

IMPACT



AMERICAN ASSOCIATES
Ben-Gurion University
of the Negev

FALL 2013



JEWISH THOUGHT
**A PEOPLE'S
INTELLECTUAL
HISTORY**

PRESERVING LADINO
LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

HOPE FOR THE IMMOBILE

THE FOOD SECURITY
CHALLENGE

SUPPORTING NEGEV MOMS

BGU BRAINPOWER ILLUMINATES OLD IDEAS AND NEW ONES

BY LLOYD GOLDMAN
AABGU PRESIDENT



Like Prof. Hendrik Bruins, whose multidisciplinary research is highlighted in “The Food Security Challenge,” the Jewish people welcome the future but are rooted in the past. This issue demonstrates how BGU acts as a bridge between the history that forged modern Jewish identity and science-based research that may shape the future for all humanity.

Discover in reading about the Department of Jewish Thought how new technology is revolutionizing our ability to understand Jewish intellectual progression and the many facets of Jewish beliefs, ideas and practices over some 20 centuries. I know you’ll also find BGU’s Center for Ladino Culture fascinating. It’s dedicated to reigniting interest in the Sephardic heritage, whose richness must be conserved even as the Ladino language is lost.

New science and technology also challenge traditional ideas about accepted practice in rehabilitation. One of BGU’s many unique collaborations—between an electrical engineer and a physiotherapist/neurophysiologist—is helping teenagers with cerebral palsy throughout the Middle East quickly improve their mobility. The team’s work on how the human body moves, and new rehab strategies that align with brain science, promise to help many.

BGU’s commitment to the community is clearly alive and well through an especially tough mission: promoting women’s health and status in the Negev region. Within a landscape of ethnic diversity, widespread poverty and traditional cultures that may isolate women, the Women’s Center offers free or affordable services to all who need them.

And to get back to Prof. Bruins, don’t miss his unique perspective as an archeologist, anthropologist and contingency planning expert. Find out why he sees a message about securing a safe food supply for the world that is written in the soil. Then, tell us what you think at Impact@aabgu.org.

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ON THE COVER: A family seder pictured in the famous 14th century *Sarajevo Haggadah*. Created during the Golden Age of Spain, this haggadah represents the first time the human form was depicted in a Sephardic work and has come to be known as a symbol of liberation and a symbol of Sarajevo. Read more on page 13.

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THE 43RD ANNUAL BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING CAPTURING BGU'S SPIRIT OF CREATIVITY, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

THE 43RD ANNUAL Board of Governors Meeting brought some 300 friends and supporters from around the world to Beer-Sheva for three days of receptions, presentations, and plenty of food and fun.

The May event highlighted the creativity, culture and sense of community that contribute to the special character of BGU.

"It's such a warm, friendly atmosphere. I feel like I'm home," said Ellen Marcus, a board of governors vice chair and AABGU's Greater Texas Region's Austin chair, at the welcome

dinner hosted by BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi.

The opening plenary began with a keynote address by world-renowned novelist Amos Oz, an Israeli cultural institution in his own right, who has been teaching at BGU for more than 27 years.

He spoke about Zionist dreams and Israeli realities in a talk filled with poetic, humorous and poignant personal observations about Israeli society, the Jewish people and BGU.

"Israel is going through a cultural golden age—arts, literature, cinema,

science, and higher education," he said. "BGU is a dream fulfilled, a vision come true, a daring dream, and vision realized," added the professor emeritus, incumbent of the S.Y. Agnon Chair in Contemporary Hebrew Literature.

THE INNOVATIVE SPIRIT

The Board of Governors Meeting is a great way to experience higher

Photo: Delegates attended "Carmina Burana" performed by the Israel Sinfonietta Beer-Sheva and the Kamea Dance Company at the Beer-Sheva Performing Arts Center.



education at BGU. This year's program included:

- A tour of the Ilse Katz Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology with its director, Prof. Yuval Golan
- The Year in Review, featuring presentations about a new homeland security technology by Prof. Gabby Sarusi; disaster preparedness research and education by Prof. Limor Aharonson-Daniel; and religious conversion from medieval to modern times with Prof. Chaim Hames
- A panel of women entrepreneurs, featuring Cherie Blair (one of this year's honorary doctorate recipients), local businesswomen, and Prof. Dafna Schwartz, director of BGU's Bengis Center for High-Tech Management in the Guilford Glazer Faculty of Business and Management
- Israeli author Meir Shalev, speaking with humor about his hometown of Jerusalem
- A visit to the Sede Boqer campus with a choice of workshops about solar energy, the physics of climate change, conservation and wildlife management, and more

SHARING BGU WITH FAMILY

The American delegation to the Board of Governors Meeting included several family groups, each with its own connection to BGU.

The Goodmans: Family, Friends, Fellows. Larry Goodman of Chicago, Illinois has been a longtime friend and supporter of BGU, and a patron of the arts, education and much



Clockwise from left: Board of Governors Member Larry Goodman with Vered Sarusi-Katz and Goodman Fellows at the naming ceremony for the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program; The Savitt family at their new inscription on the Founders' Wall; Honorary doctorate recipients Cherie Blair and Ruth Flinkman-Marandy with BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi (center)



more in Beer-Sheva.

Larry brought family members and colleagues from his foundation for the naming of the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program. Established some 35 years ago, this innovative community outreach program gives BGU students, now known as "Goodman Fellows," the opportunity to live rent-free in disadvantaged neighborhoods in exchange for volunteering in the community.

At the ceremony held in one of those neighborhoods, called Dalet, Larry was presented with a symbolic set of spare keys to the Open Apartments by Vered Sarusi-Katz, director of BGU's Department of Community Action, and a group of Goodman Fellows. "Just in case we lose them," she said.

The Savitts: The Satisfaction of Funding Scholarships. Len and Sheila Savitt, also from Chicago, first came to BGU several years ago while on

a volunteer trip in Israel. Sheila was impressed with the campus and decided to start a scholarship endowment fund that could be passed down through the generations.

Len and Sheila led a 15-member delegation of three generations of family members to celebrate becoming BGU Founders in memory of Sheila's parents, Maurice and Sylvia Young, ז"ל. The Savitts had lunch on campus with Inbal Shuttman, the student whose scholarship they are currently funding.

"It's a good feeling to know who we are giving to," says Sheila. "You'll never get out of the stock market the feeling that you get out of this."

The Flinkman-Marandy Family Celebrates Ruth. Ruth Flinkman-Marandy, a longtime member of the AABGU family, was recognized for her generosity and commitment to BGU, particularly in the area of nanotechnology, with the conferment of an honorary doctoral degree.

FORGOTTEN HEROES

BY **DORON KRAKOW**, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



BGU Professor Emeritus Amos Oz, one of Israel's most beloved novelists, at the opening plenary session

Ruth was accompanied to Israel for this honor by her enthusiastic “fan club” that included her husband, Ben Marandy, and her three sons and soon-to-be daughter-in-law.

Ruth serves as the campaign chair for AABGU's Southwest Region, as a vice president on AABGU's national board, and last year she became a governor on BGU's board.

LOCAL BEER AND CONVERSATION WITH STUDENTS

This year's annual “student evening” was transformed into an afternoon “Happy Hour,” featuring a selection of beer from Negev Brewery.

The afternoon included a live auction to raise funds for student-run programs, a dance performance, and plenty of mixing and mingling. Sponsored annually by AABGU donors, this year's event was made possible by Eric Benhamou, Arline and Ben Guefen, Micky Rahav, Harriet Soffa, and Aileen Whitman.

The students were happy to share with their new friends what brought them to BGU.

“BGU is the only university I applied to because I wanted to be in the Negev,” said Barak Luzon, an electrical engineering student.

“Living in Beer-Sheva, I feel like I'm contributing to this region.”

Barak also volunteers in a student-run program that helps promote

Continued on next page

THE 20TH CENTURY was witness to perhaps the most extraordinary events in the last two millennia of Jewish history. The destruction of European Jewry and the establishment of the modern State of Israel are of an order of magnitude that defies measurement. In the context of events of such proportion, the heroic figures who emerged have become the stuff of legend. David Ben-Gurion, Raoul Wallenberg, Menachem Begin, Hannah Senesh, Oscar Schindler, Anne Frank, Mordecai Aniliewicz, and a number of others are simply larger than life.

And yet, within the incredible scope of history this big, this profoundly important, there are countless others whose actions were no less heroic but for whom history's attention span has been altogether too short. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to make sure their heroism is not lost to our children and our children's children.

One of the more remarkable aspects of being part of the BGU community is our access to scholars dedicated to filling in the gaps in our story. And, as this issue goes to print, at least two more of these gaps are being filled.

Dr. Joseph J. Schwartz, a rabbi from Baltimore, became the head of “the Joint” (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) in Europe in 1941 on the eve of the “Final Solution.” From his office in Lisbon, Portugal, he directed a rescue and relief effort undertaken in coordination with every imaginable resource, an effort that would play a key role in the salvation of tens of thousands of lives. After the war, the Joint's offices returned to Paris, and from there he oversaw the relief work

being done in the displaced persons (DP) camps, which became home to most of the surviving remnant of European Jewry.

We know about Wallenberg, Janusz Korczak, Oscar Schindler, Emmanuel Ringelblum, and about the refugee boat, Exodus. But how many of us know that Joseph Schwartz played an important part in each of their stories?

Lolita Goldstein, a dear friend of the University, was a member of Schwartz's staff, together with her beloved husband, Melvin z”l, in both Lisbon and Paris. Thanks to Lolita, a discussion began at BGU about the work of Dr. Schwartz with one of our most eminent historians of the period.

Prof. Tuvia Friling served as Israel's state archivist under Prime Minister Sharon and is a longtime member of BGU's Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism. He has begun research on what will be a scholarly biography of Joseph Schwartz, expected to be completed in 2016.

One of the participants in the Schwartz story was Zoltan Toman. Toman was born Ascher-Zelig Goldberger in a *shtetl* in Slovenia. A victim of anti-Semitism in his youth, he sought “shelter” in Communism, taking a new name and casting his lot with a Universalist future under the aegis of the workers. He found himself in London during the war with the Czechoslovak government-in-exile. Returning to Czechoslovakia after the war, he was named minister of the interior with responsibility for the country's borders and internal security.

In the aftermath of the Kielce Pogrom in July of 1946, in which

Continued on next page



Left: Board of Governors Chairman Alex Goren and Board of Governors Vice Chair Carol Saal at the Chairman's Gala that concluded the event's festivities **Center:** Board of Governors Vice Chair Ellen Marcus and Dean of BGU's Eilat Campus, Prof. Miri Amit, on the evening of the Honorary Doctoral Degree Conferment Ceremony **Right:** Joel Reinstein, AABGU national board member, enjoys a local Negev beer with a BGU student at the Happy Hour event.

alcohol abstinence. He goes to eighth grade classrooms and talks to young students about the dangers of alcohol.

Daniel Feldman, a psychology student, chose BGU because it offers a high academic level in his field and a unique social environment and campus life.

Daniel is a fellow in the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program. He volunteered in the bomb shelters during Operation Pillar of Defense last November, keeping children busy.

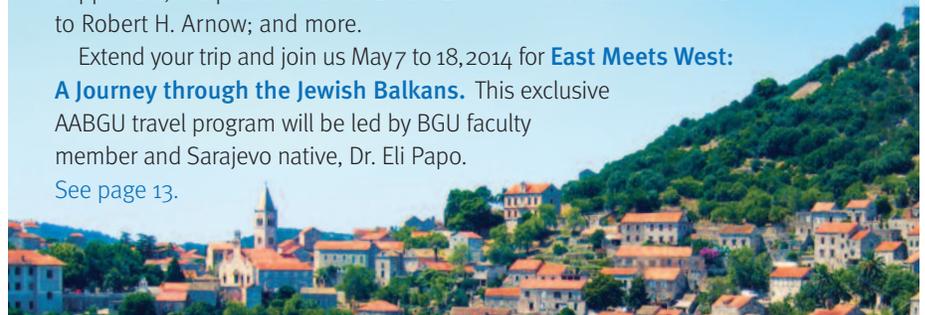
"I went home to Jerusalem, but when there were missile alerts I came back to Beer-Sheva where I could be of service," he said. ■

JOIN US IN MAY AT THE BOARD AND IN THE BALKANS

The **44th Annual Board of Governors Meeting** will take place May 18 to 22, 2014. Highlights include the dedication of the American Associates Village at Sede Boqer; the inauguration of President's Pillars, recognizing BGU's most generous supporters; the presentation of BGU's Lifetime Achievement Award to Robert H. Arnow; and more.

Extend your trip and join us May 7 to 18, 2014 for **East Meets West: A Journey through the Jewish Balkans**. This exclusive AABGU travel program will be led by BGU faculty member and Sarajevo native, Dr. Eli Papo.

See page 13.



FORGOTTEN HEROES *Continued from page 5*

more than 40 Jews who had survived the camps were butchered by their neighbors following a local blood libel, there was a stampede of Jews desperate to get out of Poland. Schwartz had come to believe that the survivors' best hope was to get to Palestine.

He needed a friendly government bordering both Poland and Germany to serve as a transit point through which the refugees could be brought to the American Zone in Germany, where they would be delivered to the DP camps. He found an ally in

Zoltan Toman, who issued an order that any person approaching the border and claiming to be a Jew on the run should be admitted without question. As a result of his actions, more than 100,000 Jews made it to safety, and most ended up in Israel.

As a reward for his efforts, Toman was imprisoned by the Stalinists who overthrew the Masaryk regime. His wife was murdered and his two-year-old son disappeared. Toman escaped and made it to South America where he began another new life, this time as a merchant, becoming a very

wealthy man. Some years later, retired and living in Oregon, he wanted to find a way to contribute to Israel's future. On the advice of a friend at the Israeli Consulate, he dedicated his philanthropy to a new university in the Negev. His contributions to BGU exceeded \$15 million.

The decision to write a biography about Dr. Schwartz opened the door to the retelling not only of his story, but of the story of Zoltan Toman. It will invariably shine a light on others—heroes of the Jewish people—heroes who should not, who will not, be forgotten. ■

PIONEERS IN THE PERIPHERY

By Jason D. Gottlieb

“What is pioneering? It is the recognition of a historical mission and an unreserved commitment to this mission, with no regard for hardship or danger. Pioneering is an infusion of the creative force hidden within all men, its augmentation and activation for the common good. Pioneering is the moral capability and the mental need to live each day by your conscience and your destiny. Pioneering is one’s demand upon oneself, a personal fulfillment of destinies and values one believes in. Pioneering is the ability to accomplish deeds of creation.” —David Ben-Gurion

ON BEHALF OF THE 14 MEMBERS of the first cohort of Zin Fellows, I am thrilled to report that the pool of impassioned pioneers and ambassadors of both Ben-Gurion University and the Negev has grown. A collective thanks to the visionary leaders who conceived, developed and sponsored this extraordinary young leadership experience—your investment of time and resources will pay dividends.

Our shared love for Israel, BGU and the Negev is born out of our experiences. As such, you’ll appreciate that my words alone cannot fully describe the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feel of the Zin Fellows Israel seminar, the culminating trip of our two-year learning program. What I can say with confidence is that each of us was positively impacted by the experience in meaningful and lasting ways.

Our adventure began with a two-hour helicopter tour of Israel. While it included brief flyovers of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, most of our time was spent over the Negev. With its vast expanse of rugged terrain and immense natural beauty, it is simply majestic from above. The cranes over the Advanced Technologies Park adjacent to BGU’s main campus in Beer-Sheva, the magnificent Zin Valley (from which comes the name of our program) that is home to BGU’s Sede Boqer campus, and the acres of vibrant agriculture sprouting from arid land epitomize the inspired *nesbama*, or spirit, of the Negev’s inhabitants.

We witnessed, from the air and the ground, the juxtaposition of modern cosmopolitan life, development towns and traditional Bedouin villages, which represent the unique challenge of Negev development. Our agenda in the Negev was characterized by both passion and paradox.

We toured Beer-Sheva, Sede Boqer and the development town, Yerucham, meeting with residents and leadership.

We came to understand the BGU vision from Prof. Rivka Carmi herself, and experienced social entrepreneurship during our lunch with BGU students at Ringelblum Cafe, where local disadvantaged youth is provided with meaningful work experience.

We learned from extraordinary faculty about autonomous vehicles, stem cell research, renewable energy, reversing desertification, and gained a deeper understanding of David Ben-Gurion—the man and leader—and of the development of Zionism and of Israel as a first-world country.

We also visited the Bedouin villages of Kasr al Sir and Hura to appreciate firsthand the challenge inherent to assimilating the Bedouin. We learned history from Moshe Arens and Aharon Yadlin, and military base expansion from Hezi Meshita.

We walked in the footsteps of the founding pioneers at Kibbutz Revivim and appreciated the very real opportunity and tension at the Kerem Shalom border crossing. We felt the pulse of the nation—past, present and future—as we navigated the Machtsh Ramon, Ein Avdat and the Zin Valley,

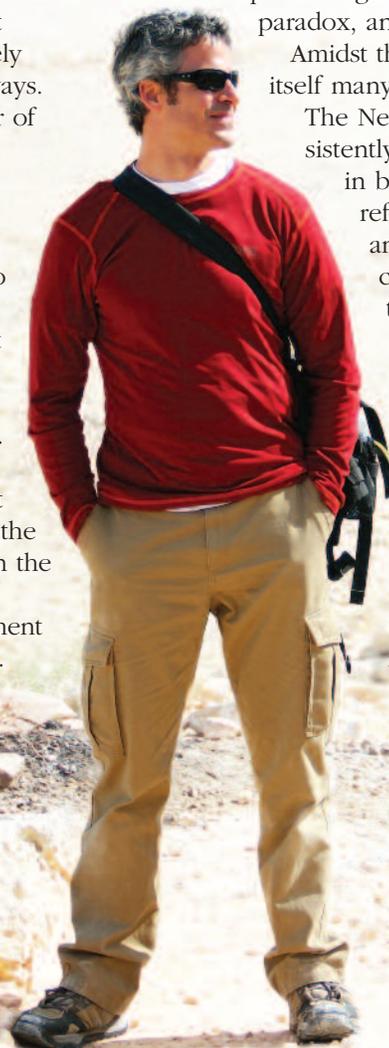
experiencing the Negev with all its diversity, paradox, and above all else, great opportunity.

Amidst the wonder, a glaring issue presented itself many times during our experience.

The Negev (as well as the Galilee) is consistently, freely labeled as the “periphery” in both historical and contemporary reference. Subtle and trite perhaps—and one might think nothing of the characterization—however, I believe this adjective is central to the brand-challenge plaguing Negev development. Imagine trying to convince someone, a generation, a nation, to become enthusiastic pioneers in the *periphery*.

That’s right—give up your creature comforts, immediate gratification, cosmopolitan life to live in the *periphery*. Recognizing that Negev development will be neither easy nor instantaneous,

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LISA J. SCHELLER was introduced to BGU by her parents, Roberta and Ernie Scheller, longtime University benefactors and supporters. “But it was when I actually visited the school,” Lisa says, “that I really connected and became enamored with it.”

Wayne Woodman, Lisa’s husband, also discovered BGU through the Schellers. “About 10 years ago they were honored at the Mid-Atlantic Region’s annual event,” he recalls. “Out of loyalty, love and respect, I made a donation—I really had no idea what BGU was about.”

Over the next few years, Ernie gradually piqued his son-in-law’s interest and drew him into serving on the board, and into conversations about how to attract other young people to AABGU. Wayne is now a national vice president. But what really sparked his interest was a visit to BGU in 2004.

“Seeing the University for the first time was very impressive, especially the desert research facility. I’ve been back several times since and beyond being impressed with BGU’s physical presence, began to know faculty members and students—and became even more impressed.”

Lisa, too, has a special regard for BGU’s desert research and the unique resources it offers other dryland regions around the world. “And I love that the Beer-Sheva campus is a high-tech institution and that its medical school is integrated with so many populations in the Negev, including Bedouins. It’s a university that serves the world.”

A few years ago, Wayne recounts, he, Lisa and Doron Krakow, AABGU’s executive vice president, talked during a long road trip about how to fill BGU’s financial needs and bring in more young board members. “I said, why don’t we think of a way to manufacture future leaders...Attract people under 50 and cultivate them as board members who’ll also influence others.”

Wayne knew first-hand the impact of actually seeing BGU and its geographic location. So he suggested a fellowship learning program: invite a group of young potential leaders to see the University.

“We’re emotional creatures,” Wayne says. “People want to be certain that the money they give produces value for them—not as a return on investment, but in feeling good, making a difference in the world. Putting



**LISA J. SCHELLER AND WAYNE WOODMAN
ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA**

PROBLEM-SOLVING WITH PHILANTHROPY

some physicality in the process is very important.”

Thus, the Zin Fellows Leadership Development Program was born. Nominated candidates apply for an in-depth immersion into the issues involved in Negev development and its unique place in the unfolding future of the State of Israel.

The first cohort of Zin Fellows “graduated” this year (see page 7 for a first-hand account). Wayne and Lisa became its most significant benefactors and participated in the experiment.

“The educational aspect was great and the program’s culminating trip to Israel was absolutely fantastic—tying the whole entire region, the communities around Beer-Sheva and the people together,” says Lisa. “It taught me to recognize my personal ties with the land of Israel and David

Ben-Gurion’s vision for the Negev as an integral part of it.”

Wayne was delighted with the itinerary. He thinks the experience achieved its goals. “It’s a good start. I believe new national board members will come out of this group. That makes me feel great.”

In fact, four Zin alumni were elected to the board in September. The candidates for Zin Fellows II have already been selected and Wayne couldn’t be more pleased.

“Tying your charity to problem-solving is a very worthwhile effort.”

Both Lisa and Wayne accomplish their volunteer work as part of formidably busy lives. Wayne built a successful money management business and now acts as an independent money manager for first generation entrepreneurs. He is also chairman of the Lehigh County Republican Committee.

Lisa is president of a family chemical business, Silberline Manufacturing, and serves as the elected Lehigh county commissioner. And, the couple brought to their marriage six children.

How do they each manage so much? “With very careful planning,” Lisa says.

Lisa is being honored by AABGU as a “woman of distinction” in November (see page 26). ■

NINA WEINER grew up in a sophisticated, multicultural Zionist home in Egypt with a father who spoke 10 languages and a Sephardic mother who was educated at the Sorbonne. The family made *aliyah* to Israel when Nina was in high school.

She studied psychology in Geneva with Jean Piaget, the influential pioneer of children's educational development. During the 1950s, Nina volunteered in Israel's youth camps for children from the Middle East, India and Pakistan who immigrated to Israel without their parents.

"I became aware of the educational gap between the refugees coming from the Middle East and the established Israelis, especially since I was half Sephardic," Nina recalls.

After working in Israel as a psychologist, earning a master's degree at Columbia University and marrying, she "wanted to do something special for Israel and education." She knew immediately what that was: "My vision was to give a different group of Israelis—a new generation in a new country—a chance for a higher education and level the inequality of opportunity."

Thus, in 1977, the International Sephardic Educational Fund (ISEF) was created. Nina was joined by the eminent banker, the late Edmond Safra, and his wife, Lily Safra. Today, Nina continues to direct ISEF as president and Lily remains actively involved as honorary chairperson.

"We hoped to highlight how young people born in poverty can achieve brilliance if you give them a chance to study," Nina says. "We started with scholarships for undergraduate students." She approached a number of Israeli universities, including BGU, and asked them to provide matching funds. All were very receptive, and the new foundation provided several hundred scholarships that first year.

Nina has long had a special concern with Israel's peripheral areas, where for decades so many refugees have settled. "I'm much attached to BGU because it relates directly to my interest in the periphery and is such an important educational center for it. The Negev is very significant to Israel and without BGU it would never be able to flourish to the extent it has and be part of such incredible innovation. BGU is serving the whole world, not just Israel, with some unique solutions that help many countries."

Now celebrating its double *chai* (36th) anniversary, ISEF has helped at least 5,000 people receive an education at



NINA WEINER
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

CLOSING THE EDUCATION GAP

BGU and other universities. It counts an impressive number of distinguished achievers among its alumni—doctors, lawyers, government leaders, Knesset members, scientists, and professors. Nina is especially proud to note that nearly a dozen ISEF scholarship students are now BGU faculty members.

As populations and needs changed, ISEF's focus grew beyond helping young Sephardic immigrants. Nina estimates that while about half of the scholarships are now awarded to Sephardic Jews, the nonprofit organization also funds Ethiopian, Russian and Druze students. And today, more than half of the recipients are women—a special joy for Nina.

She believes that the mission is more critical than ever because she sees a growing gap between the rich and poor in Israel, especially in the south.

Also to reflect new priorities, ISEF increasingly supports post-graduate education, providing approximately 500 scholarships annually. Recipients must be accepted to first-rank American

universities for Ph.D. or postdoctoral studies and receive scholarships from those schools.

The students receive more than financial help. "They become part of a family," Nina explains. They meet monthly and must volunteer five hours per week to helping children through an ISEF program. "We cultivate a feeling of belonging. And we teach them to see beyond themselves, to find out how other people feel, to help each other—to be leaders.

"And we try to imbue them with Zionist feeling," Nina adds. "I see a trend toward lack of perspective, and lack of knowledge of the Jewish narrative. Memory is short. I feel it's time for our very educated young people to reappraise the situation and realize the importance of Zionism and the existence of a Jewish state."

Putting ISEF's own contributions in perspective gives Nina Weiner tremendous pleasure. "We succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. The big satisfaction is to follow our students story by story, over 36 years, and remember where they started and where they are now. We created 5,000 lives and the impact is enormous.

"My best feeling is a legacy of empowerment: of being able to empower so many, and knowing they will empower their children. Israel's future is in the minds of its youth, and we can develop that only through higher education." ■

A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

TRAINING THE BRAIN TO IMPROVE MOBILITY



AS BRAIN SCIENCE ADVANCES, we learn more and more about how complex our everyday activities are. Even ordinary acts like picking up an object or walking, for example, are extremely complicated actions managed by the brain in ways that are poorly



Prof. Amir Karniel

understood. Working to unravel the mysteries of movement, researchers are finding better ways to help people with diminished mobility.

Rehabilitation has long been based on traditional methods of slow, rote, hands-on physical therapy. But a revolution is under way: new knowledge, new technology and new ways of collaborating are creating more effective, evidence-based approaches.

At BGU, a collaboration to help young people with cerebral palsy is breaking new ground. Prof. Amir Karniel, a specialist in motor control, and Dr. Simona Bar-Haim, physiotherapist and neurophysiologist, are

jointly pursuing research with dramatic promise for those suffering from impaired mobility due to brain damage.

THE BRAIN AND MOBILITY

“Everything is about controlling movement, which requires a brain,” says Prof. Amir Karniel. An electrical engineer, he chairs BGU’s Department of Biomechanical Engineering and directs the Computational Motor Control Lab.

“People think the brain is for thinking, for emotion—and those are important—but basically the brain is part of a system designed to control movement. Memory, emotions and thoughts are there to prepare ourselves to control movement in the future.”

So to understand movement is “to build a window into the brain,” Karniel says. He notes that teaching robots to play chess turns out to be easy, but building robots that can walk is not. We simply do not know enough about how human beings walk, and until we do, robots will stay on wheels or lurch around clumsily.

To understand how the brain acts through the nervous and muscle systems, Karniel’s lab carries out sustained sets of repetitive experiments. For example, using a special robotic device that interfaces between human subjects and the computer, he and his students meticulously record how people lift virtual glasses of water when the weight is increased from two, to three, to four grams.

This may sound tedious, but the

results are hardly dull. The experiments show that as the glass becomes heavier, the brain predicts how much the next glass will weigh and directs the muscles to lift it accordingly.

Another set of experiments aims to reveal how the brain perceives the rigidity of an object. The goal is to improve robotic surgical systems so that the doctors who operate with them will be able to virtually feel the physical tensions and obstacles in the bodies of their patients.

Understanding the relationship between the brain, the nervous systems and the muscles will instantly open up amazing possibilities for prosthetic limbs and other synthetic body parts, Karniel is certain, as well as for developments in robotics.

He believes such work will help build robots that think intelligently and function better than our own brain. More immediately, the research lays the groundwork for better ways to help people with impaired movement and disabilities.

BUILDING ON CHAOS THEORY

For many years, Dr. Simona Bar-Haim worked as a physiotherapist focused on treating children with cerebral palsy (CP). In her forties, she decided on a life of research and earned her Ph.D. at BGU.

While working on her advanced degrees, she met a Russian-Jewish

Top photo: A shoe for training people with impaired mobility was designed by Dr. Simona Bar-Haim.

ex-cosmonaut who introduced her to chaos theory. The concept has fueled her research ever since.

Chaos theory is a scientific concept positing that some systems in nature behave in chaotic, non-linear ways, rather than working in a constant predetermined manner.

To transfer the idea from the terrain of physics, for example, the healthy heart can respond to the environment by varying its beat based on activity level, temperature, emotions, and so on.

“I started doing studies on how to use chaos theory to rehabilitate,” Dr. Bar-Haim recounts.

“My idea was that the brain can choose how to do something. If it works in a chaotic way when you’re healthy, why not challenge disabled people in a chaotic way so the brain develops its own solution, rather than having a therapist train the person to do things as we expect them to?”

In 2012, Bar-Haim established the Laboratory for Rehabilitation and Motor Control of Walking at BGU. Her research is based on the concept of error-inducing motor learning. “To rehabilitate walking we induce errors to the brain and stress it so it will recover its plasticity.”

But beyond looking into the brain to understand the motor control of walking, she felt a practical imperative. “We also have a clinical track to look into real functional improvements in the lives of children with CP so they can walk out of the lab and walk better at home, in school, in their everyday lives.”

Bar-Haim knows from experience that cerebral palsy is a pressing concern. In much of the Middle East, where resources are scarce, many children do not receive early treatment and therefore languish at home with no services. And for teenagers and adults with CP, services are far less available. Accordingly,

Dr. Bar-Haim (second from left) works with a young CP patient and her family at the split-tread treadmill.

with funding from USAID and United Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation, she developed a research project to promote physically active lifestyles in children and teenagers with CP in the Middle East, better known as CP-PALS.

THE CP-PALS PROJECT

More than eight years ago, Dr. Bar-Haim created a coalition of facilities in Jordan, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, and other countries to encourage treatment in the Arab world and support her experiments helping teenagers with CP.

“Basically the brain is part of a system designed to control movement.”

—PROF. AMIR KARNIEL

In addition to enabling her to evaluate different therapeutic interventions and share information, this network helps her to fulfill personal priorities: advocating for better quality of life for

the disabled, and empowering women in Arab countries. “I try to help my colleagues study, and I encourage them to participate in the project,” she notes.

The group performed preliminary studies by monitoring activity levels of hundreds of CP teenagers. To document how the teens spent their time, they wore small accelerometers for four days. This study revealed that many of them were sitting at home all day because there were too many stairs to maneuver, or other factors.

When armed with data, Bar-Haim says, “you can go to the decision-makers and tell them they must change their policies. I explained that it was important to help these teenagers become more active participants in their society and community.” She found the policy-makers very receptive.

Prof. Karniel brought his computational motor control skills to the project five years ago. He acts as the CP-PALS principal investigator, while Bar-Haim coordinates the project and leads the consortium.

The two researchers studied people with cerebral palsy through a lifting task at the Motor Control Lab. “They don’t predict at all!,” Karniel found.



“They lifted each object gradually and slowly, each in a different way, and were never surprised,” he said.

“But when we asked unimpaired individuals to lift the object slowly at the same pace, they used prediction, deciding in advance how much force was needed. That’s a different control strategy. So we learned something about how different parts of the brain are used for motor control.”

Testing therapies to improve locomotion is the crux of the CP-PALS project. “The challenge is to find ways to train a damaged brain,” Bar-Haim explains. Initially, she used standard exercise equipment to treat CP youngsters, providing unpredictable movements to which they had to respond. The results were encouraging.

Two years ago a new piece of research equipment became available: a split-tread treadmill. Each side can operate at different speeds and mimic different terrains. This technology perfectly suits Bar-Haim’s chaos theory strategy. Given a changing, random situation, the brain in effect bypasses its accustomed motor controller.

“Every step is a surprise. In this training, the brain finds its own way to function, so the person can much more easily retain what it learns and transfer it to all the other environments.”

Results from the research are promising. “We found out that this training helps CP people with brain damage walk better and gain more mobility in a much shorter time than traditional therapy.” After six months of training, a large number of the young people will be brought in from various rehab centers to Soroka University Medical Center for MRI scans. Part of the data is already being analyzed.

Bar-Haim observes that the treadmill training provides theories that promote better understanding of the brain. “Using the split-tread treadmill showed us that the motor control of walking is not in one area of the brain. Several different parts of the central nervous system are responsible for

walking. This was a big surprise. We wouldn’t have guessed it without the technology of the treadmill.”

The team is in the middle of analyzing data and working with more groups, but the collaborators have no doubt that the approach works. “We’re 100 percent sure we’re helping these children,” Bar-Haim says. “They come into the lab and go out walking much better. They are happy and their parents are happy!” Some of the teenagers move on to play soccer, she notes.

“Using the split-tread treadmill showed us that the motor control of walking is not in one area of the brain... This was a big surprise. We wouldn’t have guessed it without the technology.”

—DR. SIMONA BAR-HAIM

Results have been published in major journals. In June, the project was exhibited at Israel’s Presidential Conference in Jerusalem, a prestigious showcase for leading brain study projects.

Research is also under way to apply the system to older people who are subject to recurring falls, with similarly notable results.

STEPPING INTO THE FUTURE

While Dr. Simona Bar-Haim has pioneered the integration of physiotherapy with brain science, she is happy to say that she is no longer the only one doing so. “The rehab field is in the middle of a revolution,” she believes.

Less than a decade ago, technological approaches were not used in physical therapy and practitioners were reluctant to change their 70-year-old hands-on methods. “But now you must use evidence-based practice.

My vision is for the rehab community to join in and use all these brain studies and bioengineering research—all this knowledge—then we will make major ‘steps’ forward.”

Start-up companies are pushing the rehab revolution, and Bar-Haim’s own company, “Step of Mind,” is part of that movement. She invented “Re-Step,” a shoe for training brain-damaged people with impaired mobility. It changes the angle of the walking surface in unpredictable ways, forcing the wearer to practice walking on variable surfaces. As with the treadmill, the brain is encouraged to find new solutions to its challenges.

Rather than selling the shoes, Step of Mind gives them to clinics on a pay-per-use basis and shares the profits. “This lets us lead the use of technology in small clinics, not just in laboratories or big rehabilitation centers,” Bar-Haim says.

THE BIONIC MAN

Prof. Amir Karniel has his own long-range vision of contributing to the rehabilitation challenge. “The robo-sapien—that’s where we’re going!” Karniel explains, “In biomedical engineering we’re designing devices that help people such as amputees. But gradually the devices will be better than the natural parts and people will prefer them. There’ll be a transition to a new species.”

Evolution was dictated by biology for eons, and it’s been slow, he points out. “But we think the next step will be dictated by humans. We won’t wait for biology. Robots will not just be mirrors; they’ll be part of us. We’ll control them. Or...” he continues thoughtfully, “...they’ll control us.”

Karniel admits that the idea raises a good many social, ethical and philosophical issues. He also acknowledges that it will take a set of research breakthroughs, a lot of collaboration, and considerable time for the bionic man to materialize. How much time?

“For the first steps...10 years, I think.” ■

PRESERVING AND SHARING LADINO AND SEPHARDIC CULTURE

“THE LADINO LANGUAGE IS DYING, but losing the language doesn’t mean you should lose the entire cultural package,” says Dr. Eliezer Papo.

“That’s where the Ladino Center comes in. We don’t believe the two destinies are necessarily connected. We’re trying to make the Ladino culture relevant to young Israelis and also part of the general Israeli heritage.”

Dr. Papo is deputy director of the Moshe David Gaon Center for Ladino Culture, established by BGU nine years ago. Ladino—Spanish with some Hebrew and Aramaic—is the language used by Spain’s Jews before they were expelled in 1492. The Center teaches the language, as well as Ladino literature, folklore and traditions.

The idea for the Gaon Center was originally met with skepticism, Papo recalls. “Some people thought, ‘it’s part of the past; no one’s interested; young Israelis won’t give a dime for Sephardic culture—not too many would go even for medieval Spanish Hebrew poetry, but Judeo-Spanish? You must be kidding.’ But once you show them the richness of the culture, it speaks for itself.”



Dr. Eliezer Papo teaches folklore and oral literature in BGU’s Department of Hebrew Literature. He has published many articles about Sephardic culture and literature in eight languages, as well as four works of fiction—one in Ladino and three in Serbo-Croatian. He is also the protagonist and moderator of the 2004 film, *The Last Sephardic Jew*.

Between 50 and 60 students routinely sign up for the beginning Ladino language courses. Each class draws 10 to 15 Bedouin students; others are Jewish, many with Ashkenazi or Oriental backgrounds, and only a handful have any Sephardic roots. Nearly all of the students become

interested in the culture and stay on for advanced language training.

The mission, however, is not to create fluent speakers of Ladino, also called Judeo-Spanish. “We’re not trying to reverse the historical process,” Papo explains. “We want them to become cultural mediators.”

He points out that many aspects of our collective human heritage survive because they are translated from one culture to another. For example, ancient Greek culture “ended,” but most Greek intellectual wealth was translated into Arabic, and was then developed in the Islamic world. Later, the entire body of Greco-Arabic knowledge was translated into Latin and moved to the west.

“We need to translate Ladino texts into Hebrew, with critical explanation of concepts, so these otherwise

Top photo: Taken from the 14th century *Sarajevo Haggadah*, this picture illustrates Potiphar’s wife trying to take off Joseph’s cloak. The left side of the image depicts the Egyptian soldier taking Joseph to prison after he refuses her advances. Note the anachronistic dress of a soldier in full armor and metal helmet.

forgotten works will become accessible to Israel's general public," Papo says. Similarly to the Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim, Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain took their language with them and it sustained their culture wherever they settled.

However, much of the heritage was lost during the Holocaust. Huge Ladino speaking communities were decimated. In countries like Greece, Serbia and Bosnia, 90 percent of the Sephardic Jewish population was killed. Turkish and Bulgarian communities survived by migrating to Israel, where they had to adopt Hebrew and forsake Judeo-Spanish.

In line with its mission to recover and disseminate Sephardic culture, the Gaon Center works to internationalize Sephardic studies. It has already helped establish programs in Belgrade and the rest of the Balkans.

Since its creation, the Gaon Center has also taken responsibility for organizing the Sephardic Studies Division of the World Congress of Jewish Studies. While only 10 to 15 speakers participated 12 years ago, 40 to 50 researchers present papers today about Sephardic culture written in Spanish, English and Ladino. They come from a dozen countries and half are not Jewish, which Papo finds especially encouraging. He believes that progress will be faster if people combine different viewpoints and fields of knowledge with an interest in Sephardic culture.

The Center also publishes *El Presente—Studies in Sephardic Culture*, the first scientific journal to admit articles written in Judeo-Spanish, making the language an instrument of modern scientific investigation.

the catalyst for the launching of BGU's Sephardic Studies Research Institute, of which Eli Papo is the director.

As funding is secured, three more centers will join the Gaon under this new umbrella: the Center for Research of Haketia Culture will study the Judeo-Spanish language and culture of North Morocco; the Center for Research of Iberian Jewish Heritage will explore the golden age of Hebrew literature that took place between the 10th and 13th centuries on the Iberian peninsula; and the Center for Research of *Anusim* [the coerced ones] and their Culture will be devoted to the Spanish and Portuguese ex-Convertos—those who were forced to convert to Catholicism only to return to Judaism secretly in Spain itself, or openly in the free world.

"We have experts already at the University eager for us to develop these centers," Papo says.

WHY LADINO MATTERS

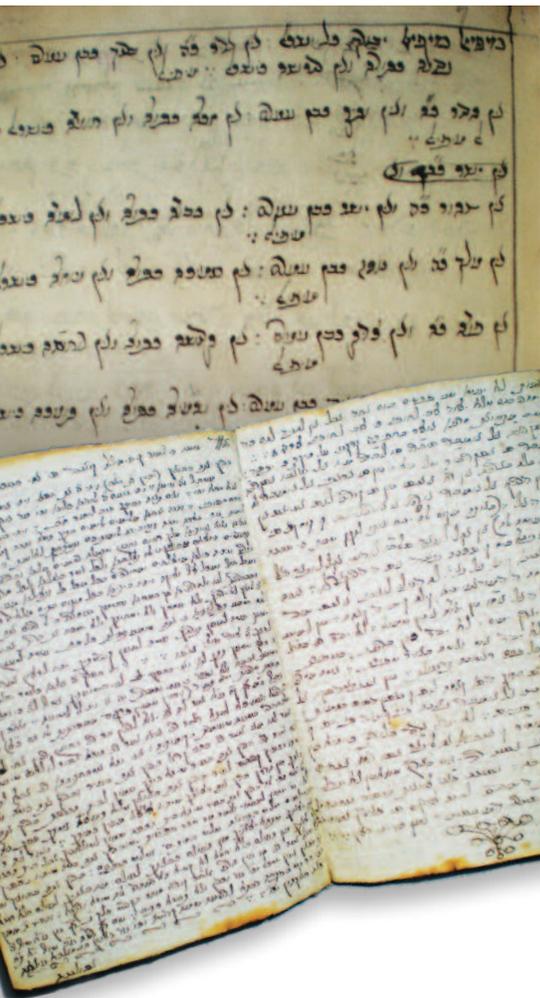
"Sephardic culture is a rich and interesting Jewish heritage most Israelis and Jews worldwide know little about—a true treasure trove of philosophy, theater, humor, music, art, folklore, and traditions," Papo says.

"Today we know that we don't understand ourselves if we don't understand where we're coming from. All our heritages together create the culture we live in."

He observes that in the last decade attitudes toward the melting pot idea have changed. Immigrants to Israel, as in the United States, were once expected to leave their old world behind and adopt the new country's culture. Today, America is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural and in Israel, too, people are starting to feel that they can be part of the community and still remain "who they are."

Dr. Papo believes that today's Israelis have much to learn from Sephardic history. "The Jewish Diaspora experience has many faces, and the Sephardic face is one of the happiest ones," he says.

Continued on page 30



Top Left: A religious poem written in Sephardic script. **Above:** The opening page from the famous *Sarajevo Haggadah*. The elaborate fortress is thought by some to symbolize heavenly Jerusalem. **Bottom Left:** A Ladino manuscript that Dr. Papo and his team are currently deciphering.

The Gaon Center's success has spurred other Israeli universities to focus new attention on Ladino culture. It has also laid the foundation and is

JEWISH THOUGHT: THE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF A PEOPLE

UNTIL THE 19TH CENTURY, Jewish texts were taught only in rabbinical institutes. Once the subject entered the academic world, Prof. Uri Ehrlich says, a learning revolution was set in motion.

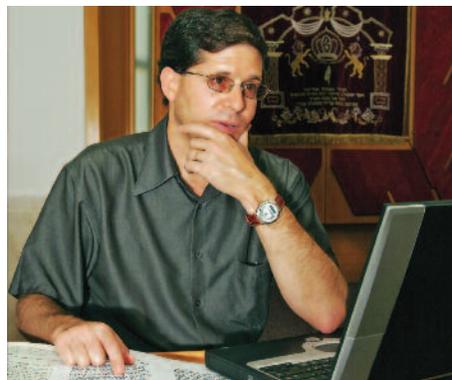
“The universities are the only place you can study Jewish thought and do research in a humanistic, non-ideological way,” explains Prof. Ehrlich, head of BGU’s Goldstein-Goren Department of Jewish Thought. “We look at Judaism and ask questions the same way you would ask questions about literature and language and the natural sciences.”

Originally a track in the Department of History, “Jewish Thought” became an independent department in 2000. It has since flourished to become one of the leading centers in the world for researching and teaching the evolution of Jewish intellectual thinking. The small department even produced the University’s first Israel Prize-winner, Prof. Emeritus Ya’akov Blidstein.

“We’re not concerned with religious ideology; the texts we study were molded by generations and generations of my people. I’m trying to analyze and understand what my ancestors think and believe. And that is the intellectual history of the Jewish people,” Ehrlich says.

To him and his colleagues, the work is to investigate the history of intellectual Judaism and publish “universal” material that is open to criticism and questions, like all humanistic and scientific research. At the same time, this history is uniquely relevant.

“Judaism is the way of living that is most connected to history,” Ehrlich says. “There is no Jew without the Bible, the *Mishna*, the rabbinical texts.



Prof. Uri Ehrlich

You don’t have to believe in the texts, but should know and understand them so you can interpret them yourself.”

The importance of the texts is in itself a historical circumstance, says Prof. Haim Kreisel, who heads the department’s Goldstein-Goren International Center for Jewish Thought.

“Judaism was a book culture, period. Jews were not allowed to attend the universities. Individual scholars might have traveled to study with a superior scholar, and later might have gathered in small groups to study together. They got most of their knowledge from books, and their research and writing were based on those texts.”

In the early medieval period, books of Jewish philosophy were generally written in Judaeo-Arabic, the language of the Jews living in Islamic countries. In the late 12th century, translation of the classics into Hebrew began, and a century later, Aristotle and Muslim philosophy were also translated into Hebrew. Thereafter, philosophical books were generally written in Hebrew, which became “the language of creativity.”

Dr. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, who joined the faculty earlier this year after earning her Ph.D. from Yale, finds the students wonderfully enthusiastic. “They’re so eager to learn. They send me e-mails after class, asking questions, asking for more reading. I’m invited to student gatherings to

Top photo: A liturgy fragment that Prof. Ehrlich pieced together and studied, now part of the Cairo Genizah Project



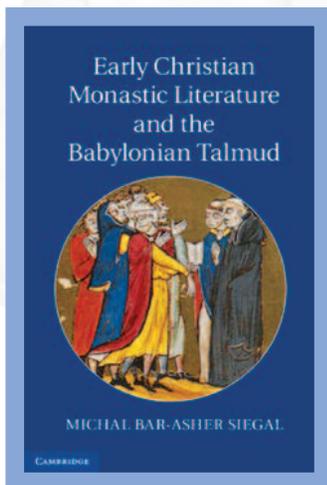
Prof. Haim Kreisel presenting the Goldstein-Goren Prize for Best Book in Jewish Thought at the Board of Governors Meeting this past May.

speak and people want to hear what I have to say.” As a woman, she is a rarity in the world of Talmudic studies, but feels very welcomed in the department’s collaborative atmosphere.

Bar-Asher Siegal grew up in a religious Israeli family where women were not taught Talmud, and was therefore not exposed to it until she was older. She began studying and “fell in love with the material.” Now she focuses on comparing early Christian monastic and rabbinic literature.

“Jewish history is familiar to our lives, but enigmatic and strange. It’s like detective work, a window into a world that existed 500, 1,500, 2,000 years ago. Whether people are connected to Judaism or not, it’s an important part of the world as we know it. You get to touch the roots, the beginning.”

Bar-Asher Siegal points out that thanks to technology, the window into earlier time periods is now more open than ever before. “Jewish material has never been as accessible as it is now. I spend my time not in library basements, but on Kindle or my com-



Dr. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal’s first book. She received the coveted Alon Prize, one of 20 in humanities awarded in Israel this past year.

puter. I used to look at microfilm—horrible! Now a lot of the material is digitized, and good search engines make it very accessible.

“I use PowerPoint; I show maps of what I’m talking about—Jewish Babylonia, the monasteries—so it’s a lot of fun to teach and easier to show the magic of the material.” Her colleagues share the same enthusiasm for new technology; the department has become well represented on YouTube, regularly posting video lectures and sharing knowledge outside of the classroom.

HIGH-TECH BREAKTHROUGH

Prof. Ehrlich is involved in a widely heralded international computer initiative called the Cairo Genizah Project.

In 1896, an enormous cache of documents was recovered from the storage room of an Old Cairo synagogue. It represented an accumulation of documents deposited there between the 9th to 19th centuries for burial, in accord with Jewish law for writing that bears God’s name. Also included was non-religious material added later. Torah scrolls, commentary, poetry, contracts, court proceedings, personal letters, and other documents were found, most in tattered fragments.

Rather like an intellectual diaspora, the material was scattered to 67 libraries and private collections around the world. There, the fragments were pored over, and some documents were pieced together through painstaking, excruciatingly hard work, memory and luck. The 301,000 fragments were

inventoried and photographed for a research website. Now a sophisticated computer system is working to connect fragments and give researchers tools to more easily piece the documents together.

Prof. Ehrlich used original materials for his research on Jewish prayer. He collected and pieced together about

The Goldstein-Goren International Center for Jewish Thought provides doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships, sponsors international conferences, and publishes a book series on relevant subjects. Every three years, an award for the best book in Jewish thought is presented. Two winners shared the \$30,000 prize this year: Written in English, Ephraim Kanarfogel’s *The Intellectual History and Rabbinic Culture of Medieval Ashkenaz*, and in Hebrew, Roni Weinstein’s *Break the Vessels: Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity*.

7,000 fragments “to give us a big picture of prayer versions unknown in our liturgy today,” he says. “If we can understand and analyze the differences—big and small—we can understand the different thinking in Jewish philosophy, ways of praying and more.”

Ehrlich’s own computerization of the fragments was incorporated into the Genizah Project and is now part of that resource.

“Now everybody, anywhere in the world, can look at the fragments and do their own research,” he says. The analysis is part of his just-released book on the *Amidah*, the central prayer of Jewish liturgy.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Prof. Daniel Lasker, whose interest spans Jewish philosophy from the late 9th century to the 16th, as well as Jewish law and modern medicine, observes that the value of technology to humanities’ research shouldn’t obscure the reasons for studying it.

“A just-technology world built on

mechanics is not a world people have found sufficient in the past, and we hope it's not sufficient in the future. We need content beyond the utilitarian scientific areas of our lives."

Lasker is especially absorbed with how science and religion have been debated and reconciled over time. "We can have different strategies. Many traditionalists look at science and believe that questions should be decided on the basis of religion," he says.

"Maimonides' science was medieval. We don't accept his assumptions about the nature of the earth, but he believed that religious questions should be understood on the basis of science. Don't let religion interfere with science, but use the science to explain religion."

Understanding ideas of the past, Lasker thinks, "the trends and antagonisms, the competitions for Jewish loyalty, helps us better understand the different options we can use in the present."

How we adapt old traditions and bodies of knowledge to present needs is precisely what interests Prof.

Boaz Huss. A specialist on Kabbalah, he first studied its main text, the *Zohar*, and its reception in Jewish culture.

Then, he observed contemporary Kabbalah practices, including the most famous expression of modern interest in the mystical text by the entertainer, Madonna.

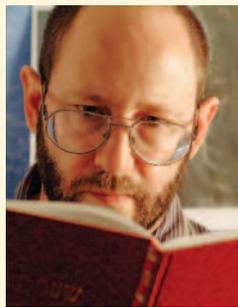
"I'm not a Kabbalist myself, but I'm fascinated by the power of human beings to find new relevance in it," Huss says. "My job is to look at how traditions are translated and recreated."

Huss cultivates new skills for his contemporary research. "Instead of just researching old manuscripts in libraries,

Continued on page 31

FINDING SURPRISES IN HISTORY

"Just as with scientific research, you never know what you're going to find," says Uri Ehrlich. "The field to me is very, very exciting." Among his own recent surprises: "We found in the Cairo Genizah a very important tradition of Jewish prayer that completely disappeared. It was used until the 10th century in Palestine before it got lost and was buried underground."



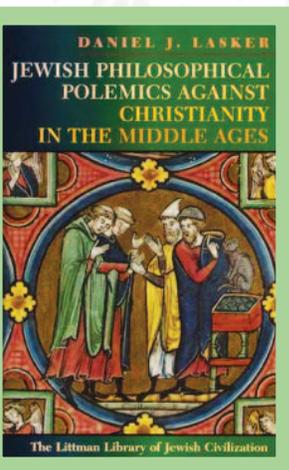
BOAZ HUSS reports that searching for the roots of early 20th century Kabbalah, he found himself in India. He discovered a wealth of information about a Jewish woman who was part of an esoteric group in France and later became an important spiritual leader in India. She was known as "the Mother" and is revered as the incarnation of a goddess. "The symbol of her ashram in Pondicherry, adopted from the Kabbalistic circle she belonged to in France, is a lotus inside the star of David!"

HAIM KREISEL notes, "the common view of the Middle Ages ignores the tremendous dynamism and philosophical progress going on, and the immense openness of many Jewish communities." For example, he finds 13th and 14th century commentaries that try to reconcile the Torah with Aristotelian philosophy—a debate that continues today. He also uncovered a little-known thinker, Nissim of Marseilles, who explained the Bible's miracles as natural occurrences.



DANIEL LASKER finds that medieval Jewish thinkers wrote polemical works against Christian doctrine and practice. This contradicts accepted wisdom, which assumes that Jews criticized Christianity only in reaction to attacks on Judaism. "Philosophy and polemics seem to work together. To determine your own view you have to define and take account of other views."

MICHAL BAR-ASHER SIEGAL finds constant surprise in the interconnected development of Judaism and Christianity in the Rabbinic period. "You can't speak of the parting of the ways clearly; it's messy and intertwined. You find Christians keeping kosher and being circumcised, for example, so you can't say Jews did this and Christians did that."



Prof. Daniel Lasker's book examines what medieval Jewish thinkers wrote about Christian doctrine.

THE FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGE

LEARNING FROM THE PAST TO SAFEGUARD THE FUTURE

PROF. HENDRIK BRUINS keeps one eye fixed on the past and the other on the future. His fields of research include geography, archaeology and anthropology, focusing on the desert and early agriculture of the Near East. He applies what he learns to contingency planning, with an emphasis on global food security.

Reflecting his multiple interests, Prof. Bruins is on the faculty of BGU's Department of Man in the Desert of the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research, as well as the Prepared Center for Emergency Response Research. He is also affiliated with the Department of Bible, Archeology and Ancient Near Eastern Studies. Were he not at BGU, he acknowledges, following all these paths would present a challenge.

Though he pursues research in each of these fields on its own, Bruins sees a clear connection among them. "Good historical and even archeological understanding is important so we see the present in perspective, including our approaches to basic things like agriculture. It's true for many other issues too, like climate, for example," he says.

"There have always been catastrophic droughts—before people had cars, well before the Industrial Revolution. If you are more familiar with what happened in the past, you have a broader basis to judge what's happening in the present."

The fact that technological progress in the last 100 years has been exponential and seems to go faster all the time doesn't necessarily mean

things keep improving, Bruins observes. "We can see the ups and downs through history. So to feel overly optimistic that now things will only be for the better would be naïve."

Changes in society and technology cause certain knowledge and methodologies to fall out of use and be forgotten, Bruins notes.

One example is the ancient terracing techniques in dry valleys that collect runoff water and floodwater, once used for agriculture in Israel's Negev

"To create real safety nets and prevent large scale famine, we need substantial food reserves on the national and regional levels."

— PROF. HENDRIK BRUINS

desert, as well as in Mexico's Tehuacan Valley and Yemen's Marib Dam.

"This knowledge disappeared partly because modern agriculture is on an entirely different scale, so the skills don't apply," he says.

"Also, peasant agriculture changed as people flocked to the cities from the countryside and large corporations took over the farming systems. So many of these shifts have problematic side effects."

Bruins' analysis of history suggests that we should not passively accept what our own era throws at us.



He is concerned about inadequate contingency planning to feed the world's growing population and relates this to his archeological observations.

"In Israel, you find many Iron Age settlements linked to the ancient Israelites. An important archaeological characteristic of these sites is the large number of grain storage facilities—silos with rounded walls, often built into the soil. Food grain reserves were always important in the past. In Europe during the Middle Ages, each town had its own grain storage facility. Usually there were two: one was run by the town, the other by private organizations. Perhaps people felt they couldn't always trust the authorities.

"People in ancient societies knew from experience that you could never be sure of next year's yield. Bad weather, diseases, locusts, war, enemies—all these could destroy the crops so there were many reasons to build food grain reserves, whether of wheat, rice or corn."

But this policy approach based on age-old experience has been largely abandoned, and this worries Bruins.

After World War II, he observes, the United States and Canada possessed very large federal

Top Photo: Model of granary, Egypt, 12th Dynasty.

grain reserves. This helped stabilize prices worldwide and in time of crop failure, as happened in Africa, helped prevent famine. But soon after, a new philosophy of globalization captured the world economically and politically. It was overly promoted in regard to grain storage, he believes.

“The view became that if you integrate everything into a global marketplace, you can always buy food somewhere. So you just need enough money in the bank, as a nation or privately, to buy it from the world market. Talking about grain reserves became old-fashioned.”

This universally accepted global view opened the door to market manipulation so that major export nations were able to offer grain at low prices, creating dependency on the part of many countries. Today, Bruins says, only five countries are capable of exporting grain in large quantity: the United States, Canada, France, Argentina, and Australia. The U.S. alone supplies about 30 percent of the grain traded on the world market. More than 100 countries—including Israel—permanently depend on grain import. As a result, the U.S.

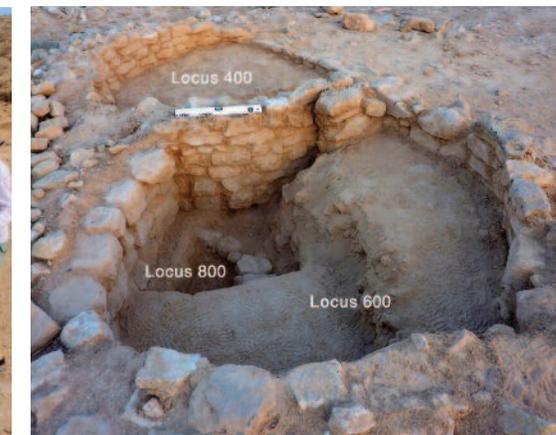
drought last year caused significant price increases in many parts of the world.



With many countries choosing to grow cash crops like flowers, and with land increasingly allocated for ethanol, the grain market is already very tight and prospects for the future look grim, in Bruins’ view. Water security issues further complicate the food outlook: over-exploiting water supplies—common in many dryland countries—steadily depletes groundwater reserves so irrigation may become insufficient to grow food.

Some of the facts Bruins cites to demonstrate the need for concern:

- The 2007-2008 droughts and lower yields caused food prices to rise, consuming as much as 90 percent of the income of many of the world’s poor.
- About 150 million more people were kicked into malnutrition levels, their ranks now numbering 1 billion.
- Europe’s shelves stock merely a month’s supply of grain for the whole continent.



Prof. Bruins’ archaeological excavations at the ancient rural desert site Horvat Haluqim, the oldest terraced field found in the Negev. Left: Beginning the excavation. Right: Silo rooms probably used to store wheat or barley.

A major disaster could cause a dangerous worldwide famine, Bruins says. “I’m not saying we should try to stop globalization; global trade gives us many wonderful things. But strangely we have insurance for all kinds of things, but no insurance for food security. To create real

On the hopeful side: “Besides silos for storage, today’s modern packaging industry enables us to pack food more conveniently and securely, so we are more flexible than in ancient Egypt. It’s best if national governments take policy measures, but people can also act privately on various local scales.” ■

In 2006, Prof. Hendrik Bruins was presented with a Royal Award from Queen Beatrix of The Netherlands for achievements in policy-oriented studies on drought, hazard assessment and contingency planning in drylands, geo-archaeological desert research and innovative chronological studies about the ancient Near East.



PROMOTING WOMEN'S HEALTH IN THE NEGEV

STATISTICS FOR WOMEN'S mental health in the Western world are startling.

- 20% of all women suffer from depression
- Women suffer from depression and anxiety at twice the rate of men
- 25% of women experience sexual violence during their lives
- 13% are victims of physical violence

The mental well being of women in Israel's Southern region is at especially high risk. The threat of missile attacks promotes physical insecurity, known to affect women more heavily. The region is also home to numerous marginalized, low socio-economic populations and a mélange of cultures. Yet as a peripheral region, the Negev has offered extraordinarily few resources to promote the health and well being of women.

This picture began to change in 1999 when Prof. Julie Cwikel, a social epidemiologist in BGU's Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work, founded the Center for Women's Health Studies and Promotion. "We were a group of

women, researchers and academics, including Prof. Rivka Carmi [now BGU president, then head of the Faculty of Health Sciences]. We were concerned that many progressive programs were happening in Israel but not getting down to the South. We felt we needed an umbrella organization to sustain programs that would support women."

Thanks to donor support, the Center for Women's Health Studies and Promotion was created and has since grown steadily. In line with BGU's multidisciplinary approach, the Center bridges the faculties of health sciences, humanities and social sciences.

"We connect clinical lab research, sociological research and education—that makes the Women's Center unique among other universities' social work programs," Prof. Cwikel says.

Moreover, the Center has an ambitious set of intertwined goals. It aimed from the outset to conduct cutting-edge

research on topics related to women's health, apply the knowledge to community-based programs, and train a new generation of researchers and practitioners. In its 14 years of existence, the Center has progressed in all these dimensions.

Dr. Dorit Segal-Engelchin, who co-directs today's Center with Cwikel, explains why enriching the Negev with services is so important.

"The population is fragile. It's multi-ethnic with Jews, Bedouins and immigrants, including many from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia. Education and employment are low. So health status is poorer than in the center of the country, affected by all the problems associated with fewer resources: poor nutrition, less awareness of the need for preventive and regular health care, and more unhealthy habits like smoking." Segal-Engelchin continues, "Their low socio-economic status



Prof. Julie Cwikel, the Center's founder, is a social epidemiologist, a field that connects social factors and health issues. She is also an activist who advocates for women's health and changes in government policy, speaking for women's causes before the Knesset and other decision-making groups.

Top Photo: A Mom-to-Mom program run by BGU's Center for Women's Health Studies and Promotion

is a risk factor for poor physical and mental health, which is amplified by higher stress due to basic problems, like providing food for their children.

“This part of Israel is neglected in many aspects. We’re trying to fill this void—slowly but consistently.”

LEARNING, THEN SHARING WITH THE COMMUNITY

The Center for Women’s Health Studies and Promotion’s training program for mental health professionals encourages research and involves students in all its projects. “Each student focuses on a different topic associated with women’s health promotion,” Segal-Engelchin says, “and some even do research to evaluate our own initiatives in the community. This helps us to improve the program all the time and gain more knowledge to teach the new young professionals.”

“We felt we needed an umbrella organization to sustain programs that would support women.”

— PROF. JULIE CWIKEL

How these goals can work in tandem is demonstrated in the person of Jo Czmanski-Cohen, a Ph.D. candidate who recently completed her thesis. She is accomplishing breakthrough research on stress associated with IVF (in vitro fertilization), while also teaching in the Department of Social Work, and working as a one-on-one therapist with the Center’s counseling program, using her art therapy background.

“This works perfectly for me,” she says. “All these things are very dear to my heart and I can’t imagine doing just one.”

Czmanski-Cohen is interested in the mind-body connection. While investigating stress levels in women undergoing IVF treatment, she found

they correlated with difficulty in conceiving and with a variation in levels of cortisol, a stress hormone the body produces. As part of the study, the women received cognitive behavior therapy. It was found that practicing relaxation techniques during an invasive medical procedure, like IVF, can be helpful in achieving a pregnancy. The numbers so far are small, however, and Czmanski-Cohen plans to research further and identify more specific factors at the DNA level.

Other research projects range from exploring how mothers from six different ethnic groups in the United States and Israel transmit health information to their daughters; differences among cultural groups in providing medical service for infants; child-raising practices in alternative families; and whether chemotherapy produces memory impairment in breast cancer patients (this study concluded that the cancer itself produces this effect rather than the chemo).

Research projects are often done collaboratively with other BGU departments and specialists. For example, a survey of Negev Bedouins documented a high repeat rate of respiratory, gynecological and urinary problems. The common denominator was identified as household waste treatment. The unrecognized villages—where 40 percent of Bedouins live—have no formal system for handling waste. Working with BGU’s Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research and two other research centers, the Women’s Center created a program that provides a “biogas digester” to safely recycle organic waste into energy for lighting, cooking and heating.

“We teach that to empower women you must see the whole family system,” Segal-Engelchin says. “And



Dr. Dorit Segal-Engelchin, the Center’s co-director, lectures in the Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work. Her specializations include working with families of children at risk and alternative family structures.

you must work jointly with the men or you accomplish nothing, and may just worsen the situation.” Whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim, traditional patriarchal societies—substantially represented in the Negev—can present additional challenges to the mission of empowering women.

The Women’s Center also disseminates its research through national conferences open to

professionals from all fields interested in women’s mental and physical health. It holds smaller seminars on specific subjects, such as parenting, and enjoys a strong track record in publishing articles and several major books.

HELPING TROUBLED MOTHERS

Sometimes an innovative model provides the solution to a major challenge. Eight years ago, determined to help new mothers with problems, Prof. Cwikel created *Em le Em*—“Mom to Mom”—using a volunteer corps. Now the Center’s longest-running initiative, Mom to Mom trains volunteers who are themselves experienced mothers, currently aged 28 to 70, to work with mothers who are experiencing stress.

Cwikel brought the program to Beer-Sheva after reading about the original model in Boston, and worked with its originator, Dr. Marsha Kaitz, to bring it to the Negev. Volunteer nurses at Soroka University Medical Center identify women who appear to be isolated, upset or show some kind of distress or withdrawal in the transition to motherhood. Typically about 60 percent are new mothers, Cwikel says, but others have different problems, such as handling twins.

“We explain the project to the women and if they’re interested, we make a home visit,” Cwikel says. “When we see the issues, we invite

them to the project, or to the open mother's group that meets weekly. There are no fees; we just need to hear 'I don't have enough support.'"

The mothers range from BGU doctoral students to Bedouin women, who constitute one-third of the women of the Negev. Research by a master's degree student recently found an alarmingly high rate of postpartum depression among Bedouin women: 25 percent to 30 percent, compared to 15 percent among the region's Jewish women.

"Some of the women referred to Mom to Mom have very limited social support, or none," says Segal-Engelchin. "We're opening the door to women who may have no one. We speak to each woman as a person, ask what's going on, give her a place and the support she needs as a human being. If we decrease the risk of depression and increase the mother's well being, we indirectly help her to be more nurturing to her children and family as a whole."

Melissa Test is a retired high school teacher who agreed to train as a volunteer at Cwikel's request. She has been working with a Russian immigrant, a single mother with multiple problems. "We're not there to tell people what to do," Test says, "but to be there—a sounding board for women who don't have people to talk to—and find out what they need. We talk, listen, reassure. The volunteers get as involved as the mothers want them to be."

Backup or other resources are brought in when a volunteer encounters problems she can't handle—an empty refrigerator, signs of partner violence or a family catastrophe.

The Women's Center is also exploring the idea of serving new fathers. Doctoral student Avigdor Kaner interviewed a number of them for his thesis, and found that they shared a strong need for support and opportunities to talk. But few had the time or energy to come to meetings. He innovated an online support group to connect them through the

Internet. He has already built the technology and plans to run several pilot groups. Results will be compared against a control group that receives no intervention.

"We're very curious and excited to see how it works out," Segal-Engelchin says. "If it's successful and we find funding, we may turn it into one of our running projects."

COUNSELING ONE-ON-ONE

The Center for Women's Health Studies and Promotion's second long-term flagship program is *Isha Be-Shela*, which means "a woman in her own right." Prof. Cwikel developed the program five years ago to make psychotherapy more available in the Negev. Fifteen therapists currently work one or two days per week, each practicing a different specialty and treatment approach.

Isha Be-Shela is available on a sliding-scale fee basis to women coping with grief and trauma, chronic illness, aging, women's identity and sexuality issues, anxiety, depression, and more. It is the only women's counseling project in the Negev. Before its establishment, waiting lists for therapy services at the publicly funded mental health clinics were sometimes a year long. *Isha Be-Shela* typically matches an incoming patient with an appropriate therapist within a week. There is no waiting list, and no one is turned away. Men who want gender-sensitive therapy are also served.

"We must be very attuned to our clients and diverse in our capacities to help," says Andy Ifergane, the program's clinical director. The staff includes therapists with traditional, secular and kibbutz backgrounds, as well as lesbians, Russians and Americans. Formerly a female Bedouin therapist was also on staff, but found

no demand for her services. "Bedouins don't want a Bedouin therapist because of the tribal connections. The women don't want it known that they sought help," Ifergane explains.

She believes that women who come for treatment often feel they are to blame for their situation and don't see the political, social and cultural influences that contribute.

"A religious woman who doesn't want to be a mother comes stressed because the community expects it of her, even more than secular communities. A mother comes after birth with depression and blames herself

for not caring about the baby enough, when everyone tells her she should be happy. Secular women, too, feel guilty about work-family conflicts.

"We try to help women understand that leaving the kids with their husband to have coffee with a friend shouldn't involve guilt." When opportunity allows, women are encouraged to gain more education—the key to advancing their status, the Center's staff believes. But advice

is always given in context of each woman's own culture and personal situation.

Student/therapist/teacher Jo Czmanski-Cohen puts the Center in perspective. "These are amazing programs that contribute to the community in such a selfless way, helping so many different kinds of women. The Mom to Mom and psychotherapy programs are helping to change society by giving women a place to come to for help. They're not to be taken for granted.

"The dedication to helping women that I see at the Center, from both staff and volunteers, inspires me to continue this work." ■



Andy Ifergane, clinical director of *Isha Be-Shela*. A trained psychotherapist and clinical social worker, she has worked with post-traumatic stress syndrome, high stress situations, and coping with chronic illness.

REGIONAL NEWS

For information about upcoming events in your area, please visit: www.aabgu.org/regions-events

For information about giving opportunities or planned gifts, such as charitable gift annuities and bequests, contact your [regional office](#).

GREAT LAKES

Ernie Simon, *Chair*
Larry Goodman, *Honorary Chair*
Steven Franklin, *Director*
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RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

In the presence of Israel's President Shimon Peres and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, University of Chicago President Robert Zimmer and BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi signed an agreement in Jerusalem to provide \$1 million for collaborative water technology research. The goal of the project is to find new materials and processes for making clean, fresh drinking water more plentiful and less expensive by 2020.

Regional board members and guests had the pleasure of meeting



University of Chicago President Robert Zimmer signs the water research agreement with BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi, as Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Israel's President Shimon Peres look on.

Dr. Eric Isaacs, director of Argonne National Laboratories, shortly after he returned from a joint research workshop at BGU. Argonne is managed by University of Chicago and is participating in the water research partnership.

BGU's new alternative energy collaboration with the University of Michigan, announced earlier this year, has already resulted in joint research on sustainable energy alternatives, including photovoltaics, solar, thermoelectric, and liquid fuels.

These collaborations have the potential to dramatically improve the quality of life for vulnerable populations around the world.

TAKING TIME OUT TO VISIT BGU

The Great Lakes Region was well represented at BGU's 43rd Annual Board of Governors Meeting in May, with attendees including Board of Governors Member Larry Goodman and family; Board of Governors Member Richard Goldstein; Regional Board Members Mort and Arline Doblin; and new Founders Len and Sheila Savitt with a family delegation of 13 children, children-in-law and grandchildren. A highlight of this year's event was the dedication of the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program (see page 4).

In June, AABGU Board Member Paul Goodman and supporter Ellis Goodman spent a day at BGU's Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research and the Ben-Gurion



Paul Goodman, Danya Chazan and Ellis Goodman at the American Associates Village construction site in Sede Boqer

National Solar Energy Center.

Congratulations to Jason Gottlieb, a graduate of AABGU's Zin Fellows Leadership Development Program. Jason, who lives in Mequon, Wisconsin, was elected to AABGU's national board in September (see page 7).

GREATER FLORIDA

Greater Florida Advisory Committee

Rich Bernstein, Alan Hurst,
Max Javit, Billy Joel, Edward
Kaplan, Jan Liff, Joel Reinstein,
Lyon Roth, Dr. Rubin Salant,
Marty Weinberg
Elise Dolgow, *Director*
Reva Feldman, *Associate Director*
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Clockwise: Zin Fellow Marc List with BGU President Rivka Carmi recognizing AABGU Zin Fellows – Cohort I on the Negev Society wall; Reva Feldman, the region's new associate director; Tanya and David Cohen, and Amy Milin visiting BGU's Marcus Family Campus

REGION'S LEADERS VISIT BGU

Leaders from AABGU's Greater Florida Region were part of the American delegation to BGU's 43rd Annual Board of Governors Meeting in Beer-Sheva in May. In attendance were national board members Joel Reinstein and Jan Liff; and Marc List, who recently completed AABGU's Zin Fellows Leadership Development Program.

Marc represented the first Zin Fellows class, as the group's name was added to the Founders' and Negev Society recognition walls for the cohort's donation to the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program.

Many thanks to AABGU supporters who recently visited the University,

including: Tanya and David Cohen; Amy Milin; Suzan Sankel; Ruth and Marcelo Warat; Mijal Warat; members of B'nai Torah Congregation of Boca Raton led by Rabbi David Steinhardt; and the eighth grade



class from the David Posnack Jewish Day School in Davie.

MEET GREATER FLORIDA'S NEW ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

AABGU is delighted to welcome Reva Feldman, who joins AABGU as the region's associate director. She comes to us from the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County, where she was an associate vice president and worked closely with the Federation's planned giving department.

Prior to her service in Palm Beach, Reva was the campaign director for the Jewish Federation of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. She has also worked as executive director of Temple Emanuel in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania, and as director of the JCC and the Jewish Federation in her hometown of Altoona, Pennsylvania.

GREATER NEW YORK

Lite Sabin, *Chair*
Kevin M. Leopold
Executive Director-Northeast
Jay Leipzig
Senior Philanthropic Advisor
Dana Ben-Benyamin
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WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS TO THE ASAROT SOCIETY

This past June, the Greater New York Region hosted programs in Manhattan and Scarsdale, featuring BGU's

Dr. Natan Aridan and honoring AABGU's most loyal supporters as they were inducted into the new Asarot Society. Asarot means "tens" in Hebrew and the inductees are a select group of donors who contributed 10 gifts or more to AABGU.

Dr. Natan Aridan has been at the Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism since making *aliyah* from Great Britain in 1980. He specializes in Israel-Diaspora relations and historic diplomatic relations between Israel and English-speaking countries. He also serves as editor of the distinguished journal, *Israel Studies*.

Continued on next page



Arnold Sabin with Region Chair Lite Sabin proudly holding their new Asarot Society certificate

Following Dr. Aridan's discussion about "Democracy, Leadership and Crisis: Ben-Gurion's Vision and Reality," the region recognized the Asarot group's longtime friendship, generosity and dedication to Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. The newly inducted members were thanked with a beautiful recognition certificate.

One guest warmly remarked how much she enjoyed the "heartfelt recognition given to members of the Asarot group for our sustained generous support."

The Greater New York Region looks forward to future induction ceremonies when more friends are welcomed into the Asarot Society.



Esther Glassman with Kevin Leopold, executive director, at the Asarot Society ceremony at Shaarei Tikvah in Scarsdale

Congratulations to Tony Felzen, a graduate of AABGU's Zin Fellows Leadership Development Program.



Miriam Zanger with the region's program manager, Dana Ben-Benjamin, happily displaying her Asarot Society certificate shared with her husband, Oscar (not pictured)

Tony, who lives in New York City, was elected to AABGU's national board in September.

GREATER TEXAS

Stephen Breslauer and Arline Guefen, *Chairs*
 Stephen Friedman, *Vice Chair*
 Ellen Marcus, *Austin Chair*
 Deborah K. Bergeron, *Director*
 (713) 522-8284
 texas@aabgu.org

SPREADING THE NEGEV SPIRIT

AABGU Executive Vice President Doron Krakow visited Houston in May for a number of events. His goal: to meet and inspire members of the community to get more involved.

Paul and Leslie Strug hosted a wine and cheese reception for some 20 young community leaders. A member of the first cohort of AABGU's Zin Fellows Leadership Development Program, Paul spoke about the Negev's spirit of community and what it means to him to fulfill Ben-Gurion's dream. Doron spoke about the role BGU's researchers, faculty and staff play in advancing Negev development.

A dessert reception was hosted by Dr. Esta Kronberg and Bill Davis for the regional board. Doron spoke to a group of 30 people about BGU's cutting-edge research, the challenges facing the University and the need to



Arline and Ben Guefen back "home" on BGU's Marcus Family Campus

get involved. A women's power luncheon was hosted by Elizabeth and David Grzebinski. Here, AABGU's executive vice president highlighted how there is still work to be done in the Negev, and the opportunities to make a difference.

BACK IN BEER-SHEVA

As usual there was plenty of Texas spirit at BGU's 43rd Annual Board of Governors Meeting in May. Participants from Greater Texas included Stephen Breslauer, board of governors vice chair and the region's new co-chair; Ellen Marcus, board of governors vice chair and Austin chapter chair; AABGU's national Board Secretary Ben Guefen and



Stephen Breslauer, a vice chair on the University's board of governors, prepares to participate in the procession for BGU's Honorary Doctorate Conferment Ceremony.



Steven Finkelman and daughter Marissa Finkelman visiting Dr. Moshe Herzberg's (center) water research lab

his wife Arline, new region co-chair; and national board member and immediate past regional chair, Steven Finkelman, with his daughter Marissa.

MID-ATLANTIC

Jack R Bershad
Regional Chair
 Connie and Sam Katz
Philadelphia Chapter Chairs
 Marla and Dr. Robert Zipkin
Philadelphia Chapter Vice Chairs
 Claire Winick
Director
 Andrew L. Demchick
Associate Director
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A provocative presentation, “Women in Israeli Society,” by BGU Ph.D. candidate Ronit Lusky, drew 25 women to a lunch and learn hosted by Sylvia Brodsky in June.

In July, Philadelphia Chapter Chairs Connie and Sam Katz invited members and friends of the Negev Forum and Tomorrow’s Leadership Committee to “Meet the Students” at a garden party in their home.

Another well attended reception was held in Pittsburgh in August. Hosted by Simone and Dr. Daniel Rubin, the

HONORING WOMEN OF DISTINCTION

The Philadelphia Chapter will hold its 2013 tribute brunch on Sunday, November 24, 2013 at the National Museum of American Jewish History. This year’s community-wide event will celebrate “Women of Distinction,” six local women who have made a lasting impact in their fields:

- **Lynne M. Abraham, Esq.**, served for 19 years as Philadelphia district attorney, the first woman and longest tenured person in that position. She is currently a partner at Archer and Greiner.
- **Marilyn Price Birnhak**, president of Weight Watchers of Philadelphia, owns and operates Weight Watchers International’s longest running franchise in the world.
- **Jane Golden** is the executive director of Philadelphia’s Mural Arts Program, the nation’s largest public arts program.
- **Lori J. Goldstein, M.D.**, directs the Breast Evaluation Center and heads the Breast Cancer Research Program at Fox Chase Cancer Center.
- **Eileen R. Heisman** is president and chief executive officer of the National Philanthropic Trust, one of the largest donor-advised funds in the United States, with over \$1.7 billion in charitable assets.
- **Lisa J. Scheller** is chairman of Silberline, Inc., a global manufacturer of paint pigments for the automotive and plastics industries. She also chairs Lehigh County’s Board of Commissioners.



Regional Chair Jack R Bershad; Dr. Glenn Rall of Fox Chase Cancer Center; Philadelphia Chapter Chairs Connie and Sam Katz; AABGU’s Planned Giving Advisor Neal Myerberg

SHARING THE BGU MESSAGE WITH OLD FRIENDS AND NEW

Mid-Atlantic Regional Chair Jack R Bershad hosted a regional board of directors’ luncheon meeting in May featuring Neal Myerberg, noted tax and financial planning expert, and Dr. Glenn Rall of Fox Chase Cancer Center. Dr. Rall and his research counterpart at BGU, Prof. Yaakov Gopas, received a highly competitive National Institutes of Health grant for studying viruses.

event featured guest speaker Dr. Elias Aizenman of the University of Pittsburgh’s Department of Neurobiology and adjunct professor in BGU’s Faculty of Health Sciences.

Congratulations to Ernie Scheller, Jr. and Ira Ingerman, longtime friends and AABGU national board members, who were elected in September as a vice president and treasurer, respectively. Congratulations also to Michele Levin. A graduate of AABGU’s Zin Fellows Leadership Development Program, the Bala Cynwyd resident was elected to the national board.

BGU’s original “woman of distinction,” the first female president of an Israeli university, Prof. Rivka Carmi, M.D., was the guest of honor at September’s kickoff luncheon. Proceeds from the tribute brunch will be directed to scholarships and fellowships for female students in engineering and the sciences.

NEW ENGLAND

Max Schechner
President
 Kevin M. Leopold
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MENDING BROKEN HEARTS WITH STEM CELLS AND BIOMATERIALS

The New England Region was honored to host Prof. Smadar Cohen, one of BGU's most esteemed faculty members, at a program this past spring focused on the latest developments of her groundbreaking stem cell research.

Region President Max Schechner welcomed Prof. Cohen and the AABGU community to his synagogue, Temple Reyim in Newton, Massachusetts, for this enlightening program.

Prof. Cohen established BGU's Center for Regenerative Medicine, Cellular Therapy and Stem Cell Research in 2012 and is founding



Hannah Banks with Kevin Leopold, executive director, and longtime AABGU supporter and friend, Howard Shrut

chair of the Avram and Stella Goldstein-Goren Department of Biotechnology Engineering at BGU.

Her research focuses on the design of functional bio-materials for promoting the regeneration of damaged tissue in the human body, including the heart, liver and cartilage. She wowed the guests, who included AABGU supporters, Temple Reyim congregants, and local community members with her impressive development of an innovative cardiac scaffold made from algae.



Ian Noy, vice president at Temple Reyim, his wife Lynda Adler; Region President Max Schechner

During her presentation, Prof. Cohen explained how this bio-device mends tissue damage following heart attacks. It is now in clinical trials and has been licensed to the pharmaceutical company BioLineRx/Ikaria.

The New England Region looks forward to future programs in neighboring communities so that BGU's top faculty members can have the opportunity to showcase their impressive research and share the virtues of this special university with more people.

NORTHWEST

Sonny Hurst, *President*
 Daphna Noily, *Director*
 Judith Alterman, *Associate Director*
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 northwest@aabgu.org

LEARNING ABOUT BGU BRAIN RESEARCH IN THE BAY AREA

Arlene and Steve Krieger were planning to host a reception at their San Francisco home for BGU neuroscientist Prof. Alon Friedman, M.D., Ph.D, when, just a few days before, they learned that President Obama would also be at a private event nearby. The area would be blocked off to cars and non-residents.

Continued on next page



Michael and Elaine Kaplan, Sherry Morse and Nancy Goldberg learn about BGU's strides in brain research at a local reception.

REGIONAL NEWS

Unfazed by this last minute development, the Kriegers saved the day by arranging for the historic Congregation Sherith Israel to welcome the guests for Prof. Friedman's talk, "From Brain Trauma to Alzheimer's: New Treatments, New Hope." Known for his dramatic discovery about the blood-brain barrier, Prof. Friedman recently gained international attention for using special MRI techniques to measure the brain function of former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who remains in a coma.

LEAVING A LEGACY FOR ISRAEL'S YOUTH

Hilda Namm cares deeply about higher education in Israel. "It must be a priority to nurture bright students—like



Prof. Alon Friedman with event host and regional board member, Arlene Krieger



Hilda Namm, Larkspur, CA

those at Ben-Gurion University—who are working hard to help solve the problems of humankind," she says.

Through its exceptional brain power, Hilda believes Israel can continue to be a world leader in technology,

medicine and finding solutions to global environmental concerns.

Hilda recently established a generous charitable gift annuity with AABGU, which will support BGU's outstanding academics and pioneering research for generations to come.

SOUTHWEST

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BGU PRESENTS RUTH FLINKMAN-MARANDY WITH AN HONORARY DOCTORATE

AABGU's Southwest Region Campaign Chair Ruth Flinkman-Marandy received an honorary doctoral degree at BGU's 43rd Annual Board of Governors Meeting in May (see page 4).

This honor recognizes Ruth's dedication to innovative research in advanced technologies, especially nanotechnology, and her commitment to fostering promising young scientists at BGU.

Continued on next page

Top: Ruth Flinkman-Marandy (center) receives honorary doctorate from President Prof. Rivka Carmi and Rector Prof. Zvi HaCohen

Bottom: Dr. Natan Aridan with Guilford and Diane Glazer; AABGU supporter Stephen Halaj with Jacob Segal, chair of the Southern California Israel Chamber of Commerce



EXPLORING ZIONISM AND DECISION MAKING IN BEVERLY HILLS

Dr. Natan Aridan, of BGU's Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, addressed a capacity crowd of new and longtime supporters at the Luxe Rodeo Drive Hotel, Beverly Hills in June. Dr. Aridan's wealth of knowledge about Israeli leaders and the dilemmas they faced making decisions in crisis situations made for a riveting discussion.

A large Southwest Region contingent attended the Board of Governors to support Ruth Flinkman-Marandy. **Back Row:** Michael Flinkman; Ruth and her husband, Ben Marandy; Lewis Flinkman; Leah Bell; Russell Flinkman **Front Row:** Yvonne and Philip Gomperts, regional director; Larry Field and Rivka Seiden



WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE

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WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE WELCOMES BGU PROF. SMADAR COHEN

The region hosted Prof. Smadar Cohen, founding chair of BGU's Avram and Stella Goldstein-Goren Department of Biotechnology Engineering. World renowned for her groundbreaking heart-scaffolding research that helps mend heart tissues following a heart attack, Prof. Cohen gave two presentations. The first was at Beth El Congregation of Baltimore as part of a "Made in Israel: Blue and White Pride" lecture series. She also spoke at a brunch at the home of Rhoda Baruch in Chevy Chase.



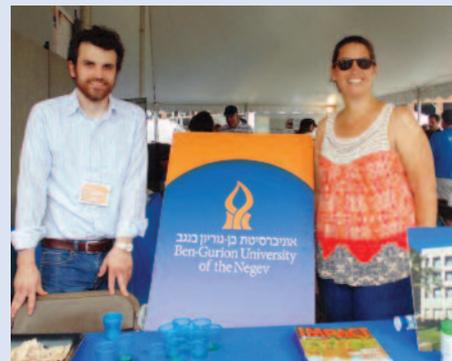
Washington area supporters enjoy getting to know Prof. Smadar Cohen (center).

disaster preparedness and solar energy research at a Baltimore area festival.

AABGU also joined the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and 10,000 attendees for Israel@65, a food, wine and music festival. The region highlighted BGU Prof. Iris Shai's research that promotes the Mediterranean diet as one of the healthiest ways to eat.

LEARNING ABOUT AN UNSUNG HERO

The region was privileged to host longtime AABGU supporter Lolita Goldstein in Baltimore. She spoke about her experiences working with



AABGU staff member David Speer and Zin Fellow Joanne Moore, newly elected to AABGU's board, promote BGU at Israel@65 with an olive oil tasting.

Dr. Joseph Schwartz in Lisbon, Portugal during World War II. A Baltimore native, Dr. Schwartz saved thousands of Jewish lives during and after the Holocaust. Thanks to Lolita's initiative, BGU's Prof. Tuvia Friling has begun work on a historical biography of Schwartz (see "Forgotten Heroes" on page 5).

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to D.C. resident Joanne Moore and Baltimore resident Ira Wagner who were elected to AABGU's national board in September.

PIONEERS

Continued from page 7

selling the Negev as the place to be to Israelis and the greater Jewish world necessitates a brand overhaul.

This challenge is surmountable. Recasting the opportunity on the basis of BGU's ongoing advancements, the military's significant investment in the region, the new high-tech park, and the countless pioneering successes

(to name but a few foundational pillars)—and rejecting emphatically and consistently any mention of the *periphery*—is a first step in both elevating and living the Negev's contemporary, enticing brand promise.

Recognizing the enormity of the challenge and opportunity bestowed upon us, we renamed ourselves the Zin Warriors. We have, each in our own way and most importantly together, accepted the charge to sus-

tain past and current works and to catalyze the ongoing and future development of BGU and the Negev.

Those who have yet to proclaim your pioneer status, simply reach out your hand, hold on tight, and join us on the adventure of a lifetime! ■

JASON GOTTLIEB, a new member of AABGU's national board, participated in the inaugural class of the Zin Fellows Leadership Development Program.

LADINO CULTURE

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The Ottoman Empire was a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. "Jews were not the ruling group; they were secondary citizens just like all other non-Muslim groups, but they were not conceived as an incorporation of otherness. They were just one more face of the 'other.' We had a good life with our Muslim neighbors in the Balkans," Papo says.

One effect of the centuries-long good-neighbor interaction, Papo recounts, is that while hundreds of Yiddish proverbs speak of "*goyim*," there was never an equivalent in Ladino. "Not a single Sephardic proverb reduces all the non-Jews, all the others, to a mere '*goy*.' Sephardic popular culture does not speak of 'us' and 'them,' Jews versus the rest of the world," he says.

"While Sephardic Jews have had their prejudices concerning some of the neighboring ethnic or religious groups, and their proverbs reflect these stereotypes, these never speak about some imaginary gentile or gentiles—but about different ethnic or religious groups. We show our students that Sephardic Jews saw people in their variety, just observing they had good relations with some, and less so with others."

Notably, Jews and Muslims were simultaneously expelled when the Christians achieved power in Spain, Papo observes.

"For Israelis this shows a very important alternative to seeing the world as 'us' and 'them.' I believe the more we teach Sephardic history in Israel, the more Israelis will realize how it's possible for us to live with our Arab, Muslim and Christian neighbors."

SEE FOR YOURSELF: SARAJEVO AND THE BALKANS TOUR

Dr. Eliezer Papo was born and raised in Sarajevo, Bosnia, and earned a law degree there before embarking on rabbinic and Judaic studies. Today, he serves as the non-resident rabbi of Sarajevo's Jewish community—the 1,000 people who remain of the 13,000-strong pre-World War II

for Sephardim and Ashkenazim—the Sephardic ones facing south, the Ashkenazi one facing east to Jerusalem. "They pronounced Hebrew differently, and their melodies for the liturgy were different—oriental versus Eastern-European," Papo says. The communities were very separate for decades, but today's small populations have joined together and now share the Ashkenazi synagogue.

"The Sarajevo Jewish community enjoyed an exceedingly positive experience with the local Muslims," says Papo. One story tells of the time a Turkish governor imprisoned Jewish dignitaries. One of the remaining rabbis visited eight taverns in Sarajevo on the



The Baruchs, a Sephardic family from Visegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1899

population. He officiates twice a year, during Passover and the High Holidays, and is constantly available by telephone, Skype and mail.

Sarajevo's history is especially interesting for Jewish people. Until the war, the city had separate synagogues



Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Sarajevo wood market preparing for winter, end of 19th century

eve of Shabbat, and at each stop, ordered a drink, paid for it, and left it untouched. When he arrived home a group of Muslims was waiting in front of his house to hear the message they understood he wished to convey.

"Today it's *our* spiritual leadership

and *our* ransom money, tomorrow *yours*,” he told them. “This governor will take the last piece of money we have.” The Muslims listened, arrested the governor and freed the Jews. That event is still celebrated by the Sarajevo Jews on the fourth of Cheshvan (the second month of the Hebrew year, usually in October), and is known as Purim of Sarajevo.

In May 2014, Dr. Eli Papo will enthusiastically lead AABGU’s “East Meets West: A Journey through the Jewish Balkans,” traveling to Bosnia, Herzegovina and Croatia, including Sarajevo.

“There’s much to learn, many beautiful things to see and hear about, the back roads of medieval cities to explore. People will get the whole story, not just the 10 percent usually told.” For details about the trip, call 800-962-2248 ext. 1601; e-mail travel@aabgu.org; or visit www.aabgu.org/balkans. ■

JEWISH THOUGHT

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I do ethnographic work. I go to meetings and events, look at video clips and surf the Internet. So much is happening now.”

He takes students to an annual Kabbalah ceremony near Beer-Sheva, conducted by an influential charismatic leader called The X-ray (*Ha-Rentgen*). The event draws 100,000 people.

Witnessing current trends affects Huss’ perspective on earlier Kabbalah. “I still research older materials, but seeing the contemporary practices embedded in life gives me different insight into the text I’m studying from the Middle Ages. It’s fascinating to understand how, throughout time, culture has been creatively adapted to suit people’s lives and sense of what they need.”

Huss summarizes the value of the Department of Jewish Thought. “We’re trying to understand not just ancient and different times, but ourselves: how we perceive and construct our world, what makes us tick. It’s great that we’re doing this work here in Beer-Sheva, at BGU. We developed a very important research center that helps us better know ourselves and our people.” ■

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