



Celebrating Excellence

*Showcasing the extraordinary
achievements of alumni of the
Mozes S. Schupf Fellowship Program & the
Doctoral Fellowships of Excellence Program*



Color us Excellent

Program

*Leslie & Susan Gonda (Goldschmied) Nanotechnology Triplex
(Building # 206) South Campus*

Registration and light refreshments

Celebration of Excellence showcasing the extraordinary achievements of alumni of the Doctoral Fellowships of Excellence Program and the Mozes S. Schupf Fellowship Program

With a special tribute to Drs. Monique C. and Mordecai D. Katz Founders of the Mozes S. Schupf Fellowship Program and the Monique C. and Mordecai D. Katz Graduate Fellowship Program

MC: Dr. Ilanit Gordon, Doctoral Fellow of Excellence alumna

Greetings: Rabbi Prof. Daniel Hershkowitz, President

Prof. Haim Taitelbaum, Rector

Prof. Gil Epstein, Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Film Testimonials showcasing Doctoral and Schupf Fellows

Presentation of gift to Drs. Monique C. and Mordecai D. Katz

Announcement of the establishment of the Monique C. and Mordecai D. Katz Graduate Fellowship Program

Presentation of scroll to Drs. Monique C. and Mordecai D. Katz

Response

Musical Interlude

Dr. Orit Wolf, 2003 Doctoral Fellow of Excellence

The Mozes S. Schupf Fellowship Program

The Mozes S. Schupf Fellowship Program was founded by Drs. Monique C. and Mordecai D. Katz over 18 years ago, in memory of Monique's beloved uncle, who in her words "would have been immensely pleased to know his name would be forever linked to extraordinarily gifted students at Bar-Ilan University, who hopefully, will be among the future outstanding Jewish leaders our people so desperately need."

The Schupf Fellowship Program provides outstanding students with a unique opportunity to complete their PhD in a shorter period of time than would otherwise be possible. Alleviating the financial pressure experienced by doctoral students – many married with young children – the program was launched at Bar-Ilan in 1996. Countless former Schupf Fellows are scholars and professionals who have infused the academic ranks and society at large with outstanding talents and great minds, while many have enriched their alma mater, having joined the University's faculty.

Doctoral Fellowships of Excellence Program

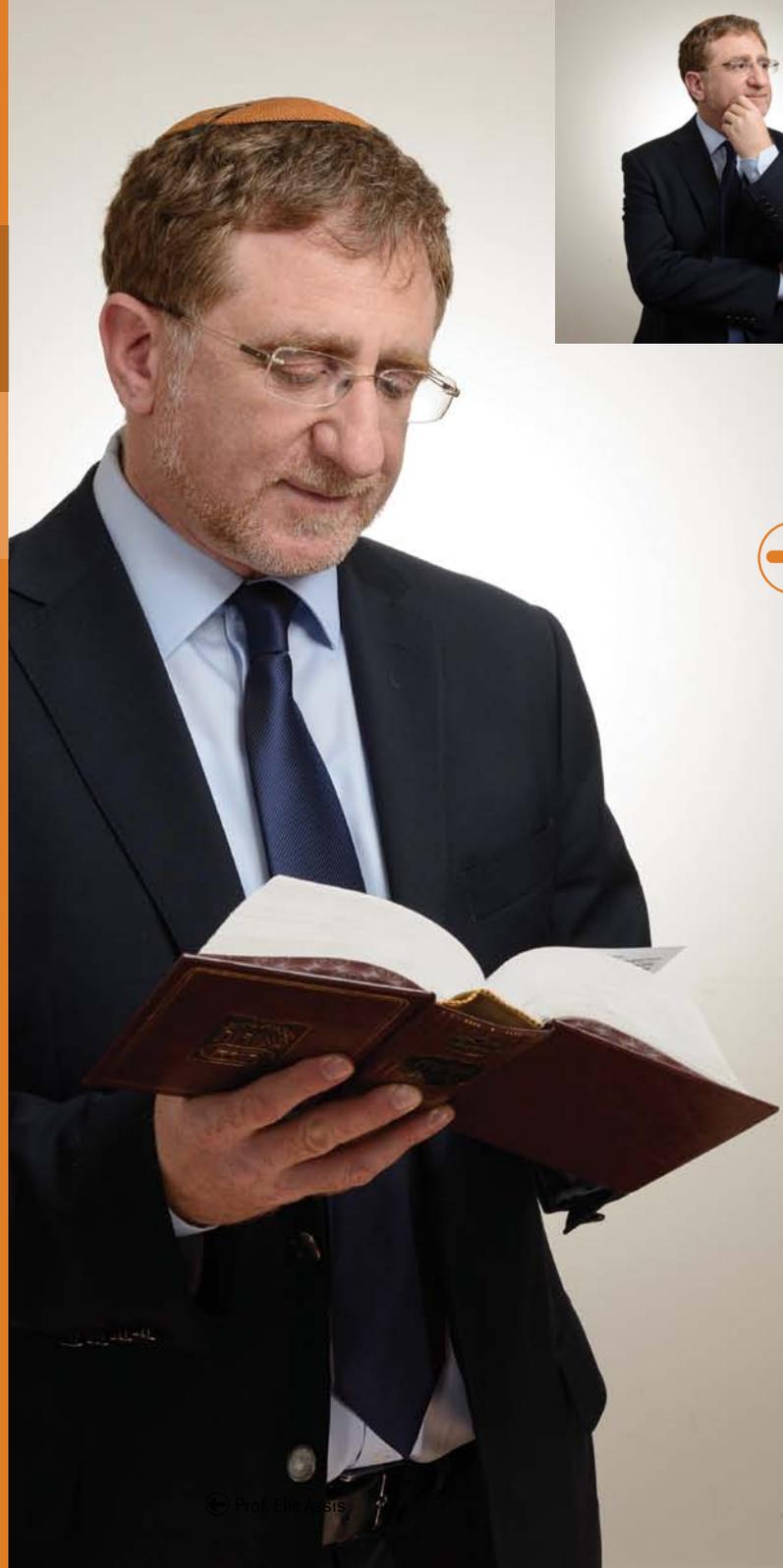
The Doctoral Fellowships of Excellence Program was established in 2000 by Prof. Moshe Kaveh, then BIU President, and is now celebrating its Bar Mitzvah year. The Program was established with the objective of expanding the University's scientific research horizons by attracting outstanding doctoral students from BIU, as well as universities throughout Israel, to pursue their higher degree with our outstanding faculty. The Program offers the appropriate financial incentives: a generous stipend, free tuition, travel expenses (to professional conferences abroad) and more.

Since the launch of the Program it has nurtured over 2,000 fellows, many of whom have already joined the academic faculty at BIU – one of whom has even been appointed department head – while many others have assumed leadership positions in industry and business, hi-tech companies and other ventures. Currently, 600 doctoral students are enrolled in the Program, almost one third of all the doctoral students at the University.

Mozes S. Schupf
Fellowship Program

Doctoral Fellowships
of Excellence Program

Profiling some
of our Rising Stars



Prof. Elie Assis:

Man of the Book



With a passion for the Bible, Prof. Elie Assis seeks to convey the beauty and spirit of the “Book of Books” around the globe. The English-born dean of BIU’s premier Faculty of Jewish Studies has lectured to hundreds of students in Israel as well as to audiences from Korea to Japan to Belgium. Chairing Bible studies at the Israeli Ministry of Education, he implements innovative school curricula which delve into Biblical text and recurring motifs. “The Bible is the root of our history, religion, and the formation of our People,” stresses the former head of the Zalman Shamir Bible Department, who has published eight books and over 40 articles.

“I try to understand the theology and ideology behind the Bible, and expose its key messages, which are as relevant today as they were in antiquity,” relays the *Hesder* yeshiva grad, who served in the IDF infantry, and was a pulpit rabbi in London. A 1999 Schupf fellow, Assis, then married and the father of two, says “the Fellowship gave me a big push to finish my PhD.”

A visiting professor at the Universities of Shandong (China) and St. Petersburg (Russia), he notes that over 20 students from the Far East study Bible at BIU. “While little ancient material culture remains, our forefathers’ spiritual legacy still fascinates millions.”

Assis believes that the Bible can unite most Jewish streams and, in fact, the Faculty’s new “Open Bible” lectures draw hundreds. “The Bible’s aim is to educate and shape Jewish and religious identity. Although it’s an exemplary literary work, it was not written for creativity’s sake but rather to transmit values and ideology.”

Today, the Faculty Dean reiterates the Bible’s appeal. “The beauty is that the prophets’ words resonate in our ears, even after thousands of years. We read ancient texts about inheriting the land which have become even more relevant with the modern Zionist revival.”

Member of Knesset

Dr. Aliza Lavie

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From politics to prayer, from media to academia, BIU's Dr. Aliza Lavie is making her mark in Israel and the Jewish world. A new member of Knesset (MK), she chairs the Knesset's Committee on the Status of Women, sits on the Finance Committee and spearheads legislation to advance women's rights and gender equality, and boost the number of women reps on key decision-making bodies, such as the judicial appointments and health basket committees. "When Yair Lapid asked me to join his party, I was excited to have an opportunity to impact," says Lavie.

The former BIU Schupf scholar – whose PhD thesis focused on radio and gender in Israel – is an Israeli radio and TV program host, and member of the Council of the 2nd Authority for TV & Radio. Her best selling *A Jewish Woman's Prayer Book* won a National Jewish Book Award. She also chairs a women's Beit Midrash, promotes religious-secular discourse in Tel Aviv, and is on the directorate of a treatment center for young drug addicts.

Formally on leave from the University to serve in the 19th Knesset, the senior lecturer in the BIU School of Communication was instrumental in creating its Center for Media and Religion. Recently, she joined the School's public diplomacy delegation, "Israel Up-Close 2014," for a 10-day sweep of the US.

"The Schupf Fellowship has helped me pursue professional training, advance in academia and realize my career goals," relays the mother of four, who was an IDF teacher soldier and Bnei Akiva emissary (with her husband) in Durban, South Africa. "My BIU education in gender and communication has equipped me with knowledge and tools to push through legislation and run committees." A Brandeis U. research fellow after completing all three BIU degrees in 2002, Lavie wants to "encourage other women to advance in academia." A role model for many, the MK professes that "Bar-Ilan University – with its commitment to Torah and worldly pursuits, and its plethora of talented scholars – is uniquely positioned to impact on Israel's public sphere."





DOCTORAL FELLOW
OF EXCELLENCE

Rabbi Mayer Lichtenstein:

Advancing and Enhancing the Talmudic Legacy



A Yeshiva educator and college Talmud lecturer who heads a community Beit Midrash, Rabbi Mayer Lichtenstein is a BIU Doctoral Fellow of Excellence in Talmud. His dissertation, “Towards a History of Blessings before Eating in Rabbinic Literature” traces the formulation of *halakha* from the Second Temple (200 BCE) through the period of the Jewish Sages (600 CE).

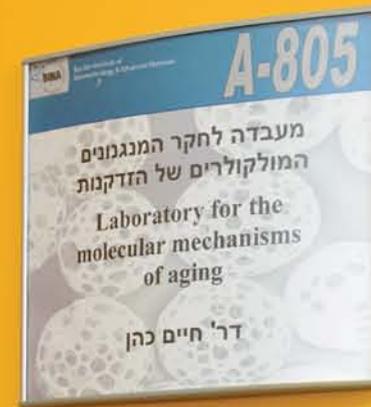
Brought up on an analytical approach to Talmud study, which he learned from his late grandfather, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (the “Rav”) and his father, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, he says, “My academic studies broadened my horizons and utilizing research tools enriched my study.” Part of a cadre of religious Zionist rabbis who advocate combining Torah learning with academic methodology, he opines that “broad knowledge of history, sociology and realia will make Talmud more relevant for the younger generation.”

Born in New York (1964) and raised in Israel, he began at age 14 to make annual visits to the US to learn with his grandfather. Following high school, he spent a year in the Rav’s *shiur* at YU before enrolling at Yeshivat Har Etzion, where he attended the *shiur* of his father, the co-Rosh Yeshiva. A *Hesder* student, he served in the IDF armored corps, later receiving *semicha* from the Israeli Chief Rabbinate, and his BA (Jewish History) and MA (Talmud) from the Hebrew University.

Pleased to be pursuing a PhD with supervisor Prof. Leib Moskowitz in BIU’s Talmud department with its “focus on content, diverse makeup and respect for tradition,” Lichtenstein is grateful for the Kahana Doctoral Fellowship which enables him to “devote more time to research.”

With plans to fully resume his teaching career upon graduation, “using my Yeshiva and scholarly knowledge to reach a higher understanding of Talmud,” the father of eight is continuing a family tradition.

“I learned most of my Torah from my father and was inspired by his wisdom, and morality,” says Lichtenstein. “My grandfather gave me my passion for Torah and a commitment to joining the chain.”



DOCTORAL FELLOW
OF EXCELLENCE

Shoshana Naiman:
An “Up-and-Coming
Woman Scientist”
to Look Out For



Halfway through PhD studies in molecular biology, 26-year-old Shoshana Naiman is already making headlines. Chosen twice by the Israeli media as an “up-and-coming woman scientist,” the BIU Doctoral Fellow of Excellence pursues international collaborations on aging and metabolic diseases, which have resulted in extension of lifespan in animal models, and articles in top scientific journals such as *Nature*. A fellow in the Israeli Centers of Research Excellence (I-CORE), she is a nominee for the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meeting for young scientists.

“Shoshana is the best PhD student I have had,” says her advisor, Prof. Haim Cohen, citing her passion for research and excellent academic record. Collaborating with BIU life scientists Cohen and Dr. Yariv Kanfi, and Carnegie Mellon computational biologists in designing a search engine for gene expression research, she was an equal first author of the report, which was published in *Nature Methods* (Oct. 2013).

Born in Chicago, she immigrated to Israel alone, at age 17, with little knowledge of Hebrew. She holds a BSc in biotechnology *Magna cum Laude*; and an MSc in molecular biology *Summa cum Laude* from BIU. Recalling the challenges of learning Hebrew, she tutors immigrants and initiated a BIU service to allow foreign students free translations of science exams.

“BIU helps me forge contacts and apply for grants, and sends me to conferences,” relates Naiman, who says that without the doctoral fellowship she wouldn’t be pursuing a PhD. “I hope one day to establish my own research lab, collaborating with others to investigate molecular mechanisms of metabolic disease (e.g. diabetes, obesity). In the meantime, she’s getting “an excellent education and has a great lab – Bar-Ilan is one of the best experiences of my life!”

Dr. Ronit Irshai:

Spearheading a **Spiritual Revolution** for Modern Orthodox Women



Dr. Ronit Irshai is fueling an Orthodox feminist revolution. One of a select cadre of scholars exploring the “dynamite combination” of *halakha* and feminist thought, she is a sought-after speaker, author of an innovative work on fertility and Jewish law, and activist in the Orthodox Jewish feminist organization *Kolech*. “My firm commitment to *halakha*, human dignity and equality inspires me to find ways to increase women’s involvement in synagogue and other rituals,” stresses Irshai, a former Doctoral Fellow of Excellence and recipient of a Schupf post-doctoral scholarship. “This is *Tikkun Olam!*”

After hearing Prof. Tamar Ross’s “fascinating lectures” on Judaism and feminism, she enrolled in BIU’s nascent gender studies program, learning with its founder, the late Prof. Dafna Izraeli, with Ross and Prof. Noam Zohar as advisors. “My doctoral fellowship afforded me with a great opportunity and crucial support,” recalls Irshai, who was then expecting her fifth child. Now the program’s academic advisor and a lecturer, she was a visiting scholar at Harvard Divinity School – “a dream experience” for Irshai, the first in her family to obtain a PhD.

“BIU is the only university that deals in depth with the connection between Judaism and feminism – an oxymoron for many secular feminists,” she says. “Fostering a feminist approach to the philosophy of Jewish law is still a challenging task both within academia and in the Modern Orthodox community. However slowly, but surely, we see progress.”

Charting a bold path with her hybrid commitment to both *halakha* and feminism, Irshai, who dons a *tallit* and reads the Torah in her synagogue (from the women’s section) advocates “consulting the books to find ways to enable women to enlarge their part. I see it as a spiritual revolution to bring women closer to holiness.”

Dr. Ronit Irshai
(photo courtesy of
the Women’s Studies
in Religion Program at
Harvard Divinity School)

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Our Generous and Far-seeing Donors

BIU is deeply grateful to our devoted supporters who have made these scholarship programs possible, unstintingly contributing generously in order to fulfill the academic dreams of so many brilliant young Israelis.

A special thanks is extended to the Katz's for establishing the Monique C. and Mordecai D. Katz Graduate Fellowship Program, as well as for their long-standing support of the Mozes S. Schupf Fellowship Program. Their dedication to nurturing a generation of scientific and intellectual leadership has set an example for all to follow.

The University also owes a huge debt of gratitude to the hundreds of generous sponsors of the Doctoral Fellowship of Excellence program, who hail from all corners of the globe. The critical funds that they provided over the 13 years that the program has existed have helped create generations of influential alumna who are shaping the face of Israel.



אוניברסיטת בר-אילן
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