WORLD CUP: Lions, elephants, and why I do not want Morroco to win

Please ignore this article if you are not following Qatar's World Cup.

BEING A MESS-ANIC JEW

As an Argentinean rabbi, I am thrilled –euphoric!– that Argentina made it to the final. And Im very happy that the final match, the last World Cup for the national hero, Lionel Messi, is played on a Sunday and not on a Shabbat, as happened with several previous games. But what leads me to write these lines is not my national affiliation but my indignation as a Jew for a specific issue that takes place in the World Cup and my fear that antisemitism gets normalized for the 3 or 4 billion people in the world that are watching these games.

At first, I was happy that Morocco won impossible games. It is also kind of personal. Moroccan blood runs through my veins because my paternal grandparents, z"l were born in Tetouan, Morocco. But after the initial charm, I started to get disappointed and feel very uncomfortable with Morocco. Why?

Because of this



What you see above is NOT the Moroccan flag. This is the Morrocan flag. 

Incredibly, the Moroccan national team players are not celebrating their victories with their own flag but with the Palestinian one!

So that no naive person has any doubts: in the Arab world, this flag or the slogan FREE PALESTINE does not represent an innocent gesture of empathy with another country or oppressed people but a declaration against the existence of the Jewish state. As Israeli journalists in Qatar were told over and over again. “You are not welcome here… There is only Palestine. Not Israel.” In other words: empathy with Palestinians is not about territorial claims or advocating for territories in exchange for eternal and lasting peace between the state of Israel and its neighbors. FREE PALESTINE is a euphemism to express that “Israel should not exist”, and that it must

disappear from the map. And the Jews: throw themselves into the sea. The FREE PALESTINE flag means FREE PALESTINE (all Israeli territory!) OF JEWS. So, does this flag means that Morrocans (or Muslims?) hate Jews more than they love their country ??

If it were Iran or Lebanon's national teams, I would have understood a little more about their antagonism to Israel because, after all, those countries are "officially" enemies of Israel. But it hurts so much because it is MOROCCO: one of the few Arab countries that made peace with Israel and has open diplomatic relations with Israel. What's going on there?

THE DOUBLE STANDARD OF QATAR

And then, of course, there is the cynicism of Qatar. This government has silenced by decree all political demonstrations in this World Cup. No Ukrainian flags have been seen, for example. Qatar has banned dissident Iranians from speaking out against its repressive government. They also opposed any demonstration against human rights violations in Qatar. And they suppressed any complaints about the deaths of between 500 and 6,500 (depending on who you ask) foreign workers who lost their lives in accidents due to the hasty construction of the lavish stadiums for the World Cup (see here). Qatar claims it does not want politics in its World Cup. And for this reason, Roi Ben Shlush, an Israeli man who wanted to take a selfie with the Israeli flag in Qatar stadium, was immediately approached by four policemen who told him "that displaying the Israeli flag in Qatar is a crime. That Israelis are not welcome. That the Israeli flag is not welcome." They threw us in the trash, Roi explains in this video (minute 1:18). Any political demonstration in Qatar is prohibited because "You must not mix politics with sports!". But there are always exceptions. Or better said, one exception: the Jews. In Qatar, protesting against the existence of the Jewish state has been

completely normalized. In the most watched event in the world these days, anti-Semitism has been Kosherized and turned into the pathetic cause that unites all the Arab countries of the world, even Sunnis and Shiites!

Do you understand now why I don't want Morocco to win? Because beyond sports, if Morocco wins, it will be an antisemitic circus, a party of hate towards the Jewish state.

WHY DO ARABS HATE ISRAEL?

Arab antisemitism is not circumstantial. It's cultural. My friend Professor Mordechai Kedar explains that delegitimizing Israel is a religious duty for Muslims. Why? Because for Islam, political and military superiority reflects religious superiority. That is to say, the true religion is the one that wins, controls, and governs the other religion. This reasoning, which may seem strange to us, explains the paradox many people naively mention. "The Arabs treated the Jews very well in the Arab countries where they lived." This may be true, but something needs to be clarified: in Arab countries, Jews were "dhimmis", that is, second-class citizens living under the authority and wings of Islam and with limited rights. Muslim accept Jews or Christians as long as they are "subjected", or surrendered (this is the real meaning of the word "islam" = surrendering) to Muslim rule. But the case of the State of Israel is different. Accepting that the Jews govern the Arabs is heresy for the Arabs, as the founding charter of Hamas explicitly clarifies (see below). Accepting a Jewish State, regardless of its size, in arab land would be equal to believing that Islam is inferior to Judaism!

If this explanation is true, then I'm not sure it will ever be possible to be a lasting, "normal" peace between Israel and the Arab countries (I heard this week in a class from Bar-Ilan Professor David Pasig that the peace deal between Israel and

Egypt is NOT really a “peace” agreement: Egypt’s Islamic authorities, says Pasig, only allowed Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to sign “a truce” with Israel).

If this explanation is real, if the Arab’s rejection of Israel is based on religious considerations, the Arab-Israeli conflict and hatred will never end. Furthermore: not recognizing this sad reality can be very dangerous for the Jewish state. Why? Because if I try to find the Western Mentality logic to the Palestinian or pan-Arab anti-Semitism and I assume, for example, that they won’t hate us anymore if we cede some territory to them, or if I assume that “sincere dialogue will bring peace”, as many secular Jews who understand nothing of religion believe, I can cause irreparable damage to Israel.

WHAT CAN ISRAEL DO?

The Moroccan national team is known as the “Lions of the Atlas” (a mountain range in Morocco). So I’ll use this motif to explain a very depressing idea about the nature of this specific form of antisemitism. Imagine a man, lost in the Atlas Mountains, encounters a lion. Lions in that area of the world are reputed to be the most aggressive cats. The lion approaches and the man tries to explain to the lion why he should not attack him. He tells the lion: “I belong to the lion’s protection society. I fight against lions extinction. I am here looking for a protected area where you lions can live in peace, without fearing the hunters”. But as valid as this man’s arguments are, the lion, who obviously doesn’t understand human language, keeps getting dangerously close to the man with murderous eyes and a hungry face. What is the only thing this man can do to stop the lion? What in the world can dissuade the lion from eating this guy alive? The only thing this man can do is to “transform himself into an elephant,” into an animal bigger and more powerful than the

lion, into a creature that the lion is afraid to attack. An elephant will force the lion to reassess his chances of winning the battle, activate his survival instincts, reconsider and return to his pride.

If Arab hatred of Israel is cultural, visceral, and religious, the only thing that Israel can do to preserve the "peace" (or a truce) with its neighbors is to understand that the Middle East is a jungle. And only the strongest survive in the jungle.

UNDERSTANDING FREE PALESTINE

I present here some abstracts from the founding Charter of Hamas. Hamas is affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, the organization that rules Qatar. Unlike other Palestinian organizations, Hamas does not hide its true intentions.

Article 2 of Hamas' Charter defines Hamas as a "universal movement" and "one of the branches of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine".[1][21][28][29]

Article 6 Hamas is uniquely Palestinian,[1] and "strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine, for under the wing of Islam followers of all religions can coexist in security and safety where their lives, possessions and rights are concerned." It claims that the world will descend into chaos and war without Islam, quoting Muhammad Iqbal.[1][21]

Article 7 describes Hamas as "one of the links in the chain of the struggle against the Zionist invaders" and claims continuity with the followers of the religious and nationalist

hero Izz ad-Din al-Qassam from the Great Arab Revolt as well as the Palestinian combatants of the First Arab-Israeli War. It adds a hadith claiming that at the Day of Judgment all Jews will be killed.[1][29]

Article 8 The Hamas document reiterates the Muslim Brotherhood's slogan of "Allah is its goal, the Prophet is the model, the Qur'an its constitution, *jihad* its path, and death for the sake of Allah its most sublime belief."[1][21]

Article 9 adapts Muslim Brotherhood's vision to connect the Palestinian crisis with the Islamic solution and advocates "fighting against the false, defeating it and vanquishing it so that justice could prevail".[1]

Article 11 Palestine is sacred (*waqf*) for all Muslims for all time, and it cannot be relinquished by anyone.[1]

Article 12 affirms that "Nationalism, from the point of view of the Islamic Resistance Movement, is part of the religious creed".[1]

Article 13 There is no negotiated settlement possible. Jihad is the only answer.[1]

Article 14 The liberation of Palestine is the personal duty of every Palestinian.[1]

Article 15 "The day that enemies usurp part of Muslim land, Jihad becomes the individual duty of every Muslim". It states the history of the Crusades into Muslim lands and says the "Palestinian problem is a religious problem."[1]

Article 18 Defines the role of women as homemakers and child-rearers, providing education and moral guidance to men.[1]

Article 20 Calls for action "by the people as a single body"

against “a vicious enemy which acts in a way similar to Nazism, making no differentiation between man and woman, between children and old people”.[1]

Article 22 Makes sweeping claims about Jewish influence and power.[1][30] It specifically claims that the Jews were responsible for instigating multiple revolutions and wars, including the French Revolution, World War I, and the Russian Revolution. It also claims that Jews control the United Nations, and that they are supported by “the imperialistic forces in the Capitalist West and Communist East.”[1]

Article 27 Praises the PLO but condemns its secularism.[1]

Article 28 Conspiracy charges against Israel and the whole of the Jewish people: “Israel, Judaism and Jews”.[1][30] It claims that “Zionist organizations” aim to destroy society through moral corruption and eliminating Islam, and are responsible for drug trafficking and alcoholism.[1]

Article 31 Describes Hamas as “a humanistic movement”, which “takes care of human rights and is guided by Islamic tolerance when dealing with the followers of other religions”. “Under the wing of Islam”, it is possible for Islam, Christianity and Judaism “to coexist in peace and quiet with each other” provided that members of other religions do not dispute the sovereignty of Islam in the region (dhimmis).[1]

Article 33 calls upon Muslims worldwide to work for the liberation of Palestine.[1]

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