



The think tank for new Israeli politics



Israel at 100

Noah Efron, Nazier Magally
and Shaharit Fellows



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Israel at 100

A Place of Contradictions and a Place for Hope

1. Hannah Pinchasi



The phrase "national home" is from the Balfour Declaration.

The Jewish state is more than that. It is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham: "for all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your descendents for ever." And still, Israel is also the homeland of the Palestinian people.

3. Orly Daboush-Nitzan



And of course not only Arabs.

Women have also suffered discrimination. And also all those who live outside of the country's center – both geographically and sociologically. Israel is made up of layers upon layers of those who are valued more, and those who are valued less.

5. Orly Daboush-Nitzan



Israel's culture is in decline because we have forgotten the question "why?" Why are we here? What values drove us as we built this place? Achievements in science, at the universities, or in literature will not enrich us on their own. Will larger budgets to schools that continue to be grade factories rather than homes to a rich set of values solve the problem? Will larger budgets to the universities – ivory towers which memorialize societal discrimination - return the vitality to our culture? Cultural vitality is found beyond any concrete reality; it is found in belief and in values, and those are what need to be rebuilt.

2. Tamar Ben-Yosef



I agree but am not quite at peace with the order and emphases of the opening sentences. To my mind, the opening sentence should be: "The State of Israel is the state of the Jewish People that has returned to its homeland." Questions of the relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and other controversial issues such as these, should wait for the next paragraphs. It is important to state clearly at the outset: we haven't yet gotten to the most painful issues; we're feeling our way towards them.

4. Tamar Ben-Yosef



I don't think that the main issue between Jews and Arabs in Israel is discrimination. Emphasizing discrimination assumes Arab weakness, and fails to recognize their political power. I believe that we Jews should recognize the political strength of Israeli Arabs, and respect it. The lives of Jews and Arabs in Israel will be based on trust and shared interests, and will be strengthened as a result of identifying conflicting interests, and confronting them.

1. Ilana Speizman



Such a belief is fed, among other things, by apocalyptic prophecies about Israeli demographics, which according to many pundits will lead to the destruction of Israel as we know it. The

trouble is that we almost never hear the views of the demographers and other researchers who present a very different forecast for the future.

abroad, it is often unsparingly critical. Pundits, politicians and professors here make much of Israel's flaws. Polls show that only a minority of Israelis believe that [the future will be better than our embattled present](#)¹. A good many doubt that the country will even survive for another generation. One hundred thousand Israelis have lately obtained German passports, which offer the ironic comfort of a place to escape should Israel fail.

This pessimism is twice a problem. It prevents us from seeing Israel's extraordinary achievements, and thus from identifying those things that can strengthen and expand on those achievements. And it discourages us from giving voice to a vision for a better future. Absent such a vision for the future, it is hard to figure out what we ought to be doing today. Despair breeds inaction which in turn breeds despair. For too long, despair has been the tired motor of Israeli politics, and Israeli politics have been a tireless motor of despair.

This cycle can be broken, as the [social protests of the summer of 2011](#)² demonstrated. For a dozen weeks, hundreds of thousands of Israelis spent night after night in makeshift encampments, discussing visions for Israel's future. Half a million came out to demonstrate on a single night, under banners proclaiming a common commitment to "social justice," and with a shared belief that the Israel we bequeath our children can be better than the Israel we inherited from our parents.

This paroxysm of optimistic cheer did not surprise us. For the two years prior to the protests, and in the half year since, we have devoted ourselves to fashioning a vision for Israel's future. To do this, we took to the road, meeting with leading scholars of Israel's politics, economics, law, history, culture and society. We spoke with politicians and policy makers. And we set out to revisit the country. We spent days and nights with ultra-Orthodox Jews in Beit Shemesh. We did the same with Russian immigrants in Ashdod, with Palestinian Israelis in Nazareth, with Mizrahi residents in the development town of Yerucham, with Bedouin in the neighboring unrecognized village of Rachma, and beyond the Green Line in the settlement of Kfar Etzion and the Palestinian town of Beit Jallah. We travelled to Efrat, Um el Fahm, Tirat Carmel, Ein Hud, Haifa and Jerusalem. When the summer protests produced tent camps across the country, we visited them from Kiryat Shemona in the north to Dimona in the south.

2. Orly Daboush-Nitzan

The social protests of the summer were a first removal of the veil of ignorance under which we generally live. There remains so many more veils to remove;.



1. Ilana Speizman



This dichotomy, like the others, doesn't fully represent our circumstances. Many children of Olim that were born in Israel and grew up here still carry with them the values and culture of their parents'

birthplace, and often struggle with the same difficulties as those of the immigrant generation of their parents.

In every place we visited, we found people working with single-minded devotion to strengthen the places which they live – their neighborhoods, towns and cities -- and to building bridges between these communities and those that surround them. We met with concern for the future of the country, and frequently with disgust for its politicians. No less, we met with quiet and determined hope that things can be better.

Our most surprising finding was a great and growing discrepancy between the way Israeli politics and society are discussed, at home and abroad, and the way they operate for real around the country. The dichotomies that so many of us have for so long believed define the country – Ashkenazi vs. Mizrahi, Jew vs. Arab, secular vs. religious, center vs. periphery, [native vs. immigrant](#)¹, left vs. right – no longer reflect the complexity of Israeli society. There are commonalities in values and in visions that have gone largely unnoticed, and in these things that we share one find seeds of a common future characterized not by conflict, but by community.

It is far from certain that this future will come to pass; the nightmares of the pessimists have a plausibility that one cannot deny. But to bring about the future we wish, we must allow ourselves to imagine it more clearly, understand it better, and act to bring it about. The pages below represent a first effort to do this, as a practical and political exercise in hope, [to describe Israel as it can and should be on the hundredth anniversary of its establishment, in 2048](#)².

A New Social Compact

We don't ordinarily think of Israel as a multicultural society. Although 20% of its citizens are Arabs, over three-quarters are Jews, and thus we think of Israel primarily as a Jewish nation-state, with a Palestinian national minority. National identity plays a central and critical role in defining us, but it also often hides more than it reveals. For example, Haredi, or ultra-Orthodox, Jews make up more than 10% of the Israeli Jewish population, but for the most part do not identify with a Jewish national identity. Within the Haredi community there are Mizrachim and Ashkenazim, and a plentitude of rival sects. Similarly, Israeli Arabs do not all share a single, well-defined identity. The history, sociology, culture and politics of Negev Bedouins are different from those of Palestinians in the Galilee. Christians, Muslims and Druze differ in religion, and

2. Maram Masarwi

I have to admit that reading "Israel at 100" was not simple for me. And yet, after thinking deeply about it, and after endless tossing and turning, I'm convinced that there is no other way.



1. Orly Daboush-Nitzan



Israel suffers from a lack of cultural depth which it could have had, save for the "melting pot" which erased and pushed to the side whole cultures. Only over the last several years have we begun to

uncover the cultural treasures that have been hidden away – in music, literature and philosophy. And still, what has been lost is far more than what can ever be recovered.

often in perspective and heritage. There are two villages of Circassians, a small population of Armenians, and even Gypsies.

The heritage of Israel's Jews trace back to dozens of different places: Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemin, Iraq, Iran, Georgia, Italy, Britain, America, South Africa, Romania, Hungary, Germany, Poland, France, Argentina, Brazil, India and many more. One million immigrants have arrived from the former Soviet Union since the 90s, some 300,000 of whom are not recognized as Jews. There are cities in Israel – Rishon L'Tzion, Ashdod, Gedera and Carmiel, for instance – where Russian can be heard almost as frequently as Hebrew on the streets. In other places, one is as likely to hear Amaharit spoken by many of the 100,000 Ethiopians in Israel. There are more than a quarter million foreign workers and refugees here, many of whom escaped ravaged Sudan and Eritrea on foot. At the Bialik-Rogozen elementary school near the Tel Aviv central bus station 26 different languages are spoken by the schoolchildren. The mosaic of cultures in Israel is intricate and detailed as arabesque tiles.

This great diversity has long been feared as a source of instability. David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, set as a political aim of the first importance taming the multiplicity of citizens' identities, and forging in its place a new national identity. Borrowing from American lore, Ben Gurion called for policies that would act as a great "melting pot¹," turning the many cultures of Jewish Israelis into a singular culture². In the same spirit, political scientists today warn that ethnic, cultural and religious divisions threaten to tear Israeli society apart. Parties form to fight for privileges for this group or that. With growing frequency voters hew to the narrow self-interest of whatever they take to be their groups, transforming Israeli politics into the politics of ethnic and religious identity. Increasingly, if you know how a person seasons his rice, and with whom he prays, or doesn't, then you know with confidence how he votes. Israel, many believe, is becoming a society of parochial interest groups, each tilting and fulminating against all the rest.

This fear is understandable but misplaced. Israel's abundant cultural heritage is a blessing. It gives meaning to most of us, and it accounts for the richness and beauty of public life here. Our identities – as Jews, Muslims, or Christian; as Zionists or Palestinians – matter to us³. They are a source of our moral intuitions, and of our political motivations, and of many of our sympathies, and notions, and behaviors. We appreciate

3. Orly Daboush-Nitzan



"Rebbe – You have given me permission to stand up. I can spread

my arms, this is my right. I no longer have the need to shrivel up." (Yalkut Shimoni, Psalms, Chapter 1) In Israel of 2012, there are many who contract their identities in order to be accepted as worthwhile; how deep runs that feeling which passes from generation to generation (almost becoming part of one's DNA); how strong is the power of humiliation. I don't know how you repair it, but I believe that a vital first step is to recognize the depth of the pain and to acknowledge it.

2. Noam Hofstadter

According to a different school of thought, there are still powerful forces that work hard to create the illusion of solidarity, to which all parts of the society need to commit



themselves, while sacrificing a rich set of identities, beliefs and cultural diversity. For example, solidarity around neo-liberal economic policies, which offers economic efficiency as the central cultural value, and ignores those that struggle to survive under such a model – the poor, Holocaust survivors, single mothers, homeless, temporary workers, the elderly, or the young that no longer benefit from the relative stability that the welfare state afforded; or, solidarity around the army as the center of our shared citizenship, creating a secular Jewish identity at the heart of what unites us, and pushing Arab and Haredi citizens outside of our shared community.

1. Ariel Picard



A central component in the new ethos must be social solidarity – the responsibility that every citizen must have to the wellbeing of every other citizen.

the world through these identities. They help us to thrive. These facts run deep; they are biological facts. Humans are creatures that flourish best in groups, in cultures, in language, in ritual, and much of the meaning we find in our lives comes through these things. A political program that aims to dampen the primordial sense of sympathy that many Jews here felt seeing Jews from Ethiopia blinking in the sun of Ben Gurion airport as they step to the tarmac, or that many Palestinians here felt seeing a Palestinian flag hoisted over Ramallah, is one that aims to mute precisely those affinities that make us who we are.

It is not Israel's cultural diversity itself that threatens the country's stability, but rather the isolation of one group from the other. [Too many Israelis come to know¹](#) only their own heritage. Ultra-Orthodox Jews live in a world of ultra-Orthodox Jews. Israeli Arabs live in a world of Israeli Arabs. Liberal secular Jews live in their own world. Too often, our identities are hermetic. With growing frequency, Israelis view one another either as brother or other, with nothing in between.

[There are signs that this may be changing²](#). In 2012, the Knesset voted to institute alongside the secular public school system and the religious public school system, a new school system that brings together secular and religious children to study together. A similar spirit animates literally hundreds of civil society initiatives that aim to bring together children and adults who generally have no opportunity to meet and speak: Arabs and Jews, religious and secular folk, refugee and long-time citizens and more. And then there are initiatives like this: In May, 2003, three hundred Israeli Arabs and Jews traveled together to Auschwitz-Birkenau where, among other things, they tearfully intoned a long list of names of Jews murdered on that spot by Nazis. The organizers, a priest named Emil Shufani and Nazir Magally (one of the authors of this document), both of Nazareth, explained that their purpose was to expand their own spirits by coming to understand firsthand the depths of Jewish suffering and the source of many Jewish fears.

By 2048, initiatives like these will no longer be just the happy but haphazard result of the visionary actions of individuals. Instead, they will find regular and institutionalized expression. To be sure, in 2048 cultural diversity will continue to thrive; indeed, the state will encourage it. But ethnic and religious identities will no longer grow in isolation. This change

[of the Fathers" from the Mishnah, or introducing the poetry of Mahmoud Darwash to the curricula. However, these attempts don't expose the students to the full cultural range of the country, and the students exposure is dependent on the political persuasions of the reigning Minister.](#)

2. Ilana Speizman

[Some will say that the policies of our recent Ministers of](#)



[Education are an expression of such an attempt to deepen our familiarity with the various communities of the country. Examples are the addition of a unit on "Ethics](#)

1. Hannah Pinchasi



I grew up in a mixed Jerusalem neighborhood, and many of my neighbors were Haredim. Years have passed and neighborhoods have become more and more homogenous (including modern

Orthodox neighborhoods). Perhaps we need to advance policies which encourage mixed neighborhoods.

begins in elemental ways. By 2048, cities, towns and neighborhoods will no longer be designed to accommodate isolated communities (as ultra-Orthodox cities are today, alongside Arab villages and secular gated communities). "Mixed housing," that brings together people of different backgrounds, with different incomes, will be a new standard¹. Planners will redesign public spaces – parks, sidewalks, shopping areas, sports stadiums -- that bring people and peoples together.

By 2048, children will no longer be sent to schools where people who look and sound like their parents teach classrooms full of students who look and sound like they do. For those who wish, mixed schools – attended by religious and secular, Jews and Arabs, working class and well-heeled – will be established. For others, schools with this or that identity will be housed side by side on campuses that will allow children to meet children unlike themselves on the playground or in the lunch room. In Jerusalem, ultra-Orthodox Jewish kids may learn Talmud with one another and mathematics with, say, secular kids from an adjacent neighborhood. A shared core curriculum will ensure that all children see treasures from other cultures. A girl from Jerusalem may be inspired by the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, a boy from Kibbutz Degania can discover that Maimonides found wisdom in Aristotle, a boy from Nazareth may discover Agnon, and a girl from Tel Aviv may, to her surprise, be drawn to Talmud.

In this way, a strong national identity² will arise through and alongside more particular cultural identities. This national identity will reflect a foundation of bedrock values, which schools will teach and courts will protect: democracy, human dignity, autonomy, an affinity for the landscape we share and, of course, an appreciation for the value of cultural heritage itself.

All of this is easier described than accomplished, yet it may not be as difficult as it seems. A tragic mistake of Israel's first generations was the indifference with which groups were isolated one from the other³. Neighborhoods, towns and villages became strongholds of this group or that, separate school systems with differing curricula taught kids of different backgrounds, newspapers catered to audiences defined by ethnicity or religious outlook or heritage. By 2048, this mistake can be undone by adopting policies that allow Israel's quiltwork of cultures to

2. Ariel Picard

In order to explain more clearly what is being suggested, we should emphasize that the common denominator is based on a liberal-humanistic worldview, which has clear borders.



It isn't multiculturalism that suggests "live and let live"; but rather a worldview that has basic values that won't be compromised. Of course, it will be extremely difficult to convince communities not reared in light of such values to accept them. On the other hand, without such shared values, the state and society simply won't be able to survive.

3. Ilana Speizman

Studies in social psychology that address the relationships



between "in-group" (my group), and "out-group" (the groups of others), show that

the in-group has a tendency to see the out-group as homogeneous, and their own group as heterogeneous. Familiarity with the out-group dramatically lessens the impression that they are homogeneous, so contact between the groups that make up Israeli society will bring, among other things, a less stereotyped view of one another.

thrive not in isolation, but in interaction with one another. The richness of cultures will be seen not as a burden, but as the blessing it is.

The End of the Conflict

For many Israelis, the Jewish-Palestinian conflict is an enduring and endless cause for despair. Growing numbers – on both the Left and the Right, both Jews and Palestinians – have lately come to the conclusion that the "Two-State Solution," or the idea of a Palestinian State and Israel existing peaceably one alongside the other, is dead. Columnist Gideon Levy captured this prevailing view when he wrote in Ha'aretz that "it's time to raise the white flag, to admit publicly that the two-state solution has been foiled" and irreversibly failed.

This conclusion is staggeringly shortsighted. As recently as 1969, Prime Minister Golda Meir could insist to the Sunday Times of London that there are "no such thing as Palestinians." By 1993, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat met on the White House lawn to sign the Oslo Accords, calling for the creation of Palestine alongside Israel. Those agreement failed to produce the durable peace their advocates predicted. But they do serve as a marker of how much the conflict had changed in a generation. Such markers are abundant. When Wikileaks published 1,600 documents that collectively described two years of negotiations between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and President Mahmoud Abbas, the story they told was of serious negotiations in which, as an observer wrote in the New York Times, "the gaps appear so pitifully small." Abbas reported that the negotiations included "creative ideas" that could solve problems that in the past defied solution. The sides had effectively agreed on matters of security and defense, for instance. Olmert reported that "we were very close, more than ever in the past, to complete an agreement on principles that would have led to the end of the conflict between us and the Palestinians."

To most people here, this last thing is hardly a surprise. The great, open secret of the peace process is that most Palestinians and Israelis know, more or less, what a negotiated settlement between the two sides will look like: two states, tweaked 1967 borders, limited return of refugees, etc. This

1. Hannah Pinchasi



Jewish Israelis' suspicions of Arab Israelis relate to three different areas: demographics, defense and culture. Although I would truly like to identify with what's being argued, I simply can't imagine

how the establishment of a Palestinian State will in fact lessen the Jewish fear of Palestinian immigration into Israel from the newfound State, or of "a fifth column" (although it needs to be stated unequivocally that there has never been justification for such a fear at any point in Israel's history), or of the demand that Israel's Jewish character be weakened. And if I have such difficulty imagining such a change, what does that tell me?

is more-or-less the settlement almost forged between Olmert and Abbas, and it is more or less the so-called "Geneva Accord" hammered out by Palestinian and Israeli intellectuals. It is a solution that political scientists believe will be accepted by most Israelis and by most Palestinians.

Our ability to envision with clarity an eventual resolution to the conflict does not mean that the price the conflict extracts today – especially the suffering of Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation – is not grave and tragic. And there are great obstacles to achieving this agreement. It cannot be denied that the steady growth of Jewish settlements on the West Bank make it ever more difficult to draft borderlines between Israel and an incipient Palestinian State that will be acceptable to all. Nor can it be denied that the continual refusal of a fragmented Palestinian leadership to full throatedly accept without reservation Israel as a presence, indeed as a neighbor, in the region does little to allay Jewish fears. But it does mean that there is good reason to believe that a resolution to the conflict can be reached.

There is good reason to believe, as well, that the resolution of the conflict will bring in tow further changes within Israel. Specifically, by 2048, the existence of a Palestinian state alongside Israel will also have served to improve relations between Arabs and Jews within Israel¹.

3. Ilana Speizman



This is largely different from what happens today when many on the

right deny the Palestinians their identity, and many on the left commit the same error, by rejecting the Zionist story's critical importance for Jews.

For one thing, Israel's recognition of Palestinian national identity will allow Palestinians, in reciprocal fashion, to appreciate more deeply the need for Jewish national identity², and to see its value. For all involved, it will diminish the impression that Jewish-Palestinian relations in the Middle East are a zero-sum affair, and that a success of one people comes only at the expense of the other³. In so doing, a Palestinian state will dampen the anger with which many Palestinians regard the establishment of Israel, viewing it as a source of suffering for their people. By increasing mutual identification, and decoupling the thriving of one people from the suffering of the other, a Palestinian state will serve to redefine relations between Arab and Jewish Israelis, on a foundation of new-found respect, empathy and equality⁴. By 2048, the inequities that see fewer public funds allocated

2. Ariel Picard

The establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel will allow for Jewish culture in the public square to thrive even more. Israel as the national home of the Jewish people



means it is not only a refuge; it is the place where this ancient people can develop its culture and become a cultural center for Jews all over the world. At the end of the day, cultural creation emerges from communities, but they can benefit from the support of the State. However, as a democratic country Israel must equally support the thriving of its non-Jewish communities, as well.

4. Maram Masarwi

The Palestinian



problem didn't begin in 1967 as many would like to believe. It began in 1948. Therefore, as long as the state and its Jewish citizens continue to ignore the Palestinian narrative, and as long as it refuses to do the work necessary to bring it to the attention of the Israeli public, there is no chance for true forgiveness and for a solution of the core problems. The recognition of the Naqba, the Palestinian tragedy of 1948, and the pain and suffering that it caused to the Palestinian people, is a necessary condition for reconciliation and the creation of a different kind of relationship between the two sides.

1. Noam Hofstедter



This is of course the dominant paradigm in Israel, and it has much on which it can be justified looking at the history in our region, certainly of the wars leading up to 1967. But it has already been

proven that policies of reconciliation by Israel can lead to diplomatic relations with our neighbors, while intentionally avoiding true peace negotiations damages our relations in the region, and strengthens the extremists in the Arab world. Specifically, it is worth mentioning the Saudi peace initiative, which was accepted by the Arab League already in 2002, and reaffirmed in 2007, and offers complete normalization of relations with the Arab world. Israel has not even formally related to this revolutionary offer.

to Arab citizens will seem like a distant, sad memory. The number of Arab professors, judges, high-level government managers, corporate executives, media moguls and the like will by then reflect the number of Arab citizens of the country. By 2048, with a Palestinian state to visit across an open border, Israeli Palestinians can live comfortably proud of both aspects of their identities, Israeli and Palestinian.

Israel among the Nations

Israel is a tiny country with a huge presence in the world. In the past decade, six Israeli scientists have grasped the hand of the King of Sweden at a Nobel Prize award ceremony, Israeli engineers and entrepreneurs have registered thousands of patents, some that sparked technological revolutions, Israeli athletes have competed for world championships, and Israeli filmmakers have walked the red carpets of the Oscars and Golden Globes.

At the same time, many Israelis feel isolated. Israel maintains tense diplomatic relations with two of our neighbors, Jordan and Egypt. Following the Arab Spring, relations with Egypt may be imperiled. Most other nations in the Middle East do not recognize Israel's basic right to exist as a sovereign state. Several are overtly hostile, including Iran whose Prime Minister has many times called for Israel's destruction.

In light of these facts, it is perhaps a natural reaction that Israelis have tried to fortify ourselves against our neighbors, while strengthening our ties to the rest of the world, and especially the United States and Europe. In our part of the world, we see the Israel Defense Forces as our sole guarantor of safety. We have built separation fences and fortified walls, and we have deployed automated missile defense systems, in an effort to protect ourselves from what we see as enemies over our every border¹. Elsewhere, we have tried to remove whatever barriers separate us politically, culturally and economically from the West.

There is logic in both these reactions but neither provides the security we seek. The truth is, Israel today is at once too staunchly fortified, and not fortified enough. Israel's long term security depends upon our ability to make a place for ourselves in the Middle East, not to remain a body seen by all but ourselves as foreign interlopers. Walls and superior firearms cannot, by their nature, accomplish this alone². At the same

2. Hannah Pinchasi

I can feel my discomfort churning inside, and I'm



guessing that many Israelis would react in a similar way.

My mind knows: this can't go on forever. But my heart protests – actually, why not? Why can't what has worked for 60 years – military deterrence, a Western country in the heart of a Middle East which is far less democratic – why can't it work for another 100 years?

1. Maram Masarwi



It would be a mistake to assume that peace will bring a significant improvement to the standard of living for the average Israeli, and will close the social and economic gaps that are growing every day. The

central problem with Israel's economy is not the security budget, but rather our economic policies which are deeply rooted in American economic assumptions. We need a dramatic change in government policy, one that doesn't hide behind graphs, half-truths and numbers that no one can understand, and which will embrace the demands of the summer's social protest.

time, Israeli's [uncritical embrace of Western culture](#)¹ in total, threatens to alter what is best about the country. In the past decades, Israel has with careless enthusiasm championed globalized culture. We have replaced local business with malls of international corporate retail, outsourced Israeli production, and compromised our economy to global interests. While some of us have gained material comforts that our parents could not have imagined, many of us have been left behind. [Along the way, Israel's social solidarity and culture of mutual commitment has grown tired and ineffective](#)².

By 2048, we ought to have integrated more tightly into our part of the world. Our ability to do so is hardly up to us alone. It is impossible to predict at this moment the results of the tumultuous "Arab Spring." The new leaders who have emerged from these revolutions are for the most part hostile toward Israel. But though one cannot conclude from the "Arab Spring" that Israel's place in the region is improving, one can conclude that the region is more fluid than previously imagined, and contains possibilities for fundamental change, sometimes for the better. Few anticipated that Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat would reach a peace agreement. Few imagined that Yitzhak Rabin and King Hussein of Jordan would also sign a peace agreement, and that the latter man would eulogize the first as a "brother and a friend." In the same way, peace with Palestinians, and ties with other countries in the region, are possible. The train tracks that once linked Jerusalem and Cairo, Beirut, Amman and Istanbul can be laid afresh, become a symbol and a conduit of new relations not just between the governments of those places, but also the people. Peace, first with the Palestinians, and then with others, can dissolve barriers that have been constructed between Israel and our neighbors.

In light of this, by 2048, Israel's notion of security will have changed. In the long run, military might will never be enough to guarantee our safety. Security is an admixture of force of arms and something more delicate yet, and in the end, more enduring: human ties. [A fortress Israel](#)³ will never be as secure as an Israel that is a busy crossroad of connections leading near and far: through marketplaces, laboratories, theaters, coliseums, concert halls and lecture halls. [And a globalized, corporatized, fully-Westernized Israel, existing as a lonely outpost of Europe, will never be as secure as one that finds a place in the world economy without surrendering the cultural and economic independence to best serve its own citizens](#)⁴. By

3. Ilana Speizman



In his article on "The Iron

Wall," Jabotinsky argued that the wall is not forever, and it will exist until the Arabs will agree to accept the State of Israel as a homeland for the Jewish people. He claims that

when that happens, the time will have come for negotiations and mutual compromise.

2. Shira Shato

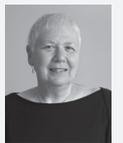
We have distanced ourselves from the Jewish tradition that demands from us to care about the widow and the stranger, and have changed from a community to a crowd – a crowd



of consumers and customers who are a target for marketing and merchandising.

4. Tamar Ben-Yosef

The Crisis of the European Union brings to focus three major models



of globalization: a) Countries that Lead: for example, Germany, which for the most part sets the tone for the European Union, and emerges as an economic winner from the model that she designs ostensibly for everyone's benefit; b) Countries that are Led: Greece, Ireland and Portugal

are wake-up calls to the fate of countries that have lost their identities; c) Countries that Maintain Some Level of Independence: Sweden and Denmark have their own currency; Switzerland never joined the European Union. All three are still thriving today. All three are countries as small as Israel, countries that knew how to turn their weaknesses into strengths.

1. Ran Raviv



As one of the worldwide leaders in the new technologies and the global markets, Israel can make itself part of the solution, rather than part of the problem: from a threat on the Arab world

which sees it as a bridgehead for the new colonialism of the technological West, to an opportunity for joint development for the mutual benefit of the region as a whole. Instead of being torn between two identities, Israel's Palestinian citizens will have the opportunity to serve as a bridge between the two worlds. The region will benefit from the joint development of technologies for the good of the region's inhabitants, rather than primarily for the further amassing of wealth in the already wealthy nations of the world.

2048, Israel will finally be what many of its earliest visionaries foresaw: a place at once of the West and the East, a country absorbing many of the gifts of Western culture, while remaining at home in the Levant¹.

Economy with a Human Face

In 2048, Israel's economy will have changed and, with it, Israeli society will be transformed.

By many measures, the Israeli economy is already today a remarkable success. For twenty years, Israel has been ranked among the world's five fastest growing emerging markets. Last year, our economy was rated 17th best of the world's most developed economies, and 9th in our durability in the face of global financial crisis. Prime Minister Netanyahu has set as a goal Israel's attaining the rank of one of the ten countries with the highest per capita income, and if present trends hold, we may meet that goal in little over a decade.

But most of us see too little benefit from this success. It is an astonishing fact that ten extended families control 30% of Israel's economy. One quarter of the country lives under the poverty line (far more than a quarter among Arabs and ultra-Orthodox Jews). Work does not guarantee comfort: more than a third of those receiving food assistance hold down jobs. The social protests of the past year were, among other things, a cry of frustration of the middle class, as the cost of food, apartments, day care, gasoline, and other basic needs increase far greater than wages, even as work-weeks grow longer. The protests' most enduring demand was to set Israel's economy on a new footing.

The protesters did more than simply level demands. They also suggested new economic forms, some of which have already begun to operate on a small scale. A nationwide cooperative called Shelanu gained hundreds of new members in its first weeks after incorporation, and has rented space for the first of a planned nationwide chain of coop stores. Its pro-bono attorneys are working to design a non-profit credit union and financial services provider. During the past decade, the first social businesses have set up shop around the country. In the same years, thousands of Israelis in their twenties and thirties have established 150 intentional communities in poor neighborhoods in cities around the country. Many

1. Orly Daboush-Nitzan



Empathy is the key word. As a democratic country, for years we have spoken of rights anchored in the law, the legal system.

The time has time for the discussion to change, and for our discussion of

rights to be rooted in our care for other human beings, from the values of mercy, not justice. From there will emerge Tikkun Olam – repairing of the world.

of these young Israelis volunteer in schools, organize night basketball leagues, set up community centers and computer labs, and whatever else might give a chance to kids born without much of one. They live on next to nothing, offering their talents to needy kids, and seeing as compensation the good that they do for the neighborhoods they live in.

These scattered and rudimentary projects demonstrate that many Israelis seek alternatives to the winner-take-all market system that has taken root in Israel. By 2048, such alternatives can be part of the day-to-day life of all of us. If today, the wealthiest one percent enjoy 70% of all available credit, by 2048 publicly-owned banks, community banks, and banking cooperatives will offer credit² to new, local entrepreneurs. This will allow small-scale businesses to flourish, giving a chance to those who grew up without advantages to launch small start-ups of their own. These will find their place alongside "social businesses," aiming to improve their neighborhoods and cities, as well as turn a profit. Cooperative stores, banks, insurance companies and similar experiments in new economy are already underway in Israel of 2012, as they are in many other places around the world. Our early experience with these initiatives shows that they strengthen their communities, offering local employment in local businesses that keep local cash and capital in the community. By 2048, our thriving traditional economy will be supplemented by such new forms of local economy that are more alive to the needs of the rest of us.

The shift to an economy that serves the needs of more Israelis, and that links economic and social benefits, will alter the way Israel engages with the global market, as well. Israel's entrepreneurial genius will focus to a greater degree than today not only on economic profit, but on social value, as well. This change may already be beginning. At the start of 2012, an eclectic coalition of multinational corporations, national businesses, local initiatives, universities, NGOs and government came together to discuss how Israeli entrepreneurship can be deployed to help provide cheap energy, clean water, and decent housing to needy people around the world. The members of this coalition seek technologically canny, culturally appropriate, environmentally benign, and low-priced products that are locally produced. They want to make a profit, but they also want to do good. And they want Israel to be part of the solution to the world's ills.

2. Ran Raviv

We have to get to the point, like in Sweden, where the credit that is in public hands and that is managed by a variety of public agencies, will amount to more than 50% of the total credit in the economy, and will thus become the defining factor in directing its use. Credit whose source, for example, is employees' savings accounts,



and which isn't managed in order to maximize profits in the short term, will be an effective instrument in restructuring the market economy. According to Keynes' vision, such a situation will "bring...an end to the power of capitalists to exploit the value of a shortage of capital for amassing wealth and oppressing the poor."

1. Ran Raviv



In order to create an economy that reflects the needs of all parts of society, the democratization of production is essential. The involvement of organized workers in management decisions will widen the company's

field of vision beyond maximizing profit, and will offer an inclusive forum in which to hold discussions and make decisions in real time.

By then, Israel's regressive tax code will have been thoroughly revised, to better reflect the values that we share. Wages will be taxed less than today. Non-productive speculation, more. Sustainable industries, which do not exhaust limited resources or pollute, will be taxed less than unsustainable industries. By 2048, relations between workers and employers will have changed, with **reconstituted labor unions**¹ insuring that workers have a voice in the decisions that most affect themselves and their companies, and who in turn take responsibility for the company, as a whole. The huge gaps between the wages of executives and laborers, which today are a vivid symbol of economic inequity, will be narrowed through a fairer tax code and through the revival of old social norms that made it unseemly for a CEO to earn as much as one hundred or one thousand times more than his employees. A guaranteed "basic income" will ensure that all citizens can live a decent life, and thereby prevent the horrid sorts of exploitation to which the poorest of us are too often subjected. The work-week, which steadily grew over the first six decades of Israel's existence, will once again contract. Day-care will be cheap and convenient. Part-time employment, flex-time schemes and telecommuting will be common. By 2048, work will not come at the expense of family and friends, or time to play football, or make music or circulate a petition.

Together, all these things will produce an economy very different from today's. By 2048, we will have learned to take into account many things that are now overlooked: natural treasures like clean air and water, cultural treasures like our literary heritage, and social treasures like our shared concern for our neighborhoods and public spaces. By 2048, the aim of Israel's economy will no longer be to maximize GDP, but rather to maximize the flourishing of the people who produce everything that allow us to live our lives, and that make our lives worth living.

A Place that Sustains Us

"Man is but the imprint of his native land," wrote the poet Shaul Tchernichovsky. The opposite is no less true. People reflect their environment, and environments reflect the people who occupy them. For better and for worse, the landscape of Israel reflects the values by which we have lived for the past generations. Nathan Alterman, another poet of echoing resonance, wrote with affection of Israel that "we shall dress you in a skirt of concrete and cement"; he was expressing the Zionist

1. Ilana Speizman



Israeli public policy indeed encourages high birth rates more than any other country, but that support stops the moment the baby is born. The state doesn't subsidize early childhood education,

and the cost of food and other childhood essentials are higher than many Western countries.

ethos of his age. Indeed, this ethos survives today, as the rate of building remains fast and constant. In the first six decades of the State, roads were paved, factories constructed, cities, towns and settlements established. Millions of immigrants were absorbed. Birth rates here remain double what they are in Switzerland, Greece and Italy¹. Rapid development has led to higher standards of living and longer life expectancy for most Israelis. It has also led to western-style consumption and western-style waste. Life in Israel has become crowded, polluted and unhealthy. Streams have become choked with sludge. Trash is dumped untreated. Schools of fish have dwindled off the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, into which all manner of chemicals are drained. The Dead Sea is disappearing. Open spaces have been sold off to developers to build bedroom suburbs with two cars in each driveway². Commuters spend hours a day, cursing their ways to work in the big cities. Children in Haifa and Tel Aviv suffer from asthma at rates far higher than the national average; just as their parents are more likely to get cancer. Our western standard of living has brought with it all the sorts of damage to the environment that one sees throughout the west, contributing to global warming, health hazards, squandering of limited resources, destruction of habitats, and all the rest.

Over the past generation, growing numbers of Israelis have grown ever more concerned about the damage we are causing our environment and ourselves. Twenty years ago, there was one national organization dedicated to protecting Israel's environment. Today, there are over one hundred organizations throughout Israel, representing Jews and Arabs, religious and secular, in the center and the periphery of the country. The treasury has allocated enormous sums of money to building new train lines. Environmental concerns have become an accepted part of the school curriculum. Those who care about the environment are often impatient at the slow pace of improvement, and at the damage wrought by the short-sightedness and profiteering that continue to be part of Israel's planning and development. But they also recognize how much sustainable values have entered the public discourse.

3. Hannah Pinchasi



The melody of sustainability which the average citizen hears is largely

that of angry prophets – they demand from us to lower our standard of living, but that too won't necessarily prevent the oncoming catastrophe... I sense a tension between the noble sentiments that are presented here, and the call to crawl back into the caves which the green movement often seems to suggest. So how will change take place?

By 2048, this concern will have matured into more sustainable ways of living³. Planning decisions will no longer be made by developers and politicians alone; the public will be involved in planning, taking into account not just the short term benefits of this or that development, but also its long-term effects. Denser cities will replace today's spread

2. Noam Hofstедter

The public square is slowly being privatized, transferred from being a public space to a space in the service of the marketplace. Instead of parks open to all, buildings for public



use, streets convivial to communities, we have grown used to noise, advertisements, sponsorships, and the renting or selling off of our public properties to private interests. This trend will also reverse, understanding that shared public space is a necessary ingredient in fostering equality and a rich quality of life.

1. Hannah Pinchasi:

2. Orly Daboush-Nitzan



And in the words of Hannah Senesh: Oh Lord, My God/I pray that these things never end/The sand and the sea/the rush of the waters/the lightning in the heavens/the prayers of Man.

Isn't this in fact evidence of the country's negligence, with organizations taking the place of government responsibility?



and sprawl. Today's wholesale transfer of public goods to private hands – land, water, natural gas, and more – will give way to policies that preserve common goods for the common good¹. Fast trains will link Israel's cities with the capitols of the Middle East, Europe and Asia. Fast, cheap and clean busses and light rail, along with car and bike sharing schemes, will convince ever more people to leave their cars at home, which will in turn reduce both traffic and pollution. Cities will become inviting places in which to live, work and stroll; even while growing in population, they will take on a more human scale, and become more friendly to children and elderly, to young people just starting their lives and to families. These trends are already in place. By 2048, Israel will be more sustainable and more sustaining to all its citizens.

New Politics

Although it is often criticized, Israel's democracy is impressive. It has a vibrant political culture, a dogged press, muscular civil society, and levels of public participation that would be the envy of many western societies. Nowhere in the world has more NGOs per capita, most of them working towards social and political change of one sort or another². None of these things can be taken for granted. Many of today's Israelis were born in countries with no tradition of democratic politics, and if one goes back a couple of generations, only a small minority of Israelis have roots nurtured in a democracy. It is impressive that Israel has succeeded to such a great extent in inculcating with democratic values citizens with no democratic heritage³.

Still, there are worrying trends. Reasoned debate among women and men of different world views has in recent years been nudged aside by the crass exercise of power in Israeli politics. The voice of minorities is often muted in public discourse. Increasingly, political positions are decided on sectoral grounds, as politicians seek to better the narrow interests of their constituencies, rather than the best interest of us all⁴. To make matters worse, in the past fifty years, rates of voter participation have dropped from 85% to 65%. The latter number remains impressive, better than most democracies, but the trend is worrisome. Pollsters report that faith in elected officials has lately plummeted. Increasingly, citizens associate politics with corruption, influence peddling, and single-minded partisanship. For the past three elections, a popular bumper

jobs to, among others, represent the interests of their voters. That becomes a problem when politicians represent only these interests, without internalizing the needs of everyone else.

3. Maram Masarwi



What a democratic state which is also a Jewish state

means is an extremely complicated question. Many of us believe there to be a deep contradiction between defining Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, and its definition as a democratic state. Equality of its citizens sits at the heart of the democratic idea, but is missing from the Israeli system of government. The Jewish domination of the country is guaranteed by the "law of return." Preferential treatment of Jews is widespread – in the distribution of lands, of budgets, of educational opportunities. The demand that Arabs accept this contradiction means, in practice, that they accept their second-class status and institutionalized inequality.

4. Ilana Speizman

"Interests" is not a dirty word. It is a politician's



1. Ran Raviv



Unions, as voluntary organizations with real power, and which aren't beholden to the rich and powerful, must become one of the pillars of a substantive democracy in society – a democracy in which not only

the wealthy and connected have access and influence, but also the large swath of society whose power emanates from independent organizing.

sticker has read “Mushchatim, Nimastem!” – roughly an amalgam of “You Crooks Disgust Us!” and “Throw the bums out!” -- and it captures a prevailing mood. Political office has come to be seen by many as a sinecure for the debauched and debased.

Recently, these trends have begun to change. Each round of recent municipal elections has attracted more new parties and new candidates than the last, including parties by and for young voters, environmental parties, parties devoted to social issues and more. In Tel Aviv-Jaffa’s last elections, the plurality of votes went to a party called “City-for-All,” led by a second-generation communist and a Likud activist from a rough-hewn neighborhood in the poorer south of the city. The social protests took the nascent politics of these halting initiatives, gave them a young face and a passionate voice, advancing a politics without cynicism that inspired tremendous response.

As more people have become involved in politics, the processes of politics have haltingly become more open. The Knesset now publishes its budget on-line, and some cities have followed by making their budgets available too. Major planning and development decisions are accompanied by processes of “public participation.” Typically, these highly choreographed processes do not give the “public” much or any real influence on the decisions under consideration, but they are a step in that direction. Ministries and mayors publish minutes of crucial committee meetings. Slowly, murky proceedings in smoke filled rooms are being replaced by public discussion downloadable on youtube.

By 2048, these changes can develop into a new political culture. Politics will no longer be seen as a pursuit carried out in the Knesset or City Hall, but in neighborhoods, towns and cities. Public forums, some brick-and-mortar, some virtual, will allow all of us to participate in the decisions that affect all of us. Information will flow to elected officials from those who elected them, as well as the reverse. **With more ways to be heard, and to participate, citizens will no longer be disaffected by politics, but will find in politics an avenue to take part in their schools, neighborhoods, cities and in the country as a whole¹.**

1. Tamar Ben-Yosef



Over the last two years I have spent many hours with the people of Shaharit. What kept bringing me back was the willingness to say full-throatedly and without hesitation: "In the Prime Minister's

office, there is no contingency plan to lead us to the future that we want for us and for our children." And for our grandchildren. And let's admit that we at Shaharit are still far away from such a plan. But we allow ourselves to dream, and to listen carefully to those with whom we might argue, even if we might argue right back.

Change is Underway

In the nether-reaches of IDF Headquarters there are detailed contingency plans for every imaginable military disaster. In the nether-reaches of the Prime Minister's office, there are detailed contingency plans for every sort of diplomatic or economic crisis. **What no one has troubled to write, are contingency plans to lead us to the future that we hope for¹.**

It is a regrettable, if understandable, fact that most discussions of Israel's future are self-lacerating and unflaggingly critical. They proceed from an unspoken assumption that today's problems will only worsen tomorrow. Typically, no justification is offered for this assumption, and indeed it is unjustified. In its first decades, Israel succeeded in ways that no one could have anticipated, producing industry, technology, science, military might, arts, literature and music of remarkable energy and quality. **In a similar way, Israel in its next decades can succeed in resolving the problems that bedevil us today².** We can be the proud homeland of the Jewish people with a flourishing Palestinian minority, living in peace alongside a Palestinian State, and peaceably among the other nations in the region. Israel can be a humane and sustainable home for all its citizens.

After several years revisiting the country and its people, seeing and hearing people of different backgrounds and different beliefs, we have seen that the seeds of such a future have already been planted. With much work, and a good bit of luck, these seeds will blossom and, by the time Israel celebrates its first centennial, will flourish.

In 1906, Theodor Herzl ended *Altneuland*, his novel anticipating a Jewish State, with an aphorism: "If you will it, it is not a dream." This implausibility was dismissed by Herzl's contemporaries, but only forty-two years passed before Israel was established. Herzl himself insisted that the seeds of the future he envisioned had already been planted when he wrote, and that his was less an act of prophesy than it was of sensitive observation of a future already unfolding. Today there are many who regard Israel with bleak resignation that leaves little room for hope. They are wrong. For those able to look with a careful eye and an open heart, there is far more here, and far more to come, than they are willing to imagine. It takes no great act of imagination to envision an Israel at 100 that is decent and sustaining for all of us.

chalutzim, the pioneers of the 21st century. Like the chalutzim that built this country, we have to abandon what no longer serves us, and save all that will help us build a better future. We must believe that it is in our power to bring about change; it is in fact our duty. As Gandhi is quoted to have said: "We need to be the change we wish to see in the world."

2. Shira Shato

We will take a different path only if we choose to understand



that we have no other home, and we'll succeed to live a life of dignity only if every one of us will devote ourselves to what needs to be done. There is no room for cynicism or despair, or believing that someone else will do the work for us. We are the



shaharit.org.il