The Committee on Drug Abuse
Committee Chair: Youth need a spiritual uplift not drugs!

At today’s Committee meeting, there was a discussion on: Drugs – What do we lack?? An examination of alternatives for leisure culture, with the aim of examining the root of the drug problem, clarifying what causes youth to cut themselves off from life through drugs.

Participating in the discussion were students from the school for young ambassadors, a welcome initiative by Ms. Rachel Amrani, the coordinator of programmes and projects at the school – a joint project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Petach Tikva Municipality that provides a leisure time response to carefully selected youth to represent Israel at home and abroad. Also participating in the discussion were representatives of the Ministry of Education, The Israel Anti-Drug Authority, and the National Youth and Student Council.

Committee Chair, MK Nissim Ze’ev: “Our youth need a spiritual uplift, not drugs! The drug problem is a real threat that damages social stability and was once defined by Prime Minister Arik Sharon as a strategic threat. As a member of various Knesset committees, including the Foreign Affairs & Defence Committee, I see the Committee on Drug Abuse as vitally important, the second most important committee after the Foreign Affairs & Defence Committee. As Committee Chair, I believe that the solution is to be found in identifying the root of the problem that causes many to choose drugs and alcohol as alternatives, followed by obvious deterioration.

“It is necessary to reach the root [of the problem] and I will reinforce my words by quoting from the Torah Portion of the Week: “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him: ‘Up, make us a god who shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.’”

“The People of Israel sought something spiritual to uplift them. When people do not find spirituality, then the alternative is clearly deterioration: “And whoever understands the ways of harm . . .” One must recognize the harm in order to beware of it, harm overtakes a person. A person must know the strength of evil, the strength of the drug, in order to protect himself and take care.
I call on you, young ambassadors, to send out this message to others.”

In a dialogue with the young ambassadors, they expressed their opinion that the environment that pushes the youth to use drugs is full of emptiness, boredom, lack of meaning, helplessness and they therefore make an unsuccessful attempt to dissipate all this with the false illusion that drugs make you happy.

The solution they proposed: to find something that will interest the youth, find the way to their hearts and give them a real answer, and only then will they not need drugs. It is possible to succeed in life without drugs; they gave themselves as an example. Their leisure time fulfills them and provides personal satisfaction, a sense of personal security, a contribution to society. Everything depends on the will – what are the values for success and happiness that society gives me.

Another position they presented: youth rebel against their parents who pressure them, perhaps it is forbidding things too aggressively that causes them to use drugs and alcohol.

The principal of the school for young ambassadors, Haim Meitlis: We have to educate the parents, education begins with the basics; by adolescence the youth are almost uncontrollable.

The Israel Anti-Drug Authority, Rikki Tzimir: We must create a leisure culture for the young people who are living in a vacuum.

The Ministry of Education: Our young people are in a state of emptiness and boredom. Today there are almost no barriers left to break down. Everything arises from the search for the meaning of life. We therefore give them tools for the meaning of life, for example, how to change risk into chance, and we do all we can so that they can find some meaning in life and deal less with emptiness.
The Committee on Drug Abuse
Chair: MK Nissim Ze’ev

17th Knesset

Av 5767 – July 2007
A Word from the Chairman

On 27.6.2006 I was privileged to be appointed by the Knesset Speaker and confirmed by the Knesset House Committee as Chairman of the Committee on Drug Abuse.

This has been a very significant year in the fight against drug abuse. But despite all our efforts, we are still a long way from having a drug-free society. Although we are in a race against time and are doing all we can to combat this malignant evil, we are still far from seeing an end to it.

We are in a hopeless race against criminals who continually seek new drugs not yet included in any ordnance on illegal drugs. This is a very serious matter since the youngster who uses the new drug is not even considered to be breaking the law. By the time we update the ordnance regarding the new drug, it is already too late and there is a new drug on the market not covered by any specific drug ordnance.

We need to introduce analog drug ordnances, as is the case in Britain and the USA, that would include all possible chemical variations on existing illegal drugs and so make enforcement easier.

However this means of action will only help in enforcement, it will not put an end to the phenomenon. We must attack the problem at its root, and to do this we must understand what our youth are going through and why they turn to drugs. In order to understand all this, we must look at the basic elements of human nature.

Man is a creature born with one thought and goal and that is to acquire pleasure and happiness. We have a saying “if he’s given a finger he wants the whole hand”. The natural desire for pleasure is what controls a person’s life. This desire, however, is not evil, it is what motivates and drives us to want better things. This desire is what led mankind to move ahead and develop so that we now have a whole multitude of good things in communications, science, society and economics – all we need do is select what we want.

This situation, however, leads to helplessness, depression and an enormous sense of emptiness, immediately followed, of course, by turning to drugs. A research study undertaken by Prof. Shmuel Shulman of Bar-Ilan University indicates that one third of the young people in Israel are searching for themselves, are searching for meaning in their lives. The study shows that the young people choose to go to India so as to avoid facing the daily need to deal with their lives and the difficult
decisions that must be taken. A survey carried out by Dr. Rahel Bar-Hamburger, the Chief Scientist of the National Authority for the fight against drugs and alcohol, indicates that 55% of the young people who traveled in the East report that they used drugs, while 30% of them decided to use drugs for the first time during their trip. The survey also shows that 85% of all young Israelis who go to India for more than 6 months use drugs. (From the Conference “The Rush to India as a Metaphor”, Bar Ilan University, 27.5.07).

Our youth face helplessness and unhappiness. Life offers them everything, but this very abundance undermines them. They feel that nothing can fill the emptiness they feel inside them. This reality seems to them a place they can no longer bear. They cannot deal with or fight the suffering and pain they feel within them, and seek an answer to the question: “What is the point of my life?” But when the society around them fails to understand them and all appears hopeless, all that remains to escape the pain is to run away, to flee to another reality, where pain and suffering disappear, even if only for a short time, yet during that time they feel free, without worries, truly in another world.

The huge vacuum in their hearts is now closed and they feel happy in their false reality and need fight the pain no longer. We need to help these young people to find meaning in their lives, to find their way; we need to give them guidance to help them understand their place in our society. We need to give them some point to their lives. To show them that escape to a false reality – escape to drugs – will not help them close up the enormous abyss in their souls. We must use all our power to relieve their suffering and pain. They are the next generation, they are our future and this is our duty.

Only together can we succeed!!

In light of the above, my Committee intends to examine the efficacy of Israel’s policy on drugs and its response to the serious drug abuse problem, so as to save Israeli society and the coming generations.
Madam Mayor, pupils and distinguished guests, I am pleased to have the honour to chair the Committee on Drug Abuse at the Knesset and to contribute to the determined fight against drugs from my wide experience in the field of welfare.

We have gathered here with the sincere intention of doing everything possible to develop a quality leisure culture that will put a halt to the spread of the malignant problem of drug abuse that is an immediate and existential threat to all humanity.

This gathering has been undertaken in the realization that today’s youth experience a sense of emptiness and lack of satisfaction that are the root of the problem. Even though drugs and alcohol have been known to human society for thousands of years, they have never represented such a real and existential threat to humanity as they do today.

Humanity has developed rapidly throughout history and has now reached an era where our knowledge has broken every boundary in technology, economics, communications, culture. It seems that there is no boundary that man has not broken through. Yet despite all the enormous bounty of the world, the individual does not find satisfaction from all this enormous wealth.

It is well known that the basic essence of any person is that most primitive desire, “the desire for pleasure”. Man lives his life with a single goal and that is to enjoy. This desire is inborn and is what drives us; it is the fuel that drives us in the search for happiness.

When the World Heath Organization informs us that the illness of Depression has spread so far that it will soon head the list of the most common illnesses, we need to take fast action. Our youth is not satisfied, they feel empty and lost and have nowhere to turn except to drugs and we must take swift action to prevent this. We are witness to the fact that many of our youth have reached the point of
emptiness, lack of happiness, depression and that there is no escape from these difficult feelings other than one choice – to escape this difficult reality to a world of illusion where they have no need to make an effort to cope. The youth seek the elixir of life but fall into a false illusion.

However, we know that another important element in this whole structure is the environment the person lives in. People are totally and inevitably under the control of the opinions of their society, and it is their environment that determines all their values and preferences and the nature of their desires.

At this conference we must design a system that will take these two elements – a person’s will and his environment – and combine them in the best and most appropriate way for our youth. Our task is to build an appropriate environment for the youth that will be rooted in mutual accountability, mutual responsibility, on “Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself”. As soon as each one gives a little of him/herself, despite his primordial desire – to receive, then the world will be a different place, where I thoughts will no longer focus on “Me and myself”, but on “All Israel is responsible for each other”.
Event of the Israel Anti-Drug Authority– Summary for 2006

Address by the Chair, MK Nissim Ze’ev

Chairman of the Authority Ronny Douek,
Director General of the Authority, Mr. Haim Messing,
Distinguished guests,

I have the privilege of chairing the Knesset Committee on Drug Abuse and of bringing to this my rich past experience in the field of welfare. I would now like to describe, as we gather here to summarize the past year, the roots of the problem and the only solution.

Both we and the whole world are witnessing the spread of the terrible scourge of drug abuse. This is an immediate and existential risk to the future of our society, our youth and all of humanity. This situation demands that we discuss the problem and find a way to solve it.

We know that everything in nature is powered by an engine that drives it to survive and live. This is “the desire to survive” or the life-force. The highest level of the life-force is in mankind. Man is the only creature whose development is totally dependent on others. Man influences his environment and the environment influences him. He is continually changing, not only because things are good or bad for him in his current situation, but also as a result of the sense of the other that causes him to desire whatever the other has. For this reason the life-force in man is called the ego, the “desire for enjoyment” or the “desire to receive pleasure and satisfaction”. Thus the internal engine that drives us forward and that is the cause of the whole process that happens within each individual and in human society, is the desire for enjoyment. The development of the desire is continuous and it shapes both the present and the future we walk towards.

Today human society has reached a very great crisis. We have a developed economy, advanced technology and open and liberal media – yet it seems that none of these great things man has created and developed bring him enjoyment and satisfaction. Man is no longer satisfied with what the world offers him. Oscar Wild once wrote:
“In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it. The last is much the worst; the last is a real tragedy!”
We see this particularly among the youth. They see no point in anything they do. They are hardly interested in anything. Only a few weeks ago, I participated in a conference on developing a quality leisure culture for youth since the conclusion had been reached that society is the tool that causes people to change. Man is a social creature and is influenced by society. When we improve our society and develop quality culture around our youth, we shall give them a meaning and a point for life – satisfaction and enjoyment and not emptiness and frustration that cause them to sink into depression, drugs, and G-d forbid, suicide.

As the Bible says: “See I have given you life and goodness as well as death and evil and you chose life so that you may live.” The question is does man need advice and guidance in order to choose life and goodness instead of evil and death? Man simply needs to avoid harming himself.

In every living body there is a noticeable interesting phenomenon: if we examine each cell separately, as an individual unit, we shall see that it functions as a total egoist, “thinking” only of itself. However if we look at it as part of the whole system, as one cell within a body, we see that it takes for itself only the minimum necessary for its own existence, while all the rest of its activity is focused on the body. It behaves as an altruist, “thinking” only of the good of the whole body. However, when even one cell ceases to behave like that, rather “thinking” of itself and multiplying and developing without control and without [concern for] the needs of the body, there develops what we call cancer.

Cancer is a state where the body is destroyed by its own cells which begin a process of uncontrolled self-duplication, while devouring all the surrounding cells without any consideration for them. The cancerous cells destroy their environment, and so make space for their own growth. They thus subordinate the work of the entire body for their own benefit. The cancerous cell does not consider its environment but kills the whole body and as a result, itself also.

“Man is a small world, the world is a large man” said “The Ari”, Rabbi Yitzhak Luria. This sample is a symbol of our society and of the whole world. Human society may be altruist or egoist. In this example we see how society is like the living body, how it influences the individual within it and how the individual influences the whole of society. And this is the change I seek

As the Rambam (Maimonides), says: Man will always see itself as half guilty and half innocent. If he does something good, he balances himself and the whole world to the side of innocence and, G-d forbid, the other way too. We see therefore, that
the influence of the individual on the whole is very great, and man should not minimize his own self worth in regard to his influence and his ability over all of society.

We see how much our youth use drugs. These children no longer find satisfaction in life. They seek a point and a meaning to life and find nothing and therefore feel emptiness, confusion and a terrible sense of loss. The deep and painful feelings paralyze them so that they lack the will and ability to cope with the difficult reality - which leads them to drugs. The drugs sell them the illusion of a better reality but it is the drug of death.

Nevertheless life teaches us that when giving, loving, and influencing, man can enjoy. A wonderful example of this is a mother nursing her baby and giving it everything. The more the child receives, the greater is her pleasure so that there is in fact no limit to the mother’s pleasure.

There are cases where what a person sees as good and the life he chooses are mistaken choices, but he thinks that is what is good and is the point of life, despite the fact that that point and that life brings him to disaster. As the young people today say, “lets have a good time”, “lets have fun”, while in fact they are mistaken in the path [they choose] and they must be helped to find a better and more correct way so that they “choose life”. For even with life and with goodness, there is a choice and a person must examine himself and not follow the lost society.

In light of all this, the solution is a change in all of us, in our way of thinking, not about ourselves but about the other! Our fellow man! Rabbi Akiva spoke of society as a spiritual society that operates according to the rule “Love they neighbour as thyself”. Only together, united, in mutual responsibility, “as one man with one heart”, can we win this war over the deep crisis in our society. This is exactly like the condition for a healthy body with the harmonious functioning of all the cells with each taking only what is necessary for its own survival while the rest is given up the benefit of other cells in order to achieve wholeness.
Research Study: a third of young Israelis are “trying to find themselves”

30% of young Israelis are looking for a meaning to their lives – according to a study presented yesterday at Bar-Ilan University. According to the findings of the study, many of those young people, aged 20-30, choose to go to India, since it is particularly easy to avoid making decisive choices there.

The study, carried out recently by Prof. Shmuel Shulman of Bar Ilan University was presented yesterday at the conference: “The Rush to India as a metaphor”. These people are drawn to India because it is appropriate to a state of indecision and of fixation”, said Prof. Shulman yesterday. “India offers a certain opening, an expectation that something will happen and things will sort themselves out. When [these young people] talk of their characteristics they mention self criticism so severe that it becomes negative. For example, a person who has an anxiety attack from fear of getting married. Nobody can ever promise him/her that “everything will work out”. The doubts and continual self examination prevent him/her from moving forward. A person like this finds refuge in a place like India.”

According to a survey presented at the Conference, about 55% of the students who traveled in the Far East before beginning their studies reported that they used drugs. About 30% of them decided to use them for the first time during their trip. The survey, carried out among some 7000 students from 12 institutes of higher education in Israel, were presented by Dr. Rachel Bar-Hamburger from Bar Ilan University.

Yael Levy
ta’am ha’Hayim – “the meaning of life”
“or the point of living”

What is the drug of life???
The Committee on Drug Abuse

I want never-ending pleasure because that’s my nature.
If something’s important for me I run till I’m worn out, with a strong will
to find the drug of life –
that’s what drives me.

To find the drug of life –
that’s what drives me.

It is one’s will that creates thought . . .
The more important you think something is,
the greater your efforts –
You give your whole self to achieve the supreme goal

I always want to feel pleasure, That’s all I ever want, And I really hate not feeling pleasure; I don’t want that at all, Because that’s the source of suffering and so I always reject it

You are young, and want to find pleasure that will never ever end, You feel that you want it and have to try,
To be like everyone else
part of the crowd,

to be liked – to be popular

to be liked – to be popular
(continue)
To be liked – to be popular
to be loved,
you want to be free and
happy
and you seek happiness . . .

and you seek happiness . . .

and you seek happiness . . .
You want to free yourself from the chains of self and depart on a wonderful journey to uncover the meaning of life and to feel exalted.

Choose the best path for you
The most worthwhile path for you

For the drug of life is to seek and find the meaning and purpose of life.
Drugs are not the meaning of life!!!