

Google Israel launches Hebrew news site

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With no fanfare or prior warning, Google Israel launched a beta Hebrew news site Tuesday morning.

The service links to stories on the Web sites of the three giants in the Israeli print media, Yedioth Aharonoth, Haaretz and Maariv, but also to smaller outlets such as Globes and Arutz Sheva and to other forms of media such as Army Radio and Telesport. The site even features a statement issued by the Ministry of the Environment.

Israelis are avid readers of online news, and many set their Internet homepages to news outlets -- especially Ynet, Yedioth's online version.

The Internet search giant set up shop in Israel officially late last month, though the company tapped former IBM employee Meir Brand to head the Israel branch several months earlier and the search engine has been

available in Hebrew for some time.

Every step of the way, Google has remained mum on its intentions for operations here.

At the news conference to announce the opening of the Israel offices, Brand said only that Google would be tailoring its services and advertising to the Israeli surfer's unique needs.

Last week the company announced it was building a research-and-development center in Haifa, headed by Dr. Yoelle Maarek.

Google News has 35 other versions for 30 other countries besides Israel, including French and English sites for Canada, Spanish and English sites for the United States, Dutch and French versions for Belgium and German and French versions for Switzerland.

The service is also available in Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Italian.

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