

Bar-Ilan University  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Department of Political Studies

The Program in  
Conflict Management  
and Negotiation

Democracy & Civility  
The Lainer Chair  
for Democracy  
and Civility

The Chair for Society  
and Judaism

The Argov Center for  
the Study of the Jewish  
People

# Judaism And State

## Essays and Studies



Israel: Dreams and Reality  
A Dialogue  
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks  
Amos Oz

May 24th, 2001

# **Israel: Dreams and Reality**

**A Dialogue**

Participants

**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks  
&  
Amos Oz**



Bar-Ilan University

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- The Argov Center for the Study of Israel and the Jewish people focuses on two Dimensions of Israel's Identity as A Jewish State.



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The Argov Center for the Study of Israel and the Jewish people focuses on two Dimensions of Israel's Identity as A Jewish State.

- A The reciprocal association between the state of Israel and Diaspora Jewry. This category includes - the State's contribution to strengthening the Jewish identity of Diaspora Jewish communities, her participation in the fight against anti-semitism, and her promotion of Jewish immigration and absorption. Under this category also come expressions of the Diaspora's solidarity with the State of Israel and world Jewry's contribution to maintaining and defending Israel's strength.
- B The Articulation of Israel's identity as a Jewish state, in the State's laws, symbols and rites and in the tenor of her public sphere. This includes such topics as: the influence of the Jewish political tradition on the format of Israel's government and legal system; issues concerning relations between religion and the State; and the relationship between Judaism and democracy.

The Argov Center seeks to contribute towards a better understanding of the topics of its interest by initiating and encouraging research; by organizing conferences and seminars; and by issuing publications in these areas. Argov Center is directed by Prof. Eliezer Don-Yehiya. ■

■ **The Sara and Simha Lainer Chair in Democracy and Civility**



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**The Sara and Simha Lainer Chair in Democracy and Civility** was established by the Lainer family in honor of their parents. The objective of the Lainer Chair is to promote democracy and civility in Israeli society while maintaining the character of the State of Israel as a Jewish State. One of the central functions of the Chair is to demonstrate that Judaism and democracy do not contradict one another. On the contrary, democracy and civility are classic Jewish values, that must exist at all levels of Israeli society. The Lainer Chair focuses on four fields: education, dialogue between the different sectors in Israeli society, academic conferences and publications. The Chair is directed by Prof. Ella Belfer ■

■ **The Chair for Judaism and Society**

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**The Chair for Judaism and Society** has set as a goal the advancement of interdisciplinary research and intellectual involvement in questions relating to Judaism and society. The Chair is involved in two central issues: The first issue is Jewish identity and character as religion, society and culture from a universal and historical perspective, and the second issue is the extent to which the State of Israel can maintain a civil society.

The Chair combines its academic interest in the above issues with a practical approach. It is intended to perform an in-depth study of the obstacles (both contemporary and inherent) to the setting up of a Jewish civil society in Israel. The chair is directed by Prof. Shmuel Sandler. ■

■ **The interdisciplinary Program in Conflict Management and Negotiation**

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**The interdisciplinary Program in Conflict Management and Negotiation** at Bar Ilan University grants degrees at both MA and PHD level. Participating faculty members are drawn from the social sciences (political studies and international relations, psychology, sociology, communications, and economics), humanities (philosophy and rhetoric), the law school, education, social work, business administration and Jewish studies. The faculty, students, and other participants reflect the wide spectrum of Israeli/Jewish society, and form the nucleus of a community of scholars that will work together to develop and expand the role of ADR (Alternative dispute resolution), mediation, and conflict management. The program has initiated and sponsored several international conferences in the past few years, including "Jewish Approaches to Conflict resolution", "Israeli-Palestinian Relations after the Failure of the Oslo Process", "Religion and Conflict resolution" and "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Negotiation and Mediation". The program also holds research seminars on international diplomacy, trains mediators for the Bar-Ilan religious/secular dialogue and the Project for Israel-Palestinian Dialogue. It was initiated by the late Hans Bachrach of Melbourne, Australia, and is directed by Professor Gerald M. Steinberg.

On May 24th, 2001, a symposium was held in Bar Ilan University between two important intellectual leaders of the contemporary Jewish world - Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of Britain and the Commonwealth, and Amos Oz, the Israeli writer. The symposium was sponsored by research institutes and chairs at the Department of Political Studies in Bar Ilan University and initiated by Dr. Jonathan Rynhold of the Department of Political Studies. Professors Shmuel Sandler, Gerald Steinberg, and Stuart Cohen, along with Ms. Judy Lever, Ms. Sharon Levi and Mr. David Fuchwanger all contributed to the organization of the evening. At its commencement, each of the two speakers addressed the crowd independently. This was immediately followed by the featured dialogue. After the dialogue, the audience was given the opportunity to ask questions to which the speakers responded in turn and closing statements were made by both. Due to the significance of this dialogue, we have decided to publish its content. The transcript of the evening was sent to the two speakers who modified and amended their speeches. Dr. Jonathan Rynhold edited the publication; Ms. Tzippy Israeli and Ms. Shlomit Stern have prepared it for publishing.

■ Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks

Jonathan Sacks is one of Britain's leading intellectuals. Since 1991 Sacks has served as Chief Rabbi of Britain and the Commonwealth. He is widely recognised as a leading exponent of Modern Orthodoxy having written widely on contemporary Jewish thought. He is the author of numerous books including "**The Politics of Hope**", and "**A Letter in The Scroll**" recently won a **National American Jewish Book Award**. His latest book is entitled *The Dignity of Difference*.

■ Amos Oz

Amos Oz is one of Israel's most important writers. His many books have earned him a worldwide reputation. His latest book is "**On Love and Darkness, an autobiographical Novel**". His many articles on various aspects of Israeli society and politics have made him one of Israel's foremost public figures. He is Professor of Literature at Ben Gurion University of the Negev and incumbent of the Agnon Chair for Hebrew literature. In 1991 he became a member of the Academy for the Hebrew Language. Amos Oz is the recipient of the Femina Prize for literature, the Frankfurt International Peace Prize and the 1998 Israel Prize for literature. His books have been translated into 32 languages including Arabic.

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## ■ Preface

In recent years two interrelated phenomena have come increasingly to threaten the stability of Israeli democracy: the polarization of its political culture and the deterioration in the civility of its public discourse. The dialogue between Rabbi Sacks and Amos Oz is important because it contains within it a common effort by people representing differing views and ways of life to overcome these problems.

The event was deliberately entitled a dialogue rather than a debate. A debate is essentially a competitive venture, in which the name of the game is to demonstrate how right you are and how wrong the other person is. There is no exchange of ideas, merely the promotion of preconceived ideas. In contrast, a dialogue involves genuine engagement with the other; give and take. A dialogue bonds the participants together in a collective venture that is at once challenging and enriching. A dialogue may involve as passionate, deep-seated divisions as found in any debate; the difference is in the approach to discourse, not in its content. Yet dialogue is not simply a politer form of debate; rather it embodies a completely different approach to politics. Political discourse in Israel often descends rapidly into struggle of all-against-all, in which combatants speak at each other simultaneously. This situation is not simply a function of manners, but a reflection of a reticence to grant the other legitimacy, which in turn is a function of fear of the other. Such mutual delegitimization closes down civic space, restricting a polity's ability to 'agree to disagree'. In contrast, a dialogue opens up civic space, strengthening a polity's ability to grapple with diversity. As such, dialogue is a vital component of democracy. This dialogue between a British Chief Rabbi and a secular Israeli author is a shining example of the opening of civic, and indeed Jewish, space.

This dialogue also presents a way to confront growing polarization in Israel. One factor that traditionally served to soften the many deep cleavages in Israel was the existence of a strong common Jewish public culture. In recent years this culture has been under attack from the rise of religious sectarianism on one hand and the rise of consumerist libertarianism on the other hand. In order to counter this trend Amos Oz proposes a coalition between secular members of the House of Berl/Brenner/Bialik and religious-Zionists. The coalition would seek to strengthen this Jewish public culture by focusing on three common ideals: protection of the Hebrew language, defending the spirit of Israel -meaning the core texts of Jewish culture be they religious or secular, and finally the promotion of social justice. The enactment of this agenda in a spirit of dialogue would not only counter polarization but also represent a move towards both a more Jewish and a more democratic Israel. ■

Dr Jonathan Rynhold

### ■ Rabbi Sacks

Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor for me to be with you and participate with Professor Amos Oz in what I hope will be an open, deep and significant conversation. Amos Oz is one of the greatest authors in the world. He is a man of conscience, a man of truth, one who knows how to sing the song of his people in hard times. I thank him profoundly for agreeing to this meeting.

First of all, I must apologize for my Hebrew. A few days ago when we discussed the content of this forum, Amos said that it is impossible to find two Jews who agree with each other 'and personally', he added, 'I am not sure that I agree with myself'. As for me, I would add that when I speak in Hebrew, I'm not sure if I understand myself! I am a Diaspora Jew. But since I am an Orthodox Rabbi as well, a representative of the world of Torah and tradition, I want, first of all, to explain why I think this meeting is important.

The Gemara, in Tractate Brachot, says that our forefather Isaac established the afternoon prayer. The scripture says: "Isaac went out to converse in the field in the afternoon" and the Gemara says: "What is conversation if not prayer?" What a profound and poetic remark! Conversation is a kind of a prayer. Why? Because conversation is, by its very nature, a meeting with the other, and the human other is in the image of the divine Other. If I cannot be open to the other, then I cannot truly encounter G-d. Conversation is thus inherently spiritual. In a conversation there are two movements: speaking and listening. In this respect, there is good news and bad news concerning the Jewish people. The good news: we know how to speak. We are among the great talkers of the world. The bad news: I am not sure if we know how to listen. Sometimes we forget that the

most fundamental commandment in the Torah is "Shema Israel"- Listen, O Israel.

When G-d gave the Torah to the Children of Israel, He revealed Himself, not as in Christianity, to the son of G-d, and not as in Islam to the prophet of G-d, but to the people of G-d - to a whole nation, men, women and children, believers and non-believers alike. Our Torah, our faith, was not directed to a community of believers alone. It was a covenant with a whole nation. In the broadest possible sense, therefore, the Oral Torah is the prolonged conversation of the Jewish people in each generation and every place about our past, our future and our destiny. The Torah is a song scored for multiple voices.

What has happened to this song in our time? If there is no serious global Jewish conversation, if there is just a series of monologues, then I see great danger. Three times in our history the Jewish nation suffered exile: the Egyptian exile, the Babylonian and Assyrian exile, and the longest of them all, after the destruction of the Second Temple. Each occurred for the same reason: the divisions among the people, the hatred between brothers. Between Joseph and his brothers, between the kingdoms of Israel and Judea and between the different sects in the Second Temple era. One sentence resonates throughout our history. It was said about Joseph's brothers: "They hated him and could not speak peaceably unto him". If there is no conversation there is hatred. This is as true now as it was then. The Jewish people have been confronted by many empires: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Hitler's Third Reich and Stalin's Soviet Union. They have all disappeared, but the Jewish people always survived persecution to rise again. They were not defeated. The Jewish people lives. There is only one people capable of endangering the Jewish people - namely, the Jewish people. In the long run, our most serious enemy is not Arafat, Syria or Iran, but the wall of fear and misunderstanding between one Jew and another. If tonight we can make a small hole in this wall and heal somewhat the rifts among the people, then I say "Dayenu"- "It is enough."

Our subject tonight is the State of Israel: the dream and the reality. First, the dream: I once heard a lovely story from Eli Wiesel. There was a time



when Sigmund Freud and Theodore Herzl lived in the same district of Vienna. 'Fortunately,' he said, 'they never met. Can you imagine what would have happened had they met? Theodore Herzl would have said: I have a dream of a Jewish state. Freud would have replied: Tell me, Herr Herzl, how long have you been having this dream? Lie down on my couch, and I will psychoanalyze you.' Herzl would have been cured of his dreams and today there would be no Jewish state. Fortunately, the Jewish people have never been cured of their dreams. Today, despite all the difficulties, domestic and international, that confront Israel, it is important for me to say that it is, for me, a dream come true.

Was there ever in history another instance of a people, exiled for 2000 years, with no power and often face-to-face with the angel of death, which arose to establish a state, fight wars, plant fields, build cities, ingather exiles, and save endangered communities, in the process building an open society and a democracy? For Israel's achievements there are no precedents, no parallels. The only adequate metaphor for State of Israel is the resurrection of the dead. I want to say, as a person of faith, that each man and woman in Israel, believer and non-believer alike, who came to live here, serve in the Israeli Defense Forces, and contribute to building a Jewish society, has fulfilled the commandment of settling the land and the commandment of "Do not stand by when your brother is being threatened." Whether consciously or unwittingly, their work has been holy work. Ashrei ha-am shekachah lo, 'Happy the people who are thus.' As our sages of blessed memory said about the splitting of the Red Sea: "Maid servants who witnessed that miracle, saw what Ezekiel never saw" - Ordinary men and women saw what the greatest prophets did not see. That is the story of our time. We have seen with our own eyes what the prophet Isaiah saw only in a vision. "This is G-d's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes". But if you were to ask me, not about the past or present, but about the future, whether the task of Zionism is yet complete, then I would say that there is much yet to do. The keyword in the Bible, used by all the prophets of Israel, is teshuva - return. That word, in biblical Hebrew, carries a twofold sense. It signifies the physical return of a people to its land, and the spiritual

return of a people to its faith. The two are indivisible: so all the prophets believed. We have witnessed the physical return. We have not yet witnessed the spiritual return.

I understand from the depth of my being that to create Zionism a degree of secularization was necessary. It is impossible to build a state, a society and an economy if one is convinced that G-d will do all these things Himself, without needing human intermediaries. Last night, I went for a walk with my wife along the sea front in Tel Aviv and I saw a sign saying: Ein Matzil. Evidently in modern Hebrew it means, "No lifeguard". But my first instinct was to read it in biblical Hebrew, as a declaration of heresy, meaning, "There is no Savior!" - No G-d in the world, G-d forbid. Perhaps to save a people from exile, you must believe there is no other savior. That, needless to say, is not my credo. I believe that we, the children of Israel, are G-d's partners in creation and redemption. But I understand those who said: we prayed and waited for too long, and now no one can save us but ourselves. Today, however, we are in a different position. In the past century, it was difficult for at least important minority of Jews to sustain a religious perspective. Not coincidentally, Sigmund Freud's central idea was the Oedipus complex - a story of alienation between fathers and sons, a metaphorical narrative of sons who want to kill, destroy, or refute the world of their fathers, the world of tradition. Freud correctly diagnosed his time. The story of the past century was a tale of Jewish rebellion against Judaism. But rebellion is a sign of youth. And at the age of 53 years, the State of Israel has outgrown its youth. It is time for a more mature approach to life, and to faith.

In the country's early years there was a movement called "the Canaanites". Today they are called "post Zionists". This is a doctrine that views the aim of Jewish culture as to behave 'like all the gentiles' and to create a society with no Jewish characteristics. Could that be the high-point of 4000 years of history - to be like all the nations? The Americans do not want to be like all the nations. The British do not want to be like all the nations. Why is this nation different from all other nations? Because all other nations want to be special, unique, but this nation does not, it wishes to be like

everyone else.

There was a Hassid, Shlomo Carlbach, of blessed memory, who used to say: When I go to university campuses and I ask the students 'What are you?' - if somebody says 'I'm a Catholic', I know he is Catholic. If he says 'I'm a Protestant', I know he is a Protestant. If he says 'I'm just a human being', I know he is a Jew. The time has come for us to stop denying our past, our tradition, our heritage and our spiritual world. As believers, sons of believers, we are not grasshoppers. We are giants. Where is our pride, our self-confidence? Jewish faith is too vast to be the sole property of religious Jews. Where are the religious poets, musicians and filmmakers of today? Where is the spiritual literature of a mature, independent nation? Where will we find among the graduates of the Yeshivah and the university, today's Isaiah or Maimonides, a guide to the perplexed of our times? The story is told about Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first chief Rabbi of the Yishuv, of blessed memory, that when he was in London during the First World War, he often went to the National Gallery to see Rembrandt's paintings. According to tradition, on the first day of creation, G-d created a special light which He then concealed, saving it for future righteous souls. Rabbi Kook used to say that G-d had given something of that special light to Rembrandt. That is what he saw in Rembrandt's paintings. Where is the Rabbi, or for that matter the secular Jew, that could now think such a thought?

On an individual level, one can live comfortably as a religious or secular Jew today in London, New York or even Moscow. What can only exist in the State of Israel? A Jewish public culture, which by its very nature is the result of a deeply rooted, wide-ranging and open conversation between all streams, denominations and ethnic groups. It is the conversation of the Jewish people with itself, with the world, and with G-d. That is the kind of conversation that is like a prayer. It is a conversation that represents the Oral Torah of our day. I pray that our shared words tonight might form a modest prelude to the great, deep conversation that we need to have in the years to come. Amen. ■

#### ■ Amos Oz

Rabbi Sacks, my dear hosts, teachers and friends. It is good to be back. Rabbi Sacks was right about conversation not merely being a mode of contact between people, but being one of the finest modes of contact between a person and his soul. But here we start the debate right away. I'm actually very sorry that Herzl did not meet Freud in Vienna. If Herzl would have met Freud in Vienna, whether on his couch or not, I believe Herzl would have persuaded Freud to come here and we all would be very much the richer for it. It is a pity he did not meet Kafka. He also was in the neighborhood. It is a pity he did not meet Einstein. It is a pity he did not meet Spinoza. I could go on and on about the people whom it is a pity he did not meet until dawn breaks and it will be time for the Shema prayer of the morning service! But one thing I would joyously like to share with you.

You have no idea how spiritually uplifted I felt when I heard Rabbi Sacks speak Hebrew. I will not be revealing a great secret, nor will I be speaking slander if I tell you that there are some Rabbis who have lived in Israel for many years, among them Rabbis whose voices are heard from one end of the world to the other (I almost said heaven forbid) and they do not know how to say one Hebrew sentence properly. By the way, in this regard and only in this regard, there is no difference between the castration of the Hebrew language by the Orthodox, the Reform, or the Conservative movement. They represent a united front. Ladies and gentlemen, there is no other common language for the nation of Israel in our days other than the Hebrew language. And when I say common language I mean, literally, a language in which the Eastern Jew, the Western Jew, the Southern Jew and the Israeli Arab can all use to converse with one another. But on a

deeper level as well, we have no other common language. We have no other form of self-determination that can unite us entirely, outside of the Hebrew language. It could well be our greatest contemporary treasure. It could well be the most wonderful collective creation of the people of Israel. Eliezer Ben Yehuda did not conceive of the Jewish people reviving a dead language, like Latin or ancient Greek. For it was never dead; it was a sleeping beauty. And if I had the time, I would tell you the great secret of who gave it the kiss of life; it was not any single individual. Anyway, the Hebrew language is under siege, a siege from within. More and more people, from the right and the left, secular, ultra-orthodox and others, are turning their backs on it. They speak in a quasi-American dialect, a rather poor quality, and lame American dialect. Not far from here, in the heart of Israel by all accounts - even according to the "doves" - a new city is being built called: 'Airport City'. For this reason alone, governments in other countries would fall. For this reason alone, crowds would go on to the streets to protest, in other countries that is. Just a few days ago I got a letter from an important mayor in Israel who is organizing an international convention, the letter was written in English. I was furious. I sent back the letter without reading it together with a letter to him in which I declared that if a mayor in France would dare write to an author a letter in English he would lose his job. You might be amazed to hear such hawkish words from a moderate, a dovish man like myself. However, when it comes to the Hebrew language I feel that we are in grave danger of losing both the ground beneath our feet and the sky above our heads. What about those Zionist dreams? First of all I would like to note that out of all the weird, wonderful and even the less wonderful visions of the 19th century, the only vision that was truly realized was Zionism. But, like every dream-come-true the Zionist dream is no longer the same as it was when it was still just a dream. This fact does not emanate from the intrinsic nature of Zionism, rather it emanates from the intrinsic nature of dreams. We mentioned Freud and Herzl, two dreamers par excellence. The nature of all the dreams in the world is that they are wonderful, perfect, and spectacular just as long as they remain a dream, a vision, a

fantasy. A dream-come-true is a dream that has become somewhat worn, somewhat shabby and it may also have become somewhat of a disappointment. It is true when one builds a house; it is the distinction between planning and building the house. It is true when one writes a novel, as I can testify from my own experience. It is true when one realizes a sexual fantasy. It is true when a person establishes a family. It is true when a person plants a garden. Any dream that becomes a reality contains within it an element of disappointment. Of what else did we dream? Take the Jewish state, the middle name on its identity card, had it had such an identity card, should have been 'Great Expectations'. With all due respect to Charles Dickens. What didn't we hope for! That we should be a light unto the nations - what a light! A global generator! That we should renew our days as at ancient times; that we should give the world a non-stop macho show; that we should break the world record in morality. I do not mock these dreams; I just note their detachment from reality, a detachment that spans the great distance between heaven and earth. I said that Israel is a dream come true, yet I must correct myself immediately because the truth is more complex. It was not one dream. There were a great many dreams. It was in fact a frail and uncomfortable coalition of different visions, hopes and master plans, some of which contradicted each other. The common denominator underlying all these plans, including the most bizarre is captured in a line from a cherished old poem, especially dear to me because it has almost been forgotten: "Here in the desired land of our forefathers, all dreams will come true". All dreams do not come true in life, in any thing, in any matter. Not in marriage; not in politics; and not in the land of our forefathers.

Still, perhaps two or three dreams did come true. There is a beautiful collection of poems by Yehuda Amichai, it is entitled, 'The Distance of Two Hopes' [תקוות שתי מרחק]. This is what happened to the many Zionist dreams: some came true to such an extent that we have no respect for them anymore; we turned our backs on them, for example, the revival of the Hebrew language. Every day, about seven million people speak Hebrew; Jewish Israelis, Arab Israelis, Arabs in the territories. People who live abroad, for reasons that I do not understand, often speak Hebrew as well; almost

seven million people. A hundred years ago, there was not more than a few thousand people who spoke Hebrew on a daily basis, either in Israel or for that matter in the whole world. A handful of anonymous, emaciated and shadowless people spoke Hebrew. I am not talking about the Hebrew of the prayer book or the Hebrew of rituals. I am talking about everyday Hebrew, kitchen Hebrew, business Hebrew, garden Hebrew, street Hebrew, bedroom Hebrew. What man told a woman: 'I love you' or for that matter what woman told a man: 'I love you', in Hebrew a hundred years ago? There was no intimate language. When I was a boy in Jerusalem just a while ago, not so long, just fifty or so years ago, there were already some one hundred thousand Hebrew speakers, which was a great leap from the deveral few thousand speakers of the previous generation. But in the Jerusalem of my childhood, anyone over the age of about fifty did not speak Hebrew. They spoke Ladino or Yiddish or Polish or German or Russian or Arabic or Persian; not Hebrew. Indeed, as a boy, I was really afraid that when I got to fifty, I would wake up in the morning and find that I could only speak in Yiddish! I thought it was like one's hair turning gray or like wrinkles - a matter of age. Seven million people now speak Hebrew, though not everyone does so happily. Some Arabs are displeased that they have to speak Hebrew to earn a living. But seven million people! Do you know that seven million is more than the number of people in the world who speak Norwegian! Do you know that seven million is more than the number of people in the world who speak Danish! Do you know that seven million is much more than the number of English-speakers in the world in the days of William Shakespeare! In those days there were fewer than five million English speakers on both sides of the Atlantic. Having said all that, I do not mean to say that every contemporary Hebrew author or poet is a Shakespeare. There are no more than five or six Shakespeares in Tel Aviv at this moment. Still, this is a great achievement, unless we stop appreciating it.

Well then, some of the dreams came true, some of the dreams were forgotten and some of the dreams became, in my eyes, horrifying nightmares. This also happens. From the very beginning of the Zionist enterprise, the founders had high hopes for it. These hopes differed from

one another and sometimes they contradicted each other. There were, for example, those who came to the land "to build and to be built". To build what? To be built into what? There were those who came: "to renew our days as ancient times"; to rebuild the kingdoms of David and Solomon. They had an unmistakably clear biblical picture of the days of David and Solomon. There were others who came here not in order to renew the kingdom of David and Solomon but to repair the body, the soul and the heart, and to prepare the land for the coming of the Messiah, which they believed was very close to hand. Some were less modest and did not expect the coming of the Messiah, but believed that they themselves were the Messiah! There were some who came here inspired not by biblical visions, nor by Messianic fervour but rather to revive (specifically here!) the Shtetl of Eastern Europe in the middle of the Land of Canaan. To this very day I have American friends who come here for their first time, look first to the left and then to the right and then proclaim with sadness: 'No bagel, no lox, ergo no Jewish state'. Try telling them that our forefather Abraham did not speak Yiddish and that Maimonides, in his entire lifetime, ate neither bagels nor lox. What can you do? There was also longing to establish here a kingdom of Yiddishkite.

There were some who wanted to establish here a Marxist paradise that Russia herself would come and pay homage to. The Marxist Kibbutz founders had a dream that they did not talk about. But maybe in my role as a story-teller I can finally reveal to you what the dream of those Zionist-Marxists really was. They dreamt that one day Stalin himself would visit the Kibbutz, and they would take him on a tour and show him the hen-house and the cow-shed, the dining room and the childrens' houses. Then they would bring him to the dining room and give him a nightlong lecture explaining, once and for all, what Marxism-Leninism really is - they, of course, knew better than him. Actually, they really did know better than him! Then at the end of the lecture, Stalin would stand up and proclaim in fluent Russian: "Bloody Jews! I must admit that you have implemented socialism better here than we did in Russia". Then they would all die of delight. There were others, for example the founders of my Kibbutz, Hulda, who were not Marxists. They did not even dream of a Jewish state. They

dreamt about much less than that. They were Gordonists, Tolstoyians, very spiritual people, whose dream was not to create a state. To them, a state seemed a foreign, gentile concept. A state was considered a toy for young children. They dreamed of a loose federation of small rural communities, no cities, in which people would work the land, living a life of brotherhood and partnership. They would share amongst themselves everything; they would reach an elevated spiritual level through direct contact with nature, through communion with the landscape, through equality, a life of minimalism and simplicity. I call them quasi-religious social-anarchists. I opportunity and make three observations, which are only partially related to our subject, but I will not be able to live with myself if I do not do so. These three comments will be controversial, but I must say them. They are things that burden heart and conscience, and if I said that we are a debating society, then this is what we are. First, doves and hawks, right and left, must poignantly ask themselves whether, in light of recent events, the day is nearing in which the territories we conquered during the Six Day War, the occupied territories, have become a great burden. Even without peace, it would be better for the State of Israel to unilaterally withdraw to its borders, and be prepared to defend itself from that border. I assess it will be less difficult than Israel defending itself from within the occupied territories. Second, when the day comes to return to the negotiating table, and it will come, our first demand must be - this must come as an Israeli condition - a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian refugees problem. Not the 'Right of Return', No way. But a decisive solution to the problem as an Israeli demand. Even if the other side says, "There's no need, let it go, it's not your business, leave it to us'. As long as hundreds of thousands of people are rotting in camps, partially through the fault of their own leaders, partially our fault, that does not matter. The question is the suffering that occurs on our doorstep; the suffering, the degeneration, the despair, hundreds of thousands of people living in the gutter. Without resolving this issue, Israel will not have security. It is a problem of Israeli national security. If I were to represent Israel in negotiations, I would support such a proposal for security reasons, not only moral ones. Without a solution to the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, not in Israel, wherever

Palestine will be, without such a solution we shall not sign. Third, as a man who has conducted many dialogues with Palestinians and has many connections with Palestinians, I feel today, tragically, that the Palestinian people have been misled again. Misled by a fanatical leadership that leads them on a disastrous path for them and for us. Yet, straight away I want to remind you that no two people here agree totally with each other, and as Rabbi Sacks said, you will hardly ever meet someone who agrees with himself or herself, because everyone has ambivalent feelings. We are six and a half million citizens, six and a half million prime ministers, six and a half million prophets, six and a half million Messiahs, everyone shouts at the same time and no one listens. Only I sometimes listen, that is how I make a living. Otherwise, what would I write about? Every bus stop in this country can be easily turned into a raging debating arena in which complete strangers argue not only about strategy, economics and family, but also about the essence of history, the meaning of life, the nature of morality, theology, about the link between the nation and its G-d and about metaphysics. Complete strangers! So long as they argue from a moral stance, it does not bother them if they push their way to the front of the queue; that is different. I tell you, and you can quote me it is not a secret; I love this country even in the days when I cannot bear it. I love this country even in moments that I cannot stand it and I have plenty of those. I love it, among other things, because of its temperament; it is a debating people, a people full of vitality, a people with fire in their bones. Even if the fire seems to me a strange fire, and my fire seems to them a strange fire, that same temperament is close to my heart.

Do you know why this temperament is close to my heart? It is because it is a Jewish temperament; because it accurately represents the wonderful anarchist strain within the Jewish tradition. I said here five years ago, and I still agree with myself although five years have passed, and that doesn't always happen to me: It is no coincidence that the Jewish people have no pope, and cannot have a pope. If someone would stand up and crown themselves "the Pope of the Jews", everyone would go up to that Pope, give him a pat on the back and say, "Hey Pope, you don't know me, I don't

know you, but my grandfather and your uncle did business together in Minsk/Casablanca. So shut up for a minute and let me explain to you once and for all what G-d really wants from us." I tell you it is true, it is not blasphemy. That is it. That is the kernel. That is the burning core of the Jewish tradition. That is why we do not have a Pope; therefore, I say in parentheses, any papal behavior in Jewish history seems to me a deviation. But, then again, I seem to them a deviation, so that is fine. Look, it begins in the ancient tradition in which our forefather Abraham, my neighbor - I live in Arad and he lived in Beer Sheva and Sodom - our forefather Abraham stands down there in Sidim valley, 15 kilometers from the place I live, and turns to G-d after bargaining with him like a used car salesman: 50 righteous, 40 righteous, 30 righteous, going down to 10 - does not help - he turns to him using audacious language, unbelievable language, "Will not the judge of all the earth do justice?!". Unthinkable! Not in Christianity and probably not in Islam either. What is Abraham doing when he exclaims, "Will not the judge of all the earth do justice?!" He actually prosecutes the chief executive, and tells him: even you are not above the law. More than that, he says to the legislator: you may be the source of all laws, but even you cannot play with the laws that you, yourself, have legislated. And we did not see fire come down from the heavens and consume Abraham when he said those awe-inspiring words. We did not see it.

This tradition continues on and on in the words of the prophets, with Job and again in the famous Talmudic story of Achnay's oven. It continues throughout all Jewish culture finding expression among the Hassidic Rabbis of the 18th century who prosecuted G-d in heaven in a Halachic trial; and no fire came out of heaven to consume them either. That is the wonderful anarchist tradition, everybody knows better. Any individual cannot only tell the other what to do, but also tell G-d what to do. And this tradition is beating strong, I tell you, like a wonderful pulsating vein, in the best of modern Hebrew literature: Bialik, Brenner, Berdichevsky, Uri Tzvi Greenberg, Yehuda Amichai, Martin Buber, Natan Zach, Yizhar and other contemporary writers. Not everyone though; "G-d shows compassion to the kindergarten children, less to the school children, and to the adults He will show no

mercy at all", writes Amichai. Or, "G-d, full of mercy, grant us an everlasting rest." If G-d were not full of mercy," writes Amichai, "then mercy would be on earth, not only with Him". Amichai is not a deviant; he is not an infidel. He drives on the highway of justice with the Jewish gene for justice seeking. That is the core. If we lose that core we lose everything. 100-130 years ago, Hebrew literature accepted this torch. It took upon itself the main burden of theological coping, of restlessness, of pursuing justice, of self-torment of the awe inspiring self-denial in the best of the tradition of the Biblical Prophets. In Bialik, Berdichevski and Mendele-Mocher Sforim's generation, Hebrew literature took upon itself this burdensome duty. It does not entirely bear the burden; not then and not today. Not all of today's literature is even interested in this burden. Not all of it even considers it relevant. But there is a core of Hebrew literature, which is actually the mainstream of the Israeli experience from time immemorial, not some kind of digression. I am among people who claim that religious politics, in all its shades, dovish and hawkish, ultra -Orthodox, moderate or other; the course of religious politics was a tragic mistake from the start. It is true that without religious politics, interests might not have been protected and the public domain might be less Jewish than it is, and maybe, who knows, heaven forbid, what else would have happened here. But the use of religious politics as a tool for advancing the religious perspective on life became a great hindrance, above all to the Jewish tradition itself. Because it closed it down in a ghetto; because it made it into a dangerous and threatening presence for a plethora of young secular people; because they immediately identified it as "not us - them". "They" want from "us" all sorts of things. They want to hound us; they want to tell us what to do and how to live; they do not let us live". The great ability to influence which is inherent in the Jewish tradition, as preached by Orthodox or other denominations, suffered a desperate blow by virtue of the fact that the observant Jews in the country closed themselves down in political ghettos (not all in the same way - but time is short, I can't get into the differences between different religious parties) albeit to a greater or lesser degree they still closed themselves down in political ghettos.

Now I will propose a practical proposition. Beyond the whole political

map, there are three forces in Israel. One force, as numerous as the sand on the beach, is the force of "Hellenist Jews".

And when I say Hellenists, I mean those people who are already uncomfortable with the Hebrew language. They still speak Hebrew but they are slowly turning it into English. I saw next to the taxi driver that brought me here an innocent headline in his newspaper, not territories, not politics, not controversial. The headline said [in Hebrew] "A Woman Was Bitten By A Dog". I was furious. Probably, the journalist who wrote that headline heard in English on TV, 'a woman was bitten by a dog'. Why did he not write [in Hebrew] "A dog has bitten a woman", and in that way build the right hierarchy in the Hebrew according to which the performer of the act always comes first, for moral reasons. "Abraham was sitting at the tent door" and not "The tent door by which Abraham was sitting". The act-maker, the verb, and then the adjectives. David the king, not the King David as in the hotel's name. That is the deepest hierarchy of the Hebrew language, and it is wonderful in my eyes. It heralds the same anarchism, the same aspiration for justice: first of all you are David, and then you are a king. Perhaps a king, perhaps not. You were David before becoming a king and when you will be a king no more - be David. "Went Abraham". Even more than "Abraham was sitting at the tent-door". First of all the action, then the actor, afterwards comes all the adjectives. "Went Abraham slowly" "slowly went Abraham", what do I know - to relax? Went Abraham to get high?! First of all who did what. So the moment you tell me a 'woman was bitten by a [ידי ענן] dog', my entire being screams... First of all, does a dog have hands? And if it had hands, what, did it bite her with its hands? This is the invasion of the Hellenists. The Hellenist tide wishes to escape, and this is what Rabbi Sacks spoke of when he said: there is only one nation who wants to be like everyone and does not want to be like itself. My father used to say: three nations live in Czechoslovakia: Czech, Slovaks, and Czechoslovakians- who are us, the Jews.

Well, I offer you a coalition, because I see the Hellenists grow to be as many as the sand on the beach. Apart from that, there is the community of observant Jews and me - an institution that I would call, "Berl house"

or "Bialik house" or "Brenner house" or "Agnon house". It is the same house.

The coalition that I propose to you is a coalition in three matters: First, protection of the Hebrew language. Are only the territories holy? - Every grain of earth from the land of the Israel?" Why shouldn't we protect the language, which is the dwelling place of all our spiritual assets, the sky above us. On this basis one can create a coalition. With this we have a common language. With this I see an immediate common denominator for the house of Brenner or Bialik in legislation, in political struggle, in street demonstrations; we shouldn't have here one big 'Airport City' with all that it represents. Second, defending the spirit means defending also what we call holy books and what we call secular books, as long as they are Jewish Culture. Third, the cry of the poor and exploited. I tell you that the cry of the exploited rises straight up to heaven. I live in Arad, I drive by poverty every day in Yerucham, in Dimona, in Caspiya. We have become the most spoilt nation, the nastiest. "Selling for money the poor, and the needy for shoes". This egoism, this nastiness, this horrible selfishness, it will lead us to hell. On this basis then, - defending the Hebrew language, defending the spirit and the cry of the poor and the exploited - we can create a coalition between observant Jews and the house of Bialik. ■

## ■ Rabbi Sacks

Prof. Oz, I heard in your words both great beauty and thoughts of great power. But I wonder whether those of whom you spoke, Bialik, Brenner, Berdichevski, whom Rabbi Kook called, "elevated souls", could not their thoughts be contained in the conventional wisdom of their times? These were Jews within whom the Jewish tradition was engrained. Many of them studied at the Volozhyn Yeshiva. The texts of our people were engraved in their hearts. If I'm not mistaken, some years ago, the Shenhar Commission studied the question of how much young Israelis in the state [non-religious] educational system knew about the Jewish tradition. Many of them could not name the five Books of the Torah, the Ten Commandments, the three Patriarchs or the four Matriarchs. Do you not fear that what we are seeing is a loss of cultural continuity, which should be of equal concern to you and to me, and I wonder whether therefore those righteous people of whom you speak are not part of a generation that has passed and has been replaced by a generation, for whom the great influences are, as somebody once said in Israel, the three M's: Madonna, McDonalds and Michael Jackson.

## ■ Amos Oz

Yes, I agree with Rabbi Kook in describing those great writers as 'elevated souls'. I honor Rabbi Kook in that I count him as a member of that club. He was, I think, a very tortured soul. I know that part of the torture, part of the wealth, part of the inspiration, came from the texts that are now being eroded. But, that is precisely, Rabbi, why I came here to propose a coalition. I think that the house of Brenner/Bialik alone is too weak to combat these new forces. I think the Orthodox, by themselves, are also

too weak to combat the Hellenisers. I think that in this respect we could work together. A friend of mine, Haim Guri, the poet, spoke to an audience a while ago, and among other things he said, 'Do not say it in Gat' (Samuel II) and the audience replied 'Why particularly in Gat? Why shouldn't the people in Gat know? Now this is precisely the greatest threat not only to continuity but also to renewal and regeneration. And I believe continuity and regeneration are two aspects of the same struggle. Continuity without regeneration and recreation or rebirth even - such continuity is doomed to become a museum; a fancy museum, a wonderful museum, but still only a museum. On the other hand, there is no creation and regeneration without continuity. I think we ought together to try to defend the nutritional texts, and by nutritional texts I mean the great Hebrew texts, beginning with, "In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth, continuing via the medieval poets, to contemporary literature. These are our treasures, if we give them up - it will not matter how big the country is - it won't do any good. So I totally agree, that there is a danger of losing the roots, literally losing the foundations, and I think we have to stand and defend our ground.

Let me ask you, Rabbi, if it is my turn now, if you don't mind, following your brilliant presentation, how much and to what an extent can non-Israeli Jews, diaspora Jews, relate to Israeli literature beyond translation. To what an extent can they therefore relate to the inner sight of the Israeli diversities? You know, I have friends in London, who are know better than I how many MPs Shas and Degel Hatorah have in the Knesset. They correct me, they know better. But they have no idea what is the essence of things; what are the moral foundations. They have a kind of gossip connection to Israeli dichotomies and dilemmas and moral diversities. What can we do about this? How do we go about intensifying this connection?

## ■ Rabbi Sacks

I am afraid I am going agree with you again. [Speaking now in Hebrew] But, I since I have not spent a long extended period of time in Israel it is difficult for me to speak in Hebrew with ease. I do believe it is a great mitzvah for all our boys and girls to speak Hebrew in all our Jewish schools.



This is what I saw in Toronto last week. There in every Jewish school they learn 'Hebrew in Hebrew'. In England it is a great pity that we have not achieved this yet, why, I do not know. But what I take from this dialogue is that the 'commandment of the hour' is to raise the level of knowledge of Hebrew in the Diaspora. For without this knowledge it is impossible to comprehend the other's reality, the reality of our brothers and sisters in Israel.

[Returns to English]. There was an assumption, a very easy and ready assumption among the early Zionists, those who went to Israel, those who did not go to Israel, that there was a natural coincidence of interests between Jews in Israel and Jews in the Diaspora. Yet there was only one time in the 19th century when German Orthodox and Reform Jews made a joint declaration. And you know what that declaration was? 'We will not have Theodore Herzl and Zionism in our country.' That is why the first Zionist congress, which was scheduled to be held in Munich, was in fact held in Basel. However, most Jews assumed that there was a natural coincidence of interest. I have to tell you [that assumption] does not exist anymore. Many Jews feel: 'I cannot identify with Israel'. I would still say that the majority of our community, on the contrary, support Israel come what may. But, for at least some Diaspora Jews to feel that they are part of Israel and Israel is part of them - that is difficult. It involves cognitive dissonance.

My view is that for 50 years of Zionism, Israel was a 'city of refuge'. Today, as far as Diaspora Jews are concerned Israel is the centre - the educational centre of the people of Israel the world over. Therefore we want every one of our children to spend significant time in Israel, studying here, so that the connection is not simply political. It is cultural; it is a connection of kinship. As you rightly said, we are all one family, which is why we have such good arguments. But to strengthen and sustain that family connection, it must flow from language, education, from bringing every young Jew in the world here. If you live in Hendon, Golders Green or Williamsburg, you have one particular view of the Jewish people. When you stand at the Western Wall and see a people drawn from 103 different countries, speaking 82 languages, you see the full character of the Jewish people.

And I think that through different languages you see a fuller picture. That, too, we agree on.

So what can we disagree about? May I disagree with you on one thing, since you raised the question of language? We are here today under the auspices of the program in Judaism and Civility. The organizers of this program had great difficulties in finding a precise Hebrew equivalent to the word civility. Six years ago I had the great privilege of receiving the Jerusalem prize. The President of the State of Israel gave a reception in our honour. In the course of his speech he said, "I see that Rabbi Sacks has received this award for his contribution to Jewish religious education in the Diaspora. Well, religious education is better than nothing, but . . ." and then he proceeded to say that what we really need is not this ridiculous thing, religious education. What we need are good secular schools. It was a perfectly reasonable thing to say, but possibly not the time or the place to say it. When I came back to England, I said to the Ambassador of Israel, "Now I understand why after 4000 years the Hebrew language still does not contain a word that means tact". Amos, is it not perhaps time that we learnt civility, which might prevent some of our wonderful disagreements which you and I celebrate, from becoming real conflicts leading to real fragmentation, the consequences of which I fear. ■

1. A question to Rabbi Sacks: I would like you to say a few words about 'Tinok Shenishba' ['an infant taken captive'] - which you have used in your writing to address the way religious Jews should relate to secular Jews.

2. My question is to Amos Oz. At the beginning of your speech, you mentioned the deep religiosity and spirituality of the Tolstoyian founders of your Kibbutz. Has the time not come for the secular camp, which you represent, to think not merely about the protection and revival of the language but also about the revival of that deep religious spirit?

3. A question to Rabbi Sacks: What can be done to encourage 'quality Jews' like yourself to immigrate to Israel and help us build a better society here?

■ **Rabbi Sacks**

Professor Oz said that he is not on the business of trying to create guilty feelings. But he has succeeded. I feel guilty that I don't speak Hebrew, so "we sinned, we betrayed" **בגדנו, אשמונו**, and so I will try to answer in Hebrew. First, I will answer the question about the 'captured child' [Tinok Shenishba]. Eight years ago I wrote a book "One people?" - are we still one nation? It was about the split between the Orthodox and non Orthodox etc. I wanted to explain how one can bring together the sides and I used the concept of a "captured child". That is what the book is about. I now know that this approach will not work. It is an affront to the other's dignity, and I cannot use it any more. How then do I relate to the non-Orthodox or the secular? I hope, with civility, with openness - I am prepared to listen. For "who is wise? [according to Ben Zoma] He who learns from every

person". Every person i.e., whether it is from a righteous man or not, whether from a man destined for the world-to-come or not. I now leave it to G-d to decide. C'est son m'tier. That is His job.

Second, what do I do in order to convince British Jews to come live here, to immigrate? Thank G-d, I have two brothers who are here today, citizens of the State of Israel, living in Jerusalem. I hope that my family - my wife and I, G-d willing - will come to live here, after I have paid my dues. I also do what I can to inform the Jewish community in England that our home is the Land and State of Israel. Twenty years ago I was appointed to be the head of Jews' College in England. In those days it was housed in a magnificent building in the center of London. It was in debt. So I told the community to sell the building and build a smaller one in Hendon, in the center of the Jewish community, not the center of town; this time not a splendid building, but a temporary residence - a Mishkan. They replied: Is it dignified for the English community to not have a college in a big, magnificent, building? I then said: When we did not have the State of Israel, we might have been allowed to build magnificent, lasting structures abroad. But now, when we have the State of Israel, any building Jews build abroad is a temporary residence, a Succah. So it is forbidden to build structures that proclaim: This is our house for ever. So I try to signal to our community that this is our place, our homeland. I do not agree at all with the idea of negating the Diaspora, just as I do not agree with any other form of negating of the "other". But I do hope that, in the end, all the Jews in the world will come to the State of Israel. And then, my friends, you'll really have problems! ■

## ■ Amos Oz

I would say that tonight we have outlined some very broad lines for spiritual work. I think we have also touched very lightly upon what might eventually develop into very deep disagreements, but they will be disagreements within the same frame of mind. For example, I mentioned the fact that I think that the major role of Jewish theology switched from the traditional Rabbinic leadership to modern Hebrew literature. Present company excluded of course! This is an extremely controversial suggestion. Some people may regard this as an "Oz occupation - annexation", look at this dove, this minimalist, who wants to annex Judaism to himself or to his kind of Jews. This will be the basis of the dialogue in the future. I would like to sit with Rabbi Sacks, and ideally with people whose frame of mind is similar, and disagree about the sacrilegious lines in Brenner. Because I will claim, and this is answering your question about religiosity; I will claim, when we come to this argument, not tonight of course, I will claim that the sacrilegious is a form of the religious. I will quote Shlomo Zemach who once said: "No person can curse G-d if G-d is not in his heart". Now, I will say that the very term 'Israel' contains within itself the seed 'Yisra Im El' 'He who will struggle with God'. No less. I will carry on, and perhaps in a more aggressive way than I did tonight, stress on the anarchistic and restless gene in our civilization. I was tonight only laying some future minefields for us to navigate together.

But I think the wonderful thing that did occur tonight, in this dialogue, at least wonderful for me, is that in a sense, Rabbi Sacks and myself are just about ready to actually get to the spiritual work. We haven't begun it tonight. That was not the point of tonight. It was just sort of checking the frequencies, adjusting the frequencies, comparing the equipment; like the

Russians and the Americans working together to build the same spacecraft. They have a lot of adjustments to do. So at least now, the Rabbi and I are ready to take off, I don't know if this is to space or down to earth. But we are ready to take off and we speak the same language. I think this in itself is very reassuring man for me, Rabbi Sacks is one of the most outstanding Jews of this generation, not only because of his wonderful books, not only because of the difficult job that he is doing as the spiritual leader of, many people in England, not just Jews, but first and foremost he is one of the few who is offering me a difficult dialogue, not an easy dialogue. Not a dialogue in which we label one another, call each other terrible names, and turn our back on each other. I think in this respect, to me, the very presence of Rabbi Sacks in my life is an enriching phenomenon. And I'm very grateful to you for being here, Rabbi.

## ■ Rabbi Sacks

It is no small thing that has occurred tonight. I sit next to a man who two days ago told me that he was not prepared to agree with himself and now he agrees with a Rabbi!

What has happened here tonight is very important to me. It is not an agreement, but rather a vision based on three principles: the Hebrew language in Israel and the Diaspora, knowledge of the Jewish tradition - the Jewish bookshelf - and most important the authentic cry of the prophets and Judaism in their distinctive voice. The first time that G-d gave us a hint of what he wants from us comes when he said of our forefather Abraham, "For I have chosen him so that he will command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord, doing justice and righteousness". Justice and righteousness: these are the ways of G-d. This way is not an easy way. This coalition initiative is very positive and we continue this dialogue. There is a great difference between dialogue and debate, between argument and discussion. After a debate, both participants are the same people afterwards as they were before. After a genuine dialogue both participants change. Each has learnt something from the other. One's horizons are widened. I think something special has occurred this evening and for this I thank Amos Oz very much. I pray that there will be more people like him in Israel. ■



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