



[Sacred Cows] Chapter 81. 'It feels like I'm entering Auschwitz to kill Nazis,' the paratroopers said on their way to Gaza. Adopting Holocaust terminology following the events of October 7 threatens to erase the memory of the Holocaust that we knew.

6 February 2024

By Yizhar Be'er

Translated by Galia Bar-On



"The Holocaust preceded me and said, 'Do not bother going to Poland. I'm already here with you, in Israel,' one poster declared. 'Every Jew is born with an imaginary number on their arm that helps them remember where they came from and where they cannot allow themselves to return,' declared another poster.

Since October 7, social networks, the media, and the public discourse have seen a flood of images and representations of the Holocaust and comparisons of the Holocaust to the slaughter in the Gaza Envelope.

Hamas are the new Nazis, and they are worse than the originals, declares the new discourse.

We return to the yellow star badge, the victims, and the aspiration to build monumental memorials for the victims of October 7. Residents from communities in the Gaza Envelope commemorate the date of the October horrors on their arms.

The journey to Be'eri by Israelis is now in, while the trips to Auschwitz-Birkenau are out. The Ministry of Education has already announced that it will skip the Holocaust section in this year's history exams.

Did Sinwar and his colleagues manage to disturb even our memory of the Holocaust?

A painful conversation with Naama Egozi from the School of Teaching the Holocaust at Yad Vashem, who collects representations and images of the new Holocaust and investigates their impact on us.

For those who listen to the podcast, it is recommended this time to watch the video edition of the episode and see the relevant images and representations.

Watch/listen/read/judge and share!

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Chapter 81. 'It feels like I'm entering Auschwitz to kill Nazis,' the paratroopers said on their way to Gaza. Adopting Holocaust terminology following the October 7 events threatens to erase the memory of the Holocaust that we knew.

Naama Egozi, Shalom

In the past twenty years, you have dealt with issues concerning "our" Shoah, the well-known, universal Shoah. Since the events of October, you have started a new project which is rapidly accelerating, concerning the use of Holocaust

imagery about what is happening in the Gaza Envelope. Why does this interest you?

Egozi: Before it interested me, it alarmed me. From the first hours of October 7, I felt my professional ground was slipping away from under my feet. As you mentioned, I've been dealing with this subject at Yad Vashem for twenty years, and suddenly I felt that this was it. I had nothing left to do. I needed to change careers and had no more work because there was nothing more to say after October 7.



Naama Egozi. Photo Yizhar Be'er

Was it that bad?

Egozi: Yes, that bad. Beyond the general trauma I experienced like everyone, it alarmed me on a personal and professional level. At the same time, I noticed that people were making comparisons and introducing Shoah concepts and terminology, along with visual designs that compared the 1940s with the October slaughter. It was clear that something was emerging...

Is it one of the consciousness-altering events, in your opinion?

Egozi: Certainly. During those moments, I felt that something was going on, and I started collecting, almost obsessively, the images and visual representations that flooded the social networks.



Were you surprised by the findings or was it expected?

Egozi: Well, on the one hand, it wasn't too surprising. By association, I admit, it also took me to that place. From certain testimonies, and certain situations that I saw, heard, and was exposed to, there was something reminiscent of the Holocaust; the hiding, the helplessness, the unanswered calls for help, the loss of security, the loss of trust, the absence of a military force... There were many associations, even physical ones; hiding in the attic, inside a closet...

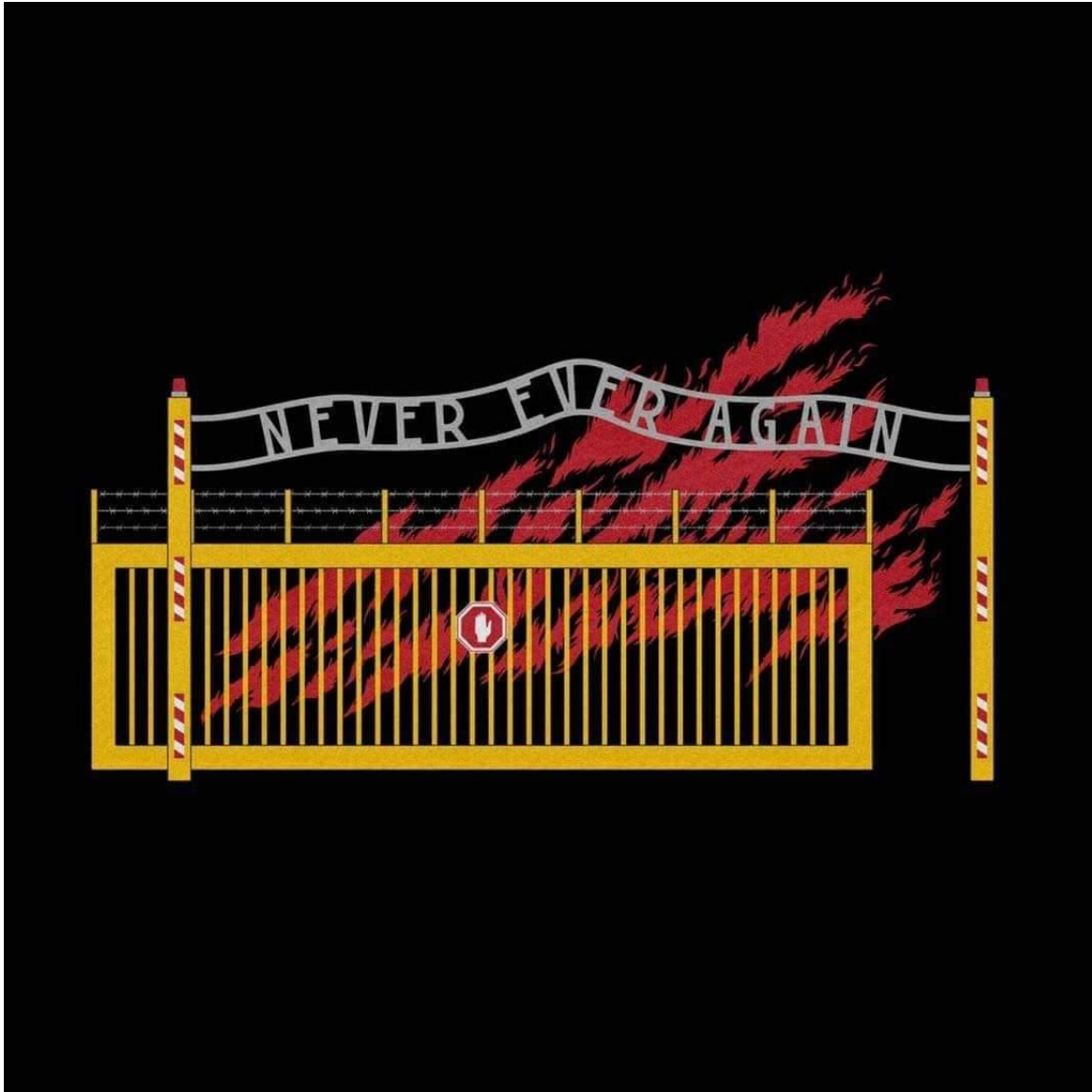
So essentially, we can divide your professional life into two parts; the past twenty years, during which you dealt with the Holocaust by joining countless trips to the extermination camps in Europe and by conducting research, and now by moving on to deal with our local Holocaust, here and now?

Egozi: I think it's too early to analyze it. We need a bit more distance. It's clear that it created a turning point and put me in a different place, because the Holocaust, for me, until October 7, was an unprecedented, unique event, compared to other genocides. It still is today. But in the first weeks after October 7, the exclamation mark that always followed the Holocaust stopped being so obvious.



I must say that as a person who is relatively alert to what's happening in the public arena, I was surprised by the intense, deep, and emotional engagement with the Holocaust imagery. I just want to note, in passing, that I've always known, understood, and been aware that two topics appear daily in the Israeli media or the public discourse. One is the Holocaust, and the other is the Temple Mount, the Jewish Temple, and Al-Aqsa Mosque.

One of the samples you collected portrays a yellow gate, similar to the familiar gates at the entrance to the kibbutzim and moshavim. There's an image above the gate reminiscing of the entrance to Auschwitz. However, instead of the caption '*Arbeit macht frei*' (work sets you free) which was placed above the entrance to Auschwitz, it says 'Never Ever Again' with red flames in the background. What do they intend to convey with this? The yellow gate has always been an integral part of the Israeli landscape...



Egozi: When you say Israeli landscape, for me it's much more than that. I live in Kibbutz Mizra. Whenever I come home, it's the sight that greets me. I open the gate through an app, and the feeling is: this is it, I've come home. I've arrived at the safest place. And here, beyond the gate, as you described, there are flames, there's fear. Also, notice a stop sign on the gate. It's small and quite concealed, but given the context of the October events, it has significance...

Essentially, the imagery of the safe home becomes completely identified with the greatest catastrophe we've experienced in our consciousness.

Egozi: Exactly. With the extermination. The Auschwitz-Birkenau camps complex is the place where most Jews were murdered. That's why it has become the symbol...

The next image is of a barbed wire with a torn piece of yellow fabric like a scarf or ribbon hanging on it. What does it tell us?



Egozi: The yellow ribbon has a history that goes beyond Israeli identity. This event dates back to the American Civil War, symbolizing the longing for the safe return of soldiers and prisoners of war...

But this design was done in the context of October.

Egozi: Certainly. And it's important to remember that it didn't originate today. When Gilad Shalit was captured, we hung yellow ribbons on our cars...

So we can say, like in the previous image, that the contrast is between the 'positive' symbols of home, security, and longing for someone, and the 'negative' symbol of the barbed wire fence, right?

Egozi: But here, the fence, unlike in the previous imagery, doesn't symbolize home. It's the fence of the concentration camps. You'll always see the barbed wire fence depicted on Holocaust Remembrance Day, as one symbol among many.

But the yellow kerchief also symbolizes hope. It's exactly the current context. It's an addition. Connecting between the barbed wire fence of those camps back then, and today's hostages.

In another image, we see a pile of children's shoes arranged in a triangular shape, clearly reminiscent of imagery from the concentration camps, with the inscription above it, 'Israel 7.10.2023'.

ISRAEL

7. 10. 23



Egozi: I admit that while collecting images, some disgusted me, and made me feel nauseated.

Explain why?

Egozi: Because, I ask myself, how far can one go with such manipulation, emotionally? What is the connection? What is this pile of shoes? What?

Is it populist? Is it vulgar? Does it touch provocatively on sentiment?

Egozi: I think it's an expression of a deep shock that they didn't know how to deal with in the first weeks. The inability to cope with the magnitude of the horror made people connect to the most similar things they know, and that is the Holocaust...

Why not say that children were murdered there in the Holocaust and children were murdered here, and make the comparison?

Egozi: But why a pile of shoes? Is everything the same? This is how we flatten and trivialize an idea and are left with an empty symbol. With nothing, only with a symbol. I'm an educator, Yizhar, I can't be in this place...

It is important to mention that all these images run on social networks, appear in the general media, and are distributed in many places. Another cruel image, I would say, is two hands, an adult's hand with a tattooed number from Auschwitz, or wherever it may be, and a baby's hand with 2023 engraved on it, placed on top of each other, above an Israeli flag with the caption on the bottom, 'Heaven have mercy on me'. Is this similar to the previous type of vulgarization of Holocaust remembrance?

Egozi: The contemporary tattoo issue intrigued me as a graphic symbol. Some people tattooed that number on their arms.



One of these people is Chaim Yalin, a survivor from Kibbutz Be'eri who tattooed the number 7.10.2023 on his arm. This is how he explained to Naama Egozi and her team from Yad Vashem what this personal and collective Shoah did to him and some of the members of his kibbutz in October 2023 (Video: Inbal Shprintzak)

Chaim Yalin: I admit I put parentheses around this term (Shoah). I didn't know how to define it. It was as if I said: No other word in Hebrew can describe this horror...

I understand that it's not a Holocaust like when we talk about genocide. But it's an internal feeling of mine that it was a Holocaust; we were helpless, they executed us, and no one came to defend us for many hours... Some of my neighbors climbed into the attic, and immediately you think of Anne Frank.

No matter where you go, it always reminds you of the Holocaust...

And that happened inside your country, in your home, inside the kibbutz, where you have the smartest and strongest army in the world, where people were supposed to care for you. All this tower collapsed.

So if you want to call it by another name, tell me what it is, and I'll call it by another name. Just tell me what name to use.

* * *

Egozi: We need to be less judgmental of people who were there during the attack, than of the general society. A person who wasn't hurt during the attack, like me and you, who wasn't present in the Gaza Envelope on that day and wasn't directly affected by the attack, and who designs such an image, for them it is different than for someone who was there in person. I can't argue with Chaim's feelings or with his associations. I'm not judgmental of him and I'm not arguing with him.

Another image that pierces your guts is the 'Babi Yar–Be'eri' poster in large, screaming, yellow letters. Why, by the way, yellow?



Egozi: The yellow color, the same color used in the image of the barbed wire, is also the color of the yellow star from the Holocaust and also the color of the prisoners of war and the hostages...

Can we say that the yellow color evokes two different associations? One is with the Holocaust-related yellow badge, and the other conveys a little optimism, longing, and hope for liberation.

Egozi: Of yearning...

Another image created by Apollo Design Studio is also gut-wrenching. It depicts two Jewish-Israeli men facing one another. One of them is a mirror reflection of a prisoner from a concentration camp peering through a barbed wire fence, shaking hands with the contemporary Israeli, who is wrapped in an Israeli flag or a shirt resembling the Israeli flag. The *Muselmann* wears the concentration camp uniform [with a Jewish star badge on his shirt].

NEVER AGAIN.



And again, the banner: NEVER AGAIN. Do you think anyone else thought about it or is it just my association? In my eyes, the face of the Israeli reminds me of Herzl, and the face of the prisoner from the concentration camp reminds me of Sinwar, or a Hamasnik, a Nukhba.

[The term Nukhba refers to Hamas militants or terrorists who are considered high-ranking or prominent in the organization. Nukhba operatives carried out the October 7 attack. The term means "elite" or "cream of the crop" in Arabic. g.b.]

Egozi: It's amazing what you say. This image provoked the most interpretations in my meetings with the various audiences.

Some told me it was the same person and that this was his reflection in the mirror. Both have beards and both are the same person. Some told me it was a Nukhba, and some told me it was Herzl. Some said they were the young Israeli generation with the new beard fashion. It was interesting to hear the different interpretations of this image...

The figure of the man wrapped in the Israeli flag and extending out his hand for a handshake, I also saw him as a Holocaust survivor. Some said he was looking at himself in the mirror.

When I looked at this image, he seemed like a Holocaust survivor. My feeling was that we, the Israelis of today, received a terrible blow that made us finally feel empathy and shake hands properly with the survivors. Because of the helplessness that we feel today, we finally understand deeply what it means to be a Holocaust survivor, and not only because we respect them or because they are elderly that we like to hug...

The man from the past, from the concentration camp, looks good. He is not thin, he is not a skeleton. He appears very healthy.

Egozi: Right. That's why I was surprised you called him *Muselmann*...

[Muselmann (also spelled muzleman) is a term used in Nazi concentration camps to refer to prisoners who were extremely emaciated, weak, and near death due to starvation, hard labor, and disease. The term was derived from the Yiddish word "muser," meaning weak. g.b.]

***Muselmann* because that's how we usually think about concentration camp prisoners. But the man in the picture looks great. He looks like a fighter.**

Could it be an image that improves our self-perception, telling us that we are strong and that our connection to past catastrophes and this last great catastrophe gives us strength?

Egozi: Because of the feeling of helplessness, this event made us feel a deeper and fuller empathy than ever before. Up until today, there was empathy for Holocaust survivors as elderly people whom we always love, respect, embrace, and listen to. But this event caused us to identify with them truly...

Now we arrive at 'Sinwar's List'. The picture, again, is a punch in the guts. It features a little girl with Nazi soldiers behind her, which was the promo poster for the film 'Schindler's List.' What does this image tell you?

Egozi: First of all, this poster is the original from 'Schindler's List,' the movie released exactly 30 years ago, only the title has changed. The girl in the red coat is the girl that Schindler sees when he observes the action from one of the hills above the ghetto if you remember the scene where he's on the horse and his mistress is next to him. They're looking down and suddenly he notices a girl. And then Spielberg paints her in red, to highlight the turning point, the moment when Schindler the man becomes something else. He feels empathy toward the victims and maybe the decision to save is formed in his heart right then. So the poster looks the same except for the title that was changed.

There's also a variation here on the lists that were published for several weeks during the first negotiations for the release of the hostages, and Sinwar, kind of turns from a horrible murderer to a savior. Because Schindler was a savior...

It's shocking. The implication is that there is a kind of empathy for Sinwar, which differs from all the previous images we've seen...

Egozi: What do you mean by empathy? I would even say gratitude... You (Sinwar) were righteous. You released our hostage. You published lists of their names. Every evening we all waited in front of our TV screens and saw them being released before our eyes.

So if we're looking from a bird's-eye view, could it indicate any possibility for a change in public consciousness? Maybe a small minority of Israelis feel on the one hand that Hamas are murderers, they are terrible, they are cruel, and on the other hand, there are points of light or moments of humanization of the enemy. Maybe you can look at the enemy differently.

Egozi: We heard testimonies from some released hostages about positive treatment and humanity. There was this girl, I don't quite remember the details, who talked about how she was angry at her guard, and he was mad at her.

They had some kind of a relationship...

Egozi: Yes, suddenly there are relationships. Everyone was mad at the first hostage when she waved goodbye to them before she was freed.

People were outraged...

Egozi: Yes. When she said that in general, her experience was not that awful...

When you meet the various audiences, are there different reactions from which you can learn that these difficult events could also open some doors to a different view of the enemy, the other side, the Palestinians, and maybe something can be done? Is there some hope for reconciliation or something like that?

Egozi: No...

One of the interesting things about the future will be whether public opinion about the other side will change. Will it shut down any possibility for a solution, or lead to a new opening, considering that we have to resolve the conflict 'not only by force'? Do we need to look for other ways? In the meantime, it's a mystery...

Egozi: It's a mystery. In the current situation, I don't doubt that it will be impossible right now. I say this with regret, but this is not an option at the moment.

What reactions are you getting to the poster of Sinwar's list?

Egozi: From deep shock to anger at the creators of this poster. People say, 'How dare you put him in this place, as someone who did good and saved Jews, and was merciful, and showed kindness to the Jews at that time.'

Did you encounter other voices?

Egozi: I don't remember. I don't think so.

In another image, we see the entrance to Birkenau. It is the famous picture of the railroad leading to the concentration camp gate. The picture has an added element of a Hamasnik planting the Palestinian flag on top of the tower. It was created by Or Reichart. What reactions did you get to that image?



Egozi: Recently, I met with a group of guides of youth delegations to Poland and their reactions were very harsh. They saw the Hamas guy who planted the flag atop the tower as saying, 'We've taken over this place and now we...'

We (Hamas) have also taken over the memory, perhaps?

Egozi: Yes. First and foremost, we've taken over this place. It's in our hands. 'The extermination,' the place that symbolizes where the actual extermination of over a million Jews took place is now in our hands. So maybe this goes beyond October 7. Perhaps, it also speaks to their intentions...

It must be said that the illustrator's choice was to plant the flag of Palestine or the Palestinian Authority's flag on top of the tower, not the Hamas flag. Does that mean that all Arabs or Palestinians are our ultimate enemy?

Egozi: I don't know to what extent the illustrator meant to say that... I didn't talk to him. So I don't know... I'm not arguing about it, but I don't know to what extent there was an intention or research behind it, whether it truly represents everyone, including Islamic Jihad and everyone else...

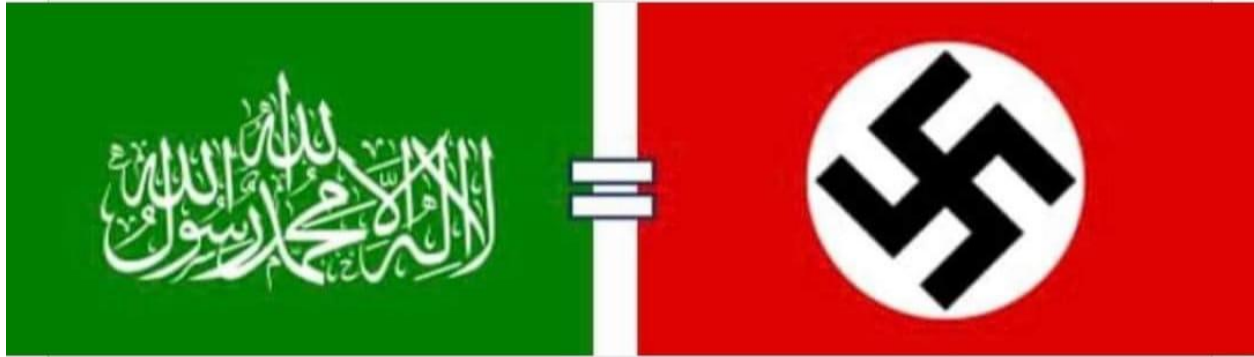
Even if there was no intention or awareness that this image represents the public sentiment, which is a generalization, that "they," no matter who "they" are, even Abu Mazen who says 'I want an agreement' is one of them. There is no difference between them... Part of the story is the generalization. You can't trust them. Now they are murderers and such, whether it's conscious or not.

Egozi: That's right. In addition, we have the layer of memory, which says, we took over not only Birkenau but also the memory, the memory of the Holocaust. Because we have shown something very classic here, something canonical. You mentioned in the opening of the interview two sacred things: the Temple Mount and the Holocaust. And, here, there is a very significant appeal for the exclusivity of the Holocaust.

This awareness fulfills one of the goals of Hamas, which is to change perceptions and the balance of power. To fundamentally change everything, so nothing stays the same. This is their success. They have taken over our consciousness.

Egozi: Yes. I know very well that the Holocaust is unprecedented. I know what happened in the Gaza Envelope was not the same event. But I think that something has shifted for many people in Israel.

Another image uses two familiar symbols. One is the swastika with a red background and the other is the Shahada, the declaration of exclusivity: "There is no God but Allah," with a green background. Between the two signs, there is the mathematical equality sign. Here, we see a religious element. Does it mean that Islam equals Nazism? Does the conflict look like a religious war now?



Egozi: It could be that whoever designs such a slogan or symbol, that's what he wants to convey...

Is it possible that the creator of this image didn't know what this inscription meant? He saw Arabic and that was enough?

Egozi: I cautiously say, I have no idea. I haven't spoken with any of the creators.

If Islam equals Nazis, then are we dealing with over a billion plus Muslims?

Egozi: Yes. The comparison between Hamas and ISIS and Hamas and the Nazis appears a lot. Practically, all the time.

Here's another depiction of the word Hamas written in English and Hebrew. In the Hebrew version, the word Hamas is written in Hebrew and the letter Alef is replaced by a swastika. Underneath, in the English version, the letter S is replaced by a swastika. This image corresponds with the previous one but does not include the entire Muslim world.



Egozi: Regarding this imagery, it's important to say that although I meet with various audiences, educators, and people from the communities in the Gaza Envelope, I also encounter academics who believe, regarding this imagery, that we need to make this comparison. Professor Liat Styer-Livni, for example, argued shortly after the events of October 7 that we must make this comparison. She claims that by comparing Hamas to Nazis, we will know 'how to confront them. How to treat them.' Only then will we know how to take care of them? [in Hebrew the word means "to treat," "to care for," and "to take care of" g.b.]

What does 'take care of them' mean? Does it mean to destroy them?

Egozi: I'm not speaking specifically. But yes, it goes in this direction.

In other words, we can't be so naive as to think about the possibility of reconciliation. Ever.

Egozi: Of course not. She also claims this is the only thing that works in the public discourse. I am quoting her.

So all the images we've seen serve the same idea?

Egozi: Yes...

Okay. Let's look at a few images that correspond to the ongoing fighting in Gaza. One uses a buzzword that became commonplace in the discourse: "Sha-Ger!" ["Launch!" g.b.] refers to launching missiles from planes and armed drones. It plays on the word "Ga-Resh" [which means "Expel!" g.b.]



Egozi: It's not that, Yizhar...

Come on, tell me!

Aguzi: It's 'Two, Three, Launch!' This is the Air Force command. This is the way you say it...

OK. And at the bottom of the poster, it says, 'We do not live next to Nazis'. Again, Hamas the enemy are Nazis, as a full comparison. By the way, is this also the comparison that Netanyahu has been making since the beginning of the events?

Egozi: Yes. But he is not the only one who does it. It should be said that some news anchors in the TV studios do this, like Amit Segal, who constantly says, 'They are Nazis, they are Nazis, they are Nazis.' People in the media, reporters, and anchors use it too. It's not just Netanyahu.

It's like a feedback loop. It emerges from the top and the bottom as something authentic. In the same context, we see the armored personnel carrier on the way to Gaza or coming back from Gaza, with a sign 'Nazi Hunters'. Again, are we in a World War II situation?

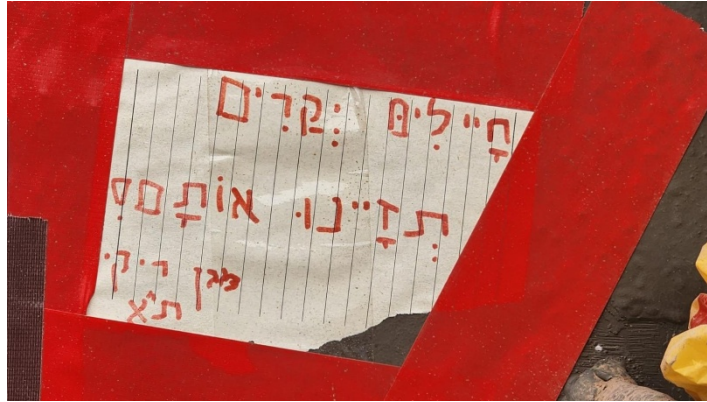


Egozi: Post-World War II, because Nazi hunters came after the war...

Yes, correct. How many years have passed since then? Eighty years? These years have passed as if they have never happened. They faded away. And here we are again, back in the time machine to the same mission...

And now, we have something borderline cute and on the verge of censorship. Children from a kindergarten in Tel Aviv, called Gan Riki, send a care package to soldiers, and on the package they attach a message, excuse the expression, 'Dear soldiers, fk them. from Gan Riki Tel Aviv.**

The words include diacritical marks [vowel signs used mostly in children's books, poetry, and the Hebrew Bible. g,b,]. I assume the little ones still don't know how to read without the diacritical marks. But they also don't know the meaning of f**k. In another picture, we see the kindergarten teacher, who is very cute-looking, with two kindergarteners with the same send-off [f**k them].



Egozi: In the second picture, it is not a kindergarten teacher, but a mother. The father is probably a paratrooper because the children wear red berets. I got this picture from a soldier who found it taped to an armored vehicle.



In other words, it's a mom with her two children, sending off the soldiers on their way to Gaza with the farewell blessing.

Egozi: Yes.

I want to read you something Tali Savo, whom I don't know, wrote. It goes like this: 'I was supposed to fly tomorrow with a student delegation to learn about the Holocaust; to understand, to identify, to mourn. But the holocaust beat me to it and said: 'Don't bother coming to Poland. I'm already here with you, in Israel.'



Egozi: It's extremely difficult to hear. The speed at which it has happened. As if they invented a new iPhone model, so let's discard the old one. In other words, the Holocaust is no longer the story. Now we have Kibbutz Be'eri, we travel to Be'eri and there, we...

Now we have a blue-white Holocaust? [Blue-white is another way to say Israeli. g.b.]

Egozi: Yes, Blue-White in 2023. Yes. It's infuriating. I had a hard time with it...

Did you also feel that your profession is somehow fading away?

Egozi: Correct. But I didn't think for a moment that this was what would replace it. You know, there's something I didn't tell you when we prepared for this podcast. On the evening of October 7, a very senior member of Yad Vashem management called the Yad Vashem Chairman and said to him, 'We need to open a new wing now.' In all seriousness.

'We need to build an additional wing in the museum.' I repeat this, not because I think you don't understand. I don't understand it myself and need to recover from this. I never thought for a moment that I would be leading delegations to Be'eri, or that this would even be an option.

Do you think it could become a reality?

Egozi: As part of my observations of this phenomenon, I quickly realized I needed to go to the Gaza Envelope and listen to the people there. When I met Hayim Yalin, he greatly reassured me with what he said.

What do you think about using the yellow star, for example when Erdan wore it on his jacket at the U.N.? [Gilad Erdan is Israel's Ambassador to the U.N. since 2020. g.b]



Egozi: I think he did it because he wanted to harness the event to shock, and to make the world identify with Israel. In my opinion, he made a serious error. Even in hindsight, we see it didn't help at all, it only caused harm. I oppose any attempt to exploit the Holocaust and use it as an excuse to rationalize anything. Leave the Holocaust alone. Let it stay where it belongs. We don't need it to prove the righteousness of our path or anything that happens today. Like you said earlier, Netanyahu turned it into a slogan, but it's not only him. Politicians from the right and left before October 7 used the Holocaust all the time. I constantly opposed this and argued that it should be left alone. We can't keep dragging the Holocaust along with us everywhere. As much as I deal with it, I think it damages us to constantly bring it into everyday life to justify what happens here.

When the Israeli ambassador and his entire delegation to the UN wear yellow star patches, doesn't it mean, essentially, that we are victims, we are weak, we cannot defend ourselves? Even in the practical matter of the so-called 'advocacy,' doesn't it look like self-harm?

Egozi: Many people think what you're saying is correct. In meetings I attend and in academic circles, many people are angry. They disagree with the victim mentality and the wallowing in the nightmare...

If we are victims, then what Nasrallah says about us, 'one little puff and the spiderweb will be wiped out' is true. Even before the Six-Day War, Prime Minister Eshkol used the term 'Shimshon the *Nebech*.' [Shimshon refers to the biblical character Samson who symbolizes strength, and *Nebech* is a Yiddish word that translates into someone weak and pitiful. g.b.]

In other words, even if we are '*Nebech*' [weaklings] we are still the biblical Shimshon. We are heroes, we are strong. To portray us as helpless victims of the concentration camps can only arouse fear and terror.

Egozi: And disgust.

Yesterday or the day before, the Prime Minister held the book Mein Kampf during a speech. During an interview for the BBC, President Isaac Herzog showed a copy of Mein Kampf found in a children's bedroom in the ruins of a house in Gaza. In your opinion, what is the political incentive for doing this? How does it benefit our propaganda and advocacy? What are we trying to prove by showing Mein Kampf?

Egozi: It comes from the same place... I don't know how prevalent these things were in the Gaza Strip. I don't know. I am not sure and I have no idea. But it's similar to previous comparisons. It comes from the same place. The need to justify...

What does it do to the Israeli consciousness? The fearful, confused, anxious consciousness?

Egozi: It doesn't do us any good...

Does it make us believe that we are living in a Holocaust-type situation?

Egozi: An ongoing Holocaust. Yes. And we are not free of it. Remembering is necessary. My work is about Holocaust remembrance. But it can't be present in our lives all the time, and it cannot manage our lives and influence us in this way.

I'm reading a headline from the newspaper Israel Hayom: "This will be the 2023 journey to Poland. The Antiquities Authority has decided to preserve and commemorate the testimonies of the atrocities in Be'eri."

The Antiquities Authority?

יום שבת, 9.12.2023 | כ"ז בכסלו תשפ"ד

ישראל היום

English | אנתנו מניסים | הרוסקופ | אוכל | תרבות ובידור | סלבס | ספורט | דעות | חדשות | Q | ☰

חדשות / בארץ

"ז'זה יהיה המסע לפולין' של שנת 2023": ברשות העתיקות החליטו לשמר ולהנציח את העדויות למעשי הזוועה בבארי

צוות מיוחד סייר בשטח ובחן דרכי הנצחה, הכוללות תיעוד תלת-ממד ושימור פריטים ומבנים המעידים על הפרעות "שבועיים בלבד אחרי האירוע הבנו שחייבים לתעד ולשמר, נעשתה פה שואה, את מה שקרה כאן יש מי שמנסים בעולם, ואפילו בישראל, להכחיש כבר מהיום הראשון - לא ניתן לזה לקרות, עלינו לדאוג שאף אחד לא ישכח"

יובד שליטור
2534, 7/11/2023

Egozi: Many organizations want to do something meaningful during this crisis out of a genuine and honest desire. Each one tries to do their best in their field. I assume that

the people at the Antiquities Authority asked themselves how they could contribute to this...

What is the relevance of the Antiquities Authority? What goes on in the minds of people who deal with the preservation of antiquities, or with the discovery of antiquities, when they look at events that took place in 2023?

Egozi: First, when you walk around Be'eri, something there feels like an archaeological site. There are huge mounds of filtered soil. There's something there that reminds me... For example, Pessy's house, where the incident with the hostages and the tank's shell that hit her house took place. So there you see huge mounds around the house. It looks like an archaeological site.

It means that somehow the past has taken over the present. The separation between the past and the present has been blurred.

In the same vein, there is a debate. What do we do with preserving this memory?

Dina Porat, for example, suggested leaving one burnt house in every settlement and every kibbutz. That means, one house that was burned, to leave it in its current state. In the image we see here, there is a burned, destroyed house, and from inside you see a a scream that recalls Munch's "The Scream." What do you think about this type of preservation? How do we preserve and in what way should we properly preserve the memory of what happened?

בכל יישוב, בכל קיבוץ – להשאיר בית אחד שרוף

הכחשת זוועות 7 באוקטובר כבר מתנהלת. עבודת הזיכרון צריכה להתבצע לא רק באמצעים הדיגיטליים והוויזואליים שנעשו לחם חוק, אלא בעוד אופן מוחשי

47 תגובות

פרופ' דינה פורת | עודכן: 07.11.23 | 08:27

האזינו לכתבה 5 דקות



Egozi: As soon as I said I was against the trips to Be’eri, I was also against leaving a burnt house in any of the settlements. It would invite a pilgrimage and I'm not sure it is something to desire. I'm not even sure the kibbutzim themselves want it. The communities that need to be rehabilitated are not necessarily interested in it, and they will have to decide whether they want it. Let me tell you, Dina Porat fears that digital preservation will fade, something will happen, there will be a technical glitch and everything will disappear. Then we will have nothing left. But I think there are many ways to remember. We can't allow one person to take ownership and decide how to memorialize the events of October 7. The communities themselves must be involved in these decisions above all else.

* * *

The strongest opposition to the phenomenon of the pilgrimage to the communities that were attacked on October 7 and the desire to turn them into a living museum, ironically, comes from the residents of the Gaza Envelope themselves. This is how Haim Yalin

presents the issue in a video alongside Naama Egozi and the two researchers from Yad Vashem Roi Ze'evi and Shlomit Steiner. (Videographer: Inbal Shprintzak)

Roi Ze'evi: A 17-year-old boy or girl will come here in a year or two. What will they see?

Haim Yalin: In another three years, they will see new neighborhoods and new families, and they won't see anything of what happened here.

Ze'evi: Is that what you would like to happen?

Yalin: We're not in Poland, not in Auschwitz, not in any place that we need to show everyone. On the contrary. I don't want children who grow up here and come here to see this. We need to look forward.

I don't need to be reminded every day where I came from. You don't wake up in the morning and say, "Okay, six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust and therefore I..."

We commemorate it once a year... We struggle with this issue. The second and third generations (after the Holocaust) experienced the traumas of the Holocaust and have passed them on to the State of Israel. There aren't many survivors left.

I think there's a completely different process here. A renewal of the entire region. Notice what happens when there's a terrorist attack in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. What's the first thing they do? A clean-up. Right?

We're inside the State of Israel, not on trips to Poland and Auschwitz, making money off the Holocaust. This is why I don't think in terms of a museum.

But will there be something else here? Yes. Maybe a museum has to be built. But it doesn't have to be in Be'eri or Kfar Aza. It should be elsewhere.

For example, in Park Re'im where 400 souls were murdered. Maybe that's where it should be and the whole world would go there. And next to it there should be an amphitheater with a park for 100,000 people who will dance and that's all. We will remember this trauma differently. Probably.

We can't live under the shadow of trauma all the time. We can't continue this way. We have to change direction... Maybe leave a house at the edge of the kibbutz, and place it outside the kibbutz boundary...

* * *

In this context, I want to ask you this: You say that you are against sending delegations to visit Be'eri and the communities of the Gaza Envelope. Many times we heard criticism of the trip to the concentration camps, especially against the

youth delegations. It's argued that such visits perpetuate victimhood and a siege mentality, making us closed off, fearful, and hostile to strangers, among other things. Why are visits to concentration camps permissible but not to places like Be'eri and the Gaza Envelope?

Egozi: First, you will never hear me call the trip to Poland a trip to concentration camps. You defined it as such. For me, the trip's goal is to explore the 800-year history of Jewish life in Poland. I'm not going to lay out my entire worldview for you right now, but I don't lead a Holocaust tour or a tour of concentration camps. After we learn well about what we had in Poland, the culture and lives of the Jewish communities of Poland, only then do we see what we have lost.

Some people indeed do this. Seven camps in three days, just like a sketch by the Ha'Hamishia Ha'Kamerit [The Cameri Five was a TV comedy show performed by five actors. g.b.]. What I say is that trips to Be'eri cannot replace trips to Poland.

You hear the common claim that Hamas is much worse than the Nazis because the Nazis did not kill with their own hands, they allowed collaborators to kill, and they shot from a distance...

Egozi: Or they pressed the button of the gas chambers...

Yes. While the Nukhba men and their helpers were cruel beyond measure, killing with knives and axes...

Egozi: I hear this a lot. That they are worse than the Nazis and that this event is worse than the Holocaust.

What do you say about that?

It's boiling lava. The event is so close and so painful...

What do you think will happen to our consciousness if this comparison succeeds and enters the mainstream? How will our future memory look?

Egozi: I'm very afraid for our society if it solidifies. It will cause injustice to both the memory of the Holocaust and the events of October 7. If everything's the same, then everything is flat and shallow..."

So everything is nothing...

Egozi: So everything is nothing. And that's why I'm very concerned. However, I believe that over time things will settle down and order will be restored. Every event will find its place. Right now, our nerves are exposed, everything hurts, everything is bleeding, and as of now, we cannot look at it from a bird's-eye view, as you said earlier.

Naama Egozi, thank you very much!

Egozi: Thank you!

This was Chapter 81 of Sacred Cows. "I feel like I'm entering Auschwitz to kill Nazis," the paratroopers said on their way to Gaza. Adopting Holocaust terminology following the events of October 7 threatens to erase the memory of the Holocaust as we know it.

As always, we would appreciate assistance with this project, which is entirely voluntary; whether in English translation, video editing, or financial contribution. Details can be found under "Help and Donation" on the Sacred Cows website.

See you in the next episodes.