

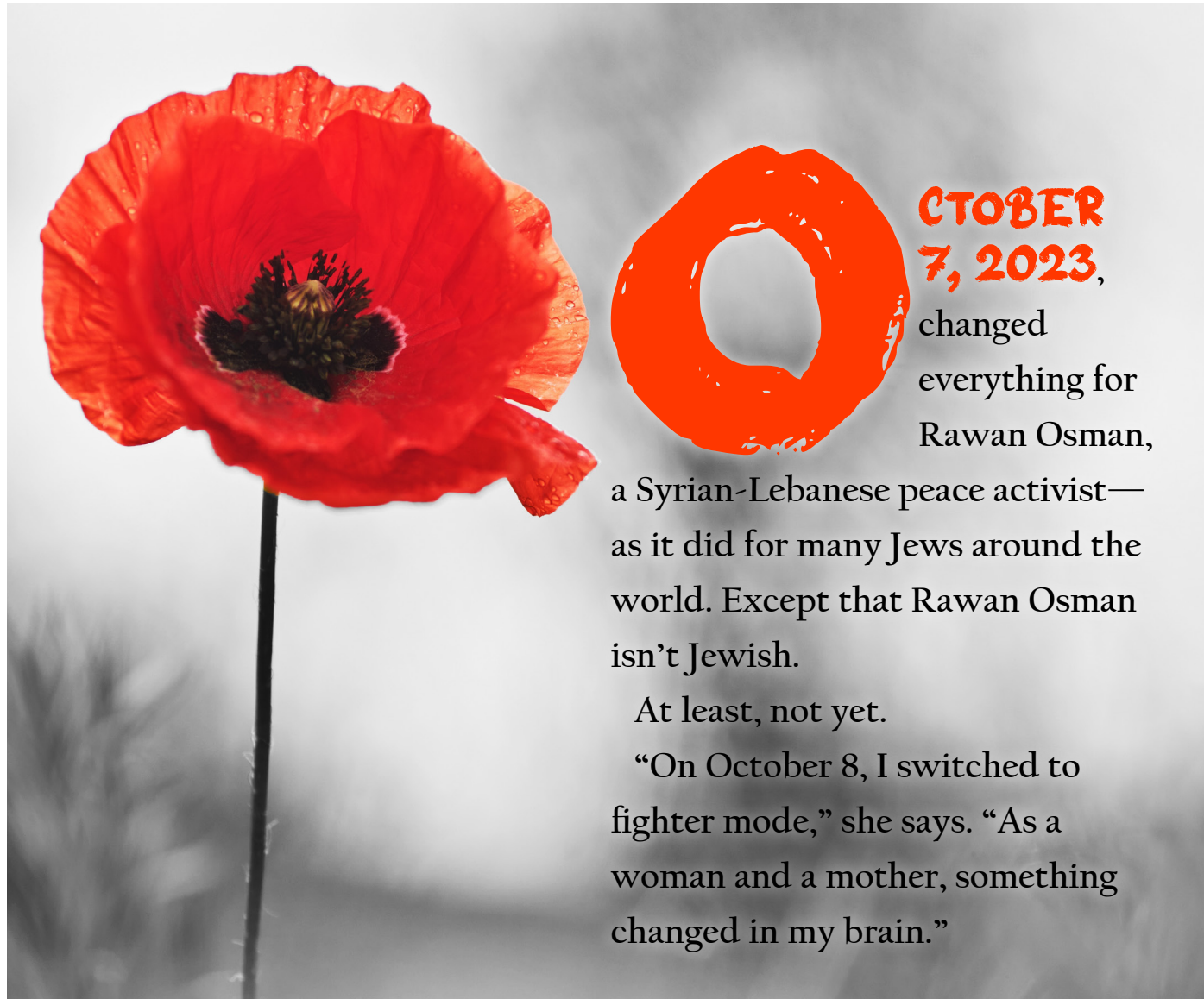
From HATE

Rawan Osman grew up in Lebanon.
She eventually learned the Jews
were not her enemy.

By Malkie Schulman



Love



It was as though she was seeing for the first time, with absolute clarity, exactly whom she, Israel, and the world were dealing with. The October 7 attacks were a brutal reminder that evil exists and that it must be stamped out. “Every Arab bearing responsibility for October 7 must be made to pay for their abhorrent deeds,” Rawan maintains.

Many in the Western world, especially “woke” liberals, have no clue what it means to be a Muslim fundamentalist, she says. People view her as a radical because she refuses to

adapt her message to the left in the West. “They do not understand that the Arabs would eat them alive.”

Many Westerners have no inkling of the anti-normalization laws embedded in the Arab world, forbidding any Arab from having contact with an Israeli. Before the Abraham Accords, it was illegal to communicate with a “Zionist.” In Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Kuwait and Iran—countries that do not recognize the Abraham Accords—it’s still forbidden. These laws target political dissidents. “If you’re accused in Iran of collaborating with a Zionist,

for example, you’ll be thrown in jail,” Rawan explains. “These laws are designed to dehumanize the Jew and demonize the Israeli. People in the West distance themselves from this truth.”

When she attempted to speak at a university in Maastricht, Netherlands, the police had to evacuate her for her own safety because Palestinian sympathizers tried to attack her—but Rawan says she will not be silenced. “Not only am I an activist advocating for Israel’s right to exist, but I will not apologize, and I refuse to appease the

Palestinians,” she says. “ Hamas is responsible for the devastation of their people in Gaza, not the Israelis.”

WAKING UP TO THE TRUTH

Born in Syria in 1984 and raised in Lebanon by secular Arab parents, Rawan grew up as a rabid hater of Jews, Israelis and Zionists. “They’re all the same to Arabs,” she says. “I grew up thinking Israelis were monsters and baby killers. I’d never seen a Jew up close in my life. We weren’t allowed to speak to an Israeli. Even as an adult living abroad, it was forbidden. Although the different Arab factions hated each other, the one thing they united around was their hatred of the *Yahud*.”

The Arab narrative was consistent: Jews deliberately target women and children. The Jewish or Israeli perspective was completely omitted. “When I was younger, there was no social media. There was no way to hear anything else.”

As a teenager in Damascus, Rawan bought an Arab-language copy of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler’s book promoting anti-Semitism and Nazi ideology, which was printed in Beirut in 1963 and again in 1995. “At the time, I believed Hitler was good,” she says. “He was glorified in the Arab world. You could find his books everywhere.”

Years later, her Nazi neighbor showed her a different version, claiming his was the authentic one. “The one I had was edited for the Arab world,” she explains. “An Arab author wrote a one-page introduction that wasn’t part of the translation. It was added to make the book acceptable to Arabs. The author wrote that Hitler didn’t belong only to the German people but was one of the few great men in history, and that his intellectual legacy would never perish.” It was part of the steady stream of anti-Jewish propaganda on which Rawan was raised. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a document falsely claiming that the Jews had a plan for world domination, was another staple, treated not as fiction but as fact.

Rawan attended a French Catholic school in Lebanon that was prized for its excellent education. But the story they told about the creation of Israel was a deliberate twisting of history. According to what she was taught, a Jew named Theodor Herzl

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created the Zionist movement to bring Eastern European Jews to Palestine, as if Palestine had been an established country with delineated borders. "That's a distortion," she says. "There was a British Mandate for what the British had named Palestine, but there was no Arab entity called Palestine."

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, modern states like Lebanon, Syria and Kuwait were created. "The Arabs received more than 70 percent of the land that became Jordan," she explains. "But nobody wants to hear that."

She adds that Arab children are taught about the "alleged" destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Arab hatred of the West is tied to the Jews immigrating to Palestine. "In their minds, Western Europe is responsible for bringing the hated Jews to the Middle East."

At the same time, no one ever mentioned the nearly one million Jews uprooted from Arab and North African countries between 1948 and the early 1970s after having lived there for centuries. "They weren't part of the story," Rawan says. "As far as we knew, they didn't exist."

Hatred of the Jews was fanned in other ways as well. Every year on Pesach, she and other students at her Catholic school would gather to watch a graphic, traumatizing film about the origins of Christianity. "The message was clear," Rawan says. "People were crucified because of the Jews." She recalls staring each morning at a religious statue of a mother and her child. "I used to think, *This baby died*

because of the Jews. It made it easy for me to hate them."

In her mid-20s, Rawan moved to the Jewish Quarter in the city of Strasbourg. "I didn't know it was the Jewish Quarter, but even if I had, I wouldn't have thought much about it. Syria also has a Jewish Quarter, but no Jews live there anymore."

When she entered a kosher store in Strasbourg, Rawan came face to face with a Jew for the first time in her life. "I saw a Jew with sidelocks and had a panic attack. I dropped my bags, ran out of the store and hid in my room." Once she recovered, she began to ponder her extreme reaction. "I started thinking how ridiculous my response was and began to question whether, in fact, the Jew was my enemy."

Over time, she came to realize that her entire perception of the Jews had been formed by the infamous Hassan Nasrallah. Until then, she'd been a fan of Hezbollah because, according to Nasrallah's narrative, Israel was the evil occupier of Southern Lebanon. "But after I woke up to the truth that my people and I had been intensely brainwashed, I was filled with outrage. I recognized that all the senseless wars could've been avoided had the Arabs agreed to share the land."

Even so, up until October 7, Rawan—who now refers to herself as a recovering anti-Semite—agreed with Jews in America and Israel who believed that the way to achieve peace was through diplomacy. Many people felt that peace could be achieved through Holocaust education and joint delegations to Auschwitz. In

2021, Rawan participated in the first Arab delegation to the International March of the Living. "It was confusing for Israelis to see Arabs visiting a concentration camp," she acknowledges.

The truth is that Rawan only agreed to head the delegation to Poland if it was only the first stop on the tour. "I'm not into taking people to visit the concentration camps if that's where it ends. It's essential that they go to Israel afterward," she explains. "I don't like Jews being pitied. Yes, learn what happened to them, but then witness what they've built despite the decimation of their people. I want Israel and the Jewish people to command respect."

"I'm a cancer survivor," she continues. "No one knew about it. I went through seven surgeries alone. I don't like being pitied. It's the same with the Jews. It's not about tolerating the 'poor Jew.' We want respect, not sympathy."

The problem with these trips, however, was that they lacked a sense of urgency. If an Arab agreed to learn Jewish history and visit Auschwitz instead of denying it, that was a start, but it wasn't nearly enough. This was more than amply proven on Simchas Torah of 2023.

A SOUL REDISCOVERED

Rawan is the product of a Sunni-Shiite marriage, which indicates that her parents were nonreligious, since these two groups would never otherwise intermarry. "My mother was a child of the Lebanese Civil War [1975-1990], a violent conflict among Shiites, Sunnis, Lebanese Christians and the PLO that resulted in massive destruction and death," she says.

Rawan grew up surrounded by the deep hatred between these sects.



In general, the Sunnis, Shiites and Christians hated each other and did whatever they could to bring each other down. Repelled by this, Rawan, along with many others of her generation, distanced themselves from religion altogether.

"That's why I was an atheist," she says. "I never believed, as we were taught in school, that there was Someone in the sky promising to reward us if we were good. Good to whom, anyway? Each side was trying to convince me that they were the good ones." Since they all spoke and acted ruthlessly toward one another, it was obvious to her that there was something rotten in all of them.

Eventually, Rawan met a British engineer based in Germany and moved there to pursue the relationship. She quips that the real reason she moved to Germany was that she was destined to cover all the anti-Semitic bases. At that point she was still a non-believer, and until 2015, when Germany invited a million Syrian refugees into the country, she hadn't felt any prejudice directed at her as an Arab.

"It was my son who suffered the most after the Syrian refugee influx," she says. "He was taunted: 'You're Syrian, and your mother came to take away our

jobs. We're paying taxes for you.' He was confused, and I was shocked. I had come legally and was working. No one was paying taxes for me."

Germany's reconciliation with the Jews was supposed to be the model, proof that former enemies could make peace. "If it failed," Rawan says, "it would raise the question of whether true reconciliation is possible anywhere." But when the Germans initiated this open immigration policy, it seemed they had no real notion of whom they were letting in...until reports of attacks against Jews began surfacing.

"In Berlin, a Syrian teenager saw a boy wearing a *kippah*. He went over to him and screamed, 'Are you a Jew?' and began beating him on the head with his belt buckle. Someone filmed it and sent it around. I watched, horrified. I kept telling the Germans, 'You have no idea what you've invited into your country.'"

Rawan wrote an article about the mistake Germany had made in allowing in the refugees without having a plan or an understanding of Syrian culture, but nobody in Europe was willing to publish it. Eventually, it was published by a think tank in Washington. "I argued that the policy would lead to the far right gaining power. People didn't

believe me. But look around today at the latest elections, and you'll see I was right."

After that incident, Rawan planned to leave Germany and move to New Zealand or Canada. But Muslims were immigrating everywhere, and she came to a realization. "The Middle East is part of my heritage, and I can't escape it. I needed to accept my past and use it to do whatever I could to help solve the Middle East problem. My parents and I had all suffered from war trauma. I had to do something to stop it."

Since her family had left the Middle East and no longer lived in a Muslim country, Rawan felt safe speaking openly against Hezbollah and Hamas without fear of retaliation against her relatives. Unfortunately, her views put her on the opposite side of the fence from her family. Her father had long since passed away, and although she believes he'd be proud of her activism, the rest of her family disowned her. She says they are so brainwashed that although they now have Jewish friends, they still hate Israel and view it as the enemy.

When Rawan realized she had a responsibility to be part of the solution, she returned to university to learn the religious views of the

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opposing sides. She enrolled at a university in Germany and took both Islamic and Jewish studies, learning the fundamentals of Judaism with a professor who was a Swedish Orthodox rabbi.

Rawan learned about Hashem and was introduced to the idea that what seem like coincidences carry deeper meaning. "I always dismissed coincidences as being no more than chance," she says. "To think there was any deeper spiritual meaning behind them was beneath me. I was a rational thinker." But as she continued studying Judaism, she began to seriously consider that perhaps there is a G-d. "I started recognizing that these seemingly random moments were pebbles Hashem was using to show me the way back home."

For instance, when she thought about moving into the Jewish Quarter in Strasbourg, she realized that life was pushing her in a certain direction. Some years earlier, she had worked for a Syrian sculptor in the Jewish Quarter in Damascus, where she'd witnessed people stealing from the basements of the Jewish houses, selling whatever was valuable. Later, when she went for a job interview at the magnificent Talisman Hotel in Damascus, a friend pointed out an old Jewish woman who was still living nearby. He told her that the hotel had belonged to the woman and that she'd been paid less than \$100,000 for her five-star property.

These moments stuck with Rawan, intimations that there was a story here she hadn't yet grasped.

Over time the pieces came together, and she concluded that we are all from one source—Hashem. She felt that He had given her a gift by allowing her to see the truth. "I was overwhelmed when I realized in my heart that I was Jewish," she states.

Years later, during a walk in Manhattan, she found herself wondering why Hashem had shown her the light, but not everybody else. That's when she realized that Hashem gives everyone a chance to read the signs, even a Hamas terrorist on October 7. "Maybe he sees a child in a safe room and decides not to murder him. That's his choice, his chance. We're always shown the light. It's up to us whether to wake up or not."

In 2021, she spoke to her professor, the Orthodox rabbi. "I told him I was planning to convert. I said, 'Shaul, if you want to be part of my journey, you're welcome.' I discovered the Jews are my people," she says. "It took a long time to be able to say it. The 'rational' part inside of me kept saying, *This lady needs help*. But in fact, I was never comfortable in Lebanon. I was born on that side of the border so that I could understand their language and their ways. Now I'm tired. I'm ready to go back home."

LET MY PEOPLE KNOW

Nevertheless, before October 7, Rawan did not feel comfortable

announcing her decision to convert. "I would tell people I was an Arab. I was acting like many Jews who, after centuries of persecution, are trained to adapt their message to the ear of the enemy. But post-October 7, I believe now is the time to stand proud and tall as a Jew. We're supposed to be a light unto the nations. That's not possible if we keep apologizing for our existence. I proudly wear my *Magen David* out."

More than that, Rawan speaks out on behalf of the Jewish people on social media and any other platform that allows her to voice her perspective. "Hashem made me fearless," she says. "It's my responsibility to speak out."

That's why she eagerly accepted an invitation to speak to the UN in Geneva on March 4, 2025. She says that even though she had to listen to absurdities about Israel being to blame for the horrific situation in Gaza, it was worth it for the 90 seconds she was given to present her views. "I was announced as a Syrian-Lebanese Arab, so they thought they knew what was coming—that I would continue speaking their nonsense."

They were in for a great surprise when Rawan called the Muslim countries out for their hypocrisy in blaming Israel for the plight of the "poor Palestinians" when they'd done nothing to stop the terrorists and hadn't sent aid to the Gazans. She addressed them directly, saying, "If you're really outraged, arrest the Hamas leadership and demand the release of the hostages."

Does she really think she will change the minds of the leaders of the Muslim world? Of course not, she acknowledges, but even small actions create ripple effects in the universe. As she was leaving the courtroom, she noticed two young men crying; they were signaling to her, sending her heart messages. "Maybe they were interns, I don't know," says Rawan. "But it was a

reminder to me that not everybody in that courtroom was insane.”

Another example of the ripple effect occurred in 2015, when the IDF helped Syrians running for their lives from Assad, and Israeli doctors treated them in Israeli hospitals. “There were cynics who said, ‘What did that do? These people will still hate you.’ But you know, since then, many Syrians have refused to participate in pro-Hamas gatherings. I know some of them. They say, ‘We were treated for free in Israeli hospitals. We will not help Hamas.’”

Rawan approaches these situations with open eyes, knowing she will get pushback. She uses these circumstances to her advantage. For example, she was invited by StandWithUs Netherlands,

part of an international organization promoting Israel and combating anti-Semitism, to speak to university students. She knew she’d be facing a hostile crowd.

“The fact is,” she says, “anti-Semitism in the Netherlands didn’t disappear after World War II. It was driven underground, only to resurface after October 7. I went there to educate the Dutch about what really happened.”

But her presence provoked pro-Palestinians. In Maastricht, protesters managed to stop the event. The mayor called it off, ostensibly for Rawan’s safety, after two students were arrested. “The reality,” she says, “is that either the politicians are afraid of the pro-Palestinians, or they’re sympathetic to

their cause.”

Still, Rawan views the outcome as positive. “I couldn’t care less what they call me to my face or on social media. But I did want the world to see how the protesters behave, and to see how the police and the bureaucracy let them get away with it.”

It wasn’t just a random group of protesters who disrupted the event. An associate professor at the university, wearing a mask and a keffiyeh, organized the mob. According to Rawan, his colleagues want him fired, but they can’t act on it. “This is what we’re working against,” she says.

She isn’t fighting this battle alone. She collaborates with other Arab influencers who are pro-Israel, though she admits there aren’t many of them. They exchange ideas and support one another.

Rawan and her team used the momentum to schedule meetings with the mayor, and they connected with a Dutch international lawyer to explore their options. They’re trying to organize a conference in The Hague. Rawan believes European countries need politicians who aren’t easily intimidated, leaders who are brave enough to stand up to terrorists. “In the US, things are beginning to shift because of Trump,” she notes. “If you behave like a thug, you’ll be deported. If you behave like a criminal, your rights will be revoked.”

And they’re making headway even in the Netherlands. The morning after the protest, the hotel manager approached Rawan and asked, “Rough night?”

“How do you know?” Rawan asked.

“You’re on television and in every newspaper.” Then the manager added, “I agree with you. We need radical change here. Even though we’re dramatically outnumbered, we must keep working against the left. Nobody should be allowed to behave this way.”

Rawan says, “We will never stop the true Jew-haters from spreading their hateful rhetoric, but we must make

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their actions illegal. Death threats to Israelis must be illegal; inciting others to riot and destroying public property must cause arrests and be placed on the criminal's public record."

Rawan believes that the work she and her fellow activists do is purposeful. Academics on Lebanese and Syrian news channels are talking of joining the Abraham Accords. The anti-Israel narrative is no longer consistent. Arab countries look at the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco, which have no grievances against Israel and whose economies are booming. They want a piece of that pie. The UAE has removed anti-Semitic content from its educational curriculum; instead, they're teaching students the importance of tolerating differences.

"I have Israeli friends who proudly wear their *kipot* in Abu Dhabi but won't wear them in London. It's not all doom and gloom; things are changing," Rawan asserts. Even in Saudi Arabia, an imam was fired for praising Hamas after the October 7 attacks. "We need to keep working at it and not give up."

CHOOSING BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL

When the IDF confirmed the murder of the Bibas family, including four-year-old Ariel and nine-month-old Kfir, Rawan was in Jerusalem. Each coffin bore the words "Date of arrest, October 7."

"Arrest?" she says incredulously. "How can you arrest a nine-month-old baby? I thought I was going to die, it was so painful."

Rawan describes a class she attended that was based on a lecture by the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, former chief rabbi of England, about G-d and the post-Holocaust era. During and

immediately after the Holocaust, there were Jews who lost their religion while some found it. But the class helped Rawan gain insight into her mission and her understanding of Hashem.

"We have no concept of why the Holocaust happened or why October 7 happened. We don't have to know why Hashem does what He does. We have to stick to our own small brains and make sure *we* don't confuse good and evil.

"The primary victims of October 7 were the leftist Israelis who gave jobs and toys and drove Palestinians to the hospital, the ones who called the Gazans their friends."

The lesson Rawan believes we need to learn is that "we must stop with the mumbo-jumbo imposed by the leftist agenda declaring that everyone is equal and that all we need to solve problems is a hug."

Rawan's primary goal is to remind Jews that there is nothing wrong with them and everything wrong with the world. "Don't make yourself smaller," she exhorts. "You accepted upon yourselves a Divine mission, with all its consequences. You received the gift of the Ten Commandments, the directive to be the light to the nations. Your ancestors knew this and accepted it. Maybe you've distanced yourself, maybe you've forgotten, but stop apologizing. You are still here."

Her message is clear and uncompromising. "Embrace your Jewishness. Embrace your identity. Stand strong and don't allow the nations of the world to gaslight you. And if you're not Jewish, be a righteous person. Stand up for what's right."

This coming summer, Rawan plans to undergo conversion in Eretz Yisrael before settling in her new homeland. Even though she has lost family and friends, Rawan maintains it's worth it.

"I've gained so much more," she says. "This is the price of standing for the truth, and I'll keep paying it." ●