

Neutralized Compass

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A. The use of sanitized expressions to describe nefarious actions is a well-known tactic of those with something to hide, aiming to instill doubt in the listener. A brief reminder: "re-settlement" (expulsion), "targeted countermeasures" (assassination), "expropriation for security purposes" (another settlement), "absentee" (those not allowed to return home), "abandoned property" (property left behind for no reason). Long before the last Simchat Torah, the verb "to neutralize" joined the list. Ostensibly, "to neutralize" means "to render ineffective." However, the numerous Palestinians who have found their death in recent years raise suspicions that their "neutralization" was not necessarily done to eliminate a threat. Those unfamiliar with the term's implication in Israeli parlance need only watch Yuval Kestelman's "neutralization" videos in Jerusalem. In this way, a perception is established that certain human beings are nothing but nuisances that may be neutralized at a convenient opportunity.

B. I recall a friend who, in 1973, repelled an Egyptian attack on an Israeli position and then pleaded with his fellow soldiers to cease firing at the retreating enemy soldiers in disarray. In 1992, Bella Freund, a Jerusalem heroine, shielded a Palestinian with her body, preventing the mob from "neutralizing" him. Are such stories conceivable now? Is the dehumanization towards Palestinians, whether they are shepherds in the Hebron hills, mentally ill individuals approaching an IDF checkpoint, or teenagers in the Old City of Jerusalem, part of the backdrop for our indifference to the horrors in Gaza?

C. Sometimes, after we make an annoying mistake, we try to correct it and end up causing more harm than the original mistake. Then, trying to atone for the second mistake leads to a real catastrophe, followed by a reckoning. Israel's attempt to correct the Simchat Torah debacle with a vengeful war, Nakba 2, is a historical mistake whose dimensions are becoming increasingly clear. Even if the war eliminates Hamas, it will not solve any existential problem stemming from our choice to establish a Jewish state in the heart of a hostile region. No victory photo in the fields of Gaza or at the gates of Nablus has deterred or will deter those who do not want us here from continuing to fight us in the coming years with more fervor and effectiveness. Meanwhile, Nakba 2.1 is stirring in the West Bank. Is there any moral compass left in us to prevent a catastrophe like Nakba 3?

D. Problems in perceiving reality: 50 years separate the Yom Kippur War from the Simchat Torah disaster. During these five decades, numerous threats loomed, any of which would have surprised us and inflicted a significant disaster. These threats did not materialize thanks to the activities of the Israeli security systems. The military failure of Simchat Torah reminds me of that great achievement. Is there anyone among us who would not sign a contract with the god of history — that the next time we fall for a wrong conception, it will only happen in Sukkot 2073?

E. For the past six months, TV channels have been addicted to the horrors of Simchat Torah. This death dance has increased my admiration for our parents' generation, those who came to the land of Israel before or just after World War II. Despite having good reasons for revenge, that generation did not seek it, not against those free of guilt or even those who were part of the Nazi regime. They kept their pain inside and created a relatively normal life here. Instead of succumbing to "dancing with the dead," they gave birth to us and founded a state.

F. We have always placed heavy blame on the peoples of the world, who knew and remained silent. And if they did not know, they should have made an effort to know. And if they did not believe, they should have doubted their beliefs. And if they thought it was an exaggeration, they should have thoroughly investigated the suspicions, even during the horrific days of World War II. We believed we were pure and that the world's silence granted us, the victims, special rights. I don't know exactly what's happening in Gaza. Yet, as I look at the pictures and testimonies published in the foreign media and listen to our IDF spokesperson, I too am doing nothing.