

# SOVEREIGNTY

A Political Journal / Issue no. 16 / October 2022

Published by The Sovereignty Movement

## EASTWARD HO!

Construction in Judea and Samaria  
will lower soaring housing prices in Israel's center



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## A Word from the Editors

Once again the citizens of Israel are being sent to the polls. Once again the people of Israel are being given the opportunity to correct the shortcomings of the past.

Indeed, the upheaval and governmental instability are not healthy for the nation and the country, but one can also find a positive aspect in going to the polls. The muse of history is granting the people of Israel the rare opportunity to restore the reins of leadership to nationalist, Zionist and right-wing hands, which represent the position of the absolute majority of Israeli citizens, who desire Jewish identity, maintaining a hold on the Land of Israel, and applying sovereignty in it.

In recent weeks, the Sovereignty Movement has been leading the "Eastward ho!" campaign, calling for massive construction in western Judea and Samaria, a short drive from Greater Tel Aviv. Construction of that kind will constitute a real solution to the housing crisis that is so extensively being discussed in the current election campaign. Increasing the supply with tens of thousands of apartments in Judea and Samaria will significantly reduce housing prices in Greater Tel Aviv itself and will provide a low-cost alternative close to the country's center, as experts who have professionally analyzed the issue have observed. The statements of some of them appear at length in this issue.

Another important challenge addressed in this issue, is the future of the capital, Jerusalem, which is undergoing an ever-deepening demographic crisis. The lack of construction and employment in Jerusalem drives young Jewish couples away from it and has dramatic ramifications for the city's future. The response promoted by the Sovereignty Movement is the "Greater Jerusalem" initiative, which broadens Jerusalem's boundaries, includes additional communities within it, and enables the construction of new neighborhoods on lands that will be annexed to the capital under a single umbrella municipality.

You can read about all these and more in the issue in your hands. All these and more are the Zionist challenges facing the leadership in Israel. All these and more are the demands of the people from their leaders.

We would like to take this opportunity to bid farewell with pain and longing to two special individuals who have departed from us in the last few months. Our friend, the late Sam Salomon, a member of the Sovereignty Forum, who invested his energy, his ideas, and his resources to promote the sovereignty vision, and the late Attorney Elyakim Haetzni, the renaissance man of action, one of the initiators of the settlement revolution in Judea and Samaria. Together with the two of them we marched, consulted and took action from the establishment of the Sovereignty Movement until now. From here on, we will continue and act by the light of their Zionist and national Jewish vision until its realization in the application of Israeli sovereignty over the entire Land of Israel.

Looking ahead to the future generation of Israel's leaders, we extend our best wishes to the Sovereignty Youth who energetically continue with activity in the field and in raising consciousness, being strengthened and strengthening others in gatherings, seminars, lectures, dialogue and hasbara throughout the country, on social networks, in the field and in the Knesset. The success of the Sovereignty Youth is the success of the entire nation.



Editors' note: The positions brought in the Journal do not necessarily represent the positions of the editorial staff. The Sovereignty platform is a platform for presentation of various, sometimes even contradictory positions.

### SOVEREIGNTY / Political Journal

Published by the Sovereignty Movement founded by Women in Green

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## SOVEREIGNTY





Photo Hadas Frosh Flash 90



## Elyakim Haetzni – a burning bush that is not consumed

**Yehudit Katsover and Nadia Matar**

Elyakim Haetzni, one of the giants of spirit of our generation, among the initiators of the return of the people of Israel to the ancestral city of Hebron and to all parts of Judea and Samaria, has departed from us.

While the Israeli government was overwhelmed from the victory in the Six Day War, Elyakim had already begun to kindle the eternal flame of settlement in the historic Land of Israel.

A partner in the ideological movement, the Movement for Greater Israel, together with other giants of the spirit including Natan Alterman, Rahel Yanait Ben Zvi, Uri Zvi Greenberg, and many others, he reset the wheels of history in motion, and revived the values of Zionism.

Elyakim dealt extensively with the legal aspect of the issue of the Land of Israel, with the historical and moral justification for building in Judea and Samaria and living there.

As a lawyer, he was insistent upon knowing all the sections and sub-sections in depth, all the fine print that was relegated to the margins of the documents of the various agreements. As a result, he was able to accurately analyze the situation and caution of the dangers of evacuations, withdrawals and concessions.

We consulted him extensively regarding the challenge of sovereignty. Elyakim was very opposed to granting the Arabs of Judea and Samaria citizenship. The gist of his worldview on the issue of sovereignty called for applying sovereignty over the entire territory and granting autonomy to the Arabs to administer their civilian lives, excluding foreign relations and defense, under full Israeli sovereignty.

Elyakim lectured countless times in the framework of various sovereignty movement activities. Regardless of his age and weather conditions, in the hot summer and the freezing Jerusalem winter, he took his place as a leader in protest vigils before the Prime Minister's residence, ranging from the Kissinger plans in the seventies to the dangerous Trump plan.

With his knowledge and careful attention to every verbal pitfall and possessing the understanding of the long-term ramifications of each and every clause, it was Elyakim who opened the eyes of all of us to the danger inherent in Trump's Deal of the Century. In his unique way, he knew how to succinctly characterize the ramifications of the Trump plan as "poison in a candy wrapper". He warned: "It is written openly in the Deal of the Century document with hundreds of clauses – a Palestinian state in exchange for sovereignty."

Two weeks before he passed away we visited him in the hospital. Despite his illness and weakness, there was only one topic that concerned him: Settlement and more settlement in the land of Israel. Elyakim's burning flame, will not be extinguished. All his sons and grandchildren continue in his path, are disciples of the Land of Israel and imbued with love for it. In all their actions, they serve as proof of the greatness and purity of his intentions and actions. Elyakim, of blessed memory, a man of vision and action, will be greatly missed. In the building of the Land of Israel we will be comforted.

The writers are the co-chairs of the Sovereignty Movement

**Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho!**

## Housing Crisis? They are Building in Judea and Samaria

The availability of state lands in Judea and Samaria is the tip of the iceberg of potential of building and employment for the Center. Former Minister of Economy **Eli Cohen**, in an interview.



Photo Ofir Aybe  
MK Eli Cohen

"Part of the solution to the real estate crisis lies in accelerated building for housing in the area of Judea and Samaria", states the former economic minister, Member of Knesset Eli Cohen. These days, most of the land in Judea and Samaria is state land, not privately owned land, so the state can promote the development of infrastructure there for the housing market".

Member of Knesset Cohen views the advantages of building in Judea and Samaria as obvious. The proximity to the center of the country and centers of employment, the high level of educational and community services that exist in the towns of Judea and Samaria, the next generation's high demand, all add up to the hope of reduced cost of housing with the massive increase in building east of Gush Dan.

"The solution to the housing crisis is to increase supply. If the land is state land, unlike in the area of the Center, the state can grow the markets", he says, noting with great satisfaction the trend of high-rise construction in many towns, a phenomenon that he views as an important tool for the economy, for settlement and for Zionism, as he defines it. To him, the goal of a million Jews in Judea and Samaria within a decade is indeed, a feasible challenge.

Cohen, who, during his term as economic minister, viewed Judea and Samaria as fertile ground for local development of thriving industrial areas, notes the high demand for the expansion of business in the area, which receives the benefits of being a

high-priority area for allocation of land and subsidizing the cost of development. This trend, he says, should be expanded and leveraged further. Here too, the proximity to Gush Dan along with low cost, is attractive to large companies and business owners who explore their considerations according to the economic index and come to the conclusion that indeed, Judea and Samaria are the best solution for them. "This is why the industrial area of Mishor Adumim is now in very high demand for industry and commerce, and how the home design complex became an impressive business success and why the amusement complex draws many people from all parts of the country".

Cohen continues, noting the development of Hi-tech complexes in Sha'ar Benyamin, Gush Etzion and other places as a model for the future. "Many industrial plants have moved their headquarters from the Center eastward, to the direction of Judea and Samaria. One of the phenomena that I have seen in the industrial areas of Kfar Saba and Petah Tikva is that buildings are becoming office buildings, while industry itself has moved to the area of Ariel, Alfei Menashe and other industrial parks. Besides factories moving, many business owners see Judea and Samaria's potential for expansion and increased efficiency for their businesses".

Being well aware of the gap between the present reality and the great potential of Judea and Samaria, Member of Knesset Cohen notes that indeed, under Likud's rule, building was accelerated, which brought about a half million Jews to Judea and Samaria, but "we really must expand the settlement. There is a reason that I keep saying that between the sea and the Jordan River there is room for only one state and one flag. The industrial and economic development of these area is an integral part of sovereignty".

Most of the land in Judea and Samaria is state land, not privately owned land, so the state can promote the development of infrastructure there for the housing market

Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho!

# Developing the Jewish Communities – Ideology, Economy and Curbing the Palestinian Authority

What did MK **Orit Struk** caution Ministers Sa'ar and Elkin about? What ultimately happened? How have inspectors hired to prevent the Palestinian Authority's takeover of Area C been redirected against Jewish settlement activity?

Photo Meir Elipur



Mk Orit Struk

From an economic perspective, from the perspective of housing solutions, from the perspective of normalcy, everyone understands that the solution to the housing crisis is found in Judea and Samaria

The chairperson of the Religious Zionist Knesset faction, Knesset member Orit Struk, has been promoting pro-sovereignty steps in the Israeli Knesset for years, both as a Knesset member and faction leader and as the director of the Eretz Yisrael lobby. However, this last government presented her with tasks that are virtually impossible. In an interview with "Sovereignty," she tells of the harsh actions taken by Defense Minister Benny Gantz, against the Jewish communities and in support of the Palestinian Authority's systematic erosion of Israel's sovereignty in Judea and Samaria. But before that, we ask her to address the housing potential latent in Judea and Samaria – the "Moving Eastward" initiative.

"There is no doubt that from an economic perspective, from the perspective of housing solutions, from the perspective of normalcy, everyone understands that the solution to the housing crisis is found in Judea and Samaria. These are areas on the periphery of the country's center and Jerusalem. Already today we see many people who work or study in the center who are searching for housing solutions in Judea and Samaria that are adjacent to their workplaces," says Struk. She asserts, "It is clear that this is the policy that a responsible government should pursue, for reasons of addressing the lack of affordable housing and the rise in

the cost of living, even before ideological reasons."

Why then, even in right-wing governments, was a significant construction campaign not promoted in Judea and Samaria? The reason, says Knesset member Struk, lies in "fears whose origins are in the political sphere – concerns about what the Americans will say and how it will be received in the world. When we want to build a few dozen isolated units, we are subject to condemnations from one end of the world to the other. This has instilled in generations of Israeli governments fear of taking the most logical and most necessary step."

**"A comprehensive change in the settlement philosophy is required."**

In the hope that her party will be a significant factor in the next coalition, Struk speaks of a wide-ranging settlement plan that the party is preparing for implementation. "We do not intend to tolerate a situation where it is only the Palestinian Authority that is developing and occupying more and more territory, while we withdraw into our communities. Our aspiration is to effect a total change of attitude towards the issue of settlement. The government must develop the communities in Judea and Samaria, not only to provide a solution for the natural growth of the residents, but for two additional important reasons: for the purpose of meeting the housing needs of all Israeli citizens and also to gain control of the territory."

Regarding the land's potential for significant construction, she says that it is outrageous that there are so many state lands that remain frozen without plans for construction. "These are lands that have already been declared state lands. Moreover, there are many areas that have not been so declared, because the entire Civil Administration system, which is supposed to supervise

the process of determining the status of the land, works at a very slow pace, with a terrible shortage of personnel, and in addition, it is challenged at each and every stage of the process by petitions submitted by left-wing and Palestinian organizations. A change is required in the approach to regulating the status of the land."

Struk relates that the process of mapping the area and determining the status of the lands began during the British period, continued during the Jordanian period, but since the Six Day War has been frozen by Israel. The person who sought to resume the review of the lands in order to determine their status was none other than Avigdor Lieberman during his tenure as Defense Minister. Gideon Saar, who was then chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, demanded that the Ministry of Justice promote the move. However, it was precisely during his tenure as Justice Minister that he chose to abandon the project, which would have increased the amount of land available for extensive Israeli construction.

However, beyond these lands that are awaiting official determination of their status, "there are many lands that

The entire Civil Administration system, which is supposed to supervise the process of determining the status of the land, works at a very slow pace, with a terrible shortage of personnel, and in addition, it is challenged at each and every stage of the process by petitions submitted by left-wing and Palestinian organizations

have been classified as state lands. In addition, there are many plots of land with Jewish ownership, some purchased before the War of Independence and some purchased recently, some of which are located in areas that correspond to the "Moving Eastward" program. I am familiar with very beautiful plots of land in the vicinity of Jerusalem. It would have been possible to build and develop large neighborhoods there, and it is a shame we did not do so."

Struk notes that massive construction like the one under discussion now requires investment in infrastructure and roads that already today are insufficient and are not adapted to the scale of the population in Judea and Samaria. "There is a huge gap between the development of roads and their condition in Judea and Samaria and what is happening in the rest of the country. This must be upgraded so that the area can absorb a steadily growing population. The same is true regarding the electricity and water infrastructure. But the considerable investment will yield profits many times greater in the future."

However, as stated, MK Struk, is no less concerned by the issue of "do good" than by the issue of "turn away from evil." She details with great trepidation: "While the State of Israel is ambivalent regarding this territory and is not really developing it, the Palestinian Authority is developing it in an accelerated manner with huge investments and an organized program with ever-growing international support. They do this in a variety of ways, ranging from regulation of the land to landscaping and development of construction and infrastructures. The Palestinian Authority is working on this with massive investment and is proclaiming to us and the world that the objective of this entire initiative is to supplant the Jewish settlement, to suffocate and surround it, and create a continuum of Palestinian settlements.

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Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho!

# Everyone will eventually get it – There's no other solution to the housing shortage

In the eyes of economist **Eran Bar Tal**, it is not a matter of right or left. If we do not build tens of thousands of housing units east of the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area in Judea and Samaria, the housing density will overtake us – and the politicians will soon realize this too.

Photo Rachel Ankri



Eran Bar Tal, economic commentator, journalist and lecturer

The settlement bloc available within Area C is larger than the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area. It is an area that is in consensus similar to the consensus with regard to the city of Ariel, the probable capital of this settlement entity, which will become the eastern shadow of the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area

Leading economist Eran Bar Tal has been closely involved in promoting sovereignty since the early days of the Sovereignty Movement. Hardly a stage or forum exists on which he has not repeatedly outlined and detailed the economic advantages of applying sovereignty in Judea and Samaria. The years go by but Bar Tal refuses to give up. When we turned to him once again, we feared that he might already be sick and tired of pursuing the subject, but he responded saying, "I wish I could get sick of it. That will happen only after Judea and Samaria has been settled with Jews."

"Within forty years, Israel's population is expected to double and we will have a population of about twenty million people living here. That is the estimate of the Central Bureau of Statistics, and some think it might happen even earlier should the various trends in the world continue and Aliya to Israel increase," says Bar Tal, noting, "The rate of population increase in Israel is the highest in the West and among the highest in the entire world, and that is why we cannot ignore the increasingly serious problem of overcrowding.

In the center of the country the per-square meter density is among the highest in the world."

The immediate result of the increasing density is soaring housing prices. "The population is growing at a rate higher than the construction rate. About 57,000 couples marry each year, while there are only about 50,000 annual building starts, and that is without taking into account immigration to Israel, which also requires housing. The meaning is that over tens of years, the disparity between supply and demand increases each year," says Bar Tal, adding, "The main demand is in the center of the country and when we try to come up with solutions, no reasonable solution exists other than to move eastward."

"The settlement bloc available within Area C is larger than the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area. It is an area that is in consensus similar to the consensus with regard to the city of Ariel, the probable capital of this settlement entity, which will become the eastern shadow of the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area." Bar Tal adds that about 35,000 dunams of state land are already ready for construction in Area C, an area that "even the supporters of Oslo should view as an area that belongs to us."

He goes on to explain, "The territories of Area C area are a huge territory that constitutes 60% of Judea and Samaria and the extent of Arab settlement in it is minimal. It is clear that no matter what the solution, this area has to start being settled," says Bar Tal as he tries to talk in practicalities before talking ideology. "It's beyond ideology. There's simply no other solution. Most jobs are in the center of the country and so are the infrastructures. Since the establishment of the state, the area from Hadera to Gedera has always been the real star. Everyone talks about the Negev, but the truth is that nothing is happening in that direction. Before we call upon people to settle the Negev

and Galilee, which is a very important goal, we cannot ignore the converging demand from Hadera to Gedera.

**Like it or not, it's going to happen: Construction will move eastward**

"Sovereignty," says Bar Tal, "will be favorable for the Arabs of Judea and Samaria just as it will be for the residents of Israel. The reality is that the standard of living of those that reside in proximity to the Jewish communities is significantly higher. There is already a plan to double the existing industrial zones, which can add hundreds of thousands of jobs, not in some messianic dream, but immediately. The infrastructures exist and the industrial zones can be doubled, and that comes in addition to feasible operational plans to build another 5-6 industrial zones. If these zones are created and the existing ones are expanded, half a million jobs can be added very quickly, which provides a solution to the increase in population. Since the establishment of the state there has not been a better plan to address the problem of overcrowding and rising prices."

Bar Tal is convinced that if Israel's leaders continue to ignore the solution that is right under their noses, there will ultimately be no alternative and the eastward move will happen despite them. In his estimation, there are already quite a few Knesset members who are starting to internalize this, and they will soon start making their views known on the subject in this spirit. He is convinced that anyone with eyes in their head should favor full Israeli sovereignty over all of Judea and Samaria, but even for those who are in no hurry to implement the full vision of sovereignty and consider it too far-reaching at this time, massive construction in this part of Judea and Samaria is inevitable.

"By refusing to build in Judea and Samaria, they are turning it into "occupied" territory, making it seemingly untouchable. These are

lands that are in great demand, so it is a crime to leave them "occupied" instead of using them to solve problems of both Jews and Arabs. Let's start by doing something that's good for everyone. It will be exactly the opposite of Apartheid. It will provide economic solutions for Jews and Arabs alike."

**Bearing in mind why we have gathered here**

"We can argue about how we will live together, but not about the fact that we will have to live together. In this debate we can discuss whether we want to be a Jewish state or not, and this is the actual debate we are trying to avoid. The Declaration of Independence talks about a national home for the Jewish people. That's what we fought for and why people came to live in Israel, and now they want to change the whole game? There are those that are trying to present it the other way around, as if a Jewish state means changing the rules of the game, but that's not true. We are first of all a Jewish state in the land of Israel, and that's why we have gathered here. That is what the founders of the renewed settlement in the land of Israel signed on for," he says, reminding us of Zionist history.

"We have built a national home here for the Jewish people and we need to be a magnet for Jews everywhere. How can we be a magnet when a person can't buy a home in the center of the country with the proceeds of the sale of their home in England, France or the United States? We are driving the Jewish people away from here with what we are doing," says Bar Tal, emphasizing that he is not referring to a governmental decision to build 500 or 600 housing units, but rather the need for a major decision to build tens of thousands of housing units and even more. "The need for a solution will lead to those state lands that are waiting for us."



Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho!

# Judea and Samaria – The future of Israel’s housing

With his own interpretation of the term “Green Line” and a willingness to make unusual concessions to the Arabs, **Eran Rolls**, chairman of the Israel Building Center, presents a clear position on construction in Judea and Samaria, which he considers the optimal and inevitable solution to the housing crisis in Israel.

What about politics? Politics should not get in the way of business and economics.

Photo David Sakori



Eran Rolls, chairman of the Israel Building Center



Eran Rolls with Gush Etsion mayor and Yesha head Shlomo Neeman

Eran Rolls, the chairman of the Israel Building Center, was recently a guest in Gush Etsion, where he spoke with Shlomo Ne’eman, mayor of the Gush Etsion regional council and head of Yesha Council, and Yehudit Katsover and Nadia Matar, the founding leaders of the Sovereignty Movement, about how massive construction in Judea and Samaria can provide a solution to the housing crisis in the whole country.

“It was a momentous encounter,” Rolls tells Sovereignty, “It was a great privilege to meet two icons such as Yehudit Katsover and Nadia Matar.” He himself grew up ideologically in the Kiryat Haim chapter of Hashomer Hatza’ir, but feels connected heart and soul to the values of settling and building Israel. “I remain committed to the social values upon which I was raised, but in matters of settlement, I am at the extreme end of the commitment to settling the land of Israel, which was a supreme value in Hashomer Hatza’ir.”

Rolls is aware of the imaginary fence that the alumni of his youth movement have erected along the Green Line, as if to say that the values of settlement apply up to the fence but not beyond. He refuses to accept this. “They draw a separation at the Green Line. I choose to continue this value going forward. When people say that I have to concede to the Arabs,

I am willing to concede in the debate about who invented the Arab salad or falafel, but not about the Land of Israel. For me, the Green Line is no more than a seam in a green Maccabi Haifa soccer shirt, my home team.” And, he adds, he is not alone. “I know many people who were raised on the settlement values of Hashomer Hatza’ir, and consider settling all parts of the country a goal and a challenge.”

### They need to understand this in Tel Aviv too: The future is in Judea and Samaria

As one of the leaders of the “transparent kipot” revolution that connects Judaism and secularism, Rolls emphasizes his pride at the link between the two. “We don’t apologize for that link. I live in Ramot Hashavim, where the percentage of Meretz voters is very high. Everyone there knows where I stand and I don’t apologize for it and am not ashamed.” During the tour, Rolls spoke with Dudu Saada, the CEO of the BeSheva group, Gush Etsion Mayor and Yesha Council head Shlomo Ne’eman and the leaders of the Sovereignty Movement at length about the potential in terms of land hiding just a few minutes’ drive away from the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area. As he sees it, there are considerable and obvious advantages to building in Judea

and Samaria. “There is no question about it. The more pressure we remove from the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area and the more alternatives we create, the more the prices will drop. Judea and Samaria are the future,” he says. He underscores, however, that in Judea and Samaria, people will have to “give up on the idea of a single-family home with a yard and transition to high-rises. Processes of evacuation-reconstruction have to be carried out, replacing single-family homes with high-rises. At the same time, we have to do what we can to change public opinion so that in Tel Aviv too they will understand the many advantages of building in Judea and Samaria.”

Eran Roll’s vision glosses over the political hurdles. He repeatedly rejects any attempt on our part to ask him if political resistance won’t put a spoke in the wheels of the idea he is seeking to promote. “I tell them ‘Do business,’ and they accept it. It won’t happen overnight, but in stages. Some companies may hesitate and they will be left behind at the end of the line, but eventually, they’ll all join in because of the economic advantages. Now we have to find the first Israeli construction companies who will decide to build in Judea and Samaria. Ultimately, investors who support Meretz will also come because when you talk business, no one cares about politics.”

“If you can invest say 1.1 million in an

apartment that a short distance away would be worth three million shekels and get a return, there’s no reason they wouldn’t want to do it. There might be 10-15 percent of the country that would refuse for political reasons, but all the rest will certainly listen, understand and accept it,” he says. As the CEO of the Building Center in Israel, he considers himself part of the revolution: “My contribution as the head of an objective body is to tell the public, the companies and investors that the time has come to invest in Judea and Samaria. We are currently short 150,000 apartments and if I say this and others say this, the opposition will disappear. Like one drop of water after another can wear down a stone, we too will continually repeat this this idea like drops of water and break down the resistance.”

The more pressure we remove from the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area and the more alternatives we create, the more the prices will drop. Judea and Samaria are the future



Eran Rolls with Yehudit Katsover and Nadia Matar in Oz veGaon



Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho!

# The Quiet Economic Revolution

Israeli and foreign companies are beginning to discover the tremendous potential in Judea and Samaria. They put politics aside and talk business.



Aharoni Neubauer, CEO of the Gush Etzion Development Company

Today company owners approach me at their own initiative to ask where they can find land and where they can do business. This is our quiet revolution

They did not know who he was. Today they are searching for him.

”Once a month there is a meeting with the senior economic figures and owners of large companies who discuss how to help the Israeli economy. Right after I assumed my position, approximately four years ago, I attended this meeting. In the round of introductions when everyone related who they were and what they do in their huge company, it was my turn. I said that I was the CEO of the Gush Etzion Development

Aharoni Neubauer, CEO of the Gush Etzion Development Company for the past four and a half years, has set as his goal what he defines as the economic normalization of Judea and Samaria in general and of Gush Etzion in particular.

“We have reached the glass ceiling of those who come to settle in Judea and Samaria for ideological reasons, and now the objective is to bring companies and citizens to Judea and Samaria for economic reasons. This includes leftists who understand that the economic solution can be found in Judea and Samaria. Judea and Samaria is the solution,” says Neubauer, emphasizing the issue of real estate, which is in such short supply in the country’s center, but exists in abundance in Judea and Samaria. “It is clear that today there is a difficult problem of supply versus demand. Once the land is made available, the prices will drop outside Judea and Samaria as well.”

Not only citizens seeking affordable housing are expressing interest in lands in Judea and Samaria, but also large companies and businessmen, some of them from abroad. The interest has already passed the nascent stage and is beginning to show signs on the ground. “There is purely commercial interest here,” he says. “Looking eastward is the quiet economic revolution that we are leading.”

You can see pegs with small signs indicating that those behind the planting are the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture along with the United States, Denmark or some other country. They send money for plowing and pay by the dunam, so for them plowing and taking over land is an entrepreneurial undertaking in every sense

Company. They looked at me without understanding what that is. Four years have passed and today company owners approach me at their own initiative to ask where they can find land and where they can do business. This is our quiet revolution.”

Industry entrepreneurs understand very well the advantages of the area being so close to the densely populated Greater Tel Aviv. “We bring them on tours of the area. Very quickly they realize that they can make a lot of money here and they ask where

there are lands for investments. The industrial zones that are established in Judea and Samaria also ease pressure,

There is no doubt that the economy is closely intertwined with ideology here. The biggest factor here is the ideology and the understanding that this is ours

traffic jams, and air pollution from the center of the country. Moreover, they provide respectable employment and respectable wages to our Palestinian neighbors. Our development company has about 600 employees, many of whom are Palestinians who earn three times as much as their neighbors in the village. The employment of hundreds of such workers is accompanied by a circle of service providers, e.g., transportation, catering, and more, who also make a good living. In that way, thousands of people make a living in every circle of that kind.”

Interest, he says, is not limited to economic entrepreneurs from Israel. European companies are beginning to express interest in what Judea and Samaria has to offer. Neubauer mentions one of them, from a country that is not a supporter of Israel, that started doing business in Gush Etzion despite the hostile atmosphere surrounding it. In his eyes, business done by a company of that kind is a leading indicator of the success story on which he has been working. Neubauer sees added value in business, industry and agriculture taking hold in the territory of Judea and Samaria. “Israel does not have an

orderly plan in the face of the chaos that the Palestinians are wreaking on land with European and American funding that is channelled in the billions for the purpose of a Palestinian agricultural takeover. You can walk through the area and see their planned, orchestrated operations designed to take control. You can see pegs with small signs indicating that those behind the planting are the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture along with the United States, Denmark or some other country. They send money for plowing and pay by the dunam, so for them plowing and taking over land is an entrepreneurial undertaking in every sense. Faced with this trend, we are at a loss. The few land inspectors cannot do much against so great a stream of people. That is why it is normalization of Judea and Samaria that will lead to overcoming this threat.”

There is no doubt that the economy is closely intertwined with ideology here. “Beyond the economic aspect, the biggest factor here is the ideology and the understanding that this is ours, that this is a normal and ordinary place. This is not the “West Bank” and not “the territories”. This is the Land of Israel and the State of Israel, and the business presence will also make it clear that Judea and Samaria belongs to us.”

This is not the "West Bank" and not "the territories". This is the Land of Israel and the State of Israel, and the business presence will also make it clear that Judea and Samaria belongs to us

Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho! Eastward ho!

# When economics and ideology intersect

Economist **Erez Zadok's** comprehensive sovereignty plan combines distinct economic advantages with an international political course of action that has already been placed on the desks of elected officials in Washington.

Economist Erez Zadok has a clear and unwavering ideological position regarding Israel's sovereignty over Judea and Samaria: "We do not have the right to give up the land we received from the Almighty. Generations prayed for it and we cannot concede it on behalf of future generations." In his view, however, this should be added to the economic dimension, which he says can unite people from both the right and the left. When he presents the economic advantages of sovereignty in Judea and Samaria, his ideas are part of a well-founded and coherent philosophy that takes into account all the various stages and challenges of the vision. "The left", he says, "presents a pessimistic and mistaken approach whereby after the application of sovereignty we will be required to naturalize the Arabs of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and grant them the rights accorded to all Israeli citizens, including social security and a wide range of social services. In addition, they calculate, or rather miscalculate, the number of Arabs in Judea and Samaria according to the figures provided by the Palestinian Authority's Central Bureau of Statistics which, as we know, includes people that have been dead for a long time, counts the residents of East Jerusalem twice, and counts people who have emigrated and have no intention of returning, along with other data that distort the truth. For some reason Israel's Civil Administration and some of political leaders prefer to use their figures". As part of the left's campaign of intimidation against the implementation of sovereignty, says Zadok, "They double the cost of services provided to citizens and choose to ignore the state's revenues from the land in Judea and Samaria, even though when we will impose sovereignty on Judea and Samaria, it will have dramatic implications in terms of freeing up the land for construction, which will bring a great deal of money into the state coffers."

## Sovereignty does not require the granting of Israeli citizenship

He is currently busy promoting his investment house, Aviv Asset

Management, which combines economics with the values of fairness and Jewish law, but in recent years he has also addressed the issue of sovereignty in Judea and Samaria and prepared a detailed plan that describes step by step what is required on the way to sovereignty. "Sovereignty does not mean giving the Arabs of Judea and Samaria Israeli identity cards," he says. "In the political program I have written and presented to senior members of Congress, we need to dismantle the Palestinian Authority and the mechanisms that incite and pay terrorists. With the exception of security coordination, these entities do nothing beneficial. At the same time, we must create jobs for the Arabs of Judea and Samaria in factories throughout the territory as well as in international companies that will be recruited for this task."

"After these entities have been dismantled, we will make every effort to make the Arab population in Judea and Samaria as normative as possible. Although the population there will not be normative in security terms as we define them, they can be useful citizens, productive workers, people who pay taxes and by means of international pressure and economic programs in cooperation with the US, Europe and the Gulf countries, a situation can be created in which the Gaza Strip Arabs receive Egyptian citizenship and the Arabs of Judea and Samaria receive Jordanian citizenship. In other words, they will be able to remain in Judea and Samaria as non-citizen residents, provided they do not engage in terrorist activities. Their tax money will be divided between the country of which they are citizens and the country where they are residents, as is the practice in international tax treaties when citizens of a one country are residents of another. This plan is much more realistic than those currently under discussion. It won't happen tomorrow morning, but if we move ahead gradually over a decade, it can work."

An immediate consequence of the application of sovereignty to Judea and Samaria will of course be the freeing up of large tracts of land for massive

construction right in the center of the country. "Western Samaria is not in the periphery. It is the center of the country and contains enormous amounts of land. If we apply sovereignty, we will easily solve the housing crisis. High-rises are being built in many communities in Judea and Samaria too. We're talking about tremendous land resources that are worth a huge amount to the state." Zadok notes that Naftali Bennett's Yemina party's political plan included giving citizenship to the residents of Area C, estimated at 80,000-100,000 Arabs. His plan, on the other hand, does not involve granting citizenship to anyone. "We need to turn them into citizens of the countries to which they have a far stronger connection." Can Egypt and Jordan be expected to agree to granting the status of citizenship to the Arabs of Judea and Samaria? "At the moment, of course not," responds Zadok, "but if the developed countries pledge to give them significant grants, significant economic programs and in addition, if part of the revenue from labor taxes and profits from investments go into their coffers, it could work, especially if international pressure is also applied."

## There will be no Palestinian state, first of all because this is our land

"If the world realizes that we are going to apply sovereignty in Judea and Samaria and that this is the only plan on the table, the world will go along." But if we continue talking about two states and that we're unjust occupiers, the world won't support us. When Netanyahu told Obama that there would not be a Palestinian state because we cannot defend Israel at the 1967 lines, he should have added a few more words before talking about the security arguments. He should have told Obama that there will not be a Palestinian state because the land of Israel is ours. Period. Only after that should the security and other arguments be made. The 1947 vote in the UN was not about the establishment of a multi-national state, but rather about a national home for the Jewish people," he notes. "We need to behave and conduct

ourselves as the rightful owners of this land, and if we send a message of strength and determination and offer solutions, the world will eventually join us."

As noted, Erez Zadok presented his plan in Washington on two different trips, and he says that he got the feeling that the plan is workable, even if it requires a great deal of preliminary work. "It will involve significant economic challenges, such as building additional roads, developing infrastructure, building train infrastructures, factories and more. I spoke with dozens of Congress members. Every one of them has an interest in benefiting the economy of their state, and if we define the establishment of factories in Judea and Samaria as an American interest and as a function of corporate responsibility, Congress members will be able to work with companies from their states that want to export to Asia, Africa and Europe. Israel can serve as a point of departure from which it is easier to export to these three continents, beyond the fact that this contributes to normalization in the Middle East. This is a region that they need and that needs them. This is an issue on which business, general and political interests intersect, and we can establish an excellent economy here that will also allow those who want to leave to do so, which is something many of them want, but in the current economic conditions they find impossible."

When we will impose sovereignty on Judea and Samaria, it will have dramatic implications in terms of freeing up the land for construction, which will bring a great deal of money into the state coffers

Photo Nachshon Philipson



Erez Zadok, Economist



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# Averting an Arab majority in Israel's capital

The demographic balance in Jerusalem is changing. Jerusalem scholar **Nadav Shragai** presents disturbing data and a possible vision to resolve the problem

Photo Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs



Nadav Shragai, Researcher and Journalist

Writer and journalist Nadav Shragai has focused on the future of Jerusalem for over forty years. He does this in his role as a scholar at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, and as a journalist and activist for the unity of Jerusalem and to strengthen Israel's sovereignty and the Jewish presence in its capital. He has written numerous books and studies about the city's past and future. He talked to us about some of the challenges facing the State of Israel and Jerusalem. In his view, the demographic battle over the future of the city is far from settled. "Although Israel has managed to maintain a Jewish majority within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, this majority has diminished since the Six Day War from 74% to only about 60%." "The good news is that the demographic forecast of the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan predicts a decline of only 1% in the Jewish majority by 2040 (59%) – and this is considered a halt in the Jewish majority's decline."

This optimistic forecast is based on a relatively new trend. "There has been a dramatic change in the fertility rate of Jewish women, which since 2012 has exceeded that of Arab women. The latest figures show that in 2020, the fertility rate of Jewish women in Jerusalem, 4.3%, was higher than that of Arab women in the capital, 3%. The impressive fertility rate among Jewish women in Jerusalem is mainly due to the high fertility rate among the Haredi and other Jewish religious populations in the city.

But there is also "bad news", as Shragai puts it. "The increase in fertility among Jews should bring us in 2040 not only to curbing the decrease, but to a reversal, that is, to a process whereby the Jewish majority increases. But this will probably not happen mainly because of one reason: a consistent negative balance in migration, because more Jews leave Jerusalem every year than come to live in it."

More than half a million Jewish residents have left Jerusalem

"Anyone who reviews the data published over the past 30 years and more (since 1991) in the statistical yearbooks

published by the Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research and the Jerusalem Municipality will find that over the past three decades, 530,000 people have left Jerusalem, almost all of them Jewish, but only 323,000 have moved to the capital. This amazing figure of over half a million Jews leaving the city within three decades explains everything," he says. "If only half of those who left had remained in Jerusalem, the demographic balance in favor of the Jews would be far higher and their proportion of the city's population would be approximately 70%, that is, ten percent more than it is today."

Surveys show that there are two reasons why Jews are leaving the capital – housing and employment. "About 2,500 apartments per year have been built in Jerusalem over the past few years, at a time when the demand has doubled and more," says Shragai. He notes that while fertility is decreasing on the Arab side, "There is unsupervised entry of Arabs from the Judea and Samaria into Jerusalem's municipal boundaries. This happens mainly in the northern Arab neighborhoods that are beyond the security fence, in the areas of the Shoafat refugee camp and the village of Aqab. This is Jerusalem's soft underbelly, demographically and in many other respects."

When he says "soft underbelly," Shragai really means Jerusalem's bellyache. "Approximately one – third of the Arab population of East Jerusalem lives in the city's north beyond the fence, in places that have been neglected for many years by the Israeli authorities in every imaginable area: poverty, drugs, crime, illegal weapons, terrorism, construction violations, physical infrastructures and services, welfare and community and more. About 140,000 people live in this "wild east." Most of the people living there, like the other residents of East Jerusalem, have Jerusalem resident documents, but in practical terms, these areas ceased to function as part of Jerusalem's urban fabric many years ago. In many respects, there is a large governmental vacuum in these areas

and a great deal of influence is wielded by the Palestinian Authority, Hamas and other organizations."

"Due to the inexpensive and available housing in these huge neighborhoods, further to the lack of a border or barrier between them and the areas of Judea and Samaria, many Palestinians from Judea and Samaria who marry residents of Jerusalem are constantly moving into Jerusalem's municipal boundaries. Many of the families there are "mixed" with one family member from Jerusalem and the other from Judea and Samaria. An Arab majority in the capital of the Jewish people – Unthinkable

The demographic crisis in Israel's capital can have several possible consequences and Shragai mentions the conceptual – values – driven one first and foremost. "The Jewish people returned to Zion, established a state in it and made Jerusalem its capital. From a Zionist and Jewish point of view, the thought that after 2,000 years of exile, an Arab majority could be created in the capital of the sovereign state of Israel is unthinkable." In his view, it is important to respect the presence of the Arabs of Jerusalem and grant them full civil and municipal rights like all other residents of Israel's capital, but this must be accompanied by "zero tolerance for any manifestations of terrorism, violence or incitement, which some East Jerusalemites have become part of in recent years".

Shragai is also troubled by the possibility that the day will come when East Jerusalem's Arabs, perhaps inspired by Raam party leader Mansour Abbas, will choose to end their boycott of the municipal elections, present their own city council list and candidate for mayor and come out en masse to vote for him. He says he has already heard talk about this.

"The resident status they hold gives them the right to vote and be elected to the capital's municipal council, a right that most of them have chosen not to exercise. East Jerusalem Arabs carry considerable weight in the municipal ballot, over a third of the seats on the city council, that is, about 12 of the 31

seats. Theoretically, they could also run a candidate for mayor. The candidate must also be a citizen, not just a resident. They can look for a candidate of this kind, someone who has received Israeli citizenship, and there are several tens of thousands of such people out of the approximately 400,000 residents of East Jerusalem, and run him as a candidate for mayor."

Is this preventable? Shragai says that there are steps that can be taken to increase the Jewish majority in Jerusalem and thereby diminish the relative strength of the city's Arabs. "I am talking, for example, about the possibility of establishing an umbrella municipality for the capital and de facto annexing Jewish communities from the Jerusalem metropolitan area to Jerusalem, placing them inside the capital's municipal boundaries. If you take Beitar Illit, Maale Adumim, Givat Ze'ev, Efrat and the communities of the Gush Etzion Regional Council and turn them into daughter municipalities of the Jerusalem Municipality, you'll get an additional 150,000 Jews more or less, many of whom will be able to participate in the elections for the umbrella Municipality, thereby reducing the proportion of potential Arab voters, residents of the capital, in the total number of voters.

Shragai explains that the plan he

**continued on page 15**

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# The Price of Israeli Apathy – The Jerusalem Metropolis Plan of the Palestinian Authority

A detailed document reveals the PA’s plan to establish a Jerusalem metropolis spreading from Hevron to Ramallah. The initiative is from the UN, the funding is from Europe, the apathy is Israeli.



Lt. Col. (res.) Baruch Yedid, commentator for Arab Affairs on Channel 14 and researcher

While official Israel prefers to close an eye to the not insignificant challenges facing the capital city of Jerusalem, from demographics

The heart of the Arab plan is the goal to form a bloc from north to south, in such a way that it will be impossible for Jewish Jerusalem to grow eastward. The maps and the contents of the plan show a clear trend to block Jewish building in Jerusalem toward the east

years and according to the Arab vision, is to be completed in 2030. Its funding, at 952 million dollars, comes from countries of the European Union, each of which took responsibility for promoting part of it. Currently, he says, it is not clear whether this European money has begun flowing into PA coffers, but the plan is certainly being promoted in the various corridors of office.

A number of principles are presented in the preface to the plan. In the chapter of the vision, it is written that Jerusalem will become the largest urban area in the PA. In the future, this area will extend from Ramallah to Hevron and at its center - the Old City of Jerusalem. In the document that Yedid obtained, there are hundreds of tables dividing the large initiative into individual detailed projects in various spheres and various locations. From water wells, through roads, to schools, etc., etc., there are detailed initiatives of culture, tourism, transportation, education and administration and for every one of the projects there is a designated responsible financier and the pace at which it will progress.

**The Arab Goal – to Stop Jerusalem’s Expansion Eastward**

“At the beginning of 2022, the PA government held a special meeting in which the decision was taken to make Jerusalem the highest priority among various projects and to this end, several tens of millions of shekels were allocated for investment in several different fields”, says Yedid about what seems to fit well with a European plan. Yedid emphasizes that “the heart of the Arab plan is the goal to form a bloc from north to south, in such a way that it will be impossible for Jewish Jerusalem to grow eastward. The maps and the contents of the plan show a clear trend to block Jewish building in

Jerusalem toward the east”.

“The plan does not relate to religious aspects, but if the Old City is the center, despite there being only 35,000 people there, it is fairly clear that the trend is to establish a religious capital for the future state”, says Yedid, adding that according to the Arab plan, Jerusalem is to become an Arab metropolis that will be divided into two clusters, northern and southern, which will make it easier to control. The plan includes five new Outline Plans for the Arab neighborhoods that are now under the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality. Besides this, the plan includes another 17 Outline Plans for the Arab population outside the area of Jerusalem. Among other things, it would mean establishing 14 solar energy sites, 11 programs for tourism, 10 various projects for housing and establishing many housing units. The initiative views Atarot as a Palestinian airfield that will return to their control, according to their definition. In addition, the plan includes establishing 271 schools, 130 kindergartens and 6 vocational schools. In the District of Jerusalem that is specified in the plan, 14 municipalities and 15 rural councils will be established, all of which will be under one comprehensive municipal unit”.

Yedid emphasizes that the details of the plan prove that its purpose is to challenge the Israeli building and planning policy and in this spirit, we hear the voice of senior PA officials, who deal with the area of Jerusalem and speak of establishing facts on the ground in Area C as a key goal. To him, although it is indeed reasonable to assume that the PA cannot implement the entire grandiose plan, it is enough for some of these steps determining facts on the ground to be done, to make it very difficult to undo later.

**Israeli Apathy**

“In Israel, there is no plan of such great scope for Jerusalem. While there are, indeed, five-year plans, the Israeli plan focuses on developing the eastern part of the city, while the PA plan views the area of Jerusalem as one entire metropolis. In recent decisions by the PA government, one can see a clear direction that includes giving highest priority benefits to the district of Jerusalem, allocating budgets for councils in the area, funding illegal building, monies for digging water sites, establishing cellular and electricity sites, etc.

We asked Yedid where is Israel in all of this and the answer that Baruch Yedid gave was very disappointing. “In Israel they have not recognized the plan. I presented it to a few ministers and CEOs of ministries. They asked for more presentations and material, but we have not heard an answer from any of them”, implying that he was told that the story is not interesting, “and this is from the most senior level of officials in policy and security”.

The plan includes five new Outline Plans for the Arab neighborhoods that are now under the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality. Besides this, the plan includes another 17 Outline Plans for the Arab population outside the area of Jerusalem

through employment and security to the economy, in the Palestinian Authority they are not standing still and in a detailed document obtained by the Middle East expert Baruch Yedid, it seems that they are preparing to determine facts on the ground in an extremely practical way regarding the future of Jerusalem.

In a conversation with the Sovereignty Journal, Baruch Yedid, Lt. Col. (res.) and a former Advisor for Arab Affairs in the Central Command and currently a commentator for Arab Affairs on Channel 14, presents the main points of the Arab plan which is backed by huge amounts of money and according to him, is nothing but an initiative by one of the UN organizations, joined by other organizations and institutions from the PA. Where is Israel in this picture? It’s good that you asked, because apparently it is really not there at all. This initiative is spread over several



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# Jerusalem and its Surrounding Cities

An umbrella-type Jerusalem municipality, which will include Giv'at Ze'ev, Ma'ale Adumim, Gush Etzion and some of the towns of Binyamin, would solve the demographic crisis and allow for massive building in the capital.

Photo Hillel Peleg



Arieh King, Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem

In light of the growing concern over losing the Jewish majority in Jerusalem due to the lack of housing and employment, the call is rising to promote the Greater Jerusalem initiative, which would unite Jerusalem, Ma'ale Adumim, Giv'at Ze'ev, Gush Etzion and some of the towns of Binyamin under one roof. This step would add about another two hundred thousand Jewish residents and allow for the building of more neighborhoods in the area between the communities of Greater Jerusalem.

Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem Aryeh King sees the step gaining momentum, even though it has not yet actually happened. "I define the idea that I seek to promote "the Metropolis of Jerusalem", and the aspiration is physically to enlarge Jerusalem", he says, noting a number of services that even now are provided to communities in the area by Jerusalem. To him, the expansion of this trend constitutes a practical basis of preparation for the next step of defining all these communities as part of the Metropolis of Jerusalem.

For King, the transportation leaving Jerusalem for Ma'ale Adumim, Beit El and Gush Etzion is similar to the flow of Jerusalem's water through the Kidron, Og and Darga streams, as well as the power lines stretching from Jerusalem to the surrounding towns - all this and more, form the practical basis for the spiritual content, as he defines it, that will come to be.

## From Garbage Trucks to the Jerusalem Marathon

The plan for the umbrella municipality that Aryeh King seeks to promote, also turns out to be efficient and financially profitable. When garbage trucks leave the neighborhood of Ramot, there is no reason they should stop a kilometer from the houses of Giv'at Ze'ev instead of continuing forward, since in any case, the garbage trucks from Giv'at Ze'ev also empty their contents at the recycling

plant at Atarot. There is no reason for this redundancy, which is only one example of the efficiency that could be achieved in a variety of municipal services. "Unified garbage disposal would cause less air pollution, would save a great deal of money and ease traffic conditions. It is the same for transporting children to schools. There is no reason that a child who lives in Giv'at Ze'ev cannot go to school in Ramot if he wants to".

We must build in E-1, which is part of Jerusalem, extend the construction up to Giv'at Ze'ev and all the residents of Giv'at Ze'ev, Ma'ale Adumim and the towns up to Sha'ar Binyamin will be included in Jerusalem

"After all, the electricity for large areas in Binyamin and Ma'ale Adumim passes through Jerusalem", he says and finds no reason that other services not to be consolidated to create "a different Jerusalem, a huge mega-city, as it is defined internationally".

And Aryeh King's many examples even go as far as the Jerusalem Marathon. "There is no reason for the Jerusalem Marathon, which winds its way through the streets of Jerusalem, not to begin in Gush Etzion, pass through Jerusalem, reach Sha'ar Binyamin and then back to Gush Etzion. All together, it is 42 kilometers".

"This is one of the ways of to prevent crazy ideas from both the Left and the Right of dividing Jerusalem, says King, emphasizing that ideas of dividing the city are heard from the Right side of the political map, where ideas are raised of removing Arab neighborhoods from the

city's municipal authority and establishing a new, independent authority for them. He thinks of this as a dangerous precedent of dividing Jerusalem, a process whose end is not clear. "Instead of talking about shrinking the city, we must talk about expanding it. People are concerned about the demographic threat. One way of dealing with is to expel people, and another way is by expanding its borders. Those who seek to rid Jerusalem of some of its people also rid Jerusalem of part of the territory, whether it is Nir Barkat, Ze'ev Elkin or the Left, the bottom line is the division of Jerusalem".

## Hands off Jerusalem

King is not reassured when the people who wish to shed Arab neighborhoods claim that the neighborhoods will not be transferred to the PA, but will remain under Israel's responsibility. He mentions the precedent of Mansour Abbas which began, according to him, "with a small step that Netanyahu took by sending Amit Halevy to Rav Druckman to test the feasibility of its "propriety" and this small step very quickly provided legitimacy for the Left to promote a process together with Bennett, Shaked, Sa'ar helping to establish the government that turned RA'AM into a consensus. Now, they are talking about teaming up with the Joint List... This is how it is with the borders of Jerusalem. Just touching the borders slightly might escalate to the point of dividing Jerusalem. You begin with a

division because of demographics and then it progresses from Shuafat and Kfar Aaqab to Issawiya and beyond."

"Instead of this, we must build in E-1, which is part of Jerusalem, extend the construction up to Giv'at Ze'ev and all the residents of Giv'at Ze'ev, Ma'ale Adumim and the towns up to Sha'ar Binyamin will be included in Jerusalem". King wants to see signs saying "Welcome to Greater Jerusalem" at Sha'ar Binyamin, in Beit Horon and in the Good Samaritan on the road ascending from the Dead Sea. "The message that this is Jerusalem will drive away crazy thoughts of handing over territory, Heaven forbid. It is a consciousness/mental process based on things that already exist on the ground and that we are not aware of".

As an example of consolidating services that already exists, Aryeh King mentions emergency situations, when the Moriah subdistrict of the Home Front unites control of Jerusalem, Giv'at Ze'ev and Ma'ale Adumim. "Meaning, there are systems that have already understood that it is the right thing to do. We must add more systems to this kind of thinking and turn it into something tangible in everyday life. Anyway, the military commander of Jerusalem in time of war is also the commander of Ma'ale Adumim and Giv'at Ze'ev - he is actually the mayor of Jerusalem, the mayor of Ma'ale Adumim and the mayor of Giv'at Ze'ev - he is

continued on page 15



Jerusalem

# “All the activity in the Yesha Council is related to Sovereignty and Promoting Sovereignty”

**Shlomo Neeman**, the incoming chairman of the Yesha Council sees promotion of the sovereignty vision as an integral part of his new position. He also tells “Sovereignty” about the reasons for the thwarting of the Trump plan.

Photo Eli Itkin



Shlomo Neeman, Gush Etzion Regional Council head and incoming head of the Yesha Council

These are days of the changing of the guard in the leadership of the Yesha Council. David Elhayani, head of the Jordan Valley Council, is leaving his position, and in his place, the head of the Gush Etzion Council, Shlomo Ne’eman, was elected. He has long ago placed the vision of sovereignty in Judea and Samaria as one of the most prominent and necessary challenges for the future of the State of Israel. We spoke with him about the contribution he envisions being able to contribute in his new position to promote the vision.

“All the activity that takes place in the Yesha Council is related to sovereignty and promoting sovereignty,” Ne’eman says and elaborates. “Everything that happens and everything that doesn’t happen in Judea and Samaria depends on one issue and that is the fact that we are still not really part of the State of Israel in the full sense of the word according to its laws. This fact is significant regarding construction, land, infrastructures, the economic status of the councils, security, and of course, also the question of the region’s political future. If the State had related to the status of Yitzhar like the status of Tel Aviv, everything would have been different.”

Ne’eman is careful to clarify that his predecessors in the position, too, “did everything in their power to ensure that there would be sovereignty, and the issue certainly concerned them.” However, he has also recently heard the voices among right-wing circles according to which we lost the chance at sovereignty because of the Yesha Council. These claims are voiced in the wake of the council’s active opposition to the Trump plan, led by his predecessor, David Elhayani. Ne’eman does not regret this opposition for a moment.

## The plan was revised within a week.

“As one who was then a member of the board of the Yesha Council, as one who dealt with this issue extensively, and as

one who was party to all the discussions, I can state that the Trump plan as it was on the day it was announced was not the same plan that was presented to us during the period before its presentation. After all, initially we were all in favor and even flew to Washington to express our support for it. After a few days, when we saw the change in it, we reversed our position and expressed our opposition to it. The reason for this was simple; the plan changed.”

He explains: “after three years of work on the original plan, it was publicized as a plan to apply Israeli sovereignty to the communities in Judea and Samaria. We all remember the tweet from the Prime Minister’s Office: ‘Sovereignty on Sunday.’ However, that week, a new demand that changed everything was introduced into the plan, when it was determined that in exchange for sovereignty in part of Judea and Samaria, there would be agreement to the establishment of a Palestinian state in 70% of its area. It was a demand that did not remain at the level of a declaration, to which we were also opposed, but also in practice, the maps were revised. For example, we had been told that all communities in Judea and Samaria would become part of the State of Israel, and a week later, it became apparent that 19 communities would remain isolated with a construction freeze.”

To our question about what led to this change, Ne’eman answers in very cautious terms. “It was an American decision, but we heard that there were also Israeli leftists who arrived there and influenced the changes in the American decision. I think I know who it was,” says Ne’eman, but prefers not to reveal who, in his estimation, it was. But he states: “The fact is that there was also Israeli involvement there.”

Now, as he steps into the very busy shoes of the head of the Yesha Council, Shlomo Ne’eman intends to continue leveraging the momentum of sovereignty consciousness and sovereignty actions on the ground. “Sovereignty comes from

two directions, from above and from below,” he says. “It is true that if there will be a political decision by the Israeli government, that will be an important decision that solves the matter all at once. However, sovereignty can also come through minor, interim decisions that lead to sovereignty in practice, step-by-step. This happens through developing infrastructure, paving roads in Judea and Samaria, and more. Today we stand in traffic jams because we are not part of the sovereign state of Israel, which brings with it treatment by the government ministries that do not transfer funds and the result is traffic jams. This means that when we develop infrastructures and roads, we are taking practical steps to bring sovereignty closer. In this way, transportation erases the green line from the map.”

## Roads, infrastructure and communication. This is also sovereignty.

Ne’eman has numerous examples and he cites one more example regarding the communication and internet infrastructures.

“Communication companies are committed in their contract with the State to provide a minimal level of reception everywhere throughout the country: Eilat, the Negev and everywhere else, except Judea and Samaria, where they do not have to provide the same necessary services. When we fight to improve cellular reception, we thereby bring communications sovereignty to Judea and Samaria. This is how practical sovereignty is created beyond the political sovereignty that also must come from the government and the Knesset.”

As one who is well-versed in the unrealized housing potential in Judea and Samaria, Ne’eman states that while the outcry of the housing crisis is heard in the central region, “official Israel does not regard Judea and Samaria and the Jordan Valley as a place to live. These are huge areas that are neither on the map of the housing solution for the ultra-Orthodox sector nor as part of the solution to the rising cost of

living. There is no expansion of state land earmarked for construction. It is simply not on the map.”

Building as a response to the demands of the residents, as done by right-wing governments as opposed to left-wing governments that do not even do that, is not enough. The construction, says Ne’eman, should be implemented as part of the housing solutions required for the entire country. “We are talking about available areas on which 200,000 housing units could be built without even entering into the question of political perception. Housing prices throughout the country would drop. This could be a dramatic change.”

As the head of the Gush Etzion Council, we asked Ne’eman for his opinion regarding the Greater Jerusalem project, which seeks to include the communities of his council, among others, in the municipal boundaries of the capital. Ne’eman passionately supports it: “The Greater Jerusalem plan is a correct and important plan. In principle, the plan will establish in the people’s consciousness, the status of Judea and Samaria as an integral part of the State of Israel. Practically, the plan will benefit the residents of the entire region. We have much in common with the city of Jerusalem regarding municipal issues, such as road infrastructures, employment, education, and transportation. That is why this connection is necessary. I believe in the plan and intend to continue working until it is realized.”

We heard that there were also Israeli leftists who arrived there and influenced the changes in the American decision. I think I know who it was



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# The primary, self-evident and realistic goal of sovereignty

Despite the painful experience of Oslo, some former members of the security establishment still advocate for the division of the land and the establishment of a Palestinian state, if only they could find a partner. This tendency is of great concern to **Kobi Eliraz**, a former advisor to four defense ministers, who has opted to drill down and present a feasible sovereignty plan.

Photo Hillel Peleg



Kobi Eliraz

As someone who advised four separate defense ministers on settlement affairs, Kobi Eliraz is considered one of the leading experts on the reality in Judea and Samaria on the ground. As such, the conversation with him will go beyond headlines and declarations, and offer a practical analysis of the workability of the various plans put forward to apply sovereignty in practice.

That said, he explains from the outset that the dream and ambition is to apply full Israeli sovereignty over all of Judea and Samaria, with an unequivocal declaration that the entire territory is part of the Land of Israel. “Unfortunately, we did not do this in the past, which might have been simpler, and with all the importance of outlining the ideal objective so that it is clear to all of us, the reality is that as long as it is related to our

our hands are basically tied,” he says. “It will be very difficult for us to apply sovereignty to the entire territory and explain to the world why we’re not giving the Palestinian Arabs full equal rights.”

Eliraz recently published a comprehensive article in which he analyzed the complexity of the reality on the ground in Judea and Samaria and the problems inherent in the various policy plans put forward by politicians from both the left and the right. The article, spanning dozens of pages, is in fact a summary of about a hundred pages of careful analysis that presents a methodical plan for the initial steps to be taken for sovereignty.

Eliraz divides the existing political plans into three main categories: 1. Withdrawal from Judea and Samaria and the establishment of a Palestinian state. 2. Full sovereignty over the entire area 3. Sovereignty in Area C only.

Despite everything they still speak in Osloese

“While it is surprising each time anew, it seems that the Oslo doctrine, which talks about withdrawing from the entire territory, unfortunately still exists and can still be heard from all sorts of former members of the security establishment. They claim that although there is currently no partner on the Palestinian side, if there were one, we would make a deal with that partner and withdraw. They are ignoring the consequences of the disengagement from Gaza, the Arab Spring and the analysis of the outcome of the American actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and even the war in Ukraine and its reliance on the West.”

“It’s amazing to discover that there are people in the General Staff who still speak in Osloese and for whom the Oslo doctrine is still relevant. I reject this both in ideological and

practical terms, and there are enough examples from the recent past that prove that this kind of formula has not succeeded in the past and will not succeed in the future. It was in this vein that Tzipi Livni could publish an article last month in Yedioth Ahronoth in which she called to resume the discussion regarding separation from the Palestinians. She protested that the issue is no longer on the public agenda and defined the positions of the right as a narrative that will lead Israel to national disaster. We must fight these approaches and their insinuation into the minds of Israel’s leadership,” he says with conviction. In reference to the position presented by the right, whereby full sovereignty may be applied to the entire territory, and that the civil loyalty of the Arabs of Judea and Samaria should be tested over the long term, with only those who pass the test receiving Israeli citizenship, Eliraz says that he finds it difficult to see Israel dragging out the issue for a long time without falling into the pitfalls of accusations of apartheid. “They will claim that we are creating different classes of people and they are being discriminated against, and we will have difficulty continuing as a member of the family of nations.”

“Sovereignty only over Area C would also be complex, because there is no obstacle to prevent the outflow of Arabs from Areas A and B to Area C,” he explains. “When Palestinians realize that they can get social security benefits in Area C, they will rush to move there and marry a Palestinian Arab woman to gain Israeli benefits. This is exactly what happened in Jerusalem in the Shuafat refugee camp and the village of Aqab, two neighborhoods that lie within the jurisdiction of the municipality of Jerusalem that grew from a few thousand people in 2000 to about 150,000 people today, only because

the Palestinians there receive a residency status that includes various social benefits, and especially because there is no fence separating Judea and Samaria from the areas under Israeli sovereignty. As a result, the reality is that if they one day decide to actually go to the polls and vote in the Jerusalem municipal elections, they will be the ones that will determine who the mayor in Jerusalem will be. We won’t be able to prevent a similar outflow of Palestinians who want rights to Area C, even if we impose sovereignty on it.”

In answer to our question whether as advisor to former Defense Minister Naftali Bennett, he understands how Bennett could have ignored this claim and offer the idea of applying sovereignty to Area C alone as his political plan, Eliraz responds succinctly, saying: “Politicians don’t always go into details. They are content with headlines that sound good. I’m sorry to say that Bennett didn’t follow through on halting the unilateral Palestinian takeover of Area C, notwithstanding his decisive statements on the matter.”

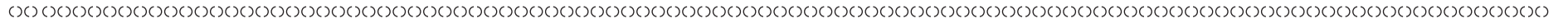
From here, Eliraz moves on to the main points of his alternative proposal, the highlight of which is the application of sovereignty in the Jordan Valley, a step that a broad national consensus would

continued on page 15

From here, Eliraz moves on to the main points of his alternative proposal, the highlight of which is the application of sovereignty in the Jordan Valley, a step that a broad national consensus would support, including many of those who hold the traditional positions of the Labor Party old timers

human capacity and international support, implementing this full plan is not realistic. This is also due to the progressive discourse, the discourse of equal rights and the situation in the international arena. In these areas,

The application of sovereignty in the Jordan Valley would send a message of non-withdrawal and discourage further demands on the part of the Arabs



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# The Jewish people are knocking on the door. We must be prepared

The World Zionist Organization is recording expanding numbers of immigration to Israel. Preparations necessitate professional training, efficiency, and preparing communities to absorb them. **Yaakov Hagoel**, chairman of the World Zionist Organization explains.

Photo Mark Israel Salem



Yaakov Hagoel, chairman of the World Zionist Organization

The challenge of applying sovereignty in Judea and Samaria and throughout Israel involves the challenge of absorbing mass aliya. Millions of Jews still live in the Diaspora and the minuscule state of Israel must make preparations to absorb them in the future. Judea, Samaria, the Negev, and the Galilee are already an integral part of the challenge of absorbing aliya, and in the future, they are expected to play an even greater role in that undertaking.

History proves that immigration does not always wait for the relevant parties in Israel to complete their preparations. Sometimes international crises cause surprises. The last example, that is still happening, is the war in Ukraine, whose results are evident, among other things, in the considerable wave of aliya that Israel is experiencing. Yaakov Hagoel, chairman of the World Zionist Organization, explains about the latest wave of immigration and the ongoing preparations to absorb immigrants throughout the country.

“This is a blessed year,” says Hagoel, who predicts that 2022 will end with 50,000 new immigrants having arrived in Israel. Israel has not seen a number like that in approximately thirty years. In fact, since the massive immigration from the former Soviet Union, the numbers have ranged from approximately 20,000-30,000 immigrants per year. These numbers almost doubled during the past year.

“The main reason is the war in Ukraine, in the wake of which immigrants are arriving from both Ukraine and Russia. This is an increase that could not have been anticipated. After two years of Covid-19 during which numbers decreased due to closed airports and cancelation of scheduled flights, which made it very difficult to immigrate to Israel, we are now absorbing immigrants in great numbers,” Hagoel says.

To our question whether the immigrants from Ukraine are expected to remain, or whether there is concern that with the cessation of the battles we will see a reverse movement, he replies, “Moving from country to country is a tremendous

challenge. As Sabras, we are less understanding of just how significant this is, but it involves leaving family, job, language and familiar surroundings. It is not an easy challenge. Some immigrants from Ukraine may have intended to come here only in five to ten years or, perhaps, not at all, but suddenly the war arrived and this need arose that brought primarily women immigrants with their children because men below the age of sixty cannot leave due to the conscription requirement. This leads to our challenge. If their absorption experience is positive, they will remain and their husbands and fathers will join them. Without a positive absorption experience, they will return to join their fathers and husbands who remained there.”

We definitely consider Judea and Samaria, as well as the Negev and the Galilee, as our priorities, as we consider the strengthening of the Israeli periphery as part of the challenge

Very significant aliya potential exists in France. The stream of immigrants from there is uninterrupted, but Hagoel is convinced that the potential is much greater. He tells of 200 Hebrew ulpan classes opened in France by the World Zionist Organization together with the Ministry of Immigration and Absorption. “Many resources are being invested in the study of Hebrew with the understanding that it will ease their decision to come to Israel. There are also barriers regarding Israeli recognition of their diplomas in order to find employment in their professions in Israel. Although there has been progress in this area, there is still room for greater improvement.”

## The Status of Yitzhar Equals the Status of Tel Aviv

From the United States, the largest Jewish community in the world outside Israel, a record of sorts was also broken this past year with the arrival of about 4,000 new olim. Relative to previous years, this is a significant number; however, considering the great potential, “we need to invest a lot in the United States,” Hagoel says.

When assessing the map of aliya absorption, Hagoel does not distinguish between Judea and Samaria and Tel Aviv, Eilat, or Metula, as he puts it. “We market all the places that can be reached. This includes any place where a Jew wishes to live. The one who chooses where to immigrate is the Jew who is immigrating. We are no longer in the fifties when they arrived on ships and were loaded onto trucks. Thank God we are no longer there. We definitely consider Judea and Samaria, as well as the Negev and the Galilee, as our priorities, as we consider the strengthening of the Israeli periphery as part of the challenge. If an immigrant decides that absorption in Yitzhar is preferable for him than absorption in Tel Aviv or Arad, we will be there to assist him. We present the various troughs, but he will be the one who chooses from where to drink.”

The body that directs absorption activity to the periphery and Judea and Samaria is the Settlement Division, an affiliate of the World Zionist Organization. Hagoel also mentions “Ofek Yisraeli,” a subsidiary

company that is involved in encouraging aliya in the Diaspora and with which the World Zionist Organization holds aliya and absorption fairs around the world. “At these fairs, representatives from the absorbing cities and communities participate and present their absorption potential. This is the best way to get to know the community. The continuation of the process is accomplished directly through those same local authorities that accompany the absorption.”

Hagoel notes the immigration absorption momentum in Ariel and Maale Adumim, but emphasizes that even if it can be assumed that immigrants who come from large cities would prefer absorption in a similar residential area, there are those who are searching for exactly the opposite. “One of the most beautiful projects in Judea and Samaria is taking place in Peduel, where families come from France, primarily from Paris, and find their future specifically in a small community that absorbs and accompanies them.”

Hagoel concludes with an appeal to each and every one of us: “It is important for us to clarify that the absorption of aliya is not the responsibility of the World Zionist Organization or the government alone. All of us must see how we can help the new immigrants have a positive absorption experience in Israel. From immigrant to immigrant, our strength grows. This is not merely a slogan.”

Photo Yossi Zeligler Pelen



Jewish Olim from Ukraine arrive in Israel



**Orit Struk continued from page 04**

They do not accomplish this in the dark, but in broad daylight and in official ceremonies," she states, noting a ceremony that was held recently in Yatta in which the Palestinian Authority issued 300 tractor licenses to be used in operations to gain control of state lands. This is merely one of many examples.

### The land was ceded with no White House ceremonies and no right-wing protests.

"Although the Palestinian Authority has been promoting this initiative for 12 years, there is a difference between what happened over the last 10 years and what is happening from the moment Gantz entered the Defense Ministry," Struk says. "During the first 10 years, the Netanyahu years, Israel did not do enough to combat the takeover attempts, but from the moment Gantz entered, a reversal took place. The country began to combat, but in favor of the enemy. Gantz is doing everything in his ability, utilizing the Civil Administration, to support the Palestinian plan, to mitigate damage to it as much as possible, and to legalize their outposts. In doing so, he is actually ceding huge tracts of land with his own two hands, with no agreement, no maps and no ceremonies on the White House lawn, but the result is the same. In practice, the territory was ceded."

Struk relates about her appeal to Gantz's current partners, Ministers Saar and Elkin, during the days of the formation of the government, and her request to prevent Gantz from entering the Ministry of Defense through an analysis of his actions as Defense Minister under Netanyahu. "There will be a withdrawal here that will not be recorded anywhere, but it will happen," she warned. The warnings were ineffective; however, in their wake, "Sa'ar and Elkin had Gantz sign an agreement obligating him to conduct the campaign over Area C while allocating manpower for this campaign. What Gantz did was transfer the manpower for the needs of the Civil Administration, among other things, for enforcement against the Jewish councils. No Palestinian outpost was treated with even a fraction of what was directed against Oz Tziyon or Ramat Migron in terms of brutality and determination. Gantz is conducting an actual campaign against Jews seeking to settle the land," she says with considerable apprehension regarding what can be expected the day after the elections.

**Nadav Shragai continued from page 09**

has described here in brief has already been raised in the discussions in the context of the Defender of Jerusalem plan, which he led together with a group

of experts on Jerusalem affairs led by Haim Silverstein. In fact, he says, the plan is part of several bills submitted to the Knesset over the years.

Another option Shragai has suggested as part of a study he conducted for the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and that was adopted by Minister Ze'ev Elkin is to exclude the large Arab neighborhoods beyond the fence from Jerusalem, and establish a separate local council or councils for them. Shragai underscores that this initiative does not involve transferring the neighborhoods to the Palestinian Authority, but would rather keep them within Israel's borders under Israeli sovereignty, but outside Jerusalem's jurisdiction. This could restore the situation to 70:30, instead of the current majority of 60% Jews. It is noteworthy that this plan has quite a few opponents who fear a precedent that could be interpreted as an actual division of Jerusalem.

About two – thirds of Jerusalem's residents, 63%, currently – 55 years after the unification of Jerusalem – reside in the areas known as "East Jerusalem," to the north, south and east of the old, i.e. pre – 1967, jurisdictional borders. Thirty – seven percent live in West Jerusalem.

While in the city's western part, 99% of the residents are Jewish, in "East Jerusalem," only 39% of the residents are Jewish and 61% are Arab.

According to the data provided in Jerusalem's statistical yearbook, last updated to December 2020, 361,700 thousand Arab residents and 233,900 Jews live in what is known as East Jerusalem.

Jerusalem's total population is 951,100, and it is Israel's largest city in terms of population. The population of Jerusalem constitutes 10% of Israel's total population. Jerusalem is also home to Israel's largest Jewish population – approximately 584,000 residents – and Israel's largest Arab population – approximately 367,000 residents.

**Arieh King continued from page 11**

responsible for education, garbage collection and everything else. If it is good in time of war, it can be good for routine times as well".

King is aware of the opinion that there will be those among the heads of authorities of surrounding communities who will refuse to hand over the reins of leadership to the municipality of Jerusalem and because of this he emphasizes that his idea does not include doing away with these authorities,

rather, they would keep the authorities under one umbrella that would provide the authorities with a variety of means that is possible for one large municipal entity to provide. "I am not talking about taking the reins from the authorities, but the opposite, it would be giving the authorities more power so that they can work together".

King's opinion is that there is already a majority in the Jerusalem Municipal Council in favor of the idea, although he estimates that other factors with other interests are likely to be concerned about the loss of control and will act in order to thwart the step, but if they understand the details of the plan and its ramifications, they may withdraw their objection.

**Kobi Eliraz continued from page 13**

support, including many of those who hold the traditional positions of the Labor Party old timers. There are very few Arab residents in the Jordan Valley, he explains, and applying sovereignty over it will decide Israel's eastern border, a step that will be welcomed on the eastern side of the Jordan too. The Jordanian crown will be happy at something that would prevent the possibility of Jordan's future attachment to a Palestinian state, which would likely pose a threat to the Jordanian regime.

Applying sovereignty over the Jordan Valley, says Eliraz, will put an end to the possibility of implementing the dream of Palestinian return and eliminate the delusional idea of positioning a multinational force to control the border crossings, which in his opinion would culminate at best in the painful scenario we saw at the Philadelphia axis.

Jerusalem's Airport – in the Jordan Valley

As part of his plan, Eliraz calls for the establishment of an international airport in the Horkania Valley in the northeastern Judean Desert. An international airport of this kind in the center of the country would be far more effective than an airport in the south or the north (the existing proposed alternatives), in locations remote from Israel's population

centers, and which are the target of numerous objections from nature lovers and environmentalists, as well as others. The airport would be considered Jerusalem's international airport, thus strengthening its status. Its construction would represent be a real revolution in terms of investments in Judea and Samaria, which thus far has not included the construction of any significant national infrastructure facilities.

"This airport could, under the required security and safety conditions, also be used by the Arabs of Judea and Samaria, and serve as a more convenient way for them to travel abroad, which could also serve to strengthen the international acceptance of the move," he further notes.

"The application of sovereignty in the Jordan Valley would send a message of non-withdrawal and discourage further demands on the part of the Arabs," he says, adding that as part of a somewhat slightly larger move, it would be appropriate to also add sovereignty over the settlement blocs. Here, however, he emphasizes that it would be sovereignty over the blocs, such as the Shiloh-Eli-Ariel bloc as a single unit, and not over individual communities, because that would complicate the demarcation of the boundaries of each community, preventing them from further developing and expanding in the future.

An integral part of the application of sovereignty, Eliraz points out, means taking full responsibility for the territory, and this includes the regulation of Arab settlements based on criteria that are consistent with Israeli interests and considerations. "In the existing reality, this is the least of all evils," he says, noting that based on his familiarity with the capabilities of Israel's leaders, he doubts they would be able to promote even such a minimal and preliminary idea. However, he says: "It is important to state what the vision is, but it is also important to present something pragmatic that the left might also be willing to discuss. This pulls the rug out from under the feet of the delusional Osloists who yearn for the division of the land and the establishment of a Palestinian state, Heaven forbid."



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