

# 75 Israelis Today

It's impossible to pick 75 people to represent all aspects of a state of more than 9 million people, let alone to pick the 75 most important or most influential people, but these diverse 75 are Israelis worth knowing across a range of fields to gain a better understanding of the current State of Israel. They join our list of [75 people from Israel's history](#), our [list of 75 Zionist founders](#) and our [list of key non-Israelis](#).



## **Mansour Abbas, 1974-**

Abbas is a dentist who lives in the Galilee town of Maghar. [Since 2019](#), he has served in the Knesset as the head of the Islamist party Ra'am. After Ra'am broke from the [Joint List of four Arab-majority parties](#) to [run by itself in 2021](#), it became the first independent Arab party to [enter a governing coalition](#). He defends Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. He serves as deputy Knesset speaker pending [the fall 2022 election](#).

Photo: Mark Neyman, Israeli Government Press Office, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

## **Chava Alberstein, 1946-**

[Singer-songwriter-musician Alberstein](#) is a native of Poland who moved to Israel with her family in 1950. She has released more than 60 albums, recording in Hebrew, English and Yiddish. The newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth has called her Israel's most important [folk singer](#) ever. She also is known for [championing liberal causes](#) and for [being an ardent peace activist](#).



Photo: Israeli Government Press Office



## **Ghassan Alian, 1972-**

A major general, [Alian](#) is the highest-ranking [Druze](#) officer in the [IDF](#). He is a native of the Galilee town of Shefa-'Amr. He serves in the Central Command. He was the first non-Jewish commanding officer of the Golani Brigade. He has seen combat in the [First Intifada](#), [Lebanon](#), and Operations [Cast Lead](#), [Pillar of Defense](#) and [Protective Edge](#). He was wounded in Gaza during Protective Edge in 2014.

Photo: IDF Spokesperson's Unit

## **Doron Almog, 1951-**

Almog, a retired [IDF](#) major general, was unanimously nominated in June 2022 to serve a four-year term as the chairman of the [Jewish Agency for Israel](#), succeeding [Isaac Herzog](#). A paratrooper, Almog was the first soldier on the ground in [Entebbe](#) in 1976. He was involved in [Operation Moses](#), the mid-1980s airlift of Ethiopian Jews. He founded and chairs the ADI Negev-Nahalat Eran Rehabilitation Village for people with disabilities, named after his late son.

Photo: IDF Spokesperson's Unit



**Ruth Almog, 1936-**

Born in [Petah Tikvah](#) to German Jewish immigrants, [Almog](#) is considered one of the most important writers in [Hebrew literature](#). Trained as a teacher, she published her first story in 1967 and first novel, "The Exile," in 1970. Her books primarily cover such themes as family, love, passion, betrayal and disillusionment. Many chronicle the [Jewish people's struggles for a homeland](#) and haven.

Photo: Moshe Milner, Israeli Government Press Office

**Yael Arad, 1967-**

A Tel Aviv native and entrepreneur, Arad is the [first Israeli to win an Olympic medal](#), taking a silver in [judo](#) at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona. She dedicated her medal to the [11 Israelis killed at the 1972 Munich Olympics](#). She won European gold in 1993. She coached Israel's judo team at the 2000 Olympics. A TV judo commentator, she became the first female president of the Israeli Olympic Committee in 2021.



Photo: Shir Zohar, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

**Linoy Ashram, 1999-**

A native of Rishon LeZion, Ashram won gold in the rhythmic gymnastics all-around at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. She also won the European all-around in 2020 and captured 11 world championship medals in her career. She retired in April 2022 as the first Israeli woman to win [Olympic gold](#) and the first champion in her sport from outside the former Soviet Union at an Olympics in which ex-Soviet states competed.

Photo: Ayelet Zussman, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

**Robert Aumann, 1930-**

Aumann is an Israeli-American mathematician who [shared the Nobel Memorial Prize in economics](#) in 2005 for his game theory analysis of conflict and cooperation. His family escaped Germany two weeks before Kristallnacht. A Religious Zionist, he is an emeritus professor at the Hebrew University's Center for the Study of Rationality. His work on rational explanations of human behavior shapes fields from biology to philosophy.



Photo: David Orban, [CC BY 2.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

**Deni Avdija, 2001-**

Avdija, the son of an Israeli Jewish mother who was an athlete and a Kosovo-born Israeli Muslim who was a [professional basketball](#) player, is a small forward for the NBA's Washington Wizards, who [drafted him in the first round](#), ninth overall, in 2020. He started his pro career at [Maccabi Tel Aviv](#) at age 16 and at 18 was the youngest MVP ever in the Israeli Premier League. He also plays for Israel's national team.

Photo: Sven Mandel, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

### **Shlomo Avineri, 1933-**

Avineri, a native of Poland, is one of Israel's [premier political scientists](#) as a Hebrew University professor and [has written extensively](#) on the [history of political philosophy](#), especially [Marx](#) and Engels. His [Herzl](#) biography emphasizes the failures of [Jewish emancipation in Austria-Hungary](#) over the [Dreyfus Affair](#) in [leading Herzl to Zionism](#). As the director-general of the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) from 1975 to 1977, Avineri was open to negotiations with the PLO.

Photo: Mark Neyman, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Mira Awad, 1975-**

An Arab Christian from the Galilee, [Awad](#) is a star [singer](#) and actress. In 2009 she became the first Arab and Christian to represent Israel at the [Eurovision Song Contest](#) when she performed with Achinoam Nini (Noa). As an actress, she gained fame on the TV sitcom "[Arab Labor](#)" in 2007 and has appeared in films and stage musicals. An advocate for Jewish-Arab coexistence, she identifies as Palestinian and Israeli.

Photo: Matty Stern, U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv, [CC BY-SA 2.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

### **Ehud Barak, 1942-**

As [Israel's 10th prime minister](#) and [last from the Labor Party from 1999 to 2001](#), [Barak](#) ended the [occupation of southern Lebanon](#), participated in the [2000 Camp David talks](#), was rebuffed by Yasser Arafat in making a peace deal under the [Clinton Parameters](#), and saw the [Second Intifada](#) begin. Israel's most decorated soldier, Barak was the [IDF](#) chief of staff from 1991 to 1995 after service as a [commando and tank commander](#).

Photo: Haim Zach, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Netta Barzilai, 1993-**

Barzilai, who [performs](#) mononymously as Netta, won the [Eurovision Song Contest](#) in 2018 with "Toy," [making her the fourth Israeli victor](#). She first gained fame by winning Season 5 of "HaKokhav HaBa." Barzilai's songs "Nana Banana" and "Bassa Sababa" charted worldwide, and the latter has received over 100 million views on YouTube. Barzilai judged the fourth season of Israel's "X-Factor."

Photo: Dewayne Barkley, EuroVisionary, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

### **Naftali Bennett, 1972-**

[Israel's 13th prime minister](#), [Bennett](#) was born in Haifa to U.S. immigrants. He was an [IDF](#) commando and a software entrepreneur. He became the leader of the settler-supported Jewish Home party in 2012 and was elected to the Knesset in 2013. As the Yamina leader, he [became the prime minister in 2021](#) in Israel's [most diverse governing coalition](#). When [that government fell after a year](#), he chose to sit out the [fall 2022 election](#).

Photo: Amos Ben Gershom, Israeli Government Press Office





### **Orna Berry, 1949-**

A computer scientist and tech entrepreneur, [Berry](#) has been a driver of innovation and received Ben-Gurion University's 2012 Yakirat Ha'Negev award for excellence in [technology](#). In 1996 she became the first female chief scientist at the Ministry of Industry and Trade. In October 2021 she took a senior position at Google implementing strategy and partnerships for Google Cloud, which is opening multiple sites in Israel.

Photo: Ya'acov Sa'ar, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Tal Brody, 1943-**

New Jersey native [Brody](#) was a first-round NBA draft pick in 1965, but after visiting Israel for the first time that summer for the [Maccabiah Games](#), he decided to stay and play for [Maccabi Tel Aviv](#). He was crucial in growing [basketball in Israel](#) and led Maccabi to the [1977 European championship](#), including an upset of CSKA Moscow in the semifinals at a time when the Soviet Union didn't have relations with Israel.



Photo: Ya'acov Sa'ar, Israeli Government Press Office



### **David Broza, 1952-**

[Haifa native Broza](#) is one of Israel's most successful and influential [musicians](#), including Spanish-style guitar playing learned during his time in Madrid. His first hit was "Yihyeh Tov" ("It Will Be Good") in 1977. He has used his platform to urge coexistence and peace with the Palestinians, as with the 2014 album and documentary "East Jerusalem/West Jerusalem." He brings Israeli and Palestinian musicians together.

Photo: Matty Stern, U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv, [CC BY-SA 2.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

### **Omri Casspi, 1988-**

[Casspi](#) was the first Israeli-born [first-round NBA draft pick](#) and player. He made his [professional basketball](#) debut for [Maccabi Tel Aviv](#) in 2005 at age 17. The Sacramento Kings drafted him 23rd overall in 2009, and he played 10 years for the Kings, Cavaliers, Rockets, Pelicans, Timberwolves, Warriors and Grizzlies. He retired in 2021 after a return to Maccabi. His foundation brings athletes and other celebrities to visit Israel.



Photo: Jaripk, own work, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons



### **Aaron Ciechanover, 1947-**

[Ciechanover](#) shared the [Nobel Prize in chemistry in 2004](#) with Israeli Avram Hershko and Jewish American Irwin Rose for showing the role of the protein ubiquitin in breaking down other proteins in cells. He was the first of four Nobel laureates to graduate from the [Technion](#) and served on the [Technion](#) faculty. In 2018 he opened the Ciechanover Institute of Precision and Regenerative Medicine in Shenzhen, China.

Photo: Daniel Tahar, own work, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

### **Dani Dayan, 1955-**

An Argentina native who moved to Israel at 15, Dayan founded the information [technology](#) company Elad Systems. He gained prominence as a leader of the Yesha Council, the organization of West Bank settlers. His role in the settler movement led Brazil to reject him as Israel's ambassador in 2016, and instead he became consul general in New York that year. He has served as [Yad Vashem's](#) chairman since 2021.



Photo: U.S. Embassy Jerusalem



### **Artem Dolgopyat, 1997-**

A Ukraine native who moved to Israel at 12, Dolgopyat won the artistic gymnastics [gold medal](#) for floor exercise at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. He also won gold in the event at the 2020 European Championships and silver in 2017 and 2019 at the World Championships. He also competes in the vault. His inability to marry in Israel because his mother is not Jewish has been cited in calls to reform marriage laws.

Photo: Mark Neyman, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Karine Elharrar, 1977-**

Elharrar became Israel's minister of infrastructure, energy and water at the [formation of the coalition government](#) led by [Naftali Bennett](#) in 2021. She had been a member of the Knesset from the Yesh Atid party since 2013. A lawyer who has muscular dystrophy, she has championed disability rights, as when she was excluded from a non-wheelchair-accessible climate conference in Glasgow, Scotland, in 2021.



Photo: Yesh Atid, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons 2013



### **Rabbanit Michelle Cohen Farber, 1971-**

Farber studied [Talmud](#) at Bar-Ilan University and graduated from the Midreshet Lindenbaum's scholars program for women. Without the option to be an Orthodox rabbi, she uses "rabbanit" and advocates for women to study [Talmud](#) through her organization, Hadran. She set up the first large-scale celebration for women completing the 7½-year Daf Yomi cycle in Jerusalem in 2019.

Photo: Public domain

### **Maxine Fassberg, 1953-**

Named one of CNN's "10 Most Powerful Women in [Tech](#)" in 2010, [Fassberg](#) was an immigrant from South Africa who rose to become CEO of [Intel Israel](#) and retired in 2016. She advocated diversity in the workplace and encouraged women to take more senior roles. She taught high school chemistry and physics after earning a master's in applied chemistry from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.



Photo: Mark Neyman, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Gal Fridman, 1975-**

[Fridman](#) was the first Israeli to [win an Olympic gold medal](#), which he earned in windsurfing in Athens in 2004 after taking the bronze in Atlanta in 1996. He also was the first Israeli to win multiple Olympic medals and won the world championship in 2002. He retired from professional windsurfing in 2008 and moved into coaching. He ran a standup paddleboard company, then moved into photography and drones.

Photo: Moshe Milner, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Gal Gadot, 1985-**

Born in Rosh Haayin and crowned Miss Israel at 18, [Gadot](#) served in the military and became a model. She has become one of the world's most recognized actresses, first through a recurring role in the "Fast & Furious" franchise, then as Wonder Woman in numerous films in the DC Extended Universe. She has faced criticism and bans in some Arab countries for expressing pride in Israel and support for the [IDF](#).



Photo: Amos Ben Gershom, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Benny Gantz, 1959-**

[Gantz](#) was a paratrooper who rose to serve as the chief of the [IDF](#) general staff from 2011 to 2015. He [entered politics](#) by [launching Israel Resilience](#) in late 2018, then merged it into Blue and White, the chief challenger to Likud, for the [April 2019 election](#). He served as [Benjamin Netanyahu](#)'s defense minister from 2020 to 2021, leading the [war against Hamas in May 2021](#), and [held the same post](#) under [Naftali Bennett](#).

Photo: Avi Ohayon, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Eilam Gross, 1960-**

Gross is a physicist at the [Weizmann Institute of Science](#). Searching for the Higgs boson, known as the "God particle," Gross applied machine learning in particle physics to help develop the ATLAS detector. As a convener of the Weizmann Atlas Group, he was involved in the discovery of the Higgs boson. He works with the [European Council for Nuclear Research](#) (CERN) on particle trajectories and math formulas.



Photo: Weizmann Institute of Science



### **David Grossman, 1954-**

A Jerusalem native, Grossman is one of Israel's most prolific and most acclaimed [writers](#). His books have been translated into more than 30 languages. His 2017 novel, "A Horse Walks Into a Bar," received the Man Booker International Prize, and he was awarded the Israel Prize in 2018 and Erasmus Prize in 2022. A son, Uri, was killed in the [Second Lebanon War](#). He is active in peace and anti-settlement movements.

Photo: Avi Ohayon, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Sarit Hadad, 1978-**

Hadad is one of Israel's most popular [singers](#). She was a 2002 [Eurovision](#) contestant and was Israeli Music TV's Best Female Singer of the 2000s. She was a judge on "The Voice Israel" and was the first Israeli to perform professionally in Jordan. Born in Afula to Mountain Jewish parents who left the Soviet Union in 1976, she plays multiple instruments and sings in Hebrew, Arabic, English, Georgian, Turkish and Greek.



Photo: Amos Ben Gershom, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Shalom Hanoch, 1946-**

Singer and composer [Hanoch](#) is considered the father of [Israeli rock](#). [Born on Kibbutz Mishmarot](#), he began writing songs at 14 and joined the army band during his military service. He was a founding member of the first major Israeli rock band, Tamuz. He was a longtime collaborator with fellow Israeli rock greats [Arik Einstein](#) and [Meir Ariel](#). Hanoch recorded albums in every decade from the 1960s to 2010s.

Photo: Einat Anker, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Esther Hayut, 1953-**

Hayut is the [Israeli Supreme Court](#)'s president, a post she is due to hold until October 2023. The Jerusalem Post says she could be Israel's most influential chief justice since [Aharon Barak](#) by reasserting [the court's review of laws](#) and protection of rights. She has served on the high court since 2003 and been the chief justice since 2017. Born in Herzliya to Romanian Holocaust survivors, she was a judge in Tel Aviv for over a decade.



Photo: Kobi Gldeon, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Avram Hershko, 1937-**

A native of Hungary who immigrated to Israel in 1950, Hershko led the biochemistry department at the [Technion](#). He and colleague [Aaron Ciechanover](#) became the [first Israelis to win a Nobel Prize](#) in the natural sciences when they shared the 2004 chemistry prize with American Irwin Rose for discovering ubiquitin-mediated protein degradation and proving that the ubiquitin molecule is vital to cells.

Photo: Amos Ben Gershom, Israeli Government Press Office

### Isaac Herzog, 1960-

[Herzog](#) has served as the 11th [president of Israel](#) since July 2021. His father, [Chaim Herzog](#), also served as president, and grandfather [Yitzhak HaLevi Herzog](#) was the chief rabbi of Ireland. A Tel Aviv native, [Isaac Herzog](#) served in the Knesset and in the Cabinet of [Ehud Olmert](#). He was the Labor Party leader and head of the opposition from 2013 to 2018, then the chairman of the [Jewish Agency for Israel](#).

Photo: Amos Ben Gershom, Israeli Government Press Office



### Dana International, 1969-

International, whose real name is Sharon Cohen, is a pop singer and former drag performer. She became Israel's [third Eurovision Song Contest winner](#) with "Diva" in 1998. She released her first album in 1993, the year she had sex reassignment surgery. She wrote the song for Israel's 2008 [Eurovision](#) entry and again represented Israel in the 2011 contest. She has appeared on reality TV and

judged singing shows.

Photo: Moshe Milner, Israeli Government Press Office

### Dalia Itzik, 1952-

The [first female speaker of the Knesset](#) from 2006 to 2009, [Itzik](#) was a teacher who began her political career as the chair of the Jerusalem Teachers Union. She was elected to the Jerusalem City Council in 1989, then the Knesset in 1992. She was a member of Kadima when she became Knesset speaker. She served as interim president in 2007 and finished third in the [2014 presidential election](#).

Photo: Amos Ben Gershom, Israeli Government Press Office



### Morris Kahn, 1930-

Kahn is a [tech](#) and media entrepreneur, investor, philanthropist, and one of Israel's richest men. A native of South Africa, he immigrated to Israel in 1956. He founded Amdocs, the Aurec Group, Golden Pages and others. Through his Coral World, he has opened an undersea observatory in Eilat and marine parks worldwide. He founded and was the lead investor in [Spacell](#), which launched a moon lander in 2019.

Photo: Dafna.liza, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

### Daniel Kahneman, 1934-

[Kahneman](#) is an author and emeritus professor of behavioral psychology at Princeton who shared the Nobel Memorial Prize in economics in 2002 for his work on prospect theory, which explores how people make decisions under conditions of uncertainty. [A Tel Aviv native](#) who survived the Nazi occupation of France, he began to develop his theories while assessing officer candidates in the [IDF](#) in the 1950s.

Photo: Eirik Solheim, [CC BY-SA 2.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons





### **Gadeer Kamal-Mreeh, 1984-**

A lifelong resident of the [Druze](#) village of Daliyat al-Karmel, Kamal-Mreeh in 2017 became the first non-Jewish woman to anchor a Hebrew-language news program on Israeli television. In 2019, as part of [Blue and White](#), she was the first Druze woman [elected to the Knesset](#). Since 2021 she has served as a U.S. *shlichah* (emissary) for the [Jewish Agency](#), making her the agency's first non-Jewish senior emissary.

Photo: Mohamed Elhega, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

### **Sayed Kashua, 1975-**

[Kashua](#) is a Palestinian-Israeli author and columnist born in Tira in Israel's Arab Triangle. [Writing mostly in Hebrew](#) about being an outsider in Israeli society, he became the state's most prolific Arab author. He wrote the semiautobiographical TV series "[Arab Labor](#)," which ran in Israel from 2007 to 2012. Since 2018, he has been a doctoral student and instructor at Washington University in St. Louis.



Photo: Moshe Milner, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Etgar Keret, 1967-**

[Born in Ramat Gan](#) to Holocaust survivors, [Keret](#) is internationally renowned for quirky, darkly humorous [short stories, novels and screenplays](#) exploring such themes as love, death, morality and the meaning of life. His influences include Kafka, Vonnegut and Faulkner. He teaches writing at Ben-Gurion and Tel Aviv universities. His awards include the Charles Bronfman Prize and the Sapir Prize.

Photo: Stephan Röhl, [CC BY-SA 2.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

### **Noa Kirel, 2001-**

Kirel is a pop star and actress of Mizrahi and Ashkenazi ancestry who is Israel's 2023 [Eurovision](#) contestant. She released her first songs at 14. She won the MTV Europe Music Award for best Israeli act every year from 2017 to 2020. She has starred in movies and TV shows and been a judge on "Israel's Got Talent." Though born with one kidney, she served in [the military](#) from 2020 to 2022. She is releasing English-language [music](#) through Atlantic Records.



Photo: Hayu Zmanim, IDF Spokesperson's Unit, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)



### **Sigalit Landau, 1969-**

[Landau](#) is a Jerusalem-born artist who studied at the [Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design](#), then worked in the United States and Britain. Her pieces are multimedia, including drawing, sculpture, video and performance. She explores themes such as the human condition, banishment, and the relationship between victim and victimizer. She creates many sculptures at the Dead Sea.

Photo: Amit Herman, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

### **Yair Lapid, 1963-**

Born in Tel Aviv, Lapid followed the path of his father, [Tommy](#), in gaining fame as a journalist, then moving into politics with a vision for a secular government. Lapid worked for Channel 1 and wrote books before he launched the centrist [Yesh Atid](#) party in 2012. He has served as finance minister, foreign minister and head of the opposition. When the [coalition formed](#) in 2021 [broke after a year](#), he became [Israel's 14th prime minister](#).



Photo: Amos Ben Gershom, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, 1937-**

The youngest survivor of the [Buchenwald concentration camp](#), [Lau](#) arrived in the Land of Israel with a brother in 1945. He was the chief rabbi of Netanya from 1978 to 1988 and of Tel Aviv from 1988 to 1993, when he became the [Ashkenazi chief rabbi](#) of Israel for a decade. He has chaired the advisory [Yad Vashem](#) council since 2008. He has been called a "consensus rabbi" linking Haredi and Modern Orthodox Jews.

Photo: Ya'acov Sa'ar, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Avigdor Liberman, 1958-**

A former foreign minister, [Liberman](#) was the finance minister in the [coalition formed in June 2021](#). Born in Moldova, Liberman arrived in Israel in 1978. He formed the secular Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel Our Home) in 1999, largely supported by Russian speakers. He [resigned as defense minister](#) in late 2018 over [Haredi military service](#), [sparking five elections in 3½ years](#). He has expressed willingness to give up his West Bank home for genuine peace with the Palestinians.



Photo: Mark Neyman, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Merav Michaeli, 1966-**

A Petah Tikvah native and Tel Aviv resident, Michaeli became the transportation minister in the [governing coalition formed in June 2021](#). She is credited with [reinvigorating the Labor Party](#) since becoming its leader at the start of 2021. She worked as a journalist for radio, television and the newspaper Haaretz and was active in women's and minority rights before she was [first elected to the Knesset](#) in 2013.

Photo: Israeli Government Press Office

### **Adi Nes, 1966-**

Kiryat Gat native [Nes](#) is one of Israel's most prominent photographers. He stages art photos to convey themes of masculinity and identity, often reflecting the influence of iconic artworks and his experiences [growing up gay](#) on Israel's periphery. One of his best known pieces, "The Last Supper Before Going out to Battle," is a re-creation of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" with Israeli soldiers around a table. Photo: Ziv Koren via Wikimedia Commons





### **Benjamin Netanyahu, 1949-**

[Netanyahu](#) has served as the Likud leader for all but six years since 1993. He is Israel's [longest-serving prime minister](#), holding the office from [1996 to 1999](#) and [2009 to 2021](#). Partially raised in the United States, he was a spokesman for the embassy in Washington and ambassador to the United Nations in the 1980s before entering the Knesset in 1988. He has criticized peace efforts such as the [Oslo Accords](#), [confronted Iran](#), courted right-wing extremists and been [charged with corruption](#).

Photo: Kobi Gideon, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Ayman Odeh, 1975-**

An Arab politician and lawyer from Haifa, Odeh has led the far-left Hadash party since 2015 and headed the Joint List, a [coalition of Arab-majority parties](#), in elections in [2019, 2020 and 2021](#). He served on the Haifa City Council from 1998 to 2005, and he credits that period for his openness to cooperation with Jews. He entered the Knesset in 2015. Odeh has advocated greater recognition of [Mizrahi culture and Jewish history in Arab countries](#) among Israelis and Palestinians.



Photo: Anan Maalouf, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons



### **Shahar Pe'er, 1987-**

Israel's [most successful tennis player](#), Pe'er won five singles and three doubles titles on the Women's Tennis Association tour. Her highest world ranking was No. 11 in 2011. She reached the singles quarterfinals of two Grand Slam tournaments. The United Arab Emirates barred her from the Dubai Championship in 2009, but WTA support helped her play in Dubai in subsequent years. She retired in 2017.

Photo: Tatiana from Moscow, Russia, [CC BY-SA 2.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons 2015

### **Itzhak Perlman, 1945-**

[Perlman](#) is an acclaimed violinist and conductor who was born in Tel Aviv, survived polio at age 4, and lives and teaches in New York. He has performed for U.S. presidents and British Queen Elizabeth II. He made his TV debut on "The Ed Sullivan Show" in 1958. His awards include a Kennedy Center Honor, the U.S. National Medal of Arts, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, 16 Grammys and four Emmys.



Photo: Ya'acov Sa'ar, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Yohanan Plesner, 1972-**

London-born Plesner has served since 2014 as the president of the nonpartisan [Israel Democracy Institute](#), which [conducts polling](#) and advocates for [government reforms](#) to [strengthen democracy](#). He was in the Knesset from 2007 to 2013 with the Kadima party. He was a Sayeret Matkal commando in the [IDF](#). He led a Knesset committee in 2012 tasked with resolving the problem of [Haredi](#)

[military service](#). Photo: Amos Ben Gershon, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Natalie Portman, 1981-**

Jerusalem-born actress Portman made her film debut as the star of 1994's "Leon: The Professional." She won an Oscar for 2010's "Black Swan" and was nominated for two others. Her directorial debut was the 2015 adaptation of [Amos Oz's](#) autobiographical novel "[A Tale of Love and Darkness](#)." She is part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe in the Thor movies. She refused the 2018 Genesis Prize because of political differences with Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#).

Photo: Gage Skidmore, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons



### **Itamar Rabinovich, 1942-**

Diplomat and historian [Rabinovich](#) is a former ambassador to the United States and former president of [Tel Aviv University](#). A former [IDF](#) lieutenant colonel, he was Israel's [chief negotiator with Syria](#) in the 1990s. His books include "The View From Damascus" and "[Yitzhak Rabin: Soldier, Leader, Statesman](#)." He is the president emeritus of the Israel Institute, which expands access to college courses about Israel.

Photo: Tsvika Israeli, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Miri Regev, 1965-**

Regev has served in the Knesset since 2013 as a member of Likud. During a 25-year military career in IDF public relations, she rose to the rank of brigadier general in the reserves. Her roles included spokeswoman, censor and planner for the [IDF's](#) 60th anniversary. Under [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), she served as the minister of culture and sports, then as the minister of transportation.

Photo: Kobi Gideon, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Reuven Rivlin, 1939-**

[The 10th president of Israel](#) from 2014 to 2021, [Rivlin](#) was a Likud politician who served as the speaker of the Knesset from 2003 to 2006 and 2009 to 2013. As [president](#), he pushed for moderation in the government. He was president through [six Knesset elections](#), and through the inconclusive voting from 2019 to 2021 he sometimes had to give multiple party leaders a chance to form a government.

Photo: Mark Neyman, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Haim Saban, 1944-**

Saban is a multibillionaire [music](#), film and TV producer who founded Saban Entertainment, creator of "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers." A native of Egypt, he immigrated to Israel in 1956. He started a tour promotion business in Israel and a record company in France before going to Hollywood. He is a major donor to Israeli nonprofits and pro-Israel politics. He founded the [Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy](#).

Photo: Kobi Gideon, Israeli Government Press Office





### **Rabbi Noa Sattath, 1977-**

Sattath became the executive director of the [Association for Civil Rights in Israel](#) in November 2021 after 11 years leading the [Reform movement's](#) Israel Religious Action Center. The rabbi also served as the executive director of a leadership organization connecting Palestinian and Israeli youths through [technology](#). Ordained in 2014, Sattath is an LGBTQ activist.

Photo: Association for Civil Rights in Israel

### **Stav Shaffir, 1985-**

Shaffir was the youngest-ever female member of the Knesset when she was elected with the Labor Party in 2013. She remained in the Knesset until 2020. She leads the Green Party. She rose to prominence as an organizer of the [2011 social justice protests](#). She has been active on government transparency, [women's and LGBTQ rights](#), and educational opportunities for people with autism and other special needs.



Photo: Dr. Avishai Teicher, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons



### **Nachman Shai, 1946-**

[Shai](#), a Labor Party member who served in the Knesset from 2009 to 2019, became the [Diaspora affairs minister](#) under [Naftali Bennett](#) in 2021. He was the [IDF's chief spokesman](#) during the [1991 Persian Gulf War](#) and was involved in media affairs for Israel's embassy in Washington and its U.N. delegation. He oversaw radio and TV organizations, wrote books, and taught at Emory and Duke

universities. Photo: Michael Jacobs, Center for Israel Education

### **Ayelet Shaked, 1976-**

An electrical engineer, Shaked in June 2021 became the [interior minister](#) under [Naftali Bennett](#), her close ally as they have moved from the Jewish Home to the New Right and Yamina. She served in the Knesset from 2013 to 2021 and as the justice minister from 2015 to 2019. She advocates such policies as barring African migrants, curtailing the [Supreme Court's power](#) and blocking a Palestinian state.



Photo: Mark Neyman, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Shimon Shamir, 1933-**

Shimon Shamir was Israel's first ambassador to Jordan and its [second to Egypt](#). A scholar of the Middle East, he is a professor emeritus in the faculty of humanities at Tel Aviv University. He was an advocate for Israel in speeches across Europe in the 1970s. He has [provided his expertise](#) in articles for the Moshe [Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies](#) and the [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#).

Photo: Ya'acov Sa'ar, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Anita Shapira, 1940-**

[Shapira](#) is a historian of Zionism and modern Israel and a professor emerita at Tel Aviv University. Her books include 2012 National Jewish Book Award winner "Israel: A History" and biographies of [Berl Katznelson](#), [David Ben-Gurion](#), [Yigal Allon](#) and [Yosef Haim Brenner](#). She founded the [Yitzhak Rabin Center](#) and led the Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism at Tel Aviv University.

Photo: Ein Hashofet Archive, CC BY-2.5 via PikiWiki Israel



### **Natan Sharansky, 1948-**

[Sharansky](#), a physicist and writer, was a Soviet refusenik imprisoned in a Siberian labor camp from 1977 to 1986. [Upon his release](#), he joined his wife, Avital, in Israel. He became an activist for immigrant rights and served in the Knesset from 1996 to 2003 and in 2006. He held several Cabinet posts, including deputy prime minister and interior minister. He chaired the [Jewish Agency for Israel](#) from 2009 to 2018.

Photo: Mark Neyman, Israeli Government Press Office

### **Dan Shechtman, 1941-**

Tel Aviv native [Shechtman](#) won the [Nobel Prize in chemistry in 2011](#) for his discovery of quasicrystals, which are crystals whose atoms are not organized in repeating patterns. A materials science professor at the [Technion](#), his alma mater, he made the crucial discovery while doing research at Johns Hopkins University in 1982. He also has taught and researched at Iowa State University since 2004.

Photo: Amos Ben Gershon, Israeli Government Press Office



### **Michael Solomonov, 1978-**

A multiple James Beard Award winner who leads several Israeli-themed restaurants in Philadelphia and writes cookbooks, [Solomonov](#) was born in Israel and raised in Pittsburgh. He worked in a bakery when he returned to Israel at 18 because of his limited Hebrew. He champions Israel's diverse cuisine, including the film "In Search of Israeli Cuisine" and the Jewish Food Society's "Bringing

Israel Home" web series. Photo: CooknSolo

### **Alon Tal, 1960-**

One of Israel's [leading environmentalists](#), Tal is a member of the Knesset for Blue and White. A North Carolina native who made aliyah after college, he founded the [Arava Institute for Environmental Studies](#) in 1996 and co-founded the Green Zionist Alliance in 2001 and the Green Movement political party in 2008. He has written an environmental history of Israel. He teaches public policy at Tel Aviv University.

Photo: Alon Tal, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons





### **Pnina Tamano-Shata, 1981-**

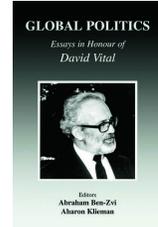
A lawyer and TV journalist, Tamano-Shata in 2013 became the first Ethiopian-born woman in the Knesset. She also is the first Ethiopian-born Cabinet member, serving as immigrant absorption minister since May 2020 under three prime ministers. She has been a member of Yesh Atid and Blue and White. She came to Israel in [Operation Moses](#) at age 3 and has advocated for social and educational equality for Israel's Ethiopian population.

Photo: Mark Neyman, Israeli Government Press Office

### **David Vital, 1927-**

Vital is an English-born historian of Zionism and diplomacy. His books include "The Origins of Zionism" and "A People Apart: A Political History of the Jews in Europe." He worked in the [Foreign Ministry](#) and the Prime Minister's Office from 1954 to 1966. He taught at Bar-Ilan and Haifa universities before serving as the [Nahum Goldman](#) professor of diplomacy at Tel Aviv University. He has held emeritus status since 1995.

Photo: "Global Politics Essays in Honour of David Vital" edited by Abraham Ben-Zvi and Aharon Klieman, 2001



### **Arieh Warshel, 1940-**

With Martin Karplus and Michael Levitt, Warshel was awarded the [Nobel Prize](#) in chemistry in 2013. His work in computational chemistry applied classical mechanics and quantum mechanics to predict and model chemical reactions. He studied at the [Technion](#) and the [Weizmann Institute of Science](#). He is a professor in theoretical chemistry and biophysics at the University of Southern California. Photo: Tomasz A. Wesolowski, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

### **Noa Wertheim, 1965-**

A [dancer](#) and choreographer, Wertheim is the artistic director of [Vertigo Dance Company](#), founded with partner Adi Shaal in Jerusalem in 1992. They added a dance school in 1997 and in 2007 established the Vertigo Eco Art Village at Kibbutz Netiv Halamed-Heh to promote sustainable living and artistic creativity. She has created more than a dozen works and the Power of Balance program for people with disabilities. Photo: Elad Debi, Vertigo Dance Company



### **Avraham Yitzhak, 1972-**

[Yitzhak](#), who [moved to Israel](#) at age 19, was the first Ethiopian immigrant to earn an Israeli medical degree and to serve as an [IDF](#) combat surgeon. He was wounded during the [Second Lebanon War](#). He participated in the 2010 humanitarian mission to earthquake-ravaged Haiti. In 2016 he became the first Ethiopian-Israeli to reach the rank of colonel and was named the chief medical officer of the Southern Command.

Photo: IDF Spokesperson's Unit

**Ada Yonath, 1939-**

[Yonath](#) is the [first Israeli woman to receive a Nobel Prize](#), sharing the [chemistry prize in 2009](#) for work on ribosomes, which are crucial proteins in cells. She used X-ray crystallography to map ribosomes' structure, important in the production of antibodies. She built Israel's first protein crystallography lab at the [Weizmann Institute](#), her alma mater, where she heads the Center for Biomolecular Structure and Assembly.



Photo: Copyright by Prolineserver 2010, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), Wikimedia Commons

**Ghaida Rinawie Zoabi, 1972-**

Zoabi serves as an Arab member of the Knesset for Meretz and deputy speaker and is an activist for [Arab rights](#). Forbes named her one of Israel's 50 most influential women in 2018. She was the first Arab woman named an [Israeli consul general](#) in February 2022 when she was assigned that post in Shanghai, but she gave up the appointment after resigning from and rejoining the [governing coalition](#) in May.

Photo: EHABJ, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons