As Israel faces new elections in September, the only plan on offer appears to be a right-wing narrative. Ayelet Gundar-Goshen says it is the responsibility of all to find an alternative option. Translated by Yael Breuer

Two months later, immediately after the election results were announced, the spacecraft approached its destination. Netanyahu, the newly re-elected prime minister, arrived once more at the Israeli Aerospace Industries centre in Yehud, to watch the celebratory landing on the moon. Israel’s citizens were watching the event on their television sets at home, or on giant screens set up in bars and public squares in Tel Aviv and around the country. The television channels repeatedly broadcast the image that had been taken from a spacecraft while approaching landing – the face of the moon with the plaque right next to it, with the Hebrew inscription and the 264 characters. Arabs did not get to be launched to the moon, but had crashed during landing. After a few minutes of nerve-wracking tension, the message arrived: the spacecraft had succeeded in orbiting the moon, but had crashed during landing. We soon learned that a problem in the acceleration gauge had led to engine failure. Although this explanation sounds plausible in engineering terms, it does not satisfy me. After all, the journey to the moon was never a mere engineering act. It was also a symbolic act. And if the landing on the moon has a symbolic value, then crashing on the moon also has a symbolic explanation. I shall dare to offer a literary explanation: the spacecraft did not crash on the moon because of a problem in the accelerometer, but because of another gauge – the gauge of Entitlement.

A country that does not bother to acknowledge and recognize 20 per cent of its citizens as citizens with equal rights, a country that does not fight for a just existence for all its citizens on the small piece of land that had been given to her may be because of concerns about sales or fear of losing public sympathy, which tends to lean towards the right. Perhaps it is due to humility: why would a writer think that his opinion is more important than the opinion of any other citizen?

In my opinion, taking a political stance is part of the ethical responsibility of every person. That responsibility is greater for those whose circumstances enable their voice to resonate more loudly in the public domain. The person with a microphone, the person the public chooses to listen to, to read or watch – that person is obliged to use their power to fight for what is worth fighting for. Otherwise, that person is nothing but a coward.

A person must make their voice heard even if they fear that nobody hears them. Even if it is only for the sake of me being able to tell my children, when they grow up, that we did everything we could in order to preserve a democratic Israel for them. On the other hand, has anybody ever changed their opinion because another person waved a placard in front of them?

Ayelet Oz left us this year. A brilliant author, who refused to sit in self-indulgence and who gave a special voice to the pain of an abandoned daughter, who resisted the temptation to resign from her writing and her commitments, who insisted on repeatedly meeting the world, or trying to change it. After years of activity on the left, Oz published a book, Dear Zealots, and astonished the Israeli literary world when he chose to be interviewed in the most right-wing newspaper paper of all, Israel Hayom (Israel Today) – a newspaper that most lefty authors avoid appearing in. This was a radical declaration from Oz about the need to build a bridge between the various layers of Israeli society. If the left left the need for influence, perhaps we should understand that demonstrations and preaching are not the way. Perhaps we need to learn a lesson in humility, a lesson in how to conduct a dialogue.

While writers often wonder what influence – if any – their words have on the public, it seems that politicians are deprived of this uncertainty. The blunt attack by right-wing ministers on freedom of expression in Israel is a testament to the fact that, for all written words, an action in real life constitutes a real threat. For example, Minister of Education Naftali Bennett, who, in the wars between us, lost those who did not have a voice, today, he insists on repeatedly meeting the world, on creating, in my novel Waking Lions, the world, or trying to change it. After years of activity on the left, Oz published a book, Dear Zealots, and astonished the Israeli literary world when he chose to be interviewed in the most right-wing paper of all, Israel Hayom (Israel Today) – a newspaper that most lefty authors avoid appearing in. This was a radical declaration from Oz about the need to build a bridge between the various layers of Israeli society. If the left left the need for influence, perhaps we should understand that demonstrations and preaching are not the way. Perhaps we need to learn a lesson in humility, a lesson in how to conduct a dialogue.

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