

# Story Of The First And Only Season In The Israel Baseball League

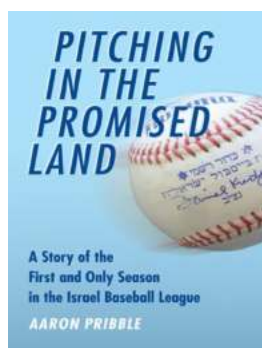


The Israel Baseball League (IBL) has an intriguing story, as it was the first and only professional baseball league in Israel's history. This unique league brought together players from different backgrounds, cultures, and skill levels, with the common goal of promoting the sport in a country where baseball was relatively unknown.

## The Birth of the Israel Baseball League

The idea of establishing a professional baseball league in Israel was conceived by American entrepreneur Larry Baras. Motivated by his passion for the sport and

his desire to foster cultural bridges, Baras assembled a team of investors and announced the creation of the IBL in 2005.



## Pitching in the Promised Land: A Story of the First and Only Season in the Israel Baseball League

by Aaron Pribble (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 2765 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
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Lending : Enabled



Despite facing numerous challenges, such as limited knowledge of baseball among the Israeli public and finding suitable venues, Baras managed to build the foundations of the league through perseverance and determination. The inaugural season was scheduled to begin in June 2007, with six teams set to compete for the championship.

### The Players and Teams

The IBL attracted players from various backgrounds, including former Major League Baseball (MLB) players, college athletes, and even aspiring local talent. Some of the notable MLB alumni who participated in the first season include Adam Greenberg, Ken Holtzman, and Dan Duquette.

The six teams in the league were the Beit Shemesh Blue Sox, Jerusalem Lions, Modi'in Miracle, Netanya Tigers, Petah Tikva Pioneers, and Tel Aviv Lightning. Each team had a mix of experienced players and rookies, contributing to the league's unique dynamic.

## **The First Games and Highlights**

The IBL's inaugural season kicked off on June 24, 2007, with an opening ceremony that showcased the diversity and enthusiasm of the league. The first game between the Petah Tikva Pioneers and Beit Shemesh Blue Sox drew a surprising number of spectators, indicating the growing interest in this unfamiliar sport.

Throughout the season, players displayed their exceptional skills and entertained fans with exciting plays. One of the highlights of the season was the performance of Adam Greenberg, a promising young player who had previously experienced a career-altering injury in his MLB debut. Greenberg's resilience and determination inspired both his teammates and fans, earning him recognition within the league.

## **Challenges and**

Despite the initial excitement and promising start, the Israel Baseball League faced several challenges that ultimately led to its downfall. Financial instability, organizational issues, and difficulty securing sponsorships strained the league's operations.

Additionally, the IBL had to compete with other popular sports in Israel, such as soccer and basketball. The lack of a well-established baseball culture made it more challenging for the league to gain a strong foothold.

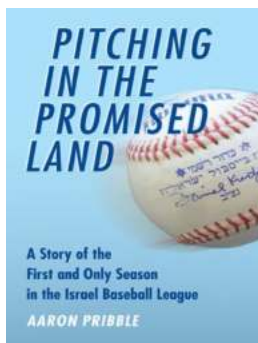
Regrettably, by the end of the season, it became clear that the league was not financially viable. The Israel Baseball League suspended operations indefinitely in September 2007, marking the end of the first and only season.

## Legacy and Impact

Although the Israel Baseball League had a short-lived existence, it left a lasting impact on the Israeli sports scene. The league introduced baseball to many Israelis who were previously unfamiliar with the sport. It also provided an opportunity for players to showcase their talents and inspired future generations of baseball enthusiasts and athletes.

While the Israel Baseball League may have been a brief chapter in history, its significance should not be overlooked. It demonstrated the power of sports to unite people from diverse backgrounds and highlighted the potential for baseball to grow as a sport in Israel.

The story of the first and only season in the Israel Baseball League is one of ambition, passion, and the challenges faced when introducing an unfamiliar sport in a new environment. Although the league did not succeed in the long term, its impact on the Israeli sports landscape and the individuals involved should not be underestimated. The Israel Baseball League will always be remembered as a groundbreaking initiative that brought the spirit of baseball to new horizons.



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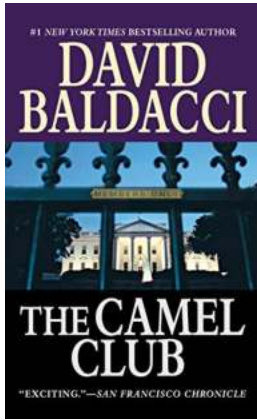
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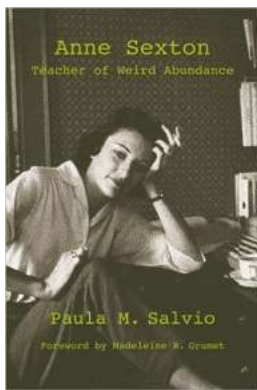
It was the first (and last) season of professional baseball in Israel. Aaron Pribble, twenty-seven, had been out of Minor League Baseball for three years while he pursued a career in education when, at his coach's suggestion, he tried out for the newly formed Israel Baseball League (IBL). Of Jewish descent (not a requirement, but definitely a plus) and former pro, Pribble was the ideal candidate for the upstart league. In many ways the league resembled the ultimate baseball fantasy camp with its unforgettable cast of characters: the DJ/street artist third baseman from the Bronx, the wildman catcher from Australia, the journeymen Dominicans who were much older than they claimed to be, and, of course, seventy-one-year-old Sandy Koufax, drafted in a symbolic gesture as the last player. After falling in love with a beautiful Yemenite Jew, enduring an alleged terrorist attack on opening day, witnessing a career-ending brain injury caused by improper field equipment, participating in a strike, and venturing into the West Bank despite being strongly advised against it, Pribble must decide whether to forgo a teaching career in order to become the first player from the IBL to sign a pro contract in the United States. His is a story of coming of age spiritually and athletically in one short season in the throes of romance, Middle Eastern politics, and the dreams of America's pastime far, far afield from home.

Learn about Holy Land Hardball, a documentary on the Israel Baseball League.



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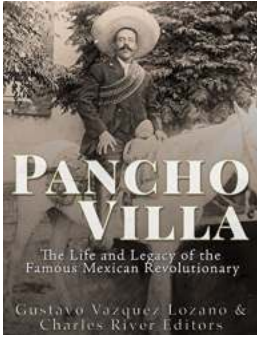
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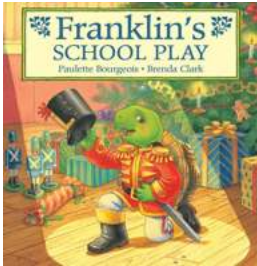
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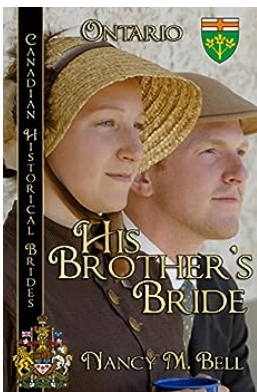
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