

VISIT OF THE INTERNATIONAL HELPERS (FARAH AND ANDREW) TO ISRAEL

5TH – 13TH FEBRUARY 2009

Due to heavy snow in England it seemed that my flight from Heathrow might be badly delayed or even cancelled, but overnight the weather turned mild and the predicted snow held off. Thanks be to God, all was well and the flight took off without major delay. We were greeted by Udi Lyon who drove us to our accommodation via some good coffee and pastries!

We arrived into Tel Aviv in the middle of what is for the Israelis, a dry hot winter with temperatures in the low 20's. The lack of rain in the winter is of concern as it provides drinking water in what is a dry country. We very much enjoyed the sun coming from a northern European winter with snow on the ground and sub zero temperatures.

Both the men and women do Latihan at different

times on the Thursday in a large spacious hall, centrally located hence accessible to the members. The women started Latihan around 8.30, with the men doing Latihan at 10.30. There is a strong social bond between the members and a lively social life. After Latihan the women discussed benefits of the body testing which Farah had just done with the women. Andrew shared in the Latihan with the men, and after convivial conversation finished around 11.30.

The Friday morning we met Lyani, Udi and Moshi, (Udi is the national chair and Moshi and Lyani are the KC's) for breakfast in the newly refurbished port area which is full of wonderful sea side café's. The discussion was honest and open and a schedule of



Above: Picnic with Israeli members

Below: meal with members in Jerusalem

visits was agreed. In the evening we joined Andre, Udi and two of his children in a Persian restaurant for some good food and lively conversation.

Saturday was a social day. We travelled out with Udi for a picnic in a beautiful part of the country in the Jezreel Valley and met 70 plus members and their children. It was a grand social occasion and a good opportunity to meet and talk informally to many Subud members. In the evening Farah met the women helpers at their weekly helpers meeting and discussed putting the Latihan into practice in our daily lives, the purpose of awareness testing with the members, working together and how a helper supports the members in their latihan. The women tested about how they fulfil their work as helpers at the present time and according to God's will. And also what it is that each one has to be aware of in themselves to do the job of helper in the best way, again what are the qualities in us which have to be developed to act as a helper in the best way.

In the morning we met one of the women members for breakfast which led to Farah doing Latihan and testing with her. We met Andre for lunch and continued our discussions on the theme of Subud and life. In the evening Andrew joined the men for Latihan and did some awareness testing, after which there was some discussion on the general subject of the importance of testing and the work of helpers.

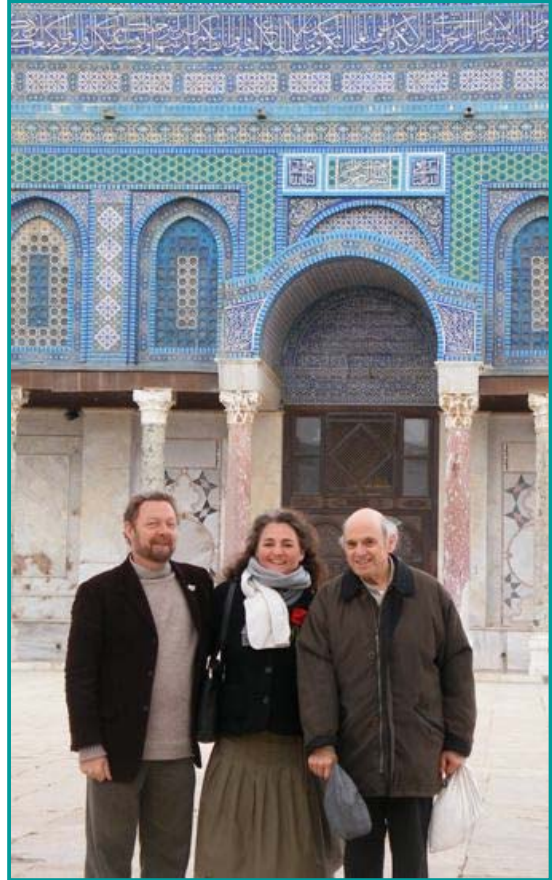
Monday we did a cleansing Latihan in the home of one of the members, and after had lunch with Amina, who served a stupendous lunch consisting of many delightful dishes from her native Bulgaria. Lyani, Laura, and Iona also joined us to make a truly enjoyable occasion. We spent some time sharing our experiences and discussing the nature of Subud as an international Association. We met Sharifin and Sofia Dickie in the afternoon over coffee on the sea front, caught up with their news; how life is for them in Israel; their Jewish origins and how they see Subud in Tel Aviv. In the evening we joined Vardina and Michael, who are stalwart members from the nearby Herzlya group. We were also joined by Nancy and Moria. Both Farah and Andrew shared some tests with the members after Latihan, which were then discussed along with other issues concerning group life. Also we talked about the causes of division in Subud and how we must each try to heal the rifts that occur between us. We encourage the occasional joining together to do Latihan in Tel Aviv. If we are truly able to surrender in the Latihan God may heal all hurts within us.

After Moria and Nancy drove us back to Tel Aviv, taking in some sights along the way including some interesting aspects of Herzlya night life!

Tuesday we joined Racheli for a delicious breakfast and then travelled with Lyani to Jerusalem. We fairly flew along and soon arrived and booked in to the Scottish Hostel next to the church of St. Andrew, so I at least felt very at home! The accommodation was excellent and had a panoramic view of the old city, the Monte Fiore Windmill and many other ancient buildings. We met some of the members there, and then gathered for Latihan in a just recently rented building, which was quiet and private and allowed for simultaneous Latihan of the men and women. After gathering together we did Latihan and tested some general questions, did awareness testing as well as some private testing. Later we had discussions about Subud and group life, helpers work and how the group might grow, etc.

We met in the evening in an excellent pasta restaurant with nearly all the Subud members around a large table. The exit polls were bringing early results of a hung election. Again we felt happy to be with our brothers and sisters in this far land meeting and talking as if we had known each other for much longer. Later that evening Farah met one of the women for testing.

In the morning another member came to Farah for personal testing, and later Lavan and Varda collected us to visit the old city together. As sometimes happens on these occasions the Angels blessed us and we were able to do a lot in a very short time, even parking the car in seemingly impossible circumstances. We visited the Jewish Quarter, and the Wailing Wall including the Catacombs where the Hasidic Jews pray and read the Kabbala. We also found time to absorb the special atmosphere of the Temple Mount, and walked back to the car via the old Roman Market and the Arab Quarter. Lavan and Varda prove most able guides and, like us were delighted to be able to visit that most special of places; the Temple Mount where Mohammed was taken up on his horse in the Ascension. Later we met for lunch with Daphna and her sister Nechama, accompanied by Lavan and Varda, before getting on the train to Binyamina via Tel Aviv. The train meandered slowly through the ancient terraces and olive groves of the holy land, evocative of an extraordinarily rich narrative, the crucible of so much grace and yet so much conflict.



We arrived in the evening and were collected by Manfred and Mariana for dinner before Latihan. Some more members came from Tel Aviv and hence there was a strong turnout. Again both Farah and Andrew did testing with the members and after we shared food and sang together which was quite wonderful. One of the themes the men tested about was forgiveness, how we ask God to forgive us, and how is it for our lives if we can do this as often as we remember, with a feeling of true sincerity.

After Udi drove us back to Tel Aviv.

Thursday we met Zvi and Alona for lunch and shared some fascinating insights into their life in Israel. This was followed by tea with Lyani at her comfortable new flat, with views to the West Bank and Jordan. We were able to spend time sharing our impressions of our travels and our perspective as visitors to Israel. This was followed by dinner with Andre and Anna at their beautiful apartment and again we shared impressions of Subud in Israel.

We spent the last evening joining the Latihan with the men and women of the Tel Aviv group. Andrew met the helpers to discuss the Latihan and Helper work whilst the women did Latihan and tested together. Farah explored themes through testing concerning preparation for the Latihan, the male and female aspects within ourselves, our willingness for an inner / outer change and finished with some testing about Bapak; to feel the work he still does although he is no longer with us, and the importance of reading Bapak's and Ibu Rahayu's talks for our inner understanding of the Latihan, and finally asked to receive how was Bapak's love toward us, and how we express and feel our love for our sisters and brothers.

The following morning we had an early flight home from Tel Aviv.

Israel like so many 'old Subud communities' has its history. In order that we do not block ourselves or others we need to clean our feelings, and to do this we have to ask forgiveness of each other and God for our mistakes. This is, in our understanding, a necessity for us as we tread the spiritual path. Bapak has said in his many talks – we cannot come before Almighty God with a heart that is not clean. Knowing that to be human is to err, and that in recognising this simple truth, we may stand before God with humility, sincerity and patience to receive that grace we call Latihan.

We both felt blessed and happy to have been able to spend time with our brothers and sisters in Israel. We thank you all most sincerely for your many kindnesses, and your love and care. We have learnt that food plays an important part in Jewish life and it seems you are all good cooks, so with such care and attention we have been widened and enriched in both our inner and outer aspects during our time with you! Finally we also wish to take this opportunity to ask forgiveness of our mistakes, for anything we may have said or done that has caused offence. Please forgive.

May God bless you all and keep you in his power.

With love Andrew and Farah