

HEALING HATRED:

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGES IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL CONFLICT / JERUSALEM

Focusing on the spiritual aspects of coping with political conflict in an interfaith context, this conference held at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem and in Bethlehem and Beit Jala was designed to open new paths for healing and overcoming hostility and controversy. Religious leaders, psychologists, educators, and spiritual caregivers explored a broad range of issues, including forgiveness, response to trauma, indifference to suffering, abuse of religion in the name of politics, bereavement, and alternatives to violence.

Dr. Ruhama Weiss, Director of the HUC-JIR Blaustein Center for Pastoral Counseling, said, “This conference was an important product of our ongoing ‘Healing Hatred’ programs, which contribute to coping with the political situation. We are teaching spiritual tools that can help us understand the ‘other’ and enable us to uphold the notion that each person is created *b’tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God.”

“The dynamic of competitive suffering, arguing, of each side becoming entrenched in their stance in opposition to the ‘other,’ is avoided,” added Dr. Sarah Bernstein, Executive Director of the Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue. “Rather, the dynamic is of honest sharing, empathy, understanding, and healing.”

This conference, convened by the International Association for Spiritual Care, was a joint project of the Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue, HUC-JIR, and the Holy Land Trust, who have worked together over the last four years to develop a new model for interfaith dialogue in situations of national conflict.



Rabbi Aaron Panken (right) and Dr. Ruhama Weiss (left) in a roundtable discussion with Israeli and Palestinian participants in the “Healing Hatred” conference.

