

The Diplomatic Club

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WELCOME 2022



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Rafah, Gaza Strip

An artist paints a mural reading "By fighting the epidemic, we protect the human being and preserve the earth" in the southern Gaza Strip | Photograph: Mohammed Abed/AFP/Getty Images



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The Diplomatic Club



Dear friends,

As the end of 2021 is approaching, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your support throughout this eventful year. The success of The Diplomatic Club is based on the relationships we have built, and we really wouldn't be where we are without you.

This year has been filled with both challenges and victories. We've seen a resumption of ambassadorial ties as Israel marked and celebrated 30 years of diplomatic relations with Latvia, Zambia, Ukraine, Russia, Mongolia, Serbia, Albania, Congo, and the Central African Republic. Furthermore, The Jewish State has been establishing its diplomatic ties with four Arab League countries: Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Sudan and Morocco.

Every year is different, but this one has been particularly challenging. The Diplomatic Club has gone through many changes, but working together has been a pleasure and we're proud of our achievements. We know there will be many challenges ahead and are excited by what 2022 has in store for us.

To our Christian friends, we wish a Merry Christmas! Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus of Nazareth, is also believed to be the birthplace of David and the place where he was crowned as the king of Israel. We have so much more in common than that which divides us, and we'd like to take this opportunity to send you our best wishes.

Enthusiasm and anticipation are building new opportunities around the world, and we are confident 2022 will bring more happiness, peace and prosperity to the Middle East.

Happy New Year to you and your beloved!

Peace on earth will come to stay!
Amen!

Stay tuned for more details in the new year,

Julia Verdel, Publisher
And the Editorial Team at the
Diplomatic Club

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INTERVIEW WITH THE AMBASSADOR OF SWEDEN IN ISRAEL



DC: This year Israel and Sweden are celebrating 70 years of diplomatic relations. In 1947, Sweden voted in favor of the UN Partition Plan for Palestine (proposed by UNSCOP and chaired by Swedish lawyer Emil Sandstrom), which provided a legal basis for founding the State of Israel. Swedish diplomat Folke Bernadotte, the first United Nations Mediator to Palestine, succeeded in achieving an initial truce between the sides in 1948. It seems that back then Sweden was very much involved in the region. Can you comment on past relations between Sweden and Israel?

A: Sweden had a very close relationship with Israel in the 1950s. Politically speaking, there were mutual interests between the Swedish social democrats and the young Jewish State. The Israeli kibbutz was particularly intriguing, and played a crucial role in forming such ties. More than 50,000 Swedes came to work or volunteer in Israeli Kibbutzim. Furthermore, David Ben-

Gurion's close friendship with then-Sweden's Prime Minister Tage Erlander (who served for 23 years and visited Israel 7 times), helped to strengthen the ties. They promoted shared values, such as women's rights and social welfare. Certainly, one cannot discuss these early days without referring to the holocaust. Sweden supported the Jewish People's right for an independent state in their homeland. We then recognized the State of Israel in 1950 and opened our first embassy in 1951.

DC: Who was the first Swedish Ambassador to Israel? Where was the first embassy located? In your opinion, should the embassy move to Jerusalem?

A: Gösta Hedengran, our first Chargé D'affaires in Israel in 1951, was succeeded by Jens Malling who became the first Ambassador. The embassy opened in Tel Aviv, which is where it should remain as long as Jerusalem is contended.

DC: Sweden and Israel are known for the stability of their democratic systems, strong labor movements, progressive taxation and extensive welfare services. How do you think the two countries differ from one another?

A: First and foremost, Israel is much younger. It is truly fascinating how quickly you managed to build a stable democracy. Sweden has a long history of fighting for democratic values, such as freedom of speech and voting rights. It took us a long time to reach the stability and high level of trust that are fundamental for a functioning democracy. I do think that in a social sense Israel lags behind, for instance when it comes to gender equality. But despite conflict and unrest, your high-tech industry flourishes and Israeli innovation is breaking boundaries.

DC: What happened in the 1970s that changed Sweden's attitude toward Israel?



Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde meets with President Isaac Herzog in Jerusalem on October 18, 2021.



Minister of Environmental Protection Tamar Zandberg and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Ann Linde

A: The Vietnam War, followed by the First Lebanon War, changed the way the USA and Israel came across. Images of war altered the perception of the Israeli-American allegiance in the eyes of the Swedes. These and other factors contributed to that change. Yet as new realities made their impact, Sweden remained dedicated to sharing common values and exchanging democratic ideas.

DC: In 2014, Sweden became the first EU member to recognize the state of Palestine. Can you comment on Sweden's current position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

A: Sweden was not the only country to recognize the state of Palestine. But regardless, we think that the only realistic solution to the conflict is the Two-State Solution. With all its flaws, there is no other path for peace and stability other than an independent Palestine state alongside the State of Israel. The alternative, a one-state solution of a bi-national state, is impractical. Needless to say, we support Israel's right to defend itself, and believe we

can be both Pro-Israeli and Pro-Palestinian at the same time. We do not find a contradiction here. It is an outlook that leads our efforts for peace in the region.

DC: Since taking office, you've succeeded in rebooting Israel-Sweden relations and strengthening the ties between the two countries. Sweden's Foreign Minister Ann Linde has visited Israel to mark a new beginning. Can you tell us more about what initiated these efforts?

A: Several factors played a role. Building trust takes time, and I think that our sincere commitment to fighting antisemitism has been recognized and appreciated by the Israel government, as well as by the Israeli people. Moreover, Sweden's current Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ann Linde, made it her priority to end the 7-year diplomatic freeze between the countries and normalize the relations. During the 2021 Israel-Palestine crisis, we strongly condemned the rocket attacks from Gaza. We acted on the international stage as best we could. Now we should move forward and deepen the

ties between our countries. More specifically, let's use our innovative spirit to fight climate change and raise the flag for gender equality.

DC: How big is the Jewish community in Sweden? What about Swedish Jewry in Israel?

A: Sweden does not keep records based on ethnic or religious affiliation, but we do know that the total population of Jews in Sweden is around 15,000, and there are about 4,000 Swedish Jews living in Israel. Yiddish is an officially recognized non-territorial minority language in Sweden, and there are attempts to revive it in some congregations. The organization Sveriges Jiddischförbund (Yiddish Union of Sweden) arranges regular activities in advocacy of the Yiddish language, and there are even a couple of radio programs in Yiddish.

DC: When it comes to Sweden, Israelis are mostly familiar with renowned brands such as IKEA, H&M, VOLVO, etc... Can you comment on the economic ties between the two countries? How does the embassy develop and promote business and trade?



A: We listen, and respond. The pandemic obviously forced us to adapt to new realities, but as business is changing - potential is growing. Swedish hospitals and medical companies are pursuing business opportunities in Israel. Volvo is here, looking into smart mobility. We are also initiating internship programs for young civil engineers. But not enough Swedes are aware of the fantastic opportunities in Israel (what they see in the news doesn't necessarily reflect reality), and many Israelis are unaware of Sweden's forward-

looking high-tech industries. If we combine our countries' entrepreneurial thinking and innovative drive, the sky's the limit.

DC: To this day, Raoul Wallenberg's leadership is a source of inspiration for Israelis of all walks of life. Are there any cultural or educational allegiances between Sweden and Israel?

A: The Swedes are indeed proud of Raoul Wallenberg's heroism throughout the Second World War, but in all honesty, our

country has a complex history when it comes to the holocaust. We chose neutrality as a higher moral ground. So as part of our efforts to grapple with the past and commemorate the holocaust, we launched an extensive collaboration with Yad Vashem. Swedish teachers are visiting Israel to participate in different programs and seminars. We are also working with IHRA, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, and we are building the first holocaust museum in Sweden.

DC: On a personal level, can you comment about living and working in Israel?

A: I love it. Israel is beautiful and unique, and is an exciting destination for diplomats. My wife is currently serving as Deputy EU Ambassador to the West Bank and Gaza, so we have our hands full. We live in Herzliya with our two children, and we always enjoy travelling and visiting new places.

Ambassador Erik Ullenhag arrived in Israel in September 2020

Ullenhag is a lawyer by profession and a Swedish diplomat and former politician. He previously served as Ambassador of Sweden to Jordan between 2016 and 2020. He took office as Ambassador of Sweden to Israel on 1 September 2020.

After serving as a junior judge in a District Court he joined the MFA 2001. Between 2002 and 2014 he was a politician for the Liberal Party of Sweden. He was elected to the Swedish Parliament 2002 and was party secretary for the Liberal Party 2006 to 2010. Ullenhag served as Minister of Integration from 2010 to 2014 and as leader of the parliamentary group in the Swedish Parliament from 2014 to 2016.

Ullenhag is married and has two daughters.

The Abraham Accords are a series of treaties normalizing diplomatic relations between Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco, facilitated by the U.S. Administration between August and December, 2020. In the span of five short months, these four Arab states joined Egypt and Jordan in making peace with Israel. The agreements were called “The Abraham Accords” in honor of Abraham - the patriarch of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

The Abraham Accords began with the groundbreaking Israel-UAE agreement in August, 2020.

The UAE and Israel have never fought militarily, but the UAE did participate in the Arab League boycott against Israel, which had been in place since Israel's establishment in 1948.

The agreement was the result of shared interests regarding threats posed by Iran's regime and years of quiet/secret cooperation.

Israel opened an international diplomatic office in UAE in 2015, Mossad chief Yossi Cohen made several secret trips there, and the two governments cooperated to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

Both countries are interested in diversifying their economies and engaging with each other to achieve that goal.

Israel agreed to freeze its plans for annexation/application of sovereignty in the West Bank as part of the deal.

The agreement has led not only to diplomatic ties, but also cultural exchanges and grassroots cooperation between people in both countries. Since the accords were signed in September, 130,000 Israelis have visited Dubai and trade between Israel and the UAE has reached 1 billion AED.

In a move widely seen as tied to the Abraham Accords, the U.S. agreed to sell advanced F35 warplanes to the UAE. This raised concerns among Israeli security officials that these planes could be used to threaten Israel in the future. U.S. and Israeli officials have discussed the issue and seem to have reached an understanding about ensuring Israel can effectively defend itself.

Israel and Bahrain announced a similar agreement in September,

2020.

They initially signed a declaration of peace, agreeing to normalize diplomatic relations, negotiate a formal peace treaty, and not antagonize each other. Officials from the two countries then began working together on the details of how they would cooperate in various areas.

Similar to the UAE, there was longtime quiet cooperation between Israel and Bahrain. The King of Bahrain denounced the Arab League boycott of Israel in 2017. In 2020, Bahrain hosted the “peace to prosperity” conference, which was led by the U.S. Administration and boycotted by Palestinian leaders.

The UAE and Bahrain have since announced they would cooperate with Israel to present a unified front to the U.S. regarding the Iran nuclear deal and the Iranian regime's ballistic missile program.

Israel and Sudan signed a normalization agreement in October, 2020.

This agreement is more complicated than the others because Sudan's government is going through a transition with the stated goal of becoming more democratic.

There are some difficulties in implementing a normalization agreement, namely that Sudan must first repeal a domestic law that prohibits relations with Israel. Progress has also been slowed by opposition from some groups in Sudan and a precarious transition in the government.

Israel and Morocco announced a normalization agreement in December, 2020.

Morocco had quiet diplomatic relations with Israel prior to open normalization. This was partly

based on the long history of Jews in Morocco, many of whom fled the country to Israel. The Moroccan government has made efforts to preserve Jewish history and welcome Moroccan Jews who visit the country. The U.S. recognized Morocco's claims to the disputed territory of Western Sahara, as an incentive for the Moroccan government to normalize relations with Israel. This was a controversial decision and it is unclear if the Biden Administration will adopt the same stance.

Palestinian leaders strongly condemned the Abraham Accords.

The Palestinian Authority called the UAE-Israel agreement a total betrayal and attacked the UAE.

Hamas reacted as expected, saying the agreement “served the Zionist narrative” and that Arab states should continue to engage in anti-normalization.

These statements led to backlash in the Arab world, including a lengthy interview by former Saudi Ambassador to the U.S., Prince Bandar bin Sultan, levelling unprecedented and harsh public criticism of against the Palestinian leadership.

According to a poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 80 percent of Palestinians “describe their feelings towards [the Abraham Accords] as: treason, abandonment, and insult.”

Dennis Ross, a former Middle East peace envoy for the U.S., wrote that the UAE's move “should also signal to Palestinians that others are not going to wait for them” to make peace with Israel.

Other Arab and Muslim states such as Oman, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia are rumored to be considering normalization with Israel as well.



THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN IN ISRAEL

organized a solemn reception on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Kazakhstan's Independence at the hotel "Dan Tel Aviv". The event was attended by the Minister of Tourism of Israel Konstantin Razvozov, Patriarch of Jerusalem and All Palestine Theophilus II, Knesset members, heads of foreign diplomatic missions accredited in Israel, representatives of Kazakhstan community in Israel, local business, scientific, cultural circles and the media representatives.

In his speech, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Satybaldy Burshakov told the guests about the Kazakhstan's achievements over the years of independence and about the current developments and reforms in the country.

Ambassador noted that Israel became one of the first countries that recognize the independence of Kazakhstan, and in April 2022. On the occasion of Independence Day President of the State of Israel Yitzhak Herzog said to the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan K.K. Tokayev: "over 30 years we have witnessed the development of Kazakhstan as an independent state contributing to the achievement of peace, stability and mutual understanding in the region and beyond".



FRIENDLY FOOTBALL MATCHES BETWEEN ARAB STATES AND ISRAEL

In first, UAE team to participate in Israeli-hosted football tournament. It will be the first time an Emirati football team visits Israel, coming in wake of 2 countries signing a normalization deal last year. In a historic first under a controversial normalization deal, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) youth football team is set to play a friendly against Israel in a winter tournament on Sunday. Organized and hosted by Israel, the tournament was set to start on Dec. 12. Russian and German youth teams were participated as well.

"The UAE youth team landed in Israel and was warmly received by the CEO of the Israel Football Association (IFA), Yossi Sharabi," the IFA said.

The UAE Football Association (UAEFA) said the Gulf state's participation in the tournament follows an agreement signed between the UAE and Israeli federations in December 2020 in Dubai.

It will be the first time an Emirati football team visits Israel, a development following Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv signing a controversial US-sponsored agreement to normalize their diplomatic relations last year.

The UAE was joined by three other Arab states – Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan – in normalizing relations with Israel in what came to be known as the Abraham Accords.

Israel's Football Association (IFA) has signed a cooperation agreement with Morocco's Royal Football Federation (FRMF). The cooperation deal is part of the two countries' determination to work together in different fields to boost bilateral relations.

In an official statement, the PLO Supreme Council for Youth and Sports has condemned football teams from Morocco and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for participating in friendly matches with Israeli teams in Israel.



THE JAPANESE AKI-NU FILM FESTIVAL IS BACK!

6-15/1/22 at Cinematheques around Israel
 The opening event will be held on 6/1/22 at the Jerusalem Cinematheque and in the presence of the Deputy Ambassador of Japan to Israel Mr. Seiichiro Takahashi



From left-to-right: EAJC Board Chairman Aaron G. Frenkel, EAJC President Dr. Michael Mirilashvili, TAU President Prof. Ariel Porat, Head of the Euro-Asian Department at Israel's Foreign Ministry Dr. Yacov Livne, Ambassador of Russia to Israel Anatoly Viktorov (Photo: Rafael Ben-Menashe)

RUSSIAN AND ISRAELI DIPLOMATS, scholars

and community leaders marked 30 years since the renewal of the countries' diplomatic ties at a conference hosted by Tel Aviv University recently. The event included an overview of the history of their relations and highlighted joint projects in both the sciences and humanities that have flourished in recent years.

Russian-Israeli ties were officially broken in 1967 with the onset of the Six-Day War and then restored in 1991, after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Since then, TAU has maintained numerous partnerships with Russian universities and scholars, producing unique initiatives based on common cultural and historic roots.



MISS UNIVERSE 2021 was the 70th Miss Universe pageant, held on December 12, 2021, at Universe Dome in Eilat, Israel. Andrea Meza of Mexico crowned Harnaaz Sandhu of India as her successor at the end of the event.

This is India's first victory in 21 years, and its third in the history of the pageant. Sandhu is the first Sikh woman to win the title of Miss Universe.



UKRAINE HAS OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED JERUSALEM as the "one and only" capital of Israel and has announced that it will open an embassy in the coming year.



THE EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN IN TEL AVIV

held the first reception ceremony on the occasion of the Kingdom of Bahrain's celebration of its National Days in the presence of a number of senior officials from the government, the Knesset, the diplomatic and business communities.

With these relations come winds of positive change that will flow through the region as a whole, said Khaled Al Jahama, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the State of Israel



During our first National Day Reception in #Israel, guests had a real taste of #Bahrain from the rich history and culture to the distinct and flavourful food.



EMBASSADOR'S DAY AT THE NAHALAL YOUTH VILLAGE

Ambassador Lisa Stadelbauer spent the day in December with Canadian Hadassah-WIZO (CHW) at the CHW Nahalal Youth Village in the north to learn about the important work being done with youth and for the empowerment of women in Israel and in Canada.



KOREAN AMBASSADOR'S CUP TAEKWONDO CHAMPIONSHIP 2021

Under-21 years old, was held with great success in December ,2021. The event was co-produced by the Korean Embassy in Israel, the Israel Taekwondo Federation and the Ramla Municipality.

The Korean Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Suh Dong Gu, and the Korean Embassy appreciated the Israel Taekwondo Federation, the Municipality of Ramla and all the great athletes who participated in the event.



EMBASSY OF FINLAND TEL AVIV - SUOMEN SUURLAHETYSTO TEL AVIV

celebrated the Finnish Independence Day in the middle of December and had reception at the Ambassador's Residence in the warm and festive atmosphere.

Earlier the Embassy hosted a Holiday Market Event at the Ambassador's Residence. The event was carried out in cooperation with two women organizations, Isha L'isha - Haifa Feminist Center and Sidreh / Lakiya Weaving from the Negev, including a market of amazing handworks made by Bedouin women and a panel discussion on women's rights and status in the society. In addition, guests were enjoyed a beautiful Christmas Concert, with the Youth Voices Choir of Beit Al Musica Conservatory from Shefa'amr village, conducted by Ms Lilya Bazogli.



ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE DAY OF TANZANIA,

the Ambassador of Tanzania to Israel, Job Daudi Masima, his spouse, Mrs. Yohana Joan Masima, and the members of the Embassy of Tanzania organized Yesterday a reception event at Amphorae Winery in Kerem Maharal.

PRESIDENT ISAAC HERZOG RECEIVES THE CREDENTIALS OF THE NEW AMBASSADORS:



H.E. Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana, Apostolic Nuncio of Vatican City State

H.E. Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana, Apostolic Nuncio of Vatican City State. President Herzog hailed the importance of Israel-Vatican ties and reaffirmed Israel's commitment to freedom of worship and the protection of all holy sites in Israel. "Religions have been challenged in the modern era," said President Herzog. "Religions enable families and societies to function better. When one looks at religion itself, it gives a sense of purpose." President Herzog added that he has been following the speeches of Pope Francis with great interest, hailing him as a "very important voice."

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H.E. Mr. Kyriakos Loukakis, Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic

President Herzog thanked the ambassador for President Katerina Sakellariopoulou's invitation to visit Greece and said that he hopes to do so soon. Addressing the recent wildfires, President Herzog praised Israeli-Greek fire-fighting cooperation and said that both nations must work together to prepare for future ecological disasters. President Herzog stressed that Israel wishes to upgrade its relations with the European Union and asked Greece to assist in convening the EU-Israel



H.E. Mrs. Ana María Salomón Pérez, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain

H.E. Mrs. Ana María Salomón Pérez, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain.

"Please send my warm regards to King Felipe," said President Herzog at the beginning of the meeting. President Herzog and the Spanish ambassador discussed the rich common history shared by Spain and the Jewish people. The President hailed the strength of Israeli-Spanish relations and expressed hope to deepen cooperation, including at the level of the European Union.



The Ambassador of the United Mexican States, H.E. Mr. Mauricio Escanero Figueroa

The ambassador of Mexico presented President Herzog a formal invitation to visit Mexico in 2022 to mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of Israel-Mexico relations. President Herzog said that he hopes to meet Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador soon and invited him for a reciprocal visit in Israel. President Herzog and Ambassador Figueroa discussed opportunities to encourage trade between Israel and Mexico.



Bahrain, H.E. Mr. Khaled Yusuf Al Jalahma

H.E. Mr. Veikko Kala, Ambassador of the Republic of Estonia. President Herzog asked the ambassador to convey his congratulations to Estonian President-Elect Alar Karis on his recent election. President Herzog restated his expectation that Western nations boycott the upcoming Durban IV Conference. President Herzog and the Estonian ambassador discussed ways that Israel and Estonia can cooperate as two modern, highly digitized nations.



The Ambassador of the Bahrain, H.E. Mr. Khaled Yusuf Al Jalahma

The accreditation of the ambassador of Bahrain comes on the eve of the one-year anniversary of the signing of the Abraham Accords and the normalization of Bahrain-Israel relations. After the ceremony, President Herzog held a diplomatic working meeting with the new ambassador of Bahrain, H.E. Mr. Khaled Yusuf Al Jalahma, and they delivered joint statements to the press.

President Herzog: "The Abraham Accords were the fruit of both vision and power. The vision and power of states and national leaders. The growing partnership between our countries is a model for the whole Middle East, and I hope that other states in our region will be inspired by your example."



The Ambassador of the Italian Republic, H.E. Mr. Sergio Barbanti

The President and Ambassador Barbanti praised the strength of relations between Italy and Israel and discussed ways to promote matters of importance to both nations. The President also addressed regional affairs and urged Italy to discover economic opportunities in the momentum toward normalization between Israel and its Arab neighbors.



Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda, H.E. Mr. James Gatera

Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda, H.E. Mr. James Gatera.

The President thanked the Ambassador for Rwanda's support for Israel's accession to the African Union as an observer state. Ambassador Gatera invited Israeli investment in Rwanda, stressing that with the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area, Israeli companies trading from Rwanda will be able to enjoy tariff-free access across the continent.



Ambassador of European Union, H.E. Mr. Dimiter Tzantchev

The Ambassador of the European Union, H.E. Mr. Dimiter Tzantchev, a former deputy foreign minister of Bulgaria, is returning for his third diplomatic posting in Israel. The President and Ambassador Tzantchev spoke of the importance of advancing Israel-EU cooperation. The President added: "I am a true believer in the partnership with the European Union; I think it's the natural partnership for Israel." The President also stressed the importance of convening the EU-Israel Association Council in order to realize the full potential of Israeli-European ties. Ambassador Tzantchev underlined the European Union's support for normalization agreements between Israel and Arab neighbors, and the President stressed the importance of a tough EU line in negotiations with Iran to stop it from obtaining nuclear weapons.



Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation, H.E. Mr. Urs Bucher

Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation, H.E. Mr. Urs Bucher.

President Herzog and the Swiss Ambassador discussed ways to promote Israeli-Swiss collaboration in the fields of science and innovation. President Herzog said: "The relationship with Switzerland is on a very positive path." The President praised Switzerland's global role as a mediator and requested its support in bringing Israeli MIAs and civilian hostages back from Hamas captivity in the Gaza Strip.



Ambassador of the Republic of Costa Rica, H.E. Rita María Hernández Bolaños

President Herzog: "Costa Rica is especially beloved by us. It has been a friend of Israel since its establishment, and we will always remember its support. It is a country that Israelis who visit love intensely." The President and the Costa Rican ambassador also discussed opportunities to collaborate on environmental issues, with a focus on sustainability and environmental technologies.



Non-Resident Ambassador of the Republic of Nauru, H.E. Margo Deiyé

Non-Resident Ambassador of the Republic of Nauru, H.E. Margo Deiyé also accredited as Nauru’s permanent representative to the United Nations. The President expressed his concerns about the effects of climate change on the Pacific island nations and discussed with the ambassador Nauru’s efforts to confront rising sea levels. The President thanked Nauru for its prompt recognition of Jerusalem as the State of Israel’s capital after the United States. They also discussed Israel and Nauru’s collaboration through the MASHAV international development agency.



Ambassador of the Republic of Malta, H.E. Cecilia Attard Pirotta

Ambassador of the Republic of Malta, H.E. Cecilia Attard Pirotta is also returning for her second posting as Malta’s ambassador in Israel. President Herzog and the Maltese ambassador discussed Mediterranean regional affairs and opportunities to enhance diplomatic, economic, and people-to-people ties between Israel and Malta in order to improve relations at both bilateral and multilateral levels. They also discussed opportunities to enhance reciprocal tourism, and the President noted that thanks to direct Tel Aviv-Valletta flights, Israelis have fallen in love with Malta.



Ambassador of the Republic of Ecuador, H.E. Helen Sophie Deller Klein

Ambassador of the Republic of Ecuador, H.E. Helen Sophie Deller Klein. The President and the Ecuadorian ambassador discussed their nations’ shared desire to build a closer relationship, with a focus on technology and agriculture. The ambassador noted with pride that she is Ecuador’s first Jewish ambassador in Israel and told the President about her family’s remarkable escape from Nazi-occupied Europe to Latin America. President Herzog and Ambassador Deller Klein discussed Ecuador’s remarkable biodiversity, and the President noted that Israeli tourists will greatly enjoy traveling around Ecuador.



Ambassador of the Republic of El Salvador, H.E. Susana Edith Gun de Hasenson

Ambassador of the Republic of El Salvador, H.E. Susana Edith Gun de Hasenson, who is returning for her second posting as El Salvador’s ambassador in Israel. President Herzog and the Salvadoran ambassador discussed President Nayib Bukele’s plan to establish a “Bitcoin City” powered by volcanic energy and talked about El Salvador’s growing economy.



President Isaac Herzog receives the credentials of the Ambassador of the United States of America, Thomas R. Nides

President Isaac Herzog's full remarks:

"It is a true privilege and honor for me, as President of the State of Israel, to open my home to you, the newly appointed Ambassador of the United States of America, Ambassador Tom Nides.

The People of Israel welcome you with open arms and an open heart. For us, this is a celebration of a shared vision and common values: liberty and equality, freedom, human rights and friendship with our closest ally.

Personally, my family has been engaged and involved with over fourteen successive American presidents. Growing up in the United States, I was strongly influenced by the spirit of the Constitution, by its social diversity and by the great tradition of your democracy.

This is why it is a special pleasure for me to host you, Mr. Ambassador, here in the President's Residence, to receive your credentials and light the eighth and final Chanukah candle with you.

I have a small surprise for you: in your youth you attended Hebrew and Sunday School in the small Jewish community of Duluth, Minnesota. I have invited the principal of the school, my good friend Elizabeth Eli Aloni, who is sitting right here, to join us today and she remembers you as a young adolescent. You might not remember her, but she remembers you. Tom—this must be where your great Hebrew comes from!

Mr. Ambassador, I must add how touched we were by President Biden's warm remarks at the Chanukah candle lighting ceremony on Thursday at the White House, as he graciously welcomed Israel's new Ambassador to the United States, my dear brother, Mike Herzog.

Far beyond the personal connection, this is heartwarming because it is a consistent display of President Biden's longstanding, genuine friendship with Israel. I take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to President

Biden, for his tireless support and his uncompromising commitment to the ironclad relations between Israel and the United States.

An alliance which should always be above partisan politics, enjoying the support of all administrations.

You should know, Mr. Ambassador, that for the people of Israel, this is meaningful beyond measure. I know how deeply you, Ambassador Nides, care about the US-Israel connection and intend to develop and deepen it throughout your term.

Israel very much looks forward to working together in harmony and in full partnership. You are coming to a more hopeful region. The Abraham Accords are a real strategic and regional gamechanger. It is essential that we realize the potential of these historic accords alongside the United States of America.

I was pleased to discuss this with the Crown Prince of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, in our warm and friendly phone conversation over the weekend.

Mr. Ambassador, without a doubt the greatest challenge Israel and the United States face is the common threat posed by Iran.

We are closely following the international community's recent negotiations with Iran. Israel will welcome a comprehensive, diplomatic solution which permanently solves the Iranian nuclear threat.

In the case of a failure to achieve such a solution, Israel is keeping all options on the table and it must be said that if the international community does not take a vigorous stance on this issue—Israel will do so. Israel will protect itself.

Ambassador Nides, I thank you so much for joining us today with your son, Max, and I wish you a satisfying, enjoyable and successful stay in Israel together with your excellent team.

I look forward to visiting the United States in the near future and meeting with my good friends President Biden, Vice President Harris and the entire administration, in order to further our common goals and strengthen the historic links between our two great democracies and peoples.



CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR IN ISRAEL

Christmas in Israel is a magical and meaningful experience for Christians. It is less commercialized than in much of the Western world. This is because Judaism and Islam are the two main religions of Israel. Despite that, Christmas in Israel is extremely meaningful. It comes from the historic and religious significance as the land where the Christmas story took place. Whether visiting Bethlehem for Christmas, experiencing Christmas in Nazareth, spending Christmas in Jerusalem or Christmas in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, it is sure to be a memorable experience!

Christmas celebrations have become more popular across the country. More and more Israelis are visiting the places of celebration.

In areas with Christian populations such as Jaffa, Haifa, Nazareth, the Old City of Jerusalem, and many Russian neighborhoods, symbols of Christmas will be visible.



CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM

If you are visiting Israel for Christmas, or just happen to be here and want to celebrate, the most popular place to go is the town of Bethlehem. Bethlehem is south of Jerusalem, in the West Bank. Here, magnificent and famous services take place on Christmas Eve in Manger Square. In the north of Israel, Nazareth, Jesus's hometown, is also an interesting place to be for Christmas with many festivities.



CHRISTMAS IN NAZARETH

Nazareth is believed to be the birthplace and hometown of Jesus Christ. Today, Nazareth is Israel's largest Arab city. Combine these two factors and you begin to see why Christmas in Nazareth is such a special experience. While Nazareth, nestled in the tranquil hills of the Galilee, probably won't have snow at Christmas, the city's large Christian population nonetheless celebrates the holiday along with thousands of tourists who come to visit. Nazareth comes to life during the holiday; its residents decorate their Christmas trees, roam around in their Santa hats, and throw street festivals, church services, and parties. On the eve of Christmas, there is a massive colorful procession throughout the town to celebrate.



CHRISTMAS IN JERUSALEM

Jerusalem is a truly unique time of year. Thousands of pilgrims come to the city to celebrate Christmas in the place where it all began (nearby in Bethlehem). The city, in particular, the old city's Christian and Armenian quarters, become adorned with decorations, while other Jerusalem landmarks such as the YMCA, along with the city's churches, celebrate by holding services and carol concerts. Below are some of the best things to do in Jerusalem during Christmas.



NEW YEAR'S EVE, or as the Israelis call it "sylvester," has become extremely popular in Israel in recent years. More Israelis have been jumping on the New Year's Eve bandwagon, despite the fact that it's not

an officially recognized holiday in Israel. But, any excuse to party is a good reason and Israelis are always down to celebrate life and have a good time. There are hundreds of New Year's Eve parties happening across Israel, as well as a host of other special events.

Whether you're a house music enthusiast, a food connoisseur, or simply looking for a dance floor to break it down dressed in your best '80s wear, you are sure to find what you're looking for.

All around the world



Andy Warhol (1928-1987). Christmas tree for Harper's Bazaar, 1957



Anna Chiara Venturini Illustration



Camilla Dainesi Illustration



Candy Christmas Trees to Brighten Any Gingerbread House



Carl Larsson (Swedish, 1853-1919). Decorating the Tree



Chris Dunn Illustration



Christmas in Madison Square Park Paul Cornoyer, 1864-1923)



Cruz Roja



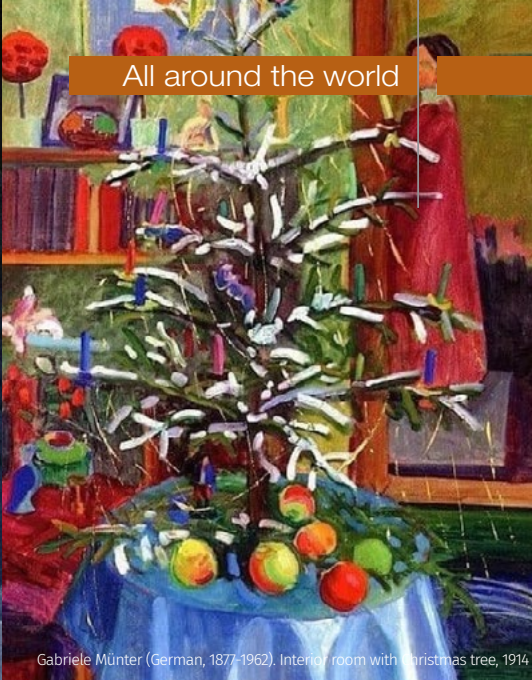
Edgar Artis Illustration



Esther Bennink Illustration



Eva Melhuish Illustration



Gabriele Münter (German, 1877-1962). Interior room with Christmas tree, 1914



Holidays in New York - Rockefeller Center, New York by Robert Finale



Jane Crowther Illustration



John Atkinson Design



Marcel Rieder (French, 1862-1942). Christmas Tree, 1898



Marius Van Dokkum, Dutch artist



Max Rimbock (German, 1890 - 1956). Christmas interior, 1952

All around the world



Mela Koehler (Austrian, 1848-1901) Christmas Card



Mila Marquis Illustration



Nino Chakvetadze Art



Novelty Candy Cane Balloon Christmas Tree



Pascal Campion Illustration



René Gruau Illustration



Robert Wagt Illustration



Salvador Dali. The first postcard of the Christmas series 1958



Sarah Fox-Davies Illustration

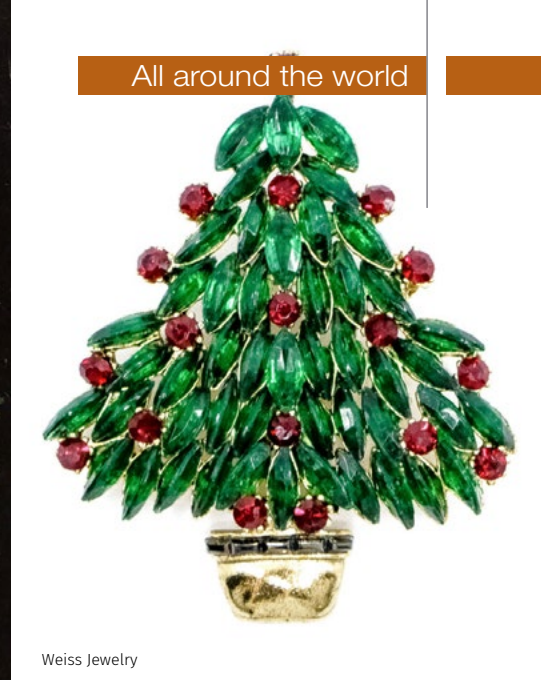


The Christmas Fair, 1872. Georg von Rosen, Swedish painter (1843-1923)



Vogue Christmas Cover by Eduardo Benito, 1914

All around the world



Weiss Jewelry



White House Christmas Tree, painted by Jacqueline Kennedy, 1961



Yoco-Nagamiya Illustration



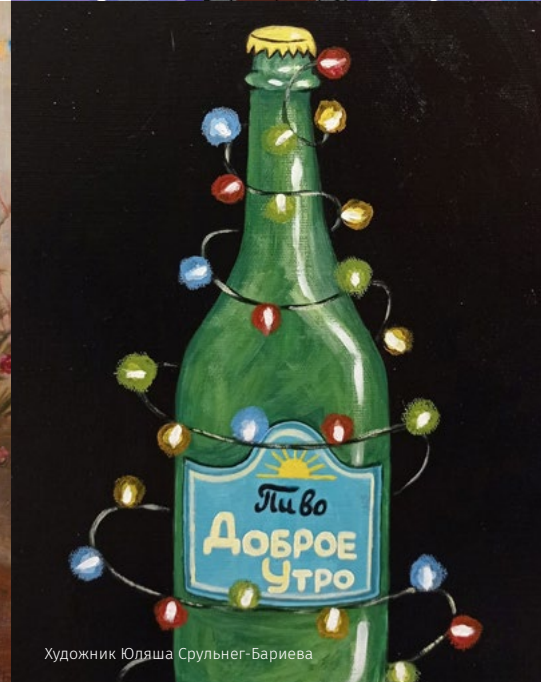
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Созданная американским ювелиром, Steve Quirk ёлочка



Художник Владимир Акиншин (р. 1969)



Художник Юляша Срульнер-Бариева



The Yvel Story

The Yvel story has turned into a successful business and grown into a lifetime achievement. There is no greater fulfillment to realize your actions, efforts, and inspiration truly make a difference.

Whenever we take the time to look back at our lives, we are often amazed at how the most significant events and milestones were triggered by the smallest of incidents, actions, or words. Similarly, the origin of Yvel, Israel's award-winning jewelry brand, can be traced back to only a random moment of a young unemployed couple, Orna and Isaac Levy, sitting at a kitchen table.

Born into the fourth generation of a large family of jewelers, Orna mentioned she could string pearls while Isaac simply asked her to teach him, and the rest is history.

Without any formal training, Orna and Isaac began to produce pearl necklaces which were later sold in jewelry retail stores.

[FOR VISITING ARRANGEMENTS PLEASE CLICK](#)

That was the beginning of becoming an award-winning luxury jewelry brand. It was the beginning of Yvel. From then onwards, the company began to grow. After several successful years, they needed a larger workplace and relocated to a small office in the center of Jerusalem. Never forgetting his immigrant background, Isaac would always stand firm in his principle of offering employment to Jewish immigrants. So whenever employing new staff, he would always look first amongst Israel's immigrant population.



*Orna and Isaac Levy
Yvel founders & designers*

Over the years, the company has grown considerably with more than a hundred employees, most Jewish immigrants from around twenty different countries. More than once, people have joked that working at Yvel seems like an excellent precursor to finding employment at the United Nations.

Peacock Bluster
*18k gold ring design,
set with natural fancy
diamonds.*



*18k yellow gold bracelet
set with a 104.51 ct.
natural Paraiba*

In 2010, Orna and Isaac decided to open a school to teach Ethiopian immigrants the art of jewelry making. A year later, the **Megemeria School of Jewelry & Art** had opened, and twenty-two Ethiopian students joined the new program. Impressed with the highly original jewelry that the students made during the course, Orna and Isaac established the Megemeria social enterprise as a platform for the students to market their jewelry, thus securing continuous employment. This endeavor is proving to be successful. It is the intention that both the school and the social enterprise will soon become fully sustainable and will continue to change the lives of many more Ethiopian immigrants.



*The Megemeria Collection tells the story
of a journey, longing and renewal.*

*Town & Country
Couture Design Award
Winner - This exotic
floral brooch brings to
life the Levys'
fascination with
Mother Nature.*



AWARD-WINNING DESIGNS

Over the years, Yvel has been recognized worldwide for its exhilarating design and innovative technique in numerous prominent jewelry design awards.

Yvel is legendary for its naturally free-form designs in which 18k white, yellow, or rose satin-finished gold is fashioned around the gemstone, caressing it and enhancing its unique beauty. "While most jewelry designers design a piece of jewelry and then look for a pearl or stone, at Yvel we first look for the pearl or stone, and then we fashion the jewelry around it," explains Isaac Levy.

The designers' refreshing sense of style and organic design have caught the attention of numerous art collectors and brought Yvel to take part in several prestigious art shows around the world, one of which is the preeminent Palm Beach Show in the USA. Yvel is also an official exhibitor in **Art Miami Show, EXPO Chicago, Top Marques** in Monaco, and **PAD London**.

This year, for the first time, Yvel has introduced its creations on new grounds: **Jewellery Arabia** in Bahrain and **Jewellery Salon** in Saudi Arabia. Recently, Yvel has participated in **The Middle East Jewellery & Watches Award** competition in Dubai, winning the **Best Independent Designer Award** for its COVID19 mask design while competing with various leading international jewelry brands.

In 2020, COVID19 had set some severe challenges for Yvel: As the pandemic broke out, the production factory was shut down, most of the employees were sent home, and order flow stopped instantly. Many of Yvel employees suddenly lost their source of income. However, Orna and Isaac were not about to see their family torn apart; The Levys turned to one of their loyal customers, a wealthy businessman, looking to help the company out. Together, they went back and forth on ideas for a commission of a one-of-a-kind creation that would provide substantial profit to support Yvel's operation and employees.

This resulted in a particular order of a 1.5M\$ state-of-the-art COVID19 mask, made of 18k white gold encrusted with 3,608 natural diamonds. The mask design made headlines worldwide and is frequently presented in the top art shows in the world.

Today, after building a world-renowned jewelry brand and a non-profit school and social enterprise while leading a clear humanistic business agenda, Orna and Isaac still sit at their kitchen table and dream. But as we have seen already, when Orna and Isaac dream, their dreams are most likely to come true.



*The world's
most valuable COVID19
protective face mask*

*'Best in Pearls' award at the
'Oscars' of the jewelry world;
Natural multi-colored keshi pearls,
set in 18k white gold, adorned by
white diamonds caressing each
petal.*



Yvel Design Center

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NEW STUDY AT TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY: MEDICINAL CANNABIS OIL FOUND EFFECTIVE FOR TREATING AUTISM



Researchers at Tel Aviv University, led by PhD student Shani Poleg and Prof. Daniel Offen of the Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Felsenstein Medical Research Center and Sagol School of Neuroscience, have successfully treated autism in animal models with medical cannabis oil. The researchers found that this treatment improves both behavioral and biochemical parameters of autism. The results of the surprising study were published in *Translational Psychology* published by Nature.

"The usual process for testing new medications involves research in petri dishes, followed by animal models and finally a clinical study in humans," explains Prof. Offen. "With medicinal cannabis the process has been reversed: treatments began in humans. Since cannabis is not defined as a medication, trials have already been conducted in children and adolescents with autism – without any preliminary studies addressing issues like the effect of cannabis on biochemical processes in the brain, spinal fluid or blood, and who can benefit from which type of cannabis oil. There is a great deal of misinformation on the subject of medicinal cannabis and autism, and Shani Peleg's doctoral project represents pioneering basic research with regard to treating autism with cannabis oil."

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disease, and its main symptoms are social deficiencies and compulsive behaviors. Cases range from mild to severe, and causes are both genetic and environmental. In about 1% of all autism cases, a mutation in a single gene, called Shank3, is associated. In the current study researchers

at TAU used animal models with a mutation in Shank3 to test the effectiveness of cannabis oil for alleviating symptoms of autism.

"We saw that cannabis oil has a favorable effect on compulsive and anxious behaviors in model animals," says Shani Poleg. "According to the prevailing theory, autism involves overarousal of the brain which causes compulsive behavior. In the lab, in addition to the behavioral results, we saw a significant decrease in the concentration of the arousing neurotransmitter glutamate in the spinal fluid – which can explain the reduction in behavioral symptoms."

Attempting to determine which components of cannabis oil alleviate symptoms of autism, the researchers found that THC, which is responsible for the euphoric sensation associated with the use of cannabis, is effective in treating autism, possibly even in small quantities.

"Clinical trials testing cannabis treatments for autism usually involve strains containing very large amounts of CBD – due to this substance's anti-inflammatory properties, and because it does not produce a sense of euphoria," says Poleg. "Moreover, the strains used for treating autism usually contain very little THC, due to apprehension regarding both the euphoria and possible long-term effects. In the second stage of our study we inquired which active substance in cannabis causes the behavioral improvement, and were surprised to discover that treatment with cannabis oil that contains THC but does not contain CBD produces equal or even better effects – both behavioral and biochemical. Moreover, our results suggest that CBD alone has no impact on the behavior of model animals."

"This is of course an initial study," concludes Poleg. "But we hope that through our basic research we will be able to improve clinical treatments. Our study shows that when treating autism with medicinal cannabis oil there is no need for high contents of either CBD or THC. We observed significant improvement in behavioral tests following treatments with cannabis oil containing small amounts of THC and observed no long-term effects in cognitive or emotional tests conducted a month and a half after the treatment began."



SHAHAF DEKEL HAS CREATED A SERIES OF 74 SHORT EPISODES ABOUT ISRAELI ARTISTS. THESE ARE THE EPISODES WE ESPECIALLY LOVED

Today, there are quite a few platforms that Israeli artists can be presented. Podcasts, photo interviews and studio conversations have become an accessible space for getting to know the work of the artists, who are usually only known by name or by photography, and provide an opportunity to get to know the artist behind the artwork.

The series has won, among other things, the Best Documentary Award at the New York Network Festival 2019 and has been selected for screening at many festivals around the world. She was also nominated for Best Documentary Network Series at the Seoul Network Series Festival for 2019, nominated in the Documentary Direction category in the International Academy of Television Network 2018 competition in LA and more.





Work by the artist Tzivi Geva

As early as 2014, Shahaf Dekel realized the potential of a platform of this kind, and with the help of the Lottery and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs produced the series called Y (V) Narrows, a nice pun between the words creators and passions. The series consists of 74 short episodes of two minutes on average, and provides a personal glimpse into the creative processes of leading sea artists in Israel in all areas of plastic art, performing arts and design.

The goal of the series is "to reveal to the general public in Israel and around the world the contemporary culture in Israel." The short chapters document encounters between the creators and palm trees in their work space, and present through regular questions, studio photos and documentation of works of art, the work environment and the world of the Israeli artist.

Through 74 diverse episodes we especially loved the episodes starring Gabi Krichli, Raida Adon, Deborah Morag, Nivi Elroy and designer Naama Agassi. Alongside familiar ideas and sources of inspiration in art, the five sail us on the fascinating river of thought or idea that actually leads to art. At the same time, they leave a lot of questions open and intriguing about this complex process. This is definitely an opportunity to get a taste of the workings of these artists.



Prime from the work of researcher and media artist Daniel Landau



Work by the illustrator Ofra Amit

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