

## Student Snapshots



Shirli



Danny



Ron



Elia



Rachel



Barak

"Bar-Ilan is wonderful and people are so helpful," raves Shirli from Paris, who is excited to commence undergrad studies in Israel "and meet people from all over the world." Danny, a Belgian immigrant, concurs: "there's nothing like Bar-Ilan with its young, vibrant atmosphere." Says Ron: "I really enjoy my classes and am glad that I am majoring in computer science." Elia, pleased to be completing his degree while working part-time in high tech, sees "the

light at the end of the tunnel" and hopes to "find my niche in industry." Rachel, a teacher enrolled in the coaching diploma program, is "glad to be back at university" and looks forward to gaining training to jumpstart a second career. Delighted with her decision to study at Bar-Ilan, Barak enthuses: "I'm enjoying every moment – social sciences, the lecturers, Jewish heritage courses – in short, the entire university experience!"



## BIU's New President Formulates Equation for Success

"I feel like a schoolboy starting the first day of class," jests BIU's newly installed President, Rabbi Prof. Daniel HersHKowitz, who enthusiastically embraces the responsibilities and "fascinating challenges" in navigating Israel's largest university. A noted mathematician and Israel's former Minister of Science and Technology, he offers his formula for continued success: "Bar-Ilan should assume its rightful place as the university of the Jewish people, drawing young Jews from all over the world to Israel, to pursue academic degrees and advanced Jewish studies."

## Rap & Rock: AY 2013/2014 Kicks Off on Right Note



Kicking off the academic year, the BIU Student Union brought rap and rock bands to campus and treated hundreds of students to free snacks and drinks.

Opening on a high note, BIU tallies some 33,000 enrollees at its Ramat Gan campus and four regional colleges, including more than 2,000 PhD candidates and close to 6,500 Master's students. Israel's popular *Walla* news site named BIU's MA in clinical psychology as one of the most sought after academic programs nationwide. Keeping up with global trends, the University has

introduced new double majors in such areas as law and economics-accounting, physics and brain science, as well as criminology and Middle Eastern studies.

BIU's over 116,500 alumni are making their mark in government, defense, finance, science, social services, and high tech, where successful ventures launched by BIU grads include the mobile advertised technology company Amobee Inc., (acquired by Singtel in March 2012 for \$321 million) and the online data leader eXelate Ltd., which has raised \$32 million.

## BIU Collaborates in Designing Search Engine for Gene Expression Research

All in the genes, ExpressionBlast has made its debut! The powerful new search engine enables researchers to compare gene expression data with millions of other studies in order to find experiments with similar profiles. Automatically organizing data from genetic expression experiments on a weekly basis, the novel tool is expected to streamline research for scientists, drug companies and others, saving both time and money. Shoshana Naiman, Dr. Yariv Kanfi and Prof. Haim Cohen of BIU's Mina & Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences joined Carnegie Mellon's computational biologists Prof. Ziv Bar-Joseph and Guy Zinman in authoring the report, which was published in *Nature Methods* (Oct. 2013).

## Fill'er Up with .... Cooking Oil!

Just 10 seconds – that's how long it takes BIU Chemistry Prof. (Emeritus) Aharon Gedanken to transform waste cooking oils into biodiesel! Visiting chair prof. at National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) in southern Taiwan, Gedanken has devised a unique patent-pending microwave-based process to convert biomass to biofuels. "Actually everyone can do it on a small scale in their

home kitchen with a domestic microwave and a certain catalyst, which can be removed and recycled to carry out 10 times the same reaction," he relays. He is optimistic that his method can be adopted for large-scale industrial conversion of cooked oils (which may otherwise pose an environmental challenge) into biodiesel. "It is hoped that this will be the replacement for fossil oil in the future," says the BIU scientist, named as one of the ISI's Highly Cited Researchers.

## Award-Winning Brainy App

Want to be more focused when studying for an exam? Try the Miyagi Learning Enhancer, a winning application that employs EEG-based software to optimize study habits. The system sits on your browser and visualizes your focus/attention as you study while wearing a Brain Computer Interface (BCI) device. After a few learning sessions, the software will be able to relay the times of peak performance for better learning session planning. The app – designed by BIU neuroscience grad student Roy Zahut, along with his Hebrew U. partner Michael Doron – won first prize in the BrainiHack 2013 competition, which launched the Israel Brain Technology's inaugural annual conference, and drew some 150 hackers, neuroscientists, developers, programmers, and others.

## Medical Briefs

### BIU Medical Faculty Treat Syrian War Casualties

BIU School of Medicine faculty members figure at the forefront of efforts to treat Syrian war casualties brought by the IDF to Israeli hospitals in the past months. At Ziv Medical Center in Safed, which has opened its doors to some 130 wounded Syrians, the School's new head of the Orthopedic Academic Department has generated headlines. With expertise in reconstructive surgery and war injuries, Prof. Alexander Lerner, who heads Orthopedics at Ziv, has rebuilt limbs and lives. In one poignant case, he was able to repair a severely shattered leg of an 8-year-old Syrian girl, using a special technique that had never previously been performed on such a young patient. He recounts that just two months after she arrived at Ziv, "The child, a favorite in the department, was cheered and hugged when she stood up and took her first step, smiling broadly at us all. It was an extremely moving moment".



### Night of Science in Safed Draws 1,000

Hosting its first "Night of Scientists" this fall, BIU's School of Medicine was a magnet for some 1,000 area residents of all ages, who were attracted to an array of experiment demos, hands-on exhibits and engaging lectures on DNA, the human brain, anatomy and additional medical research subjects. Co-sponsored by the Safed Municipality and other organizations, the event was part of the annual celebration of science held throughout Europe and Israel, with joint participation of the EU and Israel's Ministry of Science, Technology, and Space.

## BIU Acquires World's Most Advanced Archaeological Field Device



BIU archaeologists are now able to peer closer at microscopic samples of bygone civilizations, with their new handheld X-Ray Fluorescent Spectrometer (hXRF). This portable instrument, which until quite recently was only available in labs in full-scale size, is a welcome addition to the archaeologist's tool chest, as it enables analytic measurement, with ease, in the

field. Prof. Aren M. Maeir of the Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology maintains that this device, along with the Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrometer (FTIR) which is already in use, will enable on-site analysis of materials found in the excavation, at the atomic (hXRF) and molecular (FTIR) levels unmatched anywhere in the world. "In the past and even today, archaeologists have been forced to ship off findings to a lab for analysis that could take weeks to yield results," he notes. "With the hXRF, findings can be determined instantaneously, allowing archaeologists to stay in the field to discover more in real time."



### Ancient Gath on Display at Central Library

Archaeological finds from BIU's excavations at Tel Tzafit, ancient Gath, which shed light on Philistine history, offer nearly 1,000 daily library users with a close, dust-free encounter with antiquity without even leaving campus

## Balkan Jewry in Spotlight at Int'l Conference in Macedonia

The first Israeli university to collaborate with leading research institutions in Macedonia, BIU took active part in a unique international conference which drew researchers from around Europe to revisit the history society and culture of the Jews in the Balkans. The conference was organized by BIU's Dahan Center academic committee, headed by Prof. Yaron Harel, in cooperation with BIU's regional college in Ashkelon, the Macedonian National Academy of Sciences and Arts, and the University of Skopje.

Attending the festive opening ceremony were Macedonian Parliament reps and senior clergy; the Israeli ambassador in Croatia and Macedonia, HE Yosef Amrani; Israel's Deputy Religious Minister Eli Ben-Dahan; MK Dr. Shimon Ohayon, director of the Aharon and Rachel Dahan Center for Culture,

Society and Education in the Sephardic Heritage; and Dr. Yehoshua Salti, founder of BIU's Naime & Yehoshua Salti Center for Ladino Studies. The conference was addressed by the Ladino Center head and conference chair, Prof. Shmuel Refael, who forged ties with the Macedonian institutions. He spoke of the Balkan Jewish community in its changing surroundings. The closing session paid tribute to the memory of the 7,000 Macedonian Jews who were deported to the Nazi death camp Treblinka 70 years ago – and whose story remains to be told.

## Humanists at Work: Research Riddles & the Pleasures of Pursuing Them

French fiction, Russian history and culture, silenced voices from the Holocaust, the debate over anti-Semitism in Schoenberg's opera *Moses und Aron*, and women authors in the Arab world – these are some of the many subjects highlighted at a conference organized by Dr. Yael Shapira and Dr. Yaakov Mascetti of BIU's Faculty of Humanities. Scholars in fields ranging from comparative lit to music, and from English to Arabic, presented research enigmas pursued or those they hope to decipher in the future. The conference, which provided a common basis for continued inter-disciplinary conversations and inquiries, demonstrated the active, heterogeneous nature of the humanities at BIU.

## Interfaith Conference Ponders Religious Leadership Challenges

The Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal André Armand Vingt-Trois, accompanied by 150 clergy, joined Jewish leaders and scholars at "The Challenges of Religious Leadership in a Democratic Society" symposium held at Bar-Ilan University. The Cardinal reaffirmed the Church's commitment to solving religious problems, noting that "there will never be peace, unless there is peace between religions." Ramat Gan Chief Rabbi Yaakov Ariel spoke about the outlook of religion from a Torah perspective. BIU Law Prof. Yedidia Stern, VP of Research of the Israel Democracy Institute, focused on the challenges facing the Israeli rabbinate, while BIU Deputy President Prof. Yaffa Zilbershats discussed freedom of religion.



Ramat Gan Chief Rabbi Yaakov Ariel, the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal André Armand Vingt-Trois, Father Patrick Desbois (BIU 2009 honorary doctor), BIU President Rabbi Prof. Daniel Hershkowitz, and Deputy President Prof. Yaffa Zilbershats

## Israel's Top Leaders at BIU to Discuss Perils & Prospects



Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu convenes with BIU's new President, Rabbi Prof. Daniel Hershkowitz (right), and BESA Director Prof. Efraim Inbar, at "2020 Vision: Israel's Perils and Prospects," the 20th anniversary conference of BIU's Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies



Surveying the widespread instability in the region, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz underlined the threats facing the State of Israel, including the growing coordination and affiliation among terror organizations on the borders. In preparing for the challenge, the IDF must aim for a quick and decisive victory, using

key military intelligence, army divisions with specialty knowledge, and network-centered warfare, said Gantz.

## Remembering the Yom Kippur War and its Lessons

Forty years after Arab forces launched a surprise attack on Israel, Bar-Ilan U. held a two-day academic conference to research the crisis that shook the Israeli army and society. Middle Eastern Studies Prof. Michael Laskier, who organized the event, highlighted the uniqueness of the multi-dimensional scholarly conference, which embraced diverse subjects, including diplomacy, intelligence, international relations, IDF legends and testimony, national ideologies as well as a discussion with prominent journalists on the war and the Israeli media. Some 500 people attended the conference, which was co-sponsored by BIU's Menachem Begin Center for the Study of Resistance Movements together with the BIU-associated Kinneret Academic College. A two-book anthology on the subject is to be published.

The 40th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War was also marked at the commencement ceremony for 70 students of the IDF Tactical Command College who completed academic studies at BIU. Addressing the 13th graduating class of this joint BIU-IDF program, the Rector recounted that during the '73 War University faculty visited army units, gave courses, and opened a BIU "branch" in Sinai, while the Louis & Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work initiated the establishment of ERAN to help families of captives and missing soldiers.

## Rackman Center Spearheads Raise in Minimum Legal Marriage Age

The Israeli Knesset has approved a bill which will boost the minimum legal marriage age in Israel from 17 to 18. The new law is the culmination of a three-year effort initiated by the Ruth and Emanuel Rackman Center for the Advancement of the Status of Women. "The time has come to adopt this law in Israel and prevent early marriage and motherhood among girls who are not ready for it either physically or mentally," said founding director Prof. Halperin-Kaddari in lauding the Center's resounding victory. Israel's legal situation will now be consistent with that in western countries and a large number of Arab and Muslim countries, added Prof. Halperin-Kaddari, who took part in a panel discussion on marriage and divorce in a Jewish State at the annual General Assembly of the Jewish Federations of North America, held recently in Israel.

## Israel Up-Close 2014 Pioneers New Discussion on Mideast

Bringing firsthand, professional analysis of Israel and the Middle East to diverse audiences abroad, Israel Up-Close 2014 is generating great interest and enthusiastic reviews. In a recent 10-day sweep of Dallas, Atlanta and Chicago, the BIU delegation of academic and corporate experts in international politics, economics, women's rights, law and media addressed business forums, civic organizations, academic centers and policy institutes. Topics ranged from media-messaging in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to the US-Israel relationship to Israel's economic strategic advantages. A global outreach initiative of the BIU School of Communication, Israel Up-Close 2014 includes on its high-powered team Prof. Eytan Gilboa, the School's founding director; Prof. Sam Lehman-Wilzig, the School's deputy director; MK Dr. Aliza Lavie, chair of the Knesset's Committee on the Status of Women, and a senior lecturer; and Hillel Schuster, principal head of corporate finance at KPMG, Israel, and a faculty member.

## Social Work Prof. Evaluates Apps for US Military Pupils on Move

Prof. Rami Benbenishty of the Louis & Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work will evaluate the new Apps Project, which is expected to benefit thousands of military children in transition, giving them a successful start at their new school. The initiative will be funded by a new four-year, \$5 million grant from the Department of Defense Education Activity to the USC School of Social Work, the Chula Vista Elementary School District and four other military-connected school districts. The new apps will streamline the way families complete enrollment forms, find tutoring and extracurricular programs, learn about community-based resources and stay in touch with key district contacts.