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## ISRAEL IS OIL-RICH, EXPLORATION-POOR

Sir- As a geologist and managing director of various oil exploration companies in Israel over the past 20 years, I was quoted in several paragraphs of Michael Arnold's article "Slippery dreams" (January 22). I would like to amend and add certain facts as follows:

The oil potential of Israel was evaluated twice at the request of the Israeli government. In 1962, Lewis Weeks, the former chief geologist at Exxon, determined that "the potential ultimate oil resources of Israel should be of the order of 500 to 2,000 million barrels from primary recovery... The figures do not include gas... which may equal 50% and upwards of that of the oil."

In 1979, James Wilson, former chief geologist of Shell (US) determined that on-shore Israel (the off-shore and the Dead Sea Rift Valley were not included) has a potential of 330 to 2,000 million barrels of recoverable oil.

Both these experts have been president of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists.

Since the Wilson evaluation in 1979, extensive data have been accumulated relating to on-shore and off-shore Israel. From this data, it becomes clear that the total may exceed 2,000 million barrels.

Israel's per annum consumption amounts to about 70 million barrels.

The 1962 evaluation predicted that "the finding and recovery of this oil and gas may require many decades" - and evidently assumed that such efforts would be made. Unfortunately, this has not been the case.

It is most likely that this failing is one of the main reasons why the forecast potential has not yet been discovered.

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