

Morris Kahn

Born: 1930, Benoni, South Africa

Resides: Moshav Beit Yanai, Israel

Occupation: Venture Capitalist and Philanthropist

Bar-Ilan University bestows an Honorary Doctorate on Morris Kahn, who has made an indelible mark on Israel, creating a global software leader and catalyzing a high-tech explosion. His support of frontier research by returning scientists is strengthening Israel's competitive edge in the global scientific arena. His far-reaching social vision and devotion to young leadership, the environment, and the disenfranchised is improving the lives of so many.

Morris Kahn recalls one of the most significant moments in his life: a visit to Israel in 1955. His first impressions: "a strange country, a foreign language, different food – but a feeling of being at home with my people." The following year, he returned to Israel – this time to stay.

In the more than half a century that has transpired, Morris Kahn has made an indelible mark on the country. Founder of the Aurec Group, a leading provider of communications, media and information services in Israel and worldwide, he produced a yellow pages directory that eventually paved the way for the Israeli software giant Amdocs (with more than 20,000 employees worldwide and customers

in more than 50 countries) which provides integrated customer management to the telecom industry. His current focus is on philanthropy and venture capital. Through the Kahn Foundation, he seeks to better the lives of thousands through a broad spectrum of projects in science, medicine, health, education, leadership, and the environment. "Philanthropy requires work; it's not just writing checks," he maintains. Indeed, the nonprofits benefiting from his largesse have been carefully selected.

"My first big project involved the plight of Israel's naval commandos who had trained in the polluted Kishon River. These young people were dying of cancer yet no one was prepared to recognize the problem. We forced a government commission and the river is being cleaned up." Kahn also founded the NGO ZALUL ("clear") to help reclaim Israel's streams and seashores, and bring polluting companies to task. His passion for the sea led him to establish Coral World International, which owns and manages underwater observatories and marine parks. He additionally supports cutting-edge cancer research, cataract surgery for Ethiopian villagers, a camp for children with terminal diseases, and a therapeutic riding center for the disabled.

At Bar-Ilan University, he is helping to reverse the brain drain by bringing back Israeli scientists and equipping them with state-of-the-art labs. "Israel has made a huge investment in educating these young people who have stayed abroad. It's like planting and nourishing a tree and then exporting it with all its fruit!" says Kahn. "I have been successful in business and this has given me the ability to do things that are satisfying and meaningful. This is the underpinning of why I do what I do," says the honorary doctorate recipient.

