**The goal: Greater Israel. The means: the dissolution of democracy**

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The Yesha Council is currently marking 40 years since its establishment amid fears of the implementation of the autonomy agreement signed between Israel and Egypt at Camp David in 1978, and as an institutional continuation of the Gush Emunim movement. Its essence, and the danger inherent in it for the democratic regime of Israel, are reflected in its charter.

The Council, headed by Israel Harel, has renounced the authority of the elected institutions of Israeli democracy to decide on the issue of territories in exchange for peace agreements. The charter states: "The Council denies the establishment of a non-Israeli sovereign administration in parts of the land of Israel ... considers any proposal aimed at handing over parts of Israel to a foreign sovereign ... an illegal act".

This approach is a natural continuation of the teachings of the father of Gush Emunim, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, who claimed: "This land is ours ... and it belongs to the rule of Israel in all its biblical borders". He therefore added to the three offenses of "be killed and not pass (the commandments)" the return of territories. In an interview with Maariv in 1974, he said: "On this land, for all its borders ... we are all obliged to be killed and not to pass!".

Indeed, the Israeli leadership saw the people of Gush Emunim and their perceptions as a danger to Israeli democracy. In 1979, Yitzhak Rabin wrote about them (in "Service Book"): "Such a wild gang, taking a stand in the name of heaven ... all under a disgusting guise of love of Israel, breaking into the streets rudely to inflict fear and terror". And: "In Gush Emunim I saw a very serious phenomenon – a cancer in the body of Israeli democracy". Menachem Begin wrote in December 1977: "I once said this in an argument to the people of Gush Emunim ... You have one weakness - you have developed a complex of messianism among you".

The political home of religious Zionism, the National Religious Party, was also taken over by these members. They pushed the moderate founders and put the land of Israel above the people of Israel, and gave the Torah of Israel a metaphysical interpretation, according to which the times of redemption began, but this is conditional on the conquest of the land and the expulsion of the Palestinians from it. They turned Zionist nationalism into a messianic nationalism, and even went so far as to adopt Meir Kahana's racist doctrine. In an interview with 'Davar' in September 1994, the chairman of the National Religious Party, Yosef Burg, said: They glorify the integrity of the land, and forgot the integrity of the state, forgot the integrity of the Torah, forgot the integrity of the camp. If through the idea of ​​the integrity of the land it is possible to reach Kahana mentally, it is a great fault".

The great sin of those leaders, secular and religious, was that they believed that it would be possible to separate the "security settlements" in the Jordan Valley and the Jerusalem Envelope (Alon Plan) from the Messianic settlements in the West Bank, and to control the Messianic settlements over time. And so, Rabin stated in his first government: "To the heart of the West Bank, densely populated by the Arabs, we must not push Jewish settlers ... there is no need for it from a security point of view".

The Levy Eshkol government, which started the settlement project, knew that both types and areas of settlements are invalid. A telegram sent from the Foreign Office to Ambassador Rabin in the United States in March 1968 states: "Our consistent line has been and still is to evade discussion with foreign parties on the situation in the territories ... An explicit recognition on our part of the applicability of the Convention (Geneva) will highlight serious problems in terms of the Convention regarding ... settlement and more".

The defense establishment cooperated with the attempt to deceive the world, which later turned out to be self-deception. In a secret telegram sent on September 27, 1967, by Shlomo Gazit, chairman of the Political-Security Coordination Committee in the Territories, to Chief of Staff Rabin regarding the "holding on to Gush Etzion," he wrote: "As a 'cover' for the needs of the political campaign, the holding of the religious youth in Gush Etzion will appear as a holding of a military Nahal (Brigade) (acronym for Fighting Pioneer Youth). Instructions in this regard will be given to the settlers in the area. There is no intention to take practical steps, by the IDF, to implement this 'cover'". The move was approved by Prime Minister Eshkol, although he said: "These 'kids' will become bucks", and didn’t know how right he was. The heade of Yesha Council did not distinguish between the "security spaces" set by the government and the West Bank as a whole, did not attach importance to the binding international conventions, or to any commitment of theirs, which contradicts their long-term goal of "inheriting the whole land". Rabbi Shlomo Goren, one of the leaders of the camp, stated: "There is no force of any national law (Knesset Law) or international law, to change our status, our rights ... The law of these areas, according to Torah law, is Israel under Jewish rule and there is sovereignty, property and Jewish ownership throughout".

When the Rabin government decided in 1992 to stop establishing new settlements, the Yesha Council moved to establish illegal outposts with the assistance of the Settlement Division and budgets from unruly government ministries. Even when its people pledged to evacuate some of the outposts in an agreement with the Ehud Barak government in 1999, they never implemented it. Today they call it in evasive language the "young settlement". A report by Supreme Court Justice Edmund Levy (2012) states: "A phenomenon has been revealed to us regarding Israeli settlement in Judea and Samaria that is not appropriate for a state that advocates the rule of law ... It should be clear to the followers of the settlement as well as to the political echelon that they are commanded to act only within the framework of the law, and that state institutions have a duty to act in the future with determination to enforce the law".

When the Sharon government implemented the disengagement plan from Gaza and northern Samaria in accordance with Knesset legislation, the heads of the Yesha Council did not honor the agreements they signed as individuals. Plia Albeck, lawyer of the Ministry of Justice explained in an interview with Haaretz in March 2005: "There is no property right (for the settlers, because it was provided with the restriction that they might have to return the land, if the military administration ends ... the land agreements signed by each of the settler families ... include clauses that allow the agreements to be revoked".

The heart of the Yesha Council's struggle is to prevent any permanent agreement with the Palestinians - which in their eyes will hurt the deterministic process determined by God for the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the "House of David". As part of the struggle, they deny the legitimacy of the Israeli government to reach a permanent agreement. In 1986, the Yesha Council decided that "the return of territories in Judea, Samaria and Gaza is a crime", and that "any government in Israel that commits one of the above crimes will be treated as an illegal government ...".

Following the Oslo Accords, Menachem Felix, one of the settler leaders, wrote in the newspaper "Nakuda" in December 1993: "The current government in the State of Israel has no authority to continue to govern the Jewish state ... it is an illegitimate government". Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, a student of Rabbi Kook, even denied the legitimacy of a majority decision in his book "The People and Their Land, the Resurrection of the Nation in the Land" (1999): "And even if the majority of the people support this shameful and dangerous course (evacuation of territories) - there is no moral justification for this. It is not enough for the decision to be reached by a political apparatus in order for it to be moral".

The Yesha Council continues to lead its messianic vision for Israel, which is "all ours", even at the cost of the loss of Israeli democracy, as Bnei Katzover, chairman of the Samaria Settlers Committee, told Haaretz in January 2012: "Israeli democracy has ended Its role, and it must disintegrate and bow to Judaism".

The messianic stance also led to opposition to the outgoing US President Donald Trump's initiative, as stated on the Yesha Council website, "Trump's plan and the map alongside it promote the dangerous establishment of a Palestinian state. The land of Israel belongs to us".

The messianism of the members of the Yesha Council, and their denial of the authority of the elected institutions of Israeli democracy, do not stop in the West Bank. In addition to the ongoing attempts to violate the Disengagement Law and take over the Chumash and Shanur lands in northern Samaria, which were evacuated in 2005, it is interesting to read in the council's website in its answer to the question, "Why was the letter Ayin left in the council's name?". The explanation: " The letter Ayin, that represented the Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip - has remained and will remain, and not by chance ... This is a signal for the future: we, with God's help, will return and see Gush Katif rising from its ashes".

Even today, on the eve of the Knesset elections, the appropriate answer to the Yesha Council and its supporters among the right-wing candidates for prime minister, remains Rabin's will: "Against their basic view, which runs counter to Israel's democratic foundations, it was necessary to fight an ideological struggle, revealing the true meaning of their positions and ways of operating". Otherwise, the fate of the State of Israel will be sealed, and as Isaiah Leibowitz predicted, "the Messianic doctrine of Rabbi Kook will cause the transition 'from humanity through nationalism to animalism' and turn 'the people of God' into the 'people of the land' (Am haʼaretz - uncivilized, ignorant)".