

When the despair becomes less comfortable

The Gatekeepers

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Several times I have participated in movements against the settlements and the occupation, in favor of a Palestinian state in the territories and real negotiations for peace. We came to the public with moral and political arguments. We brought with us the historical lesson of the destruction of the Second Temple and our moral commitment after the Holocaust. We relied on the power of the patriotism of IDF reserve officers who had tasted the Yom Kippur War and reached the conclusion that the time had come to think peace (now). Some mobilized art and music, literature and poetry. I never imagined that our position would receive such pure and overwhelming support as it does from the film "Gatekeepers."

Six former Shin Bet directors candidly face the camera and confirm, in the direct language of Shin Bet directors, how severely the occupation is harming the people of Israel. One says that he has nothing to add to the prophecy of "the chastiser of Israel," Yeshayahu Leibowitz, on the nature of the occupation. Another, who is no vegetarian, compares the Israeli occupation in Gaza and the West Bank to the German occupation in Belgium and Czechoslovakia. The speakers are not a gang of poets from a table at the Tamar café, nor a collection of nerds from an intelligence unit at Gllilot. They are not a group of bleeding hearts who have never witnessed the distress of a person being tortured or deliberated over what to do with a "ticking bomb." Here are six people who know everything that "cannot be disclosed at this time," who devoted their lives to Israel's security, to waging a war against terror, and to protecting those wishing to roam the Temple Mount. No testimony could be more devastating in proving how the occupation harms us.

"Gatekeepers" should be the dream document for anyone seeking to convince others, in words, that the Israeli occupation is horrible; that all of Israel's governments have collaborated, some with greater and some with lesser enthusiasm, in the foolish enterprise of the settlements; that a social and political cadre is sprouting in Judea and Samaria that is not only wreaking havoc on Palestinian olive groves, but is also disastrous for the Zionist enterprise; and that the settlements are the breeding grounds of the next ideological leadership of Israel, which will direct Israeli society into the messianic era.

They say that the uniqueness of the biological creature called man is his ability to observe and adapt himself to a changing environment. Human beings are also endowed with a wonderful ability to convince others, using speech and song. But when it comes to controlling another people we have lost these survival abilities. Even after this devastating document,

most of the Jewish Israeli public continues to support the right. The ultimate Israeli, Yair Lapid, certainly watched the film and wished its creators luck in winning an Oscar. But his conclusion from the film is that his list should join Netanyahu for another four years of perpetuating the occupation. Even the Labor Party believes that social problems are Israel's top priority – as if they can be solved in a flash and then there will be time to address the marginal and “irrelevant” questions of the settlements and the occupation.

Therefore, the film led me to the conclusion that it's all over. If this film doesn't work, then nothing else, from the heart or from the mind, will be able to convince the Israeli public to abandon the path of occupation. The other familiar method human beings employ to change their path is the route of blood and fire.

As a rational person, I find refuge in a philosophical question. What is the role of despair in the life of a person? Has evolution or God (whichever you believe in) planted the emotion of despair in us so that we can “reboot” ourselves? And perhaps despair is the human creature's way to find consolation and calm when it reaches the hallway leading to the unavoidable end? I don't know.

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