

Who is Shaykh Marwan?

I asked my father if there was anything in particular that he would like me to put in this introduction, “Who is Shaykh Marwan?” His reply was, “Not shaykh, hajji!” This is always his reply to anyone who calls him shaykh, however out of respect I shall call him shaykh.

He is Palestinian, born in Jaffa on the 12th Rabi’ al-Awwal 14.. or 19th May 1940. His whole family emigrated to Jordan in 1947, like most Palestinians, they thought this was a temporary measure until the violence had calmed, however the Israeli occupiers refused to allow them to return.

Shaykh Marwan’s family are descendants of the Prophet, saw, and of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq. Their name was originally Elyafi but was changed to Khalaf: they were the target of Napoleon's special attention for leading the resistance against his forces in Palestine, nearly all were killed until a mother changed the name of her newborn son to Khalaf, or so the story goes!

His mother had thirteen children and naming this son, Marwan, was certainly appropriate - it comes from the name of the rock Marwa - one of the pair of rocks between which Hagar ran looking for water, after she and Ishmael had been left in the desert by Abraham. The rock-like nature of his iron will has given him great strength through adversity. He is also compassionate, generous and kind hearted, with a great sense of humour.

Shaykh Marwan was not trained as a scholar but as a scientist - this training, his intelligence, linguistic abilities and clear thinking, supported by the spiritual power of his shaykh, Shaykh Muhammad Nazim al-Haqqani, gave him the necessary tools to translate this Ghazali text with sympathy and understanding.

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