

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE – JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

**MASHAV, Foreign Aid, and Israel's  
Responsibility To Be A Light Unto The Nations**

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### Thesis Abstract

In the late 1950s, less than a decade after achieving statehood, Israel began an official program of international development cooperation, providing technical aid to other countries. One of the first countries to formalize its own governmental agency for providing international aid, Israel was an early leader in an area which has, since, experienced tremendous growth worldwide. In its own national development, Israel became adept at solving the problems of nation-building, and accumulated a unique set of expertise. As a fledgling nation, itself, what made Israel look beyond its borders to see how it could share that know-how to help other countries in their development?

The answer is a combination of factors which have complemented one another, at times, and which, at other times, have been at odds. Through its aid programs, the country aspired to meet its Jewish moral obligation *l'or goyim*, to be a light to the nations. The initiatives also brought to fruition ideals from the Zionist movement including a vision of the Jewish People, sovereign in its own nation, being in a position to lift up other peoples who had also experienced hardship under foreign rule and influence. Finally, Israel sought to gain acceptance in the community of nations, and to build bilateral alliances that would offer important support in the international arena. The hope was for outcomes that satisfied both moral obligations and political hopes.

The thesis explores the historical background and motivations for conception and implementation of Israel's foreign aid programs. It also traces, through several decades, the successes, failures, growth, challenge, and decline that the aid programs experienced, especially in the context of a significant relationship with African nations. One chapter is devoted to providing a snapshot of one year of Israel's development cooperation

activities, and another contains reflections, conclusions, and recommendations for the future, based on the research conducted. An appendix offers a collection of resources which appear in the thesis, and which might strengthen sermons or prompt discussion, in educational settings, regarding Israel's obligations to the nations of the world.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Israeli International Cooperative Aid: MASHAV's Background and Early Years**

“As strange as it may sound, Israel was the first to understand that there was a need to establish an international aid agency, and it began to act on the basis of that moral viewpoint less than a decade after its establishment.”<sup>1</sup> These words, from Haim Divon in 2011, refer to the creation of MASHAV, Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation, of which Divon then served as Director. The program, which operates as part of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, began in 1957, nine years after Israeli independence, and the name was changed to MASHAV a few years later. In the decades since, Israel has offered, through MASHAV, technical assistance and training to approximately 270,000 individuals from over 130 countries, as well as disaster assistance and other forms of aid and information.<sup>2</sup>

There are many reasons for Divon’s opinion that Israel’s leadership may seem strange. First, one might assume organized international aid would have long pre-dated the establishment of the modern state of Israel, and that other, more established nations may have been in better positions to take the lead. Israel was – at the time and since – a recipient of foreign aid, so its enthusiasm for providing help to others is surprising. Finally, through its history, Israel has been often been a pariah in the international community. It has been scolded regularly by the United Nations and isolated by various

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<sup>1</sup> Divon, Haim. “How Israel Became a Foreign Aid Power.” June 23, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> “About MASHAV,” *mfa.gov.il*. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

groups of nations that are allied with each other. The fact that, even as other nations of the world sought to force Israel to the sidelines, the young nation insisted on being active in helping other nations, makes Israel's history of foreign aid unique and unlikely.

### **Motivating Factors and Personalities**

The young country's drive to provide developmental aid to others was – and remains – a result of several streams of motivation. Sometimes complementary and sometimes competing, these motives include Jewish religious and moral concerns, Zionist sensibilities, and the need for political capital and allies. Balance between altruism and the desire for political benefit has always been a goal and a challenge. Later chapters will explore how failures in the latter have hindered the former in recent decades.

Israel's aid programs and their vitality were also born of certain key personalities who, whether by virtue of position, predisposition, or circumstance, found themselves at the forefront of Israel's forays into the developing world. According to Dr. Arye Oded<sup>3</sup>, One of these early personages was David Hacohen, who served as Israel's first envoy to Burma, visiting the Southeast Asian country, now known as Myanmar, in 1953. Following his visit, Israeli experts were dispatched there, and Burmese citizens and experts in various fields began visiting Israel to receive training from Israeli counterparts. Hacohen's experiment became a model upon which Israel could build to create a robust program of international cooperation and aid. Within a few years, it was being recommended to both the Prime Minister's Office, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that an official mechanism be established to coordinate Israel's aid activities. One of the

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<sup>3</sup> Oded, Arye. "Fifty Years of MASHAV Activity." *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Fall, 2009.

people leading that charge was Elyashiv Ben-Horin, head of the Asia and Africa division of the Ministry. Ben-Horin sent a letter to Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and Foreign Minister Golda Meir proposing a new initiative.

“a fund to provide technical assistance to Asian and African countries... Professionally speaking, our...experience can easily compete with [that of] other countries... basing [our presence] in the [African] continent by [sending] experts gives Israel commercial and economic advantages and adds to our stature in a sensitive, important part of the world.”<sup>4</sup>

The Foreign Minister to whom Ben-Horin sent that letter may be foremost among the personalities to whom Israeli foreign aid activity over the years can be credited. In 1958, Golda Meir created a program for technical cooperation in the Ministry, and appointed Hanan Aynor to oversee its activities. It became an independent division in 1960, known as the Department for International Assistance and Cooperation. That name was later changed to the Center for International Cooperation, for which the Hebrew acronym spells MASHAV. Golda Meir not only presided over the founding of the office, but was actively involved. She was instrumental in advocating for and implementing early aid endeavors. She visited Africa five times in the late 50s and early 60s, and had countless meetings with heads of state and others, building personal friendships and becoming intimately acquainted with issues on the continent that Israel could help address. She wrote openly, in My Life, her autobiography, about Israel’s multi-faceted motivations to help.

“Let me at once anticipate the cynics. Did we go into Africa because we wanted votes at the United Nations? Yes, of course that was one of our

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<sup>4</sup> Oded, 2009

motives – and a perfectly honorable one – which I never, at any time, concealed either from myself or from the Africans. But it was far from being the most important motive, although it certainly wasn't trivial. The main reason for our African 'adventure' was that we had something we wanted to pass on to nations that were even younger and less experienced than ourselves." (Meir, 318)

David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, who held that office when the international aid program began, said then, "And we, here, the Jews in our homeland, must also ask ourselves if Israel can help with the advancement and development of the countries of Asia and Africa? This is both a moral and political question for Israel. And from both standpoints, there is no doubt that Israel is obligated to view assistance to those countries as a great historic mission that is required for Israel no less than the benefit that it gives to the countries it assists."

The question of balance between moral imperatives and political outcomes continues to be asked, as MASHAV carries forward Israel's aid initiatives over five decades after their launch. In his 2009 article, Dr. Arye Oded addresses the ongoing question of Israel's motivations and the outcomes of its actions:

As to whether MASHAV's motives today are egotistical or altruistic, even those who still continue to stress the moral aspect admit that "side effects" of MASHAV aid are political and economic gains. Furthermore, through MASHAV activity, Israel earns a worldwide reputation as a country that assists developing nations in many vital spheres. A genuine, correct summary of the subject was given in a Ministry of Foreign Affairs survey, which determined that "although

Israel does not link cooperation with MASHAV to political achievements and does not expect anything in return, in actual fact MASHAV's activities serve as an important tool for the Israeli embassies in their bilateral relations. MASHAV's activities contribute to promoting Israel's image as a country with something to give and that there is a desire to receive aid from it."<sup>5</sup>

### **Isolation and Enlightened Self-Interest**

Both Ben Gurion and Meir conceded that Israel did not hide hopes for, nor has the country shied away from positive political outcomes from aid programs. Indeed, D.V. Segre maintains that Israel's motivation toward aid to underdeveloped countries in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America has been "mainly, though not exclusively, political" and has fairly represented what Israeli officials called "enlightened self-interest."<sup>6</sup> Segre highlights the strong belief among early operatives and activists in Israel's aid efforts that international cooperation was an effective and flexible way to go about implementing change and spurring innovation, and that it was also "the best tool to with which to break political isolation." He highlights two specific episodes in Israel's early history that made Israelis conscious of the need to address political isolation.

In 1955, a first major gathering was held of ex-colonial, mostly new nations in Africa and Asia. The meeting, held in Bandung, Indonesia, was known as the Bandung Conference, and was attended by twenty-nine countries which represented over a quarter of the Earth's land and over 1.5 billion people. The conference aimed to promote

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<sup>5</sup> Oded, 2009

<sup>6</sup> Segre, D.V. "Israel and Development." *Israel in the Third World*. Ed. Michael Curtis, Ed. Susan Gitelson. Transaction Books. New Brunswick, NJ. 1976.

economic and cultural cooperation amongst Asian and African nations. As a new nation, situated at the crossroads of Africa and Asia, whose land had, until recently, been ruled by various colonial powers, Israel was a natural fit for such a forum. Arab states, though, blocked Israel's participation, branding the Jewish state as "a bridgehead of Western colonialism." (Segre, 11) The episode forced many Israelis to really begin to grapple with the extent of the country's isolation among an expanding and strengthening group of Third World nations.

The sting of isolation from Bandung was followed up by the Suez Crisis of 1956, in which Israel launched an offensive, along with Great Britain and France, in Egypt. The offensive, in response to Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal, served to further isolate Israel, and in a variety of ways. The episode was, of course, an intensification of tension between Israel and Arab states. By invading one of them, along with Britain and France, Israel looked more the alleged part of the Western colonial power that had kept the State from Bandung. The offensive drew the ire of the Soviet Union, who was working hard to gain a foothold in the Arab world, and it was launched without the knowledge or support of the United States. The U.S. threatened political sanctions against all three countries if they did not cease their operation, which they all did by spring of 1957. This was a moment of intense political isolation for Israel. Meir wrote, in My Life, about the lonely feeling of looking around the chamber at the United Nations and thinking, "we have no friends here." The need for alliances was glaring.

One positive effect of the 1956 war with Egypt was Israel's newly acquired access, through the Straits of Akaba, to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. This gave Israel a direct route to the developing nations of East Africa and Southeast Asia. The two



areas were still largely free of Arab influence and just emerging from colonial rule that had limited the presence of other foreign interests. Israel now recognized the need, and had the opportunity, to establish friendly and productive ties with the newly emerging states. With its own recent history, Israel could offer a successful example of development in independence, as well as specific technical aid that had no colonial or military strings attached. Segre writes, "Political necessity and national experience thus joined hands to promote the policy of international cooperation, linking one of the smallest countries in the world with some of the largest." (Segre, 11)

### **The Role of Zionist Ideology and Jewish Values**

It would be terribly incomplete, though, to characterize Israel's developmental aid programs as having been carried out merely for reasons of political expediency or positive public relations. It would be more appropriate to use the term "soft power," which was coined by Professor Joseph Nye, Jr., in 1990. Soft power is defined as the ability of a state to attract others by the legitimacy of its own policies and the values that underlie them.<sup>7</sup> "The truth is," wrote Meir, "that we did what we did in Africa not because it was just a policy of enlightened self-interest – a matter of *quid pro quo* – but because it was a continuation of our own most valued traditions and an expression of our own deepest historic instincts." (Meir, 319) Meir highlights, here, the notion that aid activities were not only prudent policy, but that they are an extricable part of what a Jewish state must be and do.

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<sup>7</sup> Fried, Eli. *Soft Power and Israel's Policy of Development Cooperation*. Israel and Africa. Hartog School of Tel Aviv University. 2006.

Indeed, both halves of the concept of “Jewish State,” represented by Jewish Scripture and tradition, and the Zionist movement, respectively, come with their own motivations to help. Judaism’s writings contain numerous calls for actions that would recognize others as worthy of help and lift them up.

The Jewish compulsion for just, merciful behavior towards others, which may be manifest in Israel’s efforts to provide developmental assistance to other countries, is founded in countless teachings. Perhaps the command, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” in Leviticus 19:17, best lays the foundation for Israel’s work with other countries who share its international neighborhood.<sup>8</sup> If it is too big a stretch to consider nations of sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America to be Israel’s neighbors, one could look to the injunction, found some thirty-six times in the Torah, to be attentive to the needs of the stranger. Exodus 23:9, for example, says, “Do not oppress the stranger, for you know the heart of the stranger. For you were once strangers in the land of Egypt.” While a failure to volunteer technical assistance to another nation may not be tantamount to oppressing its people, recognizing and attending to their needs may, indeed, be considered to be born of knowing the stranger’s heart.

In Deuteronomy 15:11, it is written, “For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and the poor, in the land.” The emphasis, in content and context, is on brethren, dwelling together in the Promised Land. Similarly, the idea of “neighbor” in the Leviticus 19 quote, and the stranger not to be oppressed in Exodus 23 both really refer to

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<sup>8</sup> German-American Rabbi Joachim Prinz, speaking at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, addressed Judaism’s idea of all humanity created as neighbors. “Neighbor is not a geographic term,” he said. “It is a moral concept. It means our collective responsibility for the preservation of man’s dignity and integrity.”

those living amongst the Israelites in their land. How then, might those verses come to help justify aid to foreign nations?

There are two ways that they translate into international cooperation. First, they all promote a basic idea of assisting those in need. Defining spheres of concern aside, they tell us that care does not stop where our selves end. Expanding them to include non-Jews who live in other lands may require additional texts. Before any of the aforementioned verses appear in Tanach (the Hebrew Bible), the following verses attest to the oneness and equality of all humankind. Genesis 1:27 recounts the creation of humans, saying “in God’s image, God created man.” Before there were nations or religions, there was only humanity and each of its members was the same, imbued with the same Divine qualities, deserving of the same treatment. Before any of the earlier particularistic verses address how Israelites should treat each other, Genesis 5:1 explains the purpose of all that follows: “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God, God made him.” Taken in conjunction with these very universal statements declaring the shared status of all humans, the specific instructions of Exodus 23, Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 15, and others, have certainly served to guide Judaism’s notion of principled giving, *tzedakah* (literally: righteousness) and the idea of *tikkun olam* (repair of the world).

*Tzedakah* is often used as a word for Jewish charity, but that would suggest it is something to be done out of love or a sense of benevolence. The word’s real meaning, righteousness, is a reminder that one need not be moved to give (though he or she may, indeed, be), one must simply give. Byron Sherwin writes, “Jewish tradition, from the Bible onward, considers *tzedakah* to be a legal duty, a social responsibility, a repayment

of a debt to God. Giving *tzedakah* is the fulfillment of a commandment rather than an act of optional benevolence.”<sup>9</sup>

The centrality of and obligation to *tzedakah* for Jews seem to make a Jewish nation fertile ground, indeed, for robust aid programs. Further, what foreign developmental aid seeks to achieve resonates with what Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides) calls the highest level of *tzedakah*. In his *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides writes a treatise on gifts for the poor, in which he outlines eight levels of *tzedakah*.

“The greatest level, higher than all the rest, is to fortify a fellow Jew and give him a gift, a loan, from with him a partnership, or find work for him, until he is strong enough so that he does not need to ask others (for sustenance). Of this it is said [in Leviticus 25:35], ‘and you hold him up as though a resident alien, let him live by your side.’ That is as if to say, ‘Hold him up,’ so that he will not fall and be in need.”<sup>10</sup>

Again, the content focuses on treatment of another Jew, but a principle of aiding another in a way that helps him to become self-sufficient is outlined. The principle is precisely the type of pragmatic Jewish idea to which Israel’s early political leaders could aspire, even as they were eschewing some elements of ritual and religious dogma. In the early years of Statehood, Israel was in a unique position, because of its own national experience of land development and assumption of independent status, to offer technical assistance that could help other newly independent countries, especially in Africa, to become self-sufficient. Interestingly, Israel was not at all well-positioned to give other

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<sup>9</sup> Sherwin, Byron. *In Partnership With God*. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1990), 112

<sup>10</sup> Translation: Meszler, Joseph; “Gifts for the Poor” (Williamsburg, VA. William and Mary, 2003)

gifts of aid that would have occupied lower rungs on Maimonides' scale of *tzedakah*.

The new, small state was thriving, but very much still concerned with financial and military survival, and was really only suited, at the time, to the kind of cooperative partnerships that would constitute the highest form of giving.

When Torah is read publically in Jewish congregations, the following, from Micah 4:2 and Isaiah 2:3, is recited: "*Ki mitzion teitzei torah, u'dvar Adonai mirushalayim* (From Zion, Torah shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem)." All of the words above, whether from "the" Torah (the five books of Moses) or from the wider body of Jewish religious thought and writing, such as that of Maimonides, can be said to comprise "torah," the full accumulation of Jewish thought and teaching. The State of Israel is the modern, sovereign presence of the people of Torah in Zion, the land of Israel, and centered in Jerusalem, where it has established its capital. MASHAV and Israel's developmental aid efforts – meant to teach others so that they can provide for themselves – can be viewed as a very real way that Torah goes forth from Zion, and God's word from its capital.

The State of Israel represents a return of the Jewish people to that land, where they were centered and were sovereign millennia earlier. Zionism, the movement to recreate a national home, contained elements of a character that would, in the eventuality of statehood, lend itself to the types of foreign assistance Israel has offered. Some of those elements can be understood by examining Zionism's roots and rationales. Others were more explicit.

In his Altneuland ("Old New Land") in 1902, Theodore Herzl, one of the fathers of modern political Zionism, expressed his desire not just for a nation, but for a nation

that could help other peoples overcome the same types of challenges that the Jewish people had faced. In the same volume on whose title page appeared the words, “Im tirtzu ayn zo agadah (If you will it, it is not a dream),” which became a rallying cry for the Zionist cause, Herzl wrote the following:

“There is still one other question arising out of the disaster of the nations which remains unsolved to this day, and whose profound tragedy only a Jew can comprehend. This is the African question. Just call to mind all those terrible episodes of the slave trade, of human beings who, merely because they were black, were stolen like cattle, taken prisoner, captured and sold. Their children grew up in strange lands, the objects of contempt and hostility because their complexions were different. I am not ashamed to say, though I may expose myself to ridicule in saying so, that once I have witnessed the redemption of the Jews, my people, I wish also to assist in the redemption of the Africans.” (Meir, 320-321)

Here, ancient and modern Jewish history – from slavery in Egypt to exile from Zion, to persecution in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe – combined to create a narrative that advocated for a modern state, but which also demanded, in Herzl’s eyes, that the state be a force for limiting, for others, the types of travails that were leading the Jews to yearn for and rebuild their land.

### Founding Principles and Foreign Cooperation

The dream of Herzl and others, of a sovereign Jewish state, became real on May 14, 1948, as the British Mandate in Palestine ended. The vehicle for announcing statehood was *Megilat HaAtzma'ut* (or *Hakhrazat HaAtzma'ut*), the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, which was read by David Ben Gurion that afternoon at the Tel Aviv Museum. The reading was the first broadcast of the new Kol Yisrael radio station.<sup>11</sup> *Megilat HaAtzma'ut* serves, to this day, as not only a foundational document for the existence of the nation, but, in the absence of a constitution, as a framework for governing it. The Declaration contains several passages which lend themselves to international cooperation and aid of other nations. Three paragraphs which reflect that follow, here.

“Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to reestablish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, *mapilim*<sup>12</sup>, and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring toward independent nationhood.”

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<sup>11</sup> The State of Israel Declares Independence” *mfa.gov.il*. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<sup>12</sup> *Mapilim* refers, according to Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to immigrants who came to the Land of Israel in defiance of restrictive legislation.

This third paragraph of the Declaration is intended to make the case for the Jewish People's longstanding connection to the land, and the nation building that has been done there, leading to and preparing for independence. It also begins to lay a foundation for what the new state will have to offer as a model of development. In the paragraph, those who are conceiving of the State of Israel, in the most literal and direct sense, are recognizing in themselves and in the new nation they are establishing the ability to "make it work." They are highlighting what their fellow citizens have learned and discovered in the areas such as agriculture and land management, civic administration, culture, economy, and defense. All of these would become key areas of development cooperation between Israel and other countries, with others recognizing what the framers of this document did: that Israel, small and new as it was, was excelling in creating and implementing the systems that could make a nation thrive.

"[The State of Israel] will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants: it will be based on freedom, justice, and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education, and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations."



In this paragraph of the document (paragraph 13), the framers are focused, largely, on the responsibilities of the new nation to its own inhabitants. They are establishing several important guiding principles that will serve as a framework for governing, especially in areas of civil rights and equality. The writers craft wording, based on certain sets of values, about the nation's internal responsibilities. There is, here, and acknowledgement and aspiration to the notion that the new state would answer not only to the will of its citizens, leaders, and partners in the world. It would also be held accountable to Jewish values and tradition, and would be guided, in some measure, by the millennia-old visions of the Prophets of Israel, whose messages of justice and peace inspire both Jews and non-Jews<sup>13</sup> to this day.

In declaring a commitment extending key rights and the fruits of progress to racial and religious minorities, as well as to women, the authors also begin to articulate a framework of core values within which all of the nation's policies – including foreign policy – are meant to be rooted. Though they make no mention of a development cooperation program, the values of the government being created would later be reflected in the activities of MASHAV, whose projects have been directed toward racially diverse, mostly non-Jewish audiences, with a special emphasis on empowerment of women. Finally, the paragraph also includes as a national principle a commitment to support of and cooperation with cooperative efforts of the international community. In describing its own particularistic values, the new nation commits itself to a role in achieving universalistic goals.

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<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 2:4 is engraved on the wall at Ralph Bunche Park, across the street from the entrance to the United Nations headquarters in New York, NY.

“We extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.”

The seventeenth section of *Megilat HaAtzma'ut* is explicit about Israel's intent to operate with concern for, and in conjunction with, the world around it. One can not help but note, in a study of Israel's development aid programs, the phrase “bonds of cooperation and mutual help” in the founding document of the nation. While Israel's founding document acknowledges the nation's capabilities in nation-building and advancement, and expresses a deep commitment to serving the country's own inhabitants, it also communicates an understanding of Israel's interdependence with other countries. To be fair, it was certainly not lost on the founders that the manner in which they communicated their intent to be an independent nation would be an important piece of strategy in the effort to quickly garner international support. In terms of self-interest, they also knew that a cooperative community of nations, especially in the Middle East, would be better for the statehood upon which they were embarking than would isolation and constant threat of aggression.

### **Same, But Different: A Shift in Animating Jewish Ideals**

In recent years, the Zionist motivations embodied by Herzl's words about Africa, as well as the fervor about Africa that characterized MASHAV's first fifteen years have

subsided. New generations, distanced from the Zionist struggle and ideals, and largely unconcerned with Africa, along with new Israeli and world realities, have pushed those toward the background. Jewish values, though, have become a more explicit reason given for Israel's cooperation and aid activities. One promotional video<sup>14</sup> released by MASHAV in 2009 mentions Israel's commitment to the value of *tikkun olam*, "repair of the world." *Tikkun olam* is a phrase that is first found in the Mishnah, where it refers to good public policy. It takes on new meaning in Lurianic Kabbalah of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, where it is used to describe individual acts of repair. A second video<sup>15</sup>, from 2010, references Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6, which call upon Israel "*l'or goyim*," to be a "light to the nations." In both Biblical contexts, the phrase relates to bringing right or redemption to the nations of the world, correcting ills "to the end of the earth." (Is. 49:6)

This more explicit use of Jewish religious language may, itself, represent a combination of factors in Israel's engagement as a source of aid to other nations. Reference to Jewish scripture and values may 1) be an effort to preclude skepticism about any political motivation for reaching out; 2) serve as a call to Jewish citizens to support MASHAV as an embodiment of their own personal beliefs; and may 3) be a reminder that when you are Israel, unique among the nations of the world, political and Jewish religious consideration can, should, and will be inextricably linked. Both *tikkun olam* and *l'or goyim* are particularly appropriate textual elements to employ in explaining the work of MASHAV. It roots the work of Israel, the political entity, in the longstanding tradition of Israel, the people, and highlights a key non-political reason for aid efforts – namely, that they are the natural, expected expression of Israel's state religion and reason for

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<sup>14</sup> "MASHAV The Israel National Agency for International Development Cooperation."  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1ISkjPQ\\_7g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1ISkjPQ_7g)

<sup>15</sup> "MASHAV." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6v9GSg9OTc>

existence. In other words, cooperative aid is integral to what it means to be Israel. Citing The Mishnah or Isaiah in official communication pieces of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is Israel being itself – the modern, national embodiment of Judaism. The words of Ambassador Gil Haskel, current head of MASHAV, sum up and state clearly the manifold goals, motivations, and outcomes of the agency’s work: “MASHAV is both a manifestation of Israel’s political will, foreign policy and development diplomacy, as well as of the commitment to the traditional Jewish ideal of *tikkun olam* – healing the world.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> MASHAV 2014 Annual Report

## **Chapter 2**

### **MASHAV's First Five Decades: Through Its Work With African Nations**

Early development and expansion of Israel's aid efforts were largely centered on the continent of Africa. The trajectory of the relationships with, and activity in, the African nations provides one major historical lens through which to view MASHAV and Israel's work in the cooperative aid space. In this chapter, we will trace the growth and development, and the deterioration, decline, and recovery of cooperative programs between Israel and many African states. Many historians divide the ongoing relationship into several distinct eras. For this purpose, we will use the framework provided by Naomi Chazan in her research.<sup>17</sup> She divides the relationship into four phases which span the years 1956 – 2006. MASHAV's most recent activity, since the end of Chazan's range, will be addressed elsewhere.

#### **Phase One: 1956-1973**

Chazan characterizes this era as the birth and growth of an all out effort in diplomacy and aid to a growing number of African nations, many of which were, like Israel, newly independent. Israel's effort, guided by Golda Meir in her role as Foreign Minister, was inspired, writes Chazan, by the variety of factors outlined in Chapter One, herein. These included the potential both for votes of support in the United Nations from Africa's new member nations, and for a security barrier that might serve as a buffer in a region otherwise filled with enemy Arab states. Factors encouraging Israel's efforts also

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<sup>17</sup> Chazan, Naomi. "Assessing the Past, Envisioning the Future." *Israel and Africa*. American Jewish Committee and Tel Aviv University. 2006.

included the economic opportunities associated with developing new markets for Israeli goods and new sources of raw materials for their production. Finally, Chazan notes what she calls “sentimental” reasons for Israel’s engagement, which include a desire for friendly relationships among the world’s nations, as well as specific Israeli identification with the struggles of the African nations for independence and for civic, infrastructural, and economic development.

The effort to establish ties began with a few visits and conversations, and a slow process of showing potential partners, who were just emerging from life under colonial rule, that Israel had no intention to rule and could offer relevant assistance with no strings attached. The slow, well-intentioned beginnings flourished quickly and, by the middle of the 1960s, Israel had diplomatic missions in thirty-two African states. During this phase, some 1800 Israeli experts served on the ground in Africa, providing hands-on assistance in areas such as agriculture, education, medicine, and community development. Infrastructure for aid also took shape in Israel with the opening of the Mount Carmel Training Center, in 1961. The goal of the center, now named after Golda Meir, was “to assist in the training of women engaged in community work in the newly emerging states in Africa and Asia.”<sup>18</sup> Israel’s African partners appreciated the direct, collegial, concrete and grassroots nature of the aid effort, and sent several thousand citizens to Israel, during these years, to participate in short-term technical training courses. The bilateral relationships (country-to-country) built during this seventeen-year phase seemed to satisfy everyone, and, aside from development, business relations were built, as well, with Israeli companies and entrepreneurs making some inroads in Africa. The ties also met Israel’s multilateral (countries-to-groups of countries/international organizations)

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<sup>18</sup> “About.” *mctc.gov.il*. The Gold Meir Mount Carmel Training Center.

needs, especially in the United Nations, where Israel's African allies formed an effective voting bloc against international efforts to isolate Israel.

This "heyday" of Israel-Africa relations began to encounter increasing difficulty during the years between the Six Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973). The African nations, increasingly removed from the idealism of newfound sovereignty, were now struggling through the realities and challenges of nation building. Facing real need, many, increasingly desperate, African leaders became increasingly receptive to promises of assistance from Arab countries and to Soviet coercion to develop those relationships. Burgeoning relations with Arab states came with pressure to limit or sever ties with Israel. Israeli confidence – or overconfidence – stemming partly from its decisive military victory and a tighter alliance with the United States, added to the strain on its relationships in Africa.

"To many Africans and Israelis, Israel appeared to be a major power in Africa, even though its global power position and its actual financial contribution to Africa were less than those of many other countries. This image was enhanced by stories in both the Israeli and African press about how much Israel was doing. While this reputation reassured the Israeli public about its great importance to Africa, it also created false expectations about Israel's actual power position."  
(Gitelson, 183)<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gitelson, Susan A. "Israel's African Setback in Perspective." *Israel in the Third World*. Ed. Michael Curtis, Ed. Susan Gitelson. Transaction Books. New Brunswick, NJ. 1976.

The erosion of Israel-Africa diplomatic relations, which paved the way for cooperative aid programs, began immediately, though slowly, after the Six Day War, with Guinea's decision to end ties after Israel's conquest of the Sinai. The break-up gained steam over the next five years, as Israel rejected African offers to try to mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict, as Arab influence increased in Africa, and as disillusionment with the West, with which Israel was associated, grew. The near-complete demise of official relations came in the midst of the Yom Kippur War, when the Organization for African Unity instructed its member states to cut ties with Israel. Only Malawi, Lesotho, and Swaziland maintained ties, at that time, while the vast majority, including closer allies such as Liberia and the Ivory Coast ended relations. The quick and definitive fall of the relationships that had been built brought about completion of Chazan's first phase in the Israel-Africa aid story.

### **Phase Two: 1973-1982**

The next phase, spanning approximately a decade, is characterized by fallout from the abrupt and unpleasant end to what had been both promising and fulfilling relationships. Many Israeli officials were offended by the abandonment of their African allies, with whom they had so zealously pursued relations and offered help. There was, for many, a sense that the whole adventure in Africa, including all the effort and resources, had been for naught. Others, though hurt, continued to believe in the mission. Golda Meir responded to critics who belittled Israel's efforts when African governments cut ties with Israel after the Yom Kippur War:



“...I honestly believe [it] to have been a profoundly significant, not to say unprecedented, attempt on the part of one country to better human life in other countries, and I am prouder of Israel’s International Cooperation Program and of the technical aid we gave to the people of Africa than I am of any other single project we have ever undertaken.” (Meir, 319)

The sting of betrayal was more powerful, though, and was compounded by the realities of a return to limited support in the international community. It prompted some punitive measures from the Israeli government, but did not signal a complete end to Israel’s involvement on the continent. In 1974, Israel strengthened ties with the apartheid regime of South Africa. In addition, Israel denied many requests for continued technical cooperation projects and, in general, cut the resources that it devoted to assistance on the continent. There were voices, according to Chazan, which advocated against punishment and in favor of repairing damaged relationships. The reasons for having initially established relations, they argued, had not changed, nor had the need for allies or their ability to help, but, in the short term, at least, those voices did not prevail.

Israel’s bitterness of having been abandoned in the international community, as well as its sense of isolation, was bolstered by the 1975 passage by the United Nations, of Resolution 3379, which equated Zionism with Racism. The resolution, pushed through by the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc, was partly an attack on capitalism and the West<sup>20</sup>, and partly an effort to bolster ties between Communist and Arab regimes. The

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<sup>20</sup> Lewis, Paul. “UN Repeals Its ’75 Resolution Equating Zionism With Racism.” *New York Times*, December 17, 1991.

resolution was supported by many of Israel's former allies in Africa, which further angered Israeli officials.

Contact with former friendly nations in Africa did not cease with the degradation of cooperation and status between Israel and the nations, but motives and expectations changed dramatically. The zeal and idealism that had characterized the first phase gave way to pragmatism and opportunism. That shift was reflected in a privatization of Israel-African relations, no longer led by experts in development, but by those with military wares to sell or with other business interests to nurture. In the void left by official diplomatic emissaries, private interests grew Israel's relationships on the continent in many ways. Israeli trade with Africa increased three-fold and, by the end of the 1970s, nearly 35% of all military goods exported by Israel were landing in Africa. Israeli activity on the continent could be seen focused not in the places where the few remaining diplomatic offices were located, but instead, in countries that were rich in minerals and other natural resources (e.g. Zaire, Angola, and South Africa), or that were militarily strained and, therefore, primed for profitable relations with a potential provider of needed equipment (e.g. Liberia and the Central African Republic).

The rupture of official ties with Africa in 1973 helped to affect a negative change in Israeli interest in African affairs. If not for the establishment of African studies departments at Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University, knowledge of Africa and the affairs of its countries may not have remained significant enough for continued involvement to be an option.

The rupture also did not put and end to Israel's efforts to provide cooperative technical assistance to other nations, but it precipitated major shifts in geographical focus.

First, the number of experts serving in Africa and the number of African trainees in Israel dropped very sharply, very quickly. According to D.V. Segre, in Israel in the Third World, Israel assigned 3,304 experts to do development work in Africa between 1958 and 1974. That is an average of about 200 per year, but in 1974, the number was 51. During that same seventeen year period, 7,627 Africans participated in short training courses in Israel, an average of almost 450 per year. In 1974, the number of African trainees on Israeli soil was 88.<sup>21</sup>

The decline in cooperative efforts centered in Africa served to broaden Israel's efforts in other parts of the world, especially in Latin America and in Asia. During the same seventeen-year period referenced above (1958-74), Israeli experts averaged 82 per year in Latin America, and 72 per year in Asia. In 1974, those numbers were 329 and 105, respectively. Trainees in Israel during that stretch averaged 210 from Latin America, and 425 from Asia, annually. In 1974, those numbers were 383 and 431, respectively. (Curtis, 23) The altruistic zeal that had been a part of the energetic and productive building of cooperative aid programs in MASHAV's early years was damaged by what some viewed as their failure, after the rupture of ties. It was also muted by coinciding economic, security, and diplomatic concerns. The pivot to other geographic frontiers, though, is evidence that the Israeli goal of using its own development experience to help others was still alive and well. New direction was needed, though, and while aid to Asia and Latin America took greater shape during this second phase, a new approach to aid in Africa would slowly emerge during the third.

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<sup>21</sup> The sudden decline in both numbers is even starker when the development of programs, during the early years of that stretch, is taken into account. The raw numbers for 1958 and 1959, for example, would be below average while ties were being initiated. The averages for the whole span, then, are low compared to raw numbers at the height of relations.

### **Phase Three: 1983-1992**

Two events that occurred in the 1970s, in concert with shifting conditions, helped to set the stage for a very slow rebuilding of diplomatic ties in Africa during the years 1983-1992. One of those was a series of carefully orchestrated meetings, in the mid-70s, between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the leaders of Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire, which signaled some continued interest on both sides. The other was the signing, in 1979, of a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. The agreement largely represented a collapse in the stated reasons for the abolition of ties in 1973, freeing African nations to relate, more publicly and more meaningfully, with Israel. In addition to these two contributors to resumption of relations, Israeli bitterness had softened over time, and African disappointment with the Arab world had grown. Worsening conditions in Africa also advocated for renewed openness to help from wherever it might come.

As with Golda Meir and others in the very beginnings of Israel's international outreach, certain key characters were of key importance to a resumption of ties with Africa. Namely, David Kimche, who was appointed Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the early 1980s, and Avi Primor, who served, at the time, as head of the Ministry's Africa desk. A rebuilding of diplomatic ties was a priority for them, and they arranged several meetings between high-ranking Israeli officials, especially Yitzhak Shamir and Ariel Sharon, and African counterparts. Shamir and Sharon served, then, as Foreign Minister and Defense Minister, respectively. That both ministries were active in the rebuilding was indicative of the new nature of ties between Israel and African nations.

Diplomatic efforts including technical assistance relationships, though again possible, did not proceed in the same, largely unfettered way that they had during the earliest phase. One reason for the new, reticent style and pace of diplomacy, was the far greater, still growing level of military and business relationships that had now characterized the Israel-Africa relationship for a decade. Those with economic interests on the continent were, understandably, not interested in restriction or supervision by Foreign Ministry efforts or personnel. They were, therefore, not always zealous about helping to provide contacts and make helpful introductions to those with whom they'd built relationships in the absence of the Foreign Ministry.

That tension – between competing Israeli interests on the continent – was one of several factors that caused reinstatement and rebuilding of relations to progress slowly. Another reason was the dramatic divergence between conditions and goals in Israel and Africa since ties had ruptured. Israeli development and modernization had rapidly continued, and Israel was “almost fully oriented toward the West,” socially, economically, and politically. (Chazan, 7) African nations, on the other hand, were increasingly suffering through poverty and from a marginalized status among world nations. Their needs had become greater and Israel's willingness to meet those needs was more restrained – due to previous rejection and to current reorientation of priorities – than it had been in the earliest phase.

The slow pace of diplomatic rebuilding was also due, in part, to two new relational issues. One of those was the individual process now required to reinstate relations with each African nation, where earlier relations had been easier to establish on an almost continent-wide level. The other was the set of complications that arose from

Israel's ongoing relations with South Africa, which were objectionable to many other nations on the continent. Where Israel had, during the earliest period of relations, been an attractive partner, free of colonialist taint, the Jewish state now carried with it an association with a form of oppression that was close to the hearts and homes of would-be African allies.

A final factor, worth noting, in relation to the sluggish pace of relational repair, is the chronological effect of increased distance from Herzl's writing, state building, and the early Zionist effort. The idealistic zeal with which Israelis had viewed the plight of Africa had subsided, as a result of shifts to other altruistic foci, and of having given way to the practicalities of the state of their own state.

#### **Phase Four: 1992-2006**

The fifteen-year period which began in 1992 saw a restoration of diplomatic ties between Israel and African countries that was swift and comprehensive, but also lukewarm and of limited consequence. Seventeen African nations reestablished ties with Israel from 1993 to 1994, and by the end of the decade, the total number of official relationships was forty, which was more than there had ever been during the heyday of Phase One.

Three specific factors paved the way to the widespread acceptance and reacceptance of Israel as a partner on the diplomatic front. The first was Israel's strides toward peace with the Arab world. The signing of the Oslo Accords, in 1993 and 1995, and of a peace treaty with Jordan, in 1994, removed the last of the barriers that resulted from divides between Israel and the Arab world. Second was the end of South Africa's

apartheid regime, and Israel's help, through Ambassador Alon Liel, of the new democratic government. Israel was now aligned and associated with apartheid's solution and successor, rather than with the discriminatory regime which had been detested throughout much of the continent. The third factor contributing to wholesale restoration of relations was the collapse of the Soviet Union and break-up of their Communist bloc. The result was a world with one clear superpower with whom Israel happened to be strong ally. It appeared beneficial, then, for any country who wished to be in the good graces of the United States to be a partner in good standing with its friend, Israel.

The restoration of official diplomatic relations is one thing, cautions Chazan, but a robust, committed relationship is quite another. She characterizes Israel's approach to its new and renewed relationships as somewhat detached and disinterested. At a time when Israeli relations were flourishing with India and China, as well as with several Arab nations, Africa was a relatively unattractive place to invest heavily, and that was reflected in Israel's approach. Embassies and consulates were established only in certain strategic African countries, with ambassadors and other envoys often serving a small region of countries, with non-resident status in most of them. Aid activities, though again trumpeted as a major instrument in Israel's African relations, were carried out on a small scale, with a small sliver of the Foreign Ministry's budget being dedicated to MASHAV, and small portion of that directed toward Africa. The contributions of Israeli NGOs (non-governmental organizations) such as Magen David Adom and Latet<sup>22</sup> made up an increasing portion of Israel's assistance efforts, and those efforts that were overseen by MASHAV were increasingly financed by third parties. That is, the Israeli government

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<sup>22</sup> Magen David Adom, like the American Red Cross, provides humanitarian aid and crisis response, and Latet is dedicated to justice through alleviation of poverty. ([www.mdais.org/en/](http://www.mdais.org/en/) and [www.latet.org.il/en/](http://www.latet.org.il/en/), respectively)

and Foreign Ministry continued to provide a channel through which cooperative aid could be affected, but did not prioritize the aid, itself, with significant financial resources. The scarcity of official aid resources was compounded by scant human resources, devoted by the Foreign Ministry, to efforts in Africa. Chazan notes that most diplomatic operatives who were working with Africa were merely working their way up to a better assignment, which resulted in a lack of long-term vision amongst them. Those who were not already looking elsewhere, but were deeply engaged in Africa found little support or bargaining power within the Ministry for bolstering its presence or impact. There was, overall, a lack in desire and wherewithal to conceive of and implement a coordinated, impactful, long-term strategy for Israel in Africa.

The lack of an official Israeli strategy, resulting from what Chazan calls “formal disinterest,” has defined this phase of relations. On an official level, Israel-African ties have been formalized and normalized, but in fact, Israel has incomplete knowledge and limited control over Israeli activity in Africa, which is dominated and driven by private interests and military establishment. Diplomacy and cooperative, developmental aid efforts are, at best, complementary to those defining facets of the relationship. At worst, they are disconnected, ineffective, and insignificant in scope.

In the next chapter, we will explore what MASHAV is currently doing, as well as where and how. This chapter’s eras of Israel’s cooperative relationships with African nations give us a better understanding of how the country’s original motivations to establish such ties were originally pursued, and how that course changed with new realities along the way. In it, much of Israel’s internal history is reflected. The idealism



of pioneers embarking on a national project is, at first, fully unleashed in the form of friendly, personal, grassroots relationships with as many cooperative partners as Israel, desperate for friends and certain it has something of value to offer, can find. That idealism must later be brought into balance with things like security concerns, defense of the legitimacy of Israel and Zionism, and national pride, all of which, when threatened, have challenged Israel's resolve, ability, and desire to be cooperative partner with its neighbors in the developing world.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **MASHAV Today: A Year of Cooperative Development**

“In 2014 MASHAV’s activities included a wide spectrum of international partnerships and programs for development. A total of 1,774 professionals from 92 countries participated in 79 activities offered in Israel, while 2,308 took part in 44 on-the-spot courses (in host countries) offered in a total of 22 countries. MASHAV experts were dispatched throughout the world on 67 short-term consultancies and humanitarian medical missions to 27 countries, and 9 long-term experts served in MASHAV’s demonstration projects around the world in 6 countries. In 2014, MASHAV signed cooperation agreements for development, and organized and participated in many international conventions around the world.” (MASHAV Annual Report, 2014)

Over the course of nearly sixty years of international development and cooperation, MASHAV has experienced shifts in programmatic foci, in availability of resources, public and political support, and relationships with its partners around the world. Those decades have also seen the development of new capacities with which Israel can provide assistance to other nations and their citizens, as well as shifts away from capability to help in other areas. In addition, lessons have been learned about what works: what kinds of partnerships truly help international counterparts to become self-sustaining, as well as what kinds of relationships yield a benefit to Israel. Such benefits might include, but are not limited to friendship, political support, economic opportunity, positive public relations, or military alliance. All of that experience and learning has

continued to shape MASHAV and the ways in which Israel strives to be a partner to other nations, and to the international community. This chapter seeks to serve as a snapshot - capturing the current state of Israel's foreign cooperation and aid programs. To the greatest possible extent, the chapter will explore what MASHAV is doing, along with any available measurables that might help to explain and how, why, where, and for whom it does its work. It will also explore how certain initiatives reflect Israel's unique history and its particular capabilities.

Over the years, MASHAV has honed the overarching principles which guide its work, and currently operates under the ten that follow below (each is followed by brief comment):

- 1. MASHAV activities focus on areas in which Israel has a comparative advantage and accumulated expertise.** As a young nation that has made great strides in various areas of development, Israel can serve as a "laboratory for development solutions" that has the potential to benefit other nations.
- 2. MASHAV focuses on human capacity building and training.** MASHAV tries to train trainers in order to deepen their impact and to empower more people to help nations achieve sustainability.
- 3. MASHAV focuses on technical assistance.** The agency provides experts who can share their knowledge through practical demonstration and grassroots partnership.
- 4. Aid Effectiveness: MASHAV operates according to international standards and principles.** Among them, demand driven programs; country program ownership; alignment to national development programs; creation of

**development partnerships; more coordination; and others.** MASHAV upholds standards agreed upon in various international summits on an array of development topics, including environment, sustainable development, aid effectiveness, financing for development, and effective development cooperation.

- 5. MASHAV believes in active consultation with local partners.** Specific solutions from one country or situation are not guaranteed to work the same way elsewhere. MASHAV endeavors to adapt the know-how that led to solutions to each particular environment and to the people who can sustain it.
- 6. Development Diplomacy.** Mashav is active in issues of development policy in the international community, with the hopes of helping to shape global development policy and of forging cooperative partnerships around the world.
- 7. Every program must be comprehensive, inclusive, and carried out in an integrative fashion.** MASHAV tries to implement its programs with a holistic approach that addresses various intertwined issues, such as gender and the environment.
- 8. MASHAV implements small-scale activities aimed at “bottom-up,” community-driven development, which are part of national programs.** Projects should fit in with other national initiatives of partner countries and should have potential to serve as catalysts for further development.
- 9. MASHAV seeks cooperative programs with other national and international development organizations.** In pursuit of fulfilling the Millennial Development Goals<sup>23</sup> and in preparation for other international standards, MASHAV tries to

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<sup>23</sup> “Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015,” [un.org/millenniumgoals](http://un.org/millenniumgoals).

create more bilateral and multilateral partnerships in areas of Israeli expertise.

Partnering with other government agencies, NGOs, development banks, international organizations, and other can offer cost-sharing opportunities that leverage MASHAV's experience in order to make possible more dramatic impacts and greater success.

**10. Development cooperation can and should be used to forge bonds of peaceful cooperation between Israel and its neighbors.** The agency engages in bilateral and regional programs of cooperation and seeks to raise its activity level in the Middle East, without constraint from political realities.

From within the framework of those principles, MASHAV works to participate in and be a leader in the international development community. The first principle, along with OECD recommendations and DAC best practices for maximizing effectiveness and minimizing fragmentation of aid, drives MASHAV to focus its various programs in several priority sectors:

- Food security and agriculture
- Education
- Medicine and public health
- Community development
- Innovation and entrepreneurship for development
- Gender equality and women's empowerment
- Regional planning and rural/urban development
- Research and development
- Emergency planning and response
- Humanitarian aid

In each of these sectors, MASHAV conducts a variety of programs, of which various examples – most taken from MASHAV's 2014 Annual Report, with others from

media sources – will be highlighted throughout this chapter. They may include individual training or group courses in Israel, individual training or group courses abroad, or short-term or long-term consultancies in which Israeli experts operate abroad. Certain sectors naturally lend themselves to certain kinds of activities. For instance, humanitarian aid is almost always pursued in the form of a consultancy abroad, as the aid must be where it is needed. Education, on the other hand, can be addressed, in some way, by all of those formats.

MASHAV offered 79 training courses or individual trainings in Israel for 1,774 participants from 92 different countries. Forty-four such courses were offered abroad, or “on the spot.” Those courses, offered in 22 different countries drew 2,308 participants, with greater numbers of local trainees having the opportunity to partake when travel to Israel is not required. Examples of MASHAV training courses follow.

### **“On The Spot” Training**

The largest number of training courses abroad was in the area of agriculture, followed by small and medium enterprises. On the spot training can be important in these areas because it maximizes the extent to which local conditions are addressed in the course of the project. Being on location lets farmers learn on their own soil, and with more of their workers. The resources for training also can help to determine where the cooperative work takes place. The greatest number of these trainings, sixteen of them, took place in Latin America and the Caribbean. Those are the greatest distance from Israel, so it is often more efficient use of limited Israeli and partner budgets for one trainer to make the trip there than for several trainees to travel to Israel. Twelve on the

spot trainings were held in Asia and Oceania. Nine courses were held in Central Europe and Eurasia, and seven in Africa.

The 44 courses offered included trainings in Ghana for those who work in early childhood education. The series of courses endeavored to train teachers in an approach called “learn through play,” and training school coordinators and faculty of the local teacher training college to support the teachers and continue their training. In Jordan, three agricultural trainings took place as part of an ongoing joint cooperation project between MASHAV and JICA (Japan’s International Cooperation Agency) in areas of fertilization, irrigation, organic farming, and post-harvest care. The MASHAV-JICA agreement began in 2008 for three years and has, after positive early results and promising opportunities, been renewed through at least 2015. It provides a good example of Israel’s engagement with third parties to help in provision of aid that the Israeli budget, alone, can not finance. It also capitalizes on the expertise and the diplomatic relations of two nations, rather than one, to provide for the potential of more comprehensive assistance to a greater number of recipient countries.

### **Training in Israel**

MASHAV offers a wide array of human capacity building trainings in Israel. Often, they are developed and implemented with partner governmental and non-governmental organizations. For instance, most of MASHAV’s trainings in the agricultural realm are offered in association with the Center for International Agricultural Development Cooperation (CINADCO), a part of the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. MASHAV offered 34 courses at CINADCO’s expertise and training

facility in Beit Dagan, where expert trainers can give trainees direct access to successful Israeli technology and technique. Some of the courses, covering more generally applicable material, were offered to international audiences from various other countries, while some were specifically tailored to one trainee country or region. These trainings were attended by 575 participants from over 60 countries – nearly one-third of the nations of the world.

MASHAV also has its own training center, the Golda Meir Mount Carmel Training Center (MCTC), in Haifa. The MCTC was established in 1961 with an emphasis in grassroots training and empowerment of women. In 2014, the MCTC hosted 20 different training programs, attended by 479 professionals from 62 countries. 72% of the participants at the MCTC's offerings were women. MASHAV's trainees are not Israeli and not likely to speak Hebrew, so the ability to present information in appropriate languages is a key to their effectiveness. Various courses during the year were offered in Spanish, French, Russian, Arabic, and English.

Two of MCTC's highlights of 2014 were courses that affected Israel's immediate surroundings and closest neighbors. One was the latest in a series of programs entitled, "Women Building a New Reality," which bring together Palestinian and Israeli women for strategic planning. This was the 34<sup>th</sup> installment of "Women Building a New Reality," which began in 2003. Since then, over 1000 Palestinian and 400 Israeli women have participated together in the programs.

The other Middle East high point was the "Regional Workshop on Management of Health Systems," which was offered for professionals in health systems from Jordan and from the Palestinian Authority. The workshop was a joint effort of MASHAV and an



Israeli NGO called the Green Land Society for Health Development, headquartered in Hebron.

One other MCTC highlight from 2014 was a program for judges from around the world, aimed at addressing human trafficking. “International Seminar for Judges: The Critical Role of the Judiciary in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings,” was a joint effort of MASHAV, the Israeli Ministry of Justice, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Thirty-seven participants from 14 countries – spanning five continents – participated, and learned about Israel’s relevant successes while sharing ideas for cooperation in addressing these international issues.

### **Consultancies Abroad**

The third major area of development cooperation projects includes those that take the form of short-term or long-term consultancies abroad. Consultancies generally reflect a combination of services provided by Israeli experts and training of locals to sustain and expand projects that are begun together. Israeli experts worked in nine long-term consultancies, all of which were agricultural in nature, in six different countries. There were sixty-seven short-term consultancies, in twenty-seven countries. The vast majority of these (53) were also agricultural, with the second most (9) in medicine and public health. A highlight among these was a 10-day “eye camp” in Zambia. In response to a 2013 fact-finding mission on the rate of occurrence of eye disease, two leading Israeli ophthalmologists, along with Israeli nurses and local staff, performed eye screenings for over 1000 people. The team also performed several cataract surgeries while they were

there. The project was a joint initiative of MASHAV and Zambia's Honorary Consul in Israel, and follows a model of eye health programs that Israel routinely conducts with partnering host countries.

The short-term consultancies, along with trainings in Israel, provide some of the few opportunities Israel has to “give back” to countries, from North America and the European Union, which are often donor countries to Israel. During 2014, MASHAV coordinated a consultancy in France in management, and one in Spain in the area of community development. The United States, the Netherlands, Canada, and the United Kingdom all participated in one training in Israel on gender issues. Italy and Switzerland participated in one agricultural training, each, in Israel.

### **Humanitarian Aid**

One of the other forms of cooperative aid, coordinated by MASHAV, which falls under the heading of consultancies, is humanitarian assistance, often in emergency situations. Israel has achieved some notoriety, in recent years, for its efforts in this area. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (2005), for example, IsraAid, Israel's largest NGO, which often leads disaster response efforts with MASHAV's organizational support, sent a team of search and rescue divers and medical staff to Louisiana. Team members assisted with recovery of victims, administration of emergency medical aid, pet rescue and more. The response was acclaimed by American leaders. “Rep. Bobby Jindal (R-La.) said, ‘The work being done by IsraAID and their team members to help the people of Louisiana is greatly appreciated.’ Rep. Charles Melancon (D-La.) said the Israelis

‘performed courageously in south Louisiana when we needed them most.’”<sup>24</sup> Israel’s responses to Katrina and massive earthquakes in Haiti (2010) and Nepal (2015) are among the many episodes that have earned Israel a reputation as a leader in disaster response. There were several places where Israel’s quickly mobilized assistance was called for in 2014. Efforts following the 2013 typhoon in the Philippines continued into the early part of the year. After unprecedented rains and flooding in Serbia and Bosnia, the Israeli embassy in Belgrade, at the instruction of Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, airlifted emergency supplies into areas that were cut off by flooding. Later in the year, MASHAV coordinated shipment of emergency supplies to Paraguay after that country experienced massive, destructive flooding that forced over 300,000 citizens from their homes.

Most prominent among Israel’s various humanitarian aid efforts of 2014, though, was assistance that it provided during the Ebola virus outbreak in the West African nations of Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire, and Liberia. MASHAV coordinated a variety of responses to the crisis. Early on, Israel shipped emergency medical equipment and medicine to Sierra Leone, and protective gear to the headquarters of the African Union. In October, the Foreign Ministry, through MASHAV, convened the Israel Forum to Combat Ebola. In conjunction with the Israeli Fund for UNICEF<sup>25</sup> and SID-Israel<sup>26</sup>, the forum called upon all Israeli sectors, organizations, and the government to commit to battling Ebola with their resources. IsraAid set up field hospitals in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. MASHAV coordinated deployment of experts whose focus in these

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<sup>24</sup> “Israel Humanitarian Operations: Aid to Hurricane Katrina Victims.” *Jewishvirtuallibrary.org*. September 26, 2005

<sup>25</sup> UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund (previously U.N. International Children’s Emergency Fund)

<sup>26</sup> Israel branch of the Society for International Development

“Hospitals of Hope,” was isolation, containment, and treatment of infected individuals, as well as training of local health workers to deal with cases effectively. IsraAid founding director said, of the need for Israel’s help, “Ebola is a threat to global security, and we need to be in the front lines and demonstrate that Israelis and Jews care about the world. We can have a real impact on this situation.”<sup>27</sup> IsraAid was also put at the forefront of international efforts to address the psychosocial effects of the outbreak.

“Dealing with the psychosocial trauma is critical to addressing the Ebola outbreak,” Shachar Zahavi, IsraAID’s founding director, told JTA in an interview. “A major deterrent to treatment is that people don’t trust one another. If you don’t feel well, your family immediately hides you and you then infect your entire family. We’re trying to teach police, social workers, health workers and teachers how to deal with people who are afraid of them — and how to manage their own stress and anxiety.”<sup>28</sup>

In addition to its work in the countries at the heart of the outbreak, Israel also helped to train neighboring countries in strategies for prevention. Dr. Roei Singer of the Division of Epidemiology in the Israeli Ministry for Health, was one of the experts invited by the government of Cameroon to train professionals there. Singer and others ran seminars for hospitals, airport workers, police and fire personnel, and health workers on personal protection, isolation of patients, and border measures for disease control. Finally, Israel became the largest donor, per capita, and 10<sup>th</sup> largest, overall to the U.N.’s

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<sup>27</sup> Wirschafter, Jacob. “Israel Prepares to Fight Ebola in West Africa,” [www.jewishjournal.com](http://www.jewishjournal.com). October 14, 2014

<sup>28</sup> Heilman, Uriel. “Jews Fight Ebola in Africa From the Head Down.” *The Times of Israel*. November 14, 2014

Ebola Response Multi Partner Trust Fund, when it pledged 8.75 million USD in late 2014.<sup>29</sup> Israel directed that a portion of its donation be earmarked for UNICEF to be used for the benefit of children affected by the virus. Israel's financial commitment to the Ebola response effort may have been inspired by a combination of factors, both altruistic and self-interested. In the case of the latter, the crisis was a high profile, international issue receiving large amounts of press coverage. Intense involvement on Israel's part may have been more likely to yield positive public relations results. Israel's stake in the issue was also one of its own safety. Of the top twenty donor nations to the trust fund, Israel is one of the two closest, geographically, to the outbreak, and receives a relatively large number of African travelers and refugees. Containment of Ebola's African spread, then, is clearly an Israeli public health issue. Altruistically, Israel has a long-standing emotional investment in Africa and felt a need to play a significant role in limiting devastation there. Additionally, Israel's in-kind assistance on the ground gave it a vantage point from which to see the real need for its help. All of these factors, combined with others, likely contributed to Israel's proportionally oversized response.

### **Ebola Efforts as Exemplary of Israeli Aid Characteristics**

Israel's disaster response efforts offer effective examples of several qualities typical of its aid efforts. First, they capitalize on Israeli expertise of all kinds and from all sectors – private, public, academic, etc. Second, they leverage the financial resources of others to maximize the impact of the expertise. In the case of disaster response, it is often the financial resources of IsraAID, largely supported by American Jewish institutions and Federations, which MASHAV is positioned to put to the highest and best use on the

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<sup>29</sup> UNDP Multi Party Trust Fund fact sheet - <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/EBO00>

ground. Third, Israel's activities are in coordination with other helping countries and with multinational organizations. In West Africa, Israel coordinated, especially, with the World Health Organization, Doctors Without Borders, and the International Red Cross. Last, the aid efforts are designed not only to provide relief, but also to leave the host community better trained to carry the work forward. Experts sent by IsraAID, through MASHAV, didn't bring their support staffs with them from Israel. They hired and trained teams on the ground, increasing the effectiveness of aid efforts by limiting national, cultural, and linguistic gaps between – in this case – patient and care provider, and by adding to the number of well-trained operatives in place even after the experts return home. The one piece of the Ebola effort that is not particularly characteristic of Israel's aid is leading the way financially in the Ebola trust fund. Israel's commitment of financial resources to cooperative development has lagged, and is one of the marks against the country's initiatives, as Israel is ranked low among developed countries in the percentage of GDP earmarked for development aid. This will be explored further in a later chapter, but limited budget is an issue MASHAV has had to work through, and with which Israel has to contend in the international aid arena.

### **Development Agreements and Dialogues**

Each year, Israel negotiates development agreements and conducts dialogues on cooperation with other countries and with international agencies. The agreements are developed with the aim of capitalizing on the abilities of each party to the pact in a way that maximizes effectiveness of aid, and the dialogues are designed to help participants establish best practices for the conception and implementation of aid initiatives, in

keeping with goals that have been set by the international aid community. During 2014, MASHAV completed a number of deals and was a catalyst or participant in several dialogues, both of which are included in the following examples.

MASHAV worked with its partners in the OAS (Organization of American States) to sign an agreement for the promotion of cooperation on a wide array of issues, including disaster mitigation, gender equality, security, and development. Also affecting Israel's relations with OAS, MASHAV completed an agreement with YABT (The Young Americas Business Trust) to continue working together on training young people from Latin America in areas of business development and entrepreneurship with the hope of supporting "the OAS Member States in reproducing locally Israel's successful story of fostering innovation..."<sup>30</sup>

Israel also completed several agreements with U.N. agencies, including one with UNFPA (the U.N. Population Fund), which is concerned with reproductive health around the world. The agreement creates a framework within which Israel will aid Turkmenistan, by sending experts to conduct seminars for local gynecologists, in areas regarding screening and treatment of cervical cancer.

In Ethiopia, Israel signed an agreement with UNDP (the U.N. Development Program) for the transfer of knowledge in areas including agriculture, gender mainstreaming, and private sector development. The focus of the agreed upon services is to add value to agricultural production which, in turn, increases capacity for entrepreneurship and growth of other private ventures.

Another example of an agreement with a U.N. agency is the one signed between Israel UNODC (the U.N. Office on Drug and Crime). Its aim is to consolidate efforts in

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<sup>30</sup> MASHAV 2014 p. 11

combating human trafficking and violence against women, preventing drug abuse, and promoting gender equality and personal security. Agreements like this one build on Israel's longstanding commitment to women's empowerment. That commitment is evident in the history and programs of the Golda Meir Mount Carmel Training Center and in much of its work around the world.

A final example of collaboration with the U.N. is the agreement signed with the UNCCD (the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification). Here, the UNCCD will work to find ways for Israel to transfer its scientific and technical expertise in land adaptation and resilience. This will help developing countries which are part of the UNCCD to combat or reverse land degradation and help ensure food and water security for those countries. Here, the Zionist experience, Israel's building of the land, during pre-state and post-independence periods, is recognized as a model that can light the way for other nations.

While many of Israel's development agreements are negotiated and signed with international organizations, some are created in partnership with one or more other countries, specifically. In 2014, several of these agreements were completed, including an agriculture and human resource development agreement with Thailand, which will also include assistance to Laos, Burma, and Cambodia. Another bilateral agreement was struck with Rwanda, where Israel will help to increase agricultural capacity through training in research and development methods, among other things. Several development dialogues took place with other countries, as well. One example was with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Georgia. Israel and Georgia sought to map out a future for their cooperative development relationship, through which more than 1000 Georgians



have trained since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries, in 1992. Prior to the end of the year, the Georgian ministry sent a delegation to Israel to explore possible next directions for the relationship.

In my opinion, the most interesting of the bilateral dialogues, turned agreement, is one that was completed with Moldova. The memo of understanding that the two nations signed in November of 2014 calls for Israel to establish lab for molecular biology of GMO (genetically modified organisms) by MASHAV, for Moldova's agency for quarantine and disinfection of products. MASHAV will be responsible for providing and installing all equipment, and for training local professionals on its use. The project is intended to improve Moldova's agricultural exports and to help the country meet European Union standards. The agreement is interesting in a number of ways, including the highly technical nature of the assistance, as well as the fact that it is being provided to a European nation, albeit the poorest on the continent, that is party to agreements and organizations of many developed, Western nations.

Most interesting about this agreement, though, is what it represents, historically, for Jews and for Israel. In the late, 19<sup>th</sup> century, around the time that Zionism was emerging as a modern political movement, the capital of Moldova, Kishinev (Chisinau), was home to a large number of Jews, who comprised 43% of the city's population. In 1903 and then, again, in 1905, the city was the site of infamous pogroms – anti-Semitic attacks – that left 43 and 19 people dead, respectively, and many more injured or displaced. The pogroms in Kishinev, where Israel's development agreement with Moldova was signed, were a major factor prompting large numbers of Jews to emigrate from the Russian Empire, with Palestine as one of their major destinations. The Kishinev

pogroms also added fuel to the fire of Zionism, helping prompt the formation of early Zionist self-defense groups. In a 2003, article in *The Forward*, J.J. Goldberg wrote the following:

“Provoked by a medieval blood libel, flashed around the globe by modern communications, Kishinev was the last pogrom of the Middle Ages and the first atrocity of the 20th century. The event, and the worldwide wave of Jewish outrage that it evoked, laid the foundations of modern Israel, gave birth to contemporary American-Jewish activism and helped bring about the downfall of the czarist regime.”<sup>31</sup>

There can be no doubting that the tragedy that befell the Jewish community of Kishinev in 1903 deeply influenced the course of the next 111 years for that community, to the moment of the signing of this agreement. Thanks largely to development that resulted from an urgent necessity to create its own viable state, for its own protection from the arbitrary and brutal violence that it faced in Kishinev and elsewhere, Jews are now in a position to assist their old home with unique expertise. This is one snapshot of the special story and circumstances that lead to Israel’s speedy and successful development, which connects it to people everywhere who are struggling and that has enabled it to be a force of surprising magnitude for advancement of human capabilities around the world.

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<sup>31</sup> Goldberg, J.J. “Kishinev 1903: The Birth of a Century” *The Forward*. April 4, 2003.

### **Launch of Grand Challenges Israel Contest**

In early 2014, MASHAV, along with the Prime Minister's office and the Office of the Chief Scientist in the Ministry of Economy, launched a national competition, called Grand Challenges Israel. Modeled after a similar contest in Canada which began in 2010, Grand Challenges sought to spur innovation among Israeli researchers, entrepreneurs, and companies, that might help to solve problems of health, safety, agriculture, or water in other parts of the world. Ten winners would receive funding of up to NIS 500,000 (about 130,000 USD) to bring new helping technologies to fruition. Of the program, Minister of Economy, Aryeh Deri, had this to say:

“This exceptional program helps the weakest sectors. Most of the world's population suffers from lack of food and access to fresh water and increased exposure to disease. We invite Israeli entrepreneurs to develop technologies that will improve the quality of life of billions of people around the world.”<sup>32</sup>

One of the 2014 Grand Challenges winners was a company called MobileODT, which produced a way to use mobile phone technology to detect cervical cancer in women. One can quickly recognize the benefits of and opportunities for application of such an innovation, especially in concert with the aforementioned agreement with Turkmenistan to help that country's medical community screen for and treat the disease. This is also another way that Israel may reap benefits from its work to better the lives of people in other countries. Economy Ministry Chief Scientist, Avi Hasson, said that the contest was also a way to highlight Israel's culture of innovation and add to the world's

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<sup>32</sup> Shamah, David. “Contest spurs tech companies to take on world's ‘grand challenges’” *The Times of Israel*. July 22, 2015.

perception of its leadership in research and development. Hasson highlighted the contest's potential as enlightened self-interest, saying, "A combination of doing good by helping resolve global challenges and establishing a foothold in new markets with unique consumer demands for the Israeli industry can bring Israeli entrepreneurs vast new business opportunities." (Shamah, *ibid.*) The contest is being held again, in 2015, with the hope that it will become an annual event.

### **Conferences**

The Grand Challenges contest relates to another of MASHAV's functions during the year, which was to spur innovation through collaborative thought. To this end, the agency organized and participated in a number of conferences. One of them, the ID2 International Conference, was organized by the Schusterman Foundation and co-sponsored by MASHAV and Tel Aviv University. ID2 brought together 70 young Jewish innovators, entrepreneurs, and development professionals from Israel and around the world for a three-day conference on how best to use Israeli technologies and entrepreneurship to address world problems. MASHAV personnel also participated in and presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Arid Regions, Deserts, and Desertification. Held at Ben Gurion University, this conference involved over 500 participants from around the world.

A final, important example of MASHAV's conference initiatives was the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Development Day Conference, coordinated by MASHAV, the Society for International Development, and Tel Aviv University. The goal of the gathering was not only to initiate new conversations and debate about new directions for international aid,

but also to stimulate new partnerships between the government, the private sector, and the general public for cooperative aid efforts. A conference like this one is important for MASHAV and for Israeli aid efforts because it increases awareness, across various sectors, of what Israel does, has done, and can do, and has the potential to build allies that might support prioritization of international aid. Even if relationships built through this type of collaboration do not, in the end, yield support for greater monetary support of MASHAV in the national budget, they do open new possibilities for the leveraging of the resources of other organizations and sectors, which has made much of MASHAV's success possible, especially since budgets were slashed following 1973.

### **Delegations**

Each year, MASHAV welcomes official delegations from other countries, to Israel, with opportunities for showcasing its activities and other highlights of Israeli society that might be beneficial in each visiting group's country of origin. In 2014, these delegations included a group of professional journalists from India and a delegation of progressive Sri Lankan farmers, both of which were exposed to innovative Israel agricultural technologies. A group of experts from Vietnam came to Israel to do a study on smart cities to assist them in their own urban planning efforts. National leaders visited, as well, with the President of Peru coming to spend time with a group of thirty Peruvians who were in Israel on an 11-month academic and practical course in agriculture, co-coordinated by MASHAV and CINADCO. The Kenyan Foreign Minister, similarly, visited to mark the end of a course for Kenyan educators. These official visits help leaders and citizens of other nations learn about what being in positive

relationships with Israel can mean for them. They contribute to continued development collaboration and positive public relations by cultivating personal relationships with Israel among decision-makers in host countries.

### **Shalom Clubs and Magazine**

MASHAV attempts to maintain long-term relationships not only with other countries and organizations, but also with the participants of its programs. It operates over 70 Shalom Clubs, alumni organizations, around the world. The clubs offer activities and communications that help alumni keep their training current, and that help alumni connect with one another and share ideas to benefit their home countries. The clubs also help Israel maintain positive, personal relationships with involved members of communities around the world.

In 2014, Shalom Club highlights included an event for over 130 alumni in the northern part of Ghana. In collaboration with the agriculture faculty at the Kwame N'krumah University of Science and Technology, the gathering included lectures from Israeli experts, who were in Ghana to conduct other trainings, on innovations in citrus farming. In Kazakhstan, a joint meeting of the Shalom Clubs of that country and Kirgizstan, was held, enabling the recent graduates – over 350 since 2008 – of MASHAV programs from both countries, to meet each other, as well as representatives of agriculture companies with whom they could potentially do business. In Paraguay, the Shalom Club partnered with another organization to provide critical school, medical, food, and shelter supplies to a remote indigenous village. The program – in which

recipients of Israeli aid are now organized to provide aid, themselves – has been going on for sixteen years, and the club now plans to expand it to other villages.

In addition to the Shalom Clubs, Shalom Magazine is published yearly, by MASHAV. It is produced in English, Russian, French, Spanish, and Arabic, for the benefit of MASHAV alumni around the world. The magazine intends to maintain the connection between alumni and Israel, and to provide continuing education on current issues and modern solutions in development.

### **How Do You Measure, Measure a Year?**

The example projects in this chapter reflect a small sampling of MASHAV's 200-plus projects, conferences, negotiations, and other programs in 2014. The chapter is intended to give a sense of the kinds of initiatives that MASHAV undertakes, as well as where, how, and what forms those take. It may help to give the reader a sense, too, of some of the ways that the office works to maximize its impact despite ongoing budgetary challenges, which are addressed in some detail in the following chapter. The activity in 2014 was generally similar in scale to other recent years, though there is a general decline in the numbers of activities, especially in training activities held in Israel and short-term consultancies abroad. On-the-spot trainings experienced a precipitous decline between 2012 and 2013, but held steady during 2014, as did the number of long-term consultancies. The comparative numbers can be seen in the chart below, which is based on numbers from MASHAV's Annual Reports for the years 2011-2014.

Year	Training Courses in Israel	On-The-Spot Courses Abroad	Short-term Consultancies and Humanitarian Aid Abroad	Long-Term Consultancies Abroad
2011	120	72	110	8
2012	117	73	98	8
2013	93	42	82	8
2014	79	44	67	9

There are a number of possible reasons for the fluctuation and, in general, the decline in the numbers of MASHAV's projects over this recent stretch of years. Many of them are discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Among those possibilities are budget decline which, with the exception of a very few years, the agency has dealt with consistently since the rupture in relations with Africa in the early 1970s. Another potential contributor to a change in numbers is fluctuation in demand for the various types of help Israel is equipped to offer, and a coinciding and/or resulting shift in foci of activity – for instance, from small-scale, bilateral trainings to multilateral cooperative projects spurred by international commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. Finally, changing leadership within MASHAV may have contributed, as 2014 saw a new head of MASHAV. With transition, some production may have lagged and the year would have fallen within a period of reevaluation of the agency's work and whether resources should be used differently. Decline in MASHAV's resources and in Israel's contribution to international aid efforts has been an ongoing pattern, over the last several decades, and will be an area that increasingly requires attention now that Israel is a member of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), as discussed in the following chapter. There is much, from 2014, of which Israel and



MASHAV can be proud, and which had positive impacts on people the world over, but constant evaluation is necessary for Israel to maintain a handle on its intent, and the extent to which its expenditures and activity are fulfilling it.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Reflections and Conclusions on Israel as Light to the Nations Through Aid**

In fifty-seven years since its founding, MASHAV, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, has provided training to more than 270,000 individuals from over 130 countries, both in Israel, and on the trainees' home soil. Additionally, it has coordinated the development of dozens of demonstration projects around the world.<sup>33</sup> Beginning these efforts less than a decade into its own existence as a nation, and maintaining them in the face of changing political and economic realities at home and abroad, Israel has shown a clear commitment to certain principles on which it was founded. Among these are ideals that were articulated in Megilat HaAtzma'ut, the declaration of Israeli independence. These include a desire to spread blessing of progress, to work for justice and peace as they are envisioned in prophetic Judaism, to promote equal rights, to support the United Nations, and to be a good neighbor in a Middle East in which all benefit from progress. Other ideals, such as concepts of *tzedakah*, *tikkun olam*, and treatment of the stranger are deeply held in Jewish tradition. These are articulated more fully in Chapter One.

While Israel's outreach through MASHAV has been motivated by enduring principles, it has also been a project of enlightened self-interest, seeking to limit its political isolation and maximize support from others at the international level. Throughout its existence, support for Israel at the United Nations, for instance, has almost always been in short supply. In her memoir, Golda Meir acknowledges looking around

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<sup>33</sup> "About MASHAV." *mfa.gov.il*. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

the room at the UN and noticing a severe lack of friends during her tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs. This was very close to the same time that she made her first, historic visit to Africa, during which she began building relationships with heads of state there. Did an awareness of Israel's loneliness in the world contribute to an enhanced predisposition to hit it off with the leaders she met there in Africa? Not only am I sure that the answer is yes, but I'm rather certain she would admit as much. No matter how strongly they felt about Israel's responsibility to help others, early leaders such as Meir and David Ben Gurion, anxious for Israel's footing to be strengthened, were hopeful for any benefits Israel might receive from seeing those responsibilities through.

### **Facing Detractors**

Recent leaders have grappled with similar, sometimes more highly politically charged questions regarding motives behind Israel's swift and, often quite impactful, disaster response programs around the world, some of which are highlighted in Chapter Three. There are critics who accuse Israel of rushing to aid in disaster settings as a way of shifting public focus away from issues at home, including accusations of human rights violations. Responding to a Tweet from the Israeli Foreign Ministry, announcing that Israeli aid teams were on the ground to help in Nepal, Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch tweeted the following: "Easier to address a far-away humanitarian disaster than the nearby one of Israel's making in Gaza. End the blockade!"<sup>34</sup> Roth, and others like him, takes far too narrow a view of a nation when they judge it, at every moment, by its handling of only one issue. Rarely, if ever, does a

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<sup>34</sup> Roth, Kenneth (kenroth). April 26, 2015, 9:59 AM. Tweet.

nation have the freedom to focus in that way. Even as it offered assistance to the Nepalese, Israel surely did not forget the situation in Gaza. Thank goodness that Israel and other helping nations managed a broader view of the moment in history than did Roth.

Modern voices from Israel's leadership have acknowledged that the nation seeks to gain from its efforts, but also explain that benefit of, and responsibility for, action are much more complex than creating diversions from problems. Former Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, speaking after an Israeli team provided assistance after a 2015 earthquake in Nepal, called their work "the most effective kind of diplomacy." He added, "In crafting a country's image, nothing is more effective than providing aid."<sup>35</sup> Lieberman also stated that all advanced countries have a duty to help, and noted that Israel has always rushed to aid those in need, even if their relationship with Israel is not a warm one. Lieberman's comments echo the long-standing policy of helping as a priority, with good press as a desired outcome, though Kenneth Roth is one among many who show us that that is not guaranteed.

While one might question the wisdom of Lieberman's timing for such an explicit statement of Israel's desire to enhance its image, it is an honest answer about what Israel hopes to get out of its efforts. It is probably an honest expectation that many people and organizations, and any sovereign nation would have upon implementing a course of providing regular help to others. It would seem appropriate to question, to a greater extent, the agenda of someone who uses another country's altruism as an opportunity to impugn its character. Should no country that fails to run flawlessly offer aid to another?

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<sup>35</sup> Ahren, Raphael. "'Rubble Washing?' Israel's Disaster Outreach Does Little To Help Its Image." *Times of Israel*. May 13, 2015.

An affirmative answer to that farcical question would, of course, signal an immediate end to all international aid efforts. It is doubtful whether that is the intent of those who would question or criticize Israel's reasons for sending well-trained teams to treat those injured by disaster. The question, then, becomes one of what *does* motivate those questions. If the answer is that any time Israel is in the public eye represents an opportunity for one who would seek to delegitimize the country, then, ironically, one could argue that Israel's aid efforts actually serve to complicate public opinion. Israel's help has been, at times, a source of national pride and a platform on which diplomatic relations have been built. On the whole, though, the enduring nature of positive diplomatic effects of Israel's help tend to be mixed, at best.

### **Assessing the Benefits of Giving**

A former Israeli diplomat noted, "None of the countries that benefited from Israeli disaster relief\* changed their voting pattern at the United Nations, or even regional forums. And the Foreign Ministry did not instruct its ambassadors in these countries to make aid contingent on political support in international forums, nor even hinted at linking these issues."<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, the track record of success of Israel's cooperation efforts in producing tangible diplomatic results does not suggest that votes in the United Nations, as a primary example of what those fruits might look like, have been the driving force behind MASHAV's work. There have been successes, to be sure. For instance, the tiny Pacific island nations of Narau, Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Palau, and the Solomon Islands, regularly vote with Israel on UN issues that affect the Jewish state. "Are [they]

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<sup>36</sup> Ahren, *ibid.*

packed with Judeophiles?” asks a Tablet Magazine article from 2013<sup>37</sup>, “Or is there another reason for this political support?” The article outlines the fact that, while a few of those nations have pacts with the United States that impel them to vote with the US – which often amounts to voting in Israel’s favor – all of them are recipients of generous aid from Israel, through projects and training MASHAV oversees.

On the whole, though, being a recipient of Israeli aid has had little correlation to Israel-related voting records in international bodies. The clearest illustration of this is UN Resolution 3379, the 1975 declaration that Zionism is a form of racism. When, on November 10, the resolution passed, only three African nations voted against it. Only one Asian nation opposed it. That nation was Israel. Those two continents had been on the receiving end of the vast majority of Israel’s development cooperation efforts to that point, yet their nations partook either actively or passively – through absentia or abstention – in Israel’s international condemnation. After years of much more limited cooperative aid relationships, many of the same nations supported – sponsored and/or voted in favor of – the revocation of the racism charge, with Resolution 46/86, proposed by President George Bush in December of 1991. The record on these two votes, among many others, makes it evident that other timely realities and sources of pressure take precedence over the persuasive effect of cooperative aid relationships, even longstanding ones, with Israel.

Between 2006 and 2013, Israel was condemned in 45 resolutions of the UN Human Rights Council. If the Council had, in that time, passed thousands – or even hundreds – of resolutions, it may not seem noteworthy that an aid contributor to nearly two-thirds of the world’s countries was cited 45 times. In fact, though, the Council

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<sup>37</sup> Cheslow, Daniella. “Israel at the Ends of the Earth.” Tablet Magazine. March 19, 2013

passed fewer than 100 resolutions during that time, and those 45 condemnations represent 46% of them.<sup>38</sup> These are among many statistics from the UN that demonstrate the limited extent to which Israel's aid efforts have yielded support in from other nations in international arenas. It is no wonder, then, that with international support as one desired outcome of its work, funding for MASHAV has trended downward, with limited exception, since 1973. The budget and considerations in setting it will be explored more fully below, but being bitten by mouths it was helping feed, understandably, has not typically sat well with the Israeli public or with its leaders.

Still, positive public relations and strengthened diplomatic or economic ties are desired and welcome results of Israel's cooperative projects. MASHAV's Ilan Fluss confirmed to Daniella Cheslow in the aforementioned Tablet Magazine article, that Israel considers a country's need along with Israel's own political aims in determining what projects will take place, and where. Neither promises nor records of international votes of support, though, are determining factors in whether Israel will extend aid to a country, according to Fluss. Israel is going to help, but if it can have the same impact – based on its own expertise and recipient need – in two places, but can garner helpful support in one of them, *then*, it seems from Fluss's comment, it might be swayed by the possibility of diplomatic reward.

### **The Politics of Generosity**

It is, by now, rather clear that bolstering its own standing is not the only motivating force behind Israel's aid initiatives. Investigation of MASHAV's budget over

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<sup>38</sup> "List of the UN Resolutions Concerning Israel and Palestine." *Wikipedia.com*. November 12, 2015.

the years, though, indicates rather persuasively that, as in other modern democratic nations, the will of Israeli politicians and citizens to help is not absolute, and has been both buoyed and deterred by political or diplomatic consequences. Leaders and constituents who had been deeply committed to Israel's developmental aid, especially in Africa, soured quickly in 1973, after the severing of diplomatic ties by all but four of Israel's diplomatic partners and aid recipients in Sub-Saharan Africa. There arose, instead, a sentiment that, as an editorial in *Hatzofe* from November of 1973 put it, the large amounts Israel had been spending on aid to Africa for fifteen years, "would have been put to infinitely better use absorbing immigrants and reducing the social gap in Israel." Later that month, the *Jerusalem Post* wrote, "What is clear is that no matter how much relations with Africa improve (they can scarcely get worse) at some time in the future, the original enthusiasm which spurred Israel's first overtures to Africa 15 years ago will not return." That feeling reflected in *Hatzofe* produced swift results, as MASHAV's budget was reduced by 50% over the next two years, until 1975. As the *Jerusalem Post* predicted, the reaction to the harsh new reality that Africa was aligned against Israel and with the Arab bloc, despite Israel's generosity, was not short-lived. With the public and its government wary of being taken advantage of, MASHAV's slice of the Israeli budget continued to decline, steadily, for nearly two decades.<sup>39</sup>

Disillusionment with the failure of bilateral aid to produce better results in Africa led to massive cuts in the financial resources that Israelis and their leaders were willing to commit to international developmental aid. That was the first significant moment of a new way of budgeting for development cooperation, which continues today. Since 1973,

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<sup>39</sup> Inbal, Aliza and Shachar Zahavi, "The Rise and Fall of Israel's Bilateral Aid Budget 1958-2008" Tel Aviv University, 2009.



when Israel's relationships disintegrated just as its existence was again threatened, budgeting for developmental aid has included an element of cost/benefit analysis that is only possible with a tempering of the idealism that was characteristic of Israel's early aid. While the change is a sad departure from the romantic notion of a nation that helps where help is needed, without regard for how it will feel, later, about having helped, it brings Israel in line with other donor countries, and was probably inevitable. At some point, people who pay taxes and their elected officials were bound to be swayed by the return on their investment, or, in the case of 1973, the lack thereof.

The post-Yom Kippur Day War rupture of relations was not the only moment in which Israel's newfound need to be calculating in its budgeting was evident. After two decades of budgetary decline, MASHAV's allocation turned upward in the mid-to-late 1990s, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel, which was enjoying large infusions of aid from the U.S. under President Bill Clinton, and Palestinians. In the case of the Former Soviet Union, it was felt that Israel could build relations, through development assistance, with the independent nations that were emerging from under Soviet control. The Oslo Accords made the possibility of a cooperative Middle East seem real. Both developments opened the door to relations with other countries, including African nations with whom relations had been suspended, because with the Communist bloc broken and increasingly peaceful relations between Israel and the Arab world, the sources of political pressure on them to shun Israel were now weaker or non-existent. The hope of what might be spurred Foreign Minister (and, later, Prime Minister), Shimon Peres, to articulate a vision of the "New Middle East," in which Israel would play a central role in the economic

development of the region. Between 1997 and 1999, there were more MASHAV trainees from North Africa and the Middle East than from any other area. By the end of the decade, Israel had official diplomatic ties with 162 nations, up from 93 in 1990.<sup>40</sup> MASHAV's budget climbed, but only as long as the optimism about the relationships being built through aid lasted. In 2000, peace negotiations began to falter and three countries – Tunisia, Oman, and Morocco all suspended their relationships with Israel. As the hope for the new Middle East faded, so did MASHAV's budget, falling by 25% over the years 1999 and 2000. By 2008, the budget was back down to less than half of what it had been in 1999. The following chart illustrates the overall decline in the percent of the Foreign Ministry budget dedicated to international development cooperation.<sup>41</sup>

	1959-60	2005-06
Foreign Ministry Budget	5 million Israeli pounds	1.3 billion NIS
MASHAV Budget	1.7 million pounds	35.4 million NIS
Percentage of Ministry Budget Earmarked for Aid	34%	3%

### Meeting the Challenge of Shrinking Budgets

Those cuts, however, were not nearly reflected in the level of aid that Israel, through MASHAV, continued to provide. While the cuts signify an Israeli capriciousness – dependent on numerous factors of leadership, security, external relationships, etc. – about foreign aid as a priority, which should not be overlooked nor

<sup>40</sup> Inbal and Zahavi, 47.

<sup>41</sup> Fried, Eli. *Soft Power and Israel's Policy of Development Cooperation*. Israel and Africa. AJC/Hartog. Tel Aviv. 2006

underestimated, they also served to challenge the Israeli aid community to do more (or, at least, close to the same) with much, much less. Put another way, dramatic cuts to the bilateral aid budget put MASHAV in a position to reflect the Israeli ingenuity that had made its development assistance sought after, in the first place. MASHAV, meant to be a force for spreading Israeli creativity, now found itself charged with being a source of it.

Since the beginnings of its aid programs, Israel had capitalized on the world's demand for its development know-how by requiring others – either recipient nations or programs, themselves, or interested third-parties, such as the United Nations – to help finance its projects. After the drastic decreases in its budget, MASHAV managed to steadily increase the sources and successes of third-party financing of its projects. It did this in a number of ways, including partnering with other nations who were inclined to help and who could provide the financing if Israel could provide expertise. Other models included investments by multinational organizations in Israel's proven training programs and experts. International dollars were, thus, not spent to reinvent the wheel, but to enable programs with a good track record to proceed and progress. This was especially effective in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1980, for instance, with a bilateral aid budget of about \$700,000, MASHAV trained over 1,200 participants in courses in Israel and abroad. They also sent 300 short-term consultants and 34 long-term consultants abroad, while co-financing and developing “dozens of development research projects.”<sup>42</sup> To put that in perspective, imagine the more than 1,500 trainees and consultants had all found round-trip airfare between Israel and the partner country for \$500 each, unlikely considering the average price of domestic airfare in the US dropped from nearly \$600 in

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<sup>42</sup> Inbal and Zahavi, 46.

1980 to just under \$360 in 2011.<sup>43</sup> At \$500 per ticket, that total, alone, would have exceeded the year's aid budget, without a single project commencing. It was, therefore, imperative that Israel find new ways to pay for the aid it had become accustomed to providing, and still sought to provide.

What MASHAV has continued to accomplish, year after year, with increasingly limited financial resources, is a triumph of a relative few leaders and dedicated Foreign Ministry personnel, and organizational partners. Their work enabled Israel to maintain its involvement, though slightly more limited and bare-bones, in widespread cooperative development, and likely prevented some measure of embarrassment and critique that would have resulted if aid production had fallen at the same rate as the resources which generated it.

Following the second rise and fall of the budget, that high level of third party financing has been less achievable, as demand for Israeli aid has sagged. The decrease can be attributed to the growth in the number of countries and organizations which offering aid for free, as international development aid has matured as an industry. Additionally, Israel's time as a developing nation – actively solving the daily issues of nation-building – is past. The nature of the know-how that Israel has to offer has changed, as have the processes and culture of international aid.

Since 2011, Israel has been a member nation of the OECD, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a consortium of well-developed nations which are all expected to have robust Official Development Aid (ODA) budgets, equaling or surpassing 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI). Almost all of the nations in the OECD are falling well short of that mark. Israel, once a world leader in providing, and still at

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.thrillist.com/travel/nation/air-travel-ways-flying-was-totally-different-in-the-80s>

the forefront of advocating for and organizing cooperative development programs, lags far behind the average, hovering around 0.07% of GNI, or one-tenth of the target. Ascension to the OECD will, increasingly, mean that Israel is held to higher standards, on a stage with the world's economic powers. Being a plucky, young nation will not go as far in impressing the world audience as it once did. Israel will either need to help the international community redefine reasonable expectations for its most developed countries in a way that brings Israeli aid allocations more in line, or commit greater monetary support to its foreign aid programs. Since some of Israel's work that is financed by third parties, but which hinges on Israeli personnel or technology may be harder to measure, in dollars, than are budgets and monetary donations, it may need to be a combination of the two strategies.

### **New Innovation, New Aid Frontiers**

Israel is no longer the same kind of living laboratory for solutions to everyday issues that it was in the early years of the State. Now, however, Israel has the opportunity to capitalize on new kinds of innovation, in more high tech areas, to be a help to other nations and to solidify its standing among the developed nations. While its percent of GNI dedicated to aid is too small by international standards, its allocation for research and development is not. In 2013, Israel spent 4.25% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on research and development, according to the World Bank. That rate outpaced every other country, with only a handful of others above 3%. The United States spent 2.68%, for the sake of comparison.<sup>44</sup> Israel's unique commitment to innovation and entrepreneurship, which has earned it the nickname of "Start-up Nation," can keep its

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<sup>44</sup> "Research and Development Expenditure." *Data.worldbank.org*. World Bank.

assistance relevant and desired throughout the developing world, but that has to be Israel's intent. Initiatives such as the Grand Challenges competition, discussed in Chapter Three, can spur all sectors of Israeli society to think in terms of how their work can benefit others and improve the world, in addition to being profitable in the marketplace. In 2015, Israel signed an agreement with the U.N. to use Israel's space technology and satellites to help in disaster situations and in space emergencies.<sup>45</sup> As Israel's research and development commitment bears new fruit, the country will have a new set of tools with which to help the nations of the world.

Currently, that desire is not sufficiently present among the Israeli populace, though. In the middle of the first decade of this century, the Hartog School of Government at Tel Aviv University conducted a study of public opinion regarding cooperative development aid. Decades of security concern, focus on a changing economy, and a low profile for low-budget aid programs have affected the commitment of the Israeli public to cooperative aid. Some of the findings are encapsulated here:

“..only 21% of respondents were in favor of raising the level of development assistance; 44% responded that Israel should only provide assistance in an emergency or crisis, rather than on an ongoing basis. Moreover, a mere 56% of Israelis were of the opinion that Israel should provide assistance to developing countries at all (with a further 17% responding “perhaps/depends”). This contrasts, for example, with a 2007 poll of another small donor nation: Poland,

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<sup>45</sup> Yarowsky, Maya, “UN And Israel Sign Agreement To Apply Israeli Space Tech To Disaster Zones.” *NoCamels*. June 16, 2015

where 77% of respondents believed that Poland should support the development of developing countries.”<sup>46</sup>

It is no surprise, then, that a few attempts by members of Knesset to introduce international aid bills in the early part of this century did not have the support to be brought to a vote. If Israel’s commitment to Jewish values and to full participation in the community of nations is to continue to be manifest, to some degree, in cooperative development aid, MASHAV’s story – its past and its possibility is one that needs to be told.

### **A Secret Too Well Kept**

The shrinking effect that political disappointments have had on Israel’s foreign aid budget has been compounded by the growing distance, in years, since the country’s first, gung-ho forays into cooperative development. During those years, memory of the idealistic spirit with which Israel began its role as a provider of aid has faded, as has the direct influence of the specific personalities who led the charge. New generations of Israelis are rooted in other national narratives and passions. New history has unfolded, too, which has changed Israel’s realities, priorities, and relationships with other countries. If Israel is to play a major role as a source and coordinator of foreign aid, Israelis need to know about what is possible and about the significant foundation that has been laid. Inbal and Zahavi write that MASHAV has never really figured out how to effectively raise awareness of its activities and importance in the Israeli public. It has, largely, relied on what media coverage it could get, but may need to do more. In their study, they

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<sup>46</sup> Inbal and Zahavi, 53

suggest that it may be necessary to launch a public relations campaign in Israel to educate the public on what Israel does, can do, and what effects it might have for the world and for Israel. A second suggestion they make is that MASHAV and other government agencies interested in foreign aid might focus on the further development of a foreign aid NGO sector in which thriving organizations, rather than the government, can build public support for cooperation. Indeed, this may raise the profile of the issue without the government funding that may only be possible after the public is on board.

Those, and other, suggestions for increasing the visibility of development aid among Israelis is important, as Knesset will not likely authorize significant increases in public funds to be used for the good of others without the expressed desire of their constituents to do so. There may also be value in raising the profile of Israel's aid among non-Israelis who are involved in Israel. Many Jewish communities, in particular, but also others, such as Evangelical Christians, might be fascinated to know this piece of Israel's story, and may find that it is something that inspires them to a deeper relationship with Israel. Group trips to Israel might, for instance, make a stop at the Mount Carmel Training Center to get a glimpse of the kind of expertise sharing, thought leadership, and training of women, that Israel does. Aside from the reality of tourism dollars becoming tied to a bustling aid program, which could yield power to help build that program, the expectation and perception of Israel as an aid power emerges. Sometimes being seen in a certain way – especially by stakeholders who will celebrate and support that which they believe in – results in being that same certain way.



### **Moving the Goalposts**

Despite the lack of public knowledge and support of MASHAV and of Israel's international cooperation programs, Israel has continued to be generous and helpful. Even the poll numbers above, which don't show great support for foreign aid, and certainly not for increasing budgets, suggest that Israelis mean for their country to be helpful, especially in the case of responding to disasters. Israel is compelled by Judaism, by Zionist ideology of identifying with the struggles of other peoples, and by a human desire that is shared by other countries, to help. It is also compelled by limited resources and competing concerns to see returns on its investments, where possible. Like anyone, Israelis and their leaders want and need to feel they are getting some measure of sizzle for their shekel,<sup>47</sup> but it is abundantly clear, nearly sixty years into MASHAV's existence, that foreign aid can not be counted on to produce bilateral benefits. Those benefits would include, most notably, assurance of solidarity with Israel in international forums, but could also come in the form of trade or defense agreements, among other possibilities. Any move, fueled by the hope of bilateral benefit, to increase Israel's commitment to development assistance is likely to end in disappointment. If history is an indicator – and the previous sentence takes it as one – the budget and ideological commitment to aid would end up being reduced, in the long run.

Those who wish to see MASHAV's budget increased, and Israel's commitment to cooperative development with it, need to articulate to leaders and citizens a new goal for return on investment. Inbal and Zahavi note that there is a viable option on the multinational level. Instead of hoping one country or another will defend Israel at the UN, for instance, because of agricultural help Israel has provided them, help more

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<sup>47</sup> This author's version of the alliterative "bang for your buck" to describe Israeli return on investment

members of the UN see that Israel is at the forefront of helping the international community achieve its stated goals. Israel is a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as to subsequent versions of them. The MDGs are a set of poverty-reduction, healthcare progress, and sustainability goals that were set forth by the UN in 2000, with specific goals to be achieved by 2015. Progress has been made in all areas, but the goals are not complete and, beginning in 2016, the work continues and grows with the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”<sup>48</sup> Israel is deeply involved in international efforts to meet these goals and could find the return on investment the Israeli public needs by being seen as a leader in helping the countries of the world to solve the agreed upon problems of the world. That might require changes in the way Israel partners with other countries and organizations, changes in the number of courses and trainings it offers, and changes in the amount of money it allocates and how that money is used. It may yield changes, though, in how Israel is seen by the world and/or how Israel feels about its role in the world. Instead of the fragile hope for solidarity from recipient countries, which are vulnerable to competing external pressures, Israel may be able to court more steadfast support from powerful peer nations whose international load is lightened – or made more effective – by Israel’s leadership. For the average Israeli taxpayer and voter, helping to reduce world poverty may be easier to understand and embrace as a goal than, for instance, training the farmers of a district in Bolivia to grow more beans with less pesticide and water, which may seem overly distant – geographically and personally – from the average Israeli.

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<sup>48</sup> “Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015.” [un.org/millenniumgoals](http://un.org/millenniumgoals).

If Israel continues to hope that its work with individual countries will yield lasting, impactful diplomatic results, it will likely find those relationships to be as fragile and as susceptible to regional political pressures and promises as ever. If, however, Israel can take an undeniable, impactful, visible leadership role in helping the community of nations figure out how to solve its biggest problems, the benefits it reaps – politically, diplomatically, and economically – may be more broad and more reliable. Israel needs to see the goal differently than it has before and, if it chooses to do so, it will find success in a way that has, heretofore, been elusive.

### **Choosing an Identity**

Israel must answer for itself whether cooperation development is a major part of how it sees itself. Foreign aid, through MASHAV, is not the only way to fulfill Jewish and Zionist ideals, but it is an appropriate manifestation for some of them, and a way to define Israel's interaction with the world. Israel is unique as a democracy in the Middle East, as a Jewish nation, and as a fast mover from underdeveloped to OECD. All of those things can make Israel stand out in positive ways and all lend themselves, naturally, to showing the way for others, toward something better. Israel has to decide if it aspires to light the way for the nations and, if so, how it wishes to do that. If cooperative developmental aid is part of that, and I think it can and should be, that needs to become a national priority, rather than an afterthought which operates on the scraps of a growing national budget. There is hope, right now, that this can be a successful proposition. Says Shachar Zahavi, head of IsraAid, "We are seeing both a younger generation of Israelis who during their post-army travels want to do something meaningful with their time

abroad seek out volunteering, and at the same time we are seeing more and more companies looking to build and adapt their products for the developing world.”<sup>49</sup>

The choice to elevate anything into a national priority which receives time, energy, money, and press, may also necessitate changes in other areas of national life. Namely, Israel’s huge, necessary focus on security concerns does much to preclude the possibility of non-crisis issues to come to the fore. One wonders what Israel could achieve in cooperative development (or in many other areas) if some measure of the ongoing attention to security and the peace process, that has been necessary for Israel’s safety, could be directed elsewhere. Israel currently spends nearly a fifth of its national budget on defense.<sup>50</sup> Measured by percent of GDP, Israel ranks near the top of defense spending; ahead of the United States, Iran, and most others.<sup>51</sup> This is not included to suggest that Israel’s defense spending is immoral or misguided. Israel – and any other country – should do precisely what it feels it must to protect its citizens, and Israel has legitimate reason for concern, to say the very least. The issue of Israel’s focus on security is mentioned simply to raise the question of what greater peace with neighbors might mean for Israel beyond simply greater peace with neighbors, which would certainly be reward enough.

Every nation’s first concern is survival and safety. Those things have never come easily to Israel, and Israel, alone, can not create a future in which its security is more of a given. The question of how *l’or goyim* – how to be a light for the nations – including the area of foreign aid, is a question that could, at some point, orient Israel toward certain stances that make peaceful coexistence within its region of the world most possible. If

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<sup>49</sup> Kraft, Dina. “With New Investments, Israel Again is Looking to Africa.” JTA. June 10, 2011

<sup>50</sup> “Israel Shells Out Almost A Fifth of National Budget on Defense.” *Haaretz*. February 14, 2013

<sup>51</sup> Military Expenditure (% of GDP). *data.worldbank.org*. World Bank.

Israel aggressively decides to stand as a symbol of, and leader in, cooperative development, it will require changes geared toward limiting the ongoing necessity high levels of security. Whatever it can do – unilaterally, bilaterally, or multilaterally – to assure its ongoing safety and some resources to be otherwise applied, will help. Without comment on who or what is to blame for the lack of peace, or what should be done about it, it is simply important to note that that issue will, rightly as it is sometimes a life and death one, preclude the emergence of other issues to prominence for the Israeli public and government. Whether commitments to stand for certain things as a nation – for example, being an exporter of Jewish values through development cooperation – can or should influence Israel's policies toward peacemaking is a question with which Israel should actively grapple. Its answer might change the world, and in more ways than one.

### **Conclusions**

In Israel's brief history, its program of international development cooperation has had an impact on the world in which Israel exists, has served as a statement about what Israel means to be as a country, and has been an expression of Jewish values which are uniquely associated with Israel. The types of programs that MASHAV coordinates have helped to feed hungry people, developed communities, and lifted women toward equality. Israel's people and projects have diagnosed and treated medical problems, provided needed help in the most dire of moments, and have helped to develop local leadership. In October of 2015, Israel's President Reuven Rivlin welcomed a fellow head of state, who, it turns out, had been to Israel before. Honduran President, Juan Orlando Hernandez, came to Israel in the early 1990s on a scholarship to attend a MASHAV young leadership

development seminar. The two leaders struck new cooperation agreements, agreed to support each other where possible, internationally, and to advocate for each other to the United States Congress.<sup>52</sup> MASHAV has impacted the world and has helped other nations to better lead and care for themselves.

MASHAV's initiatives have helped most nations, directly, and have impacted every single one by helping to guide the international community toward greater commitment to development cooperation. In late 2015, for example, the UN General Assembly unanimously passed an Israeli resolution calling on member nations to prioritize the development and dissemination of sustainable agricultural technologies, and to include cooperative efforts in agricultural sustainability among their foreign policy priorities.<sup>53</sup> Israel is lighting the way for other countries to help address the problems that the world faces.

Israel's programs have been trust-builders among peoples and places that have more reason to be wary of each other than welcoming. The work it did in Africa in the 50s and 60s gave most of a continent reason to believe it could trust countries from outside to help, without fear of being colonized or conquered. The world still sends mixed messages there, but Israel-Africa relations have played a role in paving the way toward positive developments on the continent. On a smaller scale, MASHAV's programs have brought people from disparate backgrounds and locales together, face-to-face, to learn and to address challenges that are common to their different situations.

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<sup>52</sup> Cashman, Greer Fay. "MASHAV Alumnus Returns to Israel as President of Honduras" *The Jerusalem Post*. October 30, 2015

<sup>53</sup> "UN Adopts Israel Resolution on Agricultural Technology for Sustainable Development." *mfa.gov.il*. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. December 27, 2015.

Israeli aid programs have fostered human relationships and constructive interaction across the bounds of geography, language, religion, culture, and, sometimes, politics.

MASHAV and the international development cooperation that it spearheads have been, and can be again, perfect ways for Israel to embody a commitment to Jewish and Zionist ideals. Any ideal, though, that Israel seeks to uphold through its commitment to foreign aid, it must strive to embody consistently in all facets of national life. That is, if international cooperation or anything else is to be seen as a symbol of what Israel is, it must be consistent with – not an aberration from – what Israel does. Therein lies one of the great challenges of being a modern nation that strives to manifest the ideals of a religion, of a movement, or even of its own founding.

Like any other organization or even individual, a country is regularly confronted with realities that do not make adherence to ideals easy. In the case of a democratic political entity, though, there is often punishment, in the form of defeat in the next election, for values-based decisions if those inconvenience the voter in any way. There will, naturally, be moments in the life of a country during which any balance between care for itself and care for those outside the borders must tilt more heavily toward self. The political will to push the pendulum back toward others, whenever the opportunity is present, must come from the electorate. It is otherwise bound to be short-lived or, worse, a constant resident of the back burner while attempts are made to score points with voters in other ways.

To this end, the story of MASHAV ought to become a more highly celebrated part of Israel's story. That Ben Gurion, Meir, and others were so committed to creating opportunities to build relationships with and offer assistance to the *less* powerful nations

of the world when Israel was, itself, fragile and developing should be a cornerstone of the Israeli ideal. The story of Golda Meir's leadership in Israel should never be told without significant mention of the Israel-Africa relationship she was so proud to have established. Israel's ability and willingness to be a light unto the nations, helping the world address its most chronic problems, should be part of every Israeli child's history book and every Israeli politician's rhetoric. That the modern nation which exists in our name defaulted to giving, building, and helping should be part of any rabbi's sermon on why Israel merits the support of all Jews and what we should be encouraging in our homeland. It should be part of the Jewish People's understanding of what we, as Jews, should be endeavoring to accomplish in the world, and how political sovereignty can enable us to succeed. The founding generations, the *chalutzim* and *kibbutznikim* of Israel's early years, are now long removed from driving political action and public opinion. Their story and their ideals, though, can help power the rise of new generations of moral leadership, distanced from the burn of ruptured relations and inspired by the possibility of repairing the world.

Development aid is far from the only way that Israel can live the values it was founded upon, and, fortunately, this type of international cooperation is not unique to Israel. Excelling at it and being an exemplar for how other national (and religious) entities can help build the world, though, would help very much to satisfy some of the greatest hopes for what voices within Zionism, as well as the voices of the Jewish millennia, have suggested that Judaism can mean to the world.

"A colleague in Cameroon told me that Israel is a magical country, that we can do anything," said Dr. Roe Singer, deputy director of the Division of Epidemiology at the Ministry of Health in Jerusalem, reflecting on his 2014 service in the fight against



Ebola.<sup>54</sup> Israel's short history is rich in the magic of lifting others up, even as it is full of stories of development on its own soil and in its laboratories. If the former can be as much a cause of celebration and object of aspiration as the latter, that certain piece of the vision of the early leadership of the country can thrive again. They built Israel into a platform for constructive and generous interaction with its world. David Ben-Gurion believed, "For Israel, development cooperation is both a moral and a political issue, and from both aspects Israel must look upon such aid as a historic mission." He also said, "The principles of mutual assistance and equality should also constitute the basis for international relations between all people... [and] must be based on the solidarity of all human beings, derived from fraternity and mutual assistance in every sphere of life..."<sup>55</sup> Through MASHAV, Israel has worked to fulfill that historic mission and to cultivate the kind of international relations that Ben Gurion envisioned, and, recommitted to generosity in development cooperation, Israel can shine more brightly, through MASHAV, to light up the nations.

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<sup>54</sup> Heilman, Uriel. "Jews Fight Ebola in Africa From the Head Down." *The Times of Israel*, Nov. 14, 2014

<sup>55</sup> MASHAV Annual Report, 2014

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## Appendix

### **Sources for Education or Discussion**

The following pages contain pieces of text – from Jewish Scripture, Jewish thinkers, the Zionist movement, and from *Megilat HaAtzma'ut* – which are included in Chapter One, in which Israel's motivations for providing aid are explored. They are compiled here as a ready-to-copy resource for education or discussion sessions, or for sermons regarding MASHAV and Israel's foreign aid programs.

They especially lend themselves to discussions, in educational settings, for teens and adults on topics including (but certainly not limited to) these:

- 1) Whether, or to what extent, Israel has a responsibility to engage in cooperative development/foreign aid programs.**
  - i. Is Israel's responsibility different from that of other nations?
  - ii. Does its obligation stem from Jewish values? Zionist ideals? Its own articulated national principles?
  - iii. Are the Jewish texts cited here only particularistic (i.e. Do they suggest that Jews only need to take care of Jews?) or do they have universalist implications (i.e. Do Jews have a responsibility to everyone)? What about when we consider them alongside Genesis 1:27 and 5:1?
- 2) Are Israel's activities through MASHAV ([mfa.gov.il/mfa/mashav](http://mfa.gov.il/mfa/mashav)) successful in fulfilling the ideals set forth in the texts?**
  - i. In what other ways does Israel uphold or represent Jewish values?
  - ii. How does it fall short in doing so and how could it do better?
- 3) What does it mean to be a Jewish nation?**
  - i. What should the role of Jewish values be in the way Israel acts? Toward its citizens? Its neighbors? The rest of the world?
  - ii. How do the principles, set forth in *Megilat HaAtzma'ut*, about what Israel should be like as a nation compare to what a Jew should be like as a person?
  - iii. How important should things like *tzedakah* (righteousness) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) be in how a country is run?
  - iv. How should a nation balance these and other values with national concerns such as security and the economy?

The text collection was created using Sefaria Source Sheet Builder ([sefaria.org](http://sefaria.org)) and is listed publicly there. It can be printed, free of charge, from the site and users may edit it to suit their needs.

## **MASHAI\* and the expectation for Israel L'or Goyim:**

Israel's Political and Religious Responsibility to be a Light Unto the Nations

### **Isaiah 42:6**

(6) I the LORD have called thee in righteousness. And have taken hold of thy hand. And kept thee, and set thee for a covenant of the people. For a light of the nations:

### **ישעיהו מ"ב:ו'**

(ו) אֲנִי יְהוָה קְרָאתִיךָ בְּצֶדֶק וְאֶחָזֶק בְּיָדְךָ  
וְאֶצְרֶךָ וְאֶתֶּנֶּךָ לְבְרִית עִם לְאוּר גוֹיִם:

### **Isaiah 49:6**

(6) Yea. He saith: 'It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be My servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob. And to restore the offspring of Israel: I will also give thee for a light of the nations. That My salvation may be unto the end of the earth.'

### **ישעיהו מ"ט:ו'**

(ו) וְיֹאמַר נָקֵל מִהְיוֹתְךָ לִי עֶבֶד לְהִקִּים  
אֶת־שְׁבִיטֵי יַעֲקֹב וּנְצִירֵי [וּנְצוּרֵי] יִשְׂרָאֵל  
לְהַשְׁיב וּנְהַלִּיךְ לְאוּר גוֹיִם לְהִיט יְשׁוּעָתִי  
עַד־קֶצֶה הָאָרֶץ: (ס)

### **Leviticus 19:18**

(18) ...thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

### **ויקרא י"ט:י"ח**

(יח) ...וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה:

"As Jews we bring to this great demonstration, in which thousands of us proudly participate, a two-fold experience -- one of the spirit and one of our history. In the realm of the spirit, our fathers taught us thousands of years ago that when God created man, he created him as everybody's neighbor. Neighbor is not a geographic term. It is a moral concept. It means our collective responsibility for the preservation of man's dignity and integrity."

-Rabbi Joachim Prinz, from his speech at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

"Jewish tradition, from the Bible onward, considers *tzedakah* to be a legal duty, a social responsibility, a repayment of a debt to God. Giving *tzedakah* is the fulfillment of a commandment rather than an act of optional benevolence."

-Byron Sherwin from his book, *In Partnership With God*

### **Exodus 23:9**

(9) And a stranger shalt thou not oppress: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

### **שמות כ"ג:ט'**

(ט) וְגַר לֹא תִלְחֹץ וְאַתֶּם יָדַעְתֶּם אֶת־נַפְשׁ  
הַגֵּר כִּי־גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:



**Deuteronomy 15:11**

(11) For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying: 'Thou shalt surely open thy hand unto thy poor and needy brother, in thy land.'

**דברים ט"ו:יא**

(יא) כִּי לֹא־יִחַדֵּל אֲבִיוֹן מִקֶּרֶב הָאָרֶץ עַל־כֵּן  
אֶנְכִּי מִצְוֶה לֵאמֹר פָּתַח תִּפְתָּח אֶת־יָדְךָ לְאֶחָיךָ  
לְעֹנֶיךָ וּלְאֲבִינֶךָ בְּאֶרֶץ־ךָ: (ס)

"There is still one other question arising out of the disaster of the nations which remains unsolved to this day, and whose profound tragedy only a Jew can comprehend. This is the African question. Just call to mind all those terrible episodes of the slave trade, of human beings who, merely because they were black, were stolen like cattle, taken prisoner, captured and sold. Their children grew up in strange lands, the objects of contempt and hostility because their complexions were different. I am not ashamed to say, though I may expose myself to ridicule in saying so, that once I have witnessed the redemption of the Jews, my people, I wish also to assist in the redemption of the Africans."

-Theodore Herzl in his book, *Altneuland* ("Old New Land")

**From *Megillat Atzma'ut*, Israel's Declaration of Independence:**

**Paragraph 3:** "Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to reestablish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, *mapilim*\*\*, and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring toward independent nationhood."

**Paragraph 13:** "[The State of Israel] will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice, and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education, and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

**Paragraph 17:** "We extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East."

<sup>9</sup>MASHAV is the acronym for the Israel Agency for International Cooperation Development, a department of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>10</sup>*Mapilim* refers, according to Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to immigrants who came to the Land of Israel in defiance of restrictive legislation.