ARIEL SHARON
with DAVID CHANOFF

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

WARRIOR

"This fascinating book is well worth reading—for its candid descriptions of politics and politicians and for its revealing glimpse of U.S.-Israel relations."
—*The Washington Post*

WITH A NEW FOREWORD BY URI DAN

WARRIOR

The Autobiography of

ARIEL SHARON

by Ariel Sharon

with David Chanoff

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To my wife, Lily, who has been with me through
it all and whose love and support have been my
inspiration and strength.

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Foreword by Uri Dan

On February 6, 2001, the citizens of Israel elected Ariel Sharon as their prime minister. He accepted this position—one which few ever thought he would attain—with spiritual calm, but also with full seriousness, reflecting the single-minded purpose, as Winston Churchill once called it, with which he approached this awesome duty. Because to serve as prime minister of the Jewish state is to assume responsibility for the entire Jewish people, who have achieved their 2,000-year-old dream of reestablishing their homeland.

The people of Israel elected Ariel Sharon at a pivotal moment in their history, a time of critical danger that had seen the country, for the previous four months, dragged into an intolerable war of attrition, accompanied by waves of violence, terrorism, and hateful incitement initiated by Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

Sharon had promised to restore security and revive the prospects of peace that Israelis so deserve and for which they have longed since their nation was created in 1948. And the people of Israel placed their trust in him, propelling him into office with an unprecedented electoral majority—62.38 percent. It was a tribute to his well-deserved reputation for handling many of the nation's critical struggles and crises, problems that others regarded as "missions impossible."

Yet Sharon understood that in becoming prime minister, he was assuming the toughest assignment of all those he had previously known. After all, he had seen the war clouds gathering in the Israeli skies years before they appeared and had tried his utmost, through the many government and political positions he'd held, to keep those threats from coming to reality.

Since this book first appeared in print, Sharon has faced many difficult challenges, both political and personal. Perhaps none was more painful than the death of his wife, Lily, of whom he wrote in the original dedication of this book, her "love and support have been my inspiration and strength."

And yet, characteristically, he never lost his basic optimism. Though much of the world knows him by the title of this autobiography, he is fundamentally a man of peace. "We can control our destiny," he said in a message to Israelis shortly after his election. "United, I believe, we can win the battle for peace. But it must be a different peace: one with full recognition of the birthrights of Jews in their one and only land; one with security for generations; and one with a united Jerusalem, the eternal, undivided capital of the Jewish people and the State of Israel forever."

Sharon recognized the crisis at hand: It is "not just over security arrangements for Israel," he said, "it is by and large over the inherent right of Jews to exist and live in a Jewish democratic state, the one and only country in the world where we have the right and capability to defend ourselves *by ourselves*, and thus ensure the security of Jews everywhere." It was a desire to make clear this inherent right of existence that led Sharon to make his dramatic visit to Jerusalem's Temple Mount on September 28, 2000—a decision that unexpectedly set into motion the events that led to his remarkable election.

He had been warning of the coming crisis as early as 1990, when, with "a heavy heart," he stunned Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir by resigning as minister of industry and trade to protest the government's policies. "The matter is one of national principle," he declared. Under Shamir, he charged, "Palestinian terrorism runs unchecked within the whole of *Eretz Israel* [the land of Israel] and causes heavy losses of Jews and of innocent Arabs." As a result, he said, "our capital—the very heart of the Jewish people—has again been split in two." And he could not stand by and acquiesce. "There are times when a man must know when to get up from his seat and start marching," he wrote Shamir. "There are times in the life of a nation, in the lives of people, when they must awaken, arise, and fight with all their might before calamity overtakes them."

Four months later, however, he was back in the cabinet, having in the meantime prevented the Labor Party from toppling Shamir's government. A new crisis was at hand: a critical shortage of housing following a dramatic n wave of immigration from the soon-to-collapse Soviet Union. As minister of housing and construction, Sharon spearheaded the building of 144,000 new apartments and the renovation of 22,000 others within two years, an unheard-of achievement.

But the situation with the Palestinians always took precedence. Just months after the 1991 Gulf War, in which Israel withstood the onslaught of Saddam Hussein's SCUD missiles, Sharon was one of the few voices to oppose Israel's participation in the Madrid Conference. He understood that its real purpose was to force Israel into negotiating with the PLO—at a time when the Palestinian charter still called for the destruction of the Jewish state. And that, he warned, would endanger Israel's security.

To reduce the threat, he stepped up settlement efforts throughout the nation: not just in Judea and Samaria, in Gaza and the Golan Heights, but also in the Galilee—where he was instrumental in creating for the first time a Jewish majority—and the Negev, as well as greater Jerusalem. To hold the security zones, he knew, Jewish settlement there was essential.

Indeed, it is not by accident that the settlements are located where they are. They guard the cradle of the birth of the Jewish people, Judea and Samaria, while simultaneously affording Israel a strategic depth that is vital to its existence. The importance of these security zones has not lessened; indeed, it has become even greater.

But in 1992, the Likud was ousted in national elections by Yitzhak Rabin and the Labor Party. That defeat, he had no doubt, was the result of a short-sighted split within the nationalist camp that failed to appreciate the inherent danger of allowing a left-wing government to come to power. And yet history would repeat itself just seven years later.

It was not easy for Sharon to wage a struggle from the opposition. Yet he had a secret weapon: Contrary to popular myth, his personal ambition was always subordinate to the national interest. For all his interest in becoming prime minister, he was never prepared to abandon his deeply held principles and beliefs—not in regard to the safety of Jews. Which is why, despite his close and special personal relationship with Rabin, from the first he opposed the Oslo Agreements.

It's no exaggeration to say that no one had Rabin's ear on military and security advice more than Sharon. And he warned Rabin, in a frank, face-to-face talk, of Oslo's inherent dangers and the threat of bringing Yasser Arafat back to Gaza and to Israel. But this time, Rabin did not listen. So Sharon went on the stump, in Europe and the United States, warning ominously that peace would prove more and more elusive as terrorism increased. His was a lone voice in the wilderness, but he refused to keep silent. "If I am worried, then you had best also be worried," he cautioned during a hunger strike outside Rabin's office in 1995. Sadly, he was proven right: Suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks have continued incessantly, proving that Arafat had no intention of honoring the agreement he'd signed with Rabin and Peres.

The bitter divide in Israeli society grew to such an extent that it culminated in the most dastardly and abominable deed in the nation's history: the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin by a villainous Jewish assassin in the heart of Tel Aviv in November 1995. Israel was hit by a veritable earthquake that night; such evil was unthinkable in the Middle East's only democracy.

Six months later, the Likud, led by Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu, was restored to power by a handful of votes in national elections. Sharon became minister of national infrastructure, a new and powerful position created especially for him. Besides preparing Israel for twenty-first-century needs, he initiated future projects for cooperation with Jordan and the Palestinians, in order to put the peace process onto a viable track by creating a joint economic interest for all the parties. At the same time, Sharon worked to bolster the inexperienced Netanyahu in his struggle against the Palestinian Authority—especially when President Bill Clinton pressed Israel into making withdrawals that endangered security and eliminated Israeli control of sites that are integral to Jewish history, particularly the ancient city of Hebron.

Yet, as a member of the defense cabinet, he also made repeated efforts, in vain, to bring about a gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from south Lebanon, in a way that would leave the Lebanese army deployed along Israel's northern border. He believed it was essential to end Israel's stay in Lebanon, while en-

suring that the Iranian-supported terrorist organization Hezbollah could not threaten Israeli border towns. In the end, Israel did unilaterally withdraw from Lebanon under then–Prime Minister Ehud Barak, in a manner that has aroused new and dangerous hopes in the minds of Israel's enemies. Hezbollah has stationed itself along the border, and the Palestinians drew encouragement from the belief that Israel could be pressured into withdrawals by means of terrorism and violence—of the kind that Arafat renewed in September 2000.

At the same time, Sharon opened his own dialogue with key members of the Palestinian Authority. He met several times with Abu Alla, one of Arafat's assistants, and hosted one of the top Palestinian leaders, Abu Mazen, in his home. Sharon recognized that he could not ignore the new political realities. Understanding that a Palestinian state was inevitable, he focused on reducing the potential security damage and strengthening Jewish settlements in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.

The peace agreement with Jordan's King Hussein, which had been signed by Rabin in 1994, also influenced a change in Sharon's approach. Until then, he had believed that Israel's conflict with the Palestinians should find its solution through Jordan, whose population was overwhelmingly Palestinian. But peace with Jordan and the Oslo Accords changed the entire situation: Israel could no longer risk the possibility of two Palestinian states coming into being.

This change in Sharon's approach toward Jordan also yielded a special relationship of friendship and trust with King Hussein. Among other areas, they found a common interest in developing water sources for the two desert nations. So strong was the relationship that Netanyahu dispatched Sharon to Jordan to solve a sudden crisis when two Israeli Mossad agents were captured there after failing to liquidate Haled Mashal, head of the terrorist Hamas. After a lengthy late-night conversation with Sharon, the king agreed to release the Israelis and restore diplomatic relations to where they'd previously been.

In October 1998, Netanyahu named Sharon his foreign minister; together, they attended the Clinton-hosted tripartite conference at the Wye Plantation. There, Sharon fought for every inch of ground against Arafat's demands for further Israeli withdrawals. Eventually, with the help of the dying King Hussein, an agreement was reached: Israel would execute a staged withdrawal from 13 percent of Judea and Samaria but only if it was accompanied by Palestinian compliance with its previously agreed-on obligations, including the collection of illegal weapons, the jailing of terrorists, and an end to official hate-filled incitement.

But Netanyahu's government was destined to fall, thanks once again to divisions in the nationalist camp. Ehud Barak won a landslide victory in May 1999 and, when Netanyahu decided to take time out from politics, Sharon was named leader of the opposition. Believing unity imperative in order to meet the challenges of the Wye agreement, he accepted when Barak invited

him to join a national-unity government. But the offer was withdrawn, and Barak elected to go it alone, which would lead to his political downfall far more quickly than anyone could imagine.

Sharon's political success was overshadowed by a dark personal tragedy. Shortly before the election, his wife, Lily, was diagnosed with cancer. Now, Lily—who had stood by Arik's side through his toughest times—had to fight for her own life. For the first time, Ariel Sharon could only stand by helplessly. But Lily, true to her nature, did her best to send a message of "business as usual." With astonishing courage and bravery, she endured painful treatments in Tel Aviv and New York. All the while, she did everything in her power to ensure that he would not abandon his political struggle. The Sharons suffered another blow that December when their home on the farm burned down, taking with it all the memories of the warm nest that Lily had provided for the family. Yet it was Lily who, when things looked bleakest, pressed him time after time to continue the fight, to go out in the political fields after the long and heartrending nights he spent at her hospital bedside.

By dint of supreme effort, he rebuilt the Likud as an effective opposition party, fighting Barak's readiness to make further dangerous concessions with stubborn determination.

In March 2000, Lily lost her valiant battle for life. She had lived with dignity, and she died with dignity, surrounded by her entire family, who enveloped her with their love and appreciation. She was laid to rest on Anemone Hill, the hillock on the Sharon farm that she and Arik loved so much. Thousands of people gathered there from all spheres—friends, acquaintences, even total strangers came to console the Sharons that day and during the week of mourning that followed, testifying to their recognition of Lily's unique personality and how she had been inseparable from her husband.

But the loss of Lily did not leave Arik alone: More than ever, his sons, Omri and Gilad, and his daughter-in-law, Inbal, stood loyally by him, giving Sharon their love and total support.

That summer, President Clinton convened the Camp David summit, attended by both Arafat and Barak, who came bearing a package of Israeli concessions of unprecedented proportions. To the astonishment of American and Israeli leaders, Arafat rejected the proposal, in which Barak was demanding a signed document that would recognize the end of the Palestinians' dispute with Israel. Not till later was it learned that it was precisely at this time that Arafat had instructed his armed forces to prepare a campaign of violence and terror aimed at forcing a complete Israeli capitulation.

After the failure of the Camp David summit, Sharon learned, Barak was prepared to offer even further concessions to Arafat. Without consulting with his own cabinet, let alone the Knesset, Barak had offered to turn over 97 percent of the West Bank, uprooting some 100 Jewish settlements. Even more worrisome, Barak—again, acting virtually alone—was going to hand over to

the PLO the Old City of Jerusalem and give Arafat control of the Temple Mount. This was nothing less than ceding control of Judaism's holiest site, the very heart and soul of the Jewish people, the center of Jewish hopes, dreams, and prayers during thousands of years of exile.

Once again, Sharon was a voice in the wilderness. Despite his warnings, few appreciated the grave developments, in large part because Barak would never admit that he was still conducting secret negotiations with Arafat through the White House. But when Arafat declared that he could not accept Israeli control of the Western Wall without consulting the world's Muslims—insisting falsely that the Temple Mount had never enjoyed a Jewish presence—Sharon saw his opportunity. Jerusalem, Sharon understood, does not belong only to the state of Israel. It may be the Jewish state's eternal capital, but Jerusalem is the property of the entire Jewish people. Fate has given the modern Jewish state the awesome privilege and responsibility of defending Jerusalem, of liberating and unifying it, as it did in 1967. So, in order to arouse Jewish public opinion that the fate of the Temple Mount was in danger, he undertook to dramatically challenge Barak's concessions.

On September 24, 2000, while in New York, Sharon told the Voice of Israel radio that he intended to visit the Temple Mount that coming Thursday; Israeli public officials had, by and large, avoided any presence in the holiest of Jewish sites. He then informed the appropriate authorities.

One week earlier, against the backdrop of secret talks, the Palestinians had begun a series of terrorist activities in Gaza—a move security officials feared could be the start of a new large-scale campaign. The day before Sharon's trip to Jerusalem, a remote-controlled bomb exploded in Gaza, killing an Israeli officer and wounding another.

On the morning of September 28, Sharon ascended to the Temple Mount, accompanied by several Likud Knesset members. "I have come with a message of peace," he told reporters. "Jews have the right to visit here." But they weren't the only Knesset members there that day: Several Arab representatives from radical anti-Zionist parties had shown up, and they incited Palestinian onlookers to throw stones at Israeli policemen. Still, Sharon's visit might have remained just another internal political move, had Arafat not used it as a convenient pretext for embarking on a campaign of terror and violence.

The following day, at the close of morning prayers on the Temple Mount, Palestinians launched a violent clash with Israeli police and pelted Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall with stones. When security forces opened fire, killing several Palestinians, a new blood libel was born: the accusation, spread by the PLO and picked up by sympathetic journalists, that Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount had directly instigated violence. The Palestinians even labeled their campaign of violence and incitement the "Al-Aqsa intifada" and falsely claimed that Sharon had violated the mosques on the Temple Mount.

In the weeks that followed, even official Palestinian spokesmen eventually abandoned the falsehood and admitted that Arafat had planned a renewal of violence following the collapse of Camp David—long before Sharon had announced his Temple Mount visit. It was Arafat's planned response to the diplomatic stalemate, despite—or perhaps because of—Barak's readiness to make concessions that no prime minister before him would have dared consider. Barak, to his credit, repeatedly defended Sharon's Temple Mount visit.

Arafat pressed his case by demanding an international commission to investigate the "causes" of the ongoing violence; President Clinton gave in, and Barak—against the warnings of Sharon, who feared that Israel would effectively be put on trial—gave his consent. But the commission, headed by former Sen. George Mitchell, did not reach the conclusion that Arafat expected. In its final report, the commission said flatly: "We were provided with no persuasive evidence that the Sharon visit was anything other than an internal political act. . . . The Sharon visit did not cause the 'Al-Aqsa intifada.'" Not that Sharon needed Mitchell's "rehabilitation."

As the situation worsened, Sharon made clear his willingness once again to join a national-unity government. But again, Barak would not follow through, believing that only he could reach an agreement with Arafat to stop the war of attrition. Meanwhile, acts of terrorism against Israelis increased, and all efforts by the United States to halt the violence were flatly rejected, even though Barak—for the first time in Israeli history—agreed to conduct negotiations under fire.

Hoping to score a political coup, Barak abruptly resigned in December 2000, forcing early elections, which he believed he would win handily. But Sharon did not wage the campaign Barak was expecting. He vowed from the start that he would form a national-unity government in order to restore security and promote peace. The campaign was one of Israel's harshest and reached its low point when the Barak camp declared that a vote for Sharon was a vote for war. But as Israelis clearly realized, they had already been in a war for several months.

The results were overwhelming: Sharon was swept into office with a mandate never before seen in Israel. But at the moment of victory, he could hardly celebrate. He'd achieved his greatest political triumph and earned a resounding personal vote of confidence from the nation, but Lily was not there to share it with him. She who'd stood by him through all the trials and tribulations had more right than anyone to savor the well-earned victory. But as he contemplated her absence, he had difficulty holding back the tears that welled up in his eyes.

In swift order, Sharon formed a national-unity government, as he'd promised, not only to achieve unity across the broad spectrum of the Jewish community, but also to reach out to the hearts of those Israeli Arabs prepared to live in peace within the Jewish state. Ultimately, however, he formed a government in order to ensure a return of law and security to Israelis' daily lives.

It is an enormous burden that Sharon has taken on his shoulders. But he recognizes that the Jewish state is at a decisive historical crossroads. He does not believe in a physical separation with the Palestinians; that policy exists only on the left, which holds that Israelis and Arabs cannot live together. Sharon has never thought that way.

Sharon believes that while retaining its strategic assets, such as the Golan Heights, Israel must also preserve its deep-rooted historical links, such as the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, traditional burial place of the biblical forefathers. No country would willingly yield such historical assets. In Washington, crowds stand at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument, tributes to great leaders of the past two centuries. But in Hebron, says Sharon, you are talking about four thousand years of history, the place where David was crowned king of Israel. Any other nation would see to it that Hebron would be a required chapter in its children's education. Sharon understands that these are our deepest roots; how can you give up something like that?

Strategically, Sharon believes that time does not act against Israel, that the Arab world's ability to launch a military strike will diminish over the next ten to fifteen years. Therefore, it is critical that any solutions be able to stand up over a long period of time. And Sharon's ultimate vision is equally longrange: A new influx of one million immigrants, ensuring that Israel is home to a majority of the world's Jews by 2020; development of the Negev; and renewal of Zionist-value education to reinstill the pioneer generation's legitimate sense of the justice of our struggle and our full right to the land of our fathers.

Sharon has no longing or nostalgia for the past. He is focused on the future. Yet he recognizes that there was a different spirit in the nation's early days, one that enabled his generation to build today's Israel. And at the end of the day, the Zionist revolution is the only one of the twentieth-century's revolutions that succeeded.

Ariel Sharon, prime minister of Israel, knows that if we stand united, we can look to the future with hope. For as he says in this book, when he looks back on all that the people of Israel already have accomplished, it gives him the heart for what remains to be done.

1

An Echo

We had been in "Africa" for several days, on the west side of the Suez Canal. Already it was October 18, 1973. By now the Egyptians had recovered from the surprise of the crossing, an operation Anwar Sadat originally called "a television exercise." At first they had neglected the crossing site, unaware of what our thrust across the canal would come to mean. But now they knew they were facing the imminent encirclement and destruction of their armies, and they were hitting the pontoon bridge with everything they had. Shells buried themselves in the sand with concussive thuds. Now and then a fireball would explode among the men and tanks that were flowing across and spreading south and north behind Egyptian lines. Jets screamed overhead, dropping loads of napalm and high explosives.

We had been fighting since Yom Kippur, almost two straight weeks. Since then no one in the division had gotten any real sleep. Men dozed off in their positions during the occasional lulls or tried to catch an hour or two at night on the warm engines of tanks and armored personnel carriers. The entire previous night I had spent at our forward posts staring into a Starlight scope toward Ismailia, looking for signs of Egyptian movement. Now, despite the shelling, I couldn't keep my eyes open. Wrapping my coat around me, I lay down in the sand next to my

command APC. Already half asleep, I felt someone pull a blanket over me. Nearby a voice was shouting something, and I heard a soldier whisper hoarsely, "Be quiet, Arik's tired. Let him sleep." From the edge of a dream the words triggered a distant echo.

A soldier had said it then too, one of the thirty or so I had led out on a raid behind Iraqi lines in the winter of 1948—during the War of Independence. Exhausted from the fighting and the march, we had stumbled back to our camp in the Kfar Saba orange groves, soaked and shivering in the gray morning drizzle. My tent leaked. It had lost its rain cover months ago, and I knew the canvas was as sodden inside as out. Unable to face the idea of crawling inside, I walked over to the packing shed where we stored our weapons and ammunition and collapsed on a broken field cot in the corner. With my heavy British duffel coat pulled up around my ears I was just drifting off when some of the boys clumped into the shed, wanting to talk to me. "Be quiet," I heard my Sergeant Peretz saying, "Arik's tired. Let him sleep." Then too someone had covered me with a blanket or another coat. After twenty-five years I still remembered the tenderness of that gesture. I had felt surrounded by warmth and security, by the protectiveness of a family.

Perhaps these emotions had seemed especially sharp because I had not often experienced the same kind of outward affection from my own family. My father, Samuil, and my mother, Vera, were a different sort of people, not given to displaying their feelings, no matter how strong these might have been. Though they loved my sister, Dita, and me deeply, it was not their way to show it, certainly not through demonstrations of physical affection. They did not wear their hearts on their sleeves. What my parents did exude was strength, determination, and stubbornness. In Kfar Malal, the moshav where they worked their farm and where in 1928 I was born, these were qualities they were famous for. Even among the stiff-necked pioneers who had dragged Kfar Malal's farmland from the barren soil, their own stubbornness set them apart, often far apart.

They were different in other ways too. Most of Kfar Malal's forty or so married couples were Labor Zionists from the Yiddish-speaking ghettos and villages of Eastern Europe. Along with so many others in the second and third waves of immigration, they had come to Israel (Palestine to the world, to them "Eretz Israel"—the Land of Israel) not only to reclaim the Jewish homeland but to build a model socialist society. The co-operative farming village, the moshav, was their vehicle, a place where each family had its own home and land, but where the major decisions about

planting, harvesting, and marketing were made in common, a place where communal values prevailed.

At least that was how it was meant to be. But my father did not fit into anybody's mold. Like his neighbors, he was a passionate Zionist. But unlike them, he was no socialist. On the contrary, if anything stood out in his character, it was his individualism. Worse, he made no effort at all to hide his dislike for people he considered too rigidly ideological. In the enclosed social and political world of the moshav, these were volatile qualities. Occasionally the tensions between him and the other moshavniks had positive results. His innovations in planting and cultivating, developed in the face of community opposition, had an impact on farming not only on the moshav but throughout the Jewish settlements. But always the ill fit between my father and his neighbors made for problems, giving a sharper edge to an already hard life.

Like his father before him, Samuil was a Jewish nationalist pure and simple. Except for his Zionism he had no political allegiances whatsoever, not to socialism or communism or anything else. He had grown up in Brest Litovsk, where his father had been a leader in the local Zionist organization. My grandfather's colleague and closest friend was Menachem Begin's father, who was known in our family not as "Begin," but as "Bigun," Russian for "restless" or "driven." Legend had it that the two of them had once broken down the door of a synagogue whose rabbi had refused permission to hold a memorial service there for Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement.

Mordechai Scheinerman, my Zionist grandfather had trekked to Israel first in 1910. For two years he had taught school in Rehovot before returning to Russia to try to make arrangements to bring the rest of the family. But although his hopes for a quick return did not materialize, he did manage to instill in my father his deep longing for Eretz Israel. He also worked hard to help Samuil prepare for his own "aliyah"—his ascent to the homeland. An intellectual himself, he sent my father to classical Russian primary and secondary schools where Samuil learned French, German, and Latin. Meanwhile, at home my grandfather taught him Hebrew, Bible, and Zionist philosophy. And when he graduated from high school, my father enrolled in the faculty of agronomy at Tiflis University, where the family had moved to get away from the fighting of World War One. Both my father and grandfather knew that a scientific knowledge of agriculture would be important for someone who was going to be a farmer in the Promised Land.

In Tiflis my father met Vera Schneeroff, a student at the university's medical faculty. Vera was from a family in the Beulorussian district of Mohilov-on-the-Dnieper, the one Jewish family in the little village of Halavenchichi for several generations. Her father was a lumberman, cutting and selling timber from rented woods. Surrounded by Russian peasants, the Schneeroffs had somehow kept their Judaism alive, inviting other Jewish families in to help celebrate the holidays. Theirs was a steadfastness that even their gentile neighbors respected. In 1905 and 1906, when pogroms tore through their region, they were not touched, though perhaps that had as much to do with grandfather's legendary physical strength as with anything else. The Schneeroffs were also fiercely intent on education. Though they lived a hard life, with few luxuries, they saw to it that each of their eight children went through school in the neighboring town. And with the help of their eldest, Joseph, four of them went on to the university.

Perhaps my father recognized in Vera a streak of rock-hard willpower and determination and understood that she would make a good companion in the pioneer's life he was planning. Or perhaps he simply fell in love. Whichever the case, he had found in Vera a young woman of immense personal strength, the kind who would do what had to be done without asking many questions about it, and without any complaints either.

In 1917 the Czar's war against Germany turned into a civil war inside Russia. It took four years before the Revolution got rid of its enemies in Greater Russia and the Ukraine, but by 1921 the Red Army finally turned southward toward the Caucasian cities of Baku and Tiflis. For my parents it was still too soon. My father had just finished his agricultural studies, but my mother was still two years away from the medical degree that was her own great ambition. But there was no help for it. As an active Zionist, my father was sure to be arrested as soon as the communists arrived. Both he and Vera had seen the terrible massacres of Armenians and Turks, and they had no illusions about what the Revolution might bring with it. So with the Red columns closing in, they moved up their plans. In the spring of the year they got married and fled Tiflis, making their way to the Black Sea port of Batum, where they took ship for Israel.

For my father it was a journey that would fulfill his dreams, an "aliyah." But my mother did not share the vision. If Samuil was no socialist, Vera was not even much of a Zionist. While he saw the two of them returning to the homeland, she considered herself not much more

than an emigrant. Not that she found anything particularly strange in that. Already her brother Joseph had settled in Istanbul. Another brother, Solomon, was there too. A third brother was studying medicine in Germany, from where he eventually traveled first to Mexico, then to the United States, changing his name from Schneeroff to Montana along the way to ease problems with the immigration people.

Like so many Jewish families of those days, the Schneeroffs were wanderers, shaken from their homes by the upheavals of the times. In the years after the World War the earlier Jewish migration from Eastern Europe and Russia resumed its flow. Almost forty thousand Jewish immigrants arrived in Israel, members of what was called the "Third Aliyah." Following her husband, Vera was one of them, though she had little in common with the inspired Zionists and socialists of that generation. She knew no Hebrew and spoke Russian rather than Yiddish. She knew nothing about crops or soil and was hardly prepared to be a dirt farmer for the rest of her life. She was at home in the genteel world of Russian intellectuals and artists, and she hadn't the vaguest desire to live a communal existence with people she did not know and with whom she had little in common.

More than anything she wanted to finish her medical studies. As they prepared to leave Tiflis, she consoled herself that somehow she would be able to do it, perhaps in Jerusalem or at the American University in Beirut. But in the Caucusus there was no real information about that kind of thing. And when she arrived in the Promised Land, she found it a wilderness, a place for farmers and laborers, not for aspiring medical students. As she moved with my father from the experimental farm at Ben Shemen, where he first found work, to the agricultural school at Mikveh Israel, she began to realize how distant her own dreams had become. It was not in her nature to complain. But the loss scarred her heart.

Meanwhile, my father was trying to decide where to settle down. He heard that the Jezreel Valley kibbutz of Ein Harod had openings for members, but Vera didn't like the idea. It was just as well. For someone of his nature the steamy collective life of a kibbutz would have been a disaster. Then an opportunity came up at Kfar Malal, fifteen miles northeast of Tel Aviv on the coastal Plain of Sharon. Life there would be difficult, but where wasn't it difficult? There was no water or electricity and they would have to live in a tent while they built their own cabin. It would be treacherous too. The village had been destroyed in an Arab raid the year before, then re-established by the moshavniks. But in Kfar Malal