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YEHUDA AMICHAH

יְהוּדָה עֲמִיחַי



Yehuda Amichai has been called the greatest Hebrew poet since King David. Born in Germany in 1924, Amichai immigrated to pre-State Israel with his family and grew up speaking and writing in Hebrew. During his lifetime, he published more than a dozen volumes of poetry, many of which have been translated into 40 languages around the world. Some of his best-known poems include *Memorial Day for the War Dead*, *Tourists*, and *Ecology of Jerusalem*. He was awarded the prestigious Israel Prize in 1982, as well as many other Israeli and international awards. His poems address every aspect of life; though he said that all of them were in some way political: “real poems deal with a human response to reality...and politics is part of reality, history in the making.” Amichai died in 2000.



Rachel the Poet's Hebrew works are legendary in Israel, and they reflect her deep love of the country and the Zionist ideal. Born Rachel Bluwstein in 1890 in Russia, she and her sister planned to study painting in Italy but decided to visit pre-State Israel on the way. Moved by what they saw in the land, they decided to stay. Rachel learned Hebrew by listening to small children speak and dreamed of becoming a teacher. During a visit to Europe, she contracted tuberculosis, for which no cure existed. Unable to work with children any longer, she spent the rest of her life living in Tel Aviv, writing about the landscapes of her beloved land. She died in 1931 and is buried in the Kinneret Cemetery near many of the early leaders of the Zionist movement. When the Bank of Israel introduced new banknotes depicting poets, Rachel's likeness was selected for the 20 shekel note.



Amos Oz was considered Israel's best-known living writer until his death in 2018. His long list of novels includes *My Michael*, *Black Box*, and *Judas*, all bestsellers in Israel and translated into many languages around the world. His nonfiction work, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, chronicling his troubled childhood, was the first Hebrew book translated into Chinese to become part of the official school curriculum in China. Born in 1939 in Jerusalem, he moved to Kibbutz Hulda as a teenager. There, he was allotted one day per week to write, but after *My Michael* became a bestseller and brought significant revenue to the kibbutz, he was granted three days per week to write. Oz, who was an outspoken advocate for Israeli-Palestinian peace, received the prestigious Israel Prize in 1998.



ETGAR KERET

אתגר קרת



Etgar Keret writes offbeat, quirky short stories in Hebrew that have enjoyed wide appeal around the world. Looking at the titles of some of his stories—*The Bus Driver Who Wanted to Be God*, *Missing Kissinger*, and *Crazy Glue*—you begin to get a sense of his intriguing world. Born in 1967, Keret cites as his inspirations Kurt Vonnegut, William Faulkner, and the Coen Brothers. His essays and social commentaries appear in the Israeli media and foreign outlets including the New York Times. He and his wife, Shira Geffen, have collaborated on films, and he also writes plays, graphic novels, and children's books. In the aftermath of the 2014 Gaza War, Keret and his friend, Arab-Israeli writer Sayed Kashua, wrote a series of anguished letters that appeared in the New Yorker and explored different perspectives on the stalemate between Arabs and Jews in the region.



SAYED KASHUA

סײד קשׁוּא



Sayed Kashua, an Arab Citizen of Israel who currently lives in Illinois, has been called “the greatest living Hebrew writer” and holds a very special place in the Israeli literary landscape. Born in 1975 and raised in the Arab town of Tira, in the region of northern Israel called “the Triangle,” Kashua, a gifted student, was sent to an elite boarding school in Jerusalem. There he read novels for the first time, and soon afterwards began writing—naturally, in Hebrew. In his work, including bestselling novel *Dancing Arabs*, and award-winning television series *Avoda Aravit—Arab Labor*, Kashua explores the complex reality of the nearly two million Arab Citizens of Israel. In 2014, Kashua accepted a position at the University of Illinois and announced he was leaving Israel. He continues to write a weekly column for the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* and remains a cultural icon in the country.



HAIM NACHMAN BIALIK

חַיִּים נַחֲמָן בִּיאַלִּיק

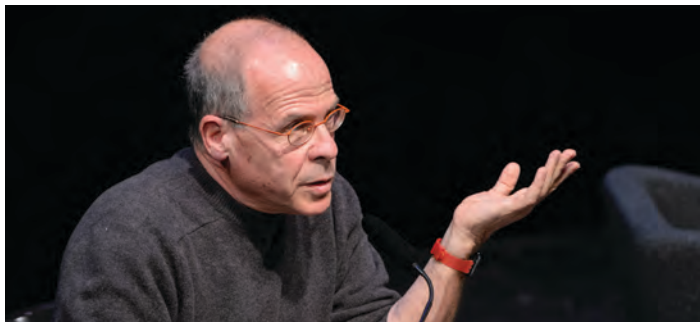


Known as the National Poet of Israel, Chaim Nachman Bialik was born in Russia in 1873 and lived most of his life in Europe. His early poetry was written in Yiddish, but as he became involved in the Zionist movement, he switched to Hebrew. After publishing his first book of poetry in 1901, he was hailed as the poet of the Zionist awakening. Perhaps his most haunting poem was written about the 1903 pogrom in Kishinev, called “In the City of Slaughter.” In it he decried the passivity of Jews in the face of anti-Semitic violence. The poem served as the inspiration behind the founding of the Haganah in pre-State Israel. He moved to Tel Aviv in 1924 where he was revered for his literary work. Many of his poems remain among the most popular children’s songs today, and his home is a museum and literary center.



MEIR SHALEV

מֵאִיר שָׁלֵב



A popular novelist and essayist, Meir Shalev was born in 1948 in Nahalal, a מוֹשָׁב—moshav—farming community, in Northern Israel. He fought in the 1967 Six-Day War and was injured soon thereafter in a friendly-fire incident. He became prominent among the Israeli public when his first novel, *The Blue Mountain*, became a bestseller in 1988; other works of fiction include *Esau* and *A Pigeon and a Boy*. His nonfiction works include personal interpretations of the Bible and a long-running weekly newspaper column. Also a writer of children's books, his works have been translated into 26 languages. After moving to the Jezreel Valley in the north and spending time in nature, Shalev wrote a nonfiction book, *My Wild Garden*. He is an outspoken supporter of a two-state solution, although he says that as long as radical Palestinians envision a Middle East with no Jews, there can't be progress toward peace.



LEAH GOLDBERG

לאה גולדברג



As a young child, Leah Goldberg kept a Hebrew diary and wrote Hebrew poems, even though she didn't know the language well. Growing up in Russia and Lithuania, she dreamed of being a Hebrew writer because "writing in any other language would be like not writing at all." Settling in Tel Aviv in 1935, at the age of 24, she joined a group of other writers who were forging a Modern Hebrew style of poetry. Her mastery of many languages made her a skilled translator, and her biggest translation project was to produce a Hebrew version of Tolstoy's opus *War and Peace*. Many of her works—including *דירה להשכיר*—*Dirah L'haskir—A Flat for Rent*—remain popular children's stories in Israel today. When she died in 1970, her mother accepted the prestigious Israel Prize on her behalf, awarded posthumously. Goldberg's image is featured on the 100 shekel note.



Born into a large Israeli family of Yemenite origin, Ayelet Tsabari recalls that she loved to read as a child, but often wondered why the heroes she met in books seemed so different from the people she knew. In her highly acclaimed first book, a collection of short stories called *The Best Place on Earth*, Tsabari pursues her mission of telling Mizrahi stories. It won the prestigious Sami Rohr Prize for literature and gained her widespread attention in Israel and North America. The book was written in English—she has lived in Canada for the past two decades—and was recently translated into Hebrew for Israeli readers. Tsabari's first published work was in Hebrew when she was 10 years old, and she sometimes marvels that today she writes in English. Nonetheless, she says, seeing her work in Hebrew translation in Israeli bookstores was a dream come true.



DORIT RABINYAN

דורית רביניאן



Novelist and writer Dorit Rabinyan was born in 1972 in Kfar Saba to parents who had immigrated to Israel from Iran. Her first novel, *השקטת השקדיות בעומרי'אן*—*Persian Brides*, became an immediate bestseller in Israel and was translated into multiple languages around the world. Perhaps the most interesting translation of her work was done unofficially and anonymously: *Persian Brides* has long been a big seller in Iran, where the unsanctioned translation doesn't mention the fact that the author is Israeli. The initial reception to Rabinyan's 2014 novel, *Gader Haya—All the Rivers*, which tells the story of a romance between an Israeli woman and a Palestinian man in New York, was warm, and the book won the prestigious Bernstein Prize in 2015. Soon, however, the Israeli education ministry removed it from a list of approved books for high school classes, saying it encouraged intermarriage and assimilation.



Now an acclaimed, award-winning Israeli poet, Erez Biton was born in Algeria in 1942 and came to Israel as a young boy soon after Israel's independence. Blinded in an accident at the age of 10, Biton studied at a school for the blind, where he was introduced to Western culture and began to write poetry. His poems focused on his experiences growing up in a school filled with blind children, and on the reality of living as a Sephardic Jew in a country dominated, at the time, by Ashkenazi culture. His work focuses on telling the stories of the Mizrahi Jewish experience which has earned him the title of the founding father of Sephardic poetry in Israel. Biton has received multiple awards, and in 2015 he became the first Mizrahi Jew to be awarded the prestigious Israel Prize for literature.



RONNY SOMECK

רוני סומק



Born in Iraq in 1951, Ronny Someck was brought to Israel with his family two years later, where he grew up in a transit camp for new immigrants. He published his first poem at age 17, and went on to study Hebrew literature, philosophy, and drawing. He has published more than a dozen books, including two children's books that he co-authored with his daughter, Shirly. Someck's poems address themes related to urban landscapes around Tel Aviv, as well as local and international pop culture figures. His 2017 collection of poetry, *נקמת הילד הבוגג*—The Revenge of the Stuttering Child has been translated into many languages, as have many of his earlier works. Someck also exhibits his artwork, has recorded two discs of music, and has been active in a variety of political and social causes. A founding member of the Yesh Atid party in 2012, Someck serves on the board of the New Israel Fund.



Born to Holocaust survivors in Transylvania in 1947, Agi Mishol immigrated to Israel with her family at the age of four. Growing up in the town of Gedera, the family was so poor that Mishol slept in an armchair in their one-room apartment until she began her IDF service at age 18. That same year, she self-published a volume of poetry, but later she destroyed all of the copies. Since then, her career has taken a major turn, and she has published more than a dozen volumes of poetry. The author Amos Oz describes her poetry this way: “Agi Mishol’s poems know how to tell a tale, to sing a song and also dance—all at one and the same time. I love the splendid surprises in them, the subtle and exact sadness, and the mysterious manner by which she makes this sadness overflow with hidden joy.” Mishol has won many awards for her work, including the Prime Minister’s Prize and the Yehuda Amichai Prize.



Born in 1914 in Poland to a family that was part of the Chabad dynasty—her first cousin was Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the most recent Lubavitcher Rebbe—Zelda, who used just her first name, moved to pre-State Israel with her family in 1926. Her poetry, which is filled with references to religious texts and imaginary characters, continues to strike a chord among Israelis from all walks of life, crossing religious lines. Since her death in 1984, Zelda's poetry has grown in popularity, as translations into many languages make her work accessible worldwide. As a young teacher in Jerusalem, one of her students was Amos Oz, who would go on to become one of Israel's greatest authors. Her most famous poem, לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשֶׁת שֵׁם—Lekol Ish Yesh Shem—Each Person Has a Name, is recited each year on Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel.



A.B. YEHOSHUA

א.ב. יהושע



A.B. Yehoshua's novels have been translated into nearly 30 languages, but many North American Jews know him best for his outspoken criticism of Jewish life outside the Jewish state. "American Jews are just playing with their Judaism," he has said, adding that Jewish life in Israel—even for secular people—is much richer, fuller, and all-encompassing than outside of Israel. Jews who choose not to live in Israel are making "a neurotic choice," he says, much to the chagrin of many Jews who have made that choice. Yehoshua's comments often prompt interesting, impassioned discussions about identity and community, which are some of the themes his novels explore. His best-known books include *A Late Divorce*, *The Lover*, and *Mr. Mani*, and his films include *The Human Resources Manager*.



DAVID GROSSMAN

דָּוִיד גְּרוֹסְמָן



One of Israel's most popular writers, David Grossman's novels, nonfiction works, and political essays have all garnered widespread attention. A longtime peace activist, his voice took on special resonance during the Second Lebanon War in 2006. His son Uri, who was fighting in the war, was killed in the final hours before the ceasefire took effect. His eulogy for Uri was a powerful ode to faith at the most difficult moment a parent can imagine. "In our crazy, cruel, and cynical world, it's not 'cool' to have values, or to be a humanist, or to be truly sensitive to the suffering of the other, even if that other is your enemy on the battlefield," he said. "However, I learned from Uri that it is both possible and necessary to be all that." He won the Man Booker Prize for his 2017 novel, *A Horse Walks Into a Bar*, and the prestigious Israel Prize in 2018.



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ARI FOLMAN

אֶרִי פּוֹלְמָן



Ari Folman's experience as a soldier in the First Lebanon War—and the three traumatic days that he blocked from his memory—led to the biggest film success of his career to date, the 2008 animated full-length *Waltz with Bashir*. The film, which explored his search for answers about what he and others experienced in Lebanon, won a Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film and was nominated for an Academy Award in the Best Foreign Language Film category. He also wrote for a variety of Israeli TV shows, including *Be'Tipul*, which became the inspiration for the US series *In Treatment*. The child of Holocaust survivors who married in the Lodz ghetto the day before they were deported to Auschwitz, Folman has also sought to explore issues related to the Holocaust in his work.



Gal Gadot—now most widely known as Wonder Woman—was crowned Miss Israel in 2004 at the age of 18, and has been a popular model and actress ever since. She has had roles in the *Fast and the Furious* franchise, and she's been the spokeswoman for everything from fragrances and fashion to websites and cell phones. As her global career has advanced, her Israeli fan base has continued to grow, leading to headlines in both local and international media that highlight her as a role model to girls and women everywhere. She credits her two years of IDF service, where she trained combat soldiers, with preparing her for her role as Wonder Woman, and in interviews she regularly expresses pride in her country.



The Israeli series *Be'Tipul* was the first TV show to become a big hit in the US market, where it drew large audiences as *In Treatment*. It's been followed by a long string of others: the blockbuster TV series *Homeland*, based on the Israeli series *Prisoners of War*, and *Hostages*, based on *Bnei Aruba*, to name a few. While many Israeli exports revolve around adrenalin-driven national-security themes—including the short-lived series about US special forces *The Brave*—others include a variety of game shows, reality shows, and dramas. Most Israeli shows use small casts and modest sets, reflecting the reality of low-budget productions suited to a small home audience. If you want to see the originals, you can stream a wide range of Israeli shows—in Hebrew with English subtitles. A few suggestions: *Fauda*, *Mossad 101*, and *Srugim*.



GALEI TZAHAL

גלי צה"ל



Galei Tzahal, Army Radio, was launched in 1950 as the heir to the pre-State Haganah radio broadcasts. Initially aimed at soldiers, the national broadcasts long ago broadened their appeal and Galatz, as it's called for short, draws a wide audience that spans all ages and walks of life. The lively mix of music, talk shows, and news hits the mark for the public. Since the 1990s, Galatz has operated a second station, called Galgalatz—a play on גלגל—galgal—wheel and Galatz—that combines popular music with frequent traffic reports. Galatz was the first Israeli radio station to broadcast 24 hours a day, and its alumni include many prominent figures in the worlds of journalism, culture, and politics. Galatz and Galgalatz are among the most-listened to radio stations in a landscape that includes state-run and private stations.



LUCY AHARISH

לוֹסִי אֶהָרִישׁ



Lucy Aharish is the first Arab Israeli to anchor a national television newscast in Hebrew, and a powerful voice for mutual respect among different sectors of Israeli society. Born in 1981 to two Muslim-Arab parents who lived in the predominantly Jewish city of Dimona in Southern Israel, she says she grew up feeling proud to be Israeli and very comfortable living with Israeli Jews. Chosen to be the only Arab among 14 citizens honored to light a torch on Independence Day in 2015, she said, in Arabic, “this is our country and there is no other.” Aharish has been criticized by right-wing Israeli Jews, as well as by other Arab citizens of Israel, but her message of coexistence has resonance among many people. “My national identity is that of an Arab-Israeli,” she says. “I identify with Palestinian suffering, but I am not part of it.”



TV SATIRE

סאטירה בטלוויזיה



From Zehu Zeh!—This Is It! in the 1970s, to Hartzufim—a made-up word that can be translated as Cheeky Faces—in the 1990s, and Gav HaUma—The Back of the Country and Eretz Nehederet—It's a Wonderful Country today, Israeli TV features a lot of political and social satire. Think a combo of Saturday Night Live and The Daily Show with a really, really, really sharp bite. Gav HaUma and Eretz Nehederet are both highly rated weekly programs that skewer social trends, news headlines, and politics and politicians. While the hosts—each show is hosted by a group of A-list Israeli personalities—share broadly liberal political views, no politician or political position escapes the sharp tongues and side-splitting laughs from these shows. Literally nothing is off-limits!



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ARIK EINSTEIN

אַרִיק אֵיִנְשְׁטַיִן



More than any other single musical artist, Arik Einstein chronicled decades of Israeli history through more than 500 songs and 34 albums. One of Israel's leading music critics, Yoav Kutner, said "Einstein is more than the greatest Israeli artist of all time. Einstein is the real Israel himself." Some of the most popular songs by the Tel Aviv-born Einstein, including *Ani VeAta*—אֲנִי וְאַתָּה and *Oof Gozal*—עוף גוזל, are still played and sung in Israel and around the world. He collaborated with countless other musicians and singers, and is universally regarded as the greatest Israeli musician of all time. It wasn't always clear that he would pursue a musical career; as a youth, he was Israel's high jump champion. When he died in 2013 in Tel Aviv, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called his music "the soundtrack of the country."



NAOMI SHEMER

נעמי שמר



Naomi Shemer is best known for her song יְרוּשָׁלַיִם שֶׁל זָהָב —*Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*—Jerusalem of Gold, which she wrote just before the 1967 Six-Day War. It became an unofficial anthem after the reunification of Jerusalem, and some proposed that it replace Hatikvah as Israel's national anthem. Her works read like a history of the state. Born in 1930 in Kvutzat Kinneret in the Galilee, a kibbutz her parents helped found, she studied at the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem, performed in an IDF entertainment troupe, and launched a long, successful career, eventually winning the prestigious Israel Prize in 1983. When she died in 2004, she was buried in the Kinneret Cemetery, just a few meters away from the grave of Rachel the Poet, whose poetry Shemer featured in many of her songs.



DAVID BROZA

דָּוִד בְּרוּזָה



Best known for his 1977 hit song יִהְיֶה טוֹב—*Yihye Tov*, which contains a passionate plea for peace, David Broza has long been one of Israel's most popular singers and performers at home and abroad. The grandson of one of the founders of Neveh Shalom, a groundbreaking community of Israeli Jews and Arabs in the center of the country, Broza's music and activism have long focused on his belief in bringing people together. When he is not performing or recording, he is working to bring Israelis and Palestinians together. In 2015, he released an album called *East Jerusalem, West Jerusalem*, which features Israeli and Palestinian performers; a film by the same name documents the experience. "I don't make political statements but I'm a peace activist," he says. "I have been for the 40 years of my career and before that as a kid."



ISRAEL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

התזמורת הפילהרמונית הישראלית



Founded in Tel Aviv in 1936 as the Palestine Orchestra, many of the IPO's original members were talented Jewish musicians who had been forced out of Europe by the rise of Nazism. The acclaimed conductor Arturo Toscanini led the Orchestra's first concert in 1936, and they performed before Allied troops around the world during World War II. That first concert featured the works of German composer Richard Wagner, despite him being a favorite of Adolf Hitler. After Kristallnacht in 1938, the IPO stopped playing Wagner's music; Wagner remains off-limits in most Israeli classical music circles to this day. In 1948, with the establishment of the State, the name was changed to the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. From its home in Tel Aviv, the IPO performs for tens of thousands of subscribers, and travels around Israel and the world. It was awarded the prestigious Israel Prize in 1958.



Yael Deckelbaum

יַעֲלֵ דֶקֶלְבָּאום



Growing up singing and making music with her father, Yael Deckelbaum burst on to the national scene as a member of the popular three-woman band הַבָּנוֹת נְחֵמָה—HaBanot Nechama—The Comfort Girls, whose debut album went platinum in 2004. The name references how the three performers met: they were all in a Tel Aviv clothing store when they began to complain about their careers. Recognizing the comfort they felt in each other's company, they found the name of their band. Deckelbaum has collaborated and toured with some of Israel's leading music acts, including Shlomo Artzi and the band Mashina. Since 2014, Deckelbaum has gained prominence as a social activist; she wrote the song *Prayer of the Mothers*, which has become the anthem of the Israeli-Palestinian women's movement Women Wage Peace.



YEHUDA POLIKER

יהודה פוליקר



Yehuda Poliker exploded on the Israeli music scene in the 1980s as the lead singer of the band Benzene, and launched his solo career a few years - and two successful albums - later. The son of Holocaust survivors originally from northern Greece, Poliker's exploration of traditional Greek music has made a unique contribution to the Israeli culture scene. In 1988, Poliker and his parents, along with Poliker's longtime partner Yaakov Gilad and his mother, co-starred in a documentary film, **בגלל המלחמה ההיא**—Biglal Hamilhama Hahi—Because of That War, with Poliker's music as the soundtrack. In addition to winning a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society of Authors, Composers, and Music Publishers in Israel in 2012, he received the Gold Cross of the Order of the Phoenix, one of Greece's highest awards for achievements in the arts, in 2014.



SARIT HADAD

סָרִית חַדָּד



Born in 1978 in the northern town of Afula, Sarit Hadad is the youngest of eight children in a musical family whose parents immigrated to Israel from the Caucasus region of the Former Soviet Union. Her early musical aptitude - she played a variety of instruments and performed in local youth bands - paved the way to a stellar career as Israel's best selling female vocalist. With more than 20 hit albums, Hadad has brought her brand of Mizrahi music into the local mainstream, garnering fans across the country and around the world. Hadad was a mentor in the early years of the Israeli version of The Voice, and has been named Female Vocalist of the Year multiple times. Galei Zahal, Israel's army radio, crowned her Female Vocalist of the 2000s, and her live performances continue to sell out across the country.



AVIV GEFFEN

אַבִּיב גֶפֶן



Born in 1973 to an Israeli version of cultural royalty—his father, Yehonatan, is an acclaimed writer, and his uncle was Prime Minister Moshe Dayan—Aviv Geffen began his performing career before his 10th birthday and quickly became an icon for young Israelis. While many popular performing artists got their start in a military performing troupe, Geffen received a medical exemption from military service, leading some of his critics to challenge his right to sing about the IDF and military/security issues. On November 4, 1995, he performed at a large Tel Aviv peace rally, singing לִבְכּוֹת לְךָ—Livkot Lecha—Cry For You—a song he originally wrote for Arik Einstein to perform. In the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, which took place at the end of that rally, the song became an anthem for the “candle children,” as the teens who lit memorial candles in the following days and weeks were called.



IDAN RAICHEL PROJECT

הפרויקט של עידן רייכל



Idan Raichel learned to play the accordion at age 9, which he calls “the uncoolest instrument ever.” By high school, he was playing jazz and experimenting with other genres. He spent his military service in an army band, entertaining troops all around the country. After the army, Raichel worked at a school for immigrant teens, where he befriended Ethiopian immigrants who introduced him to their traditional music. Intrigued, Raichel began to create music with them, eventually establishing the Idan Raichel Project. In 2003, the Project’s song בּוֹעִי—*Bo’ee* became a hit in Israel and they soon found themselves in high demand. Raichel’s unique sound blends influences from around the world, and he has performed with many popular musicians on stage, including Dave Matthews and Alicia Keys. Through his work, Raichel has become an ambassador whose music brings hope to all.



ACHINOAM NINI (NOA)

אַחִינוֹעַם נִינִי (נוֹעָה)



Born in Israel in 1969, Achinoam Nini, who performs internationally under the name Noa, moved to New York with her family when she was two-years old. Returning to Israel at 17, she served in an IDF entertainment troupe, and studied at the Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music. While there, she began to collaborate with one of her teachers, Gil Dor, whose strong background in jazz and rock continues to mesh with Noa's Yemenite influences to create a unique sound that has made her a bestselling performer. Noa credits Paul Simon, Joni Mitchell, and Leonard Cohen with influencing her work, and has been a tireless voice for peace in Israel and around the world. "My light is my dedication to peace, humanism, and human rights," she told a reporter, "and to the most beautiful concept conveyed to me as a child: 'Love your brother as you love yourself.'"



RITA
רִיטָה



Born in 1962 in Teheran, Iran, Rita—whose last name is Jahan-Foruz—came to Israel with her family as a young child. After performing in an IDF entertainment troupe, she soon launched her career with a string of best-selling songs and albums that catapulted her to the top of the Israeli music charts. In the 2000s, she began to sing in her native Farsi and became wildly popular in Iran. While the Iranian government accused her of participating in Israel’s “soft war” against them, many Iranian fans reached out with messages of peace. Whenever she performs, she leaves an empty seat in the front row—just in case one of her Iranian fans manages to attend. In a popular TEDxTelAviv, she said, “I used to think I was cursed by all possible ways: Jewish, Iranian, Israeli...Now, I have learned that our weaknesses hold the potential of great strength and our curses carry a blessing inside them.”



KOBI OZ
קובי אוז



Born in 1969 in Sderot to parents who fled the World War II Vichy regime, Kobi Oz found himself in the thick of a robust music scene that developed in the 1980s and 1990s. While subject to an ongoing barrage of rockets from nearby Gaza, immigrants and children of immigrants from the underprivileged town passed the time spent in bomb shelters by making music. Oz is among the most famous products of Sderot: he co-founded TeaPacks, which produced multiple best selling albums that merge pop, rock, and Middle Eastern music. More recently Oz, who identifies as a secular Jew, has produced albums that explore the meeting of religious texts and Tel Aviv culture, with songs whose lyrics explore man's search for meaning. He is credited with helping to open up Israeli music to Middle Eastern influences.



THE BANAI FAMILY

חֲשֵׁפֹת בַּנַּי



Everyone in Israel associates the family name Banai with performers. When the family came to Israel from Iran, they lived in Jerusalem's Nahlaot neighborhood until many of the siblings and cousins settled in other parts of the country. The Banai family music has broad appeal throughout Israel. It's hard to say who's the most famous, but here's a sampling: Gavriel was a member of the comedy trio הַגָּשָׁשׁ הַחִיּוֹר—Hagashash Hahiver—Pale Tracker, which set the standard for Israeli comedy routines and was awarded the prestigious Israel Prize in recognition of its contribution to Israeli society; his brother, Yossi, also received an Israel Prize for his acting; cousins Ehud, Yuval, and Eviatar all have enjoyed successful musical careers; and cousin Orna is one of the country's leading stand-up comics and a former member of the Tel Aviv City Council.



SHLOMO ARTZI

שְׁלֹמֹה אֶרְצִי



One of Israel's most popular male vocalists, Shlomo Artzi has sold more than 1.5 million albums in a career that spans six decades. Representing Israel in the 1975 Eurovision song contest—after his musical career was in high gear in the late 1960s and early 1970s—his song didn't garner good reviews and he contemplated giving up on music. In 1977, he decided to record “one last album,” גֶּעֵר הוֹלֵךְ לְאִיבֹד—Gever Holech Le'Ibud—A Man Gets Lost; in addition to being a bestseller, it put Artzi's career on a trajectory that continues until today. Music has turned into something of a family business; Artzi's son Ben performed in his father's music video for the hit song תַּחַת שְׁמֵי יָם הַתִּיכוֹן—Tachat Shmei Yam HaTichon—Under the Mediterranean Sky—and today he is a popular singer and performer in his own right.



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BEZALEL ACADEMY OF ARTS AND DESIGN

בִּזְלֵל אַקדֶמְיָה לְאַמְנוּת וְעֵצוֹב



Founded in Jerusalem in 1908, Bezalel was the first institution of higher education established in pre-State Israel. The founder, Boris Schatz, had a vision for the school to guide the development of arts that would meld the ancient with the modern, a vision that has played out for more than a century. Named for the Biblical figure Bezalel, who Moses appointed to design the Tabernacle, Bezalel's early students shaped the course of Israeli design as they melded elements of European art nouveau with traditional Middle Eastern elements to depict Biblical and Zionist themes. Today, Bezalel graduates play an outsized role in shaping the Israeli art and architecture scene. Prominent alumni include sculptor David Gerstein, graphic designer David Tartakover, artist Yaacov Agam, architect Ron Arad, and installation artist Sigalit Landau.



BAUHAUS ARCHITECTURE

אַדְרִיכְלוֹת בְּאַוּהַאׁוּס



How did Tel Aviv come to boast the largest collection of buildings designed in the Bauhaus style, also known as the International Style? The German Bauhaus School, which advanced a minimalist style of architecture, closed after the Nazis came to power, and many German Jewish architects fled to pre-State Israel. Tel Aviv was a new city with a new master plan, and the early architects found plentiful work designing apartments and other buildings. They adapted the Bauhaus style to the hot, humid, Mediterranean climate, and the result can be seen to this day in some 4,000 white buildings with recessed windows and high walls—to keep out the glaring hot sun—and long porches that look down on the streets below. In 2003, UNESCO recognized Tel Aviv as a World Heritage Site, due to its huge collection of preserved Bauhaus buildings, earning it the nickname The White City.



NACHALAT BINYAMIN

נַחֲלַת בִּנְיָמִין



Located in central Tel Aviv not far from the Carmel Market, the Nachalat Binyamin Arts and Crafts Market is surrounded by preserved buildings in a variety of local and international styles. A popular attraction since the 1980s, this colorful street fair brings together dozens of artists and artisans who sell their wares. Tourists and locals alike wander among the vendors, buying trinkets and souvenirs, relaxing at area restaurants and cafes, and in general taking a break from the bustle of the city. Along with street performers, the arts and crafts market operates on Tuesdays and Fridays, all year long. Thousands of people visit each week, and at peak holiday times the crowd can swell to 100,000 people.



HABIMA

תֵּאֶטְרוֹן הַבִּימָה



Habima, the National Theatre of Israel, traces its roots to Russia, where in 1917 a group of actors received permission from the mayor of Moscow to establish a troupe that would perform in Hebrew. Living and working in post-revolutionary Russia proved challenging, so when the actors embarked on a world tour a few years later, they did not return. After a brief stint in New York, they settled in Tel Aviv and formed a collective in which all members had a say in the company's management. By the 1940s, they had settled into a new building at the end of Rothschild Boulevard, and in 1958, upon receiving the prestigious Israel Prize, Habima was named the National Theatre of Israel. As a group of leading Israeli authors wrote in 2005, "Habima is not just a cultural institution. It is the foundation of the revival of the Hebrew language and cultural life in Israel."



FLORENTIN פְּלֹרֶנְטִין



This neighborhood in the southern part of Tel Aviv was established in the 1920s when a Greek Jew named David Florentin purchased the land and envisioned it as a working-class neighborhood with lots of small workshops and businesses. By the 1960s, the buildings were in disrepair, and it wasn't until a 1990s TV show called *Florentin*, about young, cool Israelis living and working in the neighborhood, that artists and other creative types discovered it. Today, many of the old workshops are artists' studios and the former shops are now trendy cafes and restaurants. Artists have turned the crumbling walls of the old buildings into their canvases, and thousands of visitors and locals flock to graffiti tours to learn about the messages behind the many forms of street art.



SHENKAR

מכללת שנקר



Ranked the ninth best fashion school in the world by Fashionista, the Shenkar College of Engineering and Design was founded in 1970 to support the country's growing textile industry. Today, Shenkar offers a wide range of academic degrees and is Israel's leading school for fashion and industrial design. Shenkar stresses the importance of embracing global culture without neglecting its uniquely Israeli mission—giving voice to Israeli culture through design. Tel Aviv's annual Fashion Week features designs produced with 3D imaging technology, newly designed materials, and other innovations pioneered by Shenkar students and graduates. Shenkar's alumni have achieved fame in global fashion circles for their innovative use of materials as well as their long lists of celebrity clients.



JERUSALEM STONE

אֶבֶן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם



The Talmud says, “Ten measures of beauty descended to the world, and nine were taken by Jerusalem.” One of the most striking aspects about the city is the use of light-colored limestone to face nearly all buildings. Israelis call it Jerusalem Stone, and it’s quarried in multiple locations around the country and in the West Bank. Used as a key building component since ancient times, in the early 1900s it became a legal requirement that all buildings be faced with Jerusalem Stone. British authorities decided it would beautify the city, and ignored the fact that using Jerusalem Stone adds significantly to the cost of construction projects. Today, most builders create stone facades from thin blocks of stone as a way to maintain the city’s unique look while keeping costs in check. One of the best things about this ubiquitous design element? There’s so much of it in the country that experts say they’ll never run out.



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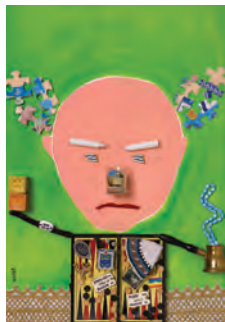
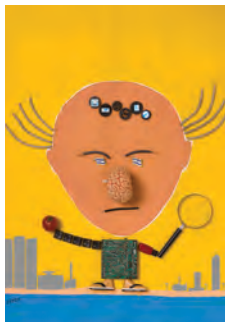
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HANOCH PIVEN

חנוך פיבן



Born in Uruguay in 1963, Hanoach Piven made aliyah with his family as a child and always dreamed of being an artist. When he got to art school in New York, however, he had a crushing realization: he couldn't draw! Rather than give up, he refocused his energies and began to work with random objects to create images that tell stories. You can learn about Israeli leaders such as Theodor Herzl, David Ben-Gurion, and Golda Meir through the wildly creative portraits he has created. One of his books, *What Prime Ministers are Made Of*, features portraits and stories about Israel's Prime Ministers from 1948 to the present. Piven's workshops in Israel and around the world teaching people how to create portraits out of everyday objects. His work appears regularly in Israeli and international publications, including *TIME*, *Rolling Stone*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and others.



Sigalit Landau is an Israeli artist whose sculpture, video, and installation works address a range of compelling current topics including homelessness, banishment, and the relationships between decay and growth. Born in Jerusalem in 1969, she spent part of her childhood in the US and Britain before studying dance at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. After completing her IDF service, she studied at the Bezalel Academy and launched her career in which she focuses on large, dramatic art installations. Over the years, her installations have been hosted in a diverse array of venues including the Tel Aviv Central Bus Station and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. For more than 15 years, many of her works have explored the Dead Sea and the salts and minerals that contribute to making the lowest place on earth a unique venue.



MOSHE SAFDIE

מֹשֶׁה סַפְדִּיָּה



Born in 1938 in Haifa, Moshe Safdie spent his childhood raising chickens and dreaming of becoming a farmer. When he was a teenager, his family relocated to Canada, where farming had less allure. He studied architecture at McGill University and went on to build a world-renowned architecture practice. After heading the urban design program at Harvard University, he left academia in order to focus his efforts on his own architecture. Significant works in Israel include Yad Vashem's main museum, the campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem, the master plan for the city of Modi'in, and Ben-Gurion International Airport. Safdie, who is a citizen of Israel, the US, and Canada, says he maintains "a trilogy of loyalties," and stays engaged in the cultural life of all three of his home countries.



Born in Moravia and trained as an artist in Vienna, Anna Ticho moved to Jerusalem to be with her fiancé, Albert, an ophthalmologist who had been asked to establish the Lema'an Zion Eye Hospital. She immediately began wandering the streets of the city, an underdeveloped outpost of the Ottoman Empire at the time, and painting scenes that struck her fancy. Over nearly seven decades, Ticho explored multiple styles of painting, but her subject was always the same: the fascinating, multi-faceted, ever-changing face of her adopted home, Jerusalem. When she died in 1980, her home—a beautiful stone building in the center of the city—was bequeathed to the city and today it operates as a branch of the Israel Museum. The outdoor café is a popular artists' gathering place, and the home hosts cultural events.



REUVEN RUBIN

רֵאָוֶן רוֹבִין



This Romanian-born painter originally emigrated to pre-State Israel in order to study at the acclaimed Bezalel Academy, only to continue his training in Paris. Upon returning to Palestine, he played a central role in creating the “Eretz Yisrael” style of art, depicting Biblical landscapes under the harsh Mideast sun’s glare, and portraits of Zionist laborers. Through much of his career, he signed his works with his first name in Hebrew and his last name in Latin letters, somehow symbolizing the merging of East and West. After a brief stint as Israel’s first ambassador to Romania in 1948, he resumed his work in Israel, creating the sets for the Habima Theater and continuing to depict scenes of the young state. He received the prestigious Israel Prize in 1973, and died the following year. Rubin bequeathed his home to the city of Tel Aviv, which turned it into a museum that is a popular place to visit.



YAACOV AGAM

יַעֲקֹב אָגָם



Born in 1928 to a rabbi in pre-State Israel, Yaacov Agam trained at the Bezalel Academy of Art before heading to Europe to continue his art education. He is a pioneer of kinetic art, and his works often feature moving parts, lights, and music. Some of his best-known iconic works include the bright, colorful Fire and Water Fountain in Dizengoff Square in Tel Aviv, removed in 2016 when the square was renovated and reinstalled in 2018; the facade of the Dan Tel Aviv Hotel; and a Chanukkah Menorah on 5th Avenue at 59th Street in New York City that is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest Chanukkah Menorah in the world. His installations can be found in prestigious museums and prominent installations around the world. Agam's work is said to fetch the highest prices of all Israeli artists.



Adi Nes is a photographer that describes himself as an outsider in many ways: as the child of Sephardic immigrants growing up in the development town of Kiryat Gat, as a gay man in a macho-focused society, and as a photographer whose job is to observe from the outside. While he never felt like he fit in, he says he stays in Israel because Israeli society is the topic of his work, and he couldn't photograph it anywhere else. Nes's most famous work depicts a scene that echoes Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*; in Nes's version, which appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*, the characters at the table all are male IDF soldiers. "My staged photographs are oversized and often recall well-known scenes from Art History and Western Civilization," Nes says, adding that they are, "combined with personal experiences based on my life as a gay youth growing up in a small town on the periphery of Israeli society."



ASSAM ABU-SHAKRA

עֲאֶסֶם אַבּוּ שְׁקֶרָה



Born in 1961 to a religious Muslim family in the northern city of Umm al-Fahm, Assam Abu-Shakra attended a Jewish high school in the nearby city of Afula, and at age 20 he moved to Tel Aviv to attend art school. For several years, he lived in a studio at the Kalisher Academy of Art, where he studied and later taught. While in Tel Aviv, he developed a body of work that included many self-portraits as well as paintings of sabra cactus plants, which he saw as symbolizing his Palestinian and personal identity. Like a cactus in a pot on a patio, he related that throughout his years in Tel Aviv, he felt as if he had been uprooted from his home in Umm al-Fahm: both he and the plants he painted had been separated from their typical settings and were living in unnatural surroundings. Abu-Shakra was diagnosed with cancer in 1987 and died in 1990. To this day both the Israeli and Palestinian art worlds claim him as an important figure.



For years, people have flocked to Tel Aviv's Florentin neighborhood to admire the street art. Tour guides lead groups along the streets and alleys, offering commentary about what a growing number of graffiti artists mean to tell the world through their art on the sides of buildings. You don't need to limit yourself to Florentin, and you don't need a guide, to see and enjoy Israeli street art—it's literally everywhere. Late at night, when the shops and stalls in Jerusalem's Machane Yehuda market are closed, feast your eyes on hundreds of larger-than-life portraits of famous people who run the gamut from rabbis and Zionist leaders to Bob Marley—all the work of local street artist Solomon Souza. Be sure to check out the giant wall murals that adorn buildings around Tel Aviv—and in the US, Argentina, China, and elsewhere—by Rami Meiri, who's earned the title of Godfather of Israeli Street Art since he began working in the 1990s.