



Amir Tsarfati
Anchor Podcast: Rawan Osman
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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0PgIS_84C0



AMIR: Shalom everyone, I'm Amir Tsarfati and this is one more episode of our *Anchor Podcast*, the anchor that is our hope in this troublesome time. And today here in the Jezreel Valley, we have the honor of hosting Rawan Osman, one of the loudest

and the most courageous voices from originally the Arab world—from not far away from this part of our country—born in Damascus, raised in Lebanon, and now living in Europe, and basically making a difference all over the world with her sound and clear voice, not only against anti-Semitism, but also a voice that is calling for so much unity and hope that we can find if people will be people who think for themselves, who educate themselves, and understand the times and the seasons in which we live. So, without further ado, Rawan. Shalom and welcome to our studio.

RAWAN: Shalom, thank you for having me, Amir.

AMIR: We tried to get you quite a few times over here because honestly, I'll be very honest with you, I never heard about you until October 7th, and ever since October 7th, I get to see you almost every day on social media. I know that you travel the world, I know that you come to Israel very often. And later on you may tell us your journey all the way from not far from here to this country. But let's start with a short introduction because you have a super-unusual story that very few people go through, and I wish it would be more of that. But tell us a little bit about who are you, where are you from and what brought you to where you are today?



RAWAN: Happily. Again, thank you, Amir, especially for your patience, you and your team. We've been trying to do this for more than a year now. You haven't heard about me before October 7th because I was

invisible. I had a very low profile and according to my son, I was a dinosaur on social media. I thought it was a waste of time until I saw how Hamas are using social media as a very effective tool to expand, to promote their narrative, and to bash Israel. So about me, for those who don't know me, I'm Rowan Osman. My father is Sunni [Muslim] from Damascus. My mother is Shia [Muslim] from the Beqaa Valley

AMIR: In Lebanon...

RAWAN: ...in Lebanon. That is where I grew up the first 18 years of my life because my parents wanted to send us to one of the best schools in Lebanon. It was a French-Catholic school. It still is one of the best schools.

AMIR: So you were born where?

RAWAN: In Damascus.

AMIR: And then moved at what age?

RAWAN: No, I always lived in Lebanon. My father sent my mom to deliver in Damascus because the IDF were getting closer to where we lived.

AMIR: I see.

RAWAN: And he just wanted her to go to a hospital where his parents lived in the capital city in Syria. So when I'm asked at the airport sometimes, "So why are you born in Damascus?" I say, "Because of you." [AMIR: Laughter] Because of the IDF. But jokes aside, I grew up in Lebanon attending a French-Catholic school. I grew up in a very tolerant society, especially that my mother is the daughter of the Lebanese Civil War, a devastating war that claimed the lives of more than 150,000 Lebanese. And at a certain point, the Lebanese thought this is not the best idea, and it's not worth killing each other for the Palestinian cause.

AMIR: So, when you say... give us a little bit of background, because a lot of people, what you just said, people don't know: it was mostly because of the Palestinian cause that the Lebanese themselves fought against one another, and 150,000 people were killed throughout that war.

RAWAN: Let's say, very briefly, that a part of the Lebanese supported the Lebanese cause, and another did not. So, let's say that those who were more on the left side of the political spectrum supported Arafat and his plight...

AMIR: ...While he lived in Beirut.

RAWAN: While he lived in Lebanon, abused the Lebanese territory, abused the Lebanese hospitality, trained with his gangsters, often joined by radical leftists from around the world, be it Germany, Italy, or even Japan. And you remember the massacre. So this is where my mother grew up between those two camps, one supporting the Palestinian cause, one opposed and saying—especially the Christians or the Lebanese minorities—who were saying, "The Jews are not our enemies, actually. The threat comes from elsewhere. And Arafat's cause is not ours." And at a certain point, those two camps clashed and killed one another. And eventually Arafat was driven out of Lebanon.

AMIR: ... Because of the Lebanon War that Israel was engaging in...

RAWAN: ... Not only that; yes and no. The society I grew up in was tolerant because the Lebanese made a decision to reconcile.

AMIR: And what year was it around?

RAWAN: I was born in the mid-80s.

AMIR: Okay.

RAWAN: So I grew up with the Lebanese wanting to reconcile, to shove the problem under the carpet, and to never really discuss why this ever happened. And I always say that I grew up in a tolerant society which only tolerated the hatred of the Jews, the Zionists, and the Israelis. And I always make sure I mention the three terms because we use them interchangeably. We do not make a distinction between Jewish and Zionist. So people agreed on the hatred of the Jews, the southern neighbors because very rarely the word Israel is mentioned. And I myself was one of Hezbollah's biggest fans... [AMIR: Really.] and I always say this at the beginning of my talks. And I say, I identify as a "recovered anti-Semite." And I say it for the shock effect. And I tell Jews, if you were in my shoes, you would hate Israel and the Jews as well. Why? Especially because Israel occupied South Lebanon and Hezbollah were the only strong ones, the heroes who defied the occupation.

AMIR: So they were held as the liberators of southern Lebanon from the Israelis. Therefore, they're considered as the strength of Lebanon rather than the problem of Lebanon.

RAWAN: Yes.

AMIR: The defenders of Lebanon.

RAWAN: Nobody told me why Israel occupied South Lebanon. They omitted a tiny detail. For more than 10 years, Arafat and his gangsters joined by the radical leftists that I mentioned earlier abused Lebanese territory, trained and occasionally sent men and women infiltrating the borders and targeting Israeli civilians.

AMIR: Jewish towns like Nahariya and others, places where Israeli military camps that were infiltrated from the air and from the sea and from the ground. And that was the reason why Menachem Begin decided to...

RAWAN: ...At a certain point to create a buffer zone after giving up on diplomacy, especially when Hezbollah expanded their work beyond Israel and targeted Israeli diplomats and their family members in Europe and in South America. I didn't know all this. So it was really easy to hate the Jews in Israel where I grew up, especially that there were no Jews left in the so-called Arab world to contest whatever the state told you about them. And I also attended the French-Catholic school. So there was a Christian anti-Semitic dimension to my perception of Israel. Every year around Pessah...

AMIR: ...As Christ killers.

RAWAN: Of course.

AMIR: Exactly.

RAWAN: Every year around Pessah or Passover, the entire school, which I attended for 15 years, gathered in the big theater and watched the same film, *The Passion of the Christ*, not the one Mel Gibson made, an older version, but not less graphic. And the message we left the theater with is the Jews could have spared the life of baby Jesus, but instead they spared the life of a thug.

AMIR: Which is, by the way, exactly opposite to the gospel. The gospel is that Messiah actually came to die for us. He could have not been spared. He chose to die. And the funny thing is that religious people that don't read the Bible twist it and turn it into "There's a group of people that killed Him and therefore we need to hate them."

RAWAN: And even the Vatican in the 60s absolved those Jews from that original sin, but the news didn't reach Lebanon, maybe. So I grew up with multiple dimensions of hatred, sometimes

politically motivated, sometimes religiously motivated. But also at school we learned, and in Lebanon, for those who don't know, we have one curriculum. So whether you attend the private or public school, you learn the same thing. We learned the story of Palestine. And it's a very short and simplistic story. It's probably three pages, if I remember correctly. The antagonist in this story is called "Theodore Herzl, Who Else?" And he invented Zionism. And according to his plan, to his project, the Jews of Eastern Europe were going to come to the Middle East and take Palestine from the Palestinians, therefore they suffer. We also learn the date and the content of the Balfour Declaration and the date of the first World Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, implying that the West enabled the Zionist project. And I think the most problematic aspect of that story is that we internalized that Palestine was a country. So coming with...

AMIR: ...with indigenous people.

RAWAN: Yes. You just learn Palestine was a country, and if you are a decent person, you're supposed to stand with the oppressed, with the underdog, against those Jews who came from Eastern Europe. In my case, I was lucky that in my mid-20s, when I decided to take a course in Europe, the natural choice was France, ...

AMIR: So then you moved to Europe?

RAWAN: ...because I spoke the language. And I landed in the Jewish Quarter in Strasbourg.

AMIR: France.

RAWAN: In France. Now, I knew my accommodation was in the Jewish Quarter, but I thought that Quarter was like the Jewish Quarter in Beirut or in Damascus, where no Jews were left. Except Strasbourg, the Jewish Quarter in Strasbourg, had a lot of Jews. I had an epiphany, a panic attack that I had the first time on the first day when I saw Jews. Four Jewish men who didn't even look at me. A little earlier, I was telling you, Amir, about my experience coming to you from Jerusalem

on the train, when I realized I was the only woman on this carriage, and it was only men who realized they had a *minyan*, and they stood up to pray. My first encounter with four religious Jews, dressed in black and white, was a little different back in 2011. So I had a panic attack, and I was embarrassed because I had a panic attack, and I stormed out of the store. And that triggered a question in my mind. Why did my body react this way? I'm not the fearful type. And I realized that for the first time in my life, I was sharing the same space with the Jew, the enemy, and for the first time in my life, in my mid-20s. I asked myself, why is the Jew my enemy? I've never spoken to Jews, to Israelis. And that put me... set me on a journey, if you will, when I started relearning the history of our region, and I realized important things such as those Jews did not originate from Eastern Europe. Obviously. Where do we hear on and on and on about Israel? Not only in the Bible, but also in the Quran. Obviously, they're indigenous to the so-called Middle East. I realized that the very concept of the nation-state is modern. The Ottoman Empire collapsed after the First World War, and new countries emerged, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, etc.

AMIR: These are all countries that are modern, they never existed.

RAWAN: These are not much older than Israel. So how come Israel is rejected categorically? So I started learning, and I was quite upset because it's rather disappointing when you understand that it is your side...

AMIR: ...That blasted you the whole time.

RAWAN: ...that not only brainwashed us, and intensively indoctrinated us, and incited hatred, etc., but they are the aggressors. They are the assailants. Had they accepted to share the land with the Jews who are indigenous to the land, tens of thousands of lives could have been spared. I dare say hundreds of thousands of lives because even those who are dying in Iran, even those who died in Yemen, who were killed by Assad, died in the name of the Palestinian cause and its champions.

AMIR: A lot of people don't know that in the early 1920s, if I'm not mistaken, there was already a written agreement between Jews and Arabs. I'm talking the 1920s, that recognizes—It's between Weizmann and Faisal—recognizing the right of the Jews over the land and asking that the Jews who are the original... they call that the original sons of that land, asking them to help build the Arab countries around, such as Syria, Jordan, Iraq and all of that. The agreement was signed. We could have spared the whole thing, but Faisal was smart enough to add in Arabic one little thing next to his signature, “Pending on British fulfillment of their promises to us.”

RAWAN: But thank you for saying that. But the British did fulfill their promises. They fulfilled their promises to, maybe some people are familiar with the Hussein-McMahon agreement. So yes, the British promised Arabs—the Arabs of today: Saudi Arabia, the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula—land and rights and privileges in return for the support of the British against the Ottoman Empire. And they did fulfill their promises.

AMIR: But not to the satisfaction of the Arab side.

RAWAN: Absolutely. But they also made promises to the Jews. Now, today, when we talk about Palestine, people don't understand what they're talking about. Palestine, the British mandate of Palestine, consisted of today's Israel, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the East Bank. So the British mandate of Palestine consisted of today's Israel, the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria and today's Jordan. So more than 78% of the land was already carved out and given to the Arabs. The Arabs who stemmed from the Arabian Peninsula and they were made royalty in a land that does not belong to them, but it bothers nobody on planet Earth. The remainder, the 22% remaining, was supposed to become the Jewish homeland. And the Jews accepted to divide it, to share it repeatedly. And they were kicked in the belly by the Arabs who wanted more and more and more. And look at where we are today. What have they achieved?

AMIR: The chanting today is “From the river to the sea.” They’re not even willing to share anything.

RAWAN: No.

AMIR: Nothing. But my point is that to tell me that the newborn state of Israel is the reason for this conflict is baloney. It’s baloney (a) because a lot of them collaborated with the Nazis, and that was before Israel was born. So the hatred has nothing to do with the newborn state because the state did not exist. But also you go back and you realize that the whole laughter and mocking the Holocaust goes back before Israel was born. So if you have a problem with the Holocaust, if you have a problem even with some of the numbers and the figures and the facts, you have a problem with the Jews. You don’t have a problem with the state of Israel.

RAWAN: The problem is with the Jews. I lived in the Arab world. I lived in four countries in this Arab world, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and briefly in Qatar, Doha. I know that the problem is with the Jews motivated by Jew hatred.

I disagree with you, Amir, on that tiny detail. I think a lot has to do with Israel becoming the first Jewish state. Why is that? We have a very rich cultural heritage in our Middle East. Today when you think about the Middle East, you associate it with wars, but the wheel was literally invented in this Middle East. Our cultural heritage comes from the abundance of diversity, variety. The Jews are the first to defy Muslim supremacy. They are the first minority to say, “No, thank you. We will govern ourselves, and we will be equals. And we are open to peace, and this is what we want. But you have to respect us. I’m not a second-class citizen anymore.” Now, if they get away with it, and Israel is a tiny speck of land, and you know this, we live here. If they get away with this, what are you going to do about the Maronites in Lebanon? Or, for example, what are you going to do about the Copts in Egypt? What are you going to do about an ethnic “minority”

that consists of 50 million plus Kurds who do deserve to govern themselves? Especially when they are mistreated. All about the Druze, and so on and so forth. We have so many minorities who were abused for more than 1,400 years, and the Jews are the first to say, “No, we will govern ourselves. We don’t want you to grant us privileges and rights. We don’t want restrictions. We are equal.” This is why it’s very hard, or it was very hard for the Muslim leadership to grant them that right, because it will start a process that is never ending. Plus, in Islam, a land...

AMIR: ...That once was occupied by them cannot belong to...

RAWAN: ...It’s governed by Muslims. The process cannot be reversed. So the Jews come and say, “We will reverse that process.” It’s not acceptable. But the Israelis are not asking for permission anymore.

AMIR: No, we’re not. We’re not, but again, I agree that much of it was intensified since Israel was born. But I think that when you look at the 1929 massacre of Jews in Hebron, there was no Israel yet, and yet Jews were massacred. So it wasn’t that “Israel is a state, therefore we now can massacre them.” The Jews are here, but you’re right. The Jews are here in what used to be a Muslim area, and they’re stuck as a bone in our throat, and we need to get rid of that.

RAWAN: And now they’ve become defiant.

AMIR: Yes!

RAWAN: So when Hillel Cohen wrote his book, *Year Zero 1929*, he didn’t write it to justify Israel’s existence. He was literally looking as a serious historian for the point in time where violence broke out between the Jews and the Arabs of Palestine. And he reckons 1929, the Hebron Massacre, was the beginning. And why I tend to agree with him? Because the notables of Hebron, Muslims who were neighbors with the Jews for centuries, stood outside their homes while they heard the cries of women and children, and they let it happen. More than 60 Jews were massacred.

That sent shockwaves throughout the so-called Arab world. Today you hear many Arabs who say, “Our Jews left the Arab countries because they were motivated by the Zionist organization.” No maybe they were terrified that every time you had an issue with Israel or with the Jews, you will target vulnerable communities. This is why they were wise enough to slowly depart.

AMIR: Which by the way, brings me now to our modern day “Let’s get our frustration with Israel over any Jews anywhere.” And let’s talk, we are already after what happened in Australia, in Sydney, in Bondi Beach. And we all know that two, originally Pakistani-background Muslims, jihadists apparently, were radicalized online and then went to train in the Philippines to how to operate those shotguns and those hunting guns in a very effective way. And they showed up to Bondi Beach with six different rifles with tons of ammunition, with a booby-trapped car, with a flag of ISIS, and uninterruptedly, for more than 10-15 minutes, were literally executing people in the very specific park where Jewish people celebrate Hanukkah, on the first day of Hanukkah. And they knew why they come over there. And it’s in a country that not only led by a government that “recognized” Palestine, but also accused Israel of a genocide, of starvation. And the government I’m talking about, the government stood by a lot of the lies and the propaganda of Hamas, and allowed much of the hatred to percolate, in a way, to that point. And we know that at least a 24-year-old son was part of some of the protests where they said, “Gas the Jews.” He was part of that. So it starts with words, but eventually it will be translated into actions. And so now, as you said, the frustrations that Muslims or jihadists have with Israel are being translated to attacking Jewish people anywhere around the world, which proves also what you said that it’s never been about really Israel. Because if you only have a problem with Israel, you attack Israel. But if you have a problem with Jews, then you attack Jews wherever they are.

RAWAN: But don't we know this, Amir, if there was, or any time, there were skirmishes between Israel and Hamas, people would go protest or torch or throw a Molotov cocktail at synagogues. Or they tried to intimidate an old grandma. This has nothing to do with Israel. Your Swiss old neighbor, who happens to be Jewish, has nothing to do with the IDF fighting Hamas in Gaza. We know this. We just want to desperately produce evidence so that the naive understand what we are up against. This is against the Jews. And as you said, in Australia, in Sydney, when your protesters get away with saying, "Gas the Jews," the writing was on the wall, but of course we will witness a massacre. How can you get away with saying, "Gas the Jews"? For a decade almost, I think, it became consensus in the Jewish world that the antidote for anti-Semitism is Holocaust education. And I live in Germany since 2013. I repeatedly said to people, "This is not enough. You lack the sense of urgency." People, you need to understand, many know what Nazi Germany did...

AMIR: And they cheer that.

RAWAN: And they are happy.

AMIR: Exactly.

RAWAN: They say, "Hitler should have finished the job." So when they tell you out loud, "Gas the Jews," what are they talking about? They know...

AMIR: ...that he gassed the Jews.

RAWAN: They want...

AMIR: ... Another Holocaust.

RAWAN: ...him to finish the job. They want to get rid of all of them.

AMIR: You know, we found in Gaza tons of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler's book in Arabic. We found that he's a hero to jihadists.

RAWAN: I know there are stores, not only in Gaza, but also in the so-called West Bank, where Hitler is the name of the store. It's like a chain.

AMIR: A clothing store. Yeah, I saw it.

RAWAN: I myself, when I identify as a recovered anti-Semite and my Israeli friends say, "Don't say that about yourself. You're better than that." No, I'm not better than that. And if we're going to cure a disease, we have to have the right diagnosis. I myself bought my version of *Mein Kampf* in Damascus for less than US \$1. I bought my version of the protocols of the *Elders of Zion* in Damascus. And they were printed in Lebanon, in progressive Lebanon, already back in the 60s. The West does not understand how widespread anti-Semitism is in the Arab world. I thought it's rampant until October 7th. I realized that I myself lacked the adequate sense of urgency.

AMIR: Where did October 7th catch you? Where were you? What did you do? Tell me about your personal experience on that day.

RAWAN: Let me tell it this way. Since 2018, I didn't have a day off. So my son goes on holiday with my ex. And out of frustration, my son says one day, "You are obsessed with the Middle East. Fine. You don't stop working. Fine." And out of frustration, I responded by saying, "If the Arabs could, they would eat the Jews alive." And my son was horrified. He doesn't speak Arabic. He doesn't understand the Middle East. He said, "How can a civilized human being make such a statement, Mom?" On October 7th...

AMIR: And when was it 2018 that he said that?

RAWAN: Before October 7th, sometime after 2018. On October 7th, he comes to my room, and he knocks on the door and he says, "Mom, it's 11. Are you sick?" I didn't answer. He walked in. He saw that I'm scrolling. My face was probably telling. He went out, checked the news, and he

came back. And we never spoke about this detail. He looked at me and one tear rolled down his cheek and he nodded. He understood,

AMIR: Finally.

RAWAN: I wasn't being melodramatic. Not because I come from the Middle East [that] I'm melodramatic; you don't understand how bad the problem is. And when I saw what happened on October 7th, I realized that even I didn't understand how bad the problem is. And now in retrospect, nobody knew, none of us, how bad and how global the problem is. Seeing how the world reacted, first with a little sympathy, when they saw how barbaric the behavior was, when they saw half-naked women paraded, when they saw children kidnapped, dogs shot dead. But it didn't last long. Even before Israel responded, the world turned against Israel.

Why is that, Amir? So now, meanwhile, I became a public speaker and I traveled around the world. A student in California told me, a student at Stanford University, told me when the first encampment took place: the first encampment happened at Stanford University on October 8, 2023. This is unbelievable! This is why the world turned against Israel, because the propaganda, the campaign, was prepared *long* before Hamas kickstarted this war against Israel that was meant as the final war. It is meant to build momentum, and they did build momentum. And it is designed to drain Israel psychologically, economically. Luckily for us, although we are dramatically outnumbered, and I say although we, I include myself, although our camp is dramatically outnumbered, it is quality versus quantity. And luckily for us, our enemies underestimated how resilient the Jewish people are.

AMIR: You know, I always use the two words, "But God." I said, you can do whatever you want, say whatever you want, kill, lie, deceive... but God. Eventually, He will not be mocked, nor will He allow His people to be back in the land and then cause them to be destroyed here after He

brought them back. So it's interesting because—You know, I investigated October 7th a lot since it happened, of course, and—Because of my background also in the military intelligence. What was important for me personally was to ask myself, could that have been avoided? Or alternatively, what would have happened if they actually succeeded, if the original plan was actually executed? Because in April of 2023, I already shared on social media what the original plan is going to be, is all about: a simultaneous attack orchestrated and led by Iran, but from Iraq, from Syria, from Lebanon, from the West Bank, from Gaza, and also from Iran and Yemen as well. And it was supposed to be something that Israel would never be able to recover from.

And you said, “luckily,” you use that word, I say, “but God” caused the pride of Sunni Yahya Sinwar to say, “I want to destroy Israel, but I want this to be written on Sunni’s name and not on behalf of—I don’t want to be a little pawn played by a Shia mother that runs the whole show. We are the majority; we need to shoot the first gunshot.” And he surprised not only himself, not only his own people, most of the Palestinians didn’t know it’s coming, only the Hamas people, but he also surprised Hezbollah and he also surprised Iran. And they were very angry with him. I know for a fact that they want to destroy Israel, but if he only waited, it would have been done in the way they actually had it planned originally. You know, Israel was not ready in the south. We were not ready because we thought it’s going to happen from the north. And what we found later on on the Lebanese border was 50,000 times more than what Hamas had. In other words, if they only fulfilled their plan to invade with the Radwan force...

RAWAN: ... had they coordinated...

AMIR: ... and had they done that on the same day, the same hour, they would have been in Haifa within an hour. Because they were ready, we did not have enough tanks, we did not have enough

soldiers. And it was in the midst of Israel's inner division and craziness that weakened us and projected...

RAWAN: ...Weakness.

AMIR: Yes, projected weakness, and you know how it is in our world. If you project weakness, even though you're not weak, but if you *project* weakness, it's like smelling blood and like hyenas all around you coming.

RAWAN: This is exactly what was happening around Israel. I believe a month before October 7th, I wrote something in *Times of Israel*, and I was warning, it was an appeal for the Israelis because I knew, I could feel it in my bones. Something terrible is about to happen. [AMIR: Really...] Absolutely.

So, growing up in Lebanon between Muslims and Christians, I was always an atheist. If people tell you, "We are right, they are wrong," you choose not to subscribe to any of the clubs because they are my family members, they are my friends. And I never believed this absurd idea of a creator being like Santa, "He just watches you from the sky, if you're bad, he'll burn you forever for eternity. And if you're good, you'll get rewarded." That sounded a bit absurd to me. At university, later in my 30s, out of frustration, after the influx of refugees who came to Europe, where I realized there is no way I can't keep moving, you can't escape the Middle East, it's part of who I am, I have to fight back. So I thought, "I'd rather live in the Middle East, but I don't want to live in war, so I have to find a way for us to push for peace." So I went to university to study Islamic studies, to understand from a neutral academic perspective: What do the Muslims want? How can we make them happy? And then I went to study Jewish studies to understand: What do those Jews want? How can we make them happy? And when I went to study Judaism, I realized

something very strange. As an atheist and spirituality has always been beneath me, I realized that I'm Jewish. What does that mean?

AMIR: So you identify more with what they say rather than with that side?

RAWAN: Absolutely, the world made sense to me.

AMIR: Really?

RAWAN: The realism I found in Judaism, the stories of the prophets, what Judaism brings to the world, brings to the table, the perception of the Creator. It made a lot of sense. I know it sounds like a cliché, but in my world, the stars aligned. It made sense to me. And I had this feeling that I couldn't shake away that I'm Jewish. I'm with friends and family, and I told the Orthodox rabbi, I told him, "Sha'u, I'm Jewish." And he choked on his food. "Come again? What do you mean?" And I told him, "I'm going to convert Orthodox. Because all my life I dismissed tradition and spirituality. And in your class, I learned that those who kept those traditions helped preserve the essence of Judaism throughout millennia. And to honor them out of respect, I'm going to have an Orthodox conversion." So I realized that I belong to these people. I didn't understand how, but I realized that all the coincidence that led me from A to B to C to D were Hashem's way to bring me back home. And later on, thanks to Israelis who kept telling me, "You have a Jewish *nshamah*, I'm like, "What does that even mean?" So I took a DNA test. And of course I have Jewish blood, but not only Jewish blood. Our blood is like the layers of earth under Jerusalem. It tells you the history of our region. You cannot erase one. We exist. We own our story. But we also owe something to the origins of our existence. So believing this story, identifying with Judaism, filled me with faith. And without this *Emunah*, I would not be able to get out of bed. If I was the atheist I was most of my life, I would do the math, and I know that we're lost. We don't. We can just as well roll over and die.

AMIR: So how do you view atheists or secular Jews, I wonder?

RAWAN: I think we each have to deal with our own journey.

AMIR: But... I understand. You're right, but...

RAWAN: Where they stand, why they identify as secular, as atheist, why do they distance themselves? Sometimes they go as far as distancing themselves, not only from Judaism, from their Jewishness. Why? I do not know.

AMIR: Well, I can tell you. I can tell you that even the Bible warned that when people get away from—further and further away from the written Word of God, from the Word of God, they start entertaining themselves with their own things. And one of the biggest problem of Israel as a nation in the Bible and God dealt with them about that issue is that they wanted to be like everybody else, always. “We want to be like them. We want to have a king like them. We want to have...” And God warned them against that. And I think that Israel was basically founded as a predominantly secular country that had this clash, inner clash, between those who believed that this is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy and those who thought, “No, this is the fruit of our hard labor.” Okay? But you said that at the very beginning and when we also talked before we started, how moved you were when you saw Jewish men praying at the train over here and how much you observed an exodus of Jews from hedonism and materialism and secularism towards faith. You're witnessing that. I'm witnessing that also. I believe that—And every hostage almost that comes out will tell you, “I actually started to believe in God because of what I went through.” I truly believe that there is an exodus, as I said, towards faith in God. But again, the problem is that we have so many... in my own town! My town is so filled with people who think that God has nothing to do with the rebirth of Israel as a state, that it is the fruit of the labor of very, very, very good people.

RAWAN: It is the fruit of hard work, of perseverance, out of culture.

AMIR: ... But God is the one overseeing it.

RAWAN: That's what I believe as well. I had a professor who gave us a class on Zionism, and he is in command of his topic, of course, but he always argued, and he is from Tel Aviv, he always argued that early Zionism had nothing to do with religion, of course. And I told him at a certain point, what did they call the movement? Zionism. Zion is the name of the movement!

AMIR: Absolutely!

RAWAN: I don't care if they kept kosher or not. They went back home, they went back to the source. Why on earth this particular part of the land?

AMIR: Exactly!

RAWAN: If you do not, as a Jew, understand your connection with the land, you might as well pack and leave.

AMIR: And you see, as a Muslim-born, born in Damascus, raised in the Beqaa Valley, of a Shiite mother and a Sunni father, you are telling a Jewish person in Israel the truth about why the name Zion has to do with the Bible and you cannot run away from it.

RAWAN: Yes! Not only that, I also share that I have Jewish blood. I share it also with Muslims because I would like *them* to take a DNA test. I'd like them to remember that before Islam came to our region, the region was inhabited. The wheel was invented before Islam existed. And it is part of who we are. Judaism, not for everybody, but for people in our region, it's part of who we are. So once upon a time, some of our miserable ancestors accepted the mission. They accepted the mission with the consequences it entailed. And Judaism teaches us that the Torah was offered to everybody in this world. And it was accepted by this group of people—call them whatever you like. They accepted the light of the Torah, this wisdom, the commandments. They accepted the rules and their mission was not to put it in a safe and lock it away. It's light. It's not a diamond

you keep in your pocket. It's a light that you cannot contain. It belongs to everybody. But it has to be conveyed, and it's conveyed, it's communicated through you, not by yourself becoming a missionary going around the world and telling people come to Judaism. No, no, no, no, you lead by the way that you behave.

AMIR: Set an example.

RAWAN: You set an example and Israel is supposed to be the example for the world. This is how you represent the light for nations.

AMIR: Exactly, we are called to be a light to the Gentiles, a light to the nations. And that's the— And I'm going to give you a copy of my book called the *Israel Decree*. That is the *Israel Decree* that was given to Abraham on that very day. And a lot of people don't understand it's a *decree*. And it's a God given decree that has nothing to do with Abraham's reply or setting any conditions. It was an unconditional covenant: "I will make you a nation that will bless the whole world. In that nation, the families of the earth are going to be blessed. And those who will bless you will be blessed. And those who will curse you...

RAWAN: ...will be cursed."

AMIR: And that's the first recipe in the entire Bible is right there. And then it's the 12th chapter of the book of Genesis, the first book of the Torah, which is one of the portions of the Tanakh, which is the Word of God. And in the first century when Yeshua was born not far from here in Bethlehem and then was raised in Nazareth, which is literally 10 minutes' drive from here, you know, people did not have the New Testament. I always tell people Jesus never ever taught from the New Testament even once. Paul, as he traveled, *Sha'ul*, as he traveled all over the world, he traveled to synagogues and he only opened the Torah, the Tanakh, to explain who the Messiah is. But there was no New Testament at that time. And yet from the Old Testament, from the Tanakh,

you could already see not only that God has an amazing past with the Jewish people and present with the Jewish people, but also an amazing future. And this is where we're going to land, the future. The future. Because, you know, two seconds before God sent the Jews to diaspora for 70 years, He told Jeremiah, "Tell them the good word that I have for them, that I know the plans that I have for them, plans not to destroy you, but to give you a future and hope." (Jeremiah 29:11) And my question to you as we wrap it up is, how do you see the future, and do you see any hope for this region in the foreseeable future?

RAWAN: So let's address a few points. It's not all doom and gloom. We are going through very, very critical times. That said, I'm very optimistic because of the *emunah*, because of this faith that discovering Judaism filled me with. As someone who's converting, I know that I'm walking towards the light. And I know it sounds like a cliché, but I truly feel that. And I'm convinced that we are doing the right thing. Even if a million tell us, tell you as an individual, "You are wrong, you're supporting the wrong side." We know we're supporting those who are fighting for the very existence, not only of Israel, but of the Word of God, of the Torah, and those Ten Commandments preserving this mission. And light will always prevail.

We mentioned Islam, Muslim several times today. Let's clarify. Ten years ago, if someone told you that a man wearing a kippah would be safer in Dubai or in Abu Dhabi than he is in Paris or London, you'd think, "Whatever you're smoking, stop it." But this is reality. Things are changing. While the West is turning against Israel, I do think that the support will come from this region where the Arabs understand that they don't have medical insurance, a pension system, their economies are failing, so much corruption, crime, violence, not because of Israel, not because of the Jews. Those who bless you will be blessed. Look at the UAE. Look at Morocco. Look at the countries that are adamant, that are devoted, obsessed with Israel and devoted to its destruction.

Look at how they live. Look at their economies, what's happening to them. I believe that the people, the average person, knows in our region the problem is not the Jew. The problem is not Israel, and they are developing different relationships with the people of Israel. For the first time since Islam came to our region, a synagogue and a church were built in Abu Dhabi in a Muslim country, something that's normally not allowed and very frowned upon.

AMIR: It's not allowed in Qatar, huh? [Laughter, sarcasm]

RAWAN: It's not happened. No, it's not. And I'm not imagining, not even in my wildest dreams, Qatar joining the Abraham Accords, but other countries.

AMIR: Yes.

RAWAN: Qatar's role is pointless...

AMIR: I'm saying that, you know why, exactly. I'm saying that because Tucker Carlson says that Christians are better off in Qatar than in Israel, which is baloney.

RAWAN: Absolutely.

AMIR: There is no one that can wear...

RAWAN: ...This man is shameless and he has no idea what he's talking about.

AMIR: But you see that. Look, you're an influencer. You're a speaker, you're a fighter, you are an advocate for the truth. And I used to think that conservative Christians in America are always siding with Israel because they always side with the truth based on conviction that it's coming straight from the Bible, not just from politics. Aren't you shocked to see what we see today that the conservative camp in America is contaminated with so much anti-Semitism basically?

RAWAN: I'm not because we realized after October 7th how badly infiltrated the West is, especially the educational institutions, the educational system, not only universities...

AMIR: ... but the educational systems were always held by the left and it's a hub of the left.

RAWAN: So, this is where Jew hatred became such a problem and we were sleeping in the past three, four decades. Why would a country like Qatar, so powerful, so rich, they could contribute to humanity differently. Instead, they choose to invest massively in humanities departments to set them up to—They set up economic disciplines to bring the system down from within in the West. Everybody has the right to be represented now. You have large parts of your society that are part of the electoral base who are demanding representation and can dictate where we're going. We reached a point where they can dictate what's going to happen in the West. And, the goal, the ultimate goal is to bring the West down from within. I'm not surprised. A lot of people are ignorant. Some are stupid. Some are naive and some are evil. I understand why someone like Carlson would be fascinated when you go to Qatar because I'm pretty sure they are pampered. But I don't understand why would someone go to Iran and be impressed? Iran, where they're killing their teenagers, girls, because they want to feel air in their hair. Why would you side with such a regime? Why would you teach in the West and then cry over Hassan Nasrallah's death and perceive him as a hero? What do you know about us? What do you know about the suffering of the people? And why are you indifferent when millions die? The world's worst abusers of human rights, some of the worst countries in the world, are the biggest champions of the Palestinian cause. It's not a coincidence. Nobody cares about the wellbeing of the Gazans, of the Palestinians. When you are indifferent to the suffering of your own people, I do not know what motivates them, but we have to acknowledge that some people are evil.

AMIR: I think it's spiritual and you have a spiritual journey.

RAWAN: It's almost a war against God.

AMIR: It is. It's a diabolic, satanic thing. If we fail to understand, (a) that God is on the move, but (b), Satan is angry, and I believe he's using his minions all over the world to brainwash people.

And I'm always telling people, look, I understand if you quote, I don't know... maybe Quran or some philosophers, but I dare you never, ever to use the Word of God, the Bible, quote and take things out of context and then turn them against Israel. Because I think that's a line that when you cross it, God will severely punish you.

RAWAN: You're going to pay in ways you do not imagine. You mentioned earlier that Israel should set the example that the Jewish people are meant to be a light unto nations. The only thing I'm worried about is not our enemies...

AMIR: ...It's the division inside.

RAWAN: It's the division inside Israel.

AMIR: But the division is also stemming from people who excluded God.

RAWAN: Absolutely. That puts more weight on our shoulders, and we are built to carry that weight. We should; we bear a responsibility. Those among us who understand our mission have the responsibility to reach out to the other side, especially in Israel. No, I will not hate you because you're a radical leftist who is obsessed with the Israeli government, who thinks this is the source of evil. It is not. You're confused. And I have an obligation towards you as a sister, as a brother to reach out and to find a way to bridge the gap. We have to. Once this is done, Israel is fine. Even if we have a billion enemies outside, God is with us and Israel will prevail [AMIR: Absolutely] and light is always stronger than darkness. Take this very little example. The world today says "We are anti-Zionist, we're not anti-Semitic. We have no problem with the Jews..."

AMIR: I love how they say that.

RAWAN: ... and then comes a young Arab Muslim woman wearing a headscarf in a shopping mall in Tel Aviv, blows out Hanukkah candles to show the entire world to de-mask this claim. You are anti-Semitic, not anti-Zionist. You are anti-Semitic. And it happened here. It's a gift for

you. In the heart of the Jewish state in Tel Aviv, someone does that. And now the world has to confront. Like she put a mirror, she held a mirror up to their faces. And now we have to deal with it. We should call a spade a spade and know how to handle the problem. And we can, as long as we prioritize bridging the gap within Israeli society.

AMIR: Wow, what a fascinating time we had here. I want to thank you again for coming and being a guest on our podcast here. I think what you say carries a lot of extra weight when it comes from someone who grew up hating us, and detesting anything that has to do with Jewish people in Israel. You were basically, you grew up in the stronghold of Hezbollah in the Baalbek area. And yet the journey that you went through, which we know God obviously was in charge of, brought you all the way to the point where you are unapologetically, fearlessly speaking out against lies, deception, and anti-Semitism, and hatred. And we both can agree it's a spiritual battle. And we both also agree that in order to overcome this, people need to come back to God and to His Word.

I want to thank everybody for watching. We're going to put the Rawan's social media handles right here in the lower thirds of the screen. You can follow her; you can support what she does and encourage her. Because you know, people in the front line, especially when you're coming from the Middle East and your family background, your national heritage is not exactly the one that supports what you do and believe in right now, there's heavy extra weight on you and a lot of exhaustion and fatigue. Pray for Rawan, pray for her family, pray for what she does as she speaks out the truth all around the world. Please like, share, subscribe and comment. The more you comment, even just by saying hello and/or saying where you're from, it'll obviously cause the algorithm to share this video with as many as we can. Thank you again. God bless you and Shalom from Galilee.



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