

**THE TENDER AMONG YOU, AND THE VERY DELICATE**  
**(Amos Oz interview with Z., 1982)**

"As far as I am concerned, you can call me whatever you like. Call me a monster, call me a murderer; but kindly indicate that I do not hate Arabs. On the contrary. Personally, I feel much better among them – particularly the Bedouins – than I feel among the Zhids. The Arabs, those that we haven't spoiled yet, are proud people, rational, but cruel or generous according to circumstances. The Zhids are completely twisted. If you want to try to straighten them out, you have to bend them really hard in the other direction. And that, in a nutshell, is my whole thesis.

"As far as I'm concerned, you can call the State of Israel by any pejorative you like. Call it Judeo-Nazi, the way Professor Leibowitz did. Why not? How does the saying go – "Better a live Judeo-Nazi than a dead saint"? Me, I don't mind being Qaddafi. I'm not looking to the gentiles for admiration and I don't need their love. But I don't need it from your kind of Jew, either. I want to survive. And my intention happens to be that my children will survive, too. With or without the blessing of the Pope and assorted Torah sages from the New York Times. If anyone raises a hand against my children, I'll destroy him – and his children – with or without your vaunted 'purity of arms.' And I don't give a damn if he's a Christian or a Moslem or a Jew or a pagan. Throughout history, anyone who thought he was above killing got killed. It's an iron-clad law.

"Even if you give me mathematical proof that the war we're fighting in Lebanon – and don't think it's over yet – is a terrible war, dirty, immoral, disgusting, beneath us, it won't matter to me. And I'll tell you something else: it also won't matter if you give me mathematical proof that we haven't achieved, and we won't achieve, any of our goals in Lebanon, not a friendly Lebanese regime, not breaking the Syrians, not the destruction of the PLO, not Major Haddad, not forty kilometers. It will still have been worth it. And if it turns out in a year that the Galilee is on the receiving end of the katyushas again, even that won't make much difference to me. We'll make another war like that and kill them and destroy them until they've had it up to here. And do you want to know why it was all worth it? Because it seems there's a good chance that this war has turned the whole self-appointed civilized world against us again. This time for good. So now maybe we've finished once and for all with that crap about the Jewish monopoly on morality, about the moral lesson of the Holocaust and the persecutions, about the Jews who were supposed to have emerged from the gas chambers pure and good. We're done with all that garbage. That little destruction job we did in Tyre and Sidon, the job in Ein Hilweh (too bad we didn't wipe out that maggots' nest for good) and the nice, healthy bombing of Beirut, and that mini-massacre – all of a sudden five hundred Arabs becomes a massacre! – in those camps (too bad the Christian Phalangists did it, and not us, with our own delicate little hands!), all these

blessings and good deeds have finished off that bullshit about a 'Chosen People' and a 'Light unto the Nations.' Yes, bullshit ! We're finished with that; not chosen and no light, and thank the Lord we're done with it!

"I want you to know that I personally have absolutely no desire – and no reason, either – to be better than Khomeini or Brezhnev or Qaddafi or Assad or Mrs. Thatcher, or Harry Truman, who killed half a million Japs with two sweet bombs. Smarter than them, yes! I want to be quicker, more clever, more efficient than them, but under no circumstances do I have any ambition whatsoever to be more gussied up and moral than them. Tell me yourself, do the bad guys really have it so bad in this world? Do they lack for anything? If anybody tries to lay a finger on them, they cut off his arms and legs. And sometimes they do the same for people who haven't even tried anything. If they feel like eating something, and they can catch it and kill it, that's what they do. And they don't suffer an upset stomach afterward or any divine retribution. So from here on in, I want Israel to be a member of this club. Congratulations! Maybe the world will finally begin to fear me instead of feeling sorry for me. Maybe they'll start quaking in fear of my whims instead of admiring my nobility. Blessed art Thou who hast kept us in life, that's what I say! Let them quake. And let them call us a mad-dog nation. Let them realize that we're a wild country, deadly and dangerous to everyone around, awful, crazy, capable of suddenly going nuts because they murdered one of our kids – even one! – and running wild and burning all the oil fields in the Middle East. And by the way, if it happens to be your kid, God forbid, you'll start talking the same way. Let them know in Washington, in Moscow, in Damascus, and in China that if they shoot one of our ambassadors, or even a consul, or even the attaché in charge of stamp collecting, we're capable of starting, suddenly, just for the hell of it, before breakfast, World War Three. If we get to have an image like that, it's going to bring us – don't be surprised – a little sympathy. In today's terms, given the atmosphere among the youth, Western intellectuals, the sentimental cunts, if we act like that, it means we're angry and desperate. And if we're angry and desperate, it means we've been the victims of injustice. And if we're victims, they'll rush to demonstrate for us and to identify with us. That's the way the perverted psychology of all these bleeding hearts works. Read Frantz Fanon! In any event, with or without demonstrations of support for a desperate and dangerous Israel, the important thing is that they walk on tiptoe around Israel, so as not to provoke the wounded animal. Let them keep their claws retracted around us! Its about time!"

We are sitting on the porch of Z.'s pleasant farm house in one of the veteran farming villages, looking westward at the sunset that burns between crests of clouds and lights up the horizon in dim fires of citron and purple and flickering gray. The citrus groves exude a lush, sensuous fragrance. There is homemade ice cream and coffee in tall thin glasses on the table before us. Z., about fifty years old, is a man with a history who has a certain reputation in some circles. Strong and heavysset, he is dressed in gym shorts, shirtless, his body tanned a metallic bronze – the tan of the blond man who lives out under the sun. He rests

his legs on the table, and his creased hands lie on the arms of his chair like two weary beasts of burden. On his neck is a faded scar. As he dictates the essence of his philosophy to me in his fluent, cigarette-scorched voice, his eyes roam over his orchards and groves, which nestle at the foot of the mountain.

"And there's one more thing, which is maybe even more important than all the rest. The sweetest fruit of this juicy war in Lebanon is that now it's not just Israel they hate. Now, thanks to us, they hate all those high falutin little kikes in Paris, London, New York, Frankfurt, Montreal, in their rat holes all over. They finally hate all the nice Zhids, too, the ones who keep shouting that they're different, not like those Israeli hoodlums, that they're a completely different kind of Jew, clean and decent. Like the assimilated Jew in Vienna and Berlin fifty years ago who begged the anti-Semites not to confuse him with the screaming, stinking Ostjude who sneaked into the civilized German neighborhood straight from some filthy ghetto in Poland or the Ukraine. It won't do those clean Zhids any good, just like it didn't do them any good in Vienna and Berlin. They can shout till they're blue in the face that they condemn Israel, that they're the good guys who wouldn't and couldn't hurt a fly, that they'd always prefer to be slaughtered than to fight, that they've taken it upon themselves to preach Christianity to the gentiles and to teach them how to tum the other cheek. But it won't do them any good. Now they're catching it because of us, and I want to tell you it's a joy to behold. A real pleasure. Those are the Zhids who convinced the gentiles to give in to those bastards in Vietnam, to give in to Khomeini and Brezhnev; to have pity on Sheik Zaki Yamani because he had a deprived childhood, and, in general, to make love, not war. Or not to make either one: to do a Ph.D. dissertation on love and war. But that's all finished now. From now on, even the most beautified Zhid is a pariah. It wasn't enough that he crucified Jesus – now he's crucified Arafat in Sabra and Shatilla. Now they're identified with us, with no distinctions made, and that's great! Their cemeteries are desecrated, their synagogues are burned, they're hearing all the good old nicknames; they're thrown out of all the hot-shot clubs; they're getting gunned down right in the middle of eating at their ethnic restaurants. Their little children are being murdered here and there; they're forced to take the mezuzahs off the door, to move out of the neighborhood, to change professions; and pretty soon they'll find that old slogan smeared on the gates of their fancy houses: 'Zhid, go to Palestine!' And you know what? They'll start going to Palestine! Because they won't have any other choice!

"All of this is a direct bonus of the war in Lebanon. Tell me yourself – wasn't it worth it? And now, old buddy, any day now, the good times will begin. The Jews will start to arrive. The immigrants won't emigrate and the émigrés will come back home. Those who chose to assimilate will finally realize that pretending they're gentiles won't help, that volunteering to be the 'Conscience of Humanity' won't do them any good. That 'Conscience of Humanity' will learn through its ass what it couldn't figure out with its thick head – namely, that the gentiles, now and always, are sickened by the Zhids and their conscience. And then the Jewish People will have only one option left: to come home, and soon, all of them, and

to install steel security doors, and put up a high fence with machine guns stationed at all corners of the fence, and to fight like hell against anyone who even dares to make a peep in the neighborhood. If anyone raises a hand against us, we'll just take away half his land, for good, and burn the other half. Including the oil. Including by nuclear weapons. Until they've lost any desire to make trouble for us. And do you know what will come out of this whole process? Hold on tight to your chair, buddy; I've got a little surprise for you. I'll tell you exactly what will come out of this process. Three very good things will come out of it – moral, just things that you want, too, but don't know how to achieve: A) a total ingathering of the exiles; B) a return to Zion, wall to wall; C) a just and durable peace. Yes! And after that, peace will reign in the land for forty years, or more. And after that, 'when you wish upon a star... your dreams come true: And after that, 'down by the riverside,' with each man sitting under his fig tree.

"As soon as we finish this phase, the violence phase, step right up, it'll be your tum to play your role. You can make us a civilization with humanistic values here. Do the brotherhood-of-man bit – Light unto the Nations – whatever you want – the morality of the Prophets. Do the whole bit. Make this such a humanitarian country that the whole world will rejoice and you can rejoice about yourselves. Make them stand up and applaud – the world championship in high-jump morality. Be my guest. That's the way it is, old buddy: first Joshua and Jephthah the Gileadite break ground, wipe out the memory of Amalek, and then maybe afterward it's time for the Prophet Isaiah and the wolf and the lamb and the leopard and the kid and that whole terrific zoo. But only provided that, even at the end of days, we'll be the wolf and all the gentiles around here will be the lamb. Just to be on the safe side.

"You'll probably ask if I'm not afraid that all those Zhids escaping anti-Semitism and coming here won't smear us with their snake oil and tum us into sissies like them. Well, listen, there's also cunning in history, a dialectic, irony. Who was it that expanded the country of the Jews almost to the kingdom of King David? Who was it that spread the State from Mount Hermon down to Sharm al-Sheikh? Levi, son of Deborah [Eshkol]! Of all people, it was this socialist, this vegetarian, this female. And who's about to put us back behind the walls of the ghetto? Who's the foolish crow from Krylov's fable who dropped the cheese when the fox asked him to sing? Who gave back all of Sinai so he'd look civilized? Jabotinsky's right-hand man in Poland, Mr. National Pride. Menachem, son of Hassia [Begin]! So you can never tell. But one thing I do know. When you're fighting for survival, anything goes. Even what's forbidden is allowed. Even expelling all the Arabs from the West Bank. Anything.

"That's right: Judeo-Nazis. Leibowitz was right. And why not? Why the hell not? Listen, friend, a people that let itself be slaughtered and destroyed, a people that let its children be made into soap and its women into lampshades, is a worse criminal than its tormentors. Worse than the Nazis. To live without fists, without fangs and claws, in a world of wolves is a crime worse than murder. Fact: Himmler

and Heydrich and Eichmann' s grandchildren live well, on the fat of the land, and even preach to us while they're at it, and the grandchildren of the sainted rebbes of Eastern Europe and those humanistic, pacifistic Jews who philosophized so prettily in Prague and Berlin – they can't preach to anyone. They're gone, never to come back.

."Go read the poetry of a nationalist and a patriot like Greenberg instead of the snake oil of Gordon and Martin Buber. Go read the poem called 'My God Father of the Gentiles.' Maybe you ought to learn it by heart. Maybe it will save your children one day. Just suppose our forefathers, so full of loving kindness, instead of writing books about the brotherhood of man and instead of marching to the gas chambers singing the praises of the Lord, had come here in time and had – now don't fall off your chair! – wiped out six million Arabs, or only one million: what would have happened? Sure, the world would have written a couple of nasty pages about us in the history books; they would have called us all kinds of names; but we would have been a nation of twenty-five million people here today! Pretty respectable, don't you think ? And our authors would write elegant novels, like Günther Grass and Heinrich Böll, about our collective guilt and shame and regret, and would collect a couple of Nobel prizes for literature and morality. Maybe the government would have paid the Arabs we didn't manage to kill some reparations from the oil revenues in Iraq. But the People of Israel would be sitting on its land! Twenty, twenty-five million ! From the Suez Canal all the way to the oil fields. And, believe me, in spite of our crimes, all those bastards would be courting us, propositioning and sucking up to us. From Moscow and China all the way to Washington. In spite of our bloodstained hands and whatnot.

"Listen, even today I'm willing to volunteer to do the dirty work for the People of Israel, to kill as many Arabs as it takes, to deport, to expel, to bum, to see that they hate us, to put a torch to the ground under the feet of the Zhids in the Diaspora, so they'll be forced to come running here whining. Even if I have to blow up a few synagogues here and there to get the job done. I don't care. I don't even care if, five minutes after I finish all this dirty work and the job is done, you bring me before a Nurenberg Tribunal. You can put me away for life; you can hang me as a war criminal, if you like. Then you can carefully launder your Jewish conscience in bleach and join the respectable club of civilized nations. Go right ahead. I'll take the whole filthy job on myself and you'll be free to call me the worst names you can think of.

"What none of you manage to understand, for all your brains, is that the dirty work of Zionism isn't finished yet. Far from it. True, it could have been finished in '48, but you got in the way, didn't let us get on with it. And all because of the Zhiddishness in your souls. Because of your Diaspora mentality. Because you wanted to play fair! It's a crying shame – we could have put all that behind us and by now become a normal nation with prissy values, with humanistic neighborly relations with Iraq and Egypt, and with a slight criminal record – just like everybody else. Like the English and the French and the Germans and the

Americans – who've already managed to forget what they did to the Indians – and the Australians, who almost totally eliminated the aborigines. They've all done it. What's the big deal? What's so terrible about being a civilized people, respectable, with a slight criminal past? It happens in the best of families. And I've already told you that I'm willing to take the criminal record on myself, together with Sharon and Begin and General Eitan. And I'm willing for you to be the future – rosy, pure, gutless. Write books of atonement for my crimes. And you'll be forgiven. Oh, boy, will you be forgiven! The international audience will adore your conscientiousness. They'll receive you in the fanciest salons! But only after my cannon or my nasty napalm cairns down the Indians and makes sure they don't scalp your children and mine; and only after millions of Zhids have come home, here; and only after the house is big enough, with enough rooms for the whole family.

"Why do I keep calling them Zhids? I'll tell you why, though not in my own words – after all, I'm a Judeo-Nazi-but in the words of Moses; right, the one from the Ten Commandments, a Jew with the seal of approval even from enlightened gentiles. Here's what he said about us: *'And among these nations thou shalt find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind, and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shall have none assurance of thy life.'* That's the whole Diaspora in a nutshell. That's an exact description of the Zhid. Like under a microscope. And that is what Zionism meant to change. But we can't change it until the Zhids understand what their real position is and what's in store for them if they don't get themselves home before dark. And the Zhid's a little thick-headed. 'A people like unto an ass.' 'Foolish people and unwise.' If you open your eyes and take a good look at the world around you, you'll see that the darkness is closing in. The darkness is coming back. And we've already seen what happens to a Jew who finds himself out after dark. So it's just as well that Israel, with this little sortie into Lebanon, darkened the sky a bit for the Zhids – let them be afraid a little, and suffer a little, so they'll come home quick, at a trot, before real darkness begins. I'm an anti-Semite, you say ? All right, then, erase me. Don't write down what I say. We mustn't quote anti-Semites. Then write down, instead, what that stalwart Zionist Lilienblum said. He's certainly no anti-Semite-he's even got a lovely little street named after him in Tel Aviv."

(Z. reads from a small notebook that was lying on the porch table even before my arrival. )

'Is this not a true sign that both our forefathers and we... desired and continue to desire to be a disgrace to mankind and despised by the nations. For we enjoy being gypsies.' That's Lilienblum, not me. Listen, friend, I've plowed through all the Zionist literature. Believe me, I've got sales slips for all of it. You want to hear something the great man himself, Herzl, said? Be my guest. 'When a man is healthy and business is prospering, everything else is bearable.' I don't know if Herzl spoke Yiddish – they say he didn't – but that statement is a typical Zhid

perversion. Straight out of Yiddish. That statement is nothing but a road sign to Auschwitz. Lilienblum and Herzl aren't enough for you? Come on, listen to what Maimonides had to say – the major-league philosopher and physician. This is what he had to say about us: 'This then is what caused us to lose our kingdom and the destruction of the Temple and prolonged our Diaspora... that our forefathers sinned... and did not study war and the conquering of countries.' The conquering of countries, friend, not the defense of home and property! Not the Green Line! Not 'war as an absolutely last resort.' By the way, you have my permission to write that I'm the scum of humanity. I have no objections. On the contrary, I'll make a working arrangement with you: I'll do everything I can to deport the Arabs really far away, I'll do all I can to provoke anti-Semitism, while you write odes about the wretched fate of the Arabs and hold the buckets to catch the Zhids that I've forced to take refuge here. And then you can teach these Zhids to be a Light unto the Nations. I'll wipe out the Arab villages and you can hold protest demonstrations and write the epitaphs. You'll be the family's honor and I'll be the stain on the family's honor. Be my guest. Is it a deal?"

At one point, perhaps here or perhaps earlier, I interrupted Z.'s monologue for a moment and expressed aloud a passing thought, perhaps more to myself than to my host: Is it possible that Hitler not only killed the Jews but also infected them with his poison? Did that same venom in fact seep into some hearts, and does it continue to seep out from there? Z. did not protest at this thought, or raise his voice, just as he did not raise his voice once during his monologue – just as he apparently did not raise his voice during the most trying moments of those shadowy exploits in his past.

He replied calmly, "Listen, friend, if that celebrated Jewish mind had spent less time saving the world, reforming humanity – Marx, Freud, Kafka, and all those geniuses, and Einstein, too – and instead had hurried up a bit, only ten years, and set up a tiny, Lilliputian Jewish state, sort of an independent bridgehead just from Haderah down to Gedera, and invented in time a teeny-weeny atom bomb for this state – if they'd only done those two things – there never would have been a Hitler. Or a Holocaust. And nobody in the whole world would have dared to lay a finger on the Jews. And there would be twenty million of us here today, from the Suez Canal to the oil fields. We wouldn't even have had to drop the bomb on the Germans or the Arabs. It would have been enough just to have a bomb like that in some Jewish storage shed in a tiny little state back in 1936 or '39, and no Hitler would have dared to come near a Jew. And those who died would still be alive – they and their offspring. Do you really think it was beyond the power of world Jewry to create a tiny state with its own tiny bomb? We might even have spared the gentiles World War Two. And spared ourselves five or six wars with the Arabs. Listen to what it says in Deuteronomy: '*And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitudes because thou wouldst not obey the voice of the Lord, thy God.*' Doesn't it give you goose bumps? And near that passage, somewhere in the same section, it talks about your type of Jew: '*... the man that is tender among you, and very delicate... of*

*the flesh of his children who he shall eat ... in the siege and in the straitness, where with thine enemy shall distress thee in all thy gates.'* You don't care for that one, do you? I can see on your face that you didn't enjoy that passage too much. That's not the nice side of Jewish tradition – eating the flesh of our sons. You're right, it's horrible. Phooey ! But if we don't want it to happen to us again, we have to cure ourselves of this Zhid disease, once and for all. To stop being the 'tender' and the 'delicate,' on this planet anyway. Maybe it's all right on the planet of the Little Prince, but not on this one.

"Come on, friend, let's go into the house. The mosquitoes I've got around here don't like left-wingers too much. You look like you could do with a drink. Have a seat. I've got good whiskey, two kinds. And there's also Campari and Dubonnet. So what'll it be ? You probably need a couple of minutes for soul-searching on the matter. So search your soul; be my guest. When you've finished, let me know what you've chosen and we'll make a toast. Never mind. Actually, I should have strung you up, along with all those friends of yours, but, instead, look at me – here I am making speeches to you and giving you my whiskey. Maybe I'm already a bit of a Zhid myself. It's very catching."