



MONEY *talks*

The Story of Israel
as told by Banknotes



Educational Resource

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This educational resource draws from many sources that were compiled and
edited for the sole use of educators, for educational purposes only.



Introduction

National Identity in Your Wallet

“There is always a story in any national banknote. Printed on a white sheet of paper, there is a tale expressed by images and text, that makes the difference between white paper and paper money.”

Sebastián Guerrini, 2011

We handle money nearly every day. But how much do we really know about our banknotes? Which president is on the \$50 bill? Which banknote showcases the White House? Which one includes the Statue of Liberty torch? Why were the symbols chosen? What stories do they tell?

Banknotes can be examined and deciphered to understand the history and politics of any nation. Having changed eight times between its establishment and 2017, Israel’s banknotes offer an especially interesting opportunity to explore the history of the Jewish state.

2017 marks the eighth time that the State of Israel changed the design of its means of payment. Israel is considered innovative in this regard, as opposed to other countries in the world that maintain uniform design over many years. The United States, for example, does not change the portraits of presidents on its dollar bills.

Motifs vary from country to country. In monarchical regimes the choice is relatively easy. In Britain, for example, Queen Elizabeth II appears on all the bills. In some countries where there is a distinct “father of a nation,” he was chosen to appear on all the notes — in India Mahatma Gandhi and in Turkey Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Other nations have chosen spiritual figures, scientists, authors, and artists.

“Like other commemoration agents, such as street names or coins, banknotes have symbolic and political significance. The messages expressed on the notes are inserted on a daily basis, in the hands of each person.

”
Adi Schwartz, Ha’aretz Daily, 2008

In the case of Israel, the banknotes changed twice because of the change in the currency – in 1980, the transfer from the Lira to the shekel, and in 1985 the transition from the old to the new shekel. But the main reasons for the change of notes are wear and tear and a consistent attempt to fight counterfeiters.

The story of Israeli banknotes is not just a story of wear and inflation. Like street names, stamps or coins, banknotes have symbolic, political, and commemorative significance – a reminder of our history, every time we open our wallet.

Israeli currency has ranged from rural landscapes and idyllic figures, to images of a great nation, politicians and key figures, and more recently showcasing poets. Israeli currency features places, key historic events, flora, symbols and words reminding us how mainstream ideology interprets history, creates a national identity, supports the foundational myths, and shapes emerging national narratives.

We invite you to examine, discern and be inspired by the stories these banknotes tell us. You'll find, as we did, that – *Money Talks*.

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Banknote Gallery Addendum (in a separate PDF)

Educational Guidelines

Banknotes are symbols of Israeli state sovereignty. Their design expresses a connection to Eretz Israel and the Jewish people. Most present stories of prominent personalities, places, or events that are intertwined with Israel's history. They include state and Jewish symbols, landscapes, wildflowers and even poetry.

Since its founding in 1948, the design of the state's banknote has changed eight times, offering an evolving window into Israel's national mood, aspirations, history and aesthetic timeline.

There are many ways to explore the rich content that follows. Considering time and grade level, the material can be taught over a period of time, broken into several units or can be presented as an overview in one or more sessions. It can be taught from an historic perspective, through personalities (i.e. Israeli politicians, Jewish leaders, artists, women), national and Jewish symbols, flora and fauna, design style, and much more.

We encourage educators to put their own spin on a lesson using these materials as a foundational source. To get you started, we're including three activities:

- Deep Dive & Share Out
- Deepen the Discussion
- Designing a New Israeli Banknote

Photos of Israeli currency can be found and printed from the following:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israeli_pound

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Israeli_shekel

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israeli_new_shekel



Activity One: Deep Dive & Share Out

1. Invite students to brainstorm (on paper) everything they know about Israel.
2. Encourage students to take turns sharing their responses with the class in a collective brainstorm session. Write all the responses down.
3. Divide the class into groups - based on a criterion or randomly.
4. Pass out photocopies of banknotes (from the same series or from different series) along with a worksheet with questions. Use these bullet points below or create your own questions.
Using the worksheet as a guide, encourage students to examine the notes thoroughly for every detail.
 - In what way is the note different from US currency?
 - Who or what is pictured?
 - What are the symbols?
 - What is the denomination / amount?
 - What is on the back side?
 - Is there a connection between the front and back?
 - What colors do you see and what might they mean?
 - How would you describe the design? Is it old fashioned or modern?
 - What are some of the security features? (watermark, microprint, etc.)
 - How is Israel portrayed through this note?
5. Pass out printed excerpts corresponding to each of the banknotes. Have students read them to further their understanding of what they examined.
6. Invite students to share their banknote and findings.
7. Hold a class discussion:
What do you know now that you didn't know before you examined the notes.

Activity Two: Deepen the Discussion

Now that your students have seen and deciphered several banknotes, invite a deeper discussion:

- What are the connections among the banknotes in a series?
- What are the connections among banknotes across series?
- How do images on a single banknote relate to one another?
- Is there significance to colors chosen for the notes?
- In what way are the themes and design of each series a reflection on the times?



Israel's current banknotes honoring poets:
Rachel, Saul Tchernichovsky, Leah Goldberg
and Natan Alterman.

Activity Three:

Designing a New Israeli Banknote

Use art to deepen learning and to encourage creativity.

1. Select materials (can be pens, pencils, paper, drawing software, recycled materials etc.)

Challenge students to design a banknote that features several elements:

- Denomination / Amount
 - Name of currency in Hebrew and English
 - Israel in Hebrew and English
 - Color
 - An impactful or historical character and images that relate to that person
 - Symbols of the state
 - Patterns
 - Security features
 - Create your own feature
2. Guide student reflection by asking the following questions:
 - Which denomination is your banknote?
 - Which noteworthy person did you choose and why?
 - Which other images and symbols appear on your note and why?
 - What color/s did you choose and why?
 - What stands out on your banknote?
 - How are the front and the back connected?
 - What information about Israel does your note reveal?
 3. Have students write reflections and create an exhibit /gallery of banknotes and students' written reflections.

Anglo Palestine Bank Series

Banknotes and coins are both a means of payment and a symbol of sovereignty. As the Fathers of the *Yishuv* (Jewish settlements in *Eretz Israel*) engaged in establishing, and naming, the new state, they confronted the matter of currency. They had to decide what would be printed on their banknotes and where they would print them.

The banknotes could not be printed in the land itself. The British Mandate had not yet expired, and they lacked the technical expertise. At the same time, it was clear that no reputable foreign firm would print money for a nonexistent state. After considerable effort, Mr. S. Hoofien, then Chairman of the Board of the Anglo-Palestine Bank, persuaded the American Banknote Company of New York to print the notes.

To avoid the need for State Department approval for printing banknotes of a foreign country, the notes as ordered gave no indication of their being legal tender. The legend "Legal tender for payment of any amount" was subsequently added. In addition, the company stipulated that its name should not appear on the notes.

The design of the banknotes was based on different combinations of guilloches (a decorative engraving technique in which a very precise intricate repetitive pattern or design is mechanically engraved into an underlying material with fine detail) in the company's stock, some of which were used for printing banknotes for China. When the banknotes were ordered, no one yet knew what the name of the new state would be, let alone its currency. It was therefore decided to print "Palestine Pound" on the notes, the currency of the mandate.

However, it states in Hebrew only "One Eretz Yisraeli Lira" (*Lira E.Y. achat*) and similarly for all other denominations.

The banknotes reached the country secretly in July 1948. On August 17 the government passed a law declaring the notes legal tender, and they were put into circulation on the following day.



In 1948 foreign exchange rate was \$ 1 to 0.250 Palestinian Pound.

1952

Bank Leumi Le'Israel Series

A New Currency!

On May 1, 1951 all the assets and liabilities of the Anglo Palestine Bank were transferred to a new company called Israel National Bank (*Bank Leumi le-Israel*) and it therefore became necessary to issue a new series of banknotes. These were almost identical to the Anglo-Palestine Bank series, except that the color of some of the notes was different. The name of the currency was the "Israeli Pound" (*Lira Israelit*) borrowed from the British currency. The Lira was divided into 1000 Mille (*mil*). Soon after, the name *Mille* was replaced with *Pruta*, based on a coin mentioned in the Mishnah. This is the first in a series of currency name changes that will occur later, such as *agora* and *shekel*, names taken from biblical and other historic sources.

The series included notes of 500 Pruta, and 1,5,10 and 50 Israeli Liras.

The new money was introduced in June 1952.



In 1952 foreign exchange rate was \$ 1 to 0.375 Israeli Pound.

1955

First Series of the Israeli Lira

On the initiative of the Bank of Israel's first Governor, David Horowitz, and with the assistance of a special committee, a new series of banknotes was prepared.

The committee chose Israeli landscapes as the motif, and commissioned graphic artists from Thomas de la Rue and Co. of London to design the notes. Abstract patterns were printed on the back of the notes. Four notes were gradually put into circulation in August-October 1955. The fifth was issued in 1957.

The series included notes of 500 *Pruta*, and 1, 5, 10 and 50 Israeli Liras.

All notes were printed for the first time with the name of "Bank of Israel" (*Bank Israel*) and were designed to connote the strong bond with the land, its nature and its history.

The notes included geographic and historic landscapes:

Ruins of an ancient synagogue at Bir'am in Upper Galilee, landscape of Sea of Galilee and Golan mountains, Negev landscape with a settlement and farm equipment, view of the Jezreel Valley depicting settlements and cultivated fields, and winding road to Jerusalem.

Watermarks were printed with the seven branched menorah and wild flowers:

cyclamen, anemones, irises, tulips, and oleander.

In 1955 foreign exchange rate was \$ 1 to 1.80 IL (Israeli Lira).



1960

Second Series of the Israeli Lira

The abstract patterns of the first series did not meet with public approval. When criticism mounted, the Governor decided to issue a new series, and appointed a public committee to plan the notes. The committee selected drawings of people illustrating different walks of Israeli life as the principal motif and archaeological subjects as the secondary motif.

The form and size of the notes differed from those of the previous series. For the first time, the basic sketches were the work of Israeli artists. The series was put into circulation in 1959-60, and gradually replaced the previous series.

From this series onwards, the banknotes of Israel are printed in several state or state-controlled banknote printing works in Europe.

This iconic series is the first to capture the ethos of the early years of the state and carried a clear Zionist message. Designed by the celebrated [Shamir Brothers](#) who also designed the state's emblem, other visual symbols of Israeli sovereignty and independence, and many posters for governmental campaigns. The backs of the notes were designed by [Jacob Zim](#), an Israeli painter and graphic designer, a Holocaust survivor of Polish descent, who also designed many symbols for government and local municipalities.

A new coin is introduced during this time – *Agora*. It was used for the first time in 1960, when the Israeli government decided to change the subdivision of the Israeli Lira from 1000 prutot to 100 agorot. The name was suggested by the Academy of the Hebrew Language, and was borrowed from the Hebrew Bible, Samuel I, 2:36 ...every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver..." (the term "piece of silver" appears in Hebrew as agorat kesef).

Denominations were: ½ Lira, 1, 5, 10 and 50 Liras.



The fronts of the notes depict Israelis from different walks of life:

Pioneer-woman soldier holding a basket of oranges against a background of fields, fisherman carrying fishing gear against a background of a bay, laborer holding a sledge-hammer against a background of an industrial plant, scientist in a laboratory, two young pioneers against a background of an agricultural settlement in the Negev.

The backs of the notes depict historic sites:

Tomb of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, mosaic from the floor of an ancient synagogue at Issafiya on Mt. Carmel, roaring lion depicted on an ancient Hebrew seal found at Megiddo, passage from the Book of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls, and candelabrum from the ancient synagogue of Nirim in the Negev.

Watermarks show the faces of the people from each note.

In 1962 foreign exchange rate was \$ 1 to 3.00 IL.



1970

Third Series of the Israeli Lira

When the need arose for a new, higher-denomination note, a 100 Lira note bearing the portrait of Theodor Herzl was introduced in February 1969. This was also the first note in a new series, which was designed by foreign graphic artists who based their work on material and information supplied by the bank. The notes featured the portraits of prominent personalities in the history of the Jewish people.

The other notes in this series were put into circulation in 1970-72.

The design marks a return to the more traditional and elaborate geometric guilloches, probably for security reasons, making it more difficult to create counterfeit notes.

Designers: Prof. Masino Bessi, Italy and H.J. Bard, Britain.

Denominations were 5, 10, 50 and 100 Lira.



The 5 Lira note has a portrait of Albert Einstein (1879 -1955), and nuclear symbols. The back depicts the atomic reactor at Nahal Sorek in the Judean Hills. Israel's first president, Chaim Weizmann, referred to Einstein as "the greatest Jew alive" and asked Einstein if he would be willing to lead the nation as its president. Einstein declined giving several reasons why.

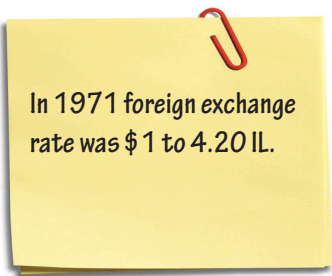


The 10 Lira note has a portrait of Chaim Nachman Bialik (1873 -1934), Israel's National Poet, and one of the pioneers of Modern Hebrew poetry. It also shows red anemones, the most beloved of Israeli wild flowers, featured in many songs, and symbolizing among other things, fallen soldiers. The back depicts Bialik's home in Tel Aviv with its lush garden. Today the house is Beit Bialik Museum.

The 50 Lira note has a portrait of Chaim Weizmann (1874 -1952), Zionist leader and Israeli statesman who served as President of the Zionist Organization and later as the first President of Israel. It also depicts an olive branch, which appears on the state's emblem, a symbol of peace. The back of the note has a portrayal of the Knesset building in Jerusalem and the emblem of the state.

The 100 Lira note has a portrait of Theodor Herzl (1860 -1904), *Chozeh Ha'medinah* (The Visionary of the State) father of modern political Zionism. It also has a towering palm tree, one of the seven species. The back has the Emblem of the State of Israel surrounded by symbols of the twelve tribes.

All watermarks show the portraits of the corresponding



In 1971 foreign exchange rate was \$ 1 to 4.20 IL.



1973

Fourth Series of the Israeli Lira

To save on production costs and to permit automatic sorting of banknotes, the Bank of Israel issued a new series with a standard width of 76 mm. The faces of these notes bore portraits of outstanding personalities, while the motif selected for the back was the gates of the Old City of Jerusalem, commemorating the reunification of Jerusalem following the 1967 Six Day War. The year of issue was 1973.

Another innovation was the printing of dots in intaglio (incised or engraved) to enable the blind to identify the denomination of the notes. A 500 Lira note was first issued in this series, but was not put into circulation until 1975-78, after the death of Ben Gurion.

On the back of the notes, bars of binary codes were imprinted in invisible ink, for the purpose of automatic detection.

Starting with this series, the Arabic calligraphy is inscribed by Yousuf Wahba.

Designers: [Paul Kor](#), Adrian Senger

This series included 5, 10, 50, 100 and 500 Lira.

The 5 Lira note bears the portrait of Henrietta Szold (1860-1945), who was an American Jewish Zionist leader and founder of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America. Behind the portrait is Hadassah Hospital on Mt. Scopus in Jerusalem. This is the first portrait of a specific woman to appear on banknotes. Golda Meir's portrait will appear in future notes as will two of Israel's female poets.

The back shows Lion's Gate in the Old city of Jerusalem.

The 10 Lira note bears the portrait of Sir Moshe Montefiori (1784-1885), British financier and banker, noted for his philanthropy in the Holy Land. The note also shows *Mishkanot Sha'ananim*, the first neighborhood built out of the Old City walls and funded by Montefiore, with its iconic windmill.



The back shows Jaffa Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem.

The 50 Lira note bears the portrait of Chaim Weizmann and the Wix Library at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot. Besides being the first president of Israel, Weizmann was a noted biochemist, who founded the Weizmann Institute, a world renowned research center.

The back shows Damascus Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem.

The 100 Lira note bears the portrait of Theodore Herzl (1860-1904), *Chozeh Ha'medinah* (The Visionary of the State) father of modern political Zionism. Behind his portrait is the entrance to Mt. Herzl in Jerusalem. Mt. Herzl, also known as *Har ha-Zikaron* is the site of Israel's national cemetery and other memorial and educational facilities. Herzl's tomb lies at the top of the hill.

The back shows Zion Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem.

The 500 Lira note bears the portrait of David Ben Gurion (1886-1973), who was the primary national founder of the State of Israel and the first Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Israel. Later in his life he moved with his wife Paula to kibbutz Sde Boker in the Negev. Behind his portrait is the library at the kibbutz. The graves of David and Paula Ben-Gurion overlook a breathtaking view of the Tsin Canyon and the Avdat Highlands in the heart of the Negev. The 500 Lira note was issued for the first time in 1975, after Ben Gurion's passing in 1973, since banknotes cannot bear portraits of people during their lifetime.

The back shows Golden Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem.

In 1974 foreign exchange rate was \$ 1 to 6.00 IL, and in 1977 it was \$ 1 to 10.78 IL.



1980

Shekel Series - A New Currency!

On June 4, 1969 the Knesset passed a law providing for the Shekel to become the new currency of Israel, replacing the Lira, at a date to be determined on the recommendation of the Governor of the Bank of Israel. In May 1978 Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Finance Minister Simcha Erlich approved the Governor's proposal to introduce a series of Shekel currency to be exactly similar to the Lira except for the removal of a zero.

The notes were prepared in the same color and size and with the same portraits as the pound series in order to make it easier for the public to become familiar with the new denominations.

The preparations were conducted in complete secrecy over a period of more than two years. On February 22, 1980 the Shekel was declared legal tender, and the first notes went into circulation on February 24, 1980.

This was the largest series of banknotes in the history of the State of Israel. Initially there were four denominations (1,5,10 and 50 Shekalim), but as inflation accelerated, reaching new highs, another five were added between 1981 and 1985: 100, 500, 1,000, 5,000 and 10,000 Shekalim. The hyperinflation rate for 1984 was 445%.

The banknotes were printed in distinct colors and standard size (76x138 mm), thus achieving a considerable economy in production costs. A new security device – a look-through – was incorporated, while special signs for the blind continued to be printed in various geometrical forms.

Shekel

In order to establish an historic connection to Israel's currency, the Shekel replaced the Lira (of British origin). The Shekel is any of several ancient units of weight or of currency. Since it was a coin that represented a claim on a weight of barley held in the city warehouse, the term "shekel" was likely used in both contexts – coin and weight.

The term "silver shekel" is mentioned in the Bible several times, mostly as a weight of the metal but also as a measure of the weight of food.

The Zionist Shekel – With the establishment of the Zionist movement and until the establishment of the State of Israel, the shekel was used to designate an annual membership tax. Anyone who bought a shekel bought the right to vote and be elected to the Zionist Congress. According to the number of shekels sold in each country, the number of delegates it was entitled to send to Congress was determined. With the establishment of the State, the Zionist Shekel was abolished.

1, 5, 10 and 50 Shekel notes are identical in design to the 10, 50, 100 and 500 Lira notes of the previous series, except the denomination. For example, the 500 Lira note now became the 50 Shekel note.

The 100 Shekel note bears the portrait of Ze'ev Jabotinsky (1880-1940), a Zionist activist, orator, and writer who founded the Betar Movement. He was also a soldier who founded the Jewish Legion during World War I. In 1935 he formed the New Zionist Organization to reflect Revisionist Zionism. He was the mentor of Menachem Begin, later to become Israel Prime Minister, and dominant leader in the emergence of the right leaning parties in Israel (Herut, Likud).

The old inn "Shuni" near Binyamina is in the background. The Inn has served as a base for Jewish pioneers and units of the Irgun Tzva'i Leumi (*Etzel*) which was the military arm of the New Zionist Organization, between 1914 and 1947. Today around this site there's a [Jabotinsky Shuni Park](#) named after him.

It is no coincidence that the note bearing Jabotinsky's portrait was introduced in 1979. The elections for the ninth Knesset were held on 17 May 1977. For the first time in Israeli political history, the right wing, led by Likud, won a plurality in the Knesset, ending almost 30 years of rule by the left wing alignment (*ma'arach*) and its predecessor, *Mapai*. It is known still today as the "electoral upheaval" (*ma'ha'pach*).

The back portrays the Herod Gate of the Old City in Jerusalem.

Design: Dutch artists

The 500 Shekel note bears the portrait of Baron Edmond de Rothschild (1845-1934) with a group of agricultural workers. Baron de Rothschild was a French member of the Rothschild banking family. A strong supporter of Zionism, his large donations lent significant support to the movement during its early years, which helped lead to the establishment of the State of Israel. He also played a pivotal role in Israel's wine industry. Under the supervision of his administrators in Ottoman Palestine, farm colonies and vineyards were established, and two major wineries were opened in Rishon LeZion and Zikhron Ya'akov.





The back shows a cluster of grapes, and names of 44 settlements in the Land of Israel in microprint.

Design: Zvi Narkiss

Zvi Narkiss (1921-2010) is best known for his creativity in designing the Hebrew letter for the typefaces he designed which made possible the transition from traditional Hebrew letters to modern types, and for ingeniously combining ancient traditions with modern design concepts.

The 1,000 Shekel note portrays the portrait of Maimonides (Rambam) and in the background a passage from his manuscript of the "Mishneh Torah" (code of Jewish law). Moses ben Maimon, commonly known as Maimonides (1135-1204), and also referred to by the acronym Rambam, was a medieval Sephardic Jewish philosopher who became one of the most prolific and influential Torah scholars of the Middle Ages.

On the back of the note is a stylized view of Tiberias where Maimonides is buried, and an ancient Menorah.

Designer: Zvi Narkiss, assisted by Arie Glazer

The 5,000 Shekel note portrays Levi Eshkol (1895-1969), an Israeli statesman who served as the third Prime Minister of Israel from 1963 until his death from a heart attack in 1969. The panorama of united Jerusalem in the background refers to the reunification of the city following the Six Day War, while he served as prime minister.

On the back of the note, a pipe carries water against a background of a meadow and barren land. This symbolizes Eshkol's enterprise, The National Water Carrier of Israel (*Ha'movil Ha'artzi*) which is the largest water project in Israel. Its main task is to transfer water from the Sea of Galilee in the north of the country to the highly populated center and arid south and to enable

efficient use of water and regulation of the water supply in the country. The project started during the tenure of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, but was completed in June 1964 under Prime Minister Levi Eshkol.

Designer: Jacob Zim

The 10,000 Shekel note bears the portrait of Golda Meir (1898-1978). She was an Israeli teacher, kibbutznik, stateswoman, politician, activist and the fourth Prime Minister of Israel.

Meir was one of 24 signatories (including two women) of the Israeli Declaration of Independence on May 14, 1948. Carrying the first Israeli-issued passport she was appointed Israel's ambassador to the Soviet Union in December of 1948.

Meir was elected Prime Minister of Israel on March 17, 1969, after serving as Minister of Labor and Foreign Minister. The world's fourth and Israel's first and only woman to hold such an office, she has been described as the "Iron Lady" of Israeli politics.

A stylized tree with intertwining branches against a background of a menorah and the words "Let my people go" in microprint. This was the slogan of the Soviet Jewry Movement both within the USSR and internationally.

On the back of the note is a picture of Golda Meir among a gathering of Russian Jews in front of the Moscow synagogue on Rosh Hashana in 1948. The words "Let my people go" (*shalach et ami*) are in the background in large and tiny letters.

Design: Asher Kalderon



In 1980 foreign exchange rate was \$ 1 to 7.54 IS (Israeli Shekel).
in 1984 due to hyperinflation it was \$ 1 to 107.77 IS.

1985

First Series of the New Israeli Shekel (NIS) Yet another new currency!

The Shekel (like the Lira before it) suffered frequent devaluations against the US Dollar and other foreign currencies. After a period of high inflation and as a result of a 1985 Economic Stabilization Plan, the Israeli New Shekel was introduced on January 1, 1986, at a rate of 1 New Shekel = 1000 Old Shekalim. The dropping of three zeros from the old shekel denominations was intended to simplify money calculations and to facilitate cash payments and financial recording.

Since the introduction of the Israeli New Shekel, the Bank of Israel and the government of Israel have maintained careful fiscal and monetary policies, resulting in a stable currency.

The name "shekel" was retained so as not to deviate from the original intention of the legislature as embodied in the Shekel Currency, to preserve the ancient name of Israel's coinage.

The first series included a new denomination – 50 NIS. Later on, a 100 NIS banknote was introduced, and in 1986, for the first time since the establishment of the state, an intermediate denomination (20 NIS) was issued.

The new shekel series continues the trend of perpetuating the memory of prominent personages in Jewish history. The colors and other characteristics of the first banknotes are similar to those of the old shekel series. The 20, 50, 100 and 200 NIS notes were printed in distinct colors different from the previous ones in order to facilitate their identification by the public.

Old design - New denomination

The 1,000 Shekel note of the previous series becomes 1 New Israeli Shekel (NIS), with Maimonides portrait on the front.

The 5,000 Shekel note becomes the 5 NIS with Levi Eshkol portrait on the front.

The 10,000 Shekel note becomes the 10 NIS with Golda Meir portrait on the front.



The symbol for the New Shekel was announced officially on 22 September 1985, when the first new shekel banknotes and coins were introduced. It is constructed by combining the two Hebrew letters that constitute the acronym of *Shekel Chadash* - *shin* and *chet*.



The 20 NIS note, a new denomination, features a portrait of Moshe Sharett (1894 -1965), the second Prime Minister of Israel (1954 - 1955), who served for a little under two years between David Ben-Gurion's two terms. He continued as Foreign Minister (1955 - 1956) in the *Mapai* government.

On the note, in a line legible under a magnifying glass appear the titles of his seven books in microprint, and the ceremony of the unfurling of the Israeli flag by Sharett at the U.N. building in 1949.

On the back is the original building of the Herzelia High School where Sharett studied, and in the background, early Tel Aviv. The school was founded in 1905 in Ottoman-controlled Jaffa. The cornerstone laying for the school's new building on Herzl Street in Ahuzat Bayit (the first neighborhood of Tel Aviv) took place on July 28, 1909. The school was the country's first Hebrew high school. The building was designed by Joseph Barsky, inspired by descriptions of Solomon's Temple in the bible.

Designer: Zvi Narkiss assisted by Arie Glazer

The 50 NIS note bears the portrait of S.Y. Agnon with reference books (perhaps Rabbinic or biblical). Shmuel Yosef Agnon was a Nobel Prize laureate writer and was one of the central figures of Modern Hebrew fiction. In Hebrew, he is known by the acronym Shai Agnon.

The back of the note shows a skyline of Jerusalem and a Jewish Shtetl in Eastern Europe. Titles of 18 books by Agnon appear in microprint and Hebrew letters float in the background.

Design: Eliezer Weishoff





The 100 NIS note bears the portrait of Itzhak Ben-Zvi, the titles of his nine books in microprint, a background depicting a group of people representing different ethnic communities in Israel.

Itzhak Ben-Zvi (1884- 1963) was a historian, Labor Zionist leader and the second and longest-serving President of Israel. A proponent of “diversity” decades before the word became popular, Ben-Zvi invited representatives of different Jewish ethnic communities and of minority communities to the President’s residence for a monthly event attended by 100-200 guests from all over the country. Each group related the history of its community, its customs, rituals and traditions, and displayed the items which evolved around these traditions.

On the back of the note is a view of Peki’in village, researched by Ben-Zvi, including a synagogue, a carob tree and a cave, and an ancient candelabrum.

Ben-Zvi’s interest in the story of Peki’in was well known. According to tradition, the Jewish community of Peki’in has maintained a presence there since the Second Temple period. The only interruption in their presence was during the 1936–1939 Arab riots. Most Jews in Peki’in did not return to the village after the violence. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi was one of the first researchers of the Jewish community in Peki’in. His wife, Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, also partook in the study of Peki’in’s surroundings as an agronomist.

According to tradition, around 2,000 years ago, the great kabbalist Rabbi Simon Bar Yohai, and his son Elazar, hid from the Romans for 12 years to escape a death sentence from the occupying Roman forces in a cave south of Peki’in. According to legend, a carob tree miraculously sprouted at the entrance of the cave providing something to eat.

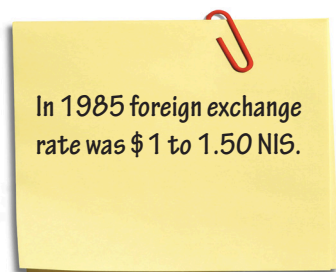
Design: Zvi Narkiss

The 200 NIS note bears the portrait of Zalman Shazar, a candelabrum formed from DNA molecules, and the poem "Compulsory Education Law" written by Natan Alterman in 1949.

On the back of the note are a girl writing at a desk and Hebrew letters.

Zalman Shazar (1889-1974) was an Israeli politician, author and poet who served as the third President of Israel from 1963 to 1973. He was elected to the first Knesset in 1949 as a member of *mapai*, and was appointed Minister of Education in David Ben-Gurion's first government. In this capacity he initiated and passed the Compulsory Education Law. According to this law, compulsory education applies to all children between the ages of 3 and 15 (grade 10) inclusive. This education is provided free of charge throughout the entire system. Natan Alterman, a celebrated poet and journalist, dedicated a special poem for this event in his weekly newspaper column.

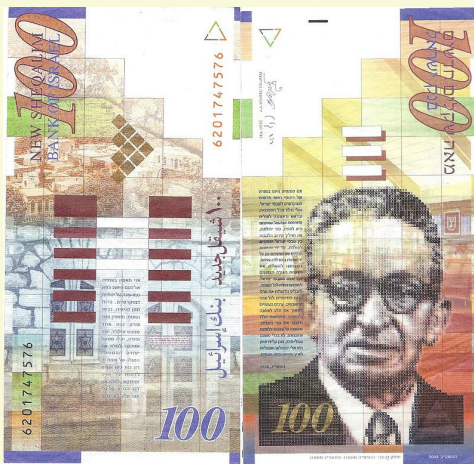
Design: Moshe Pereg (front), Dror Ben Dov (back)



The symbol for the New Shekel was announced officially on 22 September 1985, when the first new shekel banknotes and coins were introduced. It is constructed by combining the two Hebrew letters that constitute the acronym of *Shekel Chadash* - *shin* and *chet*.

1999

Second Series of the New Israeli Shekel (NIS)



On January 3, 1999, the second series of the New Israel Shekel was put into circulation with the issuance of the new NIS 20 and the new NIS 100 banknotes. On October 31, 1999, the NIS 50 and the NIS 200 banknotes were issued.

The second series includes improved security features against forgery.

The new banknotes share similar design elements and all have uniform security features.

The personages on the second series of NIS notes are those who featured on the same denominations of the first NIS series, and are in fact a re-design of that series.

The notes are designed vertically, and all denominations are uniform in size: 138 mm x 71 mm.

Design: Naomi Rosner and Meir Eshel.



In 1999 foreign exchange rate was \$ 1 to 4.15 NIS.

Third Series of the New Israeli Shekel (NIS)

The banknotes in the Third Series of the New Shekel carry the portraits of outstanding Hebrew poets, two of them women, whose life stories, works, and activities are intertwined with the story of the rebirth of the Nation of Israel in its land. This is a welcome change from previous series that included mostly politicians and mainly men.

Israelis are familiar with poems especially through classic Israeli songs. Evenings dedicated to *shirei meshorerim* (songs by poets) are popular. The quoted poetry on each of the notes is taken from well-known songs. Most Israelis can sing these lines from memory.

The first denomination of the third series of the New Shekel, the NIS 50 banknote, was put into circulation beginning in September 2014 (Elul 5774). The rest of the notes were put into circulation in 2017.

The banknotes in the series incorporate advanced levels of security, innovation, and accessibility. They include a range of advanced anti-counterfeiting security features and integrate designated features to facilitate their use by the blind and vision impaired.

All the notes incorporate a transparent glittering stripe next to the portrait; an artistic reflective element in the shape of an "open golden book" which changes from gold to green, tiny perforations forming the shape of the banknote's denomination, a watermark image of the poet and components of a menorah printed on either side of the banknote, which combine to form a complete menorah when stacked and held to light.

Design: Osnat Eshel

About her design process for the banknotes:

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/.premium-gaining-currency-1.5241369>

TO MY COUNTRY

Rachel

I have not sung you, my country,
not brought glory to your name
with the great deeds of a hero
or the spoils a battle yields.
But on the shores of the Jordan
my hands have planted a tree,
and my feet have made a pathway
through your fields.

Modest are the gifts I bring you.
I know this, mother.
Modest, I know, the offerings
of your daughter:
Only an outburst of song
on a day when the light flares up,
only a silent tear
for your poverty.

Translation: 1994, Jean Shapiro Cantu.

Robert Friend

From: *Flowers of Perhaps: Selected
Poems of Rachel*



The 20 Shekel note bears the portrait of Rachel Blaustein, who was known as Rachel the Poetess, or simply Rachel, against a background of palm tree fronds. The back presents a view of her beloved Lake Kinneret shoreline, and lines from the poem *And Perhaps it Never Happened: Oh kinneret sheli, he'hayit, o chalamti chalom?* (Oh my Kinneret...did you exist, or did I dream a dream?)

Rachel Blaustein (1890-1931) is considered one of the founding mothers of Modern Hebrew poetry. She expressed her love for the land of Israel through her beautiful and evocative poetry. Today, her gravesite beside her beloved Lake Kinneret is visited by tourists, pilgrims, and her many admirers, who come to read her poetry from her book kept beside the grave.



The 50 Shekel note bears the portrait of Shaul Tchernichovsky. Microtext on the front of the note features a line from Tchernichovsky's poem *Ho Artzi, Moladeti* (Oh, My Land, My Homeland) including the words "the bouquet of spring orchards" that inspired the design of a citrus tree and fruits on the front of the bill.

The back includes a Corinthian column, in reference to parts of his compositions and wonderful translations of ancient Greek literature. It also includes lines from the poem *I believe: Ki od a'amin ba'adam, gam be'rucho, ru'ach az* (For I shall yet have faith in mankind, In its spirit great and bold)

Shaul Tchernichovsky (1875-1943), a contemporary of Chaim Nachman Bialik, is considered one of the great Modern Hebrew poets. He is identified with nature poetry, and as a poet was greatly influenced by both Jewish and world cultural heritage.

The 100 Shekel note bears the portrait of Leah Goldberg against a background of almond tree blossoms, in reference to a line in one of her poems: *Be'erez ahavati ha'shaked pore'ach* (In the country I love, the Almond blossoms). On the back are a group of deer – the inspiration from the poem *Ma osot ha'ayalot?* (What do the does do?) and a verse from the poem *Yamim Levanim: Yamim Levanim, arukim kmo bakayitz karnei-ha'chma* (White days, long like sun rays in summer).

Leah Goldberg (1911-1970) was a prolific Hebrew-language poet, author, playwright, literary translator, and comparative literary professor and researcher. Her writings are considered classics of Israeli literature.

The 200 Shekel note bears the portrait of Natan Alterman against the background of autumn leaves. The back has moonlit flora and an excerpt from his poem *Shir Boker* (Morning Song): *Anu ohavim otach, moledet, beshimcha, beshir u'veamal* (We love you, our homeland, in joy, in song, and in labor.)

The designer included several elements inspired by Alterman's poetry.

Natan Alterman (1910-1970) was a poet, playwright, journalist, and translator. Though never holding any elected office, Alterman was highly influential in Socialist Zionist politics, both before and after the establishment of the State of Israel. His influential *Seventh Column* – an op-ed in poetry form – appeared every Friday in the daily Davar.



