BOARDROOM KNOWLEDGE SERIES

BOARDROOM'S 'KNOWLEDGE IN THE CITY' SERIES TAKES A DEEP JOURNALISTIC DIVE INTO DESTINATIONS AS KNOWLEDGE HUBS AND THEIR ASSOCIATION APPEAL.

Jerusalem

A Triangle of Academia, Industry & Government Success

Every brick in Jerusalem's Old City tells a story that is thousands of years old. But these aren't the only building blocks that have transformed Jerusalem into the vibrant city it is today. Modernity mixes with the holy city's ancient past through institutions like The Hebrew University, the largest, oldest and most important international science research centre in the country—and one of the world's top 100. Building on this academic backbone, Jerusalem has emerged as a hub for life science and biomedical companies, with a number of ground-breaking achievements attracting the attention of associations around the globe—and the government offering financial support for international conferences to get here.

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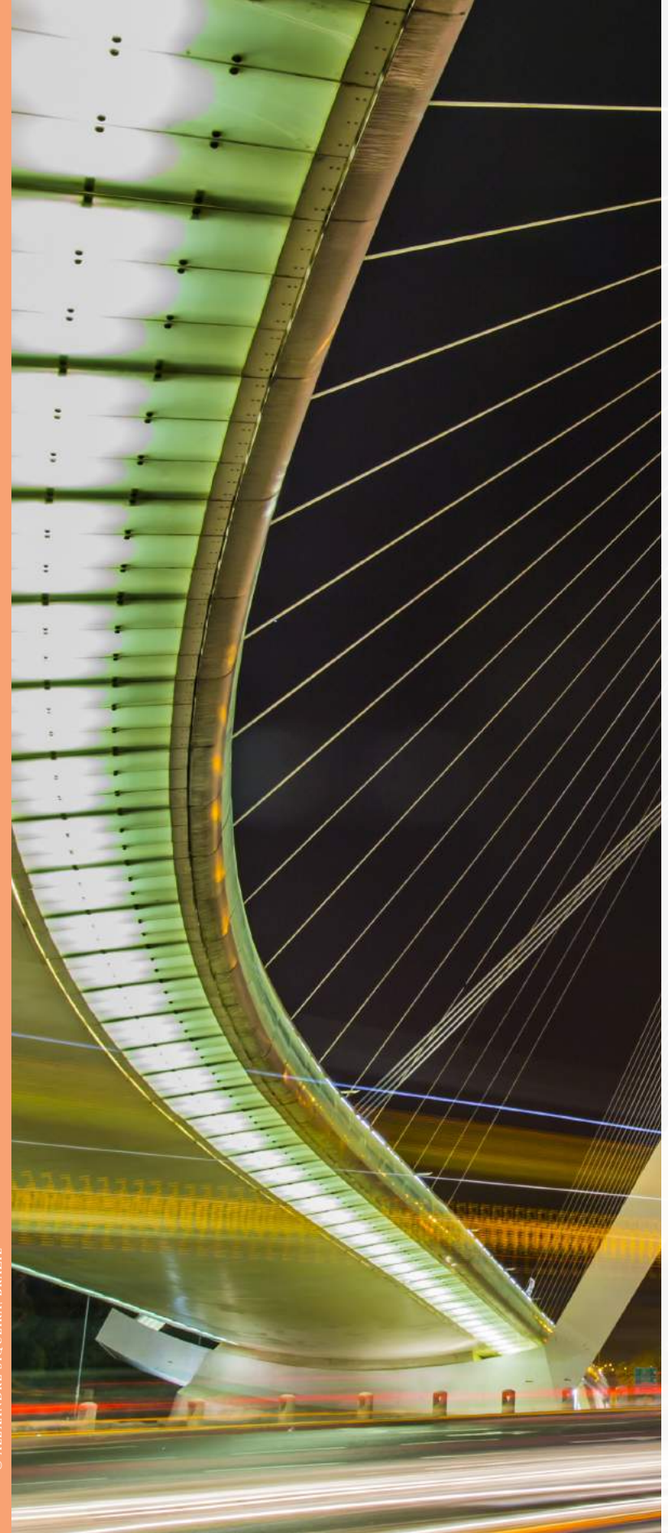

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Five years may not seem like a long time, but for a city like Jerusalem, half a decade feels like a century in terms of innovation success. Jerusalem has undergone a technology renaissance of sorts, with one of the fastest growing start-up scenes on the globe. The proof is in the papers: Time magazine named the city one of the "5 Emerging Tech Hubs From Around the World," and Startup Genome, the research body that ranks cities' start-up ecosystems, ranked Jerusalem as one of the top 30 leading start-up ecosystems worldwide. It's no surprise the high-tech hub has earned the title "*Start-Up Nation*," since it is home to over a thousand start-ups—the largest number of per-capita start-ups and venture capital investments in the world.

Thanks to these investments, the number of active life sciences and hi-tech companies in Jerusalem has tripled from 150 to 570 over the past five years alone. One of the best examples of success sprouting from the city itself: in March, Intel acquired Mobileye for $15 billion. The Israeli technology company, which develops vision technology for Advanced Driver Assistance Systems and autonomous driving, got its start in the halls of Hebrew University in Jerusalem and expects to increase workforce to 4,000 people once premises in Har Hotzvim tech park are complete. Another example: Lightricks, the company behind popular image-editing app Facetune, has developed two of the most successful paid mobile apps in the world thanks to research acquired at Hebrew University.

These are just two examples of how companies are getting their start in Jerusalem—and garnering knowledge from The Hebrew University—as well as inspiring both local and global enterprises, such as Kaspersky Lab and Rafael (Israel's most important manufacturer of advanced defense systems), to expand their operations by moving to the city. "*Jerusalem features two main hubs: education and biotech. Innovative companies have established their own hubs in Jerusalem through the contribution of academics coming from the university*," explains Dr. Joseph (Yossi) Tam, Director of the Multidisciplinary Center on Cannabinoid Research at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. "*One hub nourishes the other*."

Jerusalem's population pales in comparison to other capital cities, with just 850,000 citizens. Yet in addition to being home to three religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—Jerusalem also features 17 academic institutions that build on a history spanning back more than two millennia. The Hebrew University, which ranks 23rd in the world, features the highest number of life science Ph.D. students in the country, with cutting-edge research in areas like biotechnology, computer science, astrophysics, cancer and solar energy.

"The Hebrew University is one of the best universities in the world with many research centres that are well-absorbed in the city and educates students coming from all over Israel, as well as around the world, through its international programmes," Tam explains.

Along with affiliate Hadassah Medical Center, the two institutions conduct over one-third of the country's academic research, as well as 43% of Israel's biotechnology research. With over 1,800 students graduating annually and setting out into the community, Jerusalem is continuing to build on its reputation as a powerhouse in the field of life sciences, with over 100 companies specialising in this sector. You'll find everything from Har Hotzvim Industrial Park, home to some of Israel's largest biopharma companies like Rafa Laboratories and Omrix, to the Jerusalem BioPark at Ein-Kerem, located on the Hadassah Hospital and Medical School campus.

Given the facilities and wealth of research stemming from the city, Jerusalem has gained notoriety as a leader in scientific and medical conventions and makes for an ideal conference host, attracting over 350 tech events per year that include everything from inspiration meet-ups to hackathons and conferences. *"Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and attracts many people coming to the country,"* Tam says. *"Being a perfect mix of religion and invention, history and culture, modernity and life, brings together many people from around the globe to explore this beautiful city."*

In September, mHealth Israel, the country's largest medical technology conference, met for the fourth time in the city, bringing together over 500 attendees from more than 20 countries, over 80 percent of which were entrepreneurs. According to mHealth Israel founder Levi Shapiro in a press statement: *"It is clear that Jerusalem is experiencing a boom in life science and Medtech investment and start-ups. Jerusalem offers the perfect setting for global C-level decision makers to meet innovative start-ups from across Israel, Europe and the US."*

Jerusalem may be known as a "Start-up Nation," but it's also continuing to progress as a "Cannabis Research Nation" thanks to the work underway at the Multidisciplinary Center for Cannabinoid Research at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which hosts an annual symposium on cannabinoids. Building on five decades of work started by Professor Raphael Mechoulam, "the father of cannabinoid research," the center coordinates and conducts research on medical Cannabis and endocannabinoid activity and its therapeutic potential in treating disease.

In conjunction with the Jerusalem Conventions & Visitors Bureau, Dr. Tam helped persuade the International Cannabinoid Research Society (ICRS) to choose Jerusalem for its International Symposium on the Cannabinoids in 2021 at the Jerusalem International Convention Center (ICC), the same year as Prof. Mechoulam's 90th birthday. For both Jerusalem and the Multidisciplinary Center for Cannabinoid Research, this is a huge win since the ICRS is the oldest scientific society dedicated to the research of the cannabis plant, cannabinoids and their physiological and biochemical targets.

"One of our first goals after establishing the center was to host the ICRS conference in Jerusalem so that the international community of researchers can learn about the highly advanced work in the field of cannabinoids carried out in the center and in Israel," Dr. Tam said. *"I am certain that hosting this high-level conference will constitute another turning point in Israel's position as a global leader in cannabinoid research and development."*

The conference, which debuted in 1990, is one of the top in the field of cannabinoids research and brings together hundreds of leading researchers from scientific communities around the globe. In an effort to win the bid and compete with other nearby cities in Europe, the Jerusalem Conventions & Visitors Bureau was able to price match leading locales to ensure the city was a top contender, serving as a one-stop-shop offering financial support of up to €50,000.

When asked how the symposium will help build on the revolutionary scientific studies launched right here in the city over five decades ago, Dr. Tam responded: *"The conference brings together the leading researchers from the international scientific community and presents the latest and most up-to-date research in the field. Modulating endocannabinoid activity has therapeutic potential in a large number of human diseases, and research on cannabinoids may lead to very significant advances in basic science and therapeutics. We look forward to hosting the world's top scientists working to discover new therapies based on cannabinoids."*

More information on Jerusalem as a convention destination on www.jerusalemcvb.com.

Smart Stats on Jerusalem

Accessibility: Sitting halfway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, a 20-minute train ride away from the city, Israel's international airport, Ben Gurion, is just a 4-hour flight from Europe's major cities, with direct flights from 141 locations

Venues: The Jerusalem International Convention Center (ICC) is the largest and leading conference centre in the country with 27 halls accommodating up to 10,000 attendees, including the 3,000-person Ussishkin Auditorium—the largest in Israel

Accommodations: More than 17,500 rooms scattered across hotels suiting all budgets

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Case Study

42nd Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS) Congress

One of Europe's largest organisations in molecular life sciences, the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS), includes over 35,000 members spread across 35 biochemistry and molecular biology societies in Europe and neighbouring regions. For its 42nd congress, the organisation set its sights on Israel's capital, hosting the five-day event in September 2017 at the ICC Jerusalem. The congress brought together 1,600 molecular life scientists from over 66 countries to discuss such topics as cancer biology, molecular neuroscience, or protein degradation. Boardroom caught up with Congress Chair Abdussalam Azem, Head of the School of Neurobiology, Biochemistry & Biophysics at Tel Aviv University.

What makes Jerusalem an attractive destination for international congresses?

Israel a small country but here you can find everything; you can go to Tel Aviv and get a completely Mediterranean view or go to Dead Sea and see the desert. Then you go to the north of Israel and it's completely different. The unique aspect of Jerusalem is its diversity. The location is great and as a city we get a lot of support from the Jerusalem Conventions & Visitors Bureau. The ICC is also perfect because it's in the centre of the hotel area.

What are some of the aspects that made this congress such a successful one?

We have a very strong scientific programme and almost everyone came from outside of Israel; 90% came from outside Israel actually. They were invited because they're the best in the world. We brought in international delegates from Japan, Europe and the States, so we didn't only have European speakers. We also wanted to attract young scientists and brought in a lot from Europe. We offered fellowships since it's more expensive for flights coming from Europe than those within Europe. With such large congresses, people should invest efforts in supporting young scientists.

The congress was great because many young scientists attended talks and sessions [in addition to the pre-congress 17th Young Scientists' Forum, where over 100 young people had the opportunity to interact with pre- and post-doctoral scientists], and we tried to make a programme where everyone who was coming was able to present their work. If you look at the speakers (such as famous biochemist Bruce Alberts), they're leaders in the field. Most of them visited Israel in the past at least once, so the scientific connections—due to the fact that Israel is doing the highest level of research—are very strong.

Are there any lessons you would share with other associations planning an event in Jerusalem?

One problem we noticed with people coming to a congress is that they listen to one or two talks and then if they don't find food around, they leave to look for food. So, we decided that despite the high expenses, we would serve catered Israeli cuisine in the congress area so people don't leave the congress site [and sessions stay packed all day long].