

ISRAEL SHELANU שְׁלוֹנוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל

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.

Vol. 1 no. 7 A publication of the Community Kollel of Dallas December 28th, 2007 / Tevet 19, 5768

News חדשות

Shabbat Start/End Jerusalem: 4:03 / 5:23 Tel Aviv: 4:23 / 5:25

Being ready means being protected

While the IDF does not foresee a war in the immediate future, the Home Front Command has launched an unprecedented media campaign. Brochures are being mailed to homes across the country explaining to civilians how to prepare for missile onslaughts against Israel. The campaign also includes a number of radio and television commercials - including one intended for children. The campaign's slogan is "Being ready means being protected." "The campaign is one of the main lessons we learned from the Second Lebanon War," a senior officer. "This is our way of helping the public get ready for the possibility that war will break out in the future." (Jerusalem Post)

A map is a map.....not really

Fatah is planning to mark its 43rd anniversary with a new poster that presents all of Israel as Palestine. The poster, posted on a number of Fatah-affiliated Web sites, features a map of Israel that is entirely draped with a Palestinian keffiyeh scarf. It also carries a drawing of a rifle as a symbol of the "armed struggle" against Israel. (Jerusalem Post)

Reading glasses

Israeli nanotechnology experts at the Technion have inscribed the entire Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible onto a space less than half the size of a grain of sugar. Ohad Zohar, the university's scientific adviser for educational programs, said the technology will in the future be used as a way to store vast amounts of data. (AP/Washington Post)

Donuts anyone

New research at Israel's Rabin Medical Center shows that elderly people with a higher than normal body mass index have a greater chance of living a longer life than their thinner peers. The study's author recommends adopting more flexible criteria for defining who is overweight among the elderly. (IL21c)

"Tony in Bethlehem" (not a musical)

The Defense Ministry set up a special passage into Bethlehem to be used by pilgrims before and during their holiday. This was done to prevent long lines due to security checks, following an official request made by Tony Blair, the Quartet's special envoy to the Middle East. (Ha'aretz)



Did you know? הידעת?

The President of Israel

The President, *nasi* in Hebrew, 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. He is the head of state and his office symbolizes the unity of the state, above and beyond party politics.

Presidential duties, which are mostly ceremonial and formal, are defined by law. Amongst his formal functions are the opening of the first session of a new Knesset; accepting the credentials of foreign envoys; signing treaties and laws adopted by the Knesset; appointing judges, the governor of the Bank of Israel and heads of Israel's diplomatic missions abroad, on the recommendation of the appropriate bodies; and pardoning prisoners and commuting sentences, on the advice of the minister of justice. In addition, the president performs public functions and informal tasks which include citizens' appeals, lending prestige to communal and social associations, and strengthening public actions such as the fight against road accidents.

The president is elected by a simple majority of the Knesset from among candidates nominated on the basis of their personal stature and contribution to the state. The president is elected for one term of seven years.

- Israel's Presidents
- Chaim Weizmann (1949-52) - Zionist leader, scientist
 - Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (1952-63) - Zionist leader, historian
 - Zalman Shazar (1963-73) - scholar, author, poet
 - Ephraim Katzir (1973-78) - renowned biochemist
 - Yitzhak Navon (1978-83) - educator, author
 - Chaim Herzog(1983-93) - attorney, general, diplomat
 - Ezer Weizman (1993-2000) - air force general, politician
 - Moshe Katzav (2000-2007) - social leader, politician
 - Shimon Peres (2007-) – politician, Nobel laureate

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A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey - ארץ זבת חלב ודבש

In this week's Parasha we see for the first time the well known description of the Promised Land as a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Shmot 3:8).

These words are a description of the bountiful flora and fauna of Israel, and they characterize in brief all that is good about the land.

The Talmud (Ketubot 111b) relates the following story:

When he once visited Bnei Brak the Talmudic Sage Rami bar Yehezkel saw goats eating beneath a fig tree. Honey oozed from the ripe figs, milk dripped from the goats, and the two combined into one flowing stream.

This is the meaning, he exclaimed, of "a land flowing with milk and honey!"

And yet, it is much more than a mere description. It is a promise, a blessing.

The land will produce such natural goods. Not because it is in the nature of the land to do so, but because God wants it to be so, as we see from the book of Devarim (11:11-12).

But the land, to which you pass to possess, is a land of mountains and valleys and absorbs water from the rains of heaven, a land the Lord, your God, looks after; the eyes of Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

It is up to us to work with God in the preservation of the land. It is up to us to continue supporting the land, whether by toiling in it or for it. And it is up to us to appreciate and give thanks daily for the miraculous gift that is the land flowing with milk and honey.

...And speak of them

וזכרתם בם

If you teach your children 2 facts a week for the next 120 years they will know 12,480 facts about Israel.

- Israel's Prime minister is elected for a 4 year term (or less).
- Israel's President is elected for a 7 year term.

**A good laugh**

שמח ומבדח

Shlomo walks into 'Ephraim's Kosher Butcher', goes over to Ephraim and says, 'So, Ephraim, I hear that you're something of a betting man.'

'Yes,' replies Ephraim.

'Well,' says Shlomo, 'You're a tall man, so I bet you \$50 that you can't reach those pieces of meat hanging on those hooks up on that wall.'

'I'm not taking your bet,' says Ephraim.

'Why not?' says Shlomo, 'I thought you were a betting man.'

'I am,' says Ephraim, 'but the steaks are too high!'

**Call Al Gore**

On December 19th U.S. President George W. Bush signed the American-Israeli joint energy research bill into law. The bill will fund cooperative research and development efforts by the U.S. and Israel to develop sources of renewable alternative energy. The two countries research ventures will focus on solar, biomass, wind, geothermal, wave and tidal energy, as well as advanced battery technology and energy efficiency. (The Israel Project)

Who needs enemies when you have good friends

Leading Israeli human rights lawyer Justus Weiner has criticized Western governments and the mainstream media for ignoring the systematic persecution of Palestinian Arab Christians by their Muslim neighbors and rulers. Speaking at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Weiner presented several specific cases of recent intimidation, physical abuse and murder of Palestinian Christians, but said those were merely the tip of the iceberg. He noted that most of the massive Christian exodus from Bethlehem has come after Israel handed control of the city to the Palestinian Authority. The answer, said Weiner, is for Western "Christian" governments, the international media, and human rights organizations to intervene and demand the PA begin protecting the rights of Christians living in areas under its control. (Israel Today)

Oprah & Oscar

Journalist and writer, Ron Leshem has been topping the Israeli bestseller list for the last 18 months with his gut-wrenching novel, If there is a Paradise, tracing the last days of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. Now the book, which has been made into award-winning movie Beaufort, is about to be released in the US by publishing giant Random House. (IL21c)

Come and visit

2.1 million tourists entered Israel in January-November 2007, 24% more than during the corresponding period in 2006. The tourism industry now employs 100,000 persons, after hiring 20,000 people since January. 209,000 tourists entered Israel in November, almost double the 117,000 who entered in November 2006. 143,000 tourists entered by air and 65,000 by land. Most of the tourists entering by land were Polish and Russian tourists making day trips from Sinai. (Globes)

This is not a misprint

Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports that for the first time ever, an Israeli-sponsored resolution relating to socio-economic policy has been adopted by the United Nations. The resolution calls on developed states to share their knowledge in agricultural science and technologies with the developing world. (IsraAID)

Make Aliyah

Israel's unemployment is falling faster than expected, thanks to rapid economic growth and job creation. The Central Bureau of Statistics reports that the employment rate fell to 6.9% of the civilian labor force in October 2007. The October unemployment rate is the lowest since the 6.7% rate in 1996. Israel had 200,000 unemployed persons in October, the lowest number in twenty years. (Globes)