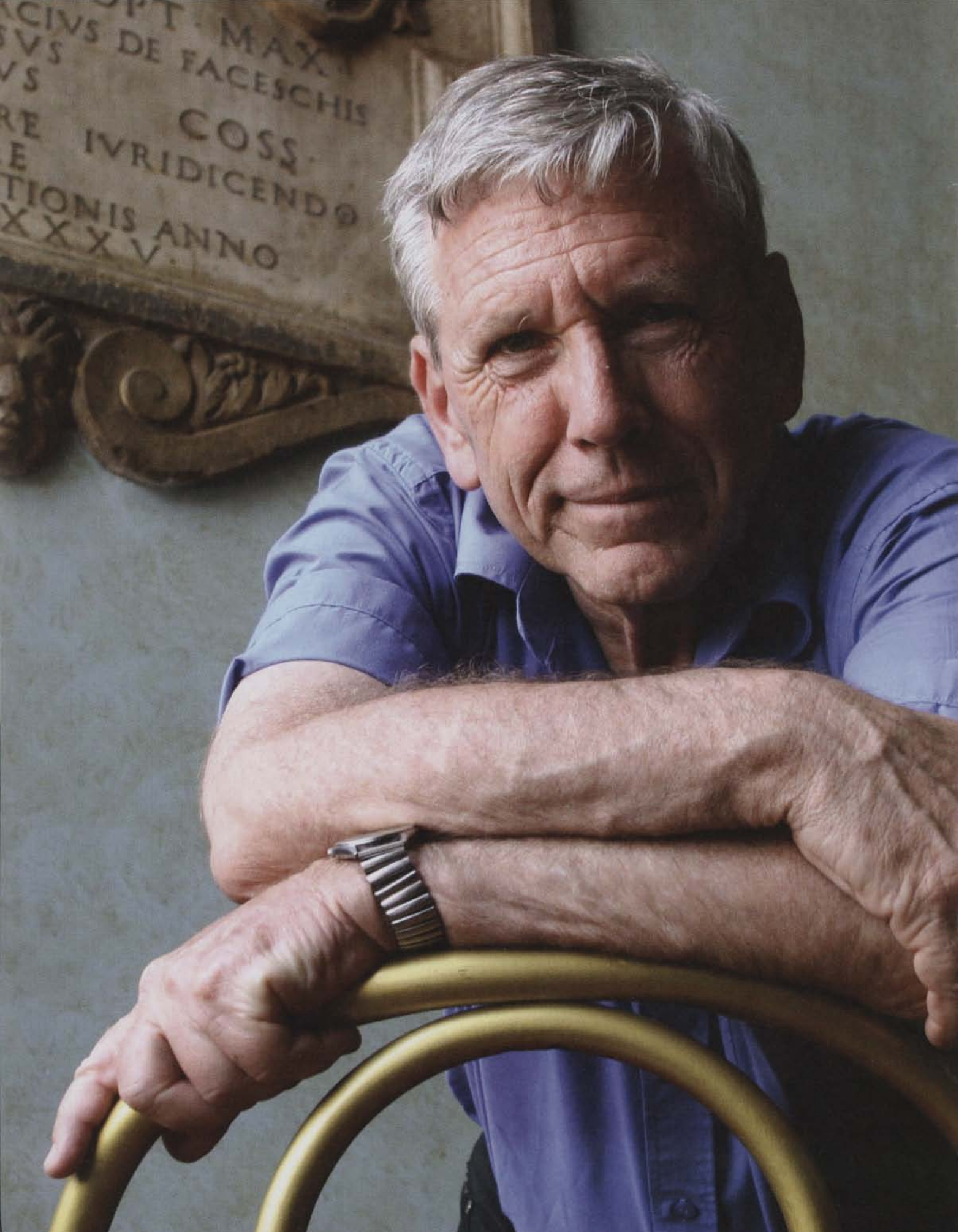


OPT. MAX
CIVS DE FACESCHIS
VS
VS
RE COSS.
E IVRIDICENDO
TIONIS ANNO
XXXV.





At home with **AMOS OZ**

Since 1967, Amos Oz

has stood at the edge of the Israeli political wilderness proclaiming his truth: The only choice that exists for Israelis and Palestinians is a two-state solution. Even as his stature rose as a writer, novelist and journalist, Oz's voice could barely be heard over the roar of the conflict. At times dismissed as a hopelessly idealist radical, Oz has remained steadfast. Only now are his words finally resonating, as most people in Israel and the Palestinian territories come to the same conclusion.

Born in Jerusalem in 1939, Oz is a member of an Israeli literary generation that is accustomed to being part of the political vanguard. Founder of Shalom Achshav (Peace Now), he was active in the Labor Party for many years and later joined the Meretz Party. Shimon Peres once suggested that Oz would make a good prime minister but unlike his friend, the writer Vaclav Havel—who became President of Czechoslovakia—Oz has resisted the call, preferring his quiet, book-lined study to the frenetic life of the Knesset.

Moment editor Nadine Epstein recently interviewed Oz in the basement office of his modest home in the town of Arad in the Negev Desert. During their conversation, Oz looked back on Zionism and the country's 60-year history and forward to the future of Israel—and the Jewish people.

Epstein: So here we are, Israel is 60 now. Looking back, what has been the state's gravest mistake?

Oz: Building settlements in the occupied territories since 1967, I think, was more than a mistake. It was a sin because it could only be based on ignoring the simple fact that we Jews are not alone in this country.

How is it possible that 41 years later, the settlements are still growing?

1967 was a spectacular military victory for Israel. And it was a just victory because the Israelis successfully prevented an attempt to wipe them off the map. But this spectacular victory evoked in Israel an intoxication with military power, accompanied by a huge sentiment for the West Bank, the most biblical part of the country. Ironically, this part is heavily populated by Palestinians. This intoxication gave rise to the idea that Israel could dictate to the Arabs all it wants. That by creating facts on the ground they will also create facts in the minds of the Arabs and in the minds of the whole world. But this did not work and could not work because the Palestinians have no other place—and because the world never recognized Israel's right to annex the occupied territories. The disillusionment is bitter and painful. I can't imagine how tragic it is for an idealistic Jewish settler to face the fact that his or her lifetime dream is doomed.

What has Zionism come to mean today?

Zionism has always been a surname, not a first name. More than half a dozen different trends,

philosophies and visions define themselves as Zionist, often with a hyphen: Zionist-socialist, Zionist-religious, Zionist-conservative or Zionist-nationalist. There were those who returned to the land of Israel to revive the kingdoms of David and Solomon. There were others who came here to create a Marxist paradise that Communist Russia would respect. Others wanted to create here a replica of the Jewish shtetl in Eastern Europe, and still others dreamed of a mild middle class democracy or exemplary social democracy. I could go on and on.

What kept them as a family was the simple common denominator that it's time for the Jews to return home to Israel. Return why? Return for what purpose? Return how? On this you cannot get two Israeli Jews to agree. In fact, it's hard even to get one Israeli to agree with himself or herself because everybody is ambivalent. Everybody has a divided mind and soul.

You once said that Israelis need to focus less on land and more on people—

Israel is a name of a country but it's also a name of a people. The people come first.

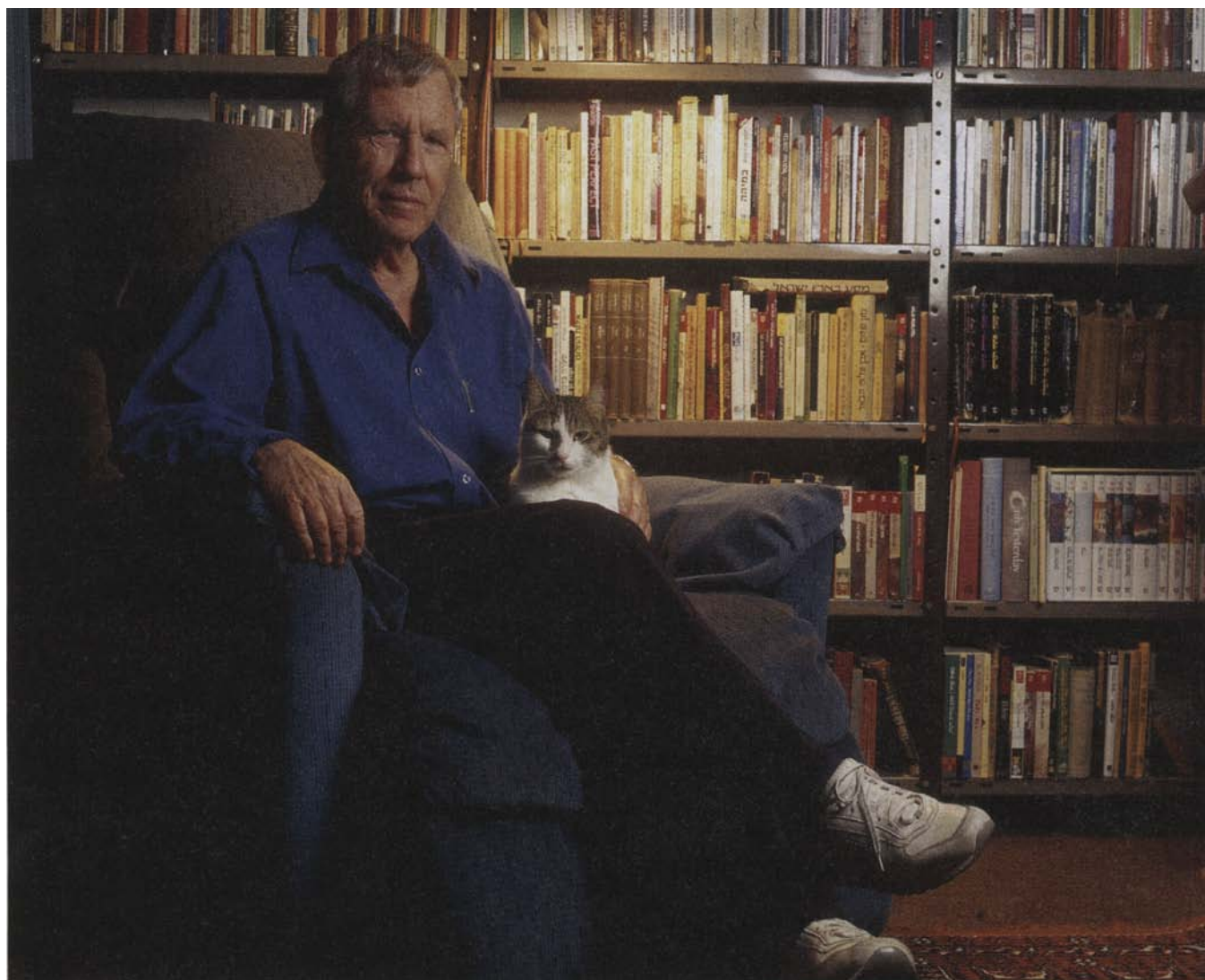
Where is Zionism heading, then?

Nobody ever meant seriously that every lost Jew will come to live in Israel. What we have now is about 40 percent of the Jewish population living in Israel. That's about the same percentage of the Irish world who live in Ireland.

Is Zionism being replaced by a new identity?

Identity is a big word and for the Jews, always a controversial word. Anti-Semites find it easier than the Jews to define who is a Jew and what is a Jew. For me, every Jew, every person, every human being who is mad enough to call himself or herself a Jew is a Jew. Is he or she a good Jew or a bad Jew? This is for the next Jew to decide. Because every Jew knows better. Because Judaism is a civilization of doubt and argument, an open-ended game of interpretations, counter-interpretations, re-interpretations. In this respect Zionism is perfectly Jewish. Everyone is a rabbi, everyone is a pope, everyone is a teacher. Everyone argues and no one really listens.

We have a lot to learn. The way we treat our minority is far from wonderful. The way we treat each other is not wonderful, either.



OPENING SPREAD: ELISABETTA NEWCOM/THIS PAGE: REIL ABRAHAM ISRAELI OUT/NEWCOM

Then is there a new vision that is supplanting Zionism?

No, there is no one vision. There are conflicting and contradicting visions with a common denominator that it's good for the Jews to live in Israel and that it's good for them to be a majority and not a minority for a change. We haven't had this experience for thousands of years. It is a test, and we are not entirely successful. We have a lot to learn. The way we treat our minority is far from wonderful. The way we treat each other is not wonderful, either.

Another common denominator is the Hebrew language. Language is more than just a vehicle. It's a state of mind. It's a mode of thinking. It's a climate. One of the reasons why

many American Jews and non-Jews fail to understand the Israeli scene is that they don't know Hebrew. Now, I am called a writer of fiction, but I am telling you the world of CNN is a world of fiction. I know American Jews who are more familiar than I am with the coalition situation in Israel—or with the deployment of some settlements—and yet they don't know a thing about the depth of our diversity here. They think we are divided over settlements, boundaries, holy places, relations with the Arabs. The settlers and I are not divided over CNN issues; in fact we are divided over ethics, ideology and philosophy, even over theology. We are divided over what is Zionism. We are divided over who and what is a Jew, over what

“I don't think our problem is to be loved. Our problem—the Israeli problem—is in the need to make some urgent decisions, decisions which have been delayed for too long.”

is holy and sacred and what is sinful. This is serious.

So the settlers have a different vision of Zionism that includes the right to live in an ancestral homeland—

No. That's not what they say. Or perhaps that's what they say but not what they mean. They speak about rights to the ancestral homeland, but they don't mean rights, they mean duty. Let me explain the difference. If I stand by a zebra crossing, the light is green, and a policeman gestures that I should cross the road now, I obviously have the right to cross the road. But if I see a van dashing my way at 80 miles an hour, I also have the right not to exercise my right. I see the van. The settlers ignore the van because they say they have a duty to be on that road.

They believe God will intervene and stop the van. There is a good Jewish joke about the belief in miracles. A certain rabbi is drowning in the sea; he can't swim. A speed boat comes by and offers him to climb in and he says, "No, I'm going to be saved by a miracle, not by a boat." Then a helicopter gestures to him to climb up and he says, "No, I am going to be saved by a miracle, not by a helicopter." Finally, he drowns, goes to heaven, and is quick to complain to God: "A righteous man like me—how come you didn't work a miracle for me?" And God says, "I sent you a boat. I sent you a helicopter. What else could I do?"

What is the best thing that Israel has accomplished?

The best thing is receiving millions of homeless Jews and giving them a home. Most Israeli people were not wanted anywhere else in the world. In the 1930s, when my parents and grandparents left Europe for Jerusalem, they were driven not just by a Zionist zeal but by savage, violent anti-Semitism. And they had absolutely no other place to go. They tried. In 1932 my paternal grandfather applied for French citizenship and was turned down. He applied for British citizenship and was turned down. He wanted to become an American and they told him he had to wait about 15 years. He didn't have 15 years to wait in the Europe of 1932. He was even mad enough to try to become German just a few months before Hitler came to power, and I am eternally grateful to the Germans for turning him down.

Some wise guy asks today whether Zionism was a good deal or bad deal and says perhaps it was a mistake altogether because of the sufferings of the Israelis and the Palestinians. This is presenting the case as if my folks back in 1932 went to a travel agency and simply made their own choice. They opted for Jerusalem whereas they should have opted for the French Riviera. Every door was slammed in their faces. Israel gave them a home. Not paradise, not heaven, but a home.

What was the worst mistake the Palestinians made in the past 60 years?

I would have thought they could have done better in saying yes to the United Nations Partition Resolution of 1947. But this really is a question for a Palestinian, not an Israeli.

What have the Palestinians done right?

They have done right in accepting, painfully, the principle of two states. It was hard as hell for them to accept the fact that Israel has a right to exist. But most Palestinians have accepted it. Are they happy about it? Certainly not. Will Palestinians or Israelis be dancing in the streets when the two-state solution is implemented finally? No. The solution is going to be like a surgery, like an amputation for both the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Will Palestinians or Israelis be dancing in the streets when the two-state solution is implemented finally? No. The solution is going to be like amputation for both Israelis and Palestinians.



AFP PHOTO/MENACHEM KAHANA/NEWS.COM

Dividing Jerusalem, dividing the country, there are no happy compromises. A happy compromise is an oxymoron. And I'm a great believer in compromise as a way of life, as a philosophy. I know the word compromise has negative connotations to young idealists. Compromises are dishonest, opportunistic, but for me the word compromise is synonymous to the word "life." The opposite of compromise is not idealism and devotion. The opposite of compromise is fanaticism and death. Now when I say compromise, I don't mean concession or submission. I certainly don't mean turn the other cheek. I am not a pacifist in the Western sense of the word. When I say compromise, I mean to meet the other somewhere halfway. I know one or two things about compromises, having been married to the same woman for 48 years.

It seems that there's a more open discussion about possible compromises in Israel than in the United States.

Time and again when I go to America, I get this from American Jews and from non-Jewish friends of Israel. They say to me here in America, we all have to speak with one voice. You may be Peace Now in Israel, but here in America you should join your voice with the voices of others. And I say: One voice is fine. But why not my voice? Those people are baffled.

But actually, I don't think one voice is fine. The people who want all of us to speak in one voice miss the point. I remember this wonderful film by Monty Python, *Life of Brian*. In an unforgettable scene, the teacher roars to the crowd: "You are all individuals," and the crowd roars back: "We are all individuals." Except one

"If we have a two-state solution and peace with the Arabs, we will still have to deal with some very real issues such as poverty, alienation and multiculturalism."

Continued on page 62

יוזבכ
ההסתדרות
הציונית
תרנ"ז - תש"ז



COURTESY OF ZIONIST ARCHIVES MATITYAHU DROBLES/ ROCHELLE RUBINSTEIN/ GEORGE BILMINETHAL

little man on the side says: "I am not."

As I said earlier, Jewish civilization survived through millennia by the intensity of diversity and doubt and argument—by the fact that every individual is encouraged to think individually. In good times every pupil was encouraged to criticize the rabbi. And in good times no two rabbis ever agreed with each other anyway. This is not the weakness of the Jews; this is the strength of the Jews. This is not the weakness of Israel; this is the strength of Israel.

What can Israel do to make its story resonate again in the world?

I don't think our problem is to be loved.

"The opposite of compromise is not idealism and devotion. The opposite of compromise is fanaticism and death."

Our problem—the Israeli problem—is in the need to make some urgent decisions, decisions which have been delayed for too long.

Which decisions?

On the surface, these decisions are on the level of war and peace; Israel and Palestine, Jerusalem. But underneath it's about why we are here and what do we really want to be. These decisions have been delayed since the beginning of Zionism. It's time to decide.

What can be done to bring forth the kind of leaders who can make these decisions?

Ariel Sharon was not my hero; he reached the conclusion late in life that the time had arrived to pull out of Gaza. In my view it was too little and too late. Nonetheless, he reached the decision and evacuated all the Jewish settlements and the military from Gaza in three days. And he had a fractured coalition. Let's not forget it. So it can be done. I would have done it differently, but then every Jew is a potential prime minister. We have more prime ministers than citizens.

Is Prime Minister Ehud Olmert capable of such leadership?

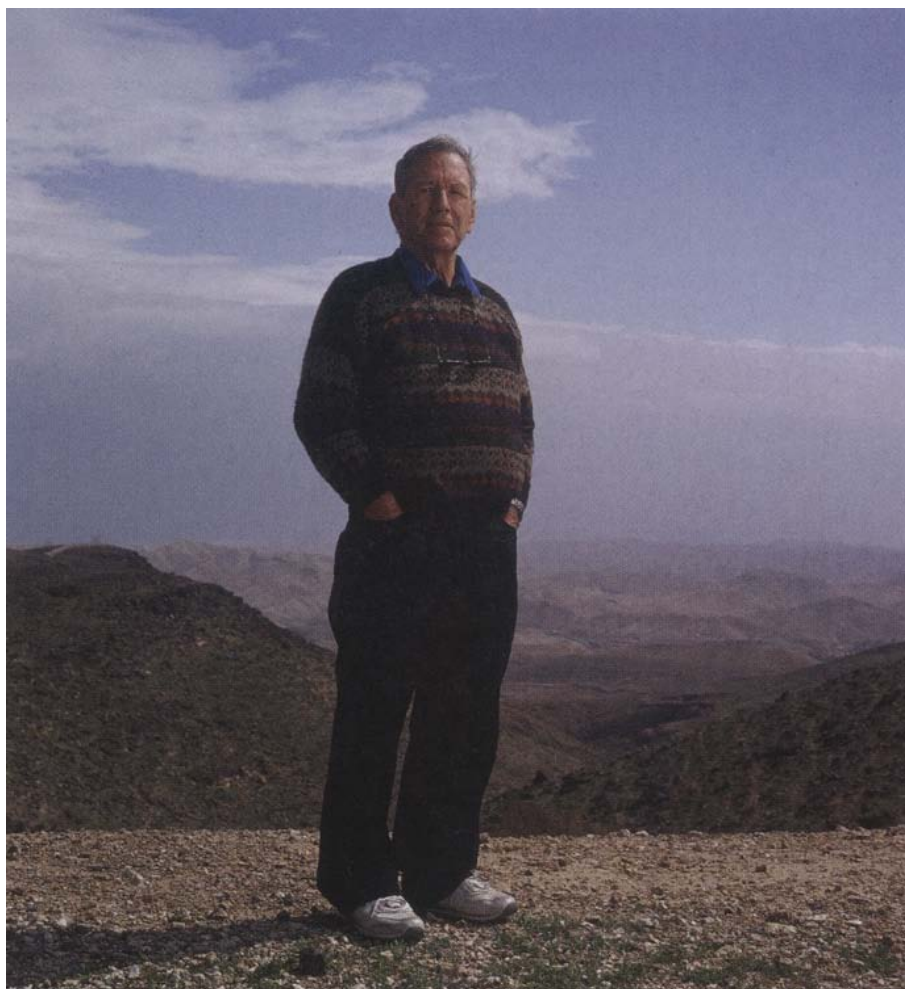
I don't know. He is the element of the unknown. Someone in Israel and someone in Palestine will have to do it. Who? I have no idea. Human nature is unpredictable. Did Churchill always know that he was going to dismantle the British Empire? Did De Gaulle know he would take France out of North Africa? Did Menachem Begin know that he was going to give the whole of Sinai for peace with Egypt? Did Sadat know that he was going to travel to Jerusalem? Did it ever occur to Gorbachev as a young Bolshevik that he was destined to undo Communism altogether? I don't know who will do it. Someone will do it.

What happens if such a leader doesn't step forth?

Then we are all dragging our feet and bleeding. Everybody will go on bleeding.

Let's just assume for a moment that you are the Israeli prime minister. What kind of decisions would you make so that Israel could move on?

We reach a draft agreement with the present pragmatic Palestinian leadership in Ramallah; we bring this draft agreement to a referendum both in Israel and in Palestine; we win the referendum and implement the agreement, leaving Gaza for the future. That sounds very simple, I know, but it is simple. It is simple, essentially because the vast majority of the



AFP PHOTO/RELI ANRAHAMI-ISRAEL OUT

Israeli Jews and the vast majority of the Palestinian Arabs know deep down in their heart of hearts that at the end of the day there will be a partition—two states—two Jerusalems—and they even know roughly where the borderline between the two states is going to be, give or take a couple of miles here or there.

Even people on both sides who object bitterly to this solution or think it is national disaster or sacrilegious, know in their heart of hearts that it's going to happen. They don't want it, they will do everything they can do to delay or to derail this solution, but they know.

As I said, it's about leadership. The best definition of leadership I ever heard in my life came from Harry S. Truman, in the book called *Plain Speaking*. The interviewer asks Truman, "How does it feel to sit in the Oval Office and be the mightiest guy in the world?" Truman replies, "Oh my, oh my, if a guy sits in the Oval Room thinking that he is the mightiest guy in the world, he is in big, big trouble, and so is the country and so is the world." Truman continues, "The only prerogative you have when you sit there is that you are in a good position to persuade people to do things which in their heart of hearts they know they should do but don't want to."

Bribing people into doing things is not leadership. Forcing people into doing things is not leadership. Leadership is persuading them to do things that they don't want to do, or they are afraid to do, or they would like to delay and postpone.

Have you ever seriously considered going into politics?

I never did. Other people considered me, but I never considered me. Vaclav Havel once asked me, why don't I follow his example and go into politics? I said if all the writers went into politics, the politicians will write the novels, and this will be the end of civilization as we know it.

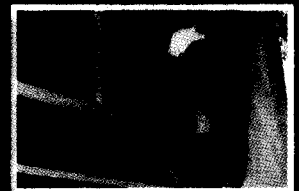
Reading the newspapers here in Israel, it looks like those who are the most leery of peace portray themselves as the most patriotic.

Isn't it the same in America that the Right sees itself as patriotic and presents the Left as unpatriotic? That's old and universal. Are they better Zionists than I am? I don't

think so. Are they more patriotic than I am? I don't think so. Are they more shortsighted than I am? Yes, I think they are.

The idea of a two-state solution is nothing new. It was the original idea behind the 1947 United Nations Partition Resolution.

Always there for the people of Israel.



Israelis are being attacked in their schools and homes, still trying to lead their daily lives. JNF doesn't just respond to headlines - we have partnered with the people of Israel from the beginning.

We are there! JNF builds security bypass roads to protect residents living on dangerous borders, providing parents and their children safe means of traveling to work and school.

We are there! When 9,000 Gaza evacuees were left homeless, JNF cleared ground for greenhouses and fields, funded temporary homes for families in need and broke ground on two new communities in the Negev.

We are there! JNF helps alleviate the trauma experienced by Israeli children living in areas under attack by bringing them to recreational camps in JNF forests. JNF has created youth leadership programs for Sderot and other communities in need.

We are there! JNF has improved the quality of life for residents of Sderot and the western Negev region by constructing two security roads, three Central Parks, playgrounds, recreational facilities and four reservoirs. JNF is providing fire trucks. It's building new communities like Be'er Milka, which are improving the region's economy.

JNF makes life better for Israel's people.

Take action now to support our work through volunteering or by making a donation at:

**1-888-JNF-0099
www.jnf.org**



Absolutely. And the partition was a very commonsensical solution. (I don't refer to the lines of the '47 partition—those lines are passé.) You see, there is one very simple fact that both Jews and Arabs in this country had a great trouble grasping. Now they finally grasp it. And the fact is we are not alone in this country. We are Jews and we are Palestinians. Now there are about five and a half million Jews in this country. They are not going anywhere. They don't have anywhere to go. There are four million Palestinians in this country. They are not going anywhere. They don't have anywhere to go, either. This very small country, about the size of the state of New Jersey, it is the one and only homeland of two nationalities. They cannot unite and become one happy family because they are not one and because they are not happy. And because they are not family. They are two families.

In the meantime, what can Israel do to treat the Arabs who live within its borders better?

It's not about "treating" the Arabs better. That's a condescending term and I don't accept it. We have to realize that Israel is the homeland of all its citizens. At the same time it is the homeland of the Jewish people. The state is not a holy object, the state is not a fetish, the state is a vehicle. This vehicle ought to belong to all its passengers without any discrimination. The passengers select the driver and they tell him where to go. An Israeli-Arab friend who died many years ago, and who served as Israel's Deputy Minister of Health, summed it all up for me in one chilling sentence. He said, "My country is at war with my people." We have to sort out the feud with the Palestinians in order to pave the way for "normal" participation of the Arab-Israeli citizens in the Israeli project.

While in West Jerusalem during this visit, I was amazed by the increase in religiosity.

You may be a victim of a certain optical mistake, spending too much time in Jerusalem at the expense of the rest of Israel. Eighty percent of Israelis don't live in Jerusalem, they live in the coastal areas. They are hedonistic, middle-class, noisy, passionate, materialistic, pushy, and secular to the bottom. You don't see them on CNN very often. If I believed the media, I would come to the conclusion that Israel consists of 80 percent violent ultra-Orthodox settlers, 19 percent ruthless soldiers and one percent wonderful intellectuals like me who struggle for peace. This is fiction.

I can support what I tell you by some statistics. When Israel became a nation and elected the first Knesset in 1949, there were 18 delegates from the religious parties in the Knesset. Sixty years later, with what people assume is a religiousization of Israel—there are 22 religious party delegates out of 120. That means that every 15 years, the Orthodox and the ultra-Orthodox have gained one extra seat in the Knesset. So don't be misled by the Israel that is projected by world media.

Yet there has always been and still is conflict between those who are religious and secular.

We have a very serious problem between orthodox and secular in this country. We are not about to solve it. We will have to coexist with clenched teeth. Orthodox next door to secular, clenched teeth on both sides, and compromise. If we don't want civil war. And I don't.

The Israeli system is probably going to remain an unstable compromise between the Orthodox ideal of a Jewish theocracy and the secular preference for a democracy. Let's not forget how church and state were resolved in other countries and in other centuries, if they were resolved at all, through rivers of blood and civil wars. Even phlegmatic England fought against itself over church and state. The rules of the game

in France were resolved by guillotine. Even America, God-blessed America, fought a bloody civil war. Our Israeli civil war has been essentially a verbal civil war, with verbal casualties and verbal battles. We call each other terrible names, thus inflicting ulcers and heart attacks on each other.

Would a political system that gives small parties less influence help sort out the rules?

I don't know what's the best parliamentary system for Israel or what's the best election system for Israel. I have given it much thought, and I came up with a conclusion that either way we will be very divided. It's not the end of the world.

What is your vision for the future of Israel?

If we have a two-state solution and peace with the Arabs, we will still have to deal with some very real issues such as poverty, alienation and multiculturalism. It's not that I predict some ideal vision at the end of the road. I don't want the end of the road. I would like Israel to remain intellectually and philosophically divided for the rest of eternity. I think being divided, as long as the divisions are not violent, is a blessing. It's a gold mine of culture and creativity. Of course, in this division I will be very glad for my kind of Israelis to be the majority and for the others to be the minority. But it is an open-ended game, and I accept it and I like it.

How does the border wall fit into your vision of the future?

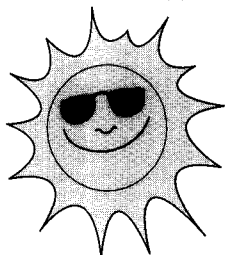
The trouble with this wall is that it is being built in the wrong place. It may be necessary sometimes to build a wall between my garden and a neighbor's garden, especially where there is animosity, hatred and suspicion. But this wall is being built not between my garden and my neighbor's garden. It is in the neighbor's garden. That's wrong.

So maybe for a while we will have a wall between Israel and Palestine, with gates in the wall, and passport control and visas. Eventually, Israelis and Palestinians will hop over the partition for business or for a cup of coffee together. Eventually, they will remove the wall in favor of a common market, or a federation, or whatever.

But step one ought to be a fair divorce. The two divorcing parties are definitely staying in the same apartment. No one is moving out. And it will be necessary to decide who gets bedroom A and who gets bedroom B. And since the apartment is very small, special arrangements ought to be made about the kitchen and bathroom. Very inconvenient. But the alternative is too terrible.

Yes, we need to build a metaphorical partition between Israel and Palestine, and perhaps for a while even a physical partition. It's a very common sentimentalist mistake—common among peace-loving progressive people in America, for example—to assume that first we have to cure the hatred and become friends and then we can make peace. Throughout history it has worked the other way around. First peace is made between enemies with clenched teeth and even with bad intentions. Then eventually sometimes there occurs an emotional de-escalation, the process of healing. This may take generations.

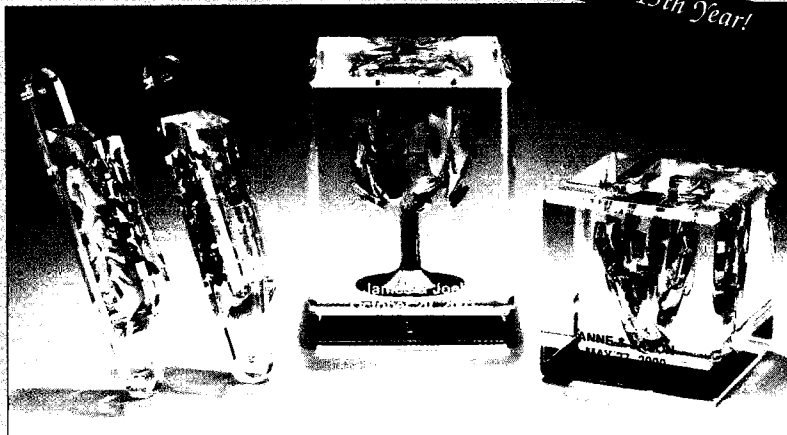
Do you feel hopeful for Israel's future? You know, being an Israeli of my age—I am almost 69—is roughly the equivalent of being a 350-year-old American. I saw the birth of the nation with my own eyes. I witnessed the Israeli equivalent of the Boston Tea Party. I personally knew the George Washington and Abraham Lincoln of Israel. I saw the beginnings and they were really against all odds. I think if we Israelis make the right choices and we do the right things we'll stand a good chance to thrive. Kicking and screaming, but we will thrive. ☺



Felice & Marty Seligmann
Danielle Amdur
Seligmann Group LLC
seligmanngroup@bellsouth.net
Re/Max Greater Atlanta 770-238-0100
Website: www.seligmanngroup.com

Tired of snow?
Tired of hurricanes?
Tired of earthquakes?
MOVE TO ATLANTA

Call three Atlanta Real Estate Mavens today for a free consultation of services available



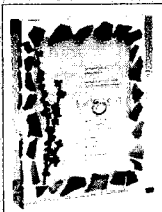
Our 15th Year!

Break Tradition!

Give the ultimate one-of-a-kind gift to the bride and groom—

The Lucite® Wedding Cube
The Lucite® Wedding Mezuzah

Send us the actual broken glass or bulb from the ceremony and we'll have it suspended as a crystal-clear Lucite® Cube or Mezuzah (or both!) for you to give to the happy couple. Imagine—that magical second when the glass is broken—frozen in time—forever! Two additional items for your broken wedding glass are:



The Lucite® "Tree of Life": A one-of-a-kind sculpture, shaped from the pieces of your broken wedding glass. Every tree is different. There will never be two alike in the world...ever!

The Lucite® Wedding Invitation: Displaying both symbols of the Jewish wedding—the invitation plus broken wedding glass shards.

The Treasured Collection

For more information call us toll free 1-800-729-2321

301-986-8888 • Fax: 301-986-0370

www.treasuredcollection.com

9 Candlelight Court • Potomac, MD 20854



MWA/2007