

# The Forum

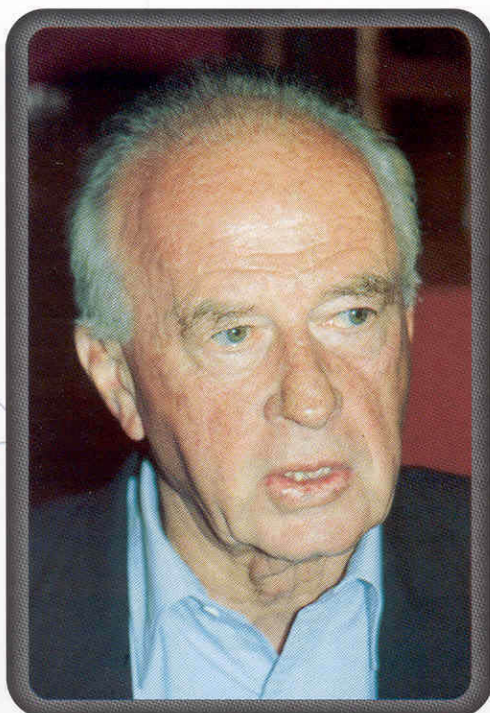
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## SCIENCE AND ISRAEL'S FUTURE



### Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin

**D**istinguished colleagues from Israel and abroad. I don't pretend to be a scientist. I was elected as a political leader, hopefully as a statesman, to devise policies to meet the most pressing needs of the State of Israel. During my term as Prime Minister, I have focused on two main policy initiatives. The first, of course, is regional peace and security. Our second initiative seeks to reorder our domestic priorities. Of these, the first must be education. I believe that, in the long run, the solution for all the ills of society is to give every individual, from his childhood until he becomes an independent adult, access to the best possible education. We have accordingly increased our national budget for education by 30% over the last 2 1/2 years. We particularly want to create educational opportunities for those sectors of our society which, unfortunately, fall below the average.

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### From the PRESIDENT'S DESK

*The current rapid pace of Israeli basic research has been a source of pride and satisfaction to us all. The international donor community has played a crucial role in this success; and our new quarterly newsletter, **The Forum**, seeks to keep the donor community abreast of recent developments and opportunities for further participation. As the American support group of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the American Foundation for Basic Research in Israel (AFBRI) has been intimately involved in these efforts.*

*In **The Forum's** pages you will find thoughtful articles on major issues in contemporary science policy, on major Israeli scientific institutions, personalities and needs, as well as exciting examples culled from the wide spectrum of Israeli basic research. **The Forum** also includes information on recent publications and upcoming events of general interest.*

*Please feel free to send us your comments, your suggestions for future articles and the addresses of others who might appreciate complimentary subscriptions. We sincerely hope that **The Forum** will become, as its name suggests, a place where Israel's scientists and decision-makers can meet with the world's foundations and donor community to discuss far-ranging issues of importance to us all.*

Professor Joshua Jortner  
President, AFBRI

# SCIENCE AND ISRAEL'S FUTURE Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin

We are very lucky. Since the end of 1989 we have absorbed over half a million immigrants from what used to be the Soviet Union. Of these more than 50,000 are engineers and about 9,000 are scientists. They doubled the number of doctors of medicine in Israel upon their arrival although, even before their influx, we already had more doctors per capita than any country in the world. I frankly don't believe that Israel could have achieved such high economic growth over the last four years without the additional professional, technological and scientific contributions of these talented immigrants. Conversely, without Israel's strong scientific infrastructure and scientific community, it would have been impossible to receive and to absorb them.

***I*** *Israel spends 2.2% of its entire GNP on civilian R&D*

Israel now spends 2.2% of its entire GNP on civilian research and development, not including our expenditure on defense-related R&D. One problem we still face is how to divide our national resources, financial and otherwise, between basic science, applied science and the links between the two. How much should we invest in R&D institutes, how much in universities, how much in industry? What can a country the size of Israel achieve in each of these fields? What should be the relationship

between our scientific community and the outside world?

We live in an entirely different world nowadays. In particular, international scientific cooperation is an intrinsic part of our national efforts. For example, in the defense area, our Arrow anti-missile system, being developed jointly with the United States, depends heavily on such cooperation. Today we lead the world in the technology to intercept ground-to-ground ballistic missiles. The Arrow initiative also allows us to enter into the space sciences in a way that we wanted in the past, but which we were unable to finance by ourselves.

No doubt our research in biology and genetics will help improve our lives and our agriculture. We can't afford to ignore such basic scientific discoveries and research that can, in a relatively short time, be translated into applied science and new technology. Thus, I don't believe that Israel can afford not to invest in basic science. At the same time, we need to distribute the responsibility for funding basic science better, to relate it to new opportunities in industry and so on.

We see great potential in our scientific investments. The more we invest in basic and applied science, the more it affects, almost immediately, our economic development. In '93, for example, a sizable fraction of Israel's increase in exports was in high-tech industries. Such high-tech industries either produce high-tech products and/or they produce relatively simple items using new high-tech techniques

We hope that Israel's scientific and related economic successes will encourage more young people to study the sciences. Israel's students now have a tendency to pursue law and business administration. These are also necessary; but I would like to see a higher proportion of students in our institutions of higher education go into the sciences. I hope that more people will realize that science is the real future for our country, both economically and socially.

Israel must continue to develop in rich human capital which have encouraged international and multinational companies to establish R&D-oriented subsidiaries here. Today, financial resources are still more limiting than our human resources. If the current Peace Process develops as we hope, providing more scope for international cooperation, the scientific community of Israel will have unique new opportunities to both benefit and contribute.

***S*** *cience is the real future of our country*

I can only express, in the name of the Government of Israel, and in my own name, our great thanks to the scientific and academic community of Israel. You have made our lives different, better and, no doubt, have created a springboard which will provide Israel with unique opportunities for the future. For that, I thank you.

*Abridged from remarks by the late Prime Minister of Israel and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Yitzhak Rabin in his opening address to the International Conference on National Strategies for the Support of Basic Research (Jerusalem, October 1994), sponsored by the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the Charles H. Revson Foundation (USA).*

