



## Prof. Blidstein Wins Israel Prize in Jewish Thought 2006



Prof. Ya'acov (Gerald) Blidstein from the Goldstein-Goren Department of Jewish Thought is the recipient of the 2006 Israel Prize in Jewish Thought. The prize, Israel's highest honor, was announced by the Minister of Education, Culture and Sport MK Meir Sheerit and will be awarded at a special ceremony on Israel's Independence Day on May 3, 2006.

Incumbent of the Miriam Martha Hubert Chair in Jewish Law, Blidstein immigrated to Israel from the United States, where he earned his doctorate at Yeshiva University. He joined the faculty of BGU in 1972. Over the years, he has served in a number of senior positions, including Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chairman of the Goldstein-Goren Department of Jewish Thought and Head of the Goldstein-Goren International Center for Jewish Thought. A member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Blidstein is an internationally-renowned scholar in Maimonides' *halachic* law and philosophy, with a special emphasis on political philosophy.

Indeed, Blidstein may be considered one of the founders of the field of Jewish political thought, along with the late Daniel J. Elazar. His work in Jewish law focuses on Jewish public law and the interface of law and social ethics. He has also published numerous studies on the history of prayer and liturgy from ancient times to the present. Blidstein's research interests cover the history of *halachah*, philosophy of *halachah*, Maimonides, ethics and *halachah*, prayer, *aggadah* and political thought.

According to the citation issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, "Prof. Ya'acov Blidstein of Ben-Gurion University is the outstanding researcher of rabbinic thought from the medieval and modern period; and in this field he has made a substantial contribution that makes a radical breakthrough in the research of the *halachic* philosophy of Maimonides and its influence throughout the generations. In his very accurate analysis of the *halachah*, he reveals its philosophical foundations and deepens the understanding of pure philosophy. His research into the relationship between democracy and *halachah* has had a major impact beyond the academic world, in Israel and around the world."

Save the Date !!  
36<sup>th</sup> Annual Board  
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May 28 - 31, 2006

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## *Eilat Campus Teams Up With French University*

A partnership agreement between the University's Eilat campus and the OMNIS Ecole Supérieure de Commerce et de Management in Strasbourg, France was signed in a special ceremony that took place at the French Embassy in Tel Aviv in February.

Dr. Natan Uriely, Acting Dean of the Eilat campus, represented the Departments of Business Management and Hotel and Tourism Management, both of which run academic programs in Israel's Southernmost city.

"The agreement with Strasbourg came in recognition of the unique character of our Eilat Campus," explains Uriely. "We look forward to a thriving relationship with Strasbourg and hope to see the exchange of students and faculty members in both directions as our academic and personal connections deepen."

The Strasbourg School was represented by its Director-General, Chantal Fedida, who traveled to Israel for the event, accompanied by other dignitaries, including Deputy President of the French Senate and President of the Council of the Bas-Rhin region in Alsace, Philippe Richert, who heads the region's French-Israel friendship league and Bas-Rhin Senator and the President of ADIRA, Francis Grignon. ADIRA is the research and development organization for industry in Alsace.

The OMNIS School in Strasbourg provides high quality education in the fields of business, management, human resources and training.

# NEWS

## *Shraga Segal*



*1939-2006*

The University mourns the sudden death of Deputy-Rector Prof. Shraga Segal, who died on February 25, 2006. A faculty member for more than 30 years, Segal was a moving force who shaped the University's curriculum on molecular biology, general and clinical microbiology and immunology. Incumbent of the Joseph H. Krupp Chair in Cancer Immunobiology, Segal's research investigated the characterization of genes that determine the metastatic capacity of cancerous cells.

According to Rector Prof. Jimmy Weinblatt, "Prof. Segal was one of the first members of the University and one of the core individuals who helped to establish the Faculty of Health Sciences. He was one of the leaders of immunological research in Israel and tirelessly endeavored to advance higher education in Israel in the framework of his varied roles. His friends and colleagues mourn the loss of a brilliant scientist and dear friend, a man of extraordinary sensitivity and abundant humor."

Segal held a number of senior administrative positions at the University including Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences, Head of the University's Center for Cancer Research, Acting Director of the Institute for Applied Biosciences in its transitional period as it became the nucleus of the National Institute of Biotechnology in the Negev, and two tenures as chair of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology.

Among his many outside professional appointments, Segal served as Chairman of Israel's National Steering Committee for the Development of Genetic Based Biotechnology and Head of the Research Committee of the Israel Cancer Association.

Shraga is survived by his wife Mazal, daughter Dorit, sons Rony and Arik, their spouses and children.

May his memory be blessed.

# @BGU

## Deutsche Telekom Creates Research Laboratories at BGU

The German communications company Deutsche Telekom (DT) signed an agreement creating the Deutsche Telekom Laboratories (DT-Labs) at BGU, which will focus on applied research in the area of information and communication technologies. This is the first time that the telecommunications giant has created an applied research institute outside Germany.

CEO of Deutsche Telekom Kai-Uwe Ricke and a number of senior DT executives were in Beer-Sheva to sign the \$12.1 million agreement in the presence of Israeli Minister of Communications and Tourism Avraham Hirshson. During the same ceremony, the University presented Ricke with the Ben-Gurion Negev Award in recognition of his contribution to advancing scientific research in the region.

University President Prof. Avishay Braverman lauded DT's decision to invest in the Negev, "reinforcing our commitment to the highest level of research. We are proud of our team — an outstanding group of academics who have proven their ability to compete in the international marketplace."

Visibly moved by his first visit to Israel and the University, Ricke expressed his admiration of Israeli innovation in the field of information technology and security. Describing the agreement to invest in BGU over the next three years, he said, "We are putting down a marker for the research work of DT and the development of the University," and noted that DT is "examining options to provide venture capital and to establish an incubator model."

Hirshson praised the agreement and acknowledged Israel's role as a leader in innovative technologies. "We have combined the Jewish mind with Israeli *chutzpah*, which gives us an advantage in many fields."



Left to right: Minister of Communications and Tourism Avraham Hirshson; outgoing President Prof. Avishay Braverman; CEO of Deutsche Telekom Kai-Uwe Ricke; Acting President Prof. Rivka Carmi

The Director of the DT-Labs will be Dr. Yuval Elovici of BGU's Department of Information Systems Engineering, who also heads its Software Engineering program, assisted by a team composed of the Chairpersons of the Departments of Information Systems Engineering, Computer Science and Communication Systems Engineering — Prof. Yuval Shahar, Prof. Amnon Meisels and Dr. Michael Segal, respectively.

DT-Labs at BGU will initially focus on two main areas of great importance to users of telecommunications services. The topic of "security in telecommunications networks" is concerned with incorporating security features into the telecommunications network that users themselves previously had to install on their handsets, at great inconvenience. This will give DT customers personalized security zones in which they can use their applications without having to worry about security details.

The second key research area covered by this cooperation agreement is concerned with organizing various software components distributed over various networks quickly and efficiently and adapting them to

customers' business processes. The third key area revolves around "intuitive usability." The object of this is to enable the end-customer to use complex telecommunications services in a natural and straightforward way. Along with an optimized use of the product portfolio, this will incorporate new media and terminal devices into telecommunications.

The new research collaboration builds on an existing \$4 million research project by DT in the area of enhancement of communication network security that is based on an innovative integration of the intelligent temporal reasoning and monitoring methods developed by Prof. Shahar, head of the University's Medical Informatics Research Center (originally created for monitoring chronic patients and for the integration of intelligence information), with Dr. Elovici's network-oriented data-security architecture.

The project is led by Dr. Elovici. The team includes Prof. Shlomi Dolev and Prof. Ehud Gudes from the Department of Computer Science. Gil Tahan, a doctoral student in the Department of Information Systems Engineering is the project's chief technology officer.

## *In Good Hands*

The positive influence of musical activities on sensory development, motor skills and social skills in children has been more than a source of academic study for Idit Sulkin. Using the fruits of her research and her own musical talents, she has produced a DVD and website that offers “hands-on” advice for parents and children in developmental games.

Sulkin, an expert in early music child development and a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of the Arts, under the supervision of Music Psychologist Dr. Warren Brodsky, explores the effects of hand-clapping songs on the development of learning skills and social maturity of children in the first grades of elementary school. The music and activities she includes in her DVD entitled, “An Hour With Idit and Mr. Snail,” are based both on her academic research on the connection between music and development, as well as her years of experience working with children and parents. Selections of the DVD are currently being broadcast on Israel’s largest cable TV channel for children.

“It is very satisfying to see that my work isn’t just some academic project that people talk about — kids love the songs while they are learning more than they can even imagine,” says Sulkin.

The corresponding website (in Hebrew only) explores the research and concepts behind the songs. For more information, visit: [www.beyadaim-tovot.com](http://www.beyadaim-tovot.com)

## *Standing Room Only for the Dalai Lama*



*The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibet: “Everyone wants peace but no one speaks about how to reach it.”*

From the crowds at the entrance to the Joya Claire Sonnenfeldt Auditorium, one might have thought a rock star had come to campus. Instead, the celebrity was the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibet, Tenzin Gyatso, the exiled Buddhist leader and Nobel laureate who now lives in India and is considered one of the world’s leading spiritual leaders and symbols of political struggle.

His visit was organized in conjunction with the Israeli Friends of the Tibetan People. Outgoing University President Prof. Avishay Braverman presented His Holiness with the Ben-Gurion Negev Award in recognition of “An exemplary individual who has remained steadfast as a guardian of ancient traditions and heritage and a symbol of hope and faith; and in acknowledgement of the laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, who has led the people of Tibet for more than half a century in the quest

for universal responsibility, solidarity, tolerance and mutual understanding and respect.”

Speaking on the topic of “Compassion and the Individual: Self-Concern Begins with Concern for Others,” the Dalai Lama put out a call for a nuclear-free world while encouraging people to smile.

“A smile is a sign of human internal warmth, regardless of religious, racial or gender difference,” he said. “The world needs to be free of nuclear and chemical weapons. All religions have the same expression and the same language of peace, compassion and respect for the other.”

On the subject of peace, he told the BGU audience that “everyone wants peace but no one speaks about how to reach it.”

### Dr. Carl Gans Herpetology Library Donated

The Dr. Carl Gans Herpetology Library and his scientific correspondence were recently donated to Ben-Gurion University. Gans served as professor and former department chairman at the University of Michigan until he retired in 1997, after which time he moved to the University of Texas in Austin where he served as Adjunct Professor. Since then, he has donated his extensive libraries, scientific correspondence and specimen collections to various universities and research institutions around the world.

The Herpetology Library is currently being catalogued and shelved in a designated area at the Jane Schapiro Library at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research on the Sede Boqer campus. It is composed of over 20,000 items, including books, journals and reprints in the areas of Herpetology, Functional Morphology, Anatomy, Physiology and Systematics.

It includes books as well as periodicals – some of them in complete series from 1940 until current issues – and reprints of scientific papers. The literature covers geographical areas

from all over the world and includes a collection of rare titles such as Claude Perrault, 1676; *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire naturelle des animaux*; Paris: L'Imprimerie Royale.

The donation includes the scientific correspondence between Carl Gans and colleagues with whom he collected animals on five continents and coauthors with whom he wrote his many publications and the twenty volume work, *Biology of Reptilia*. It also includes Gans' extensive slide and film collections, which were an important tool in his studies of functional morphology. In future years the correspondence may be indexed, reorganized and added to the Ben-Gurion Archives.

According to Gans, "These donations were made with the express purpose of making these materials available for study and research by students and scientists."

Inquiries about the collection can be addressed to the Gans Library curator, Dr. Amos Bouskila (bouskila@bgu.ac.il).

Researchers from the Faculty of Health Sciences have developed a mass screening test for the Hepatitis C virus (HCV) according to recently published findings in the online edition of the *Journal of Virological Methods*. More than 170 million people are infected worldwide with the virus, which can cause serious health problems such as cirrhosis and cancer of the liver.

"The procedure is entirely manual. You don't even need electricity for illumination, just a pipette to take the drops of saliva and place in the testing kit. In developing countries, that could be a big deal," said Dr. Arie Yaari, a member of the Department of Epidemiology and head of the investigative team at the Soroka University Medical Center.

The study was conducted in collaboration with the Israeli company Orgenics, which has developed over 30 reliable and easy-to-use diagnostic test kits for infectious diseases since it was founded in 1982. "What we did was take one of Orgenics' kits originally designed for blood testing and converted it to saliva testing," Yaari said.

Yaari and his team, including Dr. Marina Margalit, a biologist, examined the saliva-based test's efficacy on 37 dialysis patients. "People in dialysis units resemble poor people from developing countries in regards to their antibodies and immunology systems – they're generally undernourished and immunosuppressed – their immunology systems don't work like healthy people," said Yaari.

The saliva test was 100 percent successful at detecting HCV in patients with symptoms of infection. It performed better than the blood serum test at detecting infected people who had yet to develop symptoms.

### Center on Drug Abuse Joins UN Effort

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has appointed the Regional Alcohol and Drug Abuse Resources Center (RADAR) of the Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work to serve as a member of an international consortium to address major drug research, treatment and rehabilitation issues.

The BGU center will be joining its counterparts in the U.S., Great Britain,

Australia, Egypt, South Africa and Austria. RADAR is headed by Prof. Richard Isralowitz, who received the 2004 U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse "Distinguished International Scientist" Award in its International Program – the first Israeli to receive this honor.

Since the mid-1990s, Isralowitz's work at BGU has focused on promoting research on substance abuse, with a focus on immigrant populations in Israel.

## A Place for Prayer on the Internet



Dr. Uri Ehrlich

An online database to promote the study of Jewish liturgy has been created by Dr. Uri Ehrlich of the Goldstein-Goren Department of Jewish Thought.

The site, entitled "The Prayer in Rabbinic Literature Database,"

collects references to prayer found in rabbinic literature. The site is organized according to liturgical, chronological and subject categories and provides students and researchers of prayer liturgy easy access to a broad range of materials.

According to Dr. Ehrlich, the "concept of prayer is very broadly defined" and encompasses the

statutory prayers and the benedictions mentioned in rabbinic literature, both those that later entered into daily prayer books (*siddurim*) and those restricted to the rabbinic period alone; ceremonial readings; prayer in general; spontaneous prayers, whether attributed to contemporaries or to biblical figures;

and prayer in the synagogue context. "We are trying to sort, catalogue and post the widest variety of materials possible," he explains. "We are constantly adding new documents."

This developing database enables retrieval of sources according to liturgical categories and settings, both statutory and spontaneous; the historical strata of rabbinic literature, according to a specific book; or according to person(s) named in a tradition and subject categories.

As it develops, additional sources will be added to the database and its subject categories will be refined. This interactive site's publication on the web is intended to make possible worldwide scholarly cooperation.

For more information, visit the site at: <http://w3.bgu.ac.il/hazal/project/Eng/main.asp?action=40&what=40>

## Prof. Kost Recognized for Cancer Research

The Jaqueline Seroussi Foundation has awarded Prof. Joseph Kost from the Department of Chemical Engineering \$125,000 for his innovative research on a new method for treating breast cancer.

Kost was among seven scientists from Italy, Belgium, Egypt and Israel to receive prizes from the Seroussi Foundation this year. His research focuses on developing gene-based treatments of cancerous growths.

Current research involves inserting healthy genes into cancerous cells in order to destroy them. At present, the greatest problem with the injection of the genes is the body's unwanted immune reaction which can lead to death. To avoid such a reaction,

researchers have been working with polymers which help the healing gene enter the cell. Kost's research examines ways in which to increase the efficiency of the process.

The Jacqueline Seroussi Memorial Foundation for Cancer research is a non-profit entity, established in Israel by the AJAX Trust



Prof. Joseph Kost

to encourage on an international level, laboratory and clinical investigators whose research efforts are directed to that of malignant disease.

# ABG

## Alumni

focus

### On This Happy Note...

## Foreign Donations to Israel Examined

The first comprehensive study on local and foreign foundations active in Israel was conducted by the Israeli Center for Third Sector Research (ICTR) at BGU.

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Lenny Ravitz (left) jokes with one of the evening's participants

Over 200 alumni filled the W.A. Minkoff Senate Hall with laughter as they received a lesson in life from comedian Lenny Ravitz. The event is just one of the many exciting activities organized by the University's Alumni Association — that range from entertainment to nostalgia, online job listings to professional networking groups to raising money for scholarships for needy students.

Upcoming events include a job fair with representatives from Motorola open to Faculty of Engineering Sciences alumni, a reunion of the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management from its founding class 33 years ago and an evening of music with the Israel Sinfonietta Beer-Sheva.

For more information about upcoming events or to see the online job listings go to the Alumni Association website at <http://www.bgu.ac.il/alumni>.

## Grads Are Happy with BGU

Recent BGU graduates are extremely satisfied customers, according to the results of a recent survey conducted by the University Registrar's Office. Among the 2005 graduating class, 92 percent said that they were pleased with their studies and 95 percent say that they would recommend studying at BGU to their friends.

In addition, 62 percent said that they were satisfied with the extent to which their studies have prepared them for their current occupations.

The survey also revealed that more than half of the newest BGU alumni have found work related to the field they studied. Some 31 percent found work in industry (a 6 percent increase over last year) and 10 percent at advanced research institutes.

The survey is the fifth in a series that addresses the level of satisfaction of University alumni. The questions focus on three areas: characteristics of their current employment, satisfaction with their academic studies and their place of residence before and after graduation. Participation in the survey was voluntary and based on responses to an e-mail message sent to all graduates of the previous academic year.

It is estimated that up to 1500 foreign foundations are active in the country. These — together with foreign philanthropists — donate \$1.5 billion a year to Israel, according to the research project, which was conducted by Prof. Benjamin Gidron, from the School of Management, and Yael Elon, Avital Schlanger and Dr. Raviv Schwartz of the ICTR.

The study states, "This figure can be attributed to the traditional support of Jews from the Diaspora; however, in recent years more and more non-Jewish foreign foundations have been active in Israel as well. In the era of globalization, foundations in Western countries invest in international projects outside their own borders; thus the large amount of philanthropic funds that Israel receives is very significant."

The exact number of foreign donors to Israel is unknown because they are not required to register with, or report to, the Israeli authorities. The study criticizes the lack of supervision over foreign foundations, and the lack of transparency towards the Israeli public by many of them.

"Many foreign foundations intervene and invest in Israel's economy and society, but refuse to openly disclose their targets of support, in contrast to global norms," said Gidron.

The report states that 6,377 foundations and funding organizations are registered in Israel. Sixty percent of the registered foundations are active — 42 percent of foundations are active in education, and 34 percent in welfare. Most work at these foundations is on a voluntary basis, and only 11 percent pay salaries.

# NEWS

## Weiss Awarded Honorary Doctorate in Surprise Ceremony

Henry and Anita Weiss came to visit the Marcus Family Campus with their family to become more familiar with the University and the philanthropic projects that they support. In the first ever event of its kind, the University arranged a surprise ceremony to bestow upon Henry an Honorary Doctoral Degree.

Outgoing President Prof. Avishay Braverman praised the Weiss family for his commitment to Israel in general and BGU in particular. "Anita and Henry are true friends of the Negev and the University. Their commitment to recruiting promising young scientists for the University and developing cutting-edge technologies will ensure Israel's future for generations to come."

Speaking at the ceremony, Weiss reinforced his support of the Negev and its importance for the State of Israel. He also thanked the University for helping him realize a lifelong dream: "I was a pharmacist who always wanted to be a doctor. Now you have proven that if you have enough patience, you can achieve whatever your heart wishes!"

Weiss came to the campus with his daughters, Rochelle Handy and Donna

Lam and her husband, Cantor Nathan Lam of the Stephen S. Wise Synagogue in Los Angeles. The Weiss family became involved philanthropically with the University after meeting with Philip Gomperts, Director of the Southwestern Region of the American Associates of Ben-Gurion University (AABGU), and later being introduced to a number of researchers from BGU.

Born in 1921 in New Jersey to parents who had emigrated from Eastern Europe, Henry moved as a child with his family to Los Angeles. In 1943, he graduated from the University of Southern California with a degree in pharmacy and later joined the American Armed Forces. He is a veteran of World War II. Weiss worked as a pharmacist for many years and owned two pharmacies during his long career in the field.

Following his retirement, Henry was able to dedicate more time to his two passions – real estate, where he has become renowned for his business and development acumen, and the



Henry A. Weiss receives an Honorary Doctoral Degree from outgoing President Prof. Avishay Braverman.

State of Israel, where his philanthropy extends from his magnanimous support of BGU, particularly in the fields of nanotechnology and hi-tech, to the Israeli Air Force and the Asaf Ha'Rofeh Hospital and Sheba Medical Center. The family also dedicated the new Weiss Family Laboratory for Nanoscale Systems, headed by Dr. Ron Folman, for the fabrication of sophisticated atom chips.

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Henry and Anita Weiss with their daughters Rochelle Handy (left) and Donna Lam with her husband Cantor Nathan Lam