

ISRAEL SHELANU שְׁלָנוּ 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.

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News חדשות

Shabbat Start/End Jerusalem: 4:19 / 5:39 Tel Aviv: 4:39 / 5:41

59 % of the world Jewry can still make aliyah
The world Jewish population in 2007 is estimated at 13.2 million people, a rise of 200,000 over 2006, according to a Jewish People Policy Planning Institute report. In the past year, the number of diaspora Jews shrank by 100,000, while Israel's Jewish population rose by 300,000. Israel is now the home of 41% of world Jewry. (Ha'aretz)

\$100 per barrel, who cares?
Israeli start-up Orionsolar has developed nanotechnology based solar power cells that promise to conserve energy, reduce global warming, and cut power prices. The company's nano-cells, coated with organic dye which creates energy when exposed to sunlight, could be a lifesaver in developing countries where large portions of the population still don't have power. (IL 21c)

Cancel your subscriptions
Ms. magazine refused to accept a full-page advertisement featuring three prominent Israeli women. The advertisement, submitted by the American Jewish Congress, featured photographs of the president of the Israeli Supreme Court, Dorit Beinisch; Israel's foreign minister, Tzipi Livni; and the speaker of the Knesset, Dalia Itzik. Underneath the photographs, the advertisement included the text, "This is Israel." (NY Sun)

Silicon wadi
The hi-tech industry is by far the fastest growing segment of the Israeli economy. The news from close observers of this sector is that the Israeli start-up industry is currently undergoing a major change. The technology sector is entering its second phase of development, laying the groundwork for the creation of larger companies positioned to become major global players. (Jerusalem Post)

Not enough water under the bridge
The Kinneret (Sea of Galilee), Israel's main source of drinking water, has reached its lowest level in five years according to the Water Authority. (Jerusalem Post)

Crazy, crazy world
On January 3rd Libya took over the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council for one month. (Reuters/New York Times)



Did you know? הידעת?

The Modern State of Israel and Tu BiShvat

Tu Bishvat 5768, which falls on January 22 2008, is also the 59th birthday of Israel's parliament, the Knesset.

When the Zionist pioneers started to settle in Eretz Yisrael at the end of the 19th century, forestation activities, to redeem the land from its barrenness, began. On the 15th of Shvat in 1892, the educator Ze'ev Ya'avets took his pupils to plant trees in Zichron Ya'acov. In 1908 the Jewish National Fund and Jewish education system, adopted the custom of school children and their teachers going out to the fields and mountains to plant saplings.

The planting of trees was turned into a symbol of the participation of the individual in the national project of redemption, as in the olden days when Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakai said:

"If you have a sapling in your hand and are told that the Messiah has arrived - plant the sapling and then go to greet him." (Avoth DeRabbi Nathan' b' ch.31).

During the planting of the President's Forest in 1949, Prime Minister David Ben Gurion said:

"Of all the blessed acts in which we are engaged in this country, I do not know if there is a more fruitful enterprise, whose results are so useful, as the planting of trees, which adds beauty to the scenery of our country, improves its climate and adds health to its inhabitants."

It was no coincidence that the 15th of Shvat - the day which symbolizes the revival of nature, as highlighted by the flowering of the almond trees, and of the renewed ties between the Jewish people and its land - was chosen by various institutions as their inauguration day.

In addition to the Knesset the cornerstones of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem was laid in 1918 and the Technion in Haifa in 1925.



ט"ו בשבט - Tu BiShvat

Rav Benjy Myers

The New Year for Trees is a celebration of God and the world that he created. As a child growing up in Israel, I remember vividly the annual Tu BiShvat outing from school to go and plant trees in one of the nearby Keren Kayemet LeYisrael forests or groves.

To live in Israel is to be aware of the natural world. *Tiyulim* - hikes - are a national pastime, and citizens and visitors alike make like Avraham and trek through the length and breadth of the land, marveling at the many different climates and natural sceneries - the heights of the Hermon and depths of the Dead Sea, forests and mountains, lakes and rivers, ski slopes and deserts all in one tiny country.

Since the modern-day return of the Jews to their homeland, the countryside has once more gone green.

The Talmud in Sanhedrin 88a notes that there is no clearer sign of redemption than when the trees of the Land of Israel will once more bear fruits with abundance.

In the prayer for the State of Israel we declare that the State is the "beginning of the dawn of our redemption." How true this is. After 2,000 years of exile, when the homeland of the Jewish people lay desolate in the face of many foreign nations, God has once more shone His face on the land and caused the deserts to bloom, and for the world to recognize Jaffa oranges.

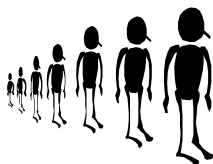
May this coming new year mark not only the beginning of the dawn of our redemption, but the full redemption and ingathering of the exiles back to their flourishing and flowering homeland.

...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 has 7.241 million residents.
- Israel's Jewish population is 5.472 million (slightly more than ¾)



A good laugh

שמח ומבדח

A certain Vaadnik (union head) is addressing a union meeting at a certain unnamed Israeli government-owned company.

"Comrades - Haverim. We have agreed on a new deal with the management. We will no longer work five days a week."

"Hooray!", goes the crowd.

"We will start work at 9 AM, not 7 AM and finish at 3 PM, instead of 4 PM"

"Hooray!", goes the crowd, again.

"We have a 150% pay rise."

"Hooray!"

"We will only work on Wednesdays."

Silence...then a voice from the back asks,

"Every Wednesday?"



Not your ordinary lullaby

Child TV host Saraa Barhoum sang the following song on Al-Aqsa TV on Dec. 20, 2007:

"We liberated Gaza by force, not by Oslo or by Taba - but with my steadfast people, and with its blazing fire." "We have proven that with our will, we can defeat the colonialist army. We have regained our freedom through bloodshed and the wrath of fire." "We will meet our death with no hesitation. We are the swords of Allah, we are the victorious armies." (MEMRI-TV)

Job well done

Dr. Reuven Bromiker of Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem and ER nurse Julie Benbenishti of Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in Jerusalem had just landed at New York's JFK Airport on Tuesday when an American Jew who was on the same flight collapsed and went into cardiac arrest. They were in the U.S. to accompany the return of a seven-year-old Israeli girl severely injured in a car accident, and had advanced medical equipment with them, including a respirator, heart monitor and defibrillator. The Israeli doctor and nurse immediately began to resuscitate the American with chest compression, cardiac massage, and defibrillation. After several minutes, the patient regained both his pulse and consciousness, as the crowd gathered in the terminal burst into cheers and applause. (Ynet)

Image is everything, or is it?

Israel's image in the international media deteriorated after the pullout from Gaza, despite Israeli expectations that the unilateral withdrawal would boost support for its policies, according to a Hebrew University study released Thursday. Researchers found that Israel was represented in a more negative light in both U.S. and UK media after the 2005 Gaza withdrawal, compared to the period that preceded it, and that the improvement in Israel's image occurred only during the disengagement itself. We "found that the demands from Israel for territorial concessions in the territories not only were not lessened following the disengagement, but actually became stronger," said Hebrew University political scientist Dr. Tamir Sheafer. (Jerusalem Post)

Drop in Terror Fatalities in 2007

13 Israelis were killed by Palestinians in 2007, down from 24 in 2006 and 50 in 2005, according to data released by the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet). There was one successful suicide bombing last year, down from six in 2006. Palestinians fired 1,263 rockets and 1,511 mortar shells at Israel in 2007, compared with 1,722 rockets and 55 mortars in 2006. Rocket attacks accounted for two fatalities, both in Sderot. (Ha'aretz)

Yippee ki-ay another political party

Israeli-American Nobel laureate Israel (Robert) Aumann is forming a new hawkish political party with MK Effie Eitam. Aumann, a Nobel prize winner for economics in 2005, will help establish the party, but will not run for parliament. The party will be called "Land, Society and Judaism." It is meant to be an umbrella for several small parties, namely National Union and the National Religious Party, that oppose concessions to the Palestinians. (Ynet)