QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"Every great advance in science has issued from a new audacity of imagination." (John Dewey, the American philosopher and educator, in The Quest for Certainty, 1929. A fitting line for a week in which an Israeli start-up only three years old is bought for a reported $7.5 billion, and researchers dare to ask whether three everyday medicines could clear a form of diabetes.)

- This Shabbat we read Vayishlach. Jacob is on his way home after twenty years away, and he prepares for the meeting with his brother Esau with gifts, a plan and a prayer. That night he wrestles until dawn, and is given a new name: Israel. It is a good week to read about a country that keeps wrestling, and keeps coming out stronger. Thanksgiving falls on Thursday, so Happy Thanksgiving to our American readers, and Chanukah is only a week away.
- Amazon has announced a deal for the technology behind the Israeli AI start-up Decart, and will bring its founders and engineers on board. Amazon has not given a price, but the deal is reported to be worth $7.5 billion, which would be one of the biggest ever for an Israeli start-up. Decart was founded in September 2023 by Dean Leitersdorf and Moshe Shalev, who met in the IDF's Unit 8200. It began with software that helps AI programs run faster and more cheaply on the same computer chips, which is what Amazon is buying, and it also became known for an AI-generated, playable world that looked like Minecraft. The founders have agreed to stay at Amazon for five years, and a large part of the payment is reported to be deferred. Not bad for a company that is barely three years old.
- Another Israeli cybersecurity start-up, Vero Security, has raised $11 million in its first funding round, led by TLV Partners. AI "agents" are programs that carry out tasks on their own, and companies worry about what they might do unsupervised, such as reading passwords they have no need for. Vero watches the agents while they work and blocks anything that breaks the company's rules. It was founded last year by Elad Tessler and Daniel Meirov, both Unit 8200 veterans, and has offices in Tel Aviv and New York.
- Almost two million passengers passed through Ben Gurion Airport in October, according to the Israel Airports Authority: about 1.96 million, with international traffic up 5.3% on October last year. Domestic flights from the airport reached a record 70,940 passengers, up 28.6%, and cargo was up 9%. Athens was the most popular destination, with about 116,000 round-trip passengers, up 19.5%, and Greece as a whole was the busiest country. Pack the sunscreen.
- Tourists are coming back. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, 152,400 visitors arrived in Israel in October, which is 16.2% more than in October last year. To be fair, the first ten months of the year are still about 10% behind last year's (957,800 against about 1.07 million), so there is catching up to do, but October is a good step in the right direction. The United States is the biggest source, at about a third of arrivals.
- Clalit Health Services, Israel's largest health fund, has received a two-year grant from Google.org, reported at $2 million, to build an AI assistant that helps patients find their way through the system: working out what they need, booking appointments and preparing for visits. The plan is for it to work by voice, including over landlines and ordinary mobile phones, so that older people without smartphones are not left out, and to understand local dialects. It is at the planning stage: a pilot comes first, then the hope of a nationwide roll-out, and no dates have been given.
- Researchers at Bar-Ilan University's medical school used a combination of three substances already in use in people, one of them a diabetes medicine and one a heartburn medicine, on mice that had a slow-developing form of type 1 diabetes that appears in adults (sometimes called "type 1.5"). About a third of the treated mice went into

complete remission: their blood sugar returned to normal, they no longer needed insulin, and they stayed diabetes-free for weeks after the treatment stopped. Blood markers also helped predict which mice would respond. This is a mouse study, so it is too early to say what it means for people, but because the substances are already in use the team hopes to move to a trial in humans. It was published in the journal MedComm.

- A great place to visit with the family: an underground hiding complex from the time of the Jewish revolts against Rome has opened to the public for the first time at Horbat Burgin, in the Adullam–France Park in the Judean foothills south of Beit Shemesh. Visitors can climb through about 200 metres of tunnels dug by villagers and rebels, and see a Byzantine church with colourful mosaic floors. The settlement dates back some 2,000 years, and may be the village of Caphar Bish mentioned by Josephus. Archaeologist Amir Ganor, who began digging there in 1995 to stop looters, says that “once we started to dig here, the looting stopped.” The site was developed by KKL-JNF, the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Mateh Yehuda Regional Council. Bring a torch, and mind your head.
- And in basketball, Hapoel Jerusalem is still perfect in the EuroCup: a 91–80 win over Rostock on 18 November (Kenny Lofton Jr. scored 29) made it eight wins from eight games and kept the team on top of its group, at the time of writing. The club, which plays its home games in Belgrade, last won this competition in 2004. Hapoel Tel Aviv also had a good night in the Euroleague, winning 85–82 at Baskonia to end a three-game losing run.
- A start-up bought by Amazon, almost two million passengers at Ben Gurion, a possible new way to treat a form of diabetes and a trip underground for the whole family: that’s GN. Shabbat shalom, and have a good week.

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