Israel, Kingdom of Bhutan Establish Full Diplomatic Ties

Another beautiful Hanukkah gift: another nation chooses to increase light and widen the circle of peace!

The Kingdom of Bhutan, a Buddhist nation in the Himalayas bordering India and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, established full diplomatic relations with the State of Israel on Saturday December 12, 2020.

"I welcome the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Bhutan, which is additional fruit of the peace agreements," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in his statement welcoming the expanding circle of peace between Israel and other nations. "We are in contact with additional countries that want to join and establish relations with us."

The agreement between Israel and the kingdom of Bhutan was signed by Israel's Ambassador to India Ron Malka and Bhutanese Ambassador to India Major General Vetsop Namgyel at Ambassador Malka's residence in New Delhi, India and was a culmination of secret talks over the past year.

Israel's Foreign Minister, Gabi Ashkenazi, thanked Ambassador Malka and his staff for strengthening the relationship with Bhutan, and for "building the outline that led to the signing of the agreement on the establishment of diplomatic relations between us" and said he hoped to host Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck in Jerusalem for a first state visit of its kind. "The circle of those who recognize Israel is growing. This is a milestone in Israel's deepening ties with Asia," he said, adding that students from Bhutan are receiving agricultural training in Israel.

Bhutan with a population just over than 770,000 people, restricted travel by foreigners into the country until 1970. Internet and television were officially permitted in 1999.

Bhutan has embassies in only seven countries, excluding the United States, China, Russia, France and the United Kingdom and in fact has formal diplomatic ties with only 53 other nations.

Israeli Ambassador to India Ron Malka and Bhutanese counterpart Vetsop Namgyel at signed the agreement in during a ceremony in New Delhi, India.

Top: Israel's Ambassador to India, *Ron Malka*, and Ambassador of Bhutan to India, Major General *Vetsop Namgyel*, with their delegations at a signing ceremony establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries, December 12, 2020. Bottom: Israel's Ambassador to India, *Ron Malka* (right), and Ambassador of Bhutan to India, Major General *Vetsop Namgyel*.
Photos: Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs