FACTS ABOUT ISRAEL
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HISTORY

The birthplace of the Jewish people is the Land of Israel (Eretz Yisrael). There, a significant part of the nation’s long history was enacted, of which the two thousand years are recorded in the Bible; there, its cultural, religious, and national identity was formed; and there, its physical presence has been maintained through the centuries, even after the majority was forced into exile. During the many years of dispersion, the Jewish people never severed nor forgot its bond with the Land. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Jewish independence, lost 2,000 years earlier, was renewed.

זכור ימוא עולם ביניו שנות דור ודור... (דברים ל"ב: 2')

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations... (Deuteronomy 32:7)
BIBLICAL TIMES

The Patriarchs
Jewish history began about 4,000 years ago (c. 17th century BCE) with the patriarchs – Abraham, his son Isaac, and grandson Jacob. Documents unearthed in Mesopotamia, dating back to 2000-1500 BCE, corroborate aspects of their nomadic way of life as described in the Bible. The Book of Genesis relates how Abraham was summoned from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan to bring about the formation of a people with belief in the One God. When a famine spread through Canaan, Jacob (Israel), his 12 sons, and their families settled in Egypt, where their descendants were reduced to slavery and pressed into forced labor.

Exodus and Settlement
After 400 years of bondage, the Israelites were led to freedom by Moses who, according to the biblical narrative, was chosen by God to take his people out of Egypt and back to the Land of Israel promised to their forefathers (c.13th-12th centuries BCE). They wandered for 40 years in the Sinai desert, where they were forged into a nation and received the Torah (Pentateuch), which included the
Ten Commandments, and gave form and content to their monotheistic faith. The exodus from Egypt (c.1300 BCE) left an indelible imprint on the national memory of the Jewish people and became a universal symbol of liberty and freedom. Every year Jews celebrate Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Pentecost) and Succot (Feast of Tabernacles), commemorating events of that time.

During the next two centuries, the Israelites conquered most of the Land of Israel and became farmers and craftsmen; a degree of economic and social consolidation followed. Periods of relative peace alternated with times of war, during which the people rallied behind leaders known as judges, chosen for their political and military skills as well as for their leadership qualities. The weakness inherent in this tribal organization in face of a threat posed by the Philistines (sea-going people from Asia Minor who settled on the Mediterranean coast) generated the need for a ruler who would unite the tribes and make the position permanent, with succession carried on by inheritance.

“The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.”
(Numbers 6:24-26)
The Monarchy

The first king, Saul (c.1020 BCE), bridged the period between loose tribal organization and the setting up of a full monarchy under his successor, David.

King David (c.1004-965 BCE) established his kingdom as a major power in the region by successful military expeditions, including the final defeat of the Philistines, as well as through a network of friendly alliances with nearby kingdoms. Consequently, his authority was recognized from the borders of Egypt and the Red Sea to the banks of the Euphrates. At home, he united the 12 Israelite tribes into one kingdom and placed his capital, Jerusalem, and the monarchy at the center of the country’s national life. Biblical tradition depicts David as a poet and musician, with verses ascribed to him appearing in the Book of Psalms.

David was succeeded by his son Solomon (c.965-930 BCE) who further strengthened the kingdom. Through treaties with neighboring kings, reinforced by politically motivated marriages, Solomon ensured peace for his kingdom and made it equal
among the great powers of the age. He expanded foreign trade and promoted domestic prosperity by developing major enterprises, such as copper mining and metal smelting, while building new towns and fortifying old ones of strategic and economic importance. Crowning his achievements was the building of the Temple in Jerusalem, which became the center of the Jewish people’s national and religious life. The Bible attributes to Solomon the Book of Proverbs and the Song of Songs.

**Divided Monarchy**
The end of Solomon’s rule was marred by discontent on the part of the populace, which had to pay heavily for his ambitious schemes. At the same time, preferential treatment of his own tribe embittered the others, which resulted in growing antagonism between the monarchy and the tribal separatists. After Solomon’s death (930 BCE), open insurrection led to the breaking away of the 10 northern tribes and division of the country into a northern kingdom, Israel, and a southern kingdom, Judah, the latter on the territory of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

The Kingdom of Israel, with its capital national life. Their revelatory experiences were recorded in books of inspired prose and poetry, many of which were incorporated into the Bible.

The enduring, universal appeal of the prophets derives from their call for a fundamental consideration of human values. Words such as those of Isaiah (1:17), *Learn to do good, devote yourselves to justice; aid the wronged, uphold the rights of the orphan; defend the cause of the widow* continue to nourish humanity’s pursuit of social justice.
Samaria, lasted more than 200 years under 19 kings, while the Kingdom of Judah was ruled from Jerusalem for 400 years by an equal number of kings of the lineage of David. The expansion of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires brought first Israel and later Judah under foreign control. The Kingdom of Israel was crushed by the Assyrians (722 BCE) and its people carried off into exile and oblivion. Over a hundred years later, Babylonia conquered the Kingdom of Judah, exiling most of its inhabitants as well as destroying Jerusalem and the Temple (586 BCE).

**The First Exile (586-538 BCE)**

The Babylonian conquest brought an end to the First Temple period, but did not sever the Jewish people’s connection to the Land of Israel. Sitting by the rivers of Babylon, the Jews pledged to remember their homeland: *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy* (Psalms 137:5-6).

The exile to Babylonia, which followed the destruction of the First Temple (586 BCE), marked the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora. There, Judaism began to develop a religious framework and way of life outside the Land,
ultimately ensuring the people’s national survival and spiritual identity and imbuing it with sufficient vitality to safeguard its future as a nation.
THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD
THE RETURN TO ZION

Persian and Hellenistic Periods (538-142 BCE)

Following a decree by the Persian King Cyrus, conqueror of the Babylonian empire (538 BCE), some 50,000 Jews set out on the first return to the Land of Israel, led by Zerubbabel, a descendant of the House of David. Less than a century later, the second return was led by Ezra the Scribe. Over the next four centuries, the Jews knew varying degrees of self-rule under Persian (538-333 BCE) and later Hellenistic (Ptolemaic and Seleucid) overlordship (332-142 BCE).

The repatriation of the Jews under Ezra’s inspired leadership, construction of the Second Temple on the site of the First Temple, refortification of the walls of Jerusalem, and establishment of the Kneshet Hagedolah (Great Assembly) as the supreme religious and judicial body of the Jewish people marked the beginning of the Second Temple period. Within the confines of the Persian Empire, Judah was a nation whose leadership was entrusted to the high priest and council of elders in Jerusalem.
As part of the ancient world conquered by Alexander the Great of Greece (332 BCE), the Land remained a Jewish theocracy under Syrian-based Seleucid rulers. When the Jews were prohibited to practice Judaism and their Temple was desecrated as part of an effort to impose Greek-oriented culture and customs on the entire population, the Jews rose in revolt (166 BCE).

**Hasmonean Dynasty (142-63 BCE)**
First led by Mattathias of the priestly Hasmonean family and then by his son Judah the Maccabee, the Jews subsequently entered Jerusalem and purified the Temple (164 BCE), events commemorated each year by the festival of Hannuka.

Following further Hasmonean victories (147 BCE), the Seleucids restored autonomy to Judea, as the Land of Israel was now called, and, with the collapse of the Seleucid kingdom (129 BCE), Jewish independence was achieved. Under the Hasmonean dynasty, which lasted about 80 years, the kingdom regained boundaries not far short of Solomon’s realm, political consolidation under Jewish rule was attained and Jewish life flourished.

**Masada**: Nearly 1,000 Jewish men, women and children, who had survived the destruction of Jerusalem, occupied and fortified King Herod’s mountaintop palace complex of Masada near the Dead Sea, where they held out for three years against repeated Roman attempts to dislodge them. When the Romans finally scaled Masada and broke through its walls, they found that the defenders and their families had chosen to die by their own hands rather than be enslaved.
The Menorah on the Arch of Titus, Rome
The Menorah Through The Ages

The Golden Menorah (a seven-branched candelabrum) was a major ritual object in King Solomon’s Temple in ancient Jerusalem. Through the ages it has served as a symbol of Jewish heritage and tradition in countless places and in a variety of forms.

The Menorah on a Hasmonean coin from the first century BCE (Israel Antiquities Authority)

The Menorah on two plaster fragments from the first century CE, found in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem (Israel Exploration Society)

The Menorah in the mosaic floor of a 5th - 6th century synagogue in Jericho (Israel Antiquities Authority)

The Menorah near the Knesset, by Benno Elkan (Government Press Office (G.P.O.) / F. Cohen)
Roman Rule (63 BCE-313 CE)

When the Romans replaced the Seleucids as the great power in the region, they granted the Hasmonean king, Hyrcanus II, limited authority under the Roman governor of Damascus. The Jews were hostile to the new regime, and the following years witnessed frequent insurrections. A last attempt to restore the former glory of the Hasmonean dynasty was made by Mattathias Antigonus, whose defeat and death brought Hasmonean rule to an end (40 BCE), and the Land became a province of the Roman Empire.

In 37 BCE Herod, a son-in-law of Hyrcanus II, was appointed King of Judea by the Romans. Granted almost unlimited autonomy in the country’s internal affairs, he became one of the most powerful monarchs in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. A great admirer of Greco-Roman culture, Herod launched a massive construction program, which included the cities of Caesarea and Sebaste and the fortresses at Herodium and Masada. He also remodeled the Temple into one of the most magnificent buildings of its time. But despite his many

Halakhah is the body of law which has guided Jewish life all over the world since post-biblical times. It deals with the religious obligations of Jews, both in interpersonal relations and in ritual observances, and encompasses practically all aspects of human behavior - birth and marriage, joy and grief, agriculture and commerce, ethics and theology. Rooted in the Bible, halakhic authority is based on the Talmud, a body of Jewish law and lore (completed c.
achievements, Herod failed to win the trust and support of his Jewish subjects.

Ten years after Herod’s death (4 BCE), Judea came under direct Roman administration. Growing anger against increased Roman suppression of Jewish life resulted in sporadic violence which escalated into a full-scale revolt in 66 CE. Superior Roman forces led by Titus were finally victorious, razing Jerusalem to the ground (70 CE) and defeating the last Jewish outpost at Masada (73 CE).

The total destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple was catastrophic for the Jewish people. According to the contemporary historian Josephus Flavius, hundreds of thousands of Jews perished in the siege of Jerusalem and elsewhere in the country, and many thousands more were sold into slavery.

A last brief period of Jewish sovereignty followed the revolt of Shimon Bar Kochba (132 CE), during which Jerusalem and Judea were regained. However, given the overwhelming power of the Romans, the outcome was inevitable. Three years later, in conformity with Roman custom, Jerusalem was “plowed up with a yoke of 400), which incorporates the Mishna, the first written compilation of the Oral Law (codified c. 210), and the Gemara, an elaboration of the Mishna. To provide practical guidance to the Halakha, concise, systematic digests were authored by religious scholars beginning in the first and second centuries. Among the most authoritative of these codifications is the Shulhan Arukh, written by Joseph Caro in Safed (Tzfat) in the 16th century.
oxen,” Judea was renamed Palaestina and Jerusalem, Aelia Capitolina.

Although the Temple had been destroyed and Jerusalem burned to the ground, the Jews and Judaism survived the encounter with Rome. The supreme legislative and judicial body, the Sanhedrin (successor of the Knesset Hagedolah) was reconvened in Yavneh (70 CE), and later in Tiberias. Without the unifying framework of a state and the Temple, the small remaining Jewish community gradually recovered, reinforced from time to time by returning exiles. Institutional and communal life was renewed, priests were replaced by rabbis and the synagogue became the focus of the Jewish communities, as evidenced by remnants of synagogues found at Capernaum, Korazin, Bar’am, Gamla, and elsewhere. Halakhah (Jewish religious law) served as the common bond among the Jews and was passed on from generation to generation.
FOREIGN DOMINATION

Byzantine Rule (313-636)
By the end of the 4th century, following Emperor Constantine’s adoption of Christianity (313) and the founding of the Byzantine Empire, the Land of Israel had become a predominantly Christian country. Churches were built on Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Galilee, and monasteries were established in many parts of the country. Jews were deprived of their former relative autonomy, as well as of their right to hold public positions, and were forbidden to enter Jerusalem except on one day of the year (Tisha B’Av – ninth of Av) to mourn the destruction of the Temple.

The Persian invasion of 614 was aided by the Jews, who were inspired by messianic hopes of deliverance. In gratitude for their help, they were granted the administration of Jerusalem, an interlude which lasted about three years. Subsequently, the Byzantine army regained the city (629) and again expelled its Jewish inhabitants.
The Arab conquest of the Land came four years after the death of Muhammad (632) and lasted more than four centuries, with caliphs ruling first from Damascus, then from Baghdad and Egypt. At the outset, Jewish settlement in Jerusalem resumed, and the Jewish community was granted the customary status of dhimmi (protected non-Muslims), which safeguarded their lives, property, and freedom of worship, in return for payment of special poll and land taxes.

However, subsequent restrictions against non-Muslims (717) affected the Jews’ public conduct as well as their
religious observances and legal status. The imposition of heavy taxes on agricultural land compelled many to move from rural areas to towns, where their circumstances hardly improved, while increasing social and economic discrimination forced others to leave the country. By the end of the 11th century, the Jewish community in the Land had diminished considerably and had lost some of its organizational and religious cohesiveness.

The Crusaders (1099-1291)
For the next 200 years, the country was dominated by the Crusaders who, following an appeal by Pope Urban II, came from Europe to recover the Holy Land from the infidels. In July 1099, after a five-week siege, the knights of the First Crusade and their rabble army captured Jerusalem, massacring most of the city’s non-Christian inhabitants. Barricaded in their synagogues, the Jews defended their quarter, only to be burned to death or sold into slavery. During the next few decades, the Crusaders extended their power over the rest of the country, partly through treaties and agreements, but mostly by bloody military victories. The Latin Kingdom of the Crusaders was that of a conquering minority confined mainly to fortified cities and castles.

When the Crusaders opened up transportation routes
from Europe, pilgrimages to the Holy Land became popular and, at the same time, increasing numbers of Jews sought to return to their homeland. Documents of the period indicate that 300 Rabbis from France and England arrived in a group, some settling in Acre (Akko), others in Jerusalem.

Following the overthrow of the Crusaders by a Muslim army under Saladin (1187), the Jews were again accorded a certain measure of freedom, including the right to live in Jerusalem. Although the Crusaders regained a foothold in the country after Saladin’s death (1193), their presence was limited to a network of fortified castles.

Crusader authority in the Land ended after a final defeat (1291) by the Mamluks, a Muslim military class which had come to power in Egypt.

**Mamluk Rule (1291-1516)**
The Land under the Mamluks became a backwater province ruled from Damascus. Acre, Jaffa, and other ports were destroyed for fear of new crusades, and maritime as well as overland commerce was interrupted. By the end of the Middle Ages, the country’s towns were virtually in ruins, most of Jerusalem was abandoned, and the small Jewish community was poverty-stricken. The period of Mamluk decline was darkened by political and economic upheavals, plagues, locusts, and devastating earthquakes.
Ottoman Rule (1517-1917)

Following the Ottoman conquest in 1517, the Land was divided into four districts, attached administratively to the province of Damascus and ruled from Istanbul. At the outset of the Ottoman era, some 1,000 Jewish families lived in the country, mainly in Jerusalem, Nablus (Shechem), Hebron, Gaza, Safed (Tzfat) and the villages of Galilee. The community was comprised of descendants of Jews who had always lived in the Land, as well as immigrants from North Africa and Europe.

Orderly government, until the death (1566) of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, brought improvements and stimulated Jewish immigration. Some newcomers settled in Jerusalem, but the majority went to Safed where, by the mid-16th century, the Jewish population had risen to about 10,000, and the town had become a thriving textile center as well as the focus of intense intellectual activity.

During this period, the study of Kabbala (Jewish mysticism) flourished, and contemporary clarifications of Jewish law, as codified in the *Shulhan Arukh*, spread throughout the Diaspora from the houses of study in Safed.

With a gradual decline in the quality of Ottoman rule, the country suffered widespread neglect. By the end of the 18th century, much of the Land was owned by absentee
landlords and leased to impoverished tenant farmers, and taxation was as crippling as it was capricious. The great forests of Galilee and the Carmel mountain range were denuded of trees; swamp and desert encroached on agricultural land.

**Modern Times**

The 19th century saw medieval backwardness gradually give way to the first signs of progress, with various Western powers jockeying for position, often through missionary activities. British, French, and American scholars launched studies of biblical archeology; Britain, France, Russia, Austria, and the United States opened consulates in Jerusalem. Steamships began to ply regular routes to and from Europe; postal and telegraphic connections were installed; the first road connecting Jerusalem and Jaffa was built. The Land’s rebirth as a crossroads for commerce of three continents was accelerated by the opening of the Suez Canal.

Consequently, the situation of the country’s Jews slowly improved, and their numbers increased substantially. By mid-century, overcrowded conditions within the walled city of Jerusalem motivated the Jews to

**Zionism**, the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, derives its name from the word “Zion”, the traditional synonym for Jerusalem and the Land of Israel. The idea of Zionism – the redemption of the Jewish people in its ancestral homeland – is rooted in the continuous longing for and deep attachment to the Land of Israel, which have been an inherent part of Jewish existence in the Diaspora through the centuries.
build the first neighborhood outside the walls (1860) and, in the next quarter century, to add seven more, forming the nucleus of the new city. By 1870, Jerusalem had an overall Jewish majority. Land for farming was purchased throughout the country; new rural settlements were established; and the Hebrew language, long restricted to liturgy and literature, was revived. The stage was set for the founding of the Zionist movement.

Inspired by Zionist ideology, two major influxes of Jews from Eastern Europe arrived in the country at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Resolved to restore their homeland by tilling the soil, these pioneers reclaimed barren fields, built new settlements and laid the foundations for what would become a thriving agricultural economy.

The new arrivals faced extremely harsh conditions: the attitude of the Ottoman administration was hostile and oppressive; communications and transportation were rudimentary and insecure; swamps bred deadly malaria; and the soil had suffered

Political Zionism emerged in response to continued oppression and persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe and increasing disillusionment with the emancipation in Western Europe, which had neither put an end to discrimination nor led to the integration of Jews into local societies. It found formal expression in the establishment of the Zionist Organization (1897) at the First Zionist Congress, convened by Theodor Herzl.
in Basel, Switzerland. The Zionist movement’s program contained both ideological and practical elements aimed at promoting the return of Jews to the Land; facilitating the social, cultural, economic, and political revival of Jewish national life; and attaining an internationally recognized, legally secured home for the Jewish people in its historic homeland, where Jews would be free from persecution and able to develop their own lives and identity.

from centuries of neglect. Land purchases were restricted, and construction was banned without a special permit obtainable only in Istanbul. While these difficulties hampered the country's development, they did not stop it. At the outbreak of World War I (1914), the Jewish population in the Land numbered 85,000, as compared to 5,000 in the early 1500s.

In December 1917, British forces under the command of General Allenby entered Jerusalem, ending 400 years of Ottoman rule. The Jewish Legion, with three battalions comprising thousands of Jewish volunteers, was an integral unit of the British army.

**British Rule (1918-1948)**

In July 1922, the League of Nations entrusted Great Britain with the Mandate for Palestine (the name by which the country was then known). Recognizing the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine, Great Britain was called upon to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine-Eretz Israel (Land of Israel). Two months later,
in September 1922, the Council of the League of Nations and Great Britain decided that the provisions for setting up a Jewish national home would not apply to the area east of the Jordan River, which constituted three fourths of the territory included in the Mandate and eventually became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

**Immigration**

Motivated by Zionism and encouraged by British sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations, as communicated by Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour (1917), successive waves of immigrants arrived in the Land between 1919 and 1939, each contributing to different aspects of the developing Jewish community. Some 35,000 who came between 1919 and 1923, mainly from Russia, strongly influenced the community’s character and organization for years to come. These pioneers laid the foundations of a comprehensive social and economic infrastructure, developed agriculture, established unique communal and cooperative forms of rural settlement – the kibbutz and moshav – and provided the labor force for building houses and roads.

The next influx of some 60,000, which arrived primarily from Poland between 1924 and 1932, was instrumental in developing and enriching urban life. These immigrants settled mainly in Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem, where they established small businesses, construction firms,
and light industry. The last major wave of immigration before World War II, comprising some 165,000, took place in the 1930s following Hitler’s rise to power in Germany. The newcomers, many of whom were professionals and academics, constituted the first large-scale influx from Western and Central Europe. Their education, skills, and experience raised business standards, improved urban and rural amenities, and broadened the community’s cultural life.

**Administration**

The British Mandate authorities granted the Jewish and Arab communities the right to run their own internal affairs. Utilizing this right, the Jewish community, known as the *Yishuv*, elected (1920) a self-governing body based on party representation, which met annually to review its activities and elect the National Council (*Va’ad Leumi*) to implement its policies and programs. Financed by local resources and funds raised by world Jewry, a countrywide network of educational, religious, health, and social services was developed and maintained. In 1922, as stipulated in the Mandate, a ‘Jewish Agency’ was constituted to represent the Jewish people vis-a-vis the British authorities, foreign governments, and international organizations.

**Economic Development**

During the three decades of the Mandate, agriculture was expanded; factories were established; new roads were built
throughout the country; the waters of the Jordan River were harnessed for production of electric power; and the mineral potential of the Dead Sea was tapped. The *Histadrut* (General Federation of Labor) was founded (1920) to advance workers’ welfare and provide employment by setting up cooperatively-owned enterprises in the industrial sector as well as marketing services for the agricultural settlements.

**Culture**

Day by day, a cultural life was emerging which would become unique to the Jewish community in the Land of Israel. Art, music, and dance developed gradually with the establishment of professional schools and studios. Galleries and halls provided venues for exhibitions and performances attended by a discriminating public. The opening of a new play, the appearance of a new book, or a retrospective show by a local painter were immediately scrutinized by the press and became the subject of lively discussion in coffee houses and at social gatherings.

The Hebrew language was recognized as an official language of the country, alongside English and Arabic, and was used on documents, coins, and stamps, as well as for radio broadcasting. Publishing proliferated, and the country emerged as the world center of Hebrew literary
activity. Theaters of various genres opened their doors to enthusiastic audiences, accompanied by first attempts to write original Hebrew plays.

Three Jewish underground movements operated during the British Mandate period. The largest was the Haganah, founded in 1920 by the Jewish community as a defense militia to safeguard the security of the Jewish population. From the mid-1930s, it also retaliated following Arab attacks and responded to British restrictions on Jewish immigration with mass demonstrations and sabotage. The Etzel, organized in 1931, rejected the self-restraint of the Haganah and

The Jewish national revival and the community’s efforts to rebuild the country were strongly opposed by Arab nationalists. Their resentment erupted in periods of intense violence (1920, 1921, 1929, 1936-39), when unprovoked attacks were launched against the Jewish population, including the Hebron Massacre of 1929, as well as the harassment of Jewish transport, and the burning of fields and forests. Attempts to reach a dialogue with the Arabs, undertaken early in the Zionist endeavor, were ultimately unsuccessful, polarizing Zionism and Arab nationalism into a potentially explosive situation. Recognizing the opposing aims of the two national movements, the British recommended (1937) dividing the country into two states, one Jewish and one Arab, to be linked by an economic union. The Jewish leadership accepted the idea of partition and empowered the Jewish Agency to negotiate with the British government in an effort to reformulate various aspects of the proposal. The Arabs were uncompromisingly against any partition plan.
Continuing large-scale Arab anti-Jewish riots led Britain (May 1939) to issue a White Paper imposing drastic restrictions on Jewish immigration, despite its consequence of denying European Jewry a place of refuge from Nazi persecution.

The start of World War II soon after caused David Ben-Gurion, later Israel’s first prime minister, to declare: *We will fight the war as if there were no White Paper, and the White Paper as if there were no war.*

**The Holocaust**

During World War II (1939-45), the Nazi regime deliberately carried out a systematic plan to liquidate the Jewish community of Europe, in the course of which some six million Jews, including 1.5 million children, were murdered. As the Nazi armies swept through Europe, Jews were savagely persecuted, subjected to torture and humiliation, and herded into ghettos, where attempts at armed resistance led to even harsher measures. From the ghettos they were transported to camps where a fortunate few were put to hard labor, but most were either shot in mass executions or put to death in gas chambers. Not many managed to escape. Some fled to other countries, a few joined
the partisans, and others were hidden by non-Jews who did so at risk of their own lives. Consequently, only one third, including those who had left Europe before the war, survived out of a population of almost nine million, which had once constituted the largest and most vibrant Jewish community in the world.

After the war, Arab opposition led the British to intensify their restrictions on the number of Jews permitted to enter and settle in the Land. The Jewish community responded by instituting a wide network of “illegal immigration” activities to rescue Holocaust survivors. Between 1945 and 1948, some 85,000 Jews were brought to the Land by secret, often dangerous routes, in spite of a British naval blockade and border patrols set up to intercept the refugees before they reached the country. Those who were caught were interned in detention camps on the island of Cyprus, or returned to Europe.

**The Road to Independence**

Britain’s inability to reconcile the conflicting demands of the Jewish and Arab communities led the British
government to request that the ‘Question of Palestine’ be placed on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly (April 1947). As a result, a special committee was constituted to draft proposals concerning the country’s future. On 29 November 1947, the Assembly voted to adopt the committee’s recommendation to partition the Land into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The Jewish community accepted the plan; the Arabs rejected it.

Following the UN vote, local Arab militants, aided by random volunteers from Arab countries, launched violent attacks against the Jewish community in an effort to frustrate the partition resolution and prevent the establishment of a Jewish state. After a number of setbacks, the Jewish defense organizations routed most of the attacking forces, taking hold of the entire area which had been allocated for the Jewish state.

On 14 May 1948, when the British Mandate came to an end, the Jewish population in the Land numbered some 650,000, comprising an organized community with well-developed political, social and

Jews of Palestine in the war effort, the Jewish Brigade was formed as an independent military unit of the British Army, with its own flag and emblem. Comprised of some 5,000 men, the brigade saw action in Egypt, northern Italy and northwest Europe. After the Allied victory in Europe (1945), many of its members joined the “illegal immigration” efforts to bring Holocaust survivors to the Land of Israel.
economic institutions – in fact, a nation in every sense and a state in everything but name.
THE STATE OF ISRAEL

On 14 May 1948, Israel proclaimed its independence. Less than 24 hours later, the regular armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq invaded the country, forcing Israel to defend the sovereignty it had regained in its ancestral homeland.

In what became known as Israel’s War of Independence, the newly formed, poorly equipped Israel Defense Forces (IDF) repulsed the invaders in fierce intermittent fighting, which lasted some 15 months and claimed over 6,000 Israeli lives (nearly one percent of the country’s Jewish population at the time).

During the first months of 1949, direct negotiations were conducted under UN auspices between Israel and each of the invading countries (except Iraq, which refused to negotiate with Israel), resulting in armistice agreements which reflected the situation at the end of the fighting. Accordingly, the Coastal Plain, Galilee and the entire Negev were within Israel’s sovereignty, Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) were under Jordanian rule, and the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula were under Egyptian administration. The armistice agreements set the stage for future negotiations and conflicts that would shape the region for decades to come.
Bank) came under Jordanian rule, the Gaza Strip came under Egyptian administration, and the city of Jerusalem was divided, with Jordan controlling the eastern part, including the Old City, and Israel the western sector.

State-Building

The war over, Israel focused on building the state which the people had struggled so long and so hard to regain. The first 120-seat Knesset (parliament) went into session following national elections (25 January 1949) in which nearly 85 percent of all eligible voters cast their ballots. Two of the people who had led Israel to statehood became the country’s leaders: David Ben-Gurion, head of the Jewish Agency, was chosen as the first prime minister; and Chaim Weizmann, head of the World Zionist Organization, was elected by the Knesset as the first president. On 11 May
1949, Israel took its seat as the 59th member of the United Nations.

In accordance with the concept of the ‘ingathering of the exiles’ which lies at the heart of Israel’s raison d’être, the gates of the country were thrown open, affirming the right of every Jew to come to the country and, upon entry, to acquire citizenship. In the first four months of independence, some 50,000 newcomers, mainly Holocaust survivors, reached Israel’s shores. By the end of 1951, a total of 687,000 men, women, and children had arrived, over 300,000 of them refugees from Arab lands, thus doubling the Jewish population.

The economic strain caused by the War of Independence and the need to provide for a rapidly growing population required austerity at home and financial aid from abroad.

Assistance extended by the United States government, loans from American banks, contributions of Diaspora Jews and post-war German reparations were used to build housing, mechanize agriculture, establish a merchant fleet and a national airline, exploit available minerals, develop industries
and expand roads, telecommunications, and electricity networks.

Towards the end of the first decade, the output of industry doubled, as did the number of employed persons, with industrial exports increasing four-fold. Vast expansion of areas under cultivation had brought about self-sufficiency in the supply of all basic food products except meat and grains, while some 50,000 acres of mostly barren land were afforested and trees were planted along almost 500 miles (800 km.) of highways.

The educational system, which had been developed by the Jewish community in the pre-state period and now included the Arab sector, was greatly expanded. School attendance became free and compulsory for all children aged 5-14 (since 1978 it has been mandatory to age 16 and free to age 18). Cultural and artistic activity flourished, blending Middle Eastern, North African, and Western elements, as Jews arriving from all parts of the world brought with them the unique traditions of their own communities as well as aspects of the culture prevailing in the countries where they had lived for generations. When Israel celebrated its 10th anniversary, the population numbered over two million.
The years of state-building were overshadowed by serious security problems. The 1949 armistice agreements had not only failed to pave the way to permanent peace, but were also constantly violated. In contradiction to the UN Security Council Resolution of 1 September 1951, Israeli and Israel-bound shipping was prevented from passing through the Suez Canal; the blockade of the Straits of Tiran was tightened; incursions into Israel of terrorist squads from neighboring Arab countries for murder and sabotage occurred with increasing frequency; and the Sinai peninsula was gradually converted into a huge Egyptian military base.

Upon the signing of a tripartite military alliance by Egypt, Syria and Jordan (October 1956), the imminent threat to Israel's existence was intensified. In the course of an eight-day campaign, the IDF captured the Gaza Strip and the entire Sinai Peninsula, halting 10 miles (16 km.) east of the Suez Canal. A United Nations decision to station a UN Emergency Force (UNEF) along the Egypt-Israel border and Egyptian assurances of free navigation in the Gulf of Eilat led Israel to agree to withdraw in stages (November 1956 – March 1957) from the areas taken a
few weeks earlier. Consequently, the Straits of Tiran were opened, enabling the development of trade with Asian and East African countries, as well as oil imports from the Persian Gulf.

**Years of Consolidation**

During Israel’s second decade (1958-68), exports doubled, and the GNP increased some 10 percent annually. While some previously imported items such as paper, tires, radios, and refrigerators were now being manufactured locally, the most rapid growth took place in the newly established branches of metals, machinery, chemicals, and electronics. Since the domestic market for home-grown food was fast approaching the saturation point, the agricultural sector began to grow a larger variety of crops for the food processing industry as well as fresh produce for export. A second deep-water port was built on the Mediterranean coast at Ashdod, in addition to the existing one at Haifa, to handle the increased volume of trade.

In Jerusalem, a permanent home for the Knesset was built, and facilities for the Hebrew University and the Hadassah Medical Center were constructed on alternative sites to replace the original buildings on Mount Scopus, which had to be abandoned after the War of Independence.
At the same time, the Israel Museum was established with the aim of collecting, conserving, studying, and exhibiting the cultural and artistic treasures of the Jewish people.

Israel’s foreign relations expanded steadily, as close ties were developed with the United States, British Commonwealth countries, most western European states, nearly all the countries of Latin America and Africa, and some in Asia. Extensive programs of international cooperation were initiated, as hundreds of Israeli physicians, engineers, teachers, agronomists, irrigation experts, and youth organizers shared their know-how and experience with people in other developing countries. In 1965 ambassadors were exchanged with the Federal Republic of Germany, a move which had been delayed until then because of the Jewish people's bitter memories of the crimes committed against them during the Nazi regime (1933-45). Vehement opposition and public debate preceded normalization of relations between the two countries.

The Eichmann Trial: In May 1960, Adolf Eichmann, the chief of operations of the Nazi murder program during World War II, was brought to the country to stand trial under Israel’s Nazis and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law (1950). In the trial, which opened in April 1961, Eichmann was found guilty of crimes against humanity and the Jewish people and sentenced to death. His appeal to the Supreme Court was rejected and he was hanged on 30 May 1962. This was the only time that the death penalty has been carried out under Israeli law.
Hopes for another decade of relative tranquility were dashed with the escalation of Arab terrorist raids across the Egyptian and Jordanian borders, persistent Syrian artillery bombardment of agricultural settlements in northern Galilee, and massive military build-ups by the neighboring Arab states. When Egypt again moved large numbers of troops into the Sinai desert (May 1967), ordered the UN peacekeeping forces (deployed since 1957) out of the area, reimposed the blockade of the Straits of Tiran, and entered into a military alliance with Jordan, Israel found itself faced by hostile Arab armies on all fronts. As Israel's neighbors prepared to destroy the Jewish state, Israel invoked its inherent right of self-defense, launching a preemptive strike (5 June 1967) against Egypt in the South, followed by a counterattack against Jordan in the East and the routing of Syrian forces entrenched on the Golan Heights in the North.

At the end of six days of fighting, previous cease-fire lines were replaced by new ones, with Judea, Samaria, Gaza, the Sinai
peninsula, and the Golan Heights under Israel’s control. As a result, the northern villages were freed from 19 years of recurrent Syrian shelling; the passage of Israeli and Israel-bound shipping through the Straits of Tiran was ensured; and Jerusalem, which had been divided under Israeli and Jordanian rule since 1949, was reunified under Israel’s authority.

**From War to War**

After the war, Israel’s diplomatic challenge was to translate its military gains into a permanent peace based on UN Security Council Resolution 242, which called for **acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force**. However, the Arab position, as formulated at the Khartoum Summit (August 1967) called for **no peace with Israel, no negotiations with Israel, and no recognition of Israel**. In September 1968, Egypt initiated a ‘war of attrition’, with sporadic, static actions along the banks of the Suez Canal, which escalated into full-scale, localized fighting, causing heavy casualties on both sides. Hostilities ended in 1970, when Egypt and Israel accepted a renewed cease-fire along the Suez Canal.

**1973 Yom Kippur War**

Three years of relative calm along the borders were shattered on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), the holiest
day of the Jewish year, when Egypt and Syria launched a coordinated surprise assault against Israel (6 October 1973), with the Egyptian Army crossing the Suez Canal and Syrian troops penetrating the Golan Heights. During the next three weeks, the Israel Defense Forces turned the tide of battle and repulsed the attackers, crossing the Suez Canal into Egypt and advancing to within 20 miles (32 km.) of the Syrian capital, Damascus. Two years of difficult negotiations between Israel and Egypt and between Israel and Syria resulted in disengagement agreements, according to which Israel withdrew from parts of the territories captured during the war.

**1982 Operation Peace for Galilee**

Israel has never wanted a conflict with its northern neighbor, Lebanon. However, when the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) redeployed itself in southern Lebanon after being expelled from Jordan (1970) and perpetrated repeated terrorist actions against the towns and villages of northern Israel (Galilee), which caused many casualties and much damage, the Israel Defense Forces crossed the border into Lebanon (1982). “Operation Peace for Galilee” resulted in removing the bulk of the PLO’s organizational and military infrastructure from the area. For the next 18 years, Israel maintained a small security zone in southern Lebanon adjacent to its northern border to safeguard its population in Galilee against attacks by hostile elements.
Second Lebanon War

In May of 2000 Israel withdrew all its forces from the security zone in southern Lebanon. Lebanon however failed to comply with UN Security Council Resolutions 425 and 1559, which call for the dismantling of Hizbullah and the deployment of the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon.

As a result of this failure, violence erupted in July of 2006, following Hizbullah's abduction of two Israeli soldiers and bombardment of Israel's northern cities. In the ensuing conflict, which came to be known as the Second Lebanon War, over 4,000 rockets were fired at civilian targets in Israel. The fighting concluded in August of 2006 and UNSC Resolution 1701 was passed, calling for the unconditional release of the captured Israeli soldiers, the deployment of UNIFIL and Lebanese soldiers throughout southern Lebanon, and the establishment of an embargo on weapons supplied to Lebanese armed groups.

2008 Gaza Operation

Following Israel's 2005 withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and four settlements in the northern West Bank, and the election of Hamas in 2007, terrorism against Israel increased. Thousands of rockets have been fired into southern Israel from the Gaza Strip, resulting in damage to property and both physical and psychological injury to the population living in the south; and creating a
Every year, Israel holds a special commemoration to mark the anniversary of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. His murder on 4 November 1995 by a Jewish extremist plunged the country into deep mourning for the soldier-statesman, who had traveled from the battleground to lead the nation on the road to peace.

situation in which Israel was forced to take military action in the form of Operation Cast Lead (27 December 2008 through 18 January 2009).

**From War to Peace**
The 1977 Knesset elections brought the Likud bloc (a coalition of right-wing and centrist parties) to power, ending almost 30 years of Labor Party dominance. The new prime minister, Menachem Begin, reiterated the commitment of all previous prime ministers to strive for permanent peace in the region and called upon the Arab leaders to come to the negotiating table.
The cycle of Arab rejections of Israel’s appeals for peace was broken with the visit of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem (November 1977), followed by negotiations between Egypt and Israel under American auspices. The resulting Camp David Accords (September 1978) contained a framework for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, including a detailed proposal for self-government for the Palestinians.

On 26 March 1979, Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty in Washington, DC, bringing the 30-year state of war between them to an end. In accordance with the terms of the treaty, Israel withdrew from the Sinai peninsula, exchanging former cease-fire lines and armistice agreements for mutually recognized international boundaries.

Three years of talks between Jordan and Israel, following the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, culminated in a declaration by King Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (July 1994), which ended the 46-year state of war between their two countries. The Jordan-Israel peace treaty was signed at the Arava border crossing (near Eilat in
TERRORISM: Arab and Palestinian terrorism against Israel existed for decades prior to the establishment of the State of Israel and since then. Thousands of terrorist attacks which resulted in the death and injury of Israeli civilians occurred during the two decades preceding the 1967 Six Day War (which led to Israel’s presence in the territories). The establishment of the PLO in 1964 put it at the forefront of this terrorist campaign.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the various terrorist organizations under the PLO launched numerous attacks inside Israel and abroad. One of the most notorious Israel and Akaba in Jordan) on 26 October 1994, in the presence of American President Bill Clinton.

Domestic Challenges
During the 1980s and 1990s, Israel absorbed over one million new immigrants, mainly from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Ethiopia. The influx of so many new consumers, as well as a large number of skilled and unskilled workers, boosted the economy into a period of accelerated expansion.

The government that came into power after the 1984 Knesset elections was made up of the two major political blocs – Labor (left/center) and Likud (right/center). It was replaced in 1988 by a Likud-led coalition, which was followed in 1992 by a coalition of Labor and smaller left-of-center parties. After the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, new elections were called in 1996. In direct elections for prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu came to power, and formed a Likud-led coalition. Less than three years later, his government was defeated. In 1999, Ehud Barak, leader of the One Israel Party (left/center),
was elected prime minister and formed a coalition government; he resigned in December 2000. Ariel Sharon, leader of the Likud, was prime minister from early 2001 until he suffered a stroke in early 2006. Ehud Olmert, head of the Kadima Party formed by Sharon in November 2005, succeeded him as prime minister.

Following the resignation of Ehud Olmert, Benjamin Netanyahu was elected as Prime Minister in early elections held in February 2009, and formed a broad-based coalition government.

Each government worked towards the achievement of peace, economic development, and immigrant absorption according to its own political convictions. attacks was the murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972. In spite of the Palestinian commitment made in 1993 to renounce terrorism, thus providing the basis for the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, terrorist attacks nonetheless continued, and strongly intensified after September 2000, resulting in the death of more than 1,000 Israeli civilians and the wounding of many thousands more.
THE PEACE PROCESS

Since the signing of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty (1979), various initiatives were put forth by Israel and others to further the peace process in the Middle East. These efforts eventually led to the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference (October 1991), held under American and Soviet auspices, which brought together representatives of Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinians. The formal proceedings were followed by bilateral negotiations between the parties and by multilateral talks addressing regional concerns.

Bilateral Talks

Israel and the Palestinians: Following months of intensive behind-the-scenes contacts in Oslo between negotiators for Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), a Declaration of Principles (DOP) was formulated outlining self-government arrangements of the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Its signing, on 13 September 1993, was preceded by an exchange of letters between PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in which the PLO renounced the use of terrorism, pledged to invalidate those articles in its covenant which deny Israel’s right to exist, and committed itself to a peaceful resolution of the decades-long conflict. In response, Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.
The DOP contained a set of mutually agreed general principles regarding a five-year interim period of Palestinian self-rule and a framework for the various stages of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The arrangements for Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area were implemented in May 1994; transfer of powers and responsibilities in the West Bank in the spheres of education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation, and tourism was implemented three months later. The DOP and other agreements signed by Israel and the Palestinians culminated in the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement of September 1995.

This agreement included a broadening of Palestinian self-governance by the means of an elected self-governing authority, the Palestinian Council (elected in January 1996), and continued redeployment of the IDF in the West Bank. The agreement also set out the mechanism governing Israeli-Palestinian relations that would lead to a Final Status Agreement. Under the Interim Agreement, the West Bank was divided into three types of areas:

Area A – comprising the main cities of the West Bank: full Palestinian Council responsibility for internal security and public order, as well as full responsibility for civil affairs. (The city of Hebron was subject to special arrangements set out in the Interim Agreement; the protocol concerning the redeployment in Hebron was signed in January 1997.)
Area B – comprising small towns and villages in the West Bank: Palestinian Council responsibility for civil affairs (as in Area A) and maintenance of public order, while Israel retained overriding security responsibility to safeguard its citizens and to combat terrorism.

Area C – comprising all Jewish settlements, areas of strategic importance to Israel, and largely unpopulated areas of the West Bank: full Israeli responsibility for security and public order, as well as civil responsibilities related to territory (planning and zoning, archeology, etc.). The Palestinian Council assumes responsibility with regard to all other civil spheres of the Palestinian population.

The timetable for the implementation of further redeployment phases, as specified in the Interim Agreement, was revised on a number of occasions by the two sides, most notably in the Wye River Memorandum of October 1998. Following these agreed revisions, Israel completed the first and second phases of the Further Redeployment (FRD) process in March 2000. As a result of the redeployments, over 18% of the West Bank was currently designated Area A and over 21% was designated Area B, with 98% of the Palestinian population of the West Bank under Palestinian authority.

Final Status negotiations between the parties, to determine the nature of the permanent settlement between Israel and
the Palestinian entity, began as scheduled in May 1996. Suicide bomb attacks, perpetrated by Hamas terrorists in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv during 1996, darkened Israel’s view of the peace process. A hiatus of three years followed and Final Status talks were resumed only after the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum (September 1999). Issues to be dealt with included: refugees, settlements, security matters, borders, Jerusalem, and more. At the invitation of US President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat attended a summit at Camp David in July 2000 to resume negotiations. The summit ended without an agreement being reached due to PA Chairman Arafat's refusal to accept the generous proposal. However, a trilateral statement was issued, defining the agreed principles to guide further negotiations.

In September 2000, the Palestinians initiated an Intifada, a campaign of indiscriminate terrorism and violence, causing heavy loss of life and suffering to both sides. Numerous efforts to end the violent confrontation and renew the peace process failed due to the ongoing Palestinian terrorism.

Israel accepted the vision presented in the speech by U.S. President George W. Bush on June 24, 2002 for ending Palestinian terrorism, to be followed by the final settlement of all issues and peace.
On May 25, 2003, Israel accepted the Roadmap, accompanied by comments that Israel considers integral to its implementation and a U.S. commitment to address these comments. However, the Palestinians have yet to live up to their obligations under the first phase of the Roadmap, primarily the unconditional cessation of terrorism and end to incitement.

Among the measures taken by Israel against terrorism has been the construction of an anti-terrorist fence.

In August 2005, Israel disengaged from the Gaza Strip and from four settlements in northern Samaria (the West Bank) in an effort to end the stalemate in the peace process following five years of Palestinian terrorism. However, Palestinian terrorism continued, following the election of the Hamas government, including Kassam missile attacks from the Gaza Strip on the northern Negev and the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier, necessitating Israeli military action.

The new Israeli government, elected in early 2009, made several concerted attempts to restart the peace process. Unfortunately, these attempts were consistently frustrated by the Palestinians, and their novel demand that the Israelis meet several pre-conditions before negotiations could even begin. It was only in May 2010 that the Palestinians agreed to hold proximity talks.
Israel and Syria: Within the framework of the Madrid formula, talks between Israeli and Syrian delegations began in Washington and were held from time to time at ambassadorial level, with the involvement of high-ranking American officials.

Two rounds of Syrian-Israeli peace talks (December 1995, January 1996) focused on security and other key issues. Highly detailed and comprehensive in scope, the talks identified important areas of conceptual agreement and convergence for future discussion and consideration. Negotiations between Israel and Syria were renewed in January 2000 in Shepherdstown, US, after a standstill of more than three years. However, these negotiations did not bring about a breakthrough, nor did the meeting between President Clinton and President Hafez Assad in Geneva (March 2000) lead to renewed talks.

Syria, along with Iran, backs the most violent and dangerous terrorist organizations, such as Hizbullah and the various Palestinian terrorist groups.

Israel and Lebanon: On May 23, 2000, Israel completed withdrawal of all military forces from the Security Zone in Southern Lebanon, in accordance with the Israeli government’s decision to implement UN Security Council Resolution 425. Lebanon, unfortunately, has yet to comply fully with UNSC Resolution 425, as well as with
UNSC Resolution 1559 (which calls for the dismantling of Hizbullah and the deployment of Lebanon’s army in southern Lebanon). Violence again erupted, following the abduction of two Israel soldiers and the bombardment of Israel’s northern cities by the Hizbullah on 12 July 2006. Israel was forced to act to remove the entrenched Hizbullah terrorist presence in Southern Lebanon, which included tens of thousands of heavy artillery rockets provided by Iran and Syria and aimed at millions of Israeli civilians. In the ensuing conflict, which later become known as the Second Lebanon War, over 4,000 rockets were fired at civilian targets within Israel, causing 44 civilian casualties and extensive damage to civilian infrastructure and property. 119 Israel soldiers were also killed in the conflict during military operations. The fighting concluded with the adoption on 11 August 2006 of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which calls for the unconditional release of the abducted soldiers, calls upon Lebanon and the new UNIFIL to together deploy throughout southern Lebanon and establishes an embargo of weapons to Lebanese groups other than the government of Lebanon.

**Multilateral Talks**
The multilateral talks were constituted as an integral part of the peace process, aimed at finding solutions for key regional problems, while serving as a confidence-building measure to promote development of normalized relations among the Middle East nations. Following the Moscow
Multilateral Middle East Conference (January 1992), with the participation of 36 countries and international organizations, the delegations broke up into five working groups dealing with specific areas of common regional concern (environment, arms control and regional security, refugees, water resources, and economic development) which meet from time to time in various venues in the region.

The Steering Committee, comprised of representatives of key delegations and chaired by the US and Russia, coordinates the multilateral talks. Since the outbreak of Palestinian violence in September 2000, most of the activities in the multilateral track have been frozen.
HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

BCE – Before the Common Era

17th-6th C. BCE – Biblical times

- c. 17th C. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob – patriarchs of the Jewish people settle in the Land of Israel. Famine forces Israelites to migrate to Egypt
- c. 13th C. Moses leads Israelites from Egypt, followed by 40 years of wandering in the desert. Torah, including the Ten Commandments, received on Mount Sinai

13th-12th C. Israelites settle in the Land of Israel
- c. 1020 Jewish monarchy established; Saul, first king
- c. 1000 Jerusalem made capital of David’s kingdom
- c. 960 First Temple, national and spiritual center of the Jewish people, built in Jerusalem by King Solomon
- c. 930 Divided kingdom: Judah and Israel

722-720 Israel crushed by Assyrians; 10 tribes exiled (Ten Lost Tribes)

586 Judah conquered by Babylonia
- Jerusalem and First Temple destroyed; most Jews exiled

Drawings by Noam Nadav
The Second Temple Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Event/Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>538-142</td>
<td>Persian and Hellenistic periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>538-515</td>
<td>Many Jews return from Babylonia; Temple rebuilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>332</td>
<td>Land conquered by Alexander the Great; Hellenistic rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166-160</td>
<td>Maccabean (Hasmonean) revolt against restrictions on practice of Judaism and desecration of the Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142-129</td>
<td>Jewish autonomy under Hasmoneans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129-63</td>
<td>Jewish independence under Hasmonean monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Jerusalem captured by Roman general Pompey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63 BCE-313 CE – Roman rule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Event/Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63-4 BCE</td>
<td>Herod, Roman vassal king, rules the Land of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temple in Jerusalem refurbished</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CE – Common Era

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Event/Comment</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c. 20-33</td>
<td>Ministry of Jesus of Nazareth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Jewish revolt against Romans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Destruction of Jerusalem and Second Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Last stand of Jews at Masada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132-135</td>
<td>Bar Kochba uprising against Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 210</td>
<td>Codification of Jewish Oral Law (Mishna) completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>313-636</td>
<td>Byzantine rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 390</td>
<td>Commentary on the Mishna (Jerusalem Talmud) completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>614</td>
<td>Persian invasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>636-1099</td>
<td>Arab rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>691</td>
<td>On site of First and Second Temples in Jerusalem, Dome of the Rock built by Caliph Abd el-Malik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1099-1291</td>
<td>Crusader domination (Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1291-1516</td>
<td>Mamluk rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1517-1917</td>
<td>Ottoman rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1564</td>
<td>Code of Jewish law (Shulhan Arukh) published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>First neighborhood built outside walls of Jerusalem's Old City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882-1903</td>
<td>First Aliya (large-scale immigration), mainly from Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>First Zionist Congress convened by Theodor Herzl in Basel, Switzerland, Zionist Organization founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-14</td>
<td>Second Aliya, mainly from Russia and Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>First kibbutz, Degania, and first modern all-Jewish city, Tel Aviv, founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>400 years of Ottoman rule ended by British conquest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
British Foreign Minister Balfour pledges support for establishment of a “Jewish national home in Palestine”

1918-48 British rule

1919-23 Third Aliya, mainly from Russia

1920 Histadrut (General Federation of Labor) and Haganah (Jewish defense organization) founded

*Vaad Leumi* (National Council) set up by Jewish community (*Yishuv*) to conduct its affairs

1921 First moshav (cooperative village), Nahalal, founded

1922 Britain granted Mandate for Palestine (Land of Israel) by League of Nations. Transjordan set up on three fourths of the area, leaving one fourth for the Jewish national home

Jewish Agency representing Jewish community vis-a-vis Mandate authorities set up

1924 Technion, first institute of technology, founded in Haifa

1924-32 Fourth Aliya, mainly from Poland

1925 Hebrew University of Jerusalem opened on Mount Scopus

1929 Hebron Jews massacred by Arab terrorists

1931 Etzel, Jewish underground organization, founded

1933-39 Fifth Aliya, mainly from Germany
1936-39 Anti-Jewish riots instigated by Arab terrorists
1939 Jewish immigration severely limited by British White Paper
1939-45 World War II: Holocaust in Europe
1940-41 Lehi underground movement formed; 
Palmach, strike force of Haganah, set up
1944 Jewish Brigade formed as part of British forces
1947 UN proposes establishment of Arab and Jewish states in the Land
1948 **State of Israel**
1948 End of British Mandate (14 May)
State of Israel proclaimed (14 May)
Israel invaded by five Arab states (15 May)
Israel Defense Forces (IDF) established
War of Independence (May 1948 – July 1949)
1949 Armistice agreements signed with Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon
Jerusalem divided under Israeli and Jordanian rule
First Knesset (parliament) elected
Israel admitted to United Nations as 59th member
1948-52 Mass immigration from Europe and Arab countries
1956 Sinai Campaign
1961-62  Adolf Eichmann tried and executed in Israel for his part in the Holocaust
1964  National Water Carrier completed, bringing water from Lake Kinneret in the North to the semi-arid South
1967  Six Day War; Jerusalem reunited
1968-70  Egypt’s War of Attrition against Israel
1973  Yom Kippur War
1975  Israel becomes an associate member of European Common Market
1977  Likud forms government after Knesset elections; end of 30 years of Labor rule
     Visit of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem
1978  Camp David Accords include framework for comprehensive peace in the Middle East and proposal for Palestinian self-government
1979  Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty signed
     Prime Minister Menachem Begin and President Anwar Sadat awarded Nobel Peace Prize
1981  Israel Air Force destroys Iraqi nuclear reactor just before it is to become operative
1982  Israel’s three-stage withdrawal from Sinai Peninsula completed
     Operation Peace for Galilee removes Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) terrorists from Lebanon
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Free Trade Agreement signed with United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Widespread violence (Intifada) starts in Israeli-administered areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td><em>Likud</em> government wins elections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Four-point peace initiative proposed by Israel. Start of mass immigration of Jews from former Soviet Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Diplomatic relations established with China and India. New government headed by Yitzhak Rabin of Labor Party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements for the Palestinians signed by Israel and PLO, as representative of the Palestinian people (Oslo Accords).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1994  Implementation of Palestinian self-government in Gaza Strip and Jericho area  
Full diplomatic relations with the Holy See  
Morocco and Tunisia interest offices set up  
Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty signed  
Rabin, Peres, Arafat awarded Nobel Peace Prize

1995  Broadened Palestinian self-government implemented in West Bank and Gaza Strip;  
Palestinian Council elected  
Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin assassinated at peace rally  
Shimon Peres becomes prime minister

1996  Fundamentalist Arab terrorism against Israel escalates  
Operation Grapes of Wrath, retaliation for Hizbullah terrorists’ attacks on northern Israel  
Trade representation offices set up in Oman and Qatar  
Binyamin Netanyahu elected prime minister; forms Likud-led coalition government  
Omani trade representation office opened in Tel Aviv

1997  Hebron Protocol signed by Israel and the PA

1998  Israel celebrates its 50th anniversary  
Israel and the PLO sign the Wye River Memorandum to facilitate implementation of the Interim Agreement
1999  Ehud Barak (left-wing One Israel party) elected prime minister; forms coalition government
Israel and the PLO sign the Sharm-e-Sheikh Memorandum

2000  Visit of Pope John Paul II
Israel withdraws from the Security Zone in southern Lebanon
Israel admitted to UN Western European and Others Group
Renewed violence (Second Intifada)
Prime Minister Barak resigns

2001  Ariel Sharon (Likud) elected prime minister; forms broad-based unity government
The Sharm-e-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee report (the Mitchell Report) issued
Palestinian-Israeli Security Implementation Work Plan (Tenet cease-fire plan) proposed
Rechavam Ze’evy, minister of tourism, assassinated by Palestinian terrorists

2002  Israel launches Operation Defensive Shield in response to massive Palestinian terrorist attacks
Israel begins building the anti-terrorist fence to stop West Bank terrorists from killing Israeli citizens.
Prime Minister Sharon disperses the Knesset, calling for new elections to be held on 28 January 2003
2003 Right-of-center coalition government formed by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon
Israel accepts the Roadmap

2005 Israel carries out the Disengagement Plan, ending Israel's presence in the Gaza Strip

2006 After Prime Minister Sharon suffers a stroke, Ehud Olmert becomes acting prime minister
Following elections on March 28, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert forms new government led by the Kadima Party
Israel carried out military operations against Palestinian terrorists in Gaza after kidnapping of Israeli soldier
The Second War in Lebanon, during which Israel carries out military operations against Hizbullah terrorism from southern Lebanon, following missile attacks and kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers

2007 Shimon Peres elected President by the Knesset
Israel declares Gaza "hostile territory" following Hamas violent takeover of Gaza Strip

2008 Israel celebrates its 60th anniversary
Israel launches its Gaza Operation (Operation Cast Lead) in response to the barrage of over 10,000 rockets and mortars fired from the Gaza Strip
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<td>Benjamin Netanyahu is elected Prime Minister in national elections held in February 2009, and forms a broad-based coalition government. The city of Tel Aviv celebrates its 100th anniversary.</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Israel joins the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).</td>
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The State
Proclaiming the Establishment of the State of Israel
Government Press Office
THE STATE
The Proclamation of the Establishment of the State of Israel, signed on 14 May 1948 by members of the National Council, representing the Jewish community in the country and the Zionist movement abroad, constitutes the nation’s credo. Included therein are the historical imperatives of Israel’s rebirth; the framework for a democratic Jewish state founded on liberty, justice, and peace, as envisaged by the biblical prophets; and a call for peaceful relations with the neighboring Arab states for the benefit of the entire region.

...in the multitude of counselors there is safety. (Proverbs 11:14)
74

| The State

...
THE STATE

Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel) was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious, and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

...Jews strove in every successive generation to reestablish themselves in their ancient homeland. ...they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community, controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself...

The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration... will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

We extend our hand to all neighbouring states and their
peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land.

(from the Proclamation of the Establishment of the State of Israel)

The flag of the State of Israel is based on the design of the Jewish prayer shawl (tallit), with a blue Shield of David (Magen David)

The official emblem of the State of Israel is a candelabrum (menorah), whose shape is said to be derived from the seven-branched moriah, a plant known since antiquity. The olive branches on either side represent Israel’s yearning for peace.
Hatikvah - The National Anthem

Kol od ba-le-vav pe-ni-mah
ne-fesh ye-hu-di ho-mi-yah, U-le
fa-a-tey mu-zrah ka-di-mah
a-yin la-Tzi-yon tzo-fi-yah,
Odi lo av-dish tik-ves-te-nu,
Ha-tik-vah bat sh'not al-pa-yim.
Li-hyet am hof-shi be-ar-tze-nu,
E-retz Tzi-yon vi-ru-sha-la-yim.

As long as deep in the heart,
The soul of a Jew yearns,
And towards the East,
An eye looks to Zion,
Our hope is not yet lost,
The hope of two thousand years,
To be a free people in our land,
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.
Israel is a parliamentary democracy consisting of legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Its institutions are the presidency, the Knesset (parliament), the government (cabinet of ministers), and the judiciary. The system is based on the principle of separation of powers, in which the executive branch (the government) is subject to the confidence of the legislative branch (the Knesset) and the independence of the judiciary is guaranteed by law.

**Head of State**
- President

**Legislature**
- Speaker
- Knesset
- Committees
- Mayors and Council Heads
- Local Councils

**Executive**
- Prime Minister
- Government
- Ministries
- State Comptroller and Ombudsman

**Judiciary**
- Court System
- Attorney General

**Electorate**
THE PRESIDENCY

The nasi (president) bears the ancient title of the head of the Sanhedrin, the supreme legislative and judicial body of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel in ancient times. The president is the head of state, with the presidency symbolizing the nation’s unity, above and beyond party politics. The president is elected by a simple majority of the Knesset from among candidates nominated on the basis of their personal stature and lifelong contribution to the state. Revised legislation (1998) provides for the election of the president for a single term of seven years.

Presidential duties, which are mostly ceremonial and formal, are defined by law. They include opening the first session of a new Knesset; directing a member of Knesset to form a new government; accepting the credentials of foreign envoys; signing treaties and laws adopted by the Knesset; appointing, on recommendation of appropriate bodies, the heads of Israel’s diplomatic missions abroad, judges, and the governor of the Bank of Israel;

Zalman Shazar (1963-73), politician, scholar, historian, author, poet

Ephraim Katzir (1973-78), renowned biochemist

Yitzhak Navon (1978-83), politician, educator, author

Chaim Herzog (1983-93), attorney, army general, diplomat, author

Ezer Weizman (1993-2000), air force commander, politician, businessman

Moshe Katsav (2000-2007), social leader, politician

Shimon Peres (2007- ), senior statesman, former prime minister, Nobel Peace Prize laureate
and pardoning prisoners, on advice of the minister of justice. In addition, the president performs public functions and informal tasks such as hearing citizens’ appeals, lending prestige to community organizations and strengthening campaigns to improve the quality of life in the society at large.
LEGISLATURE: THE KNESSET

The Knesset (Israel’s unicameral parliament) is the country’s legislative body. The Knesset took its name and fixed its membership at 120 from the Knesset Hagedolah (Great Assembly), the representative Jewish council convened in Jerusalem by Ezra and Nehemiah in the 5th century BCE.

A new Knesset begins to function after general elections, which determine its composition. In the first session, Knesset members declare their allegiance, and the Knesset speaker and deputy speakers are elected. The Knesset usually serves for four years, but may dissolve itself or be dissolved by the prime minister any time during its term. Until a new Knesset is formally constituted following elections, full authority remains with the outgoing one.

The Knesset operates in plenary sessions and through 15 standing committees. In plenary sessions, general
debates are conducted on legislation submitted by the government or by individual Knesset members, as well as on government policy and activity. Debates are conducted in Hebrew, but members may speak Arabic, as both are official languages. Simultaneous translation is available.

To become law, a regular state bill must pass three readings in the Knesset (while private bills have four readings). In the first reading, the bill is presented to the plenary, followed by a short debate on its contents, after which it is referred to the appropriate Knesset committee for detailed discussion and redrafting, if necessary. When the committee has completed its work, the bill is returned to the plenary for its second reading, at which time committee members who have reservations may present them to the plenary. Following a general debate, each article of the bill is put to a vote and, unless it is necessary to return it again to committee, the third reading takes place immediately, and a vote is taken on the bill as a whole. If the bill passes, it is signed by the presiding speaker and is later published in the Official Gazette, with the signatures of the president, prime minister, Knesset speaker and the minister responsible for the law’s implementation. Finally, the state seal is affixed to it by the minister of justice, and the bill becomes law.
EXECUTIVE: THE GOVERNMENT

The executive authority of the state is the government (cabinet of ministers), charged with administering internal and foreign affairs, including security matters. Its policy-making powers are very wide, and it is authorized to take action on any issue which is not legally incumbent upon another authority.

The cabinet determines its own working and decision-making procedures. It usually meets once a week, but additional meetings may be called as needed. It may also act through ministerial committees.

Forming a government: All governments to date have been based on coalitions of several parties, since no party has ever received enough Knesset seats to form a government by itself.

Following consultations, the president presents one Knesset member with the responsibility of forming a government. To do so, this Knesset member has to present, within 28 days of being given responsibility for

Israel’s Prime Ministers

David Ben-Gurion (1948-54)
Moshe Sharett (1954-55)
David Ben-Gurion (1955-63)
Levi Eshkol (1963-69)
Golda Meir (1969-74)
Yitzhak Rabin (1974-77)
Menachem Begin (1977-83)
Yitzhak Shamir (1983-84)
Shimon Peres (1984-86)
Yitzhak Shamir (1986-92)
Yitzhak Rabin (1992-95)
Shimon Peres (1995-96)
Benjamin Netanyahu (1996-99)
Ehud Barak (1999-2001)
Ariel Sharon (2001-2006)
Ehud Olmert (2006-2009)
Benjamin Netanyahu (2009- )
the formation of a government, a list of ministers for Knesset approval, together with an outline of proposed government guidelines. All the ministers must be Israeli citizens and residents of Israel and all must be Knesset members.

Once approved, the ministers are responsible to the prime minister for the fulfillment of their duties and accountable to the Knesset for their actions. Most ministers are assigned a portfolio and head a ministry; ministers who function without portfolio may be called upon to assume responsibility for special projects. The prime minister may also serve as a minister with a specific portfolio.

Ministers, with the approval of the prime minister and the government, may appoint a deputy minister in their ministry; all must be Knesset members.

Like the Knesset, the government usually serves for four years, but its term may be shortened by the resignation, incapacitation or death of the prime minister, or a vote of no-confidence by the Knesset.

If the prime minister is unable to continue in office due to death, incapacitation, resignation, or impeachment, the government appoints one of its members (who
must be a Knesset member) as acting prime minister. In case of a vote of no-confidence, the government and the prime minister remain in their positions until a new government is formed.

**Elections**

Elections are general, national, direct, equal, secret, and proportional. The entire country constitutes a single electoral constituency, and all citizens are eligible to vote from age 18. On Election Day, voters cast a ballot for a political party to represent them in the Knesset.

Election Day is a national holiday, free transportation is available to voters who happen to be outside their polling district on that day and polling stations are provided for military personnel, hospital patients, and prisoners, as well as for merchant seamen and Israelis on official assignment abroad.

The Central Elections Committee, headed by a justice of the Supreme Court and including representatives of the parties holding Knesset seats, is responsible for conducting the elections. Regional election committees oversee the

**The Attorney-General**

The government’s legal service is headed by the attorney-general, who holds exclusive power to represent the state in all major criminal, civil, and administrative matters. The government is bound to abstain from any action which, in the opinion of the attorney-general, is unlawful, as long as the courts do not rule otherwise.

Although appointed by the government, the attorney-general functions independently of the political system.
proper functioning of local polling committees, which include representatives of at least three parties in the outgoing Knesset.

In each election to date, between 77 and 90 percent of all registered voters have cast their ballots, expressing the great interest taken by most Israelis in their national and local politics.

Knesset elections are based on a vote for a party rather than for individuals, and the many political parties which run for the Knesset reflect a wide range of outlooks and beliefs.
THE JUDICIARY

The independence of the judiciary is guaranteed by law. Judges are appointed by the president, upon recommendation of a nominations committee comprised of Supreme Court judges, members of the bar, and public figures. Appointments are permanent, with mandatory retirement at age 70.

Law of the Land

Upon attaining independence (1948), Israel passed the Law and Administration Ordinance, stipulating that laws prevailing in the country prior to statehood would remain in force insofar as they did not contradict the principles embodied in the Proclamation of the Establishment of the State of Israel or would not conflict with laws to be enacted by the Knesset. Thus the legal system includes remnants of Ottoman law (in force until 1917), British Mandate laws, which incorporate a large body of English common law, elements of Jewish religious law, and some aspects of other systems.

However, the prevailing characteristic of the legal system is the large corpus of independent statutory and case law which has been evolving since 1948. Following the establishment of the state, the Knesset was empowered
<table>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Special Courts</strong>&lt;br&gt;(1 judge)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Religious Courts</strong>&lt;br&gt;(1 or 3 judges)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Magistrates’ Court</strong>&lt;br&gt;(1 judge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Court</strong>&lt;br&gt;(1 or 3 judges)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supreme Court</strong>&lt;br&gt;(1, 3, 5 or a larger uneven number of judges)</td>
</tr>
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to enact a series of Basic Laws, relating to all aspects of life, which will eventually be brought together to form a constitution. Many Basic Laws have been passed, outlining the fundamental features of government such as the President, the Knesset, the Government, the Judiciary, the Israel Defense Forces, the State Comptroller, Freedom of Occupation and Human Dignity and Liberty (which addresses violation of a person’s life, body or dignity).

The normative superiority of Basic Laws over ordinary legislation was confirmed in 1995, when the Supreme Court assumed the power of judicial review of Knesset legislation violating a Basic Law.

Over the years, a body of case law has developed through Supreme Court rulings which protect civil liberties, including freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and equality as fundamental values of Israel’s legal system. In its capacity as the High Court of Justice, the Supreme Court also hears petitions brought by individuals appealing for redress against any government body or agent.

The State Comptroller's Office, established by law (1949) to assure public accountability, carries out external audit and reports on the legality, regularity, economy, efficiency, effectiveness and moral integrity of public administration. Since 1971, the state comptroller also serves as ombudsman, receiving complaints from the public against state or public bodies subject to the comptroller’s audit. The state comptroller is elected by the Knesset in a secret ballot for a seven-year term and is responsible only to the Knesset. The scope of state
audit includes the activities of all government ministries, state institutions, branches of the defense establishment, local authorities, government corporations, etc. In addition, the state comptroller is empowered by law to inspect the financial affairs of the political parties represented in the Knesset, as well as their election campaign accounts, imposing monetary sanctions when irregularities are found.

Israel Police

In common with police forces around the world, the task of Israel’s police is to maintain the quality of life by fighting crime, assisting the authorities in carrying out the law and enforcing traffic regulations, as well as providing guidance on preventive measures for the safety and protection of the population.

The police’s principal mobile task force, the Border Police, deals mainly with internal security problems and includes a special anti-terrorist unit. The frequency and threat of terrorist incidents led concerned citizens to request active participation in the protection of their communities. Thus, a volunteer Civil Guard was established (1974) to maintain neighborhood security units, including command centers, armed patrols, and training programs.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Services provided by local government include education, culture, health, social welfare, road maintenance, public parks, water, and sanitation. Each local authority functions through by-laws complementing national laws, which have been approved by the Ministry of the Interior. Some authorities operate special courts in which transgressors of local by-laws are tried. Financing for local authorities comes from local taxes, as well as allocations from the state budget. Every authority has a comptroller who prepares an annual report.

The law recognizes three types of local authorities: municipalities, which provide the framework for urban centers with populations of over 20,000; local councils, which manage towns with populations of between 2,000 and 20,000; and regional councils, which are responsible for several villages grouped within a certain radius.

Each local authority is administered by a mayor or chairperson and a council. The number of council members is determined by the Ministry of the Interior, according to the authority’s population. Currently there are 73 municipalities, 124 local councils and 54 regional councils. All municipalities and local councils are united, on a voluntary basis, in a central body, the Union of Local Authorities, which represents them.
before the government, monitors relevant legislation in the Knesset and provides guidance on issues such as work agreements and legal affairs. Affiliated with the International Association of Municipalities, the union maintains ties with similar organizations throughout the world, and arranges twin cities programs and exchanges of international delegations.

**Local Elections**

Elections for local government are conducted by secret ballot every five years. All permanent residents, whether Israeli citizens or not, are eligible to vote in local elections from age 17 and to be elected from age 21. In elections for municipal and local councils, ballots are cast for a party list of candidates, with the number of council seats attained by each list proportional to the percentage of votes received. Mayors and chairpersons of local councils are elected directly.

In regional council elections, one candidate of each village is elected by a simple plurality, with those elected becoming members of the council. Heads of regional councils are selected from among the regional council’s members.

Local elections are financed by government appropriations, on the basis of the number of mandates that each faction or list wins in the local authority.
ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES (IDF)

The IDF, founded in 1948, ranks among the most battle-tested armed forces in the world, having had to defend the country in six major wars. The IDF’s security objectives are to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State of Israel, deter all enemies, and curb all forms of terrorism that threaten daily life. Its main tasks include reinforcing the peace arrangements; ensuring overall security in the West Bank in coordination with the Palestinian Authority; spearheading the war against terrorism, both inside Israel and across its borders; and maintaining a deterrent capability to prevent the outbreak of hostilities.

To ensure its success, the IDF’s doctrine at the strategic level is defensive, while its tactics are offensive. Given the country’s lack of territorial depth, the IDF must take the initiative when deemed necessary and, if attacked, quickly transfer the battleground to the enemy’s land. Though it has always been outnumbered by its enemies, the IDF maintains a qualitative advantage by deploying advanced weapons systems, many of which are developed and manufactured in Israel for its specific needs. The IDF’s main resource, however, is the high caliber of its soldiers.

In preparing for defense, the IDF deploys a small standing
army (made up of conscripts and career personnel) with early warning capability, and a regular air force and navy. The majority of its forces is reservists, who are called up regularly for training and service and who, in time of war or crisis, are quickly mobilized into their units from all parts of the country.

**TERMS OF SERVICE IN THE IDF**

Compulsory Service: All eligible men and women are drafted at age 18. Men serve for three years, women for two years. Deferments may be granted to qualified students at institutions of higher education. New immigrants may be deferred or serve for shorter periods of time, depending on their age and personal status on entering the country.

Reserve Duty: Upon completion of compulsory service, each soldier is assigned to a reserve unit.

The IDF’s three service branches (ground forces, air force, and navy) function under a unified command, headed by the Chief of the General Staff, with the rank of lieutenant-general, who is responsible to the minister of defense. The Chief of the General Staff is appointed by the government, on recommendation of the prime minister and minister of defense, for a three-year term, which is usually extended for an additional year.

Men and women soldiers of all ranks serve side by side as technicians, communications and intelligence specialists, combat instructors, cartographers, administrative and ordnance personnel, computer operators, doctors, lawyers, and the like. More and more women are now serving in combat units as well.
The IDF is responsive to the cultural and social needs of its soldiers, providing recreational and educational activities, as well as personal support services. Recruits with incomplete educational backgrounds are given opportunities to upgrade their level of education, and career officers are encouraged to study at the IDF’s expense during their service. The integration of new immigrant soldiers is facilitated through special Hebrew language instruction and other programs.

Active in nation-building enterprises since its inception, the IDF also provides remedial and supplementary education.
and may serve up to the age of 51.

Career Military Service: Veterans of compulsory service meeting current IDF needs may sign up as career officers or NCOs. The career service constitutes the command and administrative backbone of the IDF. Graduates of officers’ or pilots’ schools or special military technical schools are required to sign on for periods of career service.

to civilian populations and contributes to the absorption of newcomers among the population at large. In times of national crisis or emergency, the IDF responds immediately with appropriate action and assigns trained personnel to fill essential jobs or carry out special tasks.
THE LAND

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The Middle East as seen from Gemini 11 spacecraft.

NASA photo S66-54893
THE LAND

Israel is a small, narrow, semi-arid country on the southeastern coastline of the Mediterranean Sea. It entered history some 35 centuries ago when the Jewish people forsook its nomadic way of life, settled in the Land and became a nation. Over the years, the Land was known by many names — Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel); Zion, one of Jerusalem’s hills which came to signify both the city and the Land of Israel as a whole; Palestine, derived from Philistia, and first used by the Romans; the Promised Land; and the Holy Land, to mention but a few. However, to most Israelis today, the country is simply Ha’aretz — the Land. Over 7 million people live in Israel today; some 5.4 million Jews and 1.4 million Arabs. A wide spectrum of lifestyles characterizes the country, ranging from religious to secular, from modern to traditional, from urban to rural, from communal to individual.

...a land flowing with milk and honey... (Exodus 3:8)
GEOGRAPHY

Small Area; Short Distances
The total area of the State of Israel is 8,522.04 sq. miles (22,072 sq.km.), of which 8,356.40 sq. miles (21,643 sq. km.) is land area. Israel is some 470 km. (290 miles) in length and about 85 miles (135 km.) across at the widest point. The country is bordered by Lebanon to the north, Syria to the northeast, Jordan to the east, Egypt to the southwest and the Mediterranean Sea to the west.

Mountains and plains, fertile land, and desert are often minutes apart. The width of the country, from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Dead Sea in the east, can be crossed by car in about 90 minutes; and the trip from Metulla, in the far North, to Eilat at the country’s southern tip takes about six hours.

Geographical Features
Israel may be divided into four geographical regions: three parallel strips running north to south and a large, mostly arid, zone in the southern half.

The **coastal plain** runs parallel to the Mediterranean Sea and is composed of a sandy shoreline, bordered by stretches of fertile farmland extending up to 25 miles (40 km.) inland.
In the **North**, expanses of sandy beach are occasionally punctuated by jagged chalk and sandstone cliffs. The coastal plain is home to more than half of Israel’s population and includes major urban centers, deep-water harbors, most of the country’s industry, and a large part of its agriculture and tourist facilities.

Several **mountain ranges** run the length of the country. In the northeast, the basalt landscapes of the **Golan Heights**, formed by volcanic eruptions in the distant past, rise as steep cliffs overlooking the Hula Valley. The hills of **Galilee**, largely composed of soft limestone and dolomite, ascend to heights ranging from 1,600 to 4,000 feet (500 to 1,200 m.) above sea level. Small perennial streams and relatively ample rainfall keep the area green all year round. Many residents of **Galilee** and the **Golan** are engaged in agriculture, tourism-related enterprises, and light industry.

The **Jezreel Valley**, separating the hills of Galilee from those of Samaria, is Israel’s richest agricultural area, cultivated by many cooperative communities (kibbutzim and moshavim). The rolling hills of **Samaria and Judea** (the West Bank) present a mosaic of rocky hilltops and fertile valleys, dotted with groves of age-old, silver-green olive trees. The terraced hillsides, first developed by farmers in ancient times, blend into the natural landscape. The population is concentrated mainly in small urban centers and large villages.
The Negev, comprising about half of Israel’s land area, is sparsely inhabited, its population supported by an agricultural and industrial economy. Further south, the Negev becomes an arid zone characterized by low sandstone hills and plains, abounding with canyons and wadis in which winter rains often produce flash floods. Continuing southward, the region gives way to an area of bare craggy peaks, craters, and rock-strewn plateaus, where the climate is drier and the mountains are higher. Three erosive craters, the largest of which is about 5 miles (8 km.) across and 21 miles (35 km.) long, cut deeply into the earth’s crust, displaying a broad range of colors and rock types. At the tip of the Negev, near Eilat on the Red Sea, sharp pinnacles of gray and red granite are broken by dry gorges and sheer cliffs, with colorful layers of sandstone glowing in the sunlight.

Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee), nestled between the hills of Galilee and the Golan Heights at 695 feet (212 m.) below sea level, is 8 km. (5 miles) wide and 21 km. (13 miles) long. It is Israel’s largest lake and serves as the country’s main water reservoir. Along Lake Kinneret’s shores are
some important historical and religious sites, as well as agricultural communities, fisheries and tourist facilities.

The **Jordan Valley** and the Arava, along the country in the east, are part of the Syrian-African Rift, which split the earth's crust millions of years ago. Its northern stretches are extremely fertile, while the southern portion is semi-arid. Agriculture, fishing, light industry and tourism constitute the area's main sources of income.

The **Jordan River**, flowing from north to south through the Rift, descends over 2,300 feet (700 m.) in the course of its 186 mile (300 km.) route. Fed by streams from Mount Hermon, it runs through the fertile Hula Valley into Lake Kinneret and continues winding through the Jordan Valley before emptying into the Dead Sea. While it swells during the winter rainy season, the river is usually quite narrow and shallow.

The **Arava**, Israel’s savannah region, begins south of the Dead Sea and extends to the Gulf of Eilat, Israel’s outlet to the Red Sea. Adaptation of sophisticated farming techniques to climatic conditions, where the average annual rainfall is less than one inch (25 mm.) and summer temperatures soar to 104°F (40°C), has made it possible
to grow out-of-season fruit and vegetables, mainly for export. The sub-tropical Gulf of Eilat, noted for its deep blue waters, coral reefs and exotic marine life, lies at the southern tip of the Arava.

**The Dead Sea**, the lowest point on earth at about 1,300 feet (400 m.) below sea level, lies at the southern end of the Jordan Valley. Its waters, with the highest level of salinity and density in the world, are rich in potash, magnesium and bromine, as well as in table and industrial salts. The Dead Sea’s natural

**Climate**

Israel’s climate ranges from temperate to tropical, with plenty of sunshine. Two distinct seasons predominate: a rainy winter period from November to May; and a dry summer season which extends through the next six months. Rainfall is relatively heavy in the North and center of the country, with much less in the northern Negev and almost negligible amounts in the southern areas. Regional conditions vary considerably, with humid summers and mild winters on the coast; dry summers and moderately cold winters in the hill regions (including Jerusalem), hot dry summers and pleasant winters in the Jordan Valley; and year-round semi-desert conditions in the Negev. Weather extremes range from occasional winter snowfall at higher elevations to periodic oppressively hot dry winds, which send temperatures soaring, particularly in spring and autumn.
Water

Located on the edge of a desert belt, Israel has always suffered a scarcity of water. Archeological discoveries in the Negev and other parts of the country reveal that local inhabitants thousands of years ago were already concerned with water conservation, as evidenced by a variety of systems, designed both to collect and store rainwater and transfer it from one place to another.

The total annual renewable water resources amount to some 60 billion cubic feet (1.7 billion cu.m.), of which about 56 percent is used for irrigation and the balance for urban and industrial purposes. The country’s water sources consist of the Jordan River, Lake Kinneret, and a few small river systems. Natural springs and underground water tables, tapped in controlled quantities to prevent depletion and salination, are also utilized.

As maximum use has been made of all freshwater sources, ways are being developed to exploit marginal water resources through the recycling of waste water, cloud-seeding, desalination of pace of recession has been accelerated in recent years due to a very high rate of evaporation (5 feet - 1.6 m. annually) and large-scale diversion projects undertaken by Israel and Jordan for their water needs, causing a 75 percent reduction in the incoming flow of water. As a result, the surface level of the Dead Sea has dropped some 35 feet (10.6 m.) since 1960. A project to link the Dead Sea with the Mediterranean Sea by means of a canal and pipe system, which may help restore the Dead Sea to its natural dimensions and level, is under consideration.
brackish water, and desalination of seawater.

To overcome regional imbalances in water availability, most of Israel’s freshwater sources are joined in an integrated grid. Its central artery, the National Water Carrier, completed in 1964, brings water from the north and central regions, through a network of giant pipes, aqueducts, open canals, reservoirs, tunnels, dams and pumping stations, to the semi-arid south.
Flora and Fauna

Israel’s plant and animal life is rich and diversified, in part due to the country’s geographical location at the junction of three continents. Some 2,600 types of plants have been identified, ranging from alpine species on the northern mountain slopes to Saharan species in the Arava in the south. Israel is the northernmost limit for the presence of plants such as the papyrus reed and the southernmost limit for others like the bright red coral peony.

Natural woodlands, consisting mostly of calliprinos oaks, cover parts of Galilee, Mount Carmel and other hilly areas. In spring, the rockrose and thorny broom predominate with a color scheme of pink, white, and yellow.

Honeysuckle creeps over the bushes, and large plane trees provide shade along the freshwater streams of Galilee.

In the Negev highlands, massive Atlantic pistachios strike a dramatic note along the dry valleys, and date palms grow wherever there is sufficient underground water.
Many cultivated flowers such as the iris, Madonna lily, tulip, and hyacinth have relatives among the wildflowers of Israel. Soon after the first rains in October-November, the country is covered by a green carpet that lasts until the return of the summer dry season. Pink and white cyclamen and red, white, and purple anemones bloom from December to March, with the blue lupin and yellow corn marigold flowering a little later. Many native plants such as the crocus and squill are geophytes, which store nourishment in bulbs or tubers and bloom at the end of the summer. Hovering over the fields are some 135 varieties of butterflies of brilliant hues and patterns.

Over 500 different species of birds can be seen in Israel. Some, like the common bulbul, are resident in the country; others, such as coots and starlings, spend the winter feasting on food provided by Israel’s fish ponds and farmland. Millions of birds migrate twice yearly along the length of the country, providing magnificent opportunities for bird watching. Honey buzzards, pelicans, and other large and small migrants fill the skies in March and October. Several raptor species, among them eagles, falcons, and hawks, and tiny songbirds such as sylvia warblers and goldcrests, nest in Israel.

Delicate mountain gazelles roam over the hills; foxes, jungle cats, and other mammals live in wooded areas; Nubian ibex with majestic horns leap over desert crags;
and chameleons, snakes, and agama lizards are among the 100 reptile species native to the country.

**Nature Conservation**

In efforts to conserve the natural environment, stringent laws for the protection of nature and wildlife have been enacted, making it illegal to pick even the most common roadside flowers. Charged with the advancement of nature preservation, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA) strives to protect the landscape and natural environment. Over 150 nature reserves and 65 national parks established throughout the country under the authority’s supervision, encompass some 400 square miles (nearly 1000 square kilometers). About 20 reserves have been developed for public use with visitors’ centers, roads, and hiking trails, attracting over two million people every year. One of Israel’s important regions — Mount Carmel — was declared a biosphere reserve within the framework of the Man and Biosphere Program of UNESCO.

Hundreds of plants and animals, including the oak, palm, gazelle, ibex, leopard, and...
vulture, are protected, and special rescue operations have been initiated to ensure the survival of a number of endangered species. Feeding stations for wolves, hyenas, and foxes have been set up, as well as safe nesting sites for birds. Eggs of marine turtles are collected regularly from the Mediterranean shore and hatched in incubators; the young turtles are then returned to the sea. With more than 500 million migrating birds passing over the country each year, Israel has become an internationally known bird-watching center and a focal point of international research and cooperation.

Careful monitoring of bird migration routes helps prevent bird-aircraft collisions. An Internet site (http://www.birds.org.il) developed in Israel under the motto “Birds Know No Boundaries,” links children throughout the world in an educational and research project.

Inspired by a profound sense of heritage, efforts are being made to preserve and reintroduce plant and animal life, which existed in biblical times and have since either disappeared from the region or are range of opportunities for outdoor recreation and appreciation of nature. While continuing its activities of afforestation and forest maintenance, the JNF also develops parks and recreation sites, prepares infrastructure for new communities, carries out various water-harvesting projects and is an active partner in environmental conservation efforts throughout the country.
threatened with extinction. Neot Kedumim, a landscape reserve in the center of the country dedicated to collecting and conserving extant plant varieties mentioned in the Bible, has established extensive gardens with flora native to various geographical areas of the Land of Israel in ancient times. The Hai Bar wildlife projects in the Arava and on Mount Carmel were set up to reintroduce animal species, which once roamed the hills and deserts of the Land, into their former natural habitats. Animals now being raised include ostriches, Persian fallow deer, oryxes, onagers, and Somali wild asses.

Public awareness of nature preservation is promoted in schools and among the population at large through guided excursions, publications, and information campaigns. The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, the country’s largest environmental organization, has spearheaded dozens of campaigns against the destruction of ecosystems and landscapes through unwise development. Its educational outreach program includes 10 field schools, 4 bird-watching centers, 5 urban nature centers, and 10 local branches.
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Rapid population growth and steady expansion of agriculture and industry have contributed to environmental deterioration, especially in the coastal area, where more than half of Israel’s population and most of its industry are concentrated. To combat pollution of the Mediterranean and Red Sea coastlines, Israel has adopted a multifaceted program of inspection, legislation, enforcement, shore clean-ups, and international cooperation, primarily within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan.

Under conditions of water scarcity and intensive development, the degradation of water quality is a critical problem. The main causes of groundwater pollution are chemical fertilizers, pesticides, seawater intrusion, and domestic and industrial wastewater. High priority has been given to wastewater treatment to safeguard its effects on the environment and public health and to develop an additional water source for agricultural irrigation. A recently approved plan for water management stipulates seawater and brackish water desalination, improved wastewater treatment for reuse purposes, efficient water production and water conservation. A rehabilitation program for polluted streams has been initiated with the aim of transforming them into freshwater resources with ecological and recreational value. The quality of drinking water is strictly supervised.
Factors affecting air quality include energy production, transportation, and industry – and all three have increased dramatically in recent years. The use of low sulfur fuel for energy production has helped reduce concentrations of sulfur dioxide considerably, but pollutant emissions linked to increased vehicular traffic have risen significantly. Lead-free gasoline, catalytic converters, and lower sulfur content in diesel fuel have been introduced to mitigate the problem. A nationwide monitoring system is providing updated information on air quality throughout the country. Israel also strives to comply with international resolutions on ozone depletion and climate change.

Rapid growth in population, standard of living, and consumption have led to significant increases in solid waste in the order of 4%-5% annually. Most of the country’s illegal garbage dumps have been shut down in recent years and replaced with environmentally-safe landfills. Efforts are being made toward integrated solid waste management, which will include reduction, recycling, recovery, and incineration. Recent recycling regulations should facilitate the shift to low- and non-waste technology.

“Cradle to grave” management of hazardous substances is based on licensing, regulation, and supervision over all aspects of their production, use, disposal, and treatment. Enforcement of legislation, implementation of a national
contingency plan for integrated emergency response to accidents, and remediation and upgrading of the national site for hazardous waste should minimize potential dangers to health and the environment.

Enforcement of environmental legislation is a top priority alongside environmental education, from kindergarten to university. The public takes part in environmental law enforcement as anti-litter trustees and animal welfare trustees are empowered to report on violations of the respective laws. Economic tools are increasingly used to promote environmental improvement, both in the form of financial grants to industries that invest in pollution prevention and in the form of taxes and levies on polluters. In line with the principles of sustainable development, efforts are directed at resource conservation and prevention of pollution in all economic sectors.
Communications: Israel is connected to the world’s major commercial, financial and academic data networks and is fully integrated into international communications systems by means of underwater fiber-optic lines and satellite link-ups. The country ranks high, on a per capita basis, in telephone lines, computers, and Internet users.

Israel is one of the first countries worldwide to have 100 percent digitalization of its telephone network, which enables the provision of a range of state-of-the art services for subscribers. In addition, Israel has one of the world’s highest cellular phone penetration rates.

Postal services operate throughout Israel and connect it with most countries abroad. The Philatelic Service has issued over 1,500 stamps. Many well-known Israeli artists have helped create these ‘calling cards’, some of which have already attained the status of classics and are eagerly sought by collectors.

Roads: In a country of short distances, cars, buses, and trucks are the main means of transportation. In recent years, the road network has been extensively expanded and improved to accommodate the rapid increase in
the number of vehicles as well as to make even the most remote communities accessible. The Trans-Israel Highway (Route 6) a multi-lane highway that is Israel’s first toll road, has been completed for most of its projected 300 km. (190 mile) length, from Be’er Sheva in the South and branching out to Nahariya in the North. This road makes it possible to bypass heavily populated areas, thus easing traffic congestion and providing fast access to most areas of the country.

**Railways:** Israel Railways operates passenger services among Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa, Nahariya, Be’er Sheva, and Dimona. Freight services also operate further south, serving the port of Ashdod, the city of Ashkelon, and the mineral quarries south of Dimona. In recent years, both rail freight and passenger usage has increased. To help alleviate problems caused by increased road-traffic density, rapid rail transit services—utilizing upgraded existing tracks – have been instituted in the Tel Aviv and Haifa areas, operated in coordination with bus feeder lines. Many outmoded coaches now in use are being replaced by modern, air-conditioned passenger cars, and up-to-date mechanical track-maintenance equipment is being put into operation. In Jerusalem, a light-rail urban system is under construction.
Seaports: The ancient ports of Jaffa (Yafo), Caesarea and Acre (Akko) have been replaced by three modern deep-water harbors at Haifa, Ashdod, and Eilat which serve international shipping. Haifa Port is one of the largest container ports on the Mediterranean Sea as well as a busy passenger terminal; Ashdod Port is used mainly for shipping goods; and the port of Eilat on the Red Sea links Israel to the southern hemisphere and the Far East. In addition, a tanker port in Ashkelon receives fuel shipments, and a direct off-loading facility for freighters supplying coal to the nearby power station operates in Hadera.

Recognizing that Israel’s geographic location gives it the potential to become a transit country for passengers and goods traversing the region, the Ports and Railways Authority has designed a long-term master plan to meet future transportation needs. Among other priorities, it advocates developing a modern rail system, instituting state-of-the-art equipment in every phase of its land and sea operations, and setting up a network of computer systems to control and supervise all of its services.

Airports: Ben-Gurion International Airport (a 25-minute drive from Tel Aviv, 50 minutes from Jerusalem) is Israel’s main and largest air terminal. Due to anticipated increases in the numbers of passenger arrivals and departures, the airport has been extensively enlarged, with new state-
of-the-art terminals. Charter flights, mainly from Europe, and domestic air travel are served by Eilat Airport in the South and small airports near Tel Aviv in the Center and Rosh Pina in the North.

**Architecture through the Ages:** The style of urban building in Israel varies greatly, from structures of past centuries, solid edifices inspired by the renowned architects of pre-World War II Europe and apartment blocks hastily constructed to house new immigrants in the early years of the state, to carefully planned residential neighborhoods, high-rise concrete and glass office buildings and modern luxury hotels.
URBAN LIFE

About 92 percent of Israelis live in urban areas. Many modern towns and cities, blending the old and the new, are built on sites known since antiquity, among them Jerusalem, Safed, Be’er Sheva, Tiberias, and Akko.
Others such as Rehovot, Hadera, Petach Tikva, and Rishon Lezion began as agricultural villages in the pre-state era and gradually evolved into major population centers. Development towns such as Carmiel and Kiryat Gat were built in the early years of the state to accommodate the rapid population growth generated by mass immigration, as well as to help distribute the population throughout the country and to promote a closely interlocked rural and urban economy by drawing industry and services to previously unpopulated areas.

**Jerusalem**, situated in the Judean Hills, is the capital of Israel, the seat of government and the historical, spiritual and national center of the Jewish people since King David made it the capital of his kingdom some 3,000 years ago. Sanctified by religion and tradition, by holy places and houses of worship, it is revered by Jews, Christians, and Muslims the world over.

Until 1860 Jerusalem was a walled city made up of four quarters – Jewish, Muslim, Armenian, and Christian. At that time, the Jews, who by then comprised the majority of its population, began to establish new neighborhoods outside the walls, forming the nucleus of modern Jerusalem. During three decades of British Mandate
administration (1918-48), the city gradually changed from a neglected provincial town of the Ottoman Empire (1517-1917) into a flourishing metropolis, with many new residential neighborhoods, each reflecting the character of the particular group living there. Following the Arab onslaught against the newly established State of Israel, the city was divided (1949) under Israeli and Jordanian rule, and for the next 19 years concrete walls and barbed wire sealed off one part from the other. As a result of the 1967 Six Day War, the city was reunified.

Today Israel’s largest city, Jerusalem has a population of more than 760,000. At once ancient and modern, it is a city of diversity, with inhabitants representing a mixture of cultures and nationalities, of religiously observant and secular lifestyles. It is a city which preserves its past and builds for the future, with carefully restored historical sites, well-landscaped green areas, modern commercial zones, industrial parks and expanding suburbs attesting to its continuity and vitality.

Tel Aviv-Yafo, a modern city on the Mediterranean coast, is Israel’s commercial and financial center as well as the focus of its cultural life. Headquartered there are most industrial organizations, the stock exchange, major newspapers, commercial centers, and publishing houses. Tel Aviv, the first all-Jewish city in modern times,
was founded in 1909 as a suburb of Jaffa (Yafo), one of the oldest urban settlements in the world. In 1934 Tel Aviv was granted municipal status, and in 1950 it was renamed Tel Aviv-Yafo, the new municipality absorbing old Jaffa. The area around the ancient port of Jaffa has been developed into an artists’ colony and tourist center, with galleries, restaurants, and night clubs. Tel Aviv’s "White City," a vast ensemble of buildings from the 1930s-1950s in the Modernist Movement style, has been recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage site.

**Haifa**, on the Mediterranean Sea, rises from the coastline over the slopes of Mount Carmel. It is built on three topographical levels: the lower city, partly on land recovered from the sea, is the commercial center with harbor facilities; the middle level is an older residential area; and the top level consists of rapidly expanding modern neighborhoods with tree-lined streets, parks, and pine woods overlooking the industrial zones and sandy beaches on the shore of the wide bay below. A major deep-water port, Haifa is a focus of international trade and commerce. It also serves as the administrative center of northern Israel.
Safed (Tzfat), perched high in the mountains of Galilee, is a popular summer resort and tourist site, with an artists’ quarter and several centuries-old synagogues. In the 16th century, Safed was the most important center of Jewish learning and creativity in the world – the gathering place of rabbis, scholars, and mystics who laid down religious laws and precepts, many of which are still followed by observant Jews today.

Tiberias, on the shore of Lake Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee), is famous for its therapeutic hot springs. Today the town is a bustling lakeside tourist center, where archeological remains of the past blend with modern houses and hotels. Founded in the 1st century and named for the Roman Emperor Tiberius, it became a center of Jewish scholarship and the site of a well-known rabbinical academy.

Be’er Sheva, in the northern Negev, is located at the intersection of routes leading to the Dead Sea and Eilat. It is a new city built on an ancient site, dating back to the age of the Patriarchs some 3,500 years ago. Called the ‘Capital of the Negev,’ Be’er Sheva is an administrative
and economic center, with regional government offices and institutions of health, education, and culture which serve all of southern Israel.

**Eilat**, the country’s southernmost city, is Israel’s outlet to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Its modern port, believed to be located on the site of a harbor from the time of King Solomon, handles Israel’s trade with Africa and the Far East. Warm winters, spectacular underwater scenery, well-appointed beaches, water sports, luxury hotels, and accessibility from Europe via direct charter flights have made Eilat a thriving, year-round tourist resort. Since the establishment of peace between Israel and Jordan (1994), joint development projects with the neighboring city of Aqaba have been initiated, mainly to boost tourism in the area.
RURAL LIFE

About 8 percent of Israel’s population lives in rural areas, in villages, and two unique cooperative frameworks, the kibbutz and moshav, which were developed in the country in the early part of the 20th century.

**Villages** of various sizes are inhabited mainly by Arabs and Druze (the latter comprising 1.7 percent of Israel’s population). Land and houses are privately owned, and farmers cultivate and market their crops on an individual basis. A minority within the Arab sector, traditionally nomadic Bedouin Arabs (estimated at 250,000 people) is currently undergoing an urbanization process, reflecting the transition from a traditional society to a settled, modern lifestyle.

The **kibbutz** is a self-contained social and economic unit in which decisions are taken by its members, and property and means of production are communally owned. Today 1.7 percent of the population lives in 267 kibbutzim. Members are assigned work in different branches of the kibbutz economy: traditionally the backbone of
Israel’s agriculture, kibbutzim are now increasingly engaged in industry, tourism, and services. Many kibbutzim have modified their traditional collective approach and are in various stages of privatization.

The **moshav** is a rural settlement in which each family maintains its own farm and household. In the past, cooperation extended to purchasing and marketing; today moshav farmers have chosen to be more economically independent. 441 moshavim and moshavim shitufi’im comprise some 3.5 percent of the population and supply much of Israel’s agricultural produce.

The **yishuv kehilati** (community settlement) is a new form of rural settlement, with each of the 107 existing communities comprising hundreds of families. Although each family’s economic life is completely independent and most members work outside the community, the level of volunteer participation of members in community life is very high.

The central governing institution is the General Assembly, made up of the heads of each household, which sets and passes the community’s budget at its annual meeting. Alongside management and oversight committees, a number of working groups deal with areas such as education, culture, youth, finances and the like. A paid secretariat runs the community’s day-to-day affairs.
according to the decisions of the elected bodies. New members are accepted only with the approval of the community.
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THE PEOPLE

Israel is home to a widely diverse population from many ethnic, religious, cultural, and social backgrounds. A new society with ancient roots, it is still coalescing and evolving today. Of its 7.6 million people, 75.5 percent are Jews, 20.2 percent are Arabs (mostly Muslim) and the remaining 4.3 percent comprise Druze, Circassians, and others not classified by religion. The society is relatively young and is characterized by social and religious commitment, political ideology, economic resourcefulness, and cultural creativity, all of which contribute momentum to its continuing development.

... Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity. (Psalms 133:1)
JEWISH SOCIETY

The Long Road Home
Following the expulsion of most of the Jews from the Land of Israel some 2,000 years ago, they were dispersed to other countries; mainly in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Over the centuries, they established many large Jewish communities in lands near and far, where they experienced long periods of growth and prosperity, but were also subjected at times to harsh discrimination, brutal pogroms, and total or partial expulsions. Each wave of persecution and violence strengthened their belief in the concept of the "ingathering of the exiles" and inspired individuals and groups to return to their ancestral homeland. The Zionist movement, founded at the end of the 19th century, transformed the concept into a way of life, and the State of Israel translated it into law, granting citizenship to every Jew wishing to settle in the country.
**Formation of a New Society**

The political, economic, and cultural basis of Israel’s contemporary Jewish society was largely formed during the period of British rule (1917-48). Ideologically motivated by Zionism, the Jewish community in the Land of Israel developed social and political institutions which exercised authority without sovereignty, with every echelon mobilized toward consolidation and growth. Volunteerism was its political spine, egalitarianism its social glue.

The attainment of political independence and the mass immigration which followed, doubling Israel’s Jewish population from 650,000 to some 1.3 million in the first four years of statehood (1948-52), changed the structure and fabric of Israeli society. The resultant social grouping was composed of two main elements: a majority comprised of the established Sephardi community, veteran Ashkenazi settlers, and Holocaust survivors; and a large minority of recent Jewish immigrants from the Islamic countries of North Africa and the Middle East. While most of the pre-state population was committed to strong ideological convictions, a pioneering spirit, and a democratic way of life, many of the Jews who had lived for centuries in Arab lands adhered to a patriarchal social organization, and found it difficult to integrate into Israel’s society and rapidly developing economy.
In the late 1950s, the two groups coexisted virtually without social and cultural interaction, with the Jews of North African and Middle Eastern backgrounds expressing their frustration and alienation in anti-government protests, which, in the 1960s and 1970s, became demands for greater political participation, compensatory allocations of resources and affirmative action to help close the gaps between them and mainstream Israelis. In addition to the tensions generated by the diversity of its population during these years, Israeli society was also called upon to struggle for economic independence and to defend itself against belligerent actions by Arabs across the border. Still, the common denominators of religion, historical memory, and national cohesion within the Jewish society proved strong enough to meet the challenges facing it.

Continued Ingathering

Over the years, Israel has continued to receive new immigrants in larger and smaller numbers, coming from the free countries of the Western world as well as from areas of distress. The most recent wave of mass immigration was comprised of members of the large Jewish community of the former Soviet Union which struggled for years for the right to emigrate to Israel. While some 100,000 managed to come in the 1970s, since 1989 over one million have settled
in the country. Among them were many highly educated professionals, well-known scientists, and acclaimed artists and musicians, whose expertise and talents are contributing significantly to Israel’s economic, scientific, academic, and cultural life.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the arrival of two massive airlifts of the ancient Jewish community of Ethiopia, popularly believed to have been there since the time of King Solomon. While the transition of these 50,000 immigrants from an agrarian African environment to an industrialized Western society will take time, the eagerness of their youth to adapt will hasten the absorption of this long-isolated Jewish community.

**Religious Diversity**

Since biblical times, the Jews have been a people with a monotheistic faith, Judaism, embodying both a religious and a national component. By the 18th century most of the world’s Jews lived in eastern Europe, where they were confined to ghettos and had little interaction with the societies around them. Within their communities, they managed their own affairs, adhering to the body of Jewish law (Halakha) which had been developed and codified by religious scholars over many centuries.
The spirit of emancipation and nationalism which swept 19th century Europe generated the development of a more liberal approach to education, culture, philosophy, and theology. It also gave rise to several Jewish movements, some of which developed along liberal religious lines, while others espoused national and political ideologies. As a result, many Jews, and ultimately the majority, broke from Orthodoxy and its attendant way of life, with some striving to integrate completely into the society at large.

Jewish society in Israel today is made up of observant and non-observant Jews, comprising a spectrum from the ultra-Orthodox to those who regard themselves as secular. However, the differences between them are not clear-cut. If Orthodoxy is determined by the degree of adherence to Jewish religious laws and practices, then 20 percent of Israeli Jews strive to fulfill all religious precepts, 60 percent follow some combination of the laws according to personal choices and ethnic traditions, and 20 percent are essentially non-observant. But as Israel was conceived as a Jewish state, Shabbat (the Sabbath, Saturday) and all Jewish festivals and holy days have been instituted as national holidays and are celebrated by the entire Jewish population and observed by all, to a greater or lesser extent.

Other indicators of the degree of religious adherence might be the percentage of parents choosing to give their children a religiously oriented education or the percentage
of voters casting their ballot for religious parties in national elections. The significance of such statistics, however, is uncertain, as non-observant parents may enroll their children in religious schools and many Orthodox citizens vote for non-religious political parties.

Basically, the majority may be characterized as secular Jews who manifest modern lifestyles, with varied degrees of respect for and practice of religious precepts. Within this majority are many who follow a modified traditional way of life, with some choosing to affiliate with one of the liberal religious streams.

Within the observant minority, both Sephardi and Ashkenazi, are many who adhere to a religious way of life, regulated by Jewish religious law, while participating in the country’s national life. They regard the modern Jewish state as the first step toward the coming of the Messiah and redemption of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel.

In contrast, some of the ultra-Orthodox Jews believe that Jewish sovereignty in the Land can be reestablished only after the coming of the Messiah. Maintaining strict adherence to Jewish religious law, they reside in separate neighborhoods, run their own schools, dress in traditional clothing, maintain distinct roles for men and women, and are bound by a closely circumscribed lifestyle.
Inter-Jewish Dynamics
As there is no clear separation of religion and state, a central inter-community issue has been the extent to which Israel should manifest its Jewish religious identity. While the Orthodox establishment seeks to augment religious legislation beyond the scope of personal status, over which it has exclusive jurisdiction, the non-observant sector regards this as religious coercion and an infringement on the democratic nature of the state. One of the ongoing issues focuses on the elements required to define a person as a Jew. The Orthodox sector advocates determining a Jew as one born of a Jewish mother or who converts in strict accordance with Jewish law, while secular Jews generally support a definition based on the civil criterion of an individual’s identification with Judaism. These conflicts of interest have given rise to a search for legal means to define the demarcation between religion and state. Until an overall solution is found, authority lies in an unwritten agreement, reached on the eve of Israel’s independence and known as the status quo, which stipulates that no fundamental changes would be made in the status of religion.

Kibbutz Society
A unique social and economic framework based on egalitarian and communal principles, the kibbutz grew out of the country’s pioneering society of the early 20th century and developed into a permanent rural way of life.
Over the years, it established a prosperous economy, at first primarily agricultural, later augmented with industrial and service enterprises, and distinguished itself with its members’ contributions to the establishment and building of the state.

In Israel’s pre-state period and during the early years of statehood, the kibbutz assumed central functions in settlement, immigration and defense, but when these were transferred to the government, interaction between the kibbutz and Israel’s mainstream decreased. Its centrality as a vanguard for social and institutional development diminished, and since the 1970s its political strength, which in the early days had resulted in overrepresentation, has declined. However, the kibbutz’s share in the national product has continued to be significantly greater than their proportion of the population.

In recent decades the kibbutz has become more introspective, emphasizing individual achievement and economic growth. In many kibbutzim, the ‘do-it-ourselves’ work ethic has become less rigid as the taboo on hired labor in the kibbutz has weakened, and greater numbers
of non-member paid workers are being employed. At the same time, increasing numbers of kibbutz members are working outside the kibbutz, with their salary accruing to the kibbutz.

Today’s kibbutz is the achievement of three generations. The founders, motivated by strong convictions and a definitive ideology, formed a society with a unique way of life. Their children, born into an existing social structure, worked hard to consolidate the economic, social, and administrative basis of their community. The present generation, which grew up in a well-established society, is grappling with the challenges of contemporary life. Today, much discussion focuses on the future nature of the relationship and mutual responsibility between the individual and the kibbutz community, as well as on ramifications for the society of recent developments in technology and communications.

Some fear that in adjusting to changing circumstances the kibbutz is moving dangerously far from its original principles and values; others believe that this ability to compromise and adapt is the key to its survival.
MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Some 1.8 million people, comprising some 24 percent of Israel’s population, are non-Jews. Although defined collectively as Arab citizens of Israel, they include a number of different, primarily Arabic-speaking groups, each with distinct characteristics.

**Muslim Arabs**, over 1.2 million people, most of whom are Sunni, reside mainly in small towns and villages, over half of them in the north of the country.

**Bedouin Arabs**, also Muslim (estimated at approximately 250,000), belong to some 30 tribes, a majority scattered over a wide area in the south and others in the north. Formerly nomadic shepherds, the Bedouin are currently in transition from a tribal social framework to a permanently settled society and are gradually entering Israel's labor force.

**Christian Arabs**, some 123,000, live mainly in urban areas, including Nazareth, Shfar'am, and Haifa. Although many denominations are nominally represented, the majority are affiliated with the Greek Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches.
The Druze, some 122,000 Arabic-speakers living in 22 villages in northern Israel, constitute a separate cultural, social, and religious community. While the Druze religion is not accessible to outsiders, one known aspect of its philosophy is the concept of taqiyya, which calls for complete loyalty by its adherents to the government of the country in which they reside.

The Circassians, comprising approximately 4,000 people concentrated in two northern villages, are Sunni Muslims, although they share neither the Arab origin nor the cultural background of the larger Islamic community. While maintaining a distinct ethnic identity, they participate in Israel's economic and national affairs without assimilating either into Jewish society or into the Muslim community.

Arab Community Life
Arab migrations in and out of the country fluctuated in response to prevailing economic conditions. Late in the 19th century, when Jewish immigration stimulated economic growth, many Arabs were attracted to the area by its
Pluralism and Segregation: As a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-lingual society, Israel has a high level of informal segregation patterns. While groups are not separated by official policy, a number of different sectors within the society are somewhat segregated and maintain their strong cultural, religious, ideological, and/or ethnic identity.

However, despite a fairly high degree of social cleavage, some economic disparities and an often overheated political life, the society is relatively balanced and stable. The low level of social conflict employment opportunities, higher wages, and better living conditions.

The majority of Israel’s Arab population lives in self-contained towns and villages in Galilee, including the city of Nazareth, the central area between Hadera and Petah Tikva, the Negev, and in mixed urban centers such as Jerusalem, Akko (Acre), Haifa, Lod, Ramle, and Yafo (Jaffa).

Israel’s Arab community constitutes mainly a working-class sector in a middle-class society, a politically peripheral group in a highly centralized state and an Arabic-speaking minority in a Hebrew-speaking majority. Essentially non-assimilating, the community’s distinct identity is facilitated through the use of Arabic, Israel’s second official language; a separate Arab/Druze school system; Arabic mass media, literature, and theater; and maintenance of independent Muslim, Druze, and Christian denominational courts which adjudicate matters of personal status.

While customs of the past are still part of daily life, a gradual weakening of tribal and patriarchal authority,
the effects of compulsory education and participation in Israel’s democratic process are rapidly affecting traditional outlooks and lifestyles. Concurrently the status of Israeli Arab women has been significantly liberalized by legislation stipulating equal rights for women and prohibition of polygamy and child marriage.

The political involvement of the Arab sector is manifested in national and municipal elections. Arab citizens run the political and administrative affairs of their own municipalities and represent Arab interests through their elected representatives in the Knesset (Israel’s parliament), who can operate in the political arena to promote the status of minority groups and their share of national benefits.

Since Israel’s establishment (1948), Arab citizens have been exempted from compulsory service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) out of consideration for their family, religious, and cultural affiliations with the Arab world (which has subjected Israel to frequent attacks), as well as concern over possible dual loyalties. At the same time, volunteer military service is encouraged, between the different groups, notwithstanding an inherent potential for social unrest, can be attributed to the country’s judicial and political systems, which represent strict legal and civic equality.

Thus, Israel is not a melting-pot society, but rather more of a mosaic made up of different population groups coexisting in the framework of a democratic state.
with some choosing this option every year. Since 1957, at the request of their community leaders, IDF service has been mandatory for Druze and Circassian men, while the number of Bedouin joining the career army voluntarily increases steadily.

**Arab-Jewish Dynamics**

Arab citizens, who constitute more than one-sixth of Israel’s population, exist on the margins of the conflicting worlds of Jews and Palestinians. However, while remaining a segment of the Arab people in culture and identity and disputing Israel’s identification as a Jewish state, they see their future tied to Israel. In the process, they have adopted Hebrew as a second language and Israeli culture as an extra layer in their lives. At the same time, they strive to attain a higher degree of participation in national life, greater integration into the economy and more benefits for their own towns and villages.

Development of inter-group relations between Israel’s Arabs and Jews has been hindered by deeply-rooted differences in religion, values, and political beliefs. However, though coexisting as two self-segregated communities, over the years they have come to accept each other, acknowledging the uniqueness and aspirations of each community.
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (1948) guarantees freedom of religion for all. Each religious community is free, by law and in practice, to exercise its faith, to observe its holidays and weekly day of rest, and to administer its internal affairs. Each has its own religious council and courts, recognized by law and with jurisdiction over all religious affairs and matters of personal status such as marriage and divorce. Each has its own unique places of worship, with traditional rituals and special architectural features developed over the centuries.

Synagogue: Traditional Jewish Orthodox worship requires a minyan (quorum of 10 adult males). Prayers take place three times daily. Men and women are usually seated separately, and heads are covered. Services may be led by a rabbi, cantor, or congregant. The rabbi is not a priest or an intermediary with God, but a teacher. The focal point in the synagogue is the Holy Ark, which faces the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and contains the Torah scrolls. A prescribed weekly portion is read cyclically throughout the year. Services are particularly festive on the Sabbath (Saturday, the Jewish day of rest) and holidays.
**Mosque:** Muslim prayers take place five times daily. Men and women pray separately. Shoes are removed and a ritual ablution may be performed. Muslims pray facing Mecca in Saudi Arabia, the direction of which is indicated by a mihrab (niche) in the mosque wall. Services are performed by an imam, a Muslim prayer leader. On Friday, the traditional Muslim day of rest, a public sermon is usually preached.

**Church:** The form and frequency of Christian services vary according to denomination, but all observe Sunday as the day of rest, with special rituals. Services are conducted by a priest or minister. Men and women pray together. Services are often accompanied by music and choral singing. Traditionally, churches are cruciform in shape.

**Holy Places**
Each site and shrine is administered by its own religious authority, and freedom of access and worship is ensured by law.

Major holy places are:

**Jewish:** Jerusalem’s Kotel (the Western Wall), last remnant of the retaining wall of the Temple Mount from the Second Temple period; Rachel’s Tomb, near Bethlehem; Tomb of the Patriarchs in the Cave of Machpela, in Hebron; the tombs...
of Maimonides (Rambam) in Tiberias and Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai in Meron.

**Islamic:** The Haram a-Sharif building complex on the Temple Mount, including the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem; Tomb of the Patriarchs, in Hebron; El-Jazzar Mosque, in Akko.

**Christian:** Via Dolorosa, Room of the Last Supper, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and other sites of Jesus’s passion and crucifixion in Jerusalem; Church of the Nativity, in Bethlehem; Church of the Annunciation, in Nazareth; Mount of Beatitudes, Tabgha, and Capernaum, near the Sea of Galilee (Lake Kinneret).

**Druze:** Nebi Shueib (tomb of Jethro, father-in-law of Moses), near the Horns of Hittin in Galilee.

**Baha’i:** (independent world religion founded in Persia, mid-19th century): Baha’i world center, Shrine of the Bab, in Haifa; Shrine of Baha’ullah, prophet-founder of the Baha’i faith, near Akko.
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HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Israel’s high standards of health services, top-quality medical resources and research, modern hospital facilities, and an impressive ratio of physicians and specialists to population are reflected in the country’s low infant mortality rate (4.7 per 1,000 live births) and long life expectancy (82.5 years for women, 78.8 for men). Health care for all, from infancy to old age, is ensured by law and the national expenditure on health compares favorably with that of other developed countries.

כל ישראל ערבין זה בזה (שבועות ל”ט: א’)

All Israel is responsible for one another. (Babylonian Talmud, Shavuot 39a)
A long-standing tradition:
In the 19th century, diseases such as dysentery, malaria, typhus, and trachoma were rampant in the Land of Israel, then a backward and neglected part of the Ottoman Empire. To provide health services for the Jewish population of the Old City of Jerusalem, a number of clinics, set up by European Jewish communities, extended free medical services for those unable to pay and were famous for their dedicated care under difficult circumstances. These clinics expanded to become hospitals: Bikur Holim (est. 1843), Misgav Ladach (est. 1888), and Shaare Zedek (est. 1902), all of which still

HEALTH SERVICES

The foundation of the health system, including a network of medical services for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, was laid during the pre-state period by the Jewish community and the British Mandate authorities, which administered the country from 1918 to 1948.

Thus, when the State of Israel was established, a well-developed medical infrastructure was already functioning, immunization was standard procedure, and frameworks for improving environmental conditions were operative. However, in the early years of statehood, the health services had to readdress some of the problems previously overcome in order to cope with the health needs of hundreds of thousands of refugees from postwar Europe and from Arab countries. This challenge was met through an intensive national effort involving provision of special services as well as a far-reaching plan of health education and preventive medicine.
The country’s population is served by an extensive medical network comprising hospitals, outpatient clinics, and centers for preventive medicine and rehabilitation. Hospital care includes highly advanced procedures and techniques, from in vitro fertilization, MRI scans, and complicated brain surgery to bone marrow and organ transplants.

Mother-and-child care centers, for women during pregnancy and children from birth to early childhood, offer prenatal examinations, early detection of mental and physical handicaps, immunizations, regular pediatric check-ups, and health education.

**Administration and Structure**
Responsibility for all health services lies with the Ministry of Health, which prepares legislation and oversees its implementation, controls medical standards nationwide, maintains food and drug quality standards, licenses medical personnel, promotes medical research, evaluates health services, and supervises the planning and construction of hospitals. The ministry also acts as a public health agency for environmental and preventive medicine.
Health Personnel

Israel’s approximately 32,000 physicians, 9,000 dentists, and 6,000 pharmacists pursue their professions as members of hospital staffs and neighborhood clinics as well as in private practice. About 72 percent of the country’s 54,000 nurses are registered, while the rest are practical nurses.

Training for medical professions is offered at four medical schools, two schools of dentistry, two of pharmacology, and 15 nursing schools, seven of which grant academic degrees. Courses for physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and nutritionists, as well as for X-ray and laboratory technicians, are available at a number of institutions.

Health Insurance

The National Insurance Law provides for a standardized basket of medical services, including hospitalization, for all residents of Israel. Medical services are supplied by the country’s four comprehensive health insurance schemes, which must accept all applicants regardless of age or state of health.

The main sources of funding are a monthly health

Magen David Adom, Israel’s emergency medical service, provides a network of first aid stations, a nationwide blood donor program, blood banks, first aid courses, and a public ambulance service, which includes mobile intensive care units. The organization functions with the help of some 10,000 volunteers, many of them high school students, who serve at 109 stations throughout the country.
HEALTH TOURISM: Israel has become a popular destination for patients around the world suffering from chronic conditions such as rheumatism, psoriasis, and asthma. Many benefit from special treatments in the hot springs at Tiberias, the mineral-rich waters of the Dead Sea, or the dry climate of Arad, a modern city in the Negev desert.

insurance tax of up to 4.8 percent of income, collected by the National Insurance Institute, and employer participation in the cost of insurance for their employees. The insurance schemes are reimbursed according to a weighted average number of insured persons, calculated by age, distance of home from a health facility, and other criteria determined by the Ministry of Health.

Health Problems
Israel’s health problems are similar to those prevailing in the Western world. Since heart diseases and cancer account for about two thirds of deaths, the study of these illnesses has become a national priority. Also of great concern are medical care for the aging, problems arising from environmental changes, and conditions emanating from current lifestyles, as well as traffic and occupational accidents. Health education programs are widely used to inform the public of the need to stop habits such as smoking and overeating, as well as lack of physical exercise, which have proved detrimental to health. Campaigns are also run frequently to increase workers’ and drivers’ awareness of potential dangers.
MEDICAL RESEARCH

Israel’s well-developed infrastructure of medical and paramedical research and bio-engineering capabilities facilitates a wide range of scientific inquiry.

Research is carried out by the medical schools and various government institutes and laboratories, as well as by R&D departments of companies in the pharmaceutical, bio-engineering, food processing, and medical equipment industries. The country’s high-level facilities are recognized throughout the world, with regular contacts maintained on a reciprocal basis with major medical and scientific research centers abroad. Israel is frequently the host venue for international conferences on a wide variety of medical topics.

Medical Technology

Sophisticated technology has become an integral part of modern diagnostic and treatment procedures. Close cooperation between medical research institutions and industry has led to significant progress in the development of special medical equipment. Among others, Israeli-made CAT scanners and advanced microcomputer-supported devices, essential for accurate diagnosis and effective treatment in critical situations, are exported worldwide.
Israel has pioneered the development and use of laser surgical instruments, as well as a variety of electronic medical equipment, including computerized monitoring systems and other life-saving and pain-relieving devices.
In accordance with the belief that proper medical care is a universal right transcending barriers of ideology and political borders, Israel’s hospitals are open to all seeking their expertise. Over the years, patients have come for specialized treatment from all over the world, including countries with which Israel has no diplomatic relations. In many parts of Asia and Africa, Israeli doctors and nurses are providing assistance in treating diseases which have been virtually eradicated in developed countries, and share their skills with local medical personnel on exchange programs, some held under the auspices of the World Health Organization. Israeli medical teams also participate in relief efforts in disaster areas.

IDF Search and Rescue Team
in action
(after earthquake in Turkey)

G.P.O. / Y. Sa’ar
SOCIAL SERVICES

Israel’s comprehensive welfare system is based on legislation which provides for a broad range of national and community services. Care of the elderly, support programs for single parents, children, and youth, prevention and treatment of substance abuse, and assistance for new immigrants comprise a large part of available social services. Correctional services encompass probation frameworks, remedial programs for school dropouts, and residential and observational services for youth in distress. Sheltered workshops and employment counseling are among the rehabilitation services provided for the blind and physically disabled. The developmentally challenged are cared for through various residential and community-based programs.

Administration

Under the Social Welfare Law (1958), municipalities and local authorities are required to maintain a department responsible for social services, 75 percent of whose budget comes from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Nationwide services such as adoption, probation frameworks and residential institutions for the developmentally challenged are funded and run by the ministry. The ministry determines policy, initiates legislation, enacts regulations for the operation of social services and supervises those offered by public and private organizations.
**Social Service Personnel**

Schools of social work, available in most universities, offer graduate and postgraduate training, combining theoretical study with field work. Government-operated programs provide training for child care staff and social work aides, as well as in-service training for social work professionals. Community and case workers are employed in various contexts, including social service bureaus, community centers, immigrant absorption facilities, mother-and-child care centers, schools, factories, and hospitals.

**Senior Citizens**

Care and services for the elderly have become a major component of Israel's health and social service capabilities. While the total population has increased five-fold since the country's establishment, the number of senior citizens (age 65+) has increased ten-fold, now representing nearly 10 percent of Israel's over 7 million inhabitants. Much of this growth has been due to mass immigration, which peaked during the 1950s and the 1990s. Over one million immigrants have arrived since 1989, mainly from the countries of the former Soviet Union, more than 12 percent of them aged 65 and over. Many had neither the time nor the opportunity to learn Hebrew, be absorbed in the workforce or establish a secure economic foundation for their old age. Thus many of Israel's elderly, some 13 percent of whom are disabled, are dependant upon family and community resources.
With planning and supervision under the aegis of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, delivery of services is channeled through the social service departments of the local authorities. Community-based services for senior citizens, which aim to preserve their independence at home, include assessment of needs by a social worker, assisting families caring for an aged person, senior citizens’ clubs, meals-on-wheels, sheltered housing, daycare, medical equipment, and transportation. Emphasis is placed on services for high-risk groups, such as people without family or adequate income.
SOCIAL INSURANCE

The National Insurance Law (1954) grants the population a wide range of benefits which are provided by the National Insurance Institute (NII), an autonomous body operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Its activities are financed by obligatory payments from employers, employees and self-employed persons, in addition to government budget allocations. The government’s income-maintenance policy is carried out by the NII with supplementary assistance to families and individuals whose income is below the determined minimum. Universal child allowances boost family incomes, especially those with four or more children. An amendment to the National Insurance Law provides long-term care for elderly persons dependent on daily help, either at home or in residential facilities. The NII also administers Israel’s national health insurance program.
VOLUNTARISM

About 20% of Israel’s adult population are volunteers, active in 278 public voluntary bodies which complement health and social services. These organizations range from hospital and emergency care auxiliaries to the Civil Guard and volunteer rescue units; groups which address prevailing social problems such as substance, spouse, and child abuse, road safety, and environmental conservation; and others which concentrate their efforts on the status of women, immigrants’ and consumers’ rights, and soldiers’ welfare.

Various programs offer volunteers from abroad a chance to serve in Israel, usually on a short-term basis. Many come each summer to take part in archeological excavations, some work in kibbutzim, while others help in social services. Some young German volunteers view taking care of the elderly and sick in Israel as atonement for the war crimes of the Nazi regime against the Jewish people.

The composition of the contemporary volunteer force differs from that of previous generations. Since a majority of Israeli women work, they do not have much free time to devote to volunteering, but longevity provides many retirees, both men and women, with time to help out in such areas as emergency medical assistance (Magen David Adom) or environmental organizations. University
students commonly volunteer to tutor disadvantaged children and teenagers (for which they may receive a partial stipend). The voluntary effort in Israel is coordinated by the National Council for Voluntarism in Israel, a public, non-profit organization, funded by the Prime Minister’s Office and affiliated with international volunteer agencies. Campaigns by voluntary groups, including occasional national telethons to collect funds for causes, are a regular and accepted feature of Israeli life.
EDUCATION

Education in Israel is a precious legacy. Following the tradition of past generations, education continues to be a fundamental value and is recognized as the key to the future. The educational system aims to prepare children to become responsible members of a democratic, pluralistic society in which people from different ethnic, religious, cultural and political backgrounds coexist. It is based on Jewish values, love of the land, and the principles of liberty and tolerance. It seeks to impart a high level of knowledge, with an emphasis on scientific and technological skills essential for the country’s continued development.

אין העולם מתקיים אלא בshal ile v'oleh shel tinhukot shel bet ven (שבת קי"ט: ב’)

The very world rests on the breath of a child in the schoolhouse. (Babylonian Talmud: Shabbat, 119b)
CHALLENGES

When the State of Israel was founded (1948), a fully functioning education system already existed, developed and maintained by the pre-state Jewish community, with Hebrew, which had been revived for daily speech at the end of the 19th century, as the language of instruction.

However, since shortly after the establishment of the state, the education system has faced the enormous challenge of integrating large numbers of immigrant children from over 70 countries – some coming with their parents, others alone – thereby fulfilling Israel’s raison d’être as the historic homeland of the Jewish people. The mass immigration of the 1950s, mainly from postwar Europe and Arab countries, was succeeded in the 1960s by a large influx of Jews from North Africa. In the 1970s, the first sizable immigration of Jews from the Soviet Union arrived, followed intermittently by smaller groups. Since the beginning of the 1990s, over one million Jews from the former Soviet Union have come to Israel, with tens of thousands more still arriving each year. In two mass movements, in 1984 and 1991, almost the entire Jewish community of Ethiopia was brought to the country. Over the years, many Jews from the Americas and other Western countries have also settled in Israel.

In addition to meeting urgent demands for more classrooms
and teachers, special tools and methods have had to be developed to help absorb youngsters from many cultural backgrounds into the school population. Programs designed specifically to meet the needs of the newcomers include preparation of appropriate curricular aids and short-term classes to introduce immigrant pupils to subjects not learned in their countries of origin, such as the Hebrew language and Jewish history. Special courses were initiated to train teachers to deal with immigrant youngsters, and retraining courses for immigrant teachers have facilitated their employment in the education system.

At the same time, the Ministry of Education is involved in an ongoing process of bringing educational standards in line with modern pedagogic practices, such as mandating gender equality, upgrading teacher status, broadening humanistic curricula, and promoting scientific and technological studies. A key aspect of its policy is to provide equal opportunities in education for all children and to increase the number of pupils passing matriculation examinations.
Education in Israel begins at a very young age in order to provide children with an augmented head start, particularly in terms of socialization and language development.

Many two-year-olds and almost all three- and four-year-olds attend some kind of preschool framework. Most programs are sponsored by local authorities, some within day-care centers operated by women’s organizations; others are privately owned. The Ministry of Education allocates special resources for preschool education in disadvantaged areas.

Kindergarten for five-year-olds is free and compulsory. The curriculum aims to teach fundamental skills, including language and numerical concepts, to foster cognitive and creative capacities, and to promote social abilities. The curricula of all preschools are guided and supervised by the Ministry of Education to ensure a solid and well-rounded foundation for future learning.
SCHOOL SYSTEM

School attendance is mandatory and free from age 6 to 18. Formal education starts in primary school (grades 1-6) and continues with intermediate school (grades 7-9) and secondary school (grades 10-12). About nine percent of the post-primary school population attend boarding schools.

The multi-cultural nature of Israel’s society is accommodated within the framework of the education system. Accordingly, schools are divided into four groups: state schools, attended by the majority of pupils; state religious schools, which emphasize Jewish studies, tradition, and observance; Arab and Druze schools, with instruction in Arabic and special focus on Arab and Druze history, religion, and culture; and private schools, which operate under various religious and international auspices.

In recent years, with the growing concern of parents over the orientation of their children’s education, some new schools have been founded, which reflect the philosophies and beliefs of specific groups of parents and educators.
**EDUCATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN**

Gifted children, who rank in the top 3 percent of their class and have passed qualifying tests, participate in enrichment programs, ranging from full-time special schools to extracurricular courses. A classroom for the gifted is characterized by the level of its students and its studies, with emphasis not only on imparting knowledge and understanding, but also on applying the concepts mastered to other disciplines. Children in these programs learn to research and handle new material independently.

Children with physical, mental, or learning disabilities are placed in appropriate frameworks according to the nature of their handicap, to

** Curriculum**

Most hours of the school day are devoted to compulsory academic studies. While the subject matter to be covered is uniform throughout the system, each school may choose from a wide range of study units and teaching materials, provided by the Ministry of Education, which best suit the needs of its faculty and pupil population. With the aim of enhancing pupils’ understanding of their society, each year a special topic of national importance is studied in depth. Themes have included democratic values, the Hebrew language, immigration, Jerusalem, peace, and industry.
The Ministry of Education is responsible for school curricula, educational standards, supervision of teaching personnel, and construction of school buildings. Local authorities are charged with school maintenance as well as with acquisition of equipment and supplies. Teaching personnel at the kindergarten and primary school level are ministry employees, while those in the upper grades are employed by local authorities, which receive funding from the ministry according to the size of the school population. The government and local authorities finance 80 percent of education, while the rest comes from other sources.

Responsibility for their well-being is shared by health-care personnel, psychologists, social workers, and special education professionals, as well as by the family and various community support groups. A committee constituted by law and appointed by the minister of education determines the eligibility of handicapped children for special education programs and facilities, which are free from age 3 to 21.
The majority of secondary schools offer academic curricula in science and in the humanities leading to a matriculation certificate and higher education.

Certain secondary schools offer specialized curricula, which lead to a matriculation certificate and/or vocational diploma. Technological schools train technicians and practical engineers on three levels, with some preparing for higher education, some studying towards a vocational diploma, and others acquiring practical skills. Agricultural schools, usually in

Educational Television (ETV), a unit of the Ministry of Education, produces and broadcasts scholastic programs for use in school classrooms and educational programs for the entire population. In addition, ETV collaborates with education professionals at universities and teachers’ seminars in developing new teaching methods. Dedicated to providing

Percentage of Matriculation Examinees in 17-Year-Old Population
a residential setting, supplement basic studies with subjects relating to agronomy. Military preparatory schools train future career personnel and technicians in specific fields required by the Israel Defense Forces. Yeshiva high schools, mainly boarding schools, with separate frameworks for boys and girls, complement their secular curricula with intensive religious studies and promote observance of tradition and a Jewish way of life. Comprehensive schools offer studies in a variety of vocations, ranging from bookkeeping to mechanics, electronics, hotel trades, graphic design, and more.

Youth not attending one of the above schools are subject to the Apprenticeship Law, requiring them to study for a trade at an approved vocational school. Apprenticeship programs are provided by the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labor in schools affiliated with vocational networks. Lasting three to four years, these programs consist of two years of classroom study followed by one/two years during which students study three days a week and work at their chosen trade on the other days. Trades range from hairstyling and cooking to mechanics and word processing.

lifetime learning, ETV gears its production to people of all ages through enrichment programs for preschoolers, entertainment programs for youth, educational courses for adults, and news broadcasts for all.
HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education plays a pivotal role in the economic and social development of the country. Almost a quarter of a century before the state came into being, the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa was opened (1924) to train engineers and architects and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was founded (1925) as a center of higher learning for youth in the Land of Israel and to attract Jewish students and scholars from abroad. When Israel attained independence (1948), enrollment at the two universities totaled about 1,600. In 2009-2010 some 280,000 students attended the country’s institutions of higher learning. Of these 38 percent attend universities and 41 percent are enrolled in colleges, while 21 percent participate in courses through the Open University.

Accorded full academic and administrative freedom, Israel’s institutions of higher education are open to all those who meet their academic standards. New immigrants and students lacking the necessary qualifications may attend a special preparatory program, which upon successful completion enables them to apply for admission.

Council for Higher Education

Institutions of higher education operate under the authority of the Council for Higher Education, which is headed by the minister of education, and includes
academics, community representatives, and a student representative. It grants accreditation, authorizes the awarding of academic degrees, and advises the government on the development and financing of higher education and scientific research.

The Planning and Grants Committee, composed of four senior academics from different fields and two public figures from the business or industrial sectors, is the intermediary body between the government and the institutions of higher education regarding financial matters, submitting budget proposals to both bodies and allocating the approved budget. Public funds provide 70 percent of the budget for higher education, 20 percent derives from tuition, and the rest from various private sources. The committee also promotes cooperation among the various institutions.

**Students**

Most Israeli students are over age 21 when they begin their studies, after three years' compulsory military service for men and two years for women. Until the early 1960s, students pursued higher education mainly to acquire knowledge, while in recent years they have been more career-oriented, with larger numbers enrolled in the wide range of professional studies now offered. At
present, well over half of Israelis in the 20-24 age group are enrolled in one of the country’s institutions of post-secondary or higher education.
THE UNIVERSITIES

Technion – Israel Institute of Technology (est. 1924, Haifa) has graduated a high proportion of the country’s engineers, architects, and town planners. In recent decades, faculties for medicine and the life sciences were added. The Technion serves as a center of basic and applied research in the sciences and engineering to advance the country’s industrial development.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (est. 1925) comprises faculties which cover nearly all areas of scholarship, from art history to zoology, and houses Israel’s National Library. Since its inception, Hebrew University scientists have been actively involved in every phase of Israel’s national development, and its Jewish studies departments rank among the most comprehensive in the world.

Weizmann Institute of Science (est. 1934, Rehovot), originally founded as the Sieff Institute, was expanded in 1949 and named after Dr. Chaim Weizmann, Israel’s first president and a renowned chemist. Today, it is a recognized post-graduate center of research in physics, chemistry, mathematics, and the life sciences. Its researchers are engaged in projects designed to accelerate the development
of industry and the establishment of new science-based enterprises. The institute includes a department for science teaching, which prepares curricula for use in high schools.

**Bar-Ilan University** (est. 1955, Ramat Gan) embodies a unique integrative approach which combines enrichment programs in Jewish heritage with a liberal education in a wide range of disciplines, particularly in the social sciences. Blending tradition with modern technologies, it houses research institutes in physics, medicinal chemistry, mathematics, economics, strategic studies, developmental psychology, musicology, Bible, Talmud, Jewish law, and more.

**Tel Aviv University** (est. 1956) was founded by incorporating three existing institutions to meet the need for a university in the Tel Aviv area, the country’s most populous region. Today it is Israel’s largest university, offering a wide spectrum of disciplines and placing considerable emphasis on both basic and applied research. The university houses specialized institutes which focus on strategic studies, health systems management, technological forecasting and energy studies.
The University of Haifa (est. 1963), which serves as a center of higher education in the northern part of the country, offers opportunities for interdisciplinary studies; its interdepartmental centers, institutes, and overall architectural plan are structured to facilitate this approach. The university includes a unit for the study of the kibbutz as a social and economic entity, as well as a center dedicated to the advancement of understanding and cooperation between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (est. 1967, Be’er Sheva) was established to serve the residents of southern Israel and to encourage the social and scientific development of the country’s desert region. It has made major contributions in arid zone research, and its medical school has pioneered community-oriented medicine in the country. The university’s campus at Kibbutz Sde Boker houses a research center for the study of the historical and political aspects of the life and times of David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister.

The Open University (est. 1974), patterned on the British model, offers distinctive, non-traditional higher education opportunities toward a bachelor’s degree by utilizing flexible methods based primarily on self-study textbooks and guides, supplemented by structured assignments and periodic tutorials, with final examinations.
Regional colleges offer academic courses. A number of these colleges operate under the auspices of one of the universities, making it possible for students to begin studying for a degree near their home and complete it at the university’s main campus.

Some specialized institutes provide various disciplines in art, music, dance, fashion, nursing, rehabilitation therapies, teaching, and sports. Several private degree-granting colleges offer subjects in great demand such as business administration, law, computers, economics, and related topics. At some, additional tracks are available, leading to certificates or vocational diplomas in a variety of subjects ranging from technology and agriculture to marketing and hotel trades.
ADULT EDUCATION

A wide range of courses sponsored by the Ministry of Education, as well as by public and private institutions, addresses individual needs ranging from learning the Hebrew language and upgrading basic educational skills to promoting family well-being and expanding general knowledge. The Ministry of Labor provides vocational training and retraining for adults in many fields, available in the large cities, as well as in many towns.

Hebrew language instruction on many levels, using the specially developed "ulpan" method, helps immigrants and other population groups to integrate into the mainstream of Israeli life. Compensatory education, designed to reduce educational and cultural disparities among adults, is tailored to the world of adult learners. Vocational training courses, both in day and night classes, are available at centers jointly operated by the Ministry of Labor and industrial enterprises, as well as in institutions for technological and professional training. ‘Popular universities’ all over the country offer hundreds of adult education classes and workshops in academic subjects as well as the arts. Special radio broadcasts for immigrants include a "university on the air" program.
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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Like many other small countries, Israel has sharply defined scientific and technological policies aimed at enhancing its competitive position. In science, it encourages the establishment of centers of excellence around outstanding scientists, while maintaining a level of quality across the broad spectrum of scientific fields. In technology, Israel strives for high performance through concentration on a limited number of areas.

The percentage of Israelis engaged in scientific and technological inquiry, and the amount spent on research and development (R&D), in relation to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), are among the highest in the world.

Scientific research and its achievements are no longer merely an abstract intellectual pursuit... but a central factor... in the life of every civilized people... (David Ben-Gurion, 1962)
BEGINNINGS

The history of scientific research in Israel is an integral part of the story of the return of the Jewish people to its homeland. Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), the founder of political Zionism who actively promoted the idea of a modern Jewish state in the Land of Israel, envisaged it not only as the physical home of the Jewish people, but also as a major spiritual, cultural, and scientific center.

The desire to transform the Land, then a barren and disease-ridden region, into a modern state was a key factor in subsequent scientific inquiry and technological development. Agricultural research dates back to the end of the 19th century with the establishment of the Mikveh Yisrael School (1870). The Agricultural Station, set up in Tel Aviv (1921), eventually became the Agricultural Research Organization (ARO), today Israel’s major institution of agricultural research and development. Medical and public health research was initiated prior to World War I with the founding of the Hebrew Health Station. It received a major boost when the Institute of Microbiology and departments of biochemistry, bacteriology, and hygiene were instituted in the mid-1920s at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. These provided the basis for the Hadassah Medical...
Center, today Israel’s most prominent medical research facility. Industrial research was pioneered at the Dead Sea Laboratories in the 1930s, and advances in basic science and technology were begun at the Hebrew University (est. 1925), the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology (est. 1924 in Haifa), and the Daniel Sieff Research Center (est. 1934 in Rehovot), which later became the Weizmann Institute of Science (1949).

The country’s scientific and technological infrastructure was already in place when the State of Israel was established in 1948. At first, research focused on projects of national importance, and on this foundation commercially oriented industries gradually developed.
PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL

Israel’s large reservoir of qualified personnel is primarily responsible for its scientific and technological attainments. As the many highly trained scientists, engineers, and technicians among the hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the former Soviet Union gradually entered the labor force, the percentage of qualified personnel rose dramatically and they will significantly affect Israel’s scientific and technological achievements for decades to come.
A number of Israeli scientists have won the Nobel Prize over the past few years. The country’s most recent laureate was Weizmann Institute of Science’s Ada Yonath, who received the prize for her work with ribosomes, one of the most complicated miniature “machines” in the human body.

Israeli know-how is also going into advanced electronics, with companies like Elbit leading the way in fields such as unmanned vehicles. Security systems are another fast-growing area; dozens of Israeli companies are designing systems and software which can detect potential threats and intruders.

One of the fastest growing technology businesses in Israel is life sciences, with over 1,000 companies exporting over $6 billion in pharmaceuticals and medical devices. One well-known Israeli invention is Given Imaging’s Pillcam, which allows physicians to examine a patient’s gastrointestinal tract with a swallowable camera.

The generic pharmaceuticals giant Teva has played an important role in lowering the price of many drugs, as well as bringing to market novel drugs such as Copaxone for multiple sclerosis.
R&D in Israel is carried out primarily at seven universities, dozens of government and public research institutes, and hundreds of civilian and military enterprises. Significant research is also performed at medical centers and by a number of public service firms, in fields such as telecommunications, power production, and water resources management.

Government and public bodies are primary sources of R&D funding, providing financial support for well over half of Israel’s R&D activities. The major share of these funds for civilian R&D purposes is allocated for economic development, mainly in the industrial and agricultural sectors, which, in comparison with other countries, constitutes a very large part of the total. Over 40 percent is used to advance knowledge through national, binational, and government research funds and through individual university allocations from the General University Fund administered by the Council of Higher Education. The remainder is dedicated to various health and social welfare fields.
Over 80 percent of all publishable Israeli research – and almost all basic research and basic research training – is conducted within the universities. The Israel Science Foundation (ISF), a legally independent body, is the predominant source of competitive basic research funding. Some 1,000 individual researchers receive grants from ISF, matched with university funding. ISF also funds special programs, such as Israel’s participation in building the ATLAS detector for the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, and improving the quality of clinical research via an innovative series of ‘physician-researcher’ grants.

To fund and coordinate research initiatives too large for any one agency to handle, there is TELEM, a voluntary forum composed of the chief scientists of the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labor and the Ministry of Science, the president of the Israel Academy, and representatives of the Council for Higher Education, the Treasury, and others. TELEM engineered, and where necessary funded, Israel’s entry into the European Union’s Framework Program, membership in the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility and Israel’s Internet II initiative.

The large number of patents taken out by Israel’s universities is one measure of the effectiveness of the relationship between the universities and industry.
R&D at Universities

As at universities all over the world, advancement in scientific knowledge is the chief objective of researchers at Israel’s universities. Books and journal articles by Israelis, encompassing all scientific fields, are a primary expression of the university sector’s output. Israel publishes a disproportionate percentage (about 1 percent) of the world’s scientific publications, and in many fields, such as chemistry and computer sciences, they have a particularly high impact on the world scientific community.

Relative to the size of its labor force, Israel has a significantly larger number of publishing authors in the natural sciences, engineering, agriculture, and medicine than other countries, and an exceptionally high share of the country’s publications are co-authored by Israeli scientists and those of other countries.

To integrate Israeli science into the international scientific community, post-doctoral research positions and sabbaticals abroad as well as attendance at foreign scientific conferences are encouraged, and a wide range of exchange programs and joint projects are maintained at institute, university, and government levels with...
counterpart organizations overseas. Israel is also an important center for international scientific conferences, hosting many such gatherings annually.

Concomitant with their scientific research activities, the universities continue to play an important and innovative role in Israel’s technological advancement. The Weizmann Institute of Science was among the first in the world to set up an organization for the commercial utilization of its research (1958); today, similar organizations exist at all Israeli universities. The establishment of science-based industrial parks adjacent to university campuses has been pioneered with great commercial success. Universities have also set up spin-off industrial firms for the commercialization of specific products based on their research, often in partnership with local and foreign concerns.

Interdisciplinary research and testing institutes are functioning at universities in diverse scientific and technological fields vital to the country’s industry, serving areas such as construction, transportation, and education as national focal points for applied R&D. In addition, a high proportion of faculty serve industry in an advisory capacity on technical, administrative, financial, and managerial matters.
Medical R&D

Israel has made significant theoretical and practical contributions to the biotechnology revolution and has developed an advanced infrastructure of medical and paramedical research as well as bioengineering capabilities. Biotechnology, biomedical, and clinical research account for over half of all scientific publications. The country’s industrial sector has increased its activities in the medical field to capitalize on its extensive knowledge base.

Local scientists have developed methods for producing a human growth hormone and interferon, a group of proteins effective against viral infections. Copaxone, a medicine effective in the treatment of multiple sclerosis, was developed in Israel – from basic research to industrial production. Genetic engineering, has resulted in a wide range of diagnostic kits based on monoclonal antibodies, along with other microbiological products. Sophisticated medical equipment for both diagnostic and treatment purposes has been developed and marketed worldwide, such as computer tomography (CT) scanners, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) systems, ultrasound scanners, nuclear medical cameras, and surgical lasers. Other innovations include a controlled-release liquid polymer to prevent accumulation of tooth plaque, a device to reduce both benign and malignant swellings.
of the prostate gland, the use of botulin to correct eye squint, and a miniature camera encased in a swallowable capsule used to diagnose gastro-intestinal disease.

**Industrial R&D**

In the industrial sector, civilian expenditure on R&D and the number of scientists and engineers engaged in industrial R&D have grown abundantly over the past two decades.

Israel’s industrial R&D, with a high concentration on electronics, is mainly carried out in a small number of large firms. These R&D-intensive companies have been a major source of industrial employment and exports over the years.

Fostering the growth of such enterprises, both large and small, is the focus of Israel’s industrial strategy. The government promotes R&D in industry within the framework of the Law for the Encouragement of Research and Development, implemented by the Chief Scientist’s Office of the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labor which in 2000 funded some 1,200 projects. R&D-related products comprise more then half of total industrial exports (excluding diamonds).

**Electronics**, limited until the late 1960s mainly to consumer goods, has branched out into more sophisticated
technological developments, both military and civilian. In communications, R&D-based applications include the digitalizing, processing, transmitting, and enhancing of images, speech, and data. Products range from advanced telephone exchanges to voice messaging systems, telephone line doublers, and a vast array of Internet applications.

**Optics, electro-optics, and lasers** have been growing rapidly as industrial fields. Israel is a world leader in fiber-optics, electro-optic inspection systems for printed circuit boards, thermal imaging night-vision systems, and electro-optics-based robotic manufacturing systems.

**Computer-based equipment**, mostly in software and peripheral fields, has been developed and produced. In printing and publishing, Israeli-made computer graphics and computer-based imaging systems are widely used locally and abroad. Activities in schools are enhanced by a variety of computer-aided instructional systems, many of which have been developed for export. While some of Israel’s software products are designed for use on mainframe computers, most have been developed for small or medium-sized systems such as computer workstations. A computer mouse with three touch-pads, allowing the visually impaired to “read” text and graphics on screen, was developed in Israel.
Robotics, first researched in the late 1970s, is now producing robots designed to perform a wide variety of tasks, including diamond polishing, welding, packing, building, and more. Research is now under way in the application of artificial intelligence to robots.

Aeronautics related to defense needs has generated technological development with consequent civilian spin-offs. The Arava, the first civilian aircraft to be produced in Israel, was followed by the Westwind executive jet. Locally designed and manufactured satellites have been produced and launched by Israel Aerospace Industries in cooperation with the Israel Space Agency. Israel also develops, manufactures, and exports a large number of related items, including display systems, aeronautical computers, instrumentation systems, and flight simulators, and is a world leader in technology and production of drones.

Agricultural R&D
The agricultural sector is based almost entirely on R&D, implemented by cooperation between farmers and researchers. Research results are quickly transmitted through an extension service to the field for trial, and problems are brought directly to the scientists for solutions. Agricultural R&D is carried out primarily by the Ministry
of Agriculture’s Agricultural Research Organization. Most agricultural research institutes in Israel maintain close relations with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, ensuring a continuous exchange of information with other countries.

Israel’s dairy cows are, on average, the world champions in milk production, having increased the average yield per cow from 6,300 liters in 1970 to over 10,000 liters today through scientific breeding and genetic testing carried out by the Volcani Institute. By harvesting sperm and ova from cattle of superior bloodlines, Israel is able to upgrade its own herd as well as share its advances in this field with other countries.

Israeli agriculturists have pioneered trickle-drip irrigation, agricultural biotechnology, soil solarization, and the sustained use of industrial waste water for agriculture. These advances have been applied to marketable products, ranging from genetically engineered seeds and bio-pesticides to light-degradable plastics and computerized irrigation/fertilization systems.

Making optimal use of scarce water, harsh land, and a limited labor force has led to revolutions in agricultural methods. The search for water-saving techniques spurred
development of computer-controlled irrigation systems, including the drip method which directs water flow straight to the root zone of plants, helping farmers worldwide. Research relating to the electro-magnetic treatment of water to improve animal health and crop yields has also produced promising results.

Israeli-designed and manufactured computers are widely used to coordinate daily farming activities, such as guiding fertilizer injection while monitoring relevant environmental factors, supplying feed for livestock mixed according to tested least-cost/best-yield proportions, and providing a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment for poultry. In addition, a variety of innovative equipment for tilling, sowing, planting, harvesting, collecting, sorting, and packing has been developed, manufactured, and implemented.

Agriculture has also benefited from general scientific research and R&D, including automated plant tissue culture, biological insecticides, disease-resistant seeds, and biological fertilization.

**Energy R&D**

Extensive development of alternative energy sources such as solar, thermal, and wind energy has been a positive outcome of the country’s lack of conventional energy sources. As a result, Israel is a leader in the solar energy
field at every level and the world’s largest per capita user of solar water heaters in the home. A new, high-efficiency receiver to collect concentrated sunlight has been developed, which will enhance the use of solar energy in industry as well.

An advance in harnessing wind energy has been the production of a wind turbine with a flexible, inflatable rotor. Technology utilizing pond water with a certain degree of salinity and mineral composition to absorb and store solar energy has also been developed. Geothermal power stations, capable of extracting heat from the ground and converting it to steam for powering turbines, are now being tested. A project developed by a team of scientists at the Technion, uses dry air and water (even sea or brackish water) to produce energy through 1,000-meter high chimneys.
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ECONOMY

After having enjoyed for many years one of the fastest GDP growth rates among world economies, Israel continued the economic recovery it began in 2003, after a two-year distinct slowdown in almost all economic activities. This trend continued in 2007, according to all economic parameters. In the years 2006-2007, Israel's gross domestic product (GDP) continued its rapid growth, reaching 5.1 percent in 2006, in spite of the Second Lebanon War, which caused a temporary loss of 0.7% of the GNP. The speedy recovery and the continuation of the rapid growth were again led by the business sector, which expanded by 6.4 percent, resulting in a $20,138 per capita GDP in 2006.

He who tills the land shall be satisfied with bread...
(Proverbs 12:11)
In 2006-2007 Israel continued to achieve its main macroeconomic objectives: a very low, sometimes even negative rate of inflation, a very low budget deficit, and a limited increase in public expenditure. At the same time, Israel continued to attract foreign investments as well as enjoying a rapid growth in exports and a positive trade balance for the first time. These trends continued in the first half of 2007 and the forecast for the whole year was of continued economic growth with no inflation, a low budget deficit, and economic stability on all fronts.

In late 2008, as some of the world’s financial giants began to stumble and markets around the world seemed on the verge of collapse, no one was sure how Israel’s fragile, export-based economy would fare. As time wore on, however, Israel showed its economic strength lay not only in its capability for expansion during the boom years, but in its resilience during times of economic contraction.

Now, as the global economy haltingly emerges from recession, Israel has quickly regained economic momentum, shown first in a stock market which outperformed all Western bourses in 2009, and later finding expression in increased exports, declining unemployment and robust consumer demand.
A strong position on the eve of the crisis

Israel was well prepared when, in 2008, the effects of the financial crisis began to ripple across world economies. From a macroeconomic perspective, Israel found itself in one of its strongest positions since its inception. The budget deficit had been largely reined in and the national debt was greatly reduced, thanks to aggressive spending cuts and increased tax revenues. Israel was a sought-after target of foreign investment and was enjoying a positive trade balance for the first time in its history.

The crisis could have spelled an end to these halcyon days, but Israel’s growth proved to be robust enough to withstand the consequences of the financial downturn of 2008.

Israel withstands the recession

Three main reasons are often cited to explain Israel’s strength in the face of such severe challenges.

The first reason is Israel’s conservative banking sector. A strong regulatory system and a moderate banking tradition kept Israel’s banks away from the adventurous instruments which proved so disastrous in the US and Britain. In addition, as world investors got jittery, they were assured by Israeli banks’ strong capitalization.
Another reason was the labor market’s elasticity in coping with the new reality. Major players, including the Histadrut (Israel’s largest labor federation) understood the wisdom of accepting short-term pay cuts during the early stages of the crisis, and unemployment also increased significantly, in parallel with global developments.

As the economy recuperated over the course of 2009, wages and employment quickly returned to their previous levels, even as labor markets in the US and Europe remained sluggish.

However, the strength of domestic consumption over the course of the crisis is really what stands Israel apart in its macroeconomic adjustment. As the recession hit, Israelis cut their durable goods expenditures, but largely kept their nondurable goods spending even with pre-recession levels, cutting into personal savings to “smooth out” the drop in income. This was a primary factor in maintaining a stable GDP, and allowing the Israeli economy to weather the recession
successfully. As the world moved out of recession in 2009, domestic spending on both durable and nondurable goods picked up quickly, further aiding the country’s recovery.

**Long-term potential**

The Israeli “economic miracle” is much more than a story of recession and recovery – it is the story of an economy that was built from scratch, survived numerous crises and severe economic deprivation, and has finally emerged as a successful, free-market economy whose citizens enjoy a high standard of living.

With a population in 2010 of more than 7.5 million, Israel has been internationally acclaimed throughout the years, in particular for its extraordinary achievements in agriculture and agrotechnology, irrigation, solar energy, and in many hi-tech industries and start-ups. Based on intensive R&D, even in traditional industries, Israel today is not only the land of milk and honey but also the land of hi-tech, including software, communications, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and nanotechnology.

Israel to make fundamental changes befitting a modern economy, including reduction of Israel’s debt, maintaining fiscal and development policies, cutting taxes and making the capital market more sophisticated.

OECD membership will allow Israel greater access to certain types of managed investment funds, which are required to reserve a proportion of their holdings for developed countries.

But the true significance of Israel’s OECD membership is the recognition by the world economy of the tremendous progress that Israel has made during its 62 years of existence.
Free-trade agreements reached over the past three decades with the United States, the European Union and several countries in Latin America have facilitated Israel's expanding exports of goods and services – more than $80 billion in 2008 – as well as its participation in international business enterprises that contributed to the country's accelerated growth.
CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Recent achievements

• The year 2000 was the first ever in the country's economic history with both a zero inflation rate and a significant decrease of the balance of trade deficit, the latter declining further to less than $1 billion in 2009, representing less than 1 percent of total trade.

• In May 2010 Israel was accepted into the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a tribute to its emergence as a developed economy of the first class.

• Israel absorbed almost 1.2 million immigrants in a decade, augmenting the country's civilian labor force, from 1.65 million in 1990 to 3 million in 2010.

• Inflation was defeated, from an annual rate of 445% in 1984 to 21% in 1989, 0% in 2000 - rising only to 2.4% in 2005 and to less than zero - 0.1% in 2006. This achievement allowed the central bank to lower interest rates to near zero during the financial crisis of 2007-2010 – while still keeping inflation within the target 3-5% range.

• Foreign debt was eliminated, from being 1.6 times the GDP in 1985, still 25% of the GDP in 1995, declining to less than 3% in 2001, and down to zero by 2003 - with Israel since then becoming a creditor (i.e., the world economy owes it much more than Israel owes
the world). By 2010 the world owed Israel a net total of $50 billion.

- Foreign investments rose steadily, encouraging the GDP and accelerating growth of exports from $175 million in 1987 to $5.8 billion in 1997, to $10.7 billion in 2005, and $16.9 billion in 2006.

- Industrial exports grew almost six-fold in the past two decades, from $6 billion in 1985 to $39.8 billion in 2008 and $34.1 billion in 2006.

- In 2010 Israel announced the discovery of a huge natural gas field in its coastal waters, raising the prospect that the country may be able to reduce its dependence on energy imports and even become a gas exporter.

**Historical challenges**

Israel's most striking economic achievement is the rate at which it has developed while simultaneously dealing with the following enormously expensive challenges:

- Maintaining national security: Israel now spends around 8 percent (as against over 25% in the 1970s and 23% in 1980) of its GDP on defense. Even in eras of relative calm, Israel must retain a strong deterrent capability.

- Absorbing large numbers of immigrants: The "ingathering of the exiles" is practically the raison d'etre of the Jewish state. Since its inception, Israel has absorbed more than 3 million immigrants, more than five times the
number of Jews living in the country when it attained independence in 1948. In its first four years alone, Israel’s population more than doubled as 700,000 immigrants, mostly refugees from postwar Europe and Arab states, poured into the country. Since 1990 another wave of 1.2 million immigrants (940,000 from the former Soviet Union alone), required enormous outlays for their physical and social absorption. However, much faster than the previous waves of immigration, these newcomers soon contributed to accelerating the GDP growth - though also temporarily increasing unemployment to an 11.2 percent high in 1992. This was gradually reduced to below 6 percent before the financial crisis struck.

- Establishing a modern economic infrastructure: Although basic networks of roads, transportation, port facilities, water, electricity, and communications existed in 1948, they were far from adequate, requiring enormous outlays for their development and expansion. Without this huge investment in communications and transportation, much of the expedited growth of the economy could have never occurred.

- Providing a high level of public services (health, education, welfare, etc.): As Israel is committed to ensuring the well-being of its population (with special concern for the weaker elements in the society) a continuously growing proportion of its resources had been devoted to meet these obligations. Recent
budgets have placed a special emphasis on education and other programs aimed at investing in the country’s future workforce while helping to close the income gap.
MAJOR REFORMS

Foreign Currency Liberalization

The New Israeli Shekel (NIS) is now a "hard" currency, traded freely on all international money markets. This is a comparatively recent development after decades of currency control, which was essential - as in many countries after World War II - for the survival and growth of the economy.

The severe shortage of foreign currency in the first years of the state was due mainly to its imports being so much larger than its exports. This called for the "rationing" of foreign currency - allocating it only for very basic requirements (such as food, fuel, and defense equipment). Production machinery and raw materials were added to the list only later on, followed by a meager $10 allocation per person for travel abroad.

By the end of the 1950s, import of many "luxury" goods was allowed, and Israelis were allocated $100 per voyage abroad. The 1960s saw a further relaxation of import restrictions, and they were liberalized completely in the 1970s (transferring the onus of restricting imports to the "Chinese walls" of exorbitant customs duties). These, too, were lowered considerably, due to the free trade agreements with the European Union and the United States; and in the 1980s were coupled with a gradual rise
in personal foreign exchange allocations for traveling abroad, from $500 to $3,000. The first permits for holding foreign bank accounts and investments followed suit, and in the second half of the 1990s the last bastions of foreign currency control were removed.

**The Rate of Exchange**
The rate of exchange of the shekel is now, after removal of all foreign currency restrictions, determined by the international money market. This was not always the case. As in all post-WWII economies, Israel's currency exchange rate was a fixed one, changed (devalued) by government decision from time to time.

In 1948 the Israeli lira was equal to one pound sterling (then $4 US); it was devalued to $2.80 in 1949 together with the pound. Since then Israel's currency has been devalued many times (e.g., to 1.80 lira per $ in 1954, IL3 per $ in 1962, IL4.20 in 1971 and IL6 in 1974). This, in accordance with the economic policy, aimed at narrowing the gap between the smaller exports and imports, and actually compensating foreign trade for the accumulated local inflation rate since the previous devaluation.

In 1975 Israel followed the change of trend in the OECD and embarked on a "creeping devaluation" (allowing up to 2% devaluation per month). This system lasted two years, until the first step of liberalization was carried out. Since
then, the rate of exchange has been determined daily by
the Bank of Israel, in accordance with market fluctuations.
In 1980 IL10 were converted to 1 shekel and in 1985 1,000
shekels became a New Israeli Shekel (NIS). In July 2010
the NIS rate of exchange averaged $0.25.

**Restraining the National Budget**
The unusual circumstances of Israel's economic growth,
most of which had to be instigated by the government
during the first decade or two of statehood, placed it
high on the list of countries with a large national budget
compared to their GDP. There were instances when
the budget was even higher than the GDP, but it was
reduced to 95 percent in 1980, to 64 percent in 1990, to
49 percent in 2005, and around 43.6% in 2008 – about
the OECD average.

During the 1990s emphasis was put on curtailing spending
and reducing the deficit. The target was to bring down
the deficit/GDP ratio to the rate prevailing in Western
developed economies, a policy that was indeed successful
in reducing it down to a quarter of what it was at the
beginning of the decade. After it rose considerably in 2001,
it was brought down to 6 percent in 2003, 5 percent in
2004, and by 2007 there was no significant budget deficit.
The financial crisis necessitated a departure from the
deficit reduction program, and the government approved
a deficit ceiling of about 6% of GDP for the years 2009-
2010, but with a clear plan of reducing deficit levels once more after reaching economic stabilization.

The economic reform program embarked on by the government in 2003 continues to reduce the budget (as well as taxes) further and streamline the economy.

**Privatization**
Whereas the government is still obligated to encouraging economic initiatives, its policy succeeded - since the 1990s - in reducing its direct involvement in the economy. Thus, apart from almost eliminating subsidies supporting the prices of basic commodities and trimming down the entitlement for those directed at encouraging foreign investments and exports, it embarked on a major privatization campaign of selling the ownership of hundreds of public companies.

While during the first decade of this policy many smaller concerns were privatized, the process has been enhanced in the last couple of years, fetching an income of $3 billion from the sale of much larger enterprises like banks, El Al Israel Airlines, Zim (navigation), and Bezeq (communications), and much of the chemicals industry.
'AN ECONOMIC MIRACLE'

In its first 25 years, the Israeli economy achieved a striking average GDP growth rate of close to about 10 percent annually, while at the same time absorbing waves of mass immigration, building a modern infrastructure and economy almost from scratch, fighting four wars, and maintaining security. This was considered to be 'an economic miracle.' In actual fact, it should be ascribed largely to the resourceful use of substantial capital imports over the years - first and foremost, the mass investment in means of production - coupled with the country's success in rapidly and productively absorbing immigrants.

During the following six years, however, between 1973 and 1979, the growth rate decreased (as in most industrialized countries, partly due to the oil crises of 1973/4 and 1979/80) to a yearly average of 3.8 percent. In the 1980s, it dwindled further to 3.1 percent. Then, the 1990s saw an average annual growth rate of more than 5 percent in the GDP (even reaching 7.7 percent in 2000) and back to 5.2 percent in the mid 2000’s.

Of course, such growth rates were impossible to achieve during the global recession, but Israel was one of the few
developed economies to achieve positive growth (0.7 percent) in 2009. As the global economy began to recover, statistics indicated that growth rates were getting back to normal – around 3 percent in early 2010.

The GDP per capita grew by more than 60 percent in the course of the last decade of the 20th century, reaching an annual level of close to $25,800 in 2007 and $27,143 in 2008.

The economic growth rate in Israel in 2006 was relatively high compared with the growth rate in other developed countries. The average growth of the GDP in the 30 OECD countries totaled 3.2% in 2006 and was 1.9% lower than the growth rate in Israel.
Balance of Payments
The perennial problem of the trade deficit has been, until recently, the high price Israel has had to pay for the miracle of attaining rapid growth while successfully meeting other national challenges. This yearly gap between a high level of imports and a significantly smaller scale of exports indicated economic dependence on foreign resources. Thus, a primary policy goal - eventually reached recently - of every government was to achieve "economic independence," the point where exports will finance all imports and this deficit will disappear.

Over the first 48 years of Israel's existence, this deficit grew continuously, 45-fold (in current prices): from $222 million in 1949 to $10.1 billion in 1996. However, in relative terms, the deficit steadily decreased during that period, indicating that the problem was gradually being solved: whereas in 1950 exports financed only 14 percent of imports, in 1960 this ratio was 51 percent, and in 1996 it stood at 79 percent. Since then the actual deficit began declining, down to $4.7 billion in 2001 and to a mere $0.7 billion in 2005, representing less than one percent of total trade.
Over the past 61 years, Israel has required around $US 176 billion (in current figures) to cover all its annual trade deficits. Almost two thirds of this accumulated deficit was covered by unilateral transfers, such as funds brought in by immigrants, foreign pensions, donations from Jewish fund-raising organizations abroad to institutions of health, education, and social services, and grants from foreign governments, especially from the United States. The rest was financed by loans from individuals, banks, and foreign governments, which Israel has been repaying since its early years.

That is why the national external debt increased every year until 1985, when, for the first time, less was borrowed than was paid back. This positive trend reverted for a few years until the net national external debt reached a new high of $20.8 billion in 1995. During the past decade it diminished considerably, down to zero, and since 2002 it is becoming growingly positive - namely, Israel is a creditor - with "the world" owing it more than Israel owes the world, with a net difference of $50 billion in 2010.

**Foreign Trade**

With its small economy and relatively limited domestic market, Israel's growth depends mainly upon expanding exports. Much of the country's creative resources have been devoted to building its industrial exports. The value of these has grown almost 3,000-fold (in current prices) -
over 56 years - from $13 million in 1950 to $52 million in 1955, to $1.4 billion in 1975, to $5.6 billion in 1985, to $30.8 billion in 2000, and to $34.6 billion in 2009.

In recent years, over 85 percent of all imports of goods - amounting to $47.3 billion in 2009 - have been production inputs and fuel. 54 percent of these arrived from Europe, with the Americas providing 17 percent, Asia 16 percent, and the remaining 13 percent from other countries.

Israel's top importing regions in 2009 were Europe (48.3 percent), Asia (21 percent) and the United States (12 percent). In the same year, 32 percent of Israel's exports of goods - amounting to $47.8 billion - were directed to Europe, 35 percent to the United States, 20 percent to Asia, and the remaining 13 percent to other countries. During most of the 1990s Israel's industrial exports to the U.S. exceeded its imports from there, and since 2000 this is true even when excluding the export of diamonds.

Joining the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), as well as instituting a free trade area for industrial

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Net External Debt</th>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>543</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>2,223</td>
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<td>1975</td>
<td>6,286</td>
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<td>11,344</td>
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<td>-23,173</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>-54,949</td>
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products with the European Community (1975) and for all products with the United States (1985) has enhanced the competitiveness of Israel's exports. Hence, Israeli goods can enter - duty free - both the European Union (EU) and the United States. This enables local Israeli producers to aim for a market almost 110 times larger than the domestic one and attracts investors who wish to export their products to Europe without paying duty. Israeli investors also forged joint ventures with Jordanian and Egyptian businesses in special industrial zones that enable the export of products duty-free to the US and the EU.

To maximize chances of success, local Israeli enterprises have sought to identify segments of international trade where they can carve out specialized niches for themselves. The establishment of joint ventures with foreign industrial firms has often utilized a blend of local innovations and large-scale foreign production and market penetration. Joint projects have been undertaken in areas such as electronics, software, medical equipment, printing, and computerized graphics. Many of these joint projects are assisted in recruiting capital for joint ventures through frameworks such as the following six binational development research cooperation foundations, supported by the governments concerned: with the US (BIRD); with Canada (CIIRDF); with Singapore (SIIRD);
with Britain (BRITECH); with Korea (KORIL-RDF) and with Victoria/Australia (VISTECH).

**Export and Import of Goods (excluding diamonds)**
THE ECONOMIC PICTURE

Although the economic recovery is still fragile, and it may be too early to declare victory over the world’s worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, enough time has elapsed to assess the factors which softened Israel’s ride during the crisis.

The first factor was the Israeli banking system’s conservative nature, which meant that it was not significantly exposed to the subprime market which brought down some of Wall Street’s great firms, and also that reserves were adequate to assure investors of the safety of Israel’s financial sector.

Israel in 2008 had seen five consecutive years of strong growth – over 5 percent each year – which left it in a strong position to deal with the recession. Deficits had been reined in, reaching near zero in 2007, and the debt to GDP ratio had declined from over 100 percent to a record 77 percent, allowing the government greater leeway for expenditure during the lean period.

Inflation, once the bane of Israel’s economy, had been taken under control by aggressive policies since the disastrous crisis of the 1980’s, abetting investor confidence and giving the average Israeli economic stability and security.
Israel had developed a number of different export sectors, especially hi-tech manufacturing, allowing for a more balanced current account going into the crisis.

Israel copes with recession
Israel’s primary weapon in dealing with recession was an aggressive monetary policy, which, under Bank of Israel Governor Stanley Fischer’s direction, took interest rates to unheard of lows. Fischer’s wisdom in being one of the first central bankers to reduce interest rates – and, later, being one of the earliest to raise them as the crisis waned – had a critical role in allowing Israel to maintain steady GDP rates even as exports dipped. In fact, Israel was one of the few Western economies to show positive growth for 2009.

The aggressive monetary policy allowed the government to steer clear of heavy deficit spending. The extent of Israel’s emergency spending was low relative to other governments, and thus it does not face the debt pressures mounting in Europe and elsewhere.

The shekel, Israel’s unit of currency (valued at $0.26 in July 2010), was known as early as the second millennium BCE as a unit of weight for means of payment in gold and silver. It is recorded in the Bible that Abraham negotiated the purchase of a field "and a cave that was therein," at Machpela (in Hebron) saying: "I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. Ephron, the land-owner, replied: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver... and Abraham weighed to Ephron four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant." (Genesis 23:13, 15-17)
The Bank of Israel’s monetary policy also led to the appreciation of the Israeli shekel, thus putting pressure on exporters. The bank succeeded somewhat in controlling the shekel’s rise by purchasing large amounts of foreign currency, especially US dollars.

**Checking Inflation**

From its inception and until 2000, Israel's economy suffered from rising prices - though a linkage mechanism helped individuals somewhat to live with the consequences. All financial commitments, salaries, rents, savings accounts, life insurance policies, income tax brackets, and the like were linked to a steadier value (such as foreign currency or the consumer price index), thereby taking the sting out of inflation. Thus, Israelis managed to raise their standard of living whether the annual inflation rate was one digit (from the mid-1950s to the end of the 1960s), two digits (1970s) or three digits (first half of the 1980s).

Obviously, the economy suffered from the inflation (e.g., decline in the propensity to invest), much of which was fueled by these linkages, until the situation came to a head in the mid-1980s.

In the summer of 1985, after inflation had soared from 191 percent in 1983 to 445 percent in 1984 and threatened to reach four digits in 1985, the national unity government headed by Shimon Peres of Labor, with Yitzhak Moda'i of the Likud as minister of finance, implemented a radical
emergency stabilization program in cooperation with the Histadrut, the umbrella organization of the unions, and with the Employers’ Coordination Committee. The inflation rate fell to 185 percent in 1985 and to 21 percent in 1989. It has since fallen further, to 7 percent in 1997 and - for the first time ever - to zero in 2000. Another first ever was an actual fall of prices in 2003, with a negative inflation of -1.9 percent. During the recession, the inflation rate was allowed to rise as the Bank of Israel lowered interest rates to stimulate the economy, but the central bank has shown a willingness to resume combating inflation as the global economic situation changes, by being the first in the West to raise interest rates.

The Public Sector
The high level of public consumption, in particular the resulting large deficit in the government’s budget, was always a primary cause of Israel’s high inflation rate. All the resources the government could recruit to finance the budget (domestic and foreign sources, loans from the public, direct and indirect taxes) were not sufficient to cover the amount spent, and the government found itself repeatedly compelled to resort to inflationary financing. This heavy burden of the public sector was due mainly to the tremendous defense expenditure and the need
The Histadrut - General Federation of Labor was established in 1920 as a federation of trade unions to represent the country's workers and to set up industries to provide jobs for its members. In time, it became one of Israel's largest employers and played an important role in the development of the country.

Today, the New Histadrut, with 700,000 members, unites 78 trade unions that are concerned with the local organization of labor, signing collective agreements, and seeing to repay internal and external debts, two items which only in the last few years have come down from two thirds to less than a half of the government budget.

The pursuit of economic viability also called for checking inflation, reducing the balance-of-payments deficit, and maintaining rapid economic growth, all of which required curtailing the high public expenditure as Israel's economy grew. The high ratio of public expenditure to the GDP has been halved compared to what it was 25 years ago, from 95 percent to 43 percent of the GDP between 1980 and 2009. In 2006 there was a surplus in the balance of payments and the budget deficit was reduced to 0.9 percent of the GDP. The aggressive belt-tightening was relaxed during the recession, with a deficit of 5 percent of GDP, still a great deal lower than what most Western governments spent.

Although the government still encourages private economic initiatives, its policy succeeded in reducing actual involvement in business concerns through their privatization which in 2005 yielded an income of almost $3 billion.
The Tax System

The financing of Israel's massive public expenditure required heavy taxation, which its citizens had to bear, for years. This was one of the highest tax burdens in the world. During the first decade of statehood, taxes equaled one eighth of the GNP; in the 1960s, they reached one quarter; they wavered between 30 and 40 percent in the 1970s and 1980s; in the 1990s they averaged less than 40 percent, and were 40.3% in the year 2000. By 2003 Israelis' total tax burden decreased to 39.3% of the GDP, going further down to 31.5 percent by 2009 – well below the level of the OECD countries' average, which was 35 percent.

Indirect taxes consist primarily of a 16% Value Added Tax (VAT). In addition, a purchase tax is levied on cars, fuel, and cigarettes. Imports from the European Union and the United States are duty free, whereas customs are applied on imports from other countries.

Direct taxes on income and property amounted to less than one quarter of all tax revenues until the late 1950s, their implementation. Most branches of employment in the Israeli economy are represented: food, textiles, hotels and tourism industries, government and public sectors workers, clerks, practical engineers, nurses, pensioners, and more. Some professions are represented by independent unions: engineers, medical doctors, academics, teachers, and journalists.

The Histadrut is not as strong as it used to be, as workers are increasingly being employed through sub-contractors or by personal contracts.
climbed to around one third by the early 1970s, then to about one half in the early 1980s, and reached 45 percent in 1986. Since then the weight of direct taxes decreased to 39 percent in 1995 and has fluctuated between that and 42 percent in 2006.

In recent years, further changes to the tax system were adopted to integrate Israel more firmly into the global economy. As part of this policy, custom duties and purchase taxes on imports continue to decline, the corporate tax rate fell gradually to 25 percent by the year 2010 and is to fall to 18 percent by 2016. The marginal rate of income tax is also being gradually reduced to 42 percent in 2012 and 39 percent in 2016.

**Private Consumption and Savings**

Private consumption has risen, almost without a break, since 1950. Its annual growth averaged 6 percent since 1960. Even during the recession year of 2009 consumption continued to expand, albeit at a reduced rate of 1.5 percent. Consumption was particularly robust in non-durable goods, which increased by 2.5 percent in 2009, one of the factors enabling Israel’s relatively smooth ride during the crisis.

Despite the ongoing rise in consumption, private savings have been consistently substantial. Until the late 1950s, the average ratio of private savings to private disposable
income never fell below 29 percent; in the early 1960s, it dropped to 21 percent but rose again in 1972 to 38 percent, as it was in 1981. Since then it has fallen, almost steadily, to 26 percent in 2009.

**Investment**

The high rate of savings was never sufficient to support the immense investments made by a rapidly growing economy (generally 20-30 percent of all the resources available to the economy). As a result, a large proportion had to be financed by the transfer of public and private capital from abroad and directly by the public sector, mainly the government. During the past decade, overall investments grew from $17 billion to $22.8 billion between 1995 and 2000, and then declined for three consecutive years before rising again and reaching $24 billion by 2007. Indeed, Israel was seeing remarkable interest from parties totally new to the local economic scene. Although investment dropped off as a result of the financial crisis, the long-term trend is one of very strong investor confidence and excitement about investing in Israel, due to its dynamic, hi-tech business environment.

Many private investments, of both domestic and foreign origin, were also made as a result of government initiative and encouragement. This is reflected in the various versions, over the years, of the Law for the Encouragement of Capital Investment. Through this law, the government
attracted investors with subsidized long-term loans (with reduced interest rates), direct grants as a percentage of the total investment, as well as R&D financing.

Tax relief and tax rebates were also offered for this purpose, allocated in accordance with the weight of the contribution by the specific investment to the implementation of economic policies, such as population dispersion, promotion of exports, and the like. This assistance may have accounted for the accumulation, during the 1980s, of capital stock (production capacity) at a rate exceeding the growth of the GDP. In some sectors, this surplus production capacity facilitated the rapid takeoff in the 1990s.

**Wages and Working Conditions**

Wages in Israel are determined mostly through negotiations conducted between three parties: the government (still the country's largest employer), whose wage scale has strong implications, influencing all segments of the economy, the Histadrut (General Federation of Labor), and the organization of private sector employers.

The agreements reached constitute a framework of wage scales for the different sectors of the economy and, with occasional changes, also provide for automatic payment of a cost-of-living allowance as compensation for inflation. Thus, the wage situation for many years had been rather inflexible - especially at the lower end. Waves
of unemployment in Israel did not significantly reduce wages, although in times of labor shortages wages rise with greater elasticity where the demand for workers is more acute.

However, during the recent crisis the labor markets showed significant flexibility. Many workers agreed to reduce their hours or take cuts in pay rather than face the possibility of layoffs. This in turn helped stabilize the labor markets and abetted positive consumer sentiment, which in turn helped buoy the domestic consumption.

In June 2008 the average monthly wage was NIS 8,075 (about $2,250). Conditions for workers in the country's various economic sectors are set forth in work agreements negotiated between employers and employees. Minimum requirements, however, are anchored in law and include a maximum 47-hour work week (with the actual 2006 average in the business sector being under 40 hours a week), minimum wages (NIS 3,850 in 2008; approximately $1,000), compensation for overtime, severance payments, and paid vacation and sick leave.
SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY

Industry

Israel is today an industrialized country with most of its manufacturing, including many traditional fields, based on intensive and sophisticated research & development and hi-tech processes, tools, and machinery. This is the outcome of very rapid and intensive development.

Today's dynamic, widely diversified industrial sector was developed from small workshops, originally established since the end of the 19th century to manufacture farm implements and process agricultural products. Two incentives brought about the initial transformation of these workshops into more modern factories – the immigration of entrepreneurs and experienced engineers from Germany in the 1930s and the increasing demand for industrial products during World War II (1939-45) as the Allied forces in the region required various commodities, especially clothing and canned foods, and the region needed products that could not be imported from Europe because of the war.

Until the 1970s, traditional industries - such as food processing, textiles and fashion, furniture, fertilizers, pesticides, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, rubber, plastic, and metal products - provided most of the country's industrial output. In that period most resources were
directed toward developing agriculture, food production and processing, laying infrastructure, and providing quick employment of many unskilled immigrants.

The next phase of industrialization concentrated on developing and manufacturing arms needed for the defense of the country. It was accelerated because of arms embargoes that endangered the nascent state. The vast investment in aviation and armament industries created new technologies that became the base for Israel's unique hi-tech industries, such as medical devices, electronics, computer software and hardware, telecommunications, etc. In the 1980s, Israelis who worked in the Silicon Valley returned to Israel, opening development centers of multinational companies such as Intel, Microsoft, IBM, and others. In the 1990s a highly skilled immigration of scientists, engineers, technicians, and medical workers from the former Soviet Union enabled the upgrading of Israel's industry to its current level of sophistication, with its array of export products.

Due to its lack of natural resources and raw materials, Israel's one advantage is its highly qualified labor force, scientific institutes, and R&D centers. Today Israeli industry concentrates mostly on manufacturing products with high added value, by developing products based on Israel's own scientific creativity and technological innovation.
Unlike most developed economies, in which the number of persons employed in industry remained stable or diminished during the early 1990s, their number in Israel continues to grow, with more than 25 percent of the industrial workforce employed in hi-tech manufacturing.

In the past two decades, industrial output has made international-level strides in the fields of medical electronics, agro-technology, telecommunications, fine chemicals, computer hardware and software, as well as diamond cutting and polishing. In 2008, the manufacturing industry employed 384,000 persons (among them, the rate of those with higher education was second only to that of the work forces of the US and Holland). There were 11,000 industrial plants that produced an output of over $58 billion – more than half of which was exported.
### Major Indicators by Economic Branch (2006) (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>GNP</th>
<th>Labor Force</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Investment</th>
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<td>Industry</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6.8</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Financial &amp; Personal Services</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Services</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
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*Source: Central Bureau of Statistics*

### Hi-Tech Industries

The fastest growth rates (averaging 8 percent annually in recent years) are to be found in the hi-tech sectors. These sectors are skill and capital intensive and require sophisticated production techniques, as well as considerable investment in research and development, on which 4.9 percent of Israel’s GDP is spent – the highest among OECD countries. The quality of this R&D in Israel is ranked, according to U.N. experts, among the first 10 in the world. A successful contribution to all these is due to academic research institutes, which provide much of the basic R&D, and venture capital.
The significance of hi-tech industries' growth may be illustrated by their having accounted for only 37 percent of the industrial product in 1965, a rate that grew to 58 percent in 1985 and around 70 percent in 2006.

Almost 80% of hi-tech products are exported, while the more traditional, low-tech firms export only close to 40 percent of their product. Hi-tech exports quadrupled from $3 billion in 1991 to $12.3 billion in 2000 and to $29 billion in 2006 (plus another $5.9 billion of hi-tech services exported). In 2009, the product of ICT (information and communications technology, a major part of hi-tech industry) amounted to $19 billion. Contributing 17.3 percent of the business sector GDP, it employed 204,000 persons, and its exports were close to $16 billion.

Over 90 percent of the public budgets for R&D ($7 billion in 2006) are allocated to hi-tech industries, much of which is channeled via joint venture capital funds.

In recent years, the government has been collecting fair dividends on its shares in these funds, over and above repayment of loans granted to successful start-up companies. In addition to the six binational foundations mentioned earlier, Israel has agreements for joint funding of R&D projects with the US, Canada, Italy, Belgium, Austria, France, Sweden, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Hong Kong, India, Turkey and China.
The age of information technology (the Internet, electronic commerce, etc.) placed Israel's economy, and particularly its hi-tech industries, in the forefront of world development in these fields. A number of internationally recognized Israeli companies have been bought by top business conglomerates in multi-billion dollar transactions. The number of new start-ups is very high due to the extraordinary innovative talent in Israel, coupled with the availability of highly skilled manpower. The growing presence of Israeli firms on Wall Street and the European stock exchanges is yet another manifestation of the respect with which Israel's hi-tech industry is regarded.

**Israel's Diamond Industry**

Israel is a leading world diamond manufacturing and trading center. The main reason is that the Israeli diamond industry is as multi-faceted as its diamonds. The Israeli diamond is synonymous with trust and reliability, and it is guaranteed to be conflict-free and genuine.

In addition, the Israeli diamond industry is a world leader in both cutting-edge technologies and craftsmanship, thus ensuring the best yield of polished diamonds from the rough. The large inventory of local production as well as tax-free rough and polished imports ensure competitive prices. The Israel Diamond Exchange is the largest diamond trading floor in the world, housing all of the operational functions and needs of every diamond buyer under one roof.
In 2008 diamond exports amounted to $9.4 billion. Although the industry was badly hurt by the recession during the course of 2009, preliminary data shows that global demand picked up during 2010 and that export levels resumed their previous levels.

During 2009 Israel exported most of its diamonds to the US, with a similar number being sent to Hong Kong. Other important customers are Belgium and Switzerland.

Agriculture
Israel’s agricultural sector is characterized by an intensive system of production stemming from the need to overcome the scarcity in natural resources, particularly water and arable land. The constant growth in agricultural production is due to the close cooperation between researchers, farmers, and agriculture-related industries. Together they develop and apply new methods in all agricultural branches. The result is modern agriculture in a country more than half of whose area is desert.

As Israeli farmers and scientists have had to contend with a difficult environment and limited water resources, their experience is especially relevant to the developing world. Its success lies in the determination and ingenuity of farmers and scientists who have dedicated themselves to developing a flourishing agriculture, demonstrating to the world that the real value of land is a function of how
it is utilized. The close cooperation between R&D and industry led to the development of a market-oriented agri-business that exports agro-technology solutions—particularly water solutions—world-wide.

Agriculture in Israel is the success story of a long, hard struggle against adverse conditions and of making maximum use of arable land and scarce water (including from modern desalinization plants, the know-how of which is a winning export story). When Jews began resettling their historic homeland in the late 19th century, their first efforts were directed—mostly for ideological reasons—to turning barren land into fertile fields. The secret of Israel's present agricultural success lies in the close interaction between farmers and government-sponsored researchers, who cooperate in developing and applying sophisticated methods in all agricultural branches, as well as technological advancement, new irrigation techniques, and innovative agro-mechanical equipment.

Since Israel attained independence in 1948, the total area under cultivation has increased by a factor of 2.6, to approximately 1.1 million acres. The irrigated land area increased by a factor of 8, to about 0.6 million acres until the mid 1980s; however, owing to the growing shortage of water, coupled with intensive urbanization, this is now less than half a million acres. During the past half century the number of agricultural settlements grew from 400 to
750, but the share of the population living in them has fallen from 12 percent to less than 5 percent.

Today, most of Israel's food is domestically produced and supplemented by imports, mainly of grain, oilseeds, meat, coffee, cocoa, and sugar, all of which are more than covered by agricultural exports. Farm production consists largely of dairy and poultry products. Additionally, a large variety of flowers, fruit, and vegetables is locally grown, especially in warm areas that give farmers an early advantage in European markets. During the winter months, Israel is Europe's greenhouse, exporting melons, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, strawberries, kiwis, mangoes, avocados, a wide variety of citrus fruits, long-stemmed roses and spray carnations.

The share of agricultural product of the GNP declined from 11 percent to 2.6 percent between 1950 and 2008, and the proportion of agricultural exports decreased from 60 percent to less than 2 percent of total exports. This, despite an absolute increase of annual exports from $20 million in 1950 to $1.2 billion in 2009 due, inter alia, to the widespread introduction of innovative farming methods, modern irrigation and water treatment technologies, and export-oriented farming.
Construction

In the early years of statehood, residential building accounted for 84 percent of total construction output. Subsequently, allowing for more infrastructure construction, it fluctuated between 70-75 percent until 1991, when it leaped back to 86 percent in order to meet the demands of renewed immigration. As a result, the construction sector output also rose sharply in 1991, a year when the number of apartment-unit-starts reached an all time peak of 83,500. Since then that annual figure has dropped steadily to 29,000 in 2004. The record number of new apartments completed was 70,100 in 1992, shrinking to 31,700 in 2005. Once considered a leading branch of the economy and a barometer of the economic activity, the construction sector contributed only 5 percent to the GDP in 2006, down from 30 percent in 1950.

While at first almost all construction was the result of government initiative and investment, between 1958 and 1989 its share fell gradually, from 67 to 16 percent. At the beginning of the 1990s it rose temporarily, when the private sector could not meet the fast-rising demand created by the sudden influx of hundreds of thousands of immigrants. In the last few years the general rise in the standard of living (together with foreign demand for property in Israel) seems to be indicated by a rapid increase in the most expensive class of apartments, especially in
highly sought-after neighborhoods in cities such as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Israeli companies are among the world leaders in the design and manufacture of building metal structures, prefabricated parts and components – such as doors, windows, sanitary equipment, plumbing components, fixtures and accessories, and more. These goods are successfully marketed worldwide and may be found at major construction sites on all continents.

**Transport and Communications**

The importance of the transport and communications sector largely exceeds its small share in the economy's statistics, as it is an infrastructure industry serving all other branches of the economy as well as households. It is a service rather than a production sector, and is growing - as is the case in all modern economies - faster than the production industries. A remarkable growth in the aviation part of this sector took place in recent years (thanks to a parallel increase in tourism), but the growth of the communications sector has been even faster.

Transport and communications contributed 7 percent to the GDP in 2006, constituted some 8 percent of exports of goods and services, and employed 5 percent of the country's labor force. Thirty-six percent of its product originates from land transportation, 20 percent from
shipping and aviation, 39 percent from communications, and the rest from various services.

Since the early 1950s, the total gross tonnage of the merchant fleet has grown more than tenfold, while air carriers now fly more than 100 times as many passengers. During the same period, the road length was doubled, the number of buses more than tripled, and the number of trucks increased tenfold.

Tourism
Tourists are attracted by Israel’s geographical diversity, its archeological and religious sites, the almost unlimited sunshine and modern resort facilities on the Mediterranean, Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee), the Red Sea, and the Dead Sea.

In the year 2000, a record-breaking 2.41 million tourists visited the country (compared to 33,000 in 1950, 118,000 in 1960, 441,000 in 1970, 1.18 million in 1980, and 1.34 million in 1990). This figure was topped in 2008 as Israel opened its doors to more than 3 million tourists.

Visitor figures continue to rise. In the first half of 2010, 1.6 million tourists visited Israel, 39 percent more than in the same period last year, and 10 percent more than in 2008.
Americans make up 21 percent of the tourists in Israel, with Russians making up 15 percent and other European countries making up much of the rest.

Tourism provided foreign currency earnings of $2.8 billion in 2006, i.e. 5 percent of the income from all exports and 16.8 percent of the export of services. In the first half of 2010, incoming tourism brought in about $1.55 billion.

Although this industry contributes less than 3% to the GNP, it has a foreign currency added value of 85 percent (making it the added-value leader among the country's export industries) and employs some 80,000 persons. This industry's large potential is yet to be exploited, as it is a major factor in Israel's economic growth plan.
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CULTURE

Israel is an old-new country, small in size, but with a culturally active, heterogeneous population. Four thousand years of Jewish heritage, over a century of Zionism, and more than half a century of modern statehood have contributed to a culture which has already created an identity of its own, while preserving the uniqueness of 70 different communities. A largely immigrant society, Israel's creative expression has absorbed many different cultural and social influences, as it blends tradition and innovation, and strives to steer a course between Israeli particularism and universalism. The constant search for cultural identity is expressed through creativity in a broad range of art forms, appreciated and enjoyed by a great many people as part of daily life.

...Know that man does not live by bread alone...

(Deuteronomy 8:3)
HEBREW THEATER, unlike literature, did not exist in ancient Hebrew culture, nor did it grow out of the Yiddish theater so popular in Eastern European Jewish communities up to World War II. It began with the founding in 1917 of a Hebrew theater, Habimah (The Stage) in Moscow, under the guidance of Russian director Constantin Stanislavsky and with the acting talent of Hanna Rovina (1892-1980), who later became the 'First Lady of Hebrew Theater.' In 1931, the company set up its permanent home in Tel Aviv.

Theater in Israel is composed of many different elements - contemporary and classical, indigenous and imported, experimental and traditional - with playwrights, actors, directors, and producers of many backgrounds merging the foreign with the local and thereby gradually creating a distinctive Israeli theater. The theater scene is very active, with many professional repertory and other theaters and dozens of regional and amateur companies performing throughout the country to large and devoted audiences. In recent years, a number of Israeli companies have toured Eastern and Western Europe and the United States, and have participated
in international festivals, including the Edinburgh and Berlin Festivals, and appeared in major theater events in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere. A number of semi-professional and amateur groups perform in English and Russian.

Leading playwrights, several of whom have received international recognition, include the late Hanoch Levine, Yehoshua Sobol, Hillel Mittelpunkt, and the late Ephraim Kishon. The major professional companies are located in the country's four largest cities.

**Habimah**, the national theater, is housed in a three-hall complex (total of 1,520 seats) in Tel Aviv, and has an average attendance rate of about 90 percent, due in part to its over 30,000 annual subscribers. Its repertoire includes traditional plays on Jewish themes, works of contemporary Hebrew playwrights, and translations of international classics, dramas, and comedies, with internationally acclaimed directors sometimes brought in to stage productions.

**The Cameri Theater**, the Tel Aviv municipal theater since 1970, was the first company to stage realistic portrayals of Israeli life and has continued to contribute to the development of Hebrew theater with a lively repertoire, including a major series of original Israeli dramas and adaptations of major classical and modern hits. The Cameri
Theater is located in a new state-of-the-art compound which comprises four halls and is adjacent to the Tel Aviv Performing Arts Center. The Cameri Theater’s production of Hamlet, which starred Itay Tiran as Prince Hamlet, garnered huge critical acclaim both here and abroad. This award-winning rendition was presented as part of the Shakespeare in Washington Festival of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The Haifa Municipal Theater is a repertory theater featuring Israeli productions, as well as foreign plays, both classical and modern.

The Be'er Sheva Theater is a repertory theater featuring contemporary, original works, as well as translated classical and modern foreign plays.

The Beit Leissin Theater in Tel Aviv is a repertory theater featuring Israeli works, as well as translated contemporary foreign plays.

The Arab Theater is a professional Arab-language theater for adults, featuring original works from Arab countries, as well as translated contemporary works.

The Beit Hagefen Theater is a professional Arab-language theater for children and youth, featuring original, contemporary plays, also from other countries.
The Khan Theater, Jerusalem's only repertory theater, offers a mixture of contemporary and classical works in a unique hall situated in a restored, centuries-old Turkish inn.

The Gesher Theater, founded in 1991 to provide an artistic outlet for new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, first offered high-level productions in Russian. Following its success and critical acclaim, it has now entered the mainstream of Israeli theater with Hebrew plays. It has represented Israel in prestigious festivals all over the world.

The Clipa Theater was founded in 1995 by Idit Herman, dancer and director, and Dmitry Tyulpanov (Russia), actor and musician. Their company weaves the arts of theater, dance, design, and music. The group, whose works are mostly wordless, debuts two to four new works a year. Most are performed for a limited period, and some are performed only once, at a unique location.

The Children's and Youth Theater stages plays for three different age groups at schools and cultural centers throughout the country, conducts drama and theater classes, and provides instructors for special school workshops.

The Akko Festival is a fringe theater festival, where new
and experimental Israeli work is premiered. It consists of a competition of indoor performances; outdoor and street performances; and international guest performances.

**The Children's Theater Festival** takes place in Haifa. It features new works for children, includes a competition and hosts international guest performances.

**The Train Theater** was established in Jerusalem in 1981 as a puppet theater. It offers a variety of plays from full-length performances to colorful story-telling for very small children, as well as street festivals for the whole family. The theater also produces the annual International Festival of Puppet Theater.

Training in acting, directing, and allied stage professions is available at Tel Aviv University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Beit-Zvi School of the Performing Arts (Ramat Gan), the Nissan Nativ Acting Studio (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem), and the Kibbutz Seminar's School of Drama.
LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

The concept of 'popular' entertainment began in pre-state Israel during the 1940s with such groups as Chizbatron, Matateh, and Batzal Yarok. However, the major impetus occurred during the 1960s with the formation of entertainment troupes attached to different military units. Among the country's leading entertainers who began their careers during their army service are Haim Topol, Si Hyman, Miri Aloni, Dorit Reuveni, and Yardena Arazi. During this era, the Israeli comedy group Hagashash Hahiver rose to fame, going on to perform decades of what became classic Israeli sketches and eventually winning the Israel Prize for lifetime achievement in the arts.

While television and radio are the main outlets for popular entertainment, live performances by comedians, singers, musicians, bands, and groups take place regularly throughout the country.

Some vocalists have achieved star status, among them Arik Einstein, Shlomo Artzi, Matti Caspi, Rita, Dana International,
Corinne Alall, Hava Alberstein, Shalom Hanoch, and Yehudit Ravitz; as have some groups including Teapacks, Mashina, Atraf, Etnix, Friends of Natasha, and Beit Habubot. Certain artists have also made a name for themselves abroad, including Dudu Fisher, the late Ofra Haza, Rami Kleinstein, Aviv Gefen, David Broza, and Noa (Ahinoam Nini). In 1998, Israeli transsexual Dana International won the Eurovision song contest and become a global star. Her song, "Diva", was since chosen the 14th greatest ever Eurovision song. She recently released her 11th album, "Hakol Zeh Letova" (All for the Good).

Grand-scale musicals in Hebrew translation, including "Les Miserables" and "The Sound of Music," have been revived to enthusiastic acclaim.

Increasingly popular among all Israelis is a Mediterranean musical genre deriving primarily from Arabic and Greek influences, as performed by singers Boaz Sha'arabi, Yehuda Poliker, Sarit Hadad, Avihu Medina, Margalit Tsa'anani, Zehava Ben, and Ofer Levy. Newer names include Eyal Golan, Amir Benayoun, and Miri Mesika.

A new generation of stand-up comics, such as Eli Yatzpan and Adi Ashkenazi, is beginning to command substantial followings.
Filmmaking in Israel has undergone major developments since its inception in the 1950s. The first features produced and directed by Israelis such as "Hill 24 Does Not Answer," and "They Were Ten," tended, like Israeli literature of the period, to be cast in the heroic mold. Some recent films remain deeply rooted in the Israeli experience, dealing with such subjects as Holocaust survivors and their children (Gila Almagor's "The Summer of Aviya" and its sequel, "Under the Domim Tree") and the travails of new immigrants ("Sh'hur", directed by Hannah Azoulai and Shmuel Hasfari, "Coffee with Lemon," directed by Leonid Gorivets). Others reflect a more predominant trend towards the present Israeli reality, whether dealing with the Israel-Arab confrontation (Uri Barbash's "Beyond the Walls") or set in the context of universalist, somewhat alienated and hedonistic society ("A Siren's Song," "Life According to Agfa," "Tel Aviv Stories").

In 2009, the Arab-Israeli film "Ajami," set in an impoverished Arab neighborhood in Yafo, won a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. It was
the first predominantly Arab-language film that Israel submitted for the award and the third year in a row that an Israeli film won an Oscar nomination.

A year earlier, Ari Folman’s animated “Waltz with Bashir” reaped international acclaim for its portrayal of the director’s experiences in the 1982 Lebanon War. Awards for the film included the Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film and an Academy Award nomination.

Other notable films of the last few years are Joseph (Yossi) Cedar’s "Campfire," about a religious-Zionist Jerusalemite family in the 80s who struggle to re-establish a family dynamic after the death of their father, and "Broken Wings", Nir Bergman's award-winning film that also deals with the aftermath of familial loss and the need for acceptance. "Turn Left At The End of The World" deals with unlikely cross-cultural friendships in an immigrant desert town, and "Aviva, My Love," garnered 10 awards in Israel, Shanghai, and Tokyo.

Eytan Fox is another noteworthy and popular director. Fox’s movies include "The Bubble," which explores contemporary urban life in Tel Aviv against the backdrop of the Arab-Israeli conflict, "Yossi and Jagger" about homosexual love and desire in the IDF, and "Walk on Water." Fox was also the director of the classic "Florentine" TV series (1997), about disillusioned young Israelis living in a shabby-chic Tel Aviv neighborhood.
Poster of the film "Beaufort", Nominated for an Academy Award as the best foreign-language film

Courtesy of the producers of "Beaufort"
Israeli films garnered many awards in 2007. Joseph Cedar won best director and 11 other prizes at the Berlin Film Festival for his movie about the first Lebanon war, "Beaufort," which was also nominated for an Oscar.

Director Dror Shaul's "Sweet Mud" took the top prize at Sundance for international features; David Volach's "My Father, My Lord", a film about an ultra-Orthodox family on holiday, won the top prize for foreign features at Tribeca, and "Jellyfish", directed by novelist Etgar Keret and Shira Geffen, received the Camera d'Or award at Cannes. Among other surprise wins was "The Band's Visit", Eran Kolirin's film about an Egyptian police band visiting Israel whose members get lost and see an unexpected side of the country. The film won three prizes at Cannes: the International Critics Prize, the Youth Prize, and the Prix Coup de Couer / Uncertain Regard. Israeli actress Hanna Laslo won the Best Actress award for her role in Israeli director Amos Gitai's film "Free Zone" at the 58th Cannes Film Festival in 2005. Other Israeli films and filmmakers have also won international awards in recent years.
Cinema exports are growing as more Israeli-made films become successful abroad and more dollar-earning foreign and co-productions are filmed on location in the country. The Israel Film Center, a division of the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labor, promotes filmmaking in Israel by both local and foreign producers and provides services, from arranging professional contacts to offering financial incentives.

Such major events as the Israel Film Festival at the Jerusalem Cinematheque, along with similar events in Haifa and Sderot, combined with Israeli film festivals abroad, all help to promote awareness about Israeli film.

The recently renovated Jerusalem Cinematheque consists of an archive of thousands of films, a research library, viewing halls, and exhibition space. It presents regular screenings, often in thematic cycles in cooperation with embassies, cultural institutions, or civic organizations and, when possible, with the participation of the scriptwriter, director, or performers. Since 1984, it has mounted a yearly, non-competitive film festival which has brought many quality films and video productions to the country. Educational courses offered for adults are well attended, and programs with Jerusalem schoolchildren encourage critical analysis of a popular medium. There are branches of the Cinematheque in Tel Aviv and the northern town
of Rosh Pina. Art house cinemas remain popular in Israel, and the Lev chain offers movies in intimate settings throughout the country.

The Spielberg Film Archive at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is the world's largest repository of film material on Jewish themes as well as on Jewish and Israeli life. Run by the university together with the Central Zionist Archives, its main activity is collecting, preserving and cataloguing Jewish films, and making the material available to researchers, film and television writers and producers throughout the world.
Music began to occupy an important place in the cultural life of the Jewish community in the Land of Israel after World War I, with various attempts made by enthusiastic amateurs and a tiny cadre of trained musicians at forming a symphony orchestra, a choral society and even an opera company. Music on a professional level, however, became a major activity only in the 1930s when hundreds of music teachers and students, composers, instrumentalists and singers, as well as thousands of music lovers, streamed into the country, driven by the threat of Nazism in Europe.

The Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra (today the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra), founded at the initiative of Polish-born violinist Bronislaw Huberman, gave its first concert in Tel Aviv under the baton of Arturo Toscanini in 1936. It immediately became one of the pivots of the country's musical life and over the years acquired the reputation as one of the preeminent orchestras in the world. Soon after, a radio orchestra was established (today
the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra), whose broadcast concerts attracted tens of thousands of listeners.

Additional musical organizations were founded at later dates, including the Israel Chamber Orchestra, the Be'er Sheva Sinfonietta, and orchestras based in Haifa, Netanya, Holon, Ramat Gan and Rishon Lezion, as well as the Israel Kibbutz Orchestra, whose members are drawn from kibbutzim throughout the country.

In the early 1980s, the New Israel Opera began mounting productions on a high professional level, reviving public enthusiasm for operatic works which had declined following the disbanding of the first permanent opera company some years earlier.

During the early 1990s, Israel's musical life underwent a transformation with the massive influx of over one million Jews from the former Soviet Union. This immigration brought with it many professional musicians, including instrumentalists, singers, and music teachers, whose impact is felt with the formation of new symphony and chamber orchestras, as well as smaller ensembles, and a dynamic injection of talent and musical vitality into educational frameworks in schools, conservatories, and community centers throughout the country.

The chamber music tradition, which also began in the 1930s, includes a number of internationally acclaimed
ensembles and choral groups, which have expanded in range and variety since the immigration of the 1990s. Leading groups include the Rehovot Camerata, the chamber orchestra of the IDF Education Corps, and the Kashtaniot Camerata of Ramat Hasharon. Many cities and towns sponsor their own choirs, and several festivals are devoted to choral music, including Jerusalem's Liturgica, vocal music in the churches of Abu Ghosh, and the Zimriya festival.

Musical performances, from recitals to full symphony concerts presenting a wide range of classical works, are held in historic settings like the restored Roman amphitheaters at Caesarea and Beit She'an, and in two major concert halls, the Mann Auditorium in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem's International Convention Center. Smaller venues include the Jerusalem Theater complex, Tel Aviv's new Performing Arts Center, the Tel Aviv and Israel Museums, as well as cultural centers in towns and kibbutzim throughout the country. Israeli concertgoers are enthusiastic and demonstrative, attributes much appreciated by the renowned guest musicians and world-famous Israeli soloists, such as Pinchas Zuckerman, Shlomo Mintz, Daniel Barenboim, and Itzhak Perlman, who are part of the country's music scene every year.

World-class music events which take place in Israel include the International Harp Contest and the Artur Rubinstein Piano Competition. Local festivals such as the Music
Festival at Kibbutz Ein Gev, the Chamber Music Festival at Kibbutz Kfar Blum, and the Red Sea Jazz Festival in Eilat, draw appreciative audiences, while the Israel Festival, which features music, theater, and dance performed by groups from all over the world, turns Jerusalem into a cultural magnet for three weeks each spring.

The creation of specifically Israeli music has been evolving since professional composing began in the country in the mid-1940s. While Russian and French traditions, German romantic and post-romantic forces, and the lively evocations of later European composers all left their mark on local compositions, a new expression of modern Israel in the so-called 'Mediterranean' style, integrating traditional Eastern melodies and the cantillation of ancient prayer, has gradually crystallized.

The first generation of Israeli composers, all European-born, made great efforts to write in a new musical idiom after immigrating to the country. Paul Ben-Haim utilized expanded tonalities to create a post-expressionistic style, welding old and new, East and West; Oedon Partos saw in the assimilation of authentic folklore an important compositional method; Alexander Uriah Boscovitch used popular forms of expression as a compositional building block; Yosef Tal founded electronic composition in Israel; and Mordechai Seter concentrated on integrating Yemenite melodies and rhythms into his works.
The second generation, most of them direct and indirect students of the first, has worked toward a musical expression which integrates the Hebrew language, with its consonants and intonation, its relevance to Jewish liturgy and tradition, and its incorporation into the Eastern world. The third and most recent group of composers manifests a desire to participate in international composition with no national profile, to grapple with the Holocaust through music, and to break down barriers within music (such as in the music of Yehuda Poliker), merging Eastern and Western traditions and incorporating some innovations from popular music genres.

Talented young Israelis begin their training by attending one of the many conservatories or by studying with one of hundreds of private teachers; many gain experience by joining one of the country’s youth orchestras. Further study is provided at the degree-granting academies for music and dance in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Master classes for singers, instrumentalists, and chamber groups are frequently conducted by visiting international artists at the academies, as well as at the Jerusalem Music Center.

Music education and research at institutions of higher learning were inaugurated at the beginning of the 1960s with the establishment of the Artur Rubinstein Chair of Musicology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Since then, musicology departments have been added at Tel
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Aviv University and Bar-llan University. Two major areas of specialization are offered: Jewish music and the music of Israel's various ethnic groups, with particular emphasis on the music of the Eastern/Sephardic communities.

The early pioneers brought their songs with them, translating the original lyrics into Hebrew or setting new Hebrew words to treasured tunes. Since then, thousands of songs have been written, with melodies incorporating elements of the musical styles brought by consecutive waves of immigrants, ranging from Arab and Yemenite traditions to modern rock and pop, sometimes set to biblical or traditional texts or to the modern verses of Israeli poets and lyricists.

While it is difficult to define a typical Hebrew song, Israelis differentiate between songs written in Hebrew, on various themes and in a variety of styles, and the Shir Ivri (‘Hebrew Song’), whose words transmit the voices, values, and moods of the country and whose melodies are dominated by Slavic influences.

Songs so far
Tears and laughter
Voices of men, stars of time.
The sun and the sea
Bread, the world,
The bitter, the sweet
And everything that has been we shall leave
To live within the song.

Lyrics: Natan Yonatan

The Song to Peace
Let the sun rise
And give the morning light,
The purest prayer
Will not bring us back.

He whose candle was snuffed out
And was buried in the dust,
A bitter cry won't wake him
Won't bring him back.

Nobody will return us
From the dead dark pit,
Accompanying the major historical events in the national life of the Jewish people over the past century, these songs have recorded the nation's dreams, pains, and hopes. While expressing universal sentiments like all folk songs, they also strongly articulate Israeli feelings such as love of the country and its landscape. These are the songs everyone knows, the songs which have become an integral part of the nation's cultural legacy.

Israelis love to sing their songs, from those of the pre-state period to ones just written. Community singing takes place in public halls and private homes, in kibbutz dining rooms and in community centers, during hikes and around bonfires, often under the guidance of a professional song leader, accompanied by piano, accordion, or guitar. Participation in such group singing generates a sense of togetherness, evoked by patriotic sentiments as well as by nostalgia for the early pioneering days and the struggle for independence, for wars won, friends lost, and recurring moments of hope and love.

Here - neither the victory cheer
Nor songs of praise will help.

Refrain:
So - sing only a song to peace,
Do not whisper a prayer.
Better sing a song to peace
With a big shout.

Let the sun penetrate
Through the flowers,
Don't look backward
Leave those who departed.

Lift your eyes with hope,
Not through the rifle sights.
Sing a song to love,
And not to wars.

Don't say the day will come,
Bring the day,
Because it is not a dream,
And within all the city's squares,
Cheer only peace.

Lyrics: Yaacov Rotblit
Music: Yair Rosenblum
**Contemporary Music**

The contemporary music scene in Israel is hugely varied and often audacious. Hip hop band Hadag Nahash, for example, uses music to display political cynicism. One of their most famous hits is "Shirat Hasticker ("The Sticker Song" in English), written together with Israeli novelist David Grossman. The song’s lyrics are an amalgamation of slogans seen on Israeli bumper stickers. The opposing political slogans are juxtaposed to create a furious, ironic, and often absurd portrait of Israeli life.

Other ensembles such as the Idan Reichal project have fused the Ethiopian musical heritage with Middle-East soul and liturgical influences. Bands such as Teapacks, Mashina, and Knisiyat Hasechel, as well as solo artists Ehud Banai, Shlomo Artzi, and even Sarit Hadad are all veterans on the mainstream Israeli music scene, but have maintained their popularity.

Many of the newcomers to Israeli music’s pop scene have emerged through the TV program Kochav Nolad (A Star Is Born), Israel’s answer to the U.S.A.’s American Idol. Ninet Tayeb, Harel Moyal, and Yehuda Sa’ado are just some of those who have launched their music careers through this popular program. 2007’s winner was Boaz Mauda, whose Israeli Yemenite family tradition can be heard in his music.
In the communal and religious life of the Jewish people, dance has been regarded as an expression of joy and sorrow since biblical times and is today an integral part of religious, national, community, and family celebrations. Contemporary dance has developed in two directions: expansion of the folk dance genre which accompanied the early settlers in the rebuilding of their ancient homeland; and the establishment of art dance, leading to stage productions created by professional choreographers and performed by trained dancers.

Dance as an art form was introduced in the country in the 1920s by newly arrived teachers and devotees of dance from the cultural centers of Europe. After the establishment of the state, it was developed to a high professional level by a number of ensembles, each founded on the basis
of a different orientation and style. Today more than a
dozen major professional dance companies, most of them
based in Tel Aviv, perform a varied repertoire throughout
the country and abroad.

**The Israel Ballet** grew out of a studio for classical dance
set up by its artistic directors, Berta Yampolsky and Hillel
Markman. The only professional classical ballet company
in the country, it performs classical, neo-classical and
contemporary works created by Yampolsky as well as ballets
by Balanchine and other international choreographers.

**The Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company** was
founded in 1970 by Yehudit Arnon, member
of Kibbutz Ga’aton in the Galilee, near the
Lebanese border. Arnon turned a group
of young amateur dancers into one of
Israel’s leading contemporary dance
companies, steadily gaining international
acclaim. Today, the KCDC is identified with
its artistic director and choreographer
Rami Beer.

Founded in 1964 by Martha Graham and the Baroness
Batsheva De Rothschild, the **Batsheva Dance Company**
was initially based on Graham’s methods, but always
placed a strong emphasis on ballet training. Over forty
years on, the company is perhaps the best known global
ambassador of Israeli culture and it employs 65 members, from dancers to technical crew members. Currently, Ohad Naharin is the artistic director, and Sharon Eyal the house choreographer.

Like many dance companies in Israel, Batsheva has an educational agenda and has a number of outreach programs which aim to bring dance to all sectors of Israeli society. According to the company, Batsheva’s works are expressive, dynamic, innovative, emotive, and esthetic, all of which reflect the energy of the country.

**Vertigo** is a highly successful modern dance group founded in 1992 by two dancers, Noa Wertheim and Adi Sha'al. Touring worldwide, it has already received several international awards for its work. Much of its repertoire features original choreography by Wertheim, as well as innovative dance projects with other artists. The Vertigo Dance School in Jerusalem, founded in 1997, provides amateur and professional tuition in classical ballet, modern dance and improvisation.

**Inbal Pinto Dance Company**’s choreographer and designer Inbal Pinto is one of the rising stars of international dance. A former member of the Batsheva Dance Company, she has received numerous dance awards since she began choreographing in 1990. Together with Co-Artistic Director Avshalom Pollack, Pinto has created numerous
dance pieces, such as the world famous work, Oyster, which has been performed hundreds of times in Israel and abroad.

The country's modern dance scene is further enhanced by a number of smaller groups and independent choreographers whose work has been highly appreciated by dance lovers all over the world. The most prominent of these is Yasmeen Godder, who won the Bessie Award in 2001 in New York and numerous awards in Israel. Her dance language is based around the female form, and her work, Two Playful Pink, has been performed worldwide. Other rising stars include Emanuel Gat and Renana Raz.

Since its opening in 1989, the Suzanne Dellal Center for Dance and Theater in the newly renovated Neve Tzedek quarter of Tel Aviv has become the focal point of dance activities in the country. Also in Tel Aviv, the Dance Library of Israel and the Israel Dance Archive, in addition to serving as centers for study and research, publish books on dance and the Israel Dance Annual. Training is offered by the dance departments of the Rubin Academies of Music and Dance in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, the Bat-Dor Studios in Tel Aviv and Be'er Sheva, the Thelma Yellin School in Givatayim and a number of other dance schools and workshops throughout the country.

Israel's contributions to the field of movement education
include the methods of Moshe Feldenkrais, which are taught all over the world, and the Eshkol-Wachman movement notation system, one of the three best-known systems of recording dance and movement in written form.

**Folk Dance**

Israeli folk dance emerged as an amalgam of Jewish and non-Jewish folk dance forms from many parts of the world. While in other countries folk dance is fostered to preserve old rural traditions, in Israel it is a constantly developing art form which has evolved since the 1940s, based on historic and modern sources as well as on biblical associations and contemporary dance styles.

The early pioneers brought with them native dances which were adapted to their new milieu. Among them, a Romanian dance, the hora, typified the new life being built in the Land of Israel: its closed circle form gave equal status to all participants, simple movements enabled everyone to take part and the linked arms symbolized the new ideology.

Widespread enthusiasm for dance followed, bringing with it the creation of a multifaceted folk dance genre set to popular Israeli songs, incorporating motifs such as the Arab debka, as well as dance elements ranging from North American jazz and Latin American rhythms to the cadences typical of Mediterranean countries.
Folk dance manifests itself both through individual participation and stage performances. Public enthusiasm for folk dancing has led to the emergence of the professional dance leader and to thousands of people participating regularly in dance activities as a recreational outlet. Since 1988, a three-day international folk-dance festival has been held annually at Karmiel, a town in central Galilee, with the participation of troupes from Israel and around the world.

Alongside Israeli folk dance, and influencing it, are the traditional dances of the different ethnic groups, which reflect both the 'ingathering of the exiles' and the pluralistic nature of Israel's society. They are preserved by a number of troupes specializing in the dances of Yemen, Kurdistan, North Africa, India, Georgia, Bukhara, and Ethiopia, and by ensembles which perform Arab, Druze, and Circassian dances.
LITERATURE

Modern Hebrew prose in the Land of Israel was first written by immigrant authors. Although their roots were anchored in the world and traditions of East European Jewry, their works dealt primarily with the creative achievements in the Land of Israel to which they had come, in the words of the Zionist motto, "to build and be built by it." Yosef Haim Brenner (1881-1921) and Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888-1970), who propelled Hebrew prose into the 20th century, are considered by many to be the fathers of modern Hebrew literature.

In his endeavor to capture reality, Brenner favored the rabbinical and medieval forms of spoken Hebrew, creating new idioms and employing dramatic syntax to give the effect of living speech. Central to Brenner’s works is his identification with both the physical struggle of the pioneers for a toehold in an arid, harsh land, very different from the European countries where they were born, and the struggle, no less difficult, to shape the identity of the Jew in the Land of Israel.
Agnon chose to use more modern forms of the Hebrew language in his works. His familiarity with Jewish tradition, together with the influence of 19th and early 20th century European literature, gave rise to a body of fiction dealing with major contemporary spiritual concerns, the disintegration of traditional ways of life, the loss of faith, and the subsequent loss of identity. An Orthodox Jew and a writer of intuition and psychological insight, Agnon expressed an affinity for the shadowy and irrational sides of the human psyche and an identification with the inner uncertainties of the believing and non-believing Jew. Reality, as depicted by Agnon, exudes a tragic, at
times grotesque ambience, with war and the Holocaust influencing much of his work, and the world of pious Jews revealed with all its passions and tensions. In 1966, Agnon was co-recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature (together with Nelly Sachs).

Native-born writers, who began publishing in the 1940s and 1950s, and are often referred to as 'the War of Independence Generation,' brought to their work a different mentality and cultural background from that of their predecessors, primarily because Hebrew was their mother tongue and their life experience was fully rooted in the Land of Israel. Authors such as S. Yizhar, Moshe Shamir, Hanoch Bartov, Haim Gouri, and Binyamin Tammuz vacillated dramatically between individualism and commitment to society and state, and presented a model of social realism, often in the heroic mode, featuring a blend of local and international influences.

In the early 1960s, new approaches in Hebrew prose writing were explored by a group of younger and very influential writers, including A.B. Yehoshua, Amos Oz, Yoram Kaniuk and Yaakov Shabtai, marking a break from ideological patterns and focusing on the world of the individual. During the next two decades, experimentation with narrative forms and various prose writing styles, including psychological realism, allegory and symbolism, as well as speculation and skepticism regarding Israel’s political and
social conventions, featured prominently in contemporary writing.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a burst of intense literary activity in which the number of books published increased dramatically. Concurrently, several Israeli writers achieved international recognition, notably Oz, Yehoshua, Kaniuk, Aharon Appelfeld, David Shahar, David Grossman, and Meir Shalev. A belief in literature as a means of enabling readers to understand themselves as individuals and as part of their environment characterizes the prose of this period, written by three generations of contemporary authors. Many of these writers also address the political and moral dilemmas of contemporary life in Israel, notably Oz, Grossman, and Shalev.

Renewed efforts to cope with the tragedy of the European Holocaust have brought about the formulation of fresh modes of expression to treat fundamental questions which can be discussed only within the perspective of time and place, integrating distance with involvement (Appelfeld, Grossman, Yehoshua Kenaz, Alexander and Yonat Sened, Nava Semel, and others). Grossman’s "See Under: Love", related partially from the perspective of
a young boy, Momik, who sees the aftermath of the Holocaust unfold within his immigrant family, is perhaps the best known example.

Previously unprobed themes have also been introduced, including the milieu of the Arab village (Anton Shammas, an Arab-Christian writer, and Sayed Kashua, an Israeli-Arab journalist and writer) the world of ultra-Orthodox Jews who deliberately segregate themselves from modern society (Yossi Birstein), the way of life in Jerusalem's Hassidic courts (Haim Be'er) and attempts to deal with the existence of the unbeliever in a period when secular ideologies are collapsing and religious fundamentalism is gaining strength (Yitzhak Orpaz-Auerbach). Another important topic which some Israeli authors, themselves of Sephardic background, are addressing is the place in society of alienated new immigrants from Arab countries (Sami Michael, Albert Suissa, Dan Benaya Seri). Others explore universal themes such as democracy and righteousness as seen in the context of a society which is subject to constant challenges in most areas of its national life (Yitzhak Ben-Ner, Kaniuk, Grossman, Oz).

A number of major women authors have come to the fore, writing not only on general topics but also dealing with the world of women aware of their place in
Jewish tradition and their role in the Zionist enterprise (Amalia Kahana-Carmon, Chana Bat-Shahar, Shulamit Hareven, Shulamit Lapid, Ruth Almog, Savion Liebrecht, and Batya Gur). Lapid and Gur have also entered the genre of detective fiction to critical acclaim, both in Israel and in translation abroad.

Recently a younger generation of writers, who reject much of the centrality of the Israeli experience and reflect a more universalistic trend - often of an alienated, deeply surreal and idiosyncratic nature - has emerged. Some of these writers (Yehudit Katzir, Etgar Keret, Orly Castel-Blum, Gadi Taub, Irit Linor, and Mira Magen) enjoy almost cult followings, and their new books are assured a place at the top of the bestseller lists both here and, in some cases, abroad. In recent years, Keret has been a firm favorite among European readers, with a number of his short story collections, among them "Missing Kissinger", winning prestigious literary awards.

In addition to the prolific body of Hebrew literature, a significant amount of writing, both prose and poetry, appears in other languages, including Arabic, English, and French. Since the immigration of over one million Jews from the former Soviet Union, Israel has become the largest center of literary creativity in the Russian language outside Russia itself.
During the last few years, Israeli publishers have entered the field of electronic publishing in a massive way. Covering a wide range of topics, Israeli programs are being marketed worldwide.

**Children's Literature**

Children's literature, which includes original texts as well as translations of classics from many languages, integrates a wide variety of topics and prose styles, reflecting a world trend towards a more direct and sophisticated approach to language and intellectual content in writing for children.

Over the years a considerable body of children's literature for various age groups has been produced. It is distinguished by well-designed graphics and characterized by psychological
sensitivity as well as by an expressive and picturesque use of language, enabling the young reader to identify with the substance of the writing in a dynamic way.

Motivating open inquiry and encouraging independent thinking have become basic elements in contemporary writing for children. While themes of social and national significance are still important, they are now treated with greater sincerity and openness. Some current books aim at negating stereotypes in the country's diversified society and deal with the immigration of Jews from many parts of the world, while others feature historical works and biographies which focus primarily on prominent figures who contributed to the development of the country over the last century, beginning with the renewal of Jewish life in the Land of Israel.

Since the late 1960s, children's literature has largely portrayed the world of the children themselves, dealing with topics such as death, divorce, single-parent families, handicaps, adolescence, and the struggle for one's place in the family and society. At the same time, many imaginative children's books and stories were also written, providing young readers with pure fantasy, entertainment, and escapism.
Israel is also unusual in the number of prize-winning authors who have written for children as well as for adults. Among them are David Grossman (“The Zig Zag Kid,” “Itamar Walks on Walls”) and Etgar Keret (“Dad Runs Away With The Circus”). Many of these works also blur the line between adult and children’s novels. Israeli books for children are now also being published in translation around the world, in a wide variety of languages.

**Poetry**

Written without interruption from biblical times to the present, Hebrew poetry embodies external influences and internal traditions. The poetry of the past, which incorporates religious and national themes, also contains motifs of personal experience which are predominant in the poetry of today. A break with traditional poetic expression developed during the Jewish Enlightenment in Europe (1781-1881), when full citizenship for Jews and secularization of Jewish life were advocated, and from the late 19th century when Zionism, the movement calling for the restoration of Jewish national life in the Land of Israel, began to gain momentum. The major poets to emerge from this period, who themselves immigrated to Palestine early in the 20th century, were Haim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934) and Saul Tchernichovsky (1875-1943).

Bialik's works, which reflect his commitment to the Jewish
national renaissance and reject the viability of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, include both long epic poems recapitulating chapters in Jewish history as well as pure lyrical poetry dealing with love and nature. Bialik, often referred to as the 'national poet' or 'the poet of the Hebrew Renaissance,' forged a new poetic idiom, free of the overwhelming biblical influence of his predecessors, while maintaining classical structure and clarity of expression through rich, learned but contemporary phrasing. His poems, some of which were written specifically for very young children, are memorized by generations of Israeli pupils.

Tchernichovsky, who wrote lyric poetry, dramatic epics, ballads, and allegories, sought to rectify the world of the Jew by injecting a spirit of personal pride and dignity as well as a heightened awareness of nature and beauty. His sense of language, which embodied an affinity for rabbinical Hebrew, was different from Bialik's idiom which integrated the biblical influence with the emerging conversational mode. Both Bialik and Tchernichovsky represent the transition from ancient Jewish poetry to the modern genre.

Avraham Shlonsky, Natan Alterman, Lea Goldberg, and Uri Zvi Greenberg headed the next generation of poets, who wrote in the years which preceded the establishment of the state and during the early years of statehood.
Shlonsky utilized a flood of images along with linguistic inventions in his poetry as well as in his prolific translations of classical poetry, especially from Russian. Alterman's works, many of which are noted for their political commentary, accompanied every stage of the development of the Jewish community and are characterized by richness.
of language and a variety of poetic forms, tone and rhyme, imagery and metaphor. Goldberg expanded the spectrum of lyricism in poems which speak of the city, nature and the human being in search of love, contact and attention. Greenberg, who wrote a poetry of despair and rage using fierce imagery and stylistic power, dealt mainly with nationalistic themes and the impact of the Holocaust. This group of poets was the first to introduce the rhythms of everyday speech into Hebrew poetry. They revived old idioms and coined new ones, giving the ancient language a new flexibility and richness.

The poetry of this period, which was greatly influenced by Russian futurism and symbolism as well as by German expressionism, tended towards the classical structure and melodicism of ordered rhyming. It reflected images and landscapes of the poets' country of birth and fresh visions of their new country in a heroic mode, as well as memories from 'there' and the desire to sink roots 'here,' expressing, as Lea Goldberg wrote, "the pain of two homelands." Many of the poems were set to music and became an integral part of the country's national lore.

The first major woman poet in Hebrew was Rahel Bluwstein (1890-1931), who is known simply as "Rahel." Her works established the normative foundation of women's Hebrew poetry as well as the public's expectations of this poetry.
Its lyrical, short, emotional, intellectually unpretentious, and personal style has prevailed, as seen in most of the works of her contemporaries and of later poets such as Dalia Ravikovitch and Maya Bejerano.

In the mid-1950s, a new group of younger poets emerged, with Hebrew as their mother tongue, headed by Yehuda Amichai, Natan Zach, Dan Pagis, T. Carmi and David Avidan. This group, tending towards understatement, a general retreat from collective experiences, free observation of reality and a colloquial style, shifted the main poetic influences from Pushkin and Schiller to modern English and American poetry. The works of Amichai, who has been extensively translated, are marked by his use of daily speech, irony and metaphysical metaphors. These became the hallmarks of much of the poetry written by his younger contemporaries, who proclaimed the end of ideological poetry and broke completely with the Alterman-Shlonsky tradition of classical structures and ordered rhyming. Zach's works elicit innovative near-liturgical and musical qualities from everyday spoken Hebrew.

**When the eyes open**

*Snow on the mountains*  
*Above the High Places and above Jerusalem.*  
*Come down O Jerusalem and return my child to me.*  
*Come O Bethlehem and return my child to me.*  
*Come high mountains come winds come floods in the harbors and return my child to me.*  
*And even you, O bent bulrush, Thin stalk in the stream, Stringy desert bushes, return my child to me as the soul returns to the body when the eyes open.*

Dalia Ravikovitch  
Translated by: Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld
The field of Hebrew poetry today is a polyphony comprised of several generations, placing writers in their twenties together with poets of middle age. Representative of the latter group are Meir Wieseltier, whose prosaic, slangy and direct diction repudiates all romanticism and elevates the image of Tel Aviv as the symbol of reality; Yair Horowitz, whose restrained verses express the gentle sadness of one aware of his own mortality; and Yona Wallach, who presents herself in colloquial, sarcastic tones, using archetypal and religious motifs, Freudian symbolism, sometimes brutal sensuality, rhythmic repetitions, and long strings of associations. Other major contemporary poets include Asher Reich, Arieh Sivan, Ronny Somak, and Moshe Dor.

The poetry of the most recent generation is dominated by individualism and perplexity, and tends towards short poems written in colloquial diction, non-rhymed free rhythm. Examples of this kind of work can be found in the poems of Transylvanian-born poet Agi Mishol. Poetry in Israel has a large and loyal readership and some volumes of poems, of all periods, are sold in editions as large as those published in much more populous Western countries.
VISUAL ARTS

From the beginning of the 20th century, visual arts in Israel have shown a creative orientation influenced by the encounter between East and West, as well as by the land itself and its development, the character of the cities, and stylistic trends emanating from art centers abroad. In painting, sculpture, photography, and other art forms, the country's varied landscape is the protagonist: the hill terraces and ridges produce special dynamics of line and shape; the foothills of the Negev, the prevailing grayish-green vegetation and the clear luminous light result in distinctive color effects; and the sea and sand affect surfaces. On the whole, local landscapes, concerns, and politics lie at the center of Israeli art and ensure its uniqueness.

Organized art activity in the country began in 1906, the year Professor Boris Schatz (1867-1932) arrived from Bulgaria and founded the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem, according to a plan approved at the 1905 Zionist Congress to encourage talented young Jews to study art in the Land of Israel. By 1910, the school had 32 different departments, a student body of 500, and a ready market for its works throughout the Jewish world.
In addition to painters and sculptors, the country's artistic life comprises a host of talented craftspeople (ceramicists, silver and goldsmiths, weavers, calligraphers, glass blowers, etc.), many of whom specialize in modern interpretations of traditional Jewish ceremonial objects.

Enthusiasm for art prevails among people from all walks of life, as Israelis encourage and support art activities by attending exhibits - from one-artist retrospectives to comprehensive group shows at the country's many museums and private galleries - by frequenting the artists' quarters of Safed and Yafo or the artists' village of Ein Hod, and by purchasing the works of local artists.

**Painting**

At the outset, Bezalel's artistic orientation, which aimed at creating an 'original Jewish art' by fusing European techniques with Middle Eastern influences, resulted in paintings of biblical scenes depicting romanticized perceptions of the past linked to utopian visions of the future, with images drawn from the ancient Jewish Eastern communities as well as from the local Bedouin. Artists of this period include Shmuel Hirszenberg (1865-1908), Ephraim Lilien (1874-1925), and Abel Pann (1883-1963).
The first major art exhibition (1921), held at David's Citadel in Jerusalem's Old City, was dominated by painters from Bezalel. Soon afterwards, however, Bezalel's anachronistic, national-oriental narrative style was challenged both by young rebels within the Bezalel establishment and newly arrived artists, who began searching for an idiom appropriate to what they termed 'Hebrew' as opposed to 'Jewish' art. In an attempt to define their new cultural identity and express their view of the country as a source of national renewal, they depicted the daily reality of the Middle Eastern environment, with emphasis on the bright light and glowing colors of the landscape, and stressed exotic subject matter such as the simple Arab lifestyle, through a predominantly primitive technique, as seen in the works of painters including Israel Paldi, Tziona Tagger, Pinhas Litvinovsky, Nahum Gutman, and
Reuven Rubin. By the middle of the decade, most of the leading artists were established in the new, dynamic city of Tel Aviv (est. 1909), which has remained the center of the country's artistic activity.

The art of the 1930s was strongly influenced by early 20th century Western innovations, the most powerful of which was the expressionism emanating from the ateliers of Paris. Works of painters such as Moshe Castel, Menachem Shemi, and Arie Aroch tended to portray an emotionally charged, often mystical reality through their use of distortion and, although themes still dealt with local landscapes and images, the narrative components of 10 years earlier gradually disappeared and the oriental-Muslim world vanished entirely. German expressionism was introduced in the middle of the decade with the arrival of immigrant artists fleeing the terror of rising Nazism. Joining German-born artists Anna Ticho and Leopold Krakauer, who had come to Jerusalem some 20 years earlier, this group, which included Hermann Struck, Mordechai Ardon, and Jakob Steinhardt, devoted itself largely to subjective interpretations of the landscape of Jerusalem and the surrounding hills. These artists made a significant contribution to the development of local art, notably through the leadership given to the Bezalel Academy of Art by its directors, Ardon and Steinhardt, under whose guidance a new generation of artists grew to maturity.
The break with Paris during World War II and the trauma of the Holocaust caused several artists, including Moshe Castel, Yitzhak Danziger, and Aharon Kahana, to adopt the emerging 'Canaanite' ideology which sought to identify with the original inhabitants of the land and create a 'new Hebrew people' by reviving ancient myths and pagan motifs. The 1948 War of Independence led other artists, including Naftali Bezem and Avraham Ofek, to adopt a militant style with a clear social message. But the most significant group formed in this period was 'New Horizons,' which aimed to free Israeli painting from its local character and literary associations and bring it into the sphere of contemporary European art. Two major trends developed: Yosef Zaritzky, the group's dominant figure, tended towards an atmospheric lyricism, characterized by the presence of identifiable fragments of local landscape and cool color tones. His style was adopted by others, notably Avigdor Stematsky and Yehezkel Streichman. The second trend, a stylized abstractionism ranging from geometricism to a formalism frequently based on symbols, was strongly evident in the works of the Romanian-born artist Marcel Janco, who studied in Paris and was one of the founders of Dadaism. The New Horizons group not only legitimized abstract art in Israel but was also its dominant force up to the early 1960s.

Artists of the 1960s provided the connecting link between the activities of the New Horizons group and the search
for individuality in the next decade. Streichman and Stematsky, both teachers at the Avni Institute in Tel Aviv, strongly influenced a second generation of artists, including Raffi Lavi, Aviva Uri, Uri Lifschitz, and Lea Nikel who, on a search for a personal imagery, challenged the refined brushwork of lyrical abstractionism with pluralistic works, encompassing various expressive and figurative abstract styles derived from sources abroad.

These artists were part of "The Group of Ten," established in the late 1950s, who argued against the prevalent universalist tendency in art and strived towards making art that drew upon the Israeli landscape and Israeli individual. Unlike the European, elite aura that surrounded the New Horizons group, the Group of Ten was identified with the native Israeli ‘Sabra’ and the Palmah generation. In
the late sixties, “realist” artists Ori Reisman and Yitzhak Mambush joined the group.

At Bezalel, Ardon’s influence, especially with regard to themes and techniques, evidenced itself in the works of Avigdor Arikha, who developed a world of forms filled with intense spiritual meaning, and in the return to figurative themes evocative of the Holocaust and traditional Jewish subjects, as seen in the surrealistic paintings of Yossi Bergner and Samuel Bak. Jacob Agam, whose style is radically different, is a pioneer in optic and kinetic art, and his work is exhibited prominently both in Israel and abroad.

While the minimalism characteristic of art in the 1970s almost always included amorphic, transparent forms reminiscent of local abstract painting, the exposition of ideas rather than aesthetics dominated the works of artists such as Larry Abramson and Moshe Gershuni. The artists of the 1980s and 1990s, working in an atmosphere of individual experimentation, appear to be searching for content and a sense of Israel’s spirit by integrating a wide range of materials and techniques, as well as images based on local and universal elements as diverse as the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the human emotions of stress and fear. Current trends, as in the work of Pinhas Cohen-Gan, Deganit Beresht, Gabi Klasmer, Tsibi Geva, Tzvi Goldstein, David Reeb and others, continue to strive
towards broadening the definition of Israeli art beyond its traditional concepts and materials, both as the unique expression of an indigenous culture and as a dynamic component of contemporary Western art.

**Sculpture**

The art of sculpture flourished in the country due to the efforts of a few sculptors over a long period of time. While Avraham Melnikoff (known for his massive stone lion at Tel Hai), and Ze’ev Ben-Zvi introduced cubism, the more academic school of sculpture, represented by Moshe Ziffer, Aharon Priver and Batya Lishansky, dominated the field prior to the establishment of the state.

At the end of the 1940s, the 'Canaanite' ideology influenced a number of artists, notably Yitzhak Danziger, whose figure of the pagan hero-hunter Nimrod, carved from red Nubian sandstone, is an attempt to create a synthesis between Middle Eastern sculpture and the modern concept of the human body, while the forms comprising his sculpture of sheep resemble those of desert rocks, water canals and Bedouin tents. Sculpture in the 1950s employed new materials and monumental scale as it became increasingly abstract, stimulated in
part by the recent introduction of iron and Cor-Ten steel as a sculptural medium.

The desire to provide a tangible memorial to those who fell in Israel's wars gave sculpture a new impetus from the 1960s on, and a great many monuments, primarily nonfigurative, were introduced into the Israeli landscape. This genre is represented by Yehiel Shemi's welded steel naval memorial at Achziv, which deals both with the harshness of nature and the human capacity for violence and destruction, and Dani Karavan's "Monument to the Negev Brigade" outside Be'er Sheva, evoking the special character of desert combat.

Under the influence of the French school in general and expressionism in particular, and utilizing a wide range of materials, contemporary conceptual artists are creating installations and environmental sculptures to depict their individual reactions to social and political realities. Incorporating a powerful play of shapes and symbols, the works of controversial Israel Prize winner Yigal Tumarkin express his protest against war through geometric and figurative abstract forms, while the trend toward geometric minimalism is especially pronounced in Menashe Kadishman's persistent use of the images of sheep, which call up both an echo of
the ram in the biblical sacrifice of Isaac and a personal myth symbolizing the helpless victim.

Several Israeli sculptors have gained international recognition, including Tumarkin, Karavan, Kosso Eloul, and Israel Hadany, whose works can be seen in public and private settings abroad.

**Photography**

Today's art photography in Israel addresses both the personal - probing questions of life and death, art and illusion – and the national/political. It is characterized by intimacy, restraint, and a preoccupation with the self; both a reaction to and an outgrowth of the romantic, informational style which dominated its early stages of development. In the mid-19th century, local photography was based largely on providing photographic services, concentrating on the depiction of holy places (mainly Christian) to sell as souvenirs to pilgrims and tourists.

From 1880 onward, photographers began to document the development of the Jewish community in Palestine (Land of Israel), portraying the pioneers working the soil and building cities and towns through a heroic lens, oriented to a modern, secular ideology and the requirements of clients who used their pictures to further particular causes, such as the Jewish National Fund.
The country’s development in its early years was faithfully recorded by a number of talented photojournalists, some still active today, including Tim Gidal, David Rubinger, Werner Braun, Boris Carmi, Zev Radovan, David Harris, and Micha Bar Am. Crossing the invisible boundary between ‘photography as documentation’ and ‘art photography’ are, among others, Aliza Auerbach, who concentrates on portraiture; Neil Folberg, Doron Horwitz and Shai Ginott, who focus on nature; David Darom, an expert underwater photographer; and Dubi Tal and Mony Haramati, a team specializing in aerial photography.

Several important venues for displaying photographic work have come into being in Israel, foremost among them being the photography biennale at Mishkan Le’Omanut in Kibbutz Ein Harod and the new Museum of Photography at Tel Hai in the northern Galilee.

In recent years, as photography as a pure artistic medium has become a legitimate art form, a number of creative photographers have emerged, with the active support of galleries, museums, curators, and collectors both here and abroad. The most notable of these creative photographers is Adi Nes, (b, 1966). Born in Kiryat Gat to a
family of immigrants from Kurdistan and Iran, Nes started making waves in the 1990s with ‘Soldiers.’ This series explored questions of national identity and particularly Israeli male identity in a homoerotic, ambivalent, and highly insightful context. His work, Bible Stories, which takes Biblical figures and recreates moments of their narrative in a troubling, contemporary setting (homeless, poverty stricken), addresses the shift in Israeli society from socialist values to a modern capitalistic way of life. The recent sale of his piece, untitled, (The Last Supper) for $264,000 at Sotheby's annual sale of Jewish and Israeli art, is considered a turning point in the global appreciation of Israeli art.

Barry Frydlender’s photography is composed of dozens, sometimes hundreds, of photographs seamlessly combined to create single images of unnerving precision, clarity, and perspective. His 2007 exhibition, ‘Place and time,’ featured recent photographs that explored the circumstance of contemporary Israel: an all-male gathering in an East Jerusalem café, devout Haredi Jews on an annual pilgrimage, and the forced evacuation of Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip. The exhibition was originally held in the Tel Aviv Museum Of Art, and then moved on to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the first solo exhibition of an Israeli artist at that museum.
MUSEUMS

Some 200 museums around the country receive millions of visitors annually. Large or small, in city, town, or kibbutz, they are treasure houses of archaeology, ethnography, and local history; of art, both ancient and modern; and of crafts, from primitive to sophisticated.

The Israel Museum in Jerusalem, founded (1965) as the country's national museum, comprises several main sections: the collection of the Bezalel Museum of Fine Arts, Judaica and Ethnography, exhibits of items typical of various Diaspora Jewish communities, art galleries, period rooms and a comprehensive selection of art objects from Africa, North and South America, Oceania and the Far East; an archeological wing containing artifacts from prehistoric times to the 15th century; a sculpture garden with over 60 works; the Shrine of the Book which houses rare biblical
manuscripts, including the Dead Sea Scrolls; a youth wing comprising galleries, classrooms and workshops, with an extensive educational program; the Rockefeller Museum in East Jerusalem, housing a collection of regional archeology; the Paley Art Center in East Jerusalem which runs programs for Arab children; and the Ticho House, an art gallery and popular cafe in a century-old mansion in the center of Jerusalem. A wide range of impressive temporary exhibitions are presented regularly, as well as activities ranging from lectures, workshops and films to chamber concerts and art classes.

In honor of its 45th anniversary, the Israel Museum recently completed a major renovation, which doubled the museum's gallery space. The new design of the galleries takes the visitor on a journey through time, starting with archeology and pre-history, a billion and a half years ago, and moving all the way to contemporary art.

The Tel Aviv Museum of Art (est. 1932), which opened its present building in 1971, consists of central galleries housing a comprehensive collection of classical and contemporary art, especially Israeli art; a youth wing; an auditorium where recitals, chamber concerts, and art films are presented regularly; and numerous halls which feature temporary exhibits. The Helena Rubinstein Pavilion of Modern Art is also under its aegis.
Mishkan LeOmanut ("Home of Art," est. 1934), in northern Kibbutz Ein Harod, the first rural museum in the country and the first art museum of the kibbutz movement, houses an extensive collection of Jewish painting, sculpture, and folk art from all over the world, features special temporary exhibitions and carries out various educational projects and art research.

The Haifa Museum (est. 1949) houses the Museum of Ancient Art, which specializes in archeological finds discovered in Israel and the Mediterranean basin and the Museum of Modern Art (est. 1951), with exhibits of art from all over the world (mid-18th century to the present). Also under the museum's aegis are the Museum of Prehistory, the National Maritime Museum and the Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art, a small but well-formed space that offers both temporary and permanent exhibitions.

The Eretz Israel Museum (est. 1953) in Ramat Aviv, a comprehensive storehouse of archeological, anthropological, and historical findings in the region, comprises pavilions for glassware, ceramics, coins, copper, and more, as well as a planetarium. The 'Man and His Work' section features live demonstrations of ancient methods of weaving, jewelry and pottery making, grain grinding and bread baking. Tel Quasile, an excavation in which 12 distinct layers of civilization have been uncovered, is on the site. Also under the museum's aegis are the Museum of the
History of Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Independence Hall, where the State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948, both of which are in central Tel Aviv.

**The L.A. Mayer Institute for Islamic Art** (est. 1974) in Jerusalem houses extensive permanent exhibitions of pottery, textiles, jewelry, ceremonial objects, and the like, covering a thousand years of Islamic art, from Spain to India, and features temporary exhibits on special themes.

**Beit Hatefutsoth** (The Diaspora Museum, est. 1978), located on the Tel Aviv University campus, uses modern techniques and audio-visual displays to trace the history of Diaspora Jewish communities through the ages and throughout the world. In this non-artifact museum, exhibitions are arranged thematically, and each floor has a study area. Temporary exhibits on Jewish subjects, a chronosphere presenting an audio-visual overview of Jewish history and a full range of educational and cultural programs and travelling exhibitions are also regularly featured. The Web site, www.bh.org.il, also offers advice and guidance in all matters related to Jewish life and heritage.

**The Tower of David Museum of the History of Jerusalem** (est. 1988) is located in the Citadel compound, an important historical and archeological site containing finds from the First Temple Period (960-586 BCE), parts of a tower and the city wall from Hasmonean times (first century
BCE), and the base of a huge tower built by Herod (37-4 BCE). The non-artifact museum covers 4,000 years of Jerusalem's history, from its beginnings as a Canaanite city to modern times. Exhibits are divided according to periods, with a 'time line' in each room depicting main events, as well as displays making use of maps, videotapes, holograms, drawings, and models. Temporary exhibitions, not necessarily on related subjects, take advantage of the beautiful setting to display sculpture, installation art, and other works.

**Yad Vashem**, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, is dedicated to perpetuating the memory of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. Renovated and enlarged in 2005, it includes the New Holocaust History Museum (within it the Hall of Names of victims of the Holocaust), the Museum of Holocaust Art, the exhibitions pavilion, the Avenue of Righteous Gentiles, an archive, the Shrine of Remembrance with names of the extermination camps on the floor, the Children's Memorial Pavilion, and the Valley of the Destroyed Communities. Designed by Moshe Safdie, the museum aims to transport the visitor into an all-encompassing sensory, emotional, and intellectual experience.
ARCHEOLOGY

Archeological investigation in the Land of Israel began in the middle of the 19th century, when biblical scholars surveyed the area in search of remains of places mentioned in the Bible. Toward the end of the 19th century, but mainly since the beginning of the 20th century, many mounds (in Hebrew tel) composed of the remains of ancient settlements were excavated, and the foundations for scientific archeological investigation were laid.

Archeological activities expanded during the British Mandate period (1917-1948) and have been increased to a large extent since the establishment of the State of Israel.

The experience gained during the excavations has shaped the methods of stratigraphic research, accompanied by the meticulous study of the development (typology) of the forms of pottery vessels and other artifacts, by which archeological strata and remains may be dated. In recent years, archeological research has been extended to include less-known aspects of the ancient material cultures, such as nutrition, disease, economy, and commerce. These achievements of modern archeological research are being applied in the dozens of sites that are excavated every year.
Archeology in Israel involves the systematic investigation of all the remains of the country’s past – from prehistory to the end of Ottoman rule. The profusion of material remains is evidence of the many cultures that have left their imprint on the Land. The unique geographical features influenced the more ancient cultures: tens of thousands of years ago, the Land served as a land bridge, over which bands of hunters crossed from Africa to Europe. Their camps and living quarters have been found along the Jordan Valley and in the caves of the Carmel range and the Galilee.

In biblical times, the Land was the bridge between the prosperous cultures of the Fertile Crescent: Mesopotamia (today, Iraq) and Egypt. Since its occupation by Alexander the Great, the Land of Israel has served as a geographic and cultural link between east and west.
Archeological research in Israel accords much importance to the fact that the country is the home of the spiritual heritage of the great monotheistic religions. Above all it clearly reveals the historical link between the Jewish people, the Bible and the Land of Israel, uncovering the remains of the cultural heritage of the Jewish people in its homeland. These visible remains, buried in the soil, constitute the physical link between the past, the present and the future of the Jewish people in its country.

This unbroken chain of history can be observed at sites all over the country: in the biblical cities of Hatzor, Megiddo, Gezer, Shomron, Be‘er Sheva, and Dan; in the cities of the Second Temple period – Tiberias, Sephoris (Tsippori), Gamla – and the fortresses of Masada and Herodion, where the Jews fought for freedom; in the Judean Desert near the Dead Sea, where the remains of the Essenes’ spiritual center were uncovered, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, including the earliest copies of books of the Bible, were found. From the same period, sites associated with the life of Jesus were uncovered – Capernaum, Tabgha – where there are also remains of churches from the Byzantine period.

The sites of the great Roman and Byzantine cities of Caesarea, Beit She‘an, and Banias have been uncovered, as have the Negev
towns of Avdat, Halutza, and Mamshit, which prospered at this time. From the Muslim period, there are the remains of the ancient city of Ramle and the palace of Khirbet al-Mafjar (Hisham’s Palace) in Jericho. Remains from the Crusader period include many fortresses and towns – Acre, Caesarea, Belvoir, and Qal’at Nimrod.

Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, has been the focus of extensive archeological activity and remains of 5,000 years of history have been revealed: in the City of David, the walls of the Canaanite city and remains of structures from the capital of the United Kingdom of Israel, including sophisticated underground water systems; from the Second Temple period, the remains of public buildings along the retaining walls of the Temple Mount, which stand to this day, the remains of the splendid residences of the Upper City in today’s Jewish Quarter of the Old City, the ruins of which remained in situ after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in the year 70 CE, and hundreds of rock-cut tombs, some lavishly decorated, which testify to the wealth of the city that was destroyed; many churches and religious buildings from the Byzantine period, the most famous among them The Church of the Holy Sepulchre; from the period of Muslim rule, the
mosques on the Temple Mount and a government center, the remains of which have been excavated south of the Temple Mount; from the Crusader period, city walls, churches, and covered markets; from the Mamluk and Ottoman periods minarets, which adorn the Old City skyline. The walls of the Old City and the citadel next to the Jaffa Gate were built during the reign of the Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566).

There are some 20,000 recognized sites of antiquity in Israel that are protected by law. Every year, dozens of sites from every period of history and in all parts of the country are excavated. Licenses to excavate are issued to expeditions – from Israel and abroad – by the Israel Antiquities Authority, which is entrusted with the preservation of the country’s antiquities. Israel’s Antiquities Law requires every site slated for construction to be examined for archeological remains and a salvage excavation to be conducted if deemed necessary. The state also has the right to preserve finds of public interest; some of the more important of these are exhibited at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The museum also houses the Shrine of the Book, where the Dead Sea Scrolls are preserved, and some are on view to the public.

Much effort, as well as resources, are also invested in preserving and restoring ancient sites and dozens of them, from all periods of history, have been opened to the public.
MEDIA

Keeping informed of events in Israel, the Middle East and the world in general, is very important to Israelis. Listening to hourly radio bulletins, viewing television news broadcasts, and reading at least one daily newspaper are part of most Israelis’ daily routine.

Israel’s commitment to freedom of the press applies to all communications media, with only security matters subject to military censorship. Many daily newspapers in Hebrew are published, in addition to several in Russian, French, and two in English – the long-established Jerusalem Post (formerly Palestine Post), and an English edition of Ha’aretz, one of the country’s leading newspapers, in cooperation with the International Herald Tribune – as well as more than 1,000 periodicals, including magazines for special interest groups. Most major publications have Internet editions.

Radio and Television

Kol Israel (Voice of Israel) operates eight radio networks which offer programming in 17 languages, ranging from light entertainment and popular music to academic lectures, panel discussions, and classical music, each geared to a different audience, from children to seniors, from newcomers to veteran Israelis. Galei Tzahal and Galgalatz (stations of the Israel Defense Forces) broadcast
around the clock, featuring news and music as well as programs of special interest to soldiers. Multilingual, short-wave transmissions for listeners abroad provide a constant and reliable source of information about Israel, the Middle East and Jewish affairs.

Television began in Israel in 1967; today two state-run channels offer educational, information, and entertainment programming in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. One local commercial channel, inaugurated in 1994, is divided among three private producers, with certain hours reserved daily for educational programs. Cable television, funded by monthly subscription fees, is available in most of the country, making it possible to receive dozens of American, European, Asian and Middle Eastern networks. Independent Israeli cable channels present sports, children’s features, movies, and documentaries on a wide range of topics.

Kol Israel and the state-run television channel operate under the aegis of the Israeli Broadcasting Authority (IBA), which is subject to the IBA Law (1965) defining broadcasting as an independent government service, charged with giving expression to diverse perspectives. The IBA is headed by an executive committee, appointed by the government for a three-year term, and by a director-general, appointed for a five-year term. IBA broadcasting is financed by advertising on radio, public service announcements, and an annual fee paid by consumers.
In the 60 years since the establishment of the State of Israel, sports have played an increasingly important role in the development of the country both at home and on the international stage. Despite its small population, Israel's athletes such as tennis star Shahar Pe'er and soccer player Yossi Benayoun regularly make an impact and a name for themselves. Israeli sports teams have also found success abroad, most notably the Maccabi Tel Aviv basketball club, which has established itself as one of the best teams in Europe over the last decade. Israel's national teams have also been improving, with the soccer and basketball teams achieving impressive results.

Outside of the professional arena, sports have always been a significant pastime for hundreds of thousands of Israelis. With miles of beautiful coastline on the country's western border it's no surprise that an estimated half of the population swim regularly. The many months of warm weather encourage Israelis to enjoy outdoor sports, and a competitive attitude ensures youngsters become involved in dozens of different sporting activities from a young age.
Basketball and soccer

Soccer just edges basketball as the most popular sport in Israel. The professional soccer league, with 12 teams in the top Premier League division, is followed closely in the media and attracts crowds of up to 20,000 people at games. After half a decade at the top, Maccabi Haifa's era of unrivaled success appears to be waning, with Betar Jerusalem taking over, having won the league championship for the first time in nine years in May 2007.

Israeli clubs continue to outdo themselves in European competition. Over the past few years Maccabi Haifa has performed the best, reaching the quarterfinals of the Champions League in 2003 and 2010.

Israeli soccer players are having an increasing impact on the world stage, with 20 Israeli soccer players currently playing in top European clubs. In the summer of 2007, Israel captain Yossi Benayoun moved to Liverpool FC and defender Tal Ben Haim to Chelsea, while in January 2008, Tamir Cohen joined Bolton Wanderers.

In basketball, Maccabi Tel Aviv are the kings of Israel, winning nearly every league championship. In recent years, however, new challengers have arisen. In Europe, Maccabi scored several achievements in the Euroleague Final Four, having reached the final in 2006 and 2008 and won the competition in 2004 and 2005.
In 2009, former Maccabi player Omri Casspi made history as the first Israeli to play in the NBA, after he was drafted by the Sacramento Kings.

Hapoel Jerusalem has also had success in the European arena, competing in the ULEB Cup, a competition it won in 2005. The national basketball team has also established itself as a force to be reckoned with. In 2009 it again qualified for the Biannual EuroBasket championship, an event it has participated in since 1993.

Women's basketball is popular in Israel, with two teams – Elitzur Ramle and Anda Ramat Hasharon – regularly battling for the league title. The two also compete in European competition. Female player Shay Doron has, in fact, made one of the biggest impacts of all Israelis after she became the first Israeli to play professional basketball in America in 2007, playing for the New York Liberty in the WNBA.

**Tennis**

In recent years Israeli tennis players have become a fixture at the world's biggest tournaments. Teenager Shahar Pe'er broke into the world's top 20 in 2006 and performs well at WTA-ranked tournaments around the world, including reaching the finals of the Australian Open in 2008 (doubles).
Doubles pair Andy Ram and Yoni Erlich have also established themselves as one of the best in the world, winning the 2008 Australian Open and staying in the world's top 10 for years. Ram has also excelled in the mixed doubles competitions, twice winning Grand Slam events at the French Open with Frenchwoman Nathalie Dechy in 2007 and at Wimbledon in 2006 with Russian Vera Zvonerava.

Israel's national Davis Cup team has also performed impressively, reaching the semifinal in 2009 for the first time in its history.

Despite having no mens singles players inside the world's top 100, Israel's national Davis Cup team has also performed impressively, reaching the World Group in September 2007 for the first time in 13 years following a stunning victory over Chile in front of 5,000 fans at the Ramat Hasharon Tennis Center.

**The Wingate Institute**

An important factor in the success and development of Israeli sports is the Wingate Institute of Physical Education, the national sports center based in its own grounds close to the city of Netanya in central Israel. The institute includes an elite school for gifted young sports students, as well as the Department of Sports Medicine, a world leader in the field. The Council for Sporting Excellence, which
determines which talented athletes will receive stipends to train full time, is also based at Wingate. Numerous Israeli sportsmen and women who have gone on to find success began their careers at Wingate, including Pe'er, Ram, and Erlich.

The Sports Authority of the Ministry of Science, Culture, and Sport sponsors the training of instructors and coaches at Wingate and oversees all sporting activity in Israel, coordinating the activities of the various sports federations and organizations and assisting in the development of programs.

**Youngsters playing sports**
Sports are of course not only for the outstandingly gifted. A sporting culture developed from the early years of the state, with youngsters encouraged to become involved in sports from a young age to promote both fitness and healthy competitiveness. Each week hundreds of thousands of young Israelis compete and play in sports ranging from soccer and basketball to kayaking, sailing, and rock climbing.

A number of major sports organizations run a network of clubs around the country as well as being affiliated to the major sports teams. The most well known include Maccabi (established 1912), Hapoel (1923), Betar (1924), Elitzur (1939), and the Academic Sports Association - ASA (1953).
Schools and community centers also run local leagues and competitions with the national school basketball and soccer finals broadcast on national television.

**Sports as a hobby**

Israel is a sporty nation. On any weekend visitors will see groups of people playing basketball on outside courts in parks around the country, going running in the streets, and playing soccer in the parks. The beaches provide great opportunity for sports. Israel has the highest per capita number of qualified scuba divers in the world, with 50,000, attracted by the unique marine life of the Red Sea. Windsurfing and water skiing are also popular as well as “paddleball”, a locally developed beach game played by keeping a ball in the air by hitting it from paddle to paddle.

Away from the beaches, long-distance running is also high on the list of popular sports, with thousands participating in the annual marathon around Lake Kinneret in the North, beginning and ending in Tiberias, and triathlon events. Cycling is also very popular and the golf course in Caesarea is currently embarking on a redevelopment program. In the winter Mount Hermon in the North has become a beacon for local skiers. Other popular sports include table tennis, boxing, wrestling, weightlifting, judo, karate, and a form of self-defense called Krav Maga, developed by the IDF. Popular team sports include volleyball and handball, which both have their own professional leagues.
Olympics and Maccabiah

Israel has always prided itself on its Olympic success, but until 2004 had never won a gold medal. That changed when windsurfer Gal Fridman came first in his competition at the 2004 Athens games. Arik Zeevi also won a medal at Athens, taking a bronze in the judo competition. In the 2008 Beijing Olympics Shahar Zubari won a bronze in men’s sailboard.

Previous medal winners include Yael Arad and Oren Smadja (silver and bronze in judo in Barcelona, 1992) and Michael Kalganov (bronze in kayaking, Sydney, 2000). Pole vaulter Alex Averbukh never won an Olympic medal but has won bronze and silver medals at the 1999 and 2001 World Athletics Championships, and the gold medal at the 2002 and 2006 European Athletic Championships.

Every four years Israel hosts its own version of the Olympics - the Maccabiah Games, which since 1932 has brought together thousands of Jewish athletes from all over the world. It is one of only seven worldwide competitions recognized by the International Olympic Committee.
Participants compete in events including soccer, basketball, table tennis, and netball and attend an impressive opening ceremony at the National Stadium in Ramat Gan. Many top Jewish athletes have made their names at the Maccabiah, including American swimmers Mark Spitz, who went on to win an unprecedented seven gold medals at the 1972 Olympics, and Lenny Krayzelburg, who swam at the 2004 Athens games.

**New Sports**

English speaking immigrants have brought a number of sports to the country. The Israel Baseball League played professional baseball for a year in 2007. Other sports popular among English speakers are cricket and American football. Israel is a member of the International Cricket Association (ICA); encouraged by Indian immigrants, South African immigrants brought rugby and lawn bowls to the country, and the local men's bowls team is one of the world's best. The American flag football league includes dozens of teams competing for the Holy Land Bowl each season.

**Disabled sports**

Israel has had success in disabled sports, winning medals at the Paralympic games and giving disabled athletes an opportunity to excel. Israel took 42 athletes to the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing, competing in archery, athletics, basketball, cycling, equestrian, rowing, sailing,
shooting, swimming, table tennis and tennis. The team came home with five silver medals and one bronze. Keren Leibowitz is Israel’s most celebrated Paralympic athlete, having won three gold medals in swimming competitions in Sydney 2000, three World Championships, and five European Championships.

The Israel Sports Association for the Disabled (ISAD) conducts a wide range of activities in many fields, including basketball, tennis, volleyball, badminton, table tennis, shooting, riding, archery, swimming, and sailing. The Sports Beit Halohem clubs for disabled army veterans and the Ilan organization for the disabled through injury and illness provide numerous activities.
ISRAEL’S INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL TIES

World-wide culture ties focus on cooperation in a broad range of fields, including language, literature, the arts, media, and sports. Based on cultural agreements with more than 70 countries, in addition to links with many others, activities range from student and academic exchange programs and reciprocal tours by dance troupes, theater companies, art exhibits, musicians and orchestras, to participation in book fairs, film festivals and sports competitions as well as the teaching of the language and cultural traditions of both countries.
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AMONG THE NATIONS

The State of Israel, a member of the United Nations since 1949, maintains relations with the majority of the world's countries. With memories of centuries of persecution, the shattering experience of the Holocaust, and the decades-long Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel’s foreign policy has been geared to advance peace in the region while ensuring the country's security and promoting cooperation with all nations.

It is Israel’s fervent wish to maintain good relations with all countries, with their governments and their peoples...

(David Ben-Gurion, 1952)
Eleven minutes after the proclamation of Israel’s independence on 14 May 1948, American President Harry S. Truman extended recognition to the new state. This act marked the beginning of a relationship based on common values and was characterized by deep friendship and mutual respect. Both countries are vibrant democracies whose political and legal systems are anchored in liberal traditions; both began as pioneer societies; and both are still absorbing and integrating new immigrants. At times the two countries have ‘agreed to disagree,’ settling their differences as friends and allies.

At the same time that the United States was beginning to develop its diplomatic and political relations with Israel, it also joined other Western countries in an arms embargo to the Middle East, believing that by so doing regional tensions would be significantly reduced. After 1952, the Eisenhower administration’s pursuit of Arab support for a Middle East security pact foreshadowed a radical departure from the Truman administration’s partiality towards Israel. Relations between Washington and Jerusalem only drew closer again in the late 1950s following American disillusionment with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s policies. During the Kennedy administration, the
previous American policy on arms supplies was reversed with the lifting of the existing embargo.

Since the latter part of the Johnson administration in the late 1960s, American diplomacy has been based on a commitment to Israel’s right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries to be achieved through direct negotiations with its Arab neighbors.

Believing that a strong Israel is a *sine qua non* for attaining peace in the region, the United States committed itself to maintaining Israel’s qualitative edge over Arab armies. During the Nixon and Carter administrations, it assisted in concluding disengagement agreements between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Syria (1973-74), the Camp David Accords (1978), and the Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty (1979).

During the Reagan administration, relations not only flourished, but were also given a more formal and concrete content. In addition to previous commitments, memorandums of understanding were signed (1981, 1988), forming the basis for setting up a number of joint planning and consultative bodies, which in turn generated practical arrangements in both military and civilian fields. These frameworks of mutual cooperation were subsequently codified in a wider memorandum (1988).
The first Bush administration endorsed Israel’s peace initiative (1989) and co-sponsored the Madrid Peace Conference (1991), which led to the convening of peace talks in Washington, D.C.

The Clinton administration played a key role in the Middle East peace process by actively supporting the agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, Israel’s peace treaty with Jordan, negotiations with Syria and efforts to promote regional cooperation, including an end to the Arab boycott. Pledging to maintain Israel’s qualitative edge, it also committed itself to minimizing the security risks that Israel might incur in its pursuit of peace.

The George W. Bush administration took several important measures to back Israel in its war against terrorism, and Israel supports President Bush’s vision for achieving peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

The continuing and deepening amity between Israel and the United States has been defined by various American administrations in terms ranging from the preservation of Israel as a ‘basic tenet’ of American foreign policy, with emphasis on a ‘special relationship’ between the two nations, to a declaration of an ‘American commitment’ to Israel. By the early 1980s, Israel was regarded by the United States as a ‘strategic asset’ and was designated
(1987), in accordance with legislation passed the previous year, as a ‘major non-NATO ally.’

Congressional backing for Israel is bipartisan. Support for annual military assistance, the peace process and Israel’s struggle against terrorism have been hallmarks of Congress’ commitment to United States–Israel friendship, as was the passage of legislation (1995) recognizing Jerusalem as the united capital of Israel and calling for the establishment of the United States Embassy in Jerusalem. The ‘special relationship’ encompasses mutual economic, political, strategic, and diplomatic concerns. Israel currently receives some $2.6 billion a year in security and economic aid, and bilateral trade has been enhanced by the Israel-United States Free Trade Area Agreement (1985).

A growing number of joint ventures sponsored by Israeli and American industrial firms have been established, and several American states have entered into ‘state-to-state’ agreements with Israel, involving activities ranging from culture to agriculture.

The United States usually stands by Israel’s side in international forums, staving off attempts both in the
United Nations and in associated bodies to push through anti-Israel resolutions. The two countries have been cooperating to their mutual advantage in exchanges of intelligence and military information, as well as in the war against international terrorism and the campaign against drugs. United States-Israel friendship is bolstered by support from the American-Jewish community and a wide segment of American society.

**CANADA**

Canada recognized Israel de jure in 1949 and Israel and Canada have had full diplomatic relations for many years, based on common democratic values, with bilateral links enhanced by cultural and scientific exchanges.

Canada-Israel economic relations have become closer through the implementation of the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA).

In the international arena, Canada’s support for Israel is expressed through its generally pro-Israel stance in various UN forums.
CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

On 29 November 1947, the UN General Assembly voted on the establishment of two states, one Jewish and one Arab, on the territory included in the British Mandate for Palestine; 13 of the then 20 Latin American member nations voted in favor. In the 1950s and 1960s, relations with countries of the region were strengthened, due in no small measure to joint programs in which Israel shared its experience and skills in areas such as agriculture, medicine, organization of cooperatives, and rural, regional, and community development. Thousands of trainees have participated in study programs in Israel. Developments in the international arena during the 1960s and 1970s led to a lessening of support for Israel of these countries, mainly at the UN and its affiliated bodies.

Today Israel maintains full diplomatic relations with all the countries of Central and South America and the Caribbean region, except Cuba. These relations are reflected in productive cooperation in the political, economic and cultural spheres, as well as in a large number of bilateral agreements in many areas.

Commerce is extending steadily. A Free Trade Agreement between Mexico and Israel, concluded in 2000, added a
new dimension to this sphere. Exports, including chemicals, hi-tech software, agricultural produce, machinery and electronics, and imports, consisting mainly of meat, grain, corn, sugar, cocoa, coffee, and metals, are both on the increase, and Israeli banks, construction firms and agricultural planning and development companies are active in the countries of Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Many Israelis visit Central and South America, particularly young Israelis for whom a visit to these regions is part of a post-Army right of passage.
WESTERN EUROPE

Western Europe is Israel’s most natural trading partner. The establishment of a free trade zone (1975) with the European Community (EC) led to a significant increase in exports to Europe, and an even greater increase in EC exports to Israel. This growth in trade has been accelerated by the development of close business connections between entrepreneurs and investors and the setting up of joint ventures, as well as by efforts to strengthen economic ties with the member countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). The Israel-European Union (EU) Association Agreement, signed in 1995, came into force in June 2000, allowing for heightened political dialogue, as well as closer economic relations. In the mid-1990s, Israel joined the Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development of the EU. In November 2007, the EU-Israel Business Dialogue was established with the aim of promoting understanding and cooperation between the private sectors of the parties. In December 2004, the Action Plan under the European Neighborhood Policy was concluded between Israel and the European Union.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.
GPO / Amos Ben Gershon
Along with the United States, Russia, and the United Nations, the European Union is a member of the “Quartet” which seeks to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict through the peace process.
CENTRAL EUROPE AND EURO-ASIA

Relations between Israel and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which were renewed as soon as these countries restored their democracies, are becoming increasingly close, especially in economic matters, culture, tourism, and international cooperation activities. Economic agreements with these countries are of importance, given that many of them are members of the European Union or candidates for future membership.

As these countries had been the center of world Jewry before World War II, the memory of the Holocaust is a significant factor in relations with them. Issues being dealt with include restoration of nationalized Jewish public and private property to their owners or legal heirs, recognition of the ‘Righteous among the Nations' who risked their lives to save Jews during the Nazi era, and cooperation with the governments of the region to combat manifestations of antisemitism.

Israel's relations with the Eurasian states (former Soviet Union) have gained momentum, particularly in the political, economic and cultural realms. Official visits and new agreements have laid a solid foundation for expanding these relations. Trade and investment ties are
showing impressive growth. More than a million former Soviet citizens now living in Israel form a human bridge between Israel and their countries of origin, adding a special dimension to the relations.

Israel's ties with the Russian Federation are of strategic importance given its active involvement in the diplomatic process in the Middle East (as a member of the Quartet) and in the negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program.

Israel continues to enhance its relations with Central Asian Caucasus states, where there is great demand for Israeli MASHAV aid in the fields of public health, advanced agriculture, water resource management and the fight against desertification. Other important issues are the preservation of Jewish heritage in the Eurasian states, perpetuation of the memory of the Holocaust and the fight against antisemitism.
Israel’s ties with the Sub-Saharan African countries date from the mid-1950s; first contacts with some of them had taken place even before they achieved independence. In 1956, diplomatic relations were established with Ghana, followed by most countries south of the Sahara; by the early 1970s, Israel maintained full diplomatic relations with 33 countries there. These ties were an expression of African affinity with Israel, itself a young state that had achieved independence in 1948 and was eager to share its experience and expertise with the newly independent African states. Mutually beneficial economic ties were also developed, including many joint ventures.

In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, followed by the global oil crisis, most of the Sub-Saharan countries severed diplomatic ties with Israel, due to two prime factors: promises of cheap oil and financial aid from the Arab states, and compliance with the OAU (Organization of African Unity) resolution, sponsored by Egypt, calling for the severing of relations with Israel. Only Malawi, Lesotho, and Swaziland maintained full diplomatic relations with Israel, while a few other countries sustained contact through interest offices in foreign embassies.
Cooperation did, however, continue to some extent; African students participated in training courses in Israel; and Israeli experts were active throughout the continent.

Since the 1980s, diplomatic relations with sub-Saharan countries have been gradually renewed, gaining momentum as peace negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors progressed. By the late 1990s, official ties had been reestablished with 39 countries south of the Sahara.

Today, Israel and the sub-Saharan countries are engaged in an ongoing political dialogue, expressed in reciprocal visits by heads of state and government ministers. Furthermore, dynamic activities exist, including economic and commercial ties, cultural and academic contacts, a variety of joint agricultural projects, medical assistance, professional training programs, and humanitarian aid in times of need.

Israel has followed with interest the process of political and economic integration in Africa and the creation of the African Union. As an expression of friendship and solidarity, Israel has reiterated its commitment to work together with the emerging institutions and organizations in Africa, adding another chapter to its unique relations with this continent.
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Israel maintains diplomatic relations with most Asian states. The growing economic strength and political influence of these countries has contributed to the intensification of ties in the political, cultural and, above all, economic spheres. Technical cooperation with Israel in the areas of scientific R&D, rural development, agriculture and education has played an important role in strengthening relations with the developing countries of the region.

Israel and China established diplomatic relations in 1992. Since then, they have developed their relations steadily, culminating in the historical visit of the Chinese president to Israel in 2000 and the visits of three Israeli presidents to Beijing.

Since the mid-1980s, Israel and Japan have expanded their bilateral relations, reflected in the signing of several agreements and in the reciprocal visits of prime ministers. Japan has also played a significant role in the multilateral peace process.

Diplomatic relations with India, which started in 1992, have also intensified since the late 90s in all aspects. In 2003, Israel's prime minister made the first ever visit to New Delhi. In the year 2000, Israel renewed diplomatic relations with Sri-Lanka.
Diplomatic relations with the Republic of Korea were established in 1962. In the last few years the relations are booming in every field. In the year 2007, foreign ministers of both countries exchanged visits.

Israel also maintains good relations with many ASEAN member countries. Some of these ties date back 50 years and more, as in the case of Myanmar, Thailand and the Philippines. Some ties began more recently, when Israel established relations with Mongolia, Cambodia, and Laos. Relations with Vietnam have developed rapidly since 1993, especially in the fields of economics, trade and agricultural cooperation. An annual political dialogue was established between the two foreign ministries in 2005.

Nepal and Israel have a long tradition of close and very friendly relations, which began in the early 1960s. Nepal's foreign minister visited Jerusalem for the first time in 2007, announcing the opening of an embassy in Tel Aviv.

Israel has had full diplomatic relations with Australia and New Zealand for many years. In recent years, relations were established with 12 independent island nations of the Pacific. Israel shares with these countries its experience in various fields.
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

EGYPT

Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty in 1979, marking the end of 30 years of relentless hostility and five costly wars. The treaty was preceded by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem (1977), at the invitation of Israel’s Prime Minister Menachem Begin, as well as the signing of the Camp David Accords (1978), which constituted a basis for peace between Egypt and Israel and between Israel and its other neighbors. The accords also addressed the need to solve the Palestinian issue, following a five-year interim phase of autonomy for the Palestinian Arab residents of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) and the Gaza Strip. President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their achievement.

The peace implemented between Israel and Egypt consists of several major elements, including the termination of the state of war as well as acts or threats of belligerency, hostility or violence; the establishment of diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties; the removal of barriers to trade and freedom of movement; and withdrawal by
Israel from the Sinai peninsula, with agreed security arrangements and limited force zones. Israel completed its withdrawal from Sinai (1982) according to the terms of the treaty, giving up strategic military bases and other assets in exchange for peace.

Although Egypt was ostracized by other Arab states following the signing of the treaty, all have since reestablished relations with Egypt and reopened their embassies in Cairo. The headquarters of the Arab League, which had been transferred to Tunis, were reinstated in Cairo in the early 1980s.

Having to overcome 30 years of distrust and hostility, normalization of relations between Israel and Egypt is a long and arduous process. Yet, embassies and consulates were established by both countries, and meetings between government ministers and high-ranking officials take place regularly.

Following the renewed outbreak of Palestinian terrorism (September 2000), relations cooled considerably and Egypt recalled its ambassador, who was returned at the beginning of 2005. Nevertheless, trade and cooperation continued, and the joint military committee meets regularly. In light of Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip, to which Egypt contributed, relations have improved.
JORDAN

The peace treaty between Jordan and Israel, signed at the Akaba-Eilat border crossing (October 1994), was preceded by a meeting of King Hussein and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Washington three months earlier, when the two leaders proclaimed an end to the state of war between their countries.

Although de facto at war with each other for 46 years, Israel and Jordan had maintained secret contacts and concluded mutually beneficial agreements throughout that period.

The 1991 Madrid Conference led to public bilateral talks, culminating in a formal treaty (1994) in which both countries have undertaken to refrain from acts of belligerency, to ensure that no threats of violence to the other will originate within their territory, to endeavor to prevent terrorism and act together to achieve security and cooperation in the Middle East by replacing military preparedness with confidence-building measures. Other provisions include agreed allocations from existing water resources, freedom of passage for nationals of both countries, efforts to alleviate the refugee problem and cooperation in the development of the Jordan Rift Valley. The international boundary delineated in the treaty has
replaced the 1949 cease-fire lines and is delimited with reference to the British Mandate boundary (1922-48).

With the ratification of the peace treaty, full diplomatic relations were established and, since then, the relationship between Israel and Jordan has been moving forward steadily.

The basis for implementation of the Israel-Jordan peace treaty was established with the signing and ratification of 12 bilateral agreements in economic, scientific, and cultural spheres. These treaties are to serve as the foundation of peaceful relations between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The most significant expression of the peaceful relations is the establishment of Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs), which enables Jordan, via cooperation with Israel, to export to the US quota-free and tariff-free commodities worth more than one billion dollars. Israel is also cooperating with Jordan in two agricultural projects and in public health.

King Abdullah II, who succeeded his father, King Hussein, in March 1999, visited Israel in April 2000.

Following the renewed outbreak of Palestinian terrorism (September 2000) in the territories, relations with Jordan cooled and Jordan recalled its ambassador. There has
been a gradual development of relations and Jordan returned its ambassador in 2005.

In June 2003, King Abdullah II hosted a summit in Aqaba with President Bush and with Prime Minister Sharon and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. In April 2004, King Abdullah II visited then Prime Minister Sharon at his residence in the Negev.

GULF STATES
As a result of the Oslo peace process in the Middle East, the Gulf States showed interest in relations with Israel for the first time since 1948. Initial contacts were followed with a series of reciprocal visits by high-level officials. In May 1996, Israel opened trade representation offices in Oman and Qatar to develop economic, scientific, and commercial relations, with emphasis on water resources utilization, tourism, agriculture, chemicals, and advanced technologies.

Since the renewed outbreak of Palestinian terrorism in 2000, relations with the Gulf States have cooled. Israel's trade representation office in Oman has been closed.

MAGHREB COUNTRIES
In 1994, three North African Arab states – Morocco, Mauritania, and Tunisia – joined other Arab countries
and chose to take the path of peace and reconciliation by forming diplomatic ties with Israel.

Initiated in different ways at various levels, relations between Morocco and Israel were formalized when Israel opened a liaison office (November 1994) in the Moroccan capital, Rabat. Four months later, Morocco opened its office in Israel, thus formally establishing bilateral diplomatic relations.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania and Israel concluded an agreement at the Barcelona Conference (November 1995), in the presence of the Spanish foreign minister, to establish interest sections in the Spanish embassies in Tel Aviv and Nouakchott, respectively. Mauritania opened its diplomatic mission in Tel Aviv (May 1996) and indicated its wish to fully normalize relations with Israel.

In October 1999, Mauritania became the third Arab country (after Egypt and Jordan) to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel.

Following a timetable worked out by Israel, Tunisia, and the United States (January 1996), Israel opened an interest office in Tunisia (April 1996), and Tunisia reciprocated six weeks later (May 1996).
Diplomatic relations with the moderate Maghreb countries are important because of the role these countries play in the Arab world, and also because of Israel’s large population of North African emigrés who retain an emotional attachment to the countries where their families lived for many centuries. This affinity is an asset which may lead to more profound relationships and make a practical contribution to the peace process.

After the renewal of Palestinian terrorism in 2000, Morocco and Tunisia broke off diplomatic ties with Israel. Nevertheless, some commercial relations and tourism continue, as well as contacts in other fields.
The establishment of full diplomatic relations between Israel and the Holy See (under the terms of a Fundamental Agreement signed in Jerusalem in December 1993) may be viewed as a step of major significance in an historic process of change in the Church’s attitude to Judaism and the Jewish people, publicly initiated by the declaration known as Nostra Aetate, issued by the Second Vatican Council in 1965.

In their Fundamental Agreement, Israel and the Holy See noted the “unique nature of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people...” and committed themselves to “appropriate cooperation in combating all forms of antisemitism and all kinds of racism and religious intolerance, and in promoting mutual understanding among nations, tolerance among communities and respect for human life and dignity,” and “the peaceful resolution of conflicts among states and nations, excluding violence and terror from international life.” Additional obligations concern the Status Quo regime affecting the Christian Holy Places, questions relating to freedom of religion, pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and other matters.

In November 1997 an agreement was signed in Jerusalem
defining the status of the Catholic Church in Israel and its hierarchy under Israeli law. This marks the first *de jure* recognition of the Catholic Church by any government in the Holy Land.

In March 2000, Pope John Paul II came to Israel on a personal pilgrimage of the Holy Places, meeting with President Ezer Weizman and Prime Minister Ehud Barak. Other events included meetings with the chief rabbis and visits to Yad Vashem and to the Western Wall. The visit emphasized the continuing process of understanding between Judaism and the Catholic Church.
THE UNITED NATIONS

The State of Israel was admitted to the United Nations (UN) as its 59th member on 11 May 1949. Since then, it has participated in a wide range of UN operations and has endeavored to make its full contribution to UN organizations dealing with health, labor, food and agriculture, education and science. Israel plays an active role in the work of non-governmental organizations, conducted under UN auspices, which deal with issues ranging from aviation to immigration, from communications to meteorology, from trade to the status of women.

For five decades Israel was excluded from a regional group in the United Nations; in April 2000 it was admitted to the Western Regional Group (WEOG) on a temporary basis until it could join the Asian group. Since then, Israel can elect and be elected to major United Nations bodies. Israel was elected (through WEOG) to the vice presidency of the 60th UN General Assembly.

Some UN resolutions have been of crucial significance for Israel. Among them are Security Council Resolutions
242 (22 November 1967) and 338 (22 October 1973), which provide an agreed framework for settling the Arab-Israel dispute.

Over the years, the UN has been active in bringing about a cessation of hostilities between Israel and its Arab neighbors by appointing mediators, extending UN auspices to cease-fire and armistice agreements and stationing UN forces between the adversaries.

The UN has been used for years as a battleground for political warfare against Israel. The 21 Arab states, with the aid of Islamic countries and their ally the non-aligned camp, constituted an 'automatic majority', assuring the adoption of anti-Israel resolutions in the General Assembly.

In its effort to bring into the General Assembly the Jewish narrative, Israel succeeded in 2005 in convening a special session of the General Assembly on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps in Europe and to include the adoption of a new General Assembly resolution on an annual Holocaust Remembrance.

WZO has functioned as liaison to Diaspora Jewry, promoting activities which focus on the unity of the Jewish people and the centrality of Israel in Jewish life; facilitating immigration; fostering Jewish education in Jewish communities worldwide; and defending the rights of Jews wherever they live. The democratically-elected World Zionist Congress, the supreme body of the WZO, meets every 4-5 years in Jerusalem.
WORLD JEWRY

Since the first exile (586 BCE) and subsequent dispersions of Jews throughout the world, a unique and dynamic relationship has existed between Jews living in the Land of Israel and those residing outside it. Although separated by long distances over many centuries, the Jews have remained one nation, bound by a common history, religion and homeland as well as a collective commitment to the physical and spiritual survival of the Jewish people. The establishment of the State of Israel (1948) grew out of their 2,000-year-old dream to return to their ancestral homeland and revive its national life and sovereignty.

Recent estimates put the world Jewish population at more than 13 million, 41 percent of whom live in Israel. Jews everywhere share a spectrum of history, ideals and interests, and are engaged in ongoing dialogue on a wide range of issues.

World Jewry, in recognition of the centrality of Israel in Jewish life, participates in building the country, through social, political and financial support, as well as by coming to Israel, making it their home and adding their particular
skills and cultural backgrounds to the Israeli mosaic. A long tradition of mutual aid among Jews is manifested in a multifaceted network of organizations designed to cater to hundreds of Jewish-Israeli interests.

For its part, Israel constantly seeks to strengthen the Jewish communities and its bond with them by helping those in need, promoting Israel-oriented activities, Hebrew language study, economic opportunities and visits of groups and individuals to Israel.

The State of Israel actively attaches high importance to the security of Jewish communities all over the world. Following the recent rise in antisemitism, Israel - in cooperation with Jewish organizations, and with governments in Europe, the United States and other parts of the world - is combating racism, in general, and antisemitism, in particular.