

# PARENTS CIRCLE FAMILIES FORUM 2010 ACTIVITY REPORT



Israeli Palestinian bereaved families  
for **Reconciliation and Peace**

פורום משפחות שכולות  
ישראלית-פלסטינית בעד שלום  
ISRAELI PALESTINIAN  
BEREAVED FAMILIES FOR PEACE  
منتدى عائلات تكفي فلسطيني  
إسرائيلي من أجل السلام



“...to create a reconciliation framework to be in place for when political agreements are signed”



**The Parents Circle - Families Forum (PCFF)** continued its work in 2010 with an even stronger conviction that we have a vital task, and that is to create a reconciliation framework to be in place for when political agreements are signed. This important component has never been an integral part of political peace thinking in the past and we are convinced that **without**

**reconciliation, there will only be a cease-fire and not a durable peace.**

All of our work over the past year has been geared towards this goal.

We are proud of our innovative projects and of our ongoing education work. This creates hope, changes attitudes, educates towards empathy - recognition of the needs of the other and understanding. We would like to share with you some of the highlights of 2010:

# EDUCATION: HIGH SCHOOL DIALOGUE MEETINGS

“As a result of the meeting I changed my opinion about the conflict, I understood that the answer is dialogue, talking as human beings, one to the other. Only by understanding the needs of the other and by talking can we solve this conflict”

The Dialogue Meetings are our most important ongoing daily work on the ground. They enable us to reach more than 25,000 students annually. These meetings address young Israeli and Palestinian students. Since the second "Intifada" there is a whole generation who have never met the "other side" and the dialogue meetings may be their first encounter. After hearing the personal narratives and the joint message of an Israeli and a Palestinian representative from the PCFF there is a definite change in attitude and a willingness to explore the possibility of dialogue as an alternative to violence and an understanding of the needs of the other. We know that these encounters work by the interesting and often very poignant feedback forms students fill in at the end of the meeting: -

*“This meeting was very important because everyone should understand that Jews and Palestinians are similar human beings. The only difference between them is their nationality. I hope that there will be peace and reconciliation.”*

*“In my opinion to meet a Palestinian that lost an immediate family member is very important. This allows us to see another perspective and not just ours. It also helps to understand the other side.”*

*“This was a fascinating encounter. I never had a dialogue or met a Palestinian in the past. It was an eye opening experience which gave me a different perspective. I discovered things which I never believed happen on the other side and also their willingness to reconcile. This gave me so much hope and caused me to look at things differently.”*

*“I understood how similar we are, much more than I thought”*

*“One cannot take for granted the meeting of Palestinians and Israelis who have lost their loved ones; this motivates me to meet with Palestinians”*

*“To hear the other side and to see that there is a platform for dialogue gives me hope that there is a chance for peace”*

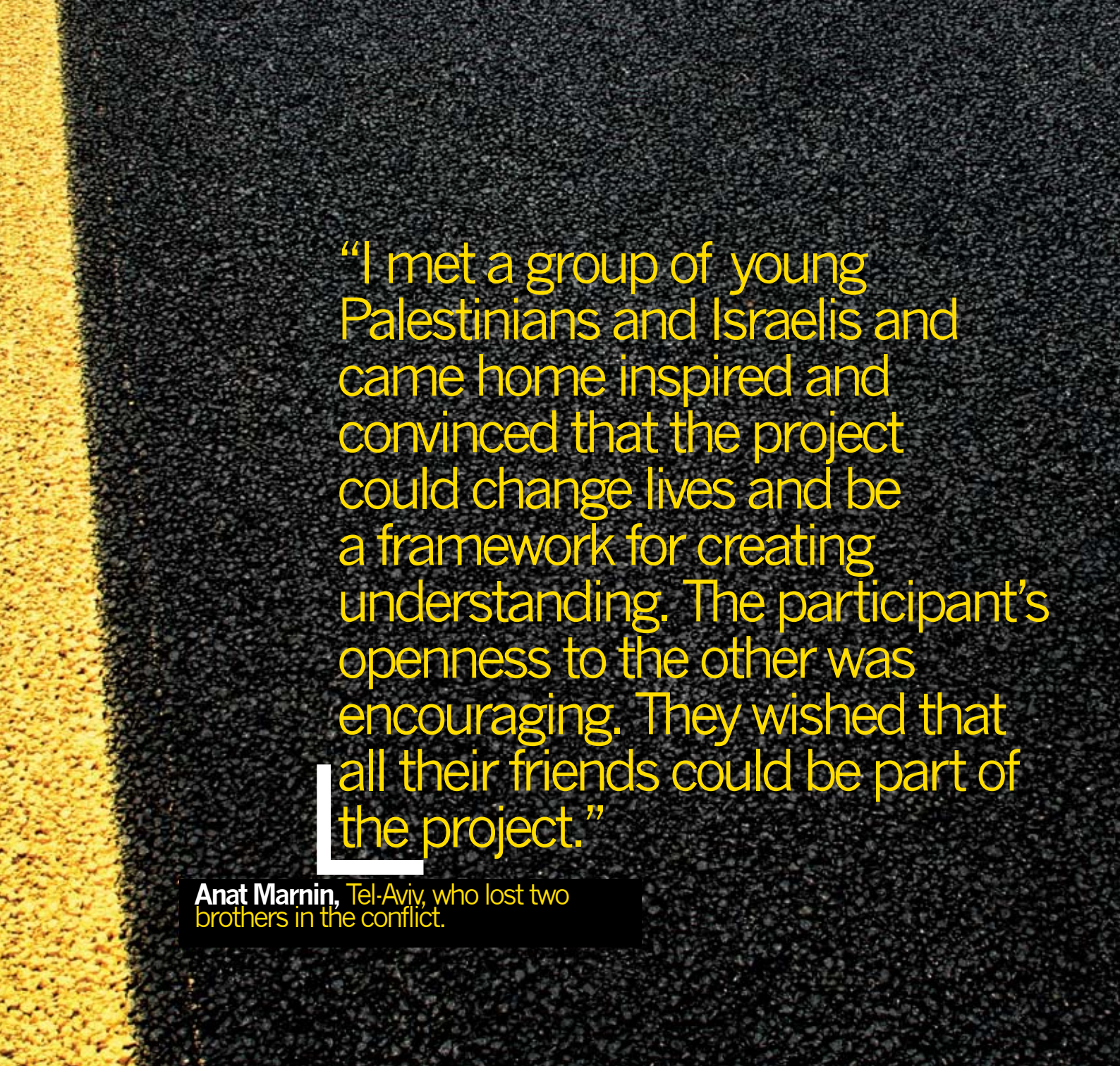
# EDUCATION IN THE WEST BANK



Our new office in Beit Jallah in the West Bank is a hive of activity and serves as a convenient meeting ground for people in the area and is also much more accessible for Israelis. Many of the lectures were held in the office and others held by Palestinians from the PCFF in Jenin, Hebron, Nablus, Bethlehem and Ramallah where it is not possible to include an Israeli partner, due to travel restrictions. One of the highlights was a meeting addressed by an Israeli and a Palestinian from the PCFF to university students from the West Bank. This was for most of the participants the first encounter with an Israeli not in uniform or a settler. These students expressed a great interest in our reconciliation message and many wanted to become more involved. Another meeting was held in Nablus with bereaved families and two new families joined the PCFF as a consequence. Yet another meeting was held with the PCFF's women's group in Nablus, and again our unique message of reconciliation did not fall on deaf ears. A joint Palestinian and Israeli meeting was held near Hebron and the participants found it hard to believe that the representative from the PCFF was Israeli. These meetings have a profound effect on the Palestinians who attend and many of them have joined other workshops which we facilitate.

This was for most of the participants the first encounter with an Israeli not in uniform or a settler





“I met a group of young Palestinians and Israelis and came home inspired and convinced that the project could change lives and be a framework for creating understanding. The participant’s openness to the other was encouraging. They wished that all their friends could be part of the project.”

**Anat Marnin**, Tel-Aviv, who lost two brothers in the conflict.



Condolence Visit to bereaved family  
Abu Rachme in Bil'in on the West Bank



Grannies Sharing three generations of memories  
The Ghost Town of Lifta. A poignant memory from 1948

# HISTORY THROUGH THE HUMAN EYE

After a very successful pilot designed for our members, we decided to apply together with our academic advisors (Georgetown University, Washington, DC) for funds for the project from USAID and fortunately it was granted.

Building on the PCFF members' experience in conducting reconciliation work through the use of personal narratives, the program aims at building trust, empathy and mutual understanding between Palestinians and Israelis through the parallel narrative experience. The program provides an avenue for Israelis and Palestinians to understand the national and individual narrative of the other.

The method of this project offers an opportunity for hundreds of Palestinians and Israelis to express themselves by telling their stories, demonstrating the most difficult consequences of the conflict. This dialogue is created, as a cornerstone towards reconciliation and conflict mitigation.

We have identified 12 different groups to participate in this program. The following groups are currently participating in the narrative experience:

- \* Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian students from the Arava Institute
- \* Israeli students from Sapir College in Sderot and Tel-Hai College in the north of Israel together with Palestinian students from Alquds Open University in Hebron and The Arab American University in Jenin.
- \* Israeli and Palestinian grandmothers
- \* Palestinian and Israeli young political leaders

Other groups planned for next year include:

- \* One Voice \* Combatants for Peace \* Wounded Crossing Borders \* Educators \* Media people \* Mental Health Professional \* Farmers

*"This was the most important and special experience for me in all the work I have done in the PCFF. I learned so much about the history of the other side, and it gave me an opportunity to see their humanity. I watched these Israelis, Jordanians, Palestinians and Internationals go through a transformation, at first they would not even allow us to take their pictures, but after two days almost all of them were willing to be photographed together."*

Aisha Khatib, Nablus, who lost her brother in the conflict.

This program also includes the establishment of a Reconciliation Center for academic materials, films books etc. Our grateful thanks to USAID.

"This was the most important and special experience for me in all the work I have done in the PCFF..."



# RECONCILIATION CENTER PUBLIC EVENTS

The PCFF conducted several public events in order to stimulate debate and to widen our exposure to adult audiences:

- ✳ **Prof. Dani Bar-Tal**, Tel-Aviv University *"How to cope with life during the conflict"*.
- ✳ **Dr. Maaram Massraui**, Ben-Gurion University, Beer Sheva  
*"Gender Differences in the Processes of Bereavement for Palestinian Parents"*.
- ✳ **Nahum Gutman's Museum** - 2 Exhibits. Photographs by Khalil Raad, 1891-1948.  
*"Local Hero: Portrait of the Arab in Israeli Painting"*.



## “WORKING WITH POLICYMAKERS” PROGRAM

For decades, Israelis and Palestinians have been engulfed in an intractable conflict. Rising death tolls in the region and countless numbers of reprisals and counter-reprisals have created a cycle of violence that has severely affected the social and cultural fabric in both societies. The respective governments have been slow to act in mediating the conflict. This situation has created a need for educating for a political awareness that there must be a clause in any peace agreement for a framework for a reconciliation process. Our goal is to reach as many politicians on both sides, regardless of their political point of view. This way we will create a lobby of politicians who understand that reconciliation is an imperative part of political agreements.

During 2010 we conducted several workshops to prepare a cadre of members of the PCFF for the project. We have met with a number of politicians and leaders from both sides who have expressed an interest and an acknowledgment of our work.

This project has been made possible by the support of the Government of Switzerland.





crack in the wall  
One Palestinian speaks.  
100,000 Israelis listening

شخ بالاجدار  
فلسطيني واحد يتكلم  
100,000 اسرائيلي يسمعون

פדוק בקיר  
אדם סודרים  
מאה אלף פולסטינים מקשיבים

# “CRACK IN THE WALL”



Crack in the Wall internet site

2010 has been dedicated in many ways to the creation of the **“Crack in the Wall”** project which will be launched in the first part of 2011. This innovative and groundbreaking social media project allows Israelis and Palestinians to engage, to express their views, tell their stories, talk and get to know one another virtually and maybe eventually in person. The project was born out of the success of the PCFF’s **Hello-Shalom Project** launched in 2002 - a toll free telephone line between Israelis and Palestinians. The incredible boom in technological innovation and new media has created an exponential growth in opportunities for individuals to engage with each other. We are therefore upgrading this project to include SMS text messaging, Facebook, Twitter and an interactive Community Website. **By using the tools for social media, Palestinians and Israelis and indeed the whole world will be able to cross hitherto forbidden borders.**

This project has been made possible by the generosity of The European Union



Works by Seham Abu-Awwad and Neta Shemesh

## WOMEN CREATING RECONCILIATION

The PCFF women’s group, created an extraordinary project with the kindness of Mr. Nick DuBois from London, entitled **“Fabric of War.”** Twenty Palestinian and Israeli women from the group have together made paper out of materials associated with their lost ones, **creating works that tell their stories and speak of their hope for change.** This exhibition has in many ways been a catharsis for these women towards closure. Giving away something belonging to a lost loved one is like admitting that they are not coming back... The exhibition traveled to London in November, and was shown at the Southbank Centre, Saison Poetry Library at the Royal Festival Hall as well as the Courtauld Institute of Art. There are plans for it to be shown in 2011 in Israel and perhaps in other venues around the world.

## “CARTOONING IN CONFLICT”

This special exhibit created by the PCFF together with Israel's most famous cartoonist, Michel Kichka as curator, has continued to wow audiences all over the world in 2010. The Exhibition has been to Austria, the Edinburgh Festival, Belfast, Madrid, Seville, Hamburg and Holland. We continue to receive requests from all over the world for this exhibit. In 2009, it was shown in Israel, Spain, London, Italy and New York. The exhibition attracted a huge response from the media and we have appeared on television at every venue.



Alan Moir, Australia

# RECONCILIATION DAY 2010

This annual event which is the PCFF's celebration of the International Day of Peace, took place in Beit Jalah. It started with nearly two hundred Palestinians and Israelis standing together in a moment of silence, remembering the victims of the conflict. Two distinguished members of the Israeli and Palestinian media – Shlomi Eldar and Nasser Al-Laham - were awarded the "Reconciliation Award" from the PCFF for their major contribution in promoting peace between the peoples. Eldar for his journalistic work and for his moving film "Precious Life" and Al-Laham, a senior editor at Maan, an independent News Agency operating from Bethlehem for promoting responsible media reports between Israelis and Palestinians. Four unique and moving dialogue circles run by the PCFF women's group, focused on the most sensitive issues of the conflict including: "A wall in my heart"; "Walls of Hope"; "You and Me will Change the World and"; "Between Mother and Nation". The dialogue was deep, painful and honest. The evening ended with a panel about "The Media's Role in Promoting Reconciliation". This event was made possible by USAID, The Frammartino Foundation and our friends from Italy.

## STORY TELLING WORKSHOPS

Once again our Irish friends, Alistair Little and Wilhelm Vervoerd, opened their hearts and their fountain of knowledge in two workshops, one in Israel for new Members from the PCFF and one in Glencree, Ireland as a continuation of the Story Telling Workshop from 2009. Both workshops served as a haven for us all to go deeper into the narrative of the other. It may have been the coldest winter in years in Ireland but the warmth and support and knowledge made up for all the snow. Story telling is such an important part of our understanding of the work towards reconciliation. In 2011, we hope for all of our members to experience a workshop of this caliber.





Federico Zukierman at the opening of  
Cartooning in Conflict Exhibition in Madrid



Shlomi Eldar and Nasser  
Al-Laham at Reconciliation Day



Two minutes of silence  
for our loved ones



Bereaved mother  
Sulhia Abu Rahma

“This project means a lot to me, I learned so much about my own history through the eyes of these grandmothers who have lived through three generations of conflict. Things in my past became much clearer. As I am a new granny I learned again through these Israeli and Palestinian grandmothers, the special love they have for their grandchildren”.

**Seham Abu-Awwad**, West Bank, who  
lost her brother in the conflict.





Yona Bargor and Suheir Al-Alami at the opening of Cartoon Exhibit in Hamburg



Delegation of Israeli and Palestinian youth to Japan



# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The work of the PCFF is world renown and 2010 once again illustrated the importance of our message internationally. We were invited to many countries and to participate in a variety of conferences and workshops.

These are some of the highlights:-

**SPAIN:** The PCFF has made important inroads into the Spanish political arena as well as Spanish society. We have spoken in many venues all over Spain and our message has been spread by the most important media outlets.

The Cartoon Exhibit received accolades in Caceres, Seville and Madrid. Our lectures in universities, political venues and to the general public brought a sense of hope and an opportunity to see another alternative to the conflict.

Delegations of the PCFF have been in Andalucia, Catalonia, Castilla la Mancha and the Basque Country. We have also established a new "Friends of the Parents Circle" in Spain. None of this would have been possible without the amazing support and never-ending work and knowledge of Federico Zukierman who will now head our organization in Spain.

**ENGLAND:** We have made several important trips to London, and have spoken at universities in Sussex, Manchester and Birmingham, as well as mosques and synagogues. These dialogue meetings have had a very important impact on the students, both Moslem and Jewish.

We are so grateful to our British Friends of The Parents Circle; they have created a strong foundation of supporters of our message and we know that this would not have happened without their amazing work.

**U.S.A.:** We had a very successful trip to New York and Chicago and are pleased to welcome several new members to the board. We take this opportunity to thank Anne Glauber for her guidance and constant support and her leadership of the American Friends of the Parents Circle.

**ITALY:** The PCFF was invited to various events in Montesole, Riccione, Modena, Perugia and Rome. Representatives of the PCFF had the opportunity to talk to broad audiences and school students.

**JAPAN:** The Fourth Israeli Palestinian Youth Delegation visited Japan following the invitation of the Municipality of Ayabe. The delegation received a warm reception by the Japanese public and brought the message of reconciliation in our region.

**BELGIUM AND HOLLAND:** A delegation of the PCFF was invited by "3rd Party" and SIVMO to an organized visit to the two countries students.

A delegation of the PCFF participated in the Anna Lindh: Forum 2010, which was held in Barcelona. Our delegation was invited to lead a workshop which was very well received.

In addition, members of the PCFF were invited to public appearances in Ireland, Austria, Germany and Cyprus.



# PRIZES FOR 2010

German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel presented the **German Senior Citizens Union Award** to two members of the PCFF. Ms. Nasra Shihab and Mr. Roni Hirshenzon. **They received gold medals** for their special contribution to the field of international understanding and reconciliation. (Berlin).

The Parents Circle Families forum was awarded the **GANDHI Foundation International Peace Award for 2010**. (London)

**The Human Rights Award**, Swiss Section of the International Human Rights Association. (Switzerland)

**International Solidarity Prize 2010** awarded to the PCFF by the International Social Cinema Film Festival of Castilla-La Mancha. (Toledo)

Khaled Abu Awwad, Palestinian Director of the Parents Circle - Families Forum and Aziz Abu Sarah, member of the PCFF, were chosen by the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre as two of the **500 most influential muslim in 2010** (Jordan)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Parents Circle-Families Forum would like to especially thank several individuals who are forever friends of the Forum and provide unconditional support.

**Chani Smith**, and the British Board, for always supporting our work in England.

**Federico Zukierman** for never giving up on us and for creating the Forum's presence in Spain.

**Hanna Lehming** for her ceaseless effort to support and encourage the PCFF friends in Germany.

**Margaret and Paul Harris** for their generous support.

**Hella Rottenberg** and **Ellen Turksma** from SIMMO Our very dedicated friends in the Netherlands.

**Edith Schlaffer** for opening doors in Austria and for keys to Mosques

**Anne Glauber** for being the most constant friend in the United States

To **Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg** for his spiritual guidance, devotion and long standing solidarity with the PCFF

We thank the following organizations for supporting major projects:

- \* **The European Union** for their support and grant for the project "A Crack in the Wall".
- \* **USAID**, West Bank/Gaza Mission for their support and grant for "History through the Human Eye"
- \* **SWISS FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS** - "Working With Policymakers"
- \* **USIP** - "Knowing is the beginning"

Our grateful thanks to:

(Alphabetical Order)

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Sivmo \* Spanish Ministry of Foreign  
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“This was a mixed group of Palestinians, Jordanians, Israelis and internationals, it was important for them to hear a message of hope. I came away convinced by the wonderful work with my Palestinian partner, that we could speak in one voice and be an example to others.”

**Daniela Kitain** Neve Shalom, who lost her son in the conflict.



# DONATIONS CAN BE MADE THROUGH

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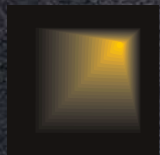
## United Kingdom

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Donations can be made on our web-site:

[www.theparentscircle.org](http://www.theparentscircle.org)

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Eli Dassa \* Bill Roberts \* Meirav Shlomo-Melamed



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