**General feedback and meaningful moments**

* **Yitzhak**: The program transformed my perception of the Palestinian problem, from a painful and bloody defense issue to a moral imperative. If, before the program, I felt it was worth trying to do something to alleviate both sides’ suffering, now I see that it’s everyone’s duty to do their best and have the most influence.
I don’t know exactly what action I’ll take because I’m still digesting and thinking, but it’s clear to me that it will find expression one way or another, soon, with God’s help.
* **Mika**: First, I’d like to express my deep gratitude and profound appreciation to those who founded, designed, and are carrying out the program. (I mean, of course, all genders—Hebrew is a really difficult language when it comes to gender…).

Second, I think the group dynamic, the good interpersonal relations, and everyone’s wish to stay in touch, to think and take action together—it’s an opportunity that must not be missed. They should make it possible for this group to continue building and being built together—consider the option of regular meetings, both of the entire group and also to create smaller groups around specific topics.

* **Daniel**: I shared with the participants my insights about how deep the anti-normalization is, the sense of defeatism on the other side, the contempt for the Israeli Left, and what I consider the main question—how we can transform the topic of the occupation so that it is not considered unworthy of discussion in Israeli society, and, of course, the experiences from the encounter with Soli, the encounter at Jibt a-Dib, and more.
* **Shivi**: There were many meaningful moments. Mainly about the tension between defeat and strong faith in the possibility of change. Also, the gap between the young generation and the old—between militancy and compromise—and how rigidity on both sides is our main obstacle now.
* **Yitzhak:** I think it is no accident that there is a difference between our group and the American groups. American Jews come as witnesses to a terrible reality and really feel it’s their responsibility to take action for change; we feel guilty.

American Jews are sincerely worried about what their Israeli brethren are doing to the people living alongside them. Even today, Alex wrote, “I’m Pinhas,” and Maggy went even farther: “I’m Pharaoh.” We relate to it in the first-person.

When you hear screaming and it turns out that the neighborhood bully is stomping on your neighbor’s neck, somehow you can keep going. But when the leg doing the stomping is yours, you can’t ignore the screaming.

American Jews draw their inspiration from the Jewish tradition, from the commandment [Lev. 19:16] of “Do not stand idly on your fellow man’s blood.” We [get ours] from the verse [Ex. 2:13], [Moses] asked the one in the wrong, “Why are you hitting your fellow?
* **Uri**: The thought I wanted to share is that the normalization issue always came up as something that matters to the Palestinians. But when I look back at our trip, I realize that one of its strongest effects on me is … Normalization “for me,” I mean, this matter of taking a trip to the other side of the fence, to eat there, to meet people—doesn’t allow you to keep thinking about the “conflict” the same way. I’m not talking about legitimizing the situation and the occupation (which is what the Palestinians are afraid of) but, for me, of moving this issue from the category of just policy/politics/”news”, to the category of relations between people. And these places: from places that you just read about and argue about, to places that you can go to. For me, it’s a kind of personal normalization—and it’s so critical to see a positive future.

**The participants’ lingering questions**

* **Shivi:**
* Is it possible to be optimistic?
* What corrective action can still be taken?
* Were the speakers whom we met representative enough of the general population?
* **Noa:**
* Didn’t we pass the point of no return when we systematically wiped out the Palestinian leadership?
* Gila:
* How do I take the feelings that I’m coping with and make them something I can act on? What’s more important, what’s less, what belongs to the work at the Shalem Center and what belongs to the community center, the family level, and the personal?
* **Elit:**
* What’s the inner work that we can do as Israelis to enlighten Israelis to the actual policy of our government, to the cruel policy of quiet and sophisticated transfer?
* How can Israelis on the right and the center of the political map be made to listen and see the other side?
* Is it meaningful to take joint action with Palestinians? Is there some way for us to help them?
* **Reuven:**
* Isn’t this program biased? Despite the rhetoric about listening, doesn’t the way it’s presented influence your judgment? And can Israeli-Palestinian dialogue really be promoted this way? The very fact that many important segments of Israeli society and Arab society don’t attend the encounters and their voices aren’t heard—isn’t that enough to push aside the possibility of a discourse? Listening led to judgments and a group consensus of sorts on many matters. Wouldn’t it have been worth talking things over beyond the feelings of sharing that usually reflected empathy with the Palestinian experience? For what reason aren’t the associates in the program more diverse? Why do most of them identify specifically with the Israeli Left? Is it really the way of the Left, via dialogue and in a manner of thinking, that will lead to progress toward a solution? Might the opposite have happened and is happening? And much, much more….
* **Maggy**
* How can the meaning of the occupation for the Palestinians’ daily lives, and for the Israelis’ essence and quality of life, be substantiated without our being able to put the entire Israeli population through the experience of a seminar like this? What should I focus my efforts on?
* **Vivian:**
* With all the goodwill of this group, can we really do something meaningful to change Israel’s policy?
* As time passes and the participants in the program return to their daily lives, will we manage to sustain the group’s motivation to continue devoting time to the matter?

**Thoughts about action in the future**

* **Mika:**
* My thoughts relate to the need to keep expanding and deepening my personal understanding of the conflict and, at the same time, to take action and speak out—to break existing patterns of thought and to find and propose alternatives: How can a different story be told? How can the narratives that dictate our thinking and, therefore, our actions (or often our inactions) be thoroughly rewritten?
* **Lior:**
* Definitely. I’m thinking about how to integrate an experience of this kind into the working process of the organization where I work.
* **David:**
* It’s too early to think right now. For me, the trip was one of the turning points in my life. It’s going to take me a while to work through it.
* **Gila:**
* I’ve got lots of thoughts. I began to put some of them into action. I planned out two educational field trips for my congregation in November. I changed my field trips at Shalem Academic Center for next year. I volunteered to take Palestinian kids to the beach. I hope to learn Arabic this year…. We’ll see….

I’m trying to put together a similar program with Encounter for my students—I brought up the idea. Mainly, I’m trying to work through what I saw and I’ve been talking about it with so many people.

**Resources that can help promote action on the conflict**

* **Moshe:**
* An alumni platform with small stipends.
* **Yael Milgalter:**

— A setting that will help and encourage members of the group to stay in touch, to get together, and to work together on a plan to take joint action. A setting that will encourage learning—a package of webinars, lectures, recommended reading, etc., so I won’t have to find the information sources by myself.

* **Lior:**
* Collaborating with the Encounter team.
* **Shira:**

— I’m still trying to understand what I saw and heard. But it’s clear to me that it’s important (if possible) for Encounter to help us acquire the skills to tell the stories of those who do not have a voice.