

The Forum



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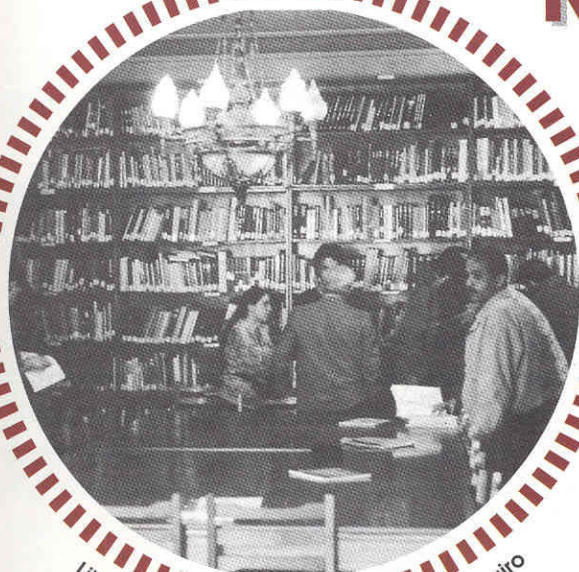
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REGIONAL C O P E R A T I O N

The Israel Academic Center in Cairo

The Israeli scientific community is one of the world's most international; and Israeli scientists - through the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities - have been exceptionally quick to exploit new opportunities for intellectual cooperation. In doing so they have become the vanguard for improved international understanding and cooperation in other areas as well. The Academy has helped facilitate this process by initiating and funding a wide variety of exciting new efforts to promote regional scientific cooperation, the topic of this new quarterly column.



Library of the Israel Academic Center in Cairo

The Middle East is in the middle of a historic Peace Process; and the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities has taken the lead in creating - through intellectual cooperation - the warm personal and institutional ties needed to ensure a lasting peace in the region. The signing of the Israel-Egypt Cultural Accords in February 1982 was followed by the opening of the Academy's Israel Academic Center in Cairo just three months later.

The Cairo Center serves as a bridge between the two scientific communities and as an umbrella organization for the activities of Israeli universities and academics in Egypt. The Academy manages and operates the Center with the help of a Board which includes representatives of all Israeli universities and the Israel Oriental Society. Most of the Center's current \$400,000 a year budget is supplied to the Academy by the Planning and Grants Committee (VATAT) of the Israel Council for Higher Education.

The Center has actively participated in the momentous changes now sweeping the Middle East. For example, the Center's Director participated in the 1994 Israeli-Egyptian Foreign Ministers' Summit which led to a new Cultural Agreement and the first official meeting between the Center's Director and the President of Cairo University.

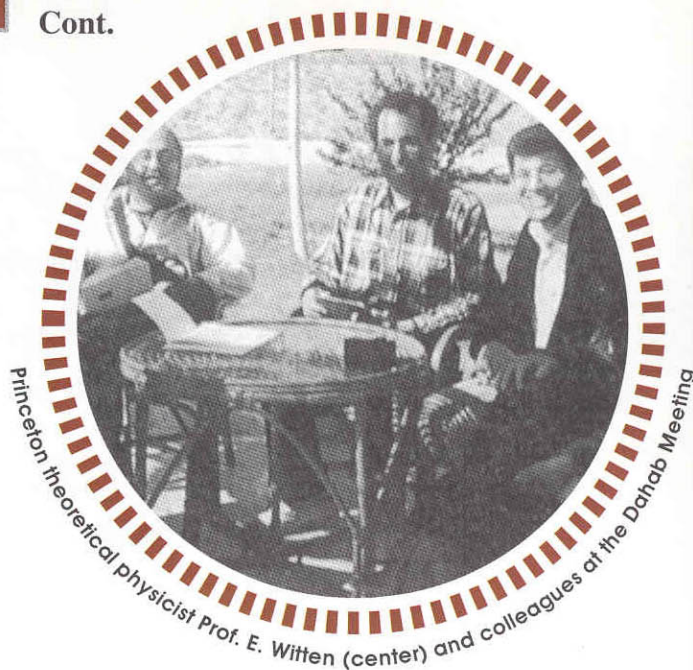
More recently the Center has been active, both officially and unofficially, in providing source material and up-to-date information on Israeli and Jewish literature, history, religion and culture to the Egyptian Ministry of Culture and to interested Egyptian researchers. The Center's Directors have all been Arabic-speaking orientalists. The Center's first Director, Shimon Shamir, later became Israel's Ambassador to Egypt and is now Israel's Ambassador to Jordan.

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REGIONAL COOPERATION

Cont.

The Center provides far more than a fine library of 14,000 volumes and other scholarly facilities. It is the hub of an extensive network of meetings, contacts, scientist exchanges and other joint activities. It also hosts Israeli scholars and students who visit Egypt to conduct research or to present lectures and bi-weekly seminars. Although bureaucratic difficulties abound, the number of Egyptian researchers visiting Israel, often with help from the Center, also continues to increase. In 1995 the Center helped arrange a visit of eight Egyptian university graduates to Israel, to help them explore their options for future education. The Center itself gave five Egyptian students direct travel/study grants and, at its urging, the Foreign Ministry has given another five Egyptian students scholarships.

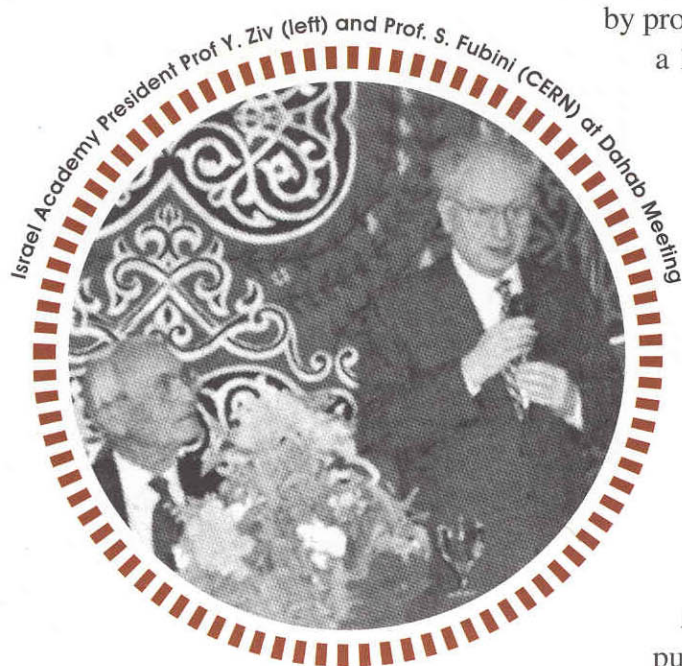


simultaneously , and successfully, pursuing both science and peace

The Center's greatest successes have been in the areas of Hebrew language and literature, both in promoting research and in helping Egyptian students undertake graduate studies in Israel. More recently there has been increasing interest in the natural sciences and a joint Israeli-Egyptian team has received funding over \$1 million for a joint project on the control of the whitefly moth, a major scourge of cotton, tomatoes and other crops. Direct trilateral research ties between Israeli, Egyptian and U.S. counterparts have also long flourished under the U.S. Agency for International Development's highly successful, \$5 million a year, Middle-East Regional Cooperation Program (AID/MERC), founded in 1982.

Center-initiated cultural exchanges, such as the publication of Amoz Oz's *My Michael*, the first modern Israeli novel to be translated into Arabic, spark wide interest and numerous press reviews. The Center continues to oversee this important

"Translation Project," which has already published several more titles with prefaces by prominent Egyptian writers. Recent symposia sponsored by the Center include a 1995 meeting on "Rav Saadyah Gaon," involving participants from Israel, Egypt and the U.S., and a similar 1996 meeting on "The Cairo Geniza."



The Israel Academy also has active direct relations with its Egyptian counterparts. The Egyptian Minister of Science and her delegation visited the Academy in Jerusalem in June 1995, and the Israel Academy's leadership visited Cairo two months later. The Academy was also a cosponsor - along with the ICTP, CERN and UNESCO - of the landmark symposium on "High-Energy, Condensed Matter and Environmental Physics" held in Dahab, Sinai, in November 1995. The meeting brought Israeli, Egyptian, Jordanian and Palestinian researchers together with major U.S. and European leaders in these fields. The Cairo Center also contributed to the symposium's organization. Thus, working both together and separately, the Israel Academy and the Cairo Center have been simultaneously, and successfully, pursuing both science and peace.