Preface

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

This book is based on a previous Hebrew version that was published in 2010, entitled *Exposed to Dialogue: Encounters between Jews and Arabs in Israel*. The present edition focuses on the possibility of the transformation of rigid identities and relations of mutual negation between groups in conflict, to recognition and reconciliation, through dialogue. It provides an in-depth inquiry and analysis of the mental and psychological barriers to change, and how they can be transmuted. Therefore, the theoretical scope of the book was expanded and it now addresses psychoanalytic and psychodynamic perspectives of identity and transformation. For the English edition, the original book was significantly rewritten and brought up to date, with a new introduction and an expanded summary chapter.

The issues dealt with in this volume are all the more acute given the 2014 Gaza War and the escalating violence that spilled into the streets in the summer of 2015. The conflict greatly intensified mutual enmity, suspicion, and resistance to reaching out to each other. Instead of dialogue, antagonistic attitudes prevail, often engendering violence both toward the other and within each community. Dissenting conciliatory opinions and voices for peace are silenced as betrayal. Nonetheless, dialogue is more urgent than ever. Despite the chasm between the two peoples, exacerbated daily by mutual suspicion and fear, the hope for a rapprochement between Israelis and Palestinians cannot be relinquished.

Indeed, the question of dialogue remains relevant: dialogue is still a key concept promising hope. It still holds the promise of reducing boundaries and opening minds.

Yet, it appears harder today than ever.

To facilitate dialogue, the present volume seeks to provide new perspectives towards understanding the psychological vulnerabilities, induced by fear and anxiety, that fuel the conflict. A look inward reveals the pain and longing for recognition even of those who perpetrate violence or call for revenge.

The words of Martin Buber address this existential calling to our commitment to break the hold of fear and anxiety:

> War has always had an adversary . . . the speech of genuine conversation in which human beings understand one another and come to a mutual understanding . . .
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> *Fighting begins where speech has ceased*; that is, where human beings are no longer able to discuss with one another the subjects under dispute… but flee from them.
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> But where speech, be it ever so shy, moves from camp to camp, war is already called in question. . . . When the word has become entirely soundless, and on this side and on that soundlessly bears into the hearts of men the intelligence that no human conflict can really be resolved through killing. . . . Then the human word has already begun to silence the cannon. (Buber, 1975, p. 236)

I argue that in order to open a space for dialogue and to effect a transformation in the attitudinal barriers to reconciliation, an empathetic appreciation is needed of the destabilizing and identity-threatening experience of dialogue between Jews and Palestinians. We must understand the difficulty and pain of letting go of positions and perceptions that evolved over the course of a long conflict, the loss entailed in reconciling with the enemy other, and the need for each side to take responsibility for their part in the continuation of the conflict.

The work of dialogue is very difficult. Years of hard work can be destroyed in a moment. In other words, the impact of the dialogue process may be temporary, the transformation occurs in a sort of an incubator, and there is a danger of regression, as the conflict intensifies and the environment resists. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the transformation process does not happen all at once, but again and again and again.

I hope that this book will be of help to those working to promote dialogue, wherever they may be.

AUTHOR'S JOURNEY

As a secular, left-wing Israeli Jew my first encounter with the Arab-Jewish issue was fraught with guilt and imbued with the desire to make amends for the injustice done by members of my group (the bad guys) to members of the other group (the good guys). I sought to bring a sense of harmony to relations

between the two sides, to restore an idealistic notion of brotherly love and acceptance.

During the initial stages of my work (first as a participant in a dialogue group and later as a facilitator), my attention was directed exclusively toward the Arabs. I failed to perceive the Jews, unable either to see or hear them. The more difficult, sad, or bitter the stories of the Arab participants, the more I identified and empathized with them; the harsher the Arab participants' criticism, the angrier I became at the Jews in the group. The result was an overwhelming sense of alienation and estrangement which allowed me to distance myself from the Jews and ignore their fears and concerns, while presenting myself to the Arabs as a different sort of Jew—compassionate, humane, and just.

I remember very vividly an experience of facilitating a group of Jewish teachers at a teacher-training college in Israel. I was one of two psychologists who had been invited to talk on the subject of how to deal with the Arab-Jewish conflict in the context of the educational system. In retrospect, the group was impressive for its willingness to tackle a difficult and unpopular subject. However, trapped in my own issues and short-sightedness, I was highly critical of the teachers in front of me. During our first activity, which involved examining their attitudes towards the Arabs, I resisted the teachers' trite declarations which I took as an attempt to conceal their embarrassment and confusion, and which blocked any real dialogue with the other. I wanted to expose the gap between the participants' declared readiness to sustain an interaction and their actual reluctance. It was hard for me, emotionally, to accept the defenses and stereotypical views that I was so skilled at analyzing in any theoretical discussion of the matter.

The following day, when the teachers came face to face with an Arab-Israeli citizen who had been invited to give his viewpoint, the participants' difficulty was manifest. It was expressed when the guest (a distinguished school principal) began to talk about his national-political views. Their confusion, magnified by the dissonance between his apparent persecuted and underprivileged minority status, and his vigorous and assertive manner, made them quite aggressive. I felt ashamed to belong to this group, and addressed them angrily, accusing them of compromising my ability to work with them.

Only later, from a distance of time and space, and while writing about that same encounter, did I begin to appreciate the huge emotional and psychological obstacles involved whenever a Jewish Israeli (especially one engaged in a public/educational position) struggles with issues such as these. In a concluding paper, my co-facilitator and I wrote:

> Dealing with the Jewish-Arab conflict creates dilemmas in any group and for any person who struggles with hard questions of identity. . . . The tension between the national identity of the Jewish participants and their human iden-

tity is accompanied by another tension—between feelings of insecurity (as a persecuted minority) and security (as the ruling majority). Although the Jewish group constitutes a majority in the state of Israel today, its own collective memory of being a national minority engenders a feeling of insecurity vis-a-vis the other/Arab group. The fear of ceasing to exist as a national majority, and the wish to avoid a recurring experience of being a minority, are at the foundation of the defense mechanisms developed by the Jewish majority. (Kahanoff and Rosenwasser, 1988)

Other psychologists writing on the topic of educating for Jewish-Arab co-existence in Israel (Katz, Ben Tzur, Haver, Arpillyand Tzadok, 1988) noted the uniqueness of dealing with this issue:

Regarding the relations between Arabs and Jews, no teacher has a simple and definite opinion upon encountering his own confusion, and with the absence of simple answers within the complex reality. Great anxiety may arise as a result of contradictory emotions and partial answers to key questions. Thus, for instance, upon introspection, the teacher can find in herself feelings and positions that are at odds with the way in which she would like to regard herself. (Katz et al., 1988)

As a professional facilitator I was supposed to bring up and discuss their personal dilemmas as well as the collective ones. However, at that stage I was still unaware of my own inner conflict. Later, I understood my failure to address their difficulties as a failure to accept myself—the ambivalent Jew reluctant to forgo her affiliation with the dominant group—and my refusal to acknowledge the inhumane aspects of myself. In fact I projected these aspects onto the other Jewish participants and rejected them ("projective identification," in psychoanalytic terms), thus enabling me to deny their reality in me and to remain pure—both powerful and humane. The price was my detachment from the group and from my own personal identity and an inability to work effectively with the Jewish participants.

In my defense, I could say that it was in line with the general trend that prevailed at the time, and that prevails even today, in many organizations active in the field of peace-building and social change between Jew and Arab. The target population for awareness, acknowledgment, and behavioral change is Jewish. The Jews are the group whose opinions must change, whose worldview must be subverted, and whose awareness of the prevalent injustice must be bolstered. The Jews should be empathic toward the Arabs, since after all this is an opportunity to support them, to encourage them to express their plight and to empower them in their struggle. One should at all costs not empathize with the Jews, the powerful and arrogant representatives of the hegemonic, racist culture (see, for example, Halabi and Sonnenschein, 2004; Shenhav, 2003; Zack and Halabi, 2008). The voice of those engaged in action—whether as dialogue group facilitators, as activists in organizations

for social change, or as researchers—must be put to the service of the under-privileged, enabling them to voice their suffering and helplessness, while the oppressor is to be reprimanded, and condemned.

My initial emotional position was entirely one-sided: I was empathic toward the Palestinians and angry with my own side, the Israeli-Jews. I strove to highlight the suffering of the Arab while ignoring the plight of the Jew.

Only later did I become aware of the obstacles that lay in my path as a Jew: the temptation to identify with the exotic enigmatic other, the enticement of defecting from the enemy lines of "the powerful and evil" to "the weak and good"; the attraction of being part of a just struggle of the weak against the strong and of experiencing the invigorating energy of dissidence; the addiction to being a savior, and, more generally, the illusion of switching my identity for another.

As I began to listen to my own camp as well, my work became more cautious. This created another problem. My cautiousness rendered me suspicious in the eyes of some of my colleagues who regard their work as part of the struggle to change the socio-political situation and attain equality in Arab-Jewish relations. I became suspect to those who regard Zionism as a colonial movement and the preservation of the state's Jewish character the source of all evil. My insistence on identifying with my Israeli Jewishness and my refusal to forego my group affinity set me apart from them. They saw in my refusal to defect from the enemy line an espousal of the status quo vis-a-vis power relations between the majority and the minority. They considered me guilty of promoting Jewish over Arab interests.

I first became aware of these suspicions in my encounter with Hashem:

> I first met Hashem in a cafe on Mount Carmel in Haifa. We were supposed to be co-facilitators of a meeting between Arab and Jewish teachers in Giv'at Haviva, and the purpose of the meeting was to get to know each other and prepare the workshop. I didn't know if I would recognize him. But once I entered, I recognized immediately the swarthy, somewhat ascetic, bespectacled figure, whose head was crowned with a curly mane. I sat down. He looked at me. I felt that I was being examined. I lit a cigarette from his packet (half confident, half embarrassed), and the conversation began to flow. I introduced myself—my past, my activities, my present work, and future plans. He talked about his activities, his job in Giv'at Haviva and his vision. We exchanged words, gazes, curiosities. We recounted, moved closer and farther apart, and all the while I couldn't shake off the disturbing feeling that I was being put to the test. I couldn't tell who the tester was (was he the one sitting in front of me?) and what exactly I had to prove, but I only knew that I had to prove myself. This feeling hurt my confidence and challenged my sense of identity. The more he got interested, the more I told him. I elaborated more and more on my personal life. The stories were virtually pushed out of my mouth uncontrollably, as if I was pronouncing my own statement of defense. I presented

myself as a woman and a young mother, an academic and a career person, a citizen of the world and an Israeli, active in the Jewish-Arab issue, and taking part in his struggle. But above all, I became aware of my being a Jew—and I was overwhelmed, as if against my will, by feelings of power and aggression. (diary segment, 1994)

The embarrassment, guilt, and sense of inferiority at being a Jew involved in promoting Jewish-Arab co-existence was brought home to me in the context of a different conflict in a distant country. I was invited to a conference in Belfast, Northern Ireland, when the peace treaty between England and Ireland was about to be signed. The conference focused on transition from war to peace and prospects of reconciliation. I was designated to talk about dialogue between Jews and Arabs in Israel. When I arrived, I found myself sitting next to representatives from conflicts in South Africa, Croatia, and Nicaragua. I was surprised at the enormous distance between me and them: their voices were clear, strong, and self-assured, committed and full of revolutionary fervor. In contrast, my own voice sounded, to my own ears, distant, analytic, cautious, ambivalent, hesitant, and skeptical. I was especially unsettled by my interaction with Carolina:

I met Carolina from Nicaragua on the first night of the conference. She was a young, dark-skinned, grave looking woman, and she was seated in front of me during the formal dinner that our hosts organized. She was an unusual guest in the hedonistic setting of the posh restaurant in which we were dining—a presence from another world, as it were. The uncomfortable feeling that I had in her presence, which persisted for the whole duration of the conference, began that night, owing to her tough, somewhat ascetic air and her intense gazes. I had to pluck up my courage in order to talk to her. She said that her name was Carolina, and that she was educating demobilized soldiers for peace. In fact, she said, she came from Guatemala, where she had been a guerrilla fighter for 17 years until a few years ago she lay down her arms under the armistice agreement between the rebels and the government.

Later, Carolina told me about the disappearance of her husband, who was also a rebel; he was kidnapped by the government and vanished without a trace. She told me of her escape with her two daughters, and of her long journey in an attempt to evade a pursuit. She explained that she could reflect on her painful memories only six months later, when it became possible.

I could imagine her in the mountains, wearing a green uniform and carrying a rifle on her shoulder in a parade (indeed, on our last day at the conference, when the women went shopping around the city, I noticed, once the downpour finally stopped, that Carolina was marching proudly with her long umbrella hanging diagonally from her shoulder in military style—a setup that was obviously very natural for her . . .).

During our entire conversation, she took center stage and I was the audience; she was the story-teller and I was the listener to stories about suffering, pain, arrests, victims, and the struggle for freedom and justice. In comparison

with her experience, I felt my own as bland and unworthy; I began to feel that I had no experience, and no story to tell either. (diary segment, April, 1998)

My admiration for Carolina's courage, willingness, and commitment reminded me of similar feelings for some Arab-Israeli women engaged in a dual war—against their male-dominated society and against national oppression by the Israelis. These feelings were sometimes mixed with an envy of their having a cause and a passion. The other speakers (who were all representatives of the "weak" and dominated groups in their countries, struggling for liberation) talked with a sense of justice and certainty of the position they represented. However, I (the representative of the "powerful" group in my country) spoke with a sense of resignation, acknowledging the relativity of justice, the limitedness of perception, and the different interpretations given by each side, thereby granting legitimacy to both sides of the conflict. My discourse sounded academic, and somewhat detached. The other speakers' language was political and engaged; it had sparkle and power, as against the weakness and dullness of my own.

I began to comprehend the trap into which I had stumbled. The Palestinian/Arab comes out as the righteous victim; the Jew as the perpetrator, threatened and fearful for his demise. The indigenous native from the Third World has a valid story to tell and her voice is morally legitimate; the voice of the outsider, the white man from the first world, finds favor with no one. After all, what story can he tell? What injustice or evil was ever inflicted upon him? This state of affairs practically paralyzed me.

Observations such as these are unpopular among those pure-hearted and justice-oriented people who do "peace work" for they are perceived as identifying with the voice of the oppressor. Such attitudes are also unpopular among intellectuals associated with radical leftist thinking. A special place is reserved for native researchers, champions of the oppressed, whose claim to authenticity transfers considerable power and moral advantage to them.

Later, I read Pnina Motzafi-Haller's paper, "You have an authentic voice" (1997) in which she criticizes the "over-determination" of concepts such as here-there, center-periphery, oppression-resistance, a dominant population and an oppressed one. Mutzafi-Heller believes that such a discourse expresses not the voice of the powerless, but rather "the new-found power of First World intellectuals, who originate from the Third World" (ibid., p. 93). Mutzafi-Heller also maintains that sometimes "authors and researchers who 'come from the Third World,' and thinkers who affiliate themselves with marginalized communities, confront serious identity dilemmas, and may act on personal interests or may be simply wrong" (ibid., p. 94).

An interesting discussion on this subject (even if his political position is contrary to mine) was written by Gideon Karsell (1996). In his paper, "Mentality: intelligence, morality and the Arab-Jewish conflict," he criticizes the

guilt felt by Jewish leftists and the moral interest of the New Historians and Israeli "critical sociologists." He suggests that these authors have other motives that affect their writings:

> The Jewish researcher, who builds on his advantage of education and social status, moves among the subjects of his study with his pride aside. While 'deigning' to undertake community research, he acknowledges his relative advantage and superior power, which allow him, in addition to the awareness of his status, to feel as if he is paying homage. Since the two nations are stratified—the Jews being on top—the Jewish researcher stoops in order to feel like an Arab, to experience, to identify and to be compassionate. When he does this against the interest of his group of origin, he feels as if he is making a personal sacrifice, and therefore purifies himself by divine reward. In a cultural climate that promotes the relinquishment of the self, stooping is valued. (Ibid., p. 63)

The job of presenting the voices of the Jewish side (the majority group, the "power wielders") indeed lacks the glory and fervor of the struggle for independence of freedom fighters, and the certainty of their voice. However, the Jewish voice, for all its seeming indifference and blandness, can also be heard to express fear, confusion, and vulnerability.

In my work I strive to repudiate the one-dimensional image of the (good) Arab and the (bad) Jew, and the one-dimensional reading of relations between Jews and Arabs as being between the powerful and the powerless, oppressor and oppressed, aggressor and victim. I seek to illuminate a whole spectrum of voices and to expose the ambivalence, internal contradictions, and struggles that persist within each camp. The attempt to understand and recognize the other is for me an ethical and practical consideration, crucial to reconciliation or any other endeavor that promotes social transformation toward peace.

The bloody events of the last decade and a half (the second intifada, wars in Lebanon and Gaza, and escalating rounds of intercommunal violence) widened the rift between Jews and Palestinians, both inside and outside of Israel. We are witnessing an increasing separation of the two communities, the exacerbation of mutual hostility, increased distrust, alienation, and even mutual delegitimization. The suspicion shared by both sides, as well as their fear and anger, increase the isolation of each group and prevent Jew and Israeli Arab from perceiving the other as a human being entitled to a dignified existence and respect. It prevents either side from acknowledging the social needs of the other—the need for collective identity, the need for national expression—and the existential fear that results from the absence of security guarantees.

The difficult relations between Jews and Palestinian-Arabs in Israel, which exacerbate the already intense Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are the background to my attempt to open a window onto the emotional world of those who live in this prolonged conflict. This book strives to lend a voice to Jews as well as to Arabs, a voice which integrates the personal and the political, and which gives expression to various shades of political consciousness in order to break away from the simplistic feelings and conceptions prevalent in conflict situations and to reconstruct their complexity.

In the years during which I was active in Jewish-Arab encounters I have thought of the encounter as a space that allows expression of one's own voice as well as the voices of others, and that facilitates a deeper understanding of the contradictory ideas and opposing wills that are inherent in the Arab and Jewish populations. This space allows a real conversation between real people, unique subjects, as Bakhtin suggests:

> The person with whom I hold a dialogue *really exists*; he is not just a collection of my sensory data, or my conjecture about the world. I also really exist; I am not to be reduced to any combination of external forces or to a reification of abstract ideas. (Bakhtin, 2009, p. 12)

I decided to leave the central stage and instead to go backstage in an attempt to bring out the personal stories of people who live in a state of protracted conflict as they face those they regard as the "enemy." I sought to uncover silenced stories, emotions, desires, and fears, and to liberate suppressed memories and traumas.

The personal conversations featured in this book, with Palestinian-Arabs and Jewish Israeli citizens, expose the great vulnerability behind the aggressive behavior (of each side), the feeling of existential threat, victimhood, and fear which uphold in their turn a wall of separation. They also expose the dire need for recognition and acknowledgment of the identity of members of both groups. The book also describes the far-reaching human possibilities offered by the encounter with the other, and points to dialogue's potential to tear down mental walls, to expose the hidden, and to unearth the human diversity behind categories of Jew and Arab, majority and minority, occupier and occupied.

In addition, the book reveals the threat inherent in the encounter between identity and otherness, and the embarrassment and confusion that participants experience following new insights that call for a reevaluation of their old ways of thinking. It sheds light on the difficulty to endure the disruption of the internal and external order. Dialogue is revealed to be a complex process fraught with tensions. It brings people together and drives them apart. It comforts and upsets, it breaks and restores. Sometimes it is experienced as a struggle for life or death.

This book follows the psychological dynamics within individuals in dialogue between rival groups, in the understanding that meaningful transformation occurs primarily on the personal and emotional level.

Using psychodynamic and psychoanalytic perspectives in my analysis enables me to delve into the deep psychological dynamics that take place within the individual encountering the rival other, and contribute to the understanding of the deep and fragile processes of identity transformation: both the threat that such processes pose for dialogue participants and their potential for growth and self-actualization. I hope this work will shed light on the powerful emotional forces that come into play in conflict situations.

Furthermore, I suggest that the desired transformations in protracted social conflicts involve changing people's deep mental structures and forming new structures that allow them to acknowledge complexity and open the possibility to accept the self and the other as they are.

This book is based on my involvement in encounters between Jews and Palestinian Arabs, whether in the context of research and evaluation, or in the context of facilitating dialogue groups of Jews and Arabs, that took place between 1988 and 2012. These meetings were held in various places: Giv'at Haviva, Neve Shalom (Wahat Al-Salaam), the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, Besod Siach, the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, the Truman Research Center for the Advancement of Peace, and the Swiss Center for Conflict Research at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. However, the quotations in this book are taken from conversations and interviews from one specific intergroup encounter at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as part of a year-long course under the title "A Meeting of Identities: Between Arabs and Jews in Israel." The group consisted of 16 graduate students, Jews and Arabs, men and women, religious and secular. The group meetings were facilitated by two moderators, an Arab and a Jew. [1]

The conversations and interviews presented here aim to allow the reader to follow the complete development of the dialogue. This way, readers can become acquainted with conversations that took place between the groups during the facilitated meetings, the conversations that developed among members of the same group in the safe space of their national groups, and particularly the penetrating conversations and dilemmas that continued to reverberate within the participants' own minds.

NOTE

1. The phenomenological dynamic of the Jewish Israeli participants described in this book may be said to be typical of dialogue encounters in Israel, reflecting greater participation of people who identify with the political left. It is my impression that "left-wing" Israelis, on the whole, are motivated to enter dialogue with the Palestinians by their universal humanistic values. Moreover, many of them are prone to acknowledge the political and ethical ambiguity of the Zionist project with respect to the Arab Palestinians and hence are eager to reach out to

them with the hope of finding a way to amend the injustice they endured as a result of the establishment of the Jewish state. By contrast, "right-wing" Israelis tend to oppose dialogue precisely because it would entail recogntion of the Palestinians as fellow human beings, and thus might promote a humanistic world view that would necessarily undermine their nationalistic-particularistic commitments. Accordingly, they expressly perceive dialogue as a threat to their values and political agenda.