drelyo has returned to Budapest where she serves as the Program Organizer at the Balint Jewish Community Centre.

We wish them all continued success in their professional endeavors!

*The SEP is run in conjunction with the Jewish Agency and supported by the Mandel Foundation and the David and Inez Myers Foundation.*

## Focus on a Program: The Senior Educators Program Continued

**As reported in our last newsletter, the Melton Centre received a generous grant from the Claims Conference which, inter alia, enabled the 2006/07 Class of Senior Educators to make an educational trip to Poland and Hungary as part of the Program's focus on "The Jewish People During and After the Holocaust". Below we offer the personal testimony of Adina Bankier-Karp on the trip. We are very grateful to the Claims Conference for making this element of the Program possible.**

The Senior Educators Program participants' trip to Poland and Hungary in May was an opportunity to contemplate the Jewish world that was, bear witness to the sites of the Nazi horror, and visit the community institutions dedicated to restoring the shattered fragments of community. Physically, emotionally and spiritually, the trip was challenging, and it became clear to our group that filling one's mind with volumes of background information in an attempt to explicate what had transpired, was about as futile as our grandparents' hopes that European high culture would prove a successful antidote to the venom of 20th century anti-Semitism. This was a journey into Ezekiel's Valley of the Dry Bones, but the presence of my ten month-old son provided a poignant counterpoint to the thunderous silence and destruction.

We wanted to believe Poland is now a better, more tolerant place, but the market stalls selling wood carvings of caricatured hook-nosed, black-hatted Jews, clutching coins in their gnarled hands, made it clear that the subterranean stream of antipathy continues to exist. In Warsaw, we met with Michael Shudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland, who is doing remarkable work finding lost Jewish souls. Tikochin is the site of a gorgeous synagogue, its community entirely wiped out. A moving program by a member of our group afforded the opportunity for artistic reflection. The prayers painted upon the walls were evidence of the rich community life prior to the Shoah; the mass graves nearby bore witness to its brutal termination. The verdant forest in Treblinka would have witnessed the deportations, gassings and cremations which occurred beneath its foliage; that



○ Class of 2006/07 & program faculty in Krakow

greenery seemed out of place at such a site.

It was hard to decide what was more bizarre in Auschwitz: the neatness and orderliness of the death camp, or the tourist industry which sprung up around it. Despite our origins from nine different countries, almost all of us have Polish great-grandparents. We met a group of I.D.F. soldiers by the crematoria; they helped us make a minyan for Mincha. A high-ranking soldier approached me afterwards and said, "In such a place as this, there are only two things which give me hope: one is *Tzahal*, and the other is your little boy."

We spent Friday and Shabbat in Budapest and visited several schools, synagogues and institutions of note, sites of glorious architecture, magnificent music, and impeccably-dressed people sitting drinking beer and lattés in riverside cafés. A memorial featuring 30 pairs of bronzed shoes by the water's edge was where the Hungarians lined up, stripped and shot the Jews, before pushing them into the river. I suddenly thought of "The Blue Danube," a piano piece I used to play as a child. The Danube was not blue that day, not even brown, but red.

Harking back to Ezekiel in the Valley of the Dry Bones, our final debriefing session challenged us to revisit the question of whether these bones will ever live again. Is it prudent to allocate from limited resources to "ventilating the corpse which is Eastern European Jewry"? We had met some exceptionally dedicated individuals working tirelessly with the fragments of a once-vibrant world. But some argued that although their aspirations may not be grand, even creating connectedness and support for one person was worth the toil. How does one define success, one ponders, and the answers we contributed to that discussion were at times almost autobiographical. As we re-examined that chapter of Ezekiel, we pondered on the contribution we as educators could make to breathing new spirit into collections of dry bones.

The experience of being together as a group forged even stronger bonds of friendship; our gratitude goes to our team of lecturers, coordinator and guides, who imbued the experience with many additional layers of depth and significance. Although we are still processing our thoughts, I feel I speak for the entire group when I say that it has added tremendously to our program this year. This year has been the most wonderful learning experience, and the Eastern Europe trip was a significant component in that.

