

Interview with Israel del Rio, author of Honeycomb

Today, Tyler R. Tichelaar of Reader Views is honored to interview Israel del Rio, who is here to talk about his new novel, “Honeycomb.”

In this life, Israel del Rio was born in Mexico City. He has worked most of his life as a software engineer. However, he has enjoyed writing all his life, and since his formative years, he would scribble poems and short stories on napkins. Today, he lives in Georgia with his wife, Rita, and sons, Derek and Alex. His daughter, Tania, pens the Sabrina the Teenage Witch comic series. “Honeycomb” is Israel’s third novel.

Tyler: Welcome, Israel. I’m glad you could join me today. I’m very interested in learning more about “Honeycomb.” To begin, will you tell our readers the basic idea behind the story?

Israel: Thanks Tyler, the pleasure is all mine...Well, at its core, “Honeycomb” ties a belief in the evolution of the soul through reincarnation with the proposition that, in essence, each of us partakes in a common consciousness. “Honeycomb” also conveys that, despite this common consciousness, our individual identities are preserved through the ability to choose the type of life we ultimately decide to live. The book introduces a character in the process of being reincarnated. He’s been given the choice to select his next life from a menu of five. The novel actually showcases portions of each possible life, and presents the character with basic questions such as: What would you do if you were given the chance to review and choose your next life? Would you choose one for its wealth, or for its happiness? Would you choose one for its challenges, or for its simplicity?

Tyler: Where did you get the idea for the novel?

Israel: Actually, the idea came to me because of two separate recollections of mine, each in the form of a very vivid dream. In one recollection, I was shown an exposition of an individual whom, I was told, I had been in a previous life—a background very similar to one I write about in one of the book’s chapters. In the second memory I stood next to a spiritual guide prompting me to choose my next life. The two experiences were so impactful that they drove me to write the book and became the anchoring ideas behind “Honeycomb.” However, “Honeycomb” is ultimately a work of fiction with most of the details and plot lines added for effect. For example, each of the life stories has been fictionalized in order to provide an entertaining narrative.

Tyler: Did you do any research in writing the novel, such as in life-after-death or reincarnation experiences, or did you rely solely upon your imagination?

Israel: Ironically, my belief in reincarnation stems not from any particular interest in religion but, rather, from an interest in science—specifically physics. I was inspired by Amit Goswami’s “Self Aware Universe” in which he explains how Quantum Physics might prove the existence of an evolving universal consciousness (incidentally, Mr. Goswami published another book on reincarnation “Physics of the Soul” in 2001, but that particular book came out after I had already written the bulk of my novel). I have also been influenced by the books of Paul Davies in which he explains how physics can relate to our understanding of God. To me, the knowledge revealed by science can be as compelling a foundation for spiritual beliefs as any religious text. Anyone who tells you that science has all the answers and that it doesn’t allow room for belief in metaphysical events is flat out wrong. The fact is that, in science, there are many unknowns and mysteries, and many of these unknowns allow for the possibilities of life-after-death and cosmic connectedness (did you know, for example, that science has yet to account for the location of 90% of the Universe?—all those billions of galaxies with their billions of stars accounts for only 10%!).

While most of the concepts and details in my novel came from my own experience and imagination, very recently I came upon a book entitled “Reincarnation” by Swami Abhedananda, an Indian monk who last lived on this earth during the early part of the 20th century, and I was pleasantly surprised to learn that much of my novel is very consistent with what he had written on the subject.

Tyler: “Honeycomb” sounds very consistent with what I have read also about reincarnation and near-death experiences. But I understand the main character did something redeeming in a past life, which is why he is allowed to choose his life in this one? Will you explain more about the character and what his previous life was like before he could make his choice?

Israel: The character learns that during his previous life as a military commander, following government orders, he orchestrates a massacre against innocent villagers. After agonizing over the hideousness of this act, he repents and rebels against the government. His attempt to remediate his wrongdoing eventually costs him his life. Because of his act of contrition, he’s given the chance to choose his next life.

Tyler: What ultimately is the purpose of reincarnation in “Honeycomb”? Will the character continue to reincarnate and how do multiple reincarnations affect or improve him?

Israel: The idea is that we are in this life to learn through the trials, experiences, and travails that life hands us. With each life, the soul gains in purity and in comprehension about the universe. Since the idea is that God can be viewed as the aggregate of all souls, She too advances in Her cosmic evolution, becoming more self-aware as each individual soul becomes purer and more experienced.

Tyler: Is there any connection between the five lives the main character considers entering in his new incarnation? Why did you choose these five lives, and not just three or ten or some other number, and these characters specifically?

Israel: First of all, I wanted to write a novel whose primary value was one of entertainment. Wanting to avoid writing anything preachy or tedious, I focused on a few lives with interesting story lines. One of the subtle points I make in the book is that the previewed lives are related to each other for the simple reason that we are *all* related to each other. I believe we are all connected. So, any particular life the main character chose to preview would have revealed some sort of connection to the others.

Tyler: While the main character chooses the life he will live, is that life pre-determined or are choices available to the person once living the life?

Israel: The life is not pre-determined. Instead it is simply being sketched out in very rough terms. Think of it as a general outline...an outline with some defaults and planned events. John, the character’s spiritual guide in the Honeycomb, is a life-weaver, and his responsibility is to script and enable the various elements that form a life, including its challenges. In the end, each soul makes free choices that determine the branches and direction of the outline, and thus, the life’s eventual outcome. In fact, my book is more about the concept of “choice” and the idea that we are all interconnected rather than simply about reincarnation.

Tyler: Israel there are many spiritual books in the marketplace today, and even novels with spiritual themes. What do you think sets “Honeycomb” apart from the many other spiritual works available today?

Israel: The most important difference is that even if you’re a nonbeliever in reincarnation or the idea of an evolving God, you can still enjoy reading my book from a purely secular perspective. Also, I hope that I managed to imprint my own voice, humor included, as a way of saying, “Hey, let’s not take ourselves too seriously!”

Tyler: Why did you choose the title of “Honeycomb”?

Israel: The original title for my book was “Evanescence”, but then my son-in-law (who, by the way, came up with the great cover design) suggested the title “Honeycomb,” perhaps thinking that it would be easier to design a cover for the word ‘honeycomb’ rather than the more abstract word ‘evanescence’!

I knew immediately that “Honeycomb” was a perfect title. In fact, I even rewrote several portions of my novel to reemphasize the analogy of everyone being part of a cosmic beehive and the theme of remembrance through Honey (love).

Tyler: You’re lucky to have your son-in-law because the cover is great, and I love the analogy and the symbolism of honey as love, but can we go back for a moment to “Evanescence.” What was your original reason for that title? Will you define what you meant by evanescence?

Israel: I considered the title “Evanescence” because the main character exists in an ethereal sphere where he is evanescent as he previews each life. The idea is that the character exists in a transposition state where his life has not been resolved, because he has not yet made his final determination of which life to live. I am really borrowing from physics here, where according to quantum mechanics, any event exists only as a probability wave and is not realized until it has been measured or observed. In my novel, I never give a name to the character, because giving him a name is akin to “collapsing” his probability wave and thus making him real.

Tyler: Israel, would you say that the novel pertains to any specific religions or religious belief system since it deals with the spiritual, or will Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus etc. all enjoy it?

Israel: I suppose that since it deals with reincarnation, some might argue that it more closely aligns with Hinduism, but I frankly don’t consider my book to be about religion. I tried to disassociate the novel from any particular creed since I believe it is possible to share in the concept of a God irrespective of the rites and earthly beliefs we choose to follow. In so far as most religions advance a belief in God and the need for spiritual awareness, I hope “Honeycomb” can be enjoyed by everyone.

Tyler: I understand many of the world religions and the majority of the planet’s population believes in reincarnation, yet Christianity does not. What is your religious background? You said above your interest has been in science, but did you feel any religious conflicts within you over this belief in reincarnation, and how did you reconcile it?

Israel: I have a Catholic background, but except for the occasional wedding, baptism or memorial, I am not a follower. It might be hard to believe, but I became disenchanted with religion when, as a seven year old attending my first (and only) catechism class, the priest dismissively refused even to try to answer my very sensible question about how the holy trinity could be three entities in one. So, I am not conflicted by any set religious beliefs. What is surprising to me is that the central dogma of many religions ignores the concept of reincarnation. My understanding is that several of the original Christian sects did believe in reincarnation, but that the emerging church leaders at around 400 A.D or so, who were responsible for establishing the “official” catholic canon (including the compilation we now refer to as the New Testament) felt that reincarnation contradicted the tenet of resurrection of the body at the end of times and that reincarnation diluted the concept of Christian salvation as well; so I guess they simply chose not to go for it.

Tyler: Israel, in introducing you I mentioned you in relation to “in this life”—biographical information from your website—so I am assuming you believe you were reincarnated yourself? How did you come to believe in reincarnation?

Israel: Absolutely! I find it hard to imagine a universe that creates life and gifts humans with consciousness and yet allows all the informational content our lives represent to vanish upon our death. I think that if nature teaches us anything it is that it’s evolving toward a state of higher complexity (entropy notwithstanding) and that this is true for the physical realm as well as for the as yet unexplored spiritual dimension.

Tyler: A lot of interest in reincarnation has arisen in the United States in the last few years. Even just in the last couple months, Dr. Brian Weiss was on Oprah talking about how we can hypnotize ourselves so we can recall our past lives. Why do you think reincarnation is suddenly becoming “popular”?

Israel: Hmm, the concept of reincarnation has been something I’ve accepted from a young age and so I haven’t really given it much thought. I suppose the belief in reincarnation could be more popular now as a result of the move towards new age philosophies that have made Eastern religions more popular here in the United States. Or could it be that our collective unconscious is now converging on the realization that reincarnation is a distinct possibility?

Tyler: After reading “Honeycomb” what affect do you hope it will have on its readers?

Israel: First and foremost, I hope they will be entertained—much as with any mainstream novel. I believe the stories and narrative are interesting and can stand on their own. A bonus would be if my novel indirectly persuades the reader that beyond the price of gas, the housing market, or the war(s); or indeed any of the myriad things that cause stress in our lives, that there is a broader context; one filled with hope, and one that can lift us up from our day-to-day struggles.

Tyler: Israel, “Honeycomb” is your third novel. Will you tell us briefly about your other books and also what you plan to write next?

Israel: I am currently writing a book more directly related to my day job as an information systems executive. It's a book about technology transformation and is definitely not a fictional work (well, okay, perhaps there is some degree of fiction involved in complex technology projects!)

My next fiction book is being drafted somewhere between my neurons and is taking shape as we speak. It will explore the concepts of faith and fate and it will be based on some recent life experiences of mine—experiences that I still need to let cool down, distil and process before turning them into a fruitful novel.

Tyler: Thank you for joining me today, Israel. Before we go, will you tell our readers about your website and what additional information they might find there about “Honeycomb”?

Israel: Thanks to you, Tyler! You can visit my web site at <http://honeycomb.paxorbis.com>. There you will find more on the book, pointers to book reviews and, most importantly, directions on how to order it! Also, I am considering launching a message board on the topic of physics and reincarnation, and I am curious to see if this is something people would enjoy reading or participating in. Email me at honeycomb@paxorbis.com with your opinions.

Tyler: Thanks, Israel, and finally, I have to ask—any chance your daughter and you will collaborate to create the comic book version of “Honeycomb”?

Israel: Ha, ha, very funny! Well, my daughter is engaged in various comic book projects of her own while continuing to write for the Sabrina Teenage Witch comic book series. It would be ideal if she did my book in comic form, but I am sure she will insist on doing it utilizing the manga style. Perhaps in my next life!

Tyler: Thanks, Israel for the informative interview. I hope you will join us again, in this life or the next. You've given us much food for thought today.

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