**Ehud Barak, the Palestinians and the historical truth**

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In an article criticizing Ehud Barak's autobiographical book, Adam Raz makes it clear: the book, he says, does not add new information regarding Barak's history and his contribution to Israeli political history. Furthermore, "there is a great gap between what people think about Barak and the historical truth ". In other words, there are no new revelations in the book, but rather a different interpretation of seemingly known facts. Similarly to Raz, I will focus on the last part of the book, which deals with Barak's political activity.

Raz writes; "in Barak's book it is not the small facts that are important, but the general outlines". To this I would like to add three things: first, indeed, the broad conception of the political process is important. However, Barak was not prepared to understand and accept, then and now, the outlines of the solution that guided the PLO headed by Arafat, the partner and rival with whom he conducted the negotiations. Barak chose to ignore them in a manner that necessarily led to the failure of his "efforts" and to the re-instilling of the ethos of the conflict in Israeli society.

Second, Raz in his article did not confront Barak's "facts", which are not minor at all but fundamental, with the abundance of information written by many of those involved in the negotiations, which ridicules part of his conclusions that are based upon the "historical truth," as he wrote.

Third, as a general rule, the facts regarding concrete moves and positions in the negotiations must serve the general outlines, and in contrast to Raz's opinion, Barak's moves were almost identical to the general outline of his conception of the solution to the conflict with the Palestinians.

Raz's explanation to that part of the book because it "contributes to the understanding of both current events and history", is, by ignoring these three arguments, rendered empty, and a basis for another missed opportunity to outline for any future Israeli Prime Minister the possible "package deal" required to solving the conflict with the Palestinians.

To Barak's credit it should be noted, that when he was elected as Prime Minister, he did indeed seek to define as soon as possible the outline of the final status agreement. He wanted to replace Rabin's "theory of stages" (not Arafat's), which preferred "interim arrangements, with a test period between stages, over the attempt to move toward a comprehensive settlement at once". Therefore, the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum, signed by Barak in September 1999, stipulated that the parties would reach a framework agreement, and only then would they complete the full agreement. In this act, Barak wanted to release both sides from the curse of the extremists who dictated the pace of the negotiations, led to toughening of positions and to a loss of trust.

In this context, Barak misinforms the reader when he "often notes in his book that Netanyahu has presented himself for years as a stubborn opponent of the agreement, but at the time of his first government (1996-1999) he continued to fulfill the stages that were included in it". In practice, the assassination of Rabin in November 1995 prevented the implementation of the interim agreement in Hebron and the first "redeployment" planned for August 1996, two months before the planned elections. Netanyahu, who beat Peres in the elections, conducted the redeployments in Hebron only in February 1997, after the Western Wall Tunnel riots. The rest of the stages he wanted to "kill" along with the entire Oslo agreement. He stopped the entire process for two and a half years, until the Wye Memorandum was signed in October 1998. On December 12, 1998, the Israeli government decided to stop implementing the Wye Memorandum. If the redeployments were to be fully implemented and timed, it can be assumed that they would have created a new reality on the ground.

Barak and Arafat took a different view of the political-legal framework for conducting the negotiations and achieving a permanent solution. Each defined the goals of the final-status agreement differently and created a different set of expectations among his public. Without acknowledging it, Barak in his book preserves the Israeli narrative that hardly meets with the Palestinian, and prevents us from understanding the immediate history and preparing for the future.

Barak interpreted Resolution 242 (Land for Peace), which served as the basis for the entire Oslo process, in line with the old Israeli interpretation, which focuses on "withdrawal from the territories" to "secure and recognized borders". This despite the fact that Israel adopted the Arab and international interpretation when it signed the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, and succeeded in finding functional and non-territorial solutions to security needs in the form of demilitarization, the deployment of international forces and the prohibition of military alliances with countries and organizations hostile to Israel. Based on this view, Barak saw the final goal of the agreement with the PLO as "a just division of the territories of Judea and Samaria" and the future Palestine as "a political entity that is less than a state," as Rabin defined it in 1995.

Arafat, on the other hand, who can not be absolved of responsibility for not preventing Hamas's terrorist activities, and his critical mistake of choosing to "ride the back of the tiger" of the second Intifada, reached Oslo after the adoption of the PLO's understanding that 242 is the only way to establish an independent Palestinian state. To him, the concession of 78 percent of historic Palestine (Israel in the 1967 lines) is the most significant, historic and only possible one for the Palestinians in return for the establishment of a Palestinian state on 22 percent of the land (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital). The Oslo Accords were designed to realize this in a gradual five-year process.

The Israeli contours gave rise to ridiculous Israeli proposals from the Palestinian perspective. Barak spent his first year on "Persian Bazaar" style proposals that did not include 80 percent of the area on the eve of Camp David. Raz writes: "This fact should not be blurred, and it takes great weight in the book, that Barak offered Arafat the best offer ever made to the Palestinians. In fact, any real future negotiations with them will be based on the outlines of Camp David, since Barak was willing to transfer to the Palestinians more than 90 percent of the occupied territories (and land swaps) and reach agreements on joint sovereignty in Jerusalem". However, the historical facts were different.

Danny Yatom, who was then head of the political-security headquarters, describes in his book "Partner for Secret" the Israeli proposal that Barak dictated: "An area of ​​no less than 11 percent, in which 80 percent of the settlers live, will be annexed to Israel. In addition, we will not transfer sovereign territory (swaps)".

Even regarding Jerusalem, the facts are contrary to what is written in Raz's article, as Yatom continues: "The Temple Mount will be under Israeli sovereignty, with a kind of Palestinian custody and a permit of prayer for the Jews. In the Old City, Arafat will have sovereignty over the Muslim Quarter and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Possibly the Christian Quarter as well. The sovereignty of the Jewish and Armenian quarters will be Israeli. The external Muslim neighborhoods will be transferred to Palestinian sovereignty (those that Israel annexed in 1967 and were not part of Jerusalem) and the Muslim internal communities will remain under Israeli sovereignty". Meaning, East Jerusalem and the Temple Mount will remain under Israeli sovereignty. Barak is not content and adds: "For a few years, Israel will control a quarter of the Jordan Valley, in order to ensure control of the crossings between Jordan and Palestine". In other words, Arafat had to return home with a state of about 80 percent of the territory without a capital in East Jerusalem, and giving up nearly 1,300 years of Muslim control over the Temple Mount. Therefore, Barak and Clinton's claim that "we assumed a proposal based on Resolution 242 and 338 that are very close to Palestinian demands" has no factual basis.

Arafat's rejection of the proposal should not have surprised Barak, because he chose to ignore the assessment of the IDF's intelligence branch that "an agreement can be reached with Arafat under the following conditions: a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, Palestinian sovereignty over the Temple Mount, 97 percent of the West Bank, plus a one-to-one exchange of territory regarding the remaining area". Head of Intelligence, Maj. Gen. Amos Malka briefed the cabinet on Arafat's positions a few weeks before Camp David and said that "there is no chance that he will compromise on 90 percent of the territories or 93 percent". If so, then Barak did not 'expose' Arafat's at Camp David because his positions were known to the Military Intelligence and were presented to Barak.

Barak was certain that the balance of power between the two sides, which had been favoring the Israeli side, would dictate the patterns of the agreement. He was not prepared to understand and accept that Arafat can not accept less than what the international community interprets 242 to be - an Israeli withdrawal from all the territories. The only flexibility that Arafat could demonstrate was the exchange of territories. Barak was so sure that he refused to prepare the issue of Jerusalem for negotiations, and when it came up against his will, the Israeli delegation was almost helpless.

Raz continues to wrongly argue that: "any real negotiations with them will be based on the outlines of Camp David". Clinton was wise enough, albeit too late, to alter his parameters in December 2000, which were different from Barak's outline at Camp David. Barak himself sent the Israeli delegation to Taba in January 2001 with various proposals, including the division of East Jerusalem and Palestinian sovereignty in the Jordan Valley. More importantly, the negotiations conducted by Olmert and Abbas during the Annapolis process in 2008 were the first to bridge the gaps in the parties' basic understandings and build common contours to the agreement.

There is no doubt that the book is aimed at public opinion and the political system on the eve of the next elections. Barak, in fact, leads and expresses, more than anyone else, the sober, clear and eloquent view of the required change in Israel, but it can not come at the expense of past mistakes that forgetting them will harm Israel's future prospects. Barak has many achievements and contributions in the history of the State of Israel, but negotiating with the Palestinians two decades ago is not one of them.

If Barak sticks to his interpretation in the book to the political process he has conducted, he reiterates the claim that "there is no partner" - but together with Raz, he forgets to point out that "there is no partner" for his plan, and to Netanyahu's plan today; A plan that no Palestinian, even the greatest supporter of the two-state solution, can accept. And the world will continue to stand by the Palestinians, at least in words.