

ARCHITECTURE

Israeli [architecture](#) is a mixture of centuries of historical building styles and prevailing international design trends. Notably eclectic, modern Israeli buildings combine traditional materials and motifs with the needs of modern, urban populations.

The architecture in Jewish towns and settlements in modern Israel was conditioned, on the whole, more by the urgent housing requirements of the various immigration periods than by any other consideration. The aesthetic aspect mostly reflected the trends prevalent in the architects' countries of origin.

Architectural styles in Israel include the Le Corbusier style, the Brazilian and the Japanese, brutalism, and plasticism. There are also attempts to adapt foreign ideas to specific conditions in Israel, particularly in terms of protection against the sun, and to draw inspiration from ancient Oriental architecture. Here and there one can find regional motifs, such as the use of a vaulted concrete shell, or the mixture of concrete and stone.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is a city like no other – it has fired people’s imaginations in every generation, is revered by adherents of the three monotheistic faiths, and its modern city is inhabited by a fantastic mosaic of humanity. Jerusalem also boasts an amazing variety of architectural styles in its public buildings and private dwellings. The style of each reflects the culture of a particular group of residents and a particular period in the city’s history.

Until 1860, almost all of Jerusalem’s residents lived in the Old City, whose walls contained old houses and building built by the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566). Crowded conditions in the Old City led Jerusalemites to look for housing solutions outside the walls, and [new neighborhoods were built](#) beginning in the late nineteenth century.

The first neighborhood outside of the [Old City](#) of [Jerusalem](#), called [Mishkenot Sha’ananim](#) (“Tranquil Dwellings”), was built in 1860 by the wealthy Jewish philanthropist [Moses Montefiore](#). Influenced by Mediterranean architecture, Montefiore designed the settlement of terraced row houses with red roof tiles. Since then, this style of construction - terraced house with red-tiled roof - has become a prototype for Jewish residences all over Israel.

Starting with [Mishkenot Sha’ananim](#), the neighborhoods that sprang up around the new city of Jerusalem were constructed in the building styles of the founders' homelands. "Thus the new Jerusalem grows by accessions from every part of the globe," Edwin Sherman Wallace, United States consul in Jerusalem wrote in 1898.

[Arabs](#) in Jerusalem began building European-style mansions and villas that integrated Islamic decoration. Meanwhile, West Jerusalem developed into a number of distinct neighborhoods: the [Bukharan Quarter](#), the

Russian Compound, and the [German colony](#), each using the city's signature Jerusalem stone, but adding on distinct architectural elements.

Jerusalem stone, a white or cream-colored marble found in the hills surrounding the city, became a required building material under the [British Mandate](#) and is still used almost exclusively today to line the facade of new building built in Jerusalem.

In 2008, the Jerusalem municipality introduced

Tel Aviv

Far less eclectic in its influences, the "white city" of [Tel Aviv](#) was modeled after European cities such as [Odessa](#), Moscow, and Warsaw. The architects of the city's first buildings did not take into consideration the Mediterranean climate in their replication of the wide windows, attics, turrets and towers of Europe's more temperate environment.

The Le Corbusier style was a strong influence on Israeli architects such as Arie Sharon, Zev Rechter, Dov Carmi, Yosef Neufeld and Sam Barkai who emulated the clean-cut and efficient "white cities" of southern [Spain](#), the [French](#) Riviera, southern [Italy](#), [Greece](#) and [Turkey](#). These architects also modeled Tel Aviv on the cities of North Africa with their cubist-like flat roofs and white walls broken up into small units.

Tel Aviv became a model of the "modern" Mediterranean, a "white city" not intended to be a reflection of Odessa or Warsaw, but as a pure Mediterranean creation, which truly suited local climate and atmosphere.

Today, architectural design in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area is heavily influenced by the steel and glass towers of New York and [Tokyo](#). Metropolitan infrastructure mimics the car-based urban and suburban sprawl of Europe and America. Tel Aviv has become Israel's commercial and high-tech hub and its skyscrapers are a symbol of this success. The Azrieli Center in downtown Tel Aviv includes Israel's second tallest building, the so called Circular Tower, which measures 614 feet and 49 floors in height. Israel's tallest building, Ramat Gan's Moshe Aviv Tower, stands 801 feet tall and is located in the *bursa*, Israel's diamond exchange.

Early 20th Century

During the early 20th century, the Orientalist style grew in popularity, integrating Arab decorations, desert motifs, and [Bedouin](#) images into Israel's architecture. Notable buildings from this period combined European monumentality and function with Orientalist motifs in a style occasionally termed "Eclectic Romanticism." On the outside, Tel Aviv's first public building, the [Herzliya Gymnasium](#), designed by Yosef Berski in 1910, is a stately imperial building, but on the inside incorporates colorful Arabic ornamentation. The structure contains features from [Mesopotamia](#) and local Arabic elements, inside the contours of a monumental European building.

[Haifa's](#) old [Technion](#) building, designed by Alexander Baerwald, along with the Beit Bialik in Tel Aviv and the [YMCA](#) in [Jerusalem](#), combined a [Byzantine](#) truncated dome-shaped ceiling, biblical-style ceramics, Islamic wooden bay windows and narrow arched windows, and art deco elements with multi-story concrete buildings.

Kibbutzim and Moshavim

At the same time, the rural communities of Jewish [kibbutzim](#) and [moshavim](#) were sprouting up all over Israel. These flourishing communities eventually became the symbol of the new, small Israeli state.

These original settlements were made up of small, white-walled houses with red roofs, laid out in geometric plans with surrounding gardens. These settlements were mostly based around a central meeting area and were designed with ease of movement as a priority, usually completely different from traditional Arab villages.

The Bauhaus

In the 1930s, the [Bauhaus](#) style became very popular in Israel, as architects who had studied in the German design academy of the same name fled [Germany](#), bringing with them their modernist style. Examples of the Israeli Bauhaus style can be found in Tel Aviv and some neighborhoods in Jerusalem.

According to art and design writer, Jessica C. Kraft, the Bauhaus style is characterized by “streamlined structural elements, the absence of ornamentation and a strict adherence to the international style dogma of ‘form follows function.’”

Architects such as Arie Sharon, Zev Rechter, and Dov Carmi were influential in building up Tel Aviv with Bauhaus’ space-efficient, light-filled structures.

International Modernism

In the 1950s, Israeli architects turned to International Modernism, associating the country with the European architectural style rather than the surrounding Arab states. Jerusalem’s Givat Ram campus of the [Hebrew University](#) showcased the graceful simplicity of the International style.

Toward the end of the 1960s, Israeli architecture returned to a blend of local and international styles. The Bat Yam municipal building, designed by Eldar Sharon, Zvi Hecker, and Alfred Neumann, best exemplifies this era. In the form of an ancient [Egyptian](#) ziggurat, the façade is made up of colorful Islamic latticework patterns while still managing to command an iconic monumental presence.

The 1970s was characterized by the "brutalist" architecture found in other Western countries and influenced by the American architect Paul Rudolph. The style was comprised of large concrete slabs and unaltered industrial materials, projecting an image of Israel’s strength in the wake of the country’s 1973 military defeat. On Mount Scopus, the Ram Karmis faculty of humanities building’s watchtowers and imposing outer walls appear almost fortress-like. Also during the 1970s, tourism expanded considerably, becoming one of Israel’s main industries, which prompted the construction of a number of large hotels and resorts countrywide.

Mosher Safdie

Through the 1970s, 80s and 90s, [Moshe Safdie](#) established himself as Israel's first internationally recognized architect. He designed many monumental and public spaces including the [Hebrew Union College](#), The [Holocaust Museum at Yad Vashem](#), the David Citadel Hotel in Jerusalem, and the Ben Gurion Airport near



Tel Aviv. Safdie's structures epitomized the fusion of past and present architectural style. His designs incorporated elegant white stone, rounded arches, and vibrant, multistoried exteriors.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism and its diverse aesthetics dominated Israeli architecture in the 1990s. In this era, form and design was adopted for its own sake, but the style soon lost popularity because of its frivolity. Despite this, many Israeli postmodern buildings hold a great deal of significance. The Supreme Court Building in Jerusalem, designed by Ram Karmi and Ada Karmi-Melamede, references the city's long history by incorporating architectural elements taken from [Herodian](#), [Crusader](#), Greek, and [British](#) buildings in the [old city](#), and also illustrates several bible passages on justice. The building points both toward the [Knesset](#) (the parliament) and to the city (the people).