

Israelis, Palestinians, Gaza, Hamas - trying to preserve sanity

Is history repeating itself?

by Adam Keller

On October 6, 1973, the Egyptian army crossed the Suez Canal. This was a strategic surprise, Israeli intelligence did not foresee it and the IDF was not prepared for it. This was the beginning of a difficult and bitter war.

Fifty years and one day later, on October 7, 2023, Hamas crossed the border of the Gaza Strip. And once again it was a strategic surprise, which Israeli intelligence did not foresee and the IDF was not prepared for. And apparently this is again the beginning of a hard and bitter war.

The similarity between the two situations - fifty years ago and today - is not reduced to the strategic surprise that the State of Israel received. There is a great similarity between the background in the years preceding the 1973 war and the background in the last years preceding today's outbreak.

For years before October 1973, the State of Israel was subject to the arrogance of power. The Israeli government of the time thought that the Sinai Peninsula would forever remain in Israel's hands, dozens of settlements were established there, and the first of them was the city of Yamit, which was built on an area whose Bedouin inhabitants had been expelled and which was intended to be a large Israeli city with a deep-water port. The Israeli government outright rejected the peace proposals of Egyptian President Sadat and also completely disregarded Sadat's warnings that in the absence of a political shift, war would break out. No one in the Israeli government cared about continuing to block the Suez Canal, one of the main anchors of the Egyptian economy (and also one of the main routes of the world economy). And in October 1973 the State of Israel paid dearly the price of arrogance and complacency.

And in recent years - once again arrogance of power. The State of Israel has decided that it has the ability to continue to pressure the Palestinians, to maintain and intensify its military rule over the Palestinians and to deny them any hope of ever being freed from the Israeli occupation, to give military and political backing to settler gangs that attack the weakest and most vulnerable Palestinian communities and to carry out real ethnic cleansing in them, and also to back up the The Messianic fanatics who go up to pray near the mosques in Jerusalem, with the stated intention of eventually destroying the mosques - the third most important place for the religion of Islam - and building a Jewish temple on their ruins.

In his speech at the UN Assembly, Prime Minister Netanyahu used the word "peace" 44 times - all 44 referred to peace with Saudi Arabia. The map he presented at the UN Assembly expressed Netanyahu's vision of peace - the State of Israel that includes within its borders the occupied Palestinian territories, surrounded by a large and solid bloc of Arab countries that maintain peaceful and friendly relations with it. And what about the Palestinians? The government replied disdainfully: "What can they do?". Well, now we have seen what the Palestinians can do.

And what will happen now? There is no doubt that the coming days will be difficult and bitter, and there will be a great deal of bloodshed. The number of dead is rising and rising in sharp leaps, another hundred and another hundred, Israeli dead and Palestinian dead, those who were killed today and those whose bodies were found today. And there is no doubt that the numbers will increase even more - Palestinians who are killed by the increasing bombings of the Israeli Air Force, Israeli soldiers who may enter the Strip and encounter deadly surprises prepared for them by Hamas... and exactly how all this will end, no one can say.

So, fifty years ago, in the end the end was good. A few years after the horrors of the Yom Kippur War, the same President Sadat who brought that strategic surprise on Israel came to address the Knesset of Israel in Jerusalem and signed a peace agreement with the State of Israel, an agreement that holds up to this day.

It is not at all certain that this part of history will repeat itself. Right now, the rivers of blood that have already been spilled and continue to be spilled give rise to a flood of blind hatred and calls for revenge - and revenge only begets more revenge, and more and more. Still, one can hope...