

# The Jerusalem Report

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## FROM THE EDITOR

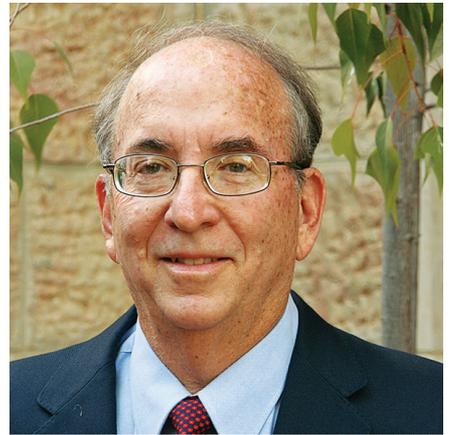
### Interfaith guru

**HOW DID** a Reform rabbi from Florida become Israel's pioneer in the field of interfaith dialogue? For the full answer, read Rabbi Dr. Ronald Kronish's new book, "The Other Peace Process: Interreligious Dialogue, a View from Jerusalem," published by Hamilton. This is just a taste.

It is, Kronish says, the first book written in Israel on interreligious dialogue as a part of Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding. During what he calls his "exciting and enlightening career," Kronish founded the Jerusalem-based Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI) in 1991, and served for 25 years as its dynamic director, becoming a well-known personality, public speaker and writer.

He established a reputation as a rational voice eloquently advocating for peaceful coexistence and constantly engaging in a vital conversation with Muslim and Christian leaders during a critical period in Israel's history. "Through my professional work, it became increasingly clear to me that the main issue that we have to deal with now and for the future – for the survival of the Jewish state of Israel – is to figure out how we can learn to live with the Palestinian Arabs in our midst, both those who live as citizens of Israel, and those who live in the West Bank and Gaza, many of whom still suffer under military occupation and whose fate needs to be resolved through peace negotiations," he concludes.

Kronish, 71, stresses that he is a liberal Zionist who believes that the Jewish people should have a state in part of their ancient homeland, side by side with a peaceful Palestinian state. His personal and professional journey makes for a fascinating read. After growing up as the son of a prominent rabbi in Miami Beach, Rabbi Leon Kronish, he studied to be a rabbi and educator at Brandeis, Hebrew Union College and Harvard, where he also developed his progressive philosophy. He got involved in the field of inter-religious dialogue some years after making aliya from the US with his wife, Amy, and two daughters in 1979. Today, he is retired but still lives in Jerusalem, and he and Amy



Rabbi Ron Kronish

have "three wonderful daughters, three terrific sons-in-law and five fabulous grandchildren."

The reader cannot but admire his faith, tenacity and dedication, and his refusal to let go of his quest for peaceful coexistence, despite what he describes as the despair among people on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "My response to this – and the answer shared by many of my colleagues in Israel – is that we must not lose faith and give up!" he insists.

Of the many great stories in this book, one of my favorites is his role in the historic visit of Pope John Paul II to Israel in 2000 at the peak of a revolution in Catholic-Jewish relations. His description of the pontiff's prayer at the Western Wall, touching the stones, and placing a note in a crack in which he asks God for forgiveness is incredibly moving.

Kronish established good relationships with a wide range of religious figures – Jews, Christians and Muslims of many denominations, and others, including the Dalai Lama, whom he had the honor of hosting in Israel. He is a proponent of what he calls "The Other Peace Process" – the educational, religious, psychological and spiritual one – to supplement the official political process, which he believes will eventually become the historic imperative of a new era, just as it did in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Bosnia-Herzegovina. "Ultimately, once we are sick and tired of ongoing violence – living by the sword – we will have no choice but to bring people together to live in peace," he writes. We can only pray, for everyone's sake, that he is right.

*Steve Linde*

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