

ISRAEL SHELANU ישראלי שלנו

This newsletter is a nonpolitical, informational and educational publication. Informing about news that does not always make the US headlines. We aim to educate about institutions, constitutions, organizations, history and other small things that makes Israel, Israel Shelanu - Our Israel.

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News

חדשות

Shabbat Start/End Jerusalem: 4:16 / 5:33 Tel Aviv: 4:36 / 5:34

Since Hamas completed its takeover of the Gaza Strip in mid-June 2007, terrorist groups there have continued firing rockets and mortars at Israel's cities and farming communities in the northwestern Negev. To date, 240 rockets have been launched on Israel from the Gaza Strip. On 7 October, a Grad missile was launched from Gaza, marking a significant escalation in the Palestinian campaign of terror against Israeli civilians. Over the past four months, weapons smuggling from Egypt into the Gaza Strip continued, as did the training of Hamas terrorists. The terrorist organizations continued to threaten Israeli children firing an exceptional number of rockets at Sderot with the opening of the new school year. (MFA)

Israel annually exports more than 1.5 billion flowers to the US and Europe. It brings upward of \$200 million into the economy annually. The country is third only to the Netherlands and Kenya in supplying the European Union with its flowers. Israel's total agricultural yield is about 2 percent of the gross national product - or \$3.5 billion. (Israel Flower Growers Association/IL21c)

Coming to your fridge door soon! Soon, your note writing can go digital with The Scribbler - an electronic screen that sticks to your fridge door and connects you remotely to your PC. Developed by Winbond Israel, The Scribbler utilizes Windows SideShow and Bluetooth technology to allow users to both input data and access e-mails, weather reports, reminders, or anything else found on the main computer. (IL 21c)

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, 62, announced that he has been diagnosed with prostate cancer and will undergo surgery to remove small tumors. Olmert and his doctors said that the procedure is simple and that he is fit to work.

"I will be perfectly fit to fulfill my duties before the operation, and within a few hours after it," Olmert said firmly.

A delegation of 23 attorneys general from the United States, including Attorneys General of Arizona, Virginia, Georgia, Rhode Island, Idaho and Arkansas will visit Israel from 25 October to 2 November. This is the 25th consecutive year that a visit of this type has been arranged. (MFA)

More news on page 2...

Did you know?

הידעת?

Israel's Nobility

We continue our presentation of the 7 Israeli Nobel Laureates. Last issue we gave a brief biography of the most recent recipient Dr. Aumann. This week we will move back in time to our first Nobel Laureate, Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888-1970) who received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1966.

Agnon was born Shmuel Yosef Halevi Czaczkes in Buczacz, Galicia (now Ukraine) in 1888. His father, Shalom Mordechai Halevy, was and ordained rabbi, but worked in the fur trade. He did not attend school and was schooled by his parents. He was an avid reader of Haskalah (Jewish enlightenment) literature. At the age of fifteen, he published his first poem - a Yiddish poem about the Kabbalist della Reina.

In 1908, he immigrated to Jaffa. The first story he published there was "Agunot" ("Forsaken Wives"), which appeared that same year in the journal Ha'omer. He used the pen name "Agnon," derived from the title of the story, which he adopted as his official surname in 1924.

In 1913, Agnon moved to Germany, where he met Esther Marx. They married in 1920 and had two children. In Germany, Salman Schocken, a publisher and businessman, became his literary patron and freed him from financial worries. From that time on, his work was published by Schocken Books, and his short stories appeared regularly in the newspaper Haaretz, also owned by the Schocken family. In Germany, he continued to write short stories and collaborated with Martin Buber on an anthology of Hasidic stories.

In 1924, a fire broke out in his home, destroying his manuscripts and rare book collection. This traumatic event crops up occasionally in his stories. Later that year, Agnon returned to Jerusalem and settled with his family in the neighborhood of Talpiot. In 1929, his library was destroyed again.

When his novel Hachnasat Kalla ("The Bridal Canopy") appeared in 1931 to great critical acclaim, Agnon's place in Hebrew literature was assured. In 1935, he published "Sippur Pashut" ("A Simple Story"), a novella set in Buczacz at the end of the 19th century. Another novel, "Tmol Shilshom" ("Yesteryear"), set in Eretz Yisrael of the early 20th century, appeared in 1945. It is by many considered his greatest novel and examines the problem facing the Westernized Jew who immigrates to Israel.

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In 1966, he shared the Nobel Prize in Literature with German Jewish author Nelly Sachs. In his speech at the award ceremony, Agnon introduced himself in Hebrew: "As a result of the historic catastrophe in which Titus of Rome destroyed Jerusalem and Israel was exiled from its land, I was born in one of the cities of the Exile. But always I regarded myself as one who was born in Jerusalem."

Agnon's fame was such that when he complained to the municipality that traffic noise near his home was disturbing his work, the city closed the street to cars and posted a sign that read: "No entry to all vehicles, writer at work!"

Agnon's image has appeared on the 50 shekel banknote since 1985.

Teach your children...

ושונתם לבניך...

Insights about the Land of Israel through the eyes of the Torah and Sages throughout Jewish History.

Me'arat haMachpela - The Cave of Machpela

We read this week of the death and burial of the first of the Matriarchs, Sarah. Avraham enters into a protracted attempt to acquire a burial plot for Sarah. He is finally successful in convincing Efron the Hittite to part with his field and cave in Kiryat Arba, next to Hevron, for the exorbitant fee of 400 silver shekel.

This plot of land became the burial place for all our Patriarchs and Matriarchs, except for Rachel, who was buried in Beit Lechem.

Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (Spain, 1089-1164) writes that the Torah devotes such detail to this story to show that the Land of Israel is superior to all other lands for both the living and the dead.

Furthermore, Rabbeinu Yona (Spain, 1180-1263) lists the burial of Sarah as the tenth trial that Avraham underwent. For even though Avraham was promised the land as an inheritance, he had to go to the trouble of finding a fitting family plot, and does so without complaint.

The Midrash in Bereishit Rabba (79:7) lists the cave of Machpela as one of three places over which the nations of the world have no claim that the Jewish people stole it from the former inhabitants of Canaan. The other two places are Shechem, the burial place of Yosef which Yaakov bought (Bereishit 33:19), and the site of the Temple which King David bought from Aravna the Jebusite (II Shmuel 24:24).

A good laugh

שמח ומבדח

There were two golf players. The first went to take the shot, and the ball landed in the pond, and sunk to the bottom. He walked up to the pond, stuck his club into the ground, and the water split in half. He walked in, and took another shot, hole in two.

Next player shot, it landed in the water, and got eaten by a fish. The fish swam to the surface and got swallowed by a bird. There was a lightning strike, and the bird spat out the fish, who spat out the ball. It fell into the hole. Hole in one.

And Moses looked up, and said "That's the last time that I play with you, Dad!"



Supporters of Tel Aviv-based soccer team Hapoel Kiryat Shalom, in Israel's third amateur division, can now use the team's Web site to vote on the starting line ups and to give instructions to the field coach. 'Most of our surfers like the idea that they can decide what the team will do,' says Moshe Hogeg, a diehard soccer fan. Mr. Hogeg teamed up with an online gaming company called Play65 and bought the team for \$500,000. Over 6,000 Internet surfers went on the site for the first game. The result? They lost 3-2 to Maccabi Ironi Or Yehuda. But there was a silver lining to the outcome - the fans only had themselves to blame. (IL21c)

Where do people buy apartments? In the first half of 2007 Netanya had a clear lead with 671 new apartments sold, despite showing only a slight increase in sales. Tel Aviv dropped to 2nd place, with new apartment sales plunging 46% to 577. Petah Tikva held on to 3rd place and Jerusalem came in 6th. The most dramatic fall in sales was seen in Kfar Saba, where the number of apartments sold was less than half of that sold in 2006. (Globes)

Israeli startup Speedbit has developed a new technology that offers a solution for today's slow delivery of video over the Internet. The Speedbit Video Accelerator cuts down on the picture freezes, hiccups, and buffering effects that encumber current Internet video downloads, offering viewers a smoother viewing experience. The Haifa-based company already supports some 60 video streaming and download sites including Reuters Video, CNN, ESPN, and iTunes, and is now in negotiations with major cellphone and consumer electronics manufacturers. From here it's just a short step to the anticipated revolution in TV viewing. (IL21c)



...And speak of them

וזכרתם בם

Facts about the modern State of Israel that you can share with your children.

Israel's largest newspaper is Ma'ariv.



Israel's largest English language newspaper is the Jerusalem Post.



A word from the Editor

דבר העורך

Suggestions, comments and bright ideas are always welcome. Our goal is to publish bi-weekly for the remainder of 2007 and then become a weekly newsletter in January 2008.

In order to do so we need to add "staff". You don't have to be a Nobel Laureate (although it is a plus), simply have a passion for Israel and a desire to inform and educate the community at large in a non-political fashion. If you are interested in joining the team please e-mail me at IsraelShelanu@sbcglobal.net. Mickie Sallmander - Editor

