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University**

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progress

Year Book 2019/20



**Australian Friends of
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

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YEAR BOOK 2019-20

Contents

Articles

- 3 Message from the CEO of the Australian Friends of the Hebrew University
- 4 Australia and the Hebrew University
- 6 2019 Federal President's Report
- 11 2019 NSW President's Report
- 12 2019 WA President's Report
- 14 2019 CEO's Report
- 22 History of the NSW Friends
- 28 For they are Jolly Good Fellows
- 30 Shattering the Glass Ceiling
- 37 Prof. Mona Khoury-Kassabri
- 38 Brainstorming week in Melbourne
- 44 A partnership that truly digs deep.
- 48 Honouring the Hoffmans
- 49 Perth Benefactors Honoured

HU News

- 52 The "Nobel" Prize of Mathematics
- 56 New Einstein Manuscripts Revealed
- 60 Emet Prize
- 64 Prestigious EU Grant to HU

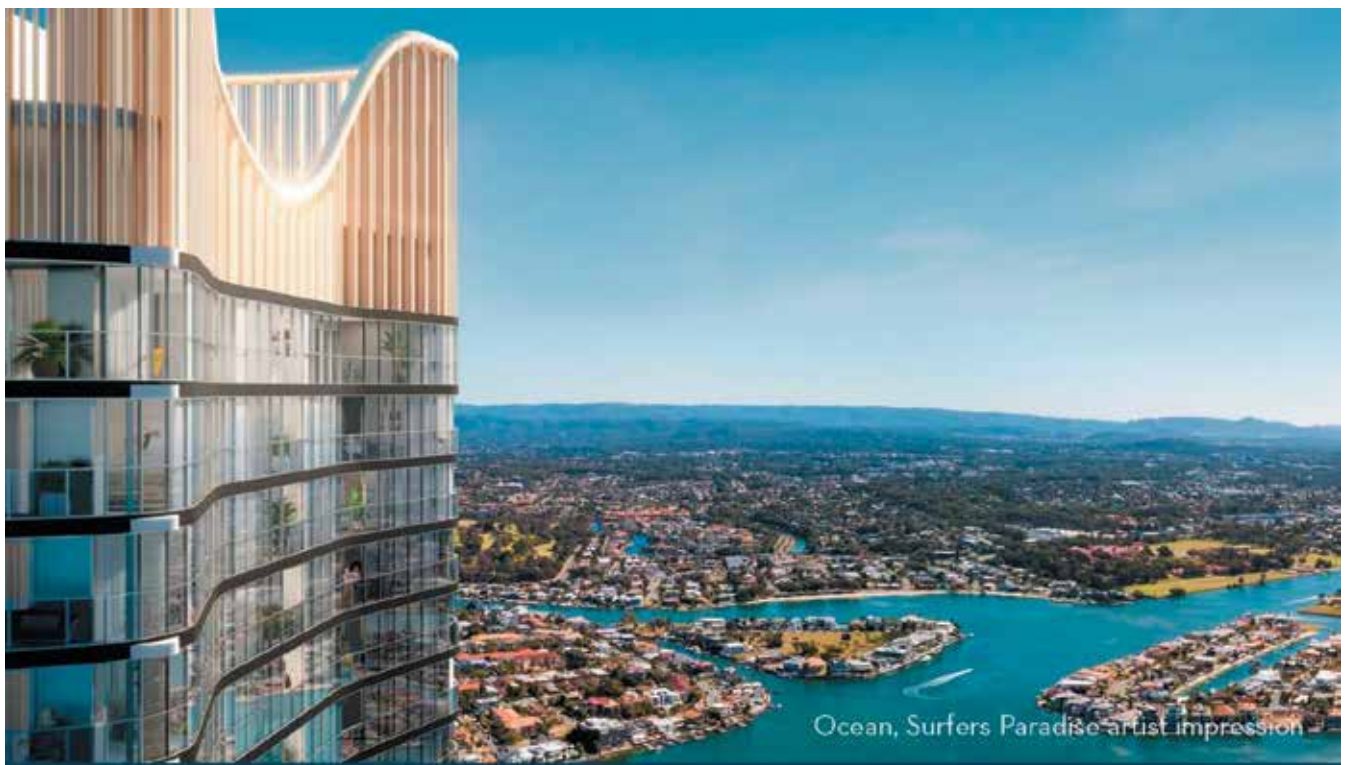
Medicine / Health

- 68 Using Deception to Fight Cancer
- 70 A New MRI Technique from HU
- 74 Preventing Alzheimers
- 76 A Blow to "superbugs"
- 80 Pausing Women's Biological Clocks?
- 82 The Father of Cannabis Research

Science / Technology

- 84 Artificial intelligence and Quantum Physics
- 88 Denisovan Finding is a Winner
- 94 Learning from Dinosaurs!
- 100 Faster Covid-19 Testing
- 102 The Secret of Science in Israel

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Message from the CEO

Dear Friends,

We are delighted to have been able to maintain our tradition of producing a hard copy Yearbook this year despite the trying conditions imposed by the coronavirus. In an exciting development, in addition to the hard copy Yearbook, this year, we are expanding our reach and also circulating an electronic version of the Yearbook to a wider audience..

We hope that by the time this Yearbook reaches you, the world will have started to recover from one of the worst pandemics in history and that it will find you and your families well.

As a result of the coronavirus, many of the outside service providers who have assisted with the Yearbook in the past were unable to be involved this year. We are particularly grateful to Mrs. Shira Halberstadt, a graphic designer who stepped into the breach and has done an amazing job to ensure that we have a Yearbook ready for distribution in June. I also express thanks to our printers, Kwik Kopy and in particular, Phillip Joel who always goes the extra mile for us.

It is also important to acknowledge the input of some of our board members who have written articles or assisted with editing and proof reading – thank you so much.

We would not be able to produce a Yearbook without the support of the many companies and individuals who continue to advertise in our Yearbook literally year after year. One of the reasons that we really wanted to ensure that we produced a Yearbook, despite the hardships involved this year, was to fulfil our obligation to our advertisers and our support base in general.

We also wanted to be able to share with readers some of the amazing contributions that the Hebrew University has made to the world over the last year. Indeed, during these months of pandemic, there have been more than 60 research projects into a vaccine and/or cure for covid-19 undertaken by researchers at the Hebrew University. We are hopeful that by the time this Yearbook reaches our readers, there will be some meaningful outcomes from this research, in fact we have included an article of just one example of this – the development of a Covid-19 Diagnostic Test that is 10X faster than anything else available.

During these difficult days, the Australian Friends has continued to disseminate relevant information from the Hebrew University and we are grateful for the calls and emails we have received from our supporters expressing their appreciation for this and enquiring about our wellbeing. Of course, it has been difficult to promote study at the Hebrew University at a time when staff members and students have not been able to be on campus. Innovative as ever, staff at the Hebrew University produced courses online and research continued to be undertaken remotely. Amazingly, during these difficult days - as you will read in some of the articles - Hebrew University faculty members continued to excel, and were the recipients of some of the world's most prestigious prizes and grants, which just goes to show that there is nothing that can stop the Hebrew University!

We hope that you will enjoy our 2019/2020 Yearbook and that the months ahead will allow our world to recover and that with your support, we will be able to ensure that the Hebrew University upholds its reputation as Israel's number one university



ROB SCHNEIDER
Chief Executive

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Mr Robert Simons OAM	(NSW)
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* (Deceased)

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Australian Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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Vice President	Mr Philip Moses
Hon. Treasurer:	Mr Robert Greenfield
Hon. Secretary:	Mr Jonathan Goodman
Chief Executive:	Mr Robert Schneider

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The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel's first university, is a multidisciplinary institution of higher learning and research where intellectual pioneering, cutting-edge discovery and a passion for learning flourish. It is a center of international repute, with ties extending to the worldwide scientific and academic community, where teaching and research drive innovation and provide the broadest of education for its students. Ranked among the world's leading universities, the Hebrew University is an institution where excellence is emphasised; where advanced, postgraduate study and research are encouraged; and where special programs and conferences attract students and academics from around the world. At its core, the Hebrew University's mission is to develop cutting-edge research, to educate future leaders, and to nurture generations of outstanding scientists and scholars in all fields of learning.

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Ram Semo



6 campuses: three in Jerusalem (Mount Scopus, Edmond J. Safra, and Ein Kerem) and in Rehovot, Beit Dagan, and Eilat



3,682 projects in progress in University departments and some **100** subject - related and interdisciplinary research centers



23,000 students, including **11,500** undergraduates, **6,000** master's students, **2,200** doctoral candidates, and **3,300** overseas, pre-academic students, postdoctoral fellows, and others



973 faculty members



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From the Australian Friends Federal President

Michael Dunkel

(Note this Report relates to the year-end 30 June 2019)

I have pleasure in presenting my report for 2019, a busy year with significant progress in some areas.

2018 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 71st Annual General Meeting of the Australian Friends of the Hebrew University was held in Sydney on 27th November 2018.

Victorian Friends - I reported that, unfortunately, it had become necessary to close the Melbourne office. I also pointed out that the Melbourne community is an important source of support to the University and that we would be making efforts to reestablish the Division.

Legacy Tours – I reported that I had been successful in obtaining a sponsor for this project and we would now be able to finalise the details and conditions for the Tour and go ahead with the project.

DGR1 Status – I also reported that this had now been finalised.

In addition, reports were also received and adopted for the following: -

The Magid Institute,
Chief Executive Officer,
Federal Treasurer,
West Australian President,

NSW President,
Student Liaison Officer.

2019 BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING

The 2019 Board of Governors Meeting was held from 14 to 19 June 2019 the theme this year being “High-Tech Jerusalem”. In addition, the “Nexus: Israel Innovation Forum was held from 12 to 15 June. The Board of Governors Meeting commenced with the customary Shabbat Dinner held at the King David Hotel.

On Saturday 15 June, lectures and panel discussions were arranged for the morning and guided walking tours of Jerusalem in the afternoon. The Innovation Forum conducted an all-day archaeological tour to the Elah Valley and surrounding areas. In the evening the Opening Reception took place at the Brain Sciences Building on the Edmond Safra Campus. Guests were welcomed by President Asher Cohen and Chairman of the Board of Governors, Dan Schlesinger and the Guest of Honour was Moshe Lion, Mayor of Jerusalem.

On Sunday 16 June, a lecture series titled “High-Tech Jerusalem” was held in the morning and the First Plenary Session was held in the afternoon. In the evening, participants attended the Avraham Harman Memorial Concert held in the Henry Crown Auditorium.

On Monday 17 June, the Second Plenary Session took place in the morning and the Convocation was held in the afternoon. In the evening the Australian Friends met for an informal dinner at Angelicas restaurant.

On Tuesday 18 June, there was the Nanoscience Research Award and Dedication Ceremony at the Wall of Benefactors followed by the third plenary session. In the evening there was a visit to the Mahane Yehuda Shuk where Dan Shapiro, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel, spoke.

On Wednesday 13 June, there were Dedication Ceremonies at the Wall of Life, Legacy Tree and Wall of Founders. A luncheon was held for Scholarship Donors and Recipients enabling donors to meet students for whom they had provided scholarships. The Closing Ceremony took place at the Edmond Safra Campus.

SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

The scholarship funds from which the Australian Friends award student scholarships are now all held in Jerusalem by the University which awards the scholarships based on our recommendation.

The Domansky Fund provides financial assistance to non-Jewish Australians to study at the Hebrew University.

The capital of the Fund has now been transferred to the University with an amount of \$20,000.00 being retained here to process current applications. There were no scholarships awarded this year.

The Yitzhak Rabin Scholarship Fund awarded \$US18,686.33 between 16 students. \$US5,794.16 remains in the Income Account.

The Henry Bialylew Endowment Fund awarded \$US5,599.33 between 11 students. \$US5,603.50 remains in the Income Account.

The Menasche Fund awarded \$US3,888.87

between 5 students. \$US22,203.55 remains in the Income Account.

The Sir Zelman Cowen Trust Fund awarded a total of \$US15,096.33 between 15 students and \$US11,326.22 remains in the Income Account.

MAGID INSTITUTE

The School of Psychotherapy continues its core 3-year program and short courses and workshops on mental health issues in children and youth. The school also now runs a 3-year psychotherapy training program for the Arab. This is the first program of this kind and it is sponsored by the Ministry of Health.

The School of Animal Assisted Therapy continues its core 3-year program.

The Veterinary Nursing program is now running in 4 classes in parallel. The core program at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital of the Hebrew University, and three more classes at an agricultural boarding school in Petach Tikva. These classes are sponsored by the Ministry of Education.

The professional development division continues to work with government offices, local authorities and other public organizations. The division also runs courses for individual participants, such as:

(i) Chief Financial Officer training, with HU School of Business Administration and the National CFO Forum,

(ii) Chief Information Security Officer training. This is also run at Israel's Aviation Industry and in Ethiopia, with HU School of Business Administration and Cytech,

(iii) Food Disorders treatment training, headed by professionals from the Shalvata Mental Health Center,

(iv) Service Accessibility training, with The



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Ministry of Labor, Social Health and Social Services,

(v) Startup managers training, with HU School of Business Administration, The Merage Foundation, StartUp Nation Central and The Jerusalem Development Authority.

The division also carries out international cybersecurity executive training.

The Institute hosted two South American delegations during the year and another South American delegation and a US delegation are expected this year. These are run jointly with the HU Federman Cyber Security Center.

The preparatory school for the Arab population provides classes in Hebrew preparation for the Psychometric test (entrance requirement to universities).

The preparatory school for Haredi continues to operate under the Institute. This is a Hebrew University led project where the Magid Institute provides the back-office services.

The Ma'aleh program is aimed at people over 35 who seek a degree at the faculties of Humanities or Social Sciences. There are no academic prerequisites. This means applicants can be accepted without a psychometric exam and regardless of their secondary school graduation status. It is an academic gateway for adults.

The aChord Centre has been integrated into the Magid Institute. The Center develops and implements effective socio-psychological interventions.

Other projects in the early stages of development in which the Institute is involved:

(i) Providing access to the university's online courses on the Coursera platform to the public,

(ii) Establishing a school for sharing knowledge related to life in desert areas,

(iii) Establishing a program for campus security for international delegations.

SIR ZELMAN COWEN UNIVERSITIES FUND

The Sir Zelman Cowen Universities Fund Prize for Discovery in Medical Research is awarded in alternate years at the University of Sydney and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The 2019 Prize (\$20,000) was awarded to Dr Yossi Tam from The Hebrew University, from the Department of Obesity and Metabolism Laboratory. He was awarded the prize for his contribution in the field of Obesity and Metabolism. The Prize was sponsored by B'nai B'rith Lodge Sydney.

The Leslie Rich Scholarship for Dementia Research (\$10,000) was awarded, in 2019, to Dr Elie Matar, a current PhD student in the Central Clinical School medicine and Health Faculty for his project entitled "Clinical, sleep and neuroimaging biomarkers across the spectrum of Lewy body disease". His current work is concerned with investigating a recent discovery that a sleep disorder (known as REM sleep behavior disorder) can often precede and be an early sign of a specific and disabling form of dementia called dementia with Lewy bodies. Dr Matar uses a combination of clinical, imaging and sleep measures to dissect early signs of this disorder and understand how and why it develops.

As part of the Academic Fellowship program Prof David Gliksberg from the Hebrew University will visit Sydney to work with Professor Graeme Cooper from Law School at Sydney University on taxation law.

During 2019, two HU students visited Sydney as part of the Student Exchange Program between the two universities, which supported by the Fund.

Two University of Sydney medical students have been awarded Roger Sebel Medical Elective Term Scholarships. One attended a placement in the Paediatric Surgery Department at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem and the other a placement in General Surgery, also at Hadassah Hospital.

Projects for 2019 included: -

Radio Astronomy (HU) – total budget approved \$248,000 over 3 years–funds transferred to date \$121,295.

40th year Doctoral Fellowship grant -10 grants for each University. Total funds \$500,000 – \$600,000. Each Fellowship will be a grant of \$25,000 towards living expenses. A further \$5,000 will be available to support students enrolled at one University to make an approved visit to the other.

Prize for Early Career Investigators in Medical Research (\$10,000) – this year is awarded to a HU applicant.

Joint Research Workshop Grants - jointly with Melbourne University and the Hebrew University (\$20,000). This is a 3-year commitment. If considered worthwhile, it may be renewed subject to a satisfactory annual report.

LIVING LEGACY MISSION

I reported last year that we have a donor to fund the Living Legacy Mission project. We have now finalised the conditions for participating in the Mission and advertised for participants. At this time, we have eight successful applicants and the first Mission is planned for May 2020. We will be advertising for additional participants to join the

Mission.

VICTORIAN DIVISION

Efforts to reestablish the Victorian Division are continuing. Rob Schneider has made several visits to Melbourne and we are hopeful of forming a Steering Committee, shortly, as a preliminary to the reestablishment of a regular committee.

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Rob Schneider commenced as CEO in November 2018. He has settled into his role extremely well and has already made significant advances in raising awareness of the University, communicating with donors and streamlining office procedures. He will be presenting a detailed report of his activities later in the meeting. Andrea Frankel, our Office Manager, as well as keeping the office running smoothly has done an excellent job of producing the Year Book and organising the Honours Club. Moran Pitchon, our Database Manager, has completed her training for the new database management system and is finalising the preparation of data for uploading to the new system, as well as continuing to update the website. Yael Basserabie, our bookkeeper, ensures the monthly figures are on time. Jamie Wise, our Student Liaison Officer, is doing an excellent job handling scholarship applications and promoting scholarships through schools and universities.

I would like to thank all the staff for their commitment and dedication to the organisation as well as all my Board and Committee members for their ongoing support. I look forward to continuing to work with all of you so that the Australian Friends of the Hebrew University remains a vibrant group, providing significant support to the University. ■



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From the President NSW Friends Division

Barry Joseph

(Note this Report relates to the year-end 30 June 2019)

HONOURS CLUB

The Honours Club continues to meet on the third Wednesday of each month with attendances of between 30 to 50 people. Waverley Library is now the regular venue for the Honours Club and is popular with members because of its central location and free parking.

COMMITTEE FOR STUDENT SUPPORT

We are continuing to look into ways to re-establish this Committee.

OFFICE MANAGER

Andrea Frankel, who joined us last year on the retirement of Carol Dor, had a big pair of shoes to fill and she is doing this extremely well. In addition to keeping on top of the routine office administration she runs the Honours Club and has produced an excellent Yearbook.

DATABASE

In her new role as Project Manager which includes responsibility for the data base, Moran Pitchon continues training for the new database management programme and upgrading the membership data in preparation for uploading to the new system. In addition, she continues to update the website as well as providing valuable support to the other executive staff.

STUDENT LIAISON OFFICER

Our Student Liaison Officer, Jamie Wise, has



MAZALTOV BARRY!

The Australian Friends congratulates NSW Friends President Barry Joseph on being named the 2020 Citizen of the Year by the Woollahra Municipal Council. Barry has been honoured for his many contributions to the community including through Rotary, the Sir Moses Montefiore Home and of course to the Australian Friends of the Hebrew University. We are delighted that Barry has been honoured by the Woollahra Council, and we wish him many more happy, healthy and productive years contributing to the community and of course to the Australian Friends!



settled into the job very quickly and has already achieved excellent results both with the number of students attending the University as well as with liaising with universities and other institutions.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND EXECUTIVE STAFF

I would like to thank the Executive and the Committee Members for their continued support throughout the year. Thanks also to Rob Schneider (CEO), Andrea Frankel (Office Manager), Moran Pitchon (Project Manager) and Jamie Wise (Student Liaison Officer) and I look forward to continuing to work with all of you in our mission to raise awareness of and support for the University. ■

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From the President WA Friends Division

A/Professor Peter Winterton AM

(Note this Report relates to the year-end 30 June 2019)

Members of the WAFHU committee in 2019 were:

Peter Winterton, President
Hilary Winterton
Yael Jacobson, public relations officer
Lynn Swersky
Martin Brezger
Ken Budd
Mark Shapiro

The committee met on three occasions this year.

The major aim of WAFHU remains raising the profile of the HJ and raising funds from which will come with time, funds. There is general agreement from WAFHU that the days of raising large amounts of funds from estates has passed. The Jewish community in WA as elsewhere has changed from a post Shoah community to a community who want to see value for their money during their life time. With this in mind it has become imperative that HJ acknowledge this change in community attitude and look at how to engage the youth of the Jewish community with the HJ and with time its relevance and importance will become meaningful and relevant. Scholarships for student exchange are key to this process. With this in mind we hope to be able to explore this opportunity further in 2020 when Professor Asher Cohen, President of the HJ visits Perth. The rising anti-Semitism is a major concern and being involved in breaking down the barriers and promoting interchange of ideas and

beliefs is crucial to minimizing this scourge.

In early **March 2019** Prof. Aviad Hacoen, Dean of the Sha'arei Mishpat Academic College, and former Senior Lecturer in Constitutional Law and Jewish Law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, visited Perth briefly. Whilst he was in Perth Professor Aviva Freilich was able to encourage him to deliver an address to members of the WA Society of Jewish Jurists and Lawyers who co-sponsored the event with WAFHU. The legal firm DLA Piper hosted the lecture held on Friday 1st March 2019. The title of Prof Hacoen's address was Theocracy or Democracy? Israel as a Jewish and /or Democratic State.

On **6th March 2019** Dr Winterton gave an address to a group of the National Council of Jewish Women Australia. This opportunity came about as a result of a lecture I had delivered to Living in Retirement, (a retired gentlemen's group that meets on a Tuesday morning) late in 2018 about innovation and the contribution to society of the HJ.

In late **March 2019** we were pleased to welcome back to WA our new federal CEO, Robert Schneider. He is well known to many in WA from his previous roles in the Jewish Community in JNF and the Jewish Museum. He took the opportunity to meet with new and old supporters. His address to the community on 28th March

2019 highlighting the geographical beauty of the land of Israel was memorable.

In **April 2019** Professor Jeffrey Gordon, Professor in the Department of Solar Energy & Environmental Physics, Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, delivered what can only be described as amazing lecture to an enthusiastic audience at Temple David. He emphasized that even though he is based at Ben Gurion University, he was all too willing to address an audience hosted by WAFHU emphasizing co-operation between the Israel's five universities.

In **June 2019** WAFHU and the University of WA (UWA) held a joint function to raise funds and to welcome and farewell exchange students on Thursday 13th June 2019 at UWA. The UWA- HUIJ Scholarship supports the exchange of students travelling in either direction.. This year Barak Waternberg from Jerusalem came to Perth and Bethany Gosling from Perth left in early September for Jerusalem. Both students emphasised the importance of student exchange and the incredible opportunity that exchange programmes offer. Barak related that he had been very impressed by the casual life style in Perth and the opportunity for learning; his field of study being political science. He continued to express his amazement at the size of Western Australia. Barak, an avid rock climber, said had travelled "seven hours to drive to the gorges at Kalbarri" and then had experienced the sheer exhilaration of descending into the gorges of the Murchison River. Barak hopes to return and do further studies at UWA. He invited Bethany to visit his family in Jerusalem.

Bethany, in her second year of her Bachelor Arts degree at UWA, travelled to Jerusalem for four months to experience all that Israel has to offer. She will be studying elementary Hebrew at HUIJ as well as archaeological, history and Jewish studies. She will be living at the Mt Scopus Campus and will be there for the Christmas

(2019) period. Bethany has promised to address us again when she returns to Perth in 2020.

The ongoing success of this programme depends a small group of supporters who attended the function. Staff changes at UWA have been an issue for us in 2019.

In **July 2019** WAFHU in conjunction with the Sydney Jewish Museum co-hosted the launch of Ken Arkwright's embracing record of his survival of the Holocaust Beyond Survival. The event although held mid-week at lunch time was well attended. His book has become obligatory reading for German high school students.

In mid-**November 2019** Professor Ehud Cohen, Director of the Brain Disease Research Institute of the HUIJ will be visiting Perth. At the time of compiling this report the WA committee are finalizing his travel arrangements. It is planned that he will address the community on the 17th November 2019.

The federal **AGM** of the friends will be held 8-10th November in Perth and we are grateful to Mrs Lillian Kessly in allowing the Friends to use her home as a venue for Shabbat dinner on the 8th November.

All members of the committee extend to Dr Harry Hoffman AM congratulations on being awarded Membership of the Order of Australia. It is intended that he will be honoured with a special function on Saturday 9th November 2019.

Conclusion

I would like to thank Yael Jacobson for her tireless effort in 2019. I think we have achieved much in the way of profile raising by being able and willing to co-host functions, both in WA and in Sydney. The challenge that the committee wishes to embrace for 2020 is ensuring the success of the UWA-HUIJ scholarship fund and working with the youth of our community in making WAFHU relevant to them in today's world. ■

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From the Federal CEO

Robert Schneider

(Note this Report relates to the year-end 30 June 2019)

I commenced my role as CEO of the Australian Friends of the Hebrew University on 1 November 2018.

Shortly after this, I travelled to Israel for an induction program in order to familiarise myself with the work of the Hebrew University. My visit coincided with a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors so I was able to use the visit to not only meet key people of the university based in Israel, but to also meet with some of the people from other international Friends organisations.

On my return to Sydney, I faced challenges in the office with the planned retirement at the end of December 2018 of Carol Dor, longstanding secretary and office administrator of the Australian Friends. Carol had been with the organisation for some 40 years and the vacuum she has left is still felt as us “newies” find our way. In addition, the successor to Carol had also just started and there was a vacuum with Student Liaison post as the proposed person for this role was not in a position to meet the requirements of the role and therefore another solution had to be found.

STAFF:

With the departure of Carol, the only staff member remaining was Moran Pitchon, the Student Liaison Manager, who was later appointed Data Base Manager.

In October 2018, Andrea Frankel was employed as Office Manager with responsibilities that include management of the office and staff support, production of the quarterly newsletter and yearbook and managing the monthly Honours Club meetings.

In December 2018, we employed a new Student Liaison Officer on a casual basis. She is a young student, Jamie Wise, who had previously assisted in the office with an update of alumni on our data base. Jamie also assists with areas of marketing including our website and social media updates.

Following the employment of Jamie, Moran was appointed Project Manager with responsibility for the data base upgrade and also the continued supervision of student matters. Moran is a most valuable resource in virtually all areas of the activities of the Australian Friends so her new title better reflects the diversity of her role.

Yael Basserabie is our part time bookkeeper and she attends the office every second Wednesday.

With virtually a complete new complement of staff, the efficient use and application of staff resources is an ongoing exercise.

STUDENT LIAISON & MARKETING:

As mentioned earlier, Jamie Wise was appointed Student Liaison and Marketing Officer in December 2018. Prior to that, Moran Pitchon

fulfilled this role. I acknowledge with thanks, the contribution of both these staff members.

We continue to reach out to Australian students encouraging them to embark on both short term and long term studies at the Hebrew University.

Marketing of HUJI Programs: This year our marketing focused on Hebrew Ulpan Programs, Short Summer Courses, the Gap Year Program, the Mishpatim Seminar and the Biblical Archaeology Program. Through maintaining existing connections and establishing new ones, we were able to boost our marketing efforts mainly through social media but also at School Fairs and University Open Days. We also managed to increase our social media following dramatically. With the rebranding of the organisation, we have updated all our artwork for upcoming programs.

Leon Fink Scholarship: Eight impressive students applied for various short summer courses offered at the Hebrew University. We are delighted to report that five were awarded funding. The successful scholar was Australian National University student Georgia Fletcher. Studying Anthropology and History, Georgia impressed us with her extensive understanding of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, as well as her engagement in several volunteer opportunities since graduating from High School. She has also worked in the Department of the Senate in Australia's Parliament House since 2017, showcasing her commitment and strong work ethic. It is truly amazing to see extensive interest, and very rewarding to support students in their desire to study at the Hebrew University.

Biblical Archaeology in Israel: Intensive Holiday Course: I am delighted to report that this is the fourth year of the Biblical Archaeology program. The 'Biblical Archaeology in Israel: Intensive Holiday Course' will be held during January 2020 and we have used our connections in an effort to expand opportunities for University students going to the Hebrew University. This year, as in the previous year, we are offering two more programs for students

participating in the Biblical Archaeology Program: Winter Ulpan and a three-week dig at Khirat el Rai in Israel. We are expecting 36 students, teachers and staff to attend the Biblical Archaeology Course at Rothberg as well as the Dig.

Mishpatim Seminar: The 'Mishpatim Seminar' will be held during January 2020. At this stage, we have 15 students who have already applied for the program, plus 30 more inquiries.

Financial Assistance: 45 students received scholarships this year, and approximately USD50,000 was granted to these students.

Statistics for 2018-2019: We have maintained the high figure of sending 91 Australian students to HUJI between 2018-2019 as we did between 2017-2018.

19 students from Middle Eastern Studies
2 students from Business Innovation
3 students from Special Interest Programs
8 students from Hebrew & Ulpan Programs
6 students from Exchange & Study Abroad Programs
14 students from the Mishpatim Seminar
24 students from Biblical Archaeology & Dig
15 students from other programs

78 Australian student inquiries were received during the 2019 Campus Fairs:

16 students from Business
16 students from Law
4 students from Medicine & Social Work
42 students from Arts & Social Sciences

OFFICE:

Since coming on board, substantial upgrades in office infrastructure and support have been implemented in areas such as computers, cloud access, IT upgrades and security and workplace safety.

DATA-BASE:

We are in the process of migrating all our data to a new program called ThankQ. Previously, we operated ►►

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two systems – one for financial data and the other personal data. ThankQ will give us the opportunity to combine all information and enable all staff, once properly trained, to be able to access all the necessary information and also to update entries.

We expect the new program to be fully operational by the end of 2019.

BOARD:

I express my gratitude to Michael Dunkel, Federal President for his ongoing support, wise counsel and stewardship of the organisation.

I am grateful for the support of all board members but in particular wish to thank the Treasurer, Robert Greenfield who has been a tremendous support not just to the Friends, but also to me personally.

Vice President Philip Moses is our organisational memory and the man we all turn to for information regarding the past. Thank you Philip.

NSW Friends President Barry Joseph is also a wonderful support in particular with the assessing Australian students applying for financial assistance to study at the Hebrew University.

Since taking on my role, we have attempted to allot specific responsibilities to individual board members and I would like to thank those board members who indeed have taken on specific portfolios and responsibilities.

HONOURS CLUB:

The Honours Club is a NSW initiative of supporters who meet in Sydney at the Waverley Public Library on the last Wednesday of the month.

The speakers and topics vary from month-to-month, as does attendance, but we generally have an attendance of between 30 – 50 people.

We would like to introduce a similar concept in Melbourne once we have the right sort of support in place.

LEGACY MISSION:

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, we are able to offer an all expenses trip to Israel provided the participant includes a specified legacy to the Hebrew University and that this provision is verified by the participant's solicitor. There are certain other conditions pertaining to participation in the Legacy Mission and these conditions are available on our website.

We aim to run our first Legacy Mission at the same time as the British Friends run theirs in late April/early May 2020.

NATIONAL: Federal & NSW

The office in Sydney serves as both the Federal and NSW offices of the Australian Friends and provides resources and services nationally.

Committee meetings are held monthly and where necessary, a Federal meeting is convened on the same date as a NSW committee meeting.

Victoria

I have visited Melbourne twice since taking up my appointment.

We have managed to establish a small steering committee in Melbourne to assist in the resuscitation of a Vic. branch of the Friends. This is very much 'work-in-progress.'

WA

We have a WA committee based in Perth and chaired by Ass. Prof. Peter Winterton AM.

This committee meets on a regular basis and enjoys the support of a part time PR Officer, Yael Jacobson.

I have visited Perth once since commencing my role during which visit I met with various stakeholders and also gave a presentation to the community and the Friends of Israel Western Australia.

Qld.

Whilst we do not have any Qld. committee as such, I have visited the community on the invitation of the NCJWA Qld. and JNF Qld. and given presentations in both Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

We do enjoy the support of a Hebrew University alumnus who serves as a faculty member at the University of Qld.

ISRAEL:

Aside from my induction visit in November 2018, I attended the 2019 Board of Governors meeting in June as well as the preceding program called NEXUS - a program to highlight innovation in Israel and especially at the Hebrew University.

This visit enabled me to strengthen relationships with the Hebrew University professionals I work with on a regular basis as well as providing me with the opportunity to learn from lay-leaders and professionals

In the last year, we have had a visit from Prof. Oron Shagrir, Vice President of International Affairs during which visit new agreements were signed with the Universities of Wollongong and Macquarie.

The President of the Hebrew University, Prof. Asher Cohen is planning to visit Australia in the first quarter of 2020. It is anticipated that he will visit Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. ■

They make it happen...

Moran Pitchon, Projects Manager, is our longest serving staff member. Moran is based in the Federal Office in Sydney. Her duties are many and varied and she is an invaluable and dedicated resource to the Australian Friends working on our data base, student matters, liaison with Israel and generally making sure that the Australian Friends is on top of everything.



Jamie Wise is our bubbling young Student Liaison and Marketing Officer. Jamie works from the Federal Office in Sydney. She joined us part time in late 2018 after having assisted earlier that year as a student on a specific project. Who better to relate to students than one who was a student through to this year!



Yael Jacobson is our part time PRO in Perth who ensures that the flag of the Hebrew University flies high in the west! Yael assists the WA Friends Committee, liaises with students in WA and is responsible for organising Friends events in Perth.



Yael Basserabie is our part time bookkeeper visiting the Federal Office for a day every second week. Although a part time contractor, Yael is dedicated to the Australian Friends and even when she is not physically in the office, she is with us in spirit.

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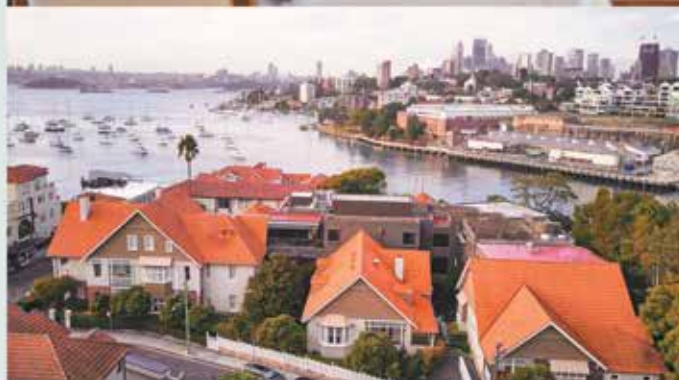
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History of the NSW Friends – final chapters

By Philip Moses

Chapter 21

A number of Australians are honoured.

During the first half of 2005, Executive Meetings were held on 2 February, 2 March, 6 April, 4 May. At these meetings, in addition to the regular reports from the Honours Club, the Women's Committee and the Student Liaison Officer, advice was received of a number of substantial bequests to the University. Consequently, by 30 June 2006 in excess of seven million dollars was remitted to the University. At the Executive Meeting held on 13 July a report on the 2005 Board of Governors was tabled. This was a significant Meeting for the Australian Friends as a number of awards were announced. Agnes Ginges received an Honorary Doctorate whilst Michael Dunkel and Wolfie Pizem received Honorary Fellowships. In addition, Stuart Silbert was appointed a Governor and Shirley Ehrlich an Associate Governor. A final highlight was the dedication of the Agnes Ginges Australia Computer Centre.

At the Executive Meeting held on 6 September 2005 Professor Hanoch Gutfreund, who was visiting Australia, was in attendance. He addressed the meeting and reported on his visit to Australia. The primary reason was to promote "Einstein Year" and to speak at a number of Einstein exhibitions. He went, firstly, to Perth where he spoke to students at Carmel School and gave an oration at the University of Western Australia followed by a reception attended by the West Australian Friends committee. In Melbourne, he addressed a Dinner in honour of the late Isidor and Ira Magid and presented the Ron Castan Scholarship. He also addressed an Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce luncheon where 900

people attended.

In Sydney Professor Gutfreund gave the Einstein Oration at the University of NSW with more than 300 people in attendance and a lecture at the Central Synagogue. He also gave a lecture at the Griffith University on the Gold Coast. He felt that all these events would do much to raise the profile of the Hebrew University in Australia. In addition, Professor Gutfreund held numerous one on one meetings and provided a brief update on the University. It was also reported at the Meeting that another successful Diner Dance, sponsored by Wolfie Pizem was held on 28 August. This was the thirty fifth year that Wolfie Pizem had hosted the function with the entire proceeds going to the Friends.

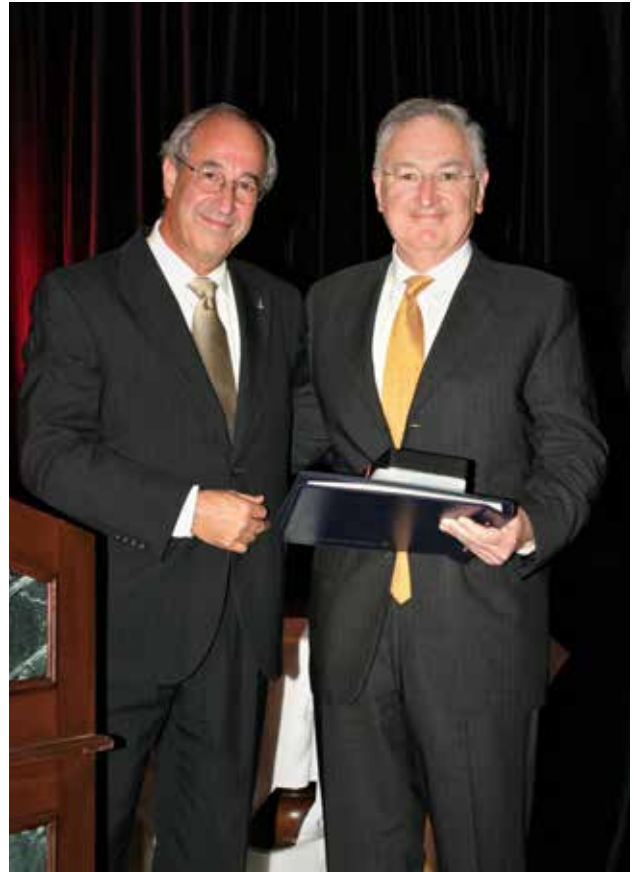
At the Executive Meeting held on 10 October 2005 it was reported that the target had been reached for the Australian Friends Student Information Centre Project and that a total of \$3,190,725 had been remitted to the University.

The 68th Annual General Meeting of the NSW Friends was held at Academy BJE on 27 November 2005. Avinoam Armoni, Vice President of the University, who was visiting Australia was in attendance. Reports were tabled from the President, Honorary Treasurer, Executive Director and the Women's Committee and all were adopted. The Executive and Committee remained unchanged and Ken Martin continued as Honorary Auditor and Robert Ebner as Honorary Solicitor.



Agnes Ginges receives her Honorary Doctorate from Avinoam Armoni

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Friends took place immediately following the conclusion of the NSW meeting. John Shalit and Eitan Drori (Victoria), Pam Mendels (South Australia) and Julie Pynt (Western Australia) were present. Reports for each of the State Divisions were adopted. Michael Dunkel reported on the Sir Zelman Cowen Universities Fund and Dan Goodridge reported on the Magid Institute. Avinoam Armoni then addressed the meeting. He spoke of the significant contribution to the University that the Australian Friends have made, most notably, the student computer centres. The University was planning to send high quality speakers to Australia to promote the University and he was arranging a visit by Efraim Halevy in the near future. There has been an increase in the number of overseas students and the University is operating satisfactorily at present and is able to balance its budget for the time being.



Michael Dunkel receives his Honorary Fellowship from Avinoam Armoni

That evening a Celebratory Dinner was held at the Stamford Plaza Hotel in Double Bay. Bob Carr, former NSW Premier, was the Guest of Honour and Avinoam Armoni gave the keynote address. 250 people attended the Dinner which was to recognise a number of awards recently bestowed by the University, namely, an Honorary Doctorate on Agnes Ginges and Honorary Fellowships to Wolfie Pizem and Michael Dunkel. Whilst in Sydney Avinoam Armoni also conducted several one on one meetings.

The Executive Meeting held on 1 February 2006 was attended by Professor Ehud Razin, recently elected Dean of the Hebrew University's Faculty of Medicine. Professor Razin spoke about his background and the reason for his visit to Sydney. He had been invited by Professor Steve Krills, Chairman of the University of NSW Department of Infectious Diseases and was seeking additional



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financial support for the staff at the University's Faculty of Medicine to maintain the high standards of research in the Faculty. Following a decision taken at the previous Executive Meeting on 14 December 2005 to hold the Australian Friends Annual General Meeting in different States each year to help promote the University in that State, it was confirmed that the 2006 Meeting would be held in Perth on 12 November 2006.

Karen Pisk (Daughter of the late Alan Milston) was invited to the Executive Meeting held on 15 March 2006. She had recently completed an internship in the University's Public Relations Department as part of her Masters Degree in International Communications and she reported on her visit to Israel and the time she had spent working at the University. Barry Joseph reported that a new five-year Jewish Holidays fridge magnet had been sent out and the initial response was very promising. He also reported that Efraim Halevy (former head of Mossad and now a Vice President of the University) would be visiting Australia later in the year. Also, it was noted that it was now sixty years since Alan Milston had first joined the NSW Friends and during this time he had served as Honorary Treasurer, Honorary Secretary, Vice President and President.

Chapter 22

Final Chapter – The “Friends” consolidate.

At the Executive Meeting held on 5 April 2006 it was reported that the revenue from the Fridge Magnet campaign, which is primarily a promotional exercise, would more than cover the cost of production and distribution, as a result of the donations received. It was also reported that the revenue raised from advertisements placed in the Year Book had exceeded the revenue raised in the previous year. Congratulations were also recorded for Alan Milston who had now served the Friends in a number of roles continuously for sixty years. At the Meeting on 3 May 2006 it was confirmed that the final surplus from the Fridge Magnet campaign was \$25,000 to be applied towards Student



Wolfie Pizem receives his Honorary Fellowship from Avinoam Armoni

Scholarships which will be presented at the 2006 Board of Governors Meeting and that the final total for the revenue raised through the Year Book from all Divisions was \$133,078. It was also confirmed that the visit by Efraim Halevy to Sydney would take place 18–20 October 2006.

Robert Simons presented a detailed report at the Executive Meeting held on 19 July 2006 of the 2006 Board of Governors Meeting which took place in Jerusalem between 8 and 14 June 2006. The Meeting commenced with the customary Shabbat Dinner on Friday night followed by Study Groups during the day on Saturday and the Official

Opening Reception on Saturday night, where the Guest of Honour was the Mayor of Jerusalem. On Sunday 10 June there were further seminars during the day followed by the Conferring of Honorary Doctorates in the evening. Monday included a Meeting of the Trustees of the Magid Institute and the first Plenary Session. Tuesday included further Plenary sessions and the presentation of Honorary Fellowships. Robert Simons was amongst the recipients. Wednesday included workshops at the Rehovot campus and the Closing Ceremony. It was also noted at the Executive meeting that a record amount of \$5.3m had been received by the NSW Friends by way of bequests during the year ending 30 June 2006.

The Executive Meeting held on 2 August 2006 noted the passing of Stan Ferster on 1 August 2006. Mr Ferster had served on the Executive between 1961 and 1979 as Honorary Treasurer and also as Honorary Secretary. At that meeting Shirley Ehrlich also reported that the Womens Committee had once again held a most successful function hosted by Wolfie Pizem on 20 August 2006. Out of respect for those lost in the recent intifada, there was no music or dancing. This was the 36th consecutive year that Wolfie Pizem hosted the function.

At the Executive Meeting held on 1 November 2006, Michael Dunkel reported on the visit to Sydney by Efraim Halevy 18-20 October 2006. In addition to breakfast and lunch meetings, Mr Halevy gave a public address at the Central Synagogue with over 500 people in attendance as well as attending a Friday night Dinner with 260 young adults. Mr Halevy also spoke at the Gold Coast, to a Parliamentary Luncheon in Canberra, to a Dinner in Melbourne with over 400 people and in Perth.

The Executive Meeting held on 2 August 2006 marked the beginning of a new era in the life of the "Friends" in Australia, as the process to achieve incorporation for the Australian Friends commenced. Robert Simons, Michael Dunkel and Barry Joseph had travelled to Melbourne and met with John Shalit (Victorian President) and

Greg Blashki (Victorian Treasurer) to discuss the incorporation of the Australian Friends. This had been suggested by Avinoam Armoni at the recent Board of Governors Meeting, as he felt it was necessary to protect the personal liability of all the executive members of each of the State Divisions.

As the NSW Friends was already incorporated and a Federal Companies Act covering all States had been enacted to replace individual State Companies Acts, it was proposed to change the name of the NSW company to "Australian Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Limited" and make each State Branch a division of this company, with Board representation for each State. John Shalit and Greg Blashki were in agreement with the proposal and agreement was subsequently obtained from Pam Mendels (South Australia) and Julie Pynt (Western Australia). To complete the incorporation of the Australian Friends, a Special Resolution changing the name of the NSW company to "Australian Friends" would need to be passed at the next Annual General Meeting of the NSW Friends. Following this, the Australian Friends would adopt the amended Memorandum and Articles of Association at its Annual General Meeting, which would be held following the NSW Annual General Meeting.

Accordingly, on 5 November 2006 at the 69th Annual General Meeting of the NSW Friends a Special Resolution was unanimously passed to change the name of the company to "Australian Friends of the Hebrew University Limited". This was followed by the Annual General Meeting of the Australian Friends which was held in Perth on 12 November 2006 where the amended Memorandum and Articles of Association were formally adopted. This ended 70 years of independent operation of the NSW Friends during which time a substantial supporter base was created, and numerous projects and scholarships funded. From this time the Friends would move forward as a national body continuing to support the University, raising awareness, funding projects and providing scholarships for both Israeli and Australian students. ■

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For they are jolly good fellows

Ahead of the next Board of Governors Meeting postponed from June due to the Covid-19 outbreak, a committee of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem has decided to award Honorary Fellowships to two stalwarts of the university – one residing in Sydney and the other hailing from Melbourne prior to making Aliyah.



Philip Moses



Eliyahu Honig

Eliyahu Honig was born in Melbourne but made Aliyah in 1955. He has had a long and distinguished career with the Hebrew University rising to the rank of Associate Vice President prior to retiring in 2009. Eliyahu is well known not just in Melbourne but in all the major cities of Australia where he visited regularly spruiking the attributes of the Hebrew University. He was also

the first Australian to participate in a Maccabiah in Israel in 1950. Eliyahu has been instrumental in raising substantial amounts for the Hebrew University that have been applied towards research, projects and scholarships, including special scholarships for Ethiopian students who have completed their army service. The Australian Friends of the Hebrew University, indeed all

friends and family of Eliyahu, salute him on his well-deserved honour.

Philip Moses has had a long association with the Hebrew University going back to his parents and indeed to his grandparents. Philip continues the family tradition and has consistently played an active role with the Australian Friends and is currently Federal Vice President. He is also active on the NSW committee and is regarded as the organisation's historian and memory bank. Philip's commitment and generosity has also seen the growth of the "Braham L. Moses Family Student Endowment Fund" which funds needy medical students at the Hebrew University and is named in honour of his late father. In appreciation of his being made an Honorary Fellow, and in honour of his parents, Philip has decided to make a substantial contribution to expand the fund and to have his parent's names inscribed on the University's 'Wall of Life' with the ceremony to take place during the

2020 Board of Governors Meeting.

Philip is also a committee member of the Australian Jewish Historical Society.

The Australian Friends of the Hebrew University is extremely proud that Philip's long association with the organisation and his steadfast commitment to the Hebrew University is being recognised through his being made an Honorary Fellow.

A special cocktail event honouring Philp and Eliyahu will be hosted by the Australian Friends of the Hebrew University during the next Board of Governors Meeting in Israel.

Anyone interested in attending future Board of Governors meetings should visit the Australian Friends website www.austfhu.org.au or call our office on 02 93892825 or email austfhu@austfhu.org.au ■

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Shattering the Glass Ceiling



From L/R: Moderator, Jillian Segal AO, Camilla Freeman-Topper, Prof. Mona Khoury-Kassabri and the Hon. Margaret Stone AO, FAAL.

PHOTOS: Nadine Saacks

On Sunday 27 October, a panel discussion themed ‘Shattering the Glass Ceiling’ hosted by the Australian Friends of the Hebrew University was held at the Sydney Jewish Museum.

The guest-of-honour was Professor Mona Khoury-Kassabri, Dean of the Hebrew University’s School of Social Work and the first Arab woman ever appointed a faculty head at an Israeli university. Professor Khoury-Kassabri is also an authority on cyberbullying – a subject she addressed during the course of the panel discussion attended by some 150 Sydney supporters of the Hebrew University.

Professor Khoury-Kassabri was part of a panel moderated by leading communal personality and business leader, Jillian Segal AO. The other panel members were Australian fashion designer Camilla Freeman-Topper and the Hon. Margaret Stone AO, Inspector General of Intelligence and Security in Australia.

Thanking the panel for sharing their insights into what had enabled them to ‘shatter the glass ceiling’, Australian Friends CEO Rob Schneider concluded by saying that “innovation and breaking through barriers was everything that epitomised the Hebrew University.” ■



From L/R: Michael Dunkel, Rob Schneider, Bert Akres, Barry Joseph

From L/R: Brian Topper, Barbara Mann, Naomi Elia, Camilla Freeman-Topper



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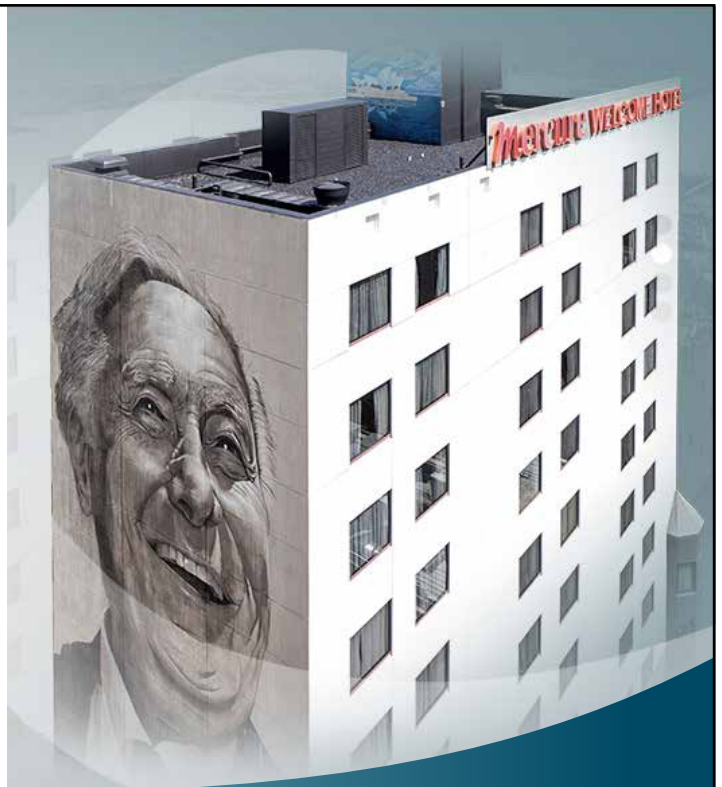
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First Arab Woman Dean at an Israeli University Visits Melbourne



*Back row left to right: Dr Sarah Wise, Dr Winsome Roberts, Professor Louise Harms of the University of Melbourne; Rob Schneider CEO and Michael Dunkel Federal President, Australian Friends of the Hebrew University.
Front Row left to right: Professor Leon Mann AO and Professor Mona Khoury-Kassabri*

Professor Mona Khoury-Kassabri, Dean of the Faculty of Social Work at the Hebrew University and the first Arab woman ever appointed as a faculty head at any university in Israel recently visited Melbourne.

Prof. Khoury-Kassabri was accompanied on her visit by Michael Dunkel, Federal President of the Australian Friends of the Hebrew University and the organisation's CEO, Rob Schneider.

While in Melbourne, a most productive meeting was held with Professor Louise Harms Chair and Head, Department of Social Work at the University of Melbourne and members of her staff. They were most interested to hear of the many links that the Hebrew University has with universities around the world and expressed interest in the possibility of a

direct MOU between the Department of Social Work at the University of Melbourne and the Faculty of Social Work at the Hebrew University.

There is already extensive cooperation between the two universities particularly in the medical arena and earlier in October, Hebrew University Professor Maya Tamir was in Melbourne for a joint workshop with counterparts at the University of Melbourne and to participate in a Research Fellowship dinner generously sponsored by the Pratt Foundation on the theme of research on Emotional Regulation.

The Australian Friends expresses appreciation to the Erdi Group of Hotels and in particular to Mr. Philip Zajac for the generous sponsorship by them of accommodation for Professor Khoury-Kassabri during her Melbourne visit. ■

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A brainstorming week in Melbourne

In November 2019, Melbourne welcomed Professor Ehud Cohen, Director of the Hebrew University's Brain Disease Research Centre.

Professor Cohen was in Melbourne for workshops with a team at the University of Melbourne headed up by Professor Ashley Bush of the Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health. The focus of these workshops was the study of possible ways of preventing and curing diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.

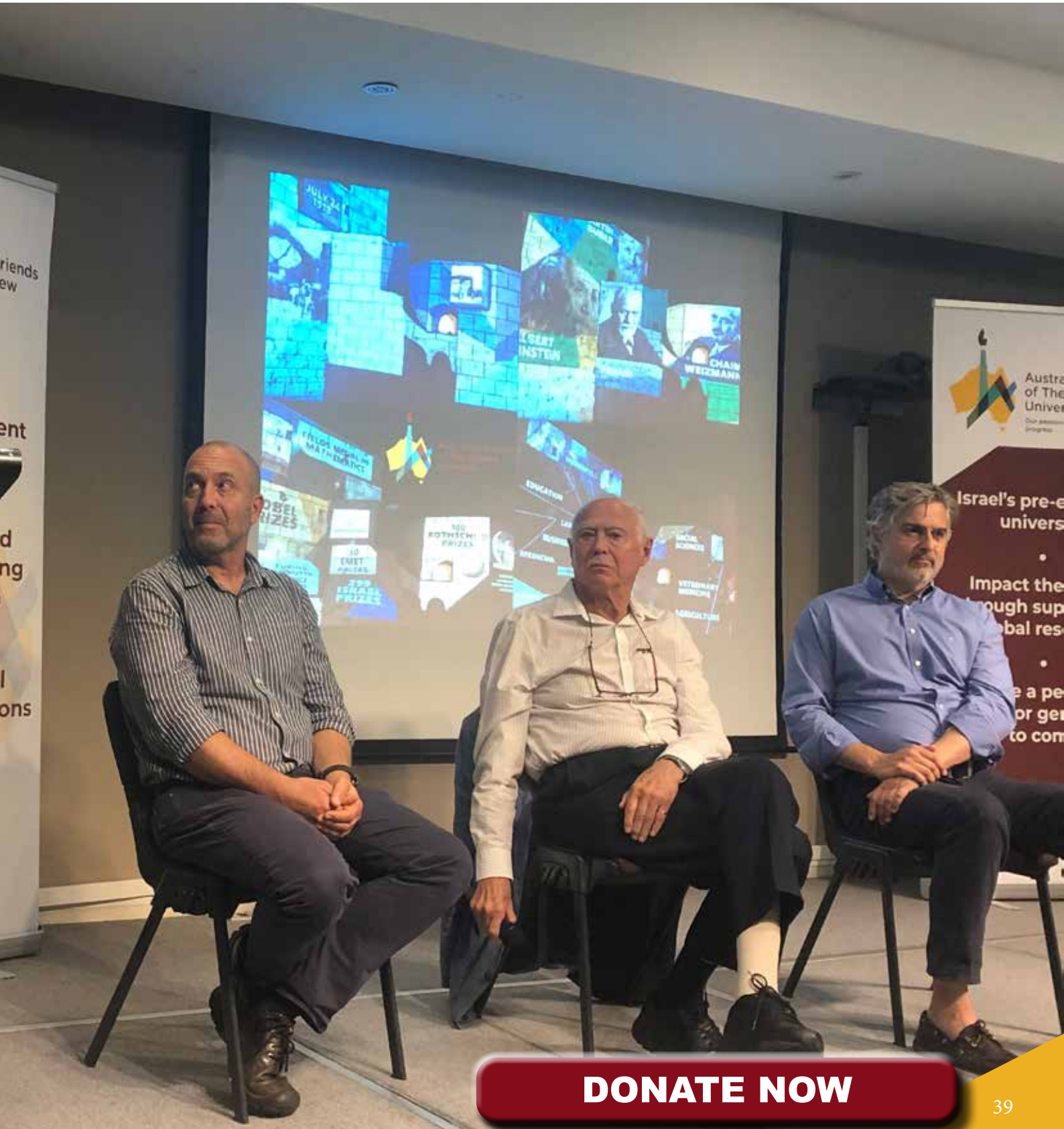
A Research Fellowship Dinner sponsored by the Pratt Foundation was held on Wednesday 20 November attended by an array of academics in the field of neuroscience and on Thursday 21 November, a well-attended public meeting was hosted by the Australian Friends of the Hebrew University at Beth Weizmann. This event took the form of a panel discussion on 'Advances in the prevention and treatment of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and other brain diseases' with Professors Cohen and Bush as the panellists and moderated by Professor Leon Man AO of the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences and a Life Governor of the Hebrew University.

The audience was enthralled at the depth of knowledge displayed by the two panellists and was given the opportunity to put questions to them on this very vexing topic. Many of the answers shed new light on how to diagnose and treat these diseases including delaying their onset through manipulating the ageing process.

The Australian Friends expresses appreciation to the Melbourne Steering Committee for their support and assistance with this event, in particular to Sharen Fink and Ricky Fink. Other members of the Melbourne Steering Committee are David Bunyan, Tom Danos OAM, Raphael Leibler and the indefatigable Professor Leon Mann AO ■



The Beth Weizmann Panel L/R:
Rob Schneider, Ehud Cohen, Leon Mann, Ashley Bush



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A partnership that truly digs deep

The close collaboration between Hebrew University and Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia is bearing wonderful dividends. In January/February this year, 43 Macquarie students and three high school teachers went to Israel to work on joint projects including a Biblical Archaeology Course run on the Mt Sinai campus and a joint archaeological excavation.

The Biblical Archaeological Course runs as an intensive winter (Australian summer!) course for three weeks. Students compare the Biblical narrative with ancient Near Eastern literature and results from archaeological excavations. It is taught by Hebrew University's Professor Wayne Horowitz and Dr Igor Kreimerman with guest



Digging deep: Just minutes after a seal is discovered among the dirt, Saar Ganor of the Israel Antiquities Authority holds the precious artefact up for the team to see.

lectures by other specialists and field trips to important archaeological sites. Students live in the university dorms and are exposed to Israeli life and culture including a trip to Yad Vashem. They obtain full university credit.

Students needing financial support to attend are

helped with scholarships from the Australian Friends and by donors to Macquarie's Ancient Israel Program. Friends CEO, Rob Schneider commented: "This program is one of the most successful collaborations we have with an Australian University and the feedback we receive from students is highly gratifying." ▶▶



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A close-up of the bronze calf

The three week archaeological dig at Khirbet el-Rai follows straight after the Biblical Archaeological Course enabling many students to do both. This is a joint dig between Hebrew and Macquarie Universities and the Israel Antiquities Authority. Situated in the Shephalah region in the Elah valley, it has recently been identified as the lost Biblical city of Ziklag, given to King David when he was a mercenary for the Philistine King Achish of Gath. Later, after Saul's death, David became king in Hebron and Ziklag remained in the hands of his nascent kingdom of Judah.

The city's true whereabouts have remained unknown for centuries, until now.

The team's excavations have revealed layers from the 12th–10th Centuries BCE, which covers the city's Canaanite foundation and rule by the Philistines as well as the Kingdom of Judah. They have found evidence of a fierce fire – burnt

mud bricks, white ash, burnt wood and numerous destroyed ceramic vessels – which coincides with the biblical account of the city being raided by the Amalekites.

The site's history continues through to early Roman times with another peak in the seventh century BC. It has yielded a wealth of artefacts including rich finds of Canaanite pottery, vessels used to store oil and wine, a stash of flint 'blanks' used for sickle blades, inscriptions, oil lamps, including a bronze 'Smiting Baal' statuette and a bronze calf invoking images of the golden calf in the bible as well as a portable shrine and even a large bronze spearhead.

The team has uncovered a series of superimposed monumental buildings as well as multiple domestic buildings. The earliest of the monumental buildings was destroyed, preserving a room full of burnt bones and cultic objects,

some of which find their origins in Cyprus. The architecture and small finds indicate that a sophisticated society with international connections was in existence at that time (the Iron Age I), rather than modest scattered settlements as scholars previously thought.

In another major innovation, the students have been trained in sampling for residue analysis using an on-site chemistry laboratory overseen by Macquarie's Dr Sophia Aharonovich. They have been taught how to collect soil samples from different locations and carry out six chemical tests on each one to get immediate preliminary results in the field. These results can show whether there was human activity (such as cooking or sleeping) and organic material (such as remnants of oil and wine) in a certain location, giving a clearer understanding of what each area was used for in ancient times.

Macquarie's Director of Ancient Mediterranean Studies, Dr Gil Davis, who runs the Ancient Israel Program was glowing in his assessment of the benefits to both universities from the collaboration. "Our staff and students work closely with their Israeli counterparts and learn a great deal from them that helps with their study and research" he said. "The dig is helping to strengthen the bonds between the two institutions and allow Australian students to experience and appreciate modern Israel".

Professor Yossi Garfinkel leading the team from Hebrew University noted that the contribution of significant funding and manpower from Australia has enabled excavations on a much larger scale than usual.

Thanks go to the Roth Families who generously fund the excavations and to Mr Isaac Wakil for funding the chemistry laboratory in memory of his late wife Susan. ■

Photos: Sophie Gidley, Macquarie University.



Hannah Newman, a Macquarie student who found a bronze calf on the dig

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Honouring Harry and Sylvia



From L/R Michael Dunkel, Sylvia Hoffman, Harry Hoffman AM, Rob Schneider, Peter Winterton AM

Harry Hoffman AM and Sylvia Hoffman have had a long and productive relationship with the Hebrew University. In 2006, the couple pioneered an amazing leadership and responsibility program for post graduate students at the University and in 2012, Harry was awarded an Honorary PhD by the University in recognition of his philanthropy both locally in Perth and of course in Israel. Sylvia has been honoured with an Honorary Fellowship. ■

Perth Benefactors Honoured at Hebrew University

During the course of the 2019 Board of Governors Meeting of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Australian Friends CEO Rob Schneider attended a very touching ceremony at the Wall of Benefactors where the names of Perth benefactors, the late David, Gita & Michael Hoffman will forever be perpetuated in recognition of their generous legacy to the Hebrew University and Keren Kayemeth for the establishment of a scholarship fund in their names.

The dedication was attended by many guests including participants of the 82nd meeting of the Hebrew University's Board of Governors. Among the speakers were Hebrew University President,

Asher Cohen, long-standing Hebrew University and KKL-JNF stalwart Stuart Silbert OAM, who was instrumental in setting up the Scholarship Fund on behalf of the benefactors, as well as Esti Goldwasser, head of the Australian desk at KKL-JNF. Stuart spoke movingly about the Hoffman family - their history and their care for the Jewish community and love of Israel - and Esti expressed the gratitude of KKL-JNF for the collaboration between this organisation and the Hebrew University over many years.

After the formalities, in an amazing setting overlooking the Old City, the group moved to the Wall of Benefactors to view the inscription in honour of the Hoffmans. ■



Seen in the photograph in front of the inscription are from left to right, Esti Goldwasser, Stuart Silbert OAM, Asher Cohen and Rob Schneider.

Photo credit: Bruno Charbit

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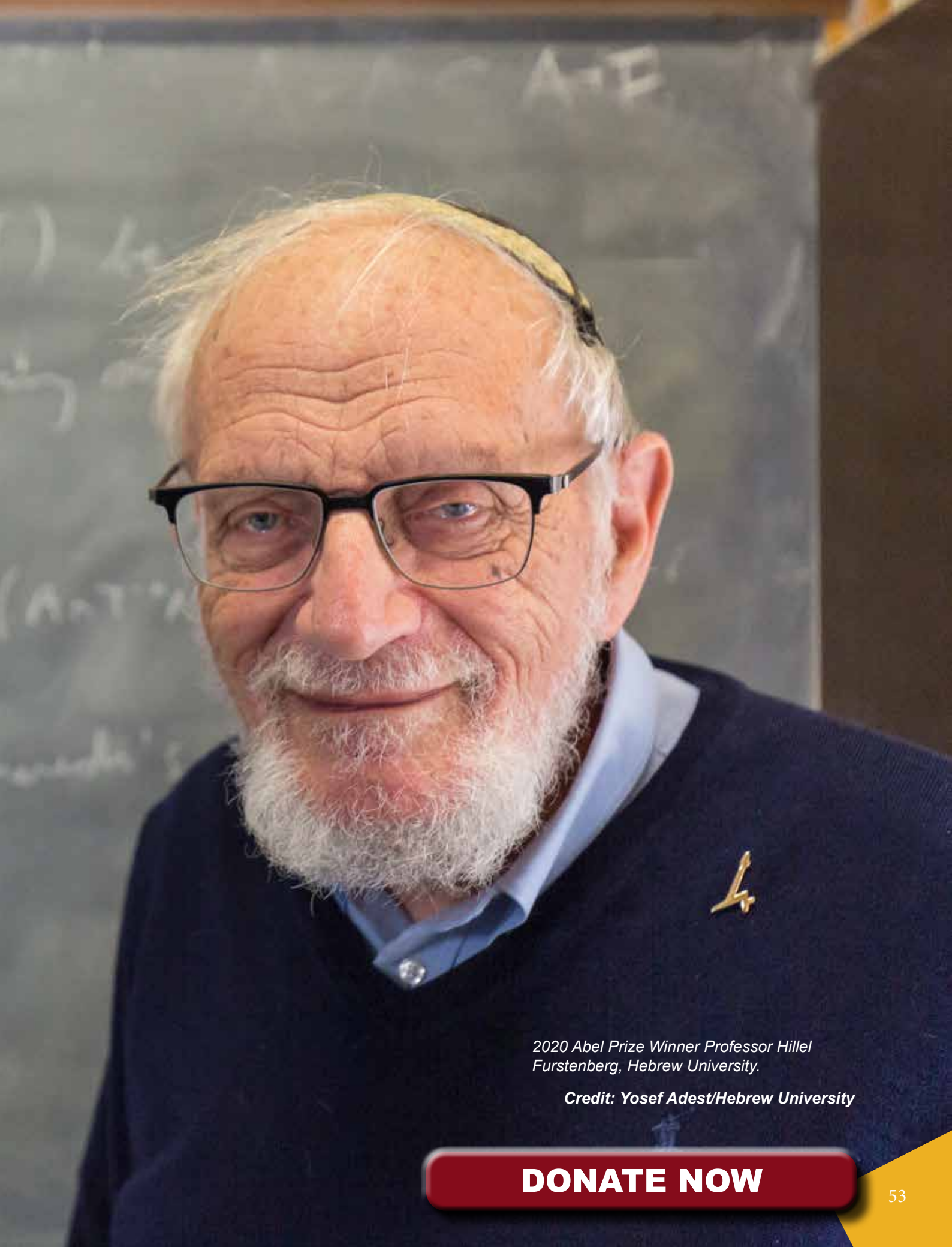
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World's Top Math Prize Awarded to Hebrew U's Hillel Furstenberg

The Abel Prize, often referred to as the Nobel of Mathematics, was established to recognize contributions that are of “extraordinary depth and influence”

In April 2020, the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters announced the award of the Abel Prize to Hillel Furstenberg at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Gregory Margulis at Yale University “for pioneering the use of methods from probability and dynamics in group theory, number theory and combinatorics”.

The Abel Prize was established by the Government of Norway in 2001 “to give the mathematicians their own equivalent of a Nobel Prize” and carries with it a cash award of 7.5 million Norwegian Kroners (\$834,000 USD). Furstenberg, a Kristallnacht survivor, is the first Israeli to win this prestigious prize. ►►



2020 Abel Prize Winner Professor Hillel Furstenberg, Hebrew University.

Credit: Yosef Adest/Hebrew University

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HU president Professor Asher Cohen, with Professor Hillel Furstenberg

Furstenberg and Margulis invented random walk techniques, a central branch of probability theory. A random walk is a path consisting of a succession of random steps. These techniques were used to investigate mathematical objects and introduced probabilistic methods to solve many open problems in group theory, number theory, combinatorics and graph theory.

“Furstenberg and Margulis stunned the mathematical world by their ingenious use of probabilistic methods and random walks to solve deep problems in diverse areas of mathematics,” shared Hans Munthe-Kaas, chair of the Abel committee. “They brought down the traditional wall between pure and applied mathematics,” he continued, “and opened up a wealth of new results...with applications to communication technology and computer science.”

Furstenberg was born in Berlin in 1935. His family fled Nazi Germany in 1939 and settled in

the United States. Already as an undergraduate, Furstenberg began to develop a reputation as a promising mathematician. When he published one of his earliest academic papers, rumors began to circulate that “Furstenberg” wasn’t an individual but rather a pseudonym for a group of mathematicians. How could it be that one person could pull ideas from so many different areas?

After teaching at several leading American universities, including Princeton, M.I.T. and the University of Minnesota, Furstenberg moved to Israel in 1965 to join Hebrew University’s Einstein Institute of Mathematics. This move helped establish Israel as a world center for mathematics, and Furstenberg went on to win the Israel Prize in 1993 and the Wolf Prizes in 2007.

“Professor Furstenberg’s Abel Prize is a true honor for Hebrew University and for Israel, as a whole”, shared Hebrew University President Professor Asher Cohen. “Hillel is not only a



world-class mathematician but a mensch and mentor to scores of students who have already changed the face of mathematics. We couldn't be prouder of his award, a Nobel-level achievement.”

Like Furstenberg, Russian-born Margulis was also heralded as a leading mathematician from a young age. However, being Jewish in the Soviet Union meant Margulis was unable to secure a job at Moscow University and he ultimately emigrated to the United States and began working at Yale University. Due to the ten years' age difference between them and to travel restrictions in the Soviet Union, the two laureates did not formally collaborate, however, they did influence each other's work.

This year's Abel Prize Award Ceremony will take place at a later date when His Majesty King Harald V of Norway will present the Abel Prize to the laureates. The original ceremony, scheduled for May 19, has been postponed due to the corona outbreak. ■

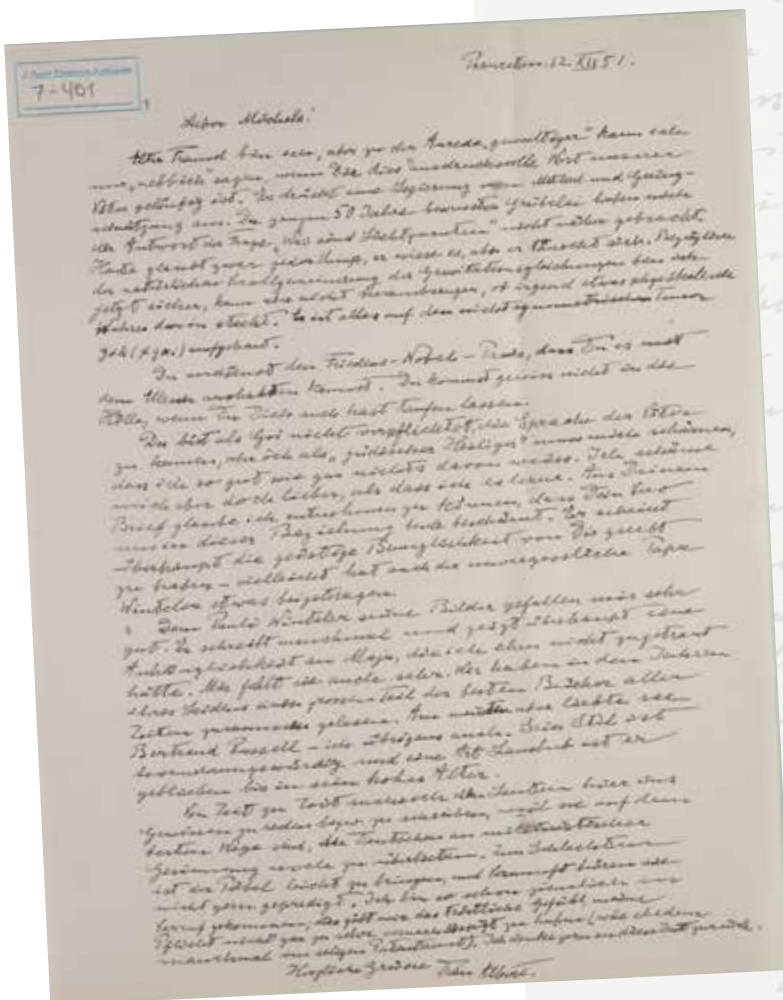
About the Abel Prize

[The Abel Prize](#) was established by the Norwegian government in 2002 on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Niels Henrik Abel's birth. The Abel Prize recognizes contributions to the field of mathematics that are of extraordinary depth and influence. The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters awards the Abel Prize based on a recommendation from the Abel committee.

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In His Own Words: New Einstein Manuscripts Revealed

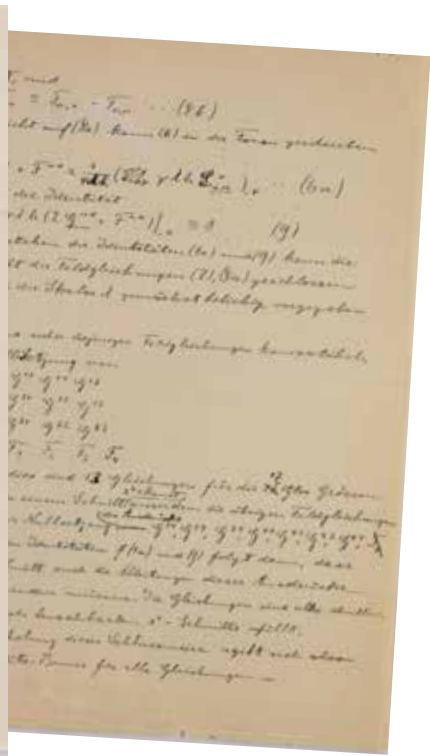
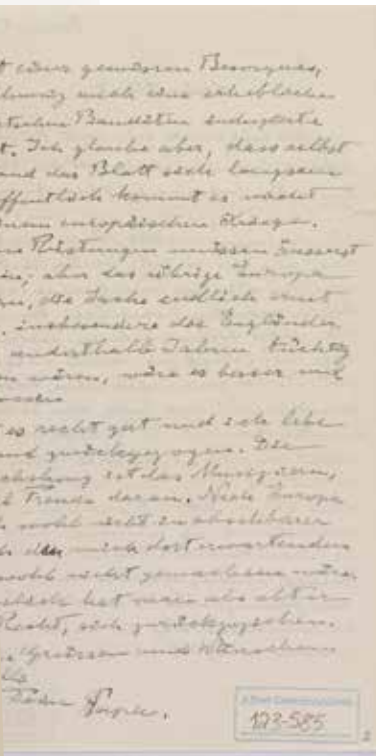
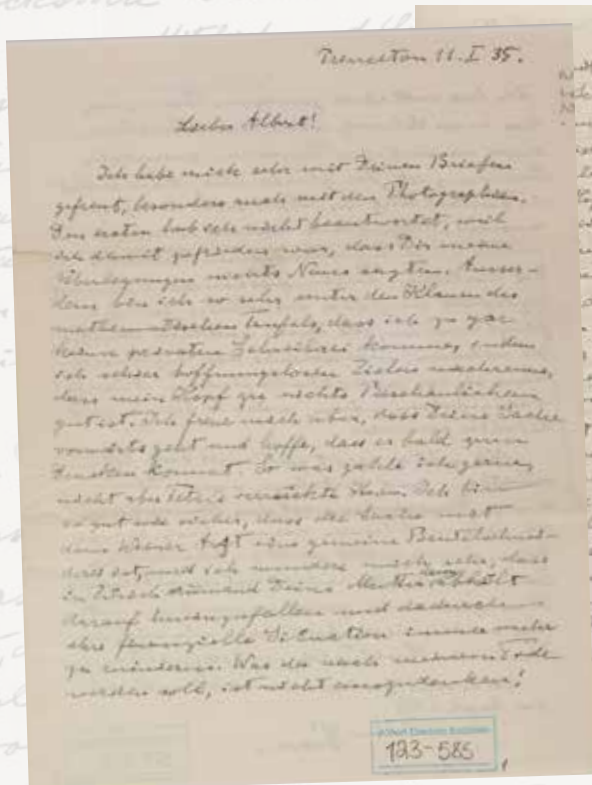
Missing Computations from Einstein's Unified Theory, Concerned Letters to Son During Nazi Germany, in New Collection



Einstein letter to Michele Besso in 1951.

Even 140 years after Albert Einstein's birth, his scientific discoveries still impact our lives--lasers, nuclear power, fiber optics, driverless cars, GPS and space travel all trace back to Einstein's theories. Today, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HU) unveiled 110 new manuscript pages, most of which have not been displayed before, and which shed light on the scientist and the man behind the science.

Einstein was one of the founding fathers of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HU). To him, the University represented a combined commitment to a Jewish identity, the pursuit of truth, and respect for all human beings. For these reasons, Einstein bequeathed his personal and scientific writings to the university and the Albert Einstein Archives were born. As the Archives'



Einstein letter to son Hans Albert in 1935.

Academic Director Professor Hanoach Gutfreund shared, “We at the Hebrew University are proud to serve as the eternal home for Albert Einstein’s intellectual legacy, as was his wish”.

The new collection contains:

84 sheets, most of them mathematical derivations from 1944-48. Here, Einstein’s research notes give us a direct, unedited insight into the workings of one of the most creative minds in the history of science. While the scientific context of many of these calculations is not yet clear, an initial description was provided by Prof. Tilman Sauer at the University of Mainz.

A handwritten, unpublished appendix to a scientific article on the Unified Theory that Einstein submitted to the Prussian Academy of Science in 1930. This article was one of many in Einstein’s attempts to unify the forces of nature into one, single theory and he devoted the last thirty years of his life to this effort. This



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appendix--Page 3—has never before been seen or studied and was thought lost until now.

A 1935 letter from Einstein to his son Hans Albert who was living in Switzerland at the time. Einstein expresses concern about the deteriorating situation in Europe and the rise of the Nazi party in Germany: “I read with some apprehension that there is quite a movement in Switzerland, instigated by the German bandits. But I believe that even in Germany things are slowly starting to change. Let’s just hope we won’t have a Europe war first...the rest of Europe is now starting to finally take the thing seriously, especially the British. If they would have come down hard a year and a half ago, it would have been better and easier.”

4 letters from Einstein to his life-long friend and fellow scientist, Michele Besso. Three of the 1916 letters refer to Einstein’s monumental work, based on a “glorious idea”, on the absorption and emission of light by atoms. This idea later became the basis for laser technology. In the fourth letter, Einstein confesses that after 50 years of thinking about it, he still does not understand the quantum nature of light.

The letters to Besso also contain Einstein’s witty and personal remarks about family matters and Jewish identity. In one, Einstein teases Besso for having converted to Christianity, “You will certainly not go to hell, even if you had yourself baptized.” Though Einstein is impressed that Besso is learning Hebrew and shared, “As a goy, you are not obliged to learn the language of our fathers, whilst I as a ‘Jewish saint’ must feel ashamed at the fact that I know next to nothing of it. But I prefer to feel ashamed than to learn it”.

Einstein’s cousin Karen Cortell Reisman flew in from Texas to attend the arrival of the new manuscripts. She shared personal experiences of growing up in a house imbued by the famous cousin. “Whenever someone came to visit our home, we always showed them our ‘Einstein Wall’ which was full of photos and letters from my grandmother’s famous cousin.” Cortell Reisman recalled. Cortell Reisman’s grandmother, Lina Kocherthaler, was Einstein’s relative. The two often traveled together and remained in close contact throughout their lives, sharing decades’ worth of correspondence. “Later, when I got

married, instead of a Tiffany bowl or crystal vase, I asked my family for a gift that would be much more meaningful to me: a July 1949 letter that Einstein, along with my father and mother, wrote to Lina,” Cortell Reisman shared.

These days, Cortell Reisman delivers keynote lectures titled “Letters from Einstein” in which she shares with individuals and businesses how to apply Einstein’s principles to increase creativity in their own personal and professional lives.

The new manuscripts were acquired for HU’s Albert Einstein Archives thanks to a philanthropic gift by the Crown-Goodman Family Foundation in Chicago. They were purchased from a private

collector in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Following the preservation and digitization of these new documents, HU’s Einstein Archives is currently working with Caltech’s Prof. Diana Kormos-Buchwald of the Einstein Papers Project to decipher the scientific and mathematical contexts for many of the calculations in this new collection.

To date, Hebrew University’s Albert Einstein Archives contains more than 80,000 items, including manuscripts, correspondences, photographs, diplomas and medals. These items make accessible to the public not only Einstein’s scientific achievements but his public activity and private life, as well. ■



Photo of Karen Cortell Reisman’s grandparents Lina and Julius Kocherthaler with Einstein. (Lina is to the right of Einstein, in a white kerchief, and Julius, in the cap, is beside her).

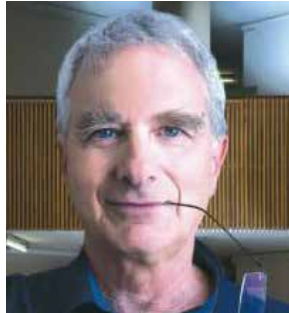
Credit: Ardon Bar Hama, Albert Einstein Archives/Hebrew University

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EMET Prize awarded to four professors from the Hebrew University Jerusalem



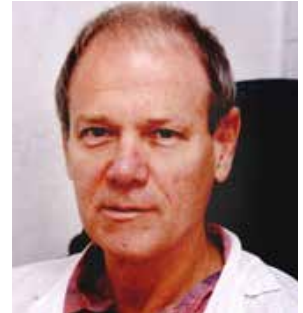
Prof. Tsvi Piran



Prof. Avner De Shalit



Prof. Benjamin Z. Kedar



Prof. Yinon Ben-Neriah

Israel's EMET prize, sponsored by the A.M.N. Foundation for the Advancement of Science, Art and Culture in Israel was awarded by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday, December 9, at the Jerusalem Theatre.

The award, known as the "Israeli Nobel Prize," has been awarded annually since 2002 to Israeli citizens, in recognition of "academic or professional excellence and achievements that have made a special contribution to society and



have had a far-reaching impact in the field in which the award was given.” The award is given in five different areas: culture and art, exact sciences, life sciences, humanities, and social sciences.

Arie Dobson, CEO of the A.M.N. Foundation, which supports academic and research institutions in Israel and sponsors the award, says: “The goal of the EMET Foundation is to recognize those who have chosen excellence as a way of life and the realization of human potential as essential to creating a better world for future generations.”

Ilana Ashkenazi, director of the EMET Prize, adds, “The EMET Prize illustrates how academic and professional excellence can improve the human condition, in all areas of life.”

This year, the \$1 million prize was awarded to 11 winners, including four professors from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: Professors Yinon Ben-Neriah and Tsvi Piran, winners in the Life Sciences category; Professor Ze’ev Kedar, a winner in the General History category;

and Professor Avner de Shalit, a winner in the Political Science and Strategy category.

Prof. Yinon Ben-Neriah of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, winner of the Life Sciences category for his “important scientific contribution to understanding immune signaling processes and decoding abnormal signal transmission mechanisms in cancer cells.” His innovative research has led to a different approach in the treatment of leukemia, using goal-directed biological drugs.

“Until 20 years ago, we fought cancer by providing chemotherapy that worked on nonspecific killing of rapidly dividing cells,” he explains. “We tested the manner in which cancer cells transmit signals. Unacceptable or unconventional signals come into the cell, or they are incorrectly interpreted by the cell, resulting in uncontrolled cell growth or invasion of cells to places that they should not be. It became clear that if we understood the field, we could intervene and curb the cancerous process that is conditioned by these signals.”



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2019 EMET Prize Laureates, back row from left to right: Professor Benjamin Z. Kedar (HU), Professor Avner De Shalit (HU), Dr. David Weinfeld, Professor Mordechai Segev, and Professor Tsvi Piran (HU). Front row, left to right: Professor Michal Schwartz, Professor Azar Gat, and Dr. Hannah Amit-Kochavi.

While Ben-Neria was delighted to learn of the prize, he says: “Our reward comes not from the awards, but from the achievements. It is a blessing if one can take a serious illness like leukemia and make it a treatable disease.” Equally trailblazing work has led Prof. Tsvi Piran of Hebrew University to be one of the EMET recipients for 2019 in the exact science category. Piran deals with high-energy astrophysics and investigated the origin of gamma rays discovered in space in the 1960s. This issue has been debated in the scientific community for nearly 30 years, and Piran was one of the few to swim against the current, stating that the explosions of the gamma rays, the strongest natural explosions in the universe, come from distant sources. “It was my opinion that one of the extinction events of life on Earth 500 million years

ago resulted from such an explosion. When I introduced this theory, people thought me strange,” Piran reveals.

“Even when a satellite sent by the United States to space provided evidence to support my theory, it took seven years for the scientific community to accept it.”

His ideas have shaped the understanding of the mechanism of physical processes. “Sometimes you think outside the box and go too far,” he clarifies. “But scientists are the opposite of chess players. In chess, you pay dearly for every little mistake, but science is more forgiving.”

Another winner in general history is Prof. Ze’ev Kedar of Hebrew University. His contribution to the study of the Crusader period and the



Credit: DAVID SALEM-ZOOG PRODUCTIONS

Mediterranean world in the Middle Ages, and the original insights into past and present intercultural encounters and his studies of comparative history, Jewish history, and the fostering of Land of Israel studies brought him this award.

“It’s wonderful to receive an award,” he says, “but the really important things are the historical works you write and the research you do, the students you guide, and most of all the discoveries you make.”

These are the great moments of my life as a historian – discovering texts no one has ever seen and offering solutions to problems no one has ever thought of before.”

In the field of political science and strategy, the EMET Prize was awarded to Prof. Avner

de Shalit., of Hebrew University, won the award for his in-depth research addressing the challenges of poverty and inequality. “We found that although liberal and social democracies invest huge fortunes, poverty levels did not go down, and even increased. We discovered that poor people have low self-esteem, which carries through to their abilities in every field. When a group of social workers in one of Belgium’s cities implemented our recommendations, the results were amazing: 67% of the unemployed started working, as opposed to none from the control group.”

De Shalit will donate most of his prize money for scholarships. “The award also belongs to my colleagues and my department,” he says. “The model of the trailblazing, brilliant researcher who works alone is incorrect – we all work together.” ■

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Three HU Professors Win Prestigious EU Grant

Three professors at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HU) have been awarded European Research Council Advanced Grants. These EU-funded grants provide awardees with up to 2.5 million Euro (roughly 10 million NIS) in “long-term funding to pursue ground-breaking, high-risk projects”, according to the ERC. Where necessary, the grants also provide up to 1 million euro in lab equipment and machinery.

Competition for these grants is steep. Of the 2,052 applications received, only 185 (11%) won funding. Further, these grants are available only to researchers with a proven track-record of significant achievements. Overall, Israel won 5 ERC Advance Grants this year, with 3 at HU and one each at Tel Aviv University and the Technion.

These ERC grants will not only allow scientists to further their ground-breaking research but also lead to job creation. An estimated 2,000 postdocs, PhD students and laboratory staff will likely be employed by the 185 ERC awardees.

Targeting cancer vulnerabilities in acute leukemia. **ONCODESTROYER**

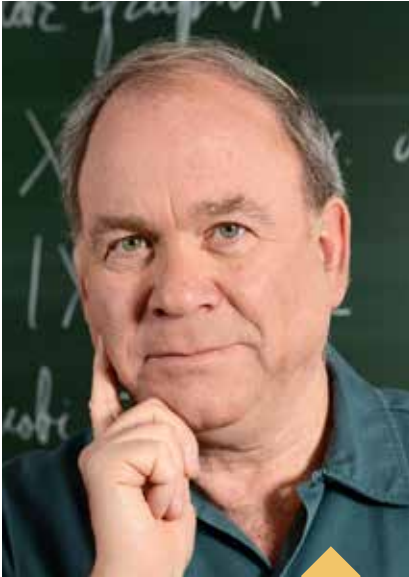
Adult acute leukemias pose a great challenge to cancer therapy. As these malignancies are commonly associated with multiple epigenetic aberrations, epigenetic factors represent attractive leukemia drug targets. Nevertheless, most epigenetic targeting drugs have displayed limited clinical benefit. We have developed a new class of small molecule kinase inhibitors, termed “oncodestroyers” (ODs). These inhibitors demonstrate an unprecedented therapeutic potency in mouse models of human leukemia and are now entering leukemia clinical trials. This project will study the principles of “oncodestruction” and

mechanisms of drug action, among other things. The research may be applied to other cancer diseases, sharing vulnerabilities with leukemia.

The Wall: People and Ecology in Medieval Mongolia and China

Why did some (but not all) Chinese dynasties invest huge amounts of resources in the construction of ‘Great Walls’? The project will focus on precisely that question, in an attempt to unravel what is, perhaps, the most enigmatic episode of ‘Great Wall’ construction. Roughly dated to the 10-13th centuries CE and located far to the north of other ‘Great Wall’ lines, this Medieval Wall System (MWS) is one of the longest walls ever constructed in world history, stretching over more than 3,500km and including large auxiliary structures. The amount of resources invested in this MWS must have been enormous, but historical sources are mute about its construction, and modern scholarship is unable to date it precisely or understand why it was built and how it functioned.

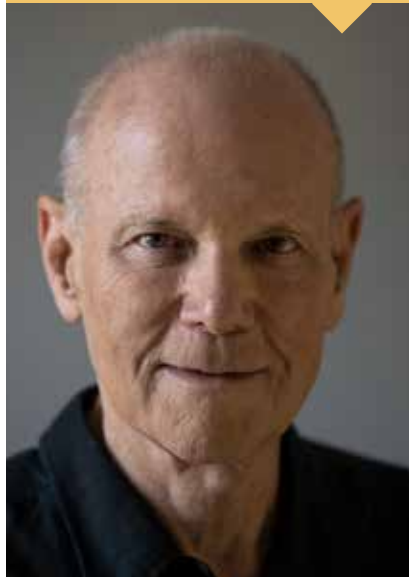
The motives behind the construction of the MWS, its political context and ecological implications, are highly relevant for the understanding of the complex history of China and Mongolia on the eve of Chinggis Khan’s rise to power. However, because in the past scholars have assumed that ‘Great Walls’ were fortified border lines designed to stop military incursions, such issues’ impetus and consequences were never addressed. Hence, the proposed project will put forward novel hypotheses, analyse them by using advanced recovery and analytical methods, and examine them against a broad archaeological, historical, environmental, and geographical background. The research hypothesis of the project is that the MWS was not built as a defence against invading armies, but rather as a means to monitor



PROFESSOR YINON BEN-NERIA, Immunology and Cancer Research, HU Faculty of Medicine. Awarded 3,200,000€ to develop an “Onco-Destroyer” to treat adult acute leukemias. The grant will assist Prof. Ben-Neria and his team to conduct research in this subject for 5 years.



PROFESSOR GIDEON SHELACH-LAVI, Asian Studies, HU Faculty of Humanities. Awarded 2,499,750€ to study “The Wall: People and Ecology in Medieval Mongolia and China”. The grant will assist Prof. Shelach-Lavi and his team to conduct research in this subject for 5 years.



PROFESSOR ALEX LUBOTZKY, Mathematics, HU Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. Awarded 1,628,750€ to study “Stability and Testability: Groups and Codes TeStability”. This is the third time Prof. Lubotzky has won an ERC Advanced grant.

and sometimes stop the movement of nomadic people and their herds. The large scale movements of nomadic people towards more central areas of the empire happened, it has been suggested, in times of ecological stress in the Steppe.

Stability and Testability: Groups and Code. TeStability

Stability in algebra in general and in group theory, in particular, is a general name for prestigious for various questions for which finite answers are yet to be found.

In recent years, it has been discovered that “Group Stability” can be the path to the solution of some longstanding problems in group theory.

In computer science, property testing is an area which studies the possibility of having (random) algorithms that can check a property while reading only a small amount of the information.

The research will aim to develop further methods to study stability and testability and eventually also to attack the holy grail problems of these areas. ■

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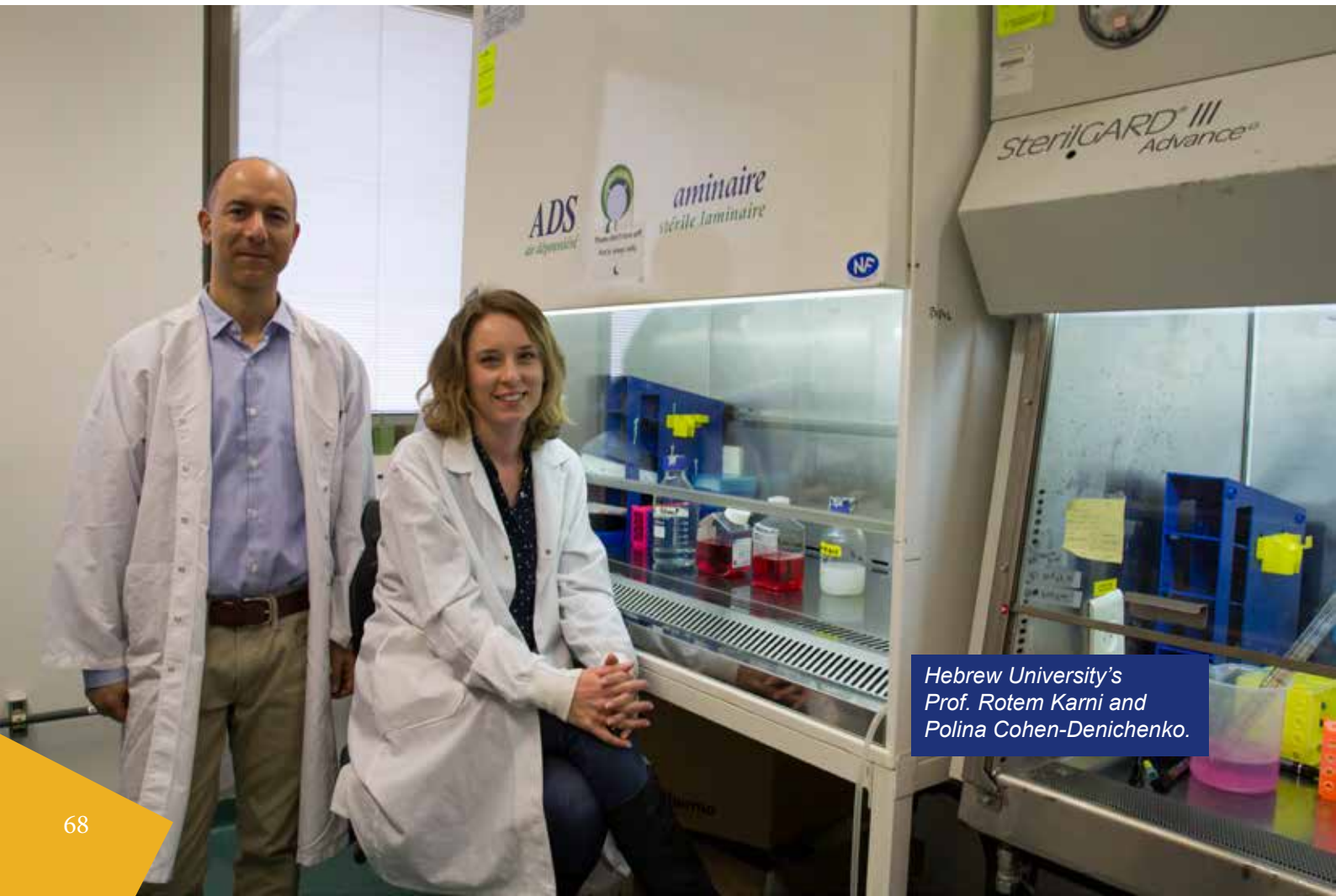
Scientists Get Sly, Use Deception to Fight Cancer

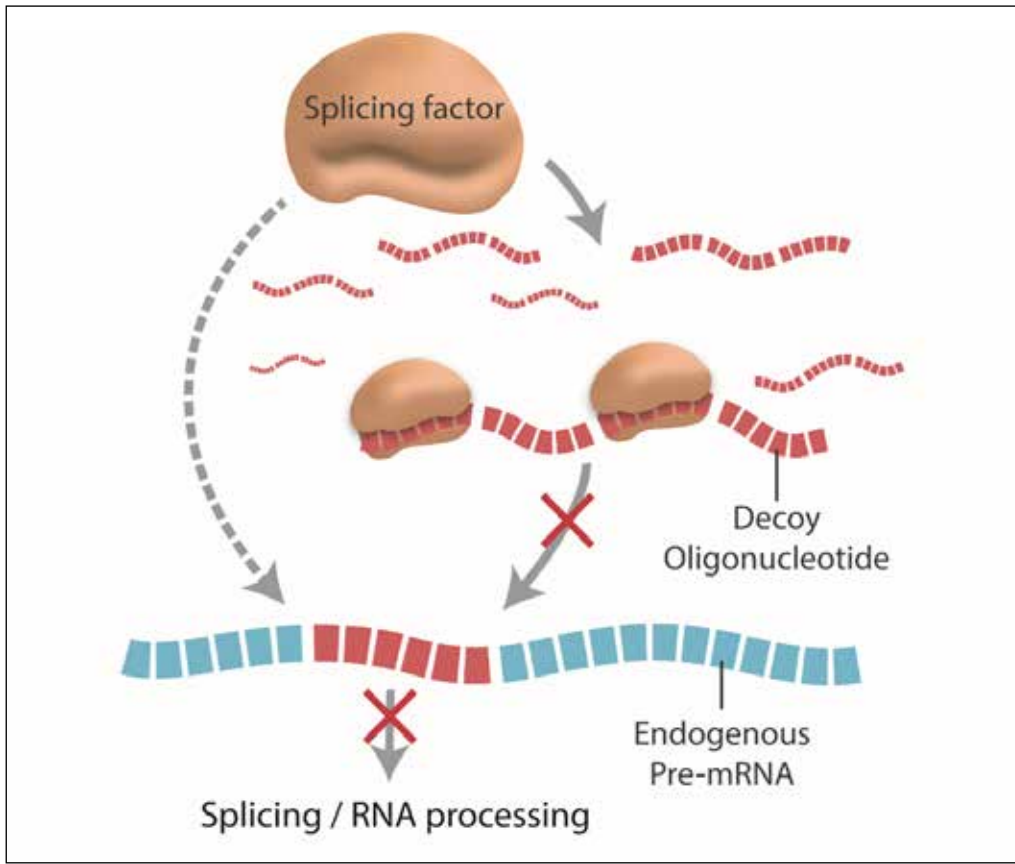
Hebrew University Researchers Create Decoys that Block RNA-Binding Proteins from Spreading Cancer

In recent years, it's become clear that RNA-binding proteins play a major role in cancer growth. These proteins, active in all cells but especially so in cancer cells, bind to RNA molecules and accelerate cancer cell growth. Unfortunately, no cancer treatment has targeted these proteins. Until now.

In the upcoming issue of Nature Communications,

Professor Rotem Karni and his team at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HU) present a new technology to fight cancer. They designed decoy molecules that trick RNA-binding proteins into binding with them. Once bound, these RNA-binding proteins are no longer able to bind with the natural RNA molecules in cancer cells and lose their cancer-promoting activity. These "sterile" RNA molecule decoys are called oligonucleotides.





Meet oligonucleotide, the RNA-binding decoy molecule.

Credit photos:
Rotem Karni

“Our technology is a new approach in the war on cancer. By understanding the biological function of RNA-binding proteins we successfully designed decoy molecules that inhibit these proteins and move us ever closer to creating an anti-cancer drug,” shared Professor Karni.

Prof. Karni and his HU Institute for Medical Research-Israel Canada (IMRIC) team, led by Ph.D. student Polina Cohen-Denichenko, developed several decoy molecules that inhibit the RNA-binding proteins that speed-up brain and breast cancer growth. To test the decoys, they treated brain cancer cells with decoy molecules. When the cells were then injected into healthy

mice, the cancer cells did not replicate and, soon after, the tumors died off.

Though this study tested the efficacy of decoy molecules on breast and brain cancer cells, Karni explained that his technology enables scientists to tailor-make decoys for other types of cancer, thereby streamlining and improving treatment for cancer patients. “We still need to examine the toxicity of the decoy molecules and to test their efficacy on animals before we can move on to humans,” cautioned Karni. “However, I’m optimistic, given that we’ve already succeeded at creating decoy oligonucleotides that inhibit RNA binding proteins in other kinds of cancers.” ■

Specific inhibition of splicing factor activity by decoy RNA oligonucleotides. Polina Denichenko, Maxim Mogilevsky, Antoine Cléry, Thomas Welte, Jakob Biran, Odelia Shimshon, Georgina D. Barnabas, Miri Danan-Gotthold, Saran Kumar, Eylon Yavin, Erez Y. Levanon, Frédéric H. Allain, Tamar Geiger, Gil Levkowitz and Rotem Karni.

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Not Just Images:

Hebrew University's New MRI Technique Can "See" Molecular Changes in the Brain

MRI's give us a picture of our body's insides—organs, bones, nerves and soft tissue. But what if MRI's could show us the molecular makeup of our body parts, and help doctors more quickly determine the onset of disease and begin treatment?

In a paper published today in *Nature Communications*, Professor Aviv Mezer and his team at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI)'s Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Brain Sciences successfully transformed an MRI from a diagnostic camera that takes into a device that can record changes in the biological makeup of brain tissue. This is especially important for doctors looking to understand whether a patient is merely getting older or developing a neurodegenerative disease, such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's.

"Instead of images, our quantitative MRI model provides molecular information about the brain tissue we're studying. This could allow doctors to compare brain scans taken over time from the same patient, and to differentiate between healthy and diseased brain tissue, without resorting to invasive or dangerous procedures, such as brain tissue biopsies," explained Mezer.

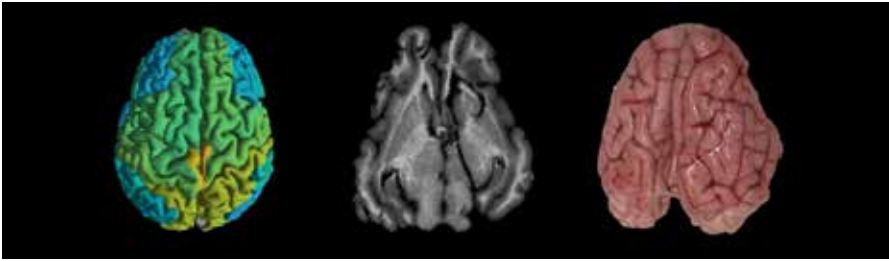
External signs of aging are familiar to us: gray hair, a stooped spine, occasional memory loss. However, how do we know if a patient's brain is aging normally or developing a disease? The answer is found on the biological level. Both normal aging and neurodegenerative diseases create biological "footprints" in the brain,



Study author - Hebrew University's Dr. Aviv Mezer.

changing the lipid and protein content of brain tissue.

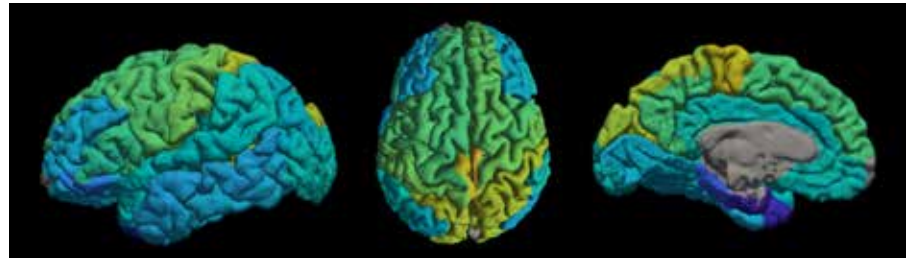
Whereas current MRI scans provide only pictures of the human brain, this new technique provides biological readouts of brain tissue—the ability to see what's going on on a molecular level, and to direct a course of treatment accordingly. "When we take a blood test, it shows us the exact number of white blood cells in our body and whether



From Right to Left:
Pig's brain; standard MRI
brain scan; new MRI
scan showing differences
in molecular makeup in
different parts of the brain.

The new MRI Technique
provides users with a
molecular map of different
areas in the brain.

Images:
Shir Filo / Hebrew University

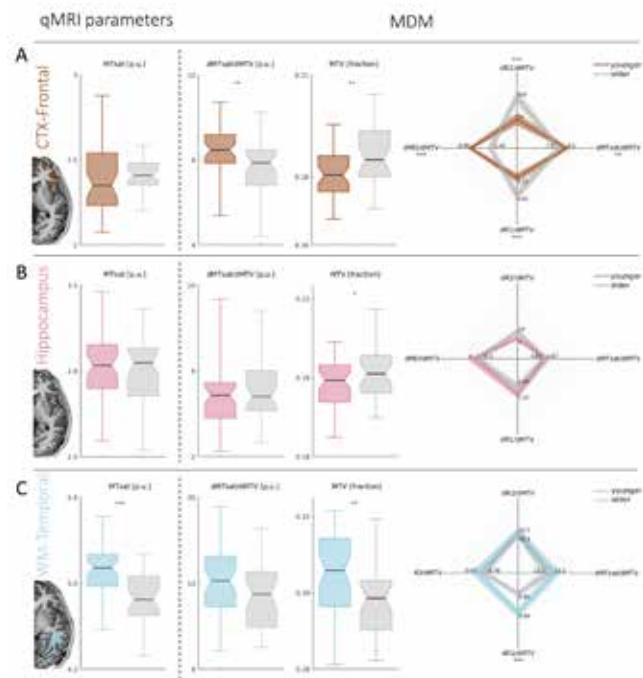


**Non-invasive detection of age-related
molecular profiles in the human
brain. Shir Filo, Oshrat Shtangel, Noga
Salamon, Adi Kol, Batsheva Weisinger,
Sagiv Shifman, and Aviv Mezer, Nature
Communications.**

that number is higher than normal due to illness. MRI scans provide images of the brain but don't show changes in the composition of the human brain, changes that could potentially differentiate normal aging from the beginnings of Alzheimer's or Parkinson's," shared PhD student Shir Filo who worked on the study.

Looking ahead, Mezer believes that the new MRI technique will also provide a crucial understanding into how our brains age, "when we scanned young and old patients' brains, we saw that different brain areas ages differently. For example, in some white-matter areas, there is a decrease in brain tissue volume, whereas in the gray-matter, tissue volume remains constant. However, we saw major changes in the molecular makeup of the gray matter in younger versus older subjects".

All this bodes well for patients. Not only will MRI's be able to distinguish molecular signs of normal aging from the early signs of disease. Patients will more likely receive correct diagnoses earlier, speeding up when they begin treatment and maintaining an improved quality of life longer, all via a non-invasive technique. ■



The new MRI Technique provides users with a
readout of the molecular parameters in brain tissue
and shows the differences in brain tissue between
healthy young adults and healthy older adults.

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Tuberculosis vaccine could help prevent Alzheimer's, Israeli study shows

Hebrew University researchers say the BCG vaccine, also used to treat bladder cancer, may fight the sustained inflammation that is a feature of Alzheimer's disease

By Shoshanna Solomon

A team of researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem say they have found that a vaccine originally developed to fight tuberculosis and commonly used to treat bladder cancer may also be effective in preventing Alzheimer's, a chronic neurodegenerative disease that causes memory loss, language problems and loss of the ability to function.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, 5.8 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's. By 2050 this number is projected to rise to nearly 14

million. At the moment, there is no cure or even treatment for the disease.

Now, say the researchers, "there may be a glimmer of hope," according to a statement published Monday by the university.

The research team was headed by Hervé Bercovier, Charles Greenblatt and Benjamin Klein at Hebrew University's Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics.

The scientists discovered that the bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine, originally

developed for tuberculosis and commonly used to treat bladder cancer, may also be effective in preventing Alzheimer's.

They published their findings in PLOS ONE.

“There's data reaching back to the 1960s that shows that countries treating bladder cancer patients with the BCG vaccine had a lower prevalence of Alzheimer's disease but it hadn't been properly analyzed,” said lead author of the paper Bercovier in the statement.

So Bercovier and his team followed 1,371 bladder cancer patients receiving treatment at HU's Hadassah Medical Center for at least a year after the diagnosis of the cancer. The age of the average patient age was 68. During follow-up visits, 65 cancer patients had developed Alzheimer's. Those who had not received BCG as part of their treatment had a significantly higher risk of developing Alzheimer's than did BCG-treated patients: 8.9% (44 patients) as opposed to 2.4% (21), the study found.

In addition, people general healthy population who had never been treated with BCG had a fourfold higher risk of developing Alzheimer's than did those who were treated with BCG, the study showed.

Alzheimer's is marked by three pathological features: an accumulation of amyloid β ($A\beta$) plaques, neurofibrillary tangles (hyperphosphorylated tau protein) and a sustained innate neuroinflammation, the study said. Inflammation is a defense mechanism of the body



Prof. Hervé Bercovier of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HU)'s Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics

Photo: Lior Mizrahi

that happens when the immune system recognizes damaged cells and begins the healing process. However, when inflammation persists longer than necessary, because of an overreaction of the immune system or for other reasons, this can cause harm, as is the case with Alzheimer's.

The exact way the BCG vaccine affects cancer has not been deciphered but it is known to have an impact on the immune system, the researchers said in their study.

Thus, the BCG vaccine, which “modulates the immune system, may serve as an effective preventative treatment to this crippling condition,” said Bercovier in a phone interview. “Looks like BCG is able to reduce this inflammation.” ■

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Israeli Docs Strike Big Blow to “Superbugs”

Hebrew U. Team Brings Hope to Patients with Life-Threatening, Drug-Resistant Infections

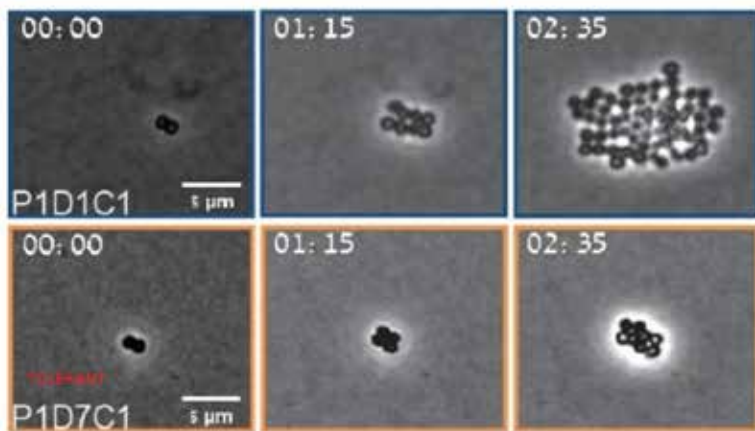


Hebrew University Professor Nathalie Balaban **Credit: Hebrew University**

Every year in the United States, more than 35,000 people die and 2.8 million get sick from antibiotic-resistant infections. Now, a team led by Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HU)’s Professor Nathalie Balaban and Shaarei Zedek Medical Center’s Dr. Maskit Bar-Meir has shown that resilient bacteria may be treatable with currently-available therapies. In a study published in *Science* magazine, the researchers show that aggressive bacteria can be controlled - but only if doctors administer treatment

within a short window of opportunity.

Like all living organisms, germs like bacteria develop defenses against hostile elements in their environment. One common tactic is “tolerance”, that is, lying dormant during antibiotic treatment. In this way, bacteria evade antibiotic treatment because antibiotics can only spot and kill growing targets. However, this intermediary stage called “antibiotic tolerance” lasts only a few days and



MRSA bacteria under a microscope.

Credit: Nathalie Balaban and Jiafeng Liu

Effect of tolerance on the evolution of antibiotic resistance under drug combinations. Liu Jiafeng, Orit Gefen, Irine Ronin, Maskit Bar-Meir, and Nathalie Q. Balaban. *Science*, January 10, 2020. Vol. 367, Issue 6474, pp. 200-204. DOI: 10.1126/science.aay3041

cannot be detected in standard medical labs. Therefore, doctors miss the tolerance window and with it the opportunity to treat a serious infection before it becomes altogether resistant. This short window does not affect most healthy adults but for those patients fighting off a blood infection with a weakened immune system, this window is critical and could mean the difference between life and death.

In a previous study, Balaban and PhD student Irit Levin-Reisman studied lab-controlled bacteria. They developed a mathematical model that successfully described, measured and predicted when bacteria would develop tolerance to a particular antibiotic. Further, they observed that when bacteria developed tolerance to one antibiotic, they were more likely to develop tolerance to other antibiotics in the cocktail. “We observed that bacteria acquired tolerance within a few days. These tolerance mutations then acted as a stepping stone to acquire resistance and, ultimately, treatment failure,” described Balaban.

Now, as published in the latest edition of *Science*, HU’s Balaban lab and Dr. Jiafeng Liu teamed up with Bar-Meir and repeated their study and tolerance test technique. Only this time, they analyzed daily bacterial samples from hospitalized patients with life-threatening, persistent MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) infections. The

pattern that they found was strikingly similar to their lab findings: First, the patients’ bacteria developed tolerance, then resistance, and ultimately antibiotic treatment failed.

Looking ahead, Balaban believes that the same evolutionary processes involved in the development of antibiotic tolerance and resistance are likely at play in cancer and might be used to inform treatment. For example, tumor cells might first become tolerant of chemotherapy, develop resistance to it, and then develop resistance to other cancer drugs, as well.

In the short term, Balaban and Bar-Meir would like to give new hope for patients with life-threatening infections by encouraging medical centers to adopt the laboratory test they developed which gauges antibiotic tolerance. This readout would enable doctors to quickly and easily detect whether a patient’s bacteria are tolerant of a planned antibiotic treatment *before* it’s administered. Further, based on the patient’s bacteria profile, doctors could handpick antibiotics with a greater chance of success that, as is currently done, blindly choose antibiotics for which the patient may have already developed a tolerance. “Using the right combination of available antibiotic drugs at the outset could dramatically increase a patients’ survival rate before their infection becomes tolerant to all the antibiotics in our arsenal,” Balaban concluded. ■

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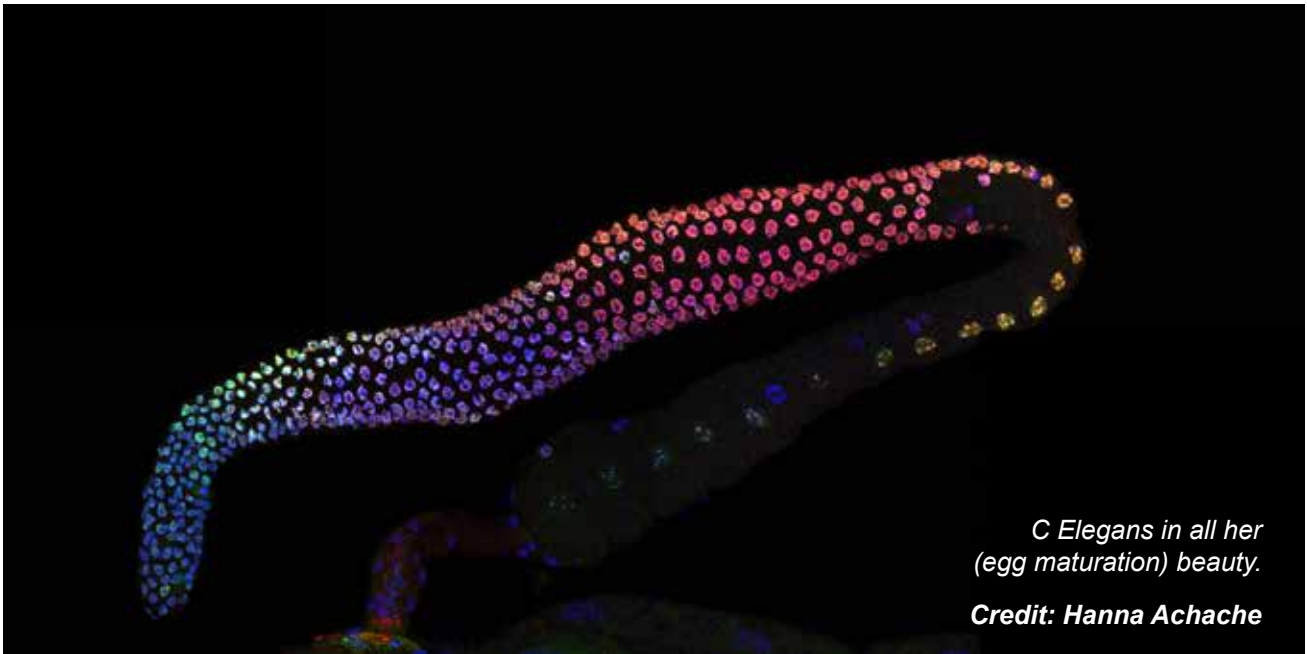
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Can Women PAUSE Their Biological Clocks?

Worms May Hold Key to Extending Fertility



C. Elegans in all her (egg maturation) beauty.

Credit: Hanna Achache

What if women could press pause on their biological clocks? Human eggs begin to mature from the onset of a woman's first period. However, most Western thirteen year olds are not interested in having babies and while they wait, their eggs age and the quality decreases. What if there were a way to delay egg aging without losing egg quality?

Researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI)'s Genetic Department have discovered the switch that may do this – in worms. And they're hopeful this breakthrough may help women extend their fertility windows and maintain high egg quality into their thirties and forties.

Dr. Yonatan Tzur and associate Dr. Hanna [Achache](#), along with scientists at Harvard Medical School, studied egg maturation in roundworms and published their findings in the scientific journal *Genetics*. Why worms? Though tiny, *C. elegans* has been incredibly helpful in helping scientists understand human genetics. These worms contain the same number of genes as humans do (20,000) and their eggs mature in about one day.

Tzur and his team monitored the changes in each of the worm's 20,000 genes during egg formation and were able to pinpoint an exact gene (*ogr-2*) that controls the rhythm of egg maturation. Delving further, the team studied MAP Kinase ("MAPK"), the biochemical switch that turns egg development on and off. When they removed the



Researchers Yonatan Tzur and Hanna Achache at work in their lab.

Credit: AG/Hebrew University

ogr-2 gene with CRISPR gene-editing technology, MAPK went into overdrive and the worms' eggs aged very quickly. "We tested the gene's role by removing it from the worm's gene sequence. Instantly, these 'edited' worms became less fertile and their eggs more closely resembled those of an older worm," shared Tzur.

These findings are significant because aging egg cells is the main cause of birth defects, miscarriages, and infertility. As human eggs age, abnormalities develop. While in-vitro fertilization (IVF) allows doctors to select the best eggs, women above the age of 35 have a harder time to produce a healthy baby with their own eggs, and for women 42 and older, those chances are close to zero. These statistics, along with the

fact that the average age of first-time mothers in the Western world is increasing sharply, means finding the key to slowing down egg maturation is crucial and has spurred scientists like Tzur to discover the mechanisms that control ovarian development and oocyte aging.

Though still in its early stages, Tzur sees two possible applications of his discovery for us, humans. One is to gently increase the equivalent of ogr-2 in girls via a food additive. This may allow girls to maintain the high quality of young eggs until they're ready to use them. Another would be to suppress MAPK during IVF cycles. This would help older eggs complete their development and improve women's chances of having a healthy baby as they get older. ■

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The father of cannabis research HU's **Raphael Mechoulam**

Journal of Cannabis Research is proud to announce that Prof. Raphael Mechoulam of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has joined its editorial board. Prof. Mechoulam and his research team are responsible for isolation and identification of several major plant cannabinoids, including Δ 9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). In this blog, Prof. Mechoulam answers questions posed by David Gorelick, Editor-in-Chief of Journal of Cannabis Research.

David Gorelick: How did it all begin?

Raphael Mechoulam: It all started from a fateful bus ride in 1964, when I brought 5 kilo of Lebanese hashish I received from the Israeli Police to my laboratory at the Weitzman Institute in Rehovot. With that material we were able to isolate and identify the psychoactive component in Cannabis, Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), that had eluded scientists for decades. The rest, shall we say, is history.

DG: What developments in cannabis research do you think are particularly exciting?

RM: I think there should be more focus on the acidic precursors of THC and CBD – THCa and CBDa. Those molecules have low stability, and as a result, very little research has been done on

them. But I think that they have a big potential and should be studied more.

DG: What do you consider the major challenges for the future?

RM: There is a lack of clinical research. The regulations are still restricting research on cannabis. More and more evidence is accumulating, but certainly not enough yet. So many cancer patients around the world have used cannabis for years, but still there are almost no randomized-controlled clinical trial with cancer patients. Every medication goes through clinical trials. And clinical trials cost money, usually quite a lot. The funding is another big issue. Clinical trials are usually funded by pharmaceutical companies, but it seems that those companies are not interested in investing in cannabis. Since it

cannot be patented, they would probably not get a return on their money. Hopefully, governments should be interested in this kind of data, but we know that governments, in general, don't have the capacity needed to do such research.

DG: Where do think the field is going in the future?

RM: You know, in addition to the known endocannabinoids (Anandamide, 2-AG, etc.) the body also produces a large number of endocannabinoid-like compounds. The body does not generate compounds for no reason. These endocannabinoid-like compounds must serve some endogenous role. While it is still unclear, I believe it is possible that the different profiles of these compounds may be at least partially responsible for our differences in behavior, perhaps a molecular basis for our personality.

In addition, these compounds may play a role in the body's defense against disease. It is hard to believe that the human body does not possess some alternate mechanisms for dealing with diseases where the immune system's antibody vs. antigen method is not relevant. These endocannabinoid-like compounds may be part of a broader heretofore unknown aspect of the immune system, protecting against diseases in ways we may only uncover in the next 20 years.

DG: What are your feelings regarding a new journal in the field of Cannabis research?

RM: There is definitely room for another journal, especially one that is broadly multidisciplinary, covering all fields from agriculture and biology of the cannabis plant, to endocannabinoids, human pharmacology, medical cannabis, and the cannabis industry. ■



Australian Friends CEO Rob Schneider with Professor Raphael Mechoulam

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Can Artificial Intelligence Solve the Mysteries of Quantum Physics?

Mobileye Founder's Team at Hebrew University Found the Way



*Hebrew University professor and Mobileye founder Amnon Shashua.
Credit: Hebrew University*

Under the direction of Mobileye founder Amnon Shashua, a research group at Hebrew University of Jerusalem's School of Engineering and Computer Science has proven that artificial intelligence (AI) can help us understand the world on an infinitesimally small scale called quantum physics phenomena.

Quantum physics phenomena is one of the hottest topics in contemporary physics. It looks at how particles in nature "come together" and bring along their unique properties, such as electrical conductivity or magnetism. However, it has been almost impossible for even the most seasoned researchers to get more than a glimpse of these complex phenomena. This is because of the enormous number of particles these phenomena contain (over a billion billion in each gram) and the enormous number of interactions between them. Until now.

A new study published in Physical



AUSTFHU CEO Rob Schneider, President Michael Dunkel, Prof. Amnon Shashua

Review Letters by Prof. Shashua’s computer science doctoral students at Hebrew University—Yoav Levin, Or Sharir and Nadav Cohen—has demonstrated mathematically that algorithms based on deep neural networks can be applied to better understand the world of quantum physics, as well.

These algorithms, the very same ones that gave our computers facial- and voice-recognition capabilities, can now be harnessed to enhance our understanding of the quantum behavior of nature. As lead author Shashua shared, “what

we have here is nothing short of extraordinary: a leading physics journal publishing computer science research. This cross-pollination has created a new and important tool that will help us understand the quantum nature of the world around us.”

Like the technological revolutions of the 20th century, gaining a deeper understanding of quantum physics through artificial intelligence has the potential to revolutionize all aspects of our lives, from computing and energy to transportation. ■

**Quantum Entanglement in Deep Learning Architectures.
Yoav Levine, Or Sharir, Nadav Cohen, and Amnon Shashua.
Phys. Rev. Lett. 122, 065301 – Published 12 February 2019.
DOI: 10.1103/PhysRevLett.122.065301.**

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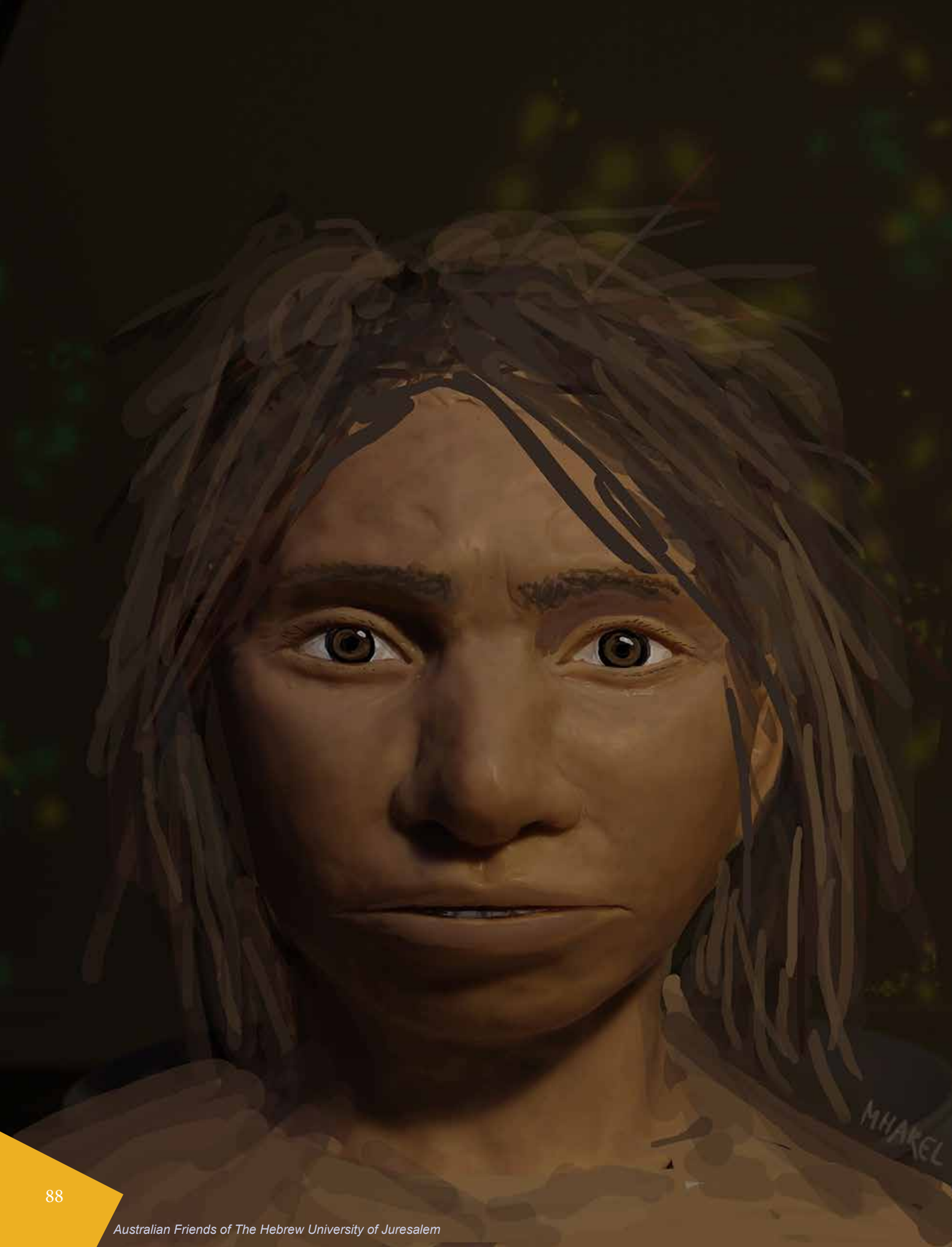
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Israeli reconstruction of ancient human face wins people's pick of 2019

By TOI staff

Science Magazine readers overwhelmingly voted in favour of Hebrew University scientists Liran Carmel and David Gokhman's depiction of a Denisovan teenager, cousin of modern humans

The prestigious scientific journal Science announced that Israeli scientists' reconstruction of the face of an ancient girl, an elusive cousin to modern humans and Neanderthals, has won the "People's Choice" category of its Breakthrough of the Year contest.

Hebrew University researchers Prof. Liran Carmel and Dr. David Gokhman used DNA from excavated remains to give a face to humanity's "newest" ancient relative, the Denisovans, and produced from the likeness of a teenage girl who likely lived around 70,000 years ago.

In a final round of voting, the Israeli research won 49 percent of the 34,000 online votes beating the three other candidates. It was named among four finalists including the discovery of new Ebola drugs, a technique that made a black hole "visible," and a new cystic fibrosis drug

"We are deeply moved by this honour and grateful to those who supported us," Carmel said in a statement from the Hebrew University. "It's amazing how scientific discoveries — even those relating to people who lived more than 100,000



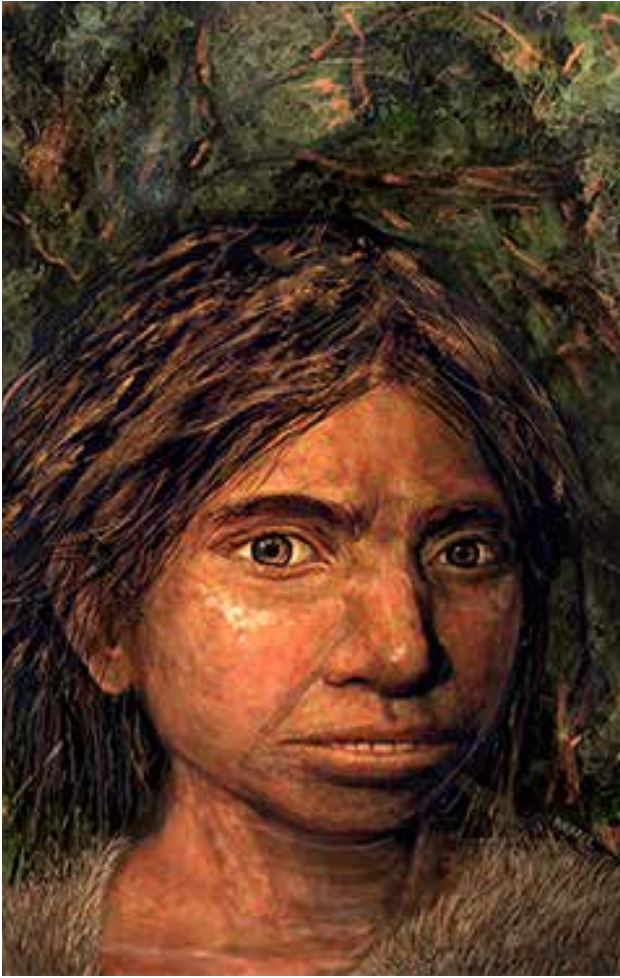
Liran Carmel

years ago — still captivate the imagination of folks around the world."

First discovered in a Siberian cave in 2008, the Denisovans coexisted with Neanderthals and modern Homo sapiens some 100,000 years ago. However, unlike their Neanderthal relatives, the

▶▶

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paucity of verified Denisovan remains — and their highly fragmented state — has until now made it impossible to create an anatomical picture of this early man.

The groundbreaking Israeli technique picked by Science readers, which was first published in the prestigious journal Cell in mid-September, helped to finally lift the veil.

Carmel's and Gokhman's model "gave the world a glimpse of this nearly unknown ancestor of modern-day humans," the university said.

They discovered a method of reconstructing what our long-ago relatives may have looked like by using open-source sequencing of ancient Denisovan DNA taken from a single bone

fragment. Professors Eran Meshorer from the Hebrew University, Yoel Rak from Tel Aviv University, and Tomas Marques-Bonet from Barcelona's Institute of Evolutionary Biology (UPF-CSIC) also contributed to the study.

"The Denisovans have haunted human evolution researchers for 10 years," Science Magazine wrote on its webpage about the research.

By reconstructing the girl's face the researchers "concluded that she would have looked a lot like a Neanderthal, with a wide pelvis, sloping forehead, and protruding lower jaw," the magazine wrote. "But she also had a wider face than modern humans or Neanderthals, and a longer arch of teeth along her jaw bone."

After some 40 years of excavation in Siberia's Anui River Valley, scientists in 2008 discovered the remains of a previously unknown form of ancient human. At the time, only a microscopic bone fragment, which underwent DNA analysis in Germany together with the rest of the findings from the cave, turned out to be from a human who was neither Neanderthal nor Homo sapiens.

After that first tiny fragment, which was part of a pinkie finger, scant other clearly determined Denisovan bone fragments were discovered, including a few teeth and recently a jawbone in Tibet. But the DNA of the Denisovans is still around in modern humans, including some six percent of aboriginal Australians, Malaysians and some other Southeast Asian populations. It may be part of the remarkable genetic differences seen in Inuits and Tibetans that allows their bodies to better handle extreme cold and high altitudes, the Israeli researchers have said.

According to Carmel, speaking at a September announcement of the findings, DNA analysis alone would not have allowed scientists to reconstruct physical characteristics of ancient humans, beyond vague information on their features, which included medium to dark hair,



Liran Carmel of the Hebrew University reveals a 3D printed model of the face of prehistoric human species Denisovan during a press conference at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem on September 19, 2019

Credit: MENAHEM KAHANA / AFP

eyes, and skin.

Instead, the Israeli researchers had to reconstruct the ways those genes would express themselves in the living organism.

To arrive at how a skeleton is influenced by the methylation switch of certain genes, the team of scientists cross-checked physical characteristics with a database of single-gene diseases, as some “monogenic” disorders can point to changes in bone structure such as a small pelvis.

Over a three-year study, the team tested its theory by drawing up physical characteristics of Neanderthals, Homo sapiens and chimpanzees based on their methylation patterns. Their predictions had an 85% accuracy.

The team then applied the methylation methodology to the Denisovans and found 56 anatomical traits which were different from modern humans and Neanderthals, 34 of which were in the skull, and probably included a longer dental arch, no chin and very wide skulls. ■

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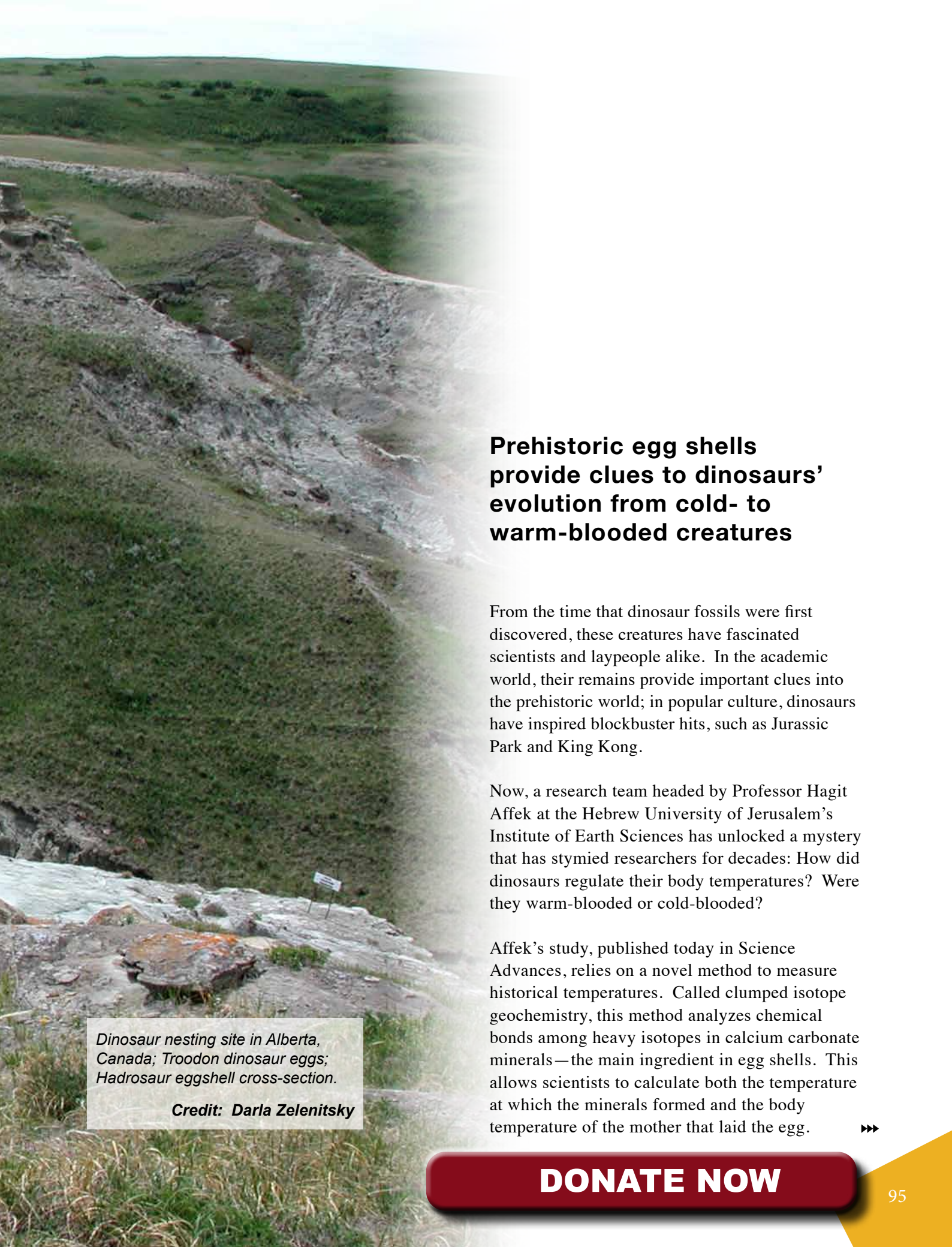
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How Did Dinosaur Parents Know When Their Kids Had a Fever?



Prehistoric egg shells provide clues to dinosaurs' evolution from cold- to warm-blooded creatures

From the time that dinosaur fossils were first discovered, these creatures have fascinated scientists and laypeople alike. In the academic world, their remains provide important clues into the prehistoric world; in popular culture, dinosaurs have inspired blockbuster hits, such as Jurassic Park and King Kong.

Now, a research team headed by Professor Hagit Affek at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Institute of Earth Sciences has unlocked a mystery that has stymied researchers for decades: How did dinosaurs regulate their body temperatures? Were they warm-blooded or cold-blooded?

Affek's study, published today in *Science Advances*, relies on a novel method to measure historical temperatures. Called clumped isotope geochemistry, this method analyzes chemical bonds among heavy isotopes in calcium carbonate minerals—the main ingredient in egg shells. This allows scientists to calculate both the temperature at which the minerals formed and the body temperature of the mother that laid the egg.

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Dinosaur nesting site in Alberta, Canada; Troodon dinosaur eggs; Hadrosaur eggshell cross-section.

Credit: Darla Zelenitsky

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Hebrew University Prof. Hagit Affek.

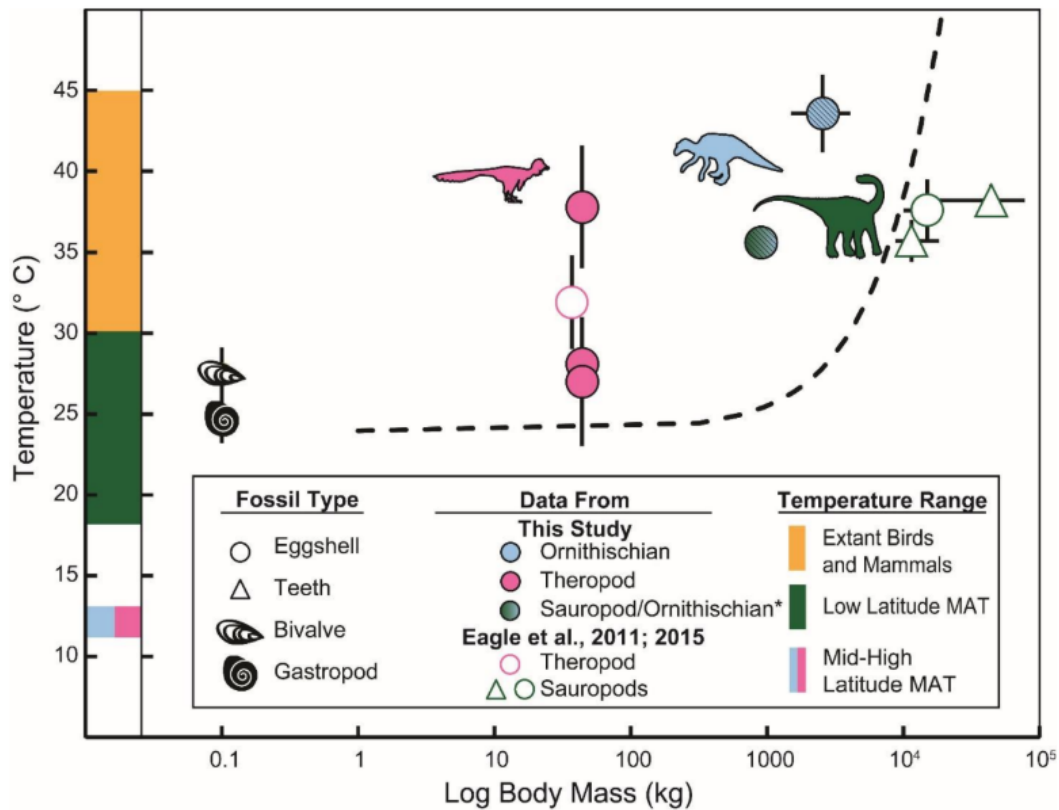
Credit: Hebrew University

Affek and her team applied this method to fossilized eggs from three distinct dinosaur species along the evolutionary path from reptile to bird and found that their body temperature ranged from 35-40 degrees Celsius. However, this bit of information still did not answer the question as to whether dinosaurs were endothermic or exothermic, meaning, did they generate their own body heat or get warm from the sun and their environment?

“The global climate during the dinosaur era was significantly warmer than it is today. For this reason, measuring only the body temperatures of dinosaurs who lived near the equator wouldn’t tell us whether they were endo- or exothermic because their body temperature may simply have been a cold-blooded response to the hot climates they lived in,” shared Affek.

To address this issue, her team focused on dinosaurs that lived in high latitudes like Alberta, Canada—far enough north to ensure that their warm body temperatures were the result of an internal, metabolic warming process rather than merely reflecting the climate around them.

To verify their hypothesis, Affek and her team needed to determine the environmental temperature in Alberta back when dinosaurs lived. They accomplished this by applying their isotope method to mollusk shells that lived in Alberta alongside the dinosaurs. Since mollusks are cold-blooded creatures, they reflect the ambient climate of the time. The mollusks’ body temperature measured 26°C and showed that the dinosaurs living in Alberta were endothermic; otherwise, they could not have maintained a body temperature of 35-40°C.



Comparison of Dinosaur body temperatures.

Credit: Robin Dawson

As dinosaurs evolved, they moved from lizard-like (cold-blooded) characteristics to avian (warm-blooded) ones. “We believe that this transformation happened very early on in dinosaurs’ evolution since the *Mayasaura* eggs—a lizard-like dinosaur species that we tested—were already able to self-regulate their body temperature, just like their warm-blooded, bird-like cousins, the *Torrdons*,” explained Affek.

The fact that both of these species, located at opposite ends of the dinosaur evolutionary tree, had body temperatures higher than those of their environment means that both had the ability to warm themselves.

Either way, Mother of Dragons, if your baby is showing a fever of 41 degrees, it’s time to call the doctor. ■

Eggshell geochemistry reveals ancestral metabolic thermal regulation in Dinosauria.

**Robin R. Dawson,
Daniel J. Field,
Pincelli, M. Hull,
Darla K. Zelenitsky,
François Therrien, and
Hagit P. Affek.**
DOI: [10.1126/sciadv.aax9361](https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aax9361).

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Hebrew University Researchers Develop COVID-19 Diagnostic Test that is 10x Faster

Test Uses Materials Commonly Found in Labs



Credit: Dr. Ayelet Rahat, Hebrew University

Media outlets around the world have reported a shortage of COVID-19 testing materials. This shortage slows down the rate of testing and increases the rate of infection, as thousands of undiagnosed patients walk around, unknowingly infecting healthy and at-risk populations. Now, Professor Nir Friedman at Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HU)'s Institute of Life Sciences and School of Engineering and Computer Science and Professor Naomi Habib at HU's Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Brain Science have developed a faster and cheaper way to test of COVID-19 using materials commonly found in diagnostic labs.

Testing for COVID-19 currently involves extracting RNA molecules from a patient's swab

sample to see whether they contain viral RNA that confirms the presence of the COVID-19 virus. The new method developed by Friedman and Habib can do the same thing, only faster. As Habib shared, "The virus detection protocol we developed is four-to-ten times faster than the current protocol. It's based on magnetic beads and works both robotically and manually. The robotic protocol has already been tested at Hadassah Hospital and is now fully operational."

Another advantage to this new testing method is its low price. The test relies on materials that are readily available and easy to manufacture locally, making it significantly cheaper than imported kits. Magnetic beads are the only item in the protocol



Nir Friedman

Credit: Yael Friedman



Naomi Habib

Credit: Moshe Wolkowitz

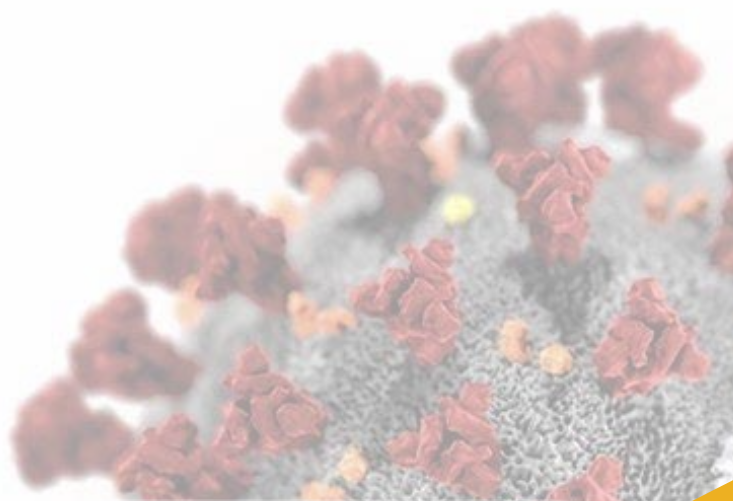
that still needs to be imported from overseas. However, these beads can be recycled and used again and again. As Friedman explained, “our COVID-19 test significantly reduces labs’ dependence on external factors. To date, we’ve tested hundreds of clinical samples from Hadassah Hospital and our results were identical to those found by the kits currently being used.”

The researchers’ next step is to develop a method that would allow for tens of thousands of samples to be tested simultaneously instead of the current rate of thousands of tests. This feat would be based on genomic sequencing and the results, so far, are promising. “We’re encouraged by preliminary—and positive indications—that this method will work,” added Friedman.

To complete their tests, Habib and Friedman have teamed up with 15 researchers and lab students from the University. “It’s very moving to see a large group of researchers so dedicated to finding a solution to our current crisis, one that will get

Israel—and hopefully the rest of the world—back to normal,” said Habib. That, indeed, would be good news for everyone.

The research team includes Dr. Ayelet Rahat Dr. Masha Adam, Alon Chapelbaum, Dr. Ronen Sadeh and Dr. Agnes Kloschandler, along with two robotics experts, Dr. Uri Shabi and Dr. Moshe Cohen. The study was funded by the Caesarea Foundation. ■



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Hebrew University President “The Secret of Science in Israel...”

Professor ASHER COHEN:

“THE SECRET OF SCIENCE IN ISRAEL IS THAT WE ARE NOT AFRAID OF FAILURE, FOR US IT MEANS TO MOVE FORWARD IN STEPS - FROM THE LABORATORY TO UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT AND FROM THERE TO THE WORLD.”



This is how the trajectory of Professor Asher Cohen can be summarized.

Asher Cohen graduated from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Economics followed by a master's degree in psychology. He completed his doctoral and postdoctoral studies at the University of Oregon in the United States and served as a tenured professor at the University of Indiana before returning to the Department of Psychology at the Hebrew University in the early 1990s, to research neurosciences.

From 2008 to 2012 he was the rector of the University and is now President - a position that takes him around the world to establish links with other academic institutions.

He was recently in Buenos Aires to participate in a symposium on the brain at the Cultural Centre of Science and spoke with Clarín newspaper. (Argentina's main tabloid newspaper).

- How do you choose the topics of scientific research in your university?

- We seek to always be at the forefront of the main scientific topics, whatever they may be. For example, nanotechnology. We didn't have it 30 years ago, and it wasn't so promising until we developed it. Quantum physics is another example.

- And in your case, what did you investigate?

- I worked in cognitive neuroscience, which is a type of human brain research. In my case, I analysed the way we see. We see with the eyes, but in reality in the brain there is a command system that tells the eyes where to see. We call this visual attention. You think you see everything around you, but you actually see maybe one or two things at a given time.

So, a good question is how do we select interesting things? And the answer is that we have a command system inside the brain that tells the eyes what they have to do. I did it by observing people's behaviours

and examining the activity in their brains.

- Transcended research on artificial foods. What does it consist of?

- We are moving towards a world in which we can no longer access all those cows that you have here in Argentina. It is a problem for the future. So we are looking for alternatives that are similar so that people can go from consuming real cattle to that other, artificial thing. We do it with vegetables. Plants are much more than what we imagine. Fungi, for example, can be used to cover containers, instead of nylon. What we are looking for is to use food for better nutrition and to replace other materials that we don't really need.

- But do you think that in the future we will consume this type of food?

- Not exclusively, but more than now.

- There also advances in Big Data. What is that about?

- There are many types of investigations. Big Data refers to the thousands and billions of bits and documents that we handle today. But there are many things that are done with this that are not interesting. We want it to be useful and that's why we focus on computational medicine. I will give you an example. When faced with a serious illness, such as diabetes, cancer, etc., five people who go to the doctor take the same medication but have different results. With Big Data you can take patterns from people and find the medicine that is right for each one.

- People here often wonder how Israel, being such a small country, has become so important in science and research ... what is the secret?

- If you have an answer, please tell me.

- But you are the interviewee ...

- Well, it's a combination of things. There is something in Israeli culture, which is curiosity, boldness or the nerve to do things, which is sometimes excessive. It is also that we are not afraid to fail. In Israel, if you fail at something,

that's fine, it means you move on to the next step.

- Can living in war also influence this culture?

- Well, the last time I observed Uganda, I didn't see great scientists coming out of the war in which they are living. That is why I say it is a combination of things. Perhaps the fact that we live in an area with many dangers adds up to something, but it is only one factor, that we wish we could remove.

- What advice would you give to a young scientist?

- The advice I gave myself when I was young, that was to pursue my dream. Insist and know that we have these dreams and try to achieve them - fulfil the dreams.

- And what happens when you have dreams but lack resources?

- Resources are extremely important. We don't have enough either and I think if we had more, we would be at the same level as Harvard and Yale. We are still up there, but on the second level because their budget is about seven times larger than ours. That allows them to acquire things that we cannot.

- And what would you say to politicians?

- In Israel, in the early 2000s there was a period when funding of science was reduced. Fortunately, it was quickly understood that having outstanding research universities and researchers is fundamental to many things - to the culture of the country, and also for the economy. The thing that separates the US from the rest of the world is really the amount of research universities they have. They have inventions and they bring in good people from outside. This is a huge factor for their economy. So, I think all politicians should realize this and need to change their priorities. From my experience, when I talk to politicians in Israel, they don't always listen; I hope that other politicians do listen. ■

Original article in Spanish by Ricardo Braginski.

Source: Clarín, Argentina

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