

THE JERUSALEM POST

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Post

Special 2013 Magazine

↘ English-language schools in Israel

↘ Reforms in the education system

↘ Israel's sphere of universities



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**Dear Reader,**

This magazine is dedicated to education in Israel, with an emphasis on overseas students who want to study here. In this issue we have an interview with Dalit Stauber, director general of the Education Ministry, who talks about the local education system. We have a story on the universities in this country and an article that describes the incentives the government offers students who immigrate to Israel. We also give a brief history of the English-language schools in Israel. I hope you enjoy this issue.

Happy reading,  
**Juan de la Roca**  
Editor



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# Education: An essential commodity

By Juan de la Roca



During their long history, the Jewish people have been famous for placing strong emphasis on learning. An education was a means to overcome discrimination and prejudices in an often hostile gentile environment.

The Jews have been called "the people of the book" because of their intimate relation to the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. But later, the name stuck because of the Jewish obsession with learning.

For many years, the Jew was pictured as someone engrossed in reading a holy book. That is not an entirely accurate depiction because in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, learning in the Jewish communities in Europe and North America was regarded as a means to achieve success. That is why the percentage of university graduates among the Jewish population was usually higher compared to that of the general population.

Learning was also an important element in the Zionist ethos. When the British Mandate was established in Palestine and the national home under the Balfour declaration took shape, two of the first organizations to be established were the Hebrew University at Mount Scopus in Jerusalem and the Technion in Haifa.

The prosperity and even the existence of the young state were based on the high level of learning in the Yishuv.

It was the high level of learning that gave the Jewish state the technological and scientific superiority to create an advanced military force that allowed it to defeat vastly superior forces.

Learning is also at the heart of the country's prosperity. The first Jewish settlements in Turkish Palestine and then in British Palestine were based on the scientific development of agriculture. When the State of Israel came into being in 1948, its level of agriculture was very well developed and could satisfy most of the country's nutritional needs. Later, the agriculture industry became an important supplier of fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers to Europe.

Science and technology are also at the core of the current prosperity of the Jewish state. The science-oriented industry in general and the hi-tech industry in particular are at the heart of Israel's ultramodern economy. Such an industry is based on learning and the ability to produce university graduates – engineers, technicians, programmers and scientists.

The science-oriented industry is the driving force of the local economy. It accounts for fifty percent of exports and for more than half of the annual increase in the GDP. Only a country with a strong educational base can produce the people required to sustain science-based industries; and up to now, Israel has proven to be up to the task.

But there are dark clouds on the horizon. The Jews in the Diaspora have enshrined learning. The Jews in their ancient homeland, much less so. This is perhaps understandable. In the Diaspora, they needed to make a point; in their homeland, not as much.

Consequently, in Israel the passion for knowledge has diminished, and standards have fallen. In the not so distant past, Israel was considered a country with very high educational standards. Today, the standards are not what one would expect of the Jewish state.

The institutions of higher learning are of a very high standard and can hold their own in the academic world. The problem does not lie in these institutions but in the primary and secondary schools. Their standards, especially in the peripheral areas of the country, leave much to be desired. In fact, many universities complain that the high schools are not up to the standard necessary to start a university education.

The new reforms initiated by the government may well improve the standards, but there is also the problem of the desire to study and to regard education as a means to a better life. The desire to obtain higher education seems to have slackened, at least compared to the Diaspora.

Today, a good education is all-important because the modern economy is based on people with a specialized education. Israel has a highly technological economy in which only those with the proper qualifications can be recruited. And these qualifications can only be attained through top-class education.

In such an economic environment, the human element is all-important in an age where machines do much of the "manual" labor. Therefore, brain power and a good education are imperative.

Israel is already an important part of the science-oriented, initiative-driven global economy. The race to the top was not easy, but the struggle to remain at the top is not less difficult. It is a struggle that will be won only if the country retains its excellent institutions of higher learning.

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# Reforms in the education system



Courtesy Ministry of Education

By John Benzaquen

**D**alit Stauber is the director general of the Education Ministry. Today, it is one of the most important positions in the civil service. The Education Ministry is an important ministry because, to a large degree, it is responsible for the future of the country. The future of any country is its young, the grassroots of the society of the future. And the quality of the future society depends on the education the population received in their formative years. The Education Ministry is an important ministry at all times, and the director general

is a key member of the administration. At present, the ministry and its senior staff are doubly important because the education system in this country is undergoing dramatic reforms.

These reforms are designed to increase the quality of education in Israel, which has declined in recent years. The ministry has raised the standing of the teaching staff by increasing their salaries and is also investing heavily in new schools and classrooms.

"The education system in Israel is undergoing great changes," says Stauber.

"The government realized that educational standards were failing and devised a comprehensive program to reverse the trend. To make this possible, the Education Ministry's annual budget was increased by NIS 10 billion and now stands at NIS 40 billion. By 2016, it is set to increase to NIS 44.5 billion."

According to Stauber, the reforms include changes in recruiting school principals and improving the quality of the teaching staff.

"At the Education Ministry, we believe that the teacher is the key element in improving

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**The Jerusalem College of Technology**

the quality of teaching and improving grades," she says. "Consequently, we have invested in training teachers in areas that need improving, such as teaching English, the lingua franca in today's integrated world economy. In addition, mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology are essential if we are to maintain our lead as a technological center and a global center of innovation. We also have a program to train engineers as teachers for high school technological education. In the Oz Le'Temura program, we have increased the teachers' salaries and decreased their workload."

*Zvi Oren, president of the Manufacturers Association, and Yehuda Elhadif, president of the Small Manufacturers Organization, told me that there are very few technical schools in Israel, hence there is a perennial shortage of carpenters, metal workers, etc. The science-oriented industries need engineers and programmers, but the low-tech industries need graduates from technical schools. Is the Education Ministry addressing this problem?*

During 2009-2012, there was a dramatic increase in the resources devoted to promoting and upgrading technical studies in the education system. We have increased the amounts of money dedicated to technical studies by NIS 400 million. These monies have been used to open new classes and to open technical study centers in Haifa and Beersheba. In the last three years, we have transferred NIS 45 million to various municipal authorities to buy the necessary equipment for technical classes.

We have opened classes devoted to the teaching of the sciences to seventh-grade pupils with the necessary aptitude to prepare them for technological studies in high school.

We have a plan for high school students, operated in conjunction with the technological educational networks. The aim is to prepare students for the matriculation exams and to obtain a technician's certificate.

We have another program, Haznek Le'ta'asia, for students who have dropped out of high school. These children are coaxed back into the education system. Once a week, they receive practical training in a certain trade in one of the country's many factories.

We also have a program for haredi boys. We give them technical education to help them in the labor market.

We also encourage pupils up to high school level to interest them in technology from an early age. We teach them robotics, which exposes them to computers, advanced mechanics and electronics in a way that is both interesting and challenging for children of that age group.

*There is a perception that the standard of*



Dalit Stauber

'The education system in Israel is undergoing great changes,' says Stauber

*education is lower in the peripheral areas, and this is reflected in the grades of these students and in the average of those who obtain the bagrut certificate.*

We are taking steps to alleviate this problem. It is not just a question of lower standards of education in peripheral areas geographically. There is also a substantial difference in education standards in the center of the country in areas inhabited by people of a low socioeconomic level.

During the past four years, the Education Ministry has invested over NIS 500 million in upgrading the education system in the peripheral areas and bringing it up to 21st-century standards. This program is called the National Tikshuv Program and is being implemented in 1,400 primary and middle schools in the North and South of the country, as well as in Jerusalem and Lod. In these schools, we have introduced modern educational techniques that make use of modern technologies.

To introduce modern technology in teaching techniques, the Education Ministry has studied diverse teaching models overseas

and has consulted experts in Israel and abroad. This is a comprehensive program in which the schools are given modern equipment, such as computers, only after teachers have been given the necessary training, new learning techniques have been developed, and the schools have prepared an implementation plan.

We have also invested NIS 470 million in creating smaller classrooms of fewer than 32 pupils each. There are areas where schoolchildren need coaching, and for that reason we are increasing the number of school hours. We are also increasing the number of hours at the primary and middle levels in mathematics, science and the Hebrew language.

We have a special incentive program for teachers who are willing to teach in peripheral areas. The incentives vary according to the location of the school and the socioeconomic level of the community.

*Does the country have boarding, schools for Jewish children from abroad who want to have a high school education in Israel?*

The Agricultural Education Authority at the Education Ministry and Aliyat Hanoar operate a number of agricultural boarding schools in which students from the Diaspora can get a high school education. We are also responsible for the Na'ale program in which children make aliya before their parents.

*The current government is ending its term of office. What, in your opinion, have been the main achievements of the Education Ministry during the past four years?*

The ministry under Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar increased its annual budget substantially. These funds were used to increase the level of education in Israel.

I want to take this opportunity to praise the work done by the 140,000-strong teaching staff, from school principals down.

In the past four years, we have reduced the cost of education to parents by introducing free schooling from the age of three. And we are subsidizing children's school trips to the tune of NIS 270 million a year. The subsidy amounts to 40-80 percent of the cost of the outing, according to the economic situation of the parents.

In addition, we have initiated a program to lend schoolbooks, and this also has decreased the cost of education.

Our efforts these past four years have improved the grades of our students on international exams. In 2011, Israeli students obtained 516 points in exams in mathematics compared to 463 in 2007; 516 points in science in 2011 compared to 468 in 2007; and 541 points in reading compared to 512 in 2007. The improvement in grades reflects our achievements in raising the level of education in these past four years.



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# Benefits for foreign students

Leaders in industry, commerce, finance and politics know that to succeed, they must have a fair understanding of what is happening outside their own borders

By Judah Massias



Overseas students in the cafeteria (Jared Bernstein Courtesy Ne'esh B' Ne'esh)

**W**e live in a global village that is becoming smaller and smaller all the time. This trend influences many aspects of our daily lives. There is a perception that the global village concept is economic and commercial. But it is more than that. It influences the interchange of ideas, social trends, entertainment and education.

For years, young men and women did their

university studies overseas to broaden their horizons and to visit foreign countries. In the past, that was the preserve of the wealthy. Today, it is a much more common occurrence. Modern technology, the Internet, inexpensive and rapid air travel have made our world much smaller. Modern technology, as well as free-trade practices, has converted the world economy into a global village and, to a lesser extent, society

at large. In this environment, the impetus for students to study overseas is greater, and the cost is much lower than it was 50 years ago; consequently, the number of foreign students at universities is growing.

Our world is interconnected. Even a superpower like the US cannot isolate itself. Leaders in industry, commerce, finance and politics know that to succeed, they must have a fair understanding of what is happening

outside their own borders. And what better way for future leaders to do this than to take university courses abroad, to spend a few semesters at a foreign university and even obtain a degree from one of them?

In Israel, many local students go abroad to study, and many foreign students come here. All the universities in Israel have special programs for overseas students. The number of foreign students in Israel is growing and, I would venture to say, that because of Israel's central position in the Jewish world, the relative number of students at local institutions of higher learning is greater than in other countries.

Foreign Jewish students are encouraged to study in Israel. The government, through the Absorption Ministry, subsidizes the tuition fees of students who have made aliya. For those students taking a BA or a BSc degree, the ministry will pay their tuition fees for three years. Those taking an MA or an MSc degree will receive tuition fees for two years. They can use these student benefits for only one degree – either a BA/BSc or an MA/MSc. Students from the US, Canada and the UK can receive assistance from Nefesh B'Nefesh. The organization was founded in 2001 by Tony Gelbart and Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, who is the NGO's executive director.

The mission of Nefesh B'Nefesh is to encourage aliya and to substantially increase the number of those making aliya from the US, Canada and the UK by helping remove the obstacles that are preventing them from actually taking the plunge. Consequently, students from these three countries can receive assistance from Nefesh B'Nefesh.

Adina Schwartz, the post-aliya education and employment adviser at Nefesh B'Nefesh, says, "Our aim is to make it easier for prospective olim to make aliya, which includes students who want to come to Israel to study. We offer advice on the universities and colleges in this country, such as what they have to offer, the application process and the background on campus life. We also tell them what financial incentives are offered to students who make aliya and the kind of financial assistance they can receive from the various universities, such as stipends and small loans from banks. Nefesh B'Nefesh also offers assistance in finding suitable employment opportunities by showing the olim where jobs are available and advertised on e-job boards in the universities and on additional job-seeking sites."

For American olim, pursuing a university degree in Israel can be financially rewarding. Universities in the US can be very expensive. On average, it costs an annual \$45,000. This means that a BA or a BSc can cost more than \$135,000. If the expenses for an MA or an MSc degree are added, the cost can come to \$225,000 – a very large sum of money for



Overseas students relaxing (Jared Bernstein Courtesy Nefesh B'Nefesh)

## Living expenses

By Judah Massias

Foreign students coming to Israel to study will find that this is not a very expensive country. Students who come as new immigrants will have their tuition paid for courtesy of the Absorption Ministry. The annual tuition fee for BA studies is just under NIS 10,000, which comes to approximately \$2,600. For graduate studies, the annual tuition fee is NIS 13,500, or approximately \$3,500. While tuition fees are an important part of the overall costs of getting an education, there are other expenses. A student must have a roof over his head and three meals a day. Accommodation at a student dorm can average from a monthly NIS 700 (\$185) for a two-bed unit to NIS 1,300 (\$340) for a single-occupancy room. Other expenses such as water and electricity can add another NIS 200 (\$53) per month. Food can add another monthly NIS 1,500 (\$400). Lunches at the student cafeteria are subsidized, but the NIS 1,500 includes extra food and drink for breakfast, supper and the weekends when the cafeteria is closed.

In addition to food and shelter, there are expenses for books, writing materials and a computer. And, of course, entertainment because a student's life is not all work – there must be recreation as well.

Generally speaking, the minimum monthly living expenses, exclusive of tuition fees, amount to NIS 3,500, or \$920.

anyone, and doubly so for someone who is just starting out in life.

In Israel, a university degree is free for new olim. By the end of 2012, student debt in the US had exceeded \$1 trillion, surpassing credit card debt, which stood at more than \$835 million.

A university degree from an Israeli university makes economic sense. It also makes sense for Jewish students from overseas, especially if they are contemplating making aliya in the future.

Attending an Israeli university is a very efficient way to adapt oneself to life in Israel.

Taking the degree in Hebrew will also make it much easier to integrate oneself into the labor market. This is especially true for those taking a degree in medicine because medical students in a foreign country will receive a license to practice only if they take the necessary exams to prove their proficiency. The same holds true for law students. Laws differ from country to country. A cum laude degree in law from such prestigious universities as Harvard or Oxford will not be much use in Israel, or any other country for that matter, unless one takes additional qualifying courses and exams.

# Israel's sphere of universities

By John Benzaquen

Bar Ilan University (Photo: Milan.si)

Israel is renowned for the high quality of its universities, which are on a par with the best in the world. Higher education in this small corner of the Middle East started in the early 1920s with the advent of the British Mandate in Palestine. The British were open to the idea of promoting education and encouraged projects in that sphere.

The first institution of higher learning to receive international recognition was the Technion, now called the Israel Institute of Technology. It was recognized as a full-fledged institution of higher learning in 1924. The Technion had existed for some 20 years as a technical school, but during Turkish rule in Palestine no efforts were made to promote higher learning.

The following year, it was the turn of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The cornerstone laid in 1918, a few months after the British conquered Palestine. The opening event was held in 1925 amid great pomp and ceremony. Among the participants were Lord Balfour, the British high commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel, and viscount Allenby, the conqueror of Palestine. The Hebrew University's first board of governors included such luminaries as Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud and Martin Buber. Judah Magnes was the university's founder.

Within the past decade, five of its graduates received the Nobel Prize. In 2012, the Center for World University Rankings rated the Hebrew University 22nd in the world. Today, there are eight fully fledged

universities recognized by the Council of Higher Learning (CHE). The council was set up in 1958 after a special act was passed in the Knesset. According to that law, the CHE is the national institution responsible for higher education in Israel. The idea was to establish a public, apolitical, independent and professional body to represent the institutions of higher learning in their dealings with the government, which puts up a substantial part of their budgets. It is also entrusted to deal with all issues connected with higher education in Israel. The CHE law has two fundamental aims: to safeguard the autonomy of the institutions of higher education; and to ensure that the council is a truly representative body in that at least two-thirds of the council members are selected based on their personal standing in the field of higher education. The education minister serves as chairman of the council.

Higher education in Israel has come a long way since the 1920s. The increase in the population, as well as the increase in the demand for higher education, led to a gradual increase in the number of universities. Some of the universities developed from subsidiaries of the Hebrew University.

In the 1950s, two universities were set up. Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan was the first religious university in the country. This was followed by the creation the Weizmann Institute of Sciences, a university for graduate studies in the sciences.

In the 1960s, two more universities came

into being – Tel Aviv University in 1962 and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in 1969. Tel Aviv University developed from a School of Law operated by the Hebrew University.

The 1970s saw the establishment of the University of Haifa, which had been operating under the auspices of the Hebrew University.

The latest addition to the Israeli family of universities is the University of Ariel, which had operated under the auspices of Bar-Ilan. It was declared a university in 2012.

Today, the eight universities are home to more than 150,000 students. The oldest, the Technion, has the smallest number of students, 14,000. Bar-Ilan has the largest number of students, 34,000.

The Hebrew University, which is the country's best-known university, has 23,000 students, while Tel Aviv University has 29,000. Ben-Gurion University has 20,000 students, while the University of Haifa has 16,000. Ariel has 15,000 students.

The Weizmann Institute is a special case. Its student body is just over 1,000 because it has courses only in scientific subjects for MSc and doctorate degrees.

All these universities are recognized internationally, and all have special programs for overseas students.

Besides the eight established universities, Israel has a large number of colleges. They are authorized to issue BA and BSc degrees, and some are authorized to issue MAs. Most of these colleges accept foreign students, and some have special programs for them.



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# English-language schools in Israel

By James Harris



Anglican International School Jerusalem

**E**nglish-language schools have existed in Israel since 1863. In 1858, Jane Walker-Arnott left Glasgow for the Holy Land and worked to win the port of Jaffa, then a run-down community under Turkish rule. She returned to Scotland in 1860, but being concerned about the plight of the girls and women she had seen in the Holy Land, she was drawn back to Jaffa. The eldest daughter of a Glasgow university professor, she felt that her greatest contribution would be in educating the locals to give them a measure of dignity and independence in an oppressive society. On March 16, 1863, the Tabeetha School, a room in Walker-Arnott's home, admitted its first students. The 14 Christian, Jewish and Muslim girls were taught to read and write, to study the Bible and to become skilled at sewing and lace-making. The lace was sold in Scotland to raise money for the school. In response to the demand from the local community, within 10 years Walker-Arnott sought to build a proper school. In 1874 a plot was purchased outside the walls of

the old city of Jaffa. Thomas Cook, who led pilgrimages to the Holy Land, sold his house in Bethlehem and gave half the proceeds, 45 pounds sterling, to Walker-Arnott. Those were the beginnings of the Tabeetha School in Jaffa.

Currently it has 330 students.

Another English-language elementary/high school is the Anglican International School of Jerusalem, which has 208 students and operates under the auspices of the Church of England. The school, located on Hanevi'im Street, is housed in a historic building that was constructed as a hospital in 1897. It functioned as a hospital until 1962. It was first run by the Anglican Church and tended to the sick in the two world wars, where it was first a Turkish military hospital and then a British military hospital.

After Israel's War of Independence, Jerusalem's premier hospital, Hadassah at Mount Scopus, became an Israeli enclave surrounded by Jordan. According to the cease-fire agreement, only Israeli policemen

were allowed there, and the modern medical facilities were lost. Consequently, the hospital needed alternative accommodation, and the mission gave the property to the Va'ad Leumi on a temporary basis. From 1948 to 1962, it housed some of the departments of Hadassah Hospital. In 1962, when the new Hadassah hospital building in Ein Kerem was completed, the building became the Anglican International School of Jerusalem.

The school in Jerusalem and the one in Jaffa are basically British institutions. The curriculum and the organization are based on British schools. That was probably the reason for opening of a third English-language school in 1958, the Walworth Barbour American International School.

The majority of embassies in Israel are based in Tel Aviv, and Tabeetha was the only educational institution accessible to the children of the diplomatic corps. This was fine for the diplomats from the countries of the British Commonwealth because it was similar to schools in their homelands. ➔



Anglican International School Jerusalem

But for Americans, it was a foreign institution, and the children felt out of place in what was, for all intents and purposes, a British school.

Consequently, the US Embassy decided that there was a need for an American school with a US curriculum. The first such school was established in Kfar Shmryahu. It was named after Walworth Barbour, the US ambassador to Israel, who was a driving force in establishing the school.

Today, the school is located on spacious grounds in Even Yehuda, a town 20 kilometers north of Tel Aviv. It also has a campus in Jerusalem. The school has four levels: preschool, elementary school, middle school and high school. It has 565 pupils, representing more than 50 nationalities; 40% are Americans, 20% are Israelis, and the remainder are from diverse countries around the globe. The 80% of non-Israelis are children from the diplomatic corps, as well as children of the

senior staff of multinational companies based in Israel.

The new 19-acre campus has three separate schools, a performing arts building and auditorium, a gym, a cafeteria, a library and a media center, athletic fields, tennis and basketball courts, a pool and many other facilities such as a darkroom, art rooms, a fitness center and a video station.

While the three schools mentioned are either British or American, they all have an international orientation. There are such schools all over the world, and they cater primarily to the needs of the children of diplomats and senior staff of multinational corporations. The parents of these students are globe trotters, changing postings or being transferred at frequent intervals, which means that the children go from one country to another and from one school to another. Consequently, there is a need for such schools worldwide.

In places where there is a large concentration

of children from one country, that country usually opens a school, such as the school for Japanese children in London.

But while the majority of the parents of the children in the American school in Even Yehuda and the British schools in Jaffa and Jerusalem are diplomats or senior staff of multinationals, these schools also play an important role in a country like ours, which receives thousands of new immigrants every year.

For a child coming to Israel from the US or the UK, the change from the education system there to here can be very traumatic. The language is different, the curriculum is different. A teenager can have serious problems of adaptation, and these schools can help solve their problems. For example, in the wake of the large aliya from the former USSR more than 10 years ago, the Education Ministry adapted certain schools to the needs of the Russian children, thereby helping them to adapt.



Tabeetha School Jaffa  
(Courtesy Tabeetha School)



Campus of the American International School  
(Courtesy AIS)



Anglican International School Jerusalem  
(Courtesy AIS)



Raphael Recanati  
International School

LIVE IN ISRAEL  
STUDY IN ENGLISH

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