

[Parot Kdoshot] Chapter 73. "We realised that we are not a regional power. We are going through a healing process" - a conversation with Muki Tsur about the events of Black Sabbath in the kibbutzim of Otef Aza.

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Muki Tsur (right)

What happened to the kibbutzim in Otef Aza during [the events of] Black October 2023 put Muki Tsur into a 'Brave depression', as he defined it. I set out to meet the last ideologue of the Kibbutz Movement in one of its most difficult moments. We talked about the tragic resilience of the kibbutzim in Otef Aza, which brought back memories of the 1948 Israeli war of independence. We also talked about the founding myths of the Kibbutz Movement, which from its inception, was subject to threats from home and abroad over its very justification to exist. He diagnosed for me the differences between hope and illusion and between pessimism and optimism.

Muki Tsur is the prominent historian of the Kibbutz Movement and its living ideologue. When he was eighteen, he came to Kibbutz Ein Gav and has remained

there ever since. His small house, like the houses of other veterans in the kibbutz, is located on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The water at high tide washes the grass in his yard, a real dream, but with the water he maintains a platonic relationship all his life, as he does not swim.

He is 85 years old, the son of Israel's first ambassador to Argentina. He was the Secretary of the Kibbutz three times, as well as Head of the Training Department for HaNoar HaOved VeHaLomed, the Kibbutz youth movement, the Kvutzot and Kibbutzim emissary to the USA, the Secretary of the Takam Kibbutz Movement and above all, a chronicler of the history of the Kibbutz project, the Labour Movement and the Jordan Valley.

In his dozens of books, he brings the story of Practical Zionism, as manifested in the Kibbutz settlement enterprise. Today he is a kind of 'elder statesman', a tribe's elder, who can take a bird's eye view of the great tragedy that befell the kibbutzim in October 2023. He treats the history of the Kibbutz Movement with great compassion, free of unnecessary nostalgia, which allows him to dismantle the myths and prejudices from its history. I left the meeting with him feeling bravely depressed.

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Be'er: Muki Tsur, shalom.

Tsur: Shalom.

Be'er: Two weeks passed since the beginning of the tragic events in the South, how are you?

Tsur: Like everyone else, I'm shocked. I'm not sure we can even discuss the events rationally, in this period of shock. Nevertheless, we are obliged to discuss rationally during this period of shock.

Be'er: Do you know any of victims or survivors personally?

Tsur: A very good friend of mine was kidnapped to Gaza. When I was an emissary to America, she came to Kibbutz Gezer from Canada and I kept in touch with her all these years. She was the one who raised the issue of women in the Kibbutz Movement. And most important, she oversaw relations with the Arab and the Bedouin communities for many years.

Be'er: Are you talking about Vivian Silver? Yes, I knew her well.

Tsur: Yes, a very close friend. Over the years I envisioned she would take my place as the secretary of the Kibbutz Movement.

Be'er: Has the attitude towards our neighbouring people, towards the Palestinians, changed as a result of the brutal events we encountered?

Tsur: There is no doubt that there is a breakdown in the relationships. A significant breakdown for many people who believed relationships were progressing. Who believed fate will lead the Israelis and Palestinians to embrace each other. I never agreed with this assessment of the Arab organised position. I was never an optimist, but always, and even today, my perspective is that reconciliation will probably take a long time, maybe like the reconciliation between France and Germany, has not changed.

Be'er: Decades? centuries?

Tsur: It can take many years. History does not breathe like humans. Humans have a short biography, I can already smell the end, but history laughs at us in terms of its perspective...

Be'er: I am addressing you also as the Kibbutz Movement's historian. 235 kibbutzim members were killed during this round of violence. Has anything like this, on this scale, ever happened in the history of the Kibbutz Movement?

Tsur: It happened during the 1948 Israeli war of independence.

Be'er: Did something like this happen in a single day?

Tsur: Not in a single day, but it happened. The war of independence is the most similar war to today's events. It is remarkable that during the past year we examined the 1973 Yom Kippur War repeatedly, while I remained in the war of independence.



Muki Tzur. photo: Yizhar Be'er

Be'er: What is the closest epic event to the recent tragedy which befell the Kibbutz Movement?

Tsur: It's similar to events that happened from '37 to '49, periods like that. For example, Kibbutz Giv'at Brenner, 1937, two people leave in a truck, and one of them is murdered. I call these days 'the era of the Silent movie'. During those days it was forbidden to discuss current tragedies. The events happened and it was forbidden to discuss them. Today there is a lot of discussion, but in those days they had a funeral.

The children were told 'come to the funeral', and so they went to the funeral. Suddenly shots were fired on the mourners in the funeral, so the children were told 'run back home, get under the beds and wait'. And that's what happened. I describe it as an example, because in Giv'at Brenner' the same place' -, Enzo Sereni lived, and at that time he went with the children to the neighbouring Arab village. He had friends in that village...

Be'er: So one or two were killed there, but it wasn't a massacre?

Tsur: Yes, but on that day, many were killed. That's not the main issue, the main issue is the expectation. We must not forget that, for years now, we have been speaking on behalf of the regional power called Israel...

Be'er: Do you think that the resilience of the community, the kibbutz, the Israeli society, has changed between then and now?

Tsur: Look, resilience exists. There is a 'tragic resilience', as Berl Katznelson] put it. The difference between the current pogrom and the events of 1937 is that during the current events we stood up. We defended ourselves, that is absolutely clear. It wasn't enough, not enough troops were present, etc., etc., but there was perseverance. There was a fight and not[passive acceptance "Like sheep to the slaughter". There was nothing of that kind. But there was a major confrontation between Israel's regional power pretensions and the events which unfolded. The technological hubris of the State of Israel - we have walls, and we have cameras...

Be'er: How would you describe the feelings during the period you mentioned, the '30s, '40s?

Tsur: The feeling then was that there was no...

Be'er: That we were weak?

Tsur: that we were weak.

Be'er: Which required us to be more careful, smarter, more determined?

Tsur: It required you to do all kinds of things outside the box. All the time. To reinvent ourselves. But to also be very sensitive all the time. At the time of the events of those years, there was an incident in which an Arab gang removed the clothes of an English platoon, and the soldiers returned to kibbutz Ein Harod naked...

Be'er: the Arab gang stripped them?

Tsur: No, they went to bathe in the spring and Arabs stole their clothes. Then they decided to shell the neighbouring village.

Be'er: The British platoon?

Tsur: The British army. And the people of kibbutz Ein Harod stopped them.

Be'er: In order not to damage bilateral relations?

Tsur: Because they said to the British: 'You will eventually leave here, but we have to live with them.' I describe these situations...

Be'er: I guess Orde Wingate was already around...

Tsur: Wingate was already around ...

Be'er: More than a century ago, Yosef Trumpeldor said: 'Where the Jewish plough ploughs the last furrow, that's where our border will be.' At least according to the myth. And in fact, when we look at the map, we see that most of the frontier settlement are kibbutzim. Do you accept or reinforce this myth, that where the Kibbutz Movement's plough reached is where the border was set?

Tsur: Yes, the first to settle there was the Kibbutz Movement. Do you know why the kibbutzim managed this? Simply put, because they had "social defects". They were effectively huge orphanage. Their parents were far away.

Be'er: Orphanage because of the holocaust?

Tsur: Yes, because of the Holocaust and even before. Yehuda Sharett, the brother of Moshe Sharett, described it nicely. He said: 'They are orphans, and their mothers are far away'.

One must understand that holding a margin and holding a border is the same. The border is always at the margin. And the conceptual idea of the kibbutz was that if we are at the margins, we cannot be marginal, unless we will aim to create utopia. And dealing with utopia... And this was the reason the kibbutzim were thrown to these border places. Look, the Kibbutz Movement in the two years after the establishment of the state founded 46 settlements. In two years! And it only took one year for most of those settlements to be emptied of most of their inhabitants.

Be'er: Why?

Tsur: Because the members returned to their homes, because they went to study, because they became government officials. The state of Israel had to be established. I can tell you that there was one kibbutz that had 150 members. 120 were government and army officials and such things, and they would return on Friday evening to the 26 remaining members, convene a members' general assembly and decide where to plough.

Be'er: The so-called Commuter Kibbutz...

Tsur: So, it's no coincidence. The borders were not determined by the people. Even Tel Hai did not determine the border. But to hold these places, to settle these places, for this purpose the kibbutz fitted very well. Then came the Development Towns, and it changed, because today it's no longer development towns, but urban centres that unite* the frontier settlements.

Be'er: there was a perception, that the frontier settlements or frontier kibbutzim were part of a territorial defence.

Tsur: That's right, but it faded through with time. Faded on purpose.. The Israeli army preferred open spaces for war.

Be'er: Today as well.

Tsur: Yes. And for the army, paying for a gun to be used by the members of the kibbutz was absurd in many respects. We see it to this day. It is not that the guns are taken away, the issue is not the guns.

Be'er: This is what happened in the kibbutzim in the south, where the army took away the guns.

Tsur: It is not that they took the guns, but they took the salaries of those who used the guns. Paying the salaries was what the IDF rejected, and which led to the reduction of the territorial defence. We could live here[in kibbutz Ein Gev all these years thanks to the territorial defence forces. The old[kibbut] members, who have passed away, are the ones who conquered Susita (above Ein Gev). I mean, they did not only defend the kibbutz by themselves, but also attacked. because they felt that the Susita mountainlaying above them, was a threat. It wasn't a simple thing, to attack Susita ...

Be'er: We will come back to this later, but I want to read you what a kibbutznik, by the name of Maoz Habib from Kibbutz Tsor'a, wrote. I don't know if you know him.

Tsur: I know him well.

Be'er: I will read the passage and then ask for your comment:

"...To this day, our prime minister has never once said the word 'kibbutz'. Yes. He didn't say it Since the days of Menachem Begin, we, the kibbutzniks, have felt that we are the state's punching bag.

For Bibi and a friend of his flock, there are three entities around Gaza that worth mentioning: Sderot, Netivot, Ofakim. They voted the right way. They - voted Likud. They - deserve support. The kibbutzim, the kibbutzniks, they are the enemy. They are leftists. They are anarchists. They are traitors. They are the pus of the country. They (ask anyone in Beit She'an) are the ones who took over the states' public spaces.

Will the kibbutzim of the Otef be rebuilt? Does anyone in the government cares? Benjamin Netanyahu has not visited a kibbutz since he became prime minister. I can't tell if he ever saw a kibbutz with his own eyes. But in our country, if there will be no revival to the kibbutzim that suffered this terrible blow, without them there will be no Sderot, Ofakim and Netivot. And after that: Ashkelon, and Ashdod. I don't need to continue.

With or without a government, I can't tell if there will actually be a revival of kibbutzim in the Otef Aza. Some kibbutzim will obviously not be rebuilt. Kfar Aza, Nahal Oz, Sufa, Kerem Shalom. Those who have lost significant part of their members, their children, their babies. A tenth, a quarter, a third, or more. To my mind, they will have no revival.

A kibbutz is an extended family. Mothers, fathers, those who experienced these experiences, they will not be able to return. This is what happened to various

kibbutzim that were occupied and destroyed in the war of Independence. Others rose to their feet, like Nitzanim, Yad Mordechai, but they were scarred for many years. But back then, the infant country was with them, supported them, loved them. So, they were a symbol, not a burden. Back then there was Ben Gurion, not Bibi. Back then we were not traitors. Back then the country had "Radio Kol Israel from Jerusalem", not Channel 14. Kibbutz Beit HaShitah lost 11 of its members in the Yom Kippur War of 1973, and it was a terrible blow, even though the kibbutz was a strong, solid kibbutz. Who knows how much many members lost from Kibbutz Be'eri? How will mothers return to the kibbutz where the terrorists piled babies and toddlers, decapitated their heads and burnt them?

Bibi saw the pictures. He sent them to Biden, who was shocked. Great! Bibi managed to shock him and to "achieve" tremendous results. America is now with us. Blinken met with kibbutzniks. Neither Bibi nor any of his ministers saw fit to do so. Bibi is unable to get the word 'kibbutz' out of his mouth.

Will his government be willing to invest the billions he invested in the ultra-Orthodox communities in the rehabilitation and rebuilding of the destroyed kibbutzim? rhetorical question. It's not even worth asking."

Be'er: So, I'll ask you this. The Kibbutz Movement, which was for years the serving elite, in the army, in assimilating new Jewish immigrants, in founding new settlement, leading the youth movements. Where is it today in this sense? And how do you explain this resentment of the kibbutzim and this hatred?

Tsur: Well, look, first of all, I understand Maoz's pain. It hurts a lot, for many years. But I'm a historian, on the one hand, and on the other hand, I don't wish to get into this 'black and white' description. The Kibbutz Movement was always cherished in retrospect. The Society always cherished the kibbutz of the past, never the present kibbutz. When Kibbutz Degania celebrated its centenary, Binyamin Netanyahu brought the whole government to Degania. Everyone received the book of Degania, Netanyahu gave a speech, he was with the kibbutz, he celebrated with the kibbutz. Until the kibbutz became a political tool. The Black Bishop that needed to be removed.

But there are two sides to this. Another side is the lasting suspicion about kibbutzim as utopias. I can say that throughout the history of the kibbutz, from its inception, from its first day, people said: "lower your dreams". For example: when the kibbutzim were planned initially, the architects were instructed to plan according to the kibbutz ideals. And so, the architects proposed a multi-story building, for all the members of the kibbutz to be in one place.

Be'er: One building for all the kibbutz?

Tsur: One building for all the kibbutz. This is what they suggested.

Be'er: How many storeys?

Tsur: Not many. There were only a few members in the kibbutz... But the state institutions said, no! After all, every kibbutz was meant to become a moshav

(village), so build small houses. And that's the origin of the small houses in the kibbutz. It started from the utopian ideal...

Be'er: Why did it scare them?

Tsur: Because they said, do you mean that we will finance utopia? That we will finance a socialist utopia? No way! Therefore, from day one, after World War I, the first thing they decided was to abolish the kibbutzim. There weren't many then, there were only four.

Be'er: Who decided?

Tsur: The World Zionist Organization. Then the kibbutzim asked for amnesty. To keep the kibbutzim.

Be'er: Wait, why abolish, on what grounds?

Tsur: Because they are utopians. Because they dream too much.

Be'er: Because it's not practical?

Tsur: 'We are rational people. We are building the nation of Israel on rational foundations.'

In Kfar Giladi the members established a shared dining hall. Kfar Giladi was under the rule of the Rothschild foundation, PICA. To achieve that, the members asked the Young Rothschild for a community space. He said: "listen, I know what you want, build the community space, after all, eventually you will need a synagogue". So, the members used the mandate given by Rothschild for a synagogue, to build the first shared dining hall.

So you see, these suspicions always existed. In 1927, the founding committee of the Jewish Agency was established. The committee's experts visited here. Their default suggestion was to abolish the kibbutzim. And this continued ever since.

Be'er: So, can we say that the hostility or antagonism to the ideals of the kibbutz was also from within the camp?

Tsur: Absolutely, all the time. At some point, Menachem Begin formed relations with the Kibbutz Movement. They invited him to give public talks. He came and was very happy and said great things about the kibbutz. Up until the moment he realised he had a political card.

Be'er: And when did it happen, in your opinion?

Tsur: In the 'kibbutzim's swimming pools' speech.

But let there be no doubt, the Labour movement did not want the kibbutz either. It supposed that by dismantling the ideal of the kibbutzim, or by telling them: "be good, we will reconcile with the other parts of the Israeli nation which we got used to, and which we shaped". Because the nation was not exactly a kibbutz nation, but one with social gaps and all kind of other social problems.

The kibbutz always had a problem. On the one hand, the kibbutz did not receive the honour that could and should have been granted to it. 'We are democrats, we want to be part of the nation.' Well, being part of the Israeli nation means to follow at what the nation is doing? or being part of the nation means to stand aside and be different? What should the kibbutz do in a country that, at its time of inception, already had a ratio of one in four in salaries?

Be'er: So, what you are actually saying is that the kibbutz ideal threatened the Zionist ideal in some way?

Tsur: The kibbutz ideal had to adapt to a normal state...

Be'er: The very dream is something abnormal?

Tsur: Look, the Kibbutz Movement was cherished in the Knesset because its members were always disciplined.

Be'er: And why were they disciplined?

Tsur: They were disciplined because that's how they behaved in a group. This is the right way to behave, to trust in whoever represents you, to accept them. Look how peacefully the Kibbutz Movement accepted the fact that its twenty-one members of the Knesset disappeared over the years. And the Kibbutz Movement had no problem with that, because they said: "That's not a democracy, to have so many kibbutz members in the Knesset, it's not democratic, we need someone else". The Bar Association would not accept that, to be told: "please have a representation in the Knesset with accordance to the extent of your profession in society". The lawyers wouldn't accept that. But in the Kibbutz Movement, , they didn't applaud, but they said: "it's fine to have less representation in the Knesset, that's how things should be".

Be'er: I want to bring us back to the context of the recent events. Regarding the images of the dramatic evacuation of the kibbutzim, and not only the kibbutzim. In the War of Independence, there was an ethos that settlements were not to be evacuated, both because it was part of the territorial defence concept, and also because it was presumed that if evacuation starts, it might lead to a chain reaction that would be impossible to stop.

Tsur: This is not accurate.

Be'er: So please correct me.

Tsur: This is not accurate. The ethos was, that's right, the ethos was...

Be'er: There was also Ben-Gurion's 1947 Tel Hai decree, according to which not a single Jewish-Israeli settlement can be evacuated, and that these settlements should be held to the last man?

Tsur: But settlements were evacuated. Even in 1941 when the Palmach forces went to Syria, together with the British army, and were defeated by the French. In the first stage of the battle, an evacuation order was issued to all settlements from Kfar Giladi

to Ein Gev. All settlements received an evacuation order. They did not evacuate because the outcome of the battle changed quickly. But they received the order.

During the War of Independence, they evacuated the colony of Hartuv. A group of fighters arrived there with an order to retreat. The people of Hartuv replied: "Why retreat? this is the first time our fields are green. We even reached an agreement with an officer from the Arab Legion that we give him half of the harvest, and you want to drive us out of here? You go away!" That's what they told the soldiers, led by Shlomo Lahat, AKA Chich. The soldiers replied: "We will not retreat, because they will slaughter you". And slowly the people of the colony decided to submit to the soldiers' and moved to Kfar Uria, on the day of the declaration of independence of the state of Israel. So, there were evacuations.

Be'er: You mean, evacuation of entire settlements, including cities, is not recent phenomenon?

Tsur: I don't know if you know, but during the War of Independence 62,000 people were evacuated from their homes. It was a military secret, but 62,000 people were evacuated from the frontier neighbourhoods in Haifa and Jerusalem. Out of the general population of 600,000 people.

Be'er: So, there's nothing new in the evacuation entire settlements under fire?

Tsur: That's correct. But the dilemma was present all along. On the one hand, we don't move, on the other hand, people should not be sacrificed for the sake of making sacrifices. This dilemma was constantly on the agenda: is avoiding evacuation necessary to save lives, or is it just for the sake of sacrifice?

There were those who after the 1973 Yom Kippur War said that all those Israelis who were taken captive were traitors. Some have said that.

So, it was a dilemma. It wasn't predetermined. Kfar Darom held on strongly in the War of Independence, but at the end of the war the kibbutz members were told to retreat, and they retreated.

Be'er: Specifically in the last stages of the war?

Tsur: In the last stages of the war, when the Israeli leadership already knew that we were winning, they told them: "you guys are sitting there, we don't want you to sacrifice yourselves. Retreat!". And they retreated. Even though they won the battle all along.

Be'er: And it created some kind of trauma or problems later?

Tsur: There are no such events which do not result in traumas. The Religious Kibbutz Movement suffered the most casualties in the War of Independence, because many of its settlements were occupied by enemy forces. Not because it was the religious arm of the kibbutz movement, but because of the fact that their settlements were in such places that were occupied. Nine percent of them perished. Think about it in today's terms. And this is what led to the split in the Kibbutz Movement: the trauma of the War of Independence The War of Independence was not only traumatic, but after it was over, no one paid any attention to the soldiers.

The soldiers returned from the war hurt in their souls, in their spirit, but a new Aliyah came to Israel, they had to assimilate the new immigrants and the soldiers were not prioritised.

Be'er: As if to rehabilitate the trauma by reliving the battle?

Tsur: The intention was not to rehabilitate the trauma, but to fight the war. And we know that the war would not have ended the way it did, had it not been for the new immigrants who arrived. If not for the Holocaust survivors who arrived. And by the way, after the war, the Holocaust survivors were completely silent about their role in the war. Up until 15 years ago, no one knew that a third of the fighters at the end of the War of Independence were Holocaust survivors.

I mean, the whole country was traumatised. And the ability to rebuild the country, when a significant part are Holocaust survivors. Soldiers in a war who, not by coincidence, felt that these elders led us... where did these elders lead us?

Be'er: It was claimed that the institutions[in charge of resettlement have a plan to rehabilitate the evacuees from the affected kibbutzim in the Otef Aza in some communal settlement, or something like that, remote, and to bring Ultra-Orthodox Nationalists groups, in fact Mitnachalim, to the affected kibbutzim. Have you heard of this idea?

Tsur: Yes, I've heard of this twisted idea. I want to say something about returning to the Otef Aza region. We are in a stage of shock; the evacuated kibbutz members are in much greater shock. I suggest that no one will step into their] shoes and will not to interfere in their decisions, and will not use them as political tools, neither their resettlement nor their non-settlement. Now is the time to stand still and let the soul process. We have acted too long as a regional power. We are not a regional power. We have never been a regional power and we will not be, and it is better we recognise it.

Be'er: What are we?

Tsur: We are a society.

Be'er: An armed society.

Tsur: A society that goes through intensive security ordeals. But I suggest we see what is happening in Africa, what is happening in Asia, what is happening in the countries surrounding us. I'm not talking about Germany or Italy or South America. All countries today exist under a sense of insecurity, of an immature society, of a society in need of restoration. The State of Israel was established on the basis of a social fabric. This social fabric established a state. Now the state needs to reestablish the social fabric. And to make this transformation... it is a very intense transformation. To be honest, I'll testify on my own words, that a few years ago I said that the Israeli society is a pregnant society. And like in any pregnancy, it suffers from nausea, anxiety, terrible pain...

Be'er: Maybe it needs hospitalisation?

Tsur: But it needs to stand up, because this is a different Israeli society. We are no longer there. I work with young people from the Mechinot all the time and I see that they are different from me. But must rebuild this society and I don't envy them. It is a hard work to rebuild the Israeli society.

I follow the news, events in Africa, events in Asia. What's happening in the United States? the great empire. What's happening in Russia and Ukraine? We are not different. These are politically wobbly countries. The world is thirsty for social reconstruction. And in this social reconstruction many must participate. So, at this time, we can hug those who are in Be'eri, those who are in Nahal Oz, those who are in Nir Oz, [those who are] in Ofakim and Sderot, we can hug, but give them the honour to make the decision .

Be'er: Can you predict or assess if it will be possible to rehabilitate the kibbutzim in the Otef Aza region, also communally?

Tsur: Since predictions have a tendency to force itself onto reality, I want to avoid making any predictions. Yesterday I was asked: "you are an ideologue, you were the secretary of the Kibbutz Movement, what do you say?" and I said I always considered myself not the vanguard walking in front, but as the rearguard collecting the wounded. And if the rearguard can't see the vanguard, and if the vanguard does not look for the rearguard, it falls apart. So, our job right now, is to give the support. Today, when I see an orphan of his mother, who returns to run the factory in Be'eri, it's a factory...

Be'er: The printing house?

Tsur: The printing house. All our credit cards are printed there. And now it started working again. Why? Because the state must have credit. The society must have credit. And this man, who returned to run a factory in Be'eri, I can only admire him, embrace him, but not give him, in any way, the feeling that I sent him back. I didn't send him; he will send himself. And to create a new societal bond, that's difficult. It's very difficult, and it requires lots and lots of love. And, moreover, a sense of humour in the face of catastrophe.

So, I don't want to make predictions. I just want to support every decision each of each person there. Also, to support the people of Sderot, of Ofakim, Netivot, Nahal Oz and Be'eri.

Be'er: Are you familiar with the powerful trend of civil volunteering now, which in some sense replaces the state which isn't functioning, through 'Achim Laneshek' (Brothers in Arms) and others. Some even compare this spirit of volunteering to the times of the Palmach. Are you familiar with this trend?

Tsur: Look, we're on a row of events. First came the COVID19 crisis. Let us not forget, it suddenly isolated everyone. Suddenly the situation forced them to reflect. "you are going to die". Then came the protest movement against the judicial reform, which were, to my mind, a direct result of the COVID19 crisis. I mean, people said: "now we can't wait, we have no other option". And then, in fact, the voluntary movements were born, and they were beaten politically. But in those demonstrations

against the judicial reform, you could see that social groups were born. groups that cannot rely on the state because they are protesting against the state. So, they create the alternative tools. And this reality is what preceded the events in the Otef Aza region.

Yesterday I said that for many years now, Israeli songs focused on traditional rhymes and love songs for couples and left out songs about the community. Some songwriters did it well, just as there were those who wrote songs about the community well . And Some did it poorly, just as there were poor communal songs. But the songwriters who intentionally avoided communal songs said: “we can no longer write about this false communalism. This collectivism. we cannot”. So, what are we left with? Singing: “I, I, I, I”, and “I love you”, and adopt verses from the Bible, to create poetry, that will become real poetry.

In this war, there was something distinguishable about it with regards to wars in general, and that is that those condemned to die broadcast wills just before their death. It did not happen before elsewhere. Not in any other war anywhere. Before, there were those who wrote letters, farewell letters.

Be’er: It happened, for example, during the 9/11 disaster or when the people on the hijacked aeroplanes managed to write kind of messages,

Tsur: But this was the first time it happened during a war. And what turned out? It turned out that in their last moments, people love, thirst for communal sense, this communal sense that was hidden in songs until then.

Be’er: And maybe people are looking for some meaning?

Tsur: It suddenly erupted. And this eruption, together with what happened during the protests and what happened during COVID19, is what created, ironically... this whole time, those who were in favour of the judicial reform said: “Israel has a shadow government, which is actually running the country, and we , the reform movement, came to liberate democracy from the shadow government”. This government has now taken command.

Be’er: The 'shadow government'?

Tsur: The shadow one, yes, it is the 'shadow government', which restored what the state could not restore.

Be’er: So maybe the believers of the Deep State theories are on to something?

Tsur: They are, they definitely are. But they are on to something good and something bad. The good thing they are on is that democracy without society cannot exist. A society should constantly feed democracy. Democracy constantly needs to grow from the bottom up, not just from the top down. A democracy that only grows from the top down, disintegrates. I always say, democracy is not a status, it is a challenge. This is in the good sense of the Deep State, and there is the bad sense of the Deep State,, of people who hold fortunes, of people who manipulate politics, of puppets that play in other people's hands. The fight between these two Deep States is not an easy fight.

Be'er: So, I wanted to ask you, from a point of view of a historical perspective, what is your immediate or dominant sentiment regarding the tragedy that has befallen the Kibbutz Movement in recent events. Are you more pessimistic or more optimistic?

Tsur: First, let me quote you Ber Borochov. He said: "an optimist does not need any change. A pessimist does not believe anything can change". So, it is best to be what he called depression...

Be'er: Constructive depression?

Tsur: Brave depression', I think is the phrase...

Be'er: Are you in that state, of 'Brave depression'?

Tsur: Look, first of all, a historian has nothing to do with mood. There are different kinds of historians. There is a blind historian, and there is a deaf historian. At my age, I learned that I had periods of deafness, and periods of blindness, and I suffered all these weaknesses. I came to Friday dinner event in my kibbutz a week after the war started, and I talked about one thing: about hope. Hope is not optimism, neither it is not pessimism, it is completely unrelated. Hope is an unconditional thing. By the way, for years, I have been dealing with a very simple question: "what is the difference between illusion and hope"?

Be'er: What is the difference?

Tsur: They seem to be related, but the difference is that illusion closes, and hope opens. How do you spot an illusion? Right after you state it, you have nothing else to do. Everything is open, or everything is closed. How do you spot hope? It asks tough questions. And we can and should pray that there will be many people who are guided by hope. That is, that they know how to ask questions, difficult questions, and know how to give hope as in the Hippocratic Oath. The Hippocratic Oath is absurd in every respect, after all every patient will die. So how do you swear to cherish life when you know your patient is going to die? It's hope, it's not a prediction. And I suggest forecasters lower the level a little and 'hoppers' to raise the level.

Be'er: But nevertheless, I want to challenge you and ask again from a historian's point of view. Do you think we are in one of the most difficult moments, or perhaps the most difficult moment, in terms of the collapse of the deterrent, or the image of the State of Israel, of its army, of its society? Or do you say: "it has happened before"?

Tsur: First of all, it has happened before. It has happened since Noah and the flood

Be'er: I am talking about the times of the State of Israel.

Tsur: During the times of the State of Israel. The time has come for Israel to lower the 'regional power' level, and this aspect, I can say, may be the beginning of recovery. I think that it will be a crisis for many that will cause some to leave the country, some to fold inward, and some major psychological crises. This is a time of crisis. I assume that the crisis period will produce something. This is my premise as

part of that brave depression, which I am not always capable of, I have to say. I do not experience it every moment, but I understand that this is what I have to adopt for myself and for my students. I can say that as an educator, if they ask me: "are there people like that? I truly believe in the younger generation.

Be'er: So there are people that will do Tikun (amend), you say?

Tsur: Yes. I strongly believe that there is a young generation that can really bring about a healing process here. I hope they will have the strength and that we will not discourage them.

Be'er: I join your brave hope.

Thank you!

This was episode 73 of Parot Kdoshot; "We realised that we are not a regional power, we are going through a healing process" - a conversation with Muki Tsur about the Black Sabbath in the kibbutzim of Otef Aza.

Since the beginning of the events in the South, the "Parot Kdoshot" (Sacred Cows) project has entered war status. In the near future we will be publishing filmed and broadcast interviews and conversations at a higher frequency than usual. These episodes relate to current events but add critical social and cultural knowledge that you will not see in regular broadcasts, featured on the television channels.

The first episode for the 'war status' period was published last week; "There is something to be done with Gaza, but on the one, absolute, condition: that you are strong" - an in-depth conversation with Ini Abadi about Gaza, about Islam and religious fanaticism and about a possible solution to the never-ending conflict. Now you have finished listening to, or watching the second episode. Thousands, also abroad, watched, listened or read the first episode and asked for more of its kind. They also asked for an English translation.

All the extensive work invested in investigations, interviews, photography, recording, editing and more, is done voluntarily. To continue the work, we urgently need volunteers; people who are qualified in Hebrew-English translation and video editing. A financial contribution to help finances the project will also be welcomed.

We need you. Contact details on the Parot Kdoshot website www.parotk.com