January 15, 2017

**Three Proposals for Joint Projects: Beit Avi Chai and Nissan Nativ**

Presented by Efem Rinnenberg

**1. Midrash on a Word: “Tractate *Dam*”:**

This work will focus on the concept of *dam* (blood) in Jewish and cultural contexts, both traditional and contemporary.

**Process:** The midrashic process will examine the meanings, significance and issues related to the concept of *dam* as understood in the Talmud. This will take us on a journey from blood used in the sacrificial service, through usage of the word *damim* to mean money, close family (as in “blood relationships”), and on to menstrual blood. Students will be introduced to the various study styles of the *Beit Midrash* (*Havruta* study, different approaches of the traditional commentaries, the myriad of voices of modern exegesis, etc.) and a wide range of texts (Written and Oral Torah, Midrash, early and late commentaries—from Rashi through contemporary secular writers).

**Relevance:** This work will attempt to uncover connections between present-day realities and the world of these concepts. What meaning does *dam* have in our sterile, virtual, scientific world? What place does it have in a world of globalization? What meaning does it have in 21st century Israel?

**Outcome:** This process will give birth to a theatrical piece in which we seek a system of theatrical images that is both timely and accessible to the general public, while maintaining the multi-faceted voice of the dramatic, poetic and philosophical layers of Jewish text, giving it additional interpretation by means of innovative modes of expression.

**2. Midrash on a Character: “Tractate David”**

This work will focus on the character of David, as reflected in the various layers of Judaism and global culture, by studying the relevance of this fascinating character to contemporary times.

**Process:** The midrashic work would focus on David's complex character as it appears in the Bible, in the midrash, and in secular literary texts that deal with David's character.

**Relevance:** The production will strive to examine the topical and social contexts derived from studying this individual. This includes questions of governance, unification and division among the people, relations between an established elite and an emerging new generation, as well as questions of violence. The production will expose different perspectives on David: as a warrior, a poet, man of God, a lover, a man of letters and a quarrelsome individual.

**Outcome:** We will create a modern production that will offer different models of leadership, and relationships between a nation and its leaders. The production will be based on a variety of different practices of theatrical text, ranging from dramatic chorus to spoken text, and from dramatic monologue to song. This will allow us to talk about David's character in contemporary language to the modern-day viewer.

**3. Midrash on rituals**

This work will attempt to encourage the viewer to grapple with all of the complexities and implications of Jewish ritual ceremonies, like the Passover Seder and the *Ushpizin* on Sukkot.

**Process:** As in the previous proposals, this work will interact with the broad range of works on the Jewish bookshelf, although in this case we will attempt to move beyond the text and examine the ceremonial act itself. We will explore changes that have taken place in these ceremonies over the generations, and we will survey how they were celebrated in different historical periods and in different cultures. This will lead to a deeper understanding of the inner workings of Jewish ritual, built on a shared spiritual, unifying experience.

**Outcomes and Relevance:** In the course of this production we will attempt to create a “new-old” ceremony that will be based on the classic celebratory structure, while at the same time offering the opportunity to include texts and topics that will be discovered to be relevant to the current experience of Jerusalem in our times.

This ceremony could be interactive, with audience participation, so that audience members can become actors in the stage event. They will become part of a live connection with Jewish content – a creative connection, full of color and the joy of creating – that connects our days to those of yesteryear.

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