



May 16, 2019

Month of Mercy

For a large portion of the population in Israel and around the world, this is a particularly important month – in Islam, it is the holy month of Ramadan. Inspired by this holiday, a new initiative has been launched which calls for solidarity between peoples and religions.

About a month ago, Mahat Acco ORT Technology High School, led by Eyad Saleh, received the Israeli Hope Prize from the President of Israel Reuven Rivlin. At the event, Salah gifted the President the book “It Takes a Village,” which serves as a foundation for a common language of parents and educators of adolescents in the multi-faceted Israeli culture.

“Acco as a city is a microcosm of Israel – people from all different cultures and religions live in Acco and live together in harmony,” says Eyad Saleh, 40, who has been the principal of Mahat Acco ORT Technology High School for the past six years. Salah is also spearheading the “Month of Mercy” initiative – which was developed together with the staff of educators at the school, in cooperation with the Village Way Educational Institute. The initiative includes a new website which contains educational content in Arabic and Hebrew, and provides a platform to learn about the values which are at the foundation of the month of Ramadan.



Award Ceremony, from left: President Reuven Rivlin, Yuta Muati, Principal of Weizmann High School in Acco, Eyad Saleh, Principal of Mahat Acco Ort High School, and Shimon Lankri, Mayor of Acco

Muslim, and Christian. And we also see that there is leadership in the police, who work to unify and connect.” It sounds like Heaven, I say to him, “It really is Heaven, compared to other places” he responds, “but it’s not that there are no problems – there is room to improve in every place, and of course in Acco as well. But if we talk about the dramatic polarization in Acco, that is less prevalent. We are succeeding in creating something different here. What does still happen, and can lead to polarization in the future, is ignorance, meaning a lack of knowledge of the cultures, customs, and goals of the different sides. Among other things, this is the reason that we created this initiative also translated into Hebrew, so that Jews can also learn about Ramadan and learn about what stands behind it.”



“Residents of the city come from all the different cultural groups in Israel” he continues, “and there is mutual respect, due to the leadership of the mayor, the relationship of the religious leaders, Jewish,

Eyad Saleh – Principal of Mahat Acco ORT Technology High School



Connecting the Youth to Values

“One of the ways to connect is to learn, and this is how this new initiative was created, from a place of connecting, we translated the game and the website into Hebrew,” says Salah. “The idea is to spread the initiative across Israel in order to create a connection between peoples, and not just for teenagers but also for adults.” But the initiative was not intended for Jews, but first and foremost for Muslims, with the intention to connect the Muslim population to the values of giving, modesty, and introspection. “Which are values similar to those of Yom Kippur,” says Salah.

Why is there a need to connect the Muslim population to Ramadan? “In recent years we are witnessing a growing phenomenon,” he explains. “People are getting away from practicing the rituals and traditions of the holy month of Ramadan, which is a month that contains very important values such as generous behavior, charity, giving, and acts inspired by the Prophet Muhammed. Instead, some Muslims engage in trivial things, like wasting huge amounts of food, watching a lots of television (or any other screen), staying up late until all hours of the night at coffee shops and public parks, and more.”

Time and Opportunity in Ramadan

The Village Way educational philosophy is one that Eyad Saleh and his staff know well. It is an approach that is implemented by educators from different groups in Israeli society (including ultra-orthodox) in dozens of schools, youth villages, and therapeutic communities. The Village Way is taught at universities and colleges of education, and is described in depth in the best-selling book *It Takes a Village* by Dotan Levi, published by Kinneret Zmora-Bitan. The philosophy is based on the understanding that education leads society, and does not follow behind it. In the Village Way, holidays and special days on the calendar serve as tools and opportunities for the educator.

One of the games that was developed and shared on Jewish and Arab social media is a game about time and opportunity during Ramadan, which lets the players learn about the guiding values of this month and the original sources, and to share thoughts, feelings, and activities about charity, giving, mercy, and more.

The website includes videos, games, and content suitable for different ages, in Arabic and Hebrew.

Ramadan Kareem – Happy Ramadan



An example of the game, relating to the value of generosity.



Staff of Mahat Acco Ort Technology High School



School staff developing the Month of Mercy initiative