Episode Book

EPISODE #6523

Unpacking Israel's National AI Strategy

PUBLISHED	10 November 2026 at 12:00 UTC
DURATION	25:39
LISTEN	myweirdprompts.com/episode/israel-national-ai-strategy-55935/
HOSTS	Corn, Herman, Clive, Hilbert
SCRIPT MODEL	z-ai/glm-5.3
VOICES	chatterbox-regular (chatterbox-local)
PIPELINE	V5.26
SOURCES	5 cited by the research (listed at the end)
BOOK GENERATED	11 November 2026 at 06:49 UTC

SYNOPSIS

A close look at Israel's Resolution 4255 and its newly formed National AI Directorate reveals a massive gap between public ambition and state funding. Rather than training costly frontier models, the strategy pivots to applied artificial intelligence, cyber defense, and public integration. An examination of the primary documents details its marquee targets—from 100,000 accelerators to domestic quantum research—and explains how the state offloads infrastructure risks onto the private market.

TRANSCRIPT



Corn

A country with no domestic chip industry, an energy budget it counts twice, and export controls sitting on the frontier compute it wants, has published a plan to become, and I quote the marketing, a "full stack nation."



Herman

Full stack. That's the phrase they went with internationally.



Corn

Daniel's prompt this week is about that plan. Israel's National AI Directorate, the strategy the government approved in June, and the gap between what the document commits to and what anyone has actually written a cheque for. His real tension, I think, is this: is Resolution 4255 a funded programme or a very well-designed PDF?



Herman

It's a twenty-eight-page PDF, for the record.



Corn

Of course it is. Let's start with the body itself, where it sits and who runs it.



Herman

The National AI Directorate sits inside the Prime Minister's Office, and it's headed by a brigadier general in the reserves, Erez Askal. The interesting institutional detail is that the Directorate wasn't some long-standing agency that finally produced a plan. The government resolution, 4255, approved on sixteenth June, both created the Directorate and adopted its strategy at the same stroke. The body and its founding document arrived together, like a chicken and an egg that were signed for on the same delivery note.



Corn

So there's no institutional memory inside it. It's new.



Herman

Brand new. The public launch came later, on tenth August, with Netanyahu and Askal presenting together at a conference with all the agencies that helped draft it. Then the English text went up in August, and the international press push went out on the thirteenth. That sequencing matters, I think. The approval was June, but the selling was August. That tells you something about who the audience was for the polished version.



Corn

The audience was abroad.



Herman

Largely, yes. The English Action Plan is the export model. So the headline commitments, before we interrogate them: at least one hundred thousand advanced AI accelerators as a national goal. A domestically built quantum computer. A National Institute for impact-driven AI applications, the NIIA, with five regional what they call acceleration reactors. And a push to attract a chip fabrication facility at five nanometers or below. That's the marquee list.



Corn

And the man running it describes the document as a compass.



Herman

Askal's own foreword calls the principles a compass for the coming decade, and describes the plan as the basis for continued inter-ministerial work to define the action plan in each activity track. Which is a remarkable sentence to bury in your own launch document. He's telling you the operational detail is downstream.



Corn

"The basis for continued work." Every government document I've ever half-read is the basis for continued work. That's the genus. Now let's read what the thing actually says, provision by provision, and then do the arithmetic.



Herman

The resolution itself has eight numbered provisions. First, sovereign AI infrastructure, expanding national computing and setting that ambitious national goal of a hundred thousand processing units for the state. Second, a national quantum computer built, quote, to the extent possible, on blue-and-white technology. Third, international alliances, positioning Israel as a global hub. Fourth, human capital, training across all segments of the population. Fifth, a national mechanism for handling labour-market shifts from AI-driven job disruption. Sixth, the NIIA with its acceleration hubs. Seventh, a national focus on Cyber AI, Physical AI, and countering deepfakes. Eighth, AI in citizen services.



Corn

That's a list of eight things a country could do.



Herman

The press release layer adds the parts the gov.il statement leaves out. The five-year vision is branded Lived AI. Three pillars underneath it: building the institutions and technology to apply AI to national problems; strengthening the human capital, infrastructure, data and regulatory base; and securing Israel's place in international alliances and standard-setting. The core conviction, and this is worth quoting because it's the whole thesis, is that Israel's advantage will come not from building the largest AI models, but from being the first country where AI is fully integrated into daily public life.



Corn

That's a retreat dressed as a strategy.



Herman

Is it? I go back and forth. You could read it as realism. Israel is not going to outspend the hyperscalers on frontier training runs, and the plan is honest enough to say so. Access to frontier models and large-scale computers, it says, are increasingly shaped by export controls, concentrated supply chains, corporate allocation decisions and strategic



Herman (continued)

alliances. That's the plan naming its own cage.



Corn

Or you could read it as the only pitch available to a country that can't afford the other one. What would you have said if they'd announced a frontier-model programme?



Herman

I'd have said they were mad. The capital requirements alone, tens of billions of dollars a year at the frontier now, for a country of under ten million. No. The applied thesis is the defensible position. Whether it's also a funded position is the question.



Corn

Let's do the diagnosis before the arithmetic. What does the plan say is broken?



Herman

Five barriers, and they're oddly specific. Model maturity, meaning consistency and reliability aren't there yet for critical uses. Insufficient adaptation to the countless concrete needs of professional life. Difficulty connecting AI to the physical world. An economy, and this is their phrase, that has not yet converged, in which the costs of energy, chips and infrastructure still outpace measurable value. And the cyber vulnerability of AI systems themselves.



Corn

That fourth barrier is the confession. They wrote down, in their own strategy, that the economics of compute don't close yet. Then they set a compute target anyway.



Herman

Because the diagnosis is honest and the target is political. Those aren't in tension in the document, but they're in tension in reality. The plan answers the barriers with four claimed Israeli differentiators: a demonstrated method for solving real-life problems under



Herman (continued)

constraint, unusual experience connecting intelligence to action in physical space, a commanding position in cyber defense, and a research brain trust out of proportion to the country's size.



Corn

The cyber one at least is checkable.



Herman

It is, and it checks out. Israeli cyber drew three point eight billion dollars in twenty twenty-four, which was forty percent of all private US cyber investment that year. Seven of the world's ten largest cyber companies run R&D centres in Israel. And Google bought Wiz for thirty-two billion dollars, the largest deal in Israeli high-tech history. That pillar is load-bearing and real.



Corn

So of the four differentiators, one is measured, one is a boast, one is Army nostalgia, and one is the universities. Now the arithmetic.



Herman

Here it is. The headline is one hundred thousand accelerators. The only concrete buildout named anywhere is five thousand, and that five thousand is explicitly led by the private market. Not state-funded. Private market. Five percent of the target, and the state's cheque for it is, as far as I can find, zero.



Corn

Five percent, outsourced.



Herman

It gets better. The quantum computer is hedged with to the extent possible. The chip fab is a push to bring a facility to Israel, not a commitment to build one. The orbital item, and there is an orbital item, is a feasibility study on hosting AI computing infrastructure in low Earth orbit. A country that hasn't built its first five thousand accelerators is studying whether to put them in space.



Corn

One step at a time. First the feasibility study, then the rockets, then the accelerators they haven't got.



Herman

And here's the thing I want on the record: no budget figure, no shekel amount, no appropriation appears in the government statement, the press release, or the first nine pages of the Action Plan. The verbs throughout are directional. The Government will act to, will promote, will advance, sets an ambitious national goal. That is the grammar of intention.



Corn

Daniel's own brief had a figure in it, three billion shekels for the year.



Herman

It did, and figures for this plan conflict across sources, so I'd treat any single number with caution. What I can say is that nothing in the primary documents confirms an appropriation. The later pages of the Action Plan, the detailed activity tracks, are the most likely place a real budget line would surface, and I haven't seen one confirmed there.



Corn

So the answer to Daniel's funded-versus-aspirational question is: read the document as ninety-five percent aspiration with one concrete step, and that step is somebody else's money.



Herman

Mostly, yes. Though I'd add the IP clause, because it's the most interesting policy design in the whole thing. The NIIA's acceleration reactors, five regional labs, will pursue nine systemic goals, from optimal aging and inclusive growth to national security and productivity. And the intellectual property from the solutions stays with the entrepreneurs who build them, conditioned on broad implementation in Israel.



Corn

That's not a funding mechanism. That's the state saying: you pay, you keep it, we just want it deployed here.



Herman

It's a deliberate transfer of cost and risk to the private sector. The classic state-lab model is the opposite, the state funds the research and owns the output. This says the state will convene, and the entrepreneurs will risk. There's a version of that which is shrewd, and a version which is the state declining to pay for its own priorities, and the difference between them is whether the reactors actually get built.



Corn

My money's on the convening.



Herman

Which is ironic, because your whole thing is being the one who declines to move.



Corn

I contain multitudes, most of them horizontal. One more item before we leave the document, because it's the one nobody's talking about: the plan commits to work with international AI developers on bias in how global models represent Israel and Jewish communities.



Herman

Alongside a National Ethics Council on transparency, fairness and privacy. And yes, the two sit oddly together. One minute the state is establishing a council on algorithmic fairness, the next it's asking foreign labs to adjust how their models represent it. Every country will eventually ask that question, I suspect. Israel is just first and least shy about it.



Corn

The ethics council gets a paragraph, the model-bias ask gets a commitment. That tells you which one is load-bearing politically.



Herman

It does. Now, the harder half of Daniel's question. He frames this as the third attempt at a national AI programme, and I have to be straight with you, Corn. I cannot corroborate that framing from anything official. The government statement, the Foreign Ministry notice, the press release, the Action Plan itself, none of them mention earlier national AI programmes, let alone two, or why they failed. The official record presents 4255 as the founding instrument, full stop.



Corn

Daniel didn't invent it out of nowhere, though. There was a 2019 expert plan that went nowhere, and a draft that once talked about twenty-five billion shekels.



Herman

Right, there's real history there. A committee recommendation talked in terms of tens of thousands of GPUs. But the specific claim of attempt one, attempt two, attempt three, with a body count of failures, that's his framing, and substantiating it properly would take the Hebrew-language business press, Calcalist, Globes, TheMarker, or interviews with people who were in the room. I'd treat it as a lens rather than a documented fact.



Corn

Then let's use the lens honestly. What does the plan itself reveal about why earlier efforts might have stalled, without naming them?



Herman

Quite a lot, actually, by accident. The plan concedes the AI revolution, quote, has not been implemented broadly and reliably in the real world. Its diagnosis of an unconverged economy, where energy, chips and infrastructure costs outpace measurable value, describes exactly the economics that would sink a compute-buildout ambition in a small country with no domestic chip industry. And the export-control framing points at the structural bind: any Israeli programme, whatever decade it's launched in, cannot simply buy its way to frontier compute. The door has a bouncer.



Corn

The plan keeps insisting it was crafted jointly with all government branches, and demands what Askal calls second-order change from all heads of the country's systems. That's a document arguing against its own predecessors without having the courtesy to name them.



Herman

Yes. You don't demand silo-breaking from system heads unless silos have been breaking you. That's the tell. The insistence on cross-ministerial authorship is an apology for something, and the something is never specified.



Corn

Which, incidentally, is the most Israeli form of institutional memory: not writing anything down, but making the next document apologise for it.



Herman

So, the case that this one is different. And it's a real case. It has a formal government resolution, not a ministry white paper. A dedicated directorate inside the Prime Minister's Office with a named head. Explicit prime-ministerial sponsorship, Netanyahu personally proposed it and fronted the launch. A public launch with every formulating agency present. A published English Action Plan. And a thesis, Lived AI, that plays to documented strengths rather than a fantasy of frontier labs. That is more institutional plumbing than a white paper gets.



Corn

And the case against is the same episode we just recorded. No published budget. The flagship number is twenty times the concrete first step. The buildout is delegated to the private market. The quantum computer and the fab are hedged. The orbital item is a study. And the director of the whole enterprise describes the document as a compass pending the actual action plans.



Herman

A compass is a wonderful instrument for a journey nobody has funded.



Corn

Askal's best line, though, and I'll grant him this one: the plan does not presume to eliminate the uncertainty, but to manage it. That's the most honest sentence in twenty-eight pages.



Herman

It is. And there's something else I keep coming back to. I said earlier I go back and forth on whether Lived AI is realism or poverty, and I've decided it's the third thing. It's a bet that the frontier commoditises. If frontier models keep getting cheaper and more available, then the value migrates to whoever integrates them deepest, and Israel's play is exactly that. If they don't, if the frontier stays expensive and gated, the whole thesis is stranded on the wrong side of the bouncer. What do you think, honestly? You're our resident skeptic of grand institutional plans.



Corn

A compass costs about thirty shekels and tells you nothing about the terrain. And my suspicion, having lived through this flat's own renovation committee, is that the five acceleration reactors will produce nine excellent presentations.



Herman

That's the Corn forecast. But you watched the cyber programme happen, same country, same office in a sense. Cyber went from nothing to forty percent of US private investment in a generation. Why does that story not repeat here?



Corn

Because cyber didn't need a hundred thousand accelerators. It needed clever people and cheap offices. The state's role was to not get in the way and to hire the alumni of Unit 8200 into the economy. This plan is trying to bootstrap an asset class, compute, that costs billions before the first clever line of code. The state's role is to pay, and the state, as far as the documents show, hasn't. Would you agree that's the structural difference?



Herman

I'd agree, with the caveat that a state can also pay in other currencies. Convening power, regulatory speed, procurement as an anchor customer. The plan gestures at all three. But a gesture isn't an appropriation, and I keep landing in the same place: the plumbing is real, the water hasn't arrived.



Corn

We did an episode on the chip revolution side of this, the accelerators and the supply chains, and the thing that stays with me from it is that everything in that market is allocated by relationship. Which means the alliances pillar is the actual strategy, and the compute target is the brochure.



Herman

The plan says it itself, in a phrase I found striking. Israel enters partnerships, quote, not only as a recipient, but as a contributor. That's the right read of a small country's position. You don't negotiate for compute from your knees.



Corn

And now, a word from a man who has reviewed every road he has ever driven down.

C

Clive

One-Star Getaways. Cape Town, the Saltmarsh Vista Guesthouse, one star. The sea view was a painting of the sea, screwed to the wall, and the frame was the only thing in the room that wasn't warped.

C

Clive

The advertised rooftop pool was a photograph of a rooftop pool, laminated, and the lift to the rooftop was a corridor with a mirror in it. Two hundred rand a night, and I'd have paid double to leave sooner.

C

Clive

For anyone after a properly disappointing trip this winter, I recommend it. Ask for room four. The painting faces the wall.



Corn

Room four has a certain honesty. The painting faces the wall. You'd almost admire the consistency.



Herman

I'd book it just to watch you sleep through a painting of the sea. Back to the compass. There's a date buried in Askal's foreword that I want to flag, because it's the one concrete deadline in the document. He invokes the eightieth year of independence, twenty twenty-eight, as the moment by which the country has to prove its systems can still change.



Corn

So that's the real deadline. Not the five-year plan, the anniversary. Now, here's a thought I keep having, and I'm going to test it on you.



Herman

Test away.



Corn

The twenty-twenty-eight date makes this a government resolution that can be declared a success by existing. Sixty-two months of Lived AI initiatives, one commemorative quantum press conference, done. Commemorative deadlines are the softest deadlines



Corn (continued)

there are, Herman. Nothing fails like a plan that can only be evaluated at a birthday party.



Herman

That's cynical even by your standards. But I can't fault it, because the evaluation problem is real. Nobody has defined what success looks like in between. There's no interim metric in anything I've read. And that gets us back to Daniel's actual question, whether this one is different, and I suppose my answer is: the institutional difference is genuine, and the financial difference is unproven, and those are different questions that the same document is trying to answer.



Hilbert

Processing units.



Herman

Sorry?



Hilbert

You've both said accelerators all afternoon. The resolution says processing units. I have the page here. The Hebrew is looser than the English they gave the foreigners, and I'd want it on the record before one of you reads the hundred thousand as a purchase order. Corn's been reading the English version out all episode like it's a bill of sale, and Corn reads slowly, but he reads the wrong translation with real confidence.



Corn

Where did you get that page?



Hilbert

Never mind where. A man I used to do work for had it on his desk in Kiryat Matalon, four weeks before the launch, and I photocopied it when he went for his coffee. He took eleven minutes, that man, every coffee of his life, and I counted because I was waiting to use the



Hilbert (continued)

copier. I've carried the copy since June.



Herman

It's laminated.



Hilbert

It rides better laminated. I'll say this once. You're both right that the plan is mostly aspiration. But you're wrong about the five thousand being modesty. That's a pilot, and I sat next to a pilot programme once for two years. A pilot is how an organisation buys the right to keep the number. They'll defend the hundred thousand on the strength of those five, whoever builds them. That's the whole trick.



Corn

And if the private market builds only four thousand?



Hilbert

Then the target was always fifty thousand, and they'll say so quietly in a basement in Tel Aviv where nobody laminates anything. Anyway. The copier man retired in March. Good man. Terrible coffee, eleven minutes.



Herman

He kept a photocopy for five months, laminated, on the strength of a Hebrew phrase that's looser than the English. And the maddening thing is he might be right. The gov.il statement does say processing units, and the accelerator framing comes from the press release. That's a distinction with real teeth if the number ever gets audited.



Corn

The bouncer at the door speaks Hebrew, and the brochure is in English. Where does that leave the hundred thousand? Same place it was: a national goal, in a country whose national goals have historically been checkable only by archaeologists. What listeners



Corn (continued)

should actually watch is smaller than the headline. Does an inter-ministerial action plan with a number in it appear, does a budget line show up in a treasury document, and does anyone in the private market actually pour concrete for the five thousand. If those three things happen, the document was a strategy. If twenty twenty-eight arrives with a commemorative conference and the compass still pointing the same way, it was a brochure, and a well-written one.



Herman

The gap to keep an eye on is the one between the document and the cheque. Our deepest thanks as always to Hilbert Flumingtop for producing the show.



Corn

If this was your kind of episode, go back for episode eighteen, Beyond the GPU; episode twelve, The AI Breakthrough; and episode sixty ninety-three, Check Out Our First Hebrew Episodes (Plus Mandarin). This has been My Weird Prompts. If you've enjoyed this one, tell a friend, or leave us a review wherever you get your podcasts, and everything's at my weird prompts dot com.



Herman

We'll be back soon.



Corn

See you tomorrow.

SOURCES

What the research for this episode read before the script was written. Primary sources first.

1. **Government of Israel, Prime Minister's Office [primary]**
   Government Approval of the National AI Program: Israel Will Lead the Next Generation of Innovation and Technology, published 2026-06-16, updated 2026-08-11. (retrieved 2026-11-10)
   https://www.gov.il/en/pages/spoke-ai160626

2. **Israel National Artificial Intelligence Directorate, Office of the Prime Minister [primary]**
   Israel's National AI Strategic Plan (Action Plan), August 2026, 28 pp. (retrieved 2026-11-10; pages 1, 9 read)
   https://govextra.gov.il/media/cgwme4z1/israel-national-ai-strategic-plan_en.pdf

3. **Israel's National AI Directorate via PR Newswire [primary]**
Israel Launches National AI Action Plan, Setting Goal of Becoming a Global Artificial Intelligence Power, 2026-08-13. (retrieved 2026-11-10)
https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/israel-launches-national-ai-action-plan-setting-goal-of-becoming-a-global-artificial-intelligence-power-302851235.html

4. **Israel National AI Directorate, LinkedIn post [primary]**
Israel Approves National AI Strategy for Technological Independence. (retrieved 2026-11-10)
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/ai-directorate_israelai-nationalstrategy-techsovereignty-activity-7472645227812610048-iddF

5. **Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
Israel's National AI Program launched, 2026-08-10, last updated 2026-08-13. (retrieved 2026-11-10)
https://embassies.gov.il/en/news/israel-s-national-ai-program-launched-10-aug-2026