The Year 1991 was marked by alternating peaks and depths, high hopes and dashed spirits. It was a year of both war and peace—a war unlike any other in the country's history, and a first-of-its-kind peace conference that sparked a glimmer of optimism about the future. Throughout the year, with the brief exception of the Gulf War period, relations between Israel and its major ally, the United States, were often acrimonious. This reflected not only divergent policies but also the growing personal animosity between their two leaders, President George Bush and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. Massive immigration from the crumbling Soviet Union continued to pour into Israel, but the initial euphoria was now tempered by awareness that the absorption of the immigrants would be no less difficult than the efforts to free them in the first place.

**National Security**

The Gulf War

Given the extraordinary circumstances, the people of Israel went to sleep with relative security on the night of January 17, 1991. The war between the U.S.-led international coalition and Iraq had broken out only 24 hours earlier, and the population had been instructed to open the boxes containing gas masks that had been distributed throughout the previous months. But most Israeli analysts, including President Chaim Herzog, a noted military commentator and a former head of Israeli intelligence, had reassured the populace that Iraqi president Saddam Hussein would not dare to attack Israel, and even if he did, the chances that he would damage anything worthwhile were virtually nil. Moreover, initial reports from the Pentagon in Washington indicated an overwhelming success for the massive bombing raids launched by the coalition's powerful air forces. The Iraqi bases H-2 and H-3, where Saddam was believed to have stationed his Scud missile launchers, had been virtually wiped out, the reports said.

At 1:42 A.M., a loud bang was heard by most residents of the Tel Aviv metropoli-
tan area. Those who were awake at the time thought at first that the noise they heard was just another clap of thunder, which had been sounding intermittently throughout the evening. But the first bang was shortly followed by another, and then another, at regular intervals. Some were close by, some farther away. Before the eighth explosion was heard, the harsh wail of the air-raid siren pierced the night.

The people of Israel woke from their sleep and entered a nightmare. They turned on their radios and heard excited announcers urging them to don their gas masks immediately and quickly enter the previously designated sealed rooms. They were told to seal the rooms tightly with heavy-duty, thick plastic adhesive tape. And they were told to await further reports. A few minutes later, the announcers said that what the experts had said would not happen had indeed happened: Saddam Hussein had attacked Tel Aviv with surface-to-surface missiles. It was not clear, at this time, whether the missiles carried conventional or chemical warheads.

For the next six weeks, the population of Israel, especially the people of Tel Aviv, learned to live with this and other uncertainties. Each night was marked by the fear that a missile attack would take place. Each missile attack was punctuated by the dread that this time Saddam had decided to escalate and to employ chemical or even biological warheads. After most attacks, the Americans announced that they were stepping up their efforts to eliminate the missile launchers in western Iraq, once and for all. Usually, a few hours after the coalition forces decreed that their efforts had been successful, they would be proved wrong by another missile salvo landing in the heart of Tel Aviv.

Ironically, during the two weeks leading up to the start of the war, the Israeli government and people were concerned that there wasn't going to be any war at all. From Israel's point of view, that was considered the worst of all possibilities. It was feared that the United States and its partners would back off, leaving Israel to fend for itself against the might of the Iraqi army. Worse, the arrangements being considered for a peaceful resolution of the Gulf crisis, which had begun six months earlier with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, always seemed to leave Israel paying a steep price in the form of concessions in its conflict with the Palestinians and the Arab states at large.

The year began with a flurry of diplomatic activity aimed at achieving a last-minute Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. While Saddam Hussein told his people that Kuwait had become the "19th Iraqi province," his foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, indicated that a mutually acceptable arrangement could be worked out—provided that the international community accepted the principle of "linkage" between the resolution of the Gulf crisis and the Israeli-Arab conflict. The European Community, and especially France, was particularly active in trying to mediate between Washington and Baghdad. And France, at least, did not hide the fact that it did not think it wise to reject the Iraqi "linkage" out of hand. Even as Israel contemplated the dangers of an arranged withdrawal, widely described in Israel as an "appeasement" of Saddam, the Israeli army was preparing itself for the possibility of an Iraqi air or missile attack, or, even worse, an Iraqi land-based attack through Jordan,
Baghdad's closest ally and dependent in the Arab world.

On January 1, King Hussein of Jordan reshuffled his cabinet, installing seven ministers representing the extremist Islamic movement. Despite repeated Israeli warnings during the previous months, Jordan was slowly moving closer to Iraq. On January 5, the Jordanian army was put on an emergency footing. Israeli intelligence experts said, however, that the heightened state of preparedness seemed to be for defensive purposes only. It appeared that Hussein was just as apprehensive about an Israeli attack against him as Israel was that he would allow the Iraqi army to move through his kingdom. Indeed, on January 12, the Hashemite king announced that he would not allow Jordanian air space to be used for an attack against any of Jordan's neighbors.

The previous month, Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir had met with American president George Bush at the White House. At the meeting, Shamir undertook not to launch a preemptive strike against Iraq. Washington's worst fear was that an Israeli move would disrupt the impressive but fragile coalition which it had assembled, especially its Arab components.

But Israel feared that Saddam Hussein might be getting the wrong impression from Jerusalem's agreement not to strike first. Therefore, a stream of warnings emanated from the government in Jerusalem, informing Saddam of the dire consequences that would ensue from an attack against Israel. The warnings were particularly harsh concerning the possibility that Saddam would use chemical weapons against Israel, as he had in the past against Iran and against his own Kurdish population.

On January 3, Chief of Staff Dan Shomron of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said, "Israel has the capability of responding with terrible force, but we have always said that we would not be the first ones to use nuclear weapons. This remains our policy." In fact, what Israel had "always said" was that it would not be the first to "introduce" nuclear weapons to the Middle East. Shomron's subtle use of the word "use" was seen as a dramatic warning to Saddam of just how terrible Israeli retribution might be.

Foreign Minister David Levy introduced yet another element in the Israeli attempt to deter Saddam: his own personal safety. On the same day that Shomron issued his warning, Levy said: "Saddam is enamored with the concept of Iraqi expansion, but more than that he is in love with himself, and this is perhaps what is most dear to him. Before he makes a move against Israel, it would be well for him to remember that the thing he holds most dear is in danger." On January 7, Prime Minister Shamir reiterated that, if attacked, Israel would know how to "react appropriately."

Washington urged two of its main Arab coalition partners, Egypt and Syria, to make clear to Saddam that an attack against Israel would not achieve its aim and would not dismantle the coalition against him. On January 10, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak stated that if Israel were attacked, it would have every right to react. Syria was less explicit, but it too made clear that Saddam was miscalculating if he
believed that an attack on Israel would disrupt the Arab force arrayed against him.

Israel watched with trepidation as Secretary of State James Baker of the United States met with Aziz in Geneva, on January 9. On the eve of the meeting, Shamir telephoned Bush and reiterated Israel’s opposition to any linkage between the situation in the Gulf and its own conflict with the Arabs. Reports indicating that the Geneva meeting had failed were welcomed in Israel.

Nonetheless, as the days passed before the expiration of the January 15 deadline set by President Bush, Israeli leaders and commentators were constantly on guard against any proposal that would leave the Iraqi military strength intact. On January 11, the daily *Ha'aretz* wrote that an arrangement with Saddam would leave the Middle East with “a time-bomb, armed to the teeth, a perpetual danger to its neighbors and to the world at large.”

On January 12, President Bush dispatched a high-level delegation to Israel, headed by Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger and including Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. The delegation tried, unsuccessfully, to keep its visit a secret, so as not to antagonize U.S. coalition partners. Eagleburger tried to secure a commitment from Shamir that Israel would not respond even if attacked, and pledged that the United States would defend Israel and destroy the Iraqi missile sites. Shamir refused to give a blanket commitment promising Israeli inaction; but the assumption was that Israel would not retaliate against Iraqi attacks if these were not chemical and if they did not cause too many casualties—and if the United States lived up to its commitment to destroy the Iraqi missile launchers.

As the deadline approached, the Israeli army was placed in a state of high alert, especially its air force, intelligence, and air-defense system. On January 8, Defense Minister Moshe Arens ordered that gas masks be distributed in rural areas as well as cities. Foreign residents and diplomats, including United Nations personnel, left the country in droves. Most airlines, with the notable exceptions of El Al and the U.S. Tower Air, stopped their regular flights to Israel. On January 16, after the expiration of the deadline but before the start of the actual war, armed forces along the borders were put on full alert. “The Israeli army has never been better prepared for war,” military sources told the press.

That same evening, coalition forces launched their massive air and missile attack on Iraqi bases and strategic installations—Operation Desert Storm. Israel was informed a few hours before the start of the bombardment. In the wake of the air strike, Shamir sent Bush a message congratulating American resolve and promising continued Israeli “consultations” with Washington before deciding on any action. Initial reports from the Pentagon indicated a massive success for the first blow against Saddam, and analysts said he might have lost his potential to launch a missile attack altogether. At the same time, there was a flurry of worrying rumors about “Saddam’s surprise,” such as the report in the *Washington Times* about a high-radiation nuclear device in the Iraqi arsenal. A message sent by Baker to Levy also seemed to indicate that the United States was concerned about Saddam’s nuclear capability.
ISRAEL UNDER ATTACK

In the early morning hours of January 18, eight modified Scud-B missiles, dubbed by the Iraqis "El Hussein," fell on Tel Aviv and its environs. Thirty hours later, at 7:20 Saturday morning, another four missiles landed on Tel Aviv. Each of the dozen missiles carried an explosive device weighing about 250 kilograms. All were conventional, none were chemical. About 20 people were injured in the two attacks, hundreds of apartments were damaged, and scores of families were evacuated to hotels, which were empty of tourists anyway. Although the IDF Spokesman described the damage done by the missiles as "minimal," information about their exact landing sites was censored, so as not to assist the Iraqis in improving their aim.

The United States, worried about possible Israeli retaliation, immediately launched an airlift of advanced Patriot antiaircraft missile batteries, complete with logistical support and crews. It was the first time an Israeli government had agreed to allow foreign soldiers on its soil to protect Israelis. President Bush spoke to Prime Minister Shamir on the phone three times in a period of 24 hours and announced that he was sending Eagleburger back to Israel in order to dissuade it from launching an attack against Iraq. A direct, dedicated phone line was set up, linking Desert Storm headquarters in Washington with the Israeli army command in Tel Aviv.

Relations between the Israeli defense establishment and the Pentagon were tense in the first few days of the war. After the war, Newsweek revealed that, following the first missile attack, Arens notified Washington that 12 Israeli planes were on their way to bomb targets in Iraq and demanded the special codes that would allow them to be secure from interference by allied planes. The Americans refused, and the planes were recalled.

On January 20, the commander of the coalition forces, Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, announced that most of Saddam's missile-launching capabilities had been destroyed. All of his stationary missile-launchers had been destroyed, and only five mobile launchers remained. Israeli sources reacted with the skepticism that was to accompany similar American statements throughout the rest of the campaign.

On January 22, at 8:30 P.M., the skepticism was borne out. Although only one missile fell on the city of Ramat Gan, near Tel Aviv, it did more damage than the preceding dozen. An apartment complex received a direct hit, and 96 people were injured, many seriously. Three people died of heart attacks brought on by the sound of the exploding missile. The next day, another missile was fired at Haifa, and early reports indicated that it had been shot down by a Patriot. But the next day, at 6:00 P.M., another salvo of eight missiles descended on the Tel Aviv area. One person was killed in the attack, and another 45 injured.

By this time, Eagleburger had arrived in Israel. He visited the American soldiers operating the Patriot batteries and was given a tour of the neighborhoods hit by the Scuds. Contrary to his behavior on an earlier visit, Eagleburger did not shy away from the press this time. He said publicly that the United States "respects the right of Israel to defend itself"; however, in his talks with the country's leaders, he
continued to urge restraint. On January 23, Bush called Shamir once again and expressed his appreciation for Israel’s calm and restraint.

While Shamir was maintaining a public calm in the face of the repeated missile attacks, his defense minister and army generals were pressing him for an Israeli response. On January 27, Arens told the cabinet, “Saddam has crossed the red line.” IDF chief of staff Shomron and Air Force commander Avihu Bin Nun presented the cabinet with various scenarios for an attack aimed at finally disabling the Iraqi missile launchers. Arens, who had been in constant contact with his American counterpart, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, revealed that, while the United States spoke publicly of its respect for Israel’s right to defend itself, in practice it was obstructing Israel from exercising that right. The Pentagon, Arens said, refused to supply Israel with the special IFF codes—“identification friend or foe”—that would allow Israeli planes to attack Iraq without fear of being shot down by coalition planes or of shooting them down. On February 3, Deputy Chief of Staff Ehud Barak announced that Israel had “very good” operational plans to take out the Iraqi missile batteries.

By this time, Iraq had already fired 26 missiles at Israeli territory. Four more missiles were launched separately during the next few days. These, however, missed their mark and fell in uninhabited areas, including, for the first time, in the West Bank. Nonetheless, Israelis were growing tired of the incessant air-raid sirens and the sleepless nights.

At this time there was growing apprehension that an increasingly desperate Saddam might try to force Israel to retaliate by launching a chemical attack against it. On February 2, Secretary Cheney warned in a press conference that if such an attack were carried out, Israel might retaliate with “nonconventional” weapons. Arens, asked to comment on Cheney’s extraordinary remark, said that “Saddam indeed has something to worry about.” Once again, Israel was coming unusually close to public admission of its nonconventional capabilities.

On February 4, Shamir made his first speech to the Knesset since the start of the hostilities. “We are trying to consider the best response at any given moment,” he said. “Sitting on the sidelines and not participating in our own defense runs contrary to our principles, but one must view the complete picture and take the special circumstances into consideration.”

Four days later, an Iraqi missile once again found its target. Landing in a Tel Aviv suburb, the missile damaged 500 homes and injured 26 persons. The government announced publicly that the missile attacks would not force it to change its policies, but Shamir, in a letter to Bush, warned once again that Israel would have to respond in case of a chemical attack or a conventional attack that resulted in many civilian casualties.

On February 11, Arens, who supported the army demand for action, came to Washington in an effort to secure American agreement for an Israeli role in the fight against the missiles. He was accompanied by General Barak and by the head of the Israeli Mossad. Arens’s meetings with Bush, Cheney, and Baker were unsuccessful,
however. Baker told Arens that while the final decision concerning retaliation against Iraq rested with the government of Israel, the government had to consider the possible negative consequences of such a decision. Arens told Cheney, "Israel's patience is wearing thin," but the Americans responded that they were capable of handling the missile problem better than Israel could. In a twist of bitter irony, Arens was called out of a meeting with Baker to receive an urgent telephone call from Israel. A missile had fallen on the neighborhood of Savyon, where Arens lived, and his own house was damaged in the attack. Indeed, this missile was the last to cause serious damage, although several more fell on uninhabited areas before the war was over. The launching of these last missiles, it was clear, was an act of desperation on the part of Iraq: at least two carried warheads full of cement, rather than explosives.

THE END OF THE WAR

The start of the land campaign to liberate Kuwait, in the last week of February, raised renewed fears of a last-ditch Iraqi attack with chemical warheads, but this was not to be. Throughout this time, Israel was concerned that Bush and his allies might end the war prematurely. As far as Israel was concerned, the war had to end with the final removal of Saddam Hussein from power and the dismantling of Iraq's offensive capabilities. By the end of February, however, as the war drew to a close, it was becoming increasingly clear that at least one of these objectives, if not both, would not be achieved. The victory celebrations and speeches, on February 28, were thus greeted by the Israeli population with a mix of relief and disappointment: relief at the end of the six-week siege, and disappointment that the cause of the suffering, Saddam, had not been adequately punished.

President Herzog, in an address to the nation, said that the war would truly be over only when Saddam was toppled from his seat. Security sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, saw the brighter side: the war, they said, seriously diminished the possibility of an effective eastern front against Israel for several years to come.

Foreign Minister Levy dispatched an urgent message to his counterparts in the countries comprising the coalition. He listed Israel's demands for the aftermath of the war: destruction of all Iraqi missiles and missile launchers; destruction of the Iraqi chemical and biological arsenals; limitations on supply of conventional weaponry to Iraq; and securing an Iraqi commitment not to launch any more attacks on Israel.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, questions were asked about the prior knowledge held by the Israeli intelligence services concerning Saddam's intentions and capabilities. Member of Knesset Yossi Sarid told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that the intelligence community had fallen short. Arens defended the intelligence services, saying they were among the best in the world—but nonetheless lacked the powers of prophecy. A senior IDF officer summed up
the Israeli experience in the war in these words: "Altogether, the main conclusion is that we were very lucky; it was, in fact, nothing short of miraculous."

The continuing tensions throughout the rest of the year between the United States and Iraq elicited repeated concern about the possibility of renewed Iraqi missile attacks on Israel. The reports issued in June by the U.S. administration about Iraq's ambitious nuclear program were seen in Israel as confirmation of its own apprehensions and intelligence assessments, as well as belated acknowledgement that its 1981 bombing raid against the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak was justified. On June 30, Shamir praised President Bush's resoluteness in seeking to eliminate Iraqi nuclear, biological, and chemical capabilities.

The Home Front

While Israeli experts mostly agreed, before the war, that there was very little chance that Iraq would attack Israel, the world, it seemed, thought otherwise. The first two weeks of January saw a massive escape from Israel by tourists and dependents of foreign diplomats. And one by one, the foreign airlines announced that they would stop their regular service to Israel as of January 15, the date of the expiration of the deadline set by President Bush for an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

In the last days before the start of the war, the supermarkets were emptied of basic foodstuffs. There was an acute shortage of supplies needed for the sealing up of rooms, as mandated by the Israeli civil-defense authorities. The two chief rabbis called for mass prayer and fasting to ensure Israel's emergence from the war without harm. They also ruled that, in case of chemical attack, Jews were not obligated to go to synagogue for their daily prayers.

A group of left-wing professors and other intellectuals, titling themselves "A Moment Before the War," called on the Israeli government to accede to Saddam's demand for "linkage" between the Kuwait problem and the resolution of the Palestinian issue, but they were met with almost universal condemnation and derision. On January 14, Israel's two main government-owned radio networks, the state-run Kol Israel and the army-run Galei Zahal, merged and began broadcasting 24 hours a day. Some of their stations, such as the popular and classical music stations, were shut down.

Just a few hours before the deadline expired, the High Court of Justice convened to hear a petition protesting the fact that the Defense Ministry had failed to distribute gas masks to the Arab population in the West Bank and Gaza. The ministry claimed in court that, even if Israel were attacked, the chances of Saddam aiming his missiles at the Palestinian population in the territories—who were sympathetic to him—were minuscule. The ministry's position was undermined, however, by the revelation that it had distributed masks to the Jewish population in the same areas. During the proceedings, it was also revealed that the ministry had only 173,000 masks left, for a population of over 1.5 million. The court rejected the ministry's arguments, ordering it to distribute all the masks at its disposal and to begin immediately purchasing enough masks for the entire Palestinian population.
On January 16, the authorities declared an emergency civil-defense regime. The population was told to open its gas-mask kits and to stay at home. Overnight, the country came to a standstill; workers stayed away from work, and tourists fled the country. The immediate damage to the economy was estimated at $500 million.

MISSILE ATTACKS

The first two missile attacks, in the very early hours of January 18 and on Saturday morning, January 20, shocked the population, first because they took place at all, and second, because, contrary to the experts' opinions, the missiles appeared to be quite accurate. The first attack created waves of true panic, as it was reported that among the missiles were some carrying chemical warheads.

The signal to enter the sealed rooms and don gas masks, and the sounding of the all-clear signal, came by way of announcements on the radio and television. Usually, the instructions were given by IDF spokesman Nahman Shai, whose calm and reassuring manner turned him overnight into a national hero, the only true hero of the war.

Among other things, the attacks immediately created two distinct economic and social classes: those who could afford to get away from the target area, and those who could not. Thousands of well-to-do Tel Avivians started leaving the city on Sunday, January 21, emigrating in droves to Jerusalem and to the southern port city of Eilat, which were thought to be immune from missile attacks. Despite the fact that by this time there were very few tourists left in Israel, the hotels in Eilat and Jerusalem quickly filled up. Many Jerusalemites recounted that, because of the missile attacks, they renewed friendships with Tel Avivians whom they had not heard from in many years. There were those who decided that Eilat wasn't far enough and decided to go abroad for the duration of the war. The "migration" from the missile-prone areas sparked a typical national debate: Tel Aviv mayor Shlomo Lahat said on January 24 that, in his opinion, "whoever defects from Tel Aviv will ultimately defect from the homeland."

On January 21, the government decided to restart the economy and to allow workers to return to work, on a gradual basis. On January 24, pupils in the upper grades in high schools were ordered back to school, but warned to take their gas masks with them. Children who came to school without the masks were ordered back home. During the day, the country was getting back to normal. At night, however, when most of the missile attacks took place, Tel Aviv, Israel's largest city, resembled a ghost town. Theaters, cinemas, restaurants, and kiosks were all closed, and the streets were empty, except for the occasional security car or ambulance. On February 7, the situation was considered stable enough to allow cinemas to resume operation. More tellingly, the process of reopening schools had reached kindergartens, which were allowed to start functioning again. The process was speeded up in those areas of the country that had not been hit by any missiles; Tel Aviv and its environs were the last in line.

As the missile attacks continued, there was increasing criticism of the army's
decision to shield the population in sealed rooms in their apartments, rather than directing them to existing bomb shelters. The sealed rooms had been recommended in anticipation of a chemical attack, but they offered little protection against the conventional explosives delivered by the Iraqi missiles. On February 10, after Israelis had endured a full month of nerve-wracking life in sealed rooms, the army's chief civil-defense officer, Brig. Gen. Uri Manos, stunned the nation when he said in a television interview that, in his opinion, the best option was to head for a sealed bomb shelter. Although he was reprimanded by army commanders, the remarks launched a national critique of the army's civil-defense policy, a debate that would last long after the war was over. Adding to the debate, on February 15, the first insinuations appeared in the Israeli press that the gas masks distributed by the army were inadequate and would not have protected the population had the Iraqis decided to employ chemical weapons.

There was a final week of anxiety at the end of February, when the coalition forces launched their ground campaign to evict Iraq from Kuwait. There was concern that, in his desperation, Saddam might try to escalate the situation with Israel by using chemical weapons. But this did not happen, and on February 28—as it happened, coinciding with the merry festival of Purim—Israelis were finally relieved of the emergency civil-defense regime and were told that they could strip their doors and windows of the ugly brown tape that had been used to seal off the rooms. That same day, most of the foreign airlines operating to and from Israel announced that flights would resume shortly.

AFTERMATH

In the final accounting of the war's effects: 9,000 apartments were damaged, 120 buildings were earmarked for demolition, and close to 2,000 families were removed from their homes to other sites. A study released on March 7 revealed that the two-month-long forced stay at home had improved the domestic situation in many households: 22 percent of the couples said their relationships had improved during the crisis, while only 6 percent said they had deteriorated. The war was also thought to have improved the status of Israeli women, who, according to various studies, were better equipped psychologically and emotionally to handle the kind of stress created by the war.

On March 16, State Comptroller Miriam Ben Porat revealed, in a special report, that close to 1.4 million gas masks given out by the army were either inadequate or defective. She severely criticized Prime Minister Shamir and his government for the faulty decision-making process governing the army's purchase of masks. The army rebutted Ben Porat's assertions, saying she had misread some of the data supplied to her by army authorities. The issue was brought to the Knesset committee in charge of the State Comptroller's findings, which backed her report on gas masks handed out to children, but not her findings on masks for adults.

On June 8, as part of the lessons learned from the war, Defense Minister Arens
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ordered the army to set up a Civil Defense Command, which henceforth would be in charge of all civil-defense matters.

The Intifada

The dry statistics of the intifada for the year 1991 give an accurate portrayal of its evolving nature: mass disturbances, such as riots and rock-throwing, decreased significantly; acts of terror and personal violence, especially the use of firearms, increased dramatically.

According to official statistics compiled by the Israel Defense Forces, the number of disturbances in 1991 declined by over 50 percent: in the West Bank, there were 2,218 disturbances, compared to 5,882 the previous year; in Gaza, 3,730 compared to 8,062. The number of Palestinians killed by the IDF was 78, compared to 93 in 1990 and 270 in 1989; 1,475 were injured, compared to close to 4,000 the previous year. At the same time, 82 hand grenades were thrown by Palestinians, compared to only 8 in 1990. Shots were fired by the Palestinians in 131 incidents, compared to 85 cases the previous year. Sixteen Israeli civilians and two tourists were killed, compared to only one civilian in 1990; the number of wounded soldiers, however, dropped by more than half. The statistics should also be viewed against the backdrop of the Gulf War: For the first two months of the year, the population in the occupied territories was under virtual nonstop curfew. As soon as the curfew was lifted, the violence erupted once again.

Indeed, the war in the Gulf served to further alienate the Palestinian population from most Israelis, including the most die-hard supporters of Palestinian rights. This process had begun in the summer of 1990, when the Palestinians followed the lead of the PLO and openly rooted for Saddam Hussein and his battle against the United States. The Palestinian press, too, took a decidedly pro-Iraqi line. The crisis in the Gulf, Deputy Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the Knesset on January 9, is causing the "Saddamization" of the Palestinians and Israeli Arabs as well. The Israeli army, it was reported in the opening days of the war, was considering sending tanks into towns and cities if the inhabitants took to the streets in support of Saddam.

The gap between the two peoples turned into a seemingly unbridgeable chasm during the first days of the war, as Iraqi missiles slammed into Tel Aviv and its environs, and Palestinians were reported to be "dancing on the roofs" in celebration of the damage done to the Israeli civilian population. The Israelis, for their part, grew even more suspicious of the Palestinians, and in several cases, Palestinians were arrested and charged with espionage and attempting to aid the Iraqi war effort.

The January 14 assassination in Tunis of PLO strongman Salah Khalaf, also known as Abu Iyad, touched off demonstrations throughout the territories in which 3 were killed and 60 wounded. The assassination was carried out by a renegade bodyguard thought to be linked with the Abu Nidal organization, but PLO spokesmen intimated that the Israeli Mossad was involved. Other observers believed that
Iraq may have contracted with the Abu Nidal group to carry out the killing because Abu Iyad was thought to have reservations about the PLO's support for Saddam.

On January 29, leading Palestinian activist Sari Nusseibeh was arrested and placed under administrative detention. Nusseibeh was charged with conveying to the Iraqis information about the exact landing sites of their missiles, in order to help improve their aim. The arrest was greeted with some skepticism inside Israel and by worldwide condemnation. The New York Times asserted, on February 2, that Nusseibeh's arrest was simply an Israeli ploy aimed at oppressing the legitimate Palestinian leadership and destroying all hopes for a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Indeed, Ha'aretz reported on February 5 that the majority of the recognized Palestinian leaders were either under arrest or under curfew or being called in for interrogation day after day.

Peace groups and foreign governments joined in strongly protesting Nusseibeh's arrest, and the outcry, or the flimsiness of the charges from the outset, made their mark. Nusseibeh was brought before a judge on February 3, just a few days after his original detention, and his sentence was cut from six to three months, with the acquiescence of the prosecution and the security authorities. He was ultimately released on April 8. That same day, however, 10 Israeli Arabs were arrested and charged with serving as Iraqi spies. In the coming weeks, there were several more cases of Palestinians and Arabs arrested on charges of spying, either for Iraq or for its reluctant ally, Jordan.

International attention was also directed at the ongoing curfew in the territories. The extended curfew made a shambles of the West Bank economy and seriously damaged the Israeli economy as well, since tens of thousands of Palestinian manual laborers were prevented from crossing the Green Line and entering Israel to work. But by far the most troubling concern was that the curfew was creating starvation, either because the residents were not being allowed to purchase basic foodstuffs, or because the forced layoffs were depriving them of the means to buy the food in the first place. Doctors in the territories said that the curfew was preventing sick residents from seeking necessary medical attention and from receiving vital medicines.

On January 31, the Defense Ministry gave the United Nations Relief Works Agency, UNRWA, whose brief is usually limited to dealing with refugees alone, special permission to distribute food to the general population. The United States, despite its preoccupation in the Gulf, also found time, on February 3, to urge the Israeli government not to deny food and medical supplies to the population.

On February 4, the curfew was partially lifted, in rural areas and in some cities. In other cities, residents were allowed out for an hour or two during the day in order to stock up on provisions. As the curfew was lifted, however, the violence returned. The impulse to strike out was reinforced by the deep disappointment and despondency created by the defeat of Saddam Hussein, especially after his announcement at the end of February that he would withdraw from Kuwait.

The PLO decision to side with Saddam had been made only a few weeks after
the Bush administration severed its dialogue with the organization. Frustrated and ostracized, the Palestinians had pinned their unrealistic hopes on the "latter-day Salah Ad-din." His defeat signaled a triple setback for the Palestinians: their savior turned out to be a false messiah, their international isolation solidified, and even traditional supporters such as the European Community were now backing away from them. Added to that, their brothers and sisters in the Gulf countries were personally bearing the brunt of the post-victory vengeance of the Kuwaitis and the Saudis.

TERRORIST ATTACKS

On February 27, the knifings that had become a permanent feature of the Palestinian attacks against Israel in 1990 resumed. Elhanan Atali, a yeshivah student, was brutally stabbed in Jerusalem's Old City. Defense Minister Arens said, "There are Arabs who haven't learned anything and haven't forgotten anything, either."

At the beginning of March, Palestinians were once again allowed to enter Israel to work. In the first few days, only a few thousand did so, apparently out of concern that the Israeli population would retaliate against them; but the numbers picked up quickly, and by mid-March nearly half of the regular 100,000 workers were crossing the Green Line each morning. The "return to normalcy" led to resumption of the popular resistance to the occupation: on March 9, the first general strike since the start of the war was held.

The American-brokered peace process, in the immediate aftermath of the war (see below), spawned two divergent reactions among the Palestinians. On the one hand, for the first time, mainstream Palestinian leaders openly voiced criticism of Saddam and of the PLO's blind faith in him. These same leaders also quietly ended their unofficial boycott of the United States, imposed after the administration had severed its links with the organization. On the other hand, Secretary of State James Baker's efforts spurred extremist elements to greater acts of terror in the hope of disrupting the diplomatic moves.

On March 10, the day before Baker's arrival in Israel for the first time, a knife-wielding Arab went on a rampage in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Kiryat Yovel, stabbing four women to death at a bus stop: Bela Levitsky, Rosa Alispur, Miriam Biton, and Mercedes Benita. Jewish residents of the city rioted, attacking Arab passers-by and demanding the immediate imposition of the death sentence on terrorists. A few days later, in Gaza, another method of terrorism was employed as an Arab truck purposely drove into a group of soldiers on the side of a road, killing two soldiers and wounding several others.

The violence, once resumed, took on a new momentum. On March 20, a 70-year-old jewelry salesman from Hadera, Mordechai Reuchman, was stabbed to death in his store. On March 26, a Jewish resident of the West Bank settlement of Dolev, Yair Mendelson, was ambushed on his way from Ramallah. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the attack. On March 31, the
cabinet approved a new series of measures restricting the entrance of Palestinians into Green Line Israel, including any Palestinian ever convicted of a security offense. On April 30, an Arab stabbed a French tourist to death in Bethlehem. He was apprehended the next day, claiming allegiance to the Islamic Jihad group.

On May 20, Petah Tikvah storeowner Reuven David was stabbed to death in his store; two weeks later, on June 6, a guard at the Petah Tikvah municipal dump, Rafi Madar, was hacked to death with axes. As the stabbings continued and the public's sense of security declined, pressure mounted on the government to take drastic steps. On May 19, a 21-year-old resident of Ramallah wounded three residents of Jerusalem. Prime Minister Shamir, responding to news of the assailant's apprehension, showed signs of the pressure on him. "I'm sorry he got out alive," he said, eliciting criticism even within his own cabinet.

On June 29, the violence continued when a Jewish settler from the Jordan Valley, Avi Oshar, was stabbed to death. A week later, Moshe Bukhris, a resident of the coastal town of Ashdod, was shot to death in Gaza. On July 15, an Arab attacked passers-by in Netanya with an ax (they all survived), and four days later another army soldier was run over purposely by a truck, in Gaza. Concurrently with the violence against Jews, internecine Arab violence continued unabated. A total of 88 Palestinians were killed in 1991 at the hands of their own people, for allegedly "collaborating" with the Israeli authorities.

The continued intercommunal bloodshed, the escalation of violence against the Jews, the aftermath of the Gulf crisis, and the burgeoning hopes that the American-led peace process might yield some tangible results this time around all led to a process of reassessment within the Palestinian community. On June 11, an extraordinary meeting of popular leaders took place in Jerusalem. This group, composed of the recognized political leadership as well as the street-level commanders of the intifada, condemned the internal violence and called for a general review of the uprising itself. Two weeks later, a new party was established in the territories, the Palestinian National Union, which distanced itself from the PLO leadership in Tunis and dissociated itself from the principle of "armed struggle" against Israel's existence. The Jerusalem meeting and the new political organization, coupled with the ongoing decrease in the incidents of mass resistance, led *Ha'aretz* to declare, somewhat prematurely, "the intifada is over."

On June 21, on Israel Television's Friday evening newcast, representatives of the Israel Defense Forces took the unusual step of disclosing information about one of their top-secret weapons in the intifada—the undercover units dubbed "mist'aravim." The units consisted of regular army soldiers disguised as Arabs, who mingled with the local population in the territories. Their aim was to apprehend wanted agitators while denying them the benefit of prior warning. Military officers explained that by revealing the existence of the units, they hoped to sow discord and confusion among the Palestinians and, at the same time, dispel allegations that the units acted merely as "death squads" against Palestinian agitators. The political echelons described the exposure as ill-timed and ill-conceived.
In July, an explosive device was detonated inside the Jewish settlement of Atniel, although no one was injured. On August 10, the intifada claimed its first victim among new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, as 49-year-old Vladimir Makarov was stabbed to death in Rishon LeZion. On September 26, Shlomo Yihye was stabbed to death in Moshav Kadima, and on October 2, a second tourist fell victim to the violence as a German visitor, sitting in a cafe in Bethlehem, was attacked by a knife-wielding Arab. Ten days later, a car driven by an Arab plowed into a group of army soldiers waiting to hitchhike at one of the busiest intersections just outside of Tel Aviv. Two soldiers were killed and 13 injured. On October 15, an Israeli Druze, Jamil Hasoon, from the village of Daliat el Carmel, was shot to death while shopping in the West Bank town of Jenin. “We are losing control,” said a senior IDF officer.

The continuing bloodshed spurred Jewish settlers in the territories to unsanctioned retaliation raids, including, in a few cases throughout the year, unprovoked assaults, sometimes with actual gunfire, against Palestinians.

Responding to the increasing pressure to do something about the rising violence inside the Green Line, the security establishment decided on various measures aimed at limiting the number of Palestinians permitted to cross over into Israel for work. On October 20, the government adopted Arens's proposal to institute the death penalty for terrorists; the proposal, however, was never implemented.

The convening of the Madrid Peace Conference at the end of October brought another burst of violence: two Israeli settlers—Rahel Druck and Yitzhak Rofeh—were killed and five children were injured in an armed confrontation in Samaria, on October 28.

On November 30, Zvi Klein, a resident of the West Bank town of Ofra, was shot dead near the town of El-Bireh. The government decided to tighten security in the territories by forbidding any travel other than on main roads during darkness. On December 16, the security forces announced the uncovering of no less than 100 clandestine terrorist groups operating in the territories. As the year ended, it was all too clear that, despite the historic start of peace talks between Jews and Palestinians, the reality on the ground had not changed, and that more than talk would be needed to bring the violence to an end.

SILWAN-CITY OF DAVID CONFLICT

In October, a new location was added to the troubled map of Jewish-Palestinian tensions: a village in southeast Jerusalem called ir david, the City of David, by the Jews and Silwan by the Arabs. On October 9, in a well-planned operation, supposedly without the knowledge of the authorities, Jewish settlers from the territories seized six houses in Silwan, adjacent to the Old City Wall. Jews had not lived in the area since the early 1920s, and the seizures raised concern among Palestinians that the Jews were planning to infiltrate yet another Muslim neighborhood of Jerusalem and to evict the Arab residents from their homes. The settlers, organized
in a company called Elad, claimed that the houses they occupied had been legally purchased. Their position was that Jews could not and should not be barred from residing in any part of their own capital.

The Jewish settlement of Silwan attracted international attention and created widespread tension in the territories. The police refrained from evicting the settlers, but did not allow them to complete their plans for occupying additional houses. The matter was referred to the attorney general, who, on November 25, ruled that the Jews indeed had a legal right to remain in some of the houses occupied by them, but that the police could evict them if it was decided that their removal was necessary to maintain the peace. On December 8, however, the government gave retroactive legal sanction to the settling of Silwan, and at the end of the year the entire matter was under review in the courts. It emerged, meanwhile, that Elad had been operating in close coordination with the Ministry of Housing, which had provided most of the funding for the purchase of the houses from a special ministry budget ostensibly dedicated to solving pressing social needs.

LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

Ami Popper, who murdered seven Arab laborers near Rishon LeZion on May 20, 1990, was sentenced to seven terms of life imprisonment, on March 18.

A special military tribunal demoted Lt. Col. Yehuda Meir to the rank of private, on April 23, for ordering his unit to “break the arms and legs” of Palestinians in the villages of Beita and Huwara, during the second month of the intifada, in January 1988. The sentence was widely criticized as being too lenient.

On July 18, Jerusalem district court judge Ezra Kama, who had been conducting a judicial investigation of the October 1990 Temple Mount incident in which 18 Palestinians were killed, refuted the government’s own findings on the incident and said that the incident was sparked by police incompetence, not by Arab provocation. Kama refrained, however, from recommending criminal proceedings against those responsible.

Peace activist Abie Nathan was sentenced, on October 6, to 18 months’ imprisonment for illegally meeting in June with PLO leader Yasir Arafat. Nathan had spent 122 days in prison in 1990 for having contacts with the PLO, following which he embarked on a 40-day hunger strike to protest the Israeli law that forbids such contacts.

Other National Security Matters

JORDAN

On January 6, shots were fired from the Jordanian border into Israeli territory. The incident was an omen of things to come, turning 1991 into one of the most
violent years in recent memory on the hitherto tranquil border between the two countries. At the beginning of the year, the escalation was attributed to tensions resulting from Jordan's affiliation with Iraq during the Gulf crisis; as the year passed, however, it became apparent that the border incidents had more to do with internal Jordanian factors, especially the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

In January, King Hussein decided to distribute arms to Jordan's mass "popular militia." On February 9, three terrorists crossed the border in the southern Arava desert and attacked Israeli buses carrying soldiers, injuring several. Analysts in Israel saw the raid as a sign that King Hussein was losing his grip on his kingdom and proof that his decision to distribute arms was folly.

On February 23, another terrorist squad infiltrated, killing a soldier. The rejectionist Palestinian group Abu Musa claimed responsibility. Two weeks later, six terrorists who had crossed the border ran into an army patrol. All six were killed and three Israeli soldiers wounded in the skirmish. On March 23, another two terrorists crossed the border in the Jordan Salient and were killed. Israel concentrated troops on its border with Jordan, in order to reinforce statements by political and military leaders that the regime in Amman would be held responsible for any further attacks. But on April 18, another terrorist crossed the border near the Allenby Bridge; he was wounded and captured. A second squad was more successful, killing a member of Kibbutz Neve Or.

Prime Minister Shamir asked Secretary of State James Baker, who was in the area on one of his numerous peace shuttles, to warn Hussein that Israel could no longer tolerate the continuing attacks. The warning seemed to have the desired effect: on April 22, it was reported that Hussein had ordered his army to put a stop to the infiltrations; on May 7, the Jordanian army was reported to be establishing numerous posts along the border in an effort to improve their control. On May 30, the daily Ha'aretz reported that the Jordanian army had successfully thwarted several attempted terrorist attacks against Israel. But the success was only partial. On May 31, there were two infiltrations; miraculously, they yielded no casualties. In one case the terrorists got into a water park near the Dead Sea, and in the other they actually succeeded in entering an IDF stronghold; in both cases they were killed or captured.

LEBANON

The border with Lebanon was marked by unabated violence. The arena for battle between Israel and the various terrorist groups operating in Lebanon was the so-called security zone established by Israel in southern Lebanon in the wake of the 1982 war, in which the Israeli-backed Southern Lebanese Army (SLA) was active. Israel's main adversary among the groups was the Iranian-backed and Syrian-tolerated Hezballah movement.

On January 12, four terrorists were killed in the security zone. Throughout the month, there were continued confrontations between the terrorists and the SLA, as well as numerous Katyusha rocket attacks against positions and villages in the
security zone. The Israel Air Force responded with repeated bombing attacks against the Hezbollah. In February, tensions on the border increased as rumors spread of a potential Israeli ground operation across the security zone. Indeed, on February 5, a combined force of the Golani infantry brigade backed by Israeli artillery crossed the border to engage in a search-and-destroy mission of terrorist hideouts in Hezbollah-controlled villages north of the security zone.

In May, tensions reached a peak as Lebanon and Syria concluded a "Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination." Although the document was intended ostensibly to formalize, for the first time, Syria's recognition of Lebanon as an independent state, in effect, it put the official stamp on Syria's domination of Lebanon. Israel warned against a Syrian repositioning of troops and backed up its warnings with troop concentrations just south of the border. Defense Minister Arens, reacting to the treaty on May 21, said that "we could wake up one morning and find the Syrian army on the border with Lebanon—and this does not make us happy." Israel did see some room for optimism, however, as the Lebanese army, in accordance with its agreement with Syria, began moving south to strip the local militias of their arms. The Lebanese were tough with the Palestinians, but decidedly more lenient when it came to Israel's bitterest foe, the Hezbollah. In July, following some harsh battles, the army and the PLO reached an agreement by which some of the Palestinian groups would surrender their arms to the advancing Lebanese army.

On June 4, the Israel Air Force launched its heaviest bombing operation since the 1982 war; 15 Lebanese were reported killed and 62 wounded. On July 3, an ominous development took place: for the first time in many years, a terrorist squad originating in Lebanon first crossed the border into Syria and from there launched an attack on an IDF position on Mount Hermon. On September 23, there was another infiltration from Syria, and three Palestinian terrorists were killed.

On July 7, the Lebanese army was deployed on the outskirts of the town of Jezzin, an important northern outpost of the security zone, which was under the control of the Southern Lebanese Army. There were differences of opinion in Israel concerning the proper reaction to this development: on the one hand, there was reluctance to enter into an open confrontation with the Lebanese army and perhaps deflect it from its mission of disarming the militias. On the other hand, the SLA was pressing the IDF for action, and failure to respond, it was feared, would be interpreted in Lebanon as a weakening of the Israelis' backing for their proxy SLA. Ultimately, when it became clear that the Lebanese army had no intention of advancing, the new status quo was allowed to remain in place.

On July 17, three soldiers of the Givati infantry brigade were killed in a skirmish with Hezbollah terrorists. It was the 24th major skirmish with that group in just two years. On September 14, a terrorist squad planning to attack the northern Israeli town of Nahariya by sea wound up just north of the border in the Lebanese village of Nequra. One UN soldier was killed and eight others wounded. On September 24, an Israeli soldier in south Lebanon accidentally shot and killed a prominent Druze sheikh, Fares Barawi from Hazbaya. Israeli leaders as well as prominent Israeli
Druze sheikhs worked hard to prevent the alienation of the Druze, both in Lebanon and in Israel.

On October 20, three Israeli soldiers were killed when an explosive device detonated near their vehicle on patrol in the security zone. The next few days saw a massive artillery bombardment of villages and strongholds north of the security zone, by both the IDF and the SLA. On December 21, an Israeli squad crossed the border of the security zone and kidnapped three Lebanese; they were released within a few hours, after it emerged that the three were victims of mistaken identity. Israel had apparently sought to kidnap prominent figures in the Hezbollah, but wound up instead with innocent civilians, including a baker.

The kidnapping was widely seen as an Israeli move aimed at improving its bargaining position with Hezbollah for the return of navigator Ron Arad, lost when an Israeli jet plane was downed in October 1986. In addition to Arad, six other Israeli soldiers were considered missing in action in Lebanon. Three—Zecharia Baumel, Zvi Feldman, and Yehuda Katz—were still missing from the 1982 war, their tank having been destroyed in the tough battle of Sultan Yaakoub, against the Syrians, on June 12, 1982. Samir Assad, an Israeli Druze, was kidnapped near the town of Tyre on March 4, 1983, and was subsequently photographed by Americans. Yosef Fink and Rahamin Alsheikh were captured on February 17, 1986, after a disastrous skirmish with Hezbollah.

In the months after the end of the Gulf War, there were persistent rumors of negotiations to free the Western hostages held in Lebanon, and of contacts between Israel and Hezbollah on the release of captured Israelis in exchange for terrorists held by Israel and the SLA. In August, Western hostages began to be released. Israel was under pressure to free Hezbollah terrorists, in order to facilitate the continued release of Western hostages, but Israel balked at releasing the Shiites it held without getting anything for itself in return. On August 12, Israel proposed releasing Shiites in exchange for information, and a series of contacts was made between UN secretary-general Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and the chief Israeli negotiator on the hostage issue, Uri Lubrani. Throughout the month, there were conflicting reports from various Arab sources about the fate of the Israeli soldiers. Palestinian terrorist leader Ahmed Jibril stated, on August 13, that three were being held by the Hezbollah, three were dead, and one was missing. A few days later, Syrian foreign minister Farouk al-Sharaa, basking in the accolades accorded Syria for its role in the release of the Western hostages, said that as far as he knew, "most" of the Israeli hostages had been killed. On August 21, an "official Lebanese source" told the Reuters news agency that navigator Ron Arad was alive. On September 2, a new twist was added when the Islamic Hamas movement announced in Beirut that it was holding Israeli soldier Ilan Sa'adon, who had disappeared in May 1989. Israeli sources discounted the story, saying that Sa'adon had most probably been killed in southern Israel, where he was last seen, and that the Hamas statement was just another facet of the wide-ranging psychological war being waged against Israel in connection with the hostages.

On September 11, the first "breakthrough" occurred: Israel announced that it had
received "definite proof" that Alsheikh was dead, but that the information received about Yosef Fink was inconclusive. It was reported that Israel had received, via Syria, dental x-rays and tissue of the two. In exchange, Israel released 51 prisoners from El-Khiam prison in south Lebanon, as well as nine bodies of Hezbollah terrorists. The next day, the body of Samir Assad was returned, in Vienna, by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). In exchange, Israel agreed to allow a prominent DFLP activist, deported from the territories several years earlier, to return to his home near Jerusalem. The next month Israel confirmed that it had received conclusive proof that Fink was dead.

On October 21, the SLA released 14 more prisoners from El-Khiam, and Israel released one Hezbollah terrorist, in conjunction with the Hezbollah release of American hostage Jesse Turner. In November and December, more Western hostages were released and more Hezbollah prisoners as well. Israel was acting on the basis of pledges that its gestures would ultimately bring about a general exchange of prisoners, including Israelis. But on December 9, Hezbollah announced that it was not holding Ron Arad at all. Two weeks later, the failed kidnapping attempt took place. The newly appointed UN secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, claimed that Israel had now disrupted the flow of negotiations for a successful swap.

SYRIA

Syria was reported to be arming itself with long-range modified Scud ballistic missiles, manufactured by North Korea; Pyongyang was also providing technical know-how for the establishment of a Scud-manufacturing plant in Syria itself. In June it was reported that China would also enhance Syria's ballistic-missile capability, with long-range M-9 missiles.

On August 14, three years of tough and frustrating negotiations between Israel and Syria, through the International Red Cross, finally reached a successful end when Fahan Assad Hamoud, the 21-year-old daughter of a Syrian-Druze brigadier, was allowed to cross the border into Israel in order to marry her loved one, 30-year-old Izat Safadi, a Druze living on the Golan Heights.

TERRORIST INCIDENTS OUTSIDE ISRAEL

On June 26, anti-Indian terrorists in the remote area of Srinagar, in Kashmir, kidnapped eight tourists, including seven Israelis. After releasing one Israeli woman and one non-Israeli, they informed the remaining six that they would be executed. The six, all graduates of elite army units, struggled with their captors; one Israeli, Erez Kahane, was killed, another was wounded, and a third disappeared. For several days the authorities searched for the missing Israeli, Yair Yitzhaki; ultimately it turned out that he had fallen into the hands of a rival terrorist group and was released unharmed on June 3. Israelis were warned not to travel any more to Kashmir.
On December 23, an explosive device was detonated on a Budapest road frequented by Jews on their way from the former Soviet Union to Israel. Two Hungarian policemen were seriously injured in the attack.

**OTHER SECURITY-RELATED MATTERS**

In January, as part of the general package of assistance to Israel in the wake of the Gulf War, Germany announced that it would fund and build two submarines for the Israel Navy, at a cost of $600 million.

The U.S. Congress approved a "drawdown" of surplus American military equipment from U.S forces in Europe to the Israeli army, up to a total of $700 million, as well as the "prepositioning" of $200-million worth of equipment for emergency use by American forces.

The second trial launch of the Israeli-designed and American-funded antimissile missile, the Arrow, on March 25, achieved only partial success after the missile computer failed to convey data to its ground control. On May 31, Israel and the United States agreed in principle on the second stage of development of the project, and on June 8, they signed a memorandum of understanding to that effect. The third trial launch, on October 30, achieved no more success; the Arrow failed to intercept incoming ballistic missiles. On December 18, Israeli Arrow project manager Dov Raviv was removed from his post, after allegations of improprieties were raised against him. The entire project was temporarily suspended in order to pinpoint the reasons for the failed launchings. On August 17, Israel carried out a successful test launch of the Barak seaborne antimissile missile.

Air Force Brig. Gen. Rami Dotan, accused of widespread fraud and bribe-taking in connection with arms purchases from the United States, was convicted, on March 16, on the basis of his own confession and sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment and dishonorable discharge from the army. (See AJYB 1992, p. 435.) The court described Dotan's actions as "corruption without any precedent in the IDF." Nine other air force officers were deposed in connection with the case. On August 15, the U.S. Justice Department charged the General Electric Corporation with defrauding the American government of $33 million in connection with the Dotan affair.

Deputy Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Ehud Barak was appointed chief of staff and promoted to the rank of lieutenant general, on March 31. Barak, the 14th IDF chief of staff, replaced Lt. Gen. Dan Shomron. The 49-year-old Barak served as commander of the elite Matkal infantry unit, was a brigade and division commander in the armored corps, head of Israeli intelligence, O/C Central Command, and deputy chief of staff. He was succeeded by Maj. Gen. Amnon Shahak.

Four Israelis were arrested on April 24 in Nicosia, Cyprus, on suspicion that they had tried to plant microphones in the Iranian embassy in Cyprus. The four were subsequently released.

Outgoing air force commander Maj. Gen. Avihu Bin Nun, in a parting interview with the air force periodical published on December 24, severely criticized the
decision-making process in Israel, claiming "the country is suffering from a lack of proper governmental order." He was reprimanded by the chief of staff.

DIPLOMATIC DEVELOPMENTS

The Peace Process

From the outset, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's government regarded the Gulf crisis with mixed feelings. On the one hand, Israel was relieved that the United States, along with its international coalition, was tackling Iraq, the country which arguably posed the most serious threat to Israel's security. On the other hand, there was constant apprehension that Israel would ultimately be asked to foot the diplomatic bill for the resolution of the crisis. In the days before the war, the concern was that Washington would reach a diplomatic arrangement with Baghdad that would entail pledges, unacceptable to Israel, concerning future attempts to solve the Palestinian problem. Once the war started, the apprehension focused on the "price" that Washington would pay in exchange for the support it received from Arab states, most notably Saudi Arabia and Syria. On January 7, in the wake of a Security Council resolution, passed with American support, that criticized Israel's policies in the territories, Shamir gave public vent to his fears: Israel should prepare itself for stepped-up American pressure after the Gulf crisis was resolved.

While the war was still in progress, the United States made clear on several occasions that its aftermath would include a serious diplomatic effort to initiate negotiations between Israel and the Arabs. This plan was reiterated, formally, in the joint statement issued in Washington on January 30 by Secretary of State James Baker and Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh of the USSR. Israel was concerned that the Americans would bow to Syrian pressure, backed by the Soviets, to convene a full-fledged international conference, a concept that was vehemently opposed by Shamir and his Likud government.

Indeed, the participation of Syria in the American-led coalition against Iraq had introduced a new factor into the longtime search for a mechanism by which Israel and the Arabs could start negotiating. Since the signing of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty in 1979, all Israeli and American initiatives had been directed at the Palestinians and, to a lesser extent, at Jordan (with the exception of the failed "peace treaty" signed in the wake of the 1982 war between Israel and Lebanon). Israelis remained skeptical of Syrian intentions and doubted whether President Hafez al-Assad would now abandon his decades of belligerency; at the same time, Jerusalem was aware that the American-Syrian alliance, even if it was ad hoc, had changed the basic equation of Middle East diplomacy.

First warnings of the change came in meetings held in February between Baker and Israeli ambassador to Washington Zalman Shoval. Baker questioned Shoval at length about the Israeli attitude toward the Golan Heights and explored, on a
hypothetical basis, the possible Israeli reaction to various arrangements in the Golan, such as demilitarization or the stationing of American troops in the area. The publication of Baker’s queries raised concern in Israel’s political community, especially in the sizeable lobby opposed to any and all concessions in the Golan. On February 13, German foreign minister Hans Dietrich Genscher stated, after visiting Damascus, that Assad would be willing to recognize Israel’s right to exist, within the framework of a general peace agreement.

That same day, New York congressman Stephen Solarz, a Democrat with close ties to the Republican foreign policy apparatus, met in Jerusalem with Shamir and Foreign Minister David Levy. Solarz presented the general blueprint of the administration’s plans to promote peace after the war. The process, he said, would include both direct bilateral talks between Israel and its Arab neighbors and regional multilateral talks. The latter would include Arab states that do not have a shared border with Israel, as well as countries from other areas in the world. The initial Israeli reaction to the plan was decidedly cool. Shamir, who had agreed in 1987 to then Secretary of State George Shultz’s proposal for American-Soviet cosponsorship of the process, had by now cooled to the idea, because, he said, of the instability of the current Soviet regime. “It’s unclear what the Soviet policy will be,” he told visiting American congressmen.

Shamir’s foreboding about the upcoming peace process was reiterated in a February 25 meeting with his own Likud caucus. After the war, he said, a political process will commence with the aim of “taking from Israel, by diplomatic means, what they have been unsuccessful in seizing by force.” Shamir did not elaborate who was included in the term “they.”

WASHINGTON TAKES THE INITIATIVE

On February 28, with the war officially ended, President Bush announced his grand vision of a “new world order.” State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler spelled out what the phrase meant in terms of the Middle East. The basic components, she said, included regional security arrangements, control of proliferation of weapons in the area, economic cooperation—and a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Secretary Baker, Bush announced, would embark on a Middle East tour aimed at exploring ways to start implementing the American vision. Baker said that he had no specific plans in mind, and that the United States had no intention of imposing a solution on the sides. Both elements of this statement were greeted with skepticism in Israel. Jerusalem, for its part, said that it would not be proposing new ideas during Baker’s visit; however, it grumbled over reports from Washington that the administration intended to abandon the linchpin of Israel’s peace plan: the election of Palestinian representatives who would negotiate the details of an interim arrangement in accordance with the 1978 Camp David accords. Shamir reiterated that the government’s 1989 peace plan, which first offered the idea of elections, would be the
only basis for discussions with Baker. A few days later, however, Shamir corrected his statement, saying that Israel would be willing to talk to Palestinians even without elections, as long as the other principles of its 1989 initiative were preserved.

On March 6, in a celebratory address to a joint session of Congress, Bush said that the time had come to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. He said that Middle East peace would be one of his administration's "top priorities," adding that a peace accord would be based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, "including the principle of territory for peace." With these words, the president renewed the debate, both between Jerusalem and Washington and within Israel itself, about the meaning of that concept. Government officials said that, although Israel had accepted the resolutions and was not reneging on its acceptance, the current government believed that Israel had fulfilled its part of the "peace for territories" bargain by relinquishing the Sinai in exchange for peace with Egypt. Since the Sinai constituted 90 percent of all the areas captured in the 1967 war, Israel was under no obligation to give up any more territories; now it was up to the Arab states to make peace.

On March 8, while visiting Saudi Arabia, America's premier Gulf crisis partner, Baker secured a vague Saudi promise to "contribute" to the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Shamir, meanwhile, meeting in Jerusalem with Canada's visiting secretary of external affairs, Joe Clark, on March 9, called on both Syria and Saudi Arabia to come to the negotiating table. Indeed, Israel was eager for Saudi Arabia to join the negotiations, not least because, it was reported, Israel and Saudi Arabia had no territorial dispute, and the Likud government wanted to prove that peace could be achieved without giving back any territories.

Visiting Israel on March 10-12, Baker achieved his first breakthrough when Palestinian leaders, including Faisal Husseini, agreed to meet with him at the residence of the American consul-general in Jerusalem, thereby ending the eight-month-old Palestinian boycott of the United States that was imposed after the administration cut off its dialogue with the PLO. The meeting reflected the weakening of the PLO's position because of its ill-advised support for Iraq, and because of the U.S. position, reiterated by Baker in Cairo on his way to Jerusalem, that there was no role in the process for the PLO. As a result, PLO headquarters in Tunis found itself compelled to accede to the demand of the local leadership in the territories to allow it to meet with Baker and not to pass up another opportunity to advance the Palestinian cause. The Palestinians did submit to Baker an 11-point plan, which included a demand that the United States recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. It was clear, however, that the demand was not a take-it-or-leave-it proposition.

In his meeting with Israeli leaders, on March 12, Baker outlined the American plan to convene a "regional conference," which would be cosponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union. He had already secured the agreement of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states, Baker told Shamir and Levy. Following the meeting, Tutwiler told reporters that Baker was "encouraged" that Shamir had not rejected
the proposal out of hand. The prime minister had, however, stipulated that any Soviet role in the peace process include a prior resumption of full diplomatic ties between Jerusalem and Moscow.

In a press conference, Baker said that, ultimately, the Middle East settlement would have to be based on the “peace for territories” principle. “If the sides want peace—they will achieve it,” he said, “and if they don’t—they won’t.” Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, who met with Baker in Moscow immediately following the secretary’s talks in the area, said that, while the Soviet Union continued its traditional support for a full international conference, it was also willing to contemplate direct talks between the sides. It was clear that in the new array of international forces, the declining Soviet Union, which was begging the United States for financial assistance, was in no position to argue with American designs, and that public statements to the contrary were simply a way of saving face.

On March 17, Shamir told the cabinet that, in the talks with Baker, the Americans had also brought up the issue of the Israeli-controlled security zone in south Lebanon. Washington, Shamir said, was demanding that Israel withdraw from the security zone, in exchange for “adequate” security arrangements.

On March 18, Shamir said that he opposed negotiations with the group of ten Palestinians who had met with Baker, remarking that “Faisal Husseini was no less dangerous than Yasir Arafat.” News reports from Washington indicated that Baker did not take kindly to Shamir’s remarks.

That same day, in Washington, one of Shamir’s trusted ministers, Ehud Olmert, created a political storm when he announced before the annual meeting of AIPAC, the pro-Israel lobby, that Israel would be willing to negotiate with Syria on anything, “including all their territorial demands.” Shamir dissociated himself, in vague terms, from Olmert’s statement, but Member of Knesset Yossi Sarid voiced the concern—or hopes—of many when he asserted that Olmert’s statement had in fact been planned in advance by the Prime Minister’s Office in Jerusalem. The anxiety among Jewish settlers in the Golan Heights grew considerably.

On March 21, in an interview with the NBC television network, King Hussein of Jordan announced that he would be willing to be part of a joint delegation with the Palestinians to the peace conference. Hussein’s statement, which in effect canceled his July 1988 “disconnection” from the territories, was seen as an effort by the Hashemite king to regain favor lost in Washington as a result of his support for Saddam Hussein by offering a possible solution to the issue that had dogged the Middle East peacemaking efforts for over a decade—the matter of Palestinian representation.

Another sign of the changing mood occurred ten days later, on April 1, when Syrian president Assad and Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, meeting in Alexandria, called for the convening of an international conference on the basis of UN Resolutions 242 and 338.
BAKER'S TRIPS TO THE REGION

On April 8, Baker arrived in Israel once again to continue his discussions. By now, the positive signals from the Arab world were having a definite chilling effect in Jerusalem. On the eve of Baker's visit, "senior sources" in the Likud said that if the United States pressured Israel to make unwanted concessions, Shamir would have no choice but to call for early elections, thus disrupting the process and, hopefully, gaining a mandate from the public for continued resistance to the American designs. During the visit, however, a certain reversal of roles took place. Baker was quoted as expressing pessimism about whether any Arab country would agree to come to a regional conference on Israel's terms. Israel, and especially Foreign Minister David Levy, emphasized, in glowing terms, the wide-ranging understanding that now existed between Jerusalem and Washington.

On April 11, Levy spelled out the terms of this understanding, in a statement that would, ironically, be the source of many a misunderstanding both inside the Israeli government and between Jerusalem and Washington. According to Levy, the two sides had agreed on the "two-track" system of both bilateral and multilateral talks and also on the other terms: that the process would not end up with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state; that Palestinian representatives would come "only from the territories" (i.e., not from Jerusalem); that Israel was not being asked to conduct a dialogue with the PLO; that there were several possible interpretations of Resolution 242; that negotiations with the Palestinians would be based on the government's 1989 initiative; that the Soviet Union would upgrade its relations with Israel prior to the start of the process; that the Soviets agreed with the principles of the process as presented by the United States and agreed to by Israel; and finally, that none of these understandings would be altered by the United States without Israel's prior consent. Israel agreed, Levy said, that the process would be launched by a regional conference, cosponsored by the two superpowers, on condition that the conference would be ceremonial in nature, that it would be a one-time occurrence, and that it would have no authority to intervene in the negotiations or to impose anything on any side.

A few days later, the misunderstandings began to emerge. Senior Israeli diplomats claimed that Baker had "reneged" on two of the understandings: he was no longer committed to excluding East Jerusalemites from the process, and he would no longer guarantee a one-session conference. State Department sources countered that Levy's account of the so-called understandings was "superficial" from the outset. The points elaborated by Levy were not "understandings" at all, the sources said, but rather Israeli positions which Baker had promised to do his best to "sell" to the Arab side.

Baker's third visit, on April 20, was thus marked by a sense of growing mistrust between him and the Israelis. Baker asked Shamir to reconsider his opposition to a periodic reconvening of the conference, as well as his objection to the participation of representatives of the United Nations and of the European Community. Baker
tried to find a way around Israel’s opposition to the inclusion of East Jerusalemites in the Palestinian delegation by proposing that they be allowed to participate in the opening “ceremony” but not in the ensuing direct talks. Shamir was not agreeable to any of the proposals.

Baker’s mission suffered a more serious blow when it emerged from his talks in Riyadh that Saudi Arabia would not participate in the conference after all. The Saudi position was seen in Israel as further proof of the disingenuousness of the American tactics, since Baker had said repeatedly that the Saudis would be an “active partner” in the quest for peace. The Saudis were also subjected to the wrath of the U.S. Congress: 50 senators wrote to King Fahd and demanded that he reconsider.

A frustrated Baker returned to Jerusalem on April 26, but not before making his first visit to Amman, thus signaling both the administration’s willingness to “forgive” Hussein’s misconceived support for Saddam and the Jordanian king’s wish to be included as a full participant in the peace process.

Baker’s talks in Jerusalem were described as “tough,” and sources in the Prime Minister’s Office said that a full-blown crisis was looming over U.S.-Israeli relations. At one point, Baker got up from the negotiating table and said, in frustration, “Well, in that case we shall have to go to the Security Council.” A dismayed Shamir responded by saying, “We are dealing with serious issues here. I don’t have to accept everything you say.” Baker’s visit was cut short by the news of his mother’s death, but it was clear that the respite, if any, would be brief.

The first days of May saw Israel trying to assign blame for the deadlock on the Arabs, while the United States was making clear that it was frustrated by the Israeli positions. The Prime Minister’s Office announced that the process was stuck because the Arabs had reneged on earlier understandings. The State Department let out word that the obstacles posed by both Israel and Syria necessitated a reassessment of the entire process.

In Jerusalem, Shamir’s aides were blaming Levy’s “amateurishness” for the impasse, while Levy’s people spoke derisively of Shamir’s “intransigence.” At the same time, ironically, Shamir was coming under increasing pressure within his own coalition, the right-wing parties threatening to bolt if it emerged, as reports indicated, that the conference would not be a one-time-only ceremonial affair. As had happened on previous occasions, the right wing exhibited the most realistic sense of things to come, realizing that the United States could ill afford to fail on such an ambitious diplomatic venture.

On May 11, Baker and Bessmertnykh met in Cairo, spelling out the principles that would govern the proposed conference. The conference, they agreed, would be ongoing and not a one-time-only affair—but its reconvening would require the consent of all participants. The cosponsors would issue the invitations, the European Community would be allowed to participate, and the United Nations could send a “silent observer” to the conference. The problem of the participation of East Jerusalemites remained unresolved.
Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries, which owed their very freedom to the American resolve against Iraq, finally came through, agreeing to participate in the multilateral talks devoted to regional issues. The response in Israel, as usual, depended on the eye of the beholder: Foreign Minister Levy expressed satisfaction, but Shamir's tough aide, Yossi (Yosef) Ben-Aharon, said that the Saudi move did not constitute a positive development in the peace process.

On May 14, Baker arrived for his fourth visit, stating that it would be his last. American sources said that if Shamir refused Baker's final offer, the secretary would have no choice but to pin the blame publicly on Israel for the breakdown of his peace efforts, and on Syria, which was also rejecting some of Baker's proposals. Teams of officials from both countries sat in Jerusalem around the clock in an effort to formulate written agreements between the two countries. At the end of the visit, Shamir continued to oppose two central elements of the proposed format for the conference: the participation of the UN and the continuity of the conference. Israel did agree, for the first time, that the meeting that would launch the direct talks could be called a "peace conference."

On May 19, Jordan announced that it would not attend the conference without Syria. The Syrians, however, were showing new signs of flexibility. Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa told his Belgian counterpart, on May 26, that Syria was no longer demanding UN sponsorship of the peace conference, nor was it insisting on a prior Israeli commitment to withdraw from the territories. The issue of the Golan Heights, al-Sharaa said, would be discussed at the conference in accordance with the "peace for territories" formula. A few days later, King Hussein, in an interview with the French Le Point magazine, said that face-to-face meetings with Israelis were still premature but would come in the very near future. "This taboo must disappear," he said.

But while the Arabs were making noises of moderation, the dialogue between Israel and the U.S. administration continued to deteriorate. Meeting with American diplomats in Washington, Ben-Aharon appeared to be reneging on understandings which the Americans believed had been reached between Baker and Shamir. According to numerous news reports, when asked to explain, Ben-Aharon responded, "Shamir does not always pay attention to details."

On June 1, President Bush dispatched letters to Shamir and to Arab leaders with questions on their final positions, and with a final plea not to let matters of procedure get in the way of potentially historic breakthroughs. Bush's intervention was described as a "make or break" move: either the responses to the letter would allow the cosponsors to issue invitations, or the process would be dead.

On June 5, Levy met with representatives of the European Community and agreed on the conditions for European participation in the conference. Levy returned from his trip much more optimistic than the Americans: while they were spreading reports of dismal prospects, Levy said he had no doubt that the conference would ultimately convene.

The next day, Shamir sent his response to Bush, and it was in no way positive.
According to reports in the Israeli press, Shamir told Bush that the United States had pressured Israel to agree to a one-time convening of the conference, and now it was asking it to agree to a continuous conference, which would allow the Arabs to emerge from the process "without direct negotiations and without peace." Shamir also explained his opposition to UN participation, saying that even a "silent observer" would be able to report to the Security Council, and that body, which Israel viewed with disfavor, could use the reports as a pretext for discussion and action on the peace process. Despite rampant pessimism in the press, Washington preferred to view Shamir's letter as a basis for further negotiations, and Levy went to Washington to continue the discussions.

Levy's mission was at least partially successful. He told the Israeli press, after meeting with Baker on June 13, that he had succeeded in diverting American displeasure and the possibility that Israel would be blamed for the breakdown of the process. Baker gave Levy a guarantee that the United States and the Soviet Union would both veto any motion to discuss the peace process in the Security Council, a pledge that ultimately persuaded Shamir to remove his objections to the participation of a UN "silent observer."

Syrian foreign minister al-Sharaa said, on June 23, that Bush's letter to Assad, which had been sent concurrently with the letter to Shamir and other Arab leaders, was "balanced and fair." The Syrian sounds of moderation, however, did not seem to be striking a positive chord in Jerusalem. Shamir and the usually moderate Levy both stepped up their verbal attacks on Damascus. Shamir said that "the United States was exaggerating in its efforts to bring Syria to the conference table, since the rejectionist positions of Damascus are well known." Even the usually upbeat Levy said, on June 25, that "Syria is arming itself for confrontation." On July 11, he said that "the peace process can be advanced even without Syria." But three days later, on July 14, Damascus upset Israel's view and threw a historic bombshell: it agreed to the terms of the conference as outlined in Bush's letter of June 1. The administration rejected allegations in Israel that it had made any secret pledges to Syria. Al-Sharaa claimed subsequently that the Americans had pledged that "Israel will have to withdraw in all the fronts in which it occupied lands," but the administration denied the claim vehemently. In late July, in an interview with Newsweek magazine, Syrian president Assad confirmed that the United States had not given Syria any secret assurances.

Now Israel was alone in rejecting the American proposals. This was exactly the position that Shamir, with all his toughness, had been seeking to avoid.

The administration called on Israel to reconsider its position, and Baker, despite earlier statements, announced plans for a fifth shuttle mission to the Middle East. In Damascus, he announced that Assad had agreed to an "inactive" UN observer. In Riyadh, it was revealed that Israel had rejected a Saudi offer to revoke the Arab boycott in exchange for a settlement freeze. On the eve of Baker's arrival in Jerusalem, the overall assessment, based on his past record, was that Shamir would reject the American proposals even at the risk of an unprecedented confrontation with the
United States, which might entail the irrevocable rejection of Israel's request for much-needed loan guarantees. Just hours before Baker's plane touched down, on July 21, Defense Minister Arens hinted that the expectations of a showdown might be misguided. Israel, he said, would consider modifying its positions.

AGREEMENT IN SIGHT

Indeed, the meeting between Baker and Shamir that day was probably the best the two had ever had. Shamir was reported to be very satisfied with the Syrian response, which, Baker assured him, carried no hidden strings. Shamir gave Baker his agreement in principle to the proposed format of the conference, but there was still one major problem left. Israel would attend the conference, Shamir said, provided that a mutually acceptable Palestinian delegation was formed. Since countless diplomatic efforts in the past had failed to produce such a delegation, Shamir's caveat was no small matter.

Ironically, on the day after Baker's departure, the Knesset was to debate a motion of no-confidence submitted by the left-wing parties, accusing the government of derailing the peace process. But Shamir's surprising acceptance of the Baker formulae left the critics with no ammunition, and most of the members of the chief opposition party, Labor, did not take part in the vote, which the government won comfortably, 54–27. The criticism was now being directed at the government from the right, which originally had planned to defend Shamir's refusal to go along with Baker's "dictates."

Police Minister Ronnie Milo, representing the government, was ebullient in describing the recent developments. Syria, he said, had undertaken a "revolutionary step," which was a "clear victory for Israel's policies." Housing Minister Ariel Sharon took a dim view of Milo's enthusiasm. The day before yesterday, he said, Assad had been the twin brother of Iraqi president Saddam; today, he was the favorite brother of Egyptian president Mubarak.

The stage was now set for the final act in the effort to convene a conference: the participation of East Jerusalemites in the Palestinian delegation. Indeed, it was this very question that had brought down the previous national unity government in 1990, and it was clear that on this matter Shamir would not budge. Faisal Husseini, the prominent East Jerusalem Palestinian leader, for his part, was showing no more flexibility. The participation of East Jerusalemites, he said, was the "bottom line," as far as the Palestinians were concerned.

At the end of July, Bush traveled to Moscow for a summit with President Gorbachev. The United States was eager for the superpower summit to serve as the setting for the official pronouncement on the convening of the conference. But Israel refused to give the final okay, for there were still matters to conclude. Among other things, Israel sought guarantees that the proposed peace conference would last only 24–36 hours, that the different bilateral talks would be held without any linkage between them, and that the United States would reaffirm, in writing, all past commitments to Israel.
Following what were described as very sharp exchanges between the U.S. president’s party in Moscow and the Prime Minister’s Office in Jerusalem, Shamir finally informed President Bush that Israel would indeed attend the conference—provided that the United States and Israel formulated, in advance, a mutually acceptable memorandum of understanding concerning the two countries’ positions in the upcoming peace talks. Shamir did not insist anymore, however, that the memorandum precede the announcement on the conference.

Thus, on July 31, Bush announced in Moscow that the Middle East peace conference would convene in October. The venue had not been set, and for the next two months the international and Israeli press was rife with rumors about possible sites for the historic meeting.

On August 1, Baker arrived in Jerusalem from Moscow to start deliberations on the memorandum of understanding sought by Shamir. Although the details of the memorandum were still in dispute, Shamir did not renege on his pledge to Bush, and Baker finally had the chance to make a positive statement concerning Israel’s willingness to attend the American-brokered peace conference.

On August 1, the cabinet convened to approve Shamir’s agreement. Sharon said that Israel was committing “a historic mistake.” Nonetheless, the cabinet approved Shamir’s proposal to reply affirmatively to the United States by a vote of 16–3. Foreign Minister Levy said that it was not Israel that had said “yes” to Baker but rather Baker who had said “yes” to Israel. Shamir said that Israel had agreed to the conference, but added an important proviso, namely, that the agreement was “subject to a satisfactory solution to the issue of Palestinian Arab representation.”

The U.S.-Israeli honeymoon, if it existed at all, was very brief. Despite the arrival in Israel on August 7 of a team of State Department officials, it emerged that Israel and the United States were far apart on the formulation of the memorandum. Israel was also concerned, as always, that despite its pledges, the administration was injecting the PLO into the peace process, in an attempt to sway the last holdouts, the Palestinians. Shamir, on August 8, summed up his skeptical view of the process: “We are entering the new diplomatic process with open eyes and without exaggerated expectations.”

On September 16, Baker arrived on his seventh visit to Israel, against the backdrop of a serious crisis between Jerusalem and Washington arising from President Bush’s extraordinary September 12 speech on the loan guarantees in which he criticized the American Jewish lobby. (See below; also “Intergroup Relations” and “The United States, Israel, and the Middle East,” elsewhere in this volume.) In Israel, Baker left a copy of a proposed “statement of principles” for the peace process, which now replaced the proposed memorandum of understanding, which was judged to be unachievable. Baker also showed Shamir a draft of the invitation that the United States and the Soviet Union planned to issue for the conference, but, much to the chagrin of his Israeli hosts, he refused to leave a copy behind. The glance afforded Shamir, however, was enough to worry the Israelis: Resolution 242, which Israel never liked, was mentioned no less than four times in the proposed invitation.
Baker also met with the Palestinians during this visit and offered them a "statement of principles" as well. The United States wished to solve the East Jerusalem quandary by guaranteeing the Palestinians that representatives of the city would participate in talks on the permanent settlement, which would follow an agreement on the interim solution. The United States also stated that the exclusion of East Jerusalemites would not prejudge the final negotiations on the status of the city. The PLO was not happy with the contents of the statement; nonetheless, on September 28, the organization's parliament, the Palestine National Council (PNC), approved Palestinian participation in the talks. The decision was reached after two prominent Palestinian leaders, Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi, traveled to the PNC meeting in Tunis, in direct contravention of the Israeli law prohibiting contacts with the PLO. The PLO, for its part, continued to claim that East Jerusalemites as well as representatives of the Palestinian "diaspora" would be represented at the talks from the outset.

On September 24, Levy met with Baker in New York, while both were attending the UN General Assembly. Israel continued to raise demands for written commitments from Washington, which the administration was either unable or unwilling to provide. Among other things, Israel demanded a joint statement in which both countries acknowledged the pre-1967 borders as being indefensible, as well as an American commitment to support Israel if it decided to abandon the proposed conference because of contacts between the Palestinian delegation and the PLO.

On October 13, Baker came to the Middle East for the final talks before the conference, which was now set to convene on October 29 in the Spanish capital, Madrid. The Palestinians had yet to give their final approval to the American formulas, and Baker, growing increasingly impatient, warned them, from Amman, "The bus will not pass by here again."

On October 16, Baker came to Jerusalem, bringing with him the final American proposal for the "statement of principles," as well as the final draft of the invitation. Soviet foreign minister Boris Pankin, who had replaced Bessmertnykh after the failed August coup, was also in town. On October 19, Pankin restored full diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel, as demanded by Israel in exchange for its agreement to allow Moscow to cosponsor the peace talks. A few hours later, in a joint press conference at the King David Hotel, Baker and Pankin announced that the invitations had been presented.

Shamir said that he would recommend to his cabinet that Israel accept the invitation because, as he said, "there was no other alternative." The next day, the cabinet approved Shamir's recommendation, by a vote of 16-3, with one abstention. By this time, Israel already knew that Haidar Abdel-Shafi, 71, from Gaza, would head the Palestinian delegation. Abdel-Shafi had been one of the founding members of the PLO in 1964. It was a measure of how far Israel had traveled from its original positions that none of the ministers objected to the Palestinian choice.

On October 23, Shamir announced that he would head the Israeli delegation to the conference, despite the fact that it had been called at the foreign-ministerial level
and that no Arab head of state had chosen to come. Various interpretations were
given to Shamir's move, including the fact that he wished to stress the importance
of the talks to Israel. It was also clearly a rebuke of his own foreign minister and
resulted in a serious political crisis at home, instigated by Foreign Minister Levy,
who felt badly slighted. (See below, "Political Developments.") Israel, reluctant at
best, was thus going to attend the Madrid conference while its government was torn
by internal strife.

THE MADRID CONFERENCE

The Madrid conference, the first-ever face-to-face meeting between Israel and a
group of its Arab neighbors, took place in the royal palace of the Spanish capital,
with hundreds of diplomats from around the globe and close to 10,000 journalists
in attendance. President Bush opened the conference on October 30, in a speech that
was well received by Israelis and Arabs alike. "Peace in the Middle East need not
be a dream," he said. "We seek peace, real peace. And by real peace I mean treaties.
exchanges. Even tourism." He reiterated that Resolutions 242 and 338 would serve
as the basis of the various settlements and spoke of "territorial compromise," a term
that allowed the Israelis to quip that the president might have been referring to
"compromise" on the part of the Arabs. The United States, Bush said, would not
impose its will on the sides, but would serve as a "catalyst" for progress in the talks.

Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, whose own position in the Soviet Union was
dubious at best and whose participation in the Madrid proceedings was described
as only ceremonial by many analysts, said: "Today we have a unique opportunity,
and it would be unforgivable to miss this opportunity. The conference can only
succeed if no one seeks any victory for one side over the other, but all seek a shared
victory over a cruel past."

The other two speeches of the opening day were a disappointment to the Israeli
delegation. Dutch foreign minister Hans van den Broek, representing the European
Community, spoke of the need for the conference to achieve self-determination for
the Palestinians and for the "essential contribution" of stopping all settlements in
the territories. Egyptian foreign minister Amre Moussa described the settlements
as "illegal" and said that a prerequisite to peace was a "complete withdrawal" by
Israel from the occupied territories. Although he lauded Egypt's trailblazing role
in forging peace with Israel, he did not mention the architect of that role, the late
president Anwar Sadat.

The parties to the conflict spoke on the second day of the conference, their words
demonstrating the depth of animosity still dividing them.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was the first to speak; he described the "eternal
bond" between the Jewish people and the land of Israel, and the long and bloody
history of Arab hostility to the Jewish presence in the Holy Land. He called on Arab
leaders to "show us and the world that you can accept Israel's existence. Demon-
strate your readiness to accept Israel as a permanent entity in the region. Let the people in our region hear you speak in the language of reconciliation, coexistence and peace with Israel.” “The issue,” Shamir said, “is not territory, but our very existence.”

Palestinian delegate Haidar Abdel-Shafi spoke after Shamir, in an emotional speech marking the first-ever meeting of Israeli and Palestinian negotiators as “equals.” Abdel-Shafi had to walk a fine line between his own allegiance to the PLO and Israel’s threat to walk out of the conference if he specifically mentioned the Palestinian delegation’s subservience to the organization in Tunis. He described the Palestine National Council, the PLO’s governing body, as “our parliament” and quoted “Chairman Yasir Arafat.” Shamir, though displeased, did not walk out. “We are willing to live side by side on the land,” Abdel-Shafi said, but settlement in the territories “must stop now.” For too long, he added, “the Palestinian people have gone unheeded, silenced and denied.”

Abdel-Shafi was followed by Syrian foreign minister Farouk al-Sharaa, who sparked a series of bitter accusations and counteraccusations by making what was widely described later as a “hateful anti-Semitic speech.” Al-Sharaa attacked the very essence of Zionism, described Syria’s “liberal policies” toward its own Jews, and said that Israel must “give up every inch of occupied Arab lands.” The subsequent speeches of the Jordanian foreign minister, Kamel Abu-Jaber, and the Lebanese foreign minister, Faris Bouez, though anti-Israel, paled in comparison to al-Sharaa’s tirade.

The third and closing day of the conference was marked by further escalation in the Israeli-Syrian face-off, and by grumblings, both in the Arab and the American delegations, about the fact that Shamir was going home early, “in honor of the Sabbath.” In his short reply, Shamir lambasted the Syrians, saying that their claims of leniency toward the Jews “stretch incredulity to infinite proportions.” Shamir also said of the Palestinians that “twisting history and perversion of fact will not earn the sympathy they strive to acquire.”

Al-Sharaa struck once again, this time producing a prestate photograph of Yitzhak Shamir (then Yezernitsky), on a “wanted” poster produced by the British Mandate authorities, who were seeking to apprehend the then leader of the Lehi underground movement. “By his own admission, he was a terrorist,” al-Sharaa said.

Following summations by Baker and Soviet foreign minister Pankin, the conference disbanded, with the sides preparing for the first face-to-face encounter two days later. The bitter diatribe at the conference dismayed many, who had expected it to serve as an arena for declarations of mutual goodwill and historic reconciliation. Shamir himself, however, told reporters back in Israel that he was “not surprised.”
DIRECT TALKS

On November 3, Israel held its first direct, bilateral talks with delegations from Syria and Lebanon, as well as the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

It was touch-and-go until the last minute. The Syrian delegation had balked at first at attending the direct talks, demanding that representatives of the two cosponsors be present, and that Israel undertake in advance to continue the talks in Madrid. Indeed, the Syrians failed to show up for their first scheduled meeting with the Israelis. Combined American and Saudi pressures finally convinced them to come, along with the Lebanese delegation, which was under Syrian control. The discussions with the Syrians, which lasted for three hours, were harsh and tense, hardly surprising in light of the tough stance taken by Foreign Minister al-Sharaa at the conference itself. Still, this was one of the rare instances in which a diplomatic cliche was truly meaningful: the importance of the meeting was in the very fact that it was held.

The meeting with the Jordanians and Palestinians was much more promising: Israel agreed that the joint delegation could split on occasion to discuss matters that were exclusively Palestinian or Jordanian. The decision was announced after the meeting, in another first: a joint statement, issued by delegation chairmen Haidar Abdel-Shafi and Elyakim Rubinstein. The delegations failed, however, to reach any agreement on the timing and venue of their next meeting. Israel wanted the talks to be held in the Middle East, but the Arabs were opposed. To break the deadlock, the American administration would have to step in once again.

PEACE MOVES AFTER THE CONFERENCE

In the hiatus, the Israeli Knesset reaffirmed the country's commitment to its sovereignty on the Golan Heights and pledged never to return it to the Syrians. The Syrian government condemned the decision, but Prime Minister Shamir said it did not have any bearing on the peace process, for, in his opinion, peace could be achieved with Syria even without giving back any territories.

Secretary of State James Baker gave the sides two weeks to reach agreement on their own on the venue for the talks. The Arabs, however, refused to have any direct contacts with Israel outside the formal framework of the talks; thus, direct agreement was impossible. On November 23, and notwithstanding the Israeli position, Baker summoned the sides for talks in Washington, which were to start on December 4. Israel was not happy with the invitation, which was issued without prior consultation, but decided to attend the talks on the understanding that they would be devoted only to finding an appropriate venue for the future. (See below, "Relations with the United States.") However, to underscore its dissatisfaction, as well as to protest the administration's unilateral move, Israel announced that it would show up for the talks on December 9, five days later than the proposed date. The cabinet statement indicated that its acquiescence was a result of "appreciation for
the United States and in appreciation of its efforts." Ambassador Shoval told the State Department that the Israelis' tardy arrival was a result of its need for "logistical preparations" and in order to emphasize to the Arabs that they would have to negotiate directly with Israel, and not try to achieve their aims through the United States. On December 4, the State Department halls designated for the talks were opened, and the Arab delegations appeared. Israel, however, was absent. It was widely reported in the press that this absence damaged Israel's standing in public opinion.

The talks finally convened on December 10, after another day's delay caused by the Arab insistence on marking the anniversary of the intifada. Israel and the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, however, did not enter the room earmarked for them, because of procedural arguments stemming from Israel's view that it was negotiating with a combined delegation and the Palestinian insistence that its delegation was an independent entity. The heads of the delegations thus met in the corridor of the State Department in an effort to resolve the problem. Israel did meet, as planned, with the Syrian and Lebanese delegations, but little progress was reported. Concurrently with the talks, the sides were waging a propaganda battle in the American media. The two main actors in the contest were, on the Israeli side, Deputy Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and, on the Palestinian side, Hanan Ashrawi. The assessment given by Israeli journalists was that, ultimately, Ashrawi was more successful, largely because the Madrid conference had given the Palestinians' their first opportunity for worldwide exposure, while Israel's case, as well as Netanyahu himself, were already well known to Western audiences.

On December 14, the head of the Jordanian delegation, Abdel Salim a-Majali, summoned Israeli journalists and gave them their first-ever interview with a senior Jordanian official. Jordan, he said, was seeking a full peace, just like the one between Israel and Egypt.

The talks closed on December 18, and the assessments after the fact reflected the wide gulf between the sides. The Israelis, who viewed the very convening of the talks as a historic achievement, said that "real progress" had been achieved. The Arabs, who were seeking an Israeli pledge to withdraw from the territories, said that they had been "deeply disappointed." The State Department offered what was apparently the most realistic view, saying that "the talks had not been a failure." President Bush, however, said that he was disappointed that the talks had not progressed to substantive matters.

The delegations dispersed, setting January 7, 1992, as the date for the next round. Israel still insistently opposed the continuation of the discussions in Washington. On December 23 it was announced that the other arena of the peace process, the multilateral talks, would convene in Moscow at the end of January.
Relations with the United States

The outbreak of the Gulf crisis in mid-summer 1990 came in the nick of time, as far as Israel's relations with the United States are concerned. Washington's shift of focus from the Middle East peace process in general, and Israeli settlement in the occupied territories in particular, coupled with the U.S. confrontation with one of Israel's worst enemies, Iraq, all combined to avert an unprecedented clash between the two countries, which had been looming ever since the collapse of the national unity government in March 1990 and the scuttling of the efforts to arrange an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue in Cairo.

Throughout the months leading up to the war, the attitude of the Israeli government and public toward Washington was a complex mix of conflicting emotions and apprehensions. The government was relieved that America seemed intent on crushing Iraq but was constantly on guard against a last-minute "deal" for which Israel would be asked to pay the price. And while the government was relieved that the Bush administration had set the peace process aside for the time being, it was also concerned that, in the aftermath of the confrontation in the Gulf, Washington would redouble its efforts to launch talks between Israelis and Arabs.

Likewise, Israel viewed with mixed feelings the rapprochement between the United States and Syria. On the one hand, greater American influence in Damascus might mean greater moderation by the Assad regime; on the other hand, greater Syrian influence in Washington might also entail a steady American drift away from Israel. And constantly looming in the background was President Bush's adamant opposition to settlements in the territories, which clashed head on with the Likud government's commitment to greatly enhance the Jewish population of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.

The government's mixed attitudes were somewhat at variance with the views of the public at large. For a large majority of the Israeli population, the war with Iraq was reason enough for an unprecedented surge in American popularity; with the arrival in Israel of American soldiers to operate the Patriot missile batteries, which were touted as the answer to the Iraqi missile attacks, U.S. popularity was probably at an all-time high.

At the same time, the months of January and February provided a brief respite in the usually tense personal relations between President Bush and Prime Minister Shamir. The two, who had previously maintained little direct contact, spoke frequently on the phone. Shamir expressed his admiration for Bush's resolve, and the president returned in kind by praising Shamir's leadership.

The damage caused by the Iraqi attacks on Israel, coupled with a seldom-mentioned sentiment that America "owed" Israel some compensation for its self-imposed restraint, created the background for the Israeli requests for financial assistance, which were discussed as early as January 22, just six days after the start of the war. In October 1990, the administration had approved an Israeli request for $400 million in loan guarantees for immigrant absorption, although the guarantees
had yet to be given in practice. Now, however, the stakes were apparently going to be much higher. When Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger visited Israel during the first week of the war, he asked Finance Minister Yitzhak Modai what Israel's needs were. Israel, Modai replied, now wished to receive loan guarantees 25 times as high as the ones already approved—$10 billion, spread out over a period of five years. "I have no doubt that the United States will accede to our request," Modai said. "There is no reason why the Americans should give massive aid to Egypt, Syria, and Turkey, and deny us only because technically we are not members of the international coalition against Iraq."

There were other versions of the meeting published in the press at the time, most notably that Modai had requested $13 billion in direct aid. In any case, the size of the Israeli request astounded even some of its allies in Washington, and especially did not go down well with members of the administration, who felt that Israel was trying to exploit the situation in the Gulf for financial gain. When Defense Minister Arens, in Washington on February 12, told Secretary of State Baker that Israel expected to be compensated for its passive role in the Gulf, Baker retorted that at that very moment, while Arens was in Washington talking about money, American boys were risking their lives at the front in the fight against Israel's enemies.

The American reluctance to compensate Israel directly, as well as the administration's incessant bickering with Jerusalem over the exact terms under which the previously approved $400-million guarantees would be approved, led Israeli ambassador Zalman Shoval, in an unusual and undiplomatic move, to complain publicly in an interview with the Reuters News Agency on February 14. The ambassador said that Israel was being "given the run-around" on the loan guarantees. Shoval's remarks infuriated Bush, who described them as "outrageous" and, in a letter to Shamir, threatened to declare the ambassador "persona non grata." The Americans claimed that the approval for the $400 million was on Baker's desk when Shoval made his untimely remarks—even as the secretary read, in the Washington Post, that, contrary to assurances given the State Department by Shamir's aides, Israel was planning to construct another 12,000 apartments in the territories in the upcoming year.

The incident was defused when Shamir, in a letter to Bush, apologized for Shoval's remarks, and after Vice-President Dan Quayle, in a February 19 meeting with Shoval in Miami, declared the affair closed. Quayle said that the loan guarantees would be approved "within days." Indeed, two days later, on February 20, Baker approved the guarantees, despite the fact that Israel had not supplied the State Department with a comprehensive report about its expenditures in the territories. Baker's chief assistant, Dennis Ross, told Shoval that the guarantees were given, among other things, on the basis of Shamir's pledge that there were no plans to build 12,000 housing units, as reported by the Washington Post.

On February 25, Israel submitted a formal request for compensation for the various kinds of damage caused by the Gulf War—directly to Israeli homes and businesses in Tel Aviv, to the Israeli economy, which underwent six weeks of almost
total shutdown, and as a result of the added expenditures for maintaining the military in a state of preparedness. The Israeli request was for a grant of one billion dollars. On March 2, Baker told Shoval that the administration viewed the Israeli request with favor, but the two agreed, on the spot, to reduce Israel's request to $910 million.

A few days later, the administration approved the granting of $650 million in emergency aid to Israel. In exchange, Israel agreed to postpone the submission of its second request for loan guarantees until September. Israel's acceptance of this demand, which was criticized both in Israel and among pro-Israel lobbyists in Washington, was apparently a reaction to the adverse response it had received to its aid request. In any case, it was clear that the Americans, for their part, wished to exploit the loan-guarantee issue in order to promote future American diplomatic efforts.

GROWING TENSION

In March, only a few weeks after the guns in the Gulf were silenced and the threat of Iraqi missile attacks removed—the underlying animosity between Jerusalem and Washington in general, and between Bush and Shamir in particular, returned to the surface. The Wall Street Journal reported on April 1 that relations between the two leaders had cooled; Bush, the newspaper said, was angered by the Israeli decision to deport four Fatah leaders, despite the American request not to do so. (The Israeli government issued the deportation orders on March 24; after losing their appeals, the four were deported to Lebanon on May 18. The Security Council condemned Israel for the action on May 24.) Housing Minister Ariel Sharon's constant public statements about the scope and scale of Israel’s settlement efforts in the territories also annoyed the Americans. In Israel, the U.S. government was coming in for increasing criticism for a wide range of things, including its perceived abandonment of the Iraqi Kurdish population.

Israel’s reports to the administration concerning the settlements were being eyed with ever-increasing skepticism. While the Prime Minister's Office told the State Department that only 1,000–2,000 apartments were being built, other sources, including the government’s own publications, mentioned much higher numbers. On March 20, the State Department reported to Congress that over 200,000 Jews were living in 200 settlements in the occupied territories and that, contrary to the Israeli pledges, immigrants from the Soviet Union were indeed being directed there. Shamir, on April 9, told Baker that Sharon’s plans for building in the territories had not received cabinet approval; but Sharon, a few days later, in an interview with the Washington Post, explained that his plans did not require cabinet approval in the first place. Shamir, he said, was a full partner in the plans which he had announced and which had so angered the Americans.

On April 10, Baker told Shamir that the issue of settlements was a constant thorn in the side of relations between the two countries and might ultimately damage them
irreparably. The response of some Israelis—not always sanctioned by Shamir—only helped to fan the flames: on three separate occasions, Jewish settlers chose the day of Baker's arrival in Israel to set up yet another outpost in the territories.

By late April, relations were close to the boiling point. At Baker's insistence, Housing Secretary Jack Kemp canceled a planned meeting with Sharon, who was visiting Washington at the time. Margaret Tutwiler explained the move by saying that Sharon "publicly opposed American policies" in the Middle East. If Baker's move had been intended to isolate Sharon in Israel, it achieved the opposite effect; even his most severe critics were forced to join in condemning what was viewed in Israel as offensive behavior by the administration. Several months later, in an interview with the German Der Spiegel, Sharon showed that he had still not recovered from the insult. American "mistakes" in the Middle East, he said, had cost the lives of "tens of thousands of people."

On May 22, in testimony to the House appropriations subcommittee, Baker made plain just how seriously the Americans viewed the issue of settlements and angered many Israel supporters in the process. "There is no bigger impediment to peace," he said, "than the Israeli settlements." The statement led several prominent members of Congress to suggest openly that some sort of linkage had to be established between Israel's aid requests and its habit of ignoring American sensibilities by constantly expanding its settlement drive in the territories. Israel was outraged, as were the major American Jewish organizations. President Bush stood by his secretary of state, saying, the next day: "I'm backing the man, I'm stating the policy of the U.S.A., and so was the secretary."

Even as the atmosphere between the two countries was deteriorating, there were reminders of the mutuality that still existed. At the same time that Israel and the United States were at loggerheads over the issue of settlements, for example, the Bush administration played a pivotal role in securing the release of 15,000 Ethiopian Jews in what came to be known as "Operation Solomon" (see below). On May 23, Shamir wrote to Bush thanking him for his efforts. Several months later, in the midst of another difficult U.S.-Israeli crisis, the Americans led the campaign in the United Nations to repeal the 1975 "Zionism Is Racism" resolution.

At the end of May, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney came to Israel for a visit. Unlike Baker and Bush, Cheney was much admired in Israel both for his leading role in the Gulf crisis and because he was perceived as a strong backer of Israel. However, even this goodwill visit was marred by yet another incident between Shamir and Bush. On May 29, Bush unveiled an ambitious and far-reaching program aimed at curtailing the proliferation of nonconventional weapons in the Middle East. A few days earlier, Shamir had asked Bush to postpone the public presentation of his program so that Israel could have a chance to submit its views on it to Cheney. Bush refused, and most of Cheney's visit was devoted to the Israelis' complaints about the Bush proposals. During Cheney's visit, Israel and the United States agreed on the development of the second stage of the Arrow missile, 72 percent of which would be funded by the U.S. government.
On June 19, as the groundwork was being laid for the presentation of the Israeli request for loan guarantees in September—in accordance with the above-mentioned agreement with the administration—Israeli ambassador Zalman Shoval, in a sober diplomatic assessment, told Jerusalem that Israel would ultimately have to choose between loan guarantees and continued settlement in the territories. Shoval’s words angered Shamir and the government, which had been telling the Israeli people exactly the opposite. Shamir reprimanded Shoval, and, for the first time, openly indicated that the government planned to go “over the administration’s head” in order to secure the guarantees. The American people, Shamir said, will no doubt reject the linkage between the guarantees and settlements. Somewhat reassuringly, the Israel embassy in Washington informed Jerusalem on June 29 that a stable majority in Congress supported Israel’s request for guarantees.

On July 1, Bush told a press conference that the “best thing that Israel could do was to live up to the commitment it made at one point not to build any more settlements.” Bush was referring to a promise which he believed Shamir had made during the first meeting between the two in 1989. Since then, Shamir had on several occasions denied making any such commitment; Bush apparently chose to disregard the denials. On July 22, National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft admitted for the first time in public that there would indeed be some linkage between the peace process and the Israeli request for aid.

In late August, relations grew even more strained. Israel and the United States were divided over the procedures that would govern the proposed peace conference and were conducting an acrimonious dialogue on the formulation of a memorandum of understanding on the peace process, a dialogue that sank to new depths as “Israeli sources” complained about the anti-Israel sentiments of some of Baker’s Jewish assistants. At the same time, Israel was gearing up to submit its request for loan guarantees, while Arab countries were telling the administration that approval of the guarantees would put U.S. diplomatic efforts in serious peril.

On September 5, Shamir refused a specific request from Bush and Baker to postpone the submission of the request for loan guarantees. Apparently, the prime minister was influenced by the rosy reports from his Washington embassy about the massive support for the guarantees in Congress and believed that the Israeli position was strong enough to overcome even outright opposition by the administration. Israel was so confident, in fact, that the 1992 budget, which was submitted to the cabinet for a first reading in early September, already included income of $2 billion to be raised on the basis of the loan guarantees.

**FORMAL LOAN-GUARANTEE REQUEST**

On September 6, Shoval formally submitted the loan-guarantee request. Bush, in return, formally requested that Congress not deal with the matter for a period of 120 days, so as not to hamper the peacemaking process, which had reached a critical stage. The Israeli steamroller, buttressed by AIPAC, continued to advance, how-
ever, unfazed by the president's strenuous opposition. Thus, the stage was set for Bush's unprecedented speech of September 12, a negative milestone in both U.S. relations with Israel and the relations between the American government and its own Jewish citizens. Bush said that he had "worn out the telephone" in trying to persuade senators and representatives to delay the loan-guarantee issue, but he was "up against some powerful political forces." The president depicted himself as the lone struggler against a thousand powerful lobbyists.

Israel, taken aback by the ferocity of Bush's onslaught, reacted moderately. Foreign Minister Levy said that the last thing Jerusalem wanted was a confrontation with the administration. Outside the government, however, reactions were fierce. Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan said Israel should take back its request for guarantees; Minister Rehavam Ze'evi, the most right-wing of the cabinet ministers, went so far as to say that Bush was an "anti-Semite" who was leading Israel to a "second Holocaust." From an emotional and psychological point of view, relations between the two governments had probably never been worse. A few weeks later, Shamir himself exposed the depth of his resentment of Bush's attitudes, saying that the president had "hurt the very essence of Zionism."

In any case, it was now clear that Shamir's hopes that Israel might be rescued by the "American people" were misplaced. In an ABC poll released on September 18, no less than 86 percent supported Bush's view that discussion of the matter should be postponed. A few days later, in a Wall Street Journal poll, close to half of the respondents said that they opposed more aid to Israel altogether. Shamir, however, was yet to be convinced. The next day he said that "ultimately, the Americans will return to themselves. All of this will pass like a bad dream." He was also unrepentant: on September 24, at the ground-breaking ceremony for a new settlement, Shamir said that Israel would continue to settle Jews "till the edge of the horizon."

By late September, it was clear that Israel would not be able to override the president's request for a postponement. "We've waited 2,000 years, so we'll wait another four months," said Levy. The government was convinced that the setback was tactical and temporary and that ultimately the guarantees would be approved with acceptable conditions.

At the same time, a seemingly uncoordinated offensive against Jerusalem's bid for aid was being opened up on another front: the economic one. A September report to Congress noted that Israel might have difficulties repaying the debts incurred on the basis of the guarantees. And on October 3, the Export-Import Bank published a negative assessment of the resilience of the Israeli economy. In Jerusalem, most policymakers were convinced that the administration was behind these publications, and an effort was launched to refute them.

An unrelated incident in early October revealed how far the discord over the guarantees had gone. The United States joined in condemning Israel for an intelligence overflight carried out by the Israel Air Force in Iraq, and warned Israel not to repeat such missions. Security sources, stung by the unexpected American re-
buke, said that Washington now was willing to criticize Israel for practically anything, even a defensive move against America’s own enemy, Iraq. There were other signs of American discontent. An October 27 report in the Washington Post recounted Israeli efforts to assist the South African ballistic-missile program. Once again, Israelis were sure that the administration was behind the leak; its aim was not only to discredit Israel in the eyes of the public, but to weaken the still formidable support for Israel in Congress.

Israel’s agreement to participate in the Madrid conference, which convened on October 30, diverted attention for a brief while. After the conference, the Americans worked on finding a site agreeable to all sides for the direct bilateral talks that were scheduled to follow. Israel wanted the talks to be held in the Middle East or somewhere in its vicinity; the Arabs objected. On November 22, Shamir came to Washington in the hope of dissuading the administration from inviting the sides for talks in Washington.

Shamir had scheduled meetings with both Baker and Bush and had notified the administration in advance that the venue of the proposed talks was one of his main concerns. Shamir emerged from his meeting with Baker and said that “progress” had been achieved on this matter and that he hoped the issue would be finalized in his meeting with the president. But before the meeting with Bush even took place, the American ambassador to Israel went to the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem and submitted the formal American invitation for talks in Washington. Not only had the administration humiliated Shamir with this move, this time there could be no doubt that it had done so on purpose.

Shamir’s ensuing meeting with Bush was held in a strained atmosphere, in complete accordance with the true state of relations between the two. After the meeting, American sources were quoted by Ha’aretz as saying that “the era of a special relationship between the United States and Israel is over.” At the end of the year, that indeed appeared to be the case.

**Other Foreign Relations**

Apart from its troubles with the United States, 1991 was a watershed year for Israel’s foreign relations and international standing. The collapse of the Iron Curtain and the Soviet bloc not only brought renewed recognition from those countries that had been under the direct influence of Moscow, but also freed Third World countries to establish independent links with Jerusalem. Israel’s restraint during the Gulf crisis earned accolades throughout the world, and in the immediate aftermath of the war the country was inundated with foreign dignitaries who hitherto had made a point of staying away. Israel’s agreement, in October, to participate in the peace process sealed what can probably be described as the most successful year for Israeli diplomacy since the establishment of the state.
THE SOVIET UNION

At the beginning of the year, Israel and the Soviet Union maintained relations at a consular level, with an independent Israeli consulate operating in Moscow, dealing, in the main, with the tens of thousands of Jews who wished to immigrate to Israel. Soviet leaders repeatedly pledged that the resumption of full ties, broken off in the wake of the 1967 Six Day War, was only "a matter of time."

On January 9, Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev invited Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir to come to Moscow. Also in January, the Soviets approached Israel directly with a proposal to establish a Middle East headquarters, located in Cyprus, that would be staffed by liaison officers from the countries of the region, as well as U.S. and other representatives, and would have sophisticated communications and surveillance equipment—with the aim of defusing tensions and avoiding misunderstandings. Israel responded favorably to the idea and proposed that "experts" from the two countries meet to discuss details and implementation.

The Soviets showed great appreciation for Israel's policy of restraint in the face of the Iraqi missile attacks; on January 31, while the war was still in progress, Soviet foreign minister Alexander Bessmertnykh wrote his counterpart, David Levy, to commend Israel's behavior.

In March, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Alexei II, made his first visit to Israel, where he discussed the properties owned by the church in the Holy Land and professed his wish to "open a new page" in the relations between the church and the Jewish people.

April and May saw a series of "firsts" in Soviet-Israeli relations. Prime Minister Shamir, in London, met with Soviet prime minister Vladimir Pavlov during an international summit on the establishment of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, in what was described as an especially cordial meeting. The next month saw the first Soviet foreign minister in Jerusalem: Bessmertnykh, touring the Middle East in conjunction with Secretary of State James Baker, arrived in Jerusalem on May 6 for a brief 24-hour stopover, during which he urged the government to agree to the American proposals on the peace process. By this time, details of the American blueprint for peace had already emerged, especially the proposal that the United States and the Soviet Union serve as cosponsors for the projected negotiations. Bessmertnykh's visit produced a flurry of speculation that the time for the resumption of full ties had arrived, but the visitor disappointed his hosts and declared only that the two countries were "on the verge" of reestablishing links at the highest level.

In September, following the aborted August revolution in Moscow, a Russian parliamentary delegation visited Israel. The same month, Foreign Minister Levy met with Bessmertnykh's successor, Boris Pankin, at the UN General Assembly in New York. The two announced that relations between the two countries would be resumed "within days."

Three weeks later, on October 18, Pankin was in Jerusalem with Baker to issue
the formal invitations to the Madrid Peace Conference. Just hours before the two announced that the invitations had been sent, Pankin and Levy signed the protocol reestablishing full diplomatic ties, at the ambassadorial level, between Moscow and Jerusalem. While the timing of the move was directly linked to Israel's insistence that the Soviets could not take a leading role in the peace process without establishing full ties, Pankin described it as "a natural and logical step which is a natural outcome of the new international realities."

On October 24, Israeli ambassador Arye Levin hoisted the Israeli flag over the reestablished embassy in Moscow, which was housed in the same building the embassy had occupied up to 1967. A week later, on October 30, Shamir met with Gorbachev, hours before the start of the Madrid conference.

FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS

On September 4, Israel recognized the breakaway Baltic republics of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. At the end of the year, with the collapse of the Soviet empire and its breakup into individual republics, vast new diplomatic frontiers and challenges awaited Israel's foreign policymakers. On December 25, Israel recognized the independence of each of the separate republics, including the five Muslim republics, which mostly expressed interest in setting up independent ties with Israel. It was revealed that, in addition to its embassy in Moscow, the Foreign Ministry planned to open new embassies in one of the three Baltic countries, in Ukraine, and in two or three of the Muslim republics.

EASTERN EUROPE

All the former Eastern Bloc countries, with the exception of Albania and the splintering union of Yugoslavia, had reestablished diplomatic ties with Israel during 1989 and 1990 (Romania never severed its links). In 1991 there was a rapid deepening of the ties between Israel and these countries, especially in the economic sphere, and several high-level visits were exchanged. In most cases, these visits evoked a renewed Israeli awareness of the disappearance of the Jewish communities in these countries during the Holocaust and were seen as an opportunity to settle the historical account with the inheritors of the wartime regimes and the people who cooperated with the Nazi extermination plan.

There were no less than three high-level visits by Eastern European leaders during two weeks in May. On May 5, Czechoslovak prime minister Marian Calfa visited Israel for the annual meeting of the World Jewish Congress. His Hungarian counterpart, Antal Goncz, came a few days later. The most widely reported and sensitive visit was that of Polish president Lech Walesa, who came to Israel on May 19. In a dramatic speech to the Knesset the next day, Walesa said: "Here, at the cradle of your civilization and your rebirth, I have come to beg forgiveness." Walesa's visit was marked by a wide national debate on the degree of Polish collaboration with
the Nazis during World War II and the existence of virulent Polish anti-Semitism, both then and now. Both of his main hosts—Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and opposition leader Shimon Peres—are Polish-born, and both escaped the impending destruction of their families and communities.

A month later, President Chaim Herzog visited Hungary and Bulgaria. In Budapest, he rededicated the main Jewish synagogue in the presence of teary-eyed representatives of the largest Jewish community remaining in Eastern Europe. The Bulgarian foreign minister made a first-ever visit to Israel on July 22. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir made an official visit to Sofia in August, along with his wife, Shulamit, who revisited the sights and sounds of her childhood there. In September, Romanian president Ion Iliescu came for a first visit to Israel. In October, President Herzog visited Czechoslovakia, where he participated in a ceremony unveiling a monument to the Jews who died at the Theresienstadt concentration camp. In October the official Yugoslav news agency announced Belgrade's willingness to reestablish ties with Israel, but the republic collapsed before the proposal was realized.

The last holdout, the previously remote Albania, announced on July 21 that it planned to set up ties with Jerusalem, for the first time since the establishment of the two countries. Visiting Israel on August 19, Albanian foreign minister Muhammad Kaplani signed the protocol establishing ties between Tirana and Jerusalem.

CHINA

In 1990 China and Israel had set up their first formal ties, in the form of an Israeli scientific delegation in Beijing and a Chinese tourist representative in Tel Aviv. It was clear that China was on the road to establishing formal diplomatic links with Israel, but that it wished to do so at its own pace, taking care not to alienate its Arab allies, especially the PLO, in the process.

On March 12, it was revealed that the director-general of Israel's Foreign Ministry, Reuven Merhav, the architect of Chinese-Israeli ties, was on a secret mission in Beijing. He was the highest Israeli official ever to visit that country. A significant breakthrough occurred when, on March 21, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued an official statement acknowledging Merhav's visit. In June an official delegation of Chinese scientists came to Israel; on June 4, an agreement of cooperation was signed between the academies of sciences of the two countries.

On November 20, the Washington Post revealed that Defense Minister Moshe Arens had made a secret visit to Beijing, holding four days of military talks with his Chinese counterparts. The Post report fueled several days of speculation in the foreign press about the much-reported "clandestine" military links between the two countries. Concurrently with Arens's secret visit, the first Israeli economic delegation visited Beijing and discussed possible economic links. The head of Israel's Chamber of Commerce, Danny Gillerman, said that his Chinese hosts had assured him that relations would be established in the very near future.
In December practical preparations began for the establishment of full diplomatic ties. A senior Israeli Foreign Ministry official held talks in Beijing, and, in the last week of the year, a Chinese deputy foreign minister visited Jerusalem. PLO chairman Yasir Arafat, in a December 21 visit to Beijing, made a last-ditch effort to persuade the Chinese authorities to cancel or at least postpone their plans, but his pleas were rejected. Just like the Soviet Union, China wished to get involved in the developing peace process, and just as with Moscow, Israel insisted that any role be accompanied by full diplomatic ties. Beijing announced that it wished to participate in the multilateral peace conference, scheduled to convene in Moscow on January 28, 1992. At the end of the year it was clear that the world's most populous country would establish full ties with Israel before that date.

OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES

Mongolia and Israel established full diplomatic ties, for the first time, on October 2. The protocol was signed by the two countries' foreign ministers in New York, where they were participating in the UN General Assembly.

A senior Japanese official came to Israel on February 23 to discuss closer ties with Jerusalem. Japan was particularly pleased with Israel's conduct during the Gulf War, and was thus inclined to go beyond its previous relationship. Manifestations of the shift were soon apparent. On April 11, the *New York Times* reported that the biggest Japanese car manufacturer, Toyota, had decided to break with its long-held policy of adherence to the Arab boycott and to start marketing cars in Israel. On May 29, Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama visited Israel, the first visit by a Japanese foreign minister.

On August 12, a senior Indian official told the Reuters News Agency that New Delhi would be setting up ties with Israel within a year. India, it was reported, was also seeking a role in the multilateral peace talks.

In November the king of the Pacific island of Tonga visited Israel on a Christian pilgrimage.

WESTERN EUROPE

Nowhere were Israel's restraint in the Gulf and its subsequent acquiescence to the American peace process more appreciated than in Western Europe. The Iraqi missile attacks on Israeli population centers elicited waves of sympathy unseen since the heady days of the 1967 war. Moreover, the PLO's support for Saddam weakened traditional Palestinian diplomatic strongholds in Western European capitals.

An exception to the rule was France, with whom relations at the beginning of 1991 reached a low point. France was seen in Israel as leading the pack of European countries interested in "appeasing" Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, even at the expense of Israel's security. There was also widespread resentment in Israel following reports that French industry had helped Saddam improve his ballistic-missile
capabilities. The formal French reaction to the missile attacks was also viewed in Israel as lukewarm in comparison to that of its European Community partners.

On January 20, President Chaim Herzog wrote President François Mitterrand, protesting French policy toward Iraq. "The attempts to appease a cruel dictator," he wrote, "evoke bitter memories among us." As the missile attacks continued, Israeli criticism of the French reached a peak. Mitterrand, according to press reports, was even said to be considering a recall of his ambassador in Israel. The ambassador, Alain Pierret, made headlines himself by stating, in a February 4 interview, that some Israelis sometimes expressed themselves "like hooligans." Later in the year, Israel refused to host Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, frustrating French attempts to play a more active role in the peace process.

Germany was also heavily involved in the building of the Iraqi military machine and was thus subjected to harsh criticism in Israel, especially in the context of possible gas attacks against the Israeli civilian population. Unlike the French, however, the Germans took several steps to placate the Israeli government and its public. On January 23, just a week after the start of the war, the Bonn government announced that it would extend 250 million marks of emergency aid to Israel. Four days later, the Germans proposed the transfer of a Patriot missile battery to Israel. Although the offer was declined, on January 31 a Boeing of the Luftwaffe landed at Ben-Gurion Airport, bringing medical supplies and special gas-detection equipment. German soldiers accompanied the shipment and provided user instruction to their Israeli counterparts.

Following the war, Israel approached Germany both for loan guarantees for new immigrants and in an attempt to recover the Holocaust reparations which Israel claimed were owed by the now defunct East German regime. Bonn denied any obligation for East Germany's war reparations debts, and in June it became clear that it was following Washington's footsteps by linking any assistance for immigrant absorption to the cessation of Israeli settlement activities in the territories. On July 3, Foreign Minister Levy protested the "linkage" created by Bonn. In December, German president Richard von Weizsäcker visited Israel to participate in a concert given by the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra.

The Netherlands supplied Israel with a Patriot missile battery, complete with Dutch military operators, in February. Portugal announced, in March, that it would appoint a resident ambassador to Israel. Spanish prime minister Felipe González made a first-ever visit to Israel by a Spanish leader, on November 30. On December 22, Turkey, seeking a role in the multilateral talks, announced that it was upgrading its relations with Israel to ambassadorial level.

The European Community, sympathetic to Israel's ordeals at the hands of Saddam and angered by the Palestinian support for him, announced on January 26 that it was canceling the limited sanctions it had imposed in protest over Israeli policies in the occupied territories. The next week, the EC decided to give Israel $170 million in emergency aid. On February 11, Foreign Minister Levy told the Knesset, in what eventually turned out to be wishful thinking, that the EC had decided to sever its links with the PLO.
Relations with the EC soured again in the summer when it emerged that Prime Minister Shamir opposed giving Europe any role in the American-brokered peace process. Foreign Minister Levy, however, was more agreeable to European participation and was thus accorded warm welcomes on his trips to European capitals. Levy, along with Secretary of State James Baker, eventually persuaded Shamir to drop his opposition, and the EC sent Dutch foreign minister Hans van den Broek to Madrid. His speech to the conference, on October 30, was regarded in Israel as disappointing, if not downright hostile.

EGYPT

The Egyptian government, a major partner in the Arab component of the international coalition against Iraq, was especially apprehensive about Israeli involvement in the war. Diplomats in Cairo were fearful that an Israeli attack on Iraq would considerably weaken the already much-maligned Egyptian decision to side with Washington against Saddam. Thus, the first two months of the year witnessed rare Egyptian commendation for Israeli policies. Nobel Prize-winning Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz said, on February 6, that Israel’s restraint showed “supreme wisdom.”

The honeymoon, however, was short-lived. Israel’s settlement policies in the territories rekindled Egyptian animosity and, in the summer, Israeli officials were voicing true anxiety. Israel’s continued haggling with the United States over the terms of the proposed peace conference was eliciting anger and condemnation in Cairo, and President Hosni Mubarak, in a June interview with the Financial Times, blasted Israeli policy in harsh terms. Unconfirmed news reports, eventually repudiated, even said that Mubarak planned to recall his ambassador to Tel Aviv and was reconsidering the entire framework of Egyptian-Israeli relations.

Foreign Minister Levy went to Cairo at the end of July, meeting twice with Mubarak and thrice with his Egyptian counterpart, Amre Moussa. Levy discussed possibilities for solving the obstacles then facing the peace process, and also tried to convince Mubarak to end his boycott of Shamir and to agree to a summit between the two leaders. Mubarak, while not refusing Levy’s requests outright, said that “the time was not ripe.”

In October tensions flared again in the wake of Egyptian opposition to American attempts to revoke the “Zionism Is Racism” resolution in the United Nations.

OTHER AFRICAN STATES

On July 13, Israel eased previously imposed sanctions against South Africa, after that country implemented political reforms, following similar action taken by the United States just a few days earlier. In November, as a direct consequence of the lifting of the sanctions, South African president Frederik Willem de Klerk paid an official visit to Israel, where he signed a formal memorandum of understanding on cooperation between the two countries in a wide array of civilian spheres.
In August the Nigerian foreign minister came to Israel for a first visit since the Six Day War, announcing that Nigeria would soon resume full diplomatic ties. Later that month, on August 22, Congo resumed full ties with Israel. Zambia followed on December 25. In November an official Israeli economic delegation visited Angola.

THE UNITED NATIONS

Relations between Israel and the United Nations started off this year in their traditional state: bad. On January 4, the Security Council unanimously approved a resolution "deploring" the Israeli treatment of the Palestinians in the territories. Visiting the occupied territories at the beginning of the year, General Assembly president Guido de Marco, the foreign minister of Malta, said that the situation there "could not continue" and that an international conference—known to be anathema to Israeli policymakers—must be convened at once. Later in the year, de Marco angered Israelis even more by claiming that the international body "owes a responsibility not only toward the descendants of those who suffered in the concentration camps, but toward the children of the intifada as well."

Nonetheless, the image of the UN in Israeli eyes underwent significant transformation during the course of the year. The end of the cold-war confrontation in that body, and especially the resolute action taken by the Security Council against Iraq, convinced most Israelis that a reassessment of the UN was necessary. There were those in Israel who welcomed the change, while others feared that a Security Council that could reach unanimity on Iraq might also be able to do so in the future concerning Israel, to the detriment of the country's better interests.

However, the UN's attitude toward Israel itself was also undergoing a change. In October an Israeli was elected to the executive of the UN's environmental group, after many years in which Israeli officials were barred from such posts.

As the General Assembly convened, it became clear that the automatic "anti-Israel majority" in the United Nations was no longer as solid as it used to be. Eastern European countries, for example, opposed a November 16 resolution calling for inspection of Israel's nuclear facilities. A November 19 condemnation of Israeli policies in the territories was supported by a majority of 93–20, smaller than in the previous year. The new reality in the UN was capped and epitomized by the December 16 decision, brokered by the United States, to repeal the infamous "Zionism Is Racism" resolution of 1975. A total of 111 countries voted to nullify the decision; only 25, mainly Arab countries, opposed the motion.

On November 23, Egyptian diplomat Boutrous Boutrous-Ghali was selected to succeed Javier Pérez de Cuéllar as secretary-general of the United Nations. Israel opposed Ghali's election at first, fearing that he would not conduct an objective Middle East policy; ultimately, however, Israel joined the majority that voted for him.
Political Developments

While 1990 had been one of the most turbulent in the history of Israeli politics, 1991 was relatively uneventful and peaceful. This was undoubtedly linked to the fact that the Gulf War, at the beginning, and the peace conference, at the end, were major focuses of attention throughout the year.

At the beginning of the year, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir’s narrow coalition enjoyed the support of 64 members of the Knesset, making it beholden to the demands of most of its lesser partners. Shamir’s only avenue for expanding his coalition was both narrow and controversial, but in January he decided to travel it.

The only remaining party that was a candidate to join the coalition was Moledet, led by former army general Rehavam Ze’evi. Moledet had hitherto been considered outside the consensus of Zionist parties, because of its advocacy of the “transfer” option, by which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be solved via the transfer—voluntary or other—of the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza to other Arab lands. Shamir had held talks with Ze’evi when he was setting up his coalition in summer 1990, but these talks failed, mainly because Shamir refused to accede to Ze’evi’s demand for either the defense or the police portfolio. Shamir had not persisted, especially in light of the widespread expected opposition to Ze’evi’s inclusion in the cabinet.

On January 31, while the Gulf War was raging, Shamir and Ze’evi reached an agreement by which Ze’evi would become the cabinet’s 20th minister, and his two votes in the Knesset would henceforth support the coalition. Ze’evi refused Shamir’s offer to be the environment minister, and since he no longer insisted on other portfolios, it was agreed that he would serve as a minister-without-portfolio. Ze’evi was also to become a member of the so-called inner cabinet, where the crucial military and political decisions were made.

It was widely assumed that Shamir chose to make this move during the Gulf War, while the international community was preoccupied with other matters, so as to minimize criticism of his action. Nonetheless, many of his closest allies in the Likud objected to the move and made last-minute attempts to dissuade Shamir from bringing his agreement with Ze’evi for approval. The Left, of course, was much more outspoken, condemning Shamir for introducing Moledet’s “racist” policies to the government and for thus legitimizing its views in the eyes of the public. Member of Knesset Yossi Sarid said that Shamir was forcing the government to live with the “rotten apple,” referring to Ze’evi.

Shamir was not affected, however, and on February 3, his cabinet approved the addition of Moledet to the government. The vote was 14–3, with two abstentions. A few days later, the Knesset also approved the coalition agreement, by a vote of 61–54. MK Zeev Binyamin Begin, Shamir’s colleague in the Likud and one of
Ze'evi's sharpest critics, refused to bow to party discipline and described Moledet's joining the government as "moral contamination." The turbulent Knesset debate was also marked by the unprecedented action of two members of the Communist party, Tamar Gozanski and Muhammad Nafa, who waved yellow stars of David, like those that Jews were forced to wear in World War II Europe. They were promptly ejected from the Knesset floor by Speaker Dov Shilansky.

The main focus of political activity during the year was inside the Likud itself, where the top ministers continued their incessant feuding. Shamir found himself at continuous odds with Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, who bitterly criticized the government from the right, and Foreign Minister David Levy, who espoused more moderate policies than Shamir and was repeatedly involved in personal clashes with Shamir and his most prominent political ally, Defense Minister Moshe Arens.

The bickering with Levy invariably involved larger diplomatic issues of the day. In early February, Arens made a quick trip to the United States to discuss Israeli reactions to the Iraqi missile attacks. Levy had planned to go to Washington several days later. While in Washington, Arens met with President Bush and Secretary of State Baker. Levy was incensed, not only because his own trip had now become superfluous, but mainly because he had not been told in advance that Arens would be meeting with Bush and Baker. Piqued, Levy canceled his visit.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, as Baker's diplomatic initiative developed, Levy was constantly attacked both by the right-wing parties and by the Likud itself for making too many "concessions" to the Americans. In several instances, Shamir warned Levy not to stray from the original blueprint of the Israeli peace plan. Relations between Levy and Shamir were also strained because of the friction between Levy and his own deputy, Benjamin Netanyahu, who was seen as being closer to the prime minister.

Relations between Levy and Shamir reached a crisis state in late October, following Shamir's decision that he would head the Israeli delegation to the Madrid Peace Conference, despite the fact that other delegations would be represented by their foreign ministers. Among other reasons for Shamir's decision, sources close to the prime minister cited Levy's decision not to take Netanyahu to Madrid, despite the latter's proven success with the foreign media. Levy's supporters in the Likud were in an uproar, interpreting Shamir's move as an injurious slight to their leader's dignity. Levy himself was reported, on October 23, to be considering his resignation. MK Arye Gamliel, from the Sephardi Shas party, labeled Shamir's decision "pure racism."

During the Madrid conference, Levy "retaliated" against Shamir by ordering Foreign Ministry personnel who were members of the Israeli delegation to the conference to come back to Israel before the conference was over. The dispute was finally resolved in a mid-November meeting between Shamir and Levy, in which it was also decided that Netanyahu would leave his post as deputy foreign minister and move to the Prime Minister's Office, where he would be in charge of Israeli public relations connected with the peace process. Levy scored yet another point.
against Shamir when, in mid-December, he accepted an invitation to meet with President Bush. This meeting antagonized the prime minister, whose own relations with the American president were at an all-time low.

Sharon, for his part, maintained a constant and fierce barrage of criticism against Shamir throughout the year. At the beginning of the year, he was the most vocal critic of the government's policy of restraint in the Gulf War, calling it a “crybaby” reaction. Later, when the war was over and the peace process had begun, Sharon lambasted Shamir for his acquiescence to American moves. Despite Shamir's wish to maintain a low profile on the government's settlement activities in the occupied territories, Sharon repeatedly issued public statements about the number of housing units being built, which were significantly higher than the figures submitted by Shamir's office to the public—and to the U.S. State Department. Shamir, in an August 4 cabinet meeting in which the government accepted in principle the proposal to attend a peace conference, accused Sharon of an “unbridled lust” for power. A few days before the conference itself, Sharon called for Shamir's resignation, in light of his “capitulation” to the Americans and to the Arabs.

On October 15, Binyamin Begin made a surprise announcement that he would seek the post of leader of the Likud, following Shamir.

Shamir's continued engagement in the American-brokered peace process created unrest not only in his own party but also among the seven right-wing members of the Knesset from Tzomet, Tehiya, and Moledet, who were members of his coalition as well. From May onward, these three parties, alone or in conjunction, sent repeated warnings to Shamir that his “collaboration” with the Americans would ultimately topple the government. In late July and early August, as it was becoming increasingly clear that the peace conference would become a reality, it emerged that the Tehiya party was the one in which rank-and-file dissatisfaction with the government was the most serious. On August 7, party leader Yuval Ne'eman, who opposed a Tehiya split from the government, barely succeeded in persuading party institutions from such a decision, persuading them that “we have more influence inside than outside.”

The pressures on the three parties increased, however, as the date of the peace conference grew nearer. On October 19, the leaders of the three parties—Tzomet's Rafael Eitan, Tehiya's Yuval Ne'eman, and Moledet's Rehavam Ze'evi—decided on a coordinated policy. It was clear that the three were reluctant to leave their posts just because of a peace conference, which might, after all, change nothing. They therefore decided that their seven members of Knesset would bolt the coalition only when “practical negotiations” over the future of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza had begun. The three declined to offer a definition of the term “practical negotiations.”

But the decision was short-lived, as far as Ne'eman and Tehiya were concerned. The next day, October 20, Tehiya's central committee decided by a vote of 34–32 to leave the government. Ne'eman resigned in protest from the leadership of the party, but, in compliance with its decisions, also submitted his resignation from the cabinet. The government's majority had now shrunk from 66–54 to 63–57.
Throughout the year, the Knesset had under consideration a constitutional change that would allow for direct elections for the prime ministership. The extended political deadlock and spate of back-room deals had produced overwhelming popular support for such a change. Prime Minister Shamir, however, had voiced only token support for the change, which would have the effect of severing the prime minister's dependence on coalition politics.

In June and July, it became increasingly clear that Shamir's lackluster support was turning into outright opposition. His office released studies by learned political science professors claiming that the change could lead to a dictatorship. Shamir, it was said, was also concerned about the possible influence that Arab voters would have on the election of the prime minister, and was not too sure of his own chances of success in a one-on-one contest with a Labor candidate. Shamir persuaded his own Likud party to support his position, and in December the Likud central committee decided to impose party discipline on its members when the matter came to a vote in the Knesset. Several Likud members, most notably Netanyahu, said they would vote for the reform anyway.

The Likud decision to impose party discipline ran contrary to an explicit pledge not to do so given to Tzomet when it joined the coalition. In response, Tzomet announced, on December 24, that it would leave the government because of the breach of the promise given in Shamir's own handwriting. As the year closed, it appeared that Shamir's coalition was about to shrink to the bare minimum of 61, with the two votes of Moledet holding the balance.

THE OPPOSITION

The Labor party, at the beginning of the year, was still recuperating from its failed effort in mid-1990 to set up an alternative government. Morale in the chief opposition party sank to a new low, first as a result of Shamir's soaring popularity during the Gulf crisis, and later as a result of the success of the American efforts to arrange a peace conference. A poll released on April 30 confirmed the justification of Labor's despondency: 55 percent said they preferred the Likud's candidates for the prime ministership. An overwhelming majority also said that they wanted the Likud to handle any future peace negotiations, rather than Labor.

There was continuous unrest on the left-wing flank of the party. It was repeatedly reported, though never confirmed, that a sizeable portion of the party's dovish element, led by Haim Ramon and Yossi Beilin, was plotting to bolt the party and join a united leftist front comprising the three left-wing parties in the Knesset: Mapam, Shinui, and the Citizens Rights Movement (Ratz). The rumors were enhanced when a joint delegation of leftist members of the Knesset made a controversial trip to the United States in May, where, their detractors said, they intended to "inform" on the government and on its settlement activities in the territories. The three leftist parties conducted negotiations all year on the formation of a united party, and even agreed on the order of precedence in the list of candidates for the Knesset of the yet-to-be-formed party.
Toward the summer, Labor completed its first membership drive in over a decade, with a surprisingly large number, 140,000, joining the party. The drive was a prerequisite for the implementation of the party's historic move toward partywide primaries, which would replace back-room deals as the method for choosing the party leader and candidate for prime minister, as well as its list for the Knesset. The primaries were tentatively scheduled to be held in February or March of 1992.

On the day following the completion of the registration drive, July 2, former prime minister and defense minister Yitzhak Rabin announced that he would compete against party leader Shimon Peres for the leadership of the party. Rabin's announcement produced a flurry of activity, as supporters flocked to both camps and reignited the never-quite-dormant rivalry between Labor's two top leaders.

For the first time, however, the two were not to be alone in their quest for the top. They were soon joined by a host of other Labor hopefuls who believed that the time was ripe for a "changing of the guard" in Labor and that the party had to get rid of both its perennial candidates if it hoped to regain power. Histadrut secretary-general Yisrael Kessar, former ministers Moshe Shahal and Gad Yaakobi, as well as MK Ora Namir, chairwoman of the Labor and Social Affairs Committee, all challenged Peres and Rabin for the helm. The party, meanwhile, was undergoing further institutional reform. On July 7, it approved, for the first time, the registration of party members who were not members of the Histadrut trade-union movement. On July 18, the party changed its official name from "the Alignment" (Ma'arakh), which was coined during the now defunct alliance with Mapam, back to "Labor" (Mifleget Ha'avodah). On September 2, the party decided to guarantee women one in every five party positions, including its list for the Knesset. Later that month, the party platform was amended so that, for the first time, Labor was no longer committed to opposing either a Palestinian state or negotiations with the PLO.

In a November 18 meeting of the party's largest body, the convention, it became clear that some habits die hard. Bowing to the demands of more than 500 delegates, party leaders agreed to place the socialist "red" flag on the podium, as had been the practice heretofore. Perhaps as a countermeasure, the convention adopted one of its most revolutionary and controversial decisions ever: support for the total separation of religion and state. The decision created an uproar both among the party leadership, which regarded it as self-destructive, and in religious circles, which vowed never to set up a government with Labor again. Labor's radicalism, however, was short-lived: on December 26, another meeting of the convention acceded to Peres's pleas and revoked its earlier decision.

Immigration

The tensions of the Gulf War, significant absorption problems faced by new immigrants, and the American refusal to grant Israel loan guarantees all combined to arrest the spiraling immigration from the Soviet Union. Contrary to widespread expectations that immigration would continue to rise in 1991, the number of immigrants actually dropped considerably: 147,292 came, compared to 184,602 the previ-
ous year. Another 5,000 arrived from the rest of Europe, 1,500 from the United States, and 2,500 from Australia, South America, and Asia. The most significant jump in immigration, which indeed made the shortfall from the previous year much less dramatic, was from Ethiopia: 20,010 came, compared to just over 4,000 the previous year.

Throughout the year, the government continued to wrestle with the dilemma that had dogged it since the start of the massive wave of *aliyah*, in 1989: housing or employment. The government had originally decided that housing was the first priority, and, as a direct result, there was increasing unemployment among new immigrants, a fact that was quickly relayed to potential immigrants waiting in the Soviet Union. By May, it was found that over half of the immigrants who had arrived a year earlier were still unemployed.

But the ambitious housing projects also ran into snags. On the one hand, many of the immigrants were housed in prefabricated "caravans," or mobile homes, which did not provide adequate living conditions. On the other hand, it was becoming apparent that the ambitious plans for permanent housing had been based on the optimistic scenario of over a quarter of a million immigrants in 1991. Now, the government was starting to realize, instead of a housing shortage it would be facing a housing surplus, and the government had pledged to buy from the contractors all the apartments that could not be sold on the open market.

On March 10, Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, who had been placed in charge of the "*aliyah* cabinet," which coordinated all the government's absorption activities, resigned. Sharon said that a Finance Ministry decision—subsequently revoked—to cut the "absorption basket" of benefits granted to new immigrants, as well as "failure of the government's employment policies," made his task impossible. A few days later Sharon retracted his resignation, but it was now clear to all that the government's absorption efforts were floundering.

In June, there was concern that the new immigration law about to be put into effect by the Soviet authorities would have a negative effect on Jewish immigration, but Jewish Agency representatives reached agreement with the authorities that would relieve the problem. (The law would include Jews in the overall Soviet emigration apparatus, which would slow down processing and perhaps encourage more Jews to try for immigration to the West.) At the end of the month, nonetheless, there was a burst of immigration as Jews left before the new law came into effect. In October, the first direct flight of immigrants from the USSR was inaugurated; it brought 150 Jews from Kishinev. Another direct flight arrived in November, from Moscow.

In July it was revealed that the incidence of suicides among new immigrants was 20 percent higher than among veteran Israelis. In a poll, most Soviet newcomers revealed that they were advising their relatives to delay coming to Israel until the economic situation improved. The August revolution rekindled hopes that immigration would pick up once again. However, the victory of the pro-democracy forces put that hope to rest, and indeed there were signs that some of the Jews who had
already decided to come were now willing to give the new regime a chance to prove that life inside Russia could improve. The breakup of the Soviet Union in December sparked similar hopes.

In the meantime, however, the month of December provided news that created worry and even anger among Israelis: 9,000 new immigrants from the Soviet Union, it was revealed, had applied for immigrant visas to South Africa.

OPERATION SOLOMON

In March of this year, immigration of Jews from Ethiopia was once again abruptly stopped by the Marxist government of Col. Mengistu Haile-Mariam. According to reports in the Israeli press, Mengistu was disappointed that Israel had “failed to live up to its promises” to assist his regime. The Ethiopians denied the charge. One of the Ethiopian leader’s chief assistants, Kasa Kabede, told Israel Army Radio on March 23 that the allegation that Ethiopia was holding the Jews as ransom for aid was in itself “extortion.” The immigration had been stopped, he said, because of “widespread fraud” by the Jewish Agency officials in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

Although Mengistu had cut off emigration after the 1984 “Operation Moses,” the secret airlift from Sudan that brought more than 10,000 Jews to Israel, in late 1989 relations between Israel and Ethiopia were reinstated, and Jews were once again allowed to leave, at a slow pace but a steady one.

As the situation of the Mengistu regime grew steadily worse, with rebel forces starting to converge on the capital, Addis Ababa, there was growing concern in Israel that the Jews, most of whom had been brought to Addis Ababa to prepare for emigration, would be caught in the crossfire of the internal revolution. Israel appealed to the United States for help, and Washington began to exert steady pressure on Mengistu to rescind his prohibition on the exit of the Jews. On April 24, President Bush dispatched former senator Rudy Boschwitz as a special emissary to negotiate with the Ethiopian regime on the matter. On April 29, it was reported in Israel that the Jewish Agency was preparing for the “possible arrival of thousands of Jews from Ethiopia.”

Mengistu’s regime collapsed on May 22, and he himself fled the country to Zimbabwe. A few days later, on May 24–25, Israel carried out one of the most ambitious and dramatic operations in the history of Zionism: a 48-hour airlift, dubbed “Operation Solomon,” during which close to 15,000 Jews were spirited out of Addis Ababa just hours before the arrival of the rebel forces. Thirty-six air force and El Al planes, as well one Ethiopian Airlines aircraft, flew in and out of Addis Ababa airport around the clock, bringing out the Jews who had been brought to the site by Jewish Agency personnel and ferrying them, packed in tightly and carrying almost no belongings, to Israel.

The complex details of the operation depended on close cooperation between Ethiopia, Israel, and the United States. The Israeli cabinet had decided on the
operation in April, but the IDF insisted that it must be carried out with the explicit agreement of the Ethiopian authorities; otherwise the risk both to the Israeli aircraft and to the Jews themselves would be too great. The negotiations on the Israeli side were carried out by Uri Lubrani, a senior Israeli official, special negotiator, and coordinator of government activities in Lebanon. The United States secured the rebels' agreement not to enter the capital until the operation was finished.

Israel agreed to pay the Ethiopians $35 million, ostensibly to cover the "cost of the operation," which, on paper, was carried out by the Ethiopians. The United States had pledged to try and help the Mengistu regime reach a diplomatic settlement with the rebels. When this failed, Israel also allowed two of Mengistu's top officers to flee the country and seek asylum through Israel. In exchange, the Ethiopians released most of the Jewish population. Some 2,500 remained behind, mostly in remote villages.

The operation galvanized and inspired the Israeli public. In an unprecedented outpouring of sympathy for the newcomers, thousands of Israelis turned up at the makeshift absorption sites where the Ethiopians were placed, carrying bags of clothes and food. Even the normally reticent Prime Minister Shamir was inspired to rhetorical heights by the event: It is not every day, he said, that one is privileged to witness, in reality, a stage in the historic process of the return to Zion. Indeed, Shamir said, in the words of the Psalmist, "we were like dreamers."

In the aftermath of the operation, it emerged that Israel's problems with Ethiopia were far from over. Both the veteran Ethiopian community in Israel and the newcomers were now clamoring for the government to bring over their relatives who had converted to Christianity, known as the "Falash Mora." The Ethiopians said that there were only 6,000–8,000 of these; Jewish Agency specialists said that the numbers were much higher and that most would leap at a chance to leave war- and drought-ridden Ethiopia. The government set up a committee to study the problem.

The arrival of the newcomers sparked yet another round in Israel's perennial kulturkampf between the religious and the secular. On June 13, Absorption Minister Yitzhak Peretz, of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, lashed out against the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants in the kibbutzim. There, he said, the newcomers were "coerced into apostasy." The country's jails, Peretz said, were full of Sephardim who had received their education in kibbutz. Peretz was roundly condemned by secular and kibbutz leaders, who labeled him "a relic of the Middle Ages."

On August 17, the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem announced that it had reached an agreement with the new regime in Addis Ababa on the exit of the remaining Jews; it was agreed that first the 500–600 unquestioned Jews remaining in Addis Ababa would be released, and then the other 2,000 Jews in the remote villages. The next day the Ethiopians denied the report of an agreement, and Jewish Agency sources criticized the Foreign Ministry for making it public. The Foreign Ministry, Agency officials charged, had jeopardized the safety of the Jews only because it felt it had not gotten its fair share of the glory for Operation Solomon.

However, on September 16, a group of 60 Jews from Ethiopia arrived in Israel,
and it was clear that the new Ethiopian government would allow the Jews to leave on condition that their exit not be accompanied by too much publicity and fanfare. By October, 400 Jews had arrived.

**IMMIGRATION FROM OTHER COUNTRIES**

On April 10, it was revealed that the government and the Jewish Agency had been conducting a secret mission to bring to Israel the last remnants of the tiny Albanian Jewish community. The liberalization in Albania, the last holdout of Marxist Europe, had allowed the authorities to bring 300 Jews to Israel. Another 350 remained behind.

The Jewish community of Bulgaria also appeared to be nearing its end: nearly a fifth of the country's 5,000 Jews came to Israel during 1991. A Jewish Agency mission to Sofia reported, in May, that most of the Bulgarian Jewish community would eventually come to Israel.

The arrival of the Ethiopians spurred the Syrian Jewish community to launch a public campaign aimed at convincing the government to push for the release of 4,000 Jews believed to be living in Syria. On September 11, in Paris, Prime Minister Shamir announced that the "day of the liberation of Syrian Jews is at hand."

On June 20, the government of Yemen denied numerous reports in the foreign press that it was allowing its remaining Jewish community of 1,500 to leave the country.

In November a Jewish Agency emissary to North America reported that American Jews were taking more interest in the possibilities for aliyah, because of the recession in the American economy. His report was greeted with skepticism by the authorities. In 1991, 1,360 Jews came from the United States to live in Israel, compared to 1,258 the previous year.

**The Economy**

The year 1991 was the second in a row marked by a massive influx of immigration and the second straight year of significant increase in investments and other economic activity. Profits and productivity were up, as was the number of jobs. The success, however, was only partial: most of the growth occurred in industries connected to housing; and unemployment continued to soar, going from 9.6 percent to 10.6 percent at the end of the year.

The government's policy was to give direct financial support to the new immigrants for a period of one year, but to let market forces control their absorption as employees. This required incentives for the business sector, such as reduction in taxes, as well as massive government investment in infrastructure. On the other hand, the government decided against managing the housing of the new immigrants through the market but rather by massive direct involvement. The result was that most government funds were diverted to housing, and the construction industry was
one that expanded significantly. According to the Bank of Israel, the government did not do enough to fulfill its own policy of spurring economic growth, and by the end of the year, the economy was showing distinct signs of a slowdown.

External developments were also not fortuitous: the Gulf crisis, which began in 1990, damaged exports and created an atmosphere of uncertainty that diminished the will to invest. The Israeli economy itself came to a virtual standstill for a period of over a month, as the population cowered at home in anticipation of the Iraqi missile attacks, and Palestinian workers from the territories were barred from crossing over the Green Line. The worldwide economic recession and the ensuing slowdown in the growth of world trade had a commensurate negative effect on Israeli exports. Israel’s trade deficit, for goods and services, was $7,213,000, the result of $18,739,000 in exports compared to $25,952,000 in imports. Israel’s total foreign debt grew slightly, from $32 billion to $33 billion; the government share of the debt was $17 billion. On the other hand, Israel had $18 billion in foreign-currency assets, of which $6.3 billion was foreign reserves held by the Bank of Israel.

Europe was Israel’s biggest trading partner, with $10 billion in imports and $5 billion in exports. The biggest European trading partner was Germany, with $2 billion in exports to Israel and $1.8 from Israel. The United States was Israel’s biggest single trading partner, with $3.3 billion in exports to Israel and $3.6 billion in imports from Israel.

Business production increased by a respectable 7 percent, but this was almost exclusively the result of the government outlays for housing. The housing needs brought about a drastic jump in imports—17 percent—while exports actually decreased by slightly over 2 percent.

The expansion of the work force caused an unusual drop in real wages—4 percent—but this, once again, was mainly the result of the building industry’s expansion. In other sectors, the wage level remained stable.

The number of employed Israelis was 1,583,100; the unemployment rate was 10.6 percent—8.6 percent among men and 13.4 percent among women. Some 503,000 married women were included in the work force, an increase of 10 percent over the previous year. Unemployment actually went down among veteran Israelis, but was especially high among new immigrants—between 40 and 50 percent. The high rate of unemployment was thought to be one of the main reasons for the slowdown in the rate of immigration, which, in turn, upset the short-term projections for an even faster growth of the economy.

Inflation ran at 19 percent, the normal level for the Israeli economy since the successful stabilization program of 1985. More than 3 percent of the inflation rate was created by the housing industry alone.

The state budget for 1992, submitted to the cabinet for early perusal in September, totaled $34 billion, and included a 6-percent increase in defense spending, coupled with a 3-percent across-the-board cut in other ministries. The deficit was set at 6.3 percent of the Gross Domestic Product.
KEY ECONOMIC EVENTS

On January 1, the Value Added Tax imposed on all goods was raised from 16 to 18 percent. In addition, to assist in immigrant absorption, a special “absorption levy” was imposed, at a rate of 5 percent of the annual income-tax rate.

On April 1, the basic coin of one agora was abolished, and the prices adjusted to the nearest 5 agorot, when payments are made in cash.

On May 7, responding to pressures from the public and against the wishes of the government, the Knesset decided on massive reform of mortgages. The highest mortgage, for eligibles, was doubled, from 80,000 NIS to 160,000 NIS for 25–30 year mortgages, at a maximum interest rate of 4 percent. On July 14, the government announced a series of measures aimed at alleviating the debts of those who took out mortgages during the hyperinflation years of 1980–1985.

On May 12, 45-year-old Yaakov Frankel, top economic adviser of the International Monetary Fund, was appointed governor of the Bank of Israel.

On September 1, the government announced a series of measures aimed at exposing protected local industries to competition from abroad.

On November 28, the government announced a series of measures aimed at further liberalization of the foreign currency regulations: Israeli residents could henceforth exchange one foreign currency deposit for another; the ceiling for imports using credit cards was raised from $500 annually to $1,500; the ceiling for interest rates on bank deposits held by foreigners was abolished.

On March 10, the shekel was devalued by 6 percent. On December 16, the government adjusted its foreign-exchange rate system, fixing a daily devaluation of 0.0236 percent, or 9 percent annually.

Vital Statistics

The population of Israel passed the five-million mark during the course of 1991, reaching 5,058,800 at the end of the year. The number of Jews was 4,144,600, or 81.9 percent; 701,400 Muslims, or 13.9 percent; 128,000 Christians, or 2.5 percent; and 84,800 Druze and others, or 1.7 percent. The Arab population of the West Bank was 1,005,000; of the Gaza Strip, 676,100.

The ratio of males to females continued to drop, from 990 males for every 1,000 females in 1990, to 986 in 1991. Among Jews, the ratio was 979 per thousand; among Christians, 944 per thousand; among Muslims, 1,030 per thousand. There were 105,725 births, 31,246 deaths, 24,263 marriages, and 5,662 divorces. Of 712,700 households, 67,200 were single-parent households, of which 36,600 were headed by divorcees or widows and 24,500 by never-married persons.

The Jewish population comprised 32 percent of all world Jewry, a jump of 2 percent over the previous year. It grew by 4.9 percent during the year, mainly due to the 178,200 immigrants who arrived. The Muslim population of Israel grew by 3.5 percent, just slightly above the previous year’s growth rate. The Christian
population grew by a dramatic 11.6 percent, due to the nearly 10,000 Christian dependents of Jewish immigrants.

Jerusalem continued to be the country's most populous city, the number of its inhabitants increasing by 20,000, to 544,200. There were 353,000 inhabitants in Tel Aviv, and 251,000 in Haifa. The population of the greater Tel Aviv metropolitan area grew by over 60,000, reaching 1,843,700 at the end of the year.

The immigration from Russia effected slight changes in the internal composition of the population: the proportion of Asian- and African-born Jews decreased by 1.4 percent, reaching 37.9 percent at the end of year; the proportion of European- or American-born Jews increased, reaching 39.7 percent. The proportion of Israeli-born Jews remained steady at 22.4 percent.

There was a sharp drop in tourism, mainly because of the Gulf War. The 943,300 tourists who came represented a drop of over 10 percent from 1990, which was itself a weak year for tourism. The continental breakdown of tourists was 8 percent from Asia, 3 percent from Africa, 56 percent from Europe, and 27 percent from North America. By individual countries, the United States continued to be the largest source of tourists, followed, at a distance, by France, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

Israel had a total of 848,000 private cars, a jump of over 40,000 over the previous year. Accidents continued to climb at an alarming rate: 19,417 in 1991, compared to 17,496 the previous year; 444 people were killed and 31,541 injured in these accidents, compared to 427 and 27,668, respectively, the previous year.

The median education of Israelis in 1991 was 11.7 years of schooling, up one-tenth of a percent from the previous year. In 1961, the median education was eight years of schooling. Among all Israelis, 11.6 percent had a postgraduate education, another 14.5 percent had a university degree, and a further 35.6 percent had finished high school; 5.6 percent of those 15 and over had no schooling at all. A total of 1,571,119 students were enrolled in educational institutions of one kind or another, up 60,000 from the previous year, most likely due to the wave of immigration. Of these, 293,000 were in kindergartens and 120,000 were enrolled in universities and other postsecondary schools. Tel Aviv University was the country's biggest institution of higher learning, with an enrollment of 21,530, followed by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem with 18,610, Bar-Ilan University with 11,930, the Technion in Haifa with 10,280, Haifa University with 8,120 students, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev with 7,490 students, and the Weizmann Institute of Science, with 680. Of the undergraduate degrees bestowed, 25 percent were in the humanities; 28 percent in the social sciences; and 16 percent in engineering and architecture.

Other Noteworthy Events

The Supreme Court appeal of John Demjanjuk, suspected of being "Ivan the Terrible" of the Treblinka death camp during World War II, continued throughout the year. On March 6, the court denied a petition by Demjanjuk's lawyer for his client's immediate release, and postponed the rendering of its judgment in order to
allow the sides to gather new evidence uncovered in hitherto-secret files in the Soviet Union. On December 23, the court convened again. Demjanjuk's attorney, Yoram Sheftel, said that the Demjanjuk case was a latter-day Dreyfus affair. By the end of the year, the court had yet to make its judgment on the appeal.

The long-awaited trial of Israel's leading bankers began on July 10. The heads of eight major banks were charged with having rigged the sales of bank shares on the Israeli stock market for several years, a practice that ultimately led to the collapse of the shares and a government bailout that cost billions of taxpayer shekels. When the scandal erupted in 1983, the heads of the banks were all replaced.

On November 13, the Knesset stripped MK Yair Levy of his parliamentary immunity so that he could be prosecuted on charges of fraud, forgery, and mishandling of funds. The prosecution of Levy, a member of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, was an offshoot of an ongoing police investigation of the party's leader, Interior Minister Arye Deri. The investigation of Deri on suspicion of misuse of government funds for both institutional and private gain continued throughout the year.

On January 2, State Comptroller Miriam Ben Porat published a scathing condemnation of the country's water conservation efforts, noting that negligent management had brought Israel's water reserves to the point of depletion.

The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Daniel Barenboim, played two compositions of German composer Richard Wagner, on December 29. It was the first time that the Israeli orchestra had performed anything by the German composer, whose music and philosophy had been adopted by the Nazi regime and who was widely judged to be anti-Semitic. Bowing to public protests, the orchestra performed the pieces during an open rehearsal and not in a formal concert.

British press magnate Robert Maxwell, who drowned early in November off the Canary Islands in mysterious circumstances, was laid to rest in the Mount of Olives Cemetery on November 10. He was eulogized by President Chaim Herzog. "He scaled the heights of human endeavor," said Herzog. "Kings and princes waited on him. Many admired him. Many disliked him. But none was indifferent to him." Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said that Maxwell had been an "enthusiastic friend of Israel."

**Personalia**

U.S. ambassador to Israel William Brown was replaced in August by William Harrop, a 62-year-old career diplomat.

Prof. Yoram Dinstein, 52, noted expert in international law, was appointed president of Tel Aviv University, on May 13.

Ovadia Sofer, Israeli ambassador to France, returned home after more than ten years at his post, in November. Sofer was the longest-serving Israeli diplomat abroad, and his continued stay in Paris aroused much criticism in the Israeli press.

Eliahu Matza, 56, was appointed the 11th Supreme Court judge, in March, and Mishael Cheshin, 56, the 12th, in December.

Among prominent Israelis who died this year were Herzl Rosenblum, Revisionist
activist, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and editor of the daily *Yediot Aharonot* (1949–1983), in February, aged 87; Mordechai Ish-Shalom, mayor of Jerusalem (1959–1965), in February, aged 90; Miriam Bernstein-Cohen, a pioneer of the Hebrew stage in Israel, in April, aged 96; Prof. Haim Hanani, first rector of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, in April, aged 78; Yosef Tekoah, veteran diplomat, Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, and chancellor of Ben-Gurion University, in April, aged 65; Sir Isaac Wolfson, businessman, philanthropist, and leader of British Jewry, in his home in Rehovot, in June, aged 93; Prof. Ephraim Urbach, leading scholar of Jewish law, recipient of the Israel Prize, and past president of the Israel Academy of Sciences, in July, aged 79; Prof. Yaakov Haim Polotzki, founder of the Linguistics and Egyptology faculty at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in August, aged 86; Yeroham Cohen, one of the founders of the Israel intelligence services and Palmach commander, in August, aged 75; Prof. Zvi Adar, first teacher of education at the Hebrew University, in August, aged 74; Prof. Mikhail Agursky, Soviet-born scientist and Sovietologist, in Moscow, while covering the August revolution for an Israeli newspaper, aged 58; Prof. Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, noted Hebrew, Semitics, and Bible scholar, in September, aged 66; Maj. Gen. (ret.) Shmuel Gonen (Gorodish), armored corps hero of the Six Day War and commander of the southern front during the 1973 war, who was subsequently removed from his post by the Agranat Commission of Inquiry, in September, aged 61; Prof. Dan Horwitz, prominent sociologist and political scientist, in September, aged 63; Avraham Tohami, founder of the prestate Irgun Zvai Leumi underground movement, in October, aged 88; Yosef Almogi, Labor party leader, government minister, mayor of Haifa, and chairman of the Jewish Agency, in November, aged 81; Mordechai Zarfati ("Mentesch"), Israel's "godfather," with prominent links to both business and criminal circles, in November, aged 76; Avraham Schweitzer, economics editor of *Ha'aretz* and leading publicist, in December, aged 68; Moshe Kastel, one of the first Israeli artists to gain international recognition, in December, aged 85; Eitan Livni, operations officer of the prestate Irgun Zvai Leumi and Herut member in three Knessets, in December, aged 72.

*Menachem Shalev*
Israeli Culture

The Performing Arts

The cultural foment and vitality of the 1980s continued into the early 1990s. The direction of cultural activity, though, was inevitably influenced by two crucial social-political developments that took place during 1990 and 1991: the mass immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union and the Gulf War.

During the Gulf War (January and February, 1991), all public performances were canceled for six weeks by order of the Civil Defense Authority of the Israel Defense Forces, and even afterward it took Israelis some time to get back into the spirit of attending concerts, plays, and dance performances. Consequently, the overall statistics of the Center for Cultural Information and Research for 1990–1991 show declines in the number of performances and attendance at cultural events.

There was some speculation that the trauma experienced by Tel Avivians during the Gulf War would leave its mark on Israel’s cultural life. Tel Aviv is the center of the arts in Israel. The local Tel Aviv newspapers are arbiters of cultural fashion. Moreover, a self-consciously “yuppie” Tel Aviv cultural image developed during the 1980s, with Tel Avivians who consider themselves cosmopolitan cultivating an intense interest in Western film, theater, rock music, and the like. Many social commentators felt that Tel Avivian confidence was shaken by the war. Scuds falling in the Greater Tel Aviv area and the subsequent exile in the provinces brought many Tel Avivians to question themselves, their doubts often expressed through fiction, comedy revues, and popular music. In certain cases, artists discovered more authentic life values outside the big city. It remained to be seen whether this self-examination would continue, perhaps finding deeper expression in a Tel Aviv culture that was less alienated from the rest of the country.

The effect of the Russian aliyah on the cultural life of Israel became evident very quickly. The 10,000 Russian artists who immigrated to Israel during 1990 and 1991 created a “critical mass,” their very number affecting the expansion of theater, musical life, and education. Despite some criticism that the Russians, although technically proficient, lacked Western approaches and interpretive skills, this serious, highly skilled cadre of immigrant artists noticeably raised the level of the various arts. In terms of cultural consumerism, surveys showed that the percentage of Russian immigrants attending cultural events was greater than that of veteran Israelis. This portended well for the future of Israeli culture.

Some general long-range trends relating to public appreciation of the arts were not as positive. A study by the Israel Institute of Applied Research comparing the
use of leisure time in 1970 and 1990 indicated that, although there was an increase in the percentage of Israelis going to college, there was a decrease in participation in certain cultural activities. The numbers of people who read books, attended concerts, and visited museums remained stable, but there was a decrease in movie-and theater-going and attendance at lectures. Instead, Israelis were spending more leisure time listening to records, taking trips abroad, and sitting in nightclubs, cafes, and pubs. The degree of participation in high culture was lower among Israelis with 13+ years of education in 1990 than it was among those with 11 or more years of education in 1970. In the case of the performing arts, particularly theater, this might be attributed to a decline in the presale of tickets through organized frameworks such as schools and workers' committees, a once thriving paternalistic system of subsidized ticket distribution.

An important development in Israeli culture was the mushrooming of festivals for dance, drama, classical music, rock, and jazz. These events, held throughout the country, combined tourism with culture and created new forms of local support for the performing arts.

**Theater**

Israeli theater was becoming less political and more family-oriented, with both its audiences and the leading characters in plays showing signs of aging. The themes and topics of plays focused on more personal subjects, family, and parent-child relationships than on the Arab-Israeli conflict or the army and war issues that were prominent in the 1980s.

During the 1970s and 1980s, a number of native Israeli playwrights were nurtured at Haifa Theater, the hothouse of experimental, socially conscious theater of the time. *Ha'aretz* critic Michael Handelsatz has traced the two major dramatic approaches that emerged: Yehoshua Sobol's socio-political theater and Hanoch Levin's more universal theater of the absurd. Sobol used social documentary and historical sources to create plays that grapple with issues of Jewish identity and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Most of the young playwrights followed his direction, and socio-political concerns dominated the theater of the '80s. Even when presenting classics, political interpretation was primary. In a production of *Waiting for Godot*, for example, the two main characters were depicted as Arab construction workers.

The other direction with which Israeli theater experimented was the absurd drama of Hanoch Levin, with tight, poetic dialogue and a grotesque, obsessively anal, misogynist vision of humanity. Although he could be bitterly satirical about Israeli social issues, as in *Queen of the Bathtub (Malchat Ha'ambatya)*, Levin wrote out of a more universal context. However, this did not become the dominant stream. The need for political relevance was too great.

Eventually, audiences wearied of being confronted with the Arab-Israeli conflict. The *intifada* was ubiquitous in the media. Israelis did not want to see it on the stage as well. In addition, officials of the Likud government fought the use of public funds
for theater which, they claimed, undermined national morale. This led to a collision course with engaged playwrights who went on to write even more vituperative plays. Ironically, the attempt to close down some of these plays and the attendant furor brought an end in 1990 to official censorship. (The censorship law, based on the British law of 1911, had been incorporated into the Israeli legal system along with other British statutes at the time of the establishment of the State of Israel.)

In the early 1990s, leading figures in Israeli theater, such as the artistic director of Jerusalem’s Khan Theater, Erann Baniel, called for a different kind of esthetic, one that was less journalistic and scandal-involved and more concerned with the larger human condition. In addition to new plays on more personal themes, the movement away from political theater also led to more light, escapist theater, such as the 1991 Haifa Theater production of *Guys and Dolls* with a star-studded Israeli cast, and performances of Neil Simon comedies.

**RECENT PLAYS**

In spite of the general decline of socio-political theater, two of the best plays of 1990 and 1991 had themes relating to the current Israeli situation. Yehoshua Sobol’s Habimah production of *Solo*, a historical drama about 18th-century philosopher Baruch Spinoza, with contemporary anticlerical, church-state implications, was one of the theatrical highlights of 1991. Spinoza is portrayed as a truth-seeker, not reluctant to embarrass the Jewish community “in the eyes of the non-Jews,” something Sobol himself was accused of doing with his Holocaust play *Ghetto*. Although Sobol scrupulously presents Spinoza’s theories of an abstract God, indifferent to the world, who claims that there is “no end or goal, good or bad, order or hierarchy in Nature,” he also translates Spinoza’s ideas into a simplistic hedonism graphically displayed on the stage, making Spinoza more of an unheroic contemporary Everyman than most critics felt was legitimate.

The Arab-Jewish conflict found expression in Ilan Hatzor’s fine intifada-based play *Re’ulim* (The Masked), first appearing at the Acre Fringe Theater Festival and then at the Cameri Theater. It is the story of three Palestinian brothers meeting in Italy. Two of the brothers belong to the Palestinian shock forces that assassinate those thought to be informers, while the third is himself suspected of being an informer for Israeli intelligence. In the background is the painful memory of a fourth brother who was shot by Israeli soldiers. Although the play clearly relates to political issues, it is a poignant work about family relationships and loyalties under stress.

Romantic love relationships are exposed for their grotesque sexuality in the Hanoch Levin plays of this period. *Can’t Choose (Ha’mitlabeit)* is the story of an unattractive bachelor seeking to get married, and the three equally unattractive options before him, while in *Hops and Hopla*, a mama’s boy attempts to woo a childhood sweetheart by trying to get her to diaper him. *The Beloved (Ha’ne’ehavim)*,
by Hillel Mittelpunkt, an important playwright associated with the Beersheba Theater, portrays the near-incestuous relationships of a Tennessee Williams-type family.

A moving original work at the Haifa Theater was *Vienna-on-the-Sea (Vina al Ha'yal)* by Edna Mazya, portraying a group of Viennese Jews at their seashore resort on the eve of the 1938 Anschluss. The most innovative dramatic work of the past two years was a five-and-a-half-hour "happening," *Arbeit Macht Frei*, which has the Holocaust as its theme but is different from anything done heretofore. Designed by Dudu Maayan of the Acre Theater Company, the work won first prize in the Acre Fringe Theater Festival during Sukkot of 1991, again indicating the importance of this festival in encouraging experimental works. *Arbeit Macht Frei*, which accommodates an audience of only 15 participants at a time, breaks down all boundaries between art and life. It begins with a tour of the Holocaust Museum of Kibbutz Lochamei Hagetaot and moves its participants from experience to experience, showing how the Israeli sensibility has been formed by Holocaust-consciousness and suggesting that the paranoia it engendered has not always been to the advantage of the Arabs. But its message is never unequivocal, as it attempts to elicit from participants their own deeply felt responses.

At a time when Israeli theater was witnessing the end of the Sobol-Levin generation and seeking new directions, awaiting the emergence of new young playwrights, the experimental group-theory approach of the Acre Theater, the innovative puppet-and-object drama of Jerusalem’s Visual Theater, and the Khan Theater’s community-oriented drama—all offered vital new options. At the same time, it was possible that rejuvenation would come from the conservative but highly professional Russian immigrants who were now working on the Israeli stage, imbuing it with the "high seriousness" of classical European culture. The Russian-language Gesher Theater presented a much-acclaimed production of Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, which Israeli spectators could enjoy through earphones with simultaneous translation. Gesher saw itself as eventually performing in Hebrew as well as Russian, as the immigrants to whom it was directed became absorbed in Israeli society.

**Film**

Israeli film also turned away from political themes in 1990 and 1991 to personal relationships. Particularly noteworthy were *Shuru* by Sabi Gavison and *Tel Aviv Stories* by Ayelet Menachemi and Nirit Yaron. The former is about a Tel Aviv self-fulfillment cult, while the latter is a slick feminist comedy.

Although the Israeli film industry produced only 19 films in 1990 and 5 works in 1991—because of the war—there were signs of continuing expansion. The Beit Zvi Film School closed, giving way to the Jerusalem Film School, which boasted state-of-the-art equipment and offered competition to the Tel Aviv University Film School, which had dominated the education of Israel’s future filmmakers. The movement to cable TV and the establishment of TV Channel Two promised new
opportunities for the cultivation of film and TV in Israel. The opening of the sophisticated Golan-Globus film production complex in the Jerusalem hills raised the hope of attracting foreign filmmakers as well as encouraging a new wave of Israeli filmmakers to create works of international interest.

Dance

Israel had six professional dance companies—Batsheva, the Israel Ballet, Bat Dor, Sound and Silence, Kibbutz, and Inbal—and a number of smaller ensembles. Many of them had undergone recent transformations, as leadership was transferred from the giants who created Israeli dance to a new generation of artistic directors and choreographers.

At Inbal, Rina Sharett succeeded the pioneering Sara Levi-Tannai, who was responsible for creating a language of movement based on traditional Middle Eastern, and particularly Yemenite, ethnic dance, which emphasizes movement in a restricted area, height and depth rather than breadth. Sharett’s work brings a broader range of ethnic dance languages to bear, as reflected in her “Bring My Fortune,” based on North African premarital customs.

The most significant event of the last few years was the return of the internationally renowned choreographer Ohad Naharin to Israel as artistic director of the Batsheva Dance Company. Israeli-born Naharin began his dance training at Batsheva but was invited to become a member of Martha Graham’s company in the United States. He later left it to explore other dance forms and started his own company based in New York.

Batsheva was founded by Martha Graham in 1964 under the auspices of Baroness Batsheva de Rothschild. Graham was its first artistic director, and Batsheva became the only foreign company in the world permitted to perform her works. Recognized for its energy and vitality, the company was constantly searching for new directions and seeking to crystallize a unique identity.

The strong, sculptured character of Ohad Naharin’s approach to dance quickly became evident in such new works as “Kyr” (Wall) and “Axiom.” “Kyr” was interpreted as depicting the struggles of a country under constant threat. Between the outbursts of war and violence—expressed by Naharin through fierce, almost chaotic, explosions of movement, wild jumps, and twitching bodies, accompanied by the rock music of the “Tractor’s Revenge” group—are sober, modest moments of utter control, the inner strength that is the supporting wall of the country. “Axiom” shows dancers marching in a regimented line until one person breaks out to do a solo, shattering the old order by this anarchistic impulse and creating a new, less regimented one. Dance critic Heski Leskli found “an unbearable beauty of anger and despair in Naharin’s works.”
Music

The most important new developments on the Israeli music scene were a consequence of the influx of immigrant musicians from the former Soviet Union. It is estimated that 7,000 immigrant musicians/music teachers arrived by the end of 1991, transforming music life and music education in Israel.

All of Israel's established orchestras gained from the Russian influx, and new orchestras have flourished. The Rishon Lezion Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Noam Sheriff, with more than half of its players new Russian immigrants, has been hailed as the country's second most important orchestra, trailing only behind the Israel Philharmonic. The last few years witnessed the creation of the New Israel Opera, in which many Russian singers appeared. New orchestras involving Russian immigrants were created in Tel Aviv, Raanana, Ramat Gan, and the Galilee. Community orchestras also thrived as a consequence of the Russian immigrants. The Hebrew University-B'nai B'rith Hillel Orchestra, under Anita Kamien, consisted primarily of Russians and played increasingly challenging works. In addition, hundreds of chamber concerts and recitals were sponsored by museums and various public and private groups seeking to give Russian immigrants the opportunity to perform. It even became popular for Israelis to invite Russian musicians to play at private parties and festive family occasions.

Although the whole country was enlisted to help absorb the immigrant Russian musicians, their disproportionate numbers and varying levels of accomplishment made it impossible for all of them to find work in their field. Viktor Fischer, artistic director of the Russian Cultural Center in Jerusalem, claimed that almost all of the musicians who were active performing artists in Russia found jobs, while those who worked previously as music teachers had considerable difficulty finding work. To help provide jobs for Russian music teachers, publicly subsidized music education was being expanded in community centers and schools.

The percentage of Israeli compositions performed in 1990 was higher than in 1989. According to composer Menachem Tzur, chairman of the Israel Composers' League, one reason was that the large number of performers created more opportunities for original Israeli works to be played. Tzur maintained, too, that Israeli composers, seeking better ways to communicate with their audiences, "are bringing lyricism back into their compositions."

One legitimate means of doing this was to integrate folk material into compositions. The Russian-born Mark Kopytman and Hungarian-born Andre Hajdu were representatives of this approach. In addition, Odeon Partos, Mordechai Seter, and Zvi Avni used Jewish and Middle Eastern materials, while Tzippy Fleischer used Arab melodies. The integration of folk themes characterized the "Mediterranean" music created by the late Paul Ben-Haim and Alexander Boscovitch in the early days of the state, which later came to be seen as too self-conscious and heavy-handed. Recent works using folklore dialectically fused it with a more sophisticated, Western musical language. The much-respected Zvi Avni, for example, returned to
folk elements after having imbibed contemporary European music. He confessed that his present compositions exhibited “a very different orientalism from that found in my earlier work.”

Andre Hajdu, who had written compositions based on Jewish sources—Mishnah, Psalms, Jonah, Eastern European folklorism—saw his works as postmodernist parody and eclecticism. It is this ironic stance, a distancing from the folk materials at the same time that they are used, that differentiates Hajdu and composers like him from the earlier nationalistic ones. Other composers, like Joseph Tal, continued to emphasize the European cultural tradition and the connection to Schoenberg. Menachem Tzur explained that there was a contemporary trend to look to classical composers of the recent past for inspiration, and he himself integrated them into his compositions Letter to Schoenberg and Letter to Stravinsky.

Altogether, a pluralism of musical styles had gained legitimacy. Josef Marchaim and Ron Verdberg used pop and jazz elements in their works. Some Russian immigrant composers remained conservative, imitating older composers, while others, overwhelmed by the new freedom, became super avant-garde, and still others turned to jazz for its free, improvisational style. In general, jazz had become increasingly popular in Israel. Yahud, a Tel Aviv suburb, had become a jazz center, and a jazz festival took place there each year.

Literature: Fiction

Israeli fiction flourished in 1990 and 1991, extending the rich literary pluralism that had developed in the preceding decade. The symbolic-psychological modes of “native generation” writers like Amos Oz and A.B. Yehoshua, whose narratives were often allegorical constructs of the larger monolithic Israeli experience, no longer dominated Israeli literature. With the decline in the 1980s of the secular, Ashkenazic, Labor Zionist establishment and those expressing their concerns, works of those who had until then been viewed as peripheral—Sephardim, Israeli Arabs, religious, and most of all women—moved to the center of Israeli fiction. Personal narrative without a national, public subtext became legitimate. Childhood, coming of age, and family relationships were central themes in novels of the early '90s, expressed through a variety of literary styles—magic realism, surrealism, and postmodernism. Israeli literature underwent a process of democratization that resulted in an explosion of talent.

In publishing circles there was a headiness over these new voices. A battle of editors was waged in 1990 and 1991 as to who could “discover” the brightest, most innovative novelists. Some contend that the young writers were so encouraged because translations of foreign works became increasingly expensive. But even when the new fruit was unripe, as some inevitably was, there was exhilaration in literary circles over the signs of cultural vitality.

Still, fine works by veteran writers continued to be published. In Amos Oz’s Third Condition (Hamatzav Hashlishi), the fumbling impotence of the middle-aged an-
Fima Nissan can be perceived as reflecting the impotence of the Israeli intellectual in the face of the intifada. Nissan's refuge in sleep—escape—also characterizes the protagonist in The Railway (Mesilat Barzel), the attenuated existential novel by Aharon Appelfeld about a nameless Holocaust survivor who obsessively rides the trains through Romania and Czechoslovakia. In this spare, symbolic work, Appelfeld implies that the train—with its allusion to the satanic machinery that carried millions of Jews to their destruction—is the very environment in which post-Holocaust Jewry continues to exist.

The suppressed violence, underground sexuality, and self-destruction in Appelfeld and Oz also permeate A.B. Yehoshua's masterpiece Mr. Mani (Mar Mani), hailed as the most important Israeli novel of the last two years, "breaking new structural ground," according to Hebrew literature scholar Gershon Shaked. Perhaps it was a reflection of the new literary atmosphere that Yehoshua, who stems from an old Sephardic family that came to Israel at the beginning of the 19th century, had only recently begun to write about his Sephardic background. Mr. Mani (subsequently translated into English by Hillel Halkin) is a haunting saga of a Sephardic Jewish family, presented in reverse chronology, with the first chapter taking place in 1982 after the Lebanon War, while the last part occurs in Athens in 1848. Here the reader is introduced to the Mani family through the conversation of Avraham Mani, the progenitor of this strange clan.

The unique structure of the book consists of five conversations about the family, where only one speaker's voice is heard, and the reaction of the listener must be interpolated by the reader. Each of the speakers has been involved with a member of the Mani family, and their recollections of the Manis also mirror their own life situations. As in his previous novels, in which family relationships symbolize larger national, societal patterns, the epic of the Mani family depicts the sweep of Jewish history for more than a century, the drive for Jewish survival and, at the same time, the countermovements to assimilation and destruction. In each generation, the Mani family is caught between the two opposing tendencies. Central to the work is the assimilative yearning of Israelis to cancel out their Galut Jewish origins and return to some mythical time when Arab and Jew were one. Yehoshua ultimately rejects this fantasy and affirms Jewish existence in Israel, albeit in a casual, nonheroic, "normal" manner. But not before he has grappled with contemporary Jewish experience in all its subtle variations.

MAGIC REALISM, GROTESQUE REALISM, SURREALISM

The need to keep in touch with present Israeli reality, at the same time using it as a springboard for flights of fancy that defy that reality, might explain the emergence of many fine "coming of age" works that border on the fantastic and surrealistic. The Israeli family is the continued leitmotif in many of these works.

Meir Shalev's first novel, the best-seller Blue Mountain (Roman Russie), uses the fantastical mode of magic realism to trace the amazing feats of an Israeli pioneering
family. His new novel, *Esau*, is another family saga, this one interweaving elements of biblical tales into a crazy-quilt Jerusalem myth. Although Shalev is abundant in symbolic suggestiveness, he does not attempt to create, as do Yehoshua and Oz, a sustained allegorical pattern.

In *The Book of Internal Grammar (Sefer Hadikduk Ha'pnimi)*, David Grossman exhibits the same uncanny ability to enter into a child’s mind that he did in *See Under: Love (R’eh Erekh Ahavah)*. The sexually overwrought events of his family are perceived by the child protagonist, whose own growth seems stunted. The larger-than-life scenes of his mother cooking magnificent meals for his corpulent father, the love-sick neighbor who thrills to watch the father break down wall after wall of her house with a wrecker’s hammer, are all counterpointed by the adolescent protagonist’s anxieties about his own sexuality and his prayers for his thyroid to grow.

Albert Swissa’s *Bound Up (Akud)* describes a Sephardic “coming of age” in a Jerusalem slum. Written with metaphorical sweep, it combines the sordid with the sublime, the realistic with the phantasmagorical. Israelis who hoped that this would be the literary masterpiece encapsulating the experience of the Jews who came from Arab countries in the 1950s were disappointed. Although Swissa’s talent was clear, some critics felt the work was overwritten. One called it “gutter theology,” and *Ha’aretz* critic Ariel Hirshfeld said the young writer should have taken more time to create a more controlled work. He saw it as an example of editors allowing unripe fiction to be published.

Fifty-five-year-old Yehoshua Knaz is a “native generation” writer whose works only recently began to receive the attention they deserve. His increasing popularity reflected new appreciation of older novelists who were overlooked because of their more personal themes and nonsymbolic modes of writing. In *The Way to the Cats (Derekh L’hatulim)*, Knaz portrays, with grotesque realism, the marginal lives of the aged. The story of Yolanda Moscovitch, ravaged and powerless in an old-age home, entangled in the familylike power struggle among its inhabitants and the cynical exploitation of the staff, was hailed a masterpiece by fellow novelist Amos Oz. “In sharp, brutal detail Knaz describes the torment, madness, absurdity, and decay that wait for all of us at the end,” writes Oz.

**POSTMODERNIST NOVELS**

The last few years saw the publication of many postmodernist novels in which values and points of view break down. There is little or no authorial direction, and readers must impose their own personal narrative on the work to make sense of it. “With this new wave of postmodernist works,” says Yigal Schwartz, “Israel is in synchrony with the literary trends of the Western world. The previous generation asserted the individual in a relativistic, humanistic approach. But for this generation reality is unreadable. There is no point of view one can rely on.” This is most evident in Itamar Levy’s *Letters of the Sun, Letters of the Moon (Otiot Hashemesh, Otiot*
At the simplest level, Levy’s story is a narrative told from the perspective of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy during the intifada. But the tale becomes more than the story of a Palestinian childhood under occupation. Rather, it is a collage of storytelling, folklore, and Arab pop songs, magically fused with realistic political events. Slowly, the reader comes to realize that he can’t trust any point of view.

Yoel Hoffman’s much acclaimed Christ of the Fishes (Christus shel Dagim) is also not the story it seems to be—that of a German immigrant family facing one death after another—but rather a work on how one looks at this reality. By flattening perspective, introducing doubts into the narrative, and breaking down distinctions between what is important and what is peripheral in his sharply detailed, Zenlike parables, Hoffman points up the unreliability of the realistic narrative.

Orly Castel-Bloom’s controversial work Where Am I? (Heikhan ani nimtzet?) can be seen as another type of postmodernist novel. It is a picaresque tale of a madcap woman who surrenders one identity after another—wife, student, professional. Angry and alienated, never remaining the same person, she gives herself to unbounded fantasies. In Yigal Schwartz’s view, Castel-Bloom’s contempt for convention and feeling of isolation are reminiscent of punk culture, “the common recognition of the need for, or realization of, violent social and cultural protest.” Perhaps more than a social revolutionary, Orly Castel-Bloom can be seen as bringing to the surface the repressed anger and violence that have existed in the works of Israeli women writers from Devorah Baron to Amalia Kahan-Carmon and Yehudit Hendel. This resentment could be discerned in many other young women writers emerging in the last few years, such as Dorit Abusch and Elana Bernstein.

THE DETECTIVE NOVEL

Until recently, Israeli literature belonged primarily to the category of “high culture,” with highly stylized works devoted to serious themes. Works of “trivial literature,” including detective stories, spy novels, and cheap romances, were read, but they were translations of foreign books. In the last few years, Israel became “normalized.” It was not only a nation like all other nations with thieves and murderers, it now also had writers of detective novels for Israeli audiences. Batya Gur, the pioneering figure in the field, who began with A Saturday Morning Murder: A Psychoanalytic Case (Retzah b’shabbat baboker) in the late 1980s, shows the unraveling of a murder to be an intellectual challenge. In her first book, the highly cerebral detective Michael Ohayon succeeds by mastering a knowledge of the psychoanalytic method and showing its clear parallel with murder-solving. In her next, equally intellectual, work, A Literary Murder (Retzah b’hug l’sifrut), Gur provides a solution to a murder that involves esoteric understanding of literary textual analysis. Her latest work, Communal Sleeping: Murder in the Kibbutz (Linah meshutefet), is more of a social analysis than anything else. Light escapism takes a back seat to Gur’s interest in penetrating the theories underlying closed elitist societies.

In Shulamit Lapid’s detective novels, Bait (Pitayon) and Local Paper (M’koman),
she succeeds in creating a delightful feminist protagonist, the colorful Beersheba journalist Lizi Badichi, whose trademark is her large dangling earrings. With the help of her policeman brother-in-law, the Sephardic Lizi outwits establishment figures. While Lapid may be more entertaining than Gur, she too has extra-detective concerns. Her realistic descriptions of Israeli life expose the social injustice, snobbery, and hierarchy of Israeli society, even in outlying areas like Beersheba. Lapid has a feminist agenda as well. Although proudly independent and hard-working, Badichi is also deeply sensual and family-oriented. As "high" literature becomes more esoteric, it may be that works like these provide the necessary popular mirror Israeli society needs for self-understanding.

**Literature: Poetry**

In contrast to earlier periods, fiction had become increasingly central in Israeli culture, while the importance of poetry waned, as it had worldwide. At the same time, Israel still ranked among the countries that publish the largest number of poetry volumes per capita.

Works by two of Israel's most distinguished poets were published in 1990-1991: the *Collected Works* of Dan Pagis (1930-1986) and *Master of Rest* (*Adon Hamenuhah*), the last work of Avot Yeshurun (1902-1992). The poetry of both men was shaped out of reaction to their past in Europe, but they expressed their pain in diametrically opposed manners. Yeshurun made it the stuff of his innovative lyricism, while Pagis attempted to suppress memory and the personal "I" in his work.

*Master of Rest* expresses the fundamental issue that runs through Yeshurun's poetry of the last 40 years, the inability to resign himself to the death of his family in the Holocaust. Yeshurun continues to yearn for them and for his birthplace in Poland and feels guilty for having left them to come to Palestine in the 1920s. Consequently, he can never be entirely at one with himself in Tel Aviv. "Straddling the fault line between . . . Poland and Tel Aviv, is what compels the poet to speak, to harangue his surroundings," says poet Gabriel Levin. It accounts for Yeshurun's fractured, pastichelike style blending Yiddish, Hebrew slang, and Polish and Arabic words as well as places and people in both locales. It is his brilliant, lightning connections between worlds that made him one of Israel's most innovative poets, receiving recognition only late in life when younger, avant-garde writers began to look to him for inspiration.

Dan Pagis, who spent the first part of his adolescence in a concentration camp, leaves few biographical traces in his poetry. The personal is distanced, defamiliarized, by his imagery. Literary scholar Robert Alter has written that in Pagis, "earthly existence is seen characteristically from an immense telescopic distance. Time is surrealistically accelerated, flattened, distorted to avoid dealing with the past." In the posthumous edition of Pagis's collected works, a prose piece called "Abba," published for the first time, discusses his father's abandonment of the family, his mother's death, and the family's destruction in the Holocaust. It provides
a sense of the personal aspects of Pagis's life that were neutralized in his poetry. Pagis, who with Nathan Zach and Yehuda Amichai was responsible for introducing a natural, colloquial tone into Hebrew poetry, was also an authority on Hebrew literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. His erudition and precision of language were utilized in creating a surrealistically sharp, intellectual poetry. "It is exactly by following a clear line of logic," writes critic Ariel Hirshfeld, "that the Pagis poem, as in an Escher painting, leads to loss of orientation."

A vibrant creative impulse is clearly at work in Maya Bejerano's energetic, densely written book of poems, Whale (Livyatan). Women had come to center stage in Israeli poetry as well as in prose, and Bejerano, Leah Ayalon, Hedva Harehavi, Gavriella Elisha, and Agi Mishol were considered among the most important poets of their generation. Critic Ariel Hirshfeld attributed the leap made by women poets in the 1980s to the influence of Yona Wallach, "who took the feminist revolution upon herself."

The appearance of Avner Treinin's seventh book, The Memory of Water (Zikhron Ha'mayim), highlighted the existence of a group of Israeli poet-scientists, among whom Treinin was the most prominent. In the poems under discussion, Treinin, a professor of chemistry, writes about a scientific experiment in which water is shown to "remember" the materials dissolved in it. This becomes a metaphor for human memory and the Heraclitean nature of reality.

Another group—religious poets—had also come to the fore in recent years. It included Leah Ayalon, Admiel Kusman, Yonadav Kaplun, Esther Ettinger, Ruth Blumert, and Moshe Meir. Although each had an individual style, they shared a certain intensity of tone and a natural integration of religious images and concepts in their verse.

Art

In the world of Israeli art, group exhibitions designed around a strong central concept had become at least as important and influential as the work of individual artists. The grouping of artists together in order to make a conceptual or ideological statement appealed strongly to Israelis' strong sense of collective identity. At the same time, Israeli intellectuals and artists were constantly engaged in questions of identity, such as: What does it mean to be an Israeli? Where should Israelis locate themselves along the axis of an internationally oriented, universalistic outlook and a particularistic Jewish identity? In the art world, these questions were often formulated as: Is there anything distinctive about Israeli art? Should there be? Group exhibitions are a unique opportunity to reflect upon or attempt to answer these questions. In the late 1980s, the most important Israeli attempt to offer a definition of Israeli art was the exhibition "The Want of Matter" mounted at the Tel Aviv Museum by Sarah Breitburg. In 1991 two exhibitions made waves in the Israeli art world by offering new definitions of where Israeli art stood and what it stood for.

The first of these exhibitions, "Perspective: New Esthetic Concepts in Art of the
Eighties in Israel," curated by Daliah Manor and mounted at the Tel Aviv Museum, was in some ways a direct response to "The Want of Matter." The exhibition displayed the work of nine contemporary Israeli painters and sculptors: Dita Almog, Joshua Borkovsky, Reuven Berman Kadim, Zvi Goldstein, Gideon Gechtman, Neta Ziv, Yitzchak Livneh, Meir Pichadze, and Osvaldo Romberg. "The Want of Matter" had argued that an unfinished, piecemeal quality characterized Israeli art, and that the inexpensive and often "found" materials with which and on which Israeli artists painted and sculpted was an expression of Israel's socialist-Zionist ethos. The works in "Perspective" were chosen because they represented exactly the opposite kind of art. They had in common a cool, seductive, even glamorous look, a striving for esthetic perfection using high-quality materials.

"Perspective" was thus an open rebellion against the pioneering, socialist ethos defined as the mainstream of Israeli art in the "Want of Matter" exhibition. Daliah Manor, in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, argues that the material and stylistic richness of the "Perspective" artists represented a "turning point and renewal" in Israeli art, made possible by the rise in the standard of living in Israel, the growing dominance of urban culture, and the ubiquity of film and television, which spread Western esthetic values and relativized local concerns.

While Israeli critics applauded the high quality of the works exhibited in "Perspective," they questioned whether they were united thematically by anything besides richness of style. Were the decorativeness and the glistening surfaces in "Perspective" a straightforward paean to esthetic beauty or an ironic statement about self-delusion, narcissism, and the seductiveness of art? A minor cultural skirmish broke out when Sarah Breitburg, curator of "The Want of Matter," dismissed "Perspective" as a celebration of bourgeois sensibility, and Manor hit back by accusing Breitburg of hypocrisy for attacking the very bourgeois society that supported the museums and the art world in which Breitburg had made her career.

In late 1991, another curator, Sarit Shapira, and another museum, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, attempted to place Israeli art in another new context, to liberate it from the burden of parochialism while still salvaging a distinctive identity and meaning. Shapira's exhibition, called "Paths of Wandering: Emigration, Travels, Passages in Israeli Art," and the sophisticated, book-length catalogue accompanying it, suggested that a nomadic nonattachment to place, a fascination with "wandering," both geographic and mental, was a central, defining theme for Israeli artists. The theme of wandering and exile had been consciously repressed by the mainstream of Israeli art since the 1930s, Shapira argued, as part of the Zionist effort to "negate the Diaspora" as well as from an emotional and artistic attachment to the old-new homeland in Palestine. The move, in the early 1950s, of the New Horizons artists—a group that dominated the art scene through the 1960s—toward universalism and abstraction was part of the effort, Shapira claimed, to deny the specific Jewish images whose context was exile. And yet, as Shapira's exhibit attempted to show, the repressed returned, and wandering and exile remained important themes for Israeli artists. In choosing paintings, photographs, and sculptures
by 21 artists, stretching across five decades, that depict suitcases, maps, ships, deserts, Bedouins, and foreign landscapes, Shapira attempted to illustrate an Israeli—or Jewish—obsession with travel, constant movement, continuous exile.

Critics responded sharply to "Paths of Wandering," some of them highly praising and vigorously criticizing the exhibition within the space of a single essay. Shapira's thesis was considered provocative and articulate, but her choice of artists and works was often criticized as arbitrary and artificial.

One broadside on Shapira came from art historian Gideon Ofrat, writing in the daily Davar. Even while attempting to recover from Israeli art a major theme that had been repressed, Ofrat said, Shapira continued to abide by the unwritten rules of the clique that had dominated Israeli art since the 1930s. This clique, which crystallized as the New Horizons artists under the leadership of Yosef Zaretzky, was committed to using color and form to create an international esthetic language of abstract lyricism and was dead set against any artistic references to the Jewish past. Shapira, like Sarah Breitburg before her, had continued the "boycott" of artists such as Mordechai Ardon, Naftali Bezem, Shmuel Bak, and Avraham Ofek, artists whose work was relevant to her thesis.

OFEK AND ARDON

The death of Avraham Ofek in 1991 at the age of 55 and the end of Mordechai Ardon's long career after his disablement by a stroke in 1990 at the age of 95 brought to the fore once again the issue of the control of Israeli art by a ruling elite, to the detriment of artists such as Ofek and Ardon. The work of both Ardon and Ofek overtly explored Jewish themes, using symbols and ideas drawn from Midrash, Kabbalah, and modern Jewish history. Despite the high quality of their work and their appreciation (especially Ardon's) internationally, both were virtually excluded from prestigious group shows, had not been given proper retrospective exhibitions by the most important Israeli museums (the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the Tel Aviv Museum), and in general had been pushed to the sidelines by the mainstream art world.

Mordechai Ardon, born Mordechai Tuchow in Poland in 1896, studied with Paul Klee and Vassily Kandinsky in the Bauhaus school in Germany and immigrated to Palestine in 1933. Because the Tel Aviv scene was dominated by artists influenced by French postimpressionism, the new immigrants from Germany did not receive a warm reception from the established avant-garde in Tel Aviv. Ardon moved to Jerusalem in 1936 and began to teach in the Bezalel School of Art. He became the director of Bezalel in 1940 and remained there until 1952, when he was appointed artistic adviser to the Ministry of Education and Culture, a position he held until 1963.

In the 1940s he began to develop the symbolic style that was his signature for the rest of his life. His paintings have a geometric harmony reminiscent of Kandinsky, but they are filled with allegorical and symbolic references to Kabbalah and Jewish
history. Ardon was one of the first artists to paint about the Shoah, in a triptych that now hangs in London’s Tate Gallery. Ardon’s work adorns the President’s House in Israel and fills an entire wall at the National Library in Jerusalem. Ardon’s can be found hanging in the Metropolitan Museum in New York and in the Steidlich in Amsterdam. An Ardon painting was sold in Japan in 1987 for nearly a million dollars—the most ever paid for the work of an Israeli artist. Despite international recognition, and despite the fact that even his opponents did not question his artistic excellence, Ardon was “not accepted as a full and equal member in the artistic community in Israel”—as one Israeli critic wrote—because of the symbolic elements and the overt Jewishness of his work.

Avraham Ofek’s career offers another example of an artist who clashed with the Israeli art establishment and fought, with imagination and charisma, to create an alternative kind of Israeli art. Born in Bulgaria in 1935, Ofek immigrated to Israel in 1949, becoming a member of Kibbutz Ein Hamifratz. Ofek studied mural painting in Italy from 1958 until 1962 and was influenced by Italian social-realist artists, who combined a deep belief in the artist’s responsibility to community with a love for local landscape, myths, and iconography.

After the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Ofek began to explore Judaism, studying Bible, Midrash, and Talmud intensively and incorporating biblical themes and their midrashic interpretations into his painting and sculpture. Along with two immigrant Soviet artists, Ofek formed the Leviathan group and wrote a manifesto declaring his commitment to founding a new school of Israeli art based on Jewish sources, on primitivism, and on the magical power of the letter. Although Leviathan broke up in 1979, Ofek continued studying Jewish sources, tagging his work with midrashic inscriptions, in a continuous search for an authentic Jewish form of art. He also returned to sculpture, using elements taken from the natural landscape—stone and wood—and simple materials such as pieces of cloth and grains of rice, in an effort to create a kind of art that would have a tribal, magical power. Although many Israeli artists and critics considered Ofek a major artist, neither of the large museums had ever offered a retrospective exhibition of his work.

In the last several years, Israeli artists such as Menashe Kadishman, Larry Abramson, Udi Aloni, and many others began to draw on Judaism as a source for their iconography. What Baruch Bleich, writing in Davar, said about Ardon applied to Ofek as well. “Although none [of the younger Israeli artists] intends to create a purely Jewish art, as Ardon wished to, the legitimization that they have given to Jewish theology as a problem within art makes them a front opposing the secular, lyrical, abstract painting that began with New Horizons. It may well happen—and this is simply a wild guess—that in the wake of the new, postmodern wave in Israeli art, there will be a rehabilitation of Mordechai Ardon.”
Jewish Thought

Jewish thought in Israel in the early 1990s was concerned, above all, with history and memory, and with the way in which interpretations of the past shape the reality of the present. Nowhere was this more evident than in the debate that raged over the remembrance of the Holocaust and its meaning for contemporary Israel. For a number of years a critique had been building, particularly among Israeli intellectuals associated with the political Left, over the place of the Holocaust in Israeli consciousness. An example of this critique can be found in “The Kitsch of Israel,” an essay by Avishai Margalit, a leading Israeli philosopher of language, first printed in the New York Review of Books (November 24, 1988), in which he argued that the memory of the Holocaust was being violated by the context and style of its remembrance in Israel’s public arena.

In 1991, The Seventh Million, the first popular book-length account of the way in which the trauma of the Holocaust shaped modern Israel, was published, written by Tom Segev, a weekly commentator for Ha’aretz newspaper, who earned a doctorate in history from Boston University. According to Segev, from 1952 onward, a series of issues and incidents pushed the Holocaust into the forefront of the Israeli public’s concern: the debate over whether to accept reparations from the Germans, the Kastner trial, the capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann. Another kind of voice—especially discernible in the speeches and writings of then opposition leader Menachem Begin—began to depict the Holocaust as the quintessence of the Jewish experience, as the event symbolizing and justifying the need for a Jewish state. In time, especially after the traumas of the 1967 and 1973 wars and the rise to power of Begin’s Likud party in 1977, the Holocaust, according to Segev, became a central myth for Israelis. “The more it became apparent that their secular Israeli existence alone was not enough to provide them with a rooted identity,” Segev writes, “many Israelis became addicted to the legacy of the Holocaust as a kind of popular ritual and at times a bizarre veneration of memory, death, and kitsch. At a certain point the Holocaust became one of the sources of [Israeli] collective memory. . . .”

Segev’s writing, while rich with anecdotes and personal testimony, covers an immense amount of material, and historians of the Holocaust and of contemporary Israel sharply questioned its accuracy. More importantly, perhaps, Segev’s often judgmental and sometimes almost cynical tone spurred debate about the stand that some intellectuals had taken toward the Holocaust. Yaakov Shavit, a renowned Hebrew University historian, responded to Segev’s book in a long article published in three parts in Ha’aretz. Shavit said that Segev had his own “contemporary political purpose” in attempting to turn the legacy of the Holocaust into a “universal history lesson detached from its specific historical connection.” The political Right in Israel may have “abused” the memory of the Holocaust to convince the Jewish public that Israel was still surrounded by evil, implacable foes blinded by irrational hatred (the most famous example of this “abuse” being Prime Minister Begin’s
comparisons, during the Lebanon War, of Arafat to Hitler and the PLO to Nazis). But the attempts of Segev and other intellectuals, argued Shavit, to “raise the memory of the Holocaust to the level of metaphysical memory” were another kind of abuse. In attempting to delegitimize the nationalistic interpretation of the Holocaust, critics like Segev imposed a meaning on the Holocaust that denied its primary context: the long history of European anti-Semitism and “the unique fate of the Jewish people.”

Y.H. BRENNER AND RABBI KOOK

Founding figures still loomed large in Israel’s cultural landscape, perhaps none more so than the fiercely iconoclastic writer and publicist Yosef Hayim Brenner, who was murdered by Arabs in Jaffa in 1921, and the mystical theologian and religious Zionist leader Abraham Isaac Kook, who passed away in 1935. These two men—whom Berl Katznelson, another founding figure, once called the only two truly great people living in the Land of Israel—remained particularly influential, in large part because both had come to be seen as prophets and avatars of the new kind of Jew that the return to Zion was destined to create. In 1990 and 1991, new book-length assessments of both Brenner and Rabbi Kook demonstrated the continuing fascination of the Israeli public with these men and, in a broader sense, with the internal intellectual history of Zionism.

Brenner, for many Israelis, was a symbol of the authenticity, intellectual courage, and artless, almost poisonous honesty that some considered the characteristic qualities of the modern Israeli cultural style. Brenner was born in Russia in 1881 and educated in traditional yeshivahs, but then broke with religious faith, becoming a fiery advocate of the need for Jews to take their lives, individually and collectively, into their own hands. “The main inspiration for his writings,” one Israeli critic said, “was drawn from the recognition that it is possible to live in a world in which redemption is not a possibility, either for the individual or for the collective, without falling into cynicism.”

Brenner moved to Jaffa during the harsh years of the Second Aliyah. He was a tireless journalist, publicist, essayist, and fiction writer, who believed passionately that the revival of the Hebrew language and literature was of seminal importance for the renewal of the Jewish people. For many people Brenner was much more than a writer, however. He was seen as a guide by many in his generation, and, according to Muki Tzur, a writer and leader of the United Kibbutz Movement, “an unending source of faith, . . . who united the [Zionist] revolution of labor with continuity of spiritual life.”

Menachem Brinker—a philosopher and scholar of Hebrew literature, and himself a beloved and charismatic figure among contemporary Israeli intellectuals—wrote Toward Tiberias Alley, a book that reintegrates Brenner’s life, thought, and literary work. Brinker challenges the widespread assumption that Brenner’s writings are autobiographical, a notion fostered by the author’s own teasing hints. Another
important point that Brinker succeeds in clarifying is the question of Brenner’s attitude toward Judaism. Brinker points out that Brenner’s often stinging opposition to Jewish tradition did not emanate from a desire to replace Judaism with a more modern, Western form of culture. Rather, Brenner felt that, until the Jewish masses had been liberated from the powerlessness and decrepitude of the Eastern European ghettos, faith and traditional culture were a distracting delusion. The feeling of moral superiority which many Jews shared was also a delusion, because it had never been tested. A Jew who was proud that his people had not oppressed anyone, Brenner said, in a characteristically sarcastic formulation, was like a castrated man proud that he had never committed adultery. Brinker’s clarifications here are important because they demonstrate that Brenner was not ideologically opposed to tradition as such. In the charged atmosphere of religious-secular tensions in contemporary Israel, the suggestion of a more modulated stance on Judaism on the part of one of secular Israel’s foremost cultural heroes was considered of great importance.

During the same period in which Brenner was formulating his bitter condemnations of Diaspora Jewish life and penning his dipped-in-acid portrayals of the struggles of the Zionist pioneers, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook was integrating the Jewish return to Zion into an encompassing mystical vision of redemption. Rabbi Kook (b. 1865), who already in Europe was known as one of the most promising Torah scholars of his time, came to the land of Israel in 1904 and was appointed first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Palestine in 1919. In contrast to the vast majority of Orthodox scholars and spiritual leaders, both in Eastern Europe and in Palestine, who saw secular Zionism as a destructive, even demonic, force aimed at seducing Jews away from their religious mission, Rabbi Kook understood secular Zionism as part of a process that would lead to the renewal of Judaism, the enlargement of its horizons, and ultimately to redemption.

Especially since the early 1970s, when Gush Emunim leaders—most of them students of Rabbi Kook’s son, Zvi Yehuda—became the dominant force within Israeli religious Zionism, Rabbi Kook’s legacy had been at the center of the Israeli cultural and political debate. It is thus somewhat surprising that only in 1990, with the publication of Prof. Binyamin Ish Shalom’s Abraham Isaac Kook: Between Mysticism and Rationalism, did a full-length academic study of Kook’s thought become available. Ish Shalom’s contribution is his portrayal of a multidimensional Rabbi Kook. Despite the poetic, fragmentary nature of his theological writings, and the seeming contradiction between his rootedness in the Jewish mystical tradition and his openness to Western philosophical sources, Rabbi Kook, according to Ish Shalom, had a coherent, highly developed system of thought that informed all his writings. But, says Ish Shalom, this thought system itself is given the breath of life by the dialectical tensions and apparent contradictions that are at its root. “Any attempt to put forward one aspect or another of [Rabbi Kook’s] ‘torah,’ ” wrote Shalom Razbi, summing up Ish Shalom’s work, “and to ignore the other aspects, is nothing but distortion, for the dialectical character is essential to this ‘torah,’ and is that which gives it its uniqueness.”
Dead Sea Scrolls

The normally staid and insular world of Bible scholarship came under the glare of media attention in 1991, with some dramatic developments related to the Dead Sea Scrolls—not to their contents or nature but to the politics and management of the scroll enterprise. As the main repository of the documents and the center of scroll scholarship, Israel was the focus of the hubbub, but much of the action took place in the United States. Two specific issues were at stake: the lack of general access to the scrolls and the slow pace of their publication.

Although many of the scrolls had been deciphered and published since their discovery in the late 1940s and early 1950s, there was dissatisfaction in the scholarly world with the fact that the remainder of the material—much of it in tiny fragments—was, until the late '80s, in the hands of a small group of scholars, who maintained exclusive rights to it and published very little. The scholars involved defended the slow pace of publication by pointing to the painstaking precision required to piece together hundreds of tiny fragments, like jigsaw puzzle pieces, into meaningful documents. Their critics argued that opening the field to more participants would speed up the process. The editors also claimed that restricting access was necessary to protect the rights of designated scholars who had been assigned various scrolls and to ensure a high level of scholarly interpretation. Critics suggested that this was merely a case of normal academic competition, of scholars seeking to protect their turf.

Part of the problem was political, an outgrowth of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Until 1967, the scrolls had been under Jordanian jurisdiction, and the seven-man editorial committee charged with working on the scrolls consisted solely of Christians, largely Catholics. After the Six Day War, the scrolls—housed in the Rockefeller Museum in East Jerusalem—were technically controlled by the Israel Antiquities Authority, but that body chose to maintain the existing arrangements with the editorial committee, a decision now regarded by most observers as unfortunate. In 1985, John Strugnell of Harvard University became chairman of the committee; he appointed its first Jewish member, Prof. Emanuel Tov of the Hebrew University, and later Elisha Qimron of Ben-Gurion University. In 1990, however, Strugnell was forced to resign, accused of making anti-Semitic statements in a published interview. Tov, who succeeded him, moved quickly to respond to criticism of the committee's monopoly and enlarged the group of scholars considerably. He also imposed strict deadlines for publication. Although two non-Israelis remained as co-editors with Tov (Père Emile Puech of the Ecole Biblique and Eugene Ulrich of Notre Dame University), the Israelis had now effectively taken control of the scroll enterprise.

But matters did not rest there. An American Jew, Hershel Shanks, publisher of a popular magazine, Biblical Archeology Review, who had been pressing the committee publicly since 1985 to speed up the pace of scroll publication, took up a new cause, making the scrolls freely available to the entire scholarly community. This issue, with its focus on "freedom of information," was widely publicized in the United States—to the displeasure of the Israeli and other scroll scholars, who felt
that the necessary correctives had been made and viewed Shanks, an American and not a scholar, with some suspicion.

In the fall of '91, a rapid succession of events took place that effectively demolished the long-standing wall of exclusivity. In September, two scholars at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati announced publication of a computer-generated reconstruction of previously unpublished scrolls, based solely on a private concordance of words in the fragments. Shanks, in fact, published the first volume of this project. Two weeks later, the scholarly world was stunned when the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, announced that it had a set of some 3,000 photographic negatives of the scrolls, which it was willing to make available to all qualified researchers. Since this was an unauthorized collection (duplicate authorized sets had been stored for years, as a safeguard in case of war or damage to the originals, at Oxford University in England, Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center in Claremont, Calif.), the Israelis and the scroll editors were outraged. But Prof. Lawrence Schiffman of New York University told the New York Times (Sept. 22, 1991): "Most will regard those who make this material available as Robin Hoods, stealing from the academically privileged to give to those hungry for the knowledge secreted in these texts."

In October, as pressure mounted, the Israeli authorities agreed to grant free access to the photographs in the United States and in Jerusalem, but continued to limit the right to publish text editions of any untranslated material to the authorized editors. This news was greeted as unsatisfactory. In November, Shanks's Biblical Archeology Society announced that it would soon publish a facsimile edition of all the unpublished scrolls, prepared by Robert Eisenman of California State University at Long Beach and James M. Robinson of the Claremont Graduate School in California, who claimed that they had received the photographs through "an anonymous benefactor." At the end of November, at a meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Kansas City, the last barrier to free access fell when Emanuel Tov announced that the remaining restrictions would be removed, that publication rights would no longer be prohibited. Professor Tov promised that his team would press forward with publication of scholarly editions, and that texts would be reassigned if scholars were unable to publish expeditiously.

Rochelle Furstenberg
Micha Odenheimer