

# A Dream Takes Flight

Escape from Zionism's Nightmare

About the front cover: statue at the campus of Tel Aviv University. A stone tablet with engraving tells us: *“From this place Professor Zvi Yavetz, The first Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, used to look at the sea and plan the future.”*

About the back cover: inside *Beth Doumia - Beit al-Sakina, the house of silence*, where Jeanette and Jan together foresaw the danger approaching them.



Dick Laan

# **A Dream Takes Flight**

Escape from Zionism's Nightmare

Translation: Eve Sapp

Publisher

**De Jabouter**

For Henriëtte

*“Together, we can really do anything”*

Original title *Geveugelde Dromen*  
Original publisher CreateSpace  
Copyright © 2009 D.J. Laan  
ISBN 9781449998189 (Dutch edition)

English edition, August 9, 2020  
Publisher De Jabouter  
Copyright © 2020 D.J. Laan  
ISBN 9789403605722

Anything from this publication may only be reproduced, stored in an automated data file and / or made public by means of printing, photocopying, microfilm, recordings, or in any other way, with the prior permission of the author.

## **Preface to the original Dutch edition**

When I started writing on November 1, 2009, I knew that my book had to be about finding a fair solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, I didn't have more than a few scribbles on paper. It was wonderful for me to experience that everything seemed to unfold as a matter of course simply when I stopped thinking and started writing.

On November 30 the story came to a surprising conclusion for me. In the book the turn in the conflict (the bifurcation) takes place in 2009. In reality, this has not yet taken place. The moment of bifurcation is by nature unpredictable. The reader may replace 2009 with a year in the future, such as 2012, 2017 or 2024. It seems inevitable that the turn will come. We can all contribute now in helping the conflict to turn for the better at that future moment. Small things can determine the direction that is being taken.

With this book I wanted to give the reader an impulse to let go of stuck thought patterns in order to be able to look for a better future for everyone.

Dick Laan, March 24, 2010



## **Preface to the English edition**

At the time I wrote the original Dutch version of this book in 2009, I had never been to Israel nor Palestine. I had never read "The Invention of the Jewish People" from Shlomo Sand nor had I read "The Anteater and the Jaguar" from Rayek R. Rizek. I didn't know that David Ben Gurion, before he founded the Jewish state, regarded the Palestinians as Jews who were converted to Islam by the course of history. He was convinced that the Jewish people in the diaspora would, after many centuries, soon be united again with their fellow brothers when returning to the Holy Land.

Now in 2020 I have been to the Holy Land twice, visiting Neve Shalom, among several other places. These visits and reading the books mentioned gave me a much richer perspective than I had during the writing of this book. However, it didn't give me a reason to make any changes, except its language. At the front and back cover I used a few pictures which were taken during my visits.

Presently roughly six million Jews and six million Palestinians live on the same piece of land. I hope they will find a way to live together. History has brought them together, the future of their children demands courage to open up towards each other and use the opportunities available in the present situation, although these opportunities are often obscured by thick layers of fixed beliefs and fear. I am convinced David Ben Gurion will be right after all, that Palestinians and Jews will live as brothers, united. There is no other sensible choice.

Dick Laan, August 9, 2020





PART I

***WATER***



## 1. *A stone in the pond*

He was right for sure- he was convinced he was right. But, five emails later, Jan had not come a step closer to his goal. His indignation had only grown. The Gaza War had only recently ended and elections would soon be held in Israel. For weeks Jan had read the reports in the newspaper with horror. He had understood for many years what others just didn't want to understand. Jeanette was on his side, he knew that. She would have a tough time with him if she wasn't. She herself thought that people should be respected, whether Jew or Palestinian. The sound of her footsteps on the stairs signaled to him that she was approaching.

She gently stroked his head. "Here's a cup of coffee for you, darling. Will you still be busy for a while?"

Jan immediately took the opportunity to vent. "Look at this, isn't it a 'nice' newspaper... for those who are looking for the nuance rather than the news. If the NRC doesn't want to publish this, I'll send it elsewhere. What jerks."

Jeanette let him blow off the steam. It was best that he did this well before they went to bed.

"Let me see," Jeanette said, leaning toward the screen. As Jan opened the email, she gently pushed her breasts against his shoulder. She loved him.

*"A warrior who deliberately shoots mortars or rockets at innocent civilians is criminal. A warrior who deliberately shoots children in the head or breaks their bones is criminal. An army that allows or even encourages its fighters to commit crimes is itself criminal. A government that does not correct its army or worse, encourages it to commit crimes is criminal. A population that manages to bring a criminal government to power time and time again in free elections will be labeled criminal by history. If the shoe fits, put it on."*

It was a message for the Israeli people who would make their voices heard again in the coming elections for the

Knesset. "They must realize that things can't continue like this," Jan said. "In Gaza, 1,300 innocent people were slaughtered, and for what? To show the world that the Israeli army could still make a fist? What a bunch of cowards. Of course, the Palestinians in Gaza could read this and also find that the shoe fits them. It may not be a perfect fit, but then, did they have a choice in all of this?"

"I think it's a nice piece of writing," Jeanette responded. "But, who knows how many letters the newspaper gets. They probably can't print even half of the submissions they receive."

Jeanette knew that more steam was coming now. Fine, then. At least the boiler wouldn't explode.

"That's not the real reason they refuse to publish it," Jan replied irritably. "They just think it's too contentious, although of course they won't come out and say that. It's always the same. If it could have even a slightly negative tone towards Israel, everyone will have a field day. What on earth can be slanted about this piece? I have written it to be as neutral as possible. Instead of 'soldiers' I've used 'warriors.' Otherwise, they'll come up with the idea that Hamas has no soldiers, so it must be about Israel. Please stop the crap."

Jeanette went downstairs. Jan could feel the loneliness descending over him. His loneliness slowly drifted with him across the World Wide Web as he searched the internet for some news. A certain Lieberman had appeared on the election stage. Lieberman's solution was the deportation of all Israeli Palestinians. If the Palestinian population continued to grow, they might well form a too large minority. How was this sort of solution called seventy years ago in Germany? It was "*die Endlösung*"- the final solution. The world had certainly remembered that.

They would be fantastic elections, not that it mattered much. Whether the winners were the ultra-right or the so-called pigeons of the Workers Party, in the end nothing would change.

As his loneliness drifted on, what remained now for Jan was a feeling of emptiness. Everyone could go to hell, for all he cared. Jan clicked on "shut down" and waited for the annoying Windows tune. This was the signal for him to swallow the remains of his cup of cold coffee. He went down the stairs.

“Did you send it to someone else?” Jeanette wanted to know.

Jan answered with a sigh, “No. It really doesn't matter whether or not it gets published.”

Jeanette pulled Jan towards her on the couch and gave him a hug. “Do you want to have a drink before we go to sleep? Yes? Good.”

Jeanette poured the wine and continued, “Why don't you see if you can help the Palestinians in any way? I have a colleague who has been doing volunteer work in Gaza for years through some sort of organization. I can ask him to come over. I'm sure he would be happy to tell you about it.”

She was bothered that Jan was doing so little that was positive with his anger. He was able to write editorials full of energy, but then the energy remained in a vacuum. There was no substance in that void to help his story take shape. He wasn't doing anything practical. So, Jan's reaction didn't surprise her.

“Everything they accomplish there is rapidly destroyed again. You should see how far they got with all that help. All wasted effort. The best thing would be for all aid organizations to withdraw from the region. As it is, the Israelis abuse them into not doing anything at all, or at least not much anyway. And if something is accomplished, they bulldozer the Gaza Strip again so that everything can start all over. Not one hair on my head is planning to cooperate with that.”

Jeanette knew it didn't make sense to disagree. It was too late in the evening and she thought it better to let the subject rest now. Every now and then Jan would switch to what she secretly referred to as “action mode.” He had written letters to two presidents of the United States. The first letter, to Bush Jr., had outlined an attractive opportunity in which George W. Bush could still obtain an honorable place in history as a grand president. A vague recipe for this was written in the letter. Jan offered to explain the rest during a face-to-face meeting. When Bush had not responded to his proposal (and had been given a place of damnation in Jan's mind), it was Obama's turn. There was predictably no response yet. “Perhaps he's still busy starting his presidency,” Jan had recently muttered.

Jeanette also knew about the stack of newspaper clippings. One day he would use it to prove his point; to show that everyone had been blind.

She actually agreed with him. She also had great difficulty with what the Israelis were doing. What she didn't like was the lack of substance in Jan's method. Tangible action was much closer to her heart. Jeanette loved the approach her colleague Johan, a doctor, took. He travelled to the Gaza Strip during his holidays to help in a hospital in Khan Younis. When he was back in the Netherlands he raised money to buy medical supplies.

Today, though, she'd had enough. "Come, shall we go to sleep? Tomorrow we'll have to get up early again."

They both worked full-time jobs- she as a youth care manager, he at the Central Bureau of Statistics. She would have liked to have had children, but they never came. She knew it hurt him as much as it hurt her that it hadn't worked out the way they both wished. When they were young, he'd been so full of stories about the children they would bring into the world together. They would become giants; they would change the world. Now, at least, she had contact with children through her work. They were "problem" kids who often just needed the right attention and support. Her team gave them that.

"I'll be right up. I'd like to take a look at the news," was his reply.

"Okay. I'll get the bed warmed up. I hope you don't take too long."

Jan pressed the number one on the remote control. The grandfather clock struck 10 while Sacha de Boer presented the events of the world. Netanyahu announced something about the right to expand the settlements and the weak intervention in Gaza. Jan turned off the television. Tomorrow he had to go to work early again at the bureau, or the CBS, as it was known. Jan was a demographic statistician. He analyzed everything about the Dutch population composition. The work gave him a certain pleasure. He felt he could better understand how reality worked. But he could also see very well how politicians dealt with this reality. They only saw what they wanted to see. They just didn't care about the rest. Anyway, they had to know the truth. Good statistics don't lie.

Jan gathered the wine glasses and a magazine, placed them on a tray and took them to the kitchen. The sound of breaking glass hit him like a grenade. He stood rooted, unable to move. The wine glasses had fallen off the tray, the sound of which was more of an aftershock, though. He had hardly noticed.

After a moment, Jeanette came down the stairs in her nightgown, startled. "What are you doing? What's going on? You scared me."

Jan did not respond. He looked down at the unreal shards of glass.

She tried to get things moving again. "Come on. Clean up the mess and let's go to sleep."

"The sound was something else, though," Jan stammered. "It came from upstairs, near the bathroom."

Jeanette was startled, but as always, she took control. She grasped the magazine from Jan's hands and together they walked upstairs. She kept him away from the bathroom. It seemed better to her that everything remained untouched until the police came.

One hour later the police finally arrived. There were two of them, a young agent and her older colleague. A police car in front of the house was an unusual phenomenon in their neighborhood. It had taken Jeanette a lot of trouble to get them to come. A broken window wasn't their highest priority. Couldn't this wait until tomorrow, when they were welcome to report the incident at the police station directly? No. It could not.

"The window has been smashed and there is a stone on the floor. We want you to come and check for fingerprints or any other evidence," Jeanette had insisted.

"Windows get broken often. Perhaps some bad kids up to mischief in the night? These things happen, ma'am. Don't take it too personally. They probably weren't targeting you," was the reply.

"It's the window under which we have a Palestinian flag hanging, and we don't think it's a coincidence. We want it to be investigated. We think this was a deliberate attack." Jeanette was becoming angry.

Jan was still lost in thought. When he heard the noise, he had immediately known which window it was. It was intuition. When he had considered whether to hang a

Palestinian flag on the outside of his house, he had taken the risks into account. His thoughts had sometimes taken grotesque forms, from arson to subversion by the General Intelligence Service, also known as AIVD, or even by the Mossad, whereby he would be unjustly but inevitably fired from his job. The realization was still dawning on him that it was now a reality and no longer just a thought that he'd often considered with some sort of dark pleasure.

The older agent took the situation into account and had given some instructions to his colleague to complete the report.

He addressed Jeanette, "I think it best to put something in front of the window to keep out the rain and cold, and maybe it's better if you remove the flag for a while. See if a repairman can come tomorrow and then everything will be fine again."

"But," Jeanette protested, "shouldn't you see if you can find fingerprints on the stone or footprints in the garden? It's almost impossible that they could have thrown it from the street. It's just too far."

"I can imagine you were shocked, but I don't think anyone is after you. Probably some troublemakers who saw your flag and took the opportunity to do something wanton, shall we say. Please understand me, I'm not trying to justify this, but you should have seen what happened when a Star of David flag was flown at an Ajax match. These things generate very primitive responses. We will check with the neighbors tomorrow. Perhaps they saw something. Do you want to come to the office the day after tomorrow to sign the report? We have other calls waiting tonight."

Less than 10 minutes after the police arrived, the two of them were gone.

"At least it's not raining," Jeanette said soberly. "We can look around tomorrow morning. Maybe we'll find something, ourselves."

Jan was still lost in thought. But, he was no longer concerned with the worry of what he had once feared could happen. He was plotting his own war. The truth would come out. He had to go to work tomorrow, but in his mind he had already taken time off. There was no question about that. And that Palestinian flag? No part of him would be budged in the direction of removing it now.



He remembered Greta Duisenberg, the spouse of the chairman of the Dutch Treasury. She herself had also bravely hung up the flag. She was then played in the press as emotional, unstable, incompetent and worse. Despite it all, she had not backed down. Brave woman!

Although Jeanette tried to stay calm, she felt a certain panic. She knew that Jan was going to latch onto this, firmer and more powerful than he had ever done. She had rarely seen him in such a state. Yes, yes, she had seen it, but only in cases where he had some great plan. Then, he would become overwhelmed by it; he would get out of control. He would regain that childish enthusiasm again, that enthusiasm she had fallen for when they first met. At those moments he was unstoppable. She could quite easily get dragged into whatever worlds he set about creating. He was like that when he was planning their honeymoon. She knew nothing about his plans, but she could feel that something very special was about to happen. A few days after the wedding, he had whisked her off on their own “Out of Africa experience”. The two of them had been totally immersed in their own self-made world full of beauty and adventure. She had wished they could stay there forever. That was Jan at his best. But now, that power of his was focused on something negative. Would she be able to steer him in the right direction? She knew she couldn't leave him alone with this.

“Jan, come on, we're exhausted. Let's leave everything as it is. We can't do anything more now.”

Jan allowed himself to be taken to bed. They fell asleep surprisingly fast together. But Jan was already far away; very far away.

## 2. Goofy

*The religion teacher, nicknamed Goofy, shakes his almost bald head with an uncomfortable smile. His name is actually Mr. Goeijenbier but at school people know him better as Goofy. Everyone likes him. He is a bit special. He limps when walking, but he has something mysterious about him. His religion classes are always exciting, as if there's much more that he could say, but doesn't want to tell you at the moment. As if he wants to say "Be patient, the plot will come in the next lesson." That's what makes him so intriguing. You want to hear more from him; what's hiding there behind his enigmatic comments? Today, he started the discussion about the foundation of the state of Israel. It is 1971. Almost the whole of the Netherlands and also the entire class of the St. John Catholic Secondary School is pro-Israel.*

*"Sir, may I ask something? What do you actually think of Israel and Zionism?"*

*Marianne, one of the best-loved students in the class, has taken the initiative. For some reason, doubts have arisen about Goofy's opinion.*

*"Uh, well, no, I'm not really in favor of it," was his reply. They could have expected such an answer, but it still surprises everyone. It raises new questions; other students join the discussion which soon becomes fierce.*

*"But the Jews suffered terribly in World War II. They have finally found a place where they'll hopefully be safe."*

*"It was promised to them by the British."*

*"What do the British matter? They were just passing through. It was already promised to them in the Bible."*

*"Don't you mean it was promised to them in the Torah?"*

*"At least they're making something of it. I saw a report about the kibbutz... amazing what they're doing."*

*"We have to support them, they're entitled to it."*

*Goofy shuffles around in front of the class. He is quiet again now. He doesn't need to clarify anything about his personal opinion as long as the class is engaged with each other. Jan keeps aloof. He knows very little about this*

*subject. The bell rings, the lesson time is up. Everyone hurries out of class- only a 10 minute break until the next lesson.*

*It is strange. The thought keeps Jan busy as he cycles home. Why wasn't Goofy in favor of the Jewish state? What was wrong with it? He is a strange man, anyway. Though it was a good question, actually; what are the arguments for this? It had seemed so simple, but now it suddenly seems a lot more complicated. When he gets home he starts his homework and the question disappears into the background of Jan's mind.*