

IMPACT



AMERICAN ASSOCIATES
Ben-Gurion University
of the Negev

SPRING 2010

THE NEGEV: AN ECOLOGIST'S VIEW

STUDYING THE
ZIONIST MIRACLE

WHAT MAKES
A GOOD PARENT?

AGING WELL

ALL THE WORLD'S
A STAGE

FROM THE TOP

Dear Friends:

I am delighted to introduce the first **Impact** issue of my presidency, an edition that reminds us of the many ways BGU works to make the world a better place.

When the Haitian earthquake struck, BGU-trained and affiliated medical personnel were among the first responders on the scene. They performed daily miracles of saving lives and bringing hope.

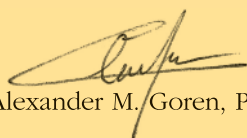
A groundbreaking new collaborative effort for training the region's emergency medical workers also demonstrates the University's widely recognized expertise in this area. Jordanian EMS specialists are joining their Israeli counterparts to learn advanced skills, drawing on BGU's outstanding resources.

On an ongoing, day-to-day basis more BGU programs than ever give back to the community. They include the Barvaz Theater Group, which provides opportunities for Beer-Sheva's at-risk teenagers to "find themselves" by working on stage productions, as well as a number of academic programs that foster research on such challenging issues as the aging population. This research adds to essential global knowledge as nations worldwide struggle with new demographics.

Because BGU gives a professional home to many outstanding scientists, such as ecologist Dr. Yaron Ziv, it adds steadily to the store of knowledge about the physical world and contributes to finding solutions to our most urgent environmental problems.

BGU has blossomed into a great university and we can take pride in the role AABGU has played in supporting the development of an institution that has given thousands of young people a world-class education, teaching them the importance of service, while achieving exceptional accomplishments in numerous fields.

Historian Dr. Natan Aridan remarks in these pages how much Israel has done in 62 years: "No other state achieved so much and gave so much to the world." We could also say, "No other University has achieved so much in just 40 years" and this realization re-energizes our own dedication to BGU.



Alexander M. Goren, President



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ON THE COVER: Spring poppies in the Pura Nature Reserve, 20 miles north of Beer-Sheva
Photo by: Dani Machlis/BGU

MISSION CRITICAL: BGU'S HAITI RELIEF EFFORT

FOUR PHYSICIANS affiliated with BGU, two current students and graduates from the University's Medical School for International Health played dramatic roles in the response to the January earthquake disaster in Haiti. The physicians were part of a 236-member Israel Defense Force team rushed to the scene to help with rescue and medical treatment of the injured, one of the first emergency teams to respond.

Among the 40 Israeli physicians flown in were Dr. Carmi Bar-Tal (Colonel Res.), in charge of triage and hospitalization for the delegation, and Dr. Lior Zeller (Lieutenant Res.), both of whom are graduates of and lecturers in BGU's Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School.

Also participating was Dr. Avi Yizhak (Major), Israel's first Ethiopian doctor and graduate of the medical school, now a surgeon at Soroka University Medical Center, and Dr. Erez Karp (Major), also a medical school alumnus now at Soroka.

The students were Elisabeth (Liz) Berger, who is completing her first year at the University's Medical School for International Health (MSIH), and

"We discharged patients but don't know what awaited them afterwards. At least we gave them a chance to live."

—DR. CARMİ BAR-TAL

Ilan Klein, who is enrolled in BGU's master's degree program in emergency medicine.

Dr. Zeller served as director of adult hospitalization. He described the scene in his journal upon landing in

Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital:

"The airport was empty and later was turned into a huge tent city, which housed the rescue teams from



The MDA hospital's surgical unit where Ilan Klein worked. Photos for this story were taken by BGU students Klein, Elisabeth Berger and their friends.

all over the world. As we left the plane we were met by insufferable heat and intolerable humidity.

"We traveled from the airport to a large football field where we began to set up our hospital. The head of our medical delegation told us that in 10 hours we would receive our first patient. It seemed to me to be on the border of impossibility, but it became reality..."

"From the moment it was announced that the hospital was opened hundreds of patients began to arrive. In a matter of hours, the wards were filled with the wounded."

In addition to the hospital, the team set up a community clinic near the stadium fence to treat people with lesser injuries. Dr. Bar-Tal noted that after treating them, "We discharged

patients but don't know what awaited them afterwards. At least we gave them a chance to live."

The work continued around the clock and the decisions in the face of such massive tragedy were difficult, Dr. Zeller reported. His flight home was a sleepless experience: "I go over the decisions I made over the previous two weeks both clinically and ethically.

There are always things you think you could have done differently."

The medical delegation treated more than 1,100 patients, conducted 319 successful surgeries and delivered 16 babies. The IDF search and rescue team was involved with the rescue of four people.

STUDENTS LEND A HAND

Ilan Klein is on the staff of Magen David Adom (MDA), Israel's national emergency medical service, as well as a student in BGU's master's program in emergency medicine. MDA asked him to go to Haiti because he speaks French.

"We came to Haiti five days after the quake," he relates, "and when we got there it was a wreck, a catastrophe."

Continued on next page

Of a 25-building hospital complex only seven buildings were left standing, and his group of 10 helped build a field hospital on the site. “So we had a lot of work, a lot of patients who hadn’t been treated for five days until

In sum, Ilan Klein says, “It’s very hard to go to another country and give help, but it makes you feel good in your heart because you know the population felt your help.”

Liz Berger also shared first-hand

screaming before the line went dead—communication was cut off completely for several days. The majority of my friends and co-workers have lost family members, as well as their homes.



Ilan Klein holds a baby delivered in the field hospital 20 minutes earlier.

we came, and new injuries.”

The group created an outpatient department, and a second for surgery, where Klein worked. “We had a big problem because we didn’t have a department where people could go to recover after an operation, so we kept them for a day—but if we wanted to send them home, the majority have no homes. I was there three weeks and it was very hard.”

It would have been much harder, he says, if not for his BGU training. “It was my first disaster operation and what I learned at BGU helped me a lot. I hope there are no more disasters—but I can say that what I learned is helping us be prepared for them. But the field is bigger and the catastrophe is bigger than we can imagine so then you learn from that. I hope I can take what I saw there to other students.”



accounts of her work in Haiti. She came to BGU with a master’s in public health from Columbia University, and had worked for four years for Zanmi Lasante – Partners in Health in Haiti’s central plateau, and for several other international health projects. She recalls:

“When the earthquake struck, I was actually on the phone with a Haitian friend/colleague and heard the earth shake, buildings shift and people



“When I arrived, about a week and a half after the quake hit, Port-au-Prince felt like a war zone: collapsed buildings were tombs. For example, the nursing school next to the main University hospital collapsed with the entire second year class inside, killing them all...the military presence felt large, with helicopters and airplanes circling overhead, and then the 1.3 million Haitians who have become IDPs [internally displaced persons] within their own city...many are now living in settlements in tent-like structures made out of sheets.”

Partners in Health had asked Berger to come help develop the supply chain needed to support the influx of relief materials. She helped coordinate shipments of medications, surgical supplies and equipment from arrival on the tarmac and ultimately into the hands of the clinical teams. The 70-plus planes landing in Port-au-Prince

carried roughly 100,000 lbs. of medical supplies, she says, in addition to the medical volunteers.

Liz Berger observes, “The real heroes in all of this have been ordinary Haitians helping other Haitians—



neighbors, friends and family members who literally used their bare hands to extract loved ones from under collapsed buildings in the days following the quake and who now continue to share what little food and water they have with those around them.

“So much of this crisis is really much more about poverty, structural violence and margins of vulnerability than about natural disaster. It is a story about economic and political fault lines just as much as topographical.”

The English-taught MSIH, a collaboration with Columbia University, enrolls students from around the world and focuses on public health. It includes clerkships in the developing world as part of its curriculum. MSIH alumni Dr. Kelly Marie Mann, now a pediatrician at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City, and Dr. Joseph Sakran, a surgeon at Inova Fairfax Hospital, Virginia also provided critical care in Haiti. ■

FROM THE DESERT FOR THE WORLD

BY **DORON KRAKOW**
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

THESE SIX WORDS offer a very special insight into the mission of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. A first reaction to hearing or reading these words might conjure up notions about how the University's research into the desert itself is providing answers about harnessing the power of the sun and finding ways to grow crops in harsh conditions. And those notions would be right.

Researchers at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research have developed technology for utilizing reflector dishes and photovoltaic cells that can harness 1000x the power of the sun. This technology is already being brought to market for commercial application in desert environments around the world.

Pioneering approaches to the use of brackish water and to the re-use of potable, brackish and recycled water have spawned breakthroughs in growing date trees, the creation of algae farms and even fisheries in the heart of the desert. And plant geneticists are uncovering gene sequences that when signaled to activate can increase plants' ability to tolerate higher temperatures and greater salinity, producing higher crop yields for the growing portion of the world's population residing in its expanding arid zones.

The world's population will grow by more than 2 billion people in the next 40 years and most of them will live in arid climates. Making those climates more hospitable to human life is an international priority and Ben-Gurion University is making its mark. In fact, Israel is the only country in the world to have its desert recede over the past century, and much of this success is the result

of research being done at BGU.

But BGU's outstretched arm to the world is about much more than deserts. Research being done in partnership with the finest universities around the world is generating breakthroughs in the treatment of disease. Human clinical tests will soon begin on a treatment for type I diabetes that will end the need for insulin injections. New research into Alzheimer's disease has revealed that it is the absence of a critical protein in the brain that creates the conditions in which the disease takes hold. Stimulating the production of this protein could be the key to a cure and BGU is working on a vaccine that will do just that.

And, sometimes it is neither science nor surroundings, but rather people that reach out from BGU. When Haiti was rocked by January's devastating earthquake, Israel's emergency response team, which was the first to establish a fully operational field hospital in Port-Au-Prince, included several members of the faculty of the Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School. They were among the first to arrive and through their incredible dedication and extraordinary skills, more than 1,000 lives were saved.

A helping hand. A partner in finding a cure. A formula for making the desert bloom. From the desert for the world. ■



SAVING LIVES SIDE BY SIDE: JORDANIANS AND ISRAELIS

IN PARTNERSHIP with the Jordan Red Crescent, BGU has established the Israel-Jordan Academic Emergency Medicine Collaboration.

This unprecedented program trains Jordanians in emergency medicine

English and Arabic. In the first and second years, studies take place at BGU's Department of Emergency Medicine, which is one of the few worldwide to offer a bachelor's degree for paramedics and the only such program in the Middle East.

In the clinical third year, students will rotate between Israeli and Jordanian institutions.

Fifteen Jordanians have already joined 45 Israelis in October. They will develop the skills to administer emergency care, work in unpredictable and stressful circumstances, conduct emergency medicine research and work in teams.

A state-of-the-art medical simulation center is one of the department's special assets for this training. Here, students can practice for real-world situations with highly sophisticated "dummies" that "speak," "breathe" and demonstrate cardiac problems and complicated injuries.

The collaboration is viewed as a meaningful step toward promoting peace in the region. Several other nations have already expressed

interest in participating.

The idea for the collaboration took shape through a program called Partnerships in Peace based at McGill University in Montreal. Three participants got to know each other—Dr. Mohammed al-Hadid of Jordan, Prof. James Torczyner, director of the McGill Middle East Program in Civil Society and Peace Building and Prof. Jimmy Weinblatt, BGU's rector.

Al-Hadid, a member of the University of Jordan's medical faculty and president of the Jordan Red Crescent, had long been interested in joint training for potential natural disasters. "The area we live in, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Palestine, Israel, Saudi Arabia, it's prone to earthquakes. So it's only natural that we are all prepared as a team rather than individually, which would be better to face a disaster of this magnitude," said Al-Hadid.

He visited the medical facilities at BGU and decided that this was the place where he'd like paramedics from his country trained. "Magen David Adom [Israel's emergency lifesaving service] is the best in the region when it comes to first aid and paramedics," he said.

The program's organizers hope that in coming together to learn, the student groups will recognize shared values and commonalities, and build ties that go further than the formal peace treaty that Israel and Jordan signed in 1994.

The Israel-Jordan Academic Emergency Medicine Collaboration is one of many BGU projects that reach out to the region's nations. ■



side-by-side with their Israeli counterparts and, it is hoped, will contribute to building mutual respect and cross-cultural understanding.

"This is a golden opportunity to combine our efforts, strengthening emergency medical services in the region to the highest level possible," said Dr. Dagan Schwartz of BGU's Department of Emergency Medicine.

The project represents the first University curriculum to be offered in

"MERCAZ AFRICA": BGU LAUNCHES NEW CENTER

AN AMBITIOUS NEW CENTER dedicated to strengthening ties between Israel and Africa and promoting cross-cultural education and understanding was officially inaugurated in December.

The Center's programs will bring African students and Africa-related cultural and academic opportunities to campus, and encourage active student involvement in Africa-based projects.

A delegation of African university presidents attended the inaugural ceremony. The event featured a sharing of first-hand experiences by a recent delegation of student volunteers to West Africa, a program of academic workshops, an African reggae concert, a performance by an Ethiopian theater troupe and an African-Israeli soccer match.

BGU Rector Prof. Jimmy Weinblatt serves as the Center's director. At the opening ceremony, he expressed his hope that the University will become a leader in African studies, and acknowledged the key role played by African Studies lecturer Dr. Tamar Golan. Formerly Israel's ambassador to Angola, she is a noted journalist as well as author of two important books about the continent.

When Dr. Golan joined the BGU faculty, she recognized a need in her area of expertise. She obtained generous financial support from Baron Eric de Rothschild of France and Israeli entrepreneur Eytan Stibbe to set up "the African Initiative" in 2006, and has headed the Steering Committee.

"Our primary objective was to draw students to a not very well known area, to engage them, to nurture their interest in the history and culture of the continent," she recently told a *Jerusalem Post* reporter.

Since 2007, the University's Student Association has sponsored an Africa Volunteer program with University support. These activities will be further nurtured by the Center, which succeeds and builds upon the African Initiative. About 400 students are already enrolled in Africa-related courses, and the University will broaden these offerings.

Several BGU student delegations have already spent three-month periods in Tanzania, Angola, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, working in schools and with local communities in areas like computer literacy, public health and environmental awareness.



A number of festivities took place at the inauguration of BGU's Africa Center.

In addition to further promoting student volunteer engagement, the Center will advance cross-cultural understanding by bringing African statesmen, thinkers, performers and poets to BGU, and will invite senior lecturers from Africa to teach at BGU. ■

DIET CAN REVERSE HARDENING OF THE ARTERIES

BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY researchers have produced the first evidence that through healthy, long-term weight loss diets, carotid artery atherosclerosis—hardening or thickening of the artery through fatty materials such as cholesterol—can be significantly reversed.

Whether weight-loss intervention can have this effect has long been unclear. Because atherosclerosis is a direct risk factor for stroke, the question is of wide interest.

The study was conducted in Israel under the leadership of Dr. Iris Shai, a researcher at BGU's S. Daniel Abraham International Center for Health and Nutrition in the Department of Epidemiology. Soroka University Medical Center and the Nuclear Research Center in Dimona participated, as well as doctors and scientists

from the United States, Canada and Germany. The results were recently published in the American Heart Association's prestigious journal, *Circulation*.

The investigation was based on two years of study comparing the impact of three diet programs: low fat, low-carbohydrate and Mediterranean (focusing on fruits and vegetables, fish and olive oil). It showed that all three strategies produced regression of the atherosclerotic process.

The researchers measured the size of vessel walls with three-dimensional ultrasound technology. They compared participants who exhibited a natural progression in the carotid vessel wall volume with those in whom it had regressed. They found that those in whom it regressed had achieved significantly greater weight loss,

greater decrease in blood pressure and homocysteine (an amino acid associated with stroke and coronary disease), and a higher increase in an indicator of HDL, "good cholesterol."

"Even if we experience some partial regain over time," Dr. Shai stressed, "long-term adherence to weight loss diets are effective for reversing carotid atherosclerosis as long as we stick to one of the current options of healthy diet strategy." Previous studies she led showed that all three diets are effective for weight loss and vary somewhat in their effects on glycemic control and lipids. Those results were published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The new study furnishes the first evidence for the potential of diet as a lifestyle modification strategy to prevent atherosclerosis. The researchers observe that diet-induced changes in blood pressure appear to mediate the effect on coronary arteries, rather than lipoprotein levels, as has been commonly believed. ■

RUTH FLINKMAN says she has a lot of theater in her blood, and it became evident quite early on.

When she was three-and-a-half, her mother enrolled her in a music and dance school for children after observing some talent. By age five, Ruth was singing on the radio and performing live as a singer and dancer. Later she sang with local bands, as well as on television with Paul Whiteman. While she was in high school, she performed in regional theater.

The theater has proved to be a lifelong interest for Ruth, but after graduating from high school in her native Bronx, New York, she hedged her bets by earning a paralegal degree.

Diploma in hand, Ruth headed for California, where her grandmother lived. “My mother said, ‘why don’t you stay there’—she didn’t think my future would be as good in New York.” Flinkman happily agreed. After a few months she decided to put her degree to work and get a job.

But she was only 18 and found that staffing agencies wanted candidates who were at least 21. Ruth tells the story this way: “I got an interview by myself, but didn’t get the job. So I was trudging around all dressed up in my suit and passed by a medical employment agency. I walked in and they said, ‘oh, we just got a call from a lawyer in Beverly Hills.’ I went there the next day and was hired on the spot to work for a partner who was away in Europe. I got the impression he was a real character and a flirt. He sounded like a terrible person.”

The absent attorney, Stan Flinkman, didn’t come back for three-and-a-half months. When he did, he was sporting a French beret and briefcase. For a few months he fixed Ruth up with all his friends. “Then one day we looked at each other—and he asked me out.” Stan and Ruth were married for almost 50 years, until his death in 2005.

Stan, who had been a broker before becoming an attorney, retired from law to manage the family’s real estate business. They began building apartment buildings. They also raised four



Ruth Flinkman with sons Russell and Lewis

RUTH FLINKMAN LOS ANGELES, CA A STAR IS BORN

children—Lewis, Michael, Russell and Linda—and the rule was, Ruth says, “everyone had to have a bar mitzvah and a real estate license.” Flinkman Management, Inc. remains a family business and Ruth is still actively involved, although two of her sons handle day-to-day operations.

The Flinkmans also involved themselves in charitable activities and have supported many good causes over the years. They are members of BGU’s prestigious Ben-Gurion Society and are recognized as founders at Hadassah, American Technion Society and American Friends of The Hebrew University.

BGU first came to the Flinkmans’ attention through a California friend who was a farmer, and was interested in the University’s work with farming techniques and water reclamation.

“My husband said let’s invest some money, and we believe the future is youth, so we started with the scholarship program. I often explain to people that many who attend BGU really can’t afford the tuition, so anything we can do to help them is really wonderful. And tuition is so much less expensive in Israel than in the U.S.; you can help so many students.”

The Flinkmans subsequently became

generous supporters of various BGU programs. After visiting the nanotechnology lab in its early stages, they became enthusiastic contributors to its development. In recognition, a wing of the new Ilse Katz Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology building will bear Stan Flinkman’s name.

Ruth also generously gives her time to AABGU. She is campaign chair for the Southwest Region and was honored by the organization last year. Recently, Ruth became a national vice president, as well. She is also a past president of Hadassah and ARMDI, the American friends organization for Israel’s emergency medical service. Further, Ruth is a member of the board of her temple in Malibu, which will honor her this year.

Ruth is far from forgetting her theater roots. She is a board member of the Beverly Hills Theater Guild, the West Coast Jewish Theater and Theatre Forty. She is also a member of the Los Angeles Music Center Director’s Circle and a founder of the Producer’s Circle. And on occasion, Ruth will perform: “Actually I can sing to 5,000 people, but I’m nervous in a group of five!”

Ruth’s visits to BGU have given her a particular enthusiasm for the University. “It’s a wonderful experience being there,” she says. “When I talk to the American students, I find they could have gone anywhere but chose BGU. The atmosphere is friendly and warm and bright. BGU is important because of its location and the need to develop the Negev. They are doing work that the other universities don’t do.”

Ruth is pleased that her children are also motivated to give and recognize the importance of doing so, and anticipates that her three grandchildren—Arielle, Noah and Hannah, “who are the lights of my life”—will continue the tradition. The Flinkmans support significant medical and disease research, but find that helping to develop BGU brings a special satisfaction.

“It’s very rewarding to see the result of what you do. To see a building come out of that—knowing you’ve been a part of that creation is a fabulous feeling.” ■

“I’M A FIRM BELIEVER that nobody should be a bystander,” Margit Meissner says. “We should take responsibility for what goes on both in our communities, and in the world.”

Her own life is an inspiring example: She is a woman who has forged a path through the 20th century’s most difficult terrain, and has also committed herself to improving life for those around her.

Margit was born in 1922 in Austria but brought up in Prague, where her father, a lawyer and banker, was engaged to create a new banking system for Czechoslovakia. The Morawetz family was well to do and enjoyed an attractive lifestyle.

“We were brought up bilingually, speaking German at home and Czech to the servants,” Margit recalls. “And my mother was intent that we speak four languages by the time we were 16. So we learned French and English too.”

Margit was 11 when Hitler came to power in 1933. Because German Jews were taking refuge in Prague and were often visitors in her home, she says, “I knew somehow something awful was in the making but didn’t quite understand what it was.”

Austria was annexed by the Nazis in 1938. Margit’s mother decided that Prague was not a safe place for her only daughter, so she took her out of school in the 10th grade and sent her to live with a French family. Margit enrolled in a French civilization program at the Sorbonne.

“Then I decided to go to dressmaking school because given the world situation, it wasn’t clear what the future held. If you lost all your money you’d need a way to make a living and with dressmaking you could go to any country.”

By the time war broke out, Margit’s brothers were variously in Australia, Canada and the United States. One brother eventually moved to Spain. Her father had died in 1932. Margit’s mother was able to join her in France, but was interned in a French concentration camp.

When France capitulated, Margit’s escape became an adventure story that



MARGIT MEISSNER
BETHESDA, MD

SURVIVOR AND SOCIAL ADVOCATE

started with fleeing Paris on a bicycle just ahead of the German troops, and a miraculous reunion with her mother. Together they fled on foot across the Spanish border, were detained in Spain and finally got passage to the U.S.

Soon after arriving in 1941, Margit married a G.I and followed him to Army posts across the U.S. When he was assigned to the Nuremberg war crimes trials she went with him, and was employed by the U.S. Army of Occupation to re-educate Hitler youth.

When her husband entered the U.S. Foreign Service, Margit lived in France, Hungary and Egypt.

Not long after, Margit left her husband in Egypt and went home to the U.S. by way of Israel. It was 1949, just after statehood was declared. She was impressed with the spirit of the people in very difficult conditions and the *kibbutzim* she visited.

Then came a stint as a story analyst in Hollywood...after which Margit became a business woman, manufacturing children’s clothes in San Francisco...and later a dress design instructor and elementary

school teacher in Argentina.

Along the way, Margit met and married Frank Meissner, who’d grown up in Moravia and spent the war years in Scandinavia, becoming an agricultural economist. Frank, who came from a Zionist family, was eager to support Israel’s economic development. Soon after BGU was created in 1969, he was invited to speak there and Margit accompanied him. Frank continued to support Israel and BGU until his death in 1990.

Margit has sustained her interest in the University. “It’s a fantastic place and I am thrilled with what it’s doing. I feel very much part of the community.”

Margit has long supported student scholarships, and contributed to the Center for Multidisciplinary Research on Aging (see page 14). Most recently, she donated to the new Mother to Mother project run by BGU’s Center for Women’s Health Studies and Promotion, which helps new mothers who do not have traditional supportive networks.

“I look for socially meaningful programs,” she says. “I am interested more in people than anything else.”

Margit’s career has continued to take new directions. Living in Maryland with her family, she became very involved with the PTA and the Montgomery County School System, initially because her daughter was learning-disabled. Her advocacy on behalf of special needs children led her back to school, and she earned a master’s degree in special education at age 65.

Margit worked in the schools for 20 years, as program planner and advocate for educating handicapped children. In 1992 she retired and became a volunteer with anti-violence programs. But her children insisted she write an autobiography. “So after a few tries I wrote it for my family but it became published and is selling quite well.” The book, *Margit’s Story*, is available on Amazon.

“When I finished the book I felt in touch with my past and my Holocaust experience,” Margit says.

Continued on page 31

“SOMETIMES I FEEL as if I’ve lived several lives—very different lives,” says Sara Luhby, who recently celebrated her 81st birthday.

Until the age of seven she lived in what is now Ukraine. Her parents were fortunate in immigrating to Israel in 1937: the extended family left behind did not survive the Holocaust.

Sara grew up in Hadera in central Israel, which at that time was a small town in a farming area. The scent of sweet oranges is one she will never forget.

When Sara graduated from high school in the pre-State years, the British were preventing Jews from immigrating. Young people her age were secretly mobilized to help with underground activities.

“The British were everywhere, watching,” she recalls. “There was always a situation of preparedness because when new immigrants came in the middle of the night, they were brought illegally to shore in little boats and immediately taken to the *kibbutzim* to get new clothes and identities.”

In 1947, Sara was admitted to the Hadassah School of Nursing in Jerusalem.

In April 1948, Sara and her colleagues watched from Mt. Scopus as a convoy of armored cars bringing personnel and supplies to the besieged hospital was attacked; 79 people were killed, mostly nurses and doctors, including the director of Hadassah Hospital.

Hadassah then housed the nursing school in a monastery, where the students worked to the sound of shellfire.

“When we were taking government exams, a bomb hit the edge of the room. The teacher instructed us to continue taking the test.”

Sara finished school in 1950, in time to be part of the new country’s next great adventure—mass immigration. There was a tremendous need for public health nurses to deal with



SARA LUHBY
NEW YORK, NY

A NURTURING SPIRIT

the new immigrants, those who had fled or been expelled from Arab countries, as well as the survivors of the Holocaust. Sara studied public health, and was assigned to serve in Beer-Sheva.

“I came and what I saw was a city of thousands of tents. In each one lived a family, sometimes with five or six children and grandparents.” No one spoke Hebrew, but rather Yiddish and many dialects of Arabic.

“I was the only public health nurse there,” Sara says. “The needs of the newcomers were endless and I often worked days and nights. In addition, a polio epidemic hit Beer-Sheva and many sick children were brought to the clinic. Seeing the people gradually strengthen and start to build their first permanent housing left me in awe.”

Sara went to the United States in 1953 to advance her nursing education. She studied at Teacher’s College at Columbia University and earned a B.S. and M.A.

She returned to Israel and was recruited by the nursing division of the Ministry of Health to supervise nursing education. She received a scholarship to study for a Ph.D. in the U.S.

In New York, she met her husband,

a physician, and found herself with the biggest conflict of her personal life. “I had to choose between my husband and my country. I loved him as much as Israel—but he couldn’t do his research there.” Sara got married and worked with her husband on his research in pediatric hematology.

Nevertheless, she never forgot her Israeli roots and returned often with her husband and daughter.

After Sara’s husband died six years ago, she thought about how she could contribute to a cause important to both of them. One possibility that caught her interest was the university in Beer-Sheva.

“I kept hearing what a wonderful, innovative place it was becoming. I called AABGU and they arranged an extensive visit to the campuses at Sede Boquer and Beer-Sheva.”

She met several faculty members from different departments and faculty, and students from the Open Apartments Program.

“I was greatly impressed with the University as a whole and I decided to support the Open Apartments Program.”

In addition, Sara was impressed with the richness of the student body, which draws from all parts of Israel, including the Bedouin and Arab communities. “It’s a wonderful mixing ground for peace,” she believes.

Recently, Sara included BGU in her estate planning, leaving AABGU a generous bequest in her will.

“I feel it is doing a tremendous job for Israel in reviving the Negev, especially because so much of the world is desert. BGU is trying to find solutions for areas that would otherwise be doomed. I think we Jews are perhaps more sensitive to these heartbreaking situations because we ourselves went through so much hardship. Therefore we should support and nourish the University’s contribution.” ■

DISCOVERING ISRAEL THROUGH THE OVERSEAS STUDENT PROGRAM

Mario Enrique Uriarte spent this past fall semester studying in the Ginsburg-Ingerman Overseas Student Program at Ben-Gurion University. In this “first person” account, he shares the valuable experience he gained from OSP.

I'M A 27-YEAR-OLD JEWISH graduate student who had never been to Israel. So, I looked online for English-language programs that would give me the opportunity to stay in Israel for an extended period of time. I wanted to get a real understanding of Israeli culture, while taking a break from my writing studies. The experience is changing my ideas about Israel, and myself.

OSP is the only study abroad program that guarantees you will be placed with Israeli roommates. This isn't intimidating, because all the students learned English in school, which makes them perfect for practicing Hebrew. What would be common everyday conversation with my friends at home became a cultural experience with my Israeli roommates. Questions as simple as, “where did you go this weekend?” or “where is your family from?” opened my eyes more than I could have imagined.

My most rewarding cultural experiences have been with my host family. OSP introduced me to a wonderful Israeli family that treated me as one of their own. They took me to my first *moshav* (a cooperative community), where they showed me how “real” Israelis celebrate the holidays. We barbequed and played soccer with their extended family, and visited their friends in Tel Aviv. Through them I learned about the amazing diversity of Israel's people and how their cultures have been synthesized into

a single way of life.

Through the program I was able to explore the vast reaches of Eretz Israel—a small country packed with significant historical sites and cool geography. I'll never forget standing on the peak of a mountain overlooking the Red Sea and being able to view four countries at the



Mario Enrique Uriarte

same time: Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

I really enjoy BGU overall. It has the best student life of any campus in Israel. What pleasantly surprised me most of all was the size of the Arab student population, especially those from Jordan. I've made a lot of new friends from every part of Israel and all over the U.S.

To me, Beer-Sheva is the heartland of Israel, and represents its true spirit. It is not the party center that Tel Aviv is, though it has plenty of nightlife, nor the religious center that Jerusalem is, though it has a thriving religious community.

Another aspect of my life here is that I am working with the Negev Coexistence Forum, which works

to promote understanding and cooperation between the Negev's Jewish and Bedouin populations. I teach English to people from the nearby villages who meet at the Forum's main office, a bomb shelter one block off campus.

My ideas regarding Israel have changed a lot. I feel I understand the situation the country is in with neighboring states and people much better. The internal culture clashes are even more complicated than I had imagined, but like any other problem of that magnitude, the issues are difficult to address and there's plenty of blame to go around. It is a very complicated and delicate way of life.

The life lessons I will take away with me by being here and interacting with the entire gamut of people who inhabit Israel go way beyond cookie-cutter morality or ideas about respecting all people and tolerating differences of opinion. It's more a feeling of comfort with myself and my own lifestyle choices.

I know that David Ben-Gurion chose to live out his life in the Negev on Kibbutz Sede Boqer because he “discovered in this barren land the supreme unity of existence.”

I would not say I have discovered the “supreme unity of existence,” but studying at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev has given me a truly unique view of Israel, and forever affected my outlook on Jewish life. ■

To learn more about semester, year and summer academic programs, contact OSP at **646-452-3682**, **osp@studyabroad.org** or visit **www.bgustudyabroad.org**

STUDYING AND CONSERVING DESERT LIFE

AN ECOLOGIST'S VIEW

ONCE UPON A TIME, says Dr. Yaron Ziv, ecologists inhabited a separate scientific world of their own, and a rather ivory tower one at that. “We used to focus on the relationships between organisms and environments, but questions to do with things like air pollution and water quality were the engineers’ problem,” he observes.

But not anymore, says Dr. Ziv, who runs the Spatial Ecology Lab and is a senior lecturer in BGU’s Department of Life Sciences. Today our common awareness of conservation brings ecology to the fore and it will become even more important in the future, he says.

“If you want to understand how nature functions in order to conserve our own life-form and community, you need scientists who understand how these processes work and what they do.

“Studying community characteristics, ecosystems, open spaces, the impact of events on biodiversity—those issues are exactly our field. And they directly relate to the threats we fear most, like global changes, acid rain, degradation of land and wildlife—our nightmares that are actually happening, and faster than anticipated,” states Ziv.

“Big concepts” such as global warming translate on the practical level to the functions of small particles that build our biosphere, he points out. “Because of human behavior like

development, pollution and loss of open spaces we face high extinction rates. Understanding ecological processes potentially contribute to reducing those effects.”

Dr. Ziv is among half a dozen scientists who teach ecology in the Department of Life Sciences and



Dr. Yaron Ziv with a marked Greater Egyptian Gerbil seconds before its release **Top:** Habitat fragmentation of the southern Judean lowlands

engage in a wide range of basic science and applied research projects. In addition, 10 ecologists are associated with the Louise Mitrani Department of Desert Ecology, part of the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research. Several ecologists sit in other departments, as well. This gives BGU the largest ecology group in Israel and,

says Ziv, he finds that it is recognized worldwide, as are other environmental research and study departments at the University.

The two ecology programs—that of the Department of Life Sciences and that of the Mitrani Department of Desert Ecology—share graduate students for M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, who, because of the field’s international orientation, are taught in English. The Department of Life Sciences also trains undergraduate students in ecology.

ISRAEL AS AN ECOLOGY LAB

Ziv finds that colleagues from other countries envy his location. “Israel is an excellent lab for ecological and evolutionary-oriented studies,” he says. “It’s located in the junction of three continents; it’s a small and relatively species-rich country with huge climatic and thematic changes. In only 360 kilometers you go from 30 milliliters of rain to 650 milliliters, an amazingly sharp gradient,” which means the landscape and biodiversity vary sharply within very short distances. “You can take advantage of this in asking macro-ecological questions,” he adds.

Ziv’s own research focuses on understanding how ecological

processes in a varied landscape determine the populations, how they are distributed, their community structure, and biodiversity patterns. He recently investigated a major macro-ecologic question—what is the relation between species diversity and productivity?

“We used to think that when you increase the amount of food available, the number of species would go up. But it’s not the case. Ecologists recently found that richness increases diversity to a certain point and thereafter it decreases as resources increase. However, to study this in other places of the world, you’d have to go very long distances and cross a lot of ecosystems.”

SHIFT IN ECOLOGICAL THINKING

Israel’s attributes are especially useful given the enormous shift in the field’s focus that Ziv has seen in his 20 years as an ecologist. The scale ecologists work on has transformed. “Instead of looking at one hectare [about 2.5 acres] of habitat in the last few years, we started looking at whole countries, continents—which is very complicated.”

He believes this change took place in part because “the issues pushed ecologists to deal with larger scale questions. People became more aware of conservation issues and expected us to be involved.”

But radical shifts in technology made the shift possible. “We now use satellite images, remote sensing, GIS [Geographic Information Systems that capture, store and analyze data], and great computers that can do all sorts of analysis. Until six or seven years ago, you’d go to international conferences and see people mainly dealing with community structure, predation [the relationship between prey and predator] and competition on a small scale. Today most of the sessions deal with habitat bordering the large scale—environmental heterogeneity, species distribution—on a continent.”

This change worked out well for Ziv. When studying at the University

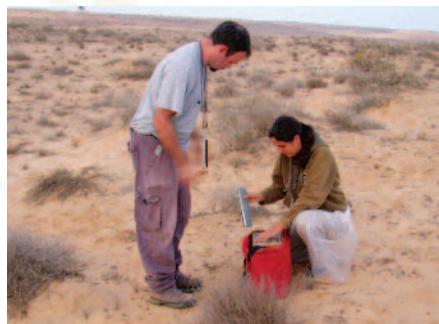
of Arizona for his Ph.D., he needed to think about a “new niche.” He decided to work with large-scale ecological

“All the research we do contributes to diversity, open spaces, the functioning of ecological systems...Israel’s future needs healthy land and ecological systems.”

—DR. YARON ZIV

processes and patterns. “So for me what’s going on now is a dream come true,” he says.

Classic ecology is also evolving in the opposite direction, he points out—genetics and molecular biology are making a major impact on the field. The two polar approaches can work together well. One of his Ph.D. students is completing a dissertation on desert landscape genetics,



Ph.D. student Udi Columbus, left, and Spatial Ecology Lab technician Zehava Sigal at work on the dune restoration study

investigating the genetic relationship between individuals and populations at a large ecological scale.

THE FRAGMENTATION PROBLEM

With four out of the six Ph.D. students he works with, Ziv is engaged in a long-range project located near Kiryat Gat in the southern Judean lowlands. These natural habitats are very fragmented and patchy, Ziv says,

and have been for 2,000 years. The area was heavily occupied in Roman times, and now patches of natural habitat are scattered between agricultural fields, settlements, cities and factories. Ziv wants to know how this fragmentation affects populations and communities.

“Habitat fragmentation is considered the major threat to biodiversity and nature conservation worldwide, like we’re seeing in the Amazon—so it’s really important. The habitat patches become more and more isolated from each other over time, and keep shrinking. Individuals and communities have to cope with that.”

Almost 60 different species of beetles, more than 200 species and morpho-species of spiders and about 30 species of reptiles live in these isolated patches. The team traps and studies them. “We were able to show that different groups and species respond differently to landscape fragmentation and the underlying processes, depending on their location in the food web and their foraging mode. Beetles that eat dry



Surveying plant life in the fragmented southern Judean lowlands, postdoctoral student Itamar Giladi and Zehava Sigal

materials were able to cope better than predators.”

This information helps us know how to conserve biodiversity and protect the major groups of plants and animals, Ziv explains. “These little creatures are responsible for the world’s nutrient cycle, gas exchange, energy flow within food webs and so on. Habitat fragmentation damages those processes so if we care about

Continued on page 31

THE SECRETS OF AGING WELL

THANKS TO THE MEDICAL REVOLUTION, life expectancy worldwide increased by 30 years in the 20th century. Before the current decade ends, 25 percent of the total population in many nations will be over 60. The implications for governments, economies, educational systems and health and welfare services are staggering.

On a personal level, we all want to know how to optimally navigate the challenges that aging brings and make the most of our later years.

BGU's Center for Multidisciplinary Research on Aging (CMRA) is specifically dedicated to illuminating these issues. It conducts a range of studies that bring together experts from medicine, social science, natural science, psychology and other disciplines.

The issues seem especially urgent in Israel, says Sara Carmel, professor of medical sociology and gerontology at BGU, and the Center's director. The shift toward an older demographic happened in Israel rapidly. Successive waves of immigrants—many of them refugees or Holocaust survivors—doubled Israel's over-65 population in the period between 1950 and 1980. It now nears 10 percent.

"This is very important because a society that considers itself young started all at once to understand that aging is a challenge, and society has to develop all kinds of services for the elderly," Prof. Carmel says. Compounding the challenge, a number of more recent immigrants are not just old, but also sick and bereft—many arrived with just a suitcase in hand. When Soviet citizens were first allowed to leave in 1989, Carmel recalls, the airplanes were met by ambulances because those arriving were so sick and handicapped.



Prof. Sara Carmel

"Most countries accept the young and healthy, but with Israel's open door policy, everyone is welcome and is immediately entitled to citizenship and services," Carmel notes. "This is nice about Israel, but yes, also a huge burden."

The over-65 population consumes about one-third of Israel's expenditures on health services, and many consumers are immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia. They continue to arrive with poor health and enormous needs. Many have lived lifetimes of poor nutrition, scant health care and sustained stress.

A GOOD PLACE FOR RESEARCH

Beer-Sheva is home to one of the largest immigrant populations in Israel, in addition to residents originally from North Africa, India, Europe and the Americas, as well as Bedouin Arabs and Israeli-born Jews.

"In terms of research this makes BGU a very good place to study and evaluate old people from all the different groups of the aged in Israel," Carmel observes.

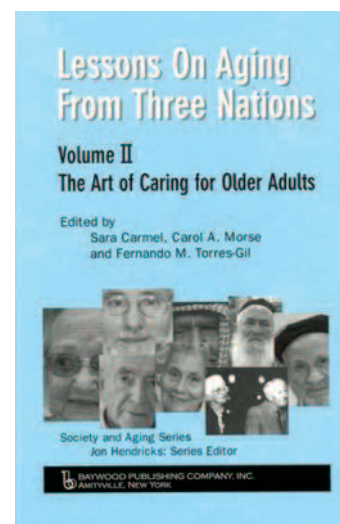
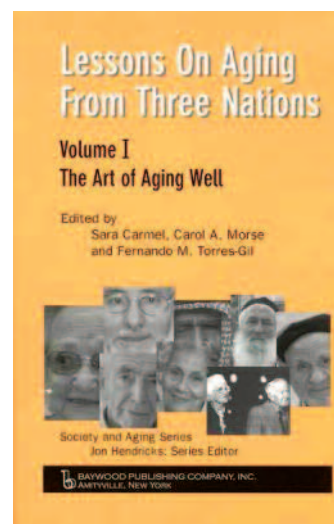
Under her leadership since 2004, CMRA is taking full advantage of these opportunities. The Center is uniquely positioned for gerontology research because of its rich medical and academic environment. It draws on the strengths of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Soroka University Medical Center and many BGU departments. Projects are strongly multidisciplinary.

In addition, CMRA is home to the

International Longevity Center-Israel (ILC-Israel), which Carmel serves as president. This provides sharing opportunities with nine other centers around the world. "The consortium's purpose is to promote international research, and especially policies and education about wellness and aging-related needs," Carmel says.

"One of the messages we try to disseminate is that society must find a way to maximize the benefits to longevity, and not view it as a burden."

Prof. Carmel says that Israelis show no sign of begrudging support to the senior population. To help connect research endeavors with government policy, she has been working closely with the governments of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the new ministry under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. With the former government, Prof. Carmel established the first National Fund for Research



A book series co-edited by Prof. Carmel

in Aging in the Ministry for Senior Affairs. Under her direction, the Fund finances about 35 research projects per year.

Prof. Carmel and her colleagues study subjects ranging from end-of-life care to doctor-patient communications and the burden of caregiving for the

elderly with severe diseases. The Center also evaluates health and welfare services.

HOW PEOPLE COPE WITH AGING

How do individuals age successfully? The second stage of a major longitudinal study on this was recently completed. Its goal is to investigate the role that an individual plays in achieving successful aging, and the coping patterns people use to deal with declines in health or functioning.

About 340 people aged 75 and over from two Israeli towns were interviewed in depth, and 275 were interviewed again after one year, and will be re-interviewed for one or more years in the future.

The research showed that people's sense of well-being—measured by factors such as morale, happiness, satisfaction with life, will to live and mood—correlates closely with their degree of health and functioning. But their personal resources and coping patterns significantly reduced the negative effects of physical decline.

"We wanted to know what the most important resources are that people accumulate during their lives, such as psychological characteristics, social support, income and education," explains Carmel. "And other than health, what the predictors of well-being are."

Results so far suggest that the best predictors of successful aging are social support, education, gender (women seem to cope with challenges less well), planning for the future, and "exit coping—having the flexibility to find new purposes and goals in life in line with new limitations."

Among those whose health or functioning declined during the year, another significant characteristic was "self-efficacy"—an individual's belief in being able to cope with difficulties and that one's own actions are responsible for good outcomes. However, the research also showed that the more confident people felt about their capacity to deal with difficulties, and the higher their education level, the less they planned for future challenges.

The CMRA report recommends increasing medical surveillance, physical activity, education and training for this fragile population, and strengthening coping behaviors. People should be given help to prepare for the role of aging and develop their capacities to deal with its losses.

In Prof. Sara Carmel's perspective, the future of gerontology is a matter of great concern. "There is a shortage of physicians and nurses in Israel today and a much more significant shortage is foreseen for the near future—especially in geriatrics."

To Carmel, nothing could be more important or satisfying. "Over time, working with all different people, I became fascinated with this age group which has so much to tell us. The more I learn, the more interesting and challenging I find it." ■

EAT WELL, LIVE LONGER

BGU researcher Dr. Danit Shahar has found that elderly people's mortality rate is directly linked to their appetite. The surprising results of her study were published in the *Journal of Nutrition, Health and Aging*.

Dr. Shahar, of the S. Daniel Abraham International Center for Health and Nutrition and the Department of Epidemiology, researched how people's assessment of their own appetite correlated with the risk of mortality. She analyzed daily activity levels, dietary factors, enjoyment of eating and intake in nearly 300 participants aged 70 to 82, with a nine-year follow-up.



The research demonstrates that good appetite is associated with a 50 percent decrease in mortality. An improvement in appetite also increased survival.

"These findings are important because they show that subjective appetite measurement can predict death, even when adjusting for health and many other variables," Dr. Shahar commented. While past studies have shed light on the role of physical activity and quality diet, they did not associate appetite with survival. "It was thought that decreased appetite may be an indicator or a result of other health problems, and that malnutrition, rather than low appetite, was associated with mortality."

In earlier studies, Shahar found that people who lost weight in old age—even if overweight at baseline—were at increased risk of deteriorated health.

THE RIGHT DIET?

Nutrition and aging is a relatively new research area, she notes. "Not many years ago the common thought was that elderly people are the same as younger adults. It is now understood that more research is needed. We still don't know the best diet for healthy aging, or the best diet while we are old to keep us cognitively intact, happy and active." Research is also needed on under-nutrition among unhealthy older people.

Shahar's own work in these areas has yielded a number of surprises, she says. In one recent study, she found that relative deficiencies in specific vitamins (folic acid and vitamin D) in the elderly, even when serum levels were in the normal range, are associated with poor balance, increased falling and longer hospitalization.

Shahar plans further studies of diet and successful aging. Her preliminary idea: "I do recommend adopting the Mediterranean diet—which includes relatively high amounts of extra virgin olive oil, vegetables, fruits and fish—as a very basic and balanced diet. It is important to adhere to a stable diet and to keep a stable weight."

"Despite the lack of real and good research in the field of aging, I do believe that a healthy diet along with optimistic attitude, and love, may really help us age successfully." ■

THE BEN-GURION RESEARCH INSTITUTE GIVING PERSPECTIVE TO A YOUNG NATION'S HISTORY

FOR DR. TUVIA FRILING, Israel's establishment as a state in May 1948 was a miracle that continues to illuminate the country's present.

An internationally known researcher and author, former Israel State Archivist, and member of BGU's Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, Dr. Friling sees this central fact of Israel's existence in both historical and personal terms.

"My parents left everything behind in Romania to come to the embryonic Israel. This was not a 'real' nation—just a young society of immigrants from a thousand places all over the world, trying to build a Jewish state in a very hostile area of the Middle East. Like my parents, most immigrants were simple, ordinary people. If they had a political culture it was usually not democratic, but the opposite. When you have no experience building a state, and don't have the infrastructure, the power and tools every nation has—and everything is based on acting within voluntary frameworks—how do you create a

democracy?"

Yet this revolution succeeded, and without civil war. Even the great French and American revolutions, and Britain's democratic evolution, were characterized at stages by bloody internal wars, Friling observes.



Dr. Tuvia Friling

The Zionist revolution made Israel a member of a very small club: "Among all the nations that launched a statehood process in the last century with democratic aspirations, only India and Israel have remained democracies."

In addition to fighting against hostile neighbors for its right to exist, the new nation

was immediately faced with an extraordinary challenge—absorbing hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors at a rate and scale unprecedented in the modern era's history of immigration. And, the small young corps of leaders successfully established a thriving economy without many of the maladies of industrialization.

"Despite the attached price tag, it was a unique social and political

accomplishment in nation and society building," Friling says, "a process that was almost a miracle, unprecedented in the modern world."

Friling seeks in his research to understand how the most basic questions were posed during the course of Israel's development, and how they were answered. A key mission of the Research Institute itself, he explains, is trying to define the cipher of values, methods and practices that accomplished the miracle—the Jewish people coming back to history after 2,000 years of being stateless and without sovereignty experience.

These quests revolve around the central figure of David Ben-Gurion.

UNDERSTANDING BEN-GURION

For historians of Israel, Ben-Gurion stands at the center, leading a revolution and the Zionist movement for 40 years in its most difficult moments. He was the State of Israel's founder, and for most of this period also the movement's most charismatic and

Top Photo: David Ben-Gurion, left, in Turkey, with Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, president of Israel from 1952 to 1963. They studied law together at Istanbul University from 1912 to 1914.

admired leader. Circumstances and also the challenges he chose to face placed him at the nexus of decision-making, almost always at time of crisis, Friling points out.

“You cannot understand anything in this sort of process without understanding the role he played,” Friling believes. “I think he is more relevant now than 30 or 40 years ago because he asked the fundamental questions and we can’t continue without going back to them.

“The first question for Ben-Gurion was, how can an independent nation-state for the Jewish people be achieved? The second question was, what must be done so as not to lose it? The answer to this is connected to his heritage and we should try to find the way to fulfill it as a common basis for Israeli society.”

What, in Friling’s view, made Ben-Gurion unique? Contradictions, he thinks. “He was utopian but realistic, democrat and autocrat, brave and bold but also anxious and angry. As a leader, he outlined the contours of the state

“Among all the nations that launched a statehood process in the last century with democratic aspirations, only India and Israel have remained democracies.”

—DR. TUVIA FRILING

in heavy brushstrokes by making strategic decisions and laying out the lines of major policy, but in many matters he also delved into the tiniest details. He was the great strategist of the Zionist century. And he turned decisions into action.

“All his decisions,” says Friling, “grew out of the tension between his ability to sense and express the inner truth of the generation he acted within, and his ability to free himself of this truth, ignore it, and to set goals far beyond it. He led rather than trailed behind his public.”

Ben-Gurion was also incurably

life, a modest state that accepted its limitations, whose major task was to promote the welfare of its citizens. “In other words, they wanted a normal country.”

Ben-Gurion, says Friling, wanted Israel to be more than just another country. “He vaguely, hazily, in terms taken from Jewish tradition,



Ben-Gurion appeared on the cover of *TIME* three times: in 1948, 1956 and 1957. After his death the magazine named him one of the most important people of the 20th century.

curious, and found the time to both read and write extensively. He knew how to use the specialists and when not to yield to them, famously saying, “You are expert in what happened—I have to decide what will be.”

Friling says, “He had a magnificent sense of timing, always knowing when to grab history by the horns, yet he was unaware in his later years that this instinct had left him.”

Friling takes as natural the ups and downs of Israelis’ regard for Ben-Gurion, as well as criticisms of Zionism’s role in Israel’s development. The country is still a very young one, he notes, and current debates reflect maturation in efforts to shape national identity, and identify values that unite.

“I think that after 40 or 50 years of finding a way—after immigration, independence, the Holocaust—people were tired. These were huge achievements, but then we had to go to the next stage.”

Israelis wanted to be ordinary people in a society that accepted the importance of individual, mundane

envisioned that the consciousness of being a ‘chosen people’ should produce an exemplary society, an *am segula* in the traditional Hebrew term that could serve as a ‘light unto the nations.’ This tension between normal and extraordinary often feeds contemporary debate both within and outside of Israel. What other nation is held to such high standards?”

Friling’s own research and ideas are expressed in *Arrow in the Dark: David Ben-Gurion, the Yishuv Leadership and Rescue Attempts During the Holocaust; Who Are You Leon Berger? A Story of a Head of a Block in Birkenau*; and as editor, *History, Memory and Politics*; and *An Answer to a Post-Zionist Colleague*, among others.

Friling is proud that the Institute, located on BGU’s Sede Boqer Campus adjacent to Ben-Gurion’s gravesite, is poised to become a major center for studying Israel. In addition to teaching Israel studies and an M.A. program, the staff is in the process of creating the International Graduate

Continued on next page

School for Israel Studies, to be taught in English.

The Institute plans agreements with universities worldwide that will enable students in B.A. and advanced programs to earn at least part of their degrees at BGU, while also providing students from around the world the opportunity to enroll full-time at perhaps the most Zionist location in Israel: the pioneering heart of the Negev desert.

Based on his knowledge of David Ben-Gurion, how does Friling think the first prime minister would feel about the university that bears his name?

"He would be happy with what we do here to exploit our most important resources, the treasure of the 'Jewish mind.' He would be happy to see that the University is not an ivory tower. The majority of students and professors are involved in enriching the community, contributing their time and abilities to newcomers, people new to education, our Bedouin neighbors.

"He preached to us about creating a special society. He would be happy that BGU is part of building it."

GETTING ISRAELI HISTORY RIGHT

"WE'RE ONE OF THE most researched countries in the world," says historian Natan Aridan, associate researcher in the Ben-Gurion Research Institute and managing editor of its journal, *Israel Studies*.

"But so much that's written about Israel is superficial because generally people don't look at the original materials—they're in Hebrew. If people study a Hispanic country or Russia, you'd automatically assume they'd at least have a reading knowledge of the language. You can't rely just on translations. But many people fight about Israeli history without reference to the original documents."

Moreover, Dr. Aridan says, he is more and more convinced that history is now being rewritten by the

THE BEN-GURION HERITAGE Institute was established by Knesset law in 1976. In 1982 a charter between the Heritage Institute and BGU established the Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism.

Located in Sede Boqer adjacent to David Ben-Gurion's gravesite, the interdisciplinary Institute has 15 resident scholars on staff from various fields of the humanities and social sciences. They teach a special Israel studies program in BGU's Department of History and an M.A. program. Plans for Ph.D. studies and an English-language master's program are in

progress. The Institute publishes books, more than 120 titles so far, and two academic journals; holds conferences and weekly seminars; operates a library; and manages the Ben-Gurion Archives.

For information about the new English graduate school scheduled to begin in the fall of 2010, contact Paula Kabalo at pkabalo@bgu.ac.il or 972-8-659-6962.

For information on funding and naming opportunities, contact the AABGU regional office nearest you or call 800-962-2248.

vanquished rather than the victor. There is no absolute truth, as David Ben-Gurion argued, "but incredible distortions are made about Israel and quoted as if fact."

Aridan's own research draws substantially on original source materials in the Ben-Gurion Archives at Sede Boqer. One focus is the relationship between Israel and Diaspora Jews, a subject he teaches and writes about, including the book, *Britain, Israel and Anglo-Jewry*. Nearly half of Jews worldwide don't live in Israel, he points out, though "we meet occasionally—like an extended family. So it's important to further the dialogue and for us to learn about and support each other. The real task is, how do we preserve the unity of the Jewish people? We need to figure out how to become more tolerant and accepting without giving up on our basic credo."

Aridan, who grew up in England but made *aliyah* to Israel after earning his Ph.D. from BGU in 1980, is also investigating the hidden contributions of women to Israel's foreign diplomacy, and the lobby for Israel,

about which most writing is particularly erroneous, he thinks.

The Israel studies program in which Aridan and his Institute colleagues teach is unique, he says, because of its unusually comprehensive range of subjects that include politics, culture and music. "Teaching

3,000 years of Jewish history has left little time for the history of Israel itself," he points out. There's a real thirst for this knowledge and that's why classes are full, and include students from all walks of life, Arabs as well, he says. A former student is now the mayor of Beer-Sheva.

Aridan teaches history through dilemmas. "For

example, who is a Jew? To what extent is Israel a Jewish state? How do you absorb massive immigration? All the questions tackled by Israel's leaders in a democratic country within a very short space of time. We ask students what they would do. We encourage them to use the Archives and not make quick decisions, but understand how the leaders went about solving the dilemmas."

The questions still matter. "We want to know, how we can learn from this



Historian Dr. Natan Aridan

history, understand the world and our country better. Our situation is unique—we have only 62 years of history, so we lack that sort of perspective. We need to understand how Israel is and how we got to where we are by understanding the dilemmas we faced and continue to face. How do we live in peace when enemies want to annihilate us, for example?”

The publication Aridan co-edits, *Israel Studies*, is considered the leading English-language journal for this new field of study. It is published by Indiana University Press for the Ben-Gurion Research Institute and since 2007 has been co-sponsored

by the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies at Brandeis University. More than 10,000 academic institutions subscribe.

With the founder/editor Prof. Ilan Troen, a recently retired BGU professor who is engaged in building an Israel studies program at Brandeis University, Aridan selects from a broad array of interdisciplinary scholarship on Israeli history, politics, culture and society. One recent issue covered the city of Tel Aviv from multiple perspectives on its 100th anniversary; another included the Zionist debates on partition, World War II-associated subjects, gender

issues in the military, inter-religious marriages and feminist scholarship.

“There’s no ideological agenda,” Aridan says. “Arabs and Orthodox Jews and left wing scholars write for us to find a common understanding of what Israel offers the world.”

What does the study of Israel’s history say to him about the future? “I absolutely believe that Israelis are far more rational than other countries, despite what is sometimes said, and we have tremendous optimism. What we lack is perspective. But look at what we’ve done in 62 years. No other state achieved so much, and gave so much to the world.” ■

THE BEN-GURION ARCHIVES: UNIQUE AND ONLINE

To understand Israel’s development from any angle of interest, researchers can draw on a pioneering resource: the Ben-Gurion Archives, which Friling formerly directed and for which he pioneered online access.

The facility reflects the best Israeli tradition of starting something entirely new, says Head of Archives Hana Pinshow—“it’s the *halutz* (pioneer) of computerized knowledge for the humanities.”

When the core document collection that includes David Ben-Gurion’s diaries, letters and personal papers was entrusted to the Ben-Gurion Heritage Institute in 1976, history and computers didn’t yet mesh, she points out. But Dr. Tuvia Friling, as the Archives’ director in the late 1980s, had a farsighted vision: to make the resource available to the world through computers. This was a decade or two before the general academic movement to computerize information.

“He found the right people to do it—and we did it,” recalls Pinshow, who was involved in the entire process. Every word in Ben-Gurion’s diaries, from 1915 to 1973, as well as virtually the entire collection is accessible online in Hebrew.

“If you want to study the history of Israel, the *Yishuv* [the pre-State Jewish community in Palestine], the mandate, the society, the events, the politics—history from every angle—it’s right there on your computer if you just know how to ask the right questions,” Pinshow says. A nominal fee buys a password.

The Ben-Gurion Archives is singular in that its materials were created by the people who formed the State of Israel. “If you wanted to form a democratic country, a complete how-to is there,” Pinshow observes. “Everything about how it was done with a new language, new people, a new world.”



One of the diaries Ben-Gurion kept from 1915 to 1973 that contain a goldmine of original historical material.

Ben-Gurion’s diaries are especially fascinating because he was the main figure of almost every institutional body in the nation and the state building process and documented almost every step, providing an inner and intimate window to his working desk. He relied on writing to keep the facts in front of his eyes, and wrote books, letters and memoirs as well as the diaries. “It’s amazing that one person can write and publish so much,” Pinshow says. “He was virtually a professional historian.”

The Institute’s library, focused on Israel, Zionism and Ben-Gurion, amplifies what the Archive offers with multiple layers of knowledge, commentary and analysis.

The archivist’s current dream is to translate the diaries and other important documents from Hebrew into English, and put these versions online as well. Then those who study Israel or the Middle East can make even more use of the Archives, Pinshow anticipates, and be better able to grasp the whole picture.

“People should be curious and not take for granted what they see or hear. The Archives is part of the global Internet knowledge system—and because it’s there, maybe it will help people look deeper to the historical truth.” ■

RAISING “GOOD” CHILDREN

BGU RESEARCHERS CONTRIBUTE NEW GUIDELINES

SOONER OR LATER, most parents pose a few fundamental questions: How do I instill positive motivation and self-esteem in my children? How can I develop their ability to make good choices? How can I encourage them to adopt my values? Am I making the right parenting decisions?

We don't really expect anyone to answer big questions like these, though we might at times look to family or friends for parenting advice. But at the BGU Department of Education, Professor Avi Assor and Dr. Guy Roth not only look for answers but are finding some universals that transcend cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic boundaries.

Their bottom line finding: The practice of “conditional regard,” whereby parents try to control a child's behavior by withholding support when disappointed, does not work well. Promoting compliance through tactics such as material gain, threats of punishment and withdrawing affection produces children who comply only when supervised, and internalize values superficially. Moreover, children raised this way tend to dislike their parents, so long-range relations are damaged.

The alternative is “unconditional positive regard” and “autonomy support.” Rather than depending on coercion, this parenting style provides steady affection and actively promotes the child's own decision-making. “Parents who use this orientation trust their child's intentions and abilities and provide a rationale for their expectations,” explains Prof. Assor.

“They're flexible, show empathy for the child's viewpoint when there's resistance, and offer choices.” Without feeling coerced, these children internalize their parents' values in a deeper, healthier way, and see themselves as self-determined. They are able to make good life choices that help

shield them from negative influences. And they feel more closely connected to their parents.

What about using extra affection as a reward for behaving or performing in ways that parents want? The findings here promise some controversy, Roth notes. “Many psychologists and

of the research. Prof. Edward L. Deci of the University of Rochester, where both Assor and Roth have visited as research fellows, is a frequent collaborator.

Some of their joint results were recently published in *Developmental Psychology*, the journal of the



Research team: Dr. Guy Roth; Ph.D. student Moran Cohen Iluz; Prof. Avi Assor; and Anat Moed, undergraduate student and research coordinator

educators would say that contingent affection—providing more affection than usual when the child meets expectations—is fine. But here too we've found that there are costs: negative emotions, shallow internalization, more rigid behavior—an investment in school focused on grades, for example, rather than understanding or interest.” So this approach is also counter-productive.

Prof. Assor and Dr. Roth conduct their research in the Motivation and Parenting Lab, which is, they believe, the first to develop systematic empirical research on the phenomenon of conditional regard. They base their studies on interviews with young children, adolescents, college students, parents and expectant parents. The United States-Israel Binational Science Foundation has funded much

American Psychological Association, and drew even wider attention when the well-known education writer Alfie Kohn quoted their research at length in a *New York Times Magazine* article called “When a Parent's ‘I Love You’ Means ‘Do As I Say’.”

PARENTING STYLE AND BULLYING

Parenting style has many ramifications, the BGU researchers are discovering. For example, it relates directly to anti-social behavior and bullying. “We find that when children identify with the value of being considerate toward others, they behave more pro-socially,” Roth and Assor say. “When they don't identify with that value, they behave less pro-socially and are more aggressive. The idea seems to be, ‘I'm acting considerate because I'm under the

teacher's control, but I'll be less so, and more aggressive, when I'm not.' When control is environmental, depending on supervision, we actually find more bullying."

But what if the family's values encourage aggressive behavior—if a child is trained to "strike the first blow" rather than being told, "don't resort to violence"?

"The theories we work with assume there are intrinsic and extrinsic values," explains Roth. "The intrinsic ones hold the promise of satisfying human needs and they promote your own health and development—like helping others, the family and community. External values like power, money, fame, are 'bad values' because like drugs, they give you the feeling you're strong and powerful, but have negative impact in the long run. The distinction is between values that promote well-being and those that don't."

And what about cultural relativism—the idea that one culture's values can be very different from another's?

"Our research shows that the autonomy-support principle is also true for non-western societies, which are more authoritarian and hierarchical and do not value autonomy as a guiding principle," Prof. Assor says. Cultures may differ in many respects, but "when it comes to ways of internalizing parental values—and even the kind of values—certain things are good in all cultures: taking the child's perspective, using dialogue and rationales, and offering some choices, rather than manipulating children through guilt feelings." Research with the Bedouin and Chinese cultures bears this out, he says, though these findings may spark controversy when published.

AN INTER-GENERATIONAL STORY

Another significant finding: Child-rearing styles repeat from one generation to the next. Though people may be highly negative toward their own

parents who treated them with conditional regard, they tend to mirror the approach with their own children.

Can this behavior be changed? The researchers say their present focus is on understanding rather than intervention. But they believe at least some change is possible. It may help to first understand why a parent might depend on conditional regard. Roth observes, "If a parent doesn't trust a child, he or she can think about why that is—it's something you can work on."

For example, attributing misbehavior to a child's 'bad character' leads parents to 'fix' the misbehavior with shortcuts that control what he or she does. "But if you attribute it to the situation, you can talk to a child and try to address the misbehavior together—

"Certain things are good in all cultures: taking the child's perspective, using dialogue and rationales, and offering some choices, rather than manipulating children through guilt feelings."

—PROF. AVI ASSOR

see it as something that can be corrected not by shortcuts, but by talking, taking his perspective, seeing how he understood the situation."

This doesn't mean that transgressions shouldn't be confronted, Assor and Roth confirm, especially when they are serious. "Hurting or endangering others, or stealing, is a different kind of violation than not studying," Assor says. "You can empathize with the child's perspective but make it clear that the behavior is not acceptable. Show empathy, offer your rationale, and later, talk about how we can set things up so it doesn't happen again."

Temperament can be a factor. "There's a lot of debate about what to

do with children who are difficult, angry, anti-regulation, unfocused and out of control," Assor says, "and there are some suggestions that we have to be hard on these kids. We are now starting research on how the idea of autonomous support would also work with difficult children."

Assor, Roth and a past doctoral student of Prof. Assor—Dr. Yaniv Kanat Maymon—have just begun a major longitudinal study that begins with expectant first-time parents. They are being interviewed now, and will then be tracked to see how their orientation toward coercion or autonomy affects their response to newborns and plays out over time. The parents and children will be followed through the first three or four years, perhaps even into adulthood.

Another research venue is that of formal education, and the resulting theories are being tested in the school setting. One focus is on how the leadership styles of school principals affect teacher motivation. Similarly to their work with parenting, Roth and Assor see an opposition between "transactional" leadership styles that are suppressive, versus a "transformational" approach that is autonomy-supportive.

They are working with several schools through two- or three-year-long intervention programs. When principals practice autonomy support, they find, teachers respond by teaching with more enthusiasm and satisfaction. Further, self-determination in teachers was found to generate self-determination in students.

"We're trying to help turn schools into places where both teachers and children learn and care for others because they want to, not because they have to," says Avi Assor. "The way I look at it, we are creating knowledge and methods of application, and distributing them. We create options for superintendents and teachers who'd like to have some guidance, upgrade what they're doing and see what is possible." ■

GIVING KIDS A CHANCE AT CENTER STAGE

REACHING OUT to the community is an ideal built into BGU's basic fabric, an intrinsic part of its mandate to develop the Negev and be a catalyst for educational, technological and social advancement. At the heart of the social outreach effort stands the University's Community Action Unit.

Through the Open Apartments Program, it brings BGU students to live in, and contribute to, Beer-Sheva's neediest areas. And through programs such as Sparks of Science and the Leadership Training Program, the Unit provides needed opportunities to underprivileged area youngsters.

In addition, the Community Action Unit operates a program that gives local students the chance to explore a world that would otherwise be inaccessible to most of them—the performing arts.

Established nine years ago by the Habarvaz Fund at the Community Action Unit, the Barvaz Theater Group was conceived as an innovative way to reach out to disadvantaged Beer-Sheva youth who are interested in acting. About 20 young people aged 13 to 18 participate, drawn from area high schools. The program involves them with every element of choosing, developing and performing in major

stage productions.

"We go directly to the schools and tell the children about the theater group," says the program's coordinator, Naama Levin. "Those who are interested come for an interview. We don't do auditions, but we need to know that they really want to do this, and wouldn't otherwise have a chance to."



Above and at top: Scenes from *Trapped Music: Brundibar*, a play about the Holocaust

Seventeen-year-old Ziv Shahar, who has been in the program for four years, is an example. "Being an actor was my dream, but there aren't many organizations for acting. So without this theater, I would just give up and accept that there's no way to do it. Now I'm living my dream and I'll go on to acting school."

The teenagers work under the leadership of professional actor and director Ya'acov Ansellem, the group's director since its founding. He also directs the Negev Theatre, a professional troupe, and the theatrical company Teatron Kol Adam, which he founded. Additionally, he teaches theater courses for youngsters and directs theater projects that include one for special needs children.

The young Barvaz actors are treated as professionals, Ansellem emphasizes, in an environment of mutual respect. For each project, everyone pitches in with the scenery, music, dancing, multimedia effects and every aspect of staging. "We work very hard with the children—not as amateurs—to give a professional show," Ansellem says. "And we involve them in deciding on the subjects. Sometimes that takes more time, but at the end of the day it's better."

The youngsters' capabilities blossom during this collaborative process and sometimes, Ansellem says, the parents are very surprised. "They haven't seen their children on stage and don't imagine what they can do. That's a good moment. But after a few minutes the audience forgets who's on stage and they just see a good professional show."

LEARNING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Previous productions have included *Hair* and Orwell's *Animal Farm*, both adapted to provide parts for everyone and suit the Israeli sensibility. This year the group chose a serious theme based on a true event of the Holocaust: presentation of a play in the Theresienstadt ghetto, which was in reality a concentration camp. The German commanders ordered a group of young inmates to present an opera that would help demonstrate to Red Cross visitors that camp life was good.

The teenagers researched the Holocaust and met with survivors to better understand their experiences. They then worked on the script with playwright Naama Goren. The result incorporates some parts of the original opera interwoven with the story of the Theresienstadt children.

Ansellem views this as a learning experience for both performers and audiences. "It was important for us to show that the Holocaust was about real people, children—not just who you see in black and white movies. We wanted the performance to show how they helped each other survive, even with jokes—the people's power."

Typically the group does a new production each year, but the Holocaust show was a two-year project. The show was performed for Holocaust survivors at the end of last year. "They were very excited," Naama Levin recounts, to "know somebody—especially teenagers—were remembering and talking about their experience."

Additional shows were planned for area high schools, to audiences of older people, at BGU and elsewhere in Israel.

Barvaz rehearsals occupy just two hours per week, to avoid interfering with schoolwork. But membership becomes a focal experience for many of the children, whether or not they have long-range theatrical aspirations. "We try to get the group to feel like a family," Levin says. "We have

social activities, talk to their teachers; we keep in touch with their parents if we feel they need help or we need to know what's happening at home. If they are having trouble with schoolwork, we find a student to help them.



A scene from *Animal Farm*

"They bring material in their lives with them and so many times, we have to think about their lives," Ansellem says.

LEARNING ABOUT THEMSELVES

Working within the theater discipline, feeling that others depend on them, and learning to explain or express themselves can work magic in terms of the children's confidence and attitude. "I see a very big change in some of them," Ansellem observes. "Some are shy kids when they come; they may have problems, but suddenly they become open and speak to friends in ways they're not used to. They show high motivation

to come. These can be small victories but they're very important."

Members of the troupe agree.

"I see kids change a lot," says Shalva Nusi, who is only 12 but already has nine years of performing history. She was recruited for a role in the Holocaust production. "At first they're not so responsible; they come to rehearsals late—then they get more serious about their lines and their acting. Some have stage fright. We tell them 'you can do it.'"

In Shalva's own case, Barvaz offers the chance to spend more time on stage and build toward the performing career she is determined to have. And, she says, "it's definitely fun to be part of a group with serious interests."

Seventeen-year-old Stas Shulman, who was born in Ukraine, says he became interested in Barvaz because acting appealed to him and some of his friends had joined. "I love the stage and this place is giving me the opportunity to be there," he says. And, "I learned to be nicer to people, and how to talk to different kinds of people."

Ziv Shahar believes the experience reoriented him. "It's changed me with my friends because it's helped me understand them more, and other people too. And it changed the way I think. I saw everyone in the theater was smart and got good grades, so I became more serious." ■

From a play called
Berta's Coffee Shop



ORLY RAHIMIYAN, PH.D. CANDIDATE

DOCUMENTING PERSIAN JEWISH HISTORY

“I’M ISRAELI-JEWISH-PERSIAN IN EITHER ORDER,” 32-year-old Orly R. Rahimiyan says.

She was born in Israel to Jewish-Iranian parents who visited Israel in 1974 and decided to stay. “Basically I grew up raised on both sets of values and there is some contradiction. The Persian culture educates to be very polite and quiet, while Israel is very open with a ‘stand up for your rights, go for it’ attitude. So sometimes I felt that for my Persian family I was too liberal—but for my Israeli friends, too conservative.”

Today, Orly sees this “hybrid identity” as privileged: “the cultures complement each other.” And her work as a Ph.D. candidate and teacher in BGU’s Department of Middle East Studies reflects her personal history. Though she went through a denial period during her teens—“I wanted to be very Israeli, so when my mom shopped in Persian shops speaking Farsi I waited outside embarrassed”—she is now a dedicated researcher on Persian life and history, focusing on the Jewish experience in Iran.

One turning point was her service in the Israeli army at 18. “Meeting people of all different ethnic origins from all over the country, I started to wonder, ‘who am I?’” So it was natural for her to think about learning Middle Eastern history, and Iranian studies in particular, when she went to The Hebrew University in Jerusalem for her B.A. and then her M.A.

After earning her degrees, Orly was unclear about the direction to take. As it happened, a series of books were being published on different Jewish communities in the region by the Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East; she was asked to contribute a chapter on the Jewish history in Iran. This led to questions about the relative lack of

research on Iran. Orly’s conclusion: “If I want to preserve my own heritage for the sake of future generations, I will have to do the research. It’s a kind of mission.”



Orly Rahimiyan

She decided to pursue her Ph.D. in Middle East Studies and, as a summa cum laude graduate, had a range of options. She chose BGU. “I felt BGU would give me a lot of opportunities, and it has. I was able to teach from my first year and there was room for all my initiatives—every idea I came up with was accepted. The skills I brought stressed language and text, and at BGU I learned new historical methods and different narratives.”

And from the beginning, Orly was encouraged to present at conferences outside Israel. This enabled her to make new historical connections to the life of Jews in Iran, as well as with major Iranian historians. She was heartened by their enthusiasm for new young researchers.

In the U.S., where she most often presented and pursued research, Orly had the chance to meet many Iranian immigrants and hear their stories. She felt a sense of urgency about retaining this first-hand experience. “Not enough

research has been done on Jewish-Iranian history and we need to collect these documents and interview the people while they’re alive.”

This is especially important, she notes, because there are so many “black holes” in Jewish-Iranian history. During periods of persecution, the hardships made it difficult for people to sit down and write.

This past year, Orly spent four months as a Phyllis Greenberg Heideman and Richard D. Heideman Fellow at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. In addition to the opportunity to work on her research, this brought invitations to speak in venues including Yale, the University of Mississippi and the Library of Congress.

Presenting on the images of Jews in Iranian culture, about which she has already written extensively, she was struck by the interest of the Iranians she met. “They said they wish to know more about Israel, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust—that they didn’t have access to the information. There’s a lot of curiosity.”

Orly finds people’s perception of “the other,” those with different cultures and values, especially interesting. She investigates how these perceptions can be manipulated.

She works through her teaching to bring history truly alive and vivid: “It’s very satisfying to see how people open up to a different topic they knew nothing about and are truly interested.”

What does she hope for personally? “I’m trying to find the golden path between the very academic and the personal level, trying to use my experience to promote goals that help other people and promote understanding.” ■

AABGU's nine regional offices around the country play a vital role in helping BGU develop the bold vision for the Negev, the focus of the future of Israel and the world. Regional events include symposia, luncheons, dessert receptions, gala evenings and missions to Israel. The following pages provide a glimpse of the regions' recent and upcoming activities. We invite you to get involved and become infused with the spirit of discovery.

GREAT LAKES

Ernie Simon, *Chair*
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In October, the region co-sponsored a reception with the National Institute of Psychobiology in Israel (NIPI) for Israeli scientists attending the Society for Neuroscience Conference. An intimate dinner followed the reception where AABGU supporters had the opportunity to visit with BGU neurophysiologists Dr. Opher Donchin and Dr. Ronen Segev. The following evening Dr. Donchin joined members of Chicago's Negev Leadership Group at a small dinner in Chicago's Greektown.

In November, Prof. David Roskies introduced BGU's newly established Center for Yiddish Studies at several regional events. More than 130 guests attended an informative presentation co-sponsored by the Chicago YIVO Society at Temple Beth Israel in Skokie. Prof. Roskies discussed "Yiddish Culture: From Rupture to Renewal." Roskies also taught a master class on an Abraham Sutzkever poem to a small group at Bank Leumi, Highland Park, and was the guest speaker at North Suburban Beth-El's Adult Education program where he presented "My Mother's Yiddish Songs."

A presentation on BGU's new Israel-Jordan Academic Emergency Medicine Collaboration was presented at the home of Consul General Orli Gil in December (see page 6).



Dr. Eli Lewis visited Chicago in February where he presented facts about his groundbreaking diabetes research. Several different groups enjoyed hearing him speak about the promise his research holds for diabetic patients.

Top: Richard Schlossberg, Prof. David Roskies and Rabbi Vernon Kurtz (NSS Beth-El) **Bottom:** Regional Board Member Steve Franklin; Regional Chair Ernie Simon; Regional Director Judy Rosen; Prof. David Roskies; Rabbi Michael Weinberg (Temple Beth Israel) **Bottom Left:** BGU researchers Dr. Ronen Segev and Dr. Opher Donchin (standing); Kathleen Martin and Dr. Herb Sohn



GREATER FLORIDA

Harriet Winer, *Philanthropic Counsel*
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Harriet Winer

Fort Lauderdale philanthropist and long-time AABGU supporter Sumner White recently became a member of AABGU's new Living Legacy Society (formerly known as the Heritage Society). Through his planned gift, Sumner will be funding the Sumner White Professorial Chair in Finance at BGU.

The Greater Florida Region welcomed Harriet Winer who had spent nearly a year and a half at AABGU's national

headquarters in New York, providing philanthropic counsel and strategy to enhance AABGU's development goals. As of February, Harriet moved to Florida to focus on the revitalization of the Greater Florida Region.

Key local leaders recently met with Harriet and Executive Vice President Doron Krakow to share their ideas for enhanced activities and additional outreach that can help the region to grow and continue its valuable contributions to BGU's mission. The leadership advisory group included National Vice President Billy Joel of Aventura and national board members Dr. Rubin Salant (also a member of BGU's Board of Governors) of Aventura and Richard Bernstein of Miami; as well as community leaders Sandy Blum of Aventura and Joel Reinstein of Boca Raton.

Delighted to be spearheading the region's development, Harriet remarks, "I am so pleased with the reception that I have received from our Florida contingent. So many of

AABGU mourns the loss of Rosalind Henwood, a most cherished friend and benefactor who passed away in December. Rosalind was the archetypal "woman of valor" who embodied, in both spirit and deed, the essence of Jewish values. She built an international air freight company from the ground up and pioneered many innovations in the industry, while maintaining a strong commitment to the Jewish people, to Israel and to education. She was awarded an honorary doctorate by BGU in 1996.



Rosalind was a member of the exclusive Ben-Gurion Society. Her leadership involvement with Ben-Gurion University as a member of its Board of Governors, as well as a trustee on the AABGU board, paled in comparison to her devotion to the University's students. Over the years, well over 600 students have benefited from her generosity. The Henwood Scholarship Fund will bear her name in perpetuity and will continue to support her legacy for years to come.

the people that I have spoken with are founding patrons, and from their support and involvement early on, they have enabled BGU to become a world-class institution over the past 40 years."

For information about upcoming events with BGU faculty members, please contact the office.

GREATER NEW YORK

Lite Sabin and Jessica Sillins, *Chairs*
Kevin M. Leopold, *Director*
Wendy Clarfeld, *Associate Director*
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The Greater New York Region was pleased to co-sponsor an event with the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), featuring Prof. David Roskies who spoke about the history of Yiddish and the importance of preserving and studying the language and culture. Prof. Roskies is the founding director of BGU's new Center for Yiddish Studies.



Lolita Goldstein lays a wreath at David Ben-Gurion's gravesite with Prof. Avigad Vonshak by her side.

On November 23, BGU held its annual Ben-Gurion Day memorial service for the late prime minister and University namesake. Each year BGU recognizes a dedicated supporter for his or her contribution to the growth of the University with the honor of laying the wreath at David Ben-Gurion's gravesite in Sede Boqer. AABGU was thrilled that Lolita Goldstein was selected for the honor during the moving ceremony.

An event at the Tunisian Cultural & Information Center was held to promote AABGU's upcoming Tunisia Tour. Yael Gamon, a BGU alumna and Tunisian Jew, spoke alongside Jerry Sorkin, AABGU's tour leader.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Hadid, head of the Jordan Red Crescent, Prof. Jim Torczyner, director of the McGill Middle East Program in Civil Society and Peace Building and Prof. Jimmy Weinblatt, BGU's rector, presented BGU's new Israel-Jordan Academic Emergency Medicine Collaboration at a program at the New York Chapter of the American Red Cross. Attendees were greatly inspired by the precedent-setting and peace-promoting project (see page 6).

For information about upcoming events, contact the regional office or visit www.aabgu.org/regions-events/new-york.



Top: Prof. Jim Torczyner, Dr. Mohammed Al-Hadid and Prof. Jimmy Weinblatt, founders of BGU's joint Israeli-Jordanian emergency medicine degree-granting collaboration **Bottom:** Yael Gamon, Jerry Sorkin and Regional Co-chair Lite Sabin

GREATER TEXAS

Sandra and Steven Finkleman, *Chairs*
Deborah K. Bergeron, *Director*
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The region had its Kickoff Supper for the 9th Annual Gourmet Kosher Dining Extravaganza at Sarah and Denis Braham's Houston home in November. Steve Breslauer, Extravaganza co-chair, and Sandra Finkelman, Greater Texas Region co-chair, welcomed and thanked the 75 guests at the event.

The 2010 Honorary Committee included Sarah and Denis Braham, Jane and Stephen Friedman, Charlett and Marshall Frumin, Renee and Ivor Karpas, Lilly Lazarus, Barbara and Jacob Leon, Barbara and Barry Lewis and Paula and Irving Pozmantier. Extravaganza chairs were Sandy and Stephen Breslauer.

Guest speaker Gil Hovav delighted the crowd as he discussed his passion for Israeli cuisine. Author, food critic and television personality Gil Hovav has played a major role in the revival of Israeli cuisine and the change Israel has undergone in recent years, from a country of basic



Top: Ninth Annual Extravaganza Kick-off Supper Reception 2010 Honorary Chairs **Bottom:** Pre-Extravaganza Chefs' Meeting

traditional foods into a “gourmet nation.” Hovav is leading AABGU’s Israel Culinary Tour this spring.

A presentation on BGU’s new Israel-Jordan Academic Emergency Medicine Collaboration was presented at the Bergeron home in December (see page 6).

The Ninth Annual Extravaganza, celebrating this year’s David Ben-Gurion Leadership Award recipients Jill and Nat Levy, was held at the Intercontinental Houston Hotel in February.

Right: The originators of BGU’s Israel-Jordan Academic Emergency Medicine Collaboration (Prof. Jim Torczyner, far left; Dr. Mohammed Al-Hadid and Prof. Jimmy Weinblatt, center) with three faculty members from the University of Houston



MID-ATLANTIC

Jack R Bershad, *Regional Chair*

Mona Zeehandelaar, *Philadelphia Chapter Chair*

Connie & Sam Katz, *Philadelphia Chapter Vice Chairs*

Claire Winick, *Director*

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The November 15 gala was a huge success, as the chapter recognized Jacob Shochat for his outstanding philanthropic support of the University. Co-chairs Sam Greenblatt and Sam Katz were instrumental in attracting a large crowd of community leaders, and BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi extended the appreciation of the University to Jacob Shochat. Exciting and well attended gala pre-events were hosted by Connie and Sam Katz and Roberta and Ernest Scheller, Jr.

At a Chanukah brunch hosted by Jacob Shochat, Prof. David Roskies discussed “Yiddish Culture: From Rupture to Renewal.” Later in December, the Philadelphia chapter board of directors met for a Chanukah luncheon hosted by Jack Bershad. Guest speakers were AABGU’s Senior Philanthropic Advisor Joe Cofield, who spoke about planned giving, and Dr. Sion Koren, a BGU postdoctoral fellow, who is currently training at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia.

Under the auspices of the Health Sciences Resource Committee, Marla and Dr. Robert Zipkin hosted a “Meet & Greet” dessert reception, welcoming several BGU graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and visiting professors who are based in Philadelphia.

The 11th annual snowbird reception, featuring Prof. Fred Lazin, was held in February in Boca Raton. As in past years, the program attracted over 100 guests.

Plans for the spring include participation at the annual Israel Bonds “Evening of Honor,” two programs partnering with area synagogues, and a “Collaboration Showcase” to inform the community about BGU’s successful affiliation with Fox Chase Cancer Center.



Top: Philadelphia Chapter Vice Chairs Connie and Sam Katz; Mona Zeehandelaar, chapter chair; Jacob Shochat, 2009 guest of honor; and BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi at the annual gala **Bottom:** Members of the Negev Forum and Tomorrow’s Leadership committees met with Prof. Rivka Carmi (seated, center)

AABGU and the Mid-Atlantic Region mourn the tragic loss of David Zeehandelaar, Philadelphia chapter chair and devoted friend and supporter, who died after a difficult battle with cancer. A full tribute will be written in the next issue of **Impact**.

NORTHWEST

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Amos Oz, BGU professor emeritus and renowned author, spoke at the San Francisco Jewish Community Center at an event co-sponsored by AABGU, the Taube Center for Jewish Life at the SFJCC, The Israel Center of the Jewish Federation and the Consulate General of Israel to the Pacific Northwest in November.

Also in November, Israeli television personality and food critic Gil Hovav and Tunisia expert Jerry Sorkin were the featured guests at the home of BGU founders Regina and Dan Waldman.

The Seattle community, San Francisco regional board and members of the San Francisco chapter of the American Red Cross were treated to presentations about BGU's new Israel-Jordan Academic Emergency Medicine Collaboration in December (see page 6).

In early February, BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi flew to Mountain View to present a golden key to Nahum Guzik, president of the Guzik Foundation, for the newly renovated Nahum and Anna Guzik Classroom Building. Nahum Guzik, originally from the former Soviet



Top: Dr. Mohammed Al-Hadid and Prof. Jim Torczyner, founders of the Israel-Jordan emergency medicine collaboration, with Rob and Kathleen Spitzer at the Spitzers' Mercer Island home **Bottom Left:** Gil Hovav prepares an Israeli culinary experience at the home of Dan (far left) and Gina (far right) Waldman. **Bottom Right:** Prof. Rivka Carmi presents the golden key to Nahum Guzik.

Union, is the founder of Guzik Technical Enterprises, a leader among high-tech companies in Silicon Valley for the last 20+ years.

SOUTHWEST

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The region hosted a dinner party in honor of very special friend and supporter Dr. Howard Marcus, celebrating his 100th birthday in September. In 2005, the main campus in Beer-Sheva was named and dedicated the Marcus Family Campus after receipt of the University's most generous donation to date.



Prof. Rivka Carmi with Howard and Lottie Marcus at his 100th birthday party

The celebration was held at the Capri Blu Restaurant in San Diego. Lottie and Howard's very proud family and close friends joined them to celebrate the milestone occasion. And, especially for this extraordinary party not to be missed, BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi flew to California to celebrate with the Marcus family.

Harvey Malyn; Lottie and Howard Marcus; Ellen Marcus; Prof. Rivka Carmi; Jennifer Kaplan, Ellen's daughter and Lottie and Howard's granddaughter; Regional Director Philip Gomperts



WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE

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The Washington/Baltimore Region continues to take advantage of professors and students visiting Washington, D.C. The region held two events, featuring Ph.D. candidates Orly Rahimiyan (see page 24) and Gail Levy, who were in D.C. for prestigious fellowships at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum last fall.

Orly spoke to a room full of AABGU supporters and new attendees at the Library of Congress about her research on "Images of Jews in Popular Iranian Culture." In September, Gail joined BGU Prof. Ruth Iskin, who was also in Washington conducting research at the National Gallery of Art, for a lunch with members of the D.C. chapter board. Board members enjoyed hearing about Gail's research on the Mossad Le'Aliyah Bet, a branch of the Haganah that aided Jewish immigration to Palestine, and about Prof. Iskin's new book, *Modern Women and Parisian Consumer Culture*.

In November, Art and Edie Hessel hosted an evening with Jerry Sorkin, expert and tour provider for AABGU's upcoming Tunisia tour. The evening inspired several attendees to register for the tour.

In March, the region co-sponsored two events with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), featuring Dr. Eli Lewis of the Department of Clinical Biochemistry. Dr. Lewis was awarded a prestigious research grant from JDRF for his research on islet transplantation therapy for type 1 diabetes.

In early March, the region hosted an event at the Greensboro, North Carolina Beth David Synagogue to introduce AABGU to the Greensboro Jewish community.



The D.C. chapter board met Prof. Ruth Iskin (second from left) and Gail Levy (third from right) for a lunch at the National Gallery of Art.



Monika Lev Cohen; Keren Waranch; and Ph.D. candidates Orly Rahimiyan and Gail Shirazi at the Library of Congress

Please check the region's Web page at:
www.aabgu.org/regions-events/washington-baltimore
for details about future regional events.

ECOLOGIST'S VIEW

From page 13

the future, we need to protect these biological components.”

The findings also have wider implications and suggest that we must give individual consideration to each major group because they respond differently to different scenarios and conservation problems.

STUDYING THE DUNES

Another ongoing project is being carried out in the western Negev. This sandy area has three separate habitats—stabilized, semi-stabilized and shifting dunes, Ziv explains. In the western portion of the area, Bedouins are not grazing their animals and there are few wild grazers. This allowed the production of a physical and biological soil crust that covers the habitats, causing a loss of shifting sands.

“We start to lose the mosaics of the habitat and then we start losing species like rodents and reptiles, which need the shifting dunes for burrowing and foraging,” Ziv notes. “They’re adapted to cope with the sandy habitat and suddenly, because the large animals aren’t there anymore, the ground is like concrete. While in nearby areas, there is too much grazing. So we’re losing the region’s heterogeneity, and we’re losing species.”

In this project, work goes beyond the research to experiments with habi-

tat restoration, in collaboration with Israel’s Nature and Parks Authority. SUVs equipped with tilting metal structures are used to artificially break the soil crust, and highly controlled analysis is carried out with eight dunes.

It will take two to three years to evaluate results. The problem is complicated by 13 years of consecutive drought, which adds to the soil crust and prevents plants from growing and feeding the animals. Ziv envisions dropping seeds from airplanes to compensate for decreased productivity.

Is taking action in this manner within the province of today’s ecologists? “In the past most ecologists were busy with basic science,” Ziv says, “but today many of us are involved with applications as well.” But action must be based on understanding, he stresses.

Ziv sees a growing willingness worldwide to take ecological ideas and conservation into account. In Israel, he believes, “we have grown up” and are starting to appreciate the desert’s beauty and the importance of preserving the natural landscape. “We need the desert on the global scale too,” he points out. “The desert has its own contribution to ecosystem functioning—it’s part of the worldwide circle.”

“We learn all the time how complex things are in ways we didn’t

know before. What we want is to preserve the treasure we have so it’s there for our kids. They need the desert, the canyons, the animals. All the research we do contributes to diversity, open spaces, the functioning of ecological systems...Israel’s future needs healthy land and ecological systems.

“We need nature to live.” ■



Spring in the Negev brings beautiful desert irises.

MARGIT MEISSNER

From page 9

She then decided to become a volunteer at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “It’s very effective to have someone who lived through that period guide you,” she observes.

Margit takes great satisfaction in having reclaimed her very international roots. Because her family was so widely dispersed, its members had

substantially lost touch. But nine years ago a reunion was organized.

“So we have family reunions now in Australia, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and next summer in Canada.” The reunions are an important response to the Holocaust, she feels, because so many families lost and never found each other. “We need to remember the Holocaust and understand what might have been different had other countries intervened.”

Margit sees BGU as a good example of taking responsibility. “The students are really engaged and BGU is very involved in the community. The mixed student body is a great asset. There’s more cooperation between Jews and Arabs in the Negev than anywhere else.

“I think my supporting BGU is also a way of supporting an organization that is involved in more than only scholarship—it is also involved in the social dimension.” ■



AMERICAN ASSOCIATES

Ben-Gurion University
of the Negev

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