Weisfeld School of Social Work
Marking 50 Years of Outreach to Israelis in Need
Dear Friends,

Israel is a world-recognized leader in technological advances and scientific research that enhance human life. We at Bar-Ilan University are very much a part of this national effort and I am proud to share with you some of our latest ground-breaking research in this issue of BIU Today.

The new management approach initiated by our VPR, for example, will transform the way we perform research. In other spheres, our scientists are searching for ways to upgrade quality of life for the elderly, while finding ways to improving our mood. Medical researchers are personalizing medicine, while physicists have found a way to rediscover the much-vaunted "God Particle." Our scientists are indeed dedicated to making life better for all humankind.

Academia is not only about the hard sciences. In this issue we also offer insights into the thorny issue of conversion and the dilemmas faced by new immigrants from the former USSR, relate to how Israel is perceived in the US, discuss how we can defeat the threat of ISIS, explore the roots of veganism in ancient times, and colorfully illuminate the little-known topic of Jewish knighthood!

We are always so proud of our exceptional alumni and students and share their stories within. I hope you enjoy the fresh new design and “look and feel” of our magazine.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Prof. Daniel Hershkowitz
President
Weisfeld School of Social Work
Marking 50 Years of Outreach to Israelis in Need

At 50, BIU’s Louis & Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work has much to be proud of. Against the backdrop of wars, terrorism, mass immigration, and other challenges, the School has played a leadership role in addressing contemporary needs and impacting the very fabric of Israeli society.

Over the years, the Louis & Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work has lent a helping hand and a listening ear in times of adversity. During the War of Attrition (1968-70) students volunteered in settlements under Syrian fire. Following the 1973 Yom Kippur War the School opened a hotline and during “Operation Cast Lead” (January 2009) students and faculty members conducted home visits to needy residents of Sderot, which was continually bombarded by rockets for days and weeks on end. The School also organized special activities on campus for Sderot residents with mental disabilities. Following the deadly Mount Carmel forest fire in 2010, the School’s play therapy program went to work with young trauma victims living in the region. The School, which pioneered the MA rehabilitation track in Israel, also supervises vocational rehabilitation centers for injured IDF vets.

Prioritizing the Community
Currently, some 600 students are enrolled in the School’s highly sought-after programs. Each year, in the course of their supervised field work, students assist thousands of children and adults in welfare and foster care agencies, hospitals, mental health clinics, shelters for battered women, centers for the elderly, and other public and nonprofit services.

In addition, dozens of people from the surrounding communities receive help and hope in the framework of the School’s noted clinics in the areas of couples and family therapy, sex therapy, couple-based interventions in cases of post-traumatic stress, and play therapy. The School is now working to further expand this communal outreach.

Targeting the specialized needs of Israeli society, the School’s Continuing Education Unit pioneers innovative professional diploma courses which benefit hundreds of social services practitioners and therapists. One such program is the prestigious three-year Post-Master’s Certification Program in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, open to qualified social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists. The two-year Post-Master’s Sex Therapy training...
BIU social workers include both secular and religious, Jews and Arabs, new immigrants and homegrown Israelis.

BIU Social Workers – Improving Lives

BIU social workers include both secular and religious, Jews and Arabs, new immigrants and homegrown Israelis. They help to shape policy, upgrade services and more effectively reach all of Israel’s diverse communities. For instance, graduates of the School’s Haredi Program (now completing its 5th cycle of men and 14th cycle of women), work in welfare agencies, mental health institutions, and hostels for at-risk individuals in towns with a heavy Ultra-Orthodox concentration.

Mamoya Zara, with a BA and MA in Social Work, has worked with the Joint Distribution Committee, specializing in cultural bridging between Ethiopian new immigrants and Israeli society. Recalling his nurturing “professional home,” Zara says “My BIU social work training gave me the opportunity and tools to assist Ethiopian immigrants integrate and also enabled me to make non-Ethiopian professionals more aware of the cultural sensitivities in order to succeed in their work.”

Dr. Amir Birani, who holds a BIU Masters in Social Work (with a specialization in rehabilitation), opened a counseling practice in his native Druse village of Daat El Carmel, offering individual, couple and family therapy. “Bar-Ilan University accepts the ‘different’, while enhancing the academic skills for success,” notes Birani, in appreciation of his experience and studies at BIU.

Distinguished Researchers and Faculty

“Since its founding in 1966, BIU’s Weisfeld School of Social Work has integrated leading research activity with teaching and maintaining a close connection with the field, governmental bodies, voluntary and public bodies,” explains the Weisfeld School’s Chairman, Prof. Rachel Dekel. She herself examines diverse facets of the human capacity to cope with traumatic events such as war, terror and family violence, and their implications for the survivor, family, therapist and community. A recipient of prestigious grants, she is a member of an elite interdisciplinary team supported by the national I-CORE (Israeli Centers of Research Excellence) initiative to set up a major Research Center for Mass Trauma in Israel.

The School’s top-notch faculty includes experts across the social work spectrum who publish in prestigious journals, lecture in key forums, and collaborate with researchers abroad.

The School’s top-notch faculty includes experts across the social work spectrum who publish in prestigious journals, lecture in key forums, and collaborate with researchers abroad.
Shaking up BIU’s Academic Culture

A New Paradigm for Challenge-Driven Research Advancement

Prof. Arie Zaban has never shied away from a challenge. Perhaps that’s because this former IDF pilot and internationally-renowned scientist—who managed to pioneer multiple approaches for renewable energy while simultaneously serving as the founding Director of the Bar-Ilan Institute for Nanotechnology and Advanced Materials (BINA)—sees challenge as the ideal “wake-up call” for a generally complacent academic culture.

Today, a new approach is sparking a revolution—one that Prof. Arie Zaban, Bar-Ilan University’s Vice President for Research, confidently expects to reverberate beyond the Bar-Ilan campus, and to transform knowledge-generation at research institutions all over the world.

“Universities generate mountains of data, but ninety percent of the observations go directly into the trash, because researchers only publish data that support their hypotheses,” Zaban says. “Just imagine,” he continues, “if we could gather all those lost observations, and let people around the world ‘mine’ this data for answers to additional questions that were never considered or were beyond the initial project’s purview. This approach could form the basis of an entirely new global network of scientific knowledge—one designed to leverage the power of emerging analytical techniques for the promotion of data-based discovery.”

Non-Hierarchical Productivity

The “Big Academic Data” project is just one example of how Zaban—appointed to the Research Vice President’s position last year—has ambitious plans for changing the way BIU does business. “Traditionally, universities in Israel are organized around faculties, which are divided into departments, which in turn oversee the research work of faculty,” Zaban says, adding that these principal investigators are free to study any topic under the sun as long as it basically aligns with departmental goals. “Academic freedom is a major engine for creativity. But if we take a planned detour around the traditional hierarchy and encourage researchers to self-organize around mutual challenges, the entire picture changes. Rather than improving performance on the departmental level, we can jump-start the creation of entirely new multi-disciplinary bodies of knowledge. Our idea—and our operational goal—is to define a dynamic series of ‘big picture challenges’ that will free our most creative thinkers from their departmental restraints, and will promote the creation of flexible, target-oriented teams who will work together to break new ground for the benefit of society.”

The challenges being considered—and currently pursued—draw inspiration from every area of inquiring, from humanities, to social sciences, to exact sciences, to Judaic studies. “BIU teams might explore, for example, the nature of ‘belief’, and how belief systems evolve historically, as well as within the individual,” Zaban says. “Another challenge gathers BIU experts in law, psychology, and brain science to examine the specific constructs that give rise to human corruption and prejudice. Challenge-based projects like these motivate the best and brightest of our existing academic community and encourage it to pool its resources and to work together with new refreshing combinations and permutations.”

“Rather than improving performance on the departmental level, we can jump-start the creation of entirely new multi-disciplinary bodies of knowledge.”

Closer to Zaban’s own area of expertise, a BIU challenge team is already seeking out the “first principles” that would make it possible to insert nano-electronic chips into virtually any object—and thus usher in a new era for medicine, communications, energy, and a host of applications we haven’t even begun to imagine.

Built-In Academic Innovation

To support such horizon-expanding projects, plans are underway to change and improve BIU’s managerial orientation, as well as its innovation-based infrastructure.
“Challenge-based research presupposes partnership with the wider community, and also serves to break down the walls of the academic ivory tower,” Zaban explains. “Industrial experts and government policy-makers are helping us to define specific research challenges that have the potential for creating a significant, positive impact. Not only are our basic researchers involved, but BIUAD – the University’s technology transfer company – is as well, training project leaders in the results-oriented management practices required to achieve results. This new management approach goes beyond the traditional distinction between ‘basic’ and ‘applied’ research within a specific discipline. Rather, challenge-based management frees the untapped potential of the BIU talent base, by creating a research ‘ecosystem’ fed by imagination and collaboration – one that produces innovative, even game-changing, results.”

In support of this vision Zaban is preparing the groundwork for three new facilities strategically designed to get revolutionary ideas off the drawing board.

“We will be establishing a Prototype Lab where teams will examine an idea’s potential – whether it’s a new type of biological sensor or a new approach to social work,” Zaban says. “A separate Pharma facility will house equipment needed for testing new approaches in nanomedicine and drug development. Finally, we are establishing an App Lab – which will plug BIU teams into the crowd-sourced community that is changing, results.”

“Challenge-based research presupposes partnership with the wider community, and also serves to break down the walls of the academic ivory tower.”

Zaban closes by saying that, while he firmly believes that this “revolution” will inspire imitation and get results, the management transformation he champions is not a zero-sum approach.

“Hierarchical academic structures are the ‘hothouses’ where many of humankind’s most important ideas have been nurtured before they branch out and take root in society,” he says. “Our goal is not to discard this hierarchy, which for many academics is still the optimum working environment. Instead, our goal is to throw open the doors, and activate our full academic potential by allowing researchers to share their vision, and to establish challenge-based projects together with people from every corner of the university community. The free exchange of ideas is naturally exciting, and the more freedom we provide, the more exciting a place Bar-Ilan will be.”

The World Rests on Three Things...

BIU Vice President Prof. Arie Zaban’s transformative approach to research management is designed to offer an alternative to the hierarchical structures that sometimes limit academic creativity. The new model rests on three goals:

• To define challenge-based research topics to be explored by multidisciplinary BIU teams, in consultation with, and with the participation of industry and government.

• To establish a strategic research infrastructure of labs for prototyping, pharma-based development, and app design.

• To harvest the “Big Data” discarded in traditional research approaches, and mine it as the basis of a new, discovery-oriented knowledge framework.

CHALLENGE TEAM 1: Complex Network Resilience

What do the threat of honeybee extinction, Ebola epidemics and historic power grid failures have in common? On face value, not much – but that conclusion would be misleading. All three resulted from dynamic changes that first de-stabilized an existing network (ecosystems that produce food, systems which impact on world health; energy systems that power the world), and then propagated through it, with disastrous results. Tracking, understanding, and eventually controlling these cascading phenomena – this is the focus of network science.

Indeed, networks drive our most crucial systems and are at the forefront of current scientific challenges. The science of networks provides a universal mathematical language to describe such diverse systems and enables us, for the first time, to develop the “physics” of epidemic spreading, sub-cellular biology, infrastructure resilience and brain functionality. That’s what makes it the defining challenge behind a new Bar-Ilan-based team devoted to Complex Network Resilience.

With expertise spanning across the fields of mathematics, physics, network science, non-linear dynamics inherent, these BIU scientists work to develop theoretical tools to assess the risk of resilience loss, predict its outcomes, and reach science-based conclusions about how to prevent or mitigate damage. Applicable to everything from the neural and genetic networks in biological systems, to networks governing economic, ecological and technology-based systems – this new approach will provide policy makers with scientifically-validated strategies for keeping complex systems stable, and for acting quickly and effectively to rehabilitate network integrity. The Team’s pathblazing work will ultimately help us protect our most precious networks so they can continue to function for society’s benefit.

The group approaches SoC design holistically, working on issues ranging from emerging devices to large-scale systems. The team has already chalked up key research achievements in fields such as hardware security, embedded memories, advanced analog circuits, energy-efficient digital systems and design with emerging devices.

The group’s wide range of academic specializations and practical expertise allows the challenge team to build and test new platforms as they emerge, “catalyzing” the transformation of scientific discoveries into working systems. Another factor focusing the team’s advances toward real-world needs is its partnership with the HiPer consortium – a group of Israeli companies identified by Israel’s Ministry of Economy, and charged with advancing the technologically important field of very-large-scale integration, or VLSI.
A novel technology developed by Dr. Yossi Mandel of BIU’s Department of Optometry with researchers at Stanford University in the US promises to improve the quality of life and treatment of glaucoma patients by enabling them to monitor intraocular pressure at home, using a smartphone. Until now, glaucoma patients had to visit their ophthalmologist every few months to get their intraocular fluid pressure examined in order to maintain or adjust their treatment accordingly. Due to the high frequency of changes in intraocular pressure, however, this periodical diagnosis is insufficient. To overcome this deficiency, Dr. Mandel’s team designed an artificial lens which is implanted in the patient’s eye. The lens contains a tiny tube of gas, affected by the amount of intraocular fluids. Using a special apparatus attached to his eye, the patient photographs the tube. The device then transmits the information to a smartphone app, and the recorded pressure level appears on the screen. The patient can repeat this process as many times as necessary. The frequent recording of data provides a much more reliable and comprehensive status report, and enables physicians to provide a tailor made and highly effective treatment.

The new device developed by Dr. Mandel’s team is user-friendly, and can be operated by the patient himself. Another advantage: fewer doctors’ appointments!

A W

A Bright Future for Glaucoma Patients

Tomorrow’s Soldiers

ill robots soon replace IDF soldiers in performing high-risk missions? It’s up to Dr. Noa Agmon of BIU’s Department of Computer Science, then the answer is a definite “yes.” Within the next few years, high-functioning robots will be engaged in various security roles. “These robots are able to detect landmines under sniper fire, with high survival rates. They could also function as UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) and detect targets on the ground, with minimal human intervention. Our objective is to program the robot to overcome obstacles and achieve maximum success in tasks as diverse as patrolling enemy territory, mapping Mars or navigating the bottom of the ocean.”

Dr. Agmon’s research focuses on the differences between robots active in friendly surroundings and those operating under fire. As part of her research, Agmon is developing artificial intelligence enabling robots to cope with difficulties and malfunctions, collaborate with other robots, and make independent decisions in the field.

Good news for our soldiers who will be able to deploy these “fighting” robots in battle, thereby saving precious lives!

New Study Will Enable Search Engines to Comprehend the Meaning of Sentences, Gather and Accumulate Relevant Conclusions Based on the Data Collected, and Summarize an Extensive Amount of Information from the Web. Future search engines will assist doctors in improving treatment given to patients, be used by company executives in advancing critical services, and enable security forces to detect online threats and respond quickly and efficiently. “The biggest problem of online information search,” says Prof. Ido Dagan of BIU’s Department of Computer Science, “is the vast amount of irrelevant or redundant information generated in each search resulting in wasted time and energy.

Dagan is working to teach computers to notice search entries which are phrased differently but which have the same meaning. His research has led to academic cooperation with four research groups and three industrial companies from Germany, Italy and Israel who have combined to form the “Excitement Open Platform” (EOP). This research won financial and scientific backing from the European Union.

Additionally, one of the applications developed on the basis of Dagan’s research is currently being adapted for use for application in the service centers of the commercial entities participating in the project. The app classifies the hundreds of calls coming in to the service centers every day, and categorizes them according to topics and sub-topics, thus providing the organization with a comprehensive status report that will aid in providing better service to the consumer.

Next-Generation Search Engines

A new study will enable search engines to comprehend the meaning of sentences, gather and accumulate relevant conclusions based on the data collected, and summarize an extensive amount of information from the web. Future search engines will assist doctors in improving treatment given to patients, be used by company executives in advancing critical services, and enable security forces to detect online threats and respond quickly and efficiently. “The biggest problem of online information search,” says Prof. Ido Dagan of BIU’s Department of Computer Science, “is the vast amount of irrelevant or redundant information generated in each search resulting in wasted time and energy.

Dagan is working to teach computers to notice search entries which are phrased differently but which have the same meaning. His research has led to academic cooperation with four research groups and three industrial companies from Germany, Italy and Israel who have combined to form the “Excitement Open Platform” (EOP). This research won financial and scientific backing from the European Union.

Additionally, one of the applications developed on the basis of Dagan’s research is currently being adapted for use for application in the service centers of the commercial entities participating in the project. The app classifies the hundreds of calls coming in to the service centers every day, and categorizes them according to topics and sub-topics, thus providing the organization with a comprehensive status report that will aid in providing better service to the consumer.
Upgrading Quality of Life for the Elderly

Obesity is the plague of the 21st century. About 1 billion people, all over the world, are obese or overweight, and are at risk of developing metabolic maladies as a result. Prof. Haim Cohen studies the connection between the amount of food we consume and the rate at which we age. He aims to develop drugs that will treat a wide range of maladies that affect the elderly and help us to achieve longer, healthier lives.

Prof. Haim Cohen's interest in this subject began while doing his post-doc at Harvard University, after reading an article by his advisor about the molecular biology of aging, involving the Saccharomyces cerevisiae yeast. “The article meticulously and methodically described the aging mechanism of the Saccharomyces cerevisiae cell,” recalls Cohen, who is Head of the Molecular Biology of Aging lab at BIU’s Mina and Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences. “I realized this data could be the basis of research that could improve the quality of human life.”

Identifying Genes that Prevent Disease due to Overeating

Cohen’s initial investigation of yeast has since evolved at his BIU lab into fruitful research on living organisms, and he has high hopes for success with regards human subjects in the near future. His research on metabolism and aging focuses on identifying the genes that affect the rate of aging and those in charge of regulation and calorie intake restriction. (Not a specific diet regiment, but rather cutting down on food consumption.

“My lab team and I identify and isolate the genes that are responsible for metabolism and that prevent diseases that are a result of overeating. The isolated genes are then tested in our lab, after which we use the results to produce drugs for various age-related diseases.” These drugs are aimed to treat illnesses stemming from overeating or bad nutrition, such as diabetes, fatty liver disease, infections, high blood pressure, and heart problems, as well as, hopefully, the cognitive issues that can occur in old age.

Cohen declares that his research is at a very advanced stage and that in about two years he and his team will be able to save ailing lab animals using drugs, rather than genetic cloning, as is currently the case. That said, treatments for humans are still years away. The final stage, analyzing the results of the experiments and creating effective new drugs based on the findings, to be approved by the health ministry for commercial distribution, is a multilayered process hinging on any number of factors, and it is nearly impossible to estimate a deadline.

Delivering the Effects of Obesity

“But even after we have the approved drug,” says Cohen, “it would still not be a green light for overeating. The new drugs will not remove or prevent the damaging effects of overindulging. They will only be able to significantly delay the effects of obesity, high cholesterol and triglycerides. ‘We have to remember that we are facing a mighty opponent — Mother Nature,’ says Cohen. ‘A new drug may extend life expectancy and improve life quality in old age, but never remove our need and personal responsibility to lead as healthy a lifestyle as possible.’

“The main challenge faced by biological research is preventing or significantly delaying illnesses that affect the elderly.”

Improving Quality of Life

“The main challenge faced by biological research is preventing or significantly delaying illnesses that affect the elderly,” explains Cohen. Old age is accompanied by numerous health issues, such as cancer and heart disease, which scientists are tirelessly working to cure. If we find a basic solution that affects the entire range of problems, we might be able to win a few simultaneous battles in this war.”

Cohen also notes the vital role his research can play on the improvement of quality of life. “Until now we focused on prolonging life expectancy, but we never eradicated the diseases that come with old age. As a result, there is a growing financial burden on younger generations, society, and specifically the patients’ families. Improving quality of life as well as life expectancy is our ultimate goal.”
At BIU’s School of Medicine in the Galilee, Prof. Izhak Haviv’s team in the Cancer Research Center is developing a novel research method to personalize medical treatment for each cancer patient and their particular symptoms, thus vastly improving their chances of recovery.

直至现在，成功的传统医学在很大程度上依赖于医生对类似疾病的处理经验，以及统计分析。然而，如果你想治愈尽可能多的病人，你就不能只依赖于统计均值，为所有人开出相同的治疗方案。每个人的需要都必须被考虑进去。因此，每个病人必须接受适合他或她的治疗方案。

“如果我们想治愈尽可能多的病人，我们就不能只依赖于统计平均值，开出同样的治疗方案。每个人的需要都必须被考虑进去。因此，每个病人必须接受适合他或她的治疗方案。”

一旦我完成了实验室的所有测试，我就可以回到临床医生那里，根据这个特定的病人开出个性化的治疗建议。“

“Personalized Medicine”

At BIU’s School of Medicine in the Galilee, Prof. Izhak Haviv’s team in the Cancer Research Center is developing a novel research method to personalize medical treatment for each cancer patient and their particular symptoms, thus vastly improving their chances of recovery.

If you want to heal as many patients as possible, you can’t rely solely on the statistical mean and prescribe identical treatment for all. Individuals’ needs must be taken into account.

“Once I conclude all the tests in the lab, I can go back to the physician with a treatment recommendation customized to suit this particular patient.”

Haviv says that in his lab they test a massive amount of variables from small groups of patients. “In a standard blood test normally about a hundred variables are tested. Here in our lab at the BIU medical school, we are testing between 2-3 million variables, and that’s a whole new world of data. The process is similar to intensifying an image resolution to the very best of the technological abilities. A conventional scientist will begin with a premise, and examine the factors it dictates. I, on the other hand, don’t test what I know, but rather, anything technology allows me to test. When you examine the optimal number of variables provided by technology, you come up with new work premises.”

“Personalized Medicine”

At BIU’s School of Medicine in the Galilee, Prof. Izhak Haviv’s team in the Cancer Research Center is developing a novel research method to personalize medical treatment for each cancer patient and their particular symptoms, thus vastly improving their chances of recovery.

If you want to heal as many patients as possible, you can’t rely solely on the statistical mean and prescribe identical treatment for all. Individuals’ needs must be taken into account.

“Once I conclude all the tests in the lab, I can go back to the physician with a treatment recommendation customized to suit this particular patient.”

Haviv says that in his lab they test a massive amount of variables from small groups of patients. “In a standard blood test normally about a hundred variables are tested. Here in our lab at the BIU medical school, we are testing between 2-3 million variables, and that’s a whole new world of data. The process is similar to intensifying an image resolution to the very best of the technological abilities. A conventional scientist will begin with a premise, and examine the factors it dictates. I, on the other hand, don’t test what I know, but rather, anything technology allows me to test. When you examine the optimal number of variables provided by technology, you come up with new work premises.”

“Personalized Medicine”

At BIU’s School of Medicine in the Galilee, Prof. Izhak Haviv’s team in the Cancer Research Center is developing a novel research method to personalize medical treatment for each cancer patient and their particular symptoms, thus vastly improving their chances of recovery.

If you want to heal as many patients as possible, you can’t rely solely on the statistical mean and prescribe identical treatment for all. Individuals’ needs must be taken into account.

“Once I conclude all the tests in the lab, I can go back to the physician with a treatment recommendation customized to suit this particular patient.”

Haviv says that in his lab they test a massive amount of variables from small groups of patients. “In a standard blood test normally about a hundred variables are tested. Here in our lab at the BIU medical school, we are testing between 2-3 million variables, and that’s a whole new world of data. The process is similar to intensifying an image resolution to the very best of the technological abilities. A conventional scientist will begin with a premise, and examine the factors it dictates. I, on the other hand, don’t test what I know, but rather, anything technology allows me to test. When you examine the optimal number of variables provided by technology, you come up with new work premises.”

“Personalized Medicine”

At BIU’s School of Medicine in the Galilee, Prof. Izhak Haviv’s team in the Cancer Research Center is developing a novel research method to personalize medical treatment for each cancer patient and their particular symptoms, thus vastly improving their chances of recovery.

If you want to heal as many patients as possible, you can’t rely solely on the statistical mean and prescribe identical treatment for all. Individuals’ needs must be taken into account.

“Once I conclude all the tests in the lab, I can go back to the physician with a treatment recommendation customized to suit this particular patient.”

Haviv says that in his lab they test a massive amount of variables from small groups of patients. “In a standard blood test normally about a hundred variables are tested. Here in our lab at the BIU medical school, we are testing between 2-3 million variables, and that’s a whole new world of data. The process is similar to intensifying an image resolution to the very best of the technological abilities. A conventional scientist will begin with a premise, and examine the factors it dictates. I, on the other hand, don’t test what I know, but rather, anything technology allows me to test. When you examine the optimal number of variables provided by technology, you come up with new work premises.”

“Personalized Medicine”

At BIU’s School of Medicine in the Galilee, Prof. Izhak Haviv’s team in the Cancer Research Center is developing a novel research method to personalize medical treatment for each cancer patient and their particular symptoms, thus vastly improving their chances of recovery.

If you want to heal as many patients as possible, you can’t rely solely on the statistical mean and prescribe identical treatment for all. Individuals’ needs must be taken into account.

“Once I conclude all the tests in the lab, I can go back to the physician with a treatment recommendation customized to suit this particular patient.”

Haviv says that in his lab they test a massive amount of variables from small groups of patients. “In a standard blood test normally about a hundred variables are tested. Here in our lab at the BIU medical school, we are testing between 2-3 million variables, and that’s a whole new world of data. The process is similar to intensifying an image resolution to the very best of the technological abilities. A conventional scientist will begin with a premise, and examine the factors it dictates. I, on the other hand, don’t test what I know, but rather, anything technology allows me to test. When you examine the optimal number of variables provided by technology, you come up with new work premises.”
Improving Patients’ Quality of Life

Each of the researchers in Haviv’s team contributes his or her specific expertise to the identification of the exact attributes of the disease and to finding the best-suited treatment. This, in addition to the fact that they all study human tumors containing extensive clinical, pathological, molecular and genomic data, also helps promote each scientists’ personal research.

Dr. Meital Gal-Tananuy and Dr. Meir Shamay study the ways viruses can indirectly cause cancer through distorting genes. Dr. Hava Gil-Henn studies the formation of metastasis, adding relevant data to the testing of drug reaction and efficacy. Dr. Michael Blank examines the control mechanisms of DNA damage response and repairs, and the resistance mechanisms of different types of cancer to standard chemotherapy treatments. Two other researchers, Dr. Moshe Dessau and Dr. Avraham Samson, protege of 2013 Chemistry Nobel Laureate Prof. Michael Levitt, reinforce their colleagues’ work by developing specific medications based on the proteins found in each tumor.

In an effort to find the most effective treatment for each type of cancer, the Center is collaborating with several pharmaceutical companies.

Levitt, reinforce their colleagues’ work by developing specific medications based on the proteins found in each tumor. In an effort to find the most effective treatment for each type of cancer, the Center is collaborating with several pharmaceutical companies. The high-level scientific nature of this research enables these companies to conduct a battery of comprehensive tests on new medications prior to clinical trials on humans. According to Prof. Haviv, so far eight companies have provided the research lab with new samples for testing and comparison with current samples. Aside from contributing to the quest for finding the cure, notes Haviv, “this collaboration is also beneficial to the companies, who are interested in having their drugs approved by the FDA. By adapting each medication to specific patients, higher rates of success can be presented for each medication, thus enhancing the chances of getting a speedy FDA approval.”

In the past year the Cancer Research Center of BIU’s School of Medicine in the Galilee studied more than 300 living samples. More than half of those are being cultured in the lab and are used by the researchers. In about two-thirds of the cases the results were applied and used successfully on the patients. Prof. Haviv is careful not to give false hope to cancer patients, and emphasizes that this research cannot cure terminal patients. He does, however, confirm that the treatment recommendations that his team is able to provide based on their research have been proven successful in extending life expectancy and quality of life among some of the patients.

A Better Mood

It’s All in the Mind

Can you boost your mood simply by actively engaging the power of thought? BIU’s renowned cognitive neuroscientist, Prof. Moshe Bar, is exploring ways to improve the mood of people suffering from depression by altering their thought patterns. Our mood is an emotional state in flux, with ups and downs. When the going is “good,” we feel confident, serene, happy and motivated. When it’s “bad” we feel sad, worried, unmotivated and sometimes fatigued. Our mood is influenced by our surroundings and life events, and...
affected by our psychological resilience as well as by our natural predisposition to pessimism or optimism. However, according to Moshe Bar, Director of BIU’s Leslie and Susan Gonda (Goldschmied) Multidisciplinary Brain Research Center, there’s another factor that plays a crucial role — our thought patterns.

Bar maintains that mood swings are like flying a kite, which fluctuates according to the wind. “Just as a kite flies high when wind conditions are optimal, so too when we are in a good mood we are ‘flying high,’” more able to recognize opportunities and act on them, and thus become more productive and industrious members of society who enjoy life.”

Everyone experiences mood swings, which, says Bar, motivate people to strive for success and learn from experience. However, being in the same mood for an extended period of time, especially if it’s a bad mood, may lead to clinical depression. Prolonged depression has come up with a number of financial and social ramifications. Modern medicine has up until now only treated the symptoms of people suffering from depression with antidepressants, but Bar’s team is examining novel modes of therapy. In a research study he conducted among people suffering from depression, Prof. Bar discovered that they all share a similar thought pattern called “rumination.” “These people fixate, or ruminate, on one single frame of mind. For example, a person who made an inappropriate comment would obsess about it for the rest of the day. ‘Why did I say that? I shouldn’t have said that. I’m such an idiot...’ And so the vicious cycle continues. This may happen to people not suffering from depression, but the difference is that they let go of it after a few minutes, and are no longer bothered by the event. Even if they recall it sometime in the future, they would not obsess over it. The healthy brain is associative, moving forward from one thought to the next.”

**Associative Thinking**

Is it possible to modify the frame of mind for people suffering from depression? This is the question confronting Prof. Bar at this stage of his research. “We are not trying to change what these people think about,” clarifies Bar. “If someone lost a member of their family we can’t just tell them to forget about it. It is truly sad, and that’s a life event that has to be dealt with. But if the person can’t return to a functional state, continues to suffer from bad moods and is ‘stuck’ for no other apparent reason, we try to bring him or her back to the healthier, associative frame of mind. As scientists, we can study not only the phenomenon of depression, but also develop techniques like cognitive exercise games, which show them how to flow from one thought to the next and how to think using a broader perspective.”

As scientists, we can study not only the phenomenon of depression, but also develop techniques like cognitive exercise games, which show them how to flow from one thought to the next and how to think using a broader perspective.

His research examines the brain structures of people suffering from clinical depression. MRI images of these people show that the continued state of depression affects the structure of their hippocampus (the area of the brain affecting recall of facts and events). This alteration is reversible using anti-depressants, but Bar’s team is examining whether it can be fixed using cognitive thought - pattern changes instead. “If we succeed by employing cognitive means, it may very well affect the concentration of the brain chemicals in these depressed individuals, and eventually, their neurotransmitters will balance out to fit their mood.” Notes Prof. Moshe Bar, “This is still just an idea, but we are very optimistic.” Now that is indeed a positive mood-changer!
until 18 months ago, BIU physicist Prof. Aviad Frydman’s research had no connection with investigations relating to the so-called “God Particle,” believed responsible for all the mass in the universe. His specialty is superconductors, with his experiments performed in ultra-low temperatures and energies – not supercolliders, within which the Higgs boson, popularly known as the “God Particle,” was discovered. However, research conducted by his PhD student, Daniel Sherman, led to the re-creation – in Frydman’s lab – of the God Particle, which was first discovered in the multi-billion dollar CERN supercollider. In joint research with groups in India and Germany, Daniel performed experiments using ultra-thin superconducting films which showed an unexplained light absorption in random areas. Frydman’s research team examined various possible explanations and consulted with colleagues from Israel and the US, who were working on theoretical conditions for measuring the Higgs in superconductors. As it turned out the films answered all their requirements, and his measured light absorption was revealed to be a typical phenomenon of the Higgs boson. And so inadvertently, Frydman’s team had discovered the God Particle’s “long lost brother” in an ordinary, run-of-the-mill, low cost lab experiment, using standard equipment.

“The Nobel Prize in Physics awarded to Peter Higgs and BIU Honorary Doctor François Englert in 2013 marks an extraordinary breakthrough in our understanding of natural laws,” elucidates Frydman. “From a purely theoretical perspective, the honorees developed a theory explaining, among other things, the formation of mass in the universe. The discovery of the Higgs boson verified what is known as the Standard Model, which predicted that particles gain mass by passing through a field that slows down their movement through the vacuum of space. Ironically, while the discussion about this ‘missing link’ in the Standard Model was inspired by superconductor theory, the Higgs mode was never actually observed in superconductors because of technical difficulties – difficulties that we’ve managed to overcome in our lab at Bar-Ilan.”

“The observation of the Higgs mechanism in superconductors is significant because it reveals how a single type of physical process behaves under drastically different energy conditions.”

“Mathematical proofs are highly valued in physics, and we need to be able to measure the Higgs boson in superconductors to be able to prove the fundamental theory.”

Moreover, the robust nature of the newly-observed Higgs mode in superconductors, discovered by Frydman’s research student in his lab at Bar-Ilan, could make it easier for scientists to study the still-controversial “God Particle” – the elusive “missing link” in the Standard Theory of particle physics believed responsible for imparting mass to all the matter in the universe. “An important message here is that scientific research is neither linear nor predictable,” says Frydman. “Many of the most significant scientific discoveries were accidental. Scientists often set out to study one phenomenon and end up finding something entirely different and much more interesting. Much like a detective, the role of the scientist is to gather clues from experiments, and deduce unexplained phenomena. The very few times when a ‘missing link’ is discovered, and all the pieces of the puzzle come together, are indeed ‘God Particle’ moments.”

Thanks to BIU Prof. Frydman’s new approach, it may soon be possible to solve long-standing mysteries of fundamental physics, through experiments conducted – not in a multi-billion dollar accelerator complex – but on a laboratory tabletop!
Dismantling the Conversion Monopoly in the State of Israel

An Op-Ed by Prof. Yedidia Stern

The fact that few immigrants of “Zera Yisrael” (Jews by patrilineal descent) convert to Judaism hinders their integration, increases the chances of intermarriage and assimilation and threatens to divide Israeli society. BIU Law Prof. Yedidia Stern calls for the State to remove the sole jurisdiction of conversion from the hands of the Chief Rabbinate.

Presumably, the Chief Rabbinate should be motivated by national accountability and should adopt halakhic stances which would enable anyone earnestly interested in converting to do so. Sadly, that’s not the case. Although these people are declared “Zera Yisrael,” and some serve in the IDF and consider themselves Jewish in every way, the current halakhic policy is strict rather than lenient. It’s a Beit Shammai (not a Beit Hillel) approach, which is not halakhically binding, and its consequences are tough, with an enormous danger of our children assimilating right here, in the Jewish land.

Concerned about this situation, a group of prominent national religious rabbis, led by Rabbi Nachum L. Rabinovitch (a 2015 BIU honorary doctor), has decided to establish a private conversion initiative, circumventing the Chief Rabbinate, which targets minors. This decision expresses the great frustration at leaving the issue with those who are not sufficiently sensitive to its importance. Responding to a national need, their aim is to prevent assimilation and a schism within the nation.

However, this is an extremely difficult choice: the Chief Rabbinate is an official national body, symbolizing the bond between religion and state in Israel. Even those who, like me, think that the Chief Rabbinate is failing at its tasks on the moral, public and religious levels, we still can’t deny its embodiment of the religious aspect in the legal characterization of Israel as a Jewish state. Therefore, the decision to establish alternative conversion courts is essentially undermining the authority of the Rabbinate of the State of Israel and raises great hesitation.

In any case, the bold decision of the national religious rabbis is the last “wake-up call” for national religious parties: they must arise and act and stop ignoring the issue by leaving it to ultra-Orthodox institutions. The national religious community is still larger than the ultra-Orthodox. It can unite with the wide swath of traditionally-minded Jews and assume responsibility for all issues regarding religion and state in Israel. If they don’t do so, it could spell the end to the Rabbinate of the State of Israel.

Prof. Yedidia Stern, of the BIU Faculty of Law and its former Dean, is also Vice President of Research at the Israel Democracy Institute.
Defeating ISIS

In the past two years the Islamic State (ISIS) has gained control over entire populations, areas and energy resources in the Middle East, aiming to restore the “glorious” days of the Islamic caliphate. Israel, too, has begun to worry that the murderous group is closing in. What is ISIS and how do we defend ourselves from it?

“T he Islamic State (ISIS) couldn’t care less about the perceptions of the western or modern world,” says Prof. Zeev Maghen, Head of BIU’s Department of Middle Eastern Studies. “ISIS doesn’t compromise or apologize in any way. Many young Muslims view this as a very daring approach. That’s the allure of this organization.”

ISIS is a jihadist Sunni organization that has conquered substantial areas of Syria and Iraq in just a few years. An even more extreme offshoot of Al-Qaeda, it is headed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, a charismatic leader whose ambition is to establish and head a worldwide caliphate. Al-Baghdadi has drawn many individual followers as well as other jihadist organizations based mostly in Libya, the Sinai and Nigeria. The organization currently has tens of thousands of warriors, many of whom are foreign citizens who have joined ISIS forces in Syria and Iraq. ISIS funds itself by the gas and oil fields it has subjugated in conquered areas, ransom demands, blackmail and the sale of antiques pillaged from archaeological sites it has invaded.

Attracting Young Fanatics

The ISIS ideology is exceedingly fanatical, even in comparison to other extremist organizations. For instance "the Moslem Brotherhood of Egypt was and still is willing to participate in a democratic regime as is the Islamic Republic of Iran (representing Shia Muslims). The name speaks for itself – a republic is a western, Greek, anti-religious, strictly nationalist idea," says Prof. Maghen. "ISIS, on the other hand, refuses to incorporate any ideas or influences that are not clearly stated in the Koran, Islamic law, or the Hadith (collections of stories and quotes of the prophet Mohammad, including his definition of the Koran and Islamic law).” Prof. Maghen says that only ISIS publicly and shamelessly auctions female slaves, and enslaves Yazidis and other non-Muslims in Iraq and Syria. In addition, exclusive to ISIS, is its attempt to establish the Islamic caliphate wherever they conquer, as opposed to other Islamist groups, including Al-Qaeda, who have focused exclusively on terror and destruction.

“ISIS doesn’t compromise or apologize in any way. Many young Muslims view this as a very daring approach. That’s the allure of this organization.”
According to Prof. Maghen, in the past few decades a “textual community” of millions of young Muslims around the world has developed of those who read and study the Koran and consequently are more devout. “These texts, especially the Hadith, are filled with folkloristic tales which pious followers find captivating. These young Muslims fantasize that they are in Mecca and Medina, shoulder to shoulder with the prophet Mohammad and his initial followers, and with the caliphs of the time. ISIS attempts to recreate the original Islamic State inspired by the prophet, and young devout idealists flock to the cause,” he says.

A Threat to Regional Stability

In October 2014 ISIS warriors infiltrated Libya without warning. They came through the city of Derna in eastern Libya, a particularly chaotic and violent region, which has been the breeding ground for various jihadist organizations. Derna is known as a searing hub of religious fanatics, sending many jihadist “warriors” to the various wars taking place in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. Initially part of an international jihadist network, they abandoned Al Qaeda and joined ISIS in Libya.

“Today ISIS isn’t the strongest player in Libya, but it is certainly prominent, cruel and resourceful, and not to be discounted,” says Prof. Yehudit Ronen, of BIU’s Department of Political Studies, an expert on the Middle East, jihadist Islam and immigration.

According to Prof. Ronen, not much is known about the Libyan branch of ISIS, which has only been operational for about a year. However, she says, “we know for a fact that quite a few jihadist organizations joined ISIS in general and its Libyan branch in particular. Among these, Wilayat Sinai (formerly Ansar Bait al-Maqdis) operates in the Sinai Peninsula, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and various jihadist organizations in the Philippines, the Caucasus, Afghanistan and other countries. Those who joined ISIS pledged spiritual allegiance (‘Bayah’) to Al-Baghdadi.”

Defeating ISIS

Prof. Maghen says that though ISIS threatens mainly Islamic states, the only ones to declare an all-out war on ISIS are the Iranian Shia, who are the most threatened, while the Sunni are not expected to react any time soon. “The vast majority of Muslims are Sunni and they are in no hurry to rise against ISIS, because to them, Shia-Iranian control is more terrifying than ISIS.”

“We know for a fact that quite a few jihadist organizations joined ISIS in general and its Libyan branch in particular.”

Maghen believes that ISIS is a clear and present threat to the west and to Israel. “ISIS may not have tanks, airplanes or nuclear weapons, but they have a powerful, clear new-old idea that stimulates hundreds of millions of people, and that’s the biggest threat, mostly because no western idea can parallel it. History proves that strong new ideas that captivate the masses are the ones that set aside stale old ideals that have lost their appeal.”

“Up until now, the west has done nothing but prove its ineptitude,” says Maghen. “In order to deal with the ISIS threat one must be swift and decisive, with the sole objective of completely annihilating this organization, even at the unfortunate cost of innocent lives. We must remember that Islamic State is all about victory. This organization aims to establish Islamic caliphates, protect and expand them. But this is also where its weakness lies, because if unable to achieve these aims, the idea will lose its power and appeal. Therefore, ISIS needs to be defeated now, while we still have the ability to do so, BUT we need the courage to do so.”

Photography: Reuters
Contrary to popular myth, US support for Israel is not based on the pro-Israel lobby, but rather is deeply embedded in American political culture. And that support for the Middle East’s only true democracy — and for a vital strategic ally — has surged since 9/11. So contends BIU political scientist, Dr. Jonathan Rynhold, who directs the Argov Center for the Study of Israel and the Jewish People, and is a senior research associate at the Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies. In his book, The Arab-Israeli Conflict in American Political Culture (2015 Cambridge University Press), Rynhold notes that most of that increase in support has been among Republicans, conservatives, evangelicals, and Orthodox Jews. Meanwhile, among Democrats, liberals, the mainline Protestant Church, and non-Orthodox Jews, criticism of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians has become more vociferous. This “Israel paradox” — the growth of both support for Israel and controversy surrounding its policies — is delineated in Rynhold’s book, which is touted as the most comprehensive work about American attitudes toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1991. Small wonder then, that it is piquing interest at Israel’s Foreign Ministry, at top think tanks in the US and UK, and among politicians with diverse ideological outlooks.

“The Arab-Israeli conflict has become a major arena in which deep divisions over grand strategy are played out.”

School of Economics, and is a media commentator on BBC, Sky, NBC, CNN, and the Arab Al-Jazeera. “Those who favor a more robust US grand strategy, and who emphasize the divide between democratic and nondemocratic regimes, tend to favor Israel more strongly, while those who favor a more defensive grand strategy, and who tend to discount ideologies except for nationalism, tend to a more evenhanded or hostile approach to Israel. While this divide straddles both parties, increasingly, most Republicans tend to strongly favor a more robust approach, while Democrats are divided but lean toward a more defensive approach.”

A significant challenge for Israel, says Rynhold, is to “maintain political support from American liberals — including Jewish liberals, as with each generation, liberals are becoming increasingly vocal and influential, particularly in the Democratic Party.”

The British-born Rynhold, who was a visiting professor at George Washington University in the US, relays that “there is a clear attachment gap that mirrors the wider polarization within the American Jewish community between the Orthodox and the unaffiliated, with Reform and Conservative Jews in the middle.”

One of his book’s central findings is that “the underlying sympathy for Israel in America is incredibly resilient, intertwined as it is with the very foundations of American identity, generating a willingness to support Israel’s well-being, especially its security, on terms and in ways that the US does not do for other countries.”

“The lesson for the State of Israel is that consensual support in America is more important than higher overall levels of support concentrated on one side of the political spectrum.” As Rynhold told Shmuel Rosen in Jewish Journal last year, “It is a very important Israeli interest to protect bipartisan support for Israel in the United States. After all, the Republicans are not going to win every election from here to eternity.”
The vegan and vegetarian trend is gaining wide popularity in recent years. Even if most of us are still self-declared carnivores, the demand for vegan catering and eateries is on the rise, and many restaurants already offer vegan and vegetarian options on their menus. The number of people who became vegans following the lectures of American animal rights activist Gary Yourofsky is astonishing, and no one is surprised anymore to hear that friends, family and acquaintances are swearing off meat or animal products. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2.6% of the adult population in Israel (in 2010) declared themselves as either vegan or vegetarian (a higher rate than that of the US or the UK).

**Not a Passing Fad**

Dr. Yael Shemesh, a lecturer in BIU’s Zalman Shamir Bible Department, is a vegan and blogger of “Long Distance Vegan,” where she shares her experiences as a long distance runner. According to Shemesh, veganism is not a passing fad. She quotes Victor Hugo, who said “Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come” and explains that the rising popularity of this trend stems from the growing awareness of the benefits of the vegan lifestyle.

“Veganism became popular largely thanks to technology,” says Shemesh, noting “the unprecedented volume of information readily available to the public about its benefits on the one hand, and heightened awareness of animal abuse issues on the other. The internet offers a plethora of lectures by doctors and scientists enumerating the health advantages of veganism. As a result, the number of health-motivated vegans is on the rise. Additionally, the revelation of the significant ecological damage created by the animal products industry is motivating environmentally-conscience people to opt for veganism.”

“Veganism became popular largely thanks to technology.”

**Man was Created Vegetarian**

"Proof that veganism was preferred both by God and by man can be found even in the Bible: ‘And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.’ ‘[Genesis I. 29] The very first chapter of the first book of the Bible in essence instructs man to eat only vegetation. Only after the great flood during Noah’s lifetime is man allowed to consume meat. Consequently, the first ten human generations were vegetarian. It was God’s first decree, and the permission given to eat meat is a deviation from that decree,” maintains Shemesh. “Some interpret that to mean that the flood destroyed all the crops, so man had to revert to eating meat. When the people of Israel were wandering in the desert, God ‘rained down bread from heaven,’ not meat. Moreover, the vegetarian diet is mentioned in the Bible not only at the beginning of time, but at the end of days as well. In Isaiah’s messianic vision, all living creatures will co-exist harmoniously ‘And the lion will eat straw like the ox.’” (Isaiah 11). The Bible, notes Dr. Shemesh, recognizes the wonders of veganism: Daniel and his comrades, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who were exiled to Babylon as consultants under orders of Nebuchadnezzar, refused to eat at the king’s table (which was not kosher), and subsisted on grains. “They looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food” (Daniel I, 15). The moral of the story may be that there was divine intervention at hand, but our sages explain that these men were healthier because meat causes
illness, while they only ate grains. Indeed, the 15th Century Abarbanel, in his commentary on Daniel, maintained that since man was permitted to eat meat during the days of Noah, who also initiated wine drinking, life expectancy diminished.

“Proof that veganism was preferred both by God and by man can be found even in the Bible.”

What did our Sages Eat?

“Food is the material expression of the geographical and cultural environment in which it was created,” says Dr. Tova Dikstein, a historian who studied ancient Israelite foods during her studies at BIU’s Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology.

Dr. Dikstein, whose specialty is the cuisine during biblical, mishnaic and talmudic times, maintains that in those days people were vegan or vegetarian for economic, and not for health reasons: “most of the people of Israel didn’t eat meat back then, not because they didn’t want it, but because it was very expensive.” Dikstein says that conscientious veganism during those times only existed among some of the Hellenic people who believed in natural living and asceticism.

In her research Dikstein found that Israeli foods in antiquity were similar to Middle Eastern foods of the era, mostly consisting of “Dagan, Tirosh and Yitshar” — grains, grape juice and oil. Many of those dishes were passed down through the generations until today. Among those, Dikstein notes a dish called “Nikudim,” which, “in contrast to what is commonly believed, is not stale bread, but toast. In the Midrash it is ‘Pahsamim,’ and to this day the dish exists in the Middle East, and is called ‘Paskimas.’”

"Food is the material expression of the geographical and cultural environment in which it was created.”

Dikstein says that she made the decision to study and re-create the ancient Israelite diet while living in New York. “On a particularly rainy day I suddenly smelled an aroma of roasted eggplant, just like my mother used to make. I followed the scent and arrived at a Lebanese restaurant, right there in the middle of Manhattan. I recalled the tale of two Jewish children who were captured by a Roman soldier 2,000 years ago and were taken to Rome as captives. When they arrived, one of the children said that he smelled the scent of leeks of Judea cooked in the Kfar Hananya cauldron, meaning that Israeli food such as that leek dish was being cooked in ancient Rome, smelling like no other Roman dish. And that familiar eggplant smell I remembered from my childhood was coming from a Lebanese restaurant, of all places. In other words, I realized that there is no such thing as ‘Israel cuisine.’ This insight motivated me to study the Israeli dishes we once had and which are no longer prepared.”

Her research and the process of re-creating all those dishes were complex and took place over the course of a decade. “I cross referenced various sources: the Bible, the Mishnah, the Talmud, the writings of our sages, ancient literature, information about neighboring peoples beginning with Sumer and ending with Rome in different periods, as well as archaeological and botanical references. These all helped me identify the plants and ingredients used in those ancient dishes. I decided to focus on vegetarian dishes which were the main dietary regimens of ancient times. I travelled across the Middle East to Turkey, Crete and Jordan, and conducted an ethnographic study among traditional ethnic groups in Israel, such as the Samaritans and Israeli-Arabs.”

Two Recipes from Dr. Tova Dikstein’s Research

Ashishot: Sweet Biblical Latkes

Ingredients:
- 200 grams green lentils
- 2 Tbsp flour
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1 1/2 cups water or milk
- 3 eggs (or replace each egg with 1 Tbsp ground flax seed soaked in 3 Tbsp water)

Directions:
- Toast the lentils and grind into flour using a food processor or blender.
- The finer you grind it the better. Mix the ground lentils and flour. Add the eggs or egg substitute and honey.
- Heat the olive oil in a pan. Spoon the batter into the hot oil to make small pancakes. (If you don’t want to fry them you can try baking them).

Ashishot – Comfort Food

Dr. Dikstein demonstrates the re-creation process with her exploration of the dish “ashishot,” mentioned in the Song of Songs. “Strengthen me with ashishot, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love.”

Ashishot 

Ingredients:
- Olive oil
- 200 grams green lentils
- 2 Tbsp flour
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1 1/2 cups water or milk
- 3 eggs (or replace each egg with 1 Tbsp ground flax seed soaked in 3 Tbsp water)

Directions:
- Toast the lentils and grind into flour using a food processor or blender.
- Add the ground lentils and flour. Add the eggs or egg substitute and honey.
- Heat the olive oil in a pan. Spoon the batter into the hot oil to make small pancakes.

Asasiot: Pomegranate Wheat Grain Salad

Ingredients:
- 1 cup wheat grains soaked in water over night
- Seeds of 1 pomegranate
- 1/2 cup walnuts
- 3 Tbsp honey

Directions:
- Cook the wheat for an hour, strain and cool. Add the rest of the ingredients and mix together.

"Strengthen me with ashishot, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love.”

Dr. Tova Dikstein preparing recipes from antiquity. Photography: Anatoli Michaelo

"Food is the material expression of the geographical and cultural environment in which it was created.”
Although we tend to associate knights with Christianity, apparently Jewish knights, too, appeared in illustrated medieval fairytales and poetry, symbolizing the noble aspirations of the elite of the downtrodden Jewish community.

The Jewish knight was created for internal needs, to boost the morale of the Jewish community that was being persecuted and humiliated at the time. In research focusing on illustrations of knights in Jewish manuscripts from France and Germany during the 13-14th centuries [the height of the Christian Crusades], Dr. Offenberg creates a clear picture of the Jewish knight. He does not have any visible Jewish insignia, and his religion is only evident from the text. As an example, Offenberg presents an illustration appearing in a liturgical poem for Shabbat Shekalim, describing two warriors: “They can be identified as the two Messianic figures – the Messiah ben (son of) David and Messiah ben Joseph – only after comprehending the contents of the poem. The illustration follows the Christian artistic style of the time, and does not depict any Jewish symbols, aside from a few small features, for instance, the Christian illustrator arms the knight with a sword or a hatchet, while a Jewish illustrator equips him with a less threatening weapon such as a club or a rod. Unlike their Christian counterparts, Jewish knights are not portrayed on horses. Dr. Offenberg did find illustrations of cavaliers, but the text always describe those as evil figures.

The Jewish illustrations were mostly influenced by the Christian zeitgeist in the era of religious crusades. Those illustrations were also affected by local events such as knightly tournaments taking place in arenas across Europe. Dr. Offenberg notes that these battles were of extreme social significance, as they reflected the combative abilities of these knights, who sometimes lost their lives proving them. The nobles, the upper class, as well as the Jews, would eagerly watch these competitions. A unique Jewish angle relating to these fights were the Jewish pawn shops, which held the warriors’ armor as collateral. Knights who lost the competition had to buy their armor back with their own money.

The close access that Jewish pawnshop keepers had to the knights’ armor explains the precise, highly detailed illustrations of these garments.

The illustrations of Jewish knights adopt chivalry as an aristocratic code, derived from a place of nobility, which sets them apart from the general population, despite the fact that Jewish knights had nothing whatsoever to do with the noble class. Another study focusing on knights in Hebrew texts found that in 13th century Germany, Jews considered themselves to be knights of the Lord. That is, they...
thought themselves as being a notch above “common” knights, who had to use swords to achieve their goals. Dr. Offenberg explains: “The Jewish knights in those contexts view themselves as servants to the King of kings, which by default, makes them superior to their immediate surroundings. By adopting the idea of Jewish knighthood, Jews were satisfying the need to express power and strength, especially in light of the massacres and devastation of Jewish communities in Germany during the late 11th century Crusades.”

**Judah the Knight**

During the 15th century, the illustrated image of the Jewish knight is transformed. The Passover Haggadah’s wicked son, or soldier son, is given physical features similar to those of medieval knights. Conversely, the wise son is featured as a learned student. “The image of the beaten, humiliated Jew is an attempt to cope with the anti-Jewish propaganda of the era by an image makeover. From the illustrations and texts it seems that despite their hardships, the Jews did not view themselves as miserable or downcast. On the contrary, they considered themselves as full-fledged aristocracy,” states Offenberg.

This makeover campaign was directed inward, as the texts and prayers (later censured by the ruler or by the Jews themselves), were meant strictly for the Jewish population. “But these illustrations,” says Dr. Offenberg, “created a coded dialogue of clear criticism against the Christians, which can only be deciphered by those who read the text. At that time, those were usually the upper class, educated Jews.”

Two additional images of knights, which appeared in later artistic works, exemplifying the change in the Jews’ self-image, and their perception of their newly adapted ideals. In a liturgical poem for Hanukkah (“Odecha Ki Anafta”), found in a 15th century Italian manuscript, Judah the Maccabee is depicted wearing a medieval knight’s garment, shield and all, but this time he is holding a drawn sword. According to Dr. Offenberg, it is safe to assume that this was the artist’s interpretation of the request by the Jewish patron who had commissioned the drawing. Fast forwarding to 1938, the next Jewish knight appears on a stamp issued by the Jewish Agency for Hanukkah. Judah the Maccabee is portrayed wearing a medieval knight’s garment, holding a gun. In place of the shield – Judah the knight is holding a plow. “The stamp’s illustrator equated the image of Judah the Maccabee, savior of the Jewish nation, with the archetypical Jewish pioneer, bravely claiming his freedom,” concludes Dr. Sara Offenberg. And that just goes to show how the Jewish knight has heroically kept pace with the times and the dramatic transformation in the Jewish national image from medieval Europe to contemporary Israel.

Dr. Sara Offenberg, of the Department of Jewish Art, is editor of *Ars Judaica: The Bar-Ilan Journal of Jewish Art*, a member of the editorial board of the *Arts & Social Science Journal*, and an advisor to the National Library of Israel.
BIU TODAY

I decided not to let my disability stand in my way. The moment I chose to live,” says Simchi. “I felt like I had nothing to live for. I wanted to crawl into bed, and sleep forever. But after getting over the initial shock I realized that more than anything else, I wanted to keep on going – to build a family, work, and move forward. Bit by bit, I was able to check things off my list, small as they may be, and realized that anything is possible. The world continues to exist, so you can live and even enjoy it.”

Guy Simchi’s rehabilitation was lengthy, and he had to re-learn even the most basic skills. A rehabilitation teacher helped him through, even accompanying him to BIU classes. A year later his eldest son was born. “I was still figuring out how to take care of myself, and suddenly I was a father with this baby to care for,” recalls Guy with a smile. “I learned how to change a diaper, bottle feed, and how to make sure that I don’t step on him. I learned how to read stories by heart, play with him, touch and feel how beautiful he is, without being able to see him. I communicated with him by listening. I noticed he had four distinct types of cries and each meant something different.” Simchi, now an experienced father of three, understands today that his decision to have children so soon after losing his eyesight was the turning point in his rehabilitation. “In retrospect, I realized that this was the defining moment that I decided not to let my disability stand in my way. The moment I chose to live.”

Another significant event for Guy was receiving a seeing-eye dog, which enabled him to be more independent and mobile, and helped alleviate the social isolation he felt. “When I used the cane I felt so alone. People don’t converse or socialize with someone who has a disability. They look through you. It’s as if you don’t exist. But when I would walk around with my guide dog “Turner” people would suddenly talk to me, ask questions, and pet the dog. It was amazing. Having a dog brought the world closer.”

“Work Connects you with your Surroundings”

Becoming blind has made Guy Simchi more insightful and has affected the way he “looks” at the world. He realizes that the inability to see enables a caretaker to be more focused on and attentive to his patients, and neutralizes the human tendency to make judgments based on physical appearance.

After completing his academic education, Simchi was elected as the chairperson of the Israeli Guide Dog Users Association. Later he was appointed the Director General of the Center for the Blind. By then he was already well aware that work brings the person closer to society, offers financial independence and reinforces self-esteem. Consequently, Simchi made it his mission to promote the employment of people with disabilities in Israel.

According to Simchi, the ideal disability employment model is that of New Zealand, where it is defined by law and fully financed by the government, providing funding not only to cover direct costs but also financial incentive to the employer. Additionally, people with handicaps in New Zealand receive state-appointed assistance in entering or re-entering the workplace. Israel is not rated very high in this respect in the western world, notes Simchi. He does, however, praise the agreement signed between the Histadrut and the Manufacturers Association of Israel, which stipulates that any business organization with over 100 employees must ensure that at least 3% of their staff are disabled.

The agreement, which was recently extended, will be applied to all Israeli companies in the public and private sectors. It was also what motivated Simchi to join the Histadrut and accept the position to head the disability employment section. “This agreement is revolutionary. Its implementation will require an intricate and comprehensive process for which the Histadrut is optimally positioned as an organization which coordinates between different government offices and branches, employers and employees. The disabled community must be engaged and readied for this process, which is why we are cultivating local leadership groups to assume a prominent role in meeting the challenges which this new law will bring.”

Simchi’s goal is that disabled people who wish to work will be able to find a job. By doing so, they will not only gain a chance for a fuller life and improved self-worth, but play an active role in the human tapestry which will allow our society to heal itself, accept the ‘other,’ and ultimately create a better world.

“Surroundings”

According to Simchi, these numbers stem from a series of difficulties among both employers and the handicapped themselves. Employers are reluctant to face that which they don’t know. They can’t imagine a person who is blind, or wheelchair-bound, being productive in the workplace. On the other hand, people with disabilities are apprehensive about dealing with the challenges of the work environment. There are also objective difficulties, such as an unsuitable physical environment. Adapting the workplace to accommodate a disabled employee can be costly, and although its financing is covered by the government, there is so much red tape involved that it may take years before the employer will get reimbursed.

Becoming blind has made Guy Simchi more insightful and has affected the way he “looks” at the world.

According to Simchi, these numbers stem from a series of difficulties among both employers and the handicapped themselves. Employers are reluctant to face that which they don’t know. They can’t imagine a person who is blind, or wheelchair-bound, being productive in the workplace. On the other hand, people with disabilities are apprehensive about dealing with the challenges of the work environment. There are also objective difficulties, such as an unsuitable physical environment. Adapting the workplace to accommodate a disabled employee can be costly, and although its financing is covered by the government, there is so much red tape involved that it may take years before the employer will get reimbursed.

The agreement, which was recently extended, will be applied to all Israeli companies in the public and private sectors. It was also what motivated Simchi to join the Histadrut and accept the position to head the disability employment section. ”This agreement is revolutionary. Its implementation will require an intricate and comprehensive process for which the Histadrut is optimally positioned as an organization which coordinates between different government offices and branches, employers and employees. The disabled community must be engaged and readied for this process, which is why we are cultivating local leadership groups to assume a prominent role in meeting the challenges which this new law will bring.”

Simchi’s goal is that disabled people who wish to work will be able to find a job. By doing so, they will not only gain a chance for a fuller life and improved self-worth, but play an active role in the human tapestry which will allow our society to heal itself, accept the ‘other,’ and ultimately create a better world.
Helping Former Delinquent Youth to Rejoin Society

BIU alumna Liat Shusteri Zini, youth coordinator at Israel’s Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority, meets with teens who have committed felonies so serious that just about everyone has given up on them. She works tirelessly and compassionately to help them become productive citizens.

When “A” was 15, he sexually assaulted a child. Although none of the specialists recommended imprisonment, he was sentenced to 18 months in prison due to the severity of the crime, and the objection of the victim’s family to a reduced sentence. The likelihood of his rehabilitation and return to a normative lifestyle seemed remote. While in prison, “A” expressed his earnest desire to be treated and rehabilitated. He met with Liat Shusteri Zini, coordinator of a unique rehabilitation program for fourteen to twenty-one year old former convicts in the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority, a government body working under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services. That meeting gave “A” exactly what he needed: hope.

Shusteri Zini, who holds an MA in Criminology from BIU, and is a certified sex offender counselor and criminal-offense mediator, treats teens and young adults who have been imprisoned for serious crimes. These at-risk youths have failed in every other framework – even the experts in the field have given up on them. Shusteri Zini explains that most of those former convicts are unmotivated, despondent, unaware of their problems and very suspicious of adults.

“In order to engage their active participation in their rehabilitation, we must be very flexible and creative, and use special tactics. Unlike other prisoners who ask to be rehabilitated primarily in order to have the sentencing cut shorter, “A” seemed to be sincerely willing to take responsibility for his actions and improve himself,” says Shusteri Zini. She designed a multi-layered rehabilitation program for “A”, which included a targeted treatment for the sex offence he committed, with the participation of everyone close to him. “In addition to the personal treatment, in which he learned to recognize the crises and weaknesses that led him to commit the crime, it was important for his family members to also grasp the severity of his actions, to accept and support him, and learn how to cope with their community which ostracized them. “A”’s dream was to rejoin the nonprofit organization where he did his national service prior to his imprisonment. They initially refused to allow him to return, but after several lengthy conversations, decided to give him another chance and reinstate him.”

The Social Circle

Shusteri Zini explains that rehabilitative criminology is a treatment approach which views the subject’s social milieu as a central factor in the rehabilitative process. Employing socio-therapy techniques which relate to all the circles in the subject’s life, this approach focuses on the offenders taking responsibility for their actions, and realizing that they could have made different choices, even when environmental circumstances deem otherwise. “As a counselor, I can’t and won’t attempt to change their life conditions,” says Shusteri Zini. “I can only expose them to empowering experiences and help to direct them toward more productive paths, so that they can regain control of their lives. They are also required to take full responsibility.
for their actions, while considering the feelings of their victims and of everyone they have hurt."

"The community is very wary of these youths," says Shusteri Zini. "Teen offenders trying to rehabilitate themselves are shunned and ostracized. The trauma of their imprisonment and of being "tainted," the complex relations with family and community, the rejection from schools and the IDF, the difficulty in finding a job – all these lead to despair.

Their cry for help is often expressed by repeated offences, resulting in more rejection. The constant sense of failure creates a vicious circle of self-destruction: "This is the frame of mind. I'm not good enough. No one will accept me. If you don’t accept me, I’ll hurt you back. Therefore, part of our job is to make society understand that despite the grave offenses committed by these teens, society is morally responsible for helping them re-integrate."

The successful rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents, says Shusteri Zini, hinges on the active involvement of the teen, his family and the community. The welfare professionals work together with the family to design the teen’s support plan.

"In my home visits," says Shusteri Zini, "I have found families so financially and emotionally damaged, that all one could see were the shortcomings. In order to even begin a rehab process in such an environment, you must begin by providing these teens with a supportive atmosphere and make them feel loved."

Reversing Grim Statistics

Toward that end, parents take part in a parental guidance group, in order to receive support and regain their parental authority. During the group sessions many painful issues surface, and bonds are created. "It is very moving sometimes to see a teen finally feeling loved in his own home. That certainly contributes to his motivation and ability to move on with his life. The teens who don’t achieve that end up feeling lost and alone in the world. The welfare professionals also visit the schools asking that they be allowed to return to their classes. Our team is committed to providing these teens with maximal support, making them feel loved, and restoring their faith in humanity by building meaningful relationships with them and conveying to them that even when it seems like they have no choice, there is always a choice to be made."

The statistics are grim. Recidivism (repeated imprisonment) rates are as high as 70% among 14-18 year olds. Shusteri Zini notes that teenagers who completed rehab programs rank at only 50%. Among 18-21 year olds recidivism is 46%, and studies prove that when there is continuity of treatment (in prison and afterwards in the community), the likelihood of recidivism diminishes, says Shusteri Zini.

"A’s rehabilitation is a success thanks to intensive, nurturing treatment employing a loving, nonjudgmental approach, which centers on the clients’ positive personality traits and on surrounding them with caring, compassionate people. "The more that the subjects encounter positive accepting attitudes the better the chances are that their inherent goodness will win out," she says. "Love overcomes self-destruction."

According to Shusteri Zini, in order to avoid a return to crime, it's important to ensure continuity of treatment and to bring problematic issues to the attention of all relevant parties in the community: the education system, welfare offices, the police, the military, social organizations and work places. "Everyone has a part to play in the rehabilitation process. If they are sensitized and willing to help, the youths' chances for full rehabilitation are good, and they can re-enter society and become normative, productive citizens."

"A" strengthened his family ties, reconnected with his peers, fully aware of his previous actions and fought to change his old negative behavior. After re-enlisting as a volunteer in the nonprofit organization where he previously worked and completing two years of national service, he obtained a high school diploma and has recently enrolled in an undergraduate degree program. Thanks to the efforts of those such as BIU grad Shusteri Zini, "A" is now a model rehabilitated youth offender who has succeeded in regaining entry into society.
Crafting Fiction about her Cherokee Roots

Creative Writing grad student Eliana Ramage wove themes inspired by her Cherokee Nation roots into a short-story that won an international literary prize.
Defending Israel’s Image and IDF Moral Standards

BIU Law student Matan Katzman is founder and chairman of My Truth, which counters negative images of Israel and the IDF put forth by organizations such as Breaking the Silence.

As a commander and officer in an IDF Reconnaissance Unit, Matan Katzman has served in every conflict against Hamas in Gaza since 2005. But more recently the BIU LLM candidate has been very active on another front: defending Israel’s image and IDF ethical standards and actions against attempts to slander the Israeli army. Co-founder and chairman of My Truth, an organization comprising IDF reservists who educate about Israeli soldiers and their values, he represents Israel and his fellow comrades-in-arms in speaking engagements locally and abroad, meets with delegations and VIPs, and participates in debates and media interviews.

Last June when he addressed the European Union Subcommittee on Human Rights in Brussels, he articulately presented his experiences in Gaza, uncovering missiles and ammunition hidden in a Hamas leader’s home. “The IDF is a moral army fighting in an immoral neighborhood,” he stressed, noting how Israeli soldiers are engaged in asymmetric warfare against terrorist groups that use Palestinian families as human shields. “In Gaza, our mission was clear — to stop the rocket fire that put over one million Israeli children in bomb shelters. The IDF has a clear policy to protect Palestinian civilian life, even at the expense of compromising the safety of its own missions, as it does when it repeatedly warns civilians about incoming attacks.”

Sitting next to him at that forum was a rep of the NGO Breaking the Silence. “Their message is a litany of horror stories about the actions of IDF soldiers, which are often void of context and unverified,” he recalls. “I think they expected to have the floor to themselves, as they normally do when they team up with the Palestinian anti-Israel lobby to address various legislatures. But this time, I was there with my story.”

“Bar-Ilan gave me the opportunity to grow and to explore my fields of interest, especially international law.”

Now a reserve infantry officer, he is completing his LLM, interning in a leading Israel law firm’s international corporate and securities department. “Bar-Ilan gave me the opportunity to grow and to explore my fields of interest, especially international law,” says Katzman, a regional executive at the StandWithUs Israel fellowship for the past three years, who aspires to a career in the public sector, possibly in the Foreign Service or Israeli politics. In the meantime, he’s right on target: “No longer will delegitimization efforts go unchallenged. That is a silence I, and others like me, will continue to break.”
Select Academic Conferences and Events

A sampling of academic conferences and events that took place in the past year

**March 2015**
- Taming Complexity, Controlling Networks (Department of Mathematics)
- Attributes of American Jewry Towards Israel (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies)
- Femininity and Motherhood – Challenge and Coping (Gender Studies Program)
- Iron Fist in a Velvet Glove: Gender/Professional Identity Integration Promotes Women’s Negotiation Performance (Graduate School of Business Administration)
- Discoveries in the Study of Yemenite Jews (Aharon and Rachel Dahan Center for Culture, Society and Education in the Sephardic Heritage)
- Literature and History Seminar (Department of Comparative Literature)
- UN Investigation Committee – From Goldstone to Schabas (School of Communication)
- The Twelfth International Conference on Jewish Names (Faculty of Jewish Studies, Israel and Golda Koschitzky, Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry)
- The Burden of Shame (Department of Sociology and Anthropology)
- Fairness in Restrictive Agreements and Economic Regulations (Faculty of Law)

**April 2015**
- Holocaust Denial in the Muslim World (School of Communication)
- Bloomfield’s Conference (Department of Philosophy)
- Basic VS Translational Research (Mina and Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences)
- Exhibition: Racol (Vorweizer Central Library)
- The Trademark in the Age of Trademarks (Graduate School of Business Administration)
- Sandplag Therapy (Louis and Gabi Westfeld School of Social Work)
- The Decline of Civilizations (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies)
- Old Wine in a New Vessel: Technological Development for Translating the Talmud in the 21st Century (Department of Translation and Interpreting Studies)
- “From Small to Big”: Diverse Outlooks in the Study of Israel (Martin [Szusz] Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology)

**May 2015**
- Children’s Rights in Relation to Parental Rights (Faculty of Law)
- Eli Cohen – 50 Years Since Being Sent to the Gallows (Aharon and Rachel Dahan Center for Culture, Society and Education in the Sephardic Heritage)
- New Studies on the History of Settlements, Zeroistic Setting of a New Area and Building the Land (Department of Geography and Environment)
- Workshop on Studies in the Field of Orphan Diseases (Mina and Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences)
- The Foundations of Artificial Intelligence (Department of Computer Science)
- Animals Rights and Environmental Protection from Theory to Practice (Faculty of Law)
- Ninth Annual Literary Evening in Memory of Dr. Shaindy Rudolf (Department of English Literature and Linguistics)
- US-Israel Relations: Where to? (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies)
- 19th-Century European Songs and Poems in Yiddish (Department of Music)
- Volunteering and Communications – Who Cares? That Grandpa Volunteers (School of Communication)

**June 2015**
- Women’s Spiritual Leadership – Where Did It Come From and Where is it Going? (Churin School of Education)
- President Hosni Mubarak – Impressions From a Personal Perspective (Department of Middle Eastern Studies)
- Nudging Investors to Make Better Investment Decisions (Graduate School of Business Administration)
- International Conference on Religion and Equality (Faculty of Law)
- International Conference on Biblical Prophecy (Faculty of Jewish Studies)
- 1-Core Conference on Complex Diseases (Mina and Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences)
- Sexual Harassment as an Interdisciplinary Phenomenon: Between Law and Care (Faculty of Law)
- Do Commanders’ Initiative and Freedom Still Exist in the IDF? (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies)
- Who Am I? Israeli Song! (Department of Music)
- Insight into Irrational Policies (Department of Economics)

**July 2015**
- Annual Conference of the Institute of Research for the Human Factor in Traffic Accidents (Department of Management)
- Flatlands Beyond Graphene 2015 (School of Engineering)
- Ten Years since the Disengagement from Gaza (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies)
- Sephardic, North African and Middle Eastern Jewish Communities in North America (Aharon and Rachel Dahan Center for Culture, Society and Education in the Sephardic Heritage)
- Annual Conference of the Institute of Research for the Human Factor in Traffic Accidents (Department of Management)
- Flatlands Beyond Graphene 2015 (School of Engineering)
- Ten Years since the Disengagement from Gaza (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies)
- Sephardic, North African and Middle Eastern Jewish Communities in North America (Aharon and Rachel Dahan Center for Culture, Society and Education in the Sephardic Heritage)
- Launching of the Graduate School of Business Administration Alumni Community (Graduate School of Business Administration)

**September 2015**
- Constructing and Deconstructing Jewish Art (Department of Jewish Art, Michael J. Floersheim Memorial for Jewish Art)
- India and the West Asian Region: Adapting to New Regional Realities (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies)

**October 2015**
- Project Presentations of 2014-15 (School of Engineering)
- Economics in the Eye of the Storm (Graduate School of Business Administration)
- Australia’s National Security Challenge (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies)

**November 2015**
- Exhibition “In the Women’s Section” (Wurzweiler Central Library)
- Preschool – A Window of Opportunity to Advance Optimal Development (Churin School of Education)
- Equality Law and the International Pact for People with Disabilities (Faculty of Law)
- How to Build a Winning International Level Start Up (Graduate School of Business Administration)
- Journey between Foreign Languages in Israeli Literature (Joseph and Norman Berman Department of Literature of the Jewish People)
- German-Israeli Relations (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies)
- The 23rd Ladino Marathon (Joseph and Norman Berman Department of Literature of the Jewish People)
- Launching of the Graduate School of Business Administration Alumni Community (Graduate School of Business Administration)
- Rain, Abundance, Blessing and Light (Midrasha, Ludwig and Erica Jesselson Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies)
- Environmental Regulation (Faculty of Law)
- Expulsion and Displacement (Aharon and Rachel Dahan Center for Culture, Society and Education in the Sephardic Heritage)

**December 2015**
- The 2nd Israeli Biophotonics Conference (School of Engineering)
- The Many Faces of Innovation (Faculty of Law)
- The Burden of Shame (Department of Sociology and Anthropology)
- The Burden of Shame (Department of Sociology and Anthropology)
- The Burden of Shame (Department of Sociology and Anthropology)
- The Burden of Shame (Department of Sociology and Anthropology)
- The Burden of Shame (Department of Sociology and Anthropology)

**February 2016**
- IsraeliHI [Department of Information Science]
- Initiatives and Innovation in the World of Volunteering: BII 2016 Conference for Volunteering (Louis and Gabi Westfeld School of Social Work)
- International conference on Strategic Challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies and BII Israel International, with the participation of leaders of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations)

**March 2016**
- International conference on Shame as a Formative Value. Holocaust, Belief and Society ("Nizkor" Program, Jesselson Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Leipzig University)
Awards & Prizes

This past year an unprecedented number of prizes and grants were awarded to BIU academicians.

- Prof. Nathan Aviezri, of the Department of Physics, won a grant from the Templeton World Charity Foundation, for his project: Development and Implementation of a Teaching Unit on Modern Science and Orthodox Jewish Faith.
- Dr. Vadim Axelrod, of the Gonda Multidisciplinary Brain Research Center, was awarded the 2015 Rothschild Fellowship for his research in Cognitive Neuroscience.
- Dr. Noga Agali-Darshan, of the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Languages, is the recipient of the Jonas C. Greenfield Prize from the American Oriental Society, which is granted every four years to a young scholar for the best article in any of its fields of study that has been published during the most recent three-year period.
- A Project grant from the Israel Cancer Research Fund was awarded to Dr. Shay Ben-Aroya of the Mina and Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences.
- Dr. Michael Blank, of the School of Medicine in the Galilee, is a recipient of the Research Career Development award for his project: ‘Genomic Aspects Refusal in Get Tort Actions.’
- Dr. Assaf Rinot, of the Department of Mathematics, was awarded the 2015 GIF (German Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research) award for his project: ‘Modern Mathematics: The Alon fellowship for absorption of outstanding young faculty was awarded to Dr. Jonathan Rubin of the Martin [Szuszn] Department of Land and Israeli Studies and Archaeology.
- Dr. Sharon Ruthstein, of the Department of Chemistry, was awarded the Krell Prize for Excellence in Scientific Research, granted by the Wolf Foundation to returning Israeli scientists.
- Prof. Dav Schwartz, of the Department of Jewish Thought, was awarded the EMET Prize for academic excellence and professional achievements which have a significant influence on society.
- Prof. (Emeritus) Dana Roek, of the Zalmor Shazar Bible Department, was awarded the 2016 Rothschild Prize for Jewish Studies.
- Prof. Sam Kraus, of the Computer Science Department and Visiting Professor at the University of Maryland Institute for Advanced Computer Studies, was named Associate for Computing Machinery Fellow.
- Prof. Gideon Lewensohn, of the Department of Music, is the winner of this year’s Prime Minister’s Award for Original Works of Composers.
- Prof. Arie Maer, of the Martin [Szuszn] Department of Land Israel Studies and Archaeology, was chosen as head of the Israel Parks and Nature Authority.
- Dr. Shiri Regev-Messalem of the Martin [Szuszn] Department of Land and Israeli Studies and Archaeology, was chosen as one of Discover Magazine’s top 100 scientists of 2015.
- Dr. Yaël Shapira, of the Department of English Literature, was awarded a three-year grant from the Israel Science Foundation for her project: Women’s Popular Literature: Cultural and Social Aspects Refusal in Get Tort Actions.
- Dr. Aharon Yeshoshua, of the Mina and Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences, was awarded the “Maof” scholarship as one of Discover Magazine’s top 100 scientists of 2015.
- Dr. Amit Tzur, of the Mina and Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences and the Institute for Nanotechnology and Advanced Materials, received the Research Career Development award from the Israel Cancer Research Fund.
- The research of Prof. Ehud Weiss, of the Martin [Szuszn] Department of Land and Israeli Studies and Archaeology, was chosen as one of Discover Magazine’s top 100 scientists of 2015.
- Prof. Yossi Katz, of the Department of Geography and Environment, was awarded this year’s Israel Prize in Geography, Archaeology, and Land of Israeli Studies. The Israel Prize, the country’s most distinguished honor, will be bestowed upon Prof. Katz at the annual ceremony on Israel Independence Day, which this year falls on May 12.
The 13th Ambassadors’ Forum featured MK Mr. Issawi Frej, member of the Meretz Party, who briefed the gathering of ambassadors and senior diplomats on “Israeli Arab Citizens: Democratic Dilemmas and Complexities.” A panel, moderated by Prof. Gerald Steinberg, of the Department of Political Studies and founder of the Conflict Management and Negotiation Program, included Prof. Hiel Frisch, of the Begin–Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Prof. Zehavit Gross, of the Churgin School of Education, and Rifat Sweidan, Academic Advisor for Arab Students, Dean of Students Office.

1. (l to r): Prof. Zehavit Gross, Ruth Cohen, Director of VIP Visits, MK Issawi Frej, and Prof. Gerald Steinberg
2. (l to r): Ambassador of Serbia H.E. Mr. Milutin Stanojevic, Ambassador of Malta H.E. Simon Pullicino, Ambassador of Croatia H.E. Pjer Šimunovic, and Ambassador of Hungary H.E. Dr. Andor Nagy
3. MK Issawi Frej addresses the ambassadors

Bar-Ilan University played an important role in the restoration of the abandoned Jewish cemetery in the city of Bitola, Macedonia. BIU hosted a delegation of Bitola municipality representatives along with Macedonian Ambassador H.E. Pajo Avirovikj and Israeli Ambassador to Macedonia H.E. Dan Oryan.

BIU President Rabbi Prof. Daniel Herschkowitz presents Ambassador Avirovikj with a gift from the university

The 14th Ambassadors’ Forum focused on the very topical subject: “The International Community and the Threat of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel.” The Minister of Public Security, Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy, H.E. Gilad Erdan, was the keynote speaker at the event, which included briefings by Prof. Arie Reich, former Dean of the Faculty of Law, and Prof. Jonathan Rynhold, Director of the Argov Center for the Study of Israel and the Jewish People in the Department of Political Studies. Prof. Gerald Steinberg chaired the meeting.

1. Minister Gilad Erdan addresses the audience
2. (l to r): Ambassador of Hungary H.E. Dr. Andor Nagy, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic H.E. Alexander De La Rose, and Ambassador of Argentina H.E. Carlos F. Garcia look on while the Ambassador of the European Union H.E. Lars Faaborg-Anderson poses a question to the panel
3. Rector Prof. Miriam Faust greets the ambassadors and diplomatic corps. Seated (l to r): VP of External Relations Judith Haimoff, VP Research Prof. Arie Zaban, Minister Gilad Erdan, Prof. Arie Reich, and Prof. Jonathan Rynhold

UK Brokerage Research Delegation in Nanophotonics and Advanced Photonics Materials

The delegation posing with Prof. Michael Rosenbluh (4th from right), Head of the Quantum Optics Research Lab in the Bar-Ilan Institute for Nanotechnology and Advanced Materials (BINA) at the Leslie and Susan Gonda (Goldschmied) Nanotechnology Triplex

NASA Administrator Maj. Gen. Charles Frank Bolden

1. (l to r): In the Archaeological Lab at the Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology - Director of the Tell es-Safi/Gath Archaeological Lab Dr. Amit Dagan, Ruth Cohen, Shimonia and Rabbi Prof. Herschkowitz, Maj. Gen. Bolden, Director of the Gath Expedition Prof. Arie Maier, and VP Research Prof. Arie Zaban (far right)
2. Maj. Gen. Bolden with the Head of the Dynamics of Gene Expression Lab at BINA Prof. Yaron Shav-Tal (in plaid shirt) and researchers

BIU Hosts Visitors from Far and Wide

A selection of recent events
Friends in Action Highlights from Israel and Across the Seas

USA

Harris Bak and family (wife Lolly, son Arye and granddaughter Margalit) visit Director of the Tell es-Safi Gath Archaeological Lab Dr. Amit Dagan (l) at the BIU Biblical Archaeology Center.

The Faculty of Law hosts (r to l): Director of Global Resource Development Dr. Merav Galili, Law Dean Prof. Shahar Lipsitz, Joel Jacob, Dr. Meggal Segal-Rech, Legal Clinics Director Dr. Shiri Regev-Messalem, Adv. Rini Rothler, and Adv. Keren Tzafrir.

Jim Joseph Foundation Mission: Dr. Merav Galili (far right), Ex. Director Dr. Chip Edelsberg (7th from right), Mrs. Edelsberg (6th from right), Associate Director at AFBIU Greater Los Angeles Area Karen Paul-Reuven (seated right), Jim Joseph Foundation President and Chairman of the Board Mr. and Mrs. Al Levitt (12th and 11th from left), and Dvira Joseph Davey (seated middle) and family.

Presidential Award winner Alice Schoenfeld is flanked by Duo Reim (Benny Rosenbaum and Yisrael Gottesdiener) at a sold-out performance at Beth Jacob Congregation in Beverly Hills. Alice met the Duo at last year’s 60th Anniversary Board of Trustees meetings where they performed over Shabbat and she sponsored them to come to Beverly Hills to the delight of nearly 800 people who were present.

Dr. Eitan Okun, director of the Paul E. Feder Alzheimer’s Research Laboratory at the BIU Gonda Brain Research Center (l), visited Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, where he met with neurosurgeon Dr. Adam Mametlak.

Three intellectuals talk about Israel’s transformation from a parched land into a water superpower at Temple Emanu-El Skirball Center, NY (l to r): BIU Vice President for Research Prof. Arie Zaban with Seth Siegel, author of Let there be Water, and Brett Stephens, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist at the Wall Street Journal.

At a reception held at the home of Rabbi and Mrs. Haskel Lookstein in NY (l to r): President of AFBIU Ronnie Stern, Midrasha Director Dr. Tova Ganzer, Rabbi and Mrs. Lookstein, and Board members Gail Propp and Michael Jesselson.

Farewell Luncheon for long-standing South Florida Friends’ secretang Roz Farbowitz held at Larry and Marcia Schantz’s home (l to r): President of the Executive Committee of the Southern Region Dr. Marc Rivo, Chairman Emeritus of the Executive Committee Southern Region Jack Burstein, Ex. Director of Southern Region AFBIU Jayne Kaplan, and Chairman of the Southern Region Executive Committee Larry Schantz.

At a reception held at the home of Rabbi and Mrs. Haskel Lookstein in NY (l to r): President of AFBIU Ronnie Stern, Midrasha Director Dr. Tova Ganzer, Rabbi and Mrs. Lookstein, and Board members Gail Propp and Michael Jesselson.
Friends in Action Highlights from Israel and Across the Seas

Canada

Mr. and Mrs. Arnie Recht meeting with the Faculty of Law’s Legal Clinics Director Dr. Shiri Regev-Messalem

David Goodman and Uri Kami of the Schulich Foundation visit BIU (l to r): BIU Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor to the President Motty Mishan, Rector Prof. Miriam Faust, VP of the Schulich Foundation David Goodman, and VP of Israeli Operations, Schulich Foundation Uri Kami

Australia

Jeanne Pratt AC hosted a dinner in honor of BIU President Rabbi Prof. Daniel Hershkowitz and his wife, Shimona. (l to r): Shimona Hershkowitz, Chairman International Friends Vera Murawitz, Rabbi Prof. Hershkowitz, and Jeanne Pratt

Great Britain

Fladgate LLP and British Friends of BIU held a breakfast event with Law School Dean Prof. Shahar Lifshitz (third from left) who spoke about the legality of modern marriages in Israel, religious and secular, including same sex couples and how do they fit within the Constitution. Among those at the event: Director of Global Resource Development Dr. Merav Galili (2nd from right), Chairman of BFBIU Romie Tager QC (5th from right), Executive Director of BFBIU Shlomo Rechtschaffen (6th from left), and Nadia Nathan (2nd from left)

Panama

Panamanians Sion and Frida Harari were on campus to unveil a dedicatory plaque recognizing their support of the university

Israel

Chairman of the Israel Friends of BIU Eli Yones (r) and Rabbi Prof. Daniel Hershkowitz (l) welcome Lt. Gen. Benjamin Gantz, the 20th Chief of General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces, to the Bar-Ilan Forum

Chairman of the Israel Friends of BIU Eli Yones (r) and Rabbi Prof. Daniel Hershkowitz (l) welcome Lt. Gen. Benjamin Gantz, the 20th Chief of General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces, to the Bar-Ilan Forum

Member of Knesset Yair Lapid, Chairman of the Yesh-Atid party, addresses the Bar-Ilan Forum

Co-Chairman of Faire Fund Shlomo Grofman is welcomed to campus by Director of Israel Desk Karin Singer

Guests from Hong Kong experienced our archaeological history and roots at BIUs-Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology (l to r): Director of the Tell es-Safi Gath Archaeological Lab Dr. Amit Dagan, Yuenyi Chan, Vera Murawitz, Director of the Gath Expedition Prof. Aren Maeir, and Dr. Hugo S. Chan

Canada

Jeanne Pratt AC hosted a dinner in honor of BIU President Rabbi Prof. Daniel Hershkowitz and his wife, Shimona. (l to r): Shimona Hershkowitz, Chairman International Friends Vera Murawitz, Rabbi Prof. Hershkowitz, and Jeanne Pratt

Great Britain

Fladgate LLP and British Friends of BIU held a breakfast event with Law School Dean Prof. Shahar Lifshitz (third from left) who spoke about the legality of modern marriages in Israel, religious and secular, including same sex couples and how do they fit within the Constitution. Among those at the event: Director of Global Resource Development Dr. Merav Galili (2nd from right), Chairman of BFBIU Romie Tager QC (5th from right), Executive Director of BFBIU Shlomo Rechtschaffen (6th from left), and Nadia Nathan (2nd from left)

Panama

Panamanians Sion and Frida Harari were on campus to unveil a dedicatory plaque recognizing their support of the university