



# ISRAEL MATTERS!

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## Israel at the Olympics!

If you were like many Americans, you very much enjoyed watching this summer's Olympics in Paris. 2024 marked Israel's 18th appearance at the Summer Olympics, and Team Israel certainly didn't disappoint! Since their debut in 1952, Israeli athletes have appeared in every Summer Olympics Games, except for the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow, which it opted not to attend in accordance with the US-led boycott.



Although there were calls from some global sports organizations and others to ban Israel's participation this year, IOC (International Olympic Committee) President Thomas Bach refused this request, taking the stand that this was never an issue for the IOC, and then cautioning international athletes against boycotts and discrimination.

With a squad of 88 athletes, Team Israel gave us plenty to cheer about! Israel's athletes brought home a total of seven medals, including six individual medals – one gold, four silver, and one bronze – and a silver team medal in Rhythmic Gymnastics. For a country as small as Israel to receive seven Olympic medals is quite the accomplishment! Indeed, considering Israel's population of 9.5 million, there are about 1.4 million Israelis per Olympic medal, roughly twice as efficient as the 2.7 million Americans per US Olympic medal! Now let's dive into the highlights.

### Israeli Athletes - Multiple Different Sports

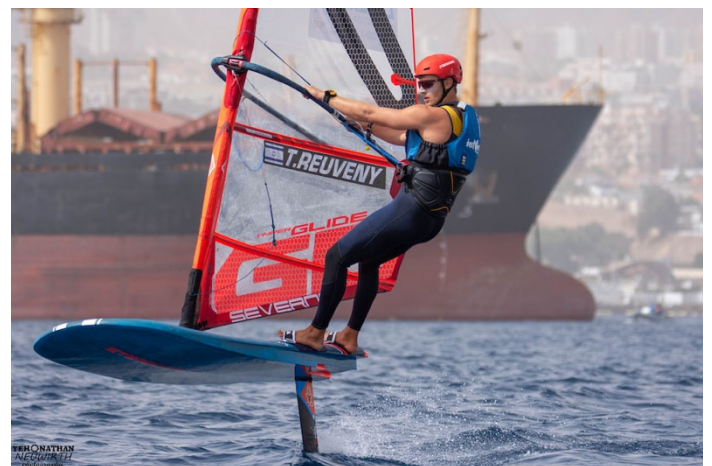
Israel's Olympians competed in an impressive array of sports, including archery, artistic (synchronized) swimming, badminton, cycling, equestrian, fencing, football (soccer), gymnastics, judo, rhythmic gymnastics, sailing, shooting, surfing, swimming, taekwondo, and the triathlon. The diversity of sports represents a testament to Israel's broad athletic prowess and determination.

### ~ The Medal Winners: The Real Maccabees ~

Here's a closer look at the medalists who made Israel especially proud, sorted by their competitive sports.

### Sailing: Gold Medalist Tom Reuveny and Silver Medalist Sharon Kantor

If you've ever been at the beach in Tel Aviv or anywhere along Israel's Mediterranean Sea, you'll no doubt have seen windsurfers of all levels and ages enjoying the waves! At the 2024 Summer Games, 24-year-old Tom Reuveny proved he was the best windsurfer in the world by securing Israel a gold medal. Tom began windsurfing at age 10, and had previously won world championships in this event, but this was his first Olympic medal, sailing him right into Israel's Olympic history books.



Sharon Kantor made waves with her Sailing silver medal, and is Israel's first female Olympic medalist in the sport. Commenting on her approach to the sailing

windsurfing competition, Kantor was quoted as saying, "the most important thing for me has been to enjoy what I'm doing." Her silver win was a shining moment, reinforcing that Israel's sailors are a force to be reckoned with. At only 21 years old, we can expect to see Kantor on the medal podium again in the future.

### **Judo: Silver Medalists Inbar Lanir and Raz Hershko and Bronze Medalist Peter Paltchik**

A bronze medalist in at the Tokyo 2020 games, Inbar Lanir earned a silver medal in the women's 78kg category of Judo at the Paris 2024 Games. Prior to her judo training, Lanir practiced ballet, and credits ballet with helping her a great deal in Judo, due to ballet's emphasis on movement (a critical skill in Judo). Lanir received the status of outstanding athlete from the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces).

Raz Hershko followed suit with another silver in the women's +78kg judo category. At 26, she has earned numerous international titles and medals, including a



mixed team bronze medal at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. Raz's strength, fierce grappling skills and unwavering focus earned her the nickname "Hersh-kules."

Peter Paltchik is currently ranked as the number one ranked Judoka (practitioner of Judo) in the world. Born in Ukraine, he moved to Israel with his family at 9 months old. His birth was difficult, and he was born with crooked and fractured bones and various other health problems. His doctors recommended that he practice sports as a way to strengthen his body. His grandfather sent him to practice judo when he was four years old - and the rest is history! Paltchik won a bronze medal in the men's 100kg category in the 2024 Games, and was one of the flag bearers in the Olympics opening ceremony.

### **Gymnastics Floor Exercise: Silver Medalist Artem Dolgopyat**

Artem Dolgopyat jumped and tumbled his way to a silver medal in the floor exercise, his specialty, dazzling both judges and spectators. Dolgopyat immigrated with his family to Israel from his native Ukraine at 12 years old. At the time he moved to Israel, Dolgopyat was already a two-time national champion in Ukraine for his age group.



His routine was a perfect blend of power and grace, executed with impeccable precision. Artem's silver medal added another chapter to his already illustrious career, having previously won the gold medal in the floor exercise at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and as the 2023 World Champion in the same event.

### **Team Silver Medal: Rhythmic Gymnastics**

*Yasher Koach* to Shani Bakanov, Adar Friedmann, Romi Paritzki, Ofir Shaham, and Diana Svartsov!



These sensational Sabras came from behind – they were in fifth place after the first two exercises –and ended up finishing second only to China (and ahead of Italy). After the medals ceremony Paritzki pointed out that there were lots of Israeli flags in the hall. She said her team is "so proud to represent the state and to lift it; we're a strong people."

### **Gold for American Jewish Wrestler Amit Elor**

Notably, American wrestler Amit Elor, whose parents are Israeli, won a gold medal in freestyle wrestling for Team USA. Elor's victory in Paris adds an extra layer of pride for Israel, as she embodies a strong connection to her Israeli roots.

### **A Final Bow:**

Israel's 2024 Olympic team didn't just participate; they shone brightly, illuminating Paris with their talent and resilience. At a time when it's not easy to be an Israeli or a supporter of Israel, the Israeli Olympic delegation gave its citizens and friends a much-needed distraction, and an internationally accepted reason to express pride in Israel. *Kol Hakavod* Team Israel!