

# RGU & YGU

Spring 2025



אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev





# Conte



Cover photo: Cohort IV of the Halutz Initiative for Global Leadership at Sde Boker  
Back cover: Ben-Gurion Visionary Way, overlooking the Zin Valley, 54th Board of Governors Meeting, 2024

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Dear Friends,

As I reflect on my first six years as President of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, I am struck by the extraordinary journey we have undertaken together. No one could have predicted the global, and local, upheaval we have faced. Yet BGU has not only endured but thrived.

And you have been a major contribution to our resilience.

Your steadfast support, your words of encouragement in difficult times, and your unwavering belief in BGU's mission have been a source of strength for me personally, and for our entire community. Since October 7, your heartfelt responses to my letters have reminded us that we are not alone. Through webinars, events, and gatherings — whether in Beer-Sheva or on visits to your communities in Canada, France, the UK, South Africa, Switzerland, Belgium, or the USA — you have demonstrated an unshakable commitment to BGU and to Israel.

Many of you have traveled to Israel, standing with us on the ground, offering not just words but action. Your generosity has enabled us to care for our students, faculty, and the wider Negev community during these difficult times. Through the success of our emergency campaign, you have ensured that we could support reservists, aid those impacted by trauma, and contribute meaningfully to Israel's national effort. And even as we navigate the present crisis, you continue to look ahead, remaining

dedicated to our broader Way Forward global development campaign.

But the work is far from over.

As we rebuild and reimagine the future of the Negev, BGU will continue to rely on you — our global family — to help us not just recover but grow stronger than ever. The long-imagined North Campus is taking shape, with its first two academic buildings now towering over the construction site, along with the Student Village and the Infrastructure Building. Plans are underway for so much more in the North Campus, as well as in our Sde Boker and Eilat campuses. Yet there is still much to be done. Through your involvement and contributions, you are helping us drive forward groundbreaking research, world-class education, and transformative innovation.

Together, we are generating the future of Israel and the world.

Thank you for being an integral part of BGU's journey.

With deep appreciation,

**Prof. Daniel Chamovitz**  
President





Dear Friends,

We meet at a painful and pivotal moment in Israel's history and in Jewish history. In addition, countries throughout the world face dramatic and threatening challenges. It's a time of uncertainty, suffering, and stress.

Yet in the face of tremendous adversity, BGU's Global Development Committee is expanding and meeting important milestones. From the beginning, the Committee had two interconnected goals: to successfully meet BGU's financial goals and to expand the number of people and countries connected to BGU. We must accomplish these goals in order to guarantee that Ben-Gurion University will be on the leading edge of education in Israel and the world, and that Ben-Gurion University will be a major force in the redevelopment of the Negev.

On behalf of all the Global Development team, a big thank-you to all of you who have joined us in person at the Board of Governors meeting. The fact that you're here in person shows the depth of your commitment to BGU. Israelis continue to be remarkably resilient and strong, but knowing there is a large global community, standing with them, re-enforces the idea that the outcome will be positive.

One of the first programs the Global Development Committee created in 2022 was the Halutz program, sister program to A4BGU's Zin Fellows, which brings a group of about 15 people a year for a week-long exploration of Ben-Gurion University, the Negev, and Israel. This year the very successful Halutz IV

trip was held from March 31–April 6. The new ideas, enthusiasm, and perspectives of the participants energized all of us. If you know someone who might be interested in applying for Halutz V, please contact your national associates organization.

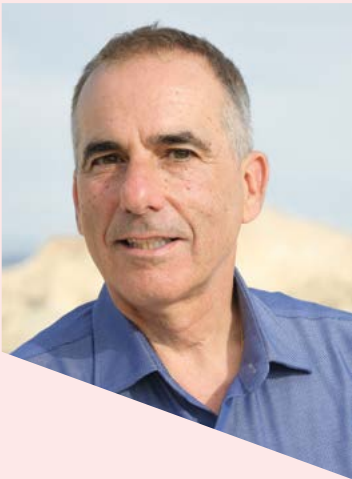
With the help of our sixty plus Halutz graduates, BGU has strengthened and expanded connections with countries which have supported BGU for decades and has led to the creation of new chapters. Thanks to the efforts of the Global Development team and the generosity of donors of all sizes throughout the world, after four and a half years, our Way Forward campaign is ahead of pace in meeting our ambitious goal of \$1 billion.

Several Halutz graduates are here at the BOG meetings. Please introduce yourself to them and let yourself be inspired.

The focus of the Global Development Committee is on the future. We believe that the more we expand our global community, the better we will understand the challenges Israel faces, and the more likely we are to discover universal values and new ways forward. We welcome you to join us in any capacity that works for you.

With thanks,

**Toni Young,**  
Chair, Global Development Committee



Dear Friends,

There are moments when words feel inadequate — this is one of them. Over the past year, as Israel faced immense challenges, you — our friends and supporters in 14 countries — have stood by us in ways both humbling and inspiring.

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev has always turned challenges into action, and this year that mission has felt more urgent than ever. More than 6,500 students — over 30% of our student body — left their studies to serve in the IDF reserves, putting their futures on hold to defend their country. Because of your generosity they returned to a university ready to support them. That is the power of community.

I have been privileged to visit several of your countries, meeting those who have embraced BGU's mission. I have attended galas, spoken at parlor meetings, and introduced you to students whose personal stories are truly heroic. Time and again, I have witnessed your unwavering dedication — not just in giving, but in bringing others into this circle of support. Every conversation, event, and introduction you make is an act of faith in what BGU represents: a belief that Israel's future depends on the young minds we educate today.

That future is already taking shape. In our labs, students are working on breakthroughs that may one day cure diseases once thought incurable. On our campuses, young entrepreneurs are developing ideas that will change industries and lives. In our classrooms, future leaders are preparing to guide

Israel toward renewal and resilience. Our Zin and Halutz leadership programs are also cultivating the next generation of BGU supporters, many following in their families' footsteps.

Your support has been even more meaningful as Jewish communities worldwide face rising antisemitism. At a time when turning inward might have seemed easier, you reached outward. The bond between Israel and Jewish communities abroad has never been more vital, and BGU has served as a bridge connecting us all.

A well-known Talmudic phrase states, "*Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh*" — all of Israel are responsible for one another. This past year, we have embodied this principle in profound ways. Jewish tradition also teaches us that even in darkness, we must seek the first glimmer of light. You have been that light for us, reminding our students and faculty that they are not alone — that people across the world believe in them and their success.

As we reach the midpoint in our decade-long Way Forward Campaign, we are ahead of pace but will not rest. With your continued support, we will exceed our ambitious \$1 billion goal — because the work we are doing matters now more than ever.

With appreciation and warmest regards,

**Jeff Kaye**

Vice President for Public Affairs and Resource Development







# With a Little Help from Our Friends

Philanthropy is more than just giving — it is an expression of shared values, a belief in a better future, and a testament to the power of human connections. At BGU, every donation, no matter its size, embodies a story of generosity, vision, and commitment. It is through the kindness of our friends and supporters that BGU continues to thrive, transforming lives, strengthening communities, and advancing groundbreaking research. Each act of giving, whether large or small, financial or otherwise, drives the momentum that sustains and propels the University forward.

These are just a few of the human stories behind the numbers, the individuals who exemplify the spirit of giving and the profound impact of their contributions.

↑ At the Major Shay Shamriz Memorial Scholarship ceremony: (L-R) Shay's sisters Reut & Smadar, parents Daniella & Shaul, Lior Pyernik, Ori Kerbis, Elad Kaplan — soldiers from Shay's unit, Amir, Chen and Elad — scholarship recipients, with Moshe Pyernik, Lior's father. Photo: Emil Tevosov



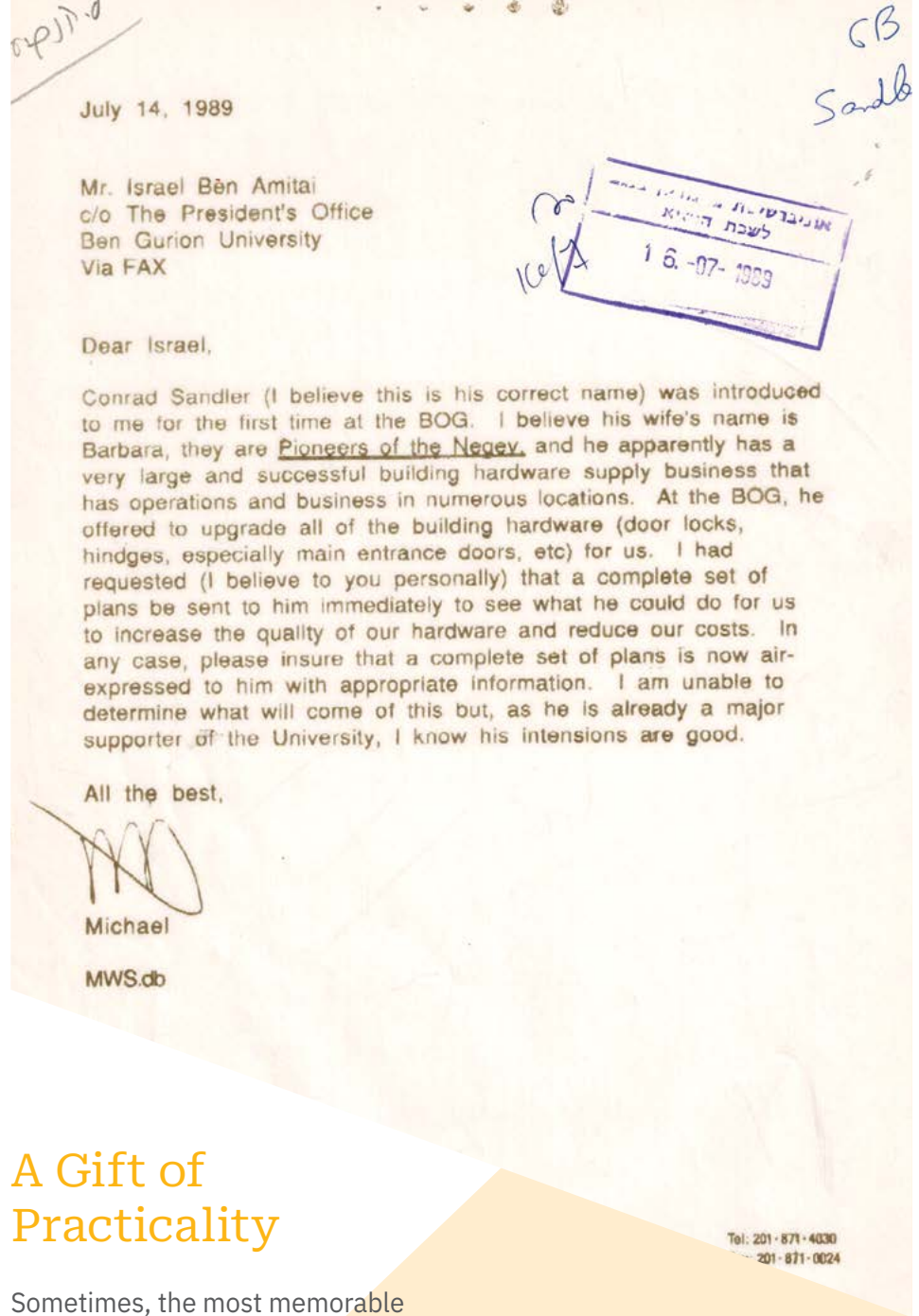
## Honoring a Hero's Memory

On December 26, 2023, Major Shay Shamriz, a 26-year-old company commander in the Nahal Brigade, fell in battle in northern Gaza. In response to his tragic death, Shay's soldiers took the initiative to establish a scholarship in his honor, rallying fellow soldiers to contribute to the fund.

The Shamriz family connection to BGU is deeply personal — Shay's parents, Daniella and Shaul, met while studying at BGU. His sister, Smadar, graduated last year, and no doubt Shay himself would have become a BGU student after completing his IDF service.

Shay's friends travelled in North America and told people his story. The response was overwhelming. What began as small donations — \$18, \$20, \$100 — grew into a lasting tribute. Last year, the fund provided four scholarships for BGU students who had served in the Nahal Brigade. At the moving scholarship ceremony, Shay's family gathered with friends, fellow soldiers and scholarship recipients to celebrate his life.

This year, the Major Shay Shamriz Memorial Scholarship Fund will sponsor five scholarships, ensuring that his legacy lives on and continues to inspire future generations.



## A Gift of Practicality

Sometimes, the most memorable contributions are not monetary, but practical.

This story goes back almost four decades, when finances were very tight. Israel and the University were going through a financial crisis in the late eighties, and this offer made sense. We recently discovered a letter addressed and faxed to Yisrael Ben Amitai, the University's first Director General, which mentioned Conrad Sandler, who sadly passed away earlier this year. The fax, dated 1989, from Michael Sonnenfeldt, noted that Conrad Sandler, Director of the

Ben-Gurion University Foundation in the UK, BOG member, and a leader in the architectural ironmongery industry, while attending the Board of Governors meeting, had offered to upgrade all of the building hardware (door locks, hinges, etc.). The letter reminded Ben Amitai to send him a complete set of building plans. At the time of writing, the final outcome of this offer remains unknown. Yet this act serves as a testament to the many ways individuals have supported, and continue to support BGU beyond traditional donations.

## A Legacy Illuminated

For Keila and Mila Abadi, philanthropy is a family tradition. Their grandmother, Navah Rubenzadeh, President of the Argentinian Friends of BGU, instilled in them a deep commitment to giving. When the Argentinian Friends held an event titled The Free World Against Terrorism, including a Hanukkah candle lighting ceremony, the girls saw an opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way.

“Since I was young, I have been aware of my grandmother’s philanthropic work and her deep connection with Israel,” Keila shared. “I want to follow in her

footsteps and, with the same dedication and effort, do my part to help in any way I can. So, together with my mother and sister, we decided to make candles as a symbol of hope and peace.”

Keila and Mila sold the candles at the event to raise funds, demonstrating the reward and power of acts of giving.

## A Teacher’s Gratitude

For Michael Singer, a dedicated American schoolteacher, his visit to BGU was a transformative experience — one that left such an impression that he felt compelled to give back. Though, as a teacher, he was unable to give on the scale of previous generations, he wanted to demonstrate his support.

**I needed to thank you for the work you and the University do, and the hospitality you showed me that day I visited. That day was one of the most important days of my life.**

“Jeff, I’m glad you were notified,” he wrote in response to a thank-you letter from the University. “As a school teacher, I am not in the position of making the kinds of donations my parents and grandparents have made. However, I needed to thank you for the work you and the University do, and the hospitality you showed me that day I visited. That day was one of the most important days of my life. Thank you and your team again. I pray for you guys.”

His modest words serve as a reminder that giving is about the intent, the appreciation, and the belief in something greater than oneself.



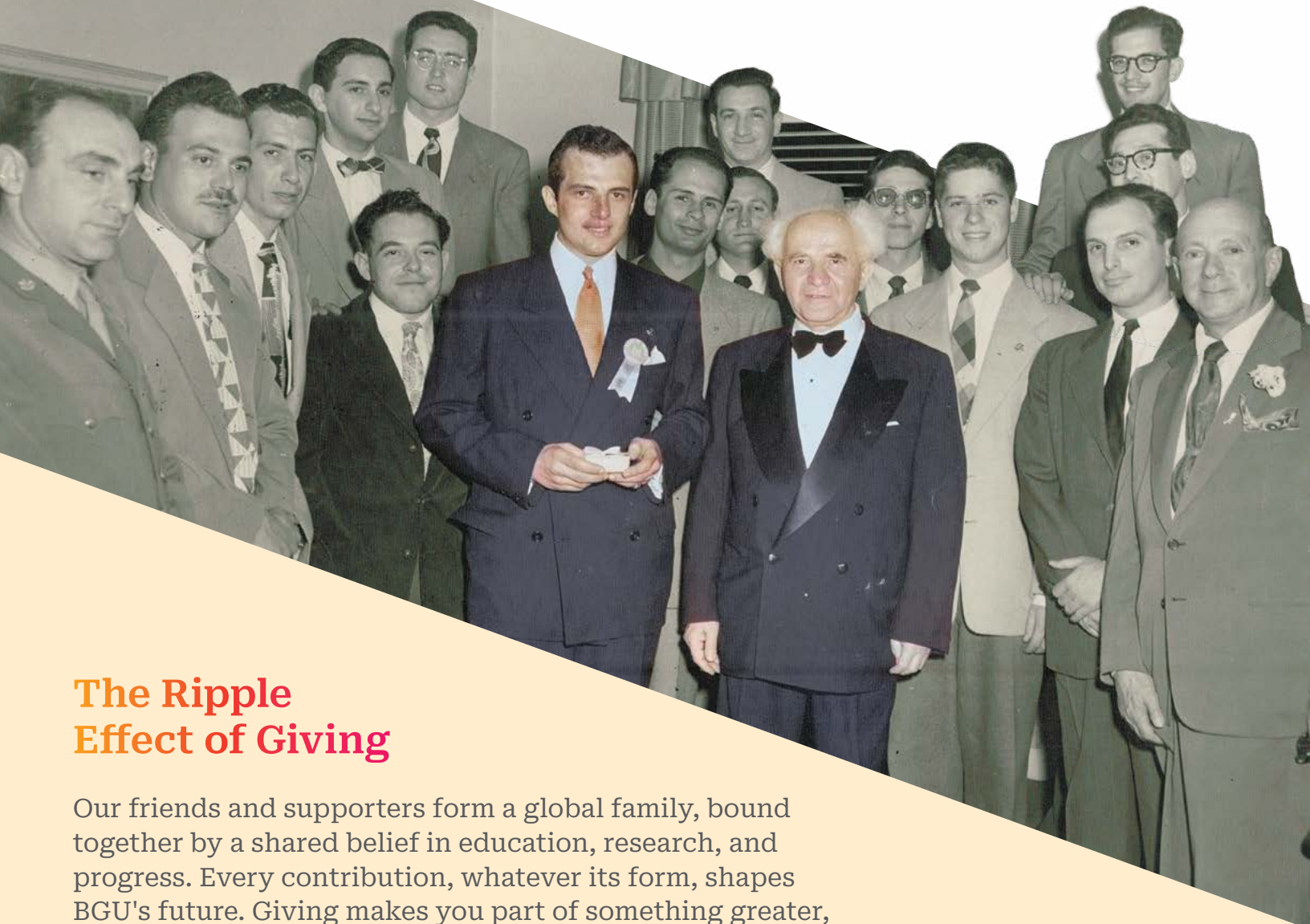
Mila and Keila Abadi selling candles



## Lifelong Ties to BGU

Longtime donor Fred Levinson, now 97, and his wife Marlene, from San Francisco, have been staunch supporters of BGU for over 40 years. In 1948, Fred volunteered to serve in the Haganah, even spending time with David Ben-Gurion. Pictured

here with fellow volunteers and Ben-Gurion, Fred later served on the national board of Americans for BGU. His generosity endures, as he continues to donate a fixed sum annually, demonstrating his unwavering commitment to the University.



## The Ripple Effect of Giving

Our friends and supporters form a global family, bound together by a shared belief in education, research, and progress. Every contribution, whatever its form, shapes BGU's future. Giving makes you part of something greater, fueling knowledge, innovation, and opportunity in the Negev, Israel, and beyond. And, as these stories prove, sometimes all it takes is a little help from our friends.

# Leading the Way Forward

For over 50 years, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev has embodied the pioneering spirit of Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion. More than an academic institution, BGU is the beating heart of the Negev — fueling innovation, driving economic growth, and shaping the leaders of tomorrow. Through the *Way Forward*, an ambitious ten-year \$1 billion global campaign, the University is strengthening its role as a global research powerhouse, ensuring a thriving, resilient future for the Negev, Israel, and the world.

## A Historic Turning Point

The events of October 7, 2023, reshaped Israel's landscape, leaving communities across the Negev facing unprecedented challenges. At this pivotal moment, BGU stands as a beacon of resilience and community responsibility, driving research and innovation with unwavering determination. By expanding infrastructure, enhancing student access, and advancing research excellence, the Way Forward campaign will transform BGU into a world-leading hub of research

and innovation, while restoring vitality to the Negev. As President Prof. Daniel Chamovitz stated, "In the wake of the October 7 tragedy, BGU's dual calling — to foster cutting-edge research and build the Negev — is clearer than ever."

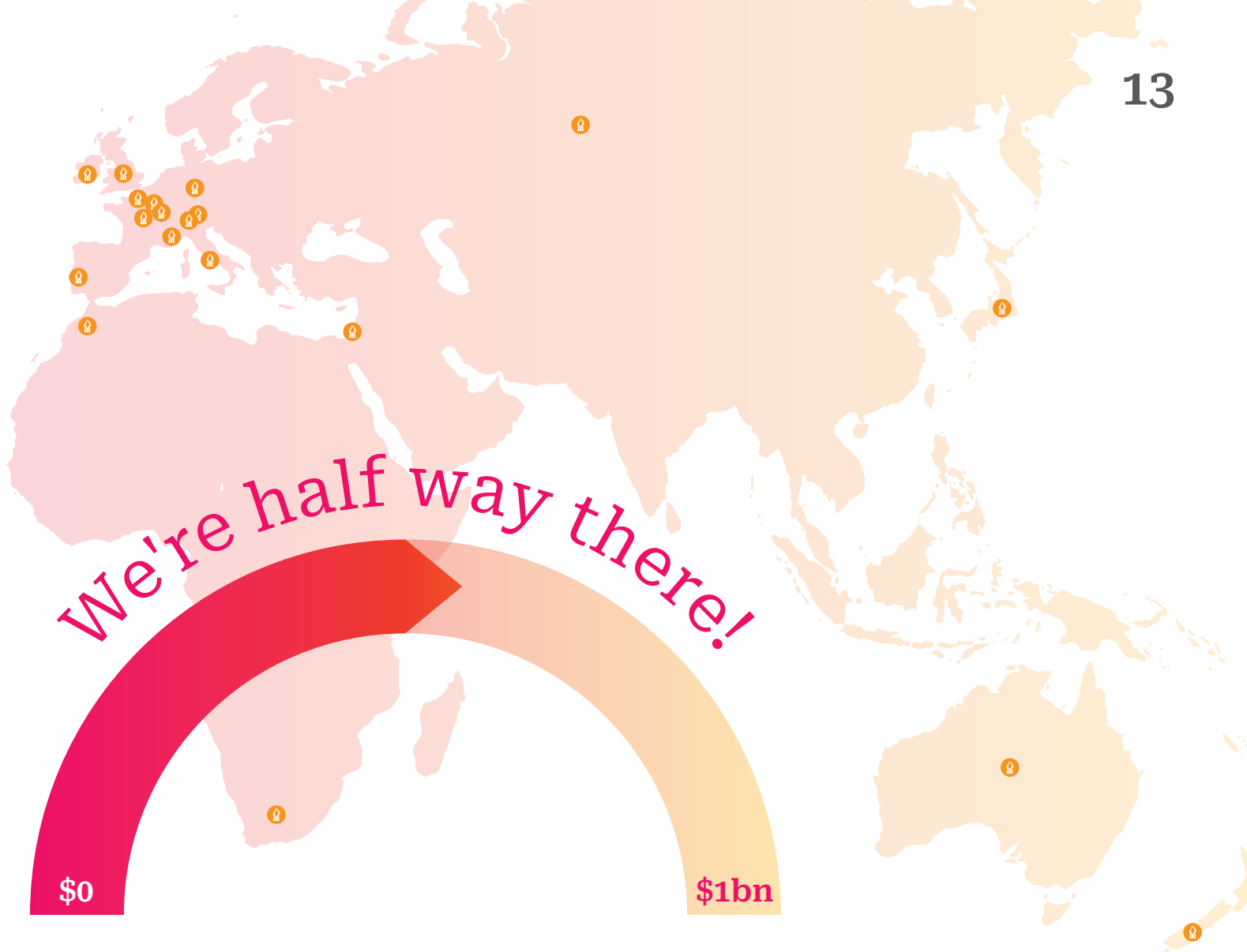
## A Global Effort, A United Community

The Way Forward is more than just a fundraising effort — it is a call to unite BGU's global community. Everyone's contribution is meaningful. Whether through a major philanthropic gift, a modest

contribution, involvement in our associate organizations, or advocacy, each act of support strengthens the University's mission and impact. This campaign is not only about securing financial resources; it is about deepening connections, forging new friendships, and reinforcing the ties that bind BGU supporters around the world. The Way Forward is about fundraising and friend-raising, ensuring that every individual who believes in the future of the Negev can play a meaningful role in shaping it.







### Fueling Innovation and Discovery

BGU has long been at the forefront of groundbreaking research — from cybersecurity to climate resilience and biomedical advances. The campaign will fund cutting-edge laboratories, interdisciplinary research centers, and cross-sector collaborations to develop transformative solutions for regional and global challenges.

### Empowering Students, Strengthening Communities

Students are the Negev's future. The Way Forward campaign will expand scholarships and enable a comprehensive framework of

support that includes mental health services and financial aid, ensuring every talented student can thrive — regardless of background. By providing state-of-the-art facilities and academic opportunities, BGU is cultivating the next generation of innovators, entrepreneurs, and community leaders who will shape Israel's tomorrow.

### A Call to Action

David Ben-Gurion once declared, "The future of Israel lies in the Negev." That future depends on us. Your support for the Way Forward campaign is more than an investment in BGU — it is an

**The Way Forward is more than just a fundraising effort — it is a call to unite BGU's global community.**

investment in resilience, progress, and hope. Together, we can forge a path forward that transforms challenges into opportunities and ensures that the Negev continues to flourish.

# Join us. Lead the Way Forward.

# Notable Contrib

The Medical School for International Health, a prestigious four-year MD program that transitioned two years ago to serve Israeli students, has been named the **Sagol Medical School for International Health** in honor of philanthropist **Sami Sagol**.

Made possible by a generous pledge, the **Cyndi and Max Mintzberg Cultural and Conference Centre** will move forward as a key development on the North Campus, allowing the University to host large international conventions and provide a cultural venue for the Negev.

**Keren Kayemeth Le'Israel - Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF)** were among the first to offer support and assistance to students affected by the October 7 massacre and the subsequent war. Under the leadership of Chief Scientist **Doron Markel**, KKL has provided meaningful support scholarships to 347 university students residing in Gaza border communities.

**Delta Galil Industries Ltd.**, led by Delta Galil's Director of Corporate Responsibility and BGU board member, **Hila Ephrati Halper**, is funding a three-year program at Ben-Gurion University to support students from the Ethiopian community, across all degree levels. The program aims to increase the number of students from the Ethiopian community who choose to pursue higher education at BGU, strengthening their integration into academia.

Inspired by their visit to the Eilat and Marcus Family campuses, **Sami and Nissim Noufi**, owners of a leading construction and infrastructure company, pledged a generous donation for the renovation of the main building lobby on the Eilat Campus.

The **Carmela and Yosef Klein Foundation** has established the Klein Institute for Nuclear Science and Engineering, furthering research and innovation in this critical field.

The **Estate of Manya Igel** and **Anne Rotman de Picciotto** have donated funds for Prof. Itzik Mizrahi's Microbiome Isolation Device.

**Dr. Harry Sieratzki** established the The Batya and Yehezkel Sieratzki z"l Scholarship of Excellence that supports four MSc scholarships per year at Sde Boker.

The **Eric Samson-Bertie Lubner Scholarship**, established to honor Bertie Lubner z"l, provides financial support for South African students pursuing a four-year MD degree at the Sagol Medical School for International Health. It continues Eric Samson z"l's legacy of philanthropy and education.





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The **Mauerberger Foundation** donated to the Female Bedouin Fellowship Program, empowering Bedouin women with scholarships that enable them to focus on their studies.

The **Asociación Argentina de Amigos de la Universidad Ben-Gurión del Neuquén**, led by President Nava Rubenzadeh, has dedicated all 2024 donations from Argentina to the Duet Center. This initiative has inspired donors across Latin America, including significant contributions from **Marcos Metta** (Mexico), and **Marcelo Steuer** (Brazil) who has committed to supporting the Center in the coming years.

**Fonds Social Juif Unifié (FSJU)**, through FSJU Israel, has provided funding for the Lilach Kipnis z"l Endowment Fund in the Spitzer Dept. of Social Work and the Combat Reservists Student Emergency Fund, aiding students with the highest number of days in reserve duty in the current academic year.

**Hyposwiss Private Bank Geneva SA** and the **Stephan Lawi family** have supported the University's emergency campaign, assisting students affected by the war.

**Toni Young** has pledged a generous lead gift to the Way Forward campaign, which will establish the new Young Family School for the Human Experience.

**Gary DeBode** and **Archie Gottesman**, along with **Melinda Goldrich**, have partnered to fund and name a new dormitory building on BGU's Eilat Campus. As the campus currently has only one dormitory, this significant gift will enable the campus to grow and expand its reach.

**John Woolf** has committed to a very generous bequest for BGU.

**Prof. Vladimir Zelman, MD, PhD** has included a generous bequest in his estate plans, which will benefit BGU's Zelman Center for Brain Science Research. Prof. Zelman was recently awarded an honorary doctorate for his groundbreaking work in anesthesiology and neurosurgical techniques.



# Notable Contributions

**Craig and Ernie Simon and their family** have pledged a multi-year gift to support scholarships, fellowships, and the Ben-Gurion Annual Fund, providing support where it is needed most.

**Crown Family Philanthropies** gave a generous gift to support the President's Distinguished Faculty Recruitment Program, which enables President Prof. Daniel Chamovitz to identify rising academic stars and provide the generous recruitment packages required to bring them to BGU.

**Alfred Munzer** and **Joel Wind** have included BGU in their estate plans with an unrestricted bequest.

**Sheryl Gold** has included a generous bequest to BGU in her will, which will create a scholarship endowment fund for Bedouin students.

**The Eileen and Ira Ingerman Family Foundation** has given a donation to establish the Ingerman Family Innovation Hub at Yazamut 360°, BGU's Entrepreneurship Center. Their generous gift supports the Yazamut 360° program and names the unique learning lab in perpetuity.

**The Nathan, Anne, Kim and Julian Geller Foundation** has contributed several meaningful gifts to support stipends for students who have served 250 or more days as reservists since October 7. They have also given generous gifts to support scholarships for undergraduate students in financial need who are currently serving or have served in the IDF.

**Lew and Ina Heafitz** have contributed a generous gift to establish the Lewis and Ina Heafitz Neurotech Collaboration, a collaborative course with Brown University in Providence, RI, which introduces students to neurotechnology and provides a cultural and academic exchange opportunity for American and Israeli students.

**Ernest Baden z"l** left a generous bequest to BGU, which will establish the Dr. Ernest Baden Head and Neck Pathology Chair within BGU's Faculty of Health Sciences.

A generous donation from a **Goren Family Foundation** will support "Alex's Patio" at the Marcus Family Campus, honoring Alex Goren, z"l — former Board of Governors Chair, Americans for BGU President, and 2015 Honorary Doctorate recipient. His son, **Andrea Goren**, now chairs the Americans for BGU board, continuing the family's legacy of leadership and support.

**Dan and Gina Waldman**, together with **Michael Waldman**, established the Waldman Family Scholarship Fund to support students who transferred from or are alumni of Sapir College.

**David Magerman** is supporting the development of integrated undergraduate degree programs for English-speaking students who have made Aliyah. The initiative aims to attract students to complete full degrees at BGU, encouraging long-term residence and community-building in Israel.



### **Coby and Riki Dayan**

commissioned a sculpture for the Marcus Family Campus as a tribute to those lost on October 7.

**John Bernhard** of Seattle, WA and **Laurie Bernhard** of Los Angeles, CA have established the **Paul Stanford Bernhard Dog Training Park** on BGU's Marcus Family Campus in loving memory of their brother. In partnership with the Israel Guide Dog Center, BGU students foster and train service puppies, continuing a cycle of care and compassion.

**Harry Lebovic** announced a transformative gift at the December 2024 Way Forward Gala hosted by BGU Canada Toronto. His generous donation will advance innovation, empower students and faculty, and inspire Torontonians to support Ben-Gurion University's mission to drive research, education, and meaningful societal change.

The Estate of the late **Victor David z"l** of Montreal made a legacy gift to Ben-Gurion University as part of the **Ruth and Victor David Fund**. Victor, a Holocaust survivor, first created a scholarship in honor of his late wife Ruth. The legacy gift will support Psychological Services in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of October 7 and ongoing scholarships.

### **Laurence and Elie Ohayon**

have generously established scholarships for MA students in the Spitzer Department of Social Work in memory of their father, Abraham Ben David Ohayon z"l. These scholarships aim to support the development of future leaders in social work.

A gift was made by **Chava and Paul McCurry** of Vancouver, Canada to empower young mothers doing their PhD to complete their degrees. For Chava and Paul, supporting Israeli women amidst the current crisis is a high priority and they were inspired by the invitation to help from Prof. Yael Hashiloni Dolev, President's Advisor for Gender Equity, to meet this urgent and critical need.

In August 2024, **BGU Canada** in British Columbia and Alberta launched the Heartbeat of Education project in partnership with Magen David Adom, aiming to support the academic journey of Israeli paramedics at BGU's Department of Emergency Medicine. By providing these everyday heroes with access to a Bachelor of Emergency Medicine degree at BGU, the initiative gives back to those who selflessly serve on the front lines. This project is poised to elevate the standard of emergency medical care throughout Israel.

**Yuri Kanner** and **Ilya Lifshits** have continued their support of BGU's Aliyah to Academia program, established three years ago.

Inspired by groundbreaking work at Prof. Natalie Elia's lab at the National Institute for Biotechnology in the Negev, Vancouverite and former BGU Canada board member **Nechemja Cohen** has funded a three-year graduate fellowship to support advanced research in cutting-edge biotechnology.

### **Montreal's Federation CJA**

continues to play a vital role in strengthening resilience at BGU and beyond with generous emergency grants through the **Jewish Federations of Canada - UIA**. Their support has enabled critical mental health interventions at the Duet Center, empowered innovative applied research at the AI for Social Welfare Lab, and advanced simulation-based learning projects at the School of Public Health that foster coexistence in Israeli society. They also contributed to placemaking studies that enrich the Negev and its communities, funded a comprehensive Medical Simulation Station, and helped establish the **Lior Tkach Memorial Scholarships Fund**.

# A Legacy of Impact

## The Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation

As Ben-Gurion University's Faculty of Health Sciences and medical school celebrate their 50th anniversary, we proudly acknowledge the extraordinary contributions of the **Goldman family of New York**. Their unwavering support has played a pivotal role in the school's continued success, as well as in other key university initiatives beyond the health sciences. We extend our deepest gratitude to these exceptional friends.

**The Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation** was established by Irving Goldman,



Irving and Joyce Goldman, 1961

a WWII veteran and successful real estate entrepreneur, to honor his late wife and uphold his commitment to philanthropy.

Through the **Goldman Family Foundation**, Joyce and Irving's children — **Lloyd Goldman** (current Chair of BGU's Board of Governors), **Katja Goldman-Sonnenfeldt**, and **Dorian Goldman** (Chair of the Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation) — have ensured the ongoing development and excellence of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. The Goldmans' engagement with BGU began in 1983, with a modest contribution toward scholarships. Within a little over a decade the Foundation had become a major donor, actively shaping the medical school's future. In 2014, the Goldman name was inscribed upon the President's Pillars, in recognition of their transformative generosity.

### A Revolutionary Approach to Medical Education

BGU's medical school, which welcomed its first class in 1974,

was originally known as the "Beer-Sheva Experiment." Its mission was groundbreaking: to revolutionize medical education with innovative admission procedures, and a pedagogy that emphasized a holistic approach, treating patients as embedded in their specific social and cultural contexts. Many aspects of this pioneering model have since been adopted across Israel and around the world — making the experiment a resounding success.

By the mid-1990s, the Faculty of Health Sciences was in increasing demand, training a growing number of health professionals in a range of disciplines to serve both the Negev and the nation at large. However, this growth coincided with major government budget cuts and the enactment of the National Health Insurance Law, requiring the Faculty to reassess its future direction. This period of uncertainty made it clear that strategic planning was essential to ensure the continued success of BGU's medical school and the healthcare system it supported.



Naming Ceremony for the Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School, 1996 (L-R): Michael Sonnenfeldt, Dorian Goldman, Former President of the State of Israel Shimon Peres, Katja Goldman-Sonnenfeldt, Avishai Braverman (then President of BGU), and Lloyd Goldman

### **The Partnership That Transformed a Medical School**

At this point, the Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation stepped in with a substantial donation to the medical school, but sought a comprehensive development plan to ensure the most effective use of this support. This led to the creation of an advisory committee comprised of Goldman family representatives, alongside prominent scientists, clinicians and educators. The committee was to serve not only as a guiding body but also as a formal review board, the International Academic Review Committee (IARC).

In June 1996, the medical school was named the Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School, officially marking the beginning

of a unique and deeply engaged relationship. Through the annual IARC meetings in Beer-Sheva, the family has remained actively involved in the school's strategic planning, academic programming, and long-term vision.

"The meetings of the IARC provide a dynamic and effective platform for discussing key strategies that promote medical education and research. The Committee's insights are invaluable as we advance our mission to provide outstanding medical education for future generations," says Prof. Reli HersHKovitz, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences.

Every few years, the IARC strategic task force meets to define broader goals and identify areas where intervention is most needed. This

ensures that BGU's medical school continues to educate top-tier health professionals and deliver quality healthcare to the Negev's residents.

Prof. HersHKovitz speaks for the entire BGU community in saying, "We are deeply grateful for the contributions, unwavering leadership and support of the Goldman Family, whose commitment is instrumental to our Faculty's ongoing success."

The enduring partnership between Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and the Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation is a testament to the power of visionary philanthropy, shaping the future of healthcare education and strengthening Negev communities for generations to come.



# For the Negev, From the World



News from Our  
Friends Worldwide





Zin Cohort  
VII. Photo:  
A4BGU Staff

## US APR 2024

### Zin VII Gathering in Philadelphia

The Americans for Ben-Gurion University Zin Fellows Leadership Program cultivates leaders in their 40s–50s committed to advancing David Ben-Gurion’s vision for creating a world-class institution of education and research in the Negev. Zin Cohort VII launched in

Philadelphia, exploring Zionism, Jewish resilience, and the impact of October 7, led by Prof. Arie Saposnik and Talia Gorodess, Kreitman Fellow and PhD candidate, both from the Ben-Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism.

## CA APR 2024

### Screenings of the movie *Irena’s Vow* in Winnipeg, Vancouver, Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto

BGU Canada hosted sold-out screenings of *Irena’s Vow* — the powerful story of a Polish nurse who hid Jews during the Holocaust — in five cities: Winnipeg, Vancouver, Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto. Each event brought together local supporters for an evening of meaningful storytelling and engagement, offering a compelling way to connect with Ben-Gurion University of the Negev’s mission and values.





# bgu italia



Andrea Jarach (President, BGU Italia) on the left, with friends protesting in Italy for the release of the October 7 hostages

AR

MAY 2024

## Screening of *Ben-Gurion: Epilogue* at MALBA Museum Auditorium in Buenos Aires

The film features a unique interview with Israel's former prime minister, conducted by an English journalist and preserved through a fortuitous recovery of separate audio and video recordings.



L-R: Ariel Berliner (AAAUBG volunteer); Hernán Najenson (president of the Association of Jewish Lawyers of Argentina and Halutz Cohort II); Nava Rubenzadeh (AAAUBG president); Eyal Sela (Israeli ambassador to Argentina); Emilio Perina Konstantinovskiy (director of the National General Archive); Guillermo Yanco (vice president of the Buenos Aires Holocaust Museum)

US

MAY 2024

## Remarkable Resilience 4, A Virtual Event

In light of the ongoing war, A4BGU's annual virtual event was renamed *Remarkable Resilience: Leading the Way Forward*. Hosted by Israeli news anchor Natasha Raquel Kirtchuk, the program highlighted BGU's leadership in Israel's recovery. With over 2,000 registrants, it became A4BGU's largest fundraiser, affirming BGU's vital role in rebuilding the South and strengthening the resilience of the entire nation.



Host Natasha Kirtchuk (right) conducts an interview during Remarkable Resilience filming

ORIENTINOS





L-R: Jeff Kaye, Gadi Bahat, Dana Gavish-Fridman (Founder & CEO Yazamut 360° Entrepreneurship Center), Andrea Freedman (CEO, BGU Canada) Peggi Cohen Rabinovitch, Mickael Kanfi and Simon Bensimon.  
Photo: Howard Kay



**JUN 2024**

#### **MME 2024**

The Montreal Main Event in June 2024 profiled the incredible work done by BGU's Yazamut 360° Entrepreneurship Center and launched the Quebec-Israel Universities Entrepreneurship Fund to encourage joint programming between Quebec universities and BGU.



**JUN 2024**

#### **Remarkable Resilience and the Way Forward, Detroit**

A4BGU hosted *Remarkable Resilience and the Way Forward* events during BGU Vice President Jeff Kaye's visit to Metro Detroit, joined by student reservist Alon Jacobs. Through powerful personal and community stories, they shared the ongoing impact of October 7

and emphasized BGU's vital role as the Negev's anchor institution and a driving force for Israel's future. Events were held at the following venues: Jewish Federation Detroit, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, Temple Israel, West Bloomfield, Michigan, and Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, Southfield, Michigan.



**JUL 2024**

#### **Remarkable Resilience and the Way Forward, Aspen**

A4BGU carried *Remarkable Resilience and the Way Forward* into summer with a standout event at Aspen's Chabad JCC, featuring Jeff Kaye, Doug Seserman, and BGU student reservists Eliyahu Green and Shaked Ben Shushan.



Jeff Kaye addresses the Aspen crowd with BGU student reservists Eliyahu Green and Shaked Ben Shushan for Remarkable Resilience.  
Photo: Jillie Spear



L-R: Prof. Natalie Zeytuni, Richard Levy, Janis Levine.  
Photo: Simon Bensimon

US

JUL 2024

### A Milestone Celebration, Philadelphia

Mid-Atlantic Chairs Connie and Sam Katz hosted a luncheon honoring Sylvia A. Brodsky's 100th birthday. Dr. Alexandra Klein Rafaeli, Director of BGU's Sylvia A. Brodsky Psychological Walk-In Service, paid tribute to Sylvia's lasting impact. A dedicated supporter since 2006, Sylvia has helped provide vital mental health care to BGU students, faculty, and the Negev community through her visionary philanthropy.

CA

JUL 2024

**Montreal Annual Summer Brunch**  
BGU Canada's Montreal Chapter launched its first Annual Summer Brunch Get-Together in July 2024, featuring guest speaker Prof. Natalie Zeytuni — BGU alumna and Assistant Professor in McGill's Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology. Donors and supporters gathered at the summer home of Diane and Jack Altman in the Laurentian Mountains to celebrate BGU's achievements and growing impact.



100th Celebration with Sylvia A. Brodsky (L-R): A4BGU CEO Doug Seserman, Mid-Atlantic Co-Chair Connie Katz, Sylvia A. Brodsky, Dr. Alexandra Klein Rafaeli, A4BGU Director of Development Claire Winick, Mid-Atlantic Co-Chair Sam Katz. Photo: A4BGU Staff



Adam Korbin, regional president, addresses the audience at Congregation Beth Israel in Vancouver. Photo: David Berson

US

JUL 2024

### Healing Israel Post-October 7, Delaware

A4BGU's Delaware Chapter hosted an intimate gathering at the home of Drs. Jennifer and Gregg Goldstein in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, focused on Israel's post-October 7 mental health crisis. Dr. Alexandra Klein Rafaeli, Director of BGU's Sylvia A. Brodsky Psychological Walk-in Service and manager of Iron Swords psychological initiatives, shared how BGU is providing urgent psychological support and training social workers for the region and nationwide.



CA

AUG 2024

### Heartbeat of Education

BGU Canada's Winnipeg and Ottawa chapters joined forces to support the Heartbeat of Education campaign, launched in Vancouver in partnership with Canadian Magen David Adom. This unique initiative is raising funds to provide Israeli paramedics with access to a bachelor's degree in emergency medical services at BGU. The campaign was inspired in part by Dr. Oren Wacht, head of BGU's Department of Emergency Medicine and a volunteer MDA paramedic.

CA

AUG 2024

### Dr. Dorit Efrat Treister workshop in Vancouver

In Vancouver, 35 new friends of BGU Canada took part in a powerful workshop led by Dr. Dorit Efrat Treister, addressing how Jewish communities abroad can cope with stress, anxiety, and depression in the wake of October 7. Drawing from research in BGU's Department of Management, Dr. Treister offered practical strategies and emotional validation, fostering a meaningful dialogue. The evening concluded with a barbecue hosted by Regional President Adam Korbin.



Dr. Dorit Efrat Treister speaking at the home of Adam Korbin in Vancouver. Photo: David Berson





AUG 2024

# south african associates

## South African Tour

During a visit to South Africa, BGU President Prof. Daniel Chamovitz traveled to both Johannesburg and Cape Town, engaging with local communities and institutions. In Johannesburg, he spoke at an event hosted by the Zionist Federation at Sydenham Highlands North Hebrew Congregation, gave an interview on SA Jewish Radio Chai, and visited Wits University. In Cape Town, he participated in a panel discussion event and visited the Herzlia school campus, connecting with school heads and board members.



Panel discussion in Cape Town (L-R): Heather Blumenthal (Executive Director - SAZF Cape Council), Liv Sperber, Prof. Daniel Chamovitz, Prof. Adam Medelsohn (Director, Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies), Ruby Kapalushnik (SAUJS Executive - South African Union Jewish Students), David Cohen (Chair, SAZF Cape Council). Photo: Guy Lerner Photography

Zionist Federation Event (L-R): Daniel Yakcobi (Halutz cohort III and SAICC - South Africa Israel Chamber of Commerce), Benji Shulman (SAZF - South African Zionist Federation), Stacey Dembo (SAZF), President Prof. Daniel Chamovitz, Liv Sperber (BGU Director of Global Development - English Speakers), Rabbi Yehuda Stern (Sydenham Synagogue), Klaas Mokgomole (SAZF), Kenneth Mokgatlhe (BGU African Studies graduate)



Marc Lubner (President BGU SA) and Kenneth Mokgatlhe (BGU MA graduate in African Studies 2023), prominent pro-Israel journalist in South Africa. Photo: Benji Shulman



FR

SEP 2024

Pictures from the annual  
conference of BGU France:

Conversation between Danièle  
Bidermann (President, BGU France)  
and philosopher Raphaël Enthoven



SEP 2024

Anne de Picciotto and Stanislas  
Rotman hosted President Prof. Daniel  
Chamovitz and Prof. Itzik Mizrahi,  
opening their home for an intimate  
dinner with friends showcasing BGU.  
Photo: Max Pashley

UK



BGU  
FRANCE

BGU President  
Prof. Daniel  
Chamovitz  
addresses the  
conference



CA

SEP 2024

### Prof. Ilan Troen in Canada

A crowd of 150 gathered for a powerful evening and book launch with Prof. Ilan Troen, held in partnership with the Azrieli Institute for Israel Studies at Concordia University. Prof. Troen shared his personal loss following the October 7 Hamas attacks and presented his latest book, *Israel/Palestine in World Religions: Whose Promised Land?*



L-R: Richard Vineberg, Simon Bensimon, Janice Levine, Andrea Freedman, Consul General of Israel Paul Hirschson, Gail Palevsky, Prof. Ilan Troen, Peggi Cohen Rabinovitch, Prof. Csaba Nikolenyi. Photo: Howard Kay





BGU President Prof. Daniel Chamovitz, Shira Chamovitz, Katja Goldman, Michael Sonnenfeldt, Tamar Zandberg (Director of BGU's National Institute for Climate and Environmental Policy), Lloyd Goldman, Victoria Goldman. Photo: Preston Rescigno



SEP 2024

### One Day: A4BGU NY Annual Benefit

Over 300 guests filled the Ziegfeld Ballroom to honor outgoing A4BGU Board Chair Gary DeBode and enjoy a special performance by Matisyahu. The evening featured tributes and a festive dinner.



Archie Gottesman, Gary and Ella DeBode. Photo: Preston Rescigno



SEP 2024

### Annual Meeting, NYC

Board members gathered in New York City for A4BGU's Annual Meeting, a three-day event that began with the NY Benefit and continued with meaningful learning, discussion, and planning. Highlights included faculty talks by Professors Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, Galit Katarivas Levy, and Tamar Zandberg. BGU President Prof. Daniel Chamovitz, Rector Prof. Chaim Hames, and VP Jeff Kaye joined as leadership set urgent post-October 7 goals for the University and the Negev.



Prof. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal (VP for Global Engagement) addresses A4BGU annual meeting. Photo: A4BGU Staff





#### OCT 2024

A parlor meeting at the home of Raymond Nasser, who recently participated in Halutz cohort IV, and has already become actively involved in our initiatives. The participants were Jewish businesspeople and educators from the São Paulo community, Brazil, aiming to learn about and develop connections with BGU



Nava Rubenzadeh, left, President of the Association of Argentinian Friends of BGU with former Uruguayan President Julio Maria Sanguinetti, 2024 Ben-Gurion Peace Award honoree. Photo: Iton Gadol

AR

OCT 2024

#### Presentation of Argentinian Friends' Ben-Gurion Peace Award 2024 to Former President of Uruguay Dr. Julio Maria Sanguinetti

The award ceremony took place in the Golden Hall of Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, attended by ambassadors from Israel, the United States, India, Uruguay, as well as national, city, and community authorities. Recognition was also given to distinguished figures in the fields of science, society, politics, and journalism.

CH

OCT 2024

#### Commemoration for October 7 in Front of the United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

The Swiss Friends of Ben Gurion University took part in an October 7 commemorative event organized by a coalition of associations outside the United Nations headquarters in Geneva. Drawing approximately 1,000 attendees, the gathering called for the immediate release of hostages. During the event, Lionel Halpérin addressed the crowd, highlighting BGU's wartime efforts and stressing the urgent need to secure the hostages' freedom.



Lionel Halpérin, President, Swiss Friends of BGU, addressing the crowd in front of the UN, in Geneva, Switzerland. Photo: Comité Ha7

## SA NOV 2024

### South African Water Research

Prof. Noam Weisbrod, Director of BGU's Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research, visited South Africa in November, strengthening ties in the field of water research. In Johannesburg, he met with experts at Wits University and addressed professionals at an Israel Chamber of Commerce event. He later presented to water specialists in Cape Town at Stellenbosch University.



L-R: Thabo Mahlobo (Halutz Cohort III), Nthabiseng Mahlobo, and Prof. Noam Weisbrod at an event in Johannesburg. Photo: Godfrey Morabe

## CH NOV 2024

### Jewelry Sale for BGU in Geneva

A special jewelry sale featured pieces from the private collection of renowned artist Abram Sandomir. Fifteen percent of the sales proceeds were donated to support BGU.

L-R: BGU President Prof. Daniel Chamovitz, Fred Waks, Linda Waks, Shimmy Wenner, Tamara Fine, Gary Fine, and Max Weinberg. Photo: Liora Kogan



## CA NOV 2024

### A Star-Studded Weekend in Toronto

Ben-Gurion University Canada Toronto Chapter hosted a memorable weekend of music and philanthropy, led by event chairs Fred and Linda Waks, and Gary and Tamara Fine. Highlights included a private dinner with E-Street drummer Max Weinberg, a Bruce Springsteen concert, and remarks from BGU President Prof. Daniel Chamovitz. Proceeds support wellness and recovery programs at BGU and throughout the Negev.





NOV 2024

### Frontline Conversations with Dr. Daniel Elbo Arama

BGU's Lt. Col. Daniel Elbo Arama, PhD, was the featured speaker at events in California, Denver, and Dallas. Under the theme *Frontline Conversations: Resilience Amidst Tragedy*, he shared his harrowing October 7 experience rescuing lives during the Hamas attacks. His courage and humanity moved audiences deeply, earning standing ovations at every stop. Events were held at Santa Barbara Israel Teach-In, Santa Barbara, California; Hebrew Educational Alliance, Denver Colorado; and at a private home in Dallas, Texas.



NOV 2024

### Yadlin Conference Hall

Aaron Yadlin ז"ל, member of Kibbutz Hatzerim in the Negev, former Minister of Education, co-founder of Ben-Gurion University, and an active member of the University's Board of Governors, passed away in August 2022. Ben-Gurion University honored his memory by dedicating the Executive Committee meeting room in the Zlotowski Students Center and Administration Building in his name. Additionally, the University established a fund that awards a prize annually to outstanding researchers in the field of education policy, through the generous support of the members of Kibbutz Hatzerim.



Dr. Oren Wacht speaks in Las Vegas. Photo: A4BGU Staff



NOV 2024

### Emergency Medicine in Action: Healing the Negev Post-October 7 with Dr. Oren Wacht

A4BGU hosted multiple events featuring Dr. Oren Wacht, from the Department of Emergency Medicine Services, who shared battlefield insights and highlighted BGU's Field Family Medical Simulation Center as a hub for vital training. He also spoke about BGU's role in advancing tactical medicine. A special highlight was his appearance at Sinai Residences, honoring Rachel Javit, donor of the Rachel and Max Javit Medical Simulation & Classroom Building.

Dr. Wacht spoke at Jewish Nevada, Las Vegas; Chizuk Amuno Congregation, Baltimore; and two parlor meetings and Sinai Residences in South Florida.



Yadlin family members with President Prof. Daniel Chamovitz and Avi Nissenkorn, Chair, BGU Executive Committee. Photo: Dani Machlis





NOV 2024

### Bodleian Library Tour

Sandra and Raymond Dwek hosted a day in Oxford for the BGU UK Board of Trustees and recent Halutz participants, featuring a private tour of the Bodleian Library that showcased rare Jewish texts. Prof. Daniel Chamowitz later spoke at Oxford Brookes University.



L-R: Prof. Raymond Dwek, Hannah Yadgar, Geoffrey Berger, Ann Berger (Chair, BGU UK), Harold Paisner (Past Chair BGU UK), Louis James Zlotowski, Prof. Daniel Chamowitz, Liv Sperber, Simon Walton (Halutz Cohort II), Maya Orr (Halutz Cohort III), Laura Forster (Halutz Cohort III), Judith Paisner. Photo: Bodleian Library Staff

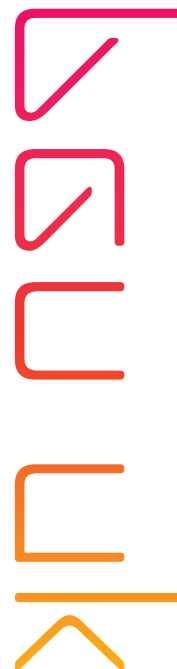


NOV 2024

### Tribute Brunch, Philadelphia

The Tribute Brunch remains a signature event for A4BGU's Philadelphia and Delaware Chapters. Held at Har Zion Temple, this year's event honored Robert Pincus (Delaware Chapter) and the BGU-Philadelphia Academic Bridge Board. Over 100 guests attended, with remarks by A4BGU CEO Doug Seserman and a keynote by U.S. Representative-

elect Sarah McBride. Delaware and Philadelphia-based A4BGU contributors of \$1,800 or greater attended a Kick-Off event in September, this time hosted by Sherrie Savett, Esq. with guest speaker BGU Professor Emeritus Fred Lazin. A Patron Party before the main event took place in October at a private home, with Doug Seserman as the featured speaker.



Tribute Brunch in Philadelphia. (L-R): Back row: Neil Hockstein, Carolyn Glazer-Hockstein, Doug Seserman, Claire Winick, Congresswoman Sarah McBride, Jay Leistner, Marcia Halpern, Gina Schoenberg, Josh Schoenberg. Front row: Connie Katz, Sam Katz, Rob Zipkin, Rich Harwood, Alton Sutnick, Bob Pincus, Sherrie Savett. Photo: Christopher John Brown

CA

NOV 2024

### Montreal Visit for Prof. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal

The Montreal Chapter hosted Prof. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, BGU Vice President for Global Engagement, at a reception with Paul Hirschson, Consul General of Israel.



L-R: Andrea Freedman, Paul Hirschson, Peggi Cohen Rabinovitch, Jack Altman, Prof. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal and Simon Bensimon. Photo: Howard Kay

US

DEC 2024

### Ben-Gurion Day in the USA, A Virtual Event

A4BGU's observance of Ben-Gurion Day continues to grow as a national engagement opportunity. This year's webinar, held December 8, featured a prerecorded presentation by Dr. Adi Portugies (Ben-Gurion Archive) and a live Q&A with Prof. Paula Kabalo (Ben-Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism)

and CEO Doug Seserman. Held in partnership with the Ben-Gurion Heritage Institute, the program honored David Ben-Gurion's legacy, connecting archival material to Israel's current challenges. A companion educational toolkit was shared with over 120 synagogues and schools nationwide. More than 1,200 people registered, and the webinar continues to draw views on A4BGU's YouTube channel.

US

DEC 2024

### Zin VII Gathering 2

The Zin VII cohort gathered in Scottsdale for a three-day educational and bonding experience in the Sonoran Desert — their second in-person session of the Zin Fellows Leadership Program. Professors Chaim Hames and Raz Jelinek led an in-depth exploration of BGU's mission, structure, and research strengths. A highlight was a visit to Arizona State University, focusing on global academic collaborations and the Fifth Wave university model. With over 100 alumni in 20 states and 23 cities, Zin graduates continue to serve in key A4BGU leadership roles nationwide.



Students at A4BGU Community Partner Congregation Habonim celebrate Ben-Gurion Day





DEC 2024

## Sold-out Event in London

Renowned historian Simon Sebag Montefiore and award winning writer and journalist, Lord Daniel Finkelstein spoke on the Middle East at a sold-out BGU UK event in London, drawing an audience of 350 guests.



L-R: Ann Berger (Chair BGU UK), Jeff Kaye (Vice President BGU), Simon Sebag Montefiore, Lord Daniel Finkelstein. Photo: Yakir Zur



DEC 2024

## From the Negev to the World: Advancing AI and Cyber Security, Los Angeles

*From the Negev to the World* marked A4BGU's first major Los Angeles event since before COVID, drawing nearly 200 attendees and strong community support. Held at Sinai Temple, the evening featured a keynote by BGU Prof. Yuval Elovici on AI and cybersecurity.

The evening began with an honorary doctorate ceremony

in which President Prof. Daniel Chamovitz and Rector Prof. Chaim Hames conferred the degree on Prof. Vladimir Zelman, Clinical Professor of Anesthesiology at The Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California, who was surrounded by numerous friends and colleagues.

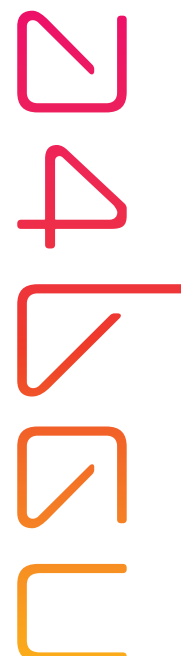
A4BGU CEO Doug Seserman and Event Chair Lisa Field shared remarks, spotlighting BGU's mission and post-October 7 resilience.



L-R: Simon Sebag Montefiore and Lord Daniel Finkelstein in conversation. Photo: Yakir Zur



BGU President Prof. Daniel Chamovitz and Rector Prof. Chaim Hames confer an honorary doctorate on Prof. Vladimir Zelman. Photo: Dan Balilty, Beet Films





DEC 2024

### Toronto Way Forward Gala

BGU Canada held the *Way Forward* Gala in Toronto — a landmark event featuring Ambassador Nikki Haley — to address the urgent mental health needs at Ben-Gurion University in the wake of the October 7 attacks. Proceeds supported psychological services for students, staff, faculty, and Negev residents, underscoring the community's need for emotional resilience and healing.



DEC 2024

### English Publication of *Sounds that Startle* by BGU Alumna Lilach Kipnis z"l

BGU Canada partnered with the family of Lilach Kipnis z"l and psychologist Rachel Goodman to publish an English translation of *Sounds that Startle*, a children's book by Lilach, a BGU graduate and social worker tragically killed on October 7. Over 3,000 copies were distributed across North



America, including at the 2024 Toronto gala. A special High Holidays campaign expanded access, honoring Lilach's legacy of resilience, healing, and support for children affected by trauma.



Reserve duty students joined Vice President Jeff Kaye (seated in the front row) and Dean of Students Prof. Orna Almog (center) for a group photo at the event.  
Photo: Dani Machlis



DEC 2024

### Scholarship Ceremony

Ben-Gurion University honored 181 students who served over 230 days in the reserves during the 2023–24 academic year with \$1,000 scholarships, recognizing their dedication to national security while pursuing their studies. Generously funded by supporters in France and the US, and in particular by the Nathan, Anne, Kim and Julian Geller Foundation, these awards supplement existing grants for reservists. At a ceremony led by Dean of Students Prof. Orna Almog, Vice President Jeff Kaye praised recipients for their sacrifices: "This is our way of showing how much we value your commitment to both academia and service," he emphasized.





Part of the Geneva Board with Chef Yotam Ottolenghi (third from right)

CH

JAN 2025

### Pre-Opening Lunch at Chef Yotam Ottolenghi's Geneva Restaurant

The Swiss association hosted an exclusive lunch for 30 of BGU's friends to celebrate the opening of Chef Yotam Ottolenghi's first restaurant outside London. The event was a delightful culinary experience, with exquisite food and a unique opportunity to meet the chef in person.

Jeff Kaye addresses Gruss scholarship recipients



IL

JAN 2025

### Gruss Scholarships Ceremony

At a special scholarship presentation event held at BGU, the Joseph S. & Caroline Gruss Life Monument Fund, led by Executive Director Naomi Fink-Gertner, honored students from

Israel's periphery who are the first in their families to pursue higher education. The Fund also annually brings soon-to-be-discharged IDF soldiers to campus to explore academic opportunities as they prepare for civilian life.

IL

JAN 2025

### Support for BGR Formula Team

The management of Ashot Ashkelon Industries Ltd., a leading manufacturer of propulsion systems and machine parts for jet engines and off-road vehicles, visited BGU and announced their support for the BGR Formula Team. The company has committed to providing financial assistance to help the team design and build their racing-car and compete in international competitions abroad.







## JAN 2025

Jeff Kaye (Vice President BGU), together with Arielle Herzog Hadida (BGU Representative to Switzerland), present a gift to Yves Brunschweig, the President of Keren Hayessod Suisse Romande during KH Switzerland's annual gala in Geneva, in gratitude for help received for BGU's emergency campaign



## FEB 2025

### 2025 Houston Annual Benefit

Now in its 21st year, the event, formerly known as *Kosher Extravaganza*, was rebranded as the 2025 Annual Houston Benefit and held at Congregation Beth Yeshurun. Prof. Dorit Nitzan and BGU medical student reservist Noa Shuker shared powerful stories of resilience amid Israel's ongoing war. A4BGU CEO Doug Seserman also addressed the audience at the dinner.



## JAN 2025

### Our Brains After October 7 with Prof. Alon Friedman, Newton Centre

Longtime A4BGU supporters Dr. Michael Ozer and Patricia Kalmans hosted an intimate parlor meeting in the Boston area, spotlighting BGU's neuroscience research. Prof. Alon Friedman led a compelling discussion on brain disorders and the impact of stress, connecting his research to post-October 7 trauma and resilience. Guests deeply valued his insights, shaped by years of studying stress in the Gaza border area.



L-R: A4BGU CEO Doug Seserman, Prof. Alon Friedman, A4BGU's Director of Development Eve Rubinstein, Sandy and Arlene Remz, Patricia Kalmans and Michael Ozer.  
Photo: Doug Seserman





L-R: Journalist Jonathan Sacerdoti, (Halutz Cohort I), Trevor Asserson, (Asserson Report Team), Dr. Haran Shani-Narkiss (researcher in computational neuroscience, Asserson Report Team), Dr. Oren Tsur (Dept. of Software and Information Systems Engineering, Asserson Report Team), Ann Berger (Chair BGU UK). Photo: Yakir Zur



MAR 2025

### GPT vs BBC — AI Event in London

In response to growing controversy surrounding the BBC's recent Gaza documentary and broader concerns about its coverage of Israel, the event featured insights from the team behind the groundbreaking Asserson Report on BBC bias. The discussion offered a multi-faceted exploration of the challenges and innovations in media analysis, highlighting the role of artificial intelligence in addressing bias and advancing objective journalism. The discussion was moderated by Jonathan Sacerdoti, journalist and broadcaster, and Halutz cohort I participant.



FEB 2025

### Resilience & Hope events in Florida

Prof. Dorit Nitzan and BGU medical student reservist Noa Shuker launched their US tour with *Resilience & Hope: The Way Forward in the Aftermath of October 7th* at the Miami Beach JCC and Temple Beth El in Boca Raton. They shared powerful personal and communal stories, highlighting the war's health and mental health impacts, and BGU's role in healing the Negev and beyond. Both events featured remarks from A4BGU CEO Doug Seserman and lay leaders.



L-R: Prof. Dorit Nitzan, A4BGU CEO Doug Seserman, student reservist Noa Shuker. Photo: Hagit Bibi



# Halutz and the Power of Connection







We recently welcomed the fourth cohort of BGU's Halutz Initiative for Global Leadership for an intensive and transformative visit, following an equally dynamic visit of the latest cohort of the Zin Fellows Leadership Program. This year, sixteen Halutz fellows from eleven countries arrived in Israel at a particularly critical moment. Their immersive experience provided them with a deeper understanding of BGU's importance to the Negev's recovery, as well as its groundbreaking research and innovation.

Since its inception, the Halutz Initiative has attracted participants

from diverse professional backgrounds — entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, and community leaders — united by a shared passion for Israel's future and BGU's pivotal role in shaping it. Each cohort returns home as ambassadors, sharing their insights and strengthening global engagement with Israel's innovative spirit. Their enthusiasm is contagious, often inspiring others to join the next generation of Halutz pioneers.

#### **Friends Bring Friends**

One of the most powerful aspects of the Halutz Initiative is how personal connections drive participation. Friends,

colleagues, and mentors who have experienced the program firsthand become its strongest advocates, creating an ever-expanding network, extending the program's impact across borders and generations.

Jonathan Sacerdoti, a member of the first Halutz cohort, exemplifies this ripple effect. After his transformative experience, he nominated individuals for the second and third cohorts, who in turn recommended others. "I was delighted to become acquainted with BGU's work and community through my participation," he shares. "It was equally gratifying to introduce others whom I

**“These efforts strengthen the essential connection between BGU and the wider world.”**

knew could serve as valuable ambassadors and friends of the University here in the UK. Knowing that BGU is investing in a forward-thinking initiative to cultivate a global network of leaders is truly reassuring. These efforts strengthen the essential connection between BGU and the wider world.”

One of his nominees, Maya Orr (UK Cohort III), recalls the profound impact of joining Halutz: “I am incredibly grateful. Since meeting the BGU team, I have discovered a deeper purpose within myself and found an entirely new community — one that I now consider family.”

Another of Jonathan’s nominees was Natalie Lancer (UK Cohort II), who in turn recommended Simon Walton (UK Cohort II); “After Natalie mentioned it to me, I looked up the agenda for the program and saw what a fantastic opportunity it was to visit the Negev in particular, learn more about BGU and meet new people from around the world” Simon added that he was “very happy

that she introduced me to the BGU community. I formed some wonderful connections during the trip, and I hope I can contribute in the future.”

Mirko Garasic (Italy Cohort III) recommended Halutz to Alessio Pellegrino (Italy Cohort IV). Alessio recalls, “Mirko told me about Halutz over a wonderful lunch in Rome. He warmly encouraged me to take part, telling me it was a top-level initiative and that the connections and network it helps build are truly life-changing. I felt deeply touched and honored that Mirko thought of me!” What ultimately persuaded Alessio? “...As someone who is not Jewish, Israel had always seemed a



Halutz fellows cohort IV explore groundbreaking research in diverse fields at BGU's Sde Boker campus





distant country, mostly known for its conflicts. But I was completely captivated and immediately fell in love with its energy, its beauty, and the unbreakable spirit of the Israeli people. How could I turn down such an incredible opportunity?" Mirko reflects on his recommendation: "Alessio didn't need much persuading – and I certainly appreciate his love for knowledge, science and research, so BGU was a natural fit! In an era of misinformation – it's rewarding to help spread the truth." This ongoing cycle of engagement is at the heart of the Halutz initiative. Each recommendation expands its reach, deepening the bonds between BGU and a global community committed to Israel's future.

## **Beyond the Experience: A Lifelong Commitment**

The Halutz Initiative extends far beyond the initial program — it sparks a lifelong connection. By immersing fellows in Israel's pioneering spirit, it equips them with the tools to drive change in their own communities. Many alumni have already assumed leadership roles in organizations supporting BGU and Israel. For example, Leora Hessen (South

Africa – Cohort III), Tanya Golan (South Africa – Cohort III), and Daniel Yakcobi (South Africa – Cohort III) are all expected to join the BGU Board of Governors this year. Similarly, Simon Walton (Cohort II), Maya Orr (Cohort III), and Laura Foster (Cohort III) are set to join the board of BGU UK this summer. Meanwhile, Vanina Berly (Argentina – Cohort III) and Hernan Najenson (Argentina – Cohort II) are deepening their involvement in Argentina, and Ronie Terni (Brazil – Cohort III) has been organizing activities even though there is not an official associates organization in Brazil.

These examples represent just a fraction of the dedicated Halutz alumni making an impact worldwide. Many others continue to play crucial roles in strengthening BGU's global network, ensuring its mission endures.

## **A Call to Future Pioneers**

For those who believe in Israel's potential to lead in sustainability, technology, and global problem-

solving, Halutz offers a unique gateway to action. With each new cohort, the network expands, fostering a new generation of leaders dedicated to Israel's future.

BGU remains steadfast in its commitment to nurturing these leaders. Through the Halutz Initiative, the University not only advances its academic and research mission, but also reinforces the vision that the Negev — and Israel — will continue to flourish through collaboration, innovation, and the enduring power of human connection.

For more information or to express interest in joining a future cohort of the Halutz Initiative for Global Leadership or Zin Fellows, please contact your local BGU association. Because in shaping the future, friends bring friends — and together, they change the world.

# Zin Fellows Program Bonds with the Negev

Each year, a select group of outstanding individuals embarks on a journey — not only across Israel's Negev desert, but into its future. The Zin Fellows Leadership Program, a flagship initiative of Americans for Ben-Gurion University, brings together rising Jewish community leaders from across the US for a deep, personal connection to Israel through the Negev.

Now in its seventh cohort, the program includes two domestic gatherings and a week-long seminar in Israel. Through direct engagement with Ben-Gurion University's faculty, students, and thought leaders, fellows explore the Negev's geography, history, and development challenges. Topics like climate resilience, diversity, innovation, and regional growth come to life in hands-on experiences and powerful conversations.

The latest seminar spanned from Tel Aviv to Eilat, with visits to Kibbutz Alumim, Hostage

Square in Tel Aviv, and the Nova Festival Memorial. Fellows toured cutting-edge labs in marine biology, biomedicine, and desert agriculture — seeing firsthand how BGU research is shaping Israel's future.

Numerous Zin graduates have taken on leadership roles, including Gary DeBode, immediate past board chair, and Andrea Goren, current board chair of Americans for Ben-Gurion University. Beyond the itinerary, the Zin program fosters lasting bonds: to Israel, to BGU, and to a shared vision. Graduates return home not only as ambassadors for the Negev, but as lifelong partners in BGU's mission — to transform the desert into a beacon of knowledge, resilience, and opportunity.



Cohort VII of the Zin Fellows Leadership Program in the Zin Fellows Garden in Memory of Ben Guefen, March 2025





# The Ben-Gurion Awards 2024

In a year marked by profound loss and extraordinary resilience, the 2024 Ben-Gurion Award ceremony honored individuals and organizations embodying David Ben-Gurion's vision, inspiring hope, recovery, and transformation.

One of the most moving stories celebrated was that of **Osnat Peri**, Chair of Kibbutz Nir Oz and a survivor of the October 7 massacre. Osnat's unwavering dedication to rebuilding her shattered community after losing her husband, Chaim Peri, in an

act of heroism, Osnat's relentless efforts to restore both Nir Oz's infrastructure and spirit have become a beacon of hope for the Negev and beyond.

Equally inspiring were the **Friends of Noa Argamani**, 12 BGU students who mobilized a global campaign advocating for Noa's release from Hamas captivity. For 246 days, they tirelessly engaged political, diplomatic, and media platforms. Noa was rescued in an Israeli military operation on June 8, 2024. Her emotional on-stage reunion

with her friends symbolized the triumph of hope, and the power of collective action.

The ceremony also recognized other outstanding individuals and organizations:

- **Dovi Frances**, a financial technology innovator, BGU alumnus, supporter and board of governors member.
- **ICA in Israel**, the veteran British organization dedicated to developing Israel's periphery through education, settlement, science, and research.



...even in the most challenging times, the values of resilience, innovation, and unity can light the path forward.



- **Orna Banai**, a leading Israeli actress and comedian.
- **Prof. Michal Shapira**, BGU professor emerita of life sciences.
- **Gideon Shani**, an artist, retired IDF officer and member of the BGU Executive Committee.
- Three Negev-based organizations dedicated to social justice and regional development: **AJEEC-NISPED** (Arab-Jewish Center for Empowerment, Equality, and Cooperation - Negev Institute for

Strategies of Peace and Economic Development; the **Ben-Gurion Heritage Institute**; and "**Asher Ruach Bo**" Pre-Military Academy for at-risk youth.

From students to scientists, philanthropists to community leaders, these honorees reflect Ben-Gurion's vision: to serve as "a beacon of science and knowledge

for the Negev, Israel, and the nations of the world." Their stories are a powerful reminder that even in the most challenging times, the values of resilience, innovation, and unity can light the path forward.





(L-R) Jeff Kaye with longtime Canadian BGU supporter Robert Rosen on a visit in April 2024

# Seen on

## Notable Visitors to BGU this Year



Jennifer Lang, representing her family's Consolidated Anti-Aging Foundation, visited in April 2024 and explored the latest advancements in Prof. Shelly Levy-Tzedek's Parkinson's research lab, a project proudly supported by the Foundation



Richard Vineberg on a visit to BGU from Canada in May 2024





Student leaders from the University of Cape Town engaged with Prof. Noam Weisbrod, Prof. Muhammad Bashouti, and students from BGU's African Studies program in June 2024

# Campus



Board of Governors member Joel Reinstein joined Al and Phylis Newman for their visit to BGU in May 2024



Donna and Jason Weiss visited the Marcus Family Campus in June 2024





Jacquie Bayley met with researchers and students of the Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work in June 2024



Longtime BGU supporter, Lenny Roth, visited in July 2024

Pictured here in July 2024, Yuri Kanner meets with students impacted by the events of October 7, who received scholarships from the Russian Jewish Congress and the Center for Jewish Impact







Stuart and Evie Steinberg honored their son Max z"l's legacy on the 10th anniversary of his passing by meeting recipients of the Max Steinberg Memorial Scholarship in July 2024

# Seen on Campus

Notable Visitors to  
BGU this Year



Alli Medof  
visited BGU  
from the US,  
in July 2024



Ernest Scheller, Jr. and his daughter Lisa laid the cornerstone for the Ernest Scheller, Jr. Gate of Innovation, the main entrance to the North Campus, at a ceremony in September 2024



Ofer Bavly and Maya Abarbanel, Director General and Deputy Director of Chicago JUF's Israel office, met with President Prof. Daniel Chamovitz and VP Jeff Kaye at the Marcus Family Campus in August 2024



Sami and Nissim Noufi, prominent figures in the Israeli construction industry, visited in October 2024 (Pictured here with Shira Kauffman, Donor & VIP Visitors Section, and Yamit Shannon-Mizrahi, Director, Global Partnership Development and Donor Relations)



Dr. Michael Rimmel, Head of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's Israel Office, led a delegation of German parliamentarians from the Christian Democratic Union to BGU in November 2024. This followed an earlier visit in October 2024



Sami Sagol visited BGU in November 2024. Pictured here (L-R): 1st from left: Oren Vanek, Managing Director, The Sagol Network, 4th from left: Prof. Alan Jotkowitz, Head of the Sagol Medical School for International Health, Prof. Daniel Chamovitz, Sami Sagol in the center wearing a cap, 3rd from right: Prof. Reli HersHKovitz, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences — along with medical school students



# Seen on Campus

## Notable Visitors to BGU this Year



Graciela and Analia Bukstein traveled from Argentina to visit BGU in December 2024. (Pictured here with Alejandro Grinberg, Director of Resource Development Latin America, Spain and Portugal)



Dr. Harry Sieratzki met with recipients of the Batya and Yehezkel Sieratzki z"l Scholarship of Excellence at Sde Boker in November 2024



A delegation from AthenaLab, a Chilean think tank led by Scott Ibañez, visited BGU in December 2024, to explore Israel's water sector, its path to sustainability, and Beer-Sheva's evolution into a cyber hub, through academic, military, and industry collaboration



Former BGU student, Jonathan Engler, visited in December 2024 with his wife Becky and their three children to explore academic opportunities at BGU, especially in mechanical engineering, honoring family ties to longtime supporter Margit Meissner, z"l



# Seen on Campus

## Notable Visitors to BGU this Year



Brenda Zlatin, Israel Representative, and Regan Ralph, new Executive Director of the Blaustein Philanthropic Group, visited the University in January 2025, focusing on introducing Regan to BGU's pioneering research at the Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research (BIDR) in Sde Boker



Michael Cape and Steve Shulman (pictured here with Jeff Kaye) visited from Montreal in February 2025

# In Memoriam

**We remember our friends  
and supporters who have  
passed away this year**

Yehiel Admoni  
Robert Badinter  
Avraham Ben-Naftali  
Paul Bronfman  
Dr. Joseph Ciechanover  
Nina Cohen  
Esther Coopersmith  
Victor David  
Robert Elman  
Jack Finkelstein  
Aaron Fleck  
Richard Freedman  
Lis Gaines  
Arlene Ginsburg  
Herbert Glaser  
Ellis Goodman  
Martin Katz  
Francine Hokin Katz  
Solomon (Solly) Krok

Minky Lipson  
Morty Lober  
Boris Gerson Melamed  
Sami Michael  
Philip Needleman  
Steven Rogers  
Conrad Sandler  
Roberta Scheller  
Caroline Simon  
Yaakov Turner  
Salomon Varsaux  
Elsa Weinberg  
Dr. Ruth Westheimer  
Stephen Winig  
Edith Zinn

May their  
memories be  
blessed



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# Save the Date



**The 56<sup>th</sup> Board of  
Governors Meeting  
May 10-14, 2026**