

NO MORE WAR

Not since the days of Ben Gurion had a leader been so loved. The victory breathed new life into Begin. On learning the election results, he gave many interviews and found it hard to conceal his delight.

“What kind of leadership style will you bring to Israel?” he was asked before moving from his one-bedroom apartment on Rosenbaum St. to the posh Prime Minister’s Residence in Jerusalem. “The usual style—a Jewish style,” he replied, with a victor’s composure.¹ Even concerning the future of Israel’s relationship with Germany, Begin hastened to clarify that his actions as prime minister would not necessarily be the same as those that he had espoused in opposition. When asked what he would do when asked to shake the hand of a German politician, he replied, “I shall act like the prime minister.”² The rage and impassioned delivery of his opposition days vanished as if they had never existed.

In the first days following the election Begin savored his victory. One of his first instructions at the Prime Minister’s Office was that a portrait of Ze’ev Jabotinsky be put beside those of former prime ministers. He waited for the clicking of the cameras while he gazed upon the photograph, his face glowing with the sense of achievement of one who had completed a decades-long marathon. One of the photographs of him at this time shows a pile of newspapers on his desk, with the two left-wing dailies, *Davar* and *Al Hamishmar*, on top. He declared that nothing would change in his daily routine. “As always, I got up this morning at 5:30 a.m.,” he would say.³ It was important for him to express continuity, as if his rise to power was a natural culmination of an expected, preplanned chain of events. His satisfaction derived not