

# THE CHALLENGE OF COEXISTING

Friday  
NOV 17

5:30 at  
Beth Ami

Challenges and  
Methods to Building  
a Shared Society

## PROGRAM

- 5:30 to 6:00 - Asaf & Ulfat children's presentation (regular Shabbat services will be provided)
- 6:00 to 7:00 - Dinner. Adults \$8, Kids \$4, family \$15.
- 7:00 to 8:30 - Asaf & Ulfat's presentation (childcare provided).

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## Israel 2017 – The challenge of being a Jewish Democratic state

Every fifth citizen in Israel belongs to the Arab minority. This group's integration in Israeli society constitutes a not always easy challenge, given that their fellow Arabs in the Middle East are in fact in a state of war against the country of their residence, Israel. This challenge is coupled with the collective memory of the events of 1948, which are a central motif in the Palestinian narrative in Israel and the surrounding region.

Our presentation will focus on these issues through the personal stories of Ulfat Haider and Asaf Ron as well as their mutual work experience at Beit Ha'Gefen – Arab Jewish Cultural Center, on the memory of the events of 1948: Independence versus 'Nakba', i.e., the events of 1948, deal with the question of Arabs defining their identity in their own eyes as well as those of the Jewish majority; raise a number of key questions concerning shared life of Jews and Arabs in Israel, with an attempt to examine the answers from both points of view and understand the complexity of living within a common space. We will focus on the city of Haifa, a mixed city, as a unique model of living together with mutual respect and understanding.

## The Art of Shared Living in Haifa: Beit HaGefen Arab-Jewish Cultural Center

The city of Haifa is unusual in the Israeli human landscape, offering an intercultural expanse that constitutes a model for building a shared society of Jews and Arabs, veteran Israelis and immigrants from the East and from the West.

Founded in 1963, Beit HaGefen is a cultural center which seeks to create shared egalitarian spaces that contain the variety of identities and cultures in Haifa, and in Israel in general. Our activities and mission are based on the belief that interpersonal acquaintanceship and an encounter with another culture and its narratives are essential for breaking down barriers and building trust. We do so through cultural encounters and creating a space and forum for people and artists to represent their identities and narratives through art and dialogue. All of our divisions – including our youth and cultural events departments – strive to generate and foster a discourse surrounding social and political issues, with an emphasis on connection through arts and culture. Our programming directors have many years of experience building bridges between communities through cultural activities.

**Ulfat Haider** was born and raised in Haifa, Israel, where she lives today. As an outstanding young volleyball player, she joined the Israeli National Women's Team, as its only Arab member.

Ulfat has always combined her love of sports and the land with her desire to bring people together. In addition to earning her B.Ed. in Physical Education, she also completed a B.A. in Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Haifa, and a Master's degree in Gender Studies at Bar-Ilan University. Currently, Ulfat is working at Beit HaGefen – Arab-Jewish Cultural Center in Haifa as its Program Director. Two of her projects involve leading annual student expeditions to the Alps.

**Asaf Ron** was born in Haifa, Israel. He holds a B.A in Education and in Israel Studies, and an M.P.A in Public Administration from Haifa University. Between 2000 and 2003, Asaf served as a community emissary (shaliach) in the Greater Hartford community in Connecticut. From 2006 Asaf directed the education department of the Gilboa Regional Council, 40 percent of whose residents are Arab. During that time he guided the Gilboa School Principals Forum, which was comprised of seven Arab schools and six Jewish schools, and initiated activities for stimulating mutual acquaintanceship. Asaf has served as director of Beit HaGefen – Arab-Jewish Cultural Center in Haifa since June 2010. In this capacity, Asaf is responsible for directing initiatives for coexistent life in Haifa together with the municipal council and the Mayor, and works with community leaders and the city's prominent clergy.

