

Hard to pinpoint a moment after which I could never look at things in the same way again. My life must be full of these, I'm sure. Sometimes so slight, they might be like a pin dropping on a marble floor. I need to strain to hear it, to realise that something has happened. Sometimes there is a feeling of shock, suddenly something is obvious or different, and why didn't I realise that before? I could almost kick myself...

One day, when I was younger, I decided to imagine that I was not the centre of my universe. I tried to place myself in the context of the billions of souls which populate the earth. I tried to visual them all, and me not in the middle but just somewhere among them. I had the feeling of zooming out, out and out of my surroundings. Suddenly everything around me felt so much bigger, and so much smaller at the same time. I was jolted by this vision. It frightened me because I had never tried to see things in this way. Something shifted, both physically and mentally, in my perception of where I was.

Maybe this is one kind of epiphany. I looked the word up in the dictionary and found this quote by someone I had never heard of:

"I experienced an epiphany, a spiritual flash that would change the way I viewed myself".

Maybe the way we experience change has to be about ourselves in the end, because if we change our point of view about something outside of ourselves, we start to reflect about why we thought the way we did before that change. Epiphany is something like a spiritual flash, it feels like something is happening to you through something bigger than yourself. But maybe this makes epiphany sound like something which always leaves you on a higher note.

I can remember two particular flashes clearer than any others. The first was at the dinner table with my family almost 15 years ago. We were sitting around the white table in the kitchen eating green beans and chicken. I was just about to put a forkful of chicken into my mouth when I realised that what I was about to eat had been killed. I couldn't eat it, wouldn't eat it. I had never thought about it before, I had just accepted the food I was given (unless of course I didn't like the look or taste of it). It suddenly seemed such a horrible thing to eat something which had once been breathed. I didn't eat meat or fish again for seven years after that. The second flash was different. It trickled and trickled in a slow build up until it hit me heavy as anything. It was much more devastating.

Growing up in England, I thought of my birthplace, Israel, as some kind of paradise. No crime or prostitution there, the sun always shining, my family living so nearby and the beach just around the corner. England was very, very different. Different buildings, different language. School uniform seemed like a very exotic thing. We were meant to leave after a year, but we stayed. Visits back home became less frequent, and the idea of home became confused. England was not quite home, and neither was Israel. But this idea of our wonderful birthplace was still there in the minds of my siblings and I. This picture postcard image was maintained for some years. An article here, a comment there, a banner at a protest march, and the image began to fade. The reality came as a real shock. Not only did this place have problems, but real and bloody ones.

The flash came some time during the Second Intifada. Media coverage was at a high. A photograph of a Palestinian man shielding his son from bullets marked this turning point in my thinking. I felt like I had been living in a fantasy world, and I did not know where to place my love for the country and happy memories I had of it. I felt like I had just found out the shocking and violent secret of a close relative, which the rest of the family had known about all along. I felt a mixture of guilt and shame, and could not understand the point of view of my parents, who I began to question about the issue. It was only later, when I had read and questioned more that my views became less about my immediate reaction to that particular jolt.