

# The Forum



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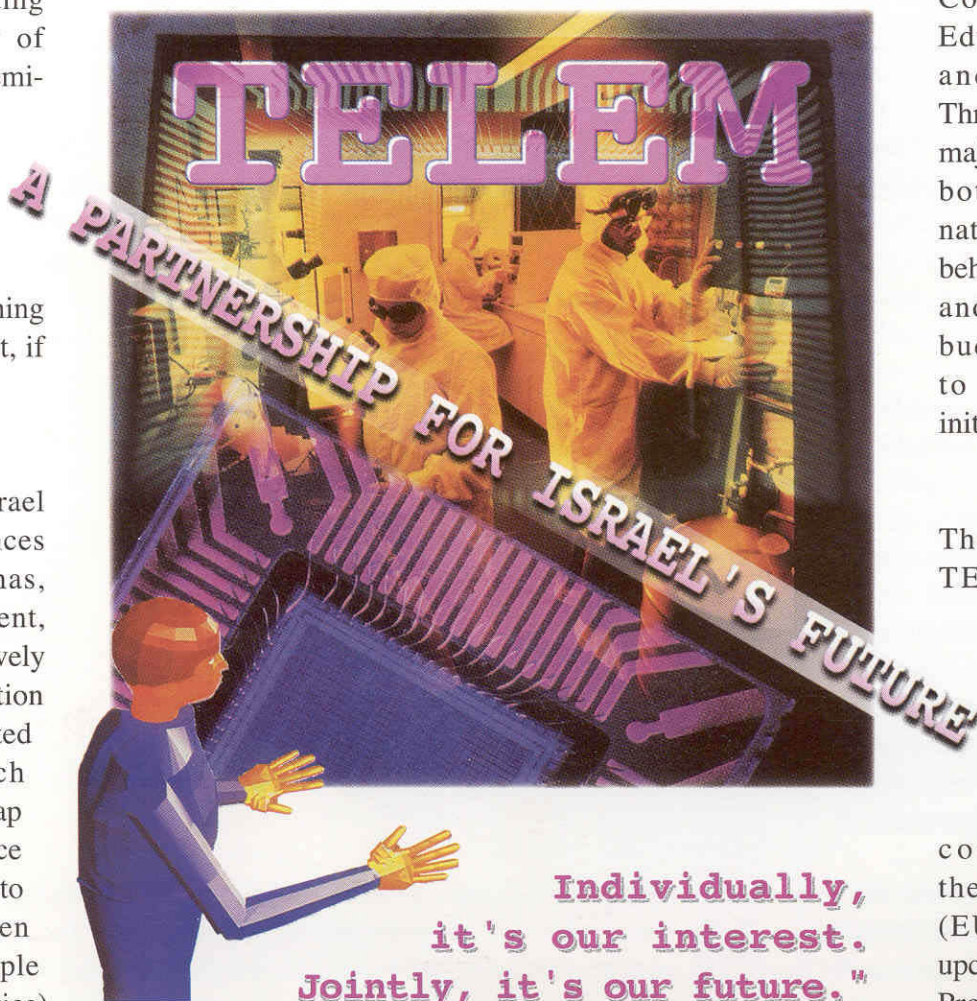
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The major initiatives and megafacilities that increasingly characterize modern science require coordinated effort and funding. In contrast, Israeli science has been characterized by individual entrepreneurship and decentralized funding by a wide variety of governmental and semi-independent bodies. This has made coordination and cooperation on matters of national science policy, planning and funding difficult, if not impossible.

In response, the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities has, through its President, Prof. Jacob Ziv, actively lobbied for the creation of a legally mandated National Research Council to fill this gap in the nation's science system. A 1996 bill to that effect has been approved in principle (but not yet in practice) by the Israeli Government. In the interim, the Israel Academy has established a high-level, voluntary *ad hoc* Forum for

**"The new Internet II research facility will keep Israel fully competitive at the very forefront of today's fast-moving networking revolution.**

**It's the sort of thing TELEM was formed to support.**



**Individually,  
it's our interest.  
Jointly, it's our future."**

National R&D Infrastructure (TELEM) composed of senior representatives of the Israel Academy, Ministry of Science, Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Planning and Budgeting Committee of the Council for Higher Education (VATAT) and the Treasury. Through TELEM, these major organizations can both discuss major national initiatives on behalf of Israeli science and pool their own budgetary resources to undertake such initiatives.

The first meeting of TELEM developed a common, comprehensive strategy for organizing and funding Israeli scientific and technological cooperation with the European Union (EU), including the upcoming V Framework Programme. Prof. Paul Singer, Chairman of Executive Board of the Israel Science Foundation, was appointed the liaison of the Israeli academic community



# The Batsheva de Rothschild Foundation



**T**he time was 1958. Israel was ten years old, but the day-to-day struggle for survival left the new State little money for scientific research (now the backbone of its vigorous high-tech economy). Profs. Ephraim Katzir and Alex Keynan went to visit Batsheva de Rothschild, whose own aliyah to Israel had been followed by an active involvement in its welfare and culture. She listened to their analyses and then, with characteristic energy and intelligence, set up the B. de Rothschild Foundation for the Advancement of Science in Israel (incorporated in the USA). She has personally headed the Foundation and its associated Israel-based "Fund" (founded in 1965), ever since, keeping it true to its goal: to fund what is needed, what others, as yet, cannot.

**... "A place where you see things happening, always intelligently, and often quite quickly..."**

In the early 1960s that meant applied and agricultural research. In the early 1970s, after the government's newly established Offices of the Chief Scientist began funding that, the Foundation switched to funding basic research. Recognizing the dangers of Israel's potential scientific isolation and the difficulty of sending Israelis abroad for training, the Foundation began their immensely successful series of Batsheva Seminars. These brought 8-10 world experts to Israel to help explore and start new advanced scientific fields together with their Israeli counterparts. Several such seminars were (and still are) held each year.

Anxious to unleash the creativity of Israel's young scientists, who were often confined to working on problems defined by their laboratories, the Foundation began issuing special Grants for Young Scientists. As Malka Keynan, a personal friend of Batsheva's and the Fund's long-time Administrator, recalls: "Within a few years, many of those young investigators became major scientific figures and served as reviewers for our next rounds of applicants!"

Much of the credit for the scientific direction of the Foundation goes to its exceptionally broad Panel of Advisors, who can analyze problems and opportunities from all angles. The first Chairman of the Panel, now headed by Prof. Natan Sharon, was Prof. Katzir. Keeping their finger on the pulse of Israeli science, the Panel has the unique ability to act on-the-spot, adding and dropping programs at will. Thus, they were able to shift support from young scientists to Russian immigrant scientists far in advance of Israel's more ponderous establishment.

Most recently, the Foundation has begun emphasizing "Frontiers of Science," using its seminars to promote Israeli interest in (and funding of) the Human Genome Project, synchrotron radiation and evolution research. Many of these topics have gone on to be funded by the Israel Academy, Israel Science Foundation or FIRST.

As the Batsheva de Rothschild Foundation celebrates its 40th anniversary, Malka Keynan still admires the Foundation as "a place where you see things happening, always intelligently, and often quite quickly. It's been wonderful!"