Congrats to the Class of 2013!

Bar-Ilan University is proud of its more than 8,000 graduates who completed their bachelor’s (4,741), masters (2,915) and doctorate (219) degrees and diploma (183) studies. Social sciences was the discipline of choice for two-thirds of the BA grads and more than half of those acquiring their masters degree. Another popular MA specialization was law, with some 900 grads (31% of the MAs). Favored PhD fields included social sciences, exact sciences and Jewish studies.

3rd Annual BIU-YU Summer Science Internship Gets Underway

Freshly arrived on campus, more than 30 bright, motivated undergrads from Yeshiva University and other US colleges relax before heading to their labs to conduct research alongside expert BIU faculty mentors in the life sciences, nanotechnology, brain, engineering, computers, chemistry, physics and math. The internship, which runs from June 24 - August 8, also includes study tours to Israeli science and tech sites and weekly guest lectures by leading BIU academicians in diverse fields. Supervising the program is Prof. Chaim Sukenik (fourth from left), dean of the Faculty of Exact Sciences, director of the Minerva Center for Nanoscale Particles and Films as Tailored Biomaterial Interfaces, and newly appointed president of the Jerusalem College of Technology (Machon Lev).

Students Run Fun Day on Campus for Young Cancer Patients

The BIU Student Union, together with a national support center for children with cancer, bring a smile to the faces of some 25 pediatric oncology patients from nearby Sheba Hospital (Tel Hashomer) and their families, who enjoy inflatable trampolines, clowns, bongo drums, refreshments and more on the BIU campus.
Flagship Torah & Science Forum Caps Year with Psychology and Bio-Informatics

BIU’s intellectual platform Nitzotzot, which is run by the Ludwig and Erica Jesselson Institute for Advanced Torah Studies, hosted a fascinating conference, “The Process of Repentance – Religious, Psychological, and International Aspects.” Co-sponsored by the Department of Psychology with the support of the Dalfen and Friedman families, the event featured Dr. Timotheus Arndt, a Jewish studies researcher and Hebrew teacher at the University of Leipzig. Speaking in Hebrew, he stressed that T’shuva means both repentance and “answer.” Dr. Arndt recounted how his father – a former Nazi – repented at the end of the war and atoned for the rest of his life by helping the Jewish community, and advancing Jewish-Christian understanding. Arndt, who translated Rabbi Kook’s Orot Hatorah into German, first met Rabbi Shabtai Rappoport, Jesselson Institute Beit Midrash head and Nitzotzot founder, at Shabbat services in Leipzig. Rabbi Rappoport discussed the role of punishment in repentance and atonement; other subjects explored were repentance and psychotherapy, and remorse and appeasement.

Cutting-edge research in genetics and bio-informatics was the focus of Nitzotzot’s closing session this year. Columbia University’s renowned bioethicist Prof. John D. Loike gave the keynote address in which he examined the state-of-the-art in cloning and its bioethical and halakhic ramifications. Nitzotzot coordinator Dr. Yisrael Belfer gave an overview of biology in the information age, and Rabbi Rappoport discussed the role of punishment in repentance and atonement; other subjects explored were repentance and psychotherapy, and remorse and appeasement.

Earlier in the day, 18 PhD fellows presented their research projects before Prof. Loike at the concluding monthly session of Nitzotzot Shachar, BIU’s year-long seminar for outstanding doctoral candidates from all Israeli universities. Spanning diverse academic frontiers (from physics and cognitive science to psychology and political thought) the projects examined the impact of these fields on innovative Jewish thought.

Midrasha Rosh Hodesh & Elul Enrichment

For the past academic year, the Midrasha – part of the Jesselson Institute for Advanced Torah Studies – has ushered in each Jewish month with a special cultural and learning event. The new initiative, Matmoniyot (Hebrew for “treasures”) attracts some 70 women for an encounter with religious female artists, singers, dancers and actors, who offer insight into the joys and challenges of their profession as well as a stirring live performance. Gearing up for the High Holidays, the Midrasha’s popular Elul program (Aug. 19 – Sept. 12) will offer a range of classes relating to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. A special event “Soul Tunes” (Sept. 9) will provide an inside look at Days of Awe melodies, and feature a Hasidic Tisch replete with stories and tunes performed by leading musicians.

Highlighting Ancient Text “Messages” that Illuminate Judaism

Epigraphy experts from Belgium, France, Austria and Israel recently convened on campus to showcase new previously unpublished ancient texts – inscriptions, ostraca (scribed potsherds), and papyri which illuminate the development of Jewish religion from the Iron Age through the end of antiquity. They came to address the conference, “Jewish Religion in Light of New Inscriptions and Papyri,” sponsored by BIU’s Jeselsohn Epigraphic Center for Jewish History together with Vienna University’s Institute of Jewish Studies, and cosponsored by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Austrian Cultural Forum in Tel Aviv. Held in the presence of the Austrian Ambassador, H.E. Franz Josef Kuglitsch, and the Center’s donors, Dr. David and Jemima Jeselsohn, the conference included sessions on sites and texts predating the Babylonian Exile (e.g., marriage contracts, Hebrew ostraca from the Jeselsohn Collection, Aramaic divination text), and from the Neo-Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic and Roman periods. Organized by Jeselsohn Center head, BIU Bible Prof. Esther Eshel, with Vienna’s Prof. Armin Lange, the conference provided a window into the ancient Jewish world.

The oldest known marriage contract in Israel, from the Edomite community in Maresha (176 BCE)
Revisiting Jewish History and Heritage in Europe and Worldwide

The Aharon and Rachel Dahan Center for Culture, Society and Education in the Sephardic Heritage hosted a moving memorial evening for longstanding, devoted BIU patron and founder Aharon Dahan, z”l, recipient of a doctor honoris causa, and honorary chairman of the Board of Trustees, in the presence of his son Ely and family.

Demonstrating the versatility that Aharon Dahan inspired, the Dahan Center also sponsored a conference on “Hungarian Jewry: Identity and Heritage” together with Safed’s Memorial Museum of Hungarian-Speaking Jewry. Israeli academics from BIU and its sister institutions spoke about the history, culture, literature and Torah world of Hungarian Jewry, while also examining Hungarian communal divisiveness in the US and the status of Hungary’s contemporary Jewish community. An artistic program with a distinctly Hungarian flavor featured music, poetry and folklore.

With expertise in the history of Jews in Poland-Lithuania, BIU Prof. Moshe Rosman of the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History served as a consultant for Warsaw’s new Museum of the History of Polish Jews which opened its doors in April, to mark 70th anniversary of Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

The Koschitzky Department recently convened eminent scholars from nine countries (e.g., US, UK, Turkey, France, Spain) for its Second Annual International Conference, entitled “Economic History of the Jews throughout the Ages: Sources, Methodologies, Narratives.” The two-day forum included 11 sessions on such topics as Jewish Money Trade, Judaism and Economic Practice, Economic Theory, Jewish Crafts and Industry, Interplay between Economy, Social Structure and Communal Institutions.

Ars Judaica 2013 Makes Debut

Embracing such topics as Jewish mysticism in synagogue mosaics, ancient Israel’s material culture, medieval Ashkenazi Bible manuscripts and Hasidic wedding rings, the ninth volume of Ars Judaica – The Bar-Ilan Journal of Jewish Art is an invaluable resource for art historians, collectors, curators, and visual arts enthusiasts, who have eagerly awaited its publication by the BIU Department of Jewish Art. The Department hosted an international conference, “Traditions and Perspectives in the History of Jewish Art,” which convened art historians from many countries who presented their latest research breakthroughs.

Distributed throughout the world by the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, the annual journal Ars Judaica was established in memory of the late Michael J. Floersheim, devoted friend, Jewish art collector and BIU honorary doctorate recipient, with the generous support of his widow, Dr. Yonat Floersheim, and their son, Alexander. The conference commemorated the 20th anniversary of the passing of Michael J. Floersheim.
Prestigious Law Forums Convene World Experts at BIU

Recently, the Faculty was chosen to partner in a unique initiative, the Private Law Consortium, with Harvard Law School and the University of Pennsylvania (USA), McGill University (Canada), and the Universities of Oslo (Norway) and Trento (Italy). BIU hosted the inaugural conference – sponsored by the Israeli law firm, Yigal Arnon & Co. – with the participation of top scholars from the partnering institutions. Providing a rare opportunity for the experts to engage in in-depth discussion of legal issues among individuals, associations and corporations, the “First Private Law Consortium” examined such topics as breach of contract, property and privacy, Tort defaults, and private law in an era of globalization and Internet. A special session was held in memory of the late Prof. and Adv. Paul Baris, a founder of the BIU Faculty of Law. Consortium architect, Prof. Gideon Parchomovsky of BIU and U. of Pennsylvania, is Israel’s preeminent authority in property law and intellectual property law.

Intellectual property law was the subject of another conference held by the BIU Faculty of Law, together with the U. of Penn Law School and the Center for Technology, Innovation and Competition. Co-sponsored by Israel’s Sanford T. Colb & Co. and Meitar law firms, the conference, “Understanding Entrepreneurship: On IP, Culture and Innovation Environments” featured a talk by the chairman of Spacell, Landing an Israeli Spaceship on the Moon. Other sessions were addressed by academicians, government officials and attorneys, and focused on the role of IP law and culture in innovation. Discussions also touched upon the role of government, IP and culture in advancing entrepreneurship as well as exploring entrepreneurship on the internet and considering possible law reforms that can advance entrepreneurship and innovation. The conference was organized by Prof. Gideon Parchomovsky and Dr. Miriam Bitton.

International BA Students Tour Knesset

Students in the English-language BA (interdisciplinary social sciences, communication and political studies) gain an inside view of the Israeli Knesset where they meet with MK’s including Dr. Nachman Shai (a BIU alumnus in political studies and communication) and get behind the Knesset Channel cameras.

Israel’s 1st Postbac Premed Program in English

This summer BIU will be opening Israel’s first postbaccalaureate premed program in English for some 20 American and Canadian college grads. The medical hopefuls will undertake a concentrated premed science study program, along with intensive MCAT preparation, medical school application workshops, and interview training. They will also tour historic and modern Israel, attend special seminars and may opt to take emergency medicine and Jewish/Israel studies courses in English. Run jointly by the Mina & Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences and the Dean of Students’ Office, the competitively priced program is directed by Dr. Don Katcoff.

More than a Light Read – BIU Press Book Recommendations to While Away Summer Months

Looking to broaden your intellectual horizons this summer? The BIU University Press has some intellectually stimulating recommendations from its catalog of close to 800 titles in diverse disciplines. Most of these English works are available as e-books. For more info, visit: http://www.biupress.co.il/