**The settlers are not pioneers, even if they think they are**

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The myth of the new "Zionist settlement" in the West Bank, which ostensibly continues the path of the pioneers prior to the establishment of the state and in its early years, is at the heart of the nationalist and messianic public claim to gain legitimacy in Israeli public opinion. This myth is fundamentally baseless, does a historic injustice to the first pioneers and ultimately conceals the truth from the public.

The waves of Jewish settlement to the Land of Israel in the modern era did indeed share the same national goal - the establishment of the "Jewish State" in as much territory as possible, but the vision, the political background, the challenges, the characteristics and the results were very different.

With regard to the expansion of the borders of the "Jewish state," three main periods can be discerned in 120 years of Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel: the first, 1947-1881, is mainly a pioneering and voluntary settlement; The second, 1948-1967, is a forced settlement at its core; The third, 1968-2018, is mostly a convenience and real estate settlement.

The motives of the settlers in the first period differed among the "Aliyahs", even if they were essentially based on a new national consciousness. As a rule, religious people, like the old "Yeshuv", settled in the holy cities, where they could find a livelihood; Job seekers and socialists established the Moshavim and agricultural farms, the Kibbutzim and "groups"; and there were those who saw the establishment of cities as their contribution to the establishment of the Jewish National Home.

The challenges facing them were enormous: lack of knowledge and experience in agriculture, foreign climate, malaria, a competing Arab labor force, opposition from the Ottoman regime, and later, British restrictions on immigration and acquisition of land, harassment and violence from the local Arabs and more.

Until overcoming malaria in the 1920s, the Jewish settlers chose to cling to the "N settlement" - the coastal plain and valleys. The malaria-stricken lands were sold to Jews, and later these areas became the heart of the Jewish state, planned in the partition resolution in 1947.

The Royal Peel Commission in 1937 suggested that the Jewish state be extended to the "N settlement" and the Galilee - an approach that made it clear for the first time that in future proposals for the partition of the land, areas with Jewish presence would be included within the boundaries of the Jewish state. Therefore, the Jewish Agency decided to increase the deployment of Jewish settlement. During the last decade of British rule, the momentum of Jewish settlement increased and spread to the Western Galilee, the Beit She'an Valley and the Negev (52 " Wall and tower" settlements, the three "look-outs" in the Negev, the "the 11 points" in the western Negev and more).

In the war that erupted as a result of the Arabs' refusal to accept the Partition Plan in 1947 and their decision to fight in order to cancel it, half of the areas designated for the Arab state were concurred. The young Israel established a policy to prevent the return of the Palestinian refugees to the destroyed villages and to drop the borders of the partition resolution from the international agenda. At the end of 1948, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion formulated the policy of the second period: "A living, working and creating human wall, can protect the borders of the land". Accordingly, between 1948 and 1967, 465 new settlements were established in the State of Israel.

In order to realize this concept, Israel adopted a policy of population dispersal. The main milestone was the "Sharon Plan - Physical Planning for Israel" of 1951; the architect Aryeh Sharon formulated the principles of population dispersal of the young state, which led to the State of Israel holding a world record of number of communities relative to the population.

The wave of mass immigration of 1948-1951, which numbered about 700,000 people from Asia and Africa, settled in the center of the country and dealt with the difficulties of absorption: language, labor and housing shortage, and negative cultural labeling. In these years, new kibbutzim were established in the border Strips. Thirty-five of them were established during the war until January 1949, but in the absence of a settlement nuclei of the pioneering youth movements, the population dispersal was subsequently made mainly by referring the 200,000 new immigrants who arrived from North-Africa in the mid-1950s to the border communities.

The IDF played an important role in the implementation of the policy, and in the 1950s and later on, the General Staff of the "Settlement Bureau" operated, and the IDF determined the location of the new settlements according to security considerations only. This was a forced "pioneering" of immigrants who had to deal with all the hardships of their predecessors, which were exacerbated; In the establishment of the remote communities, no consideration was given to the creation of suitable sources of employment, education, health and welfare services. Worst of all was the security threat - during the period 1948-1956, "infiltrators" killed about 200 civilians and dozens of security personnel, stealing and sabotaging property worth an average of several hundred thousand Israeli pounds per year.

The new settlements established until 1967 were included in the regional councils of Beit She'an, the Jezreel Valley, the Sharon and Judea. In the north, the Beit She'an Valley and the settlements of the Ta'anach region were established, and in the East Sharon area 40 new settlements were established in these years, including the town of Rosh Ha'ayin.

The third period was marked by a decade of settlement in the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea, which was defined as security settlement by the Ma'arach (Labor) governments. But the geographical conditions turned the aspirations of the plan's thinker, Yigal Allon, to bring a million Jews to the area into fantasies. The members of the kibbutzim and veteran moshavim who came to establish the 25 agricultural settlements, which were added to the cities, have not yet crossed 6,000 people.

The steeply sparsely populated eastern strip of the West Bank can be added to the ridge of the Judean and Samaria hills - a steep and rugged region where most of the large Palestinian cities are located. To this region, members of the national- messianic "Gush Emunim" (Block of the faithful) sought to push themselves in order to prevent Palestinian continuity and the division of the land, under the false declaration that the bloc was "a movement for the renewal of Zionist fulfillment".

The first decade saw the block's struggle against the IDF and the Israeli government, whose policy was clearly determined by Yitzhak Rabin: "To the heart of the West Bank, which is densely populated by the Arabs, we must not thrust Jewish settlers. Such dramatic settlement has in it signs of showmanship and provocation to Arabs and the United States, and there is no security need and justification. With the political upheaval of 1977, and in all the years in which Israeli governments invested tens of billions in the region, there has been no dramatic change in the settlement aspect, and in the region there is a Palestinian demographic dominance of 92%.

The third and western strip is characterized by good agricultural soil, and overlooks the coastal plain. This is the "high demand" area of ​​the West Bank, where most of the Palestinian agricultural villages are located. In this area, which includes most of the "Jerusalem Envelope", live most Israelis who live beyond the Green Line (83%). 220,000 Israelis live in the 12 Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and find their main source of income in the city. Most of them ultra-Orthodox and religious, who saw these neighborhoods as a solution to the housing shortage in the city. Another 415,000 Israelis live in the Judea and Samaria region. About 40 percent of its residents are ultra-Orthodox who live in Modi'in Illit and Betar Illit, the poorest and most subsidized cities in Israel, are located on the Green Line and are far from participating in the messianic nationalistic vision of inheriting the land.

Most of the secular residents living in Judea and Samaria also share the perception of improving their quality of life. And so another 30 percent of Israelis face westward (Alfei Menashe, Ma'aleh Adumim, Ariel, Oranit, Har Adar, Tzofim, Sal'it, etc.). Even among the Messianic nationalists there were many who chose the more comfortable places to live (Elkana, Mevo Horon, Shaarei Tikva, Efrat, Gush Etzion and more).

Jewish settlement in the 50 years since the war, with the encouragement of the government of Israel, in investments of huge capital, is not approaching its predecessors, no matter how much advances and subsidization the state has imposed: per capita budget is 280% higher than the average (Makro Institute, 2017); 137 million NIS for temporary evacuation of Amona; Nation State Law, the Regulation Law, grants, exemption from leasing fees, and more.

All these groups chose to avoid the challenging areas of the West Bank. In the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea area, only three out of a hundred residents are Israelis; south of Gush Etzion there are only two; and in northern Samaria only one out of every hundred. Israelis do not travel on two-thirds of the roads in the West Bank, there are no significant Israeli industrial zones there and even agriculture is carried only by a few residents in the Jordan Valley. Sixty percent of the workforce makes its way to Israel every morning. Jewish settlement gained Jewish dominance only in the "blocs" that cover only 4 percent of the West Bank, while the rest of the territory is controlled directly by the army (50 percent of Area C is closed by military order).

The security burden on the IDF in maintaining the settlements is heavy, and most of the forces are invested in securing the settlements, guarding the traffic arteries and worse still, confronting Jewish terror directed against Palestinians.

The Messianic nationalists, the group that leads the settlers of the third period, are charged with an ideology and vision different from those of their predecessors. While the former wanted to settle and establish a state that would serve as a safe haven for the Jewish people, the latter wants to "bequeath the land to its inhabitants". Menachem Begin confronted them at the end of December 1977: "You must remember that there were days when you were not yet born or were little children, when other people risked their lives day and night, worked and labored, sacrificed, and did their duty without a shred of messianic complexity".

The purpose and nature of the state are also different. While the former wanted a state based on "the foundations of freedom, justice and peace ... will uphold social and political equality ... will guarantee freedom of religion" (the Declaration of Independence), the latter wishes to establish a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation, the return of the Shekhina to Zion, the establishment of the kingdom of the House of David and the building of the Temple - as a key point in the improvement of the world in the kingdom of Shadai" (Hanan Porat).

In contrast to the success of the settlers of the early periods, the failure of the third period settlers echoes. The reasons for this are many. Whereas in the early periods the Jewish community and the State of Israel enjoyed the support of the international system and law (the Balfour Declaration, the Mandate, the Partition Resolution); succeeded in preventing the return of the Palestinian refugees; applied Israeli law to occupied territories; granted citizenship to Arab residents and maintained consensus and solidarity in Israeli society - in recent times the international system and law have rejected the settlement enterprise and the idea of ​​annexing parts of the West Bank and recognizing the Palestinians' right to self-determination in the territories; Israel has not applied Israeli law to the West Bank and maintains a discriminatory regime between the two populations; and suffers from a lack of consensus in Israeli society regarding the future of the territories, which divides it with the encouragement and incitement of the government.

The only option available to Israel to realize part of the massive investment in the settlement enterprise is to return to a policy of separation and division of land on the basis of the Green Line, with territorial exchanges of up to 4%. While this will not add one square meter to Israel's territory, it at least allows 80 percent of the Israelis living beyond the Green Line to be held under Israeli sovereignty.

But this is not the intention of the Netanyahu government. Encouraged by the Trump administration, settlement continues under a policy of "creeping annexation" or annexation by law. But this will bring about the collapse of the Zionist vision - a democratic state of the Jewish people - in favor of an apartheid regime that will be replaced by an unstable bi-national state that will become an Arab state.