

# NEWS BYTES

Bar-Ilan University



Winter 2007/2008 | Tevet 5768

*All you need to know in a glance*

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## Bar-Ilan Jurists at the Pinnacle

Recently, the Israeli financial daily *Globes* reviewed some of the top Israeli "brains" in the judicial field, among them the following BIU stars:



**Prof. Gideon Parchomovsky** is a professor at BIU, the University of Pennsylvania, and is a visiting lecturer at Yale University. *Globes* singled him out as the number one outstanding legal researcher in the under-40 category. Specializing in economics and law, Prof.

Parchomovsky's research is acquisition, intellectual property, internet law, and contract law. "Intellectual property is especially important in Israel, where there are so many high-tech industries," he says. Prof. Parchomovsky zigzags between the USA and Israel. For seven weeks of the academic semester, he lives on a plane. "I fly from class to class, and from lesson to lesson." Parchomovsky explains. "This way I am connected to both Israeli and American academic studies and research at the highest level."



**Dr. Shachar Lipschitz**, a senior lecturer at BIU's Faculty of Law is an expert in family law. He is considered to be a genius in his field. Dr. Lipschitz returned to Israel after a two-year stint at Yeshiva University's Cardozo Law School. Dr. Lipschitz has been awarded more than ten prizes

and stipends, among them the Rothschild Post-doctoral Stipend, the Fulbright Scholarship, and the Bahat Prize for a young researcher for his book on cohabitation law in Israel.

## BIU Women Academics Take the National Lead

Statistics published recently revealed that women still represent only about a quarter of Israel's academic faculty: 26% in 2006 compared with 23% in 2000. Female professors say the academic "glass ceiling" remains in place because only superficial, easy-to-handle issues have been addressed, not advancement mechanisms and acceptance procedures.

While all the other Israeli universities have stagnated with regards to improving female faculty membership, only Bar-Ilan has enjoyed a constantly increasing trend in its hiring of female academics. Indeed, at BIU the rate of female researchers to begin their work during the coming academic year is higher than that of any other university in the country.

## Bar-Ilan Scientist Creates Unique Counterterror Computer Program



**Dr. Gal Kaminka** of BIU's Gonda (Goldschmied) Multidisciplinary Brain Research Center has designed the ultimate virtual terrorist for a simulation program that will help train security forces around the world in their war against terrorism. Dr. Kaminka's team based the unique program on Artificial Intelligence (AI) software by Soar Technology of Ann Arbor, Mich. Dr. Kaminka, whose specialty is AI, created synthetic red forces he calls "Smart Entities" –

unique virtual fighters that think and behave like human beings – as part of a computer simulation program designed by Israel's Elbit Systems. In addition to their cognitive capacity, these virtual fighters possess the operational knowledge and clandestine survival skills of real terrorists whose experiences and feelings have been recorded in thousands of hours of interrogations and debriefings by Israel's security services.

"What makes this project one of the most advanced of its kind is the way it integrates extraordinary scientific achievements with knowledge gleaned from the real world," says Dr. Kaminka. "The unpredictability of the Smart Entities – along with their ability to internalize an authentic, street-smart terrorist mind-set – is unique in the world of Artificial Intelligence."

## British Academics Visit Bar-Ilan



Left - right: British academic Prof. Rick Trainor, BIU VP of Research Prof. Harold Basch and BIU President Prof. Moshe Kaveh

Less than a month after the British University and College Union announced that the proposed boycott of Israeli universities is illegal and therefore cannot be implemented, a delegation of British University Vice-Chancellors arrived in Israel to advance scientific cooperation between Israel, the UK and the Palestinian Authority.

As the earliest victim of the infamous British-initiated cry for an academic boycott of Israeli universities and lecturers, BIU has been at the vanguard of an international movement of academic institutions created to fight such academic boycotts.

"This visit serves as a counter to the defunct academic boycott. Instead of threatening academic freedom, it represents a practical effort to generate academic cooperation for the benefit of all," said Prof. Yosef Yeshurun, chair and founder of the International Advisory Board for Academic freedom (IAB) and former BIU Rector. "These Vice Chancellors are interested in promoting and encouraging research, not in boycotting or silencing those whose work contributes to the alleviation of human poverty and the improvement of welfare," added Ofir Frankel, IAB executive director.



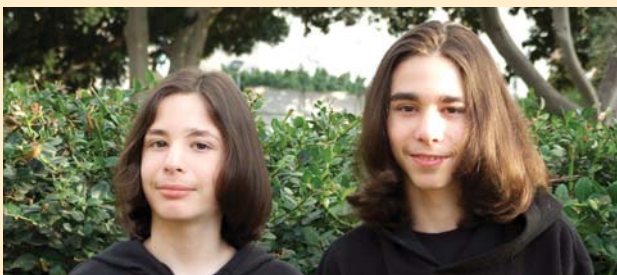
## BIU Diamond Researchers Shatter a Hard Problem

BIU chemists **Prof. Shmaryahu Hoz**, **Prof. Harold Basch** and **Dr. Lior Itzhak** (and Prof. Eli Altus from the Technion) have solved a mystery which has puzzled scientists for decades, revealing the secret behind the extreme natural hardness of diamonds, *The Jerusalem Post* reported. In a paper due to be published in *The Journal of Physical Chemistry*, the researchers explain that substance's super-strength is caused by chemical interactions on a quantum level, linking atoms which are not directly attracted to each other through sub-atomic, "hybrid" bonds. The team has predicted that the discovery will allow the engineering of new hard substances in the laboratory, some of which may prove even harder than diamonds and more suited to use in industrial applications.



Prof. Feldman's study shows that women display bonding behaviors in direct correlation to the levels of *oxytocin* during early pregnancy, throughout pregnancy, and in the early postpartum phase. Low levels of this hormone in a mother during these times predict low bonding behaviors. Further, her study revealed that *oxytocin* determines both the behavioral and the emotional aspects of bonding between mother and infant. Such research may assist in understanding pathological conditions related to childbirth, such as postpartum depression.

## Bar-Ilan's Youngest Students



Fourteen-year-old twins Or and Guy Landsman's connection with Bar-Ilan began when they were in the sixth grade – through the University's special program for youth in the Israel Center for the Advancement of Mathematics. After matriculating in mathematics last year, the brothers continued at Bar-Ilan for BSc studies in applied mathematics, making them the youngest students in their class – and at Bar-Ilan!

Or and Guy travel to Bar-Ilan twice a week from their school in the northern-situated town of Hadera, where they are completing the rest of their high-school studies. Their days at the University are very long, sometimes ending after 10 pm! The boys' mother, Yael, doesn't object to the long journeys to and from Bar-Ilan, as she is happy that her sons are fulfilling their passion and drive to study.

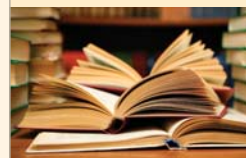
For Or and Guy the future seems very clear, including ambitious plans of becoming high-tech leaders and software inventors. They share the same preferences in their courses, supporting each other through exams and homework. Although their university studies are time consuming, they are still involved in activities typical to their age, such as sports, computers (for fun), and television. Indeed, their favorite show, "Mesudarim," ("Set for Life") is about a group of young super-achievers – just like themselves!

## BIU Study Finds Israeli Youngsters Addicted to Dieting



Unnecessary dieting among Western youth is now being seen as a worrying and increasing trend among Israeli youngsters as well. New research conducted by **Dr. Yossi Harel** of BIU's Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology shows that the percentage of Israeli girls who are not overweight but are on a diet is one of the highest in the West, with young boys not too far behind. The study included 106,119 fourteen-year-olds from 33 countries, among them 1,500 Israeli boys and 2,000 Israeli girls.

The results of the study were reported recently by the Israeli daily newspaper *Yedioth Aharonot*. Dr. Harel found that even though Israeli girls are not heavier than their peers in other Western countries, 26% of them diet unnecessarily. The only country with a higher percentage of normal weight girls on a diet is Denmark (28%). The United States was ranked fourth. A surprising finding of Dr. Harel's research is that 8% of normal weight Israeli boys are trying to lose weight (compared to 9% of American boys). These high figures are of concern and point to the wrong messages Israeli adolescents receive about the importance of physical appearance.



## BIU Research Proves Public Libraries are "In"

Despite reports that book-reading is at an all-time low, research by **Dr. Israela Yavlonka**, of BIU's Department of Information Science, reveals that there are numerous, new, large and fully equipped libraries worldwide. In Israel alone, over the last decade, new libraries report on growing numbers of visitors and readers. This evidence stands in contrast to gloomy predictions concerning the general disappearance of libraries.

Dr. Yavlonka's research, under the guidance of Dr. Snunit Shoham, dates the history of public libraries and investigates the role of public libraries in the modern "information highway." Her findings show that as long as libraries provide increasing services and offer a social get-away, they will never go out of style!

## Published by the DIVISION OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS

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 Design and Production: Raphael Blumenberg

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