



האקדמיה הלאומית הישראלית למדעים

THE ISRAEL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

About the [Israel Academy](#) of Sciences and Humanities

In November 1957, less than a decade after the founding of the State, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion formally supported the creation of a single, combined national academy. Following extensive preparations, Prof. Martin Buber proclaimed the establishment of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities on December 27, 1959 and was subsequently elected the Academy's first President. The Knesset, Israel's Parliament, formalized the Academy's status by enacting the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Law (1961). Today the Academy comprises just over 112 of Israel's most distinguished scholars. It is divided into two sections, the Natural Sciences and the Humanities (including the Social Sciences), and is administered by a Council currently comprised of:

President: Professor Ruth Arnon

Vice President: Professor Benjamin Kedar

Chairperson of the Sciences Section: Professor Itamar Willner

Chairperson of the Humanities Section: Professor Yosef Kaplan

Immediate Past President: Professor Menahem Yaari

Executive Director: Dr. Meir Zadok

The president is appointed by the president of the State, on the recommendation of the Academy membership. The governing regulations of the Academy are self-determined, in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Culture.

At least two plenary sessions of the Academy are convened annually (one open and one closed), while the Sections meet 1-3 times a year. The home of the Academy is in Jerusalem, adjacent to the official residence of Israel's President.

The Academy's principal objectives (as mandated by the 1961 Law), are:

- To enlist as its members distinguished scholars and scientists resident in Israel
- To cultivate and promote scholarly and scientific excellence
- To advise the government on activities relating to research and scientific planning of national significance
- To maintain contact with parallel bodies abroad
- To ensure the representation of Israeli scholarship and science at international institutions and conferences
- To publish writings calculated to promote scholarship and science
- To engage in any other activity calculated to serve the aforesaid objectives.

The Academy has spearheaded major initiatives to strengthen basic research in Israel. The Academy founded and provides administrative support to the Israel Science Foundation (ISF) and Israel's Focal Initiatives in Research in Science and Technology (FIRST) program. It also initiated the establishment and provided initial administrative support to



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Israel's National Council for Research and Development (NCRD). The Academy facilitated the establishment of the MAARAG, a national consortium of organizations whose mission is to improve ecosystem management and policy, with emphasis on biodiversity conservation, based on research, monitoring and synthesis of knowledge obtained from studies in open spaces and their management.

It has had a similar role in the Initiative in Education – a project that seeks to implement educational research findings in practice. It also undertakes assessments of individual scientific fields in Israel and studies of broader science policy issues, often making specific recommendations for the future. Astronomy, astrophysics, immunology, the neurosciences, archeology and history have been topics of previous analyses.

Earlier the Academy galvanized forces to establish The Forum for National Research and Development Infrastructures (Hebrew acronym: TELEM) -- helping initiate the projected 5-year, \$300 million Israel Nanotechnology Program (INP); and facilitating the participation of Israeli scientists in cutting-edge research at international high-energy physics (CERN) and synchrotron radiation (ESRF) mega-facilities. The Academy initiated Israel's National Human Genome Project and set-up a Bioethics Advisory Committee dealing primarily with issues related to stem cell research. For many years the Academy has been involved in developing and maintaining National Collections in biology, an undertaking unique in the Middle East, for the documentation and preservation of local biodiversity.

The Israel Academy is the focal point for many scholarly contacts at the individual, organizational and national level between the Israeli research community and its counterparts abroad. Through its 32 international agreements, the Academy promotes and coordinates reciprocal visits by Israeli and foreign scholars and small bi-national scientific workshops. The Academy has played a leading role in several major binational initiatives, including the historic establishment of Israeli academic centers in Egypt and China. The Academy is currently involved in annual Frontiers of Science programs with the German Humboldt Foundation (Humanities) and the US National Academies (Sciences). Through the Academy, Israel is an active partner in ICSU, ALLEA, AASSA and other major international initiatives. Israeli researchers hold prominent positions in many of them.

Beginning with the historic Israel–Jordan Peace Treaty of 1994, Jordan has been a leader in recognizing the potential benefits of a joint, science-based approach to chronic regional problems. A meeting of the Association of Middle Eastern (Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Palestinian Authority) and U.S. Academies of Sciences was hosted in Amman in 1995 and a report of the joint Working Group on Water was published in 1999. There was also a regional Working Group on Micronutrient Deficiencies. The second regional Frontiers of Science and Engineering meeting for outstanding young scientists was held in Seville in 2007.



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Jordan provided a site and several million dollars in construction funds for the multinational SESAME (Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East) project, of which both Israel (through the Academy and through the National Committee for UNESCO) and Jordan are active members. Additional funds are provided by UNESCO.



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The Albert Einstein Memorial, situated under a willow tree in the Science Garden on the grounds of the Academy in Jerusalem. The sculptor, Robert Berks, based the work on a bust of Einstein he sculpted from life in 1953.