

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE FROM ISRAEL FOR THE UN DAY OF VESAK 2010

**From Dr. Itamar Bashan and Dr. Thor Gonen
Bhavana House, Dhamma center, Tel-Aviv,**

Dear Friends in the Dhamma,

Thank you so much for welcoming us so warmly. This auspicious gathering is an opportunity to meet and learn from dear Dhamma friends that gives us courage and mental support in our effort to cultivate and propagate the Buddha-Dhamma in Israel.

Israel, as other countries represented in this conference, is very much a mixture of extremes, of heaven and hell, bitter conflicts and beauty. In a confusing mixture of contrasts and a continual threat of war - what can one take refuge in? People try to find refuge in an arrogant nationalism and divisive ideologies, in personal fame, in financial and professional success, but alas, of no avail. They live in blindness and fear. All these are not sustainable conditions for inner peace and harmonious and conscious relationships among beings, and can not be a true remedy for the human condition.

But there is another possibility. As it has been said by the Buddha, in the Samyutta Nikaya 35.135, in realms where sense objects are totally disagreeable or totally agreeable it is very difficult to practice the path, because one is distracted either by utter pain or by total pleasure. In Israel, a land of milk and honey, overflowing with bloodshed and hatred, there is an excellent opportunity and a real necessity to practice the Dhamma. Indeed, what we plant in the affluent, sated, and yet anxious Israeli society is the urge to practice awareness before it will be too late. To walk the Path as long as one can. To wise-up.

This is our effort at Bhavana House, and in our daily work in psychotherapy and in education, where we strive to go against the stream of the dominating values in the sick and semi-anarchistic society that we live in. We try to sow the seeds of good-will, harmlessness and renunciation with a sense of urgency, as the mountains of death are rolling very fast from all directions in the Middle-East. May all leaders wise up.

We thank and congratulate with joy and deep gratitude the lay and monastic sangha, the individuals, committees, organizations, governments and Mahachulalongkorn University, which made this UN day of Vesak celebration 2010 possible. May this gathering

be fruitful and bring comfort and healing to all Nations. May all beings be free from suffering.