

Why I love Israel

Based on the Quran

By an Arab, Egyptian, with a Muslim background and an ex-member of one of the most fanatical Islamic groups in the history of Islam (JI).

Tawfik Hamid

I am a typical Arab Egyptian with a Muslim background. As any Arab, I was brought up on hating Israel and the Jews. When I was four years old, the dehumanisation of the Jews everywhere around me led me to imagine them as green ugly people, full of evil.

At the age of six or seven my father who was secular and open minded was reading a history book when he showed me a photo.

This photo will never be erased from my memory as it was of a family without clothes and the father had his eyes open in a combination of fear, shock and inability to believe what was happening to him and his family.

My dad said to me "these people are called Jews and someone who is called Hitler put them in ovens to burn them alive". My dad was telling this from a purely historical point of view. I went to my room and wept over this man and these people.

Since then, everything has changed in my mind regarding the Jews and despite the extreme hatred toward them in the media, in the schools, and everywhere around me, I could not hate them, and, in fact I sympathised with them.

This created a feeling in me that I should meet these people, talk to them, and try to understand them.

As I grew up the hatred in my community was increasing but my feelings did not change.

One day, in my school in Egypt, the teacher asked us to draw something called Bahr Albaqar. They told all the students that Israel attacked a kindergarten and killed the Egyptian kids intentionally. They portrayed Israel and the Jews as bloodsuckers who enjoyed killing young Arab kids.

I drew this on a sheet of paper as I was a young student and I had to obey the teacher, but my feelings toward the Jews remained the same and my desire to see them and talk to them had not changed.

When I was 15 years old, I met on a family occasion with a doctor who used to work in the area of Bahr Albaqar and he told me the shocking truth. The man told me that this area was only a military area and the commander of it had decided to open a kindergarten for the kids of those who worked in the military unit just 48 hours before the Israeli attack. Consequently when Israel attacked it, they were attacking it on a military basis because they never knew of the sudden unpredicted decision of the commander of this military unit.

When I heard this I felt that my whole government was betraying all of us just to make us hate Israel and to portray the Jews as blood suckers.

The moment I heard this story was the moment when I really felt I had been betrayed all of my life.

I decided not to believe my government any more when they talked about Israel, and my desire to talk to the Jews and hear their views from their point of view, increased.

After this stage I joined one of the Islamic movements in the late 1970's which was one of the most fundamental Islamic groups back then called (Jamaha Islamia). This was the group that produced Alzawahire, the top organiser of Alquaida.

After a relatively short period of time I started to feel that my personality that had been open to others, that had accepted differences, and that loved peace, was changing gradually into a real evil personality.

I felt I would become a real satanic beast if I continued with this group so I started to withdraw from the group "JI" and I developed a new small peaceful sect within the Islamic religion itself. This sect was not only peaceful, but also was tolerant of differences, and promoted love, care, and compassion to all humans irrespective of their deeds.

According to this sect, which followed only the Quran rather than Hadith (written traditions about Mohamed or Sunna) I had a totally different view about Israel and the Jews, as you will see next.

Based on my interpretation of the Quranic verses, which was based on literal pure language interpretation rather than a historical view, I used to love the word, love the meaning, and love the concept of Israel.

Let me now explain this to you in more detail.

The word Israel for me was the name of one of the greatest prophets that is described in the Quran among those who shed tears when they listen to the words of G-d. Just read the following verse to understand my feeling toward the word "Israel":

(Quran 19:58 those were some of the prophets on whom God did bestow His Grace, of the posterity of Adam, and of those who we carried (in the Ark) with Noah, and of the posterity of Abraham and Israel of those whom we guided and chose. Whenever the Signs of ((God)) Most Gracious were rehearsed to them, they would fall down in prostrate adoration and in tears.)

As the reader can see, the verse just made me love the word "Israel". Sadly, most Muslims correlate the word Israel to the word "Azraeil" that sounds like Israel but has a totally different meaning, as the latter is the name of the "Angel of death" that takes the life of people. This created a link in the minds of most Muslim children the need to hate the word Israel, as it was linked to death so that the first thing they are brought up with is to hate the word "Israel".

I loved the meaning, because the word Jews in Arabic language is "Yahood". Even though most Arabs hate this word, for me it was the opposite, for the following reason.

The word 'Yahood' in pure literal Arabic language is derived from the word "Hado and Hudna" which means "returned back". This word, according to the Quran, was given as a gift from G-d to the Israelites when they "returned back" to him. The following Quranic verse describes this moment when the Israelites were called "Yahood" because they "Hado or Hudna" or "returned back" to G-d: (7:156 the Israelites said: "And ordain for us that which is good, in this life and in the Hereafter: for we have turned unto Thee 'Hudna llaik'.").

According to this literal Arabic interpretation, I loved the word 'Jews' even more and more.

I used to ask people around me why do you hate the Jews while this beautiful word represents those who "returned back" to G-d. Sadly, I had no answer as the hatred for the Jews among Arabs and Muslims made them blind to any logic.

In addition, to the word Israel and the meaning the word Jews, I also loved the concept of gathering such a wonderful nation from around the earth into their homeland again. For me, according to the Quran, this represented the power of God who saved the Jews from the evil of pharaoh (28:4 Truly Pharaoh elated himself in the land and broke up its people into sections, depressing a small group among them (children of Israel): their sons he slew, but he kept alive their females to rape them: for he was indeed a maker of mischief 28:5 And We wished to be Gracious to those who were being depressed in the land, to make them guiding lights and leaders (in Faith) and make them heirs)

Furthermore, and again according to the Quran itself, God gave the Israelites the land as their promised land (17:104 And We said thereafter to the Children of Israel, "Dwell securely in the land of promise":

The Quran went even further to consider the Promised Land as the permanent inheritance for the Israelites (26:59 Thus it was, but we made the Children of Israel inheritors of such things (the Promised Land)

In addition, the Quran considered that God wrote the Promised Land to the Israelites as a final contract (5:21 "O my people (the Jews)! Enter the holy land, which God hath assigned unto you).

For me, I loved the God that saved his people, kept them alive while more powerful nations disappeared; this was God who kept his promise.

In addition to the above discussion and according to some other unambiguous Quranic verses God will gather the Israelites again into their promised land before the end of the world (Quran [17:104] And we said to the Children of Israel afterwards, " scatter and live all over the world...and when the end of the world is near we will gather you again into the Promised Land").

This last verse proves that the Quran is declaring that it is the will of God himself to gather the children of Israel again into their promised land before the end days. Accordingly, *No Muslim has the right to interfere with the gathering of the Jews in Israel, as this is the will of God himself.*

The latter verse made me look at Israel as the ultimate representation of God's power and the wonderful declaration of his existence.

My view was that if Muslims are unhappy with these Quranic verses they should not blame me as I am not the one who invented them and if they refused these great meanings about the Jews and Israel they should stand, look to the sky and say to "Allah" we are not happy with your Quran!.

I think the reader can now imagine what can happen to a man like me who preached these views in the midst of the Muslim world. I will not tell you what happened as it is violent and will be very painful to many readers, but I will tell you the end result was that I left every thing behind me, my house, my car, my good Job in Saudi Arabia and immigrated to the West.

After this relatively religious stage in which I used to preach Islam in a totally different manner, I started to look at the Middle East from a logical point of view rather than a religious view.

This can be illustrated by this example of when an Egyptian secular person asked me one day "Why do you love Israel". I said to him I want you to think in two countries, country A and country B rather than thinking about Israel and Arabs and just be honest to yourself. Then I said to him country A respects you as a human being who can stand against the government, respects your freedom to choose your religion or belief and if he dared to touch your wife or rape her or otherwise, he would be punished with no mercy, while in country B your basic human rights are not respected, you have no choice for your religion, and the son of its president can rape your wife and no one will dare to say to him "This is wrong".

Obviously I was referring to Israel by country A and to the Arab world by country B in which human right activists are thrown into prison if they speak against the government e.g. Saad Eldi Ibrahim, the Human Rights activist. In Egypt, people cannot change their religion e.g. In Saudi Arabia and many Islamic countries the death penalty is applied to anyone who dares to convert from Islam, and the son of the president can rape the wife of any one and no one can criticise this evil action e.g. Uddai the son of Saddam Hussein used to do this regularly without any punishment.

I then asked my friend, which country do you think you should love more.... is it country A or country B?, which country would you respect more ... country A or country B, and which country would you defend with your own blood...country A or country B?

The man just could not answer my questions and looked to the ground!

As a man who just wants to be honest, I will never forget when the *Israel Air Force* was above Cairo in 1967 in a war that, as usual was initiated by the Arabs. They could have destroyed the whole of Cairo but they did not do that. This for me represents the highest degree of civilisation ever, as I know very well that if the opposite had happened and the Arabs were above Tel aviv with their Air force they would not have hesitated for *even a second* to destroy all of it.

I will never forget Israel the country, Israel the civilisation, Israel the great meaning that put its sons and daughters at risk to find the terrorists who hide amongst civilians to only target them. Israel the democracy that allows different religions to exist on its land (compare this to Saudi Arabia which prevents other people but Muslims from practicing their own religions, does not allow Non-Muslims to build their temples for use in prayer, or to be able to have their religious books).

For these reasons I will never forget Israel... the "Flower" of the Middle East.

When I mentioned the word "Flower" an instant flashback happened in my mind in which I remembered one of the poems I wrote about Israel.

I wrote this poem after I saw a movie called "the pianist" that materialised the suffering of such a great Jewish nation.

It was late at night when the movie was over but I could not stop my hands for writing some words to describe the story of Israel...my hands were shaking and my neck pains were killing me but I continued the story and I wrote:

They want to kill the flower but the flower will never die

Thousands of years ago
A flower was born

it was the most beautiful one among all the flowers
the flower was called Israel

The lord said.... this is going to be my flower to witness my name and speak
about my might and beauty

I will give her a charming beauty and I will make all the earth smell its perfume

The spikes were jealous and they decided to kill the flower
They injured her many times
And its perfume dropped like tears on its soft papers

The flower went sad and started to die...then.....and all of a sudden.... it
awoke and cried... I will never ever die and I will not let the spikes kill me....I will
fight with my perfume and resist their evil with my softness.....and the spikes
surrounded her....and the flower was groaning in pain

.... the lord listened to her groaning and his voice filled the earth and the
skies..."I swear with my holiest name I will never leave you to diemy most
beautiful flower.and I will make the whole earth smell your perfume and see your
charm and beauty".

The Lord promised her a gift.... a new land to grow and blossom
And what the Lord had said ...happened. and the new garden was called...
Jerusalem
And the beautiful flower went to its new land.... and it grew and blossomed.
(I refer here to saving the Jewish nation from the Pharaohs when they were in
Egypt)

The spikes went crazy...and they swore they will throw the flower out of its new
land...and sadly... it happened
(I refer here to the destruction of the first temple)

The flower was in pain and it complained to its G-d
And the Lord swore."I will return you smiling...my beloved flower.... to your land".
the lord kept his promise.... and the beautiful flower returned back to its
garden.....the holiest of holies.....Jerusalem.....and it kept growing and it
blossomed

Then.....all the spikes united and said.... we will not have any mercy with
her this time...and they started to injure her...caused her to suffer pain...made
her sad...and finally..... the flower was bleeding her perfume....
And the perfume was smelt everywhere..

(I refer here to the destruction of the second temple and the dispersion of the
Jews)

The spikes were even more angry...then they decided to cut its green papers...and defame her.... to make her die and to end its perfume.... they did not have mercy with her this time.... her perfume dropped like tears...no one felt for her...they threw her lonely to suffer her pains.... the flower did not find many to feel the pains with her...and its crying got louder and it was heard every where on the earth...and it started to die from the pains.

Andit surrendered to its fate..... in silence.....

(I refer here to the holocaust)

...and in an inevitable moment of deaththe flower remembered the promise of her God...and it remembered the old spikesand its beautiful garden in Jerusalem.... and the flower swore to return back to the land that God promised her

And the flower tolerated the pain and continued fighting with its perfume...and it returned back...believe me it returned back...after a long journey.... to its most beautiful garden.... to grow and blossom

...and after the journey of pain and suffering was over... there was no pain any more and her perfume was smelt all over the earth.... and the flower lived.

(I refer to the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948)

The spikes are still trying again to kill “the Flower”...but it will never dieif we gave her our love...if we sacrificed our blood to protect it...if we spoke loudly every where.....”you will never die our beloved flower.... and you will blossom again in the most beautiful garden.... on the mountains of Zion...you will never shed tears any more.... and God kept his promise”.

When I wrote the poem I sent it to a friend of mine at nearly midnight, it was full of English language mistakes as I had translated it from Arabic (my native language), but I could not stop myself from sharing it with my best Jewish friend who is also a “Flower”.

To conclude, as an observer from within the Arab and Muslim world and as a man who just wants to say the truth and nothing but the truth, I say it loudly that Israel is the *ONLY* light in the Middle East.

Israel is the light of love, democracy, civilization, tolerance, and justice and I pray from the depth of my heart that the light of Israel radiates to cover the darkness around it.

It is a dream...but who knows it may happen.

Do you understand now “why I love Israel”?!

T.Hamid

7 June 2004