

Vayelech September 16, 2017

וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת וַיִּתְּנָהּ אֶל-הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי לֵוִי הַנִּזְכָּרִים אֶת-אַרְוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה
וְאֶל-כָּל-זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Deuteronomy 31:9 *Moses wrote down this Teaching and gave it to the priests, sons of Levi, those who carried the Ark of the covenant of Adonai and to all the elders of Israel.*



According to this week's portion, once Moses completed his recitation of the "Teaching" - the Torah - he writes it down to ensure its permanence and that it will be read publicly. Moses seeks to remind the current and all future generations of the content of the Torah and their covenantal bond to G-d and the Land of Israel.

After so many chapters and details of rules and regulations for the Israelites, the Torah is officially "recorded" with very little ceremony or explanation. And, yet the Torah has indeed been carried forward through every generation since. The Torah was, and continues to be, reproduced by specially trained scribes skilled in the laws of copying this

sacred document letter by letter, word by word. It is hard to imagine the ingenuity and determination it took for this endeavor in pre-modern times. This writing and passing down of the Torah is one of the incredible success stories of the Jewish people and has contributed to the survival of a cohesive Jewish community, no matter where one finds Jews around the world.

As Israel's population has grown since the early pre-State years, the art and science of print and publishing has continued as a great success story. News coverage, book publishing, print, and online press have all flourished. Combining their expertise and ingenuity, engineers, journalists, and business people have positioned Israel as a leader in the media industry.

In 1881, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda immigrated to Israel, having spent his early years as a lexicographer and newspaper editor in Lithuania and France. Best known for his revival of the Hebrew language as the spoken tongue of Israel, in 1884, Ben-Yehuda started the newspaper *HaZvi* (The Gazelle), which served to introduce contemporary ideas and even new words that would make their way into common parlance of new immigrants to Israel.

Several noteworthy female journalists also spearheaded efforts to bring news, fiction, and nonfiction to the emerging Jewish communities. Devorah Baron moved to Israel from Russia in the early 20th century and became the editor of a column in the newspaper *HaPoel HaTzair* (The Young Worker). Later, Hava Hirschensohn worked with her husband and brother to publish *Beit Ya'akov*, a Yiddish bi-weekly, as a supplement to Ben-Yehuda's *Ha-Zvi*. Almost all of these publications ground to a halt during World War I. Yet, once they started up again, the print news industry and publishing houses grew exponentially. Since the beginning of the 21st century women have been equally represented in the Israeli media world, something that is rare if not non-existent in other Western countries.

Currently more than twenty-seven publishing houses in Israel produce everything from educational books, periodicals, fiction and nonfiction, academic texts and journals, travel guides and so on. In print and distribution, there are over thirty-three newspapers and magazines ranging from political and everyday news to style and fashion - many of which had their origins in pre-State Israel.

In the present day, "writing down" the news of the day or opinions concerning current events, takes on a whole new dimension. In the high tech media world, Israel is a global leader. Most recently, nano-graphics has entered the printing realm. Benny Landa is the designer of this newest technology. Previously, he created commercial digital printing - then this groundbreaking technique that countries all over the world have adopted. Landa is an American who made *aliyah* to Israel, with the claim that, in his experience, Israelis take a new idea and whole-heartedly run with it, thereby ensuring that it will be a great success. Not only does Landa and his nanotechnology offer faster, more efficient printing, but he also takes pride in the fact that it reduces energy use through a water-based, eco-friendly technique of applying the ink at unprecedented speeds.

From Moses' transcribing of the Torah instructions to ensure the future of Israelites, through the successful early days of getting the news and information to pre-State builders, and now to Landa's groundbreaking nanographics, Israel has been at the forefront in the world of modern print and getting news, education, and information to the world's population.

Discussion Questions:

What do you think has led Israel to be a hotbed for revolutionizing printing and communication since the ancient days?

What are the advantages as well as the disadvantages for putting history, narrative, and opinion pieces into print and distribution?

Additional Resources:

Abigail Klein Leichman, [Step aside, Gutenberg, Israel is about to revolutionize printing – again](#), Israel 21C Weekly, MAY 7, 2012

Aliza Lavie and Yehiel Limor, [Media Professions: Yishuv to Present-Day Israel](#), Jewish Women's Archive

The [National Library of Israel](#) has an interactive database of historical Jewish newspapers published in a variety of languages. *Ha-Zvi* and *HaPoel HaTzair* are among the fifty-four titles available.