Country Guide (IAM)

Israel

This guide is compiled from the IAM Country Guide for reference only. Customs regulations change frequently; please consult your Seapoe relocation consultant for the latest requirements before shipping.

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Documents

Documents required for importing used household goods, personal effects, and related shipments.

Required Documents

Israel's import process differs significantly by immigration status. The documentation requirements are among the most complex of any country.

New Immigrants (Olim)

- Original passport of consignee and spouse
- New immigrant booklet ("Teudat Oleh")
- English packing list without values (from origin agent)
- Power of Attorney authorising destination agent to clear shipment (provided by destination agent)
- Declaration for customs showing values of all items, with make, serial number, manufacturer name, whether old or new, and sizes for fabric items (prepared and signed at destination agent's office)
- Invoices for newly purchased items (less than 12 months old)
- Rental contract or proof of residence in Israel (minimum 1-year lease)
- Optional: EUR-1 or certificate of origin for items less than 12 months old

Returning Israeli Citizens (Abroad More Than 2 Years)

- Clear copy of consignee's and spouse's Israeli passport (picture page)
- Confirmed "returning resident" status (obtained online or at the customs house near place of residence; requires Israeli passport, spouse's passport, ID card/Teudat Zehut, and proof of residence)
- English packing list without values
- Proof of residence in Israel
- Invoices for newly purchased items (less than 12 months old)
- Power of Attorney authorising destination agent
- Declaration for customs (prepared and signed at destination agent's office)

Israeli Citizens (Abroad Less Than 2 Years)

- Clear copy of Israeli passport (picture page)
- English packing list without values
- Power of Attorney authorising destination agent
- Declaration for customs (prepared and signed at destination agent's office)
- Optional: EUR-1 or certificate of origin for newly purchased items

Foreign Workers (B-1 Visa)

- English packing list without values
- Original passport stamped with B-1 visa

- Israeli customs forms and Power of Attorney (filled in Israel)
- Letter of employment from Israeli employer
- Original bank guarantee documents, signed by issuing bank (from employer)
- Residence visa

Religious Individuals (A-3 Status)

- Same as B-1 requirements, plus:
- A-3 status page stamped in passport by customs authorities
- Letter from place of service
- Bank guarantee or deposit

Diplomats

- English packing list without values
- Clear copy of passport
- Clear copy of diplomat's ID card (obtained at the diplomatic department, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem)
- Power of Attorney from embassy (one-time per embassy)
- Tax exemption franchise (obtained by the embassy/consulate/organisation once diplomatic ID card is issued)

Specific Information

Valued inventory: Must include values of all items, make, serial number, appliance manufacturer name, old/new status, and fabric sizes. The destination agent prepares the customs-format declaration in Hebrew.

Duties & Taxes

New immigrants: Entitled to 3 tax-free importations of household goods and personal effects within 3 years of arrival date (as marked in the Teudat Oleh). The import of a car and professional tools does not count toward this limit. Only one of each type of electrical appliance is permitted, with an exception for 2 computers and 2 televisions per family. Only items for personal use are permitted. No items brought for other people are allowed. The consignee can immigrate from country A and import from country B.

Returning Israeli citizens (2+ years abroad): May import household goods and personal effects tax-free once "returning resident" status is confirmed by Israeli Customs. During the 2 years abroad, the individual must not have spent more than 4 months (120 days) in Israel in each year of absence. Goods must arrive at the port of entry within 9 months of the date of arrival. One of each household appliance permitted, plus 2 computers and 2 televisions per family. Alcohol, food, and communication equipment (phones, fax machines) are NOT exempt from duties even with returning resident status.

Israeli citizens (under 2 years abroad): Do not qualify for tax exemption. The entire shipment will be taxed according to the Israeli customs tariff (customs duties plus VAT plus sales tax). Exception: if the individual did a formal export when leaving Israel through a certified international mover or freight forwarder, and the original export documents are in that company's archives, items matching the original export list can be imported tax-free as a "returning import." The original customs stamp on the returning import papers is required (not a copy).

Foreign workers (B-1): Unlike most countries, a work permit/visa in Israel does not entitle the holder to duty-free import. The employer must provide a bank guarantee in the amount of duties levied by Israeli Customs. This guarantee must be renewed every 12 months and can only be revoked when the goods are exported out of Israel. The guarantee must be adjusted to the Israeli Consumer Price Index. Once the visa holder departs, goods must be re-exported. The owner cannot sell goods with value (furniture, appliances) in Israel.

Tourists (B-2): No duty-free rights. All goods are subject to full customs duties.

Diplomats: Tax exemption covers Israeli customs duties and taxes only, not port-related charges (NVOCC handling, cargo terminal charges, wharfage fees).

Carpets (new immigrants): Permitted duty-free up to 25% of the floor area of the flat, or 75% if wall-to-wall carpeting.

Professional tools: New immigrants and returning residents may import professional tools valued up to USD 36,000 under a bank guarantee (in lieu of paying taxes). Within 6 months, proof of opening a business using the equipment must be presented to Customs, who will then release the guarantee.

Inheritance: No special privileges. Full taxes and duties apply. Requires inheritance papers issued by an Israeli court.

Prohibited & Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Weapons and ammunition (firearms require special authorisation from the Ministry of Interior prior to shipping)
- Explosives
- Dangerous chemicals
- Illegal drugs
- Gas BBQ/grills of any kind (unless approved by the Standards Institution of Israel; treated as effectively prohibited for household moves)
- Electric bicycles, scooters, and mopeds of any kind
- Food (limited to 2 kg)
- Wine/alcohol (limited to 2 litres in personal effects; additional amounts are dutiable, not prohibited)
- Biological commodities: seeds, plants, raw wood, soil (all require permits from the Plant Protection and Inspection Services/PPIS)
- Knives and deadly weapons
- Milk and dairy products
- Fresh meat and meat products
- Games of chance and gambling machines
- Cordless telephones with a range up to 900 MHz
- Wolf hybrids, Savannah cats, and Bengal cats (unless 5th generation or more removed from the pedigree)

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Traveller Allowances (Personal Luggage)

- 250 cigarettes or 250g of other tobacco products
- 1 litre of spirits
- 2 litres of wine
- Gifts: non-residents may import gifts valued up to approximately USD 125

In Household Goods Shipments

- Alcohol: subject to full duties and taxes for all categories (not exempt even for returning residents or new immigrants)
- Communication equipment (phones, fax machines): dutiable, not exempt even for returning residents
- Carpets, curtains, and drapes: subject to partial or full duties depending on item and status
- Sporting equipment and outdoor furniture: subject to partial or full duties
- New items (less than 12 months old): require invoices and EUR-1/certificate of origin for possible reduced rates

- Appliances: no special privileges beyond the 1-per-type exemption for qualified immigrants; 25% discount on sales tax may apply

Diplomats and Alcohol

Diplomats are exempt from duties on alcohol, but it is advisable not to import more than 30-40 bottles to avoid a more complicated customs clearance process requiring a permit from the wine department at the Israeli Standards Institute. Consult the destination agent before shipping.

Gas-Powered Devices

Devices fuelled by natural gas (methane, propane, etc.) including barbecue grills, hobs/burners, cookers, ovens, and heaters must be approved by the Standards Institution of Israel. Without approval, items are subject to confiscation and destruction by Customs, and the owner is liable for all charges incurred.

Special Categories

Unverified Items

- Current vehicle duty rates by engine size and immigration status could not be verified against a current Israeli government source (gov.il sites return 403 to bots). The rates in the IAM and FIDI guides may have changed. The destination agent should provide current rates before shipping any vehicle.
- Whether the electric bicycle/scooter/moped prohibition (from the IAM guide's prohibited list) has been relaxed or formalised into a permit system could not be verified independently. Assume prohibited unless confirmed otherwise.
- The gas BBQ/grill restriction and Standards Institution approval process could not be verified against a current official source. Both IAM and FIDI guides flag this prominently, so it should be treated as current.

Consignment Instructions

Recommended: Contact the destination agent to ensure all requirements have been met prior to import, especially for differences regarding air and sea shipments.

Vehicle import permit: Must be obtained from the Ministry of Transportation BEFORE loading. Failure to have this permit on arrival triggers penalties.

Passport surrender: New immigrants must surrender their original passport along with a copy of the new immigration booklet to Israeli Customs during the clearance process.

Inventory preparation: The valued inventory for customs must be in Hebrew and include values, make, serial number, manufacturer name, old/new status, and fabric sizes. The destination agent prepares this document.

Bank guarantee: B-1 visa holders and A-3 religious individuals must arrange a bank guarantee before clearance can proceed. This is a significant operational step requiring coordination between the employer, bank, and destination agent.

Timing: New immigrants: goods must arrive within 3 years of arrival date. Returning residents (2+ years): goods must arrive within 9 months of arrival date. Israelis under 2 years abroad: no special timeline, but no duty exemptions either.

Diplomatic shipments: The tax exemption franchise must be physically obtained before the shipment can be cleared. The original papers (not copies) are required.

Port charges: Tax exemptions (for diplomats, new immigrants, returning residents) cover customs duties and taxes only. NVOCC handling charges, cargo terminal charges, and wharfage fees are always payable regardless of status.