



Bar-Ilan University



## “Destination Success” Workshop for Women Students

The Gender Studies Program has established the workshop “Destination Success” to prepare BIU female students for successful integration into the workplace in cooperation with the WIZO Israel Institute’s Division for the Advancement of Women. It consists of five weekly four-hour sessions devoted to gender thinking, women in the labor market, decision making, dealing with barriers, personal presentation skills, negotiating, dealing with conflicts, and building personal visions, and is intended for all BIU women at the end of their undergraduate studies.

“The information that will be offered during the workshop will open a window for the participants that will allow them to reflect upon themselves and on the world from a new and fascinating perspective,” said Prof. Tova Cohen, Director of the Program in Gender Studies, of the Dafna Izraeli Center in Gender and Women’s Studies, and of the Rachel and J.L. Gewurz Center for Gender Research. “Women will be able to express their voices, and discuss their various unique passions as women, prior to the construction of their adult lives,” added Dr. Ronit Arenfreund-Cohen, head of WIZO Israel’s Division for the Advancement of Women.

## In this issue...

- “Destination Success” Workshop for Women Students
- Making Room for Women in the Orthodox Religious Hierarchy
- New Dementia Data Reported by BIU Scientist
- BIU Political Commentators in the News
- International Conference on Bioethics and Halacha
- BIU Robots Compete in World Cup Robotic Soccer
- Watching a Gene at Work
- Birth Control Pill for Men
- BIU Receives 3 Million € Grant for Study on Coral Reefs and Global Warming
- Scientists Create Nano-Patterned Superconducting Thin Films
- Shaindy Rudoff Graduate Program in Creative Writing News Briefs
- Student Awards, Scholarships and Ceremonies
- Anti-Academic Boycott University President Visits BIU
- New Appointments
- Key Alumni
- Hot Off the Press!



## Making Room for Women in the Orthodox Religious Hierarchy

One of the biggest challenges facing Orthodox Jewish communities is rarely spoken about publicly, wrote Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten, of BIU’s Israel and Koschitzky



Department of Jewish History and the Genders Studies Program, in *The Jewish Week*. By admitting women into the cadre of the religious hierarchy, the article continued, those who traditionally hold this place must make room to allow new members to be part of their ranks. The implications of this highly sensitive subject within Orthodox circles was one of the topics explored at a recent international conference on Gender and Jewish Identity, held at Bar-Ilan University. More than 30 participants from nine countries spoke at the conference, sponsored by BIU's Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism, along with the Hadassah Brandeis Institute, the Gender Studies Program and the Ruth and Emanuel Rackman Center for the Advancement of the Status of Women at BIU. Many of the conference speakers presented papers that reinforced historical, literary and sociological studies conducted over the past decades that examined women and gender issues within Judaism.

The evidence is clear, says Baumgarten. Steady changes are happening even as they are being resisted. It is time for those in the current religious power structure to stop resisting change, and start discussing how to best bring it to fruition. Once the process is set in motion, even in the most intimate and private spheres, it is bound to reach the public sphere.

## **New Dementia Data Reported by BIU Scientist**

A study of Filipino home care workers in Israel conducted by Dr. Liat Ayalon, of the Louis and Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work, and published in *Home Health Care Services Quarterly* found that negative experiences within the home/work environment, as well as within Israeli society at large, contribute to depression and post-traumatic stress symptoms. However, caring for an older adult with dementia was the only predictor of intention to leave the job. The majority of workers do not report an intention to leave the job. Ayalon concludes that greater supervision of this care giving arrangement in an attempt to protect the rights of foreign home care workers within the home/work environment is an important step, which has to be followed up by attitudinal changes within society at large and that specific training in dementia care is also warranted.



## **BIU Political Commentators in the News**

BIU is consistently in the news through the opinions expressed by our academicians and pundits in the international media. Among them, the images from the "peace" flotilla to Gaza exposed the tactics of powerful non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that lead the strategy of political warfare targeting Israel, noted Prof. Gerald Steinberg, of BIU's Dept. of Political Studies, founder of the University's Program on Conflict Management and Negotiation and Executive Director of NGO Monitor in an opinion piece in *The Canadian Jewish News* recently. In order to defeat this third-generation warfare (following conventional army attacks and the ongoing terror campaign), he continued, we need to assess the threat and find the right strategy. Understanding NGO exploitation of moral principles is the first step, Steinberg asserts.

## **International Conference on Bioethics and Halacha**

During the Second International Columbia University-Bar-Ilan Conference on Bioethics and Halacha held recently, organized by Columbia University's Center for Bioethics, in conjunction with BIU's Mina and Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences and the Ludwig and Erica Jesselson Institute of Advanced Torah Studies, speakers aimed to bring fresh perspectives concerning bioethical and halachic issues that emerge from new technologies in the areas of genetic diagnosis and reproductive medicine, as reported in *The Jewish Press*.

The cutting-edge conference brought together world-renowned experts in the fields of science, law, philosophy, halacha, and bioethics to analyze and grapple with new bioethical challenges. For instance, basic principles and concepts of DNA and molecular biology were introduced, followed by a presentation of halachic views on the use of DNA technologies to identify a deceased body. This conference, continued the article, served as a wellspring for new ideas and an opportunity to integrate different perspectives to reach workable conclusions regarding the ethical challenges emerging from DNA technology and genetics, as well as highlighting the greater directive and mission of the Jewish people in *Tikkun Olam*.

## BIU Robots Compete in World Cup Robotic Soccer



Israel may not have been able to enter a soccer team in the World Cup, but it did get picked for the world cup in soccer robotics, according to a report by *Israel 21c*. Using their brains instead of brawn, a group of BIU researchers and their students headed to Singapore for six days in June to coach their own kind of soccer team – one made up of robots at the annual RoboCup tournament. They may not have won the prestigious tournament, but in the good spirit of robotics and diplomacy, the team played against Texas and Austria, practiced with Turkey, and was even invited to come with their robots to Iran.

The Robot World Cup pits robots from different universities around the world against each other. Making the cut among only 24 teams from around the globe, Bar-Ilan's BURST Team included four robots and thirteen researchers, among them eleven of the University's best graduate students from the Department of Computer Science.

"One of the unique things about our robotics program is our emphasis on the inclusion of undergraduate students," said Prof. Gal Kaminka, of the Dept. of Computer Science, who heads the team (pictured standing in the middle surrounded by the BIU team). "There are very few universities in the world, let alone Israel, where undergrads can take regular classes, in which they face state-of-the-art research challenges in robotics," he added.

## Watching a Gene at Work

Knowledge of the real-time dynamics of gene expression may help researchers to explain variation among genetically identical cells and the molecular processes that lead to cancer. For the first time, scientists have devised a way to watch and analyze, in real time, the transcription of a single gene in a living human cell. Published in *Nature Methods*, Bar-Ilan University researcher Dr. Yaron Shav-Tal describes his system to visualize and track the kinetics of transcription, including the speed and fluctuations of transcription of a single gene (*Haaretz Science and Technology online*).

Dr. Shav-Tal and his colleagues, including BIU returning scientist Dr. Yuval Garini, Doctoral Student Liat Altman and Doctoral Student Sharon Yonger, used their technique to track the speed and duration of the transcription of a single well-characterized gene that produces a protein important to the cell cycle. By tracking the gene multiple times, the team was able to detect how many mRNA transcripts were produced, how quickly they were produced, and how different types of promoters affect the rate of transcription.

## Birth Control Pill for Men

The female birth control pill, commonly referred to as "The Pill," is not 100% effective, and some women's bodies don't react well to the extra hormones. Now, finally, a new birth control option for men is in the works, which would allow partners to share the



responsibility, and let men be in control of whether or not there will be any surprises in the procreation department. News of the unique pill made headlines in hundreds of media outlets throughout the world.

Prof. Haim Breitbart, of BIU's Mina and Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences, authored a breakthrough paper in 2006 describing how sperm survive in the uterus. Now the biochemist has taken those findings and is using them against sperm. He's developed a number of novel compounds that have no effect on male sex drive, but succeed in impairing the reproductive ability of the sperm. If all goes according to his plans, a new male birth control pill could be on the market within the next five years.

In another development reported by *Haaretz*, Prof. Breitbart and researchers at Meir Hospital in Kfar Saba made a medical breakthrough through their discovery that the ability of visible light to increase sperm motility could increase chances of conception for couples looking to conceive through in vitro treatments (see cover story in *BIU Innovations*, Vol. 2).

## **BIU Receives 3 Million € Grant for Study on Coral Reefs and Global Warming**

The "CoralWarm" European Project for Study on Coral Reefs and Global Warming was officially launched in June. The research, a joint Israeli, Italian and Palestinian study, was awarded over 3 million € funding by the European Union. Prof. Zvy Dubinsky, a researcher of aquatic photosynthesis at BIU's Mina and Everard Goodman Faculty of life Sciences, leads the Israeli team which also includes BIU's Dr. Oren Levy, a molecular biologist.

The main goal of the five-year project is to create a mathematical model which will enable scientists to foresee how Mediterranean and coral reefs will change over the next 50-100 years, following temperature and acidity increase. Prof. Dubinsky has just returned from Panarea, part of the Aeolian Islands north of Sicily.



There, coral has lived in hotter and more acidic water for centuries and perhaps millennia, which might give the scientists an indication of what to expect worldwide over the next 50 to 100 years, reported *The Jerusalem Post*.

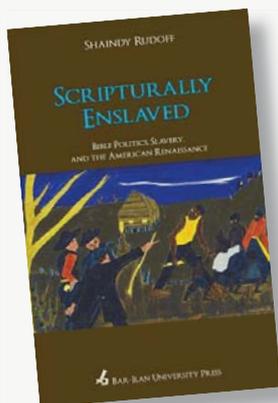
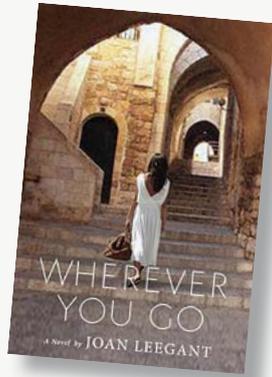
## **Scientists Create Nano-Patterned Superconducting Thin Films**

Professor of Physics Yosef Yeshurun, Head of the Center for Magnetic Measurements and a member of the Bar-Ilan Institute of Nanotechnology and Advanced Materials (BINA), is heading a team of scientists from Bar-Ilan University in collaborative research with the Brookhaven National Laboratory in which they have fabricated thin films patterned with large arrays of nanowires and loops that are superconducting – able to carry electric current with no resistance – when cooled below about 30 kelvin (-243 degrees Celsius).

This breakthrough was reported in the prestigious scientific journal *Nature Nanotechnology*. The scientists, including Prof. Avner Shaulov and BIU PhD student Ilya Sochnikov, showed they could change the material's electrical resistance in an unexpected way by placing the material in an external magnetic field. The long-term vision is that such superconducting nanowires and nano-loops might eventually be useful for new electronic devices.

## Shaindy Rudoff Graduate Program in Creative Writing News Briefs

- A memorial gathering commemorating the fourth year of Shaindy Rudoff's untimely death from cancer took place in New York recently. More than 250 participants heard novelist Rebecca Goldstein speak at the event.
- At the Fourth Literary Evening in memory of Dr. Shaindy Rudoff, Joan Leegant read from her new book and discussed the myths of the writing life. Leegant has visited Bar-Ilan for the past three years and served as the Program's fiction instructor. Her novel, *Wherever You Go* is being published this summer by W.W. Norton and was highly acclaimed in a review in *The Forward*.
- A new Director, Dr. Marcela Sulak, was appointed to head the Shaindy Rudoff Graduate Program. Sulak comes from the American University in Washington D.C., where she taught literature. Sulak read from her latest book, *Immigrant*, published by Black Lawrence Press and gave a talk on Food and Memory.
- This summer writers Elana Greenfield and Clive Sinclair will each give a two-day writing seminar at the Stern House in Jerusalem, sponsored by the Shaindy Rudoff Program. People from across Israel and around the world come to participate in these unique seminars.
- Dr. Shaindy Rudoff's book, *Scripturally Enslaved*, published by Bar-Ilan University Press last year, is now available as an e-book.
- Graduate student Vanessa Fogel's first novel, *Sag Es Mir*, will be published in German by Weissbooks this summer (see *Innovations*, Vol 2. for excerpt).



## Student Awards, Scholarships and Ceremonies



### At the **Mordechai Bar-Lev Informal Education Program**

Awards in Excellence Ceremony held recently, first prize went to students Einat Cohen Ba-Gad and Shira Leshem Wilner, second prize went to Liron Peretz Freiman and Rebecca Bar-Chai, and third prize was awarded to Dikla Ben-Yacov and Shani Vatzubari. "The domain of informal education is rich in function but poor in research," said Dr. Zehavit Gross, head of the Informal Education Program. "This award is designed to encourage graduate students to explore this field and develop it professionally while striving for excellence. "I have no doubt that excellence in informal education affects academic achievements in the formal field of education," said guest speaker MK Zevulun Orlev, adding that informal education is the main medium in which the real education process happens.

The goal of the recently-launched **Keren Hessed Fund** is to provide living stipends for Bar-Ilan's neediest students, without which they would be forced to abandon their academic studies. The Fund was generously inaugurated with a \$180,000 gift by the Chairman of the BIU Board of Trustees, Dr. Mordechai D. Katz, together with his wife, Dr. Monique C. Katz, while in a moving ceremony last month thirty-six students were granted \$150,000 in tuition and living costs by the **Yehuda Siman-Tov Foundation**.

Eighty ninth-graders from schools around the country participated in the recently-held commencement ceremony for the **Science for Girls Project**, a program established four years ago to encourage excellence for girls in science. During the event, organized by the Department of Physics, the Churgin School of Education and the MOT program, a science and technology program for girls run by the Ministry of Education, the students presented their scientific research. "I am glad to see so many talented girls interested in physics," said Prof. Shlomo Havlin, of the Department of Physics, the program's initiator and director. "There is no doubt that by participating in this one-of-a-kind program, the motivation of the girls to become involved and excel in science has increased," said Shosh Cohen, of the Ministry of Education.



## Anti-Academic Boycott University President Visits BIU

"Israeli academics will always be welcome in the United States," said Lebanese-American University of Miami President and former US health secretary Donna Shalala, as reported in *The Jerusalem Post*. She was recently in Israel with a delegation of US university presidents sponsored by Project Interchange. "Whether it's disinvestment or a boycott against Israeli academics, it's inappropriate and not worthy of any educational institution", she added. During her visit, Shalala and a distinguished delegation from the Miller School of Medicine headed by Dean Pascal Goldschmidt, met with BIU President Prof. Moshe Kaveh and other BIU officials to examine the possibility of cooperation between the new BIU Faculty of Medicine in the Galilee and the University of Miami's medical school.

## New Appointments

- Prof. Yaffa Zilbershats was appointed Deputy President. Former Dean of the Faculty of Law, she will be responsible for overseeing BIU's five-year plan, the enlargement of existing university departments, the a campaign for financial development, and the oversight of the new Faculty of Medicine (see article in Fall 2010 *BIU Today*).
- Prof. Haim Taitelbaum, former Chairman of the Department of Physics and former Vice-Rector, was elected Rector of the University. As such, he is responsible for initiating and supporting the policies that ensure the University's educational excellence (see article in Fall 2010 *BIU Today*).
- Prof. Miriam Faust was appointed Vice-Rector. She is former Chairman of Bar-Ilan University's Department of Psychology and director of the brain and language laboratories at the University's Gonda (Goldschmied) Multidisciplinary Brain Research Center.
- Prof. Shlomo Margel is the new Dean of Students. Former Dean of the Faculty of Exact Sciences, he is a Professor of Chemistry.
- Prof. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, Director of the Faculty of Law's Ruth and Emanuel Rackman Center for the Advancement of the Status of Women, has been

re-elected as a member of the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

## Key Alumni

Bar-Ilan University boasts thousands of alumni who are today's movers and shakers in industry, the sciences, the government, law, and in many other fields. Among these leaders:



• Edna Foa, one of *Time Magazine's* most influential 100 of 2010 (BA Psychology)



• Tzipi Livni, MK and Leader of the Opposition (LLB)



• Nachman Shai, MK (PhD Political Science and Communications)



• Gilad Erdan, Minister of Environmental Protection (LLB)

For more information on some of our distinguished alumni check out the Bar-Ilan University website: [www.biu.ac.il](http://www.biu.ac.il). Click Alumni.

## Hot Off the Press!

Volume 2 of *Innovations*, BIU's prestigious annual Magazine of the Arts & Sciences, has just been released. This latest issue features research and developments in areas such as male infertility, herpes disease, dialectics, the military forces from the women's perspective, speech enhancement in noisy environments, an examination of the Biblical Joseph and Potiphar, cell phone viruses, and an excerpt from a novel by a BIU student (see mention of novelist Vanessa Fogel in Shaindy Rudoff Graduate Program in Creative Writing article above).



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