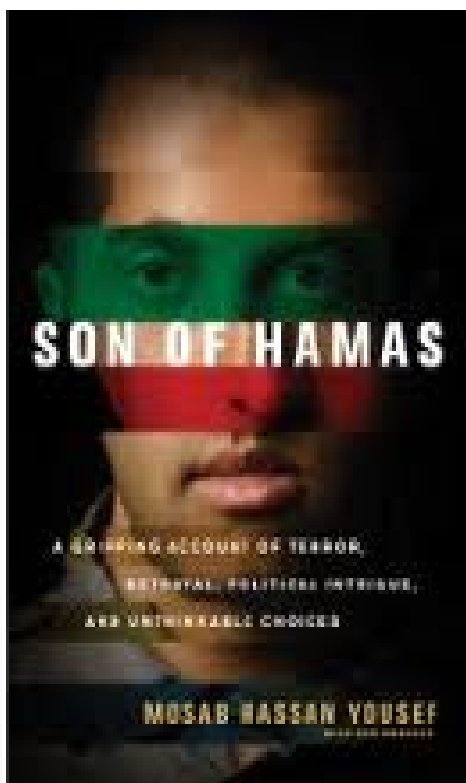


## ***BOOK REVIEW***

No. 13

Tuesday, 1 November 2011



Son of Hamas:  
A Gripping Account of Terror,  
Betrayal, Political Intrigue  
and Unthinkable Choices

Mosab Hassan Yousef  
with Ron Brackin  
Tyndale House Publishers,  
Carol Stream, IL, 2011  
ISBN: 9781414333083

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On 18 October 2011, Israel freed 477 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for a young soldier who was captured by Hamas on 25 June 2006 in Gaza. Gilad Shalit, in an interview just after his release said, “I will be very happy if all Palestinian prisoners are

freed so they can go back to their families... I hope this deal could help reach peace between Israelis and Palestinians and strengthen cooperation.” For a soldier who was held in captivity by Hamas, he did not opt for an obvious choice of vengeance; instead he wished for peace between Israel and Hamas. It might seem strange to many especially for those who believe Hamas as a terrorist organization that not only conspires to kill Israelis but are also the major roadblock to peace in that region. For them I recommend *Son of Hamas: A Gripping Account of Terror, Betrayal, Political Intrigue and Unthinkable Choices* written by Mosab Hassan Yousef along with Ron Brackin as a must read.

Mosab Hassan Yousef is the eldest son of Sheikh Hassan Yousef who is one of the founding members of Hamas. This book is the story of his journey that started in the West Bank as a young child who saw the rise of Hamas from a fledgling spiritual group to an organization that today funds terror attacks against Israel. The book begins with a letter written by Mosab to his father and family in which he explains the reason why he has come out in the open and shared his story with many in the world. He writes” I paid, you paid yet the bills of war and peace continue to come” [p.vi]

The author takes the reader through his own recollection of various important milestones in the history of Hamas. He begins with the background of his father who went to Jordan to study Islam and its way of life. Sheikh Hassan Yousef, after returning from Jordan, was taken aback by the lack of piety among the people of West Bank. He started preaching and urged people to change their ways to follow the right path shown by the Quran. He was joined by many other young Imams who were influenced by the philosophies of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. In 1986, seven of these young Imams came together and formed Hamas. Their aim was to “awaken, unify and make the Palestinian people understand their need for independence under the banner of Allah and Islam” [p.20]. They were ready to challenge the Israeli occupation of their land and their first attempt was in 1987 when they led the First Intifada. They encouraged young and old Palestinians to riot and throw stones.

Mosab further describes the role of Israeli Defence Forces to suppress the intifada. He shares his own frustration of being the eldest son in a family whose only bread earner was put behind the jail several times during this period. The book gives details of how Israel used military brutality to suppress the riots and the uneasy calmness that followed.

The book picks up pace when Mosab starts describing the year he turned 18 which was also the year that the second intifada took place. He was captured by the IDF for possessing a gun and was sentenced to months of imprisonment. In the prison he was tortured inhumanely by the guards. To escape the brutality of the prison he accepts to be an agent of the Shin Bet—internal intelligence organization of Israel. He was then transferred to a prison camp where there were many Hamas followers. In that camp he sees a different side of Hamas. He saw the jailed leaders

of Hamas torturing fellow Palestinians in brutal fashion. He slowly becomes jaded with the leaders and their “double talk”.

Once he was freed, he started his life as a secret agent. He joined his father as a leading member of Hamas and accompanied him all important meetings. He saw firsthand the way Hamas functioned and its relation with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). He became the “prince” of Hamas. However behind this glory, Mosab continued to supply information to the Israeli intelligence. He not only shared sensitive information like the location of Hamas leaders but also continued to protect his father from getting captured by the Israeli forces. Eventually he became tired of playing the double agent and escaped to United States where he was granted political asylum.

An interesting perspective in the book is the way Mosab depicts Israelis. He reveals that they are not the bad guys nor are they the good guys. They are just as similar to the Palestinians who are ready to pick up any object as a weapon to protect their land. He writes that ordinary men and women, Palestinian or Israeli, are a victim of the decisions taken by the leaders. The non demonization of the other gives this book an unbiased value which makes the reader understand both the sides at war.

Though Mosab gives a lot of details regarding the working of Hamas and its Damascus connection, he does not offer any details regarding Gaza strip and the organization of Hamas there and offers no glimpse to the readers about the reaction of Palestinians when Gaza strip was given to the Palestinians. An obvious (but maybe erroneous) conclusion that can be drawn is that the West Bank Palestinians really have no contact and concern with the people of Gaza. They are two separate lands with separate people of the same origin. It seems probable that the people of these two lands have chartered their own course. The question then arises the role and presence of Hamas as a unifying factor in both the lands.

Mosab ends the book with a message of hope and forgiveness. Reflecting his new Christian faith which he embraced while working for the GSS, he quotes scriptures from the Bible and urges the Palestinians to “forgive and love” Israelis. He sees the solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict lying in the acceptance of each other. But can a political problem have a spiritual answer is a question that every reader has to answer for himself/herself.

To conclude, this book is not only a personal story of a Palestinian but is a story of dreaming of freedom. It is a story that reflects the life of many young people in conflict areas. It’s a story that gives hope and a chance to dream again. Finally it is a story that reiterates what young men and women both Palestinian like Mosab and Gilad, his Israeli agent alike really want from the leaders today.

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