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1. Vorgezogene Neuwahlen im April

In Israel soll bereits am 9. April ein neues Parlament gewählt werden. Bislang lehnte Ministerpräsident Benjamin Netanyahu, dessen Regierung schon einige Zeit in der Krise steckte, Neuwahlen ab. Netanyahu sagte bei einer Sitzung seiner Likud-Partei, er erhoffe sich von den Neuwahlen "ein klares Mandat für unsere Regierung, ihren Weg fortzusetzen". Ausführlich umriss er die Erfolge seiner bisherigen Regierungszeit im politischen, wirtschaftlichen und militärischen Bereich, darunter die Entscheidung des US-Präsidenten Donald Trump vor einem Jahr, Jerusalem als Hauptstadt Israels anzuerkennen. Noch vier Wochen vorher hatte Netanyahu seine Koalitionspartner mit Hinweis auf die Sicherheitslage an der Grenze zum Libanon vor vorgezogenen Neuwahlen gewarnt. Was ihn zum Umdenken motiviert haben dürfte, ist die drohende Anklageschrift in mindestens zwei Korruptionsfällen. Netanyahu baut darauf, dass die Verfahren erst nach den Wahlen eingeleitet werden, wenn überhaupt. Der frühere Generalstabschef Benny Gantz kündigte seine Kandidatur mit einer eigenen Partei an. Bildungsminister Naftali Bennett und Justizministerin Ayelet Shaked trennten sich von der Siedlerpartei

Habayit Hayehudi und wollen versuchen, mit der „Neuen Rechten“ religiöse und weltliche Wähler für sich zu gewinnen.

By calling early elections, Netanyahu is taking the gamble of his life

(...) The supreme and only priority that has dictated Netanyahu's steps from that evening until now is his complicated legal situation. (...) A bribery indictment in one or two cases and is unavoidable. He is going to a lightning election, by Israeli standards, with a campaign season of 106 days, in the hope that the attorney general's decision won't be publicized during the course of the campaign. The possibility that he won't be reelected, and that he will eventually be treated by the justice system like any other citizen, is a calculated risk. With his decision, Netanyahu wants to challenge the attorney general and to prevent a situation in which Mendelblit's decision will be made public right on the eve of the election (...). He is gambling that Mendelblit will be deterred from such a dramatic step and will wait until after the election. That is the gamble of his life, no less.
Yossi Verter, HAA, 24.12.18

Israel holding elections for sake of Netanyahu's personal interests

(...) The coalition heads were not the ones who decided to call early elections, (...) they would have preferred to keep the current government alive for

as long as possible. (...) The order came from Netanyahu himself, because if he genuinely wanted to keep the coalition afloat, nothing would've stopped him and a solution to crisis triggered over the IDF draft bill would have been found overnight. (...) The prime minister's associates probably convinced him that Mandelblit (...) wouldn't dare release his recommendations a month before the elections, and after Netanyahu is once again elected as prime minister, Mandelblit will most likely not make his decision public right away. (...) Netanyahu's advisors also most likely insisted that he shouldn't wait until former IDF chief of staff Benny Gantz establishes his own political party and starts fundraising. It's such a cynical move (...) over the past month we've evolved from a country on a brink of war to a state that can easily afford to go to early elections (...) only to end up with the exact same coalition we've had up until this point. (...) It's fascinating how the reality suddenly changes when personal interests are at stake. It's an insult to the intelligence of the general public. (...) It's nothing but a matter of personal interest. (...) One thing is certain, those who hoped there will be a plea deal or resignation, will be left disappointed. Netanyahu is here to stay, and we'll see who has the courage to challenge him. Sima Kadmon, YED, 25.12.18

Let's move toward a more civil election campaign for 2019

(...) the vibrant democracy of the State of Israel is writ large on the stage of world politics. (...) But what we cannot abide, cannot tolerate, is the way in which some of these representatives of the State of Israel conduct themselves (...). Yes, elections are a traditional time for people to really go at it, to say anything and do anything to win favor with voters, pandering to the lowest common denominator with the misbegotten notion that the ends justify the means. It is foolish and deplorable and an embarrassment. The people of Israel deserve better. (...) We hope this election campaign won't be bloody, though sadly it's already not looking good (...) speak properly. Use better language. Don't get down in the mud. We do not need a repeat of the 20th Knesset, with its full share of verbal garbage. (...) Is it too much to ask all candidates to give honor and character to their profession? Does every political point necessitate debating at the highest level of venom and vitriol? Can Israeli politics this time display some decorum, some civility? All we ask for is a little *menschlichkeit*.

Editorial, JPO, 25.12.18

What do elections mean for Israel's main players

(...) Netanyahu preferred elections in May (after Israel Independence Day and the Eurovision song contest) or in November (the original date), but the prospect of elections with Liberman, Minister of Justice Ayelet Shaked, and Minister of Education Naftali Bennett accusing him of not being concerned enough about state security was unattractive for Netanyahu. In the past few weeks, Netanyahu has managed to recover his security standing as a result of the tunnels operation in the north, among other reasons, and to quieten those critical voices. (...) As of now, it appears that Shaked and Bennett's withdrawal of their ultimatum demanding Bennett's appointment as minister of defense caused no special harm to them or their party (...). The Jewish Home Party is Netanyahu's natural partner for forming the next government, and it is likely that Shaked and Bennett will be in a fairly comfortable situation when the next coalition is assembled (...). Liberman is one of the big losers from the coalition surviving his resignation as minister of defense. (...) The effect of the northern tunnel exposure campaign detracted from Liberman's arguments about Netanyahu's irresponsibility on the southern front. (...) The announcement of elections catches Gantz with his hypothetical political party and the possibility of a partnership with one existing party or another still being an unrealized election surprise. (...) After four years in opposition, the elections are coming at the best possible time for Yesh Atid Party chairperson MK Yair Lapid. He is prepared for them, his field staff is prepared, and he is ready to state that he is running for prime minister, no less. (...) The fact that he refused to support the military draft bill in its current form makes him more attractive to his constituency, but also confronts him with an old dilemma: how to run for prime minister without serving in the same coalition with the haredi (...) parties. (...) The showing of Gabbay and the Zionist Union in the polls is far from encouraging, to say the least, and the shaky state of relations within the party and with opposition chairperson MK Tzipi Livni are weighing him down. (...) Will he agree to step aside in favor of Benny Gantz? Not in the foreseeable future.

Naama Sikuler, GLO, 25.12.18

Netanyahu's secret weapon

(...) Elections have twice been held in March, in 2006 and 2015, and they have been held in late May at least twice. We have also been known to have elections over the summer. But elections in April,

two weeks before the Passover holiday? That is a surprise and apparently, one of the effects Netanyahu had hoped to achieve. (...) April 9 is another three-and-a-half months away. This short time frame is particularly problematic for the political novices getting the most media coverage at the moment. Former IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz, Labor party leader Avi Gabbay, former Yisrael Beytenu MK Orly Levy-Abekasis, former Defense Minister and Likud MK Moshe Ya'alon will all need to focus their energy on extricating themselves from this political pileup. (...) political commentators are wrong to claim the investigations into Netanyahu's alleged corruption are the elephant in the room, as if Netanyahu is running against Attorney General Avichai Mendelblit at the ballot box. Mendelblit is just doing his job. And let us keep in mind that to date, nothing about Netanyahu's actions has caused him to lose the support of his supporters. (...)

Amnon Lord, IHY, 25.12.18

Victory is within reach

The Israeli Left (...) is on the brink of collapse as a result of a crisis that began with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 (...). For too many years, the spokespeople for the Left (...) have tried to convince the public there was a partner for peace on the other side. (...) Any sensible person can see that we are now at the height of a struggle against a pro-terrorism Palestinian Authority and its supporters inside the State of Israel. (...) The Left has failed because it lacks vision. (...) No one is nostalgic for the bolshevik economy that once had a chokehold on private initiatives. (...) Labor party leader Avi Gabbay and Zionist Union head Tzipi Livni, both individually and as a team, are incapable of convincing Israelis of their ability to contend with the challenges Israel now faces. Just look at the polls. (...) the Left and its familiar representatives in the media have chosen to (...) try to convince us that everything is bad, there is no future, Israeli democracy is at risk, the settlers are eroding the rule of law, the judicial system is under threat, the Supreme Court is at risk of being shut down, Israeli society is polarized and fragmented, and everything is corrupt. Adhering to the bolshevik spirit of yore, for these people it is always the worse things are, the better. In fact, the opposite is true. Under Netanyahu's leadership, the Right has led Israel to unprecedented achievements. (...)

Dr. Haim Shine, IHY, 26.12.18

Netanyahu's election u-turn is meant to sway his criminal probes

(...) Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit (...) has a tough call to make — deciding on which charges (...). The decision-making process must neither be contaminated, nor influenced by the election date or election campaigns (...). Even those opposed to Netanyahu don't really know what they are voting for. Those going to the polls must surely wonder whether by giving their vote to Yesh Atid's Yair Lapid, or former IDF chief of staff Benny Gantz, or Zionist Union's Avi Gabbay, they are voting for a party that will join the coalition once the Netanyahu era is over, or are they voting for a party that will sit in the opposition no matter how things unfold in Likud. Moreover, Likud's satellite parties — Jewish Home, Yisrael Beiteinu and Kulanu—will be obligated to explain to their voters the nature of their commitment to Netanyahu, and whether they will continue working with him should any indictments be filed. It appears this situation is convenient for Netanyahu. The right wing wants to see him continuing his tenure. (...) Netanyahu will be the main issue. No prime minister before him, not even David Ben-Gurion, has played such a dominant role in an election campaign (...). Netanyahu's u-turn — going from vehemently opposing early elections to fully supporting them — is meant to disrupt any move by Mandelblit and transform his decision on whether to indict him into a political issue. It may be impossible to take looming indictments out of the election campaign, but the election campaign must be taken out of the discussions on the indictments.

Nahum Barnea, YED, 26.12.18

The upcoming Israeli elections will be greatest test of Netanyahu's career

(...) A little over a month ago, Netanyahu did everything possible to avoid elections. On Monday, elections suddenly became the preferred route. Was it the security situation that changed? (...) Or is something else at play, unconnected to the nation's security? (...) it seems that Netanyahu's decision this week to disperse the Knesset and go to early elections had absolutely nothing to do with Israel's security. What made him change his mind was an understanding that an indictment will be filed against him, and sooner rather than initially anticipated. (...) Bribery is the cardinal political sin. Unlike breach of trust or fraud, bribery is easy for the public to understand: instead of working on behalf of the people, Netanyahu had worked for himself. (...) it made more sense to go to elections now, before an in-

dictment. This way, he hopes to tie the hands of Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit, who is now expected to wait until after the elections before announcing his decision on any indictments, and the charges they will contain. (...) Netanyahu's plan seems based on the hope that the Likud will win by such a high margin, with so many more seats than it has today, that Mandelblit will be deterred from indicting him, or at the very least, from including the charge of bribery. (...) The upcoming elections will be the greatest test of Benjamin Netanyahu's political career. For him, this could literally be a fight for survival. (...)

Yaakov Katz, JPO, 28.12.18

Netanyahu, don't threaten

A prime minister committed to the general welfare and not to his personal good would step down from his position at the completion of a police investigation that finds evidence of severe corruption offenses on his part. But not Benjamin Netanyahu. (...) he has also launched a comprehensive campaign intended to publicly delegitimize the law enforcement agencies. And as if that weren't enough, he is now putting himself up for reelection and considering out loud the possibility of maintaining his position – should he be reelected – even if he is indicted for bribery. (...) The attorney general must (...) continue to examine the evidence in the case and the police and state prosecutor's recommendations and make a decision as soon as possible. (...) Mendelblit must not surrender to pressure by Netanyahu and his people, just as he must not draw an analogy between the demand on him to slow down his work and the calls that he carry it out efficiently. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 28.12.18

Are you looking for a new Likud?

The current education minister (Bennett) and justice minister (Shaked) would not have received senior portfolios in the next government (...) the two have been carrying the bitterness and resentment of humiliation. They are holding on to the insult and feelings of shame caused by Netanyahu. (...) the new right-wing party saw fit to introduce their families. Shaked with her secular background, her husband the kibbutznik and fighter pilot, and Bennett with his secular wife Gilat, who just a few weeks ago rebuked Netanyahu for trying to plant "slander" on the Walla news website about her preparing deserts in a non-kosher restaurant. Now, in this brave new joint secular-religious party, it is an advantage to be married to someone secular. (...) Bennett and

Shaked pledged partnership between the secular and the religious, just like in basic training in the army, in the workplace, at the Passover Seder table. Sounds good. What do you say, Bennett, should we launch this enlightened approach in schools too? (...) we should expect better production values from two such experienced politicians announcing a dramatic move. Their press conference looked very shoddy. (...) But the most intriguing question is what outgoing Justice Minister Shaked heard from her friend, Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit. What does she know that we do not about the prime minister's future and his chances of surviving the next term in office? (...) If Bennett and Shaked are indeed anticipating Netanyahu's imminent retirement from politics, this could well be the reason for establishing a new right-wing party. Or perhaps we should say, a new Likud?

Sima Kadmon, YED, 30.12.18

2. Trump will US-Truppen aus Syrien abziehen

Nach dem angekündigten Rückzug der rund 2000 in Syrien stationierten US-Truppen drohen veränderte Machtverhältnisse in der Region. Israel kündigte an, den Kampf gegen von Iran unterstützte Milizen in Syrien zu verstärken. US-Präsident Donald Trump begründete das Ende des militärischen Engagements in Syrien damit, der IS sei besiegt. Den IS warnte er, sollten die Extremisten die USA angreifen, sei die Organisation "dem Untergang geweiht". Russlands Präsident Putin stimmte mit der Einschätzung, dass der IS besiegt sei, weitgehend überein. Es bestehe aber die Gefahr, dass sich die Terroristen reorganisieren könnten. Anzeichen für den Abzug der USA sieht der Kreml-Chef noch keine. Die USA hätten schon oft einen Abzug aus Afghanistan angekündigt, seien "aber immer noch da". Israels Ministerpräsident Benjamin Netanyahu kündigte an, "weiterhin sehr aggressiv gegen die Versuche Irans, sich in Syrien festzusetzen, vorzugehen". Er habe dafür die volle Unterstützung der USA. Bisher kämpften Iran und Russland an der Seite der syrischen Truppen gegen die Rebellen. Die USA führten eine Koalition westlicher und arabischer Staaten an, die vor allem aus der Luft den IS bekämpften, die andauernde Präsidentschaft Bashar Assads aber ablehnten.

Trump's pullout leaves Russia holding the cards in Syria, to Israel's bitter disappointment

U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement that American troops are being withdrawn from Syria (...) is of strategic importance to Syria and the entire

region. (...) After Islamic State was defeated, the United States maintained a presence in Syria in two main areas: the Kurdish region in the northeast and the al-Tanf enclave around a U.S. air base in southern Syria, near the border with Iraq and Jordan. The U.S. presence was seen as blocking the expansion of Iranian influence in Syria. (...) Trump's latest announcement (...) is deeply disappointing to Jerusalem. Israel was counting on Tanf as a bargaining chip; the Pentagon had promised it that the U.S. soldiers would leave only as part of an agreement under which Iranian forces also withdrew from Syria. Unless it emerges that the U.S. withdrawal is part of a comprehensive agreement with Russia — and for now there's no indication of this — it will leave Moscow holding the cards in Syria. From Israel's perspective, this has two implications: First, it is more isolated than before in its efforts to remove the Iranians from Syria, since there is still tension with the Russians in the wake of the downing of the plane in September. Second, Trump, despite his declared sympathy for Netanyahu, is taking a step that totally conflicts with the prime minister's position. (...)

Amos Harel, HAA, 20.12.18

The winners and losers in the new Middle East

Donald Trump's decision to pull the 2,000 or so American troops out of Syria reshapes the geopolitical map in the Middle East. (...) Russia remains, along with Iran, the central military force in the region. (...) The Islamic Republic benefits greatly from the American flight: Tehran's grip on Syrian territory is now expected to expand into the regions vacated by the US Army. (...) Even IS can feel a little satisfied at this new development: Trump is leaving Syria without completely defeating Islamic State, whatever he claims to the contrary. (...) without their American defenders, the Kurds now face invasion threats from the Syrian army to the south and the Turkish army to the north. (...) The Jewish state, too, is alone: Without the American presence near the northern border, Israel has lost a significant source of deterrence and potential military assistance in the event of a regional escalation. The Russian army, which will now become Syria's main governor, has no commitment to Israel. In fact, the two nations are already in political crisis following the downing of a Russian plane by Syrian anti-aircraft missiles during an Israeli airstrike.

Smadar Perry, YED, 20.12.18

U.S. withdrawal from Syria shows Washington is an ally, but only to a point

(...) It's true that the extent of American forces in Syria was not sufficient for conducting significant tactical operations, but their very presence marked a territory of control and deterrence, preventing conflict with Russian, Turkish, Syrian and Iranian forces. (...) The State Department is rightly concerned that withdrawal from Syria would provide further proof to American allies that there's no one that can be trusted in Washington and that Trump's commitments are not worth the virtual space his tweets occupy. (...) For Israel, the U.S. presence in Syria did not carry much weight in terms of its campaign against the Iranian presence in Syria, but it had great importance in setting the rules of the game with regard to Russia, in delineating regions of reduced conflict in southern Syria and in removing Iranian forces from the Golan border. In all of these, Washington was either directly or indirectly involved, through its backing of Israel in multilateral meetings, and through its presence in Syria, which gave it the status of an active partner. (...)

Zvi Bar'el, HAA, 20.12.18

Trump's gift

The mullahs in Tehran probably slept easily Wednesday, with the satisfaction that they have won this round. That's because on Wednesday, the US announced that it is pulling its troops out of Syria. (...) An American departure leaves a vacuum that will be filled with people who harm American and Israeli interests: Russia and Iran. Iran is not shy about its aspirations to wipe Israel off of the map, nor is it stingy in funding partners who are willing to do their dirty work, (...). They will now be freer to act as they wish in Syria and try to increase their spheres of influence throughout the Middle East. (...) The US is truly Israel's greatest ally, but the impact of that alliance has grown weaker in recent years. (...) The result of an increasingly isolationist American policy can only be bad for Israel. Our alliance with the US is a strategic asset that makes Israel significantly stronger, both in quantifiable military might and in how we look in the eyes of other countries in the region. (...) When the US decides, of its own volition, to make itself a weaker player in the Middle East, Israel is weaker as a result. Israel is stronger with an involved America backing it up. (...) Israel will have to work that much harder to keep its citizens and its borders safe. Withdrawing American troops from Syria is a

mistake for which the US and Israel may end up paying dearly.

Editorial, JPO, 20.12.18

Trump's withdrawal from Syria is a slap in the face to Netanyahu

(...) Trump's order to withdraw all U.S. forces from Syria ought to worry Israel. Even though the American presence did not have a decisive role in Israel's direct campaign against Iran in Syria, the United States was an important counterweight to the Russians in establishing the rules of the game in the region. Its involvement in northern Syria helped in keeping Iranian forces away from Israel's border in the Golan Heights. (...) Netanyahu seems to have been blinded by the gestures, some of them merely symbolic, that Trump lavished on Israel, from withdrawing America from the Iranian nuclear deal and stepping up sanctions on Iran through moving the embassy to Jerusalem to humiliating Israel's Palestinian partner and making it irrelevant. Trump gave Netanyahu reward and gestures that cost him nothing. In exchange, the president received a grateful, obedient prime minister who is no longer capable even of criticizing, much less opposing, a move that is potentially disastrous for Israel. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 21.12.18

Like Obama, Trump is eroding American credibility

(...) Donald Trump's claim that IS has been defeated in Syria is half-true. IS still has a stronghold in Syria (...). There is no shortage of anti-Assad and anti-Iran Syrians that might join IS for lack of a better choice. Recruiting them will certainly be made easier after the departure of all US troops, though the IS stronghold will not stop the joint Iranian and Russian takeover of Syria now made possible by the US withdrawal. (...) Donald Trump has committed both a strategic and a moral mistake by abandoning America's allies to Assad, to Russia, to Iran, to Turkey, and to what is left of the Islamic State. (...) This decision will affect not only America's credibility and honor, but also its interests. (...)

Emmanuel Navon, TOI, 23.12.16

US should recognize Golan as Israeli

(...) Israel had a clear strategic interest in seeing the war end with Syria split into three states, based on the ethnic population distribution: Alawite-Shiite, Sunni, and Kurds. If that had come to pass, it would have been enough to block Iranian expansion, and

beyond that, it would have presented a strategic opportunity to redraw a historical border that expressed international recognition of Israeli sovereignty on the Golan Heights, which comprise a mere one percent of Syrian territory. That interest dovetailed with the international desire to prevent mass murder, uphold human rights, and prevent an exodus of refugees. (...) the withdrawal of American forces from Syria demands that Israel exert all its influence to convince its U.S. ally to adopt a "hybrid" mentality on everything having to do with Syria and recognize the Golan Heights as Israeli as the final steps of the pullout. (...) There are no vacuums in the Middle East. In the absence of determined, immediate action by Israel to secure U.S. recognition of Israel's sovereignty on the Golan – before the U.S. withdraws from Syria – Israel could find itself facing international demand for a dream deal for Syrian President Bashar Assad and Iran: Iran would withdraw from Syria – which would remain under the cover of various militias, similar to the Hezbollah model in Lebanon – in exchange for Israel withdrawing from the Golan Heights. (...)

Zvi Hauser, IHY, 24.12.18

The end of the affair

Many Israelis believe that our relationship with the U.S. is a good deal (...). We are a military outpost, a testing ground for American weapons, a high-tech nation, a front-line fortress of democracy in barbarian lands. We are the most daring fighters against the terror that threatens America. Trump, in truth, agrees with his predecessors in thinking that the U.S. should relax its firm grip on this malignant region. But while Barack Obama was honest about these intentions, Trump is a master salesman, who specializes in selling luxurious apartments made of cheap materials. Moving the embassy to Jerusalem costs nothing, whereas getting the troops out of Syria comes with hefty political profit. For him, not us. (...) this is a man totally absorbed in himself. A liar, a cheat, a show-off, an aggressive man who has no self-reflection. In the circles that surround him you won't find a single artist, thinker or activist, only businessmen, their lawyers, bankers, show business people, opportunistic women and politicians who need his money. (...)

Yaron London, YED, 27.12.18

3. Trauer um Amos Oz

In Israel galt er als unbestrittene Nummer eins der zeitgenössischen Literaten, doch die höchste Auszeichnung des Literaturnobelpreises blieb ihm trotz

wiederholter Nominierungen verwehrt. Der Schriftsteller Amos Oz erlag 79-jährig seinem Krebsleiden. Er gehörte zu den unermüdlichsten Kritikern der Besatzung. Seine politische Haltung war es, die den kaum 15 Jahre alten Amos Klausner aus dem Haus seines Vaters trieb. Auslöser für das schwierige Verhältnis dürfte der frühe Freitod der Mutter gewesen sein. Der Junge zog in den Kibbutz Hulda, studierte später Literatur und Philosophie und unterrichtete anschließend über 20 Jahre lang an der Kibbutzschule. Später wurde er ordentlicher Professor an der Universität Ben-Gurion in Beersheva. Schon als 22-jähriger veröffentlichte er sein erstes Buch, dem viele Romane und Sachbücher folgen sollten. Manche davon wurden in über 30 Sprachen übersetzt. Oz lehrte und schrieb und wurde, obschon er als Soldat im Sechstagekrieg und im Jom-Kippur-Krieg gekämpft hatte, mit seinen Texten und Appellen zu einer Art Gewissen des Landes und zum Visionär. Die letzten Lebensjahre verbrachte Oz, der über drei Jahrzehnte in der Wüstenstadt Arad gelebt hatte, im zwölften Stock eines Tel Aviver Betonblocks, um seinen Kindern und Enkeln nahe zu sein. Seine Tochter Fania Oz-Salzberger gab den Tod ihres Vaters auf Twitter bekannt. „Mein geliebter Vater ist heute an Krebs gestorben“, schrieb sie. „Er starb ruhig und im Schlaf, umgeben von seinen Lieben.“ Oz wurde auf dem Friedhof von Kibbutz Hulda beigesetzt.

Death of a prophet: A tribute to Amos Oz

Fair-eyed as David, rebellious as Absalom, eloquent as Solomon, preaching peace like Jeremiah, and braving tragedy like Job, Amos Oz embodied a biblical tale. (...) Oz was a product of the kibbutz, once the wellspring and pride of Israel's socialist elite, where he himself landed as a lonely teenager following his mother's death, and where he lived into his forties and wrote his early novels. (...) following Likud's rise to power in 1977, Oz found himself in the unfamiliar company of what came to be seen here as nobility, namely, the Labor establishment in general, and the kibbutzniks in particular. (...) Oz was a converted socialist who grew up as part of the anti-socialist opposition. (...) With a battery of literati like S.Y. Agnon, Natan Alterman, and Haim Hazaz demanding that Israel retain its newly conquered territories, the 28-year-old Oz wrote in summer 1967: "We should tell the inhabitants of the occupied territories ... we do not desire your land ... we will sit and rule here until the signing of a peace agreement. A year, a decade, or a generation, and when the day comes – the choice will be yours."

Years, decades, and three generations have elapsed, and many who once were attentive to this message became disillusioned. Not prophet Amos. Like Jeremiah in the face of Jerusalem's war party, and like sidelined politician Shealtiel Abarbanel in his Judas (2014), Amos Oz never gave up on peace. (...) Oz will be buried (...) in the kibbutz whose soil he tilled as a farmer; by the mountains he depicted as writer; between the cities, villages, and people whose agonies, plots, and dreams he cooked in rainclouds, tears, and ink.
Amotz Asa-EI, JPO, 29.12.18

Amos Oz — in memoriam

Amos, our friend. How dear you were to us. A classmate, a friend, an opponent and always, always an ally in the love of this land, the love and concern for this state and its direction, for its people and its future. How dear and important you were to the State of Israel, to Israeli society, to the world of literature. Your eyes that always saw so clearly, that looked at the world with both tenderness and focus, with clarity and with such hopes, deep from within and always a little bit from outside. (...) And what will we do now Amos, now that you are no longer? In your last book, you said that in one of the conversations with you "the way to bring the dead back to life is to invite them to join us from time to time, to make them a cup of coffee, to remember a few things with them, to try and make up with them a little, and to send them back to the darkness to wait for us patiently." We will be sure to invite you again and again, Amos. You will always be with us.
Reuven Rivlin, TOI, 29.12.18

The Prophet Amos Oz was the last of the moral Zionists

(...) The secret was in his winning personality and charm, his amazing modesty, his magic. Every meeting with him was a breathtaking experience; every telephone conversation was full of hope (...). Israel will be a different country without him. (...) we'll see that there's nothing left of the country we once thought was beautiful and just. That we've been left with just Miri Regev. We've already got a mini-Trumptopia here, but on the fringes there were some discernible old lights, ever so slightly illuminating the overwhelming darkness. Now these floodlights have been extinguished. We always knew that despite it all, we still had Amos Oz. That's no longer the case. (...) He wasn't right about everything. He believed that the Jews and the Palestinians must divorce, as he put it, taking a

symmetrical approach to both peoples, a symmetry that never existed in any way. In one of his last lectures, which went viral with more than 100,000 views on YouTube, he attacked the one-state solution, which his good friend Yehoshua had embraced, and said there could never be a binational state but only an Arab state with a Jewish minority. (...) Oz was the last of the moral Zionists. Exactly as he believed the other day that we would meet for coffee, he believed that the country would be divided. Neither happened. They apparently never will happen. How sad, how very sad.

Gideon Levy, HAA, 30.12.18

4. Medienquerschnitt

Umstrittene Einäscherung

Dery and Axelrod should leave the Ramon family alone!

(...) Who asked Rabbi Dery to write to the Ramon family proposing that their mother, Rona, who suffered so much during her life, be buried rather than cremated as she wished? Gedalya Axelrod, a leading Lubavitch rabbi in Haifa, goes even further when he states: "We are not descended from monkeys. We shall be resurrected with our body from the dead. It is shocking that they intend to burn her body." Given the tragic manner in which Ilan Ramon's own life came to an end in 2003 following nearly 16 days in space when his shuttle Columbia burnt up during re-entry into the earth's atmosphere, Axelrod's remark that we are resurrected with our bodies was particularly tasteless and insensitive. If burial in the ground is a pre-requisite for resurrection, what will be the fate of our ancestors, whose bodies were incinerated in the ovens of Auschwitz? (...) cremation is against Jewish law. (...) However, as Aaron the priest knew, there is a time to remain silent (...). That time is surely now when the Ramon family are in a state of grief. (...) Rona Ramon's children, Tal, Yiftah and Noa, need to be comforted as they mourn the loss of their dear mother rather than be confronted by rabbis telling them not to respect her final wishes.

Michael Boyden, TOI, 19.12.18

Problematische Spenden aus Deutschland

An end to German hypocrisy

(...) plans to condition German funding of foreign organizations and initiatives on the grounds the money not be used by organizations involved in any

type of anti-Semitic activity could be a turning point in one of the more problematic aspects of German-Israeli ties. Amazingly, the same Germany that prides itself on having learned the lessons of its Nazi past and heralds its deep friendship with Israel at every opportunity in practice supports organizations, in particular in Arab and Muslim states, that disseminate the hatred of Jews and Israel or demonstrate scandalous tolerance for such hatred. (...) Jerusalem has finally decided to wake up from the passive slumber characteristic of Israel's official approach toward the duality of the German position that sees Berlin declare its commitment to Israel's existence and security while at the same time throw its support behind bodies that undermine the existence and security of the Jewish state. For decades, Israel's government has preferred to ignore the increasingly problematic nature of Germany's hypocritical policy, not only as far as foreign countries are concerned, but within Israel and Germany themselves. (...) As a sovereign state, Israel has the right and obligation to raise concerns regarding Berlin's funding of German bodies that promote the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement, which calls for Israel's destruction, whether they be a Jewish museum or an international film festival.

Eldad Beck, IHY, 25.12.18

HAA = Haaretz

YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

GLO = Globes

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