Gadi Taub surrenders to the tyranny of the contemporary

Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, July 8, 2018

In his article, Gadi Taub (Haaretz, July 6) argues that the end of the conflict between us and the Palestinians depends solely on the Palestinians, and that they do not intend to give up their great dream of destroying the State of Israel. In so doing, he adopts the basic claims of the nationalist right and cuts himself off from the camp that believes that achieving a political separation is possible, but depends on both sides, and more so on Israel. He also cuts himself off from the camp, which believes that in the absence of a Palestinian partner, Israel must take its fate into its own hands and pursue independent and controlled measures, in accordance with its security needs, to ensure future separation between itself and the Palestinians.

Taub accuses Noam Sheizaf (Haaretz, June 15) of describing the "situation" in Gaza as if "there was no history and no reasons". In the same paragraph Taub seeks to go deeper in history and notes that the Palestinians "succeeded in thwarting Israel's repeated attempts to end the occupation". Taub thus commits the same sin as he succumbs to the tyranny of the contemporary, which characterizes the Israeli discourse of historical dishonesty in examining the processes and attitudes of the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

It can be assumed however that we will not want to go back in history to the biblical period and argue with the absurd Palestinian claim, which was often presented to the League of Nations and the British (1921), that "the first to settle in Palestine from time immemorial are our forefathers, the Amalekites".

The "opening shot" of the conflict is recognized in the Balfour Declaration and in the 1922 Mandate issued on its basis. Twenty-five years later, the partition report (1947) states that "the principle of self-determination did not apply to Palestine when the Mandate was created in 1922". This confession serves as the keystone of the Palestinian narrative that a historic and legal injustice was done to the Arabs of Palestine Which in 1922 accounted for more than 90 percent of the population, owned more than 90 percent of the private land, and were deprived of the right to self-determination "due to the desire to allow the establishment of a Jewish national home".

The Palestinians have held to this argument for decades and rejected all proposals to divide the land between themselves and the Jews, as Mahmoud Abbas admitted (2008) "the opportunity for the partition of 1947 was lost, and before that the Peel Commission's partition was lost". Those proposals it must be noted, were accepted by the Zionist movement, which recognized the right of the Arabs of Palestine, as Ben-Gurion declared (1924), "The Arab community in Israel must have the right to self-determination and self-rule. And as he continued to suggest (1947), "the only possible immediate arrangement with a foundation of finiteness is the establishment of two states, one Jewish and one Arab (in the land of Israel)."

Taub and his ilk ignore the dramatic change that occurred in the Palestinians' position in 1988 during the geopolitical changes that took place in the global and regional systems. The Palestinians, who maintained a discourse based on fundamental rights in which they claimed they were deprived of the right to self-determination, understood that this position, which is unacceptable to the international community, led them to the Nakba, to protracted refugee-hood and to the absence of an independent state. They were forced to move into a discourse based on legitimacy and international resolutions, headed by resolution 242, as Abbas continues: "We do not want to miss another opportunity, so we accepted the division of 1948 and 1967, which do not include more than 22% of historic Palestine". This position led to the mutual recognition with Israel in which the Palestinians declared (1993) that "the PLO recognizes Israel's right to exist in peace and security, recognizes UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 ...".

This change in attitude, it should be noted again, was not due to "the love for Mordecai", and even the use of the term "historical Palestine" attests to their position that they "gave up 100% of the Palestinian homeland in exchange for a Palestinian state of 22%". Nevertheless, historical fairness requires that all the proposals and the willingness of the Zionist movement and the State of Israel to partition the land stem not from "the love for Ishmael", but from the realization that the Arab majority between the sea and the Jordan does not allow the establishment and existence of a democratic and Jewish state - the Zionist vision.

From David Ben-Gurion, who wrote (1937) "What we want is not that the land be unified and whole, but that the unified and whole Land be Jewish. I do not have any satisfaction with the entire Land of Israel - when it is Arab", to Yitzhak Rabin (1995) "I view the separation issue a central issue", Ehud Barak (2000) "I view separation as a supreme national need for Israeli demography, identity and democracy", and Ariel Sharon, who initiated the Disengagement Plan (2003), "I believed and hoped that we could hold forever (onto the land)... but the changing reality in the land, the region, and the world requires me to evaluate differently and change positions".

When you know the history of the conflict, the Palestinian narrative, and the international resolutions, it is not too difficult to understand why Arafat rejected Barak's proposal at Camp David in 2000. The one which asked him to return home without a capital in East Jerusalem, with recognition of Israeli sovereignty on the Temple Mount, to agree to an Israeli annexation of 9-11 percent of the West Bank without receiving land from Israel in return, for a long period of leasehold of a quarter of the Jordan Valley and other areas, without an external border with Jordan and more.

The attempt to define the Annapolis negotiations of 2008 between Mahmoud Abbas and Ehud Olmert as a failure is bordering on deception. The Palestinians proposed an exchange of territories that would allow the majority of the settlers to remain under Israeli sovereignty, the annexation to Israel of Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem (without Har Homa), Jewish sovereignty over the Western Wall, the Jewish Quarter, half the Armenian Quarter and the rest of Mount Zion. A demilitarized Palestinian state and a symbolic "return" with compensation to the Palestinian refugees.

As a forward-looking observer, Olmert took the trouble of making clarifications (2012) for the sake of Taub and his kind: "I was within reach of a peace agreement. The Palestinians never rejected my proposals. And even if for the 1,000th time, people will try to claim that they rejected my proposals, the reality was different. They didn’t accepted them, and there is a difference. They did not accept them because the negotiations were not over, it was on the brink of completion ... If I had stayed prime minister for another four or six months, I believe that it would have been possible to reach a peace agreement. The gaps were very small, we had already reached the last stretch".

In these positions, the Palestinians demonstrated a very flexible interpretation in favor of Israel, above and beyond the decisions and positions of the international community. The main points of these positions appear in the "Palestinian position document" distributed by Abbas' bureau. But for Taub's information, of these generous positions, Netanyahu said, "under the conditions they want at the moment, a Palestinian state is out of the question" (2015).

Taub continues to argue that the Palestinian strategy is "the destruction of the Jewish nation-state", thereby aligning himself with Netanyahu who claimed (1993) that "the PLO's policy is the doctrine of stages and its goal is to destroy the State of Israel and not reach an agreement with it". If so, why not for Taub to remain faithful to all of Netanyahu's 2015 promises "If I get elected, there will not be a Palestinian state in my term," and "We will forever preserve a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty," as well as "I am committed to building throughout Judea and Samaria" (2014). Taub must internalize what the Prime Minister's father, Ben-Zion Netanyahu, understood and said in response to the Bar-Ilan speech (2009), "Benjamin does not support a Palestinian state, but only on conditions that the Arabs will never accept. I heard it from him", or read what the Prime Minister himself wrote about resolving the conflict (1995) "The autonomy plan under Israeli control is the only alternative to preventing these dangers, which are inherent in the 'peace' plan of the Oslo Accords".

"The end of the occupation, actually, does not depend on us", Taub concludes finally. But the end of the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel depends on both us and the Palestinians: Israel must return to the negotiating table on the basis of the parameters on which the negotiations in Annapolis took place and stop dreaming that the Palestinians will accept the Trump proposal. If the Palestinians refuse, then Israel must, through initiatives, maintain its identity and regime by itself. When Ariel Sharon claimed in 2003 that "there is no Palestinian partner with whom it is possible to advance peacefully toward an agreement ..., he continued and concluded "I have decided to initiate a process of gradual disengagement ... ".

As opposed to him, Netanyahu and his government are doing everything to further lubricate the slippery and dangerous slope in which Israel is marching toward the loss of the Zionist vision and the establishment of one state, which will begin its path as an apartheid state and end as an Arab state. A process from which Sharon warned (2003): "We do not want to control forever millions of Palestinians who multiply their number every generation. Israel which seeks to be a model democracy can not endure such a reality for a long time".

Netanyahu heads a government whose members and members of the coalition have laid out many plans and bills for the annexation of the entire West Bank or parts of it. A government that actually expands the isolated settlements and avoids separating the populations by continued refusal to complete the security fence. A government that works tirelessly to preserve the Palestinian split and strengthen Hamas' status in the Gaza Strip. If for Taub this is the way to eliminate the Palestinian "resistance", then it is fitting that he internalize that this is the way to eliminate the Israeli and Palestinian hope for a resolution of the conflict.