

This month Israel will turn 70. Her upcoming birthday has me reminiscing about the stories I heard growing up. While my father's first trip to Israel wasn't until he was in his forties, he would talk about what a miracle it was to have a Jewish homeland, a place where we would always be welcome. My mother would tell us stories of when she went to live on a kibbutz in Israel in 1958. We would hear about the army truck that brought her from the airport to the kibbutz, how there was only hot water once a week shower and she needed to make an appointment to call her parents two weeks in advance. To her, that was when the desert was really the desert. I believe that this was her version of walking to school four miles uphill both ways while it was raining and snowing at the same time. While she will admit that she could no longer live the way she did back then, she feels the Israel of today is too commercial. I would argue that what she calls commercial is what some would see as the miracle my father described.

In a relatively short period of time, Israelis have turned a small piece of desert land into a thriving country. Here is a very abbreviated list of what Israel has achieved:

- Israel has the third highest rate of entrepreneurship in the world, as well as the highest rate among women and among people over 55.
- Relative to its population, Israel is the largest immigrant-absorbing nation on earth. Immigrants come in search of democracy, religious freedom, and economic opportunity.
- Israel is the only country in the world that entered the 21st century with a net gain in its number of trees, made more remarkable because this was achieved in an area considered mainly desert.
- Israeli scientists developed the first fully computerized, no-radiation, diagnostic instrumentation for breast cancer.
- An Israeli company developed a computerized system for ensuring proper administration of medications, thus removing human error from medical treatment. In U. S. hospitals 7,000 patients die each year from medication errors.
- Israel's Given Imaging developed the first ingestible video camera, so small it fits inside a pill. Used to view the small intestine from the inside, the camera helps doctors diagnose cancer and digestive disorders.
- Researchers in Israel developed a new device that directly helps the heart pump blood, an innovation with the potential to save lives among those with heart failure.
- The cell phone was developed in Israel by Motorola, which has its largest development center in Israel.
- In response to serious water shortages, Israeli engineers and agriculturalists developed a revolutionary drip irrigation system to minimize the amount of water used to grow crops.
- Voice mail technology was developed in Israel.
- The AOL Instant Messenger was developed in 1996 by four young Israelis.
- These examples come from an old list generated when Israel turned 60, but off of the top of my head I can think of two more, Waze and ReWalk.
- Waze, a community-driven GPS navigation app, was developed and popularized by Waze Mobile, an Israeli company.
- ReWalk is a commercial bionic walking assistance system that uses powered leg attachments to enable paraplegics to stand upright, walk and climb stairs. It was designed in Yokneam, Israel.

You may or may not agree with her politics but no one can deny Israel's accomplishments. The scientific and technological advances benefit not only Israel, but the world. Thank you, Israel, and Happy Birthday!

L'shalom,

Morah Amy