

The religions' potential to contribute to peace in the Holy Land

[ppt 4] You all know about Martin Luther King's Dream. On August 28, 1963 at his great march on Washington he spoke about it and you all have heard his famous words "I have a dream!"

Today I can speak to you. And I, too, can tell you about such a dream. Please allow me to tell you of my dream of peace!

But **let us start with today's reality**, because reality is the source of my dream.

[ppt 5] On Friday, January 6, 2017, **the Top Imam of Palestine, Dr. Mahmoud Habbash**, the supreme Sharia Judge of Palestine, declared: moving the US embassy to Jerusalem, as the new American President Donald Trump announced, is a **'declaration of war' on Islam**. Dr. Habbash did not say "war on Palestine", he said "war on Islam".

What is the connection between the US-embassy and Islam?

Jerusalem is the connection. **[ppt 6]** For Muslims Jerusalem is a holy city. Jerusalem is **their** holy city. Jerusalem is the city of the prophets, who came before the Prophet Mohammed. That is why the archangel Gabriel brought the Prophet Mohammed to Jerusalem – and from there he lifted him up into heaven to meet with all the Prophets who had come before him – in his famous Night Journey. That is why Jerusalem is one of the three most holy cities of Islam. Besides Mecca and Medina there is Jerusalem!

- This was uncontested until there was a State of Israel.

This is why none of the Muslim States agreed when the United Nations in 1947 said they would provide a home for the Jews in their ancient Biblical homeland.

Because the ancient Biblical homeland of the Jews has become the heartland of the Muslim *Umma* a very, very long time ago, nobody could take it away from the Muslims! Nobody could take Jerusalem away from the Muslims.

And now along comes a new American President, and he wants to move the American Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem! He wants to take Jerusalem away from the Muslims, so it seems to Muslims. This is to declare war on Islam! Not war on Palestine, but war on Islam!

For an Israeli, this is nearly impossible to understand. But I just tried to make it understandable even for an Israeli, because, if an Israeli makes the mental effort to see the whole matter from a Muslim point of view, he will understand.

But could a Muslim also understand the point of view of an Israeli?

Could a Muslim ever leave the point of view of the *Umma* in compassion for someone he is used to seeing as an enemy?

[ppt 7] A Muslim professor at a German university – Viennese people may know him, **Professor Khorchide** – wrote a book entitled “Islam means compassion”!

He states that a Muslim can feel compassion even for an enemy, because an enemy, too, is a human being like himself.

And so, with an entire people, the Israelis.

But now, just imagine:

[ppt 8] The PM of Israel, Netanyahu, doing what the name-giver of Israel, Jacob, did.

Do you know what the name-giver of Israel did? Do you know the story of the conflict between the brothers Esau and Jacob from the Bible? It is one of the most important stories in the Bible. And it explains the meaning and the origin of the name “Israel”.

The story is not present in the Qur’an; thus, many Muslim may not know it. Let me, therefore, please, tell you the story, because, surprisingly, it is all about the reconciliation between two brothers, Esau and Jacob, who were deadly enemies – and that story about the original “Israel” contains a solution for today’s conflict between Israel and the Muslim *Umma*! It tells us about a way to a peaceful outcome of today’s war! Please listen!

[ppt 9] Back then, nearly four thousand years ago, Abraham’s grandson Jacob had deceived his brother Esau. He had even deceived his father Isaac by pretending to be Esau in order to get his father's blessing. To get this blessing meant to be the one to receive God’s promise to their father Abraham of becoming the founder of a great people, which would be a blessing for the entire world. That was what Jacob wanted. And in order to get that he was ready to cheat. And he succeeded! Understandably, Esau was angry. He wanted to kill Jacob.

Jacob had to flee. He spent decades in exile. But eventually he had to return if he wanted to be the person who would carry out the promise contained in the blessing – that he would become the father of the people Abraham had seen in his vision.

So, Jacob was approaching, returning from exile. And his brother Esau awaited him – with 400 armed men, ready to kill him!

Jacob was desperate. He spent his last night before the showdown alone in prayer. And he encountered an angel who fought with him. Jacob did not give in. He kept insisting on getting God's blessing – and that he was given – and with it he received a new name: "Israel" – which means "the one who fought with God and prevailed".

And the next day Jacob knew what he had to do:

When he approached his brother Esau, Jacob prostrated himself before him seven times – and he expressed his regret.

And his brother Esau was moved.

[ppt 10] He lifted Jacob up and embraced him – and he forgot about his armed men.

This is the story of the original Israel – a lecture for today's Israel!

[ppt 11]

And this is my dream.

Just imagine:

[ppt 12] An Interfaith Harmony Week in a not too distant future in New York at the United Nations Building **[ppt 13]**. **[ppt 14]** The PM of Israel, Netanyahu, is one of the participants, another is the Imam of the Al Azhar in Cairo, **[ppt 15]** Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, the symbolic head of Sunni Islam, and the third participant, Ayatollah Khamenei **[ppt 16]**, the symbolic head of Shia Islam. Just imagine these three persons being the main actors in the great assembly room of the United Nations in New York. Just imagine a grand ceremony there with the Prime Minister of Israel doing what the name giver of Israel, Jacob, had done nearly four thousand years ago, when he reconciled with his brother Esau: **[ppt 17]** But now the Prime Minister of Israel will prostrate himself before the Imam

of the Al Azhar and before Ayatollah Khamenei, and he will express his regret!

After prostrating he will express his regret over the absolute distress of the Jewish people in the year 1947, when they just had escaped – while six million of them had been killed in the Holocaust! He will express his regret about the absolute existential necessity to establish a Jewish homeland in the midst of the Muslim *Umma*, and he will express his regret about the need to abstain from the *Sharia* rule of subordination under the superiority of Islam, while at the same time recognizing that principle for the rest of *Umma* territory. And he will appeal to the authorities of the Muslim *Umma*, both Sunni and Shia, to understand the exceptional plight of the Jews at the time of the founding of the State of Israel.

While that would not have been possible back then – he will now ask for Islamic mercy and compassion!

Can you imagine?

After I told this story to an Egyptian Imam in Germany – one known to be a member of the Muslim Brotherhood – he was very moved and he said, if Netanyahu were to do that, the Muslim *Umma* would welcome Israel and tell Netanyahu what Esau had told Jacob: Welcome, the territory is big enough for both of us. Go, establish your Jewish homeland – and if you really need it, you may even build your new Temple. We will find a way.

That is reconciliation. That is peace, true peace!

[ppt 18]

Thank you! Be blessed!