

## **Zippori: Thinking about the Past, Dreaming about the Future**

*Zippori has a two thousand-year history of creativity, dialogue, and learning. In November 2017, Oranim International School hosted a day devoted to thinking, talking, and dreaming together about new directions for innovative educational programming based around Zippori.*



This exciting think tank day was the result of the vision and generosity of Mr. Robert Deutsch, whose parents and family have been long-time supporters of Zippori.

### **Open and Authentic Dialogue**

The event brought together a wide range of people representing the various stakeholders in the future of Zippori, including: the Central Galilee – Michigan Partnership, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, KKL JNF, the regional council of Emek Yizrael, the Jewish village of Zippori, the Arab community that left the town of Saffuriya (located around what is now Zippori) in 1948, and Oranim College of Education. This was a unique opportunity for all of these people and organizations to sit together, think deeply, and share in an open and authentic dialogue about the educational potential of Zippori for Israeli society. Rabbi Marc Rosenstein, Director Emeritus of the Galilee Value Foundation, facilitated the dialogue.

### **Diverse Narratives**

The day began at Oranim College exploring the diverse narratives around Zippori and how they shape the past and future of Zippori. Mr. Robert Deutsch opened by sharing his vision for the day. A panel was held entitled: “Zippori-Sepphoris-Saffuriya: Past, Present, Future.” Dr. Mary Tutry of Oranim College spoke about Arab Israelis who were displaced from their homes in 1948 but remained within Israel, including many of the residents of Saffuriya. Mr. Ziyad Aweisy, physiotherapist and member of the Committee of Internally Displaced Persons, described his family’s experience of leaving Saffuriya in 1948, their hopes of returning, and his own activism to make that happen. Dr. Anat Yisraeli, Dean of the Faculty of Education at Oranim College, explored Zippori’s rich Jewish history as a place of Jewish pluralism, creativity, and multiculturalism, where Jews and Romans lived side by side.

A dialogue followed in which participants shared their own stories and hopes for Zippori, and listened to one another. As Dr. Anat Israeli said, listening to one another’s stories is the beginning of healing. Ideas included building a Jewish-Arab educational center in Zippori, and using Zippori as a basis for a practical

project that brings Jews and Arabs in the region together for their mutual benefit, such as an environmental project.

### **Experiencing the Site**

After lunch, most of the group travelled to Zippori to experience the site itself and were met by others interested in Zippori. Ms. Eti Coriat-Aharon, Director of the Northern Region of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, welcomed the group. After everyone enjoyed a lovely reception, they convened in the ancient synagogue to hear a beautiful performance from the Shimshit Band, local Jewish and Arab young people who make music together. The group then explored highlights of the excavations at Zippori with Dror Ben Yosef, Director of Archaeology at the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, and participated in a creative text study. There was a lively discussion of the ancient Talmudic texts.

### **Future Educational Directions**

A concluding discussion gave participants the opportunity to share concrete ideas for future educational directions. Specific ideas raised for using the site of Zippori included: developing a retreat center, building a Center for Tolerance, making a Beit Midrash for exploring current issues in the public sphere, and creating an annual festival. All of these ideas would connect and integrate diverse groups in Israeli society and visitors from around the world. The success of any of these initiatives would depend on the cooperation of all of the organizations represented at the think tank day.

Participants left Zippori with hopes of continuing the conversation and working together to make their dreams a reality. This [website](#) provides a forum for continued discussion and joint projects.