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SHABBAT SHALOM

**POSITIVE ECONOMIC & POLITICAL PROSPECTS
FOR ISRAEL, A JEWISH RETURN TO SPAIN?**

Contents:

Israel winning in Europe: [Arsen Ostrovsky, Ynet News, Dec. 14, 2012](#)—Before the ink was even dry on the Palestinian vote at the UN last week, headlines already started flooding on how Israel 'lost Europe.' The reality however, could not be further from the truth, as Israel continues to make stunning headway in its trade and bilateral relations with the EU.

Israeli find barrels of shale oil in 'game changer': [Sharon Udasin, Jerusalem Post, Dec. 17, 2012](#)—Israel Energy Initiatives (IEI), which has already completed an exploratory pre-pilot drilling phase in Israel's Adullam region near Beit Shemesh, has claimed that the area – also called the Shfela Basin – contains approximately 250 billion barrels of shale oil, amounts that could be competitive to the amount of crude oil in Saudi Arabia.

A Tepid 'Welcome Back' for Spanish Jews: [Doreen Carvajal, New York Times, Dec. 8, 2012](#)—Top government officials pledged to speed up the existing naturalization process for Sephardic Jews who through the centuries spread in a diaspora — to the Ottoman Empire and the south of Italy; to Spain's colonies in Central and South America; and to outposts in what are now New Mexico, Texas and Mexico.

On Topic Links

Israeli Cardboard Bike Revolutionizes Transportation: [Algemeiner, Oct 18, 2012](#)

Groundbreaking Innovations in Hydroelectricity: [Gedaliah Borvick, Times of Israel, Oct. 18, 2012](#)

Massachusetts, Israel Cooperate to Build Water Innovation: [Sharon Udasin, Jerusalem Post, Dec. 18, 2012](#)

ISRAEL WINNING IN EUROPE

Arsen Ostrovsky

[Ynet News, Dec. 14, 2012](#)

Before the ink was even dry on the Palestinian vote at the UN last week, headlines already started flooding in on how Israel 'lost Europe.' The reality however, could not be further from the truth, as Israel continues to make stunning headway in its trade and bilateral relations with the EU.

Anyone familiar with the mechanisms of the United Nations, where the Palestinians enjoy an automatic anti-Israel majority, never seriously doubted the outcome. Despite the predictable posturing by President of Germany, the Jewish state may have liked a few more 'no' votes in their camp, but given the choice, Israel would take tangible results over symbolic victories at the UN any day.

Regrettably, when commentators lament how Israel has 'lost' Europe, they overlook the impressive list of achievements by this government in the past four years. For example, in May 2010 the OECD unanimously voted to invite Israel to join the organization. This was no small achievement, and came despite intensive lobbying by the Palestinians. Even countries like Norway, Spain and Ireland, traditionally the most hostile to Israel in Europe, voted in favor.

In September 2011 Israel became the first non-European member of CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, while in July this year the EU and Israel signed a memorandum of understanding to deepen their scientific cooperation in the fields of energy and water desalination, where Israel is a world leader.

Moreover, in October the European Parliament ratified the ACAA agreement (Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products) with Israel. The agreement is unprecedented in that it recognizes Israel's industrial standards as equivalent to those in Europe, especially in healthcare, and is a prime example of a 'win-win' situation for both Europe and Israel.

According to David Saranga, the head of European Parliament Liaison Department for the Israeli Mission to the EU: "The ACAA protocol will eliminate technical barriers to trade by facilitating the mutual recognition of assessment procedures. This will in turn help lead to facilitating imports of high-quality, low-cost Israeli medicines into the EU, while at the same time increasing medicinal choice for European patients and healthcare professionals."

In the last few years, Israel has also held an increasing number of government-to-government meetings at the highest level of Cabinet with various European allies, including the Czechs, Italy, Poland, Bulgaria and Germany....As a result of these meetings, Israel has signed a number of significant bilateral agreements in areas of high-tech, green energy, culture and the sciences.

This year alone, Israel has signed multi-billion dollar gas deals with Cyprus and Greece; Israel's Aerospace Industries has secured two contracts worth nearly \$1 billion to provide Italy with air force military equipment; whilst the past year has also been Israel's "best tourism year ever", with more than 3.5 million visitors to the Holy Land – most of whom have come from European countries.

Importantly, in 2011 the EU was Israel's largest trading partner, with total trade amounting to approximately €29.4 billion for the year – an increase of 45% from 2009; and this came during the midst of an unprecedented financial crisis in Europe....

Whilst the United States will always remain Israel's most important ally, the Foreign Ministry, under the present political leadership, has made a concerted effort to reach out to allies in Europe (and elsewhere) that had been neglected in the past. Perhaps the key factor behind Israel's success in Europe has been its ability to successfully extricate 'the conflict' from their bilateral relations.

Previously, there had been a direct correlation between how the conflict was progressing and Israel's trade relations. Today, Israel has created an environment in which its bilateral agreements are increasingly judged on trade merits alone, while membership in international organizations is based on the same criteria as for every other nation – that is, what can Israel contribute by way of

skills, experience and expertise. No, Israel has not 'lost' Europe. Rather, Israel is 'winning' in Europe.

Arsen Ostrovsky is an International Human Rights Lawyer and freelance journalist.

[Top of Page](#)

ISRAELI FIND BARRELS OF SHALE OIL IN 'GAME CHANGER'

Sharon Udasin

[Jerusalem Post](#), Dec. 17, 2012

Developing a firmer understanding of shale oil's chemical complexities is crucial to oil explorers in both Israel and North America, who are drilling in shale rock and sand in the search for alternatives to traditional OPEC crude, an expert told *The Jerusalem Post* in an interview last week.

Israel Energy Initiatives (IEI), which has already completed an exploratory pre-pilot drilling phase in Israel's Adullam region near Beit Shemesh, has claimed that the area – also called the Shfela Basin – contains approximately 250 billion barrels of shale oil, amounts that could be competitive to the amount of crude oil in Saudi Arabia. The company intends to acquire the oil by drilling a production well and surrounding in situ heating wells approximately 300 meters below the Earth's surface, in order to melt the hydrocarbon-filled sedimentary rock from within the ground before extraction.

While the country's green groups adamantly protest the drilling process as potentially catastrophic both below and above ground, the company has repeatedly stressed that an impenetrable layer of rock separates the shale layer and the water aquifer, and that there will likewise be little permanent surface impact.

Prof. Carol Parish, of the chemistry department at the University of Richmond in Virginia, has called the oil shale finds in Israel a "game changer," but also said it was crucial to study the relatively new resource on a molecular level, and compare it to traditional crude oil. "In order to fully harness this resource, it is necessary to develop a thorough understanding of the petroleum chemistry and reactivity of the molecular constituents of oil shale," Parish said.

Upon completing a Fulbright fellowship with Prof. Sason Shaik, director of the Lise Meitner Minerva Center for Computational Quantum Chemistry at Hebrew University, Parish spoke last week with *The [Jerusalem] Post* about the importance of studying shale oil on such a close level. Parish visited Israel under the Fulbright fellows academic exchange program, which works in partnership with the US-Israel Educational Foundation that manages Israeli participation in the program.

In her research, Parish is looking at applying quantum mechanics techniques to the characterization of molecules in alternative energy sources, particularly oil sand and oil shale. "There are actually a lot of parallels with the development of petroleum crude," she said.

Yet in typical light, sweet crude oil, about 90 percent of the molecules exist in long, straight chains and about 10% are cyclical, Parish explained. The reverse is true for shale oil molecules in that they are predominantly cyclic. Because crude oil is made up almost entirely of straight chains, this is where the bulk of molecular research has thus far been done on oil. Parish, on the other hand, is looking at the cyclical molecules that dominate shale oil.

Often as a result of the cyclical molecules, diradicals – molecules with two dangling electrons – can form. According to Parish, diradicals are very difficult to properly characterize because many are very reactive. Visiting Shaik’s lab in Israel for four months allowed her to learn a specific quantum mechanics technique called the Valence Bond Theory, aiding in the understanding of the bonding that occurs between the diradicals.

With this knowledge, scientists will be able to derive a more accurate characterization of the shale molecules, comprehending the combustion and pyrolysis – decomposition of compounds by heat in the absence of oxygen – that are the foundation for petroleum production, she explained.

Due to Shaik’s expertise in Valence Bond Theory and the huge oil shale supply in the country’s Shfela Basin, Parish stressed that the “the two things put together caused Israel to be the perfect place to pursue this kind of work.”

During her time here, Parish said her work with Shaik amounted to a great success. “We were able to characterize a diradical system which hadn’t been characterized using valent bonds,” Parish said, noting that she now has 90% of the results necessary to publish her research. Because IEI plans to heat the shale in-situ, meaning while it is still underground, rather than pump sludge to a refinery, Parish said she believes that the process will be a much cleaner one than methods that have thus far prevailed.

“The advantage to the Israeli method is that they’re going to get it pure, directly out of the ground, and don’t have to ship it to the refinery,” she said. “They are basically going to do the refining right out of the ground.”

She noted that another advantage the Israeli shale deposits have over those of the US is that “there is an impenetrable layer of material that separates oil shale deposits from the water table.” In the US, on the contrary, the two layers are often intermixed.

Because she is not a geologist and therefore could not officially confirm IEI’s claims that an impassable barrier separates the shale and the aquifer, she stressed that “it would be an outright lie to say what they are saying if it is not true.” Parish suggested that the green groups who doubt IEI’s claims raise funds to bring in third-party geologists to survey the region.

Ultimately, focusing on her own research, Parish said she hopes to be laying the groundwork for further research into the characteristics of shale oil, as the world continues to demand more and more long-term, sustainable sources of energy. “The harvesting of oil shale is a very new field and people become more interested in alternative energy like that when the price per barrel of conventional fuel rises,” Parish added.

“There has to be an economic motivation in order to harvest alternatives. I believe that we can get a better understanding of the energy content and the reactivity of these alternative sources of fuel,” she said. “That too will motivate the development of more sophisticated techniques to harvest the alternative fuels.”

[Top of Page](#)

A TEPID ‘WELCOME BACK’ FOR SPANISH JEWS

Doreen Carvajal

[New York Times](#), Dec. 8, 2012

Top government officials pledged to speed up the existing naturalization process for Sephardic Jews who through the centuries spread in a diaspora — to the Ottoman Empire and the south of

Italy; to Spain's colonies in Central and South America; and to outposts in what are now New Mexico, Texas and Mexico.

I am conducting a global search for a missing menorah that my great-aunt Luz concealed in a commode in her cramped bedroom in a garden apartment in San José, Costa Rica. She preserved it until she died, in her 80s, in 1998, when she was buried swiftly the next day with a Sabbath-day psalm on her funeral card — cryptic signs of my Catholic family's clandestine Sephardic Jewish identity because the prayer avoided any reference to the trinity or Jesus.

I tallied these and other Carvajal family clues a few days after the Spanish government heralded its new immigration reform last month. Five hundred and twenty years after the start of the Inquisition, Spain opened the door to descendants of Sephardic Jews whose ancestors had fled the Iberian Peninsula, forced, in order to live in Spain or its colonies, to choose between exile or conversion to Christianity. Or worse.

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Spain's foreign minister, José Manuel García-Margallo, sought to address his nation's painful legacy when he revealed the reforms, declaring it was time “to recover Spain's silenced memory.” But the process is much more complicated than it appears, and some descendants are discounting the offer as useless, or even insulting, as it dawns on them that they are excluded.

Some of those converts in Spain's colonies — still within the reach of the Inquisition — led double lives for generations, as I learned from writing a book about my own family's concealed identity. They lived discreetly, maintaining Jewish rituals that would have put them in peril if they had been discovered. They risked confiscation of wealth, prison, torture or death. Some relatives knew, some didn't and others refused to see.

For this act of heresy, living life as Jews, a branch of Carvajal converts in the 16th century was decimated in the Spanish colony of Mexico by burning at the stake. They are called *anousim* — Hebrew for the forced ones — crypto Jews or *Marranos*, which in Spanish means swine. I prefer a more poetic term that I read in a French book: silent Jews who lived double lives.

The Spanish offer was not as simple as it first sounded, and almost immediately evoked a mix of reactions. The Federation of Sephardic Jews in Argentina, for one, was elated. But there were some hard questions from *bnei anousim*, the descendants of the *anousim*. They were concerned about criteria that were not widely explained.

Genie Milgrom, president of the Jewish Genealogical Association of Greater Miami, researched her family's unbroken Sephardic Jewish line through 19 generations of grandmothers to Spain. She said she had no interest in Spanish citizenship in “a country that extinguished my heritage.” But for those who want nationality, she said Spain “needs to be abundantly clear on what they are going to do with the *anousim*.”

The proof of Jewish identity among the *anousim* is often pieced together like a mosaic of broken Spanish tiles. Clues range from last names to cultural customs in the home to intermarriages among families with traditional Sephardic Jewish names.

In my case, I have a family tree ornamented with such names, since ancestors had an enduring habit of marrying among trusted distant cousins to protect their secret lives. Is it enough, though,

to offer the Spanish government a family tree? Or what about Aunt Luz's old menorah if I can ever find it? My great-grandfather had a habit of visiting a local rabbi in San José weekly. Was that evidence of interior religious lives?

When I asked Isaac Querub, president of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain, about the criteria for anousim, I was startled by the response. To be naturalized and become citizens, secular bnei anousim Jewish applicants whose families had maintained double lives as Catholics must seek religious training and undergo formal conversion to Judaism. It is the federation that will screen and certify the Sephardic Jewish backgrounds of applicants who seek the documents that can be submitted to the government to obtain citizenship. Mr. Querub said that what the government meant by Jews is "the Sephardic descendants who are members of the Jewish community."

[Top of Page](#)

ON TOPIC

Israeli Cardboard Bike to Revolutionize Transportation in Developing Nations: *Algemeiner*, Oct 18, 2012—An Israel inventor, Izhar Gafni, has created a bicycle made nearly entirely out of cardboard as well as a new model of "green" transportation production that could allow poor nations to get bicycles for free.

Groundbreaking Innovations in Hydroelectricity: *Gedaliah Borvick, Times of Israel*, Oct. 18, 2012—The story of Israel's burgeoning energy industry is absolutely fascinating as it reinforces the "can do" spirit of the Jewish nation. While its neighboring countries account for four of the top six oil producers in the world, Israel – ranked way down the list at number 98 – is rising to the occasion by discovering creative alternative energy solutions.

Massachusetts, Israel Cooperate to Build Water Innovation: *Sharon Udasin, Jerusalem Post*, Dec. 18, 2012—As Massachusetts eagerly seeks Israeli partners in water innovation, a Herzliya-based firm specializing in rapid microbiological water testing will get the chance to showcase its systems in the New England hi-tech hub.

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