



Ein Bustan Update, August 2010

Greetings to all our supporters, and to all our new friends who have joined us recently!

At the end of June 2010 we concluded the fifth year of activities in the joint Arab Jewish kindergarten "Ein Bustan". (www.ein-bustan.org) This may seem like a significant period of time, but in many ways it seems like our project is still in its infancy. We have set ourselves a worthwhile challenge: to run a high quality bi-lingual educational institution that follows the Waldorf method, while being truly attentive to the two cultures in our region - one speaking Arabic and the other speaking Hebrew.

It's a hot summer here in Israel, both literally and metaphorically, as Israel's borders are heating up with hostilities both North and South, tensions within Israel rise, and racism has reared its ugly head. Here in Ein Bustan none of this has stopped us from preparations for the new school year in September.

!Ein Bustan is Growing

This summer, walls went up in Ein Bustan. As these building walls are going up, invisible walls of fear and suspicion between people are slowly disappearing. [Renovations](#) stemmed from the need to enlarge our present building in order to accommodate the increased number of children: we concluded the previous year with 25 children, and are happy to report that



we are commencing the sixth year with over 35 children! We have even had to put some families on a waiting list. This August, teachers, parents, children and volunteers worked together to rebuild the sandbox, weed the garden, paint, plaster, haul out piles of building rubble, and prepare our building for the school year. You can see [pictures here](#).

We would like to take this opportunity to send a heartfelt thank you to all of the donors who through their generosity helped us fund the renovations, and to the industrious workers and volunteers, and to remind you that our project belongs to you, too, and it is through the power of your love and support that we are making progress.

A few months ago, the Ein Bustan community grew by several more members, in a very exciting way, but not as the result of new families joining us. How did this happen? One after another, young brothers and sisters joined the children in the kindergarten. This resulted in a new need: a nursery for the youngest ones. One of the parents will open a nursery for children of both Arabic and Hebrew speakers. The mother/caregiver is Amal Idat, who has a background in education. We wish her and the new nursery a successful beginning - one of growth and joy.

Respecting our Differences and Finding Common Ground:

A look back over the past few months gives us reason for optimism and a hopeful future. Our little island of sanity and friendship is growing - among Arabs and Jews who feel that we MUST learn to live together and speak each others languages and respect each other's culture and religion, if we ever wish to liv

Among the many dilemmas that we find ourselves dealing with as a bi-lingual and multi-cultural kindergarten is how to celebrate the many Jewish and Moslem holidays. It's clear that if we choose to celebrate all of the holidays, we will find ourselves celebrating all of the time. Amir writes about how we are confronting this dilemma, in his article [Celebrating The Holidays together in a Joint Arab-Jewish Kindergarten](#)



We respect all religions and their unique customs, yet continually seek universal common ground, seeking the ideal way to be attentive to beauty and nature and recognize our common humanity. When we considered which holidays we would like to invite the parents to participate in, we decided to choose one Moslem holiday and one Jewish holiday. This year we celebrated Eid El Fitr, the holiday marking the end of the Ramadan fast, with a traditional meal in the kindergarten. The Jewish holiday picked for joint celebration was Tu Bishvat, which we celebrated outdoors, amongst the trees. You can read more about our [Tu bishvat Celebration here](#)

Another "holiday" that we celebrated together which has a universal theme was Mother's Day, which coincided with the spring equinox. On March 21, Arab and Jewish families alike celebrated [Mother's Day and the Spring Season in Ein Bustan](#), with an evening of dance, food and songs in Arabic and Hebrew. The children put on a special play about the awakening of spring, and each child presented his or her family with a flower and a jar of strawberry jam that they had

made. We rejoiced at the miracle of all the new babies and concluded (as always) with a festive meal!

“Language Spaces”: an innovative approach to Bi-lingual learning:

Throughout the year, we held a weekly teacher training group with Dr Ora Mor from the University of Haifa, who is an expert in Bi-lingual education. With Dr. Mor’s assistance we worked on creating and implementing our bilingual curriculum, and explored the many issues that arose. The teachers made a conscious effort to employ both languages equally, while monitoring the level of the children’s understanding, and the development of their language skills. One of the methods that we implemented was that of “language spaces”: for a certain period of time we focused on a physical area of the kindergarten, and created a collection of vocabulary words that we used in that area. We discovered that this method was effective, but also quite a challenge to implement. Read more [here](#)



Arabic language skills were given an additional boost by the presence of two Arabic-speaking young Bedouin women, who fulfilled their “National Service” (in lieu of Military service) by volunteering as interns in the kindergarten, and we will be welcoming two new interns this coming school year.

Blossoms of Peace

At times, as hostilities increase both within Israel and in the Middle East in general, we wonder if we are alone in our vision. Amir Shlomian, Director of Ein Bustan, was honored to travel to Amman, Jordan, on June 24, 2010, to take part in a conference of the United Religions Initiative (www.uri.org) Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), as a representative of Salaam Shalom (www.sashedf.org), which is one of the supporters of our project. URI is committed to “promoting enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to ending religiously motivated violence, and to creating cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.” Despite the political atmosphere that polarized people on all sides following the Gaza Flotilla episode, Amir was able to share a healing perspective with the conference

participants, with whom he talked, listened, and played music. You can read more in depth about Amir's experience, [here](#).

We celebrated the [end of the year](#) with a festive party. The parents put on a short humorous play in Arabic and in Hebrew and the children danced and sang. The teachers distributed lovely hand-made gifts to the children. You can see [more pictures](#) on our website:

Below: Ein Bustan parents join hands to follow a new path together



Preparing for the future: a joint Bi lingual school:

In October 2009 we started the first of a series of monthly meetings that took place throughout the 2009-2010 academic year. The purpose of these meetings was to prepare the foundation for the establishment of a future bi-lingual school in our area. The meetings were attended by Waldorf educators and experts on bi-lingualism, who tackled a variety of issues, both ideological, pedagogical and practical. We examined how Waldorf education can play its part in social justice and in creating a bridge between the two peoples living in Israel. We formed several teams, and each team pursued the different issues at hand, ranging from pedagogical matters and questions regarding the training necessary for future Waldorf teachers so that they will be able to educate children from two cultures, to practical issues, such as location of the future school, organizational and budgetary issues, and more. This forum will continue to meet, and we plan to open our first grade class in the Fall of 2011.

:In parting, here are some words from Amir

“Over the past year, I have often pondered the question - what next? The deeper we get into our work, it becomes more and more apparent to me that we have discovered a particularly successful key to providing our children with an education that they deserve, and the creation of a better future. An education that provides recognition and empathy for the other, no matter how different or strange, is one that all of us should follow. According to my belief, the way towards freedom and spiritual growth passes through the heart of my fellow man, through honestly listening to his needs and pain, and through

unconditional love and compassion. How can we expand our project without compromising its quality? How can we enable more children, from more places, to receive what they deserve - kindergartens and schools like Ein Bustan? I put my trust in the path, which holds the answers.”

Many thanks to our teachers, Ibtisam, Yael, Meirav, Amna and Gidi, who worked with tireless devotion throughout the school year. Welcome to Yoav, a new teacher for the older group. Thank you to all the parents who were with us this year, and welcome to all the new families! And last but not least, we send our heartfelt thanks to all our friends and supporters: it is your help that makes our project possible.

Greetings for Ramadan: Ramadan Kareem and Rosh Hashana:
L' shana Tova Umetuka: May you have a Sweet and Happy New Year!
With love,

Amir Shlomian and Rachel Gottlieb, on behalf of the teachers, families and children of Ein Bustan

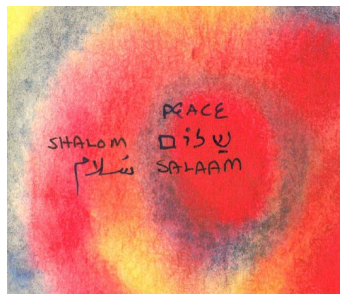
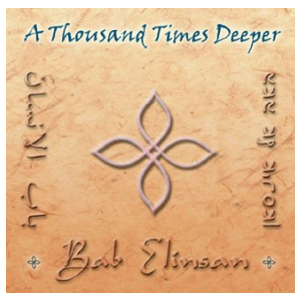
A [donation](#) to Maayan Babustan represents support for a future of true friendship and peace - all donations are gratefully accepted.

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[Ein Bustan products: natural soap, art placemats and more](#)

Bab El Insan: "Gateway to Humanity": a unique music CD is for sale now via Ein Bustan's website, 50% of proceeds go to support Ein Bustan.

To order, kindly email [Amir](#)



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