

www.haaretz.com

Last update - 03:16 16/01/2008

Professors strike / This year can't be returned

By Yossi Sarid

At the start of the strike, they announced that unless it was concluded in two weeks - the semester would be canceled, and possibly the entire academic year too. Nearly three months have passed, and every second day they set a new date, and every time it is definitely final. Only the heads of the universities, pure scientists, are able to change the laws governing time; only they can offer a course in "How the time that passes does not really pass," and "The hands of the clock are in perpetual movement."

It turns out that the academic year has rules of its own, and it shrinks or expands alternatively. There is no year that is more flexible and elasticity, as is known, enables bodies to return to their previous state; and there are also elastic people.

The academic year is a sort of magic blanket, which is increasingly shrinking but it still manages to cover both the head and the legs. It is pulled up, it is pulled down, and they manage to cover themselves. What a surprise.

However, the reality is completely different, and not everything follows the commands of the university heads. The sun will not stand still, and what has happened - this failure - cannot be undone. This year is a lost year and it does not matter any more when the official announcement of its demise is made. The brain damage was caused at the end of

80 days of deep campus coma, and cannot be rehabilitated. There is no transparent reporting on the clinical condition of the dead year, not least because of the fatal budgetary implications. Who more than Professor Moshe Kaveh and Professor Menachem Megidor and their colleagues recognize the significance of a dead year, and there will be no rush to revive the dead in our academe. It will be declared a disaster zone next year too, and in the years to come, it will drop a grade - a lot lower than it has fallen in recent years.

And how it has fallen. The Nobel laureate in chemistry, Avram Hershko of the Technion in Haifa, was right when he wrote the following: The crisis did not begin now but six or seven years ago, when the Sharon-Netanyahu-Livnat government began snipping the roots of higher education, and nearly NIS 2 billion was cut. The Committee of University Heads, held its breath then, until things exploded. That is what happens, must happen, when the academic leadership is more political and less professorial.

What do they have to complain about now, after they allowed three governments to cut positions, to privatize good programs, to allow fields of study to atrophy, to decimate libraries, destroy laboratories, to discriminate against young faculty and to push them out, to drain the senior faculty, and to abuse the students as if the classrooms were not meant for them but for Treasury officials. The heads of the universities collaborated in their silence, sometimes sounding off like chicks, but no more.

Ehud Olmert knows how to deal with wolves. A serious slam of his hand on the table would have also moved the limits set by the Treasury, in whose basement all the sticks in the wheels of negotiations are piled up. And they are collaborating now, by pretending that it is possible to restore the lost year.

</hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=945054>
[close window](#)