



COMMEMORATING DIAMOND JUBILEE

NEPAL-ISRAEL RELATIONS

DYNAMISM of COOPERATION
OPPORTUNITIES, CONNECTIONS AND ACTIONS

Edited by:

Dr. Anjan Shakya
Arjun Ghimire
Sabita Deshemaru



Embassy of Nepal,
Tel Aviv, Israel

Commemorating Diamond Jubilee
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Foreword

On behalf of the Embassy of Nepal, Tel Aviv, I would like to express my happiness to bring out the publication “Nepal-Israel Relations: Dynamism of Cooperation, Opportunities, Connections and Actions” to commemorate 60 years of diplomatic relations between Nepal and the State of Israel. I believe this book will certainly contribute to enhance the cemented bilateral relations between the two countries.

On the occasion of Diamond Jubilee, I wish that Nepal-Israel relations will flourish further as high as Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) and as deep as the Dead Sea not only up to the level of Governments but also to People's level.

The mellifluous relations between the two countries advanced when Nepal had recognized Israel as a State in 1st June 1960. Actually, Nepal's relation with Jews started since when Nepali Gurkha Soldiers participated in the battles during and before the time of world wars together with British Army. It proves that we have relations of centuries. Around six million Jews were killed during the World War-II. The survivors of the Jewish Holocaust never forgot their murdered family members. When B. P. Koirala, the first elected Prime Minister of Nepal got this information, he was heartily touched and shocked as described in his book ‘Hitler and Yehudi’ which is the first book ever written by a Nepali Prime Minister about Jews. He paid intense empathy to those who were victimized. Henceforth under his premiership, he showed the recognition of the State of Israel. He felt that a separate State is necessary for Jews. He had a good relation with David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, who established the country and taught his people how to be united, truthfulness and hardworking for the development of the country. He looked forward to east and established Embassy of Israel in Kathmandu immediately after Nepal recognized Israel as a State and became the first South Asian country to recognize Israel and to host the residential Israeli

Embassy in Kathmandu. Still Nepal stands in two States solution as per the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations Organization (UNO). Nepal's foreign policy with the principle of 'Amity with all and enmity with none' is abided by the UN charter, International law, Non-Aligned Movement, principles of Sovereignty, Territorial integrity, Independence, Non-interference and always adhere for world peace, harmony, friendship, security and also expects the same from the international communities. Nepal is moving forward to developing nation from the least developed country following an overarching dream of the country "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali."

When I was appointed as Ambassador, I was instructed by the Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Nepal to enhance collaborations with the State of Israel especially on Agriculture sector to accelerate economic development of Nepal. Following this, the Embassy is able to sign an MoU to increase agricultural cooperation between the two countries. The reality of the day is that the State of Israel is interested to expand its cooperation in Asia. It has been opening up direct flights with different Asian countries which ultimately is helping to expand trade, investment and tourism. With the focus towards Asia, we can be hopeful that Nepal will be prioritized for receiving the assistance to a larger extent.

At present, the relations in various sectors like agriculture, health, employment, education, energy, science and technology, information and communication, business, tourism, investment, culture, sports, etc. are blooming. I had envisioned to bring out this book on Nepal-Israel relationship about a year back when I first met and presented my credentials to H. E. the President of the State of Israel so that our cooperation and collaboration would remain alive forever and such feelings would transmit from generations to generations. I have past experience of publishing such books with the compilation of articles of the veteran people. In this process, Ms. Sabita Deshemaru, a Nepali Ph.D. Scholar in Israel was interested, and of course, a very appropriate person for the accomplishment of this work who understood my feelings. I am grateful to her for enormous efforts and tireless contributions

to bring this book into shape. I would also like to thank my husband Hon'ble Dr. Ajaya Kranti Shakya who always encouraged me all along my path, my parents, all my family members and friends from Nepal as well as Israel.

All the articles of this book are the yields of the pen of the prominent political figures and experienced diplomats as well as experts of different fields. The primary intent of this publication is to garner valued suggestions and good advices to enhance Nepal-Israel bilateral relationship forever and also to further extend the cooperation on diverse sectors.

I heartily would like to thank the Right Hon'ble President of Nepal Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari, the Right Hon'ble Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. K P Sharma Oli, Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Nepal Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali as well as H. E. the President of the State of Israel Mr. Reuven Rivlin, H. E. the Prime Minister of the State of Israel Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, H. E. the Foreign Minister of the State of Israel Mr. Gabi Ashkenazi for providing their warm messages to consolidate our relations. I would also like to express my gratitude to the governments and people of both the countries and other esteemed contributors of heart touching articles and messages whose kind cooperation made this endeavor of publishing a book a success amidst the celebration of the 60 the anniversary.

I am grateful to Honorary consuls of Nepal based in Israel Mr. Ilan Nir and Mr. Nimrod Berger who have contributed financially to publish this book. I would also like to thank my Deputy Chief of Mission Mr. Arjun Ghimire and Attaché Mr. Pradeep Sagar Giri and all staffs in the Embassy who have contributed their valuable time while preparing this book. Last but not the least, I would like to appreciate the publisher who has helped to release this book in this form.

Anjan Shakya, Ph.D.
Ambassador of Nepal to the State of Israel
December, 2020



राष्ट्रपति
The President

June 14, 2020

Message

I am pleased to learn that the Embassy of Nepal in Israel is bringing out a commemorative book on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and the State of Israel.

On this special occasion, on behalf of the Government and people of Nepal as well as on my own, I extend warmest felicitations to the Government and people of Israel. I wish the people of Israel continued peace, progress and prosperity.

Since its establishment, Israel has achieved unparalleled success in many fields. It has remained at the forefront of scientific invention and technological advancement which have benefited the people all over the world. Nepal being the first country in South Asia to recognize the State of Israel on 1 June 1960 and to host the residential Embassy of Israel in Kathmandu takes pride in the progress achieved by Israel.

Our two countries have consolidated the bonds of friendship and intensified cooperation in the past sixty years. Israel's support in the fields of human resources development, agriculture, health and education has contributed to our efforts in socio-economic development. Increased levels of people-to-people contacts have brought our two countries further closer. Contributions of Nepali migrant workers in Israel and Israeli tourists' choice of Nepal as their preferred destination have played an important role in this regard.

As we celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, it is fitting that we look back into our journey over the last six decades and take inspiration to chart the course for the future.

Though, as nations, our geographic location and historical evolution are unique, a few common features remain prominent. Both countries are the lands of ancient civilizations and are able to preserve their heritages and way of life despite many adversities. Diversity has remained a hallmark of our ancient cultures and societies. Our common faith in democratic system of governance has created a conducive environment for further nurturing our bilateral ties.



राष्ट्रपति
The President

Exchange of high-level visits contributes to the expansion and consolidation of friendly ties and cooperative partnership. I am confident that there will be greater engagement between our two countries at various levels in the years ahead.

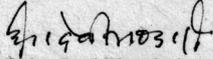
In this context, Nepal and Israel can learn from each other's experiences and collaborate in many areas of common interest. Environmental protection, agriculture, investment, trade, tourism and technology stand out as promising areas to further our collaborative partnership to the mutual benefit of our two countries and peoples.

As the entire humanity is battling the COVID pandemic for the last several months, our two countries remain in constant contact at different levels to exchange views and experiences to overcome the pandemic. We are confident that Israeli innovation and advancement in the area of biotechnology will contribute greatly to humanity's fight against the virus.

Our common values, historical experiences and recent successes in collaboration and cooperation foster optimism and buttress our common resolve to further enrich and deepen our bilateral relations.

Finally, I would like to commend Ambassador Dr. Anjan Shakya and her team in the Embassy for taking this initiative to publish a book to mark the historic milestone of the six decades of friendship and cooperation between our two countries. I am confident that the book will serve its important purpose of further cementing ties and promoting cooperation between our two countries.

I wish steady and continuous development of Nepal-Israel relations.



Bidya Devi Bhandari





THE PRESIDENT

As we mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Israel, I would like to express, on behalf of the State of Israel, our deep appreciation for the vision and the courage of the late Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. B.P. Koirala, who chose to recognize Israel in 1960, becoming the first to do so among the countries of South Asia.

The friendly relations and the successful bilateral cooperation between our two countries have developed in a number of areas since the establishment of our diplomatic relations and the visit to Israel by Prime Minister Koirala in August 1960. The warm friendship that has developed between our two nations – one on the high peaks of the Himalayas and the other in western Asia, between the shores of the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea – are indeed a wonderful example of good relations between nations. This is clearly demonstrated in the wide range of cooperation, ranging from academic cooperation to tourism, agricultural development and health services, and will, we hope, continue to provide a strong foundation for ongoing warm relations between Israel and Nepal over the years to come.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish the government of Nepal the continuing political stability and economic prosperity that will help promote the ongoing progress of the Nepali nation. Israel has gladly stood by Nepal over the years, both in good times and in crises such as the terrible earthquake that struck in April 2015, and we will be happy to continue to help realize the vision of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli: Prosperous Nepal–Happy Nepali.

I send my greetings to all the people of Nepal together with my hopes for ever expanding ties between our two countries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Rivlin'.

Reuven (Ruvi) Rivlin



The Prime Minister of Nepal

June 14, 2020

Message

I am pleased to know that the Embassy of Nepal in Israel is publishing a souvenir to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and the State of Israel.

Nepal and Israel established diplomatic relations on 1st June 1960, during the early years of Israel's foundation. I recall with pleasure that Nepal was the first country in South Asia to formally recognize the State of Israel by establishing diplomatic relations and hosting the Israeli Embassy in Kathmandu. This landmark development constituted the bedrock of the evolution of Nepal-Israel relations. It is gratifying to note that our relations have widened and deepened in the last sixty years to our mutual satisfaction. Nepal attaches importance to its relations and ever expanding cooperation with Israel. The people of Nepal nurture tremendous goodwill towards the friendly people of Israel.

Recently, I had the opportunity to have friendly conversations over telephone with President H.E. Mr. Reuven Rivlin and Prime Minister H.E. Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu. During our conversations, we renewed our friendship and shared commitment to further developing our relations on the solid foundation built in the last six decades. The conversation also provided us with an opportunity to exchange views on fighting against COVID-19 pandemics. The friendly exchanges on the historic diamond jubilee occasion of our relations will go a long way in cementing our friendship and building a strong partnership for mutual benefit.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government and the friendly people of Israel on the occasion of the 72nd anniversary of independence this year. We, in Nepal, are following with keen interest and appreciation the great strides Israel has been making in the overall advancement of its people and nation in the last seven decades, be it the cooperative agriculture and community spirit of Kibbutzim and Moshavim, or Israeli miracle in turning Negev desert into a blooming agricultural innovation center, be it its reputation as the world's one of the most successful research and development centers in the fields of medicines, information technology, defense industries, and many more. Nepal continues to draw inspiration from the Israeli spirit of industry, resilience, innovation and ingenuity. I wish the friendly people of Israel continued successes in these and many other fields in the days to come.



The Prime Minister of Nepal

In the last six decades, Nepal has undergone political transformation of historic proportions. We have abolished monarchy that ruled the country for nearly 250 years and established a republican system of governance. The democratic Constitution, which was promulgated by an elected Constituent Assembly in September 2015, has institutionalized the gains of the successive people's movements. People of Nepal have become the real source of sovereignty and state authority. We have achieved much needed political stability following the elections of all three tiers of federal set up in 2017. In the elections, the people of Nepal provided a robust mandate to the Nepal Communist Party to govern the country. The present Government that I head enjoys strong majority in the federal parliament. After the settlement of the political issues for which we had continuously fought for over seven decades, socio-economic transformation of the country has been our topmost priority today. '**Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali**' is our overarching national aspiration, and all our efforts and activities are directed towards realizing this aspiration. In fulfilling this mission, we count also on the goodwill and support of the Government and people of Israel.

Our relations continued to flourish over the decades. We continued to cooperate and collaborate on various areas of mutual interests at bilateral and multilateral levels. Our relations today encompass the ever-expanding sectors and areas of cooperation ranging from employment, human resources development and agriculture to development cooperation, technology transfer and energy.

Cooperation in the area of agriculture has remained one of the most beneficial and fruitful collaborative endeavors between our two countries. Under the 'Learn and Earn' program, several Nepali youth agriculture students have received regular opportunities to train in Israel. We are now working seriously to establish centers of agricultural excellence in Nepal that will be crucial to transfer the state-of-art Israeli technology for the development and modernization of agriculture sector in Nepal.

As we strive to advance our cooperative partnership, there is a need to explore and harness the tremendous potentials in such important areas as trade, investment, agriculture, health, technology, tourism and people-to-people contacts. The stark contrast that the highest point on earth, Sagarmatha, known as Mount Everest in Nepal, and the lowest point on earth, the Dead Sea in Israel, inspires us to bring our two countries further closer through tourism.

Exchange of visits can provide added momentum to elevate our relations to new heights. Prime Minister Netanyahu has invited me to visit his beautiful country which I sincerely look forward to. I have also extended an invitation to him to visit Nepal after the current difficult situation of Covid-19 pandemic becomes normal.



Kathmandu, Nepal

The Prime Minister

As this is a time of global distress and unprecedented adversity brought upon us by the Covid-19 pandemic and also a time of unparalleled opportunity to forge global cooperation and collaboration, I would like to take this opportunity to express solidarity and best wishes from the Government and people of Nepal to the Government and people of Israel in their efforts to fight and overcome the pandemic.

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Ambassador Dr. Anjan Shakya and her team in the Embassy of Nepal for taking this important initiative to publish this commemorative book. I believe that several more events that are planned for this year to celebrate this important milestone in our relations will contribute towards further consolidating our bilateral ties.

Long live Nepal - Israel friendship!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K P Sharma Oli', written over a horizontal line.

K P Sharma Oli



ראש הממשלה
PRIME MINISTER

July 2020

Dear Friends,

I congratulate the people of Nepal as we celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. I welcome the publication of *The Israel-Nepal Friendship: An Example to the World*, which documents the historic friendship between our two countries.

We always remember Nepal's decision to be the first South Asian country to recognize Israel, despite intense political pressure. Prime Minister B.P. Koirala's vision and courage were the driving force behind this decision in June 1960. He later visited Israel at the invitation of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion.

Nepal has become one of the leading tourist destinations for Israelis, who enjoy Nepal's spectacular vistas and hospitality. Thousands of Nepali caregivers demonstrate that sentiment in their service to the health of Israeli families. I was honored to order the immediate deployment of a medical delegation when Nepal experienced a devastating earthquake in April 2015, and to provide assistance in rescue, reconstruction, and medicines.

In the security sphere, Israel is located in a very challenging area. Nepal plays its part in maintaining regional security by providing soldiers to serve in UN peacekeeping forces in Lebanon and on the Golan Heights.

Economically, our countries continue to enhance our agricultural cooperation. Approximately 3,000 young Nepalis have studied modern agricultural techniques in Israel and are now applying that knowledge at home.

I congratulate Prime Minister Oli and the Government of Nepal on its many achievements. The State of Israel is proud to be your partner.

Sincerely,



Benjamin Netanyahu

Jerusalem, Israel



Government of Nepal

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu, Nepal

3 February 2020

Message of Best Wishes

I am happy to learn that the Embassy of Nepal in Tel Aviv is planning to publish a souvenir book to commemorate the special occasion of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and the State of Israel.

Nepal and Israel established diplomatic relations on 1 June 1960. It is a matter of satisfaction to note that our relations have remained warm, friendly, close, cordial and cooperative over the decades. I am pleased to recall, on this occasion, that Nepal was the first country in the South Asia region to formally recognize the State of Israel by establishing diplomatic relations and hosting its residential Embassy. Israel opened its Embassy in Kathmandu in March 1961, soon after the formalization of bilateral relations. Nepal established a residential Embassy in Israel in August 2007.

Our relations have continued to grow with the expansion of sectors and areas of bilateral cooperation and collaboration in various matters of mutual interests over the years. There have been exchanges of several high-level bilateral visits, including at the highest levels. We have already concluded a number of bilateral agreements and MOUs, and many more are under consideration. Nepalis are working in Israel in the caregiving sector. Israel has extended valuable cooperation to Nepal including through provision of trainings and scholarships for human resources development. Cooperation in the agriculture field has remained our most significant bilateral collaboration. One such success story is the 'Learn and Earn' program under which around five hundred Nepali youth students every year have been receiving training opportunities in the agriculture sector in Israel which has been beneficial to impart skills as well as to transfer the state-of-the-art Israeli technology to Nepal. There exists tremendous scope for further expanding and deepening cooperation between our two countries in the areas of trade, investment, technology transfer, employment, tourism and people to people contacts.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Ambassador and the Embassy of Nepal in Israel for taking initiative to publish this commemorative book. I am confident that the various events to be organized this year to celebrate the milestone of our bilateral relations will further contribute towards strengthening our bilateral ties.


Pradeep Kumar Gyawali





MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1 July 2020

On June 1st 2020 we celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Nepal. It was the vision, wisdom and courage of Nepalese Prime Minister B.P. Koirala, and his deep knowledge of Israel that made him the first South Asian leader to visit Israel in 1960.

For 60 years the ties between our two countries have developed and strengthened in many different fields including those of academia, agriculture, health and tourism and I look forward to working with the Government and people of Nepal to develop them further.

These past 60 years have seen friendships develop not only on a National level but also on a people to people level. Visitors to your country can visit the highest place on Earth on Mount Everest and those that come to Israel can visit the lowest place on Earth at the Dead Sea.

During these difficult times, as the world tackles the COVID-19 pandemic, I wish all of the people of Nepal good health, and I send my thoughts and good wishes to all those affected by the virus.

May the next 60 years bring both Israel and Nepal health, prosperity and continued cooperation and collaboration for the benefits of both of our peoples and countries.

Sincerely yours,

Gabi Ashkenazi

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The Ambassadors' Club of Israel Connecting Diplomats to Israel

07/06/20

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

THE AMBASSADOR OF NEPAL TO ISRAEL,

Dear Ambassador,

Nepal and Israel celebrate this year, 2020, sixty years of diplomatic relations.

In the past six decades, our two countries succeeded in developing excellent relations despite the geographic distance between them.

In many different fields, these relations, such as the economic, cultural, and political ones, are based on mutual respect and admiration, on solidarity and shared values and common interests.

Nepal is one of the most popular touristic destinations for Israelis.

It will no doubt continue to attract record numbers of Israeli tourists in the future.

Several months ago, your Embassy was invited me to the launching event of "Nepal 2020".

This was my first encounter with magnificent Nepal.

It was also the first time that I saw the Nepalese Ambassador to Israel, presenting her country to an Israeli audience.

You did it beautifully and effectively.

Your Excellency,

You have been chosen, unanimously, by the Ambassadors' Club, among the ninety foreign ambassadors serving their countries in Israel, as "Ambassador of the year 2019-2020" for your excellent diplomatic work since your arrival to Israel.

You will receive, in October, at our annual Award ceremony, the "AWARD OF EXCELLENCE IN DIPLOMACY." This Award recognizes your unique contribution to the close relations between Nepal and Israel.

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries, I express my best wishes to you and your country.

Yitzhak Eldan



President of the Ambassadors' Club

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The Cross Border Agriculture Program: External Studies Unit at Ashkelon College



- Abutbul, Rachel

The Cross Border Agriculture Program is one of many in The Unit for External Studies, which was founded in 2010. Now, The Unit for External Studies is located on twelve campuses throughout Israel in colleges from Eilat (the south) to Haifa in the north. With many specializations that provide professional development in over 70 training courses the Foreign Studies Unit umbrella operates study programs in accordance with and under the supervision of many governmental bodies and senior officials in order to provide certificates of value that empower our graduates as they begin, return to, or advance their careers. In 2014 The Cross Border Agriculture Training Program, under the Foreign Studies umbrella, began.

The Cross Border Agriculture Program at Ashkelon College has been partnered with Nepal and its youth since its foundation. In six years, 600 Nepali students have come to Israel to study in various agriculture fields: farming, irrigation & rural development,

pasturage, and agri-business. Students learn hands-on at industrial farms and pastures. And at the end of the year, every student who leaves Israel has his/her own realistic, professional, business model and proposal.

At the heart of the program, Program Director Rachel Abutbul, designed student learning at various sized farms. Family-run to industrial farms, students work, earn good wages, and participate in the daily operations on these farms. In addition, lectures are given by accredited university-professionals now working in their various fields of study. They direct students to design co-op farms, market evaluations, and business models according to the Nepali environment. Meaning, the soil conditions, weather, financial institutions, livestock breeds, and growing seasons are not compatible between Nepal and Israel; as such students must be prepared for and anticipate these differences when building their business models.

Experiential tours help with acclimation and further development of agricultural knowledge. Every year students tour various agriculture exhibitions. They see the most modern technology in irrigation, seed development, fertilization, etc. They visit nurseries where the most modern grafting techniques are learned, as well as nursery conditions and production intended exclusively for highest-quality export.

The Cross Border Agriculture Program journey doesn't end when students leave Israel. Many students, especially handpicked leaders, return home and spread the knowledge they learned in Israel to their communities in Nepal. Even more, the program's staff stays in touch to answer questions and provide help when they can.

Every year the program's staff visits Nepal to interview new students and visit the farms of previous graduates. They are always impressed to see former students with huge farms of chickens bred for meat, egg production farms, kiwi farms, organic produce farms, goat pastures, cows for milking, and community co-ops run by friends and families. Opportunities are as broad as one's imagination: some students train their families and neighbours in the techniques they learned in Israel, one student is now a guide for

a national park, and some extend their learning at Israeli universities.

It isn't all work all the time though. The program also aims to familiarize students with Israel, its culture, and its diversity while embracing the culture of Nepal. It's a great pleasure to share and compare traditions by celebrating holidays like Haritalika, Dashain, Tihar, and the Nepali New Year in addition to Passover, Chanukah, Rosh-hashana (Hebrew New Year), and Independence Day.

At graduation, the ambassadors of both countries come to present students with certifications, gifts, and acclimations, see examples of the students' business plans, hear songs, and watch choreographed dances. And while it's always a sad occasion it's also a joyous celebration. Bonds have been formed that make of the returning students ambassadors of two countries, Israel and their own. They are encouraged to take this duality literally and put stones from the Dead Sea (the lowest point on earth) on Mt. Everest (the highest mountain in the world).

More than academics and business, The Cross Border Agriculture Program is an experience that forges a bond between two nations and in the process nurtures and strengthens both.

-Ms. Abutbul is a Program Director at Ashkelon College.

(This article was received on 3 November, 2019)

An Example of Agricultural Practices in Desert and Its Replication in Nepal



-Arnon, Hanni

ANMC – The Arava - Nepal Modern Agriculture Company Ltd. in Gandaki province is the result of the close cooperation between our two countries - Nepal and Israel.

It began in 2002, when the Israeli Embassy in Kathmandu helped us contact Tribhuvan University in Rampur and bring a group of agriculture students to study at AICAT.

AICAT – The Arava International Center for Agriculture Training is located in the heart of the Arava Desert, in the southern part of the State of Israel, and is about a kilometer from Israel's border with Jordan.

The area has poor natural resources, with extreme weather conditions, and is geographically distant from the center of the country. Nevertheless, the region has become the food barn of the State of Israel and of the world and is a leader in advanced and innovative agriculture. Students come to AICAT from all across Asia and Africa, from various different nationalities, religions and

cultures, for agricultural study and training.

Through our acquaintance with the students from Nepal and from our annual visits to its rural areas, we have learned about agriculture in Nepal. We have been impressed by the entrepreneurial nature of the younger generation.

Our students from Nepal are curious, asked questions and quickly learned that it is possible to bring about changes in the way of thinking in order to promote changes in Nepalese agriculture. Over the years, we started working with the Sana Kisan Bank headed by Mr. Jalan Sharma.

It is said that it's easier to change the world when you have with whom to do it. In Jalan and in his organization we found the perfect partner, a partner who set himself the goal of helping the rural areas and the young entrepreneur farmers. This aligned with AICAT's goal of growing young leadership which would lead to change in local agriculture.

Over the years, students returned to Nepal's villages and set up agricultural businesses or began improving their farms, but the earthquake on April 25, 2015, provided an example of opportunity arising from difficulties.

At the time there were 165 students from the Dhading area at AICAT, led by Mr. Binod whose home was also destroyed in the disaster.

"What can we do but cry," he said at the time. There was nowhere to return to, no food, no houses and no road infrastructure.

In an extraordinary and unprecedented move, the students were allowed to stay in Israel for an additional year of study.

The time spent in Israel and the inspiration they received gave them the momentum to lead the Israeli-Nepalese agricultural revolution, which played an important role in restoring Nepal's agriculture. 47 AICAT graduates brainstormed, thought, asked questions and realized that the model of the Israeli moshav, with community responsibility, solidarity and partnership, would suit them as well.

And this is how an innovative group of young people with vision and initiative, and with a lot of motivation, got organized and became a model for rehabilitation.

Today at ANMC there are greenhouses for field crops as

well as chicken coops which are using advanced technologies, and there are also plans to open a dairy farm in the future.

At the same time ANMC also runs a training center and agricultural tourism center.

Next year ANMC will run a preparatory course for the new students before they arrive at the AICAT training program.

We are proud of over 2000 graduates and are confident that together with them Nepal can look forward to a bright future.

-Ms. Arnon is a Program Director at Arava International College for Agricultural Training.

(This article was received on 31 May, 2020)

IDF Delegation to Nepal Earthquake 2015



-Bader, B. G. Dr. Tarif & Laredo, B. G. Yoram

The preparation

It was on April 25th, it was Saturday and it was our holiday. I was planning to go to Eilat with my family, it was our last arrangement before we leave for Eilat, at that time I heard in the news that there is an earthquake in Nepal and I got a call within few minutes. At that time I was the deputy surgeon general. And, as a deputy general I was responsible for the manpower of the corp and was responsible for operational manager. Within couple of minutes, I start getting phone calls from my officers and telling me that probably we will need to send a delegation.

My younger daughter noticed me talking on phone more than once and she asked if there is anything wrong? I told her about the earthquake in Nepal, and she said, “so what if there is earthquake in Nepal? We are going to Eilat, what is the connection? What is the problem?” After a while she and I understood that we will have to prepare if there will be a delegation. So, I drove from

my home (North of Israel) to the office within couple of hours and Mor (my secretary) also got here as well as other officers. We started arranging ourselves to be what is needed in case of sending delegation to Nepal. We received the information in the real time. When I heard the news and saw the shots about Nepal that was struck by severe earthquake, it was a shock to see Kathmandu; the houses and temples laid on the ground like rubbles. When we received the news, we knew that we need to go help. To be prepared for help, first of all we needed to understand what Nepal is; what the characters are and their economy and many things, how we organize, how we are going, what is the governmental system, what is the disaster and its consequences.

And, what we do in general is we try to send an assessment team as soon as possible to the affected country. This assessment team is a small team regardless of the fact that there is a delegation or not, but they are moving to the affected country as soon as possible usually, in a civilian airplane. To be our poll on the ground, to see what is happening there, to collect the information about what is a need in the affected country. Of course, we do get information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and from our military attaché base. But in the case of Nepal, it is the same attaché in India and in Nepal. So by the time of gathering information, we sent 5/6 personnel from medical core and from the home front command. They went to Nepal. When they are going to Nepal, we were starting to prepare ourselves to be sure that if there is a need, we will be prepared. Then, within couple of hours, there raised the possibility of going a delegation. Since we have a lot of experience from the previous delegations, we are well prepared for the first sets for preparing the delegation.

So this was the 25th April, 2015, of course, we heard the big magnitude of the earthquake there in Nepal; so many people were affected and killed by the earthquake. Since we have very wonderful relationship with Nepal, we consider ourselves friends; we were prepared in no time to send a delegation. Although there was a big chance that the Nepalese people will ask for our help, we will be willing to go and help them. There are some kind of disasters in places where we cannot go there or they cannot ask us for help

because as you saw we are working in our uniforms, we are working in our tents, we are working under our flag, so sometimes it is not comfortable for some of the African countries that the foreigners and it does not matter if that is Israelis or others, are coming to the state with their uniform and working inside the country. It was not the argument in this case because we consider ourselves friends with Nepal. The relationship was, and is and will be wonderful. That's the reason that we allies and there is a good chance that we will be asked for help and we will send the delegation.

It took us around 24 hours to prepare ourselves and the delegation. But if I examine the latest delegation, none of them went within 24 hours. What was the reason for that? Because we believe in safety first and what is expected from our commanders is to be sure that we are sending the delegation to a safe place and it's safe for both. There is always danger, but it was not so dangerous to go to this affected country. You need to think about the after-shocks, you need to think about the epidemic you might have there, you need to think about the weather and many things. So we have to check the risks, and the pros and the cons. And sometimes the affected countries cannot accept us in meaning of, for example, the airport of Kathmandu was not working for many hours after the earthquake. It was a dilemma whether we are going to India and go from India to Kathmandu. Or wait for the better information about the airport if we can land to Nepal. So we are expecting from ourselves to prepare within 24 to 36 hours. Again, since we do not have the military delegation, it's not a military unit. Part of the delegation were officers, soldiers who are serving military so it was very easy for us to call Mor on Shabbat to come here from her home to the headquarter but it's much more difficult for me to ask a civilian to stop her work and come to serve as a reservist within couple of hours to this delegation. As since there is a wonderful system with the military system and the civilian system, they understand that it is really important to get this done really as soon as possible. So I think none of the people that we called and told about the delegation, none said no. Of course, if he is not in the country, if he has wedding of his daughter he cannot go, if he has a very important event within 10 days, I cannot promise him to

be back within this 10 days. But, in general we had no difficulties in gathering the extra people out of the military corps, as a reservist from almost every hospital. Other part is the part of the military unit called the field hospital. There is a military unit called the military hospital, and others are from outside as reservists. We looked at possible needed personals for the delegation to Nepal, we called Prof. Eli Shwartz who is a physician from tropical infectious diseases and working in Tel Ha-Shomer hospital, who has worked couple of years in Nepal, he is familiar with the Nepalese people, he speaks the Nepali language, and he is master in endemic problems that people of Nepal are suffering from. So he was the perfect guy to call and to ask to be part of the delegation. And, if I need pediatrics surgeon, I can call Asher Prizman, he is working in Afula, as the head of the department. He has previous experience from other delegations, and I asked him to be part of the delegation. And again with the paediatrician, internal medicine etc. whenever we have these facilities or these personals, either from the unit, the reserve zone, or from the military core, it's much easier for me. But if we do not have them, probably we would ask the Ministry of Health or the hospitals or the HMOs, to release them and to let them join the delegation, and no doubt all hospitals want to be part of this delegation. It's a proud to be part of this delegation. So, within couple of hours, we started to arrange the personnel, again working in parallel others were preparing the equipment. And you have to understand that we do not have in daily bases, we do not have all the equipment for field hospital. As a military unit, for example, there is no need of paediatric equipment and there is no need to OB/GYN. So, there is no need of these in daily manners. But, when there is delegation, we are preparing for the equipment for needing extra in our unit. And these 36-38 hours are very busy. The people here are working around the clock, and it did not matter if it was a Saturday or Sabbath or Holiday or whatever, it does not matter. This is an amazing thing that I remember Avi, who is now the head of the southern medical command, he was the lieutenant colonel here and he was living in Beer Sheba, we asked him to come to the airport. He told us that he needs couple of things; we asked another driver from here go and meet him in the airport with the

things he asked because the flight was within 2 hours. Within 2 hours, he came from Beer Sheba, he just called his family to tell them that he is on the way to Nepal, and within 2 hours he was already in the flight to Nepal to join the assessment team. The other team, the other part of the delegation, they have to be prepared within let's say 24 to maximum 36 hours. And, people who cannot be relief from their work within 24 hours, they will not be part of the delegation. Let's say, in this delegation, we were 126 medical personal, in total, including the photographer, x-ray technician, laboratory technician, nurses, paramedics, medics and physicians. Besides 126 medical team, there were other 151 personal from the home front command. So, in total we were almost 281 including the spoke persons and etc. In general, we were 120-130 medical personal to work in the field hospital, and almost the same number from home front command and other 20-30 personals were supplementary.

From previous experience, we knew that who we need and how many people. Five years ago it was in 2010, and in between we were in the Philippines, and then Japan (there were only one delegation and that was from Israel). Every time we have to plan from the beginning because none of these delegations were the same. There are a lot of similarities between the delegations to Haiti and the delegation to Nepal. Except one difference; in the case of Haiti, all the local hospitals were destroyed. There was almost no collaboration between our field hospital and local hospitals in Port-au-Prince. And this is the main and the major difference between these two operations. In the case of Nepal, part of hospitals in the city was still operating. They were partially affected. Even the hospital that was the military hospital that we collaborated and worked with was also affected from the earthquake. Parts of the departments were evacuated to the yard of the hospital but the operation rooms and ICU rooms were working, that's the reason we decided that we are establishing our field hospital near this Army hospital, and will work in collaboration with them. So part of the operation we did in our hospital and part of the operation done in the Nepal Army hospital and after the patients was moved to our hospital to intensive care unit. So, there was a wonderful

cooperation between these two hospitals and again it was one of the differences between the Haiti delegation and the Nepal delegation. Even though both of them had established a field hospital that can work totally independent in affected country, even the number of the personnel were the same, the outcome was different. But the case in the Philippines, our delegation members were 64, and that's because the Philippines asked us to work us inside the hospitals and the clinics. So the hospitals and clinics were not affected, but they were lack of equipment and personnel. So the delegation to the Philippines was like a helping delegation, not establishing our independent field hospital. As I said, from our previous experience we understand what is needed from us. After understanding that there is a need of the field hospital, beside the hospital that was still partly operating in Nepal, we knew that 126 personnel would be needed to work in an independent way in any affected country. And, I said independent way because it's not fair or it's not wise to think that we can rely on the local facility and to be another burden to the affected country. We have to be fully prepared from the water, from food, to the equipment, to the blood, and to the medications, and to the whole things. And that's the reason we are going with the whole x-rays, laboratories, operating room, the intensive care unit, the obstetrics and gynaecology, the labour room. When we are talking about the labour room, we are talking about the intensive care unit for neonates. So you have to arrange all these things together because you cannot operate the labour room without the surgery room if there is the case of neonates. I am going little bit further, that's the reason that from the 6 labours we had in our field hospitals, 5 of them were from caesarean section. This is just because the complicated pregnancies were sent to our hospital from the local hospitals. They understood that the field hospital has a wonderful facility not only for the labour room but also for the neonatal intensive care unit.

As I have mentioned earlier, we sent an assessment team to Nepal before the delegation. In this internet era it's so useful because when they were in the flight to Nepal, we already know almost all the information needed from the affected country because our military attaché are already there, our ambassador is

already there, we called him and asked him questions. We called the Nepalese surgeon general and talked to him directly. The proto of the assessment team started in Kathmandu when we arrived there, the information given by this team was important. The importance of this assessment team is for two reasons; the first one is try to understand where is the best place to build our field hospital in the affected country, because I can ask the military attaché but he cannot understand what is needed from the place for the field hospital. The decision of having our field hospital in this ground beside the Nepal Army hospital was the understanding from the assessment team when they talked to Nepalese personnel from the Ministry of Health, from the surgeon general, the assessment team understood from them that it's very important that the field hospital will be in Kathmandu, and in that area, it's a central area that it's very easy to come from almost all the areas around Kathmandu. So, this is the first decision and the first advantage of the assessment team. Second advantage is at the moment I am landing there, in unknown country to meet not Dr. Sri Krishna whom I have met before on the way but to meet Avi my officer who was already there and who understood the situation. Gathering information from extra miles that I can get without the assessment team; from the ambassador, from the military attaché, from the internet, from the collaboration with the affected country and from other sources were important as well. And, sometimes the assessment team's initial report is very important for the decision makers here to decide whether or not to send the delegation. I am going back to 2004, when there was Tsunami in Thailand, I was there as part of the assessment team. I went within couple of hours with the team, after realizing the disaster there, after seeing all the casualties are well treated in very good private hospitals in Bangkok, we realized that actually we don't need a field hospital for this kind of delegation. So our suggestion at that time was there is no need for a field hospital to come to Thailand. And, that was the reason; actually Israel did not send the delegation. But in the case of Nepal, we realized there are need and when our assessment team arrived there; their initial report was another crucial proof that there is need of us.

Debrief

Actually, since we are not talking about a unit as a unit, as we are talking about gathering personnel from the whole country, it's very important to have good bonding between these personnel before we start the mission. Actually, the mission has already started before we land in the affected country. For example, when I called my secretary to come here, in her point of view the mission already started. But, again it's very important to have these people from different parts of the country, from different hospitals in the country, as they have never met before, never worked together before, they were working according to different protocols. The protocol in Nehariya is different from the protocol in Tel-Hashomer hospital. And, it might be the physician work with the nurse of the Ichilov hospital and vice-versa. Even though they are talking the same language, even the same medical language, but again they are from local protocols, so we have to arrange all of these together. So one of the things we are doing, since I have talked about safety first, and sometimes as part of the protocol we have to wait for the approval to fly there and then we have 13-15 hours of flight to the destination so actually we had plenty of time to prepare ourselves not only prepare as a whole 126 members, but as part of the whole delegation team which is 281 members. We had to arrange ourselves in small departments. For example, the internal medicine department should know who is chief of the department, who are the nurse, who is the chief nurse, who the medics are working in this department, and to understand that the chief of the x-ray department is near. So, one of my first missions is to arrange these people according to the department. So, when you are talking about the way of working in hospital, there is an emergency department, there is a pediatric department, there is internal medicine department, there is an emergency room and let's say surgery room. And the first mission is let's say "Prof. Dr. Yoram Malekhi, you are the head of the internal medicine department. And, these are the people working with you; Avi from Haifa, Yossi from Jerusalem, Krishna from Nepal etc." And, then they are working together to know each other to give the first relations of how they want to work together. Of course, according to the

military medical corps, and we are having this fine tuning to work in the department. But, it's very important to know each other because some of them have never met before. So, they have this working format and working schedule for the field hospital.

We worked almost 24 hours after we finished our packing. We were prepared to take off. All the people were in the airplanes. All the personnel were in the airplanes. We were ready, we started to talk the mission but there was no permission to land in Kathmandu because the airport in Kathmandu was not still operating. So, we waited almost for 24 hours extra time in the airport and it is very difficult to have these people to wait and just sitting in the airport. All of them who already left their homes, and left their families. They have still another 2 or 3 weeks to the operation. Almost 24 hours we were waiting doing nothing because we can't go home, we can't stop working, the equipment is not with you so you can practice a little bit, but only thing you can do was to talk in small groups about the mission, about the expectations from each other, and of course for me as the commander of this delegation is to give the information and prepare them in state of mind. So, we utilized the time absolutely. There was nothing we can do in order to shorten this period. We utilized it in a productive way. I told you we had to think either we go to India and then we go to Nepal from there or we land to Nepal. Then we realized, even if we have to wait 36 hours in the airport and go directly to Nepal, its much shorter and easier having all the equipment there but not having trucks from India to Nepal so they will take much more time. That's the reason; we waited more hours in the airport so we could fly to Nepal directly with the equipment. We landed in the Kathmandu airport. I think we were the first airplane to land in Kathmandu after the earthquake. We waited and waited. The military attaché that was in India, he was the pilot from the IDF, actually he went to the airport to make it clear what was missing and if it is approved if we can land there or not. After couple of hours, Nepalese people in the airport gave permission to land in Kathmandu. That's the time we flew to Kathmandu and it took us 15 hours to land there. We landed the personnel and the equipment in Kathmandu, and we have trucks from the airport to the military hospital; Nepal Army

Hospital. In 2010, because of the same problem, also in Port-au-Prince, the airport was not operating and we asked ourselves if it's a good idea to go to the Republic Dominican and from there go to Haiti. And, then again, also there we decided to wait and finally we got the permission to go directly to Port-au Prince airport in Haiti. So, it was the same.

In the action in Kathmandu

In the delegation, in the mission, we were 281 people that included medical personnel for the field hospital, urgent rescue officers. We took one Israeli air force, and one commercial Israeli airline EL AL to bring the delegation to Nepal. We landed in Kathmandu and we established the field hospital on the open ground of Nepal Army Hospital.

We drove in Kathmandu with our urgent rescue team and it was devastating to see the houses, we drove through rubbles unfortunately there were not much to rescue. But what amazed me more is to connect with the Nepali people. People are very gentle, very calm, very appreciable people. I did not see a sight of losing temper or hysteric or not panic. But they were standing on road and appreciating us because they read in the media that we are coming for help. People were waiving at us and welcoming us.

Another effort was the civilian aid; our engineers gave them consultation and approval for the building if they are safe or not safe to live in. Our team checked hundreds of building and gave approval, especially schools; they are the first step the nation to come back to routine.

The biggest effort was to establish our field hospital and operate it to serve the injured. We arrived after midnight. And, we went to the area where the assessment team has suggested having our field hospital because I have to approve if it's a good and safe place to go there. It was in between the artillery base and the military hospital. There was a big open ground there. I remember that we just arrived there I started to work with my assistant to see the ground and how we will arrange the field hospital there and to fit that area; where to make the entrance. So, we actually started to plan with the paper and the pen; something to plan, how

to build the field hospital; the entrance, the emergency room, the departments to put operating rooms, and besides the operating room there should be the intensive care unit (ICU), the x-rays, Orthopaedics, Paediatric and neonatal with intensive care unit. And of course we have to keep place for ourselves. So there were plenty of small tents, actually these were our rooms. You finished duty and you pass 2 meters and you are at your home. There were bathrooms and the kitchen on the other side. So, we built all these things from the scratch. And, you have to be well prepared for everything, you have to take in advance that you have all the tents, all the hammers, all the things. We are talking about water, we are talking about oil, we are talking about food, we are talking about everything. And, in our point of view, we have the ability to work totally independent, at least for the first couple of days. After that, we can go to the supermarket in the affected country or to the other countries to buy something. For example, we bought water from India. In the case of Haiti, we bought part of the things for the delegation from the Dominic Republic. So, for the beginning, we are prepared for few days to work independently. And this is one of the strength of our field hospital. And, that's the reason for example we were the first field hospital in the world. We got accreditation from the WHO. As a field hospital, we are level 3; level 3 means the field hospital that has all the facilities for operating like a big hospital including the ICU, including all the units and to be able to work independently. So, we are the only and first field hospital for two years, and last year another field hospital from China was accredited for field hospital from the WHO. So, at the mean time, only 2 field hospitals with the WHO accreditation for FMT3. FMT3 is Foreigner Medical Teams level 3 is the highest level.

The moving story

It was very touching story about a young soldier who was travelling to Nepal in the trekking routes when the earthquake happened. That guy was a soldier in the protective edge project war in 2014 with Gaza. We had a big operation in 2014 and he was in the Golani and few of his platoons were died. He completed his mandatory service and in 2015 he went to Nepal to a breath

by himself, after experiencing his friends, being in war, seeing his friends died. This was the guy that we did not find so some of his friends from his platoon from Golani came from Israel and stood in my camp in the field hospital in Kathmandu. His two commanders, the officers and few of his team, they were 6 or 7 I think stood in my delegation and said “Hey! we know that he is missing and we know that nobody could make connection with him so we are going to look for him.” I said, you are crazy, this is something has to be professional. They said they don’t care, they are going. So, when I realized that there is no chance that we can stop them, we gave them equipment, we gave them radios, we connected them with our station and we connected them with the choppers of Nepal army. We sent our few troops with them and they flew by following his tract and they found him, unfortunately they found his body. Some of the rock fell from the mountain hit him and he died there. He was killed at the exact time when the earthquake happened, on Saturday 12:00. He was in the middle of trek and he was smashed and died. And it is amazing that the team managed to find him and his friends brought his body to Israel. This was the most emotional story.

Actually, every time you realize that you are being able to save a life is a touching story. And every time if you were not there and people will die, it’s a touching story. I mentioned that the labour room and the 6 deliveries, 5 of them were from Caesarean section. Every case like this is a unique case. Being able to accept the helping hands in such complicated situation, and actually some may argue with our OBS/GYN department as part of humanitarian delegation to the earth quake. But, we believe that this is also an important part of the delegation too. I remember a moving story about a boy aged 13 or 14, he was suffering from head trauma, he was from small village outside Kathmandu. They asked us if we can send a physician from the field hospital to go to this village almost 3 hours by car to see what is happening with this boy because they had no transportation to bring this child to the field hospital. We took this mission, if we would say no, probably the boy will die. This is why we decided to go with a physician dr. Hagit Padora to work with a small team far away from our field hospital to see what

is happening with the boy and to decide what is the best to do. She, the doctor went there, she checked him and fortunately she recognized that there is not something normal about the boy, he is not suffering just from the head trauma, he was also suffering from fever. And she thought about if there he is bleeding since two three days, she thought there is infection inside head from this bleeding. They told me and we decided to bring him to our field hospital to continue the treatment. This boy was brought to our field hospital, we realized that this boy needs an urgent neurosurgery, but we do not have neurosurgeon. We talked to the military hospital, they did the surgery in the military hospital, and he was shifted to our field hospital in our intensive medical unit for the coming few days. What was touching is to see the boy almost dying in the village and to see the same boy smiling sitting on the wheelchair and eating. For me, I am a Paediatrician, I have 4 children, for me it was like.... OMG...I did my job.

Challenges

We have experience from past delegations to Kenya to Mombasa, Philippines, Mexico, Brazil and few more countries. Every mission has different challenges, for me, the challenge in the Nepal mission was to command this delegation of 281 people, their assignments. You know they are pulling injured and dead people from the rubbles, so I had to give them activities or talks to relief their mental stress. There is a technique how you relief their mental stress. I must say that it was a mental relief to walk with them to see the very beautiful sites of Kathmandu like the Baudha, Swoyambhu, and few more beautiful sites. After dealing with bodies, rubbles and hospital, we took our people to breathe in there and we had the chance to see very beautiful sites. The view of Kathmandu valley from the mountain on the top of the hill; Swoyambhu, was amazing. We made sure that we did not deal with just with the stressful time but also to see the beauty of Kathmandu.

The second and the major challenge was that how you organize your delegation, to keep the routines from raising the flag in the morning, and complete the day with the briefing. The third challenge was the logistic and physical maintain; food, sanitary,

bathroom, to maintain the camp. And the last challenge was to make connection with the army, to receive the mission to see we are coordinated, to see the local government's coordination.

I think the challenges that we were facing were some kind of lack of resources. That means we cannot save the whole country, we are another hospital. You have to decide what kind of things we can do and what kind of things we cannot do, and other dilemmas or challenges we were facing all the time was when the time to go back is. It's a very big dilemma because even we would stay another 3 or 4 weeks in Kathmandu, people would still coming to our field hospital. We had to do balance in going to help and on the other side let's say people will come again and again for other treatments not from earthquake affects that was not the reason we went there. Even though we could help in the times of crisis, it was difficult to decide to close the mission and go home. I remember I was going to the office to the military hospital there and telling them with the coordination with the ministry of health in Nepal, and I told them that we are finishing our mission in coming two days. It is always very difficult to take this decision. Because the more you stay there the more you can help, but again after 3 week 4 weeks, it's never enough. It's okay to move and give the responsibility to the local people.

A different and unique delegation

When we organized the delegation, we had two missions; to help Nepal and Nepalese from this disaster and to bring home the missing Israelis in the trekking sites. The mission with connecting Israelis makes this delegation unique. This was the first time that we have this kind of mission parallel to helping the nation. So, we had those days 188 Israelis who were in tracks in all the very beautiful sites in the Himalaya region, and they were disconnected with their families so we heard the stories from their families so we knew that we may work for them parallel to the field hospital that we opened in Kathmandu. We succeed to establish the connection with 187 but sadly we found one person dead. We brought them to safer places and we helped them connect with their family members in Israel. And after we have learnt that we cannot connect with one

Israeli, we sent our team.

Another uniqueness of this delegation was there was a Nepali doctor in the delegation. It was very difficult to approve his participation in this delegation. 3 or 4 ministries were involved in this case. The ministry of health, the ministry of foreign affairs, the Minister of Defence, and others. Because we were talking about military delegation, he is not an Israeli citizen, he is not serving the military, and he is not the volunteer. So, you are taking a foreigner and giving him the title of part of the delegation, it's totally different that we are meeting Dr. Krishna in Kathmandu. It's totally different because if he was working in Kathmandu and wants to volunteer in the field hospital, it's okay. But, bring him as part of delegation from here, he went with us from Israel and during the 2 weeks he was with us and he came back with us to Israel being totally as part of this delegation. On the third day, we decided to take him to military force and gave him the uniform. And, during the two weeks that we worked there, he was wearing this uniform. And even when we went to visit his family, he was in the uniform because he was part of our delegation. Dr. Shree Krishna Kashichawa was much more than another physician in this delegation. Dr. Shree Krishna was a guide, was a friend, was a physician, was a translator, and he was a sensometer of what Nepalese people think of us. So, it was my pleasure to have him in my team and since then we are in contact and for me it is a wonderful opportunity. The Israel Defense Force recognized and appreciated his contribution to the delegation in a function. I thank him for being part of this delegation.

Reward

I think one of the important thing that you have to keep in mind when you have decided to go to this kind of delegation, is not to expect anything. That means, when there was need for us in Nepal, we decided to go there because there was need that we can help with. We have never thought about whether to go or not in a way of thinking, what Nepalese people can give us. In the case of Haiti, with the poorest country in the world, Israel never expected that Haiti will come and help Israel. Still when we knew there was an earthquake, thousands were affected, we never thought what

Nepal can give us, what we can give you now we will give even though you are going to give nothing. I am sure that the Nepalese people are thinking different about Israel and Israelis hopefully better after the delegation. I remember when I was invited by the Nepalese ambassador in Israel, I went there as an officer. When I went there, I was just like another officer; it was a reception at the residence of the ambassador in Herzliya for the Defense minister of Nepal. When I introduced myself as the commander of the field hospital last year, I felt the respect the people gave me. And I believe this respect is not because of the uniform, not because of ranks but because of the wonderful work done by my team during the delegation in Nepal.

I will tell you a personal story, I'm almost 30 years at the military, and this delegation is one of the top things I have done in my service. As you can imagine, they commanded such a delegation something that nothing can be part of this sensation, of this experience. Even I was in Haiti as a Pediatrician, I was in Thailand as an assessment team, I was responsible for treating the Syrians for almost 5 years when I was serving in the North in 2013 till 2018; it was the longest delegation we have done. We treated almost 5000 Syrians in 5 years inside Israel. It's nothing compared with 1600 Nepalese in 14 days. So, the sensitivity working in such a field hospital than working for five years inside the country is different. But, we were working in 10-15 days in a very intensive manner. Actually, we were working around the clock even when we are going home, we are not actually going home, and we are not going to see your children, our wife, and our family member. We are finishing our shift and going to the tent. It's the same noise of the generator, it's the same smell of the hospital, and it's the same sounds from the physicians in the hospital, it's the same cry from the children in the hospital. So, it's very intensive working, day and night for the whole period. But, I can tell you that our people are very experienced, very devoted to that type of mission and they have a lot of experiences in these cases. Let's say that none of them felt tired and none of them said I cannot do this anymore. It is another reason to be very proud of our people.

Suggestion

I would like to share one thing; we are in Israel, preparing ourselves; the majority of rescues are by the neighbors. Wherever in the world the family and the neighbors are the most first people in saving lives. We have in Israel a project called Self-instruction. In this project, we prepare and train people through municipalities all over Israel that how you can rescue your friends and neighbours by very simple means like by the jack of the car, by hammer, whatever you have in an ordinary house. We have around 15000 volunteers all over the nation. They are run by home front command. We are in coordination with all the municipalities. We invited people to volunteer for the training of 'Self-instruction'; we are amazed to see there are so many people who come for training and volunteering as part of this project. And we understand that in the situation of catastrophic or other disasters like earthquake, this mass of trained volunteers can make a difference. So if I have suggestion for Nepal, you must have skilled volunteers to rescue people from rubbles. Because this is the most cost effective life support, life saving in the matter of earthquake.

None of us is strong enough to deal with such natural disaster. That's the reason that it's good to have friends. I think the message I am giving from the personnel here is if you are facing such natural disaster, you can realize that you cannot cope alone with this. You have to do the first thing that is expected to do and always the first responders are the locals. You have to realize that if you are alone, it's okay to ask for help.

A must duty

Israel is a Jewish state, and in Jewish religion, there is Tikun Olam. That means helping and saving lives. It is very important to save lives in our religion this is why we go for help wherever is needed. Second, Israel has got not many friends in the world. It is very important for us that we show kind side of us, not just to show wars all the time but also to show that we are good friends. I really believe that friends in need are friends indeed. I think this is a gesture of kindness and friendship that we went to Nepal and helped Nepal to recover or heal. It's something between two nations, something for people, and something important. So we did

what we had to do. I think if someone needs help and counting that there are friends and you go to help, it is the biggest help.

There is a sentence in our military oath, this is IDF medical oath, “to extend the helping hands to the wounded and to the sick, with our common extended friend or form. And to every man is a” I think this simple sentence of the medical oath is the real reason why we do not think twice whether to go or not to help. When there is need of us we believe and we feel that we have to be there.

Summary

We noticed that the president came to visit in the field hospital, the prime minister visited our field hospital, the chief of staff was visiting, the surgeon general was visiting us, and the first lady was visiting. So we felt that you really appreciated the help that we are giving and we did not think twice whether to go or not in this mission because as they said more than once; a friend in need is a friend indeed. I heard this more than once from the Nepalese people. The most satisfying was we were there when there was need.

It was a wonderful to coordinate with Nepal Army in the delegation. When you are in need and the experienced delegation is coming in, it's not like having visitors from outside and you have to show them and you have to explain to them. No! We came to help so, we were very welcomed to take part in saving lives and helping the countries. As I have mentioned, there was a very good collaboration with the military hospital. We went to few hospitals in the country; they all were very excited and were happy that we were there.

The field hospital was the most successful effort and the help to Nepal. We treated 1600 patients, 85 surgeries, 8 births. The hospital and the team worked day and night with the full capacity 24/7 for all the days we stated there. UN recognized our effort and appreciated that Israel sent the biggest delegation to Nepal during earthquake. The chief of course and the commander of the army and the ministers and the prime minister have come to visit us in the hospital. It was very fruitful and successful delegation/mission.

-This chapter is based on interview taken by Ms. Desbemar with Col. Laredo and Surgeon General Dr. Bader.

(This article was received on 30 November, 2019)

In the Footsteps of Moshe Sharet: Personal Experience of an Israeli Physician in Dhulikhel Hospital, Nepal



-Bdolah, Dr. Yuval

"..Such a warm conversation, in a remote part of the world, at the foot of the Himalayas, with people so different from us, was a wonderful experience. When I walked out of the room into the dark night, and raised my eyes to the sky, to see familiar stars and signs, I was so excited: I found myself so far away from home, yet garnering interest, and causing warm feelings and solidarity from the people of Nepal.."

This was the impression of Moshe (Moses) Sharet, the former second prime minister of Israel, embarking on a visit to Kathmandu, on October 24th, 1956. Sharet visited Nepal, among several additional far-eastern countries, and was stunned by the people of Nepal. He expressed his memories in a diary, published under the title "Travelling through Asia".

Sharet met with Tanka Prasad Acharya, the 19th Prime Minister of Nepal, pro-democracy politician and the founding leader of Nepal Praja Parishad (Nepal People's Council). He set

the foundations of the longstanding relationship between the two countries.

Moshe Sharet's early impression of Nepal, back in 1956, was in my mind when I first visited this amazing country, in 1984. Instantly, I also experienced warm feelings and solidarity with the people of Nepal and fell in love with this country.

My first visit to Nepal was at 22 years of age, right after completion of a four years period, as an officer in the Israeli defense forces. I visited the Kathmandu valley, trekked from Jiri to Everest base camp, and travelled to the Pokhara area, as well as Chitwan national park. This two month visit was inspiring for me, leaving me with a strong will to come back. The experience of trekking in beautiful landscapes, beneath the giant mountains of the Himalayas and meeting the simple and humble people of Nepal was an overwhelming and deep experience for me. I promised to myself I would come back, one day.

Another desire, which was nourished by my visit to Nepal, as well as other Asian countries, was to become a physician and try to aid in making people's life better and happier.

In the years following my Asian endeavor, I went to Medical school, in Hadassah- Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and became an obstetrician-Gynaecologist. I gained experience in clinical gynaecology and obstetrics, and specialized in infertility treatments.

In 2012, I did come back, with my wife. We set to trek again to the Everest region, reaching Namche bazar and Tengboche. We found the people of Nepal warm, humble, and yet proud and content. My wife, an archaeologist, who initially expressed resentment from the idea of going to such a remote country, immediately fell in love with the Nepali people, and became the biggest advocate for the country.

At that period, the Israeli ambassador to Nepal was Mr. Hanan Goder, who was also our friend. Hanan introduced me to Dhulikhel Hospital, and that started a long standing cooperation between my department, Obstetrics, Gynaecology and infertility in Hadassah Mount Scopus Medical Center, Jerusalem, and the equivalent department in Dhulikhel Hospital.

In the fall of 2013 I came for a visit to Dhulikhel Hospital.

I found a very impressive medical and academic institute, founded by Dr. Ram Shrestha. Dr. Shrestha is a surgeon, trained in Austria and came back to his homeland with a vision to set up a modern medical facility, for the welfare of the Nepali people.

Dhulikhel hospital was built in the midst of farm lands, with a calm atmosphere. The aim of the medical center is to provide high level medical care, for a low fare, available to all. Surprisingly, despite difficulties, this is exactly what the hospital is doing – it is providing medical assistance to all patients. The hospital is treating patients in the emergency room, hospitalizing departments, and out-patient clinics. It organizes medical delegations to remote mountainous village clinics, as well. Over there, community outreach programs are practiced for medical care, as well as medical education for the public.

It is there, where I met Dr. Suman Tamrakar, an impressive Senior Gynaecologist working in the Obstetrics & Gynaecology department, with whom I exchanged views and clinical thoughts. I had the honor of giving lectures in my field of expertise, to students in nursing school, medical students, residents in Obstetrics & Gynecology, and to the senior ward of the hospital. I was impressed with the students' knowledge, and their curiosity that drove them to ask questions, in a polite manner.

I was amazed to see how every morning, Dr. Ram Shrestha, the medical director of the hospital, was updated in the morning rounds attended by the entire hospital ward. He inquired about every new patient admitted to the hospital, Orthopaedic, Gynaecological or Paediatric case alike, and gave his input.

The dedication of the medical staff of the hospital, overcoming many objective difficulties and fighting lack of resources and budget, left me with admiration to their devotion and capabilities.

It is one thing to treat patients in a modern-equipped western hospital, but a completely different task to take care of a pregnant patient who has walked through the mountainous trails down to Dhulikhel, or to give life support to a neonate born prematurely, coping with shortage of medical supply. Here, the medical staff had to use their best skills in order to give the best possible solutions to

their patients, in non-optimal conditions.

The ethical dilemmas which we, physicians, sometimes face in our professional life, such as whether to deliver a baby at six months of pregnancy, in order to cure the mother from life-endangering pre-eclampsia (high blood pressure, potential seizures and liver as well as kidney malfunction), knowing that the baby does not stand a real chance to survive, are fortified in hospitals such as Dhulikhel. And the physicians and nurses made brave and right decisions – the mother always comes first!

Another impressive approach I witnessed, concerned village hillers. While visiting remote villages, the medical staff decided to train the village hillers in basic modern medical procedures. Instead of opposing these hillers and patronizing them, from a point of view that they are practicing "primitive" traditional medicine, the care givers decided to respect the hillers and teach them additional, medical techniques, so that they can be the ones to give first aid to the village inhabitants. I found this approach very thoughtful and respecting.

After returning from Dhulikhel to Jerusalem, I sent Dr. Yuval Lavy, a gynaecological surgeon from my department in Hadassah Mt. Scopus to Dhulikhel hospital for consultations and operations in his field of expertise.

The next year, we invited Dr. Suman Tamrakar, from Dhulikhel hospital, to come for a two-week visit to Hadassah, for exchange of views and sharing our experience in Gynecology, obstetrics and infertility.

This cooperation with Dhulikhel hospital was one among many other cooperation visits of Israeli physicians to the hospital. Dhulikhel attracts many foreign physicians, nurses, para-medical personnel and medical students, coming from many western countries, being a model for combining high level medical care for all, for a low fee.

My personal experience in Dhulikhel, setting cooperation between two Gynecology & Obstetrics departments, took my thoughts back to Moshe Sharet.

In a meeting with deputy foreign minister of Nepal, Moshe Sharet, former Prime Minister of Israel, discussed development

issues and possible cooperation between the two countries. When expressing doubt whether Israel can compete with the United States delegation in economic planning and guidance, the Nepali deputy foreign minister replied that "Israeli experience is much more practical for Nepal." This was back in 1956.

In my visit to Dhulikhel hospital, in 2013, I felt in a way, in the footsteps of Sharet. The relationship between the two small countries is unique and long standing, and one can easily feel solidarity with such wonderful people, despite differences between the two cultures.

I foresee many opportunities for further cooperation between our countries, in the medical field.

-Dr. Bdolab is a renowned Israeli Physician.

(This article was received on 11 December, 2019)

Nepal is My Second Home



-Ben Yehuda, Nadav

I've been coming and going to Nepal every year for a few months during the past decade. Nepal has been in my heart for a long time now, with about a third of the years of my life inherently connected to the land and the people of the Himalayas. Yet, even after many years of countless experiences there, Nepal keeps surprising me every time, by letting me to discover new angles to its diverse beauty.

There are many things that keeps drawing me back to Nepal throughout the years, but probably the main two are the mountains, and the people.

Mountains

They cover about 22 percent of the earth, home to almost a billion people, which are about 13 percent of all humanity, and indirectly sustain additional billions downstream. The immense power of the Himalayas is known by human beings all over the

world. Between its lines, we can find mountains with very famous names -such as Everest and Annapurna, for example. But this massive mountain range is built by hundreds of sub-ranges and innumerable groups of mountains, numerous as the stars in the night sky - which all together tells the ancient story of our planet's formation. Every mountain is spectacular, and full of awe - in its very unique way. When I climb in the great ranges of the Himalayas, I always remember that I am a guest. A responsible guest in the world of high mountains, and a respectful guest in the country where they lie.

As William Blake once said - "Great things happen when men and mountains meet."

The people of Nepal

At the beginning, I was attracted to Nepal as a climber for its mountains, but I surely stayed because of its people and culture. The warmth, friendship and historic culture of the Nepali people embraces me every time that I go - personally and nationally alike.

Though far and separated by numerous mountains and rivers, Nepal and Israel, two ancient great civilizations with glowing vitality in the modern times, share a long history of friendly exchanges and genuine partnership between the two peoples. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations back in 1960, personnel exchanges and cooperation of mutual benefit have been increasing and deepening with each passing day in the fields of economy, science and technology, education and culture. It is my firm belief that, through our joint efforts, Nepal-Israel relations will enjoy wider and greater prospects.

We - the people of Nepal and Israel - are the bridge between our two countries, carrying forward our friendship, deepening mutual understanding, promoting pragmatic cooperation in our commercial and economic relations, driving towards good and healthy tourism achievements, and helping to create a better future for the relations between our two countries.

Even if in different parts of the world, both small countries are located in tough neighbourhoods. Yet, Israel and Nepal, even during the most difficult times, instinctively responds when the

other is in need. Whether it is an earthquake in Nepal, or an Israeli traveler who got lost, the Israeli and Nepali people alike are often among the first to step up and show up for each other. This is simply who we are. We value life, we value our friendship, and we value each other.

As a part of my roles as a representative of the Nepalese government in several fields, I also work for many years with the Embassy of Nepal in Israel. I wish us all to continue our long way walking shoulder to shoulder, and our uncompromising commitment to deepening the bilateral and close relationship between Nepal and Israel - with the long time tradition of the embassy, of many years of great deeds and endless devotion to promoting the bridge between the two nations. I send my profound wishes to all of you. You are true friends of Israel, and of myself.

To all the people who consider to visit Nepal on their next journey - you should know that the mountains are just one part of what you will find, and there are many other dimensions to experience, such as Trekking, Architecture, Zip Flying, Poetry, Sky Diving, Bungee Jumping, Music Concerts, Jungle Discovery, Rafting and Kayaking, Traditional Cuisine, Cannoning, Mountain Biking, Paragliding, Academia, Mountain Flights, Bird and butterfly Watching, History, Festivals - and so much more, the possibilities are almost endless. Nepal is for everyone.

And to all of you who visited Nepal in the past, a humble advice from personal experience - once is definitely not enough. Come and join us again, and who knows - we might meet somewhere along the beautiful ways.

-Mr. Ben Yebuda is a Professional Athlete, High-Altitude Mountaineer, Search and Rescue Operative, Photographer and Speaker. Nadav has reached more summits of over 8,000 meters than any other Israeli in history, among them the first Israeli ascent of the most dangerous mountain in the world - Mt. Annapurna-I. Nadav has been chosen for the list of the most influential people under the age of 30 by Forbes magazine, he acted as the chairman of the Israeli Alpine Committee, acts as the national representative and Honorary Public Relations Representative (HPRR) of Nepal Tourism Board, and was

officially appointed as a Goodwill Ambassador of Nepal to Israel for VNY 2020.

(This article was received on 1 April, 2020)

Nepal and Israel: Amazing Opportunities Await You at the “Roof of The World”



- *Berger, Nimrod*

I first learned about Nepal from a business perspective in 2007 when working at my previous company, a prominent Israeli start-up. At the time, my CEO Shlomo Bezem laid the foundations for our operations in Nepal. This would also become an amazing personal journey that would introduce me to one of the most charming regions of the world. Quite early on, it became increasingly clear to me that Nepal has more to offer than we previously considered. This led to a rapid expansion of our operations and a deepening of our relationship with local regulators and legislators. Furthermore, it was abundantly clear that both the people of Nepal and Israel share many commonalities and have much to gain from deepening the relationship between the two countries, especially in terms of business and cultural potential. When I would take the helm as the company’s CEO, I have continued to build upon this special relationship and further expand our activities in Nepal. I would later go on to establish Kavadev, one of the largest and most

trusted outsourcing destinations currently available in Asia, which has chosen Nepal as its home.

As opposed to many other countries in the region, Nepal has reliably proven to be a welcoming destination for international businesses, offering a healthy regulatory environment and pro-business policies that are critical both to your success and the prosperity of the Nepalese people. This unique combination has inspired us to deepen our investment in Nepal not only from the business perspective but also in the all-important cultural perspective. Personally, this path has led me to eventually become Nepal's Honorary Consul to Haifa city of Israel – a great honor and once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to bring these two nations closer together.

Welcome to the world's rooftop

There are many factors that contribute to Nepal's attractiveness to international businesses, each highlighting a different aspect of the country's great people and vast natural and geographical resources. Nepal is often called “the rooftop of the world” due to the high altitudes of some of its regions, but I am here to argue to this nickname is more fitting to the financial opportunities available in the country. Throughout this article, I will do my best to explain why Nepal and its people offer Israeli companies more value, friendship, and a brighter future than any other country or region.

A Climate that supports better productivity all-year along

The first important factor I'd like to point out concerns Nepal's climate. While most people consider the weather to be more relevant to a tourist than a businessman, it can also be a major determining factor of worker productivity. Not only is the weather warm, but it is also very stable. This allows for increased worker productivity regardless of the time of year. The warm climate also provides an energetic and exciting framework for all of the activities carried out in Nepal. During the winter season, Nepal continues to offer an exceptional working environment. Winters are generally clear and rain-free, ensuring that there are no climate-

related setbacks that would otherwise mean extensive setbacks in a different region. Even during the summer, when it rains almost daily, the rain occurs overnight and allows productivity to remain high throughout the season. As a tourist, this is a wonderful feature; as a business, this is a highly-attractive opportunity to develop and expand at an unbeatable pace.

A financial miracle in the making

Next, I'd like to share my great impression of Nepal's banking system. Since initially opening up to international activities in the 80s, the Nepalese banking system has grown significantly to offer reliable financial services and a secure economy to operate in. Nepal's centralized banking system goes to great lengths in order to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and expedite business activities. This goes hand-in-hand with the outstanding improvement in Nepal's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) that occurred in recent years. In a recent review, the World Bank adjusted Nepal's GDP projections to account for the steady financial growth of the country's services and technology sectors, alongside large-scale infrastructure investments and the implementation of a trade deficit resolution program. Importantly, the Nepalese government has shown its commitment to investors with the establishment of specialized investor services. Most recently, the Nepalese government has created the Investment Reform Delivery Unit managed directly by the Prime Minister's office in order to advance critical business reforms in the country.

One of the major driving forces of this economic miracle is the establishment of highly successful services and industrial sectors in the country, which was made possible by major changes in the country's educational system. This data is only the result of Nepal's smart decision to invest in its most valuable resource – the education of its talented population.

Investing in education and the future

This brings us what I consider to be Nepal's most impressive asset: its population. Nepal's population is relatively young with a median age of 24 that is highly-educated. There are currently 6

universities operating in Nepal alongside 600 private colleges. Together, the universities and colleges create over 150,000 alumni every year. In fact, each year, the Nepalese academic system produces over 16,000 new graduates in high-tech fields, such as engineering, computer science, and software development. One of the most important decisions Nepal has made regarding its educational system was to conduct all academic studies in English, ensuring that the young and capable workforce is able to compete effectively in the international marketplace. Nepalese students have even garnered the attention of leading academic institutions in the West, with Nepalese students becoming exceptionally prominent in masters and doctoral programs worldwide according to recent data. In the U.S. alone, Nepalese students would bring the country to the 9th place in terms of percentage of the international student community. The educational uptrend is easily recognizable and serves as the basis for our belief that Nepal is the ideal destination for advanced high-tech development. For us as a business, the rapid advancement of the academic system has played a critical role in allowing us to expand our operations in Nepal with great ease.

A Great political shift

The important changes in Nepal's economy and educational systems occurred alongside hugely-influential political shifts of recent decades. After its first elections in 1991, Nepal has been quick to adopt positive policy changes that would bridge the gap between tradition and modernity and create a vibrant and inclusive economy. After internal conflict for several years, Nepal chose to abolish its monarchy in 2006 and instead adopted a republic governing model by 2008, taking a major step towards what would eventually become today's impressive economic success. Importantly, a constitution was enacted in 2015, creating a highly-stable environment for the people of Nepal, its businesses, as well as for international companies such as ourselves. From a business perspective, the Nepalese constitution is said to be amongst the most progressive in Asia, garnering significant praise from policymakers worldwide.

The 2017 election further solidified the country's successful shift to democracy and proved to us what we've always known in

our hearts: that Nepal is a truly unique player in the evolving Asian marketplace that will become increasingly attractive to us at Kavadev, as well as our partners around the world. This has been mirrored by many other international companies operating in Nepal which have also enjoyed the benefits of an agile and quickly-evolving business environment. With our eyes set on the future, we are confident that Nepalese lawmakers will continue their miraculous journey towards a thriving future.

What does it mean for you?

For Kavadev, a company that offers outsourcing solutions to international partners, Nepal has proven to be the perfect match. The rapid advancement of the academic system and widespread embracement of English as a major means of communication in Nepal means that we have more value to offer our partners across the most in-demand fields of the high-tech sector. This has allowed us to recruit highly-talented individuals to develop some of the most advanced features and technologies that are in use today. Our partners were quick to learn that they can expect the same level of expertise and professionalism from their newly-established Nepalese software development and verification teams as they've come to expect from their local teams. Importantly, our partners were also pleasantly surprised to discover the cultural commonalities shared between them and the Nepalese people, allowing for greater productivity, resourcefulness, and ingenuity to be expressed throughout daily work.

Kavadev has had the opportunity to witness the great political and economic shifts that transformed Nepal into a modern nation that can compete effectively in the international marketplace. This includes important changes in Nepal's banking system which began over 30 years ago when it was only first starting to open up to international activity. Since then, Nepal has steadily worked towards making further improvements to its banking system. Today, Nepal offers a modern economic playing field that is governed by pro-business policies that have helped the local market make historical advancements. We've also witnessed an impressive political shift that has taken the country from a monarchy to a republic in just

a few short years, allowing for modern conventions and practices to become a priority for local policymakers. This has been best demonstrated by the enactment of Nepal's constitution.

A final word

Personally, the story of Nepal's rapid advancement has been inseparable from my own journey and career with Kavadev, culminating in the opportunity to serve as Nepal's consul to Israel. I've had the pleasure and honor of introducing countless colleagues and partners to the advantages of outsourcing to Nepal and am proud to continue to do so in the future. I am deeply honored that Kavadev has been able to take part in important ventures at the forefront of technology, medicine, and infrastructure industries, and I am confident that the future holds many more opportunities for both the Israeli and Nepalese people, working together.

-Mr. Berger is the CEO of Kavadev, one of the most prominent Israeli companies currently operating in Nepal. Kavadev specializes in offering highly-reliable outsourcing services and solutions for international companies seeking to quickly scale-up their operations and meet the demands of a fast-growing and competitive marketplace. Kavadev has chosen Nepal as its home thanks to a unique combination of factors that highlight the outstanding opportunities offered to international companies, including highly-trained workers, the common use of the English language, and a supportive regulatory environment for businesses. Since 2015, Mr. Berger is serving as Nepal's Honorary Consul to Haifa City of Israel, giving him a unique perspective on what both countries can offer each other in terms of business opportunities. Furthermore, Mr. Berger highlights the deep cultural connection between the Israeli and Nepalese people that has proven to a critical part of the success.

(This article was received on 17 June, 2020)

Great Friendship of Two Nations



- *Bernstein-Reich, Anat*

Friendship is always between human beings. You cannot attach an emotion to a state or to an object. Initially I wanted to start this story by saying that Nepal and Israel are good friends, but then it struck me that it is about the people of our countries that are maintaining the friendship. It is the Israeli tourists to Nepal, the mountaineers, the diplomats of both countries, the business community, the Nepalese caregivers in Israel, the Agriculture experts, all of those and more, create the basis for the deep friendship that was developed over the past 60 years, and even before. People can wonder what those two very different countries, Nepal and Israel, have in common. Israel is the host of the lowest place on the earth- the Dead Sea, and Nepal is the host of the highest place on the Earth, Mount Everest. Those extremes were the theme of a joint postage stamp that was issued in 2012. Israel with only 9 million people is mainly Jewish, Nepal with 30 million is mainly Hindu. And still, there is something that bonds us together

and keeps us as friends since 1960, much before many other Asian countries that didn't recognize Israel's right for Sovereignty. I often meet the diplomats that served as the Israeli ambassadors to Nepal. Even years after their posting in Nepal, they feel committed to Nepal, attend all the Nepalese functions in Israel, and talk with great admiration about their time in Nepal.

Israeli boys and girls after their mandatory army service usually go backpacking in Asia. Three to Six months of travelling with brief planning, and with few personal items that they can carry for a long time in their backpack. Nepal is one of their favorite destinations. The Israeli backpackers are planning their trip in Asia in a way that they will reach Kathmandu during the Passover holiday. The Chabad House in Kathmandu is one of the most important establishments for the backpackers' community. The Chabad movement is a non-profit Jewish organization that operates open houses all over the world and aim to give Jews, home far from home, wherever they are. Each year, the House is the host of the Passover meal, a Jewish holiday ceremony. Last year, it hosted 2,000 Israelis that were travelling in Nepal.

I am the chairperson of the Israel-India and Nepal Chamber of Commerce, which is part of an umbrella organization, the Israel-Asia Chamber of Commerce. The President of the Chamber is Mr. Raviv Byron, a veteran of the water industry and frequent traveler to Nepal. We are constantly promoting doing business in Nepal, however, on May 21st 2020, our business relations took another step up. A memorandum of understanding between our chamber and the Nepalese chamber of commerce was signed. The special ceremony that was conducted over the internet was attended by over 50 people and live streaming on Facebook was watched by thousands. Both ambassadors, Mr. Benny Omer and Dr. Anjan Shakya gave their blessing to the collaboration. In the business community we say that diplomats pave the way for relations, but it is the businesses that sustain the relations, and create the interdependence between markets, ensuring the continued good diplomatic relations. Presently the bilateral trade between Israel and Nepal is negligible. My chamber and our sister chamber in Nepal should join hands to create venues for business exchange.

During the 2015 earthquake, the Search and Rescue unit of the Israeli army reached Nepal with equipment and field hospital. The members of this unit actually fought for the right to travel to Nepal and participate in the humanitarian activities. Israel unfortunately has experience in Search and Rescue and not because we have earthquakes. Post the earthquake we conducted in our chamber a seminar about the business opportunities in rebuilding the infrastructure. The seminar hall was packed not just with the business community, but with friends of Nepal and some of the rescue members that wanted to find a reason to travel back to Nepal and continue the association with the country they fall in love with.

Thanks to a book named the start-up nation authored by Dan Senor and Saul Singer, Israel is now known as the start-up nation. The number of start-ups founded every year is enormous when compared to the size of the population. In terms of the number of patents per capita, Israelis ranked 5th in the world, about 70 Israeli companies are traded in Nasdaq, third to US and China. There is something in Israel that people want to innovate and explore. Even my hairdresser decided to be an entrepreneur. He developed an algorithm for more accurate use of hair color. Now during the COVID-19 pandemic, he is talking about inventing a robotic hair cutting device.

It is the Israeli innovation in agriculture and water that should be the foundation to the collaboration between Israel and Nepal. The innovation in the agriculture and water domains are aimed to make the world cleaner and ensure food supply to the growing demand of the world. Nepal is a neighbor to 2 giants that consume large percentage of the food demand. This strategic location combined with advanced agriculture that can be sourced from Israel, can provide Nepal an edge in the region.

The Israeli Agritech is actually a combination of the traditional farming that was the basis of the state of Israel, along with the current high technology industry, and the terms ML (Machine Learning) and AI (Artificial Intelligence) are no more just terms of computer science, it is also part of the Agritech world. Precision Agriculture which combines sensors, drones, high sensitivity cameras, Wi-Fi and GPS, with basic agronomical knowledge,

ensures better yield, lower usage of fertilizers and chemicals, and precise amount of water that is needed for the plant. The precision agriculture technologies will be most beneficial to Nepal. Nepalese agronomy students that visit Israel for the training programs are the conduit for this knowledge transfer. Those students exchange should be supported and expanded to other domains such as cyber security, renewable energy and sciences. Although the language in Israel is Hebrew, most of the academia institutes hold special programs in English to accommodate foreign students, and the cost of those studies are much cheaper than studying in the USA.

The Foreign Ministry of Israel manages a special agency that is engaged in knowledge transfer in various fields such as education, water and agriculture. Due to the special efforts of the Ambassador of Nepal to Israel, this agency named “Mashav” has confirmed the opening of an Excellence Center in Nepal. Israeli Excellence Centers for Agriculture are common in India and other countries in Asia and Africa. Those centers showcase Agritech from Israel and implement them in new markets. Ambassador Gil Haskel, the head of Mashav, visited Nepal recently and is active in promoting founding the Excellence center. And, on a personal note, two stories about Nepalese caregivers that worked in Israel. The Nepalese caregivers are considered large portion of the trade between the countries. Presently over 10,000 Nepalese work in Israel. I was lucky to know in person a Nepalese caregiver named Melina that assisted an old lady named Clara. I was appointed by court to be Clara’s guardian since she didn’t have family in Israel. Clara, originally from Czech Republic, was a holocaust survivor that lived alone until Melina came. It was quite interesting to see Melina cooking spicy Nepalese food to Clara, that never before even tried east Asian Food. Melina picked very quickly on Hebrew and the two ladies lived several years together until the expiry of Clara. In the funeral, people gave Melina their condolences as if Clara was her mother. I promised Melina to visit her one day in Nepal, which now is very realistic. The other story involved Mr. Gilad Tuffias, the former Managing Director of my Chamber of Commerce. In February 2018, he was driving in Tel Aviv. Suddenly he saw smoke coming out of a building and a Nepalese lady screaming "Mother

is inside." Gilad stopped the car, took off his jacket, and entered the dark smoky building. Using the flashlight on his cellphone, he went up to the third floor where he met another local hero named Judas. The two broke the door and found a very old lady almost unconscious. Both heroes picked up the lady and carried her out of the building. It turned out that the Nepalese lady was a caregiver, and the "mother" was the old lady whom she cared for. The Nepalese lady was no less hero than Gilad and Judas. Realizing she couldn't carry the old lady out of the building, she rescued herself from the smoky building through the gutters of this old house, and called for help. All four were evacuated to the hospital with some injuries. In the following event of the Nepal Embassy, all three heroes received a momentum of recognition from the former Ambassador, Mr. Nirajan Kumar Thapa and there is another Israel-Nepal anecdote with some stardust. Did you know that the American superhero Wonder Woman visited Nepal few years ago? And why it is related to Israel? Well, here's the story. In year 2012, the Israeli television produced a 13 episodes' series named "Kathmandu", a story about the Chabad House in Kathmandu. The shooting took place in Nepal, and one of the lead actresses was the Israeli star Ms. Gal Gadot who spent two months in Nepal during the shooting. Few years later she played the role of Wonder Woman in the Hollywood movie. I am sure that when you saw that movie, she looked familiar to you.

-Mrs. Bernstein-Reich is the Chairperson of the Israel-India and Nepal Chamber of Commerce and the Vice President of the Israel-Asia Chamber of Commerce.

(This article was received on 6 June, 2020)

Need for Better Trade and Economic Ties in 60 Years of Nepal-Israel Diplomatic Relationships



- *Bhatta, Shisbeer*

Nepal and Israel cherish a long history of friendly and diplomatic relationships. In fact, Nepal was one of the first nations to recognize Israel as a nation and the formal diplomatic relationships between two nations spans six decades. Nepal's first democratically elected Prime Minister B. P. Koirala paid the first official visit to Israel in 1960. Since then, political leaders and government officials at high levels from both countries have exchanged several goodwill visits to nurture mutual relationships in multiple fronts. Nepal shares even older history of assisting Jews before forming Israel as a nation; Gurkhas played a vital role in defeating the Hitler's Nazi soldiers in multiple fronts in Europe and Israeli people have recognized this historical contribution with high respect.

However, despite this strong friendship has enjoyed, it is yet to translate this great relationship into fruitful socio-economic ties. While both countries can benefit each other through multiple avenues, Nepal being a developing nation can learn and gain from

Israel a lot more from its culture of innovation, work ethics, and technological advancement. Both Israel and Nepal carry many natural and historical treasures that are unique in the world. Nepal being a Himalayan nation has the tallest peak of the world, Mt. Everest-Sagarmatha, while Israel has Dead Sea, the lowest point in the world. They both are recognized as a very hard-working, patriotic and tough people in the world in multiple ways. Both nations are culturally rich. Nepal is the birthplace of Buddha and Israel being the only Jewish nation is also the birthplace of Jesus Christ. Jewish people share long history of struggle for freedom and justice over the years. Despite all the hard times that both countries have endured over the years, they have supported each other in good faith when needed.

Both nations have enjoyed their 60 years of relationship in harmony, co-operation and mutual understandings. Israel established diplomatic presence in Nepal since 1961 with its Embassy opening while Nepal opened its Embassy in Tel-Aviv in 2007. There was a protocol of cooperation signed between the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce in Tel-Aviv in 1993, however, this tie was not fully activated and both countries didn't experience many commercial and trading activities between two economies. It was only during the tenure of Excellency Hanan Goder that the idea of launching a platform to bring the Nepali and Israeli entrepreneurs together for greater economic and commercial ties came into fruition. And the result was the formal launch of Nepal Israel Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICCI), which was inaugurated on February 2017 by Honorable Foreign Minister Dr. Prakash Saran Mahat and Ambassador of Israel, Yaron Yitzchak Mayer in presence of prominent business leaders of Nepal and Israel in Kathmandu. Since then, NICCI has played an active role in organizing business forums aimed to promote Nepali business and products in Israel and vice-versa. NICCI team led by the president Shisheer Bhatta was at Agritech-2018 in Tel-Aviv along with the Agriculture Minister of Nepal. During this visit, NICCI team members participated in several bilateral meetings with Agriculture Ministers of both countries, several other business meetings and

agricultural farm visits along with delegates from different countries. It was very fruitful visit and Nepali delegates had the opportunity to see the advancements of their Israeli counterparts that they could adopt in their home country through mutual help and co-operation. NICCI also has facilitated multiple business and trade promotion events for both countries since its coming into existence in 2015. It hosted felicitation event for Ambassadors of both countries, Her Excellency Dr. Anjan Shakya of Nepal and His Excellency Benny Omer of Israel on August 2019 and presented its Plan of Action to both Ambassadors. As a result, Ambassador Dr. Shakya facilitated to form an Israel Nepal Chamber of Commerce (INCC) within Israel Asia Chamber of Commerce and the formal launching of the collaboration by historical signing of an Memorandum Of Understanding (MoU) between these two business promotion entities took place on May 22, 2020 via online. This formal signing of collaboration is considered as a cornerstone in opening business and trading prospects between two countries and Nepali media was highly receptive that they made this event as their major headlines.

This agreed upon collaboration is focused mainly on exchange of information and ideas on trade, investment, economic cooperation and service between two countries. It also aims at encouraging business community between two countries to participate in various types of trade fairs and exhibitions that will increase the prospect of business deals. While the signing of MOU will open many avenues of business and trading opportunities, it will primarily focus on the following areas;

- i. Enhancing Trade and Investment between two countries
- ii. Promoting Industrial Growth, Transportation and Tourism
- iii. Modernizing & Promoting Agriculture, Energy & Power
- iv. Education & Infrastructure.

It will focus on organizing trainings, seminars, workshops and talk programs in the areas of mutual interest and co-operation. Both the organizations also have agreed to setup a permanent joint working group to take up bilateral issues on trade, investment, transit and deflection of trade and make appropriate recommendations to their respective governments and follow up for speedy resolution

of the issues.

Nepal fully recognizes the goodwill and the contribution of Israel on multiple fronts. Israel has extended various cooperation and transferred knowledge on high value agricultural technology, telecommunications, satellite technology, education and rural development adding values to bilateral relations both on government and people's level. Israeli tourists are a growing sub-sector of Nepali Tourism industry and number has been increasing in recent times. However, though the business and trading prospect between two economies is very high, nothing close to its potential has been achieved so far. There are few hundreds of caregivers and farm workers that have been employed in Israel and given the historical friendly relationships that both countries have, this labor market can go up by several thousand which will benefit both economies.

Nepal on the other hand believes that Israel being just a 70 years old country has excelled in multiple fronts. Israeli tech companies have become the global leaders, and their culture of innovation is considered in par with Silicon Valley. Nepal, just recently gone through a massive political and social restructuring a new constitution came into practice in 2015 only with 7 new provinces, is working towards a sustainable economic growth pathway that will help graduate from least developed nation to developing country. National plans and policies are now geared towards achieving the middle-income status by 2030. So, it is imperative that Nepal achieves and maintains double digit growth in the next 10 years thus to reach the middle-income country status. This ambitious goal of middle-income status will propel the nation to invest its own as well as pave smooth path for FDI in billions of dollars in the coming years. This will open many avenues for investments, technology transfer and markets for Israeli entrepreneurs.

It also believes that trade and commerce can play significant role in bringing people of cross cultures together for prosperity through mutually benefitting business and economic opportunities. There are several sectors of economy that Nepal needs to focus after post Covid-19 scenario. Nepal is keen on being self-reliant on agriculture products. Nepal's climate from 59m to 8,848m altitude can grow many high value crops and herbs. Israel can

provide assistance on research and development of these high yield products and bring these products into global market.

Nepal is demographically considered to be amongst the youngest country in the world; median age is less than 28 years old. Its vast reserves of natural resources endowment such as water, forest bio-products, scenic beauty, fertile land in Terai and biodiversity throughout the country puts it at a better position than many of its counterparts.

Recent studies show increasing enabling environments in Nepal for International Trade such as capital markets growth, technology, innovation, labor productivity, business and trade friendly government mechanisms that can positively enhance prospect of International Trade growth in the coming days.

In line to growing trade prospects in Nepal which two economies can mutually benefit, following are the positive trends that should be taken into consideration;

- i. Increasing Agricultural sector growth
- ii. Improved Migrant Labor Sector Skills
- iii. Increasing Energy Surplus, Green Growth and Productivity
- iv. Increasing Aviation Sectoral Growth and New International Airports, Lumbini and Pokhara
- v. Increasing Prospect for High value exports through empty outbound cargo flights
- vi. Improving infrastructures networks at local levels and productivity
- vii. Increasing Capital creation and access at local levels: commercial bank on every local government
- viii. Improving Education, health, easy adoption of technology and productivity

Trade deficit has become a major drag in Nepal's economy. For every Rupee of export that Nepal does, it imports more than Rs 10 of goods and services, and Indian share on imports is the highest (70-80% of all imports). Fossil fuels, food, and consumer goods are the major contributors of its import economy. While delving into Trade and Competitiveness in Nepal, one needs to

address two major compelling ironies of Nepalese economy; i. Though it is an agricultural economy, it imports more than \$2 billion worth of food and other agro products from third countries & ii. Though considered as a rich water resource economy, it still depends on India to fulfill its energy deficit during late winter and spring. Our internal studies show that with right policies in place and the activation of market systems, International Trade & Commerce of Nepal can be significantly boosted by focusing on ;

- i. Green Economy
- ii. Value added agricultural products
- iii. Energy intensive light manufacturing.

International Trade and Commerce in Nepalese context will have to embrace both the current exports and imports context of Nepal. While it is a big imperative that Nepalese products are globally competent so that we can create their demand in global marketplace, we also have to take into consideration that we make our local production systems more efficient, adopt relevant technologies of storage and warehousing. We need to promote localized organic farming utilizing barren lands especially in mid-hills because of labor shortage and innovate systems of value addition for both agro and forest bio-products. Research shows that systemic utilization of barren lands with smart use of local disease resistant varieties of seeds that create enhanced yields will not only bridge the trade deficit due to food and green vegetables imports from India, but also has the real exports possibility in countries like India, Middle East and South East Asia where Nepal has direct access of land and air routes. Israeli entrepreneurs with their long history of innovation in agriculture can come both as an investment and technology partners to capitalize this growing prospect in Nepali Agriculture.

The looming clean energy surplus that Nepal is going to have in the next 12-18 months, technology base and energy intensive light manufacturing will have a real prospect in southern plains of Nepal sharing borders with India. Energy intensive manufacturing such as packaging and processing, pharmaceuticals, production,

value addition, and garment can benefit a lot from low cost and clean energy from Nepal. Light manufacturing in plains can also be aided because of the reasonable cheap labor supply in Nepal. From the International Trade perspective, goods and services can only go global if they are meaningfully Unique & price advantage. Value added green products from high hills are unique in the world in taste and quality. With proper warehousing and supply chain logistics put into place, exports of green products from Nepal is a real possibility because more than 90% importing containers coming to Nepal go empty back to India. Similarly, with the new International Airports opening in Lumbini and Pokhara on top of Kathmandu, exports of Nepali green produce in Middle East and South East Asia also carries huge prospect since more than 95% of outbound flights do not carry cargo at all. Light manufacturing products can be assessed from their pricing as well as lower cost of production perspective compared to other markets in Nepal. Local reports from around the country show that post corona Nepal will see a substantial uptake in agricultural production in mid hills especially because more people are engaged in production as more migrant workers are coming back homes and new government budget has focused on self-reliant on food production. Studies show that while the barriers to Global Trade of Nepali products and services are sector specific, interventions from government, development agencies and other relevant bodies are mostly scattered and insufficient. The effective interventions for these sorts of barriers will be to engage with different trade and commerce groups of respective countries and help facilitate and smoothen the process and organize frequent trips and trade shows. Scholarly articles from around the world also show that frequent communications between the prospective buyers and sellers are the early precursors for International Trade and Commerce to take place. While diplomatic ties between Nepal and Israel started during the 1960s with both countries maintaining a very cordial relationship, time has come that we convert our long friendship into a robust trading and business activities benefiting both nations. NICCI believes that shared growth between people of both nations is possible through exchange of ideas, resources, and enhanced business-trade relations between two economies. It

aspires to play catalytic role for the shared prosperity of both Nepal and Israel in the coming days.

-Mr. Bhatta is the President of Nepal-Israel Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICCI).

(This article was received on 7 June, 2020)

Tourism in Nepal and Post COVID-19 Scenario



-Bhattarai, Yogesh

Nepal as Tourist Destination

Tourism is one of the most sustainable sectors in Nepal's economy. Home of the world's eight out of fourteen highest peaks on the earth with Mt. Everest as the jewel in the crown; birth place of the Buddha, Apostle of Peace; blessed with holy places and shrines for various religious followers; adorned with spectacular arts and architectures; enriched with historical and archeological sites and monuments; source of numerous rivers, glaciers and lakes; significantly covered (23.39% of total land of the country) with green vegetation in the form of national parks, conservation areas and wild life reserves; teemed with diverse flora and fauna spread over the altitude ranging from 59 to 8848 meters; and inhabited by 125 ethnic groups speaking 123 languages and dialects and following unique cultural patterns, lifestyles, feasts and festivals; Nepal is a great tourist destination. Situated between two most populous and big economies, Nepal enjoys the location most appropriate

in tourism activities. It has been a favorite destination for tourists from across the world for the last more than six decades.

Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, international arrival figures were on the rise and tourism's contribution to national economy was increasing year by year. Its contribution to Nepal's GDP comes around 3%. Tourism is now gaining momentum as a phenomenal business activity and is being spread across the nation. It is being taken as a source of employment generation, a dependable contributor to national revenue and a catalyst to socio-cultural development. It can involve people from all sections of our society with equal importance to all religions, ethnicity, age, geography and gender. Tourism is one of the most appropriate economic activities with competitive advantage in Nepal. It can cater to businesses from a small investment to big international investment. Even the lowest strata of society can also benefit from it.

Therefore, Government of Nepal has designated tourism as priority industry and has formulated laws and policies conducive to it, and will continue to do so. It has adopted open sky policy, has encouraged Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and has sensitized all people about the importance and benefits of tourism. All three level governments: federal, provincial and local, are promoting tourism as a common development agenda for economic prosperity of Nepal.

Tourism grows with team work and it requires a synergy of basically three major components: government, private investors/business people and community/people. Slackness in one of the components impacts the whole industry. It is rather more sensitive than other businesses, as it is prone to natural, man-made, domestic and international circumstances. Nepal is well experienced about all these sensitivities over the last three decades. It has suffered and survived, crumbled and come back. It has always remained a mainstay of our economy.

COVID-19 and aftermath

Unfortunately, this year again, the whole world is suffering from COVID-19 pandemic causing monumental tragedy to

humanity and horrendous shock to global economy. Like in other parts of the world, Nepal's tourism and aviation are the hardest hit sectors by this pandemic causing unprecedented recession in tourism and hospitality and putting at risk billions of dollars' investment in these sectors. In this context, Government of Nepal has taken all measures from immediate medical response to the infected to virus prevention and containment strategies. We have achieved a remarkable amount of success in fighting the pandemic and in rolling out economic activities in measured and calculated paces. We have launched safety protocol, as per WHO guidelines, for hospitality and aviation to be strictly followed by service providers, service receivers and all stakeholders. We are planning to open economy and tourism activities slowly and cautiously, step by step. Government of Nepal has brought policy and program packages for job retention, survival and revival plans for the most affected economic sectors like tourism and aviation.

COVID-19 pandemic has changed the global tourism landscape; it has altered tastes of travelers and has set new parameters and priorities in travel and tourism. Safety and hygiene will top the list of preferences while mass tourism may be at less priority at least for some years. I believe, Nature and adventure based tourism will still be on the spotlight while other elements like physical and mental wellness and herbal medication can be more on demand in the New Normal scenario. Nepal in the post COVID-19 era will remain as a preferred destination due to its unique Nature based products and highly eclectic activities. Amazing adventures, Himalayan herbal medicines, serene Nature, variety of cuisines prepared from organic products, yoga and meditation, rich tradition and culture and hospitable and caring people will continue to attract international travelers to Nepal. In addition, there are a number of entertainment activities and world heritage monuments to have the experience of life time.

Over these few years, Nepal has made some remarkable strides in development of physical infrastructures and policy reforms. Development and up-gradation of transport infrastructures like Gautam Buddha International Airport, Pokhara International Airport, Tribhuvan International Airport and other domestic

airports and road infrastructure have strengthened Nepal's capacity of bringing more international tourists. Reconstruction work of earthquake damaged monuments will be completed in next two years while new investments are pouring into tourism sector. Necessary policy reforms have been initiated to strengthen and ensure aviation safety, tourism promotion and culture preservation. Since we have adopted open sky and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) friendly policy, we believe to have more investment and movement in Nepal. Our growing air connectivity with various cities around the world has made journey to Nepal very short, direct and convenient. Nepal has signed Air Service Agreement with many countries as far east as Japan and as far south as Australia. We have already started scheduled flight to Japan and will do the same with Australia in the near future. This scenario shows a sustainable existence of tourism industry in Nepal. Therefore, Government has earmarked tourism as a vehicle of economic transformation to its aspiration to "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali".

Israel, a highly potential source market

Nepal and Israel enjoy a long cordial relations adorned with mutual cooperation, goodwill, understanding and friendship. This year marks the Diamond Jubilee of Nepal-Israel diplomatic relations. Exchanges of high level visits from both the nations in different times have further cemented our multidimensional ties over the last six decades. Israel has extended support and cooperation for the development of Nepal in various areas like agriculture, education, foreign employment, rural development, water resources, tourism and technology. The humanitarian support, relief operations extended by Government of Israel in the wake of 2015 earthquake and in the ongoing reconstruction works are highly commendable.

Nepal and Israel share some commonalities as each nation is the origin of great religions and civilizations. Nepal is the Birth Place of Lord Buddha and holy soil for Buddhism and Hinduism while Israel is Birth Place of Prophet Moses and Jesus Christ, origin of Judaism and Christianity. Both the nations are rich in cultural and Natural treasures. Nepal has the world's highest point, Mount Everest while Israel is blessed with the world's lowest point on land,

i.e., The Dead Sea. This marks a unique juxtaposition between both the nations. Nepal's lush greenery is juxtaposed with Israel's desert. Both of them are unique tourism attractions worldwide.

Israel is an attractive destination for Nepalese migrant workers, especially women. Quite a good number of Nepalese care giver women and students have been residing in Israel. They have formed a diaspora of Nepalese community which has become a strong bond between both the governments and peoples. Trained and educated in Israel, a number of women have formed a network in Nepal and have started entrepreneurship and made good socio-economic gains.

Israel is a highly potential tourist source market for Nepal; we received Israeli travelers even during the time of insurgency and after earthquake. They are adventure lovers and they enjoy trekking in various routes in Nepal and savor the tastes of Nepalese culture. It would be a milestone to begin direct flights between Nepal and Israel. This would reduce flight time to Nepal by more than five hours. Israel can be a convenient transit for Western tourists coming to Nepal. It would also be an opportunity for both of us if our new international airport near Lumbini, the Birth Place of Lord Buddha, (which is coming into operation soon) is directly connected to Israel.

Nepal Embassy in Israel has played an important role in cementing the relations between both the nations. We express our appreciations and gratitude to the support and goodwill extended by Government and people of Israel in all initiatives and programs organized by the Embassy of Nepal. Nepalese Ambassador for Israel, Dr. Anjan Shakya, is a dynamic diplomat and she has played proactive role in strengthening our relations. We are proud to acknowledge that she has been awarded as "Ambassador of the Year 2019-20".

Long live Nepal-Israel relations.

-Mr. Bhattarai is the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation of Government of Nepal.

(This article was received on 26 July, 2020)

Israel-Nepal Relations



-Cohen, Gilad

Introduction

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in June 1960, Israel and Nepal have cultivated a warm friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation. Development cooperation, specifically in the field of agriculture and human capacity building through MASHAV training programs, has been a key pillar of the bilateral relations from the outset. Moreover, such tangible collaboration has been grounded in mutual admiration between the Nepalese and Israeli peoples and in a shared desire to engage in cultural and people-to-people exchange. One such symbolic gesture has seen the two countries celebrating the location of the highest (Mount Everest) and the lowest (Dead Sea) points on the earth, by issuance of Nepal-Israel joint stamps in December 2012 featuring the two sites, along with interchanged stones from the respective locales for visiting tourists.

Israel's inauguration of full diplomatic relations with China

and India in 1992 mitigated certain constraints on the political dimensions of the Israeli-Nepalese relationship and ushered in a new era of increased cooperation. Sweeping geopolitical changes in recent years, in Asia, the Middle East and at the global level augur well for the further expansion of this collaboration.

Moreover, Israel's increased focus on Asia, exemplified by its *'Israel looks East'* campaign and strong momentum in establishing the trade and travel infrastructures necessary to augment its relations with countries in the region, can assist the expansion of cooperation with Nepal.

In this regard, many of Nepal's current national priorities correspond to fields of expertise acquired by Israel during its decades-long process of development, particularly in such fields as agriculture, human capacity development, health, education and technology. Moreover, the countries have a joint interest in capitalizing on employment opportunities for Nepalese nationals in the Israeli caregiver sector. Thus, the two countries have fertile ground to expand their relations.

Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its Embassy in Kathmandu and engagement with the Nepalese Embassy in Tel Aviv, is firmly committed to turning this vision into a reality.

Israel-Nepal relations in historical perspective

Israel recalls with great appreciation the fact that Nepal was the first South Asian country to recognize it in June 1960. At the time, Israel was still a fledgling country struggling to contend with enormous economic, security and political challenges. Nepal's decision to set itself apart from the large bloc of developing countries that adopted a hostile posture towards Israel internationally was a very courageous one, exemplified by the visit to Israel of Nepalese Prime Minister B. P. Koirala in August 1960. Koirala's bold move to develop relations with Israel at a time when India refrained from doing so was a testament to his personal vision and commitment to the matter.

Even after becoming one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961, which has formed the backbone of a long-standing bias against Israel in the multilateral arena, Nepal

maintained a relatively balanced position on Israel. For example, already in September 1961, Nepal joined Burma and other countries in thwarting an anti-Israel resolution at the Non-Aligned Nations' Conference in Belgrade.¹ In a notable expression of its more even-handed approach, Nepal abstained on the infamous 1975 General Assembly resolution, which equated Zionism with racism.

From the outset, development and defense cooperation were key expressions of the developing bilateral relationship. Israeli agronomists and experts provided knowhow on plant cultivation, tool fashioning and communal administration. Nepalese military officers underwent training in Israel and Israel was instrumental in establishing Nepalese paratrooper capabilities. During the 1960s, Nepalese students attended Israeli technical schools and the 'Joint National Company of Nepal' was established under the shared ownership of the Nepalese government and the Israeli construction firm 'SolelBoneh,' enabling a transfer of technical and organizational knowhow.²

High-level visits, such as the visit of King Mahendra to Israel in 1963 and reciprocal visit of President Zalman Shazar to Nepal in 1966, underscored the closeness of the relations, notwithstanding pressures from the Arab countries and the Nonaligned Movement. The translation into Hebrew of King Mahendra's collection of poems, "A Garland of Verses", by President Zalman Shazar in 1965 was also a significant expression of cultural exchange.

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, the younger brother of B. P. Koirala, continued the tradition of close relations by paying an official visit to Israel in June 1993.

With shifting geopolitical realities and as Israel increasingly normalizes its relations within the Middle East, the intimacy of Israel's relations with Nepal and scope for cooperation have only increased.

Bilateral cooperation

A current overview of existing domains of cooperation

- 1 Ivor Barelle, 1961. "Israel and Neutralism", *The Israel Digest* 4(20), pages 2, 8.
- 2 Abadi, Jacob, 2004. "Nepal-Between the Giants of Asia", in *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in Asia: Garrison State Diplomacy*. London: Frank Cass Publishers, pages 247-248.

between Israel and Nepal gives a sense of the current state of affairs as well as an indication as to potential avenues for expanding the relations.

Trade – Trade between Israel and Nepal has expanded about 19% over the past decade, but remains small in scale, amounting to roughly 5.5 million USD in 2018. However, Nepal's strong economic growth, over 7% in 2019 according to the World Bank, implies a growing scope of opportunity to expand the volume of trade. Moreover, Israel is well-placed to be helpful in advancing sectors which are currently prioritized by Nepal: tourism, employment abroad and remittances, agricultural development and human capacity building,

A June 2019 World Bank study singled out incoming tourism and remittances as important drivers of Nepal's strong growth forecasts.³ Both coincide with domains of existing cooperation with Israel that hold promise of expansion.

Tourism – In the field of tourism, there is significant potential yet to be tapped. Roughly sixty percent of the 50,000 young Israelis, who travel abroad every year, following their military service, visit South Asia. Though many already make their way to Nepal, there is room to increase the number of Israeli tourists by more intensive marketing and raising awareness to the advances in Nepal's tourist infrastructures promoted under the "Visit Nepal 2020" program, which has boosted the hotel and restaurant sectors. The completion of Nepal's second international airport will no doubt enable an expansion in tourist arrivals. This follows the increased volume of traffic to the broader region afforded by the operation of direct flights from Tel Aviv to New Delhi in recent years.

Looking ahead, as the Nepalese economy grows and incomes rise, there will be room to promote growth in the number of Nepalese tourists to Israel.

Remittances – As of 2018, close to 2000 Nepalese workers were legally working in Israel as caregivers, conveying remittances back to Nepal. Following a pilot project, Israel and Nepal are exploring the advancement of an employment agreement in the

3 *Nepal Development Update*. June 2019. The World Bank <https://www.world-bank.org/en/country/nepal/publication/nepaldevelopmentupdate>

caregiver sector, which could be a natural avenue to capitalize on the countries' complementary needs. Moreover, additional sectors could be explored in the future.

Agriculture – Israel is a world leader in the field of innovative agricultural technologies, at all levels of development. The demonstration farm set up in Nepal's Dhading district several years ago by Israel, in a collaborative effort of the Israeli Embassy in Kathmandu and an Israeli NGO, Tevelb'Tzedek, is a good example of the kind of transformative initiative that can make a real difference in the life of community. Due to the project, local farmers succeeded in diversifying their crops and were able to farm year-round. Health and hygiene improved due to the introduction of bio-gas technology and education flourished. Tragically, the project was destroyed in the April 2015 earthquake. Nevertheless, people of the area appreciate the impact that the project had on the local people's livelihood.

If scaled up, such efforts could play a role in advancing Nepal's overall social and economic development. In this vein, Israel has proposed to establish an agricultural 'Centre of Excellence' in Nepal, similar to the twenty-eight such centres that have been established successfully in India. Such centres serve as a regional hub for disseminating state-of-the-art agricultural knowhow.

After six years in which Israel has been operating the "Learn and Earn" agricultural training program for Nepalese students in Israel, there is currently a pool of some 2700 Nepalese graduates making use of modern agricultural techniques in cooperatives throughout Nepal, many of which are fashioned on Israel's collective farm models, the moshav and kibbutz. Such cooperatives can be used to train farmers as well as retired military personnel in advanced agricultural techniques, as the Nepalese Chief of Army Staff has proposed. Together with a Centre of Excellence, such initiatives could play an important role in modernizing Nepalese agriculture.

Human capacity building – As noted by the World Bank, "Investing in people and building human capital are critical if Nepal is to accelerate its growth and rapidly reduce poverty" (Nepal Development Update, 2019). Human capital development

contributes to the economy in a number of ways, including by raising earnings, productivity and competitiveness.

Israel's international development agency, MASHAV, has been at the cutting edge of global development efforts since its establishment in 1957. Active in Nepal since the 1960s, over 1500 Nepalese have undergone training in MASHAV courses in such fields as health, agriculture, education, innovation and others.

MASHAV's activities are guided by a simple principle: capacity building as a means of empowering governments, communities and individuals to improve their own lives. Translating this principle into a holistic development strategy, MASHAV incorporates cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, health, education and environmental factors in its capacity-building endeavours.

This approach is the result of decades of work in the developing world, as well as Israel's own development experience, which has demonstrated that only a combination of national policy blended with grassroots capacity building can bring about sustainable change.

In addition to cooperation through MASHAV, Israel and Nepal are exploring possibilities of establishing vocational training programs at Kathmandu University and other institutions, with the goal of helping to build a skilled workforce to attract industry.

Existing cooperation in the field of health, particularly in paediatrics and ophthalmology, could serve as a basis for additional medical collaboration.

As to the private sector, a number of initiatives are being advanced to promote increased business ties between the countries, in such fields as telecommunications, hi-tech, cyber-security and alternative energy. The latter field could prove to be particularly lucrative given Nepal's great potential to develop hydroelectric energy, to the point of becoming an energy exporter throughout the region.

Israel is eager to explore these and many other possibilities for cooperation with Nepal, which hold promise of bringing mutual benefit and of raising the bilateral relationship to new levels.

The multilateral arena

Israel and Nepal share a common ambition to contribute substantively to the global agenda, as is evident in such fields as peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. In this regard, the two countries' reciprocal support for candidatures on various UN bodies is an important component of their existing cooperation in the multilateral arena.

Nepal is one of the UN's largest troop and police contributing countries, including current deployments of 858 troops to UNIFIL and 324 troops to UNDOF, peacekeeping forces stationed across Israel's borders, which play an important stabilizing role in the region. UNDOF currently is under the command of Nepalese Major General.

Israel too is a supporter of UN peacekeeping, contributing knowledge, knowhow and training to help protect peacekeepers and give them the tools to fulfil their mandates. During the past few years, Israel has worked closely with the UN in sharing Israeli expertise in the medical field to facilitate in first-aid training for peacekeeping personnel. Israel has also expanded its partnership with the UN to improve camp security.

In the field of development, Israel has long been a key player vis à vis the international community and the UN specifically. Since 2007, Israel has passed a biennial UN General Assembly Resolution on "Agricultural Technology for Sustainable Development", which enjoys very broad international support. Since 2012, the General Assembly has passed another Israeli-drafted biennial resolution on "Entrepreneurship for Development". Thus, two key aspects of global sustainable development are spearheaded in the General Assembly by Israel.

Underscoring Israel's commitment to advancing the UN's "Agenda 2030", in July 2019, Israel published its first Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), surveying where Israel is in terms of achieving the seventeen SDGs and how it plans to proceed.⁴ The

4 *Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, National Review Israel 2019.* Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environmental Protection. <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2019/Documents/Israel%20SDG%20national%20review.pdf>

report, which includes detailed metrics on how to measure SDG implementation, can be helpful to other countries in advancing the common global development agenda, particularly in such fields as education, water, health and the economy, all of which are central to Nepal's development plans.

As Nepal played a leading role in the negotiations of the Istanbul Programme of Action in 2011 and contributed actively to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Israel and Nepal are natural partners for advancing the cause of sustainable development.

With regard to human rights, in 2018 Israel completed the third cycle of its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In this context, the High Commissioner lauded Israel for its constructive engagement in the process, and specifically for measures it has taken to promote gender equality and to combat violence against women. Israel's commitment to human rights, as reflected in the UPR, is in no way diminished by the institutional bias of the Human Rights Council, which singles Israel out with a permanent agenda item and passes a highly disproportionate number of condemnatory resolutions.

Nepal's current membership of the Human Rights Council reflects its long-standing interest in human rights. Moreover, during its tenure on the Council, Nepal has demonstrated a willingness to exhibit a relatively balanced position regarding Israel, having abstained on a March 2019 resolution, which criticized Israel whilst completely ignoring Hamas. This latter position taken by Nepal is an encouraging sign as to the sense of partnership that could characterize Israeli-Nepalese relations in the UN.

Yet, as one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961, and despite some key divergent examples over the years, Nepal has traditionally voted in tandem with this bloc of countries in multilateral fora. Unfortunately, this has often entailed support for resolutions that unfairly single Israel out for censure, whether in the UN General Assembly, or other UN bodies.

Aside from reflecting a lack of balance towards Israel, this

tendency of the NAM bloc to extend blanket criticism of Israel through the UN has had a negative impact on the Palestinian willingness to engage Israel in earnest through direct negotiations. Given the changing global geopolitical landscape and deepening of its bilateral cooperation with Israel, it can be hoped that Nepal will find ways to give expression to its friendship towards Israel by consistently adopting more balanced positions in the UN, as other NAM countries are increasingly doing.

Nepal's recent abstentions on a number of key resolutions, such as the US-sponsored resolution to condemn Hamas in the General Assembly in December 2018 and the biased March 2019 Human Rights Council resolution condemning Israel, are indeed encouraging signs in this regard.

Conclusion

Israel values its relations with Nepal, both in the bilateral sphere and in the overall context of its outreach to Asia. For six decades, Israeli-Nepalese relations have steadily expanded, rooted in shared values and interests and underpinned by a flowering of people-to-people relations. Moreover, current geopolitical developments, both in Asia and the Middle East and among the great powers, favour a deepening of cooperation between the two countries.

Outdated modes of thinking regarding the perceived need to balance between Israel and the Arab countries have lost their salience. Building on its formal peace with Egypt and Jordan, Israel is increasingly engaging the Gulf States, which rightly see in Israel a partner for dealing with a host of shared regional challenges, both in the realms of security and civilian matters.

Cultivating a robust bilateral relationship presents a win-win situation for Israel and Nepal. Much of the experience and knowhow that Israel has acquired in making the transition from a developing country to an advanced OECD market-economy is relevant for Nepal, as it charts its development path forward. Israel is eager to structure its technological cooperation with Nepal, in

such fields as agriculture and water management, along sustainable modes of development, rooted in sound economic principles. Engaging the private sector at the behest and under the overall aegis of government-to-government frameworks, holds promise of increasing the available capital for investment, while augmenting the impact and sustainability of development projects.

Israel, in turn, can benefit from the inclusion of the Nepalese workforce in various sectors of the Israeli economy, which are open to foreign employment opportunities.

Moreover, Nepal is in a position to play an important role in the multilateral arena, by being a consistent voice of balance and fairness towards Israel, thus offsetting the traditional bias shown towards Israel by members of the Non-Aligned Movement in the United Nations. Fostering a more balanced climate towards Israel in the UN would have the added benefit of encouraging the Palestinian leadership to adopt more realistic bargaining stances vis à vis Israel on core issues in dispute between the sides.

Reflecting back on six decades of Israeli-Nepalese relations affords an opportunity to celebrate the warm relations enjoyed by the two countries, while equally serving to chart the potential still to be realized. In tackling their respective challenges, Israel and Nepal have gained invaluable experience, which can benefit both countries.

The great Nepalese poet, Laxmi Prasad Devkota, captured well the intimate relationship between knowledge gleaned through the surmounting of challenges and the ability to attain ambitious goals:

"What in the cosmos is mighty? Hardship, knowledge is.
What to aim is? To fly high, to touch the moon is."

Laxmi Prasad Devkota, the Great Poet of Nepal

These timeless words serve as a useful guideline as Israel and Nepal get ready to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of diplomatic relations and look to further develop their ties into the future.

-Mr. Cohen is a Deputy Director General of the Asia-Pacific Directorate in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel.

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Life of an International Student in Israel



-Desbemar, Sabita

Background

The only Jewish nation in the world and surrounded by Arab countries, Israel has a total area of 22,145 sq.km (420 km in length and about 115 km across at the widest point), and is 7 times smaller than Nepal in size. Its population is only a bit over a third of Nepal's, with approximately 9.7 million residents.

Israel is regarded by Jews, Christians and Muslims as the biblical Holy Land. Its most sacred sites are in the capital city of Jerusalem. Israel has a strong agricultural sector which utilizes advanced technologies that enable agriculture in the country's southern desert. Israel's financial hub, Tel Aviv, is known for its architecture, hi-tech companies and beautiful beaches. Israel is known as the "start-up nation"¹ because of its successful technology sector.

Israel is popular destination for higher studies. There is

1 Seror, D., & Singer, S. (2011). *Start-Up Nation*

handful of Nepalese students enrolled in several Israeli universities including: the Hebrew University, Ben Gurion University, Tel Aviv University, Bar Ilan University, and Haifa University. There are Nepalese students studying agriculture in Rehovot as well. The agricultural program in Rehovot is under the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, even though it is located in Rehovot. In addition, Israel hosts a popular agriculture work-study program “Earn and Learn” through which Nepalese youth work and study agriculture for 11 months in agricultural colleges in Israel. I completed an M.A. in International Community Development and am currently working towards a Ph.D. in Social Work at Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Enrollment process

There are no consultancies in Nepal or in Israel that provide information about study programs in Israel for Nepalese students. The Nepalese students who are currently pursuing higher studies in Israel have personal connections with professors and/or Nepalese students who are studying in Israel or studied there in the past. I met the internship coordinator of my program, Mrs. Aya Navon, in Nepal when I was working as the Community Development Program Coordinator with an Israeli organization Tevel B”Tzedek. Mrs. Navon introduced me to the International Community Development M.A. Program at the Hebrew University and encouraged me to apply. The application process was lengthy—it took six months to get the letter of acceptance from the program, however, it was worth the wait as I was accepted with a full scholarship. According to Israeli law, international students are not allowed to work in Israel, and students have to find other arrangements to cover their tuition and living costs. It is not possible for a Nepalese student to study and live in Israel without support, because the cost of living is very high. However, many international programs provide scholarships to students from developing countries.

First days in Israel

When I arrived in Israel, I already had many Israeli friends that I knew from Nepal. When I landed in the Ben Gurion International Airport on October 23rd, 2011, my dear friends Osher, Gilad,

Michal, Anat and Hofit came to pick me up in the airport. They came with flower garlands and welcomed me in Nepali style. Osher and Gilad took me to their home in Rehovot for the first night. On the second day, my friend Roni drove me to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She helped me with the registration and paperwork (all of which was in Hebrew) that I needed to get in to the Hebrew University's dormitories. During my first weeks in Israel, many friends came to visit me in the dormitory and helped me to settle in. They brought decorations for my room, bedding, pots and dishes, as well as toiletries and food. I was overwhelmed with their love and care. My friends welcomed me with a big heart and opened their homes and their lives to me. Through them, I learned a lot about Israeli life, Israeli culture, religion, and little bit about politics.

A few weeks later I went shopping on my own for the first time, which was challenging because all the food names were written in Hebrew. I could not find the things I needed—things looked similar but were not the same. Luckily some of the supermarket staff helped me, as did my roommates, who helped me translate and learn the names of foods in Hebrew. Having friends in Israel, and the support I received from them, was a lifesaver in many situations.

Israel has a developed transportation system, fast internet, entertainment facilities, nice beaches, and parks, a zoo, nature reserves, and natural springs. The thing I enjoyed most in Israel is the beaches and the desert. I remember that when I saw the Mediterranean Sea for the first time, I was overwhelmed. I wanted to go into the water, but I was afraid. I went to the Dead Sea for the first time with my friends Roni, Avigayil and Itamar. I was afraid to go into the water: I did not know how to float in the Dead Sea. My friends encouraged me to try and they helped me float. My dear friend Roni took me to desert to see nature and to enjoy the cool natural springs in the hot desert. I also traveled to the north in the winter to see the beautiful greenery of the landscape. I visited my friend Anat's family in the spring and enjoyed the amazing wildflowers.

Life on campus/university

Most of the Israelis I encountered in my studies were positive. The staff of the program were reat and ready to help students, whenever needed. The coordinator of my program, Noa Schwarzwald, was very kind and helpful. She helped me with everything I needed in the university and in the program including opening a bank account and getting a bus card. She even brought me appliances for my kitchen. The internship coordinator of the program, Mrs. Aya Navon, is an inspiring personality. She had solution to any problem—I was blown away by her ability to solve any issue that I encountered. Prof. Steve Kaplan was very encouraging and supportive.

I made good friends in class. Most of my classmates were internationals, and there were a few Israelis as well who were all nice and helpful. My Israeli classmates helped me in many ways, especially in translating Hebrew. I got a lot of help in English from my American friends, especially in writing papers, where they corrected my English. I was happy to help them in turn. I am still in touch with them even though they are now located in different parts of the world. I see my classmates who are in Israel once in a while.

The teaching method was interactive, including during classes where students had the chance to share great ideas—they knew a lot. Lecturers and professors listen to students and to their ideas and give constructive feedback. There were no tests and exams like in Nepal, but students were asked to write papers. Grades were calculated according to the students' class attendance, interaction and participation, and papers submitted.

Writing papers was a challenge for me. The Hebrew University has its own criteria for papers, which were completely unfamiliar to me. Each type of assignment (short paper, long paper, seminar paper and thesis) had its own writing method and criteria. I had to learn everything from scratch, however, thanks to the teaching assistant; I was able to master the material. It was hard for me to achieve high grades in the first semester due to stress of study, and of adapting to a new place. However, things improved in the second semester where I achieved high grades in all subjects

(courses). I was surprised to get 99% in a subject—I had never got a grade of 99% in any subject in Nepal. I was happy and proud of my success. I shared my happiness with my parents, and they were proud too. The third and the fourth semester were easier and more enjoyable.

Language was another challenge for me throughout my studies. Because the entire name boards were written in Hebrew, it was hard to find classrooms (each course had different classroom and they changed) and buildings inside the campus. Shopping in the campus supermarket and taking buses from the campus was not easy because the signs were in Hebrew and the drivers only spoke Hebrew. It was difficult to commute in public transportation in the beginning—I called and asked my friends for help every time. Later on, they taught me to use transportation applications such as Moovit, which made things easier. They also taught me to use the English sites of bus and train companies. Also, I learned some Hebrew signs and words which were helpful.

The cost of living in Israel is ten times higher than in Nepal. As a student, I had a limited budget. I kept records of daily expenses. Most of the expenses were for accommodation, utilities (water, electricity, gas, and internet), food, telephone, transportation and health insurance.

Cultural differences

Nepalese students in Israel may face cultural challenges. Nepalese are shy, polite, and easygoing, and Israelis tend to be tough, critical, and direct. They say things to your face. I had hard time with this kind of culture—at first, I thought they were very rude. However, over time, I learned to appreciate their directness. The people of Israel are often compared to the fruit of the cactus; thorny on the outside but soft and sweet inside. I fell in love with Israelis for their caring, helpful and supportive nature.

Israelis are risk takers. They say, “If risk is not taken, nothing can be achieved”. This attitude explains why so many Israelis build startups. Israelis are hard workers and they work like there is no tomorrow, as if the world is going to end. They want to do everything and keep themselves busy in productive activity.

For example, take a civil engineer. Engineering is a demanding job: she has to be in the office for planning, and in the field to supervise construction. However, in Israel, that engineer often has a family with four kids, which she maintains well. In addition, she may be involved in community work, helping families, organizing community functions, events, and assisting in elections etc. She goes to gym every day. Not only that, she pursues her acting hobby, performing on stage. How does she manage so many things?

Israelis are self-reliant. Let me share an anecdote. I was on a bus to the city center when a woman at her fifties fell down right in front of me. I gave her hand to help her get back on her feet but she replied loudly, “No! I don’t need your help. I can stand by myself.” I was offended and embarrassed. I quietly sat on my seat and thought, “Why did she get angry?” If this had happened in Nepal, she would be thankful, but in Israel, it was important for her to get up on her own.

Impression of Israel

My dear friend Itamar Caspi once said, “We Israelis must fight for our life, if we don’t, we will not be alive. Our history taught us to fight for our existence. Jews were forced to migrate to other places of the world, Jews became slaves, and Jews were killed in the Holocaust. Our past taught us to be strong and self-reliant. Now we have a country, but we are surrounded by enemies. If we are not strong in all aspects, we will not be here. We must protect ourselves and we have to fight for life. This is our reality and this is life for us.” I see this attitude in every Israeli.

When I landed in Israel for the first time, I was amazed to see the roads and infrastructure. How did this tiny country develop so quickly? Why does such small country need so many roads? Every village, neighborhood and house is connected with well-paved concrete roads. Town and cities are built with good planning. The Moshav and Kibbutz communal living systems were also impressive. It is interesting to see how the Moshav and Kibbutz villages, originally communist, have built commercial lodges, hotels and training centers.

Israel’s hi-tech is renowned throughout the world. When I

asked, “Why is Israel a leading country in hi-tech?” a very wise person replied, “When god created this country, there was nothing, no fertile land, no water, no plants. People had only their head to create with. People used their ideas to make it possible to live in a desert and change the desert into greenery.” Today, Israel exports agricultural goods to Europe and other parts of the world while only 3% of the country’s population is involved in agriculture. People are creative and have developed technologies to make this possible.

I was amazed to see people’s unity and the government’s commitment to its citizens’ protection. I saw how the Israeli government is responsible for the security of every Israeli citizen. In October 2011, an Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, was released after being held hostage in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas, since an attack at Kerem Shalom on June 25, 2006. I saw how people of Israel supported the Shalit family and put pressure on the Israeli government to negotiate with Hamas to bring him back. The Israeli government released 1,025 prisoners to secure Shalit’s release, as part of the Gilad Shalit Prisoner Exchange Agreement between Israel and Hamas. I asked my friend why the government accepted this deal. She said, “If my government cannot give security to its citizens, why do we need the government? It will be a shame.” It was unexpected but nice to hear. I cannot expect this from my government.

In July, 2014, I experienced the war between Israel and Gaza. Rockets from Gaza lit the Israeli sky and Israel fired back into Gaza. It was scary time: coming from a peaceful country like Nepal, living under fire in Israel did not feel normal. Soon after, I learned that the Israeli military used the Iron Dome system to block the rockets. I saw how Iron Domes defused the rockets in the sky and did not let them hit their targets. Again, Israel ensured each citizen’s safety and security. I also learned that every house in Israel has a bomb shelter. When a warning siren sounds, letting people know that rocket has been fired in their direction, people run to the shelter for safety. It was quite a circus during that time, running to the shelter every hour or so.

There are personalities in Israel that also inspired me. My

favorite is the former president of Israel, Shimon Peres, who contributed greatly to building the nation. His incredible dedication to the progress of this nation is laudable. One of his impressive achievements was to sign an agreement to bring medical students from Palestine to train in Israeli hospitals so that Palestine would have good medical doctors, despite the tension between the two nations. He believed in peace between Israel and Palestine, and the Peres Center for Peace initiated the training of Palestinians in Israeli hospitals. He became my inspiration; the inspiration to dream big. His biography², that explained his imagination, his courage and how dreaming big contributed to the making of modern Israel. One of his famous quotes is “If you have more dreams than achievements, then you are still young.” I can relate this to his last and very motivational advertisement work about his life after retirement from the presidency in his 90s. He joined a bank after retirement to keep informed and active.

Inspired by the late president Shimon Peres, I have my own big dream—to establish a first-aid paramedic system that can respond to emergency calls and provide emergency treatment on-site in Nepal. Physical injuries are the third most common cause of death and the fourth most common cause of physical disability in Nepal. Road accidents top the trauma list, killing 3000 people every year. On average, it takes approximately one hour for an ambulance to arrive at the scene of an accident and many people die on the way to the hospital. Equipped motorcycles and trained volunteers could be mobilized to save countless lives.

-Ms. Deshemaru is a PhD Scholar and co-editor of this book.

(This article was received on 8 October, 2020)

2 Peres, S. (2017). *No Room For Small Dreams: courage, Imagination, and Making of Modern Israel*

Nepal: A Meaningful Design in Education



-Dr. Gal, Adiv & Hod, Gal

Background

The student delegation from Kibbutzim College to Nepal is the fruit of the initiative of my personal dream. My name is Gal Hod. I am a sophomore in the pre-school special education department. I managed, quite easily I must add, to get Adiv, one of my lecturers in the college to join forces to realize this dream. A collaboration between a student and a college lecturer is not a common practice, at least not in most colleges in Israel. In this case, two extremely enthusiastic people got together and succeeded in sending 12 teacher-training students from Kibbutzim College to have a multi-sensory, multi-cultural experience in Nepal – which undoubtedly we will remember for years to come. This chapter is written from our point of view. I, Gal, will describe my experiences as a student who initiated the delegation and Adiv, the lecturer who assisted me in getting the delegation off the ground will describe his experiences from his point of view. The chapter is written in

a way that unfolds the delegation's story from the moment of its inception to the end of the trip and back home from Nepal. In some of the chapters Adiv's and my experiences are separated. I described what I felt after each experience, and Adiv added his thoughts. In some of the chapters we co-described our experiences.

Chapter 1 – First encounter

It all started in the first semester in my sophomore year studying pre-school special education in Kibbutzim College. It was a kind of vague, obscure nutty idea. I always had a dream to travel abroad and work with children, usually with Africa in mind. Why Africa? No special reason; perhaps because of the pictures I have seen from there. I knew I couldn't do it alone. After a few minutes of thought, I knew who I would turn to. I needed to talk to Adiv, my lecturer from my freshman year who taught Seasonal Nature. From my acquaintance with Adiv, I knew he was also a bit "out there" so I knew that if I proposed my idea there was a good chance he would go with it. And that's what eventually happened. I looked for him on campus, but I couldn't find him. I didn't waste any time and sent him an email. The truth? I wasn't even sure he would remember me, but I said, "What do I have to lose?"

Hi Adiv,

I apologize for dumping this idea on you...but there is something that has been on my mind for a while and I need someone (like you) who will take on the idea. I thought of taking a volunteer delegation abroad...there is a great need in Africa and loads of other places for volunteers to work with animals or with children. Do you think this is something that could work?

Thank you ☺

Gal Hod (a gentle reminder in case you forgot...pre-school special ed., last year...2016)

Adiv

While working on the computer, putting the finishing touches on a presentation for the end of the semester, I noticed a new message coming in. Should I look? Now? Later? I looked.

First, I checked to see who the message was from. I was surprised to see it was sent from Gal Hod, a student who had been in my class the year before. I began to wonder...what, I forgot to give her a grade? Can't be. She was a good student. I began to read. The more I read, the more my thoughts began to race forward. Africa? A student delegation? Fabulous! But wait...why Africa? I know of a delegation that had gone to Nepal. I answered her immediately and we set up a meeting. I was very careful and scheduled the meeting relatively earlier in the day...7:30 a.m.....

Chapter 2 – A change in direction

Gal

From that moment on, the ball began to roll...just as I had thought, Adiv was interested and immediately set up a meeting. One thing I forgot to mention, is that meetings with Adiv are usually at dawn, according to a sophomore's time table. We scheduled for 7:30 a.m.

Adiv said that he didn't know anything about volunteering in Africa, but he had heard about Nepal. A delegation had left from the Seminar in the past. "I am not sure of the details," he said and gave me few names of people to talk to. We slowly began to get the wheels turning: talk to people who had attended delegations in the past, check out "Tevl B'tzedek"¹ (the organization with which we went to Nepal), lecturers with international experience. After many discussions and meetings, I began to feel like this was really going to happen; the delegation was beginning to come to fruition. I was thrilled. In the beginning, I had my doubts, but the more we progressed, the more I realized that it was really happening, that I was about to fulfil my dream and enable other students to experience what I had been dreaming about all these years. Rumour about the delegation began snowballing at the Seminar, all the way to Nepal. A group of 14 women students participated in the delegation after passing an acceptance committee with Tevl

1 Tevl b'Tzedek (Earth in Justice) is a non-governmental organization based in Israel that promotes sustainable development in developing countries through the formation of thematic-based groups and community mobilization^a

B'tzedek. I was slightly concerned...but not only me...maybe I wasn't suitable, an unforeseen problem. Adiv calmed me down and said that the interviews were a formality, whoever wanted to come would come. And he was right. We all passed the interviews for the delegation.

The path to fulfilling the dream was not without pitfalls. There were glitches on the way: Tewel B'tzedek didn't quite get our goals and wanted us to work mainly in agriculture; finding funding; the realization that the delegation will be more expensive than I had imagined; two students who left the delegation. But we crossed all the rickety bridges and we arrived at the preparation stage – pre-delegation preparation in Israel. None of us knew exactly what we were expecting; therefore it was difficult to construct a pre-delegation program. We had no idea what was important to focus on; it was difficult to schedule meetings for everyone to participate (an important lesson for future delegations: Dates must be set up in advance, and everyone who signed on the delegation must attend all meetings as a prerequisite for participating in the delegation). Days passed and we neared our date to leave for Nepal. Excitement was in the air – I so wanted to get to Nepal and fulfil my dream, to enjoy the fruits of the hours and days of preliminary preparation. I wanted the delegation to succeed, that something positive would result. My own personal physical journey to Nepal was full of ups and downs; I felt that each down would ultimately lead to something good. "The way to the top is paved with hitches and snags." That's what I thought.

Adiv

Gal was amazing. She organized everything: the students, meetings, events, information, everything. From the moment we decided on the delegation, which is actually a student course, it was clear to me that this course had to be different. No more frontal lectures, where the teacher is in the centre. I decided that the whole course, the entire delegation we would construct together, from A to Z, including the rubrics for a grade and the mode of assessment. Total democracy (almost). And that's exactly what happened. The students didn't always have an easy time of it. All of a sudden the

responsibility fell on their shoulders. It was up to them to decide. How? When? I, who was in charge of everything having to do with the administration was running from place to place, convincing, persuading, coercing, and asking for permits. It was clear that there were some reservations from the management, but at the end of the day, all of our requests were authorized – we are on our way!

Chapter 3 – Kathmandu, Nepal Gal

After many hours, we arrived in Kathmandu, Nepal. The women who had arrived a day before, took me to a place called The Big House, where we were meant to stay until we were taken to the villages. I can say that the place was pretty old and dilapidated, and I wasn't too thrilled about sleeping there. The girls took me to my room, gave me the grand tour and then to the veranda and the roof. What a view! A fantastic panorama of Kathmandu. We arrived a few days before the orientation with T'el B'tzedek began. We became familiar with the area, but mostly we just kept going back and forth to Thamel. Kathmandu seemed very noisy to me – thousands of people, cacophony. In some ways it reminded me of some parts of Israel. South Tel Aviv, perhaps? Thamel seemed very touristy – they immediately realized we were Israeli. We couldn't figure it out. Despite that, there was something magical there, like a honey trap. On the one hand, the clamour and the denseness, and on the other hand, you couldn't detach yourself. On our free days, we chatted a great deal, but most of all, we were excited; we wanted to get going already!

The orientation began, and the days were long and jam-packed. Lots of English. All day long, English. At times, it was difficult to concentrate and internalize, but the deep desire to learn helped us overcome the difficulties. Israeli English meets the Nepali English accent. It wasn't easy, but most of it was fascinating. The lesson about Nepal: the education institutions, the caste system... it was all new, and all impressive, all so very different. During the days of orientation, we also went on a few outings. We went to the Monkey Temple – a charming place, full of live monkeys – in Israel one can see them only in the zoos. We went on a tour of

the Kalimati neighbourhood – an unforgettable experience. One of the commonalities between Israeli and the Nepali culture was about lower schools. There was a Kindergarten in Kathmandu... thousands of miles far from Israel, but so similar at the same time. A kindergarten teacher, sweet little smiling-faced children playing, waving hello, just like in Israel. The jewel in the crown was the teacher. We are second-year students for pre-school-teacher training, and we meet an impressive, inspiring Nepali pre-school teacher; she is constantly learning, developing and evolving, acquiring knowledge and skills. We left the kindergarten and went to an intercultural meeting: *Dal Bhat*, following an immediate visit to the toilet. We can argue over the flavour of dal bhat, but not over the stench in the restroom: a hole in the ground, what we nickname in Israel, "on target". This when I think I began to realize that we were really in Nepal – without a doubt – an experience I'll never forget.

As the days went on, the concerns increased: dividing the group into the villages, dividing the group into the homes in the villages, living conditions, who will we be working with? What will the Nepali staff be like? How will we be treated? How will the educational staff relate to us? Do we have enough clothing? Will it be hot? Cold? Will we have to cross the river with our stuff, or will the bus cross the river and take it? Did we take enough food with us? What will we eat? Will we really eat with our hands? Will we like it? Will it be exciting? Difficult? Will we be successful in what we set out to do? Will we feel like we are actually making a contribution, that we fulfilled our goal? Endless thoughts, but many more concerns about the unknown.

Adiv

I arrived in Kathmandu in the middle of the students' orientation. It was my second time in Nepal, with a seven-year gap in between visits. The first time, I "dragged" my wife for her 40th birthday celebration trek in Poon Hill. By the way, she still doesn't let me forget it till this day. Back to Nepal, back to Kathmandu – how exciting! I didn't dream that I would be returning so soon, and certainly not as the head of a college delegation. I arrived to the

orientation with butterflies in my stomach.

Chapter 4 – out to the villages

It began a day before; we went to Thamel to do some shopping before going out into the villages. We bought rain ponchos, bottled water and lots of food; we were afraid we wouldn't have enough to eat. We packed our backpacks and divvied up the food. We had a good shower; we knew this would be our last shower with running water for a while; we tried to turn in early, but that didn't work.

We woke up early the next Monday morning. I was so stressed from the hike, that I even shed a few tears. We put on our packs and set out. Finally, the journey begins! Extreme excitement overrode the stress; I was really excited. I had been planning this trip for six months and now it was happening. I wanted to get there already – to see, understand, observe and do.

We left Kathmandu for a 70 km trip that took us five hours in traffic jams that even in Israel we never see. A million potholes in the road, endless honking. The Israeli noise is like the streets on Yom Kippur compared to the cacophony we were subjected to. A white line? That's only a recommendation. Two-way traffic? Recommendation as well. There were easily three make-shift lanes with motor bikes in between. Endless motorbikes.

We left Kathmandu and the green, expansive, magnificent Nepali scenery spread out before us. Before the end of the journey, we wanted to know if we would have to trudge along the last Kilometre and a half with all of our belongings up steep hills and down again, or would the bus disguise itself as a jeep and cross the river. Luckily, the river's flow wasn't too strong and the bus was able to cross most of it. We arrived at our destination and disembarked. We mounted our backpacks and began to cross the rest on foot. We got there in time for lunch which was...you guessed correctly! – dal bhat – I can't begin to count how many times we ate that – and we got into the crowded jeeps for another two-hour drive on a dirt road towards Ramechhap. We were packed into these jeeps, it was hot... but the view.... Outstanding! We began the climb on a winding road along a huge river, which in Nepal isn't considered wide at all, rice paddies, birds such as bee-eaters, shrikes and wagtails, but

not too much other fauna, to tell you the truth. We saw the myna, known in Israel as "invaders", and lots and lots of dogs. In Israel there are a lot of stray cats. In Nepal, there are dogs. About two hours later we arrived at the village called Dao and here we split up into groups. Six students stayed in that village and the rest of us continued for 45 minutes along a bubbling brook through dirt roads to the next village called Hiledevi. We arrived at this village after a total of eight and a half hours on the road, when we are only about 100 Kilometres away from Kathmandu as the crow flies.

Chapter 5

We arrived at Hiledevi, our village – to our home for the following two weeks. We took a look, went into the rooms that housed two beds only, to our fancy kitchen consisting of four tin walls, but most important was our neighbour – the cow. My first utterance was that it was better than I had expected. We slowly realized that the toilets were public, a closed structure with a hole in the floor, a pail of water to rinse the area after each use, the shower was actually not a shower, but a large water container exposed to all the elements. The beds were set on a dirt floor. The kitchen was equipped with, well nothing. No stove top, no pots and pans; there was nothing in that "kitchen" that we had been promised. We wondered what would happen next; would we eventually get equipment, or would this remain the status quo? When do we start working? What do we do today, and what will we do tomorrow? We wanted some sort of bulletin about what was going to be scheduled. In the end, everything worked out. We got what we needed and the Tevel team in Nepal received us warmly.

We walked around the village and tried to get our bearings. We wanted to get something hot to drink – we were cold and the weather was not what we had been expecting. We came from a blistering summer and all of a sudden it was raining. Not rain like in Israel; the real thing. I can say that if you haven't experienced rain in Nepal, then you have never seen real rain, especially if you live in Israel. A good rain in Israel is 20 minutes and then the sun comes out. In Nepal, it can rain for five days straight.

Adiv had gone to a meeting with the Nepali team and we were so hungry. We decided to open the first packet of "Bamba"². We didn't have too many packets, but on the first day, we were so depressed, that I think we ate most of the snacks we brought with us.

Chapter 6 – introduction to the education system in the villages

We awoke to a very rainy, wintry day. The first days focused on observations. We went from one kindergarten or school to another. We observed a little, listened a little – too little as far as I was concerned. We were looking for more: to spend an entire day in a kindergarten or school, to see how the administration was set up, what the children do during recess, how they deal with transition, and how they get through the day with such conditions. The observations were not easy. In Israel, we have transportation to go from school to school, and in the village, we had to walk. We were not prepared for that. The walking for most of us was really, really hard. The distances were long and the rain did not desist. Remember those ponchos we bought? Ha! Our shoes? Soaking. Socks? Completely drenched. Our clothes? Dripping wet (actually, we were walking in a built-in puddle in our shoes). We had no clothes to change into because everything was wet. But mostly, we were caught by surprise. We had no idea that we would have to walk so much. For us Israelis, every time we walked to a school it was like a trek. It seemed that because of this hardship, we were losing sight of the reason we had made the trip in the first place. When we arrived at the kindergartens, all we wanted to do was dry off and rest for 10 minutes, but that was all the time we had to visit each school, hence we did not have time to achieve our goal. The difficulty entailed in trudging to the schools every day in the rain was the reason the observations were not particularly significant as far as a learning experience was concerned.

Yes. It is safe to say. We were slightly in shock. Some of the "institutions" were made of tin walls. Some of concrete and some looked like mud huts. When each drop of rain fell on the tin roofs,

2 "Bamba" is a popular peanut-butter-flavored snack that looks like Cheetos

it sounded like a deluge. Some of the roofs weren't waterproof, so water leaked into the classrooms. The entrance remained wide open, with a curtain-cum-door that didn't quite keep the outside noises at bay, or in our case, the storm. There were no windows in the classrooms, and if there were, they were wide open – just another silence deterrent. It was very difficult to hear what was going on in class. Everything was noisy and wet; the conditions were impossible. We were undeniably having a very hard time.

On the other hand, the Nepali pre-school teacher gave us a great deal of inspiration. We, who are not used to these kinds of conditions in Israel, were witness to how they managed to circumvent the difficulties, or more inspiring, they did not see these conditions as difficult in the first place. The teachers we saw motivated me to become a teacher – sooner than later. A pre-school teacher who has the deep desire to do that as a profession, one that comes to school everyday with a smile on her face, and even in dire times, laughs and learns from it; a teacher who loves her children truly, one who is willing to do anything for them, including walking kilometre in order to get to the school, completely isolated.

Chapter 7 – good cop, no bad cop

The second day in the villages included yet another trek, but this time it took two and a half hours with packs on our back, as we were going to stay in another village – Dima Pokhari. The day had yet to begin, and the skies opened up and the rain came down. If we could call the rain from the day before "scattered showers," the rain that caught us just arousing from sleep was way more threatening. It just kept coming down in relentless sheets. The problem was that it intensified, and clouds began to form in the mountains causing a thick fog to surround us, so that even the fantastic view was invisible. We had to leave within the hour and no one was willing to get out of bed. Clearly no one was anxious to slip on those same wet socks from the day before and put on the soaking shoes that hadn't had time to dry out either.

We began to plod on; the walk was long and arduous and just as we were at a breaking point, as though from divine intervention, a police jeep came up and asked where we were headed and if we

needed assistance. Obviously, we happily crowded into the back of the jeep, but it didn't matter, as long as we weren't walking. We had no idea how to thank those policemen. And then an idea popped into one of the student's head: We will give them "Omer's bracelet". The story behind the bracelet gave us all the chills. It refers to a memorial project for a young Israeli girl named Omer Shemesh who was killed on her way to a trek in Nepal. She had a tattoo of a butterfly on her back. The quote that was on the tattoo was written on the bracelet. During the "Shiva"³, her parents came to realize all the good things she had done in her short life. Hence, they decided to continue her memory with a bracelet inscribed with "butterflies are forever"; everyone who has the bracelet must pass it on to someone who has done a good deed for them, and in this way it eternalizes her memory by continually "paying it forward". So when the kind policemen let us off, we gave them the bracelet and explained its meaning, thus the memory of Omer Shemesh will continue in Nepal, and a new chain of good deeds began.

Chapter 8 – Friday evening in Nepali villages

Friday evening in the Nepali villages. We are making the finishing touches for our Sabbath meal with the help of the local Nepali team: cooking – limitations taken into consideration – showers – for those willing to risk the bucket system with cold water overlooking an amazing natural setting. This was the end of the first cooperative preparation stage between the Israeli delegation and the local team. Later on, both teams conducted a program for pre-school, elementary-school and youth-movement staffs after a collaborative two-day meeting. Before coming to Nepal, I asked all of the participants' families to write a personal note to the student – and to me – the surprise awaiting us from Israel. We were all moved – even to tears.

Chapter 9 – preparations for educational activities

Preparations with the Nepali team was an experience. We each got used to each other's accents. We felt a bond. We felt that despite our different appearance, our internal goals and

3 The seven-day Jewish period of mourning

objectives were the same. Nepal? Israel? It really didn't matter. The common ground was education. One of the sessions addressed social activism. The Nepali team liked the ideas raised by the Israeli students. It was a pleasure to see the cooperation and the enthusiasm from the collaborative activities, and how important it was for them to understand exactly what was meant. Working with them was outstanding. Collaboration is a wonderful way to demonstrate globalization. Despite the geographical difference and the cultural gaps, the desire to promote social change exists on both sides of the map, as though there were no borders.

Chapter 10 - educational activity

We began conducting educational activities according to what we planned with the Nepali team. The impressive teamwork with the local Tevel B'tzedek team proved itself to be praiseworthy. The first session was with kindergarten teachers. Because of language barriers, the Nepali team led the session. The students gave it their all combining skill, talent and excellent training after two years in the college. All of the teachers from the area, (about 25) made their way on foot – a two-hour journey each way, in the rain, in order to make it to these sessions, some of which were led by the Israeli students. Throughout all of the sessions we could see the Nepali teachers glowing, happy, interested and learning. They asked a lot of questions, shared stories, participated in game playing and other activities, and when they spoke about the importance of their job and its impact on the children, they were quite moved. The feedback we received from the teachers and Nepali team was wonderful to hear: empathy, creativity, kindness, are only some of the superlatives that they showered on us. Even on the pedagogic side (that's what we came for...) we reaped a great deal of praise. During the summative session, the students were asked what they had learned. It was interesting to hear about two main ideas: openness was the first. They noticed that the Nepali teachers were open to new ideas that were presented, a characteristic they decided to adopt. The second was related to global environmental citizenship. The Israeli students saw that it was possible to use what is available or recycled to create activities in the kindergarten, and

not always give into consumerism.

On our way home...

Tuesday morning...we awoke early in order to have time to get ourselves organized before the long walk and less than comfortable journeys. The Nepali team was waiting for us. It was both moving and sad. We drank tea, and were on our way. The ride back to our rendezvous point was quiet. Thoughts raced in our heads. What did we experience, how did we feel? The difficulties, but mainly the experiences. Endless experiences as result of a multi-cultural encounter. Kind of East meets West. Kind of developed country vs developing country, kind of different people. But it was all "kind of". The only difference was external. There were many more similarities than differences. The similarity was that education held in a place in the centre of our existence. We returned from the pastoral, quiet villages to Kathmandu. The tranquility of the villages was behind us, as well as the breath-taking views; back to the hustle and bustle of the city streets. We walked around Thamel that evening, ate a delicious meal...not dal bhat! We turned in early overwhelmed with feelings and anxious to get home to our families.

At home in Israel

Gal

Today, sometime after our journey and following the entire course, there are many feelings and thoughts that have stayed with me. There are some questions that I have not yet found the answers to. It is difficult for me to pinpoint what the preparations and the journey contributed to my life. Yes, I did fulfil a dream, even though it was not exactly as I had imagined...yes, I did succeed in organizing a delegation; that really did happen. There is no doubt that the delegation was meaningful and I learned a great deal – about myself, mostly in hindsight, and I hope that these insights will make me a better person in the future. I am sorry I cannot go on another delegation and implement the conclusions and amend the mistakes.

Adiv

When I returned to Israel and shared some of the experiences with a colleague with whom I lead a unification trial period for elite military units, and he told me I was crazy. "You took them on a course that was harder than any other combat unit course. Good on them for surviving. I would have given up." So that's the point. They did not give up; they were amazing, they withstood every difficulty, awful conditions, and in the end, they came out smiling. Yes, yes, they were smiling, and they even said they would consider continuing the collaboration with the Nepali team. There is no doubt that this was a life-altering experience. I believe it will shape their educational point of view. The Nepalis? There is also no doubt that the experience was contributory for them as well. And the proof is that two weeks after my return to Israel I received photos of the educational processes they were conducting with the Nepali team using the pedagogic tools they learned from our students.

Two months later

Two months following our return to Israel, the school year has begun. We have all returned to our routine. The college juniors are visiting more kindergartens, writing reflections, running to the next class, writing another paper. And me? I am continuing to head the science department, preparing another lecture, another meeting with students, putting out more fires, and dealing with issues. Alongside life's routine, I conducted interviews with the participants from the delegation. From my point of view, these interviews were very moving. There is no other way to describe them. If I had been, let's say, a bit skeptical regarding the outcome of this type of short-term delegation, then these interviews surpass anything I could have imagined. I knew there would be a long-lasting experience, perhaps eternal – at least for me – but I had no idea that the students would express themselves with "I came back a different person", "I learned to recognize differences," "I learned to accept the Other," "I learned to collaborate with the Other," "I'm sure that my experience with the Other in Nepal will be a guiding principle as a pre-school teacher," "As a teacher I have already implemented

some of the simplicity, open-mindedness, and acceptance we saw in Nepal," "The delegation put the educational clichés into practice: everything related to containment, understanding, my not knowing everything as the teacher, and opening up to learn together with the Other." It cannot be argued whether or not these women had once-in-a-lifetime experience. What will the future bring? We are working on it and hope to send another delegation in September, 2020.

-Dr. Gal is a co-founder of The Center of Education and Environmental Sustainability and Ms. Hod was a student in Kibbutzim College of Education Technology and the Art who have jointly expressed experiences of their stay in Nepal.

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"Ke Garne?" (What to Do?) Contemporary Times in Nepal: Peoples, Cultures and Architectures



- Gansach, Dr. Ada

Nepal is a fast changing nation. 'ke Garne?' - the traditional idiom of acquiescence 'What to do?' is becoming a request for action. What was un-dreamable only a few decades ago has become an everyday reality for the Nepalese. This paper traces the changes of Nepal through the writer's first-hand experience in the country for over 30 years, tells about the nature of people and opportunities today, and describes current ideas and projects which are now being developed with partners in Nepal.

I was left alone, imprisoned by circumstances on the deck of the rusty old boat between India and Sri-Lanka. It was a magical night on an ocean dotted with reflections of stars on the silvery black ripples. The police officers slammed the gates of the country shut without letting me in. I did not have the visa I needed in my Israeli passport, and could not return to India with my expired single

entry: "...do not be upset", the border police officers said politely, comforting that "it is not personal, it is between our countries" when they saw me worried.

But personal it was when I reached Nepal, rushing with an emergency three days' visa through India after non-stop day and night travel on the hard wooden benches of the second class trains, in the stale air of cheap oily 'fooding' and sweet tea, crammed with millions around me, who insisted to hear about my distant world - about the name of my father, my mother, my husband, brothers and uncles, how old they all are, what do they do for living, how much they earn, what do they eat during the day, how many children they have, and many such details about the rest of the world - perhaps disappointed that it is not so different from theirs. I was sitting on the benches just waiting for those extremely long three days to end.

An orange sunset welcomed me in as I crossed the northern border with my old back pack, when a petit man in khaki and red uniform smiled at me at the border station. I was distressed with "...what is wrong now? how many rupees will he demand for 'bakshish' ? what will he want now? ...". I was almost paralyzed with worries as he nodded his head left to right and went on with his job till I heard the thump of the seal stamping the visa onto my passport and handed back to me with the same bright eyes and big smile wishing me a good time in Nepal. Only then it hit me that perhaps he is nice to me because he is nice. This smile dissolved my worries and my heart could open again to see and explore the country I entered for the first time. It was a special entry - with long shadows and misty blue hills under the orange skies accentuated by the bright eyed smiles of the curious officer who watched me closely. I had just entered Nepal and could not know that this was the beginning of a life-long trip and the foundation for my very long relationship with the country for the decades to come.

I have mostly learnt from Nepal

It opened my mind to see the beauty of humanity - that differences are the wealth of cultures, and that they dissolve when humaneness comes to the fore. I learnt how cultural constructs are so embedded in the environment, and how they evolve through

time and social locality, and how humanity can transcend constraints through community wisdom and shared efforts. I was amazed to see how possible is the impossible, and the incomprehensible makes so much sense: I saw the most delightful war.

It was a real war between east and central Nepal that I witnessed in a remote village in north Nepal - a place which, at that distant past some 30 years ago, was linked to the worlds outside the hidden valley by a single narrow, recently opened path that crossed ridges and high mountains. There were no roads, no cars, no telephones, no electricity and no running water - it was still a world enclosed with snow-capped high mountain walls in black granite, in almost complete isolation. I had just come there with a group of porters from Eastern Nepal who brought my equipment for my 'fieldwork research' I set out to do for the PhD I had just begun. We all sat around the fire after the dinner we shared with the villagers.

As we finished the salty tea and went on to the *Raksi* (local hard alcohol) the hosts and visitors discussed and compared their worlds, weaving some songs into the lively conversation. It was fun till a point when suddenly their voices grew louder with a hidden animosity that sparked fire into the gentle debate. The two groups of men grew apart, and the discussion heated: whose rice is better - theirs, of the lower lands in East Nepal, or the rice of the high lands in Central Nepal?. Between argument and competition - it was a fight about the grain of rice, the size, ease of harvesting, husking, threshing and winnowing, and surely, cooking it, the taste of food and, of course, of the women who cooked it. Then it evolved into almost war about farming, traditional rituals and songs, and songs in general. Then, as the *Raksi* was settling in, the competition grew fierce, and dances were added to prove the point. The thumps shook the floor and the sounds became louder till late, until the fire turned into embers, the *Raksi* emptied out and the energies drained, till one after the other the men went, or dropped into the corners of the room, muttering some words of praise or of anger and vanished into deep sleep. When the sun rose as early as it always does the next morning, people parted with assured smiles - the villagers went to work in the fields, the visitors went back home in the east, all feeling that they won that war - everyone

was reassured that his rice is better, his songs and dances are better, his language is richer and his home is the best.

Today's Nepal is very different

It is a republic of fast changes, accelerating urbanization, where openness and education have transformed it to a land of possibilities. Nepal today is un-comparable to its past of discrete communities, each with their own language, economy and lifestyle, controlled by a disaggregating regime. Since the demise of the monarchy, the decade of insurgency which followed, and after the tough beginning of the new era where people were fighting on the streets of cities and in mountain villages to define their democracy, today, the recent division into provinces that had fragmented the dysfunctional centralization seem to have found the appropriate scale for the nation, perhaps more familiar to a people with a long history of tiered *Panchayat* councils. Nepal today is a liberal democratic republic with political stability and cooperating coalition politics.

The people of Nepal today are completely different. Mobile phones are everywhere, even in the most remote villages. Computers are common knowledge even where they are inaccessible, communication networks, radio, TV and the internet, have brought the world to the remote people of Nepal, and the new roads have shattered the barriers of distance. The cities are bustling with cars and motorbikes as the young entrepreneurs are immersed in the screens of their smart-phones, latest models, setting up a new project or arranging the next deal.

The enormous difference between the young Nepali adults and their parents' generation cannot be underestimated, particularly in the towns and cities of Nepal which are growing at an overwhelmingly accelerating pace. It is a generation which was born into democracy and struggled for the emerging liberalism, educated people who grew in a Nepal of open borders and fast communication, in the modest homes of the evolving middle classes, where free economy and private enterprise has become the ideal and the challenge. This, together with the creative mindset that was born from the necessities of poverty in Nepal's 'previous

life', of traditions, joint-family and close social groups, makes the young adults of Nepal a unique group of able, educated people who are eager to take on the new challenges of the 21st century despite the scarcity of means at hand.

It is this generation that is shifting the meaning of the most common idioms of *Ke garne?* . 'What to do?' epitomized the Hindu-Buddhist traditions in Nepal denoting the historical stance of acquiescence, acceptance and passivity to a certain extent: '*Sansaar yestai chha*' - life is like this" they say. Today '*ke garne*' is being asked in an active mode - towards taking steps of action for change, taking on challenges - a dynamic stance of taking action to make a difference.

Nevertheless, while GDP and GNP are growing, and personal income increasing even in the more remote villages - poverty - merely a comparative concept, not a condition to be measured by US\$ income per capita - has increased. Communication has brought home absences and created poverty, yet, at the same time it is also shaping the new challenges and drive for change which characterizes the shift of Nepal towards its dynamic life today.

Having grown alongside Nepal and followed the way it has evolved, my own relationship with the country has changed. In the past I refused to join foreign investors or aided projects as I cherished the local worlds which were self-sustaining and content, and I felt strongly that 'development projects' were patronizing, or judgmental at best, resulting in using up resources where wealth is extracted and the balanced sustainability derailed.

My first accidental visit in the 1980's, after that night on the old Indian boat on the silver ripples of the Sri Lankan ocean, has been most rewarding for me. Contrary to the well meaning border policemen, my travels to Nepal have become personal affair which has changed my life. I feel privileged to have many friends from all walks of life - people of the aristocracy of Kathmandu and the poorest of the Dalit in far western Nepal; I know state politicians and local leaders, urban professionals, lower-middle class craftspeople, farmers in remote villages and Buddhist priests in isolated monasteries of the high mountains. I have known them for years and we travelled pieces of our lives together. We shared

boiled potatoes and 'lagar' (mountain buckwheat bread), happiness and troubles, and we brought new insights to each other's lives -I feel most fortunate for knowing them, and knowing Nepal so intimately through them.

It is for them, and for the fast shift in Nepal today that I have begun to engage in several initiatives in Nepal. This I do with my colleague and friend, Yoram Ilan Lipovsky under the umbrella of IAT - Ilan Advanced Technologies, partnering Nepali and Israeli entrepreneurs of vision and ideas, working together to strengthen weaker links or add a missing link by initiating projects which cater for Nepal's contemporary needs. The guiding concept is that knowledge is shared, development and adaptation is done together in Nepal, mostly by the Nepali and for themselves, and profits are shared between us as partners, with a certain percent allocated for humanitarian work in Nepal to acknowledge our special relationship with Nepal.

But while most of these projects are based in appropriating advanced technologies to the unique conditions and particular needs in Nepal, the first and most important of these is our initiative is to preserve and promote the diversity of cultures by the creation of The Center for Cultural Excellence of Nepal, which we feel is the most urgent and pressing initiative, as I shall expand below.

Under the pressure of time

Nepal is transforming at an ever growing rate in recent decades - fast urbanization, economic emigration of laborers and professionals, and the growing consumption of cheap products and ready-mades have resulted in the fragmentation of communities and dissolution of traditions. At the same time that new employment opportunities help integrate the more remote villages into the Nepali economy, they detach the locals from the historical seasonal programs which balanced the traditional division of time between agriculture, manufacture and social and religious production. In practice, this means complete transformation of lifestyle, and loss of local knowledge, histories, crafts and languages: the cultural richness and self sufficiency are taken over by monetized economy.

This is neither good nor bad - as a common Nepali proverb

explains: 'Sansaar yestai chha' (Np.: 'life is like this'). It is what it is - like the weather, as I learnt from a close Nepali friend long ago, when he asked me, somewhat shyly, to explain a perplexing puzzle he could not resolve about us, 'bideshi's (foreigners). He asked why we say 'good weather' or 'bad weather' - and continued to explain his bewilderment when I raised an eyebrow: 'after all, weather is weather'....

What has been unique in Nepal until recently is that artistic production, whether painting, sculpture, dance or music, has been inseparable from everyday life of the people, and has found its place in the crafts of pottery, brass casting, stone and woodcarving, architecture and decoration, ritual objects, jewelry, textile etc. as well as folk or religious music, dance and theatre. In contradistinction to the European traditions, where the production of the arts was patronized and produced for consumption by aristocratic courts or the churches, and the artist is a cultural hero, in Nepal it has been produced by the people and belongs to their everyday life. The artist is everyone, artistry is everywhere, and art is there to serve and to be used.

There is more in the loss of diversity. "There are only 56 languages in Nepal" once a German linguist explained to me, and emphasized : "languages, not dialects". There were more, as I learnt from my Dalit friends in Humla during a three days' ritual of dispelling a prophesy of misfortune to the life of a young man. There were dances around the fire through those freezing cold nights of November, when the men were singing the whole of the Mahabharatha. It was not Hindi, nor Nepali, nor any local language I ever heard of . They said it is in the original Khas language of west Nepal, that they did not necessarily understand - but they knew the words to sing together. This is still there - but disappearing. Today, the children of my Manangi friends do not speak their mother tongue, and the Nepali of my friends in Kathmandu is better than their English, they say.

The vanishing of this rich cultural diversity and the disappearance of the traditional arts and crafts in Nepal is a great loss - not only for the Nepalese, but for the heritage of the world just as much. It is only obvious that cultural discourse of

people, environments and social practices is embedded in their cultural products and enhances their formal and aesthetic value as they reflect the social and historical processes which have produced them. The unique situation of Nepal - its geographical fragmentation, and relative isolation till recent decades, particularly of the more remote districts, have prolonged the historical ways of life and preserved its tangible and intangible cultural products, which have made Nepal particularly unique. In contemporary Nepal, this is now under threat of disappearing, and the sense of urgency is pressing.

Turning a problem into an opportunity has been my mother's lifelong and indissoluble frame of mind - a holocaust survivor who refused to surrender to trauma or difficulties. It proves relevant here too: at the same time that contemporary life takes the traditions off the main streets of culture, this can now be studied, framed, and put on display to remember, study and promote. To-date, Nepal has had no institutions nor frameworks for doing so.

There is a handful of the museums in Kathmandu valley do display some wonderful objects under layers of urban dust. Until recently, such efforts have fossilized everyday culture or architecture which was alive everywhere outside those institutions, and hence the disappointment of the visitors, local and tourists alike. Until recently, it would have been absurd to display the trivia of everyday life on museum pedestals. But now things have changed.

Center for cultural diversity

Turning a problem into an opportunity has given rise to our vision of regeneration. More specifically - the creation of a new home for Nepali cultural life of past and present - a place to preserve, study and debate and create everything, directly or indirectly related - a true center dedicated to the Nepali arts and crafts, to archive and display, a place for study and enjoyment of historical and contemporary paintings and sculptures, photographs and documentary, the artistry of architecture, of brass casting, of blacksmiths' and silversmiths' works, jewelry and textile, stone and woodwork, costumes and even cookery. It will become the center for the performing arts - of singing and music, of dance and theater.

Education is to have a pivotal importance to the activities of the Center: beside classroom and workshop for children and adults to study and gain first-hand experience in the arts and crafts, it will be a place where local knowledge can be transmitted - alive and real. Furthermore, the historical collections will be but a part of the new digital library, equipped with the most advanced technologies to link it to the world's best libraries, where access will be free and open to all, giving everyone an opportunity to develop. Such a place will become the new home to celebrate Nepal's rich diversity and enjoy its differences when bringing in visiting exhibitions, performances and scholars. A place such as we envisage will become a central hub for cultural life in Nepal today - a link between historical traditions and contemporary discourse, which engages Nepali and bideshis alike, a place for cultural preservation and regeneration - a contemporary link between Nepal's past and its future.

The creation of a national treasury of Nepal's cultural history is our most important project initiative, where the collection will serve as a national cultural anchor for the country and serve as a reference point of identity to communities and individuals, and preserve peoples' histories.

Regeneration: urban, cultural and economic vision of an architect

At this historical juncture architecture and urbanism can provide an adequate response and a vision for what is an urgent national necessity. Like temples or churches, the greatest of the world's museums are important secular shrines to celebrate humanity's cultural wealth. Such museums are mostly located in city centers and provide a magnet for visitors, locals and tourists alike, and become a magnet for many related social, cultural, commercial and educational activities which give the area around them a special identity in the urban context.

The vision for the new Center for Cultural Excellence of Nepal is free from the history-burdened centers of cultural repositories as in Europe and the US. It will be a new type of multi-functional complex which, in the context of Nepal, it will be a reflection of the country - almost an oxymoron - a place for

the arts and crafts of Bahal's (residential courtyards) and palaces brought together, for creativity of people in villages and cities, a reflection of urban and rural life, where 'high' and 'low' traditions merge and blend: a place to celebrate differences and enjoy the diversity of Nepal.

Furthermore, in practice, as we see it, regeneration is a process in the ways in which this long term project is developed - a process of partnering, sharing knowledge, learning, training and working together on the conservation and adaptation of historical architecture and new technologies, to create a facility that can make the knowledge of Nepali culture accessible to all. Such a project will create a new center in Nepal for its cultures to be preserved, remembered and referenced to, and perhaps transformed and made relevant to contemporary life, perhaps in a different form.

This project is designed to be economically sustainable in the long run. It was initiated by friends from inside and outside Nepal with whom we share our love and admiration for the vanishing traditions of Nepal. To-date this vision is well received and shared by many, and we pray that these new insights will prevent commercial market pressures or economic forces from thwarting our efforts to making this happen.

Besides, separately, and in addition to this - our intimate knowledge of Nepal, our in-depth involvement with the advanced technologies in Israel, together with our intention of working together in full partnership, has given rise to several new initiatives, where we plan to share Israeli and Nepali knowledge, learn, develop and train people in the process of implementation. Some of our initiatives are briefly outlined below :

STEAM - We believe that education is the foundation for the future so that every child has the right to fulfill his/hers potential and realize their dream. In the world of the 21st Century, the STEAM subjects - Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics - are the basis for contemporary life and development. This, plus the Plus framework we devised, where we designed a program to support the personal growth of the students, as individuals and as a social beings, and work to develop their social skills. The integrative approach of the program is an imperative in

this century, where the screens are taking over unmediated contacts even among the younger of children.

RMI - No other country in the world is as fragmented by mighty mountains and deep river valleys which have made many of its parts inaccessible, hindered development, and prevented many from receiving good medical care they equally deserve. Our Remote Medicine Initiative (RMI), where advanced communication can bring medical care to distant places where there are no sufficiently experienced specialists, or no doctors at all. Together with one of the ten best hospitals in the world, Sheeba Hospital in Israel, we are working to make medical knowledge and experience accessible to even the more distant clinics and hospitals in remote parts of Nepal, guide treatment, relieve much pain and save many lives.

DMI - Our Disaster Management Initiative, brings together all the authorities and government instruments that operate when major disaster strikes (like earthquakes, landslides, fires, accidents, etc.), by identifying specific local needs, developing facilities and networks in order to bring the facilities of the center closer to the remote districts and reach in time. Strengthening the links between central and provincial governments will enable timely rescue and provision of supporting services to save lives.

One concept to varied projects - There are several initiatives we are working to develop and share with Nepal - like the advanced technology earthquake warning system, air-lifted mobile hospital unit, and others. ONE CONCEPT unifies what is seemingly disparate, but not dissimilar projects, which, in our view, are founded on common grounds. All these initiatives begin with our intimate knowledge of Nepal on the one hand, and our long history of working together closely with the most advanced technological industries in Israel, in the academies, in practice, and in education, on the other. In bringing these together, tailoring them to the needs of Nepal, and sharing this with Nepali partners - we believe that our joint efforts and working together will be equally beneficial for all, and contribute to make the relationship between Israel and Nepal closer. Amen.

-Dr. Gansach is an architect in private practice since 2004 after working as a senior project architect of large projects in UK, Israel and several other countries, and winner of several architectural competitions; taught at academic institutions in the UK and Israel, and published several papers on architecture and anthropology in Nepal. Ada is an honorary graduate of the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, with masters degree and a PhD specializing in Nepali architecture and culture. Ada's connection to Nepal extends over the past four decades, with many professional colleagues, allies in the communities she worked with as a philanthropist and a volunteer for the advancement of the people in Nepal, and many close friends in the cities and villages she has visited and with whom she keeps in close contact.

(This article was received on 7 December, 2019)

Nepal-Israel Relations



-Ghimire, Harishchandra

Political relations

It gives me immense satisfaction to mention that Nepal-Israel relations, ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations on 1 June 1960, have remained warm, friendly, close, cordial and cooperative. The establishment of diplomatic relations was marked by a beautiful historical coincidence: Nepal was under the leadership of the first elected Prime Minister B. P. Koirala and Israel was under the leadership of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, who was also the first Prime Minister of Israel, at the time. Furthermore, Nepal was the only country in the region during 1960s and 70s to recognize Israel as a state and to host the residential Embassy of Israel in Kathmandu.

While Israel opened its Embassy in Kathmandu in March 1961 within less than one year of the formal beginning of bilateral relations, Nepali Ambassadors to Egypt used to be concurrently accredited to Israel until Nepal established its Embassy in Tel

Aviv on 13 August 2007 at Charge d' Affaires level, which was later upgraded to the Ambassadorial level. Nepal had appointed an Honorary Consul in Israel before establishing her residential diplomatic mission. At present, along with the Embassy of Nepal in Tel Aviv, there are Honorary Consuls of Nepal in Beersheba and Haifa cities.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, Nepal has maintained that both Israel and Palestinian people have the right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries and that the Palestinian issue should be settled in a peaceful manner. Nepal voted in favour of Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which upheld the right of all the States in the region to live in peace. Nepal has welcomed every initiative from whatever quarter of the globe that sought to resolve the Middle East problems like the Camp David Accord signed between Egypt and Israel in 1978 and the renewed peace process.

Nepal welcomed the historic accord, officially entitled the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (DOP), signed between Israel and Palestine Liberation Organization on 13 September 1993 in Washington DC, on autonomy for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank Town of Jericho and also the agreement signed on 10 September 1993 on mutual recognition to each other. Nepal viewed the landmark ceasefire announced after a summit held between Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Leader Mahmoud Abbas in Egypt on February 8, 2005 to end four years of bloodshed following the Second Intifada, as a positive step towards resolving the longstanding issue.

Nepal strongly believes that both Israel and Palestine need to engage in dialogue to build mutual confidence critical to reaching at a viable and durable two-State solution such as that offered by the Quartet-endorsed Road Map. Nepal abstained from voting on the resolution "Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem" at the 40th Human Rights Council session in March 2019, believing that both sides should resolve the problem by means of dialogue and negotiation, in accordance with the

principles of international law.

Bilateral visits:

The exchange of bilateral visits at various levels including at the highest ones as well as the foresight shown by our leaders while dealing with important issues have immensely helped to promote and nurture the relations between Nepal and Israel.

Visits from Nepal

A. Head of State, Head of Government and Other High Level Visits

- Prime Minister Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala paid an official visit to Israel from 23-25 June 1993 at the invitation of Israeli Prime Minister Mr. Yitzhak Rabin.
- Speaker of the House of Representative Mr. Daman Nath Dhungana paid an official visit to Israel in January 1992 at the invitation of Speaker of the Knesset.
- In 1968, Crown Prince Birendra paid a two-week study visit to Israel.
- King Mahendra paid a State Visit to Israel in September 1963.
- Prime Minister Mr. BP Koirala paid an Official Visit to Israel in 1960, which was very important for promoting bilateral relations as many countries had not recognized Israel at that time.

B. Ministerial Level and Other Important Visits

- Minister for Agriculture, Land Management and Cooperatives Mr. Chakra Pani Khanal visited Israel to attend the 20th International Agricultural Exhibition (Agritech 2018) held on 8-10 May 2018.
- Minister for General Administration Mr. Keshav Kumar Budhathoki visited Israel from 28 December 2016 to 5 January 2017.
- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Kamal Thapa paid an official visit to Israel on 24-26

May 2016.

- Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives Mr. Mrigendra Kumar Singh Yadav paid an official visit to Israel from March 14-18, 2010 leading a four- member Nepalese delegation.
- Minister for Labour and Transport Management Mr. Mohamad Aftab Alam paid an official visit of Israel from 19-26 August 2009 leading a seven-member delegation.
- Minister of Foreign Affairs Mrs. Sahana Pradhan paid an official visit to Israel on 11-12 July 2007 at the invitation of the Government of Israel.
- Deputy Speaker Mrs. Chitra Lekha Yadav paid an official visit to Israel from 29 June-2 July 2003 at the Invitation of the Deputy Speaker of Knesset Ms. Eti Livni.
- Minister of Information and Communication Mr. Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta paid an official visit to Israel from 20-22 March 2002.
- Minister of Agriculture Mr. Chakra Prasad Bastola paid an official visit to Israel from 5-8 September 1999 at the invitation of Agriculture and Rural Development Minister of Israel.
- Minister of Communication Mr. Jhala Nath Khanal visited Israel from September 16-22, 1997 at the invitation of Israeli Communication Minister Mrs. Limor Livnat.
- Minister of Agriculture and Local Development Mr. Ram Chandra Paudel paid an Official Visit to Israel from 17-21 November 1993.
- Minister of State for Science and Technology Mr. Bhakta Bahadur Balayar paid an official visit to Israel from 7-11 April 2002.
- Assistant Minister of Education Mr. Hasta Bahadur Malla visited Israel to participate in the Jerusalem International conference of ministers of Education from January 8-11, 1996.
- Chief Secretary Mr. Lok Darshan Regmi visited Israel from 13 to 15 May 2019. During the visit, Chief Secretary

held meetings with Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development as well as Cabinet Secretary of Prime Ministers' Office and senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel.

- Labour Secretary Mr. Sureshman Shrestha visited Israel from 23-27 February 2013 leading a four-member delegation to discuss the proposed bilateral pilot program for recruitment of Nepalese caregivers in Israel.

Visits from Israel

A. Head of state, head of government and other high-level visits

- Israeli President Zalman Shazar paid an Official Visit to Nepal in March 1966.

B. Ministerial level and other important visits

- A four-member Knesset delegation headed by the Deputy Speaker MK Nawaf Mazalha, paid a friendly visit to Nepal from 2-4 December 2001.
- Moshe Dayan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, paid an official visit to Nepal in 1979.
- Ambassador Mr. Gil Haskel, Head of MASHAV (Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation), visited Nepal from 8 to 12 December 2019 at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- A delegation of Israeli officials led by Mr. Amnon Ben Ami, Director General, Population and Immigration Authority paid a visit to Nepal on December 13-15, 2012 to discuss on the proposed bilateral pilot program for recruitment of Nepalese caregivers in Israel.
- Dr. Rachel Adatto, MK (Kadima), Chairperson of Israel-Nepal Parliamentary Friendship League visited Nepal from 11-13 April 2010 and the visit coincided with the Golden Jubilee Year of the celebration of the establishment of 50th year of Nepal-Israel diplomatic relations.

- A delegation of Israeli officials led by Mr. Chaim Choshen, Director, South and Southeast Division, MOFA paid a visit to Nepal on their own on October 26, 2009.
- A delegation from the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre (MCTC) led by Director Ms. Mazal Renford visited Nepal from 31 October - 5 November 2004.

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2020, both countries are taking initiatives for exchanges of high-level visits and hosting different programs to further enhance the relations at the government as well as people's level.

Economic cooperation:

Nepal and Israel have been promoting mutually beneficial economic relations. Israel has extended valuable cooperation to Nepal in various developmental fields including establishment of the National Construction Company of Nepal and training facilities for the Nepali Army personnel. Israel has also been providing Nepal with short-term scholarships in various subjects particularly in the areas of agriculture, education, rural development, water resources, and tourism.

Similarly, Israeli experts on farm management, artificial insemination, irrigation, childhood education and cooperative biotechnology and farm machinery have conducted several on-the-spot courses in Nepal. In the training field, Israel is offering Nepal each year a number of several scholarships through Israeli International Development Cooperation Agency (MASHAV) in agriculture, health, education, cooperative and others. MASHAV has been providing short-term trainings to Nepali nationals in sectors such as science, health, environment and education. Around five hundred Nepali youth students have been receiving training in Israel every year as part of 'Learn and Earn' under agricultural cooperation. As of now, a total of 2700 agriculture students have graduated from the program.

Ambassador Mr. Gil Haskel, Head of MASHAV visited Nepal from 8 to 12 December 2019 at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While in Nepal, Ambassador Haskel called on several high-level Nepali dignitaries, including Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, Hon. Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development, Hon. Minister for Finance, Hon. Minister for Health and Population, and Hon. Minister for Education, Science and Technology as well as Hon. Chief Minister of Gandaki Province. Various aspects of Nepal-Israel bilateral relations including the ongoing and potential areas of cooperation such as the establishment of agriculture centers of excellence in Nepal were discussed during the meetings.

Ambassador Haskel also visited Lamjung, Gulmi, Jhapa and Udayapur districts to observe the agricultural projects being operated in these regions as well as to interact with the stakeholders and explore potential areas and ways of cooperation.

During a meeting between MASHAV Head and Foreign Secretary of Nepal held at the end of the visit, overall bilateral cooperation relations between the two countries was reviewed, momentum created by the present visit towards further consolidating the cooperative relations was appraised, and need to establish some sort of bilateral follow-up mechanism to facilitate the execution of ideas generated during the visit was discussed. They also discussed about organizing various events, including the exchange of high-level visits, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries next year.

Relief assistance for earthquake victims:

Immediately after the devastating earthquake that struck Nepal on 25 April 2015, the Government of Israel sent its humanitarian mission of over 250 doctors, including other emergency health workers for rescue and relief operation. The Israeli group set up a field hospital with 60 beds, including an obstetrics department, and provided health services to the people injured in the earthquake. Israel has also proposed to co-operate in reconstruction of a village that is damaged by earthquake.

Agreements/MoUs signed:

- A Protocol of Cooperation between the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce was signed on 25 June 1993 in Tel-Aviv
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) relating to the scholarships programs signed between Government of Nepal and the Government of Israel on 16 February 1995.
- Government of Nepal and the Government of Israel signed a bilateral Air Service Agreement (ASA) on November 18, 2002.
- Agreement between the Government of Nepal and the Government of the State of Israel on Cooperation in the Field of Agriculture was signed in Jerusalem on March 17, 2010.
- “Arrangement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Government of Nepal and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel on gainful occupation for family members of a member of a Diplomatic mission or Consular Post” was signed in Jerusalem on November 16, 2014.
- A Joint Pilot Program for the Recruitment of Caregivers from Nepal to Treat Disabled Elderly Employers in Israel was signed on 07 August 2015 in Kathmandu, Nepal.
- An agreement to establish Bilateral Consultation Mechanism at the Foreign Ministry level was signed on 25 May 2016 in Israel. The first BCM meeting was held in Kathmandu on 19 March 2018.

Foreign employment in Israel:

Israel is one of the attractive destinations for overseas employment of Nepal. Currently, there are more than 3,000 Nepali workers in Israel, mostly female caregivers and household workers. There are also some male caregivers, as well as agriculture workers from Nepal.

The Joint Pilot Program for the Recruitment of Caregivers from Nepal to Treat Disabled Elderly Employers in Israel, signed on 07 August 2015 in Kathmandu, has provisioned for sending 60 caregivers from Nepal to Israel every year. Recently, Israel has shown interest to sign a full-fledged agreement in this regard.

Nepal has already proposed a draft of the Agreement for Israeli side's consideration.

Trade:

Nepal and Israel have been trading various goods and articles. Nepal's exports to Israel mainly include oil seeds and oleaginous fruits; medicinal plants, vegetable plaiting materials, tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes, yarns, carpets and other textile floor coverings, apparel and clothing accessories, musical instruments and parts and accessories of such articles. Imports from Israel mainly include live trees and other plants, cupflowers and ornamental foliage, vegetables, fruits, nuts or other parts of plants, mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation, bituminous substances, mineral waxes, organic chemicals, pharmaceutical products, fertilizers, apparel and clothing accessories, nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances and parts, electrical machinery and equipment and parts, sound recorders and reproducers, television image and sound recorders and reproducers, and parts and accessories of such articles, optical, photographic, cinematographic, medical or surgical instruments and parts, furniture- bedding, mattresses, cushions and similar stuffed furnishings, lamps and lighting fittings, prefabricated buildings, and chemical products.

Nepal-Israel trade volume during the last five years

Year	Export in US\$	Import in US\$
2014	177,556	7,946,078
2015	2,268,230	5,256,895
2016	195,620	12,544,330
2017	183,247	9,504,462
2018	161,524	16,175,402

Source: Trade and Export Promotion Center, Nepal

A look at these figures shows the need to increase the volume of trade and maintain trade balance, as Nepal seems to be running a big deficit.

Tourism:

Nepal has always remained a favourite tourist destination for Israelis, particularly the young Israeli backpackers who love adventure tourism activities such as trekking, mountaineering, rafting and jungle safari. A total number of 5,512 and 5,764 and 6,913 Israeli tourists visited Nepal in the year 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively. This figure is not small if compared with around 9 million total population of Israel.

The opening of the Embassy of Nepal in Tel Aviv on 13 August 2007 has further contributed positively towards promoting Nepal by disseminating relevant information to the Israeli nationals. In order to promote tourism and raise awareness about Nepal, the Embassy in Tel Aviv is organizing tourism programs and events every year.

In September 4, 2012, joint postage stamp was issued in Jerusalem and Kathmandu amidst a ceremony mentioning 'Mount Everest, highest place on earth and Dead Sea, lowest place on earth' to mark the 52nd anniversary of Diplomatic relations between Nepal and Israel.

On May 29, 2013, a monument was established in Tamar Region near Dead Sea placing the stone from Mt. Everest, the highest part of the world and similarly a monument was established in Namche Bazar, the base of Mt. Everest on 23 April 2013 placing the stone of Dead Sea, the lowest part of the world.

The Government of Nepal and the Embassy of Nepal in Tel Aviv have been organizing various tourism promotional programmes in Israel.

Conclusion

Nepal and Israel have been enjoying cordial relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations. Both countries have also been cooperating at the multilateral levels, including the United Nations, on issues of common concerns. Nepal has been continuously pursuing the policy of recognizing the rights of all states in the Middle East region.

The exchange of high level visits as well as signing of bilateral agreements/MoUs on different areas of bilateral cooperation have significantly contributed to further strengthening, enriching and

deepening relations during the last 60 years. Moreover, there are several agreements/MoUs under consideration between the two countries, which will enhance cooperation and collaboration on various existing and new sectors. Exchanges of such visits and expansion of areas of cooperation, both at the government and non-governmental levels, should continue in the years to come in the larger interest of both Nepal and Israel.

-Mr. Ghimire is Joint Secretary who is the head of Central Asia, West Asia and Africa division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

(This article was received on 24 January, 2020)

The Program for Nepali Trainees in Agriculture in Israel



- *Goder-Goldberger, Hanan*

Introduction

The Program for International Trainees in Agriculture was established in the Arava region in Israel in 1994. Central Arava is a Regional Council located in the Negev Desert and includes seven settlements: five agricultural villages and two community villages. The first of the seven villages, EinYahav, was established in 1962 and the last of the seven, Zukim, was established in 2001. The entire area of the Regional Council is part of the World Desert Belt and receives a limited amount of rainfall yearly: approximately 50 mm per year. Although the villages are located in a harsh desert, the five rural settlements of this council depend on agriculture as an important source of income. In the 1980's, the Israeli government approved importing international employees to work in the agricultural sector, mainly from Thailand. The reason for this import was mainly due to the high cost of unskilled Israeli laborers and the need for working hands in this area. The Program for Trainees

in Agriculture started when the founder of this initiative, Mrs. Hani Arnon, decided to transform the system of importing labor workers to an educational program for Thai students with previous academic backgrounds. Thus, a new program was established as an independent educational program rather than an employment program.

The initial educational program established in 1994 included 20 Thai students. Over the years, the program has gradually grown with success. As of the academic year of 2019-2020, over 4,000 students from 30 developing countries participate in the program. The students have the opportunity to learn agriculture in depth in six colleges located all over Israel.

The international training program for students in Israel

There are over 4000 students from over 30 developing countries that participate in the program annually. Generally, the students arrive in Israel during the summer and stay for 10-12 months. The students reside either with farmers or on special sites near the farms, where they do their practical work. Once a week, the students are taken for a day of study by buses organized by one of the six academic institutions that participate in the program. Israeli experts on agriculture and business management hold high level academic lessons for the students. Several field trips are organized by the colleges for the students to enable them to learn from various farms that are currently implementing modern agro technologies and new farming methods. The students are required to conduct a practical scientific research on a chosen topic. The Academic Guide supports them during the entire research. The students present their papers at the end of their project.

While in Israel, the students enjoy all rights given to workers and to students by the Israeli law. This includes health insurance and national insurance rights given to Israeli workers.

Nepal's agricultural sector

Nepal enjoys three different regions that correlate with its agricultural activities: the mountains, the hills, and the plain land (Terai).

The mountainous region of Nepal is located in the northern belt of the country with many mountain peaks, some being more than 3000 meters above sea level, making any human activity difficult. Small plots in this area are often used by local farmers, however, due to the steep nature of the terrain, the commercial viability of the agriculture is limited.

The hills of Nepal can be found in the middle belt of the country, with peaks that reach up to 3000 meters above sea level. The valleys in the area are rich with human activities and fertile land and good climatic conditions, which allows all sectors of agriculture to be present there. Most of the farmers in this area use traditional methods of agriculture. Until recently the villages were producing locally most of their consumption.

The Terai is the lower belt of Nepal linked with the Indian border. Big parts of the Terai were resettled in the 1950s and 1960s by citizens from other parts of the country. The area is very fertile with large rivers and wide flat fields, where big commercial farms can be established to produce different agricultural products in large scale.

Until recent years almost 80% of the Nepali population lived in rural areas and were involved in agricultural production. Now a days, this percentage has dropped dramatically due to job opportunities in urban areas and abroad. Salaries for those who find work out of the country may not necessarily be high, however, the income is enough to support their families staying in the villages.

Nepal is not yet fully self-reliant in food production. Though a significant number of people live in rural areas, there is still a need to import basic food ingredients for the local population.

First stage of the program

The training program was introduced in Nepal in 2008 during the last stages of the political unrest the country suffered for almost ten years. 100 Students were selected from agriculture colleges in the country and joined the Israeli training centers in Arava and Ramat Negev. The students had to pay in order to join the program. Many students would often leave the programs, staying as illegal workers in Israel. Following the big numbers of

students that would disappear, the Israeli training centers informed the Embassy in Kathmandu of their decision to withdraw their activities in Nepal and divert their efforts to other countries. The first stage of the program in Nepal ended in 2012. The selected candidate students received a message stating the end of Nepal's participation in the program.

The new operating model of the program

The Embassy of Israel in Nepal approached Sana Kisan Bikas Bank Ltd. (SKBBL) in order to consult the reinstatement of the Nepali participation in the Program for International Trainees in Israel. The Bank was then led by Mr. Jalan Sharma as Chief Executive Officer (CEO). SKBBL is a Wholesale Bank, which is an umbrella organization for 800,000 farmers (78% of them are women) from 69 districts out of 77 districts of Nepal. The Bank is a channel, chosen by the Government of Nepal to assist the small farmers of rural areas with low interest loans to facilitate their investments in agricultural production. When this cooperation was re-established, there were still some challenges for the execution of the program. They were: (1) ensuring a transparent process for students' selection to avoid unnecessary payments, (2) prevent students from staying illegally in Israel at the end of the training program and (3) creating a support system to encourage returning graduates to create joint micro farms of 2-10 students upon their arrival in Nepal.

A new model was finally created with Sana Kisan Bikas Bank, which included the following elements:

- Every student has to deposit ownership certificate of land belonging to his family with the bank. The land is being deposited to ensure the return of all students to Nepal at the end of the program. The bank warned the students and their families that there will be zero tolerance for those who break the rules of the program.
- All students that are allocated to each of the Israeli training centers came from adjacent districts in Nepal. This is done to ensure that the students come from similar backgrounds so they can create joint projects when they return home.

- All participating students must be between the ages of 20-30. Thus the career of students are not fully developed and there are high chances for the students to improve their skills during the one year program.
- Selection process is done under supervision of the Embassy of Israel in Nepal. All candidates are invited together to the selection venue. Lottery will be opened in front of the prospective students and the students selected through the Lottery will appear in the interview done at the same venue. Interviews are conducted by the directors of the Israeli training centers.
- Selected students must produce health fitness certificates from Medical Centers designated by the Embassy of Israel in Nepal.
- The students must submit their "Plus 2" certificate to ensure only students with advanced educational background would join the project. At a later stage, students are required to enroll with an academic college in Nepal in order to be equipped with academic background in agriculture and related subjects so that they can be on the same level with students from other participating countries.
- Knowledge of the English language is a pre-requisite for joining the program as the studies are conducted in English language.

Besides developing the partnership with the bank, a strong working relation was established between the Embassy of Nepal in Israel and the Israeli training centers. This involvement began when the new regulations for the program were put in place. This included visits to the students on the farms site and in the classroom. Close cooperation is maintained between Nepali Ambassador, the Embassies' staff and the program directors. This includes periodic visits to the colleges and participation in graduation ceremonies that are held in the colleges at the end of every school term.

Special program for earthquake effected students

During the devastating earthquake that occurred in April

2015 in Nepal, some students coming from districts that were severely affected by the earthquake requested to prolong their stay in the program. Many of them either lost their homes or were in great need to financially support their families, who that had lost their source of income. As an exception, the request was approved and more than 100 students stayed in Arava for one more year.

Graduates of the program

As of summer 2020, 3000 graduates of this program have already returned to Nepal. There are currently 500 students attending the training in the five colleges in Israel, namely, at Arava - AICAT, Ramat Negev, Kinneret, S'dot Negev and Ashkelon. After spending a year in Israel, many students feel prepared to start their own business or agricultural projects in Nepal. When starting a new project the graduates have a number of advantages:

- The students can use the new skills that they learned in Israel. Their knowledge and experience in modern agriculture allow them to have a concrete vision of the farm that they would like to establish.
- The money, which the students saved in Israel, give them a solid base for starting their new farm.
- SKBBL has a special program to support the returnee graduates with loans at low interest rate in order to start a farm.
- The students that stayed in one college and comes from nearby districts in Nepal, establish partnerships of two or more students. These partnerships allow the students to collect bigger investments for their farms. As of now, the biggest enterprise established under this model is "Arava Nepal Modern Agriculture Company Ltd." in Lamjung. This enterprise includes 100+ graduates of the program, who invested their savings to start the business.

Research by Tel Aviv University

Dr. Ram Fishman and his team, from the Social Science Faculty of Tel Aviv University, conducted a research on the effects of the program on Nepali youth. The research compared students,

who participated in the program with those who did not. The study went in depth about both groups' activities as well as other elements related to the development of their career. The results showed a clear difference between the two groups; the one that went to Israel and the one that were not selected. The students, who joined the program showed higher abilities to improve their social and commercial performance through their careers. The research showed clearly that the year the students spent in this program had a significant positive impact on their future life after they return to Nepal.

Conclusion

The cooperation and partnership between the governments of Israel and Nepal in initiating and supervising this program is an example of fruitful efforts for the development of agriculture in Nepal. While the program is being run and operated mostly by the private and commercial sectors in both countries, the Embassies in Nepal and in Israel as well as other relevant Ministries in both countries work together to ensure the program continues to operate according to the original methods and principles that led to its establishment. So far, more than 3,000 Nepali graduates have enhanced their skills and upgraded their agricultural activities. New system of work in farming has been introduced in Nepal and many commercial partnerships have been established by graduates upon their return to home. The cooperation between 100 alumni of the program in order to establish an agricultural business with their collective investments has brought significant changes in the overall agricultural atmosphere in Nepal.

This program aims to bring the agricultural transformation in Nepal through utilization of skills learned by Nepali graduates in the program and through introduction of the modern agrotechnologies, capital investments, irrigation systems, and marketing techniques that have been proven successful in Israel. All of these changes must be implemented in order to allow Nepal to move forward and change its traditional systems of farming to an updated modern systems.

-Mr. Goder-Goldberger is Ambassador of the State of Israel to Nepal. It is his second term as the ambassador of Israel to Nepal. He was the Israeli Ambassador to Nepal between the years 2011-2014.

(This article was received on 14 June, 2020)

Nepal's Presence in Israel in Early Days



-Gottesman, Adina

The diplomatic relation of Nepal and Israel was established in 1960, since then there was an embassy of Israel in Kathmandu, but there were no relations with India and China. During these days, Israel didn't feel safe but her presence was there in Nepal. Israel waited until China and India pick up the relations with Israel in order to have some Nepali representatives in Israel.

It was the first time the then Prime Minister Mr. Koirala had visited Israel at the invitation of the Prime Minister of Israel in 1993. He came with a big delegation of about 60 people, among them 30-40 people were from chamber of commerce and the head of the chamber of commerce was Mr. Chaudhary. I had invited all the delegation for lunch at my place along with some Israeli Foreign Ministry officials. At that time, there was no ambassador here in Israel, the Nepali ambassador for Israel was based in Cairo, he was Mr. Sharma, very good man. He inquired at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Israel; who could organize the reception here.

Usually, when the Prime Minister visits a country, there should be someone who will officially help and welcome to the delegation. So the Foreign Ministry of Israel asked me if I would be interested to represent Nepal until there will be an embassy. I took a day to think and told them that I am interested to take responsibility for that because I was always attracted to east but I had not been to Nepal till that time but I had read a lot about Nepal. The whole delegation wanted to go down to Dead Sea because it was very interesting for them to see the lowest place on the earth. So, I took them all to Dead Sea and we established some kind of symbol to mark the friendship of Nepal and Israel. We established a block near Ein Bokek which is really the lowest point. I haven't been to that place for a long time but I am sure the symbol is still there.

After a month, I received the Accreditation letter from the government of Nepal. I got permission and authority to issue visas to all the Israelis who wish to go to Nepal. We used to work only with travelling companies. I used to get packet of visas and issue to Israelis. All the money that was collected, I was sending it to Kathmandu to the Foreign Ministry. And, of course, I kept all the receipts. That worked beautifully. I have sent a lot of money earned from visas. The then ambassador Mr. Sharma who was based in Cairo used to come to Israel from Cairo about twice a year because the Nepal government did not have money to open an Embassy in Israel. That's why they opened the Honorary Consulate General in 1993 which I used to be. It worked very nicely. Every year on the king's birthday, I had a very big reception at my place and I invited about 100-150 people, and always speaking about Nepal and very often I had Nepali dance performances presented by the Nepalese community in Israel. I used to invite the commander of the Nepalese Army on the Golan Heights as well. He was the Nepali General Mr. Thapa, I invited him to stand with me to receive all the people/guests in the function.

After few years, the Nepal government asked the Foreign Ministry of Israel to allow them to bring foreign workers from Nepal. At that time, we had foreign workers from Thailand who work in agriculture, there were many people from Philippines who worked in care taking, and Nepali ambassador said that Nepalese

are good at caretaking work and agriculture. We got an okay from the side of Israel to bring Nepali workers. The Nepali workers started to come through manpower companies. There were a lot of mishaps in the beginning, I was not aware of it. We had a big problem. When the foreign workers come to Israel, they come with the specific work with specific visa and for a specific person. If they don't like the person or the work, it can create a problem. Most of the people who came in the first group did not like the work, most of them wanted to do business in Israel. They went from one employer to another. When police found them working for somebody else, they took them to jail. And, when they were in jail, they immediately called me. I was in shock that I had to go to prison. I had never expected to go to a prison, no matter for what. When I went to jail for the first time it was not pleasant to me at all. But, I was obliged. Lawyers started to work for them, things got arranged, the news went to Nepal and they understood that it will not work this way. Even though, they were given a short training for cleaning and taking care of person, given little bit of Hebrew lessons in Nepal, it was a problem because they had different expectations. On top of it, many women and girls didn't speak English because they did not have a lot of schooling. And when they came, they could not adjust because Nepalese are very shy and the Israelis are the opposite. I remember, there was a woman who was taken to hospital because she was not eating. She was not in good shape. It turned out that the lady of the family showed her the fridge; food store and told her that she can take/eat food whenever she wants. But, you know no Nepali girl will ever touch any food until it is given to her. This is why she did not eat well so she lost 14 kilos. Also, the food here is very different from Nepal. Israelis don't eat rice everyday but rice is everything for Nepali people. It was a misunderstanding due to upbringing and way of eating and so on. Anyway we resolved the case and she was taken care by the family after that. It was a problematic until both governments worked on it.

There was a young Israeli couple who could not have children, they went to Nepal as a tourist and they saw all the children there and they saw a child in one of the villages living in poverty. The

couple wished to adopt the child so they spoke to the family. The family agreed, and the child was brought to Israel, she was just 14 months when she was adopted. She is now more than 20 years. I met the girl here for the king's birthday ceremony and at that time she was 18 years old. The Israeli parents took the girl to Nepal to let her meet and see her biological mother and to show the biological mother that the child is well taken care. They came back and the girl went to the army and everything is normal. It happens a lot in Israel; not only from Nepal but also from other many courtiers people bring and adopt children.

Also there was another interesting story. Somebody told me that there is a young dancer in Nepal that dances on her one leg. When she was 7 years old, she was caught on car accident and her one leg was cut off from her body. Since then she has been dancing on her one leg. A doctor from Beit Avinson Staim hospital travels to Nepal every year. He saw her and he wanted to help her because he was an orthopaedic surgeon. So, he asked us if someone can pay for her flight he can examine and do surgery to put prosthetic leg. She wanted to get married and wanted to have a child so she needed the prosthetic leg for the balance. I spoke with a good friend of mine and told her about the girl and she was very generous that she gave us money to bring her here and do the treatment. The rest was taken care by the doctor and the hospital. So, the girl came here with her boyfriend, she was operated here and she started to walk. After the treatment and before she left to Nepal, she danced at our program. I heard that she continued dancing on one leg because it is special. With two legs there are many but with only one leg it was only her, the only one. It was easier to make money like that because she was unique. I was happy that I could help but I am not sure if she was happy or not. But I know that if she wants a baby she needs balance.

A lot people from Nepal come to Israel for the courses provided by the MASHAV. Whenever they finish their course, I had to go there to attend their graduation. I travelled down to the Arava and up north to Haifa for functions. I used to participate in Tihar and Dashain and big festivals of Nepal. It kept me quiet busy.

Once we had Princess Helen's visit here. She came with

princess Jayanti. Princess Jayanti was very interested in Cancer survivors because she had done something similar in Nepal. I had connection with the cancer association of Israel, I invited two important people from the association for dinner at my place so they can talk and share. They had very good discussion. Princess Jayanti learned things from the discussion that she can put together to continue her social work to the cancer survivors in Nepal. They were here for 8-10 DAYS, and I took them around the country in every sites. The daughter of Princes Jayanti was married to the ambassador of London. From here they went to London. Then a year after I went to Nepal and Princess Helen invited me in her residence in Kathmandu. I also went to Pokhara and stayed in their hotel. It was so beautiful. Pokhara is like Switzerland. The lake is so beautiful with crystal clean water. And then I travelled to Chitwan for safari and it was nice to see one horned rhinos.

It was the Visit Nepal Year 1998, there was a big celebration and I had ticket to the opening function. I sat in front of the king and queen. There was a rally with traditional attire and people were colourful. It was unbelievably beautiful. I went to Bhaktapur, Patan, and Kathmandu cities, super interesting country and people are lovely. I heard that you are making Visit Nepal Year 2020. It must be special and I am sure that now it will be organized and more beautiful.

When I was in Nepal for the first time, I had a meeting with the Prime Minister Mr. Koirala. Every time I was there I went to the Foreign Ministry of course. The last time I was in Nepal was for the conference for consuls for Nepal from all over the world. It was during the time of the riots in Kathmandu. I was staying at the Hotel where the conference was taking place. The hotel was built by Japanese, a little bit outside of the Kathmandu. I decided to stay in the same location because I did not want to hassle travelling from place to place. But, most of the people stayed in the centre in Kathmandu and they were brought to the conference in an escorted bus by the army and the security. It was interesting to see and meet other consuls from different countries. There was the consul from Lebanon and he did not want to talk to me. It was not okay because as a consul for Nepal, we all are diplomats and we should not judge

people by their nationality. But the Bangladeshi consul was very interested to hear about Israel.

I travelled to Nepal four times and I loved it each time. I absolutely loved it. I was all the time in Yak and Yeti Hotel, very beautiful hotel. And, it was very nice to work as an honorary consul for Nepal and I had good experience working for and with Nepal. I was honorary consul general for 13 and half years. It was a nice period in my life. It gave a lot to me. It taught me many things about Nepal and many other things. I was very happy when embassy was opened in Israel because it made everything easier. The current ambassador Dr. Shakya is terrific. She does so much more than everybody else because she has the knowledge and she has the charm to win everybody on her side. She is a wonderful representative. Last Friday, she organized an event at her residency called 'Meet My Country Nepal'. We had international women's club and she invited all, there were about 60 people. There were beautiful Nepali dances. She prepared a big buffet for all the participants to let them taste the Nepali cuisine. I can tell you that she does a terrific job.

-Ms. Gottesman is the first Honorary Consul of Nepal from 1993 to 2007. This chapter is based on interview taken by Ms. Desbemar with Ms. Gottesman.

(This article was received on 31 May, 2020)

MASHAV in Nepal: 60 Years of Sharing Knowledge for a Shared Future



- *Haskel, Gil*

Sixty years ago, two courageous leaders, B. P. Koirala, the first elected Prime Minister of Nepal and David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, embarked on a historic path by establishing diplomatic relations between the Ancient Himalayan country of Nepal and the newly born State of Israel with the aim of exploring new avenues for cooperation and friendship.

Since then, the two countries have expanded and strengthened their bilateral relations in many fields of mutual interest, including exchange of knowledge and best practices for human capacity building within the framework of MASHAV's international development cooperation program.

MASHAV - Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation—one of the oldest international development cooperation agencies in the world, was established in 1958, only a decade after Israel's own independence.

MASHAV shares the State of Israel's global responsibility of

striving to achieve worldwide sustainable development and social equity. Based on the Jewish principle of *Tikun Olam* (Repairing the World) the guiding spirit behind MASHAV in its development work is a profound belief in our *ability* and our *duty* to share our accumulated knowledge and experience for the improvement and betterment of others.

We are very familiar with the challenges of development, as we, ourselves, made the transition from a developing country into a modern success story. This particular experience of nation building is the unique ingredient that MASHAV brings to its work in the field of sustainable development.

The Israeli experience of extremely rapid development taught us that solutions to these challenges lie, primarily, in the human resource. To that end and since its inception, MASHAV has focused its many development activities on human capacity building based on the 'training of trainers' approach, and placing people at the heart of its activity.

Based on the belief that human development should be unconditional, MASHAV has trained, up to date, close to 300,000 professionals from over 140 countries across the globe, some of whom have limited or no diplomatic relations with Israel. MASHAV has been, and continues to be, a manifestation of Israel's diplomatic and foreign policy approach of bringing Israeli goodwill to every human being in need, regardless of nationality, religion, race, age, gender or distance.

MASHAV capacity building activities are implemented both in Israel and in Nepal through bilateral and multilateral development cooperation programs, mainly in the fields of agriculture and rural development, early childhood education and health.

It is a great pleasure to mention just a few examples of MASHAV's cooperation with Nepal.

Agriculture and rural development

Recognizing the importance of the agricultural sector of both countries and in line with their national agricultural policies and development programs, Israel and Nepal agreed to develop, promote and expand agricultural cooperation between the two countries. The main field of cooperation within this framework,

includes capacity building and transfer of technologies and knowhow; development of extension and R&D systems; transfer of species of crops and genetic resources; enhance diversification and intensification of agricultural production (with emphasis on livestock and horticulture); water management and innovative irrigation technologies, rural development; and land conservation and precision agricultural practices.

MASHAV, the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) and Nepal signed a cooperation agreement in the field of Water Management to work together to advance the training of professionals in the areas of water management, water and health, irrigation systems and drinking water systems.

MASHAV-ADBL Nepal's Agricultural Development Bank Limited, agreed to establish a basis of cooperation to enhance institutional efficiency and human resources development to support small and medium rural entrepreneurs and ensure financial viability and sustainability, as well as sharing knowhow and expertise in the fields of small & medium enterprises development.

'Learn and Earn' program – A joint project between Sana Kishan Bikash Bank Limited, host colleges in Israel, Kathmandu University and the Embassy of Israel in Nepal. Within this framework, agricultural students arrive in Israel for a yearlong training that includes lectures and practical experience. Upon completion they return to their communities and contribute towards sustainable agricultural growth through knowledge based agricultural systems. So far, over 2,000 students have taken part in the project.

Demonstration farm- MASHAV, together with the Embassy of Israel in Nepal, and the non-profit Israeli organization Tevelb'Tzedek, built an agricultural demonstration farm in Mahadev Besi village, in the Kathmandu Valley. The farm includes drip irrigation systems made by Israeli companies, a fishpond, greenhouses for growing vegetables, a vegetable garden, and demonstration of different composting methods to raise awareness about the use of chemical fertilizers. Agricultural training programs take place on the farm once a month. Farmers from the villages in the area participate in these trainings regularly.

Early childhood education

MASHAV, in cooperation with **UNESCO**, **UNICEF** and **Save the Children**, signed in 2010 a cooperation agreement with the Government of Nepal, in the field of Early Childhood Development (ECD), establishing a framework for supporting implementation of ECD programs within Nepal's School Sector Reform Plan.

Cooperation with 'Seto Gurans' National Child Development Services - In the late 1970s, Agatha Thapa, founded this unique organization following her participation in an eight-month course on Early Childhood Education held at MASHAV's Carmel Training Center in Haifa, Israel. Cooperation includes capacity building programs and study tours. Seto Gurans, one of the first organizations to bring Early Childhood Development (ECD) to rural Nepal, envisions a country in which the rights of all children are ensured and where all children receive quality opportunities for learning and developing their full potential to become contributing members in the future for the positive transformation of the society and the nation.

Health

MASHAV-Dhulikhel hospital Kathmandu – An agreement was signed between the parties to enhance institutional efficiency and human resources development to render better healthcare through outreach centre to rural areas. Moreover, this exchange of knowledge will support the hospital's goal to develop as a research centre of excellence on innovative approaches to health care.

Within this framework, Israeli experts conducted a comprehensive workshop in the field of responding to medical emergencies and trauma care, jointly organized by MASHAV, the Israeli Embassy in Nepal and Dhulikhel Hospital. The 30 participants were professionals from several medical fields including surgeons, anaesthesiologists, emergency physicians, general medical doctors, nurses, paramedic staffs and community health personal.

Developing and organizing a trauma system – Nepalese doctors arrive yearly to Israel to take part in MASHAV's professional

course on “Developing and Organizing a Trauma System and Organization of Mass Casualty Situations,” organized by Rambam Hospital Teaching Center. In 2015, three Nepalese doctors were in Israel at the time of the earthquake that hit their country at the end of April. MASHAV and Rambam Teaching Centre provided the doctors with additional training to deal with the severe situation prevailing in Nepal.

Humanitarian assistance – MASHAV is the body responsible for coordinating the State of Israel’s official humanitarian assistance program. Drawing on Israel’s vast experience in crisis response and field medicine, we rapidly organize and dispatch much needed supplies, medicines and urgent medical assistance. Following the devastating earthquake which hit Nepal in April 2015, Israel provided immediate response dispatching a 281-member disaster team of Israel’s Defense Forces, including Israel’s top specialists for traumatic injuries, and setting up a field hospital near Kathmandu equipped with x-rays, laboratories and operating rooms, with the ability to receive and provide care for around 200 patients a day.

Following the immediate response, I held a meeting in Jerusalem with relevant stakeholders to discuss the second stage of Israeli aid to Nepal focusing on long-term assistance. Later on, I participated in the International Conference on Nepal’s Reconstruction (ICNR) in Kathmandu. During the Conference under the theme: “Towards a Resilient Nepal”, I pledged, on behalf of MASHAV, the State of Israel’s commitment to contribute to Nepal’s rebuilding efforts.

Thematic Delegations – MASHAV is always honored to host professional delegations from Nepal, as in the case of representatives from Kathmandu University, who examined possible cooperation in the areas of agricultural engineering, emergency medicine and renewable energy. The intensive tailor-made program included meetings with MASHAV, as well as with representatives from several Israeli universities; leading medical institutions, and agricultural researchers and entrepreneurs.

Shalom clubs

MASHAV keeps in touch with its graduates through a worldwide network of ‘Shalom Clubs’. Established by the alumni in their respective countries, in partnership with the local Israeli diplomatic representation, the clubs serve as a forum to take part in professional, social and cultural events and to exchange ideas and expertise for the benefit their communities. The Shalom Club in Nepal is, undoubtedly, one of the most active and committed around the globe. Here are a few examples of their activities:

The Embassy of Israel in Nepal together with members of the Shalom Club marked the ‘Good Deeds Day’ spending a day painting and decorating the walls of the Kanti Children’s Hospital, in Kathmandu. The Embassy maintains a close relationship with the hospital and regularly donates medicines, books, toys and games especially shipped from Israel.

The children of Kathmandu’s orphanage enjoyed an action packed day organized by the Embassy of Israel and the Shalom Club under the auspices of MASHAV. Activities included wall climbing at Kathmandu’s Climbing Centre.

The Embassy of Israel and the Shalom Club members donated a fully equipped playroom to Shanti Shikshya School. Later on, they joined the children to renovate and decorate the premises.

‘Sharing and Learning’ was the name of a recent workshop organized by the Embassy of Israel for teachers from Shivapuri Secondary School facilitated by three MASHAV graduates who shared educational tools and methods they acquired in Israel.

Looking back, moving forward

From this partial overview, one can see how MASHAV’s cooperation activities in Nepal continue to honor the commitment made by our inspiring leaders sixty years ago. Their vision provided us with goals, targets and direction, motivating us to take action to partner for a better world.

Up to date, over 3,500 Nepali professionals have participated in MASHAV capacity building programs both in Israel and in Nepal. During their training, they have had the opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas from different perspectives as well as learn

best practices, programs and methodologies.

In recent years, MASHAV had intensified programs that synthesize innovation and entrepreneurship from both the public and the private sectors, while attempting to present an achievable method of implementing a supportive and sustainable environment for development. We continue to advocate that a successful collaboration of governments, private sector and civil society would allow an enabling environment for change.

In the words of David Ben-Gurion: "*...The principles of mutual assistance and equality should also constitute the basis for international relations between people... [and] must be based on the solidarity of all human beings, derived from fraternity and mutual assistance in every sphere of life...*" Looking back at the past 60 years of Israel-Nepal relations, while moving forward towards the next sixty years, I would like to reaffirm MASHAV's commitment to continue sharing our knowledge and expertise, inspiring and supporting fellow nations, communities and individuals in joining hands so we can, together, bring change, hope and opportunity to all.

-Mr. Haskeel served as Head of MASHAV - Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

(This article was received on 14 June, 2020)

Role of Nepal Army in Peacekeeping in the Middle East



-Karki, Col. Santosh

Introduction

Nepal is one of the oldest countries in South Asia, situated between China and India. Centuries old traditions are part of everyday life in Nepal. There have been mention of Nepal in the ancient texts; however, the proper documented history of Nepal only starts from 464 C. E. The modern Nepal was established in 1767. Since then, it has become a common habitat for more than a hundred ethnic groups. Likewise, in its small geographic area, the altitude varies from 59 meter to 8,848 meters (Mt Everest).

In such a varied and diverse nation, the Nepali Army has been carrying out the task of protecting sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, it performs various other tasks like nature conservation, rescue and relief during disaster, providing security assistance to the government and most importantly contribution in Peace-keeping missions across the globe. General Purna Chandra Thapa is the present Chief of the Army Staff of the Nepali Army.

Nepal in the UN & peace keeping missions

Nepal has been an active member of the United Nations since 14 Dec 1955. From 1958, the Nepali Army had started to deploy troops for Peace Keeping Missions. Nepal's journey of peace keeping began with the deployment of five military observers to Lebanon as part of the United Nations Observer Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL). The first Nepali Contingent was, however, deployed in 1974 in Egypt. In six decades since then, the Nepali peacekeepers have served in 43 different peacekeeping missions. By now more than 127,390 personnel from Nepali Army have served in these peacekeeping missions, out of which 65 personnel have been martyred and 66 suffered disabling injuries. At present, 5,124 Nepali peacekeepers are serving in 14 different missions around the world. This has made Nepal, the fourth largest troops contributing country to the United Nations.

Nepali Army in peace keeping missions in the Middle East

The Nepali peacekeepers have been deployed to Middle East to carry out tasks such as to prevent the escalation of the situation, monitor AOS & AOL, and conduct independent tasking conforming to the mission priorities in Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Iraq and Yemen under various missions and appointments. They have been conducting regular escort duties, convoy protection tasks, VIP escorts, camp security, joint patrols and various other assistance mission in these nations.

As mentioned earlier, the Nepali Army started deploying its troops for peace keeping operations from 1958. The first contingent to be deployed was Purano Gorakh Battalion in 1974 in Sinai as a part of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II). Then, in 1978, a contingent was deployed in Lebanon as part of UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon). Lt Gen Krishna Narayan Singh Thapa (Retd.) became the first Nepali Officer to serve as the Force Commander in UNIKOM (United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission), Iraq-Kuwait. After that, Nepali Staff and Observers were deployed as part of UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization) in 1992 in the Golan Region. The Nepali troops had also participated in the United Nations Guards

Contingent in Iraq (UNGCI) in 1995.

In 2004, another Nepali Officer, Lt Gen Balananda Sharma (Retd.) became the Head of the Mission/Force Commander of UNDOF, Syria. The Nepalese troops were called back to Lebanon in 2006. Since then, a contingent of 873 troops and Staff Officers have been serving as part of UNIFIL till date. When the security situation in Iraq had worsened, the Nepali Army readily offered to assist in the steps taken by the United Nations for establishing peace. From 2008, 77 personnel from the Nepali Army have been serving under United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Furthermore, when the conflict escalated in Syria, Nepali Army had sent staff officers to Syria in 2012 under the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS).

Since July 2013, Nepali contingents have been part of UNDOF. In 2015/16, the present COAS of the Nepali Army General Purna Chandra Thapa had served as the Head of the Mission/Force Commander of UNDOF. NEPCON (FHQ Support Company) was the first troop of Nepali Army to be deployed in the Golan Heights. The NEPENGRs platoon and the Nepali Mechanized Infantry Company followed in 2016 & 2017 respectively. Similarly, in 2019 Nepali medical team took over the Level 1+ Hospital at UNDOF HQ, Camp Faouar. In 2019, Maj Gen Shivaram Kharel (Retd.) temporarily served as the acting Head of the Mission/Force Commander for about four months. The present Head of the Mission/Force Commander, Lt Gen Ishwar Hamal is also from the Nepali Army. With the strength of more than 350 personnel, makes Nepal the largest troop contributing country for UNDOF.

The loyalty, bravery and commitment of the Nepali forces could be explained just by few mentionable examples. When UN positions in Mt Hermon were vacated in 2013, Nepali troops from Lebanon volunteered and deployed to secure these positions. Another mentionable occasion is that of 2015, when only the Nepali Company remained deployed in B-Side at Mt Hermon while rest of the forces had withdrawn to the A-Side when the security situation had worsened. Moreover, the Nepali troops have been serving in the UN position at the highest altitude in the world

i. e, Mt Hermon. These acts have not only proven the reliability of the Nepali troops but have also contributed in maintaining the credibility of the UN.

After the escalation of conflict, many of the UN positions were overrun by the rebel forces and were turned into ruins. Now, UNDOF has started the reoccupation of these positions and here also the Nepali troops have taken the lead by becoming first to deploy their troops for the reoccupation of the positions.

Conclusion

The journey of Peace Keeping Operations for the Nepali Army began by deploying its troops in the Middle East. Since the very first deployment, Nepali troops have demonstrated unparalleled valor, been one of the most trusted forces and have been the excellent ambassadors for peace in the Middle East. The growing number of Nepali peacekeepers in the Middle East is also a testimony of the significant contribution by the Nepali peacekeepers in maintaining peaceful environment in the Middle East. Till date Nepali Army has proven true to the confidence of the UN over Nepali peacekeepers by providing disciplined and efficient soldiers. The Nepali forces with a glorious history have rightfully deserved and earned the trust and confidence of the people wherever they have served. The Nepali Army always remains committed to fulfill the noble aim of peace keeping.

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- Mr. Karki is Colonel of Nepal Army who has served in a number of UN Peace Keeping Missions.

(This article was received on 2 September, 2020)

Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd. and Its Collaboration with Israel in the Field of Agriculture



- Koirala, Dr Shiva Ram Prasad

The Context

Needless to mention, there are countless development potentials in Nepal. However, Nepal is under developing country with very glorious picturesque from different angles. The government has set a goal of graduating from least developed to developing country by 2022 simultaneously achieving the target of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Nepal entangled in poverty, hunger and social backwardness for decades. The constant effort, to reduce multi-dimensional poverty and create environment for decent living of the majority small/marginalized farmers and deprived populace, is failing to bring desired result. To this, existing rural socio-economic structure needs transformation.

Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd (SKBBL): A premier micro finance institution

The role of Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) in socio-

economic transformation and improvement in quality of life of the rural poor seems instrumental. SKBBL incorporated in 2001 under the company Act and licensed under the Banks and Financial Institutions Act (BAFIA) has been a premier wholesale lending financial institution in the country. SKBBL not only provides wholesale credit to its partner Small farmer Agriculture Cooperatives (SFACLs) to further relend the same to poor marginalized farmers and deprived communities but also helps build the capacity of member farmers to be economically self-reliant. The whole activities of SKBBL are focused towards “No one should be left behind from access to finance” apart from providing technical know-how and skills to SFACL’s member farmers in order to make farming efficient and sustainable. It has been effortful to change the landscape of Nepali agriculture through commercialization and value chain development together with promoting agricultural entrepreneurship.

With the outreach expansion in 400 plus local municipalities of 70 districts through more than 900 partner cooperatives, catering more than 800 thousand members (women members 78 percent), SKBBL is committed to extend support to the government to materialize the dream of generating prosperity and happiness in Nepal.

Agriculture landscape in Nepal

Agriculture sector employing 66 percent of the total population and providing 27.60 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) needs to be developed in such a way that it could transform the economy of the country. Traditional and subsistence farming, with low productivity of both land and labour, practiced from time immemorial has been the identity of ancient Nepal. The shift therefore from subsistence to commercial farming is the need of the day to ensure food sovereignty and to get rid of food grain imports contributing to escalation of trade deficit of the country. Since agriculture is a science, its development is possible through the use of improved inputs, technology, research and innovation, knowledge and skills among others. Involvement of educated or skilled people especially the youth in this sector is therefore a must.

Ironically, agriculture which supplies food, the basic necessities of life has an image problem especially amongst the educated youth. It is not looked at as a viable sector of employment and remains highly unattractive to them due to the risks, intensive nature, low profitability and little room for career advancement. Current agricultural practices, therefore, are neither economically profitable nor environmentally sustainable. In order to match the increasing demand of food grains and that too the nutritious food to the ever-increasing population skewed to the urban area, enhancement of agricultural outputs and productivity is sine qua status quo non to ensure food sovereignty, sustainable industrial development, creation of employment and poverty reduction. Achieving this would require critical understanding of the challenges faced by the youth at the production node of the agricultural value chain and the prospects of youth engagement in agriculture. Empowering youth to tackle climate change and adopt climate smart techniques in agriculture is essential for future food security and above all to retain youth in the homeland preventing them to go abroad in search of even life-threatening jobs.

Israeli agriculture practices: A bird's eye view

Israel is the world leader in agricultural technology, research and development. Israel is a major exporter of fresh produce despite the fact that the geography of the country is not naturally conducive to agriculture. More than half of the land area is desert, and the climate and lack of water resources do not favour farming. Israeli agro-technology, from irrigation and efficient water management to fertilization techniques and genetically improved seeds and livestock, has dramatically improved local yields, and could go a long way towards feeding a hungry world. So, it's the best destination to learn agro -skills.

Most of Israel's agriculture is organized on cooperative principles, which evolved in the country during the first decades of the 20th century. Motivated by both ideology and circumstances, the early pioneers set up two unique forms of agricultural settlements: the kibbutz, a collective community in which the means of production are communally owned and income is equally

distributed; and the moshav, a co-operative village where each family maintains its own household and works its own land, while purchasing and marketing are conducted cooperatively. In recent years both systems have undergone vast ideological and structural changes, though they still account for the lion's share of productive crop-growing area.

Learn and Earn program: A milestone

Considering that wide spread poverty can be rooted out and rural economy can be transformed only through improved agriculture practices, SKBBL in 2013 conceived the idea that Nepali youth from small farmer families should be provided with the opportunity to go to Israel from where they could learn modern agriculture practices because Israeli agriculture is an amazing thing. It is not an easy task to farm in Israel being that it is mainly desert land. But Israel has made the desert bloom adopting farming technologies. They have not only helped themselves; the whole world is really benefitting from Israeli innovation and technology.

Since last seven years, young students are going to Israel to participate in 11 months long agriculture training program called 'Learn and Earn' in collaboration with the Israel government and with the support of Nepal government and the Israel embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal. The students study in college once a week and do practical work for 5 days for which they are remunerated. They save quite some amount of money during their stay in Israel and bring it back when they return to their homeland. The attraction of this program is that students learn about the modern Israeli agriculture system, innovation and know how among others.

At a time when one of the big challenges of government of Nepal is to improve the quality and quantity of its agriculture products, this program provides the much-needed exposure and skills to Nepalese farmers to grow more. If two percent of population in Israel produce enough food for Israel and even export despite adversity of land, water and other basic necessities for agriculture, it is most likely that Nepal can also do by improving agriculture through optimum utilization of adequate fertile land, perennial source of water and favorable climate for agriculture.

What we need is good partners and one of them of course is Israel with its knowhow for efficient agriculture system. Not all of them who have come back from Israel are necessarily adopting farming as their profession. It is assumed that around 40 percent of the Israel returnee students are engaged in commercial farming or livestock rearing using the Israeli know-how and experience. By now, 2700 students have already come back and 480 students have recently gone to Israel to pursue the training. If this trend of sending students continue, this will certainly make a great difference in upcoming days.

Considering that Nepal is going through a youth bulge with close to 20.8 percent of total population within the age group 16-25 years while 40.68 percent in the age group 16-40 years, there is urgent need to think of availing youth bulge creating environment to utilize their skill and talents in agriculture field. The burgeoning youth should be seen as assets for transforming Nepali agriculture because they possess unique capabilities like dynamism, strength, adventure and ambition etc. Since, youth represent the most active segment of the population and the engine, this group of young population is sure to contribute to the economic development of the country if provided with proper learning and work opportunity. Nepal has to invest in education, skills development, empowerment and employment to get benefitted from the demographic dividend. Only the young people can transform the agriculture sector by applying new technologies and new thinking. If agriculture is made more remunerative and rewarding in terms of income and profitability, the youth would indeed be attracted to the sector.

Youth's limited access in land, lack of value addition to agriculture, limited access to finance, market, information, knowledge and skills, and most importantly their non-involvement in policy dialogues are some of the major challenges that restrict youth involvement in agriculture.

In this backdrop, transformation of agriculture remains a wishful thinking unless youth centered policies and plans are in place. Youth land rights along with land lease and rental to facilitate youth access to land, provision of youth venture capital fund or challenge fund to support start-up capital, establishment of agri-business

incubation center, youth enterprise loan, enterprise development support, distance learning for young farmers, development of ICT based agricultural solutions, involvement of youth in drafting of agriculture related policies and laws could be the ways to induce young people in agriculture. Moreover, communicating the youth that agriculture is an industry either on a small scale or large scale is ever productive, and that the agriculture sector offers huge potential for job creation can radically change their image of agriculture.

Agricultural and vocational training are critical so as to equip the youth with requisite skills and overall sensitization on agricultural technologies. Establishment and strengthening networks of youth involved in food and agriculture, distance learning for young farmers to enhance their knowledge and skills could be other likely steps to attract and retain the youth in agriculture.

Without making any delay, let us learn from Israel, a country of desert where involvement of very small population in agriculture feeds not only its entire populace but also exports food grains to other countries. Adoption of new technology, knowledge and research-based production system, economies of scale in big plots of land, promotion of value chain activities, involvement of educated people in agriculture industry, has resulted in increased agriculture output and productivity.

With the conviction that Nepali youth have the potential to transform the agriculture sector if provided with learning and work opportunity. The government's plan to double the agriculture production in five years can take its real shape only if unique capabilities of youth can be utilized in transformation of agriculture sector. To this, initiation of SKBBL, inter alia, to send the youth in Israel to learn modern agriculture technologies, needs further policy as well as financial support which could be instrumental to attract and retain the youth in agriculture enterprises.

If the current constraints faced by the youth in agriculture are not addressed, the notion of youth being future farmers might be a myth. However, with the targeted intervention, the youth can still be at the forefront of revitalizing the agricultural sector and the sector could be a potential source of gainful employment for the vast unemployed and underemployed Nepali youth.

Conclusion

Agriculture development in Nepal is very important to provide daily needs to the people, increase exports, cut down imports, solve the problem of unemployment and provide raw materials to some industries. SKBBL's only agenda is to help the farmers of Nepal. This "Learn and Earn" program is very important for Nepal to retain youths in the country by engaging them in agriculture profession. Israeli Government's constant support to this program by allowing adequate quota for Nepali small farmer youth of course has added a new dimension in Israel-Nepal relationship of six decades long. This program is of paramount importance in the sense that it has been able to engage at least one thousand youth so far in commercial agriculture, who otherwise could opt to go to the gulf countries in search of even hazardous jobs. The program has been very much effective in terms of agricultural transformation, rural employment creation, productivity enhancement of both land and labor thereby boosting the rural economic growth. As a flagship program for the nation too, it needs continuation despite some obstacles surfacing during implementation of this program. The constant cooperation and mutual support among the Nepal government, Israel government and SKBBL is the prerequisite in order to make this program sustainable and fruitful.

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(This article was received on 23 November, 2019)

Israeli Tourism in Nepal: A Perfect Match



- *Ladelsky, Roy*

Israeli tourists love to travel and discover new locations. They also love to meet new people, experience new foods and flavors and are obsessed with conquering the highest peaks and most demanding trails. For that reason, it is hardly surprising to learn that Nepal has become an increasingly popular travel destination for Israeli tourists. After all, Nepal is not only one of the most stunningly beautiful locations in the world, it is also one of the most culturally-rich countries you could travel to, offering countless opportunities for new and exciting adventures across high-ranging mountains and ancient temples. It's these treasures that attract both older and younger travelers all the way from the Middle East to the Rooftop of the World. This is evident by the impressive growth in Israeli tourism to Nepal in recent years which was just recently celebrated by the Nepalese embassy in Israel alongside prominent Israeli leaders and public figures.

Looking towards the future, one may wonder what can be

done to further promote Israeli tourism in Nepal across all ages. I believe that focusing on attractive geography, leisure activities, and historical locations is the key to attracting more travelers from Israel. From my experience, the following list includes some of the most important features Nepal can offer Israeli tourists to further increase tourism.

Natural resources

The Israeli tourist, regardless of age, loves to experience natural beauty in its purest form. It has even become a tradition for young Israelis to travel during their early 20s and to witness such beauty, particularly in South Asia and South-East Asia. This tradition continues to live on with Israelis as they grow older, perhaps explaining the age diversity seen among many Israeli travelers.

Nepal is especially attractive to Israeli travelers due to its impressive natural resources and unique geography. Known as the “roof of the world”, Nepal is home to 10 of the 14 highest mountains in the world, including the famous Mount Everest. The trek to the Everest Base Camp is one of the most well-known hikes across the globe, and many Israeli hikers are anxiously waiting for their opportunity to try it. The significant differences in altitude across Nepal’s different regions also produce a stunning variety of locations, plants, and animal life for Israelis to discover and experience. The Annapurna Circuit is another well-known region favored by many Israelis, offering what many consider to be the best hiking treks in the entire world, especially when you consider the outstanding beauty of the Himalayan region.

Nepal is also home to over 200 stunning lakes which serve as a major tourist attraction across the entire country. In particular, the Gokyo lake system, which includes several lakes, is a perfect example of the type of experience that the Israeli tourists would greatly appreciate: A walk in the area offers you the opportunity to gaze upon picturesque vistas filled with stunning beauty and vibrant colors. Furthermore, it offers a glimpse of the majestic Mount Everest as well as Ngozumpa Glacier, the largest in Nepal.

Nepal is also well known for its wide range of activities

available to tourists. All across Nepal, Israeli travelers are highly engaged in adventurous, or “extreme” activities, such as rafting, mountain biking, bungee jumping, paragliding, and even enjoying a ride aboard a hot air balloon. The Chitwan and Bardia national parks are an Israeli favorite, especially for their wildlife safari experience. The ability to track down and see crocodiles, rhinos, deer, and even Bengal Tigers is very attractive to the Israeli travelers. These activities are key to attracting more Israeli travelers who greatly appreciate the wonder and adventure of exploring Nepal’s magical wilderness in a fun and exciting way. In fact, many young Israeli backpackers, fresh out of military service and eager to learn more about the world, travel to Nepal specifically for this reason. This is a very important factor for Israelis of all ages in their determination of where to travel next.

Culture

Nepal is home to a rich and impressive history, offering travelers an opportunity to explore ancient temples, historic ruins, and even Buddha’s birthplace, which can be found at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lumbini. All across Nepal, travelers can explore amazing historical centers and locales to learn about the rich and diverse culture of the country. The cultural hub of Kathmandu, Nepal’s capital, is often mentioned by many Israelis who fell in love with the sights, sounds, and smells of the busy city. In particular, the possibility of exploring the city’s ancient squares, gardens, courtyards, and temples, makes Kathmandu the first stop for Israeli travelers who want to get to know Nepal’s culture and people.

Israeli travelers are also very interested in learning about the religion and spirituality of their travel destinations. This is one area where Nepal has much to offer, especially as the home to the Buddha’s birthplace in Lumbini. However, there are many more locations that are very attractive to Israeli travelers, such as the Boudhanath Stupa in Kathmandu. As the holiest of Tibetan shrines in the region, the Boudhanath Stupa offers its visitors the chance to see outstanding artwork, craftsmanship, and beauty.

The rich cultural diversity of Nepal is another major

attraction to travelers. In particular, Israelis feel right at home amongst the different religions that are practiced in Nepal. While Hinduism is the main religion practiced by Nepal's population, the ability to travel to a different area and meet other religions and customs, such as Kiratism, Islam, and Christianity, is a great way to entice and excite the Israeli travelers. In my experience, Israelis are always happy to explore a small and hidden village just for the possibility of learning about new customs, traditions, and beliefs they have never seen or met before.

The cultural richness of Nepal also means that a traveler can experience an impressive diversity of foods and drinks around the country. Israeli travelers are known to adore such opportunities to experience new tastes and flavors, giving Nepal a major appeal in this regard. Luckily, major cities in Nepal are home to a wide range of foods from all over the world, ensuring that everyone will find an opportunity to try something new.

In this case, Israeli travelers are very fond of guided tours as a way to learn about the location quickly without missing anything important. Incorporating such activities as part of a hotel reservation is a great way to excite Israeli travelers and ensure that they enjoy their stay.

Leisure

Israeli travelers often plan their travels in a way that allows them to enjoy both adventure and leisure. A typical travel itinerary would include several days of travel and activities, followed by several days of rest and leisure. Nepal's resorts and hotels already have a positive reputation among Israelis, and I believe that this trend will continue. At resorts, Israeli travelers are looking to relax and enjoy the beauty, high-quality food, and drinks, as well as good service. In many cases, Israelis will travel with their families, including children. In this regard, Nepalese resorts would be wise to capitalize on such opportunities with special offers, family-friendly activities, and advertisement. In particular, Israeli tourists are known to be interested in all-inclusive deals, allowing them to sit back and relax without worrying about the small details throughout their stay.

Shopping and nightlife

Israeli travelers are very excited for an opportunity to explore the shopping and nightlife. In this regard, Kathmandu is an outstanding destination in Nepal thanks to its exciting Thamel area. Here, travelers will enjoy a buzzing and visitor-friendly section of the city filled with live music, delicious food, bustling cafes, and parties during the later hours of the night. The area is also completely covered by a Wi-Fi network to offer tourists even more comfort and value. The Thamel area is filled with narrow alleyways, shops, and vendors. Here, tourists will find a wide variety of products, including travel gear, entertainment, clothing, and hand-crafted souvenirs. Thamel is also a great place to find the famous Kashmiri carpets and beautiful jewelry. Businesses operating in this area would benefit greatly from attracting more Israeli travelers by emphasizing the fun and entertainment that can be enjoyed in this area. Remember that the Israeli traveler is often on a strict budget, so be sure to offer tangible value.

Climate

Nepal resides in both the southern and northern hemispheres, making the climate and seasons quite different when compared to Israel. Excluding the summer months, which are known to be rainy, Nepal's climate is a major attraction for Israelis, particularly during the cold winter months when there is significantly less rain. For this reason, the months of October through December are the busiest for Israeli travelers in Nepal.

Nepal's major altitude differences between its different regions are one of the reasons why nature and wildlife are so diverse. This is one of the main aspects of Nepal that attract Israeli travelers, especially younger backpackers. Older travelers will also greatly appreciate the bird-watching activities afforded by this natural diversity.

Safety

Above all else, Israeli tourists appreciate their safety while traveling abroad. Thankfully, Nepal is considered generally safe for travelers, and emphasizing this point to your Israeli guests is

a great way to make sure they feel welcome and enjoy their stay to a greater degree. Nepal's low crime rate is a major attraction for Israeli travelers, making this an important aspect to promote. However, in areas prone to pick-pocketing or bag snatching, be sure to offer your Israeli guests a fair warning to keep an eye over their belongings. It is also important to point out to your Israeli guests whether they may be engaging in an unsafe activity or are about to travel through an area prone to avalanches, landslides, or other safety risks.

A final word

When considering Nepal's great offerings as a travel destination, there's little reason to be surprised at the rate at which Israeli tourism grew over the last several years. Together, the highest mountains in the world, the vast natural resources, wilderness, and rich cultural diversity make Nepal a perfect match for the preferences of the Israeli traveler. The images, sounds, and smells of Nepal's wild beauty are exactly what Israeli tourists seek, amongst younger and older travelers alike. A word of advice - When Israelis choose their next travel destination, they will often rely upon the past experiences of other Israelis who have already traveled to the area. The best way to ensure the continued growth of Israeli tourism in Nepal is to make sure that Israeli travelers enjoy the wonders offered by Nepal's magical nature and culture.

-Mr. Ladelsky is the COO and co-founder of Kavaden, a pioneering software development company with a mission to introduce more international businesses to Nepal's exceptionally talented engineers and developers. Previously, Roey served as VP of Sales and Business Development at Tsunami, a leading provider and pioneer in the data and content migration field that has chosen Nepal as the base of operations for its development team. Over the last 11 years, Roey has spent much of his time in Nepal managing complex and advanced high tech operations. But this time also allowed him to discover and fall in love with Nepal's beauty as a traveler. He has quickly learned that Nepal offers more than talent – it offers exceptional beauty and serenity. If you'll ask Roey, it's no mistake that Nepal is becoming one of the most attractive destinations

for Israeli travelers. Its thanks to a unique combination of factors, including geography, travel, culture and history, attractions, and shopping. Together, these advantages make Nepal a very special destination that could easily attract more Israeli tourism.

(This article was received on 30 August, 2020)

The Nepal Earthquake: A Personal Reflection



-Mayer, Neichu

My husband, Yaron Mayer served as Ambassador of Israel to Nepal from August 2014 to August 2017. During that period, I worked with the Joint United Nations HIV/AIDS programme (UNAIDS, Nepal) as Partnership Coordinator. This paper is my personal reflections on the experience of the 2015 Nepal earthquake.

25 April 2015, Saturday was a typical day, until 11:56 am. Saturdays were always our favorite day of the week—there are no staffs in the house; we don't organize events, nor do we plan much activity for ourselves. We wake up in leisure and usually have a late breakfast. For our one and a half-year-old son it's a pancake day, out in the terrace with just mum and dad. That particular day was also ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) day, and like every year, the embassies of Australia and New Zealand organized an event at dawn to remember the members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps who served in the First World War. My husband went to that ceremony, and when he came back, we were

still asleep. As he entered the room, I woke up in distress saying, "Oh, I had such a bad dream, something horrible might happen today'. He cuddled me and said, 'thank God it's only a dream'.

When the earthquake struck at 11:56 am, our little one was having his morning snooze in his cradle. His father was reading in our bed next to him, and I was busy organizing something in the corridor. To this day, I cannot imagine what if we were all in different parts of the enormous house we live in. Everything was moving, and it felt like a big storm was coming. From the window, I saw huge chunks of earth falling off the mountain. The whole thing lasted only about 50 seconds, but it felt like forever. My husband grabbed the sleeping baby, and we both tried to run out of our room holding each other. But the shaking was so strong we couldn't move. We clung on to a pillar by the stairs and waited. Everything around us was falling and breaking. 'What is it?' I screamed. 'It's the earthquake', he said.

As soon as the shaking stopped, our security guys came rushing into the house to look for us. They were as shaken as we were, but they seemed relieved to have found us together and alive. Apparently, from the outside, the house looked as if it was about to collapse as it moved from end to end like a jelly. Later I learned that earthquake-safety homes tend to shake much more than those that are built without earthquake consideration. Many buildings around us fell to the ground, and many people in our neighbourhood died in those few seconds. Thousands died in the whole of Nepal.

The experience of the actual earthquake was instant and dramatic that I don't quite remember how scary it was. But the constant aftershocks left me shaken and traumatized to this day. They said that there were over 100 aftershocks in less than 24 hours. Each aftershock felt like another earthquake and always seemed worse than the previous one. And it kept happening for a whole year.

Within two hours after the earthquake we were in the Embassy, contacting and organizing all the Israelis in Nepal and checking to see if everyone we knew in Kathmandu were ok. Life, we realized, was never going to be the same again.

The earthquake brought in the rains within minutes. It was

dangerous to go inside any building, and it was cold and wet to be outside. Oh, it was dreadful. Earthquake in Nepal was expected. The Embassy had kept emergency supplies, including tents, medical kits, and foods for such an event.

During that particular point of time, many Israeli couples were utilizing surrogacy services in Nepal, and so on that day, there were about 25 Israeli newborn babies, some in incubators, in a private hospital in Kathmandu. As soon as we were out of the house, in the open space surrounded by our security staff and neighbours, my husband called the director of the hospital to check if the babies were ok. He was informed that they managed to bring out the babies and kept them in the parking lot of the hospital. That was even more worrying. Immediately on arrival at the Embassy, he and his deputy Chief of Mission took the two cars and rushed to collect the babies and their parents. They made several trips until all the babies were brought into the embassy compound. The emergency tents that were kept prepared for us were put up for some of them, while those in incubators had to be kept inside the cars with the engine on, so they can stay warm. I piggy bag our son the whole day and night, as I was too scared to let go of him. An Israeli colleague of ours was pregnant, but the workload of organizing the stranded Israelis kept her busy with no time or space to rest even for few hours. Till today when I think of that day, I feel for her.

Fortunately, many Israelis travelling in Nepal are usually young people after the army. They were good at organizing and dealing with logistics, and they helped to ensure proper distribution of foods and kept the morale of the people high with their enthusiasm and willingness to help. There were also staff and volunteers of an Israeli NGO, Tevelb"TZedek (IBT), who were extremely helpful in looking after the stranded travelers. There was also a group of older people who were travelling in Nepal during that time and they helped immensely in taking care of the babies. We were altogether hundreds in number and were all staying in the Embassy garden waiting for evacuation for some, while others were exploring ways to help in rescue and recovery efforts.

Many colleagues from the Israeli Embassy in Delhi and

Bangkok arrived by the first flights that came in after the earthquake to help with consular and other services. In addition, senior officials from the head office in Jerusalem came to assist in the smooth evacuation of Israeli citizens and to facilitate rescue and recovery support for Nepal. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel was one of the first people to call us when the earthquake struck checking on our wellbeing and assuring his support for initiatives that my husband was responsible for them. In emergencies like this, having a full backing of your government is so crucial and deeply encouraging.

Less than an hour after the earthquake, my husband received a phone call from the Chief of Staff of Nepal, saying, 'Excellency, we need help'. Within 24 hours, an advance team arrived from Israel to assess the situation and to organize logistics and venue for the Israeli team to set up their field hospital. And by 48 hours after the earthquake a large Israeli army jumbo aircraft arrived with a world-class Field hospital, medical teams, and rescue experts. Altogether there were 281 Israeli emergency experts who came in that aircraft. It took 36 Nepal army trucks to unload the supplies and transport them to the open field next to the Nepal Army hospital in the heart of Kathmandu, where one of the largest field hospitals was set up. Many Nepali doctors and health professionals also came to assist them. The then Prime Minister of Nepal, late honorable Sushil Koirala visited the site the day it was set up and was deeply moved. He was choked with emotions when he said, 'Israel, you are our true friend, we will never forget this'. That same jumbo flight that brought in the field hospital and the rescue team took many of stranded Israelis back home safely, including the babies.

Israel's immediate early emergency response were soon followed by many other recover and reconstruction support led by Mashav (Israel's international development department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), TevelB'tzedek, IsraAid, Jewish distribution committee (JDC), Israeli Coalition for Trauma, and other individuals, medical clowns and smaller NGOs. Most of these NGOs also brought with them expertise in mental health and trauma healing. It was heart warming to see strong solidarity and deep friendship between the two countries.

After days of endless aftershocks, constant rain, and awful news of deaths and damages from across the country, I was emotionally and physically drained. My mother and family have been insisting that my son and I should go home to Nagaland, India, to recuperate. My husband became extremely busy dealing with assistance for Nepal while still organizing evacuation of Israelis stranded in the mountains. So we left. And it was the right thing to do because a week later, there was another earthquake.

In the worst of experiences, real human nature tend to come alive. Monday morning, less than 48 hours after that massive earthquake, many of the Nepali staff working in Israel Embassy turned up to work like another normal day. They, too, have been living in some open fields, crammed under plastic tarpaulins with all their families and neighbors. They also have not been sleeping or eating normal foods. Yet, they turn up to work knowing that the Embassy was dealing with massive search and rescue efforts, and evacuation of Israeli tourists in Nepal. For many of them, their houses were severely damaged or even destroyed, their extended families in their villages were unreachable with possibility for injury or deaths, yet they came to work, and work they did wholeheartedly from morning till night.

Early morning on Tuesday, our son's nanny came with warmly cooked food for him and for us. Her house is situated in the outskirts of Kathmandu, and the road between us have been damaged, and there was no transport available whatsoever, so she walked all the way. Like everyone, she and her family were also living in the open fields, and as most Nepalis, they managed to take out the cooking gas and the entire kitchen with them and continued to cook like usual. When she learned that we were surviving on tinned foods, biscuits, and instant noodles, she said she could not sleep. For my son, it was like a dream to be sitting inside a tent, eating his favorite food (dahl bhat and alu fry) and being fed by his most favorite person. Watching them, I felt teary. Later she gave him a good cold-water shower in the open, from a hand pump water source belonging to the Nepali Police guarding the Embassy. The boy saw all these as part of some fun games his didi(nanny) had organized.

The Nepali police who live in the embassy compound were cooking rice, dhal and Thakali curry every day during those days and knowing that I am a mountain girl like them who needs rice for a meal, they kept some aside for me. And of course, whenever I could, I dragged my husband to come and eat the Nepali food with us. Early in the mornings, when I am sitting half asleep inside the car or by the steps at the entrance of the embassy, they brought me hot cup of tea (chai), and it was like heaven. How can I ever forget such kind gestures?

My husband's mother and aunt both well-known ceramic artists, and we kept a nice collection of some beautiful pieces of their work. Sadly many of the items were broken into pieces during the earthquake. Like many homes in Kathmandu, although our



house withstood the strong shuddering, things inside the house were substantially damaged. A year later, I decided to make an earthquake memorial wall in our compound with all the broken pieces of our ceramic and china collections and quoted, "broken things always have a story, don't they?" by Sara Pennypecker.

Nepal Earthquake was devastating. Those of us who lived through it will never forget the experience and will live with the trauma for the rest of our lives. The people of Nepal, in their worst nightmare, has taught us that goodwill and persistent conviction to rise and build again, will triumph over dust, deaths, and despair. Years later, they are still rebuilding not just their houses and

highways, but also their hopes and dreams. And for the sake of our own humanity, we must continue to journey with them in their endeavors to rebuild their beautiful and magnificent country. Jai Nepal!

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Israel-Nepal Cooperation in Agriculture Sector



- Mishra, Dr. Rajendra Prashad & Bista, Dr. Prakash Raj

Nepal and Israel established diplomatic relations on June 01, 1960. Ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations, both countries have been enjoying friendly and cordial relations. Exchange of visits at various levels including at the highest, one has contributed to the growth of bilateral relations between the two countries. Israel have extended valuable cooperation to Nepal in various developmental fields including agriculture.

The Government of Nepal and the Government of the State of the Israel signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of agriculture on March 17, 2010. Both countries have agreed to cooperate to contribute to the achievement of national and institutional goals of agricultural development; promote exchange of technical and scientific knowledge for the benefit of the agricultural sectors in both countries, as well as the exchange, of data and experience on agricultural policies and their implementation and encourage cooperation between the respective associations,

organizations and private sector of both countries. This agreement is expected to pave the way for further strengthening and deepening cooperation in agriculture sector, for the benefit of both countries.

Israel has been providing some short-term scholarships to Nepalese citizen in the area of agriculture that have contributed to develop skillful human resources. Recent collaboration between the two countries in this field is Small Farmer Agriculture Training Program which is launched by Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd since 2013 in association with the Embassy of Israel in Nepal. This, also referred as Learn and Earn program, is one of the instrumental initiatives to transform rural agriculture system of Nepal by attracting rural youth in agriculture through providing them opportunities of learning modern practices and technologies adopted in the agriculture sector in Israel. In this program, youth of 20-30 years belonging to small farm families are sent to participate in 11 months long agricultural training course in different college and agricultural training and research organizations in Israel. The trainees learn necessary theoretical knowledge one day a week in college/agricultural training and research organizations. Then, they are given an opportunity to work and learn practically on the farm for remaining five days per week for which they are paid. This arrangement also helps to solve farm labor problem in Israel to some extent. So far, 2677 rural youths have participated as a part of Learn and Earn program under agricultural cooperation. Some of the returnee trainees have successfully adopted the learned farming technologies back home in Nepal through establishing commercial farm and became exemplary in the society. Group of returnees have already started integrated farms in Lamjung district. This program has opened up a new avenue in bilateral engagements.

In addition, the Government of Nepal has also sent 13 officials to the Galilee International Management Institute, Israel to train on greenhouse and tunnel crop production, drip irrigation and efficient use and improved water resource management in crop production in 2016 through the financial assistance of the World Bank funded Irrigation and Water Resources Management Project. The learned technologies of plastic tunnel and fertigation system had been demonstrated in three locations namely, Darimjyula

of Salyan, Khurkot of Parbat and Subeda Tallojyula of Bajhang district.

The Government of Israel has also funded agriculture demonstration farm project with the goal to improve socio-economic condition of the rural farming community. This project has been implemented jointly by an Israeli INGO and local NGO with the participation of local community in Mahadevbesi, Dhading district. In addition, Israeli experts also provided technical assistance in farm management, artificial insemination, irrigation, and farm machinery in Nepal.

Nepalese agriculture is still in a low development stage. Although about 60.4% populations are engaged in agriculture and this sector contributes to 27% of gross domestic product: Productivity and competitiveness of the sector are low and improved technology adoption is slow. The country's agricultural trade deficit has been widening due to high growth rate of import compared to exports over the years. On the other hand, Israel is one of the world leaders in agriculture research and development. Nepal can benefit from advanced agricultural technologies of Israel like micro irrigation and water management, high crop productivity, greenhouse and tunnel farming, post-harvest and agro mechanical equipment among others.

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My Work in Nepal: What Israel can Offer Nepal



-Moser, Prof. Asher

I have had the privilege to be in Nepal several times, all for official or professional duties. During my first visit, I participated in a team created by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs that aimed to establish a new Nepalese medical school in the Kathmandu valley. In the following several visits, I accompanied students' from the Medical School for International Health at Ben Gurion University of the Negev who were learning and practicing their skills in some areas of global health. My last visit to Nepal was in April 2015 after the devastating earthquake; this time, I was a member of a humanitarian aid delegation seeking to provide medical assistance to the victims of the earthquake and to the population of Nepal.

It may seem that all my experiences in Nepal were somewhat protected, financed and short termed. And while this is mostly true, it also allowed me to gain somewhat of a comprehensive insight to the medical systems and the services the citizens of Nepal can expect to receive.

Chapter 1 - developing a medical education:

My first visit to Nepal was in the summer of 2003. A new medical school was to be established in the Kathmandu valley. Those involved in the founding of this new school were a small group of senior physicians together with some recent graduates of various medical professions who were navigating the system and they were joined with a number of community leaders and politicians who envisioned a new form in both the education and the provided medical systems. They realized that there is a great need to revisit the existing medical education in their country and to make the needed adaptations to make it fit for the challenges of the 21st century.

The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), through the embassy in Kathmandu, was approached to provide assistance. And so, as the monsoons were pouring on the valley in late July 2003, I found myself with a group of medical education professionals recruited from Ben Gurion University assigned to assist this initial group of founders and teachers in fulfilling their mission. The building of the new campus near Dhulikhel was in final planning and potential staff were been asked to join the faculty. Upon arrival we were greeted by a crowd of very enthusiastic people, one could sense they had this air of rejuvenation and creation in their eyes. This project has become the reason for great excitement and enthusiasm for all involved, and it was contagious!

Our task was to conduct a two week workshop with the new staff. The workshop would include details on how to build a curriculum; what is needed to ensure proper preclinical and clinical medical exposure, class size and methods of exam and much more.

We spent the next two weeks on site, lecturing and discussing the means and methods of creating a medical school. We spent a considerable portion of the time engaging in fruitful discussions, starting from the more general ideas and concepts and then dissecting and cashing them in to operational coins. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to present traditional ideas, only to examine their applicability to the program, challenging traditional educational methods common to Nepal. What we thought as "good methodology" needed to be carefully examined just by merely asking

ourselves and the audience the simple questions of "why" "what if" and "is there an alternative". We spared no effort exploring all details, venues and pathways, small or large. We discussed the overall curriculum, examinations, teaching equipment, distant locations, student bodies, teacher compensation and much more.

This mission could not have been successfully executed by us alone and by bringing the "western" model of a medical school. We learnt that many of the Nepalese currently practicing doctors and academics had some, or most, of their training in developed countries and as a result had been exposed to models that they hoped could be suitable to implement in their new school. It definitely was a mutual learning experience, thus leading to fruitful discussions. Our team learnt a great deal from the participants about the customs and people of Nepal. Thus, each night when we retired to our beautiful guesthouse nestled in the foothills of the mighty Himalayas, we revisited and reviewed the topics of the next day and revised the schedule accordingly. I believe that we were able to offer alternative pathways to achieve the ultimate goal of offering a proper education for their next generations of medical professionals.

The rich and profound discussions with the local people to make the much needed adaptations that should work for the local cultural needs. I believe that our success would have been limited if it were not for the unique environment of the Medical School for International Health (MSIH), a school that trains physicians to be global health providers.

The lessons to be learnt are that promising medical professionals should be educated and granted their medical diplomas first and foremost in the spirit of their proficiency of understanding and ability to prevent, and treat, diseases and ailments common in their community and country.

Implementation of the medical education

Over the next decade, I was fortunate to visit Nepal several times, promoting the collaboration between MSIH and the local medical school, now centered in Patan Hospital. As a background note, it is important to state that all medical students from the

graduating class of MSIH are required to participate in a two month clerkship in a developing country to augment their knowledge and exercise the skills taught throughout their education. To this extent, the Patan Medical School was, and still is, the ideal partner; there are ideal clinical settings where the patients provided a wide and diverse exposure to medical and non-medical problems while the staff addressed the local customs and beliefs when approaching a problem.

Graduating students, in small groups, would arrive at the hospital spread out in the various departments. They would mix in with the other students and would attend the daily routine of the wards. The warm nature and hospitality of the hosts created an environment that encouraged the students to participate in all activities including rounds, surgeries, emergency ward and outpatient clinics. Patients would travel in from great distances to consult with the physicians. This environment nurtured the cooperation and mutual learning of the MSIH and the Patan students who joined each other at meals and social activities.

Students were also sent to health posts in the periphery where they could experience, first hand, the work of the primary health providers, more often than not, without the presence of a certified physician.

All MSIH students participate in similar experiences in different locations in the developing world, and share their experiences on blogs. The groups who were hosted in Nepal continually praised the hospitality, the learning experience, exposure to diverse patients and most importantly, the invitation to fully participate and be an integral part of the staff.

My role as a visiting professor was to escort the students through the program, ensure the smooth integration and to conduct meetings with the school officials regarding the students interests and research projects. Occasionally me or other visiting professor, would lecture or conduct a teaching sessions.

In parallel, over the next years the bilateral relations enabled junior and senior staff from both schools to visit each other outside of the structured program, promoting international collaborations.

It was evident that the interpersonal relationships played a

crucial role for both students and staff. This has laid the foundations for a fruitful and productive environment enabling future collaborations both on the personal and institutional levels. These relationships of individuals, academics and even governments are of unparalleled value.

The power of medical aid put to test:

I believe that the above mentioned achievements dwarfs in magnitude compared to the experience during the 2015 earthquake and the developments in the aftermath.

On the 25th of April 2015, a massive earthquake measured at a magnitude of 7.8 on the Richter scale struck Nepal. While governments around the globe were deliberating the "how" the "when" and the "what" of medical aid, true to the longstanding relations between the two countries, and the ability for Israel to recruit and send aid in a matter of hours, preparations to assist were rapidly mounted in Israel when the first reports came in as to the magnitude of the disaster. In addition to the official government support in the form a fully equipped mobile field hospital a small and relentless non-governmental organization, "Isra-aid" joined the effort. The organization was fortunate enough to have had a representative stationed in Nepal on a different mission, one who spoke Nepalese, who could quickly make an initial assessment of the needs in order to begin the aid effort. Two teams of professionals were assembled, one specializing in locating humans buried under the rubble of collapsed buildings and the other, a team of 8 medical personnel: five physicians and three nurses including two midwives were recruited, I had the honor role of the pediatrician. Within 48 hours we were airborne with a 250 kg of medical equipment.

This time we had definitely different experience. On arrival at Kathmandu airport, we found ourselves in a most chaotic situation; Individuals and groups from all over the globe were arriving to offer aid, most all just hoped on a plane to rush help in no organized or coordinated manner. The main challenge was that the earthquake and its aftermath had destroyed much of the communication infrastructure, rendering the government was challenged and often paralyzed, thus severely hampering the ability

coordinate the aid effort pouring in from around the globe.

The airport authorities were instructed to waive the visa fee for individuals who came to aid and while it was just a small gesture it was widely accepted. In the arrival hall we were welcomed by posters who contained vital information, locations in dire need, priorities and even details for money exchange and SIM cards, and noted the daily meeting conducted every evening at the main park coordinated by UN officials. As mentioned, our contact on the ground rushed us shortly after our arrival to a local hospital where we were able to register as affiliates who came to provide aid. We were joined with a group of local physicians and nurses and we set out immediately to one of the more remote areas where we had information that our services were desperately needed.

This continued over the next two weeks: We loaded our minibuses and travelled to remote villages, some visits were on a daily basis and some lasted for several days, wherever and whatever we were needed.

Our tedious coordinator was, most often, able to seek out places to provide aid and to announce our arrival ahead of time. Thus, upon arrival to a location, we often had a large crowd waiting patiently to be served. We had a routine to set camp and right away we found ourselves providing basic medical needs not only for acutely injured people but also for acutely and chronically ill patients whose medications and treatments were lost in the devastation or that simply need to be replenished. Many of the people who came to seek what seemed to be medical help were often actually looking for someone to speak to, to share their frightening experiences, to grieve about missing relatives or even loss of the animals and livestock.

In between assignments we were housed in a guesthouse in the Thamel in Kathmandu where we could rest and get reequipped. Time and again we packed all our personal and medical gear on any mode of transport available to be in areas where we were most needed. Taxis, cars, buses and even helicopters served us, no expense was spared. Usually, we would bring our food with us: basic fruit, vegetables, rice and lentils and would hire a local resident to do the cooking during the day. Food was a real issue as

the monsoon season was close and many families were not sure they had stored enough supplies, at a time when there were already many of the drivable roads were destroyed. We made it a habit to leave our leftover food for the locals before leaving the villages.

One of the more important tasks we performed, one with a most significant long term outcome was the establishment of continuation projects. We came to believe that the straightforward medical part of the mission was relatively easy. However, we realized that the communities that suffered devastation were not only medically and economically hurt but also lacked the resources to rebuild from within, to repair.

Many communities had sustained heavy human losses; some villages were comprised of scores of children, who had lost their immediate care givers. A follow up team of psychologists, social workers, and other healing professionals would come in and establish a space where people could come and talk, play, create and dine together. These centers were to stay in place for months and even years, depending on the needs of the community.

We learnt that many students from the Patan Medical School were located in several areas of Nepal and have found themselves at the forefront of medical care and were able to assist, help, heal and provide comfort to many victims throughout the country. All the years of friendship and personal relationships had merged in a horrific situation and we were able to be part of the rescue mission, a most challenging, yet fulfilling experience.

The rescue effort occurred a time when we had seen the medical education develop from an idea to a reality and the students were able to execute what they were taught. To see the fruits of our educational work be put to the test as a result of such difficult circumstances was most fulfilling.

Conclusion

For the last three years I have been working at the Magen David Adom, the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross. I am in a managerial position in which I evaluate large scale programs, work on contingency plans and repeatedly look for extreme, worse case scenarios. My experiences in Nepal have greatly contributed to my

understanding of approaches to natural disasters and has assisted me in developing means and strategies to prepare for the "what if? I am forever grateful to the Government of Nepal, the wonderful teachers and staff of the Patan Medical School and the local people in the Kathmandu valley for allowing these experiences.

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(This article was received on 16 August, 2019)

Factors Governing Nepal-Israel Relationship



- *Nepal, Madhav Kumar*

Relationship between Nepal hailed as the ancient and ever-independent country and the sacred land of Gautam Buddha, apostle of universal peace, fraternity and non-violence, and Mt. Sagarmatha (Everest), the highest peak in the world, and Israel, known for its historical, archaeological and religious significance, is really unique in the sense that Nepal was the first South Asian country to have established diplomatic relations with it in June, 1960. Although Israel is 2,605 nautical miles far from Nepal, we have maintained a qualitative relation with mutually beneficial ties of friendship and cooperation.

Our multifaceted relationship has truly stood the test of time. Israel has been providing financial and technical support to Nepal for a long time. Its support during the critical period of earthquake and other natural calamities has won appreciation and admiration on the part of the people of Nepal. Exchange of high level state visits has also played the role of a catalyst in further strengthening

and consolidating bilateral relations.

Nepal is a rare country in the world that did not face colonial yoke even during the heydays of British colonialism that held sway in most parts of our region. On the other hand, the state of Israel came into being only after the Second World War. Nepal and Israel have mutually supported the aspirations of the people of both countries to strengthen and consolidate their national sovereignty, territorial integrity and peaceful existence.

Within a short span of time, the heroic people of Israel known for hard work, innovation and intelligence have made their country a unique example of development and prosperity. Israel has surpassed many countries in terms of development activities, science and technology, human development index, health and education. Its advanced technology and scientific farming in an arid zone of the earth has not only baffled the world but also exhibited an example of its sterling achievement in research and development.

Nepal has to learn a lot from Israeli history of struggle and material advancement and scientific achievement. We should explore new areas for promoting bilateral cooperation in the field of agriculture, education, health and science and technology so that our sound ties at diplomatic and political levels may be translated into concrete areas of bilateral cooperation for promoting economic and trade relations. This specially makes sense when we are trying to speed up economic development through the motto of Prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepali.

While Israel has faced various problems in its quest for better livelihood and qualitative change in its economy, Nepal was forced to undergo a prolonged period of insurgency resulting in the deaths of over 17,000 people and destruction of infrastructures. After a painful political transition, we have been able to promulgate a new constitution three years ago that makes the people of Nepal truly sovereign and master of their own destiny. Our new constitution promulgated on September 20, 2015 is an exemplary document that has guaranteed fundamental rights of people on the principle of inclusion under a federal democratic principle. The mega-earthquake that hit Nepal on April 25, 2015 further caused setbacks to Nepal in its quest for rapid progress and prosperity.

Israel has adopted multiparty parliamentary system of governance. As we faced severe political instability in the past before the emergence of the present government headed by the Nepal Communist Party enjoying nearly two-thirds majority in the parliament, Israel has remained a model of how a country can prosper and achieve its goal despite fractious political mandate of the people.

After the establishment of diplomatic relations, Nepal did not open its residential mission in Israel for a long time. The government of Nepal decided to have a formal mission in Tel Aviv on August 13, 2007. The expansion of bilateral relations, marked by mutual cooperation, goodwill, and understanding and friendship has greatly contributed to Nepal's development. Nepal has strongly stood in support of Israel's existence and voted in favour of Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which upheld the right of all the states in the region to live in peace. Nepal is always particular for the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the Middle East.

The exchange of high level bilateral visits including heads of states and governments has immensely helped promote and nurture Nepal-Israel relations. Top visitors from Nepal included King Mahendra, King Birendra, Prime Ministers B. P. Koirala and Girija Prasad Koirala in the past. From the Israeli side, President Zalman Shazar paid a State Visit to Nepal. Likewise, several visits at other levels have been exchanged between the two sides.

Nepal is popularly known internationally as one of the diverse lands on the earth with its amazing geography ranging from low land to the highest peak of the world, diverse population, language, culture, world heritage sites, socio-cultural harmony and biodiversity. Nepal has been a safe tourist destination for those who want to enjoy traditionally built temples, monasteries, trekking, mountaineering expedition, rafting, paragliding and hunting. Similarly Nepal has been a sacred pilgrimage for Hindus, Buddhists and other religious communities. Moreover, the tolerance and harmony seen in Nepali community in terms of culture, religion and language can be considered as an exemplary human virtue for all. Nepal is also considered the home of ancient saints, sages, and

monks who are thought to have been enlightened through their meditation on the bank of holy rivers, lap of mountains, dense forest, etc.

Many spots of Nepal and Israel have been infused with historical, archeological and religious meaning. That is why tourists visit both countries enthusiastically with deep reverence.

Israel's support and contribution in rescuing, treating and rehabilitating the victims of 2015 earthquake remained successful in winning the heart of not only Nepalese people but also of international community. A team of 281 members from Israel including doctors, defense personnel, rescue experts, and technicians worked day and night and proved their unfathomable courage and expertise. The support and cooperation extended by Israel in a crucial moment of Nepal has proved Israel as a longstanding and time-tested friend. Israel's presence is also felt in several areas for the socio-economic progress of Nepal.

Israel has been extending valuable cooperation to Nepal in various developmental fields. The establishment of National Construction Company that constructed highways and built bridges and buildings in Nepal was the first effort. However, the then government of Nepal could not run it properly after it was handed to a government owned company, NCCN (National Construction Company of Nepal). Training facilities for the Nepalese Army personnel in parachuting and short-term scholarships in various subjects particularly in the areas of agriculture, education, rural development, water resources and tourism are quite remarkable contributions on behalf of Israel. Similarly, Israeli experts are being engaged in Nepal on farm management, artificial insemination, irrigation, childhood education, workers, and cooperative biotechnology and farm machinery adding value to our bilateral relations both at government as well as people's level. Israel's support and cooperation during critical period in Nepal is worth saluting.

The agreement reached between the government of Nepal and the government of the state of Israel in the field of agriculture in March 2010 remained a milestone to enhance agriculture in Nepal. The short term trainings for Nepalese youths in agriculture have

proved to be beneficial for individual as well as the nation. Those who get training in Israel not only bring new skill and technology in Nepal but also develop good faith and friendship that will certainly be a catalyst in promoting people to people relations.

Israel has in recent years been one of the favorite destinations for Nepalese youths, particularly female workers, who seek foreign employment. In the past, a satisfactory number of Nepalese youth were working in Israel in care giving sector and agriculture. The number is being decreased these days due to some procedural delay. The Israeli government has proposed to recruit caregiver through G to G process. Bilateral talks on this issue are being held to give continuation to sending Nepalese caregivers to Israel and we are hopeful that both governments will reach to a concrete decision for the mutual interest of both countries.

There is some sporadic trade between Nepal and Israel. Nepal exports jute carpet, woolen products, tobacco items, vegetable products to Israel and imports non-alcoholic drinks, disc recorder, electronic machinery and equipment, animal vaccine, etc. In the year 2016, Nepal exported items to Israel worth amounting to NRs 83, 09, 474.00 and imported from Israel amounting to NRs 56, 33, 76,328.00, resulting trade deficit, however the government of Nepal should find ways to export other products to Israel to minimize trade deficit.

Tourism can be a potential area to further strengthen and consolidate relations between the two countries. Around 6,000 tourists from Israel come to Nepal and visit different places. They enjoy Nepal's natural beauty, trekking, mountain climbing, rafting and adventurous activities like paragliding, bungee jumping, etc. The most alluring feature for the people of Israel is the harmonious and friendly treatment and hospitality of Nepalese people. Similarly, Israel has unique beauty of its own including the world's lowest place on earth, the Dead Sea, the unmatched salt water that keeps one automatically floating on the surface. The issuance of joint postal stamp to commemorate the 50 years of Nepal-Israel diplomatic relations can be considered as a token of good understanding and friendly relations between two nations.

-Mr. Nepal is a former Prime Minister of Nepal who has also served as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) for 15 years in the past. He is currently the Senior Leader of the Nepal Communist Party and an elected member of the House of Representatives.

(This article was received on 3 September, 2019)

Definition of Nepal in My Words



-Nir, Ilan

When I have the honor to be asked by many people how to define Nepal, I say, friends, Nepal is the most beautiful country on our planet. When they hear my answer, they usually raise an eyebrow and say: "well, that is in the eyes of the beholder, every person loves a different place". As we know, some prefer the mountain an hills landscape and others prefer the desert landscape; some nations would say that they would never replace their god's little acre next to the sea and others would claim that their house in the woods is the best of all. I try to explain to them that there is no argument in regard to the beauty of Nepal and then I tell them the wonderful legend that obviously starts with the story of creation that everyone is familiar with.

The Torah of the people of Israel starts with:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said: 'Let there

be light.' And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day."

And God said: "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.' And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

And God said: "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called Seas; and God saw that it was good. And God said: 'Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit-tree bearing fruit after its kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth.' And it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed after its kind, and tree bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after its kind; and God saw that it was good."

This is how the story of creation starts in the Torah. within six days God created the Heaven and Earth, the Land and Seas, the animals, vegetables and minerals and then, finally, *"And God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."*

The first tasks of God have been completed and then he had another difficult task, to hand all the living nations parts of the world, lands, where the people can settle and work the land, grow their livestock, build their houses and provide for themselves.

And then we learn that: *"And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men build. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confounds their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So, the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth."*

The legend says that in order to spread the people around the earth, God prepared a large sack and put in it all the lands designated to the different nations and right after that he asked all the nations to stand in line and promised each nation a piece of land they could live in.

All the nations obeyed Gods command and stood in line in perfect order. Nations after nation, they received their land and the nation of Nepal, known to be humble and polite, choose to stand in the end of the line, quietly and calm, while letting all the other nations to take their place in the line.

Gods started with the task of distributing the different land to the different nations. The French received the land known as France, the Germans the land known as Germany, after them the Spaniards, the Italians, the Turks and the Greeks received their lands.

To us, the nation of Israelites, the chosen people, God gave the Holy land, the land of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and chose Jerusalem the capital as the center of the world. And so on, the nations approached God that gave each nation a different land from the sack.

Slowly but surely, the line got shorter and shorter and the sack continued to be emptied out. Few nations were left in line and the tension rose, without effecting the nation of Nepal that stood in line quietly and calmly, as so typical to them.

In the end, the nation of Nepal stood alone In front of God that was perplexed. God did not have any more lands to hand to the nations and he noticed that only the Nation of Nepal were left in the end of the line.

God did not know what to do and stood helpless. Indeed, it was impossible that all the lands he prepared were given to different nations and only the nation of Nepal was left out.

God thought and thought what do with the awkward situation at hand. God continued thinking how to resolve this problem and then he said "I have an idea" I will give you, the nation of Nepal, the highest and most beautiful land, the one I prepared for myself.

-Mr. Nir is Honorary Consul of Nepal for Beersheba city of Israel.

(This article was received on 13 March, 2020)

Tevel b'Tzedek: A friend of Nepal



-Odenheimer, Micha

Tevel b'Tzedek is an Israeli-based non-governmental organization whose aim is to connect Israelis and Jews around the world with the challenge of poverty and environmental devastation, in particular in the Global South. Tevel does this in two ways. On the one hand, Tevel develops models and implements projects to directly assist impoverished communities; in particular, our emphasis is on subsistence farming villages in crisis; on the other hand, through its volunteer-service learning and fellowship programs, Tevel helps create a new generation of both Israelis and Nepalese who have experienced working directly with impoverished communities, according to our holistic, agriculture-based community development model. These young people will, we believe, grow into sensitive and devoted leaders, whose appreciation for the humanity of others crosses cultural and linguistic barriers, and who have seen first-hand how communities can be transformed.

As our organization has grown, so has the number of

Nepalese we have touched. During the first years after the earthquake, we were working quite intensively with a population of 25,000 villagers in three different districts, and numerous village development councils. Our 5 years project in the Ramechhap district was evaluated by Nepal's Social Welfare Council recently. They gave it high praise, calling our projects in agriculture, including commercial vegetable farming, beekeeping, goat farming, water harvesting, preventing school dropouts, and more “exemplary”, having “drastically improved the lives of beneficiaries.”

When I first set about creating Tevel b'Tzedek, my assumption was that it should be in a country on the “Humus trail” in South Asia—the travelers route frequented by young, post-army Israelis. This was both in order to attract young people to our service-learning programs and to serve as an educational beacon for other young Israelis on the route, to send the message that Israeli and Jewish identity could be a platform for advancing global good. In the summer of 2005, I travelled to India and then to Nepal in search of the right place to begin Tevel's work. India was laden with bureaucracy and seemed unfriendly to volunteers. In Nepal, everything seemed easier. Preoccupied with the People's War, and then with the transition from monarchy to republic, and healing the wounds of the long civil war, bureaucracy was minimal and NGO's were embraced.

Nepal also seems the perfect place to bring Israeli and Jewish young adults because there is so much they have to learn from its people, its culture, and its politics. Nepal is a centre for both Hinduism and Buddhism, and is enriched by both. Nepalese, for the most part, have absorbed their religion and culture, and it has become part of their character. As a result, Nepal is, almost always, a safe place to be. In the subsistence villages of Nepal, there is no culture of poverty, because there is no poverty of culture.

During the first year and a half or so, Tevel's emphasis was very much on leadership training for the internationals that came on our program. We had not yet developed our own work model. Instead, after a month-long training period, we sent our service-learning participants out to volunteer with local organizations, schools or communities. Kathmandu was a perfect location for this—there

were many local NGO's and institutions doing fascinating work—with street children, trafficked women, brick factory workers, and children in slums, for example. Within a few hours ride away, there were rural villages who were struggling on all kinds of levels, and for whom the presence of an Israeli or American Jewish volunteer was a welcome opening into new kinds of thinking and a way to interact with the broader world.

Moreover, the politics in Nepal was fascinating, and made for accessible learning experiences. The Maoist People's War—which I had first reported on in the Washington Post in 2002- had raised fascinating issues. How would the new constitution that seemed always in the making, deal with issues of ethnicity (Nepal had over 100 ethnic groups), caste and gender. How did these issues interact with questions about Federalism and the demarcation of local authority? How could parties who had been on different sides of a violent war, in which thousands were killed, reconcile and play the game of multi-party politics together? Major figures from the Maoist, UML and Nepali Congress party came to speak at Tevel's training, as well as social activists, writers, and intellectuals. Nepal was so open, that in one of our training exercises—in which we send our participants out to explore non-tourist Kathmandu using only public transportation—one of them found herself drinking tea with the then-Prime Minister Koirala. As the meeting place of Hindu and Buddhist cultures, and home to at least one hundred different ethnicities, it was also exceedingly rich in culture and spirituality, all of which added to our participants' experience. Because of its culture and spirituality, Nepal is also, almost always, a safe and friendly place for foreigners.

A year after our founding, during the elections in 2008, Tevel applied for, and received, the privilege of being an election monitoring team. We were assigned to the Dolakha region, where we had just begun to work. We were able to witness first hand that the election was mostly free and fair—but also that there were irregularities, which we reported to the election committee, receiving accolades in the Nepali press as one of the only monitoring groups to write a full report about the election.

Very quickly, our model developed and grew. By the third four-

month cohort of volunteers, we had begun to understand a number of crucial points. First of all, the internship model was severely limited. In some way, what we were doing when we sent young internationals out to local NGO's was outsourcing the problem of what to do with volunteers who could not speak Nepali. With interns leaving after just three months, their impact could only be minimal. Moreover, even in terms of the international volunteer's experience, local organizations would most likely put them to work in the office, creating a website or writing proposals or reports, or teaching English to staff.

If Tevel wanted to make an impact, we began to realize, we would have to do our own long term projects, in partnership with local organizations, certainly, but with our own programmatic strategies and goals. At the same time, Tevel began to understand that nearly all of the populations we were dealing with in Kathmandu—street children, trafficked women, slum dwellers, brick factory workers—originated in the crisis of the rural villages. Some 70 percent of Nepal's population still lived in rural villages, although many villagers were forced to migrate for work—to Kathmandu, India, or the Gulf States. The rural villages were in crisis. An array of interrelated factors, including population growth, a drop in soil fertility due to erosion from deforestation, and climate change meant that the vast majority of villagers were not able to grow enough food to feed their families, much less to provide for the education of their children or for health care. Moreover, the social structure of the villages were in flux. Relations between castes and ethnic groups, once set within a clear hierarchy, were changing, in the aftermath of the People's War. So were gender relations. The old order had been shaken, but a new order had yet to emerge.

Tevel believed that, if we truly wanted to contribute to Nepal, and to the healing of global poverty, we should go to the root of the problem: the crisis of the rural villages. Israel held both high level agricultural knowledge and methodology for increasing the strength of communities. We began to focus on long term programs for rural villages—we defined long term as between 3 to 5 years—aimed at increasing and diversifying agricultural production, while working with farmers' groups, women groups, youth groups

and teachers to strengthen community structures.

In order to do this, we realized, we would have to develop an extensive local staff. A key figure in this was Dr. Bishnu Chapagain, a talented agronomist who had originally come to Israel with a Mashav program and had spent 11 years earning a Master's and PhD in Plant Science, and then doing two years of post-doctoral research. I had tried to interest Bishnu in Tevel before we began, but he was still doing his post-doc. Now, two years in, I tried him again, and he kindly agreed to return to Nepal to head our local staff and our agricultural efforts. As our local staff began to grow, Tevel realized that we had to help found a local organization to make our hiring, our salaries and our development activities legal. With the help of Nepalese who had studied for Masters and PhD degrees in Israel, as Bishnu had, we created a local organization called Nyayik Sansar, a Nepali translation of Tevel b'Tzedek.

Before exploring the main part of our work, I would like to mention something important that came out of Tevel's presence in Nepal, in terms of Nepal-Israel relations. When we began working, several thousand Nepali's a year had been coming to Israel to work as caretakers for the elderly or infirm. But in order to do so, they had to pay a fee of some \$10,000. About two thirds of that fee went to Israeli manpower companies, and one third to Nepali manpower companies, who acted in tandem. Ten thousand dollars is a huge amount of money for Nepalese from the villages; in order to raise the fee, they often had to sell much of their land, or borrow from all their relatives. Part of the consequences of incurring such debt was that it was nearly impossible for a Nepali to quit a job in Israel, even if they were being abused—the first year of pay all went into paying the debt, and going home without having paid would be very difficult. This fee was illegal according to Israeli law, but bureaucrats and politicians turned a blind eye and did not investigate.

Tevel educated our participants about the illegality of the manpower agencies and the consequences of their profit making. Meanwhile, we started sharing staff with the Israeli embassy. One of the young men who came as volunteers—Yotam Politzer—stayed on working half time for us and half time for the embassy. Yotam learns languages easily, and was the first Israeli working at

the embassy who had fluent Nepali. He thus interviewed those Nepalese, mostly women, who were applying for work visas in Israel. He was able to get 100 of them to sign affidavits testifying that they had paid \$10,000 for their visa. He sent the affidavits to Israel's Ministry of Industry and Trade, and they had no choice but to stop giving out visas. It took a number of years, but over the past three years, a government to government pathway for Nepalese to get Israeli work visas is opening up—without the \$10,000 payment. Tevel has been involved in this reboot. Although it meant that Israel was closed off to Nepali workers for a time, I am still proud that we helped eliminate the illegal payments that drove people into debt.

About a year and a half after we had begun to work, we began to test our long term, agriculture-based community development model. Our first village was only about an hour and a half from Kathmandu, but were suffering from extreme poverty. Part of a fishermen caste called the Dunuwar Rai, the river where they had fished for several generations was now being used primarily as a quarry for stones that were dragged from the water and crushed into gravel for use in making concrete and asphalt. Because of this activity, and because some of the waters had been diverted upstream both intentionally and because of landslides, there were no longer large fish in the river. The Dunuwar Rai were part of a small, marginalized caste. The adults were virtually all illiterate. There were no toilets in the village. Women were mostly afraid to talk to anyone outside their immediate family. One woman was blind because of easily treatable cataracts—but could not even consider going to Kathmandu to a hospital for treatment. The bus ride itself—costing about 2 dollars—was too expensive and she did not have confidence to travel to Kathmandu.

Unlike many of the stone-crushers by the river, the Dunuwar Rai did have land. But because there was no irrigation the land was only cultivated during the monsoon, for rice. Tevel discovered that with a small investment we could bring water from a kilometre or so away. With a micro-grant from the Israeli Embassy, we began to build a training farm in the Rai village, sending an agronomist as full time staff to teach off-season vegetable farming. The very

capable; the project coordinator Mrs. Sabita Deshemaru helped us find women's empowerment groups, young girls groups, children group and teachers' group to make our holistic approach possible. We built bio-gas toilets, and constructed (all with the active help of community members) improved cowsheds that trapped manure and urine for fertilizer. The attendance of children in school improved—and the first young people, including girls, passed the S L C. The economic and social conditions of the village improved substantially. Our work with the Dunuwar Rai gave us confidence that with our agriculture based community development model we were on the right track.

In 2011, we launched a new fellowship program, in which young people from both Israel and Jewish communities in the Diaspora would work side by side with Nepalese who were also post-BA and looking for their first foray into development work. From the Nepali side, we got many dozens of applicants—at least 150--and were able to put together great cohorts of fellows that included Tamangs, Dalits, Tharu and Rai, as well as high caste Nepalese. The demand was so high because many Nepalese study subjects such as rural development, but have a hard time getting their first job. Each Nepali was paired with an international, and the partners learned a tremendous amount from each other, and from the experience of communicating across cultural and linguistic lines.

Another expression of Tevel's deepening understanding of what we had to gain from Nepal was evident as we began working in a rural village area of Burundi, Africa. Who should we send to Burundi in order to infuse our work there with both the methodology and the spirit Tevel has developed in Nepal? Our choice was Bijay Shrestha, a young Nepali staff member who had already been with us for 8 years, and had proved to have a deep, and sensitive understanding of community work and its ethos.

The launching of the fellowship coincided with a new project in the Ramechhap district—one of the poorest in Nepal's Central region, in the Hiledevi, Bethan and Dhimmipokhari village areas. We expanded our reach to include some 2500 families, or nearly 15,000 people. When we first arrived in Hiledevi, the only vegetables that could be found in the market were onions and

potatoes—imported from elsewhere. By the time we left, thousands of tons of vegetables are being exported each week to Kathmandu.

One principle of Tevel's work is that we see community as the greatest strength that villages have. Israel has a deserved reputation for excellence in agriculture. But just as important for Israel's survival has been its ability to build community. Israel was built up through youth movements, the kibbutzim, the moshav movement, a people's army, and other communal institutions. Tevel considers expertise in community building to be just as important as expertise in agriculture. Dr. Sarahle Shadmi Varman, one of Israel's most highly regarded experts in community was one of our mentors in bringing Israeli community methodology to Nepali villages, travelling numerous times to Nepal to train our staff. Tevel's primary development tool has been the creation of farmer's groups, collection centres, women's groups, and youth movement, while also utilizing and strengthening pre-existing community groups, including local NGO's and groups such as the Female Community Health Volunteers.

The 2015 earthquake in Nepal catalysed massive changes in Tevel. At the time the earthquake hit, we had 100 people on the ground, including local staff (from Nyayik Sansar as well as Tevel Nepal), Israeli staff and service-learning participants. All the areas in which we had worked and were working, including Dhading, Dolakha, Ramechhap and Kathmandu, were hard hit by the earthquake. In the villages, virtually all the homes of our beneficiaries were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Tevel immediately reorganized, and resolved to reach out to the communities where our projects had already finished, as well as those where we were currently engaged. We also partnered with a number of Israeli organizations, both in the immediate aftermath of the quake, and in the longer term. During the first week, Tevel staff and participants worked in the Israeli Embassy and in the Israeli military hospital, helping to coordinate aid. Dividing into teams, we quickly made our way to the village areas in which we had worked—but also added neighbouring VDC's to our project, at the request of the Nepali government. We built emergency toilets, distributed sanitation equipment, built child safe centres and much

more. Because of our intimate knowledge of the areas in which we had worked, we were able to respond in real time to specific needs. So, for example, in Samantar, the Dunuwar Rai village, Tevel learned that all of the rice seed was buried in rubble. Tevel managed to find rice seed in time for planting before the monsoon hit. Tevel also learned that the main water pipe that provided irrigation for hundreds of farmers had been damaged during the earthquake, breaking altogether for the monsoon; the organization was able to fix the pipe in time for post-monsoon planting. Funded by Israel's version of the Red Cross, Magen David Adom, Tevel distributed tin roofing to more than 4,500 families in the process of rebuilding their homes.

In order to effectively expand after the earthquake, Tevel hit upon a strategy that was another stage in "going local". Funded by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Tevel chose 45 young Nepalese, one for each 100 families in the villages in which we worked, to serve as youth community mobilizers in their own villages for a two year period. Trained and guided in an ongoing fashion by our professional staff, these young people proved an invaluable asset in spreading knowledge and building capacity. By the end of the two year period, the YCM were able to galvanize villagers to donate thousands of dollars for the building of multi-purpose community centres in almost every ward in which they worked. Our experience with the YCM has strengthened our belief that development work means, first of all, utilizing the strengths that exist within local communities and especially their younger generation.

For Tevel, work in Nepal has been an amazing opportunity. As members of a small people with a strong identity and a difficult history, we resonate deeply with the cultural richness of Nepal, with the determination of its people, and their desire to transform their lives for the better. Over the past 12 years, we have seen Nepal struggle and grow. We have seen the resilience of Nepal following the earthquake and the Indian blockade. We have seen the blessing of decentralization, with the Gaupalika system offering hope for ongoing, equitable, democratic improvement in the lives of rural villagers. And yet there is still a long way to go—for Nepal, for

Israel and all of humanity. We hope and pray that Israel and Nepal continue to learn from each other, in mutual respect and deep human connection.

-Mr. Odenheimer is a Founding Director of Tevel B'Tzedek.

(This article was received on 5 December, 2019)

Nepal-Israel Friendship at 60 Glorious Years



-Omer, Benny

Two men with extraordinary visions and respect for their countries and their peoples, late BP Koirala and late David Ben-Gurion, both the then Prime Ministers of their respective countries, Nepal and Israel, established diplomatic relations on 1 June 1960. Israel opened its Embassy in Kathmandu in March 1961.

Nepal was the first country in South Asia to recognize the existence of Israel and supported the right of Israel to exist within secured and internationally recognized boundaries. Nepal voted in favour of Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which upheld the right of all the states in the region to live in peace. Nepal has also welcomed every initiative from whatever quarter that seeks to resolve the Middle East problems like the Camp David Accord signed between Egypt and Israel in 1978 and the renewed peace process sponsored time to time by countries like the USA.

Soon after the establishment of relations, Prime Minister of Nepal B.P. Koirala paid an official visit to Israel in August 1960.

PM Koirala followed strongly pro-Israel foreign policy in Nepal. King Mahendra paid a State Visit to Israel in September 1963. He also maintained Koirala's special relationship with Israel. This was returned by Late Israeli President Zalman Shazar's Official Visit to Nepal in March 1966. After that, many bilateral visits took place between the two countries. In January 2015, Israeli Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development Yair Shamir visited Nepal and in May 2016, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nepal Kamal Thapa visited Israel. Likewise, Nepal's Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Development Chakrapani Khanal visited Israel in May 2018.

Nepal and Israel have been enjoying deep and fruitful friendship, which is being demonstrated by many such high-level visits and undertaking of numerous mutually benefitting cooperation. Apart from government level visits, both countries have seen business groups travelling for potential economic collaborations. Nepal is one of the most loved travel destinations for young Israelis and around 10,000 travel enthusiasts come to Nepal every year to enjoy the beauty of the country.

Another example of strong friendship, Israel sent a medical team of 264 doctors and paramedics and established a full-fledged field hospital to help and give free medical services to the people injured in the earthquake within 72 hours of Gorkha Earthquake in Nepal in April 2015, which was highly appreciated by the Government and People of Nepal.

Israel is also known as a start-up nation and is one of the pioneers in the development of technologies. It shares its expertise learned in the course of its development with friendly nations in many fields through MASHAV (Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation). Israel has been supporting Nepal in human capacity building in the sectors like, agriculture, education, health, science and technology, income generation, gender, etc. through various training programs in Israel and in Nepal conducted by MASHAV. Since 1960, around 3,800 Nepalese professionals have been trained in Israel and around 5,000 Nepali professionals have participated in on-the-spot training courses on above subjects conducted by Israeli experts in Nepal.

Another very important project that Israel is cooperating with Nepal for development of agriculture sector is 'Learn and Earn Program'. Since 2013, 2,700 youths from marginalized and underprivileged farmers associated within the networks of Small Farmers Agricultural Cooperative Ltd. (SFACL) and Small Farmers Development Bank (SFDB) have participated in 11 month long advanced agricultural training in Israel and 500 are undergoing training in Israel now. Every year more than 500 students join this program. The students returned from Israel, either individually or in a group, are engaged in modern agriculture farming, presenting themselves as role model farmers in their communities and contributing in Nepal's agricultural sector development.

Also, many Nepalese, especially women, are working in Israel as caregivers and they are very much appreciated for their dedication and caring for the elderly people by their families.

The recent visit to Nepal, in December 2019, by Ambassador Gil Haskel, Head of MASHAV (Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation) will open new areas of cooperation between the two countries. Ambassador Haskel had discussed in depth with various high level officials and identified areas for future collaboration in Nepal, including establishment of 'Centers of Excellence'.

Israel and Nepal can work together in many fields bilaterally and multilaterally supporting each other for mutual benefit. Israel can share with Nepal its know-how and technologies from agriculture to cyber-tech for the development of Nepal.

The Government and the People of Israel highly value the friendship with Nepal. Long live Nepal-Israel friendship.

-Mr. Omer is the former Ambassador of Israel to Nepal.

(This article was received on 26 February, 2020)

The Israel-Nepal Friendship: An Example to the World



- *Oren, Dr. Michael*

At the foot of Mt. Everest, the world's highest mountain, at on the shores of the Dead Sea, the lowest, stand extraordinary monuments. The first, made of Dead Sea stone, is a gift of the State of Israel to Nepal, and the second, is made of Everest stone and was presented to Israel by Nepal. This extraordinary exchange followed the joint issuance of a Nepalese-Israeli stamp celebrating more than fifty years of diplomatic relations. Both the monuments and the stamps are testaments to a friendship that is unique in the world and bound by ever-strengthening cooperation in commerce, humanitarian projects, education, and tourism.

Those ties were officially established in June, 1960, with opening of Israel's embassy in Kathmandu. Nepal became the first South Asian country to recognize Israel and since then has consistently supported Israel's right to exist and to defend itself. Those rights were embedded in UN Resolutions 242 and 338, both backed by Nepal, and in Israel's peace treaties with Egypt (1979)

and Jordan (1994), which Nepal welcomed despite UN opposition. A strong advocate of Middle East peace efforts, Nepal endorsed the 1993 Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO as well as all the subsequent interim agreements.

Parallel to their close diplomatic cooperation, Israel and Nepal developed promising commercial ties. This grew after the signing of a trade agreement in 1993 and through the remittances of thousands of Nepalese care workers in Israel. Tourism became an essential component of the economic bonds between the two nations as a trekking trip to Nepal grew to be considered *de rigueur* for tens of thousands of newly demobilized Israeli soldiers. Hebrew signs now are a common sight in Kathmandu where the Chabad House holds the world's largest Passover Seder.

Another burgeoning element in the relationship is the educational programs for Nepalese students in Israel. Most of these focus on advanced Israeli agricultural methods. Hundreds of Nepalese have worked on Israeli farms, earning salaries and learning techniques that they then take back to Nepal.

A final but crucial aspect of friendship is humanitarian and disaster relief. Israeli NGOs such as TevelB'Tzedek (The World with Justice) and IsraAID have been working for years in Nepal, assisting communities in need, developing day care centres, and offering various social and psychological services. During the 2015 earthquake, Israel sent a search and rescue mission of 264 military and civilian experts who arrived with a complete field hospital which they left in Nepal.

The friendship has found further, public, expression in state visits of Israeli and Nepalese officials. These include the historic visit to Nepal of Israel President Zalman Shazar in 1968 and Nepal's Foreign Minister Sahana Pradhan in 2007, after which Nepal opened its embassy in Tel Aviv. In 2015, while serving as a Member of Knesset, I paid a state visit to Nepal and met with a wide range of government officials, educators, and journalists, and held talks with Foreign Minister Kamal Thapa. As Nepal was then engaged in a national discussion over the enactment of its constitution, I shared insights into Israel's success in forging a modern democracy from a highly diverse population and under adverse regional circumstances.

Over the course of the nearly sixty years since the establishment of bilateral ties, the friendship between Israel and Nepal has grown remarkably. Today it stands as an example of how two countries can, with mutual respect and admiration, build a deep and far-reaching relationship that spans all linguistic, cultural, and geographic distances. Israel and Nepal will continue to set that example for our two peoples and, indeed, for the world.

-Dr Oren is Former Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Member of Knesset and Deputy Minister for Diplomacy in the Prime Minister's Office.

(This article was received on 23 January, 2020)

Historical Development of Nepal's Cooperative Sector: Some Reflections From Israeli Cooperatives for Way Forward



- Paudel, Chandrakala

Introduction

The word “cooperative” is derived from the Latin word “Cooperari” which literally means ‘combine’, ‘unite’ or ‘work together’. Cooperation is a basic characteristic of humans. From the primitive age, humans have been working together in the various ways, formally and informally, so as to make their lives safe and comfortable. Over the period, different forms of cooperation have emerged and converted into tradition across the world. Nepal is one of those countries where different ethnicities have been practicing different forms of cooperation. Tradition of “*parmapaat*’, *dbikuri*’, *mankaa*’, *gutbi*’ are few of them . However, cooperative as a formal organization is different since “the tradition of reciprocity does not necessarily mean cooperatives” .The formal cooperatives emerged in Nepal only after the establishment of democracy in 1950s. However, cooperatives are defined and perceived differently during different political regimes.

Development of cooperatives in Nepal

The modern cooperative movement in Nepal was initiated with the establishment of Department of Cooperatives (DOC) in 1953. Immediately, government sent two officials to learn about cooperatives in Ceylon so as to address the immediate human resource capacity gap within the government. In 1954, bill of Cooperative Committee was drafted to institutionalize the governing system.

In 1954, people living in the Hills and Terai of central and eastern Nepal confronted a destructive flood that made many people homeless. Later, United States Operation Mission (USOM) came up with Rapti Valley Multi-purpose Project which worked for the rehabilitation and resettlement in the valley of Chitwan. It aimed to fulfil the objectives to produce food and to create employment to the flood affected people through various means. Consequently, Bakhanpur Saving and Credit Cooperative was formed in 1957—the first ever registered cooperative in the country. Later, thirteen primary cooperatives along with Bakhanpur were registered in 1956/57. These initiatives planted the formal cooperatives in the country.

During the first five year plan, historic initiatives were made for the institutional development on cooperative's front. It had realized the indispensable role of cooperatives to address socio-economic backwardness of the rural people and entrusted them as an important means to abolish the rural indebtedness and raise the living standards. Realizing this fact, first elected government brought first Cooperative Act in 1959 in Nepal. Further, Cooperative Training and Research Centre was established in 1962 to educate the personnel of regulatory bodies, board of directors and management of cooperatives. Altogether, 378 cooperatives were established in different parts of the country during the first five year plan. They used to work primarily in providing loan and supplying chemical fertilizers to their members; however, few had initiated linking farmers to the market as well.

In 1960, multiparty democratic system was replaced by the party less Panchayat system. Panchayat system was basically an authoritarian regime; however, few democratic exercises were allowed unless they created any disrespect to the king and the

panchayat system. Since, cooperatives promote the principle of the democracy, they were given limited space to grow on their own. To illustrate, a committee was formed to review the performance of cooperatives in the beginning of the Panchayat era. Later, both number of cooperatives and their members were reduced by 1969/70.

Similarly, the then government used cooperative sector as the means to execute some of the government's policies and programmes. The cooperatives were mobilized to supply the chemical fertilizers, credit facilities, rations; execute the Intensive Agriculture Programme, Land Reform Programme; among others. In 1985, government brought Sajha Act and converted cooperative movement into Sajha mission. It gave rights to the government to appoint the manager of National Cooperative Union, and buy any number of shares of any cooperative, intervene policies and activities of Sajha/Cooperatives. That is why cooperatives were perceived as the government agency until 1990.

After the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, the policy reform was geared up in Nepal to convert the economy from inward looking to outward looking. Enactment of Cooperative Act 1991 replacing Sajha Act is one of those reforms. The act was fully based on globally accepted values and principles and granted the autonomy and independence to those organizations. Now, people from all geographies, ethnicities, gender could form or join the cooperatives easily. Moreover, the act allowed cooperatives to form unions at district and central levels to work on value chain and policy advocacy. Additionally, National Cooperative Development Board was created in 1991 to advise the government on policy matters. Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives was created in 2000.

Nepal witnessed a major political shift since the first decade of this century. The people's movement 2006 converted the country from constitutional monarchy to a republic state and from unitary system to a federally structured system. Aspiration of the people expressed during the movement was to make the state inclusive, equitable and economically progressive; so the new Constitution of Nepal 2015 has placed the cooperative sector as a pillar of

economy together with public and private sectors so as to develop the economy socialism oriented. While restructuring the state, the constitution has granted both legislative and executive rights regarding cooperatives to the governments at all levels, even to a local government can now bring own law to promote and regulate cooperatives which are within one's respective area.

In 2012, Ministry of Cooperative and Poverty Alleviation was established to look after cooperative issues. The ministry brought Cooperative Policy in the same year for the first time in Nepal. In 2017, new cooperative act was enacted replacing the previous Cooperative Act 1991. The new act has systematically structured the provisions and is guided to promote cooperative business in general. To illustrate, a cooperative doesn't need to register the business now; it can register its own brand; cooperatives can also conduct the business in the partnership and form "Specialized Cooperative Union". In addition, the act has made a number of provisions regarding how cooperatives could mobilize the resources.

Current situation of cooperative movement and cooperative businesses in Nepal

Currently, there are about 34,737 primary cooperatives in Nepal. And, 325 district level unions and twenty national level unions are also working in their respective areas. At the apex level, National Cooperative Federation (NCF) is representing this sector and working for policy advocacy, networking, alliance building, and capacity building. A Cooperative Bank is working to serve the member cooperatives in their financial needs. Altogether, nearly 6.5 million people are associated with cooperatives in Nepal. Such cooperatives are founded in all the districts and geographic areas. According to Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11, about 73 percent of the households find a cooperative within an hour walk. Cooperatives have helped improve people's access to finance significantly. In particular, they have played praiseworthy role in agriculture and in informal sectors. Recently, Nepal Rashtra Bank, Central Bank of Nepal, revealed that the ratio of loan issued by cooperatives and by bank and financial institutions is about 14 percent.

Cooperatives are considered as the important social organizations. They are remembered for the contribution in community mobilization, empowerment, leadership development and democracy. One in every four people is associated with cooperatives in the country. Above 50 percent of the cooperative members are women, which is 21 percent of total population of the country. A significant number of present members of parliaments and local level leaders had initiated their carrier from cooperative movement. Cooperative sector is consulted during planning and budgeting activities by all levels of government.

Cooperatives are recognized as a pillar of the economy. So, many policies and programmes—in the form of concessions, relaxation and subsidies—are introduced so that cooperatives could grow as the vibrant business organizations. To illustrate, the incumbent Cooperative Act relaxes many obligations to the cooperative business. The government has been implementing various programmes since the eighth five year plan to build the business capacity and infrastructure for cooperative sector . Moreover, the government offers support measures frequently to this sector for value chain development of milk, fruits and vegetable marketing, consumer fair price shops, housing development, renewable energy development, and agricultural and herbal processing enterprises through its annual budgets. Recently published approach paper of the 15th five year plan envisions achieving economic prosperity and social transformation through qualitative and sustainable cooperatives.

Nepal's cooperative sector is largely dominated by saving credit services. According to the statistics produced by DOC, altogether 39 percent of primary cooperatives are saving-credit related which occupy 55 percent of the total members and 74 percent of total share capital of Nepal's cooperatives. Saving credit is the major service of multipurpose and agriculture cooperatives as well. Only few cooperatives—dairy, tea and coffee related cooperatives in particular—are engaged in value chain development and marketing activities. It shows that Nepal's cooperatives are largely service oriented rather than being engaged in the production, processing and marketing activities. Hence, there are only about 63,500 direct

employment being generated within cooperatives despite many efforts of the government. This is 1.8 jobs per cooperative staying far below the global average of 5.44.

Though the constitution aims to make Nepal's economy socialism-oriented, it follows the features of liberal economic system in general. So, a cooperative couldn't do business well unless it develops its entrepreneurial skills. And, it is argued that Nepal's cooperatives lack entrepreneurial skills to handle the changing market dynamics.

Reflections from Israel

Nepal is the first country in South Asia to recognize Israel and host its embassy in Kathmandu. In 1960, these two countries established its diplomatic relation formally. Since then, the Government of Nepal is keen to learn on different fronts from the development of Israel. Cooperative is one of the sectors on which Nepal wants to learn from and make partnership with Israel. Coincidentally, Nepal's first cooperative act was enacted in 1959. In 1960, a resettlement programme was launched taking financial and planning support of Israeli government. Establishment of rural cooperatives was a part of the project. Since then, Israeli government has been providing learning and education opportunities on cooperatives and agriculture development to the government officials, farmers, and cooperators.

Israel's cooperative movement is unique in terms of its history, nature and contribution to the economy. The movement was started before the establishment of the State of Israel. They were ideologically based on socialism in the beginning. A cooperative represented a settlement in Israel. Since the cooperatives were like commune, they handled the land and production, conducted production and processing, operated the business, and managed the food, cloths, education, health and other necessities to their members. However, Nepal's cooperatives are service oriented. In the beginning, they were formed to provide the credit to the rural people who were living in the miserable condition. Later, cooperatives have been used to implement access-to-finance related programmes. They are also involved in supplying agricultural inputs

and consumer items. So, Nepal's cooperatives lack the experience of handling production, processing and marketing activities.

The land use and ownership system in Israel is different than in Nepal. The government holds above 93 percent of the total land in Israel. And, it is given to cooperatives and individuals only for use. Moreover, land is closely associated with cooperative organizations. The land received by Kibbutz—one kind of primary cooperatives among two—was managed by cooperatives in commune form. And, Moshav—second type of primary cooperatives—used to allot whole area among the members and members used to operate and manage the individually provided land on their own way. In Nepal, farming land is largely held by individuals. Land was never provided to the cooperative organizations for agriculture purpose. Though cooperatives organize the farmers, cooperative farming is new to Nepali cooperatives.

According to Food and Agriculture Organization (2013), Israeli cooperatives confronted the financial crisis in 1980s that compelled the government to liberalize this sector. Now, Kibbutz have also become the member-based organizations and are becoming decentralized, specialized, vertically integrated and market oriented. Since the early period, there have been regional level agriculture cooperatives at second layer working as the enterprises and purchase cooperatives to help the members (Kibbutz and Moshav) to supply the inputs market the outputs. At third level, there are national level agriculture cooperatives—such as Tnuva—which work for the marketing of produce based on commission . In Nepal, dairy, tea, and coffee related cooperatives and their district and national level unions are engaged on value addition and marketing activities to a certain extent. However, rests of the cooperatives are largely limited to saving credit and input supply activities. So, the member farmers are not benefitted as much as the collectiveness could offer.

In the early years, agricultural cooperatives in Israel received extensive support through tax reductions, quotas, protection from competition, subsidies, among others. However, agriculture cooperatives confronted the financial crisis in the 1980s due to paradigm shift in economic policies, mishandling of the mutual

guarantee system and fall of the stock exchange market. The crisis has taught that, instead of relying only on government support, cooperatives should be financially viable and professionally efficient to tap the changing market dynamics. In Nepal, cooperatives were incubated to provide the loan to the rural people in the beginning. Later, they were used to implement government policies and programmes. At present, saving credit cooperatives and a handful cash crop related cooperatives are only performing satisfactorily.

Conclusion

Cooperatives were emerged in different contexts and times in Nepal and Israel. Also, the engagement of cooperatives in these two countries is not similar. However, few lessons to Nepal's cooperative sector could be derived by interfacing the experience of these two countries.

- Israeli cooperatives have been involved in production, processing and marketing since the beginning. Nepal has limited experience on those activities. Nepal could learn from Israeli cooperatives regarding how processing and marketing could be done by cooperatives so that members could get benefit to the maximum extent.
- Nepal is promoting collective as well as cooperative farming for few years. Despite a couple of support measures, cooperatives are not encouraged to get involved in such farming. Israeli cooperatives have a long experience of collective farming. Crisis of Kibbutz could be interesting to Nepal's policy makers. The experiences gathered by Moshav could also be useful to the Nepali policy makers.
- Israeli cooperatives have a long experience of operationalizing their marketing network. Nepal's cooperative sector has limited experience in this field. Only a few numbers of cooperatives are involved in such activities. Nepal could learn from Israel regarding how cooperatives could operationalize such network. Moreover, experiences of second and third

layers of cooperatives from Israel could be useful to district and national level unions in Nepal regarding how members' commitment could be ensured, how the marketing could be done profitably, among others.

- Earlier, Israeli agricultural cooperatives were engaged on diverse activities. Moreover, they were getting protection and support from the government heavily. Later, they encountered with the crisis while they didn't care of the market dynamics. So, Nepali cooperatives could learn from them regarding how excessive reliance on government is harmful to a cooperative.

-Ms. Paudel is Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Reduction, Government of Nepal.

(This article was received on 4 November, 2019)

Israel & Nepal Bilateral Relations in the Field of Agriculture



-Poleg, Yakov

Introduction

Israel and Nepal established diplomatic relations in 1960, just 12 years after the founding of the State of Israel. To me, this fact alone symbolizes the importance Israel and Nepal attach to our bilateral relationships. Coming from the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development I have realized, on one hand, how valuable our cooperation is in the various agricultural fields. However, my visit to Nepal had proved how important our cooperation is to the livelihood of smallholder farmers, on the other hand.

This visit had highlighted the real value of our bilateral relations and gave a true meaning to our work at the governmental level, influencing people's everyday life.

Bilateral relations- my experience

In 2008 MASHAV and Agricultural Development Bank

Limited (ADBL) signed a MoU to enhance institutional efficiency and human resource development of ADBL. The cooperation is targeted to facilitate banking services to rural small and medium-scale entrepreneurs to help develop rural and modern banking services and ensure the financial viability and sustainability of ADBL.

An **Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Agriculture** was signed in March 2010 between the Government of the State of Israel and the Government of Nepal, recognizing the importance of the agricultural and food sectors of both countries.

In line with their national and agricultural policies and development programs, the parties agreed to cooperate with the aim of contributing to the achievement of national and institutional goals of agricultural development, promoting exchange of technical and scientific knowledge and encouraging cooperation between the respective associations, organizations and private sectors of both countries. It was agreed that the cooperation will be focused on:

- Capacity building
- Technology transfer
- Development of extension and R&D systems
- Exchange of scientific and agricultural technology information
- Transfer of species of crops and genetic resources
- Promote public private partnership
- Enhance diversification and intensification of agricultural products
- Water management
- Rural development
- Land conservation and precision agricultural practices

On the occasion of the MOU signature, Mr. Mrigendra Kumar Singh Yadav, Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives, paid an official visit to Israel in March 2010 at the invitation of Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Israel, Mr. Shalom Simhon.

Furthermore, In March 2019, I arrived in Kathmandu, Nepal as member of a distinguished delegations headed by

Mr. Gilad Cohen, Deputy Director General for Asia and the Pacific in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The delegates took part in a bilateral dialogue which was organized by Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nepal (MOFA) attending H. E. Mr. Benny Omer, Ambassador of the State of Israel to Nepal and high ranking government officials. The participants discussed issues of great importance to both countries.

During 2019, H. E. Dr. Anjan Shakya, Ambassador of Nepal to Israel arrived at the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for several meetings to advance bilateral cooperation between Israel and Nepal in the field of agricultural development. Both sides emphasized the significant contribution of the Agricultural Internship Program to the development of the Nepalese agricultural sector and exchanged ideas regarding the possibility of strengthening the current cooperation between the two countries.

Participation in human capacity training programs held in Israel

Over the last decade thousands of Nepalese trainees had the opportunity to participate in unique agricultural capacity building trainings and programs, which focus on transfer of expertise, technologies and innovations developed in Israel:

- By 2020, thousands of Nepalese undergraduate students had arrived in Israel to take part in **the Agricultural Internship Program**, an exclusive professional training which provides trainees with practical and theoretical knowledge on methods of growing and managing a modern farm. The 11-month Agricultural Work-Study program is implemented by private training centers in Israel, and includes one day per week of lectures on various agricultural topics, usually in the English language and usually given by lecturers who have at least a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Studies or hands-on experience in the relevant subject matter. Since 2014 the quota for students was doubled, with approximately 500 students enrolled during the current academic year 2019-

2020.

- Over 20 professionals from academic and government institutions as researchers and scientists participated in the R&D International Agricultural Training Program. Led in cooperation with MASHAV and Agricultural Research Organization Volcani Centre, the program equipped the students with innovative knowledge and methods used for solving current problems in agricultural production and encouraging future improvements through the introduction of new products, precise technologies and modern equipment.

On a more personal note: Meeting the Nepalese students in Israel during their training program and later seeing how they have implemented the knowledge gained in Israel in their own farms in Nepal, left me speechless and very proud.

In my humble opinion, these students, are the backbone of the Nepalese agricultural sector's successfulness. I was honored to visit them in their modest and remote farms in the slopes of the high mountains of Nepal, to be their guest for few hours, to understand closely the magnitude of their food production challenges, to see them successfully coping with very limited natural resources, turning challenges into opportunities.

I met with young group of alumni of the Agricultural Internship Program that founded an agricultural cooperative in Nepal upon their return. They have realized and learned to appreciate the advantages of working together as a cooperative during their training program in the "Arava", a small geographic region in the middle of the Israeli harsh desert, and decided to put this experience into practice establishing maybe the first Kibbutz in Nepal. Wow!

It was that moment that I realized – these students are among the best in this program. It was at that moment that I knew: If they succeeded here in Israel, they would be successful anywhere in the world.

I would like to extend my gratitude and thankfulness and express my sincere appreciations to H. E. Dr. Anjan Shakya, the

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Nepal to Israel. Dr. Shakya is a true friend of Israel. She is an extraordinary personality who is contributing significantly to our ongoing agricultural cooperation, a person with great vision and many virtues. I am certain that her strong commitment to enhancing the relationships between Nepal and Israel is to bear many fruit in the future.

-Mr. Poleg is Deputy Director General at the Ministry of Agriculture of the State of Israel.

(This article was received on 3 June, 2020)

A Year of Experience as an Ambassador in Israel



-Shakya, Dr. Anjan

After my arrival to this beautiful and one of the most innovative countries in the world, I presented my letter of credence to His Excellency Reuven Rivlin, President of the State of Israel on 14th February, 2019 amidst a special ceremony at President's Residence, Jerusalem.

I was received in audience by the President Rivlin. The President welcomed me with greetings in Jerusalem, the city of God and Peace. He expressed his gratitude towards Nepali soldiers who are rendering exemplary works in a number of UN missions stationed in and around Israel and are working tirelessly towards regional stability as well as transcending the regional boundary. He reiterated that Israel values the friendship between Nepal and Israel that dates back to decades. I conveyed message of friendship and cordiality from the Rt. Hon. President of Nepal Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari and Rt. Hon. Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli to H. E. Rivlin along with the invitation from the President Bhandari and



(Credential Presentation Ceremony)

Prime Minister Oli to H. E. Rivlin to visit Nepal, in response of which he quipped that he knows everything about Nepal and wants to visit the country but he needs to train himself to be there. He showed his willingness to visit Nepal in the occasion of the 60th years of the diplomatic relations between Nepal and Israel.

H. E. Rivlin was seen really happy when I started delivering my opening remarks in Hebrew during the presentation of letter of credence to the President.

I invoked the motto of Government of Nepal " Prosperous Nepal; Happy Nepali" exhorted for Israeli support in the forms of transfer of technology in diverse Nepali sectors like Agriculture and Irrigation, Education, Health, Information and Technology as well as in establishing Centres of Excellence in all provinces of Nepal. President Rivlin expressed his commitments to meet all initiatives taken by the Government of Nepal.

I started to establish endless friendship with Israeli people from the very beginning. I found them very warm, cordial, Sabra (sabra = cactus fruit); and hospitable and with their loveliness, my more than a year here passed so fast that I couldn't even realize.

As a true friend and a well-wisher, Nepal recognized the State of Israel on 1st of June 1960 being the first South Asian nation and hosted the Embassy of Israel in Kathmandu in 1961. Since then, both the countries are enjoying excellent bilateral relations. The relationship between the two nations has remained always amicable. Now, we are celebrating 60th anniversary of establishment of our diplomatic relations. Commemorating this occasion, exchange of

high level visits will be there from both sides along with release of a book, organizing walkathon, friendship matches, among others. Visionary leaders like B. P. Koirala of Nepal and David Ben Gurion of Israel played crucial role in shaping and nurturing our bilateral relations. Over the years, leaders and people of both the countries have contributed to further develop and strengthen the bond of friendship and cordiality existing between our two countries. I am thankful to the Government of Israel for their continuous support in various fields such as agriculture, education, energy, trade, tourism, science and technology, labor, etc. I am very much optimistic that Israel will extend its cooperation in the days ahead to further deepen the relationship.

Since I assumed my office, I have been continuously talking with Ministers and high level officials from various Ministries of Government of Israel. In those meetings, I paid my utmost efforts in establishing agriculture center of excellence in all seven provinces of Nepal. I have been striving to reopen the care giver sector in full fledge. Also, I am talking to open new sectors of employment such as construction and hotel as there are good numbers of Nepali youth in these professions. I have been working with enthusiasm to increase the number of Nepali students to pursue agricultural training and to bring students to Israel for Intermediate, Bachelor, Master, Ph. D and Fellowship in scholarship in various fields of studies. I have also requested to the concerned authorities to bring Nepali farmers for agricultural training.

The Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. K. P. Oli and the Prime Minister of Israel Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu had telephone conversation on 20 April 2019 at 22:45 Nepali Standard time (20:00 Israeli Standard time). They discussed on various matters of Nepal-Israel bilateral relationship and mutually invited each other for the exchange of visits. PM Netanyahu thanked PM Oli for the supports that Nepal is extending towards Israel in multilateral forums. The telephone talk contributed to increase the number of Nepali students coming to Israel for agricultural training. It can be believed that the telephone talks at the Prime Ministers' level will bring the bilateral relations to a newer height.

Chief Secretary of Nepal Mr. Lokdarshan Regmi visited the

State of Israel from 13 to 15 May, 2019. He is the highest official ever visited Israel.

On the day of his arrival, Mr. Regmi paid a courtesy call on former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Mr. Uri Yehuda Ariel. Mr. Regmi explored the possibilities of utilizing Israeli agricultural innovative technologies to transform Agriculture sector of Nepal.

Apart from the Minister, Chief Secretary also met with his counterpart Cabinet Secretary Mr. Tzachi Braverman, Deputy Director General and Directors of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture of the State of Israel held bilateral talks to enrich the relations at bureaucratic level between the two countries.

Both sides discussed the establishment of Centers of Excellence in Nepal as well as the possibility to open the Agricultural Internship Program for undergraduate students from Nepal. Mr. Regmi visited Yad Vashem Museum, laid wreath and paid tribute to those who lost their lives during Holocaust. Chief Secretary also visited Volcanic Center in Bet-Dagan, under the Ministry of Agriculture and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), Systems Missiles and Space Group to learn about Israeli satellite and space technology.

MASHAV, Israel's Agency of International Development Cooperation has been providing training to Nepali nationals working in private and Government sector. Around 500 Nepali students travel to Israel under "Learn and Earn" project annually for agriculture training of 11 months in 5 Agricultural Colleges of Israel. Embassy of Nepal is orienting them regularly and attending their graduation ceremonies. After I assumed the Office, The Embassy has started keeping records of the students so as to utilize their agricultural expertise and to provide it as per the need of the Government of Nepal and the private sectors. The number of students has increased and the meticulous efforts paid to increase more next year. The Embassy has sought scholarship for Masters and PhD Students in Israeli Universities. The Israeli side has informed the Embassy that both the countries need to sign a cultural agreement to provide any scholarship. It will also help to introduce Israeli technologies to Nepal. The Prime Minister Oli

expressed his guts to bring the technology from Israel especially in agriculture field. Additionally Israel has developed many technologies and innovations in health, education, IT sectors too.

I participated the “25th Anniversary of the program for Students in Agriculture” held at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem on 4th June, 2019. As the training period of 11 months is not sufficient, I urged on behalf of Asian Countries to select best students and provide them training for extra period so as to enhance their capacity to act as consultant when they go back to their countries. I appreciated the team for the completion of successful 25 years and for their wonderful works. The state of Israel is a pioneer of agricultural technology and has substantially increased its per unit productivity within a limited land for a limited number of species by the use of hi-tech structures, mechanization and proper dissemination of technical knowledge among farmers. Possibly, no other country like Israel has helped the world with so much agricultural breakthrough in terms of food security and food sovereignty. A lot of opportunities for students from thirty countries have been given to learn on Agriculture field. The students are much benefited and hope they would apply their knowledge and ideas they have gained and garnered a good Agriculture practices in their own countries.

In this connection, around 500 Nepali students are studying in five agricultural centers of Israel namely S'dot Negev Agriculture Center (SNAC), Ramat Negev International Center, Arava International Center for Agricultural Training (AICAT), Kinneret Academic College, Ashkelon Agriculture Center for advanced training. I have visited all the centers where Nepali students are studying and also the farms where they are working and admired for the wonderful works as the visit of Ambassador to each and every center is very crucial to encourage and motivate them.

Israel's continued support via Mashav to train and educate Nepali students, and other professionals have greatly contributed in introducing new techniques, technologies and methods to boost agricultural production and other sectors too. We are very grateful for all such cooperation.

I met with Nepali graduates at different prestigious

universities of Israel studying in Intermediate, Bachelor, Master, Ph. D. and fellowship levels. Also, I have been invited by some schools and colleges where I have delivered in front of students from Israel and international community as a guest speaker. I have also visited and observed many community based organizations (Kibbutz, Moshav, Moshe, Moshava, etc.), universities, companies to extend our relations at people's level.

It is more important that very few students are coming to universities of Israel on their own, through direct contact with Professors. There are many opportunities for students which they need to grab. Due to continuous effort of Nepal Embassy, Dr. Bhagwan Koirala and Dr. Smriti Shakya, we are succeeded to provide scholarship for one doctor from Kathmandu Institute of Child Health (KIOCH), Nepal to study in Hadassah Hospital in Israel. My experiences pushed me to say that it needs to organize exchange of visits at Professors/Doctors, teachers, students, faculty members and other levels so that both sides will be benefited. I am confident that our bilateral relations will grow stronger in the days ahead.

I visited "Wolfson Medical Center" and "Save a Child's Heart (SACH)" whose support made Nepali baby Avita's surgery possible. Avita had a congenital heart problem which was treated in Wolfson Medical Center through the support of Mr. Morris Kahn. He is a well-known Philanthropist and one of the major donors of SACH, an Israel based international humanitarian organization; whose initiatives have saved more than 5000 lives and restored eye sights of thousands of people. I am thankful to the medical team and Mr. Kahn for such generosity. I also extended invitation to Mr. Kahn to visit Nepal.

Nepali friends drew our attention after visiting Kalia beach in dead sea informing about a display board placed near a beach falsely denoted Mt. Everest with a flag of China. We succeeded to place a new display board with the help of Israeli Authority which now rightly states that Mount Everest is in Nepal. Four million tourists visit this beach annually.

Minister of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation of Nepal Honorable Padma Kumari Aryal visited the

State of Israel from 16 to 19 July, 2019. In the bilateral talks with the then Minister of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services of the State of Israel, Haim Katz, both the Ministers discussed on issues of Nepali workers in Caregiver, Farmer, Hotels, and Construction sectors and explored new avenues of cooperation in future. She also held bilateral talks with construction Minister Yifat Shasha-Biton and expressed her commitments to introduce Israeli technologies in building roads and constructing unified settlements in Nepal. Minister Aryal also met with the then Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Uri Ariel. Minister Ariel expressed his willingness to support Nepal's efforts proposing few plans where he expected to get response from Nepal. He visualized that the



(With the Minister of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation of Nepal and the Minister of Construction and Housing of Israel)

Israeli technological cooperation will assist in transforming Nepali Agriculture from subsistence level to commercial level.

The Minister Aryal also held meetings to have collaboration in the sectors of agriculture, cooperatives, land mapping, mapping, geodesy, cadaster and geo-informatics, advanced identification, tracking and security solutions. Nepal showed particular interest in Land Information System (LIS), an all-inclusive solution designed to handle complete aspects of Land Management practices. LIS included secured land-titles' certification, secure portal where land-owners can handle their land-related affairs, pay their bills, strong

audit trail and reporting capabilities. Also, there was a bilateral meeting in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel.

I had a meeting with Shai Cohen, Senior Diplomatic Advisor at the Knesset and discussed about Nepal-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Group formed on 9 July 2019. The discussion continued to exchange the visit of Parliamentarians for sharing ideas, knowledge and practices with each other.

Due to my active involvement in many events/programs organized by the Government of Israel, Diplomatic Missions, and social networks such as Rotary Clubs, Schools, Universities/Colleges, Hospitals, Local bodies, International Women's Club (IWC), Ambassadors' club of Israel, etc., I am selected as "Ambassador of the year 2019-2020" by the Ambassadors' Club of Israel among 90 Heads of Mission based in Israel. According to the Ambassadors' Club, I am awarded for the excellent performance as a Diplomat serving the interest of Nepal in Israel as well as advancing the relations between the two countries. I really feel proud to get this award of excellence discerned by the Club.

On 7th August 2019, I met with a veteran Singer Gali Atari, the first Israeli Euro Vision contestant who sang about Nepal around forty years ago. She has been making Nepal popular among Israelis with that song about Nepal. She applauded me and the Embassy for coming to see her concert saying that "Nepal is not far away now because the Ambassador of Nepal is here" I found many Israelis visited Nepal only because of her song. So, I admired her and the writer of the song for their wonderful job.

Two Nepali artists participated in "International Art and Craft Festival" one of the biggest exhibition in Israel on 12-24 August, 2019. Visiting the Nepali stall, we found that the interests of Israelis in Nepalese jewelries and arts were significant. They sold their stuffs almost completely.

President of the State of Israel H. E. Reuven Rivlin hosted Women in Diplomacy network at his residence. Issues on women empowerment, involvement and motivation were discussed in the network where I highlighted the exemplary constitutional provisions of Nepal stating about the alternative representation of male and female in government's vital posts viz. President and Vice President

of Nepal should represent different gender and communities. Similar arrangements are made for the selection or election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker of House of Representatives, Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of National Assembly, Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Municipalities and among other (elected) executive posts. It assures the representation of 33 percent of seats for women in parliament whether they lose or win in election followed by other governmental institutions as well. Because of this very progressive provision, Nepal currently has significant number of female Parliamentarians.

On the national day of Nepal 2019, Gilad Cohen, Deputy Director General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel was the guest of honor. He appreciated Nepali care givers and students who have been doing exemplary works, hoped to promote an inter-government agreement aimed at bringing even more Nepalese care-givers to Israel. He also praised "Learn and Earn" program which has successfully trained more than 3000 graduates already. The graduates are equipped with unprecedented knowledge and experiences in modern Israeli farming technology. He also thanked Nepalese government for its role in creating regional stability through its continued contribution of soldiers to the UN peacekeeping missions along the Israeli borders, including UNTSO, UNIFIL and UNDOF. He appreciated the openness and kindness of Nepalese people in receiving Israelis who visit Nepal every year to discover the natural beauty. He happily offered Israeli citizens to cope an opportune of the occasion of visit Nepal Year 2020 declared by the Government of Nepal.

In the Israel visit of Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Development of Nepal Honorable Chakrapani Khanal to participate in Agri-tech 2018, he was asked by H. E. Uri Ariel, the then Minister of Agriculture of the State of Israel to prepare a road map for Nepali Agriculture sector. Nepali side expressed its willingness and had forwarded project proposal to Israeli side to establish the Agricultural Centers of Excellence in Nepal. I handed over the project proposal to Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to the Head of MASHAV. After the continued and rigorous efforts, following the talk and proposal, Israeli MFA arranged a



(With the Prime Minister of Nepal during the visit of Ambassador Haskel)

visit of Ambassador Gil Haskel, Head of MASHAV to Nepal from 8 to 12 December 2019. I not only accompanied ambassador Gil Haskel but also arranged all the high level meetings (meeting with the Rt. Honorable Prime Minister and 9 Ministers). The aim of the visit was to survey the fields to establish Agriculture Centers of Excellence in Nepal. The MoU has been signed on 30 September 2020 to establish the centers. Additional two MoUs (MoU on Energy and MoU on Education, Science, Culture and Sports) are in the pipeline.

Honorable Minister of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation of Nepal Mr. Yogesh Bhattarai visited the State of Israel from 10 to 13 February 2020 at the invitation of Israeli Tourism Minister H. E. Yariv Levin to participate in International Mediterranean Tourism Market (IMTM) 2020. They discussed about the possibilities of operating direct flights between Nepal and Israel along with other tourism related issues including the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between two Tourism Ministries. The Minister had a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Regional Cooperation of Israel H. E. Tzachi Hanegbi and discussed to increase the number of Nepali students taking agricultural training in Israel and to lengthen the period of



(With the Minister of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation of Nepal and the Tourism Minister of Israel during IMTM 2020)

training for them including the process of establishing Agriculture Center in Nepal. The matter to open the care giver in full fledge through bilateral labor agreement was also discussed during the meeting. Minister Bhattarai also met with the Minister of Economy H. E. Eli Cohen and proposed to exchange business delegation and requested the Minister Cohen to motivate Israeli investors to invest in Nepal. It has brought a lot of hopes to enhance our bilateral relations in the areas of Culture, Tourism, Civil aviation, Agriculture, Labor, Energy, Trade and Investment, among others.

The Government of Nepal had announced the year 2020 as Visit Nepal Year (VNY) which was officially inaugurated in Nepal by the Rt. Hon. Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari. Israeli Minister of Tourism H. E. Yariv Levin inaugurated the event in Israel. Following the campaign, the Embassy organized historical tourism promotion events both in Israel and Cyprus in presence of Hon. Minister of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation of Nepal Mr. Yogesh Bhattarai. The Government of Nepal announced Mr. Nadav Ben Yehuda as Good will ambassador of VNY 2020 for Israel. However, VNY Campaign has been stopped due to the global pandemic. Hope this campaign will continue in near future.

In the light of aforementioned high level visits and meetings, I would prefer to highlight some of the achievements of my tenure and some important processes in the pipeline. After a rigorous and continuous effort of the Embassy of Nepal, we are at the stage of reopening the care giver sector in full fledge at Government to Government (G to G) level. Regarding this matter, a draft letter has

been sent from the Ministry of Labor, Nepal to the Government of the State of Israel. The Israeli side is positive on it and we hope that we will be able to conclude this matter soon. Embassy of Nepal organized some programs and interactions related to investment opportunities, tourism, culture, labor etc.



(With the Foreign Minister of the State of Israel during signing agreements)

No new Treaty is signed between the two nations yet. However, Cultural Exchange Agreement, Agricultural Agreement, Health, Education and Energy Agreement are initiated to facilitate training and capacity building. On the occasion of 60 years of establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Israel, agreement on Visa Exemption for Diplomatic Passport holders has been signed. This agreement is signed by myself on behalf of the Government of Nepal and by H. E. Gabi Ashkenazi on behalf of the Israeli Government on 20 August, 2020.

High Level Zoom meetings were organized between the high level officials of Nepal and Israel as a result of which Framework agreement to bring Nepali workers in different fields has been signed on 30 September, 2020. Based on this agreement, a process of bringing Nepali caregivers in Nursing sector of Israel has been started. We are also hopeful to bring Nepali farmers in Israel soon.

An MoU to establish Agriculture Center of Excellence in

Nepal has been signed between the Government of Nepal and MASHAV on 30 September, 2020. MoU between Federation Chamber of Commerce of two countries, MoU between Tourism Ministries, etc. are in the primary stage.

Nepal Embassy successfully coordinated the historical MoU signing between Nepal-Israel Chamber of Commerce and Israel-Nepal Chamber of commerce on 21 May, 2020. Nepal Academy and Hebrew Writers' Association have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance mutual understanding and friendly relationship between academicians, writers, poets, scholars and intellectuals of both countries to promote art, culture, literature etc. Both of them agreed to exchange visits, mutually translate books, articles, poems, novels, and so on.

An MoU has been signed between Arava Nepal and AICAT. MoU between Federation Chamber of Commerce of two countries, MoU between Tourism Ministries, etc. are in the primary stage.

The Embassy is also coordinating with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Nepal and Israel regarding the second meeting of Bilateral Consultation Mechanism (BCM) between the two nations.

The Embassy has set up few plans to celebrate Year 2020 as 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relationship. However, we need to streamline it due to COVID-19. Nepal Embassy arranged high level telephone talks between the leaders (Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers) of two countries on the first day of 60th anniversary i. e 1 June, 2020. We formed a joint committee of doctors of Nepal and Israel (Nepal-Israel COVID Initiatives) to share knowledge and practices to jointly combat this global pandemic.

Considering the activities of the Embassy, The Ambassador's Club of Israel has awarded me as "DIPLOMAT OF THE YEAR 2020."



(Receiving the Award of Excellence in Diplomacy from The Ambassadors' Club of Israel)

At first, I was very excited to hear that I was selected for Ambassador of the Year 2019-2020. For this Award of Excellence, I would like to thank The Ambassador's Club, the government and people of both Nepal and Israel, diplomatic community and all of my friends for their honest support. This Award of Excellence in diplomacy is the highest distinction discerned by the Club for foreign diplomats, it makes me feel so gratified and profoundly honored for having this noble award. I heard that, it is granted for this first time to Asian country. I understand the value of this recognition, which gives me more encouragement and motivation to enhance our relations in the days ahead.

On the occasion of my birthdays, I have been meeting with families of the Israelis who lost their lives in Nepal. On behalf of Embassy, I would like to salute the families who showed their courage to live even in such difficult times of losing their dears and hope their stories would inspire generations to generations. It also gives the message that there is a great uncertainty in regard to our lives anywhere in the world.

Of course, there are still many things to do to enhance our bilateral relations. At the same time, we should be proud of what we have achieved. It's a spontaneous process of our daily life. I believe that these activities will definitely support to materialize "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali", an overarching dream of Nepal government. We are in the process to achieve a speedy economic development. At present, Nepal has a stable government with 2/3rd majority in the parliament. We have already promulgated a progressive new constitution endorsed by 90 % of the lawmakers.

This stability has brought confidence in people which consequently is encouraging them to invest in various sectors. Excluding the Corona crisis, GDP growth rate of Nepal is 7%.

Nepal is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of water resources and bio-diversity due to its unique geographical position and latitudinal variation. The elevation of the country ranges from 59m above sea level to 8 highest peaks out of 10 in the world. We can say that "Naturally Nepal, Once is not enough"

We have 10 World Heritage Sites, sacred Birthplace of the Shakyamuni Buddha, the living goddess Kumari, land of scenic

beauty, marvelous landscape, archaeological wonders, 12 national parks, 3 wildlife reserves and 6 conservation areas, hunting reserve, jungle safari with village tours, rafting, paragliding, canyoning, bungee jumping, and many more. Apart from these, we are now focusing on eco-tourism and religious-tourism. One can get experiences of vivid cultural aspects, Nepali food and very hospitable smiling people. Nepal and Israel share a unique bond representing Mt. Everest of Nepal, the highest point on the earth and Dead Sea from Israel, the lowest point on the earth.

We have been witnessing a growing number of tourists from Israel to Nepal every year. I hope this trend will further increase. I have requested in various programs to all the Israelis to make Nepal a next holiday destination. We have “on arrival visa” provision for many countries including Israel so that one can make their flight to Nepal from anywhere in the world.

Nepal always remembers the outstanding support of Israel sending a delegation of 280 professionals and government officials to Nepal for rescue operations immediately after the earthquake 2015. The exchange of visits of Heads of State/Heads of the Government is the most awaited to further enhance our relations.

Nepal is located between two large and rapidly growing economies – China and India with easy access to markets of more than 2.7 billion people. Nepal enjoys various duty and tax free arrangements in the region as a Member of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral, Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Nepal is a member of Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) of the World Bank Group and member of World Trade Organization (WTO). Nepal has duty free quota free market access to European Union and Duty free US market access to 66 types of garment items for 10 years (starting from 2016). Due to these provisions, Nepal has a very high potential for the investment.

We are waiting to welcome more Israeli tourists as well as explore better business environment for Investments and Trade in days to come.

-Dr. Shakya is the Ambassador of Nepal to the State of Israel.

Experiences of Nepali Agricultural Trainee in Israel



-Sharma, Geeta

My name is Geeta sharma. I am from Nepal. Now, I am living in Israel as an agricultural trainee in Ramat Negev Advanced Agriculture training Center. The incoming process took me far from the usual track, into the depths of this magical landscape which is full of unexpected experiences. Being a part of Ramat Negev for almost two year, introduced me to this incredible region, to the unique desert experiences, to Israel which make any journey special. I got the opportunity to explore the beauty of this amazing site. It's hard to describe the feeling of approaching a desert to someone who has never seen one before. A dry landscape, a browning big open wide land, scattered trees, bushes, unique rock layer, adverse climatic conditions, unbelievable development of agriculture inside the greenhouses, development of high-tech infrastructure and signs of human life and their luxurious life standard. Yes, these things make the magical journey of mine here in this program. I can write little bit and maybe show some pictures but portraying

that feeling is much harder because it's so special. And this specialty is given only by agriculture training program which is running at Ramat Negev Advanced agriculture training Center. This training center is operated by the Research and Development Department of Ramat Negev Regional Council. It is located at Moshav Kmehin in the southern part of Negev near Beersheva city-capital of the Negev.

For Nepali students, this program started at 2013 in collaboration with Sana Kisan Bank, a venture of agriculture development bank and small farmer co-operative limited (SFCLs). Recently, this training program includes around 600 students from different nationalities such as Nepal, Vietnam, Myanmar, Zambia



*(Dr. Anjan Shakya, Ambassador of Nepal and Mr. Alon Melchior,
Director of Ramat Negev with Students)*

and Central American countries like Honduras, Jamaica, and Guatemala. The major goal of this training program is to provide advanced agriculture and practical training to the students which help them to improve farms and yield outcomes. Another important goal is to keep long-term bilateral relations with developing countries by exposing of students to advanced agriculture knowledge and techniques which will be great contribution in building of human capital in a competitive world.

My arrival date here in Ramat Negev was in 2018 as a group

leader in order to lead the group of Nepali students. So, my role and responsibility is a bit different and more sensitive. I'm continuously in touch with every students for most of the time. Within this 11-month time period, students live in different local farms of Ramat Negev where the time is dedicated to practical training, research and work in the farm. Students get great opportunities to experience practical modern methods of agriculture. Also, they can see the fact of extreme struggle, smartness, people's will power, creative ideas and new methodology while working with Israeli farmer. Along with this, students are facilitated by the great platforms for sharing their experiences, ideas, social and cultural aspects of their native countries because a lot of students from different nationality stay together, work together and come in school together.



(Students working in middle desert tomato farms)

In school, theoretical knowledge of agriculture and management is given by lecturers who have both academic background and field experience. My job in school is to translate

the materials given by lecturers in my own language to the group of Nepali students. Group is divided based on number of students, 50 for each group. Altogether, Students learn 17 courses of different agriculture aspects like plant sciences (Plant breeding, Plant protection, Drip irrigation, postharvest), animal sciences (Poultry, Fish farming, Dairy), basic business management skills which is really helpful to navigate business world, strength of entrepreneur and also helps to expand the creativity in generating perfect business plan. In the beginning of the training program, students get very important lessons about safety for better safety precaution while working in the farms. Similarly, students get a chance to learn about the history of Israel, a lot of information and facts, people & religion, influencing facts of agriculture, development of new invention, geography, climate, interesting places, many more about the Israel and its successful movement from a very experienced teacher in a very interesting way. At the last of school days, every student need to submit their final project of research which is evaluated by the senior lecturers of the project and then students can graduate successfully.

Besides the school activities, the program provides the opportunity to see Israel more openly. Eilat (Red Sea), Jerusalem,



(School's field trip in R & D center)

Dead Sea, Haifa, Harmon Mountain, Tel Aviv beach and more. Students can feel how beautiful and thrilling is the wave movement of the open sea for the 1st time in their lives. The experience becomes more special and wonderful as being at lowest place on earth, floating in the saline waters, bath in the therapeutic mineral-rich mud in Dead Sea. Another scenic beauty, religious faith, history and uniqueness of Jerusalem also taken as a wonderful sight visiting for every students. Other study related agricultural field trip also provided by the program like seeing of local organic farm, milking cow farm, poultry farm, soil trip to see vermicompost etc. Some of the friendly cultural activities are organized by the program like a Multinational New Year celebration, Dashain festival which are celebrated much happily and in a joyful way.

The agriculture training program is beneficial for the student's personal and professional development. After graduating the Ramat Negev agriculture training program, two former students of Ramat Negev are studying for a master's degree at Ben Gurion University. The programme itself plays a crucial role in making, searching, selecting and recommending the best students for the university in full scholarship. I think this is the great contribution for the welfare of the students. Doing struggle & drag the direction of life is one's selection but providing the opportunities for those needy is much more appreciated.

I see many more opportunities for those students including me, who arrived here as an agriculture trainee. The 11-month training program is fruitful for both the countries and especially for the students, because learning and gaining priceless practical experiences, discipline, skills, new methods, technology and theoretical knowledge. We have some successful stories from our former students with full positive vibes who are doing their job very well after returning to Nepal. These stories are also mentioned in the project's website. Shiva Kumar Ale, a young resident of Bhimad Tanah, Nepal, was a student at Ramat Negev in the year of 2017-2018. He is doing his goat farming business which is running nicely. After the completion of the training program, he returned back to Nepal and applied the agricultural technology, maximum utilization and management of water, farmer-friendly

research, sense of entrepreneurship to his business. He imported he-goat of Boer gene from Africa and Australia in his goat farming business and then farm grew tremendously. In addition to the goat farm, he planted 15,000 trees and green grass. Also, he is planning to implement drip irrigation technology learned in Israel. He said he is trying his best to make the farm as a model farm of his area.

Another inspiring success story by a girl named Ms. Sirjana Chaudhary, a former student of Ramat Negev 2015-2016. She is managing her own fish farm business in Butwal, Nepal. She said, “When I studied and worked in the program, I used to think about the agricultural sector, dreaming to become a farmer and a successful business woman. After completing 11 month training, I returned back to Nepal and started my own business: A fish farm. First, I had a small fish farm where local fish were reared. As time passes, my business progressed, expanded to 2.5 hectare of land which is later used to make altogether four managed earthen pond where many indigenous fish are grown: Carps family like Labeo rohita (Rohu), Cirrhinus spp. (Naini), Kaaman, Grass carp, Silver Carp, Bighead Carp, etc., as well as some exotic fish. Recently, I established 2 nursery earthen ponds, where approximately 10000 fingerlings are reared and two big earthen pond around 6000 big up to market size fish are reared. I sell small fingerlings to a nearby hatchery home and big fish are shipped to the near district. Mostly, I do my business with the local Nepali Market. A new place, a new idea, hard work, patience, the knowledge and practical training I gained at Ramat Negev, are those precious things which lead me to take the step and become an entrepreneur.”

These are just some of the examples of how inspiring Ramat Negev is for its graduates. We can find many more successful stories from the former students. We learned a lot from this training program and still in the learning process. For me, it became a life changing experience and pivotal moment in both personal and professional life. Professionally, I learned management, working style, importance of time, respect, discipline, diplomacy, patience, and confidence, a lot of theoretical and practical knowledge of agriculture. I get much love and support from all training program staff. They always advise me not to limit myself because it's

necessary to dream big and think ahead to do more. They motivated and try to keep me calm in dealing with stressful situations. In this training program, I always work alongside the Director and the coordinators, they usually manage and help me to learn and grow which is always appreciated. This is the kind of strength and reality of this agriculture training program.

Struggle, hard work, interdisciplinary studies, interaction and many experiences provided by Ramat Negev open anyone's mind to new ideas and lifestyles. Also after knowing the powerful dedication, working with Israeli farmers and their most updated new and high technology, I can hope that the agriculture trainee who comes from Nepal will take their own nation in a different level by growing, learning, producing, marketing and distributing their unique idea to uplift the traditional agriculture system to highly ranked modern agricultural system very soon.

-Ms. Sharma is a trainee and Nepali students' leader in Ramat Negev Advanced Agriculture Training Center.

(This article was received on 29 November, 2019)

Promoting Nepal-Israel Trade, Industrial and Economic Relations: Opportunities and Prospects



-Shrestha, Rajesh Kazi

Diplomatic relations between Nepal and Israel were established on 1 June 1960. A year after that, in March, Israel established its embassy in Kathmandu. Nepal opened her Honorary Consulate General's office in Israel in 1993 and embassy in 2007. Initially, the Nepali Ambassador to Egypt was accredited to Israel as well. Since the establishment of bilateral ties between both nations, Nepal has always backed Israel's national interest in all international forums.

Nepal and Israel are long standing bilateral partners” in a range of G2G, G2B Development cooperation spheres undertakings (e.g. Human capacity, specialized work services, technical know-how and business initiatives), At a time when there was no relation of Israel with Beijing, New Delhi and other Asian Countries, Nepal was the first sovereign country to establish a relation with Israel from this region. That's why we share a good relationship with Israel.

Nepal has been receiving technical assistance from Israel for

agricultural development. Both nations have agreed to contribute to the development of agriculture, promote exchange of technical and scientific knowledge related to the agricultural sectors in both countries. The agreement provisions for exchange of research data, agricultural policy formulations and implementation, and approaches adopted to encourage cooperation between public and private sector stakeholders.

Israel has been assisting Nepal in the field of infrastructure development programmes like agriculture, cooperative, medical and education sector. Nepal is very impressive by the growth of cooperatives in Israel popularly known as Kibbutz and Nepal will learn more from such exchanges of visits. Nepal-Israel relations should be consolidated further through exchange of art, culture & other development activities between Nepal & Israel.

Nepal and developing economies at large - holds favourable conditions and opens for Innovative technology and IT related partnerships, **Agriculture - Rural sector** – are an integral part of the “BIG PICTURE” of the national economy and a “key player” in any PPP development program (The “4 Forces”-PEOPLE, LAND, WATER, FOREST),

Israeli volunteers have proved to be a valuable asset to Nepal, as they offer their services in areas like education and health where Nepal is woefully lagging behind. Nepal should learn from the radical changes achieved by Israel in the agriculture sector with maximum utilization of irrigation using modern technology.

Both the countries have signed bilateral Air Service Agreement to strengthen our friendly relationship. This we hope will increase the flow of Israeli tourists visiting Nepal. Even though we share a very friendly relationship with each other, we have to reengage ourselves in cooperation again as there is almost no cooperation. We have to increase the economic ties, as both countries will get benefit with economic relations. In this regard, Nepal Chamber of Commerce is willing to play its role.

Major export item to Israel consists of: Manufactured Tobacco, Tobacco, partly or wholly stemmed/stripped, M & B Cotton shirt, not Knitted, Used or new rags, scrap twine, cordage, sorted. While the import from Israel consists of: Concentrate of

non-alcoholic soft drink, Citrus fruits, prepared or preserved, whether or not, Base oil, Refine lead, unwrought.

The current status of trade between the two countries shows that trade is greatly in favour of Israel. As of today, there is no formal trade agreement that exists between the two countries.

Investment

The Israeli businessmen are interested to tap the growing telecommunications sector of Nepal and want to invest on this area. They are especially eyeing the cellular mobile sectors the coverage of which is still at low level. It can become one of the most important sectors of cooperation between two countries. There is also possibility of supplying materials for hydropower projects from Israel.

Tourism

It has been estimated that about 8 thousand Israeli tourists visit Nepal every year; mostly young students and adventure seekers. Youth oriented tourism promotion programs in Israel would help in attracting young tourists from Israel to Nepal.

Since Israel has got the experience and expertise in the field of floriculture development, we expect support from Israeli government, whereby our entrepreneurs could visit your country and get the first hand information which will subsequently lead to flourish the floriculture business in Nepal. In this regard, Nepal Chamber is willing to play the vital role.

Agreements

A Protocol of Cooperation was signed between Nepal and the State of Israel in Tel Aviv on 25 June 1993 during the official visit of then Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. Similarly, Government of Nepal and Government of Israel have signed a bilateral Air Service Agreement (ASA) (November 18th, 2002), bilateral agreement on Agriculture Cooperation (2010) and there are some other agreements in the offing. A Framework Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Agriculture was signed in March 2010 between the Government of Nepal and the Government of the

State of Israel. An agreement to establish **Bilateral Consultation Mechanism between the Foreign Ministry levels** was signed on May 2016 during the visit of Hon. Kamal Thapa, then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Finally, the assistance provided by the Israel Government immediately after the 2015 earthquake is appreciated from all levels of Nepal Government.

Trade:

The trade between Nepal and Israel has remained extremely in favor of Israel. Nepal exports Jute Carpet, Woolen products, Tobacco items, vegetable products to Israel and imports Non-alcoholic drinks, Disc recorder, electronic machinery and equipment, animal vaccine etc. In 2019 Nepal exported the items to Israel worth amounting to USD 47,053 and imported amounting to USD 6,098,676 resulting trade deficit balance to USD -6,051,623.

Tourism:

There is an immense potential towards enhancing the field of tourism in both countries. This is further supported by the fact that Nepal is blessed with natural beauty, world's popular high peaks including the tallest Mountain on the earth Mt. Everest, adventurous touristic sites and friendly people which Israeli citizens love most. Similarly, Israel has unique beauty of its own including the world's lowest place on the earth the Dead Sea, the unmatched salt water that keeps one automatically floating on the surface.

In 2012, Nepal and Israel Jointly issued Postal Stamp commemorating the completion of 50 years of diplomatic relations between two countries. The number of Israeli tourists visiting Nepal is about 8 thousands annually and hope it will certainly increase in the days ahead.

Role of Nepal Chamber of Commerce in promoting bilateral economic relations

Nepal Chamber of Commerce is **the oldest chamber** in Nepal. It is the federal body. After the promulgation of the Constitution in Nepal, established about 50 plus chambers

associations in different parts of the country and in all the seven provinces. By the end of this year, in almost all the 77 districts Chamber will be established.

As such, Nepal Chamber is the Membership Based organization with **about 10,000 members including the commodity associations, national chamber and affiliated professional organizations**. We are providing suggestions in the formulation of the economic related Acts including **Industrial Enterprises Act, Labour Act, Foreign Investment Act, and Contribution based Social Security Act, BAFIA**, and the like.

Nepal Chamber of Commerce in the recent past concluded various flagship programme and plan to do the programme in days to come like:

- a. Nepal Chamber Expo since 2015 till date on a periodic regular basis with International country partner. NCC is planning to convene the NCC Expo 2020 also.
- b. Participation in different international fairs and exhibitions
- c. Represented in almost all the committees formed by the Government.

Just to recapitulate, Nepal chamber had sent its members to participate in various Agro fair held in Israel in “Agriculture Exhibition and Conference” Agritech Israel 2015.

-Mr. Shrestha is President of Nepal Chamber of Commerce.

(This article was received on 15 August, 2019)

Symbol of Long-Strong Nepal-Israel Relations: The Israeli Embassy in Kathmandu



-Simkhada, Dr. Shambhu Ram

There is only a thin line between triumph and trauma, success and failure in many human pursuits and professions. In risky high altitude Himalayan expeditions and sensitive *Expedition of Diplomatic Mountain Climbing* this line is even thinner. That is why caution than boldness is preferred in diplomacy, especially for the small and less powerful. But in an unusually bold diplomatic move Nepal's first democratically elected Prime Minister B. P. Koirala not only recognized the State of Israel but also went on an official visit during his short tenure in 1959-60. History has proved, his decision making Nepal one of the first Asian countries to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel as far back as June, 1960 was also one of the most farsighted.

Nepal-Israel Friendship: Since then Nepal and Israel have enjoyed excellent bilateral relations. Nepal has stood firmly for Israel's right to exist in peace and with secure border, while also recognizing the right of the Palestinian people, both living

side by side, and all countries in the region coexisting in peace, dignity, prosperity and security. Nepal has also supported all peace initiatives in the Middle East and stood by Israel in the international fora, contributing significantly in United Nations' peace keeping operations with many Nepali senior military officers serving as Force Commanders in the region. Israel has helped Nepal in many ways, providing technical assistance and scholarships in different fields, establishment of the National Construction Company and training Nepali paratroopers as some highlights.

Israeli Embassy in Kathmandu: The Israeli Embassy in Kathmandu, established in March 1961, one of the oldest Israeli embassies in the region, has stood as a symbol of this long and strong friendship between Nepal and Israel. It is in the backdrop of this long-strong friendship and important role played by the Israeli embassy and many distinguished Ambassadors that I found startling the information so kindly shared by a distinguished Israeli diplomat and my good friend and colleague Ambassador Yosef Lamdan, Israel's Permanent Representative (PR) to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva in an informal chat in early March, 1999 that Nepal was one of the 10 countries where the Israeli embassy was going to be closed for austerity reasons.

Timely information from a good friend: Yuval Noah Hariri's fascinating book *Sapiens, A brief History of Mankind*, shows how the history of the human race is filled with subjugation and extermination of "others". Born and raised in the simplicity and naiveté of the central hills of the "isolated" Nepal of the 1950s, far away from even the emerging Kathmandu elites, let alone understanding the "sophistication" of the developed world, I grew up seeing only the "goodness" of the humankind. Even now, after so much twists and turns, ups and downs, triumph and trauma I am unable to fathom man's inhumanity to fellow humans. New friendship has been a motto of my life and diplomatic life for sure.

Friendship with a distinguished American Civil Rights lawyer, scholar and diplomat, Ambassador Morris Abraham, who also served as US Representative to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, of which I became Vice Chairman in 1999 and Chairman in 2000, was one of those blessings. I met Ambassador

Abraham soon after arriving in Geneva as Nepal's acting PR and we developed great personal relationship. He was an elderly gentleman and I and my wife were relatively young then. So, he used to treat us as a family.

Morris introduced me to Yosef Lamdan, the Israeli Ambassador. Excellent official relations between our two countries, personal goodwill and mutual friendship with Morris made my friendship with Yosef also special. This friendship must have prompted him to spontaneously share the information on the proposed closure of the Israeli embassy in Kathmandu with me in our informal conversation. Significantly, that information triggered some pro-active diplomacy further strengthening Nepal Israel friendship.

Pro-active Diplomacy: In our conversation, I explained to Ambassador Lamdan the history of Nepal-Israel relations. I further pointed out that G. P. Koirala, brother of B. P. Koirala, who took that bold diplomatic decision to establish relations with Israel so long ago, was now the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Although with no direct bilateral responsibility, I candidly conveyed my feeling to my colleague and friend that if the Israeli Embassy was to close now it would not only be regrettable but also hurt Nepali feelings. At the end of our conversation Ambassador Lamdan assured me, he would convey my views to his authorities back home.

I returned to my office and called Prime Minister G. P. Koirala to brief him on what I had heard. He took the matter seriously and said he would do the needful. I also sent a note to the ministry of foreign affairs back home. Meantime, I also called Ambassador Abraham and explained the situation. As Chairman of UN Watch, an organization promoting Israeli interests in the UN, I knew his views would be taken seriously by the Israeli authorities.

In the interest of Nepal-Israel relations and as a friend of Israel I had done my best. The decision was now in the hands of others. I am not privy to who played what roles but I am happy that the Israeli Embassy in Kathmandu continues to function as a symbol of the long and strong Nepal-Israel friendship. As a sign of strengthening relations, Nepal also has now established its

embassy in Israel with resident Ambassador. Nepal is today one of the choicest spots for Israeli tourists and Israel for Nepali migrant workers.

Nepal Israel relations - interesting case study in IR: How two countries far apart geographically and different in many ways have come together building a relationship of lasting friendship? Many who may have blamed B. P. for *trying to swallow more than he could chew*, and in a way may have played a role in punishing him in domestic politics, were compelled to follow him on this particular course of foreign policy he pursued with boldness and foresight. Nepal-Israel relations is thus an interesting case study in post World War II International Relations (IR), both theoretically and in practice.

Thin line between life and death, success and failure: Understanding of history along with practical knowledge and experience are important in all human pursuits, even more so in understanding IR, making of foreign policy and conduct of diplomacy, particularly if history is not to repeat itself. I wish Morris Abraham and Yosef Lamdan were around in Geneva at the time when I became the Chairman of one of the most vital but risky organs of the UN, the UN Human Rights Commission (Council), and chaired it's 5th Special Session devoted to Israel's role in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in September 2000.

Just before the formal opening of the 55th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in mid-March 1999, in which I had been elected Vice Chairman representing the Asian Group, I had received an invitation for dinner at the residence of Morris Abraham. One day before the dinner I met Yosef Lamdan in the UN meeting hall. Seeing me he signaled towards the quiet side of the room. I thought he was going to give me some news on the Israeli embassy in Kathmandu. Instead he gave me the shocking news of the sudden demise of Morris Abraham, with whom we were both supposed to be sitting around the dinner table at his beautiful residence across the Geneva lake the next evening.

I had known Morris Abraham only for a few years but we had developed a very close relationship. My father passed away when I was still very young. That morning when Yosef Lamdan

told me that Morris Abraham had died, it took me back to the time when I got the news that I had lost my father.

Yosef Lamdan also left Geneva soon after that. I missed these two good friends after they left for their different destinations. I missed their personal friendship but more than that I needed them in helping me understand the deep wounds of a whole people, society and nation-state carrying the memory of pains inflicted by genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Many can academically define or professionally claim to understand their meaning but feeling the pain or fathoming the collective sense of hurt left behind by those heinous crimes must be something else.

Chairmanship of the two UN meetings on Human Rights have profoundly affected not only my professional *Expedition of Diplomatic Mountain Climbing* but my whole *Journey of Life* personally. These events have given me new understanding of Israel, about which I have shared some reflections in my book *Human Rights Human Wrongs in the Scale of Human Conscience*. But, why does humanity repeat again and again what it vows "never again"? Human conscience is perhaps what prompted Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate Elie Weisel, to ask a gathering of world leaders "does humanity ever learn?"

-Dr Simkbada, Nepal's former PR to the UN in Geneva and Ambassador to Swiss Confederation (seen here third from right), with the current H.E. Mr. Benny Omer (with beard) and Nepali Ambassador to Israel H.E. Dr. Anjan Shakya (lady) is currently involved in teaching and writing, mostly devoting his time in healing the wounds and wiping the tears of those most affected by conflict and violence nationally and internationally.

(This article was received on 22 November, 2019)

Gurkhas in the Holy Land (1917-1918)



-Tearosh, Eran

This year, 2020, we are honoring the 60th anniversary of the official diplomatic relations between Nepal and Israel. However, it is fairly unknown that Nepalese hill-men were involved in the shaping of this region over 40 years before, by participation in the military campaign in the Sinai Peninsula, The Holy Land (The land of Israel, Palestine) and Syria during The Great War, 1917-1918. The Gurkha military units have a reputation of being among the finest, most respected and feared soldiers in the world. Acting under the motto 'It's better to die than live like a coward', the sound of their battle-cry, 'Ayo Gorkhali' (The Gurkhas are here) and the use of the Khukuri (a long-curved knife) earned the Gurkha that fearsome reputation. Legend say that once a Gurkha draws the Khukuri in battle, it must draw blood.

Nepalese hill-men are recruited by the British for over 200 years, first as a part of the British East India Company Army and later as a part of the British Indian Army. After India's independence

in 1947 and under the Tripartite Agreement, the Gurkha regiments were split between the British and Indian armies. Till today, young Nepalese men are recruited and serve with Gurkha military units in the Nepalese, British and Indian armies.

In 1997, Queen Elizabeth II unveiled in London the British Memorial to the Gurkhas. Surprisingly, there is a connection between this memorial and the Great War military campaign in the Holy Land – The inscription on the monument is a quotation from Sir Ralph Turner, a former officer in the 3rd (QAO) Gurkha Rifles Regiment, who fought with the 2nd battalion in the Holy Land and was awarded the Military Cross (MC) for his actions in this country:

THE GURKHA SOLDIER
Bravest of the brave,
most generous of the generous
never had country
more faithful friends
Than you



On the outbreak of the Great War there were ten Gurkha regiments, two battalions per regiment. During the war, thirteen more battalions were raised, some as a part of a new regiment, the 11 Gurkha Rifles. In addition to the British-Indian Gurkha Rifles, units of the Nepalese Army also took part in the war, and other Nepalese enlisted for other duties, such as Labor Battalions etc. The Gurkha Rifles fought in various theaters of the war, from the trenches of the Western Front in France, through Gallipoli, Egypt and the Suez Canal to Mesopotamia.

Egypt became the base of a multi-national army, the EEF – Egyptian Expeditionary Force – comprised mostly of British Empire and the dominions forces, plus French and Italian

detachments. Formed in 1916, the EEF fought the next years (1916-1918) through the Sinai Peninsula, the Holy Land and Syria. In June 1917, General (later Field-Marshal) Edmund Allenby took command of the EEF, at the gates of the Holy Land. On the eve of the late 1917 EEF's offensive, two battalions of the 3rd (QAO – Queen Alexandra's Own) Gurkha Rifles Regiment were a part of the 75th Division. These battalions, 2/3 and 3/3, took part in the breakthrough of the Ottoman lines, through the Plain of Philistia, the Judean Hills and HaShephela (Judean Lowlands). During this offensive the Gurkhas proved their worth time and time again, at Brown Hill, Nebi Samuel and other battlefields. During March and April 1918, the 3rd (QAO) Gurkha Rifles battalions took part in fierce fighting in south-west Samaria. 19 years old Rifleman Karan Bahadur Rana, of the 2/3 battalion, was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallant deeds during action on April 10th, 1918.

During 1918, many Indian units arrived in the Holy Land and joined the EEF, replacing British units that were sent to the Western Front. Among those Indian units, three more Gurkha Rifles battalions arrived – The 2/7 Gurkha Rifles & the 1/1 Gurkha Rifles, both part of the 3rd (Lahore) Division and the 1/8 Gurkha Rifles, part of the 7th (Meerut) Division. All battalions in the country gave some platoons to form a new battalion, 4/11 Gurkha Rifles, that joined the 53rd (Welsh) Division. Small numbers of men from other Gurkha battalions arrived in the country and were attached temporarily to the Gurkha battalions mentioned above.

All six Gurkha battalions took part in the great offensive launched by General Allenby in September 1918, later called 'The Battles of Megiddo'. Five of these battalions fought under the command of the XXI Corps, in the 'Battle of Sharon' on the western sector of the front line. This battle opened the way for the swift movement of the mounted forces to the Vale of Jezreel, encircling the Ottoman armies in Samaria and blocking their routes of retreat. The Gurkha battalions fought across the Sharon plain (from the west eastwards): 1/8 (7 Division) operated in the area which is western Ra'anana today to the north-west. The 2/3 & 3/3 (75 Division) acted towards Et-Tire. 1/1 (3 Division) fought in what is today the western part of Kfar Saba, before wheeling to the

east, north of Qalqilye to the edge of the mountains. To their right, the 2/7 moved south of Kfar Saba and on Qalqilya. During the following couple of days, the XXI Corps continued the movement into the Samaria Mountains. Far to the east, under the command of the XX corps, the 4/11 battalion took part in the 'Battle of Nablus', on the edge of the Judean Desert.

To demonstrate these fierce engagements, here are a few quotes from the regimental history of 'The 1st King George's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Malaun Regiment)':

"D Company had edged to the right and was partly mixed up with the 93rd Burma Infantry. A platoon had even gone beyond them. This platoon, under Jemadar Ane Thapa got among the 27th Punjabis and acted on its own account for some time. It did fine service, and, when held up by a field battery and machine guns, the Jemadar outflanked them with his Lewis guns and captured the whole battery. Khukuri were freely used on this occasion in rushing the trench...

C company had met with a good deal of resistance from Turks overrun by the Dorsets. In one instance, a Gurkha, seeing his platoon held up by a machine gun, worked round on his own initiative till he was behind the gun, jumped into the trench, killed two men with his Khukuri, and took the rest prisoners...

On the opposite flank Subadar Janga Rana had dealt equally efficiently with another Turkish post which he charged with his men. They took the post and killed many Turks with their Khukuris, besides taking twenty and exterminating with Lewis-gun fire those who attempted to escape".

About 500 fallen Gurkhas are commemorated at the Indian War Memorial in Heliopolis, Egypt. 32 are commemorated at the 1914-1918 Memorial in the Ramleh War Cemetery, south-east of Tel-Aviv. Several British officers who served with the Gurkha battalions and were killed in action are buried in Ramleh, with the relevant Gurkha regimental badge engraved on their headstones.

In November 2017, a moving community event took place in today's JNF's Azriqam Grove, Be'er Tuvia Forest (East of Ashdod), to commemorate the 100th anniversary of two battles that took place in this area. The event was organized by the JNF

(Jewish National Fund), The Be'er Tuvia Regional Council and The Society for the Heritage of WWI in Israel. Royal Scots, Australian Light Horse and Gurkha Rifles took part in these battles, and accordingly – representatives of the British, Australian and the Nepalese embassies were invited to take part as guests of honor.

Nepal was represented by Ms. Astha Subba, Second Secretary of the Embassy. The guests of honor participated in the moving event and after that – the unveiling of new information and commemoration signs and planted Olive trees.

This event was another step in the long journey of building bridges between local communities and visitors from abroad to this fascinating and lesser known chapter in the history of this land, following the footsteps of all armies, nations, soldiers and people involved in the Great War in this region, including the unique roll of the Nepalese Gurkhas in the liberation of this part of the world from the Ottoman rule.



(Embassy's participation in a moving community event)

-Mr. Tearosh is an Israeli scholar, expert of Land of Israel studies with an expertise on the Great War period. Mr. Tearosh is the chairman of The Society for the Heritage of WWI in Israel.

(This article was received on 17 July, 2020)

Experiences of Nepali Caregivers and Their Employers

Dana's employer's interview

My mother's caregiver is Kadmbari Shrestha (Dana), she has Hebrew name Dana. She is about 45 years old and she is from Kathmandu Nepal. When we were looking for an employee for my mother, we held an interview and she seemed kind and caring to me so I decided to hire her. She is the first Nepali caregiver and hopefully the last one. She is working with my mother for last 13 years. She is a caring and loving person. She loves my mother. She shows her compassion, she kisses her and touches her which is very good for my mother's health. She takes care of all the basic tasks with my mother and she has other skills like she hair styles and she knows beauty tips so my mother benefits for getting a haircut and my mother loves to put make up. My mother also gets massage and beauty care in times so my mother is in love with her. She is very honest. We treat her with lots of respect and she respects my mother. This is very important for us. The only problem and challenge working with Dana is lack of communication; we sometimes have some disputes and this due to miscommunication; we don't understand her Hebrew and English well. I expect that after a lot of time here in Israel, she will know how to speak Hebrew. We trust her and we feel safe that our mother in her hands. She is a wonderful personality. From our experience with her, I would suggest and highly recommend to others to hire Nepali caregivers.

Dana Shrestha

My name is Kadambari Shrestha (Dana). I came to Israel on

January 22, 2006 because I heard about good income. I worked for my first employer for two years and this is my second employer, and I have been working since February 11, 2008. Working almost 15 years in Israel, I bought a house in Kathmandu and two pieces of land in Kathmandu. I like Israel not only for income but also because it is safe especially for women. I recommend other Nepalese to come work in Israel.

If we work with sincerity, our employers treat us well. I really respect my employer and I like my employer's family. They treat me like a family member, they respect my work. They let me invite my friends at my employer's home. My employer's family took care of me when I was sick and was admitted in hospital; one family member stayed with me in hospital for two nights and two days. The family is very helpful; they have helped me with my private work in Nepal as well. They let me go visit my family in Nepal when I want. My employer is a happy woman at 90. She loves me and I do love her too. I don't see any problem in this work. I think care giving work for an old lady is a blessing. I am thankful to work with such nice employer and the family.

Nitu Khatiwada

My name is Nitu Khatiwada. I was born in Okhaldhunga, Nepal. I came to Israel 14 years ago. After working as a caregiver for several years, I got engaged in volunteering work as well. I volunteer for non-profit organizations like Kav La'Oved, Hotline, Mesila. When there is problem for Nepali workers, I go to help them. I also work as a freelance translator and interpreter. Whenever there are cases of Nepalese, I go to interpret in courts and in prison. For that work, I get paid as according to the rule. I like to write poems, songs in my free time.

I was raised in a village where it was not common for girls to go to school. But, my family allowed me to finish school. I am thankful to my parents and family that they made me capable in life. I started to work in tour and travel sector after marriage. But, tourism sector got hit badly when there was insurgence of Moist. That civil war had heavy impact on my work, I lost my job. This made me choose to come to Israel. I left my 3 years old son to my

family. It was very emotional moment but I had no choice but come to Israel for work.

It was very difficult for me in the beginning days in Israel. I did not know the language, the cultural difference was shocking and was not easy to spend days but thinking about good days in future helped me to adjust in the environment. I accepted challenges, I learned language, I became curious about Israeli culture and learned. I made friends. My first friend was from Philippines. She introduced me a monthly magazine called “Focal” where you can read about Israel, news about migrant workers, gives information about employment rights. I was happy to know about the magazine. One day, I read news about a Nepali lady in a problem. I contacted that Nepali lady and took her to Mesila organization for help. I was impressed with the help we got from Mesila that I decided to take part in training and become a volunteer. The training was for 3 months, and I became a licensed volunteer. After this, I got good exposure in social work. I built a good networking and I made many Nepali friends as well as other nationals. I am very happy that I am engaged in social work and I could help Nepali and others.

Sangita Gajurel Oli

It is said that economic freedom is an essential condition for women's empowerment. Financial independence is the foundation of women's right to live with dignity, equality and other women rights. Economic freedom capacitates women to make decisions, increasing access to resources. This is also my own experience. The way I live my life today is directly related to my financial freedom. The reason why I wanted to highlight this issue is to convey message to every woman so as to develop her overall personality and live according to her desires. In a country like Nepal, where patriarchal values are rooted, women's independence is not respected. Not being the same is the result of financial dependence of women. I want every woman to break the chain of dependency and march towards freedom.

I often tremble when I remember my past. The entire responsibility of raising and educating the two young children fell on my shoulders. I started looking for foreign employment after I

didn't have adequate income from the business. So I came to Israel about 15 years ago. After coming to Israel, I found that my life had changed drastically. This country not only showed me the way to financial freedom but also taught me how to live. Currently, I am living with the emotional closeness of my two children and their spouses. I am receiving love as well as respect from my children, which I think is directly related to my struggle and financial freedom. As I came to Israel and started working as a caregiver, I gradually advised my friends who had the desire of coming here and guided them about the process and other things. At that time, I thought that I should not be limited to the work, but should help interested fellow Nepali to come and work in Israel. I started doing that as a business. It gives me pleasure to help the brothers and sisters who are stranded and need support. Whether it's in the mass media or on social media, I didn't publicize my social works because whatever I do, I do it for self-satisfaction and social responsibility.

Living and doing business in Israel has provided me the opportunity to live with dignity and to brighten the lives of many others. Therefore, I would like to suggest to all the sisters to make the journey towards their financial independence from my own experience. I suggest that working in Israel can be a safe destination. Our economic liberty is the foremost step towards equality between men and women.

Neelam Bhattarai

I am Neelam Bhattarai, daughter of Mr. Purna Bahadur Bhattarai and Mrs. Pavitra Bhattarai. I was born in Birtamode, Jhapa, the Southernmost district of Nepal. I was working there as a beautician before coming to Israel.

While I was working as a beautician, a wave of people going to Israel from our village started and hence I also made up my mind to come to Israel. I heard that in Israel, there are good vacancies for women, especially in caregiving sector. So, I came to Israel in 2008 with the consent of my family. Initially, it was a bit difficult because of the language problem. In my opinion, in any country, it is one of the main problems for foreign workers. Gradually, it becomes easier to work once you start understanding the language. That was

the case for me too.

I was mentally prepared to make good use of my weekly vacation and study an international hair design course here besides working as a caregiver. Money and mind were no problems. The main challenge was to manage the time because my holidays here are on either Friday to Saturday or Saturday to Sunday. And my beautician training classes were usually on weekdays. Although it was difficult, I managed somehow and joined my first training at a school called Dezingoff Street Daya.

Everything was not as easy as I thought it would be. I was not smooth in Hebrew and Teaching Methods here were different than they are in Nepal. To be brutally honest, I did complete the course because I was unable to get the refund of money I paid for that course. Nevertheless that training became a milestone and a ladder for me to become an international beautician. This Non-refundable episode was kind of good for me. If I could get that money back, I would have done that and left the course and wouldn't have done the effort and my dream would have been unfulfilled.

After completion of this training, I wanted to enlarge my scope of study and started taking other courses. Hence other advanced courses were also added. What I got here is different schools for different pieces of training. Some were nearby while some were at more than 2 hours distance by bus.

In 2014 - 2020, I took different training on bridal makeup, modelling makeup, Photoshop makeup, permanent makeup, Setting makeup, Micro-blading, Eyeliner makeup, Eyebrows makeup, lipsticks makeup, Cosmetics, mojo therapy, plasma pain, laser, skin treatment, regular facial, beauty facial, chemical peeling, herbal peeling, hair cutting and hairstyling.

It took me five years and a large amount of money to complete all these courses. Today, I have succeeded in becoming an international professional beautician.

In the meantime, I wanted to be involved in social works. I worked as a member of a prestigious organization Non-Residential Nepalis Association (NRNA), Israel for two years (2017-2019). Now I am working as a vice president of the same organization for 2019-2021. I am also working as a consultant in another Israel

based Nepali organization: Jhapali Samaj Israel.

I also had the opportunity to travel around Europe as part of my work and got a chance to visit beautiful countries like Switzerland, Germany, France, Spain and Italy.

Israel is one of the fastest-growing and most developed countries in the world. This country has an equal opportunity for men and women. Especially in caregiving sector, majority of the workers are women. So our sisters from different countries are working here as caregivers. There is no violence or pressure against women here. Israel is a safe country for women to work.

Besides work, our Nepali brothers and sisters are involved in many social activities here. They are active in various Israel based Nepali social organizations. They have been providing financial assistance to the people who face critical problems in Nepal. The people who come here to work have made good money. Here the monthly salary is up to 200000 (in Nepali currency). It seems to be better than Europe in terms of earnings. I consider myself lucky that I work in Israel.

Interview with Mrs. Martin

The door just opened and a special sparkle in the eyes of the elderly woman filled the room. At 95, Mrs. Martin still keeps her independence sacrosanct and enjoys doing 'forbidden things'. It was her medical condition which worsened two years ago that forced her to concede that she needs some help. This changed her life, but not her spirits: she packed her Parisian home and moved to live in Israel with her children and grandchildren, has continued managing her home independently, studies Hebrew, and still wins most of the Scrabble challenges when she plays against her son. She meets him daily, celebrates everyday with joy, meets family, grandchildren, and the friends who are still around, and loves Sima dearly - her Nepali care-giver whom she sees as a close friend.

Nepal is close to Martin's heart and her relationship with care-givers from the country has a long history. First it was Sumitra whom she met some 35 years ago, at her son's wedding in Paris. She met her again soon afterwards in Kathmandu, when she travelled with her husband to Nepal in 1978. It's been a long time, she says,

but she clearly remembers Kathmandu and Pokhara, the visit to the temple, the name of which she forgot, where people offer flowers to the gods, and monkeys roam around taking bananas and other goodies from pilgrim's hands. She does not remember the food exactly, but she still likes lentils that Sima cooks, not so much the rice.

Sumitra has become a close friend of the family, and their lives have been intertwined since then. When she was young, she stayed for some years at the family home to take care of Martin's husband who needed help. He was a somber philosopher, social activist, somewhat cold and detached academic, who was distant even from his own children. But when Sumitra came into the family, when he was growing older, all this has changed. Her two lively children were irresistible - he became playful and even allowed them to sit on his lap - something his own children were never allowed to. The warmth she brought to his life was special - it made him a changed man - loving, warm hearted and joyful, and Sumitra and her children have become close friends, as close as family, ever since.

When he died, Sumitra helped his brother during his last years till he left this world at 100, and then took care of his niece till she died at a similar age, and then helped Martin's brother, Bernard. In the meantime, together with her husband, and some extra support from the family, they succeeded to develop a business on their own, which occupies them to date. "They have a good mind set for business, those Pradhans" explains Tulasa, Martin's temporary care giver today, who replaces Sima who is now in Nepal on a family visit.

Sima is unique, Martin says, with some sadness rising in her eyes. She misses her now, and wishes she will be able to come back soon. It's Corona time now, the sky is closed for air travel, Sima got stuck in Nepal, and likewise her reliever Tulasa is stuck in Israel, waiting to return home to Nepal after so many years.

Sima and Martin clicked right from the start. She is warm and loving, always in good spirits and always with a smile. She was introduced to the family by Sumitra when she escaped from Nepal - not many people know her difficult story, but Martin does

- they have become truly close and intimate friends, despite the age difference - she has become a kind of honorary grandmother - she has learnt to appreciate the young woman, and loves her more for her courage, strength and her smiles.

Tulasa is here now, temporarily. 'She is not like Sima... well.... she is nice too, warm and smiling, but there are two main differences between them: Tulasa does not like to cook - Sima does, and knows how to cook a variety of foods in different styles. This is not so bad as the other problem, Martin cheekily smiles, as I eat mainly fresh foods and salads, but the difficulty is that Tulasa listens all the time - she hears everything and comes to help me the minute she hears even the smallest of noises'. Tulasa then defends herself: 'this is my job. I want to take good care of you and cannot allow anything to happen.... remember that time that you fell and hurt yourself badly ? - it was night and I was concerned - you were on the floor bleeding, and I was really afraid'. 'Yes', says Martin with a sigh of rebellion 'but when you come I cannot do the forbidden things I like to.... like getting up and escaping my bed from the other side by myself - the route that I found I where the rail does not reach....'.

Tulasa has lived and worked in Israel for about 5 years. She planned to leave for Nepal for good, but she is stuck here with the epidemic, unable to return home. She did not have a job when Remi, Martin's son called her to see if she can replace Sima during her time away. It was originally one month, but the Corona is still here, changing the world - the lockdown was extended so both of the young women are stuck where they both don't want to be.

Tulasa is 28 years old. She comes from a village near Biratnagar. Three of her sisters are married, and she assumes she is the next one in line, as her one younger sister is still at school. 'It's not necessarily good to be married' she says, 'but my parents will probably want to arrange a marriage for me, so I will' she acquiesce, and we talk and even if not all of us agree, we conclude in her support that, as it is traditionally nice in Nepal, it is better to be old with a family and children around rather than to be left staying alone, even with the nicest of care-givers....

If you came from such a faraway place - how did you come

to imagine, and imagine to come to Israel to work? how did you hear about Israel, and what did you hear about it? - we asked Tulasia when we found that nobody from Biratnagar has come to work in Israel before. She explains the mystery: 'everyone knows that working abroad is a great economic opportunity, but I did not know how to begin. So I asked a close friend of my mother who went to work in Israel around 10 years ago. She wrote and said it was a good place to work, that she can help me receive a good job in a good place, and help me to come'. Her support reassured my parents who finally agreed. 'Here I am' she said, 'and everyone's happy'.

Tulasia did not know anything about Israel when she came - 'I knew nothing and I was worried' she says 'but people said there is nothing to be afraid of. Some said it is a good place to be, that people do not hit you but '*ulio*', they treat you like a family member, that you eat together with them' and she continues 'it is true - it is really friendly here and nice; people never hit you - like other friends say about other countries'.

'I had problem only once - in the beginning. I did not speak the language, and communication was not good. It was difficult for me, and for the old woman I came to help as well - so we agreed that I leave. It took me a week, to see some other homes before I began my work again. It was a different beginning this time - the people were understanding and made an effort to make it easy for me. I worked there for two years before the woman passed away and I had to find another job. I moved to Tel Aviv - a really great big city, where I worked since then. I am lucky to have this temporary 'Corona Reliever' position - I miss home and plan to return once the lock down is lifted, the planes return to fly and when Sima returns.

'Living conditions here are really good', she says. Here, Martin's comfortable flat is located on the fifth floor with a view onto the street from above, where Sima, and now Tulasia, have their own private room 'but I never close my door' she emphasizes 'I need to hear everything, just in case' and Martin sighs with a tinge of resentment as she explains.

Life for us, Nepali here in Israel, is nice. Sixteen of us share a rented flat in the south of the city - a five-bedroom flat with large

living room, kitchen and bathroom and we share the bedrooms. We are a mix of females and males but it is never crowded - it always works and there is never a problem. Even in holidays, when everyone tries to take some days off and come home for the festival Puja, it works out alright; somehow it has never been crowded, and it has not yet happened that everyone is here together - some go to friends, some go to a disco all night and return in the mornings when others get up. 'Disco ?' - we asked. 'Yes - there is a Nepali-Indian disco nearby, in south Tel Aviv where everyone meets. It's noisy, too noisy for me - I managed only ten minutes there and left, but other really do like it'

Our conversation then drifted to talk about living abroad, where there are people of varied origins and different religions. We talked about Muslims and Jews within Christian society in Martin's France, about being a Hindu or Buddhist in Israel of the Jews, and of Nepal, where Christianity is spreading, and appreciated the tolerance of Buddhists and Hindus that streamlines conflicts. The conversation flowed till we noticed that Martin was tired and



needed to rest. But she insisted on showing us the little shrine Sima arranged for herself.

She led us to the corner of the kitchen. Buddha was seated within a carved wood arkeda with two mani-wheels by its sides, chorten and dragons above and a Ganesh added in front - all crowned by a white silk Katha and pictures of Saraswati, the goddess of learning above, with Ganesh to worship for her success on her left and Laxmi, the goddess of wealth playing sitar on the right. In front, on the worktop, there was also a box of colourful Hanuka candles, a water pot, some wrinkled Rudraksha beads and a conch as well as special Sabbath candlesticks for the ritual and a small stock of Nepali incense sticks for the future. Martin went to rest, Tulasia began to prepare the lunch which was due, and we left feeling assured that the all the gods have joined-in to guard the lives of the people at home and protect their path into the future.