

Study In Israel

Analytic Mind

Israel's universities rank amongst the best in the world. High academic standards combine with access to excellent professors and independent study.

Star of David

University schedules follow Jewish holidays. No such thing as an exam on Rosh HaShana.

Laptop

For frequent stops in the ubiquitous cafes with free WiFi.

Books

Extensive library network, and much reading material in English.

Comfortable Shoes

Walking the campus and the city streets is easy and safe.



Imagine...

Imagine studying in a highly acclaimed academic institution where there are no classes or exams on Jewish holidays and everyone around you is in tune with preparing for the Seder or lighting Hanukah candles

Imagine choosing from a vast range of academic subjects or even studying in English, while waking up each morning in Israel....

Imagine a country that wants you to come and study so much that they will assist you with your university tuition.....

Imagine learning Hebrew well enough to study and to socialize and meeting your life partner from among thousands of Jewish students between the campus library bookshelves or while sitting on the grass in brilliant sunshine...

For thousands this has become reality. Over 150,000 students from all over the world have studied in Israel, nearly fifty South Africans joined last year. They study at one of Israel's eight Universities or numerous Academic Colleges, with many choosing Jerusalem's Hebrew University or the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya.

A recent arrival shared her thoughts:

"My name is Dafna Admony. I am a new immigrant from Johannesburg, South Africa, and studying for a Masters in Medical Sciences at Tel-Aviv University.

"I made my way to Israel in September 2007. My year here has been filled with both good and hard times, but it was all well worth it! I am now happily settled and have made a wonderful circle of friends. I work at the Sourasky Medical Centre in Tel Aviv, and am nearly fluent in Hebrew!! I was recently asked if I miss my home country. I responded: "Yes, and my family, but I could never live in South Africa anymore." Israel has a charm, it is magical. It is more than just a home to our nation. I advise all Jewish youth in South Africa to seriously consider Aliyah and make use of all organized youth tours to Israel. I am looking forward to my studies this year and to meeting more incredible people."

There are many ways of gaining an academic degree and many wonderful places around the world, but there is only one place where you can discover your Jewish roots while gaining professional qualification and building yourself a future!

Don't be daunted by the obstacles. Everything worthwhile has its challenges, but you grow so much in the process.

Whatever your field of interest, whether you just completed your Matric with university exemption, or an undergraduate degree, Israel and her institutions of higher education have a lot to offer you. It is a place you can truly call home. ❖

By Naomi Shmuel from the Israel Student Authority.

Where

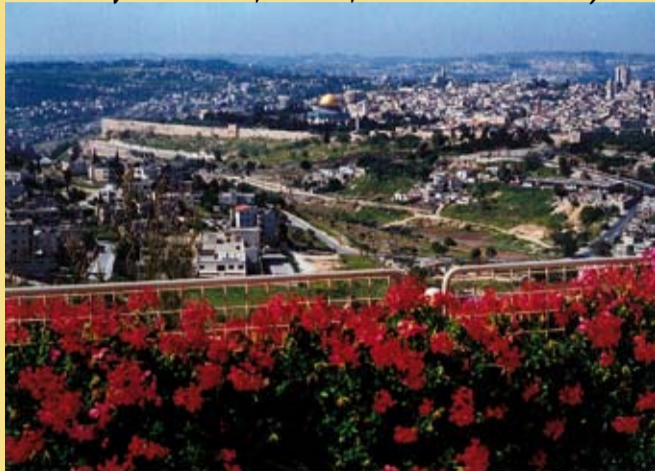
How

What

Financial
Assistance

Find Out Inside

View from Mt. Scopus Campus, Hebrew University



📖 The Israeli System of Higher Education

The Higher Education system offers a range of options including:

Academic Degrees:

- Universities
- Academic Colleges
- Higher Education and Academic Institutions
- Teachers Colleges
- Engineering Colleges

Diplomas/Certificates:

- Technical Colleges
- Art Institutes
- Schools for Health Professions

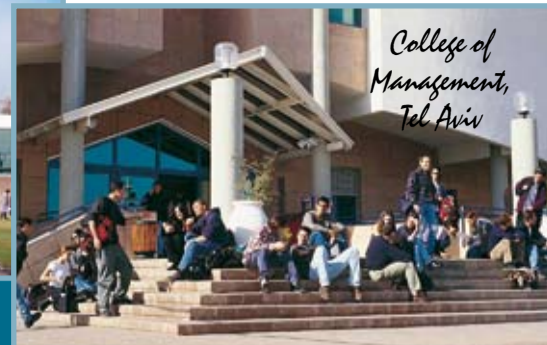
Important facts:

- Academic degrees from Universities and the other academic institutions are of equal value and are all recognized worldwide.
- All institutions require completions of Matric with Exemption.
- Most universities require holders of Matric with Exemption to complete *Mechina*, as part of the conditions of acceptance.
- There is a vast variety of study options in Israel – there is a place for everyone!!

This newspaper contains the experiences of student immigrants in Israel, along with facts and information compiled by the Academic Department of the Israel Student Authority.



Technion



College of Management, Tel Aviv

The Student Authority

The Student Authority is a partnership between the Jewish Agency and the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption. It helps immigrant students in Israel by providing tuition grants, social and cultural events, excursions, seminars, individual and group guidance, and counselling on academic issues.

For more details: naomis@moia.gov.il, (972) 2 621-4589; www.studentsolim.gov.il

For all academic options in Israel: www.meidaat.co.il

Israel Centre

The Israel Centre of South Africa is a crucial link between the local community and Israel. We provide assistance and information to individuals and families wishing to fulfil the dream of Aliyah. The Israel Centre also offers a wide range of Zionist and Jewish-identity programmes.

Johannesburg: (011) 645-2530; aliya@israelcentre.co.za

Cape Town: (021) 464-6700; shaliach@ctjc.co.za

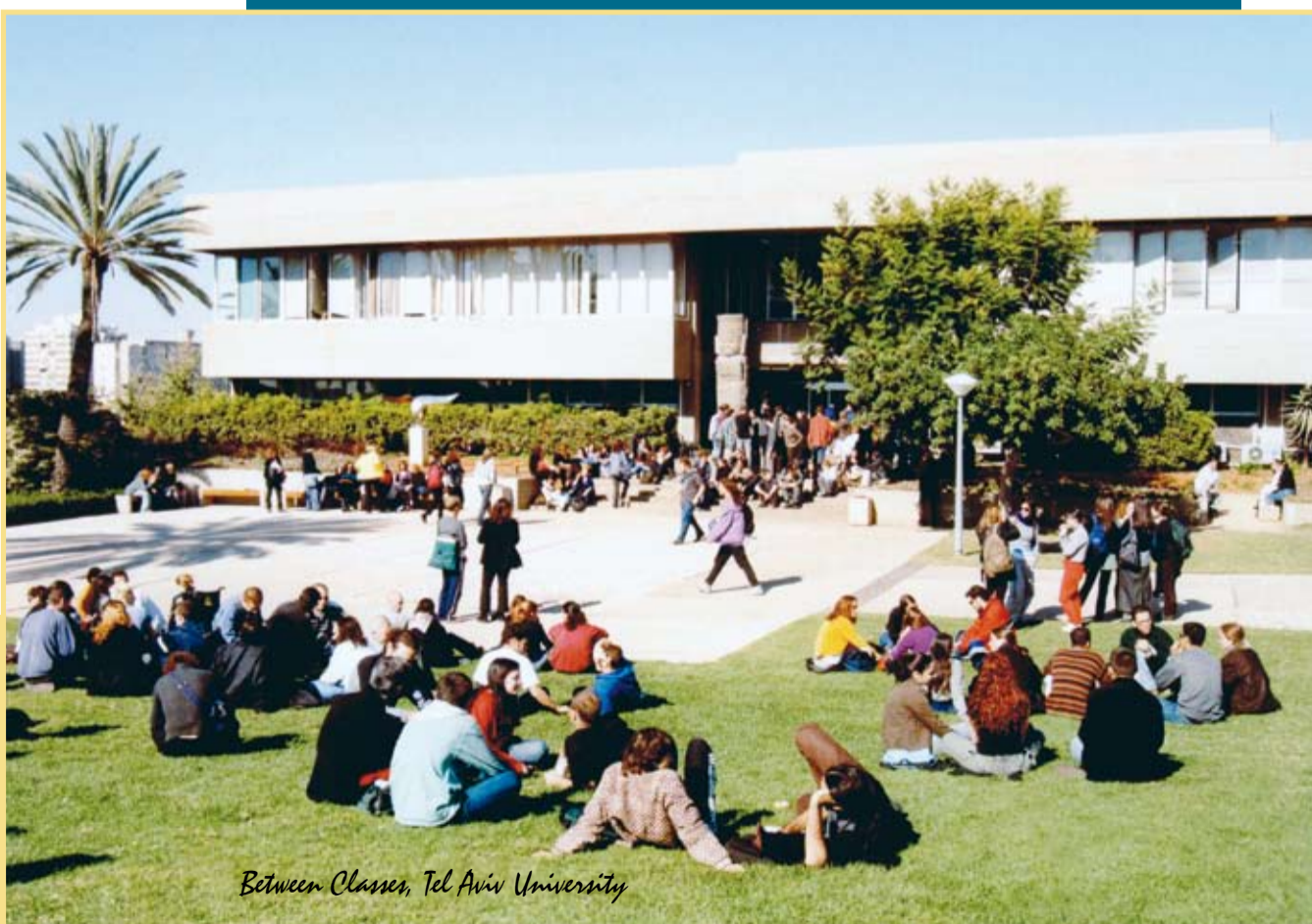
www.israelcentre.org.za

The Global Centre

The Jewish Agency Global Centre offers people from around the world the most comprehensive information service on a wide range of Israel-related topics. Operating 24 hours a day, six days a week (excluding the Sabbath) Global Center representatives are waiting to hear from you.

Call toll-free: (0) 800-996-886

Useful Contacts



Between Classes, Tel Aviv University

“Study in Israel, 2009” Editorial Board:

Orit Mor-Sela, Naomi Shmuel,

Barbara Meltz-Kahn, Ofer Dahan, Becky Rowe

Design and Interviews: Becky Rowe

By Plan or By Proxy

Occasionally, the course of life marches on according to plan, while other times, it takes an unexpected turn. For Revi Chadowitz, her trajectory was unswerving. "My family moved from Israel to the US when I was ten; the minute we left, I told my parents I was going back to Israel. At age 16, they saw I wasn't kidding."

At 18, Revital joined Garin Tzabar, an army unit comprised of children of Israelis who live abroad. After her discharge, she headed south to begin studies at Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva. "I knew that was where I wanted to study. All the universities in Israel are academically excellent, but Ben Gurion is known for its campus life. It is run by students—for students; and the city has evolved into a university town." The extremely active student union organizes a regular

line-up of free music events, lectures, dances, parties, etc. Revital dances salsa at least once a week, and is organizing a "stitch and bitch" (an international knitting/crochet) group in her dorms.

Her double major of Psychology and English Literature expose her to two different kinds of learning experiences. "Psychology is the

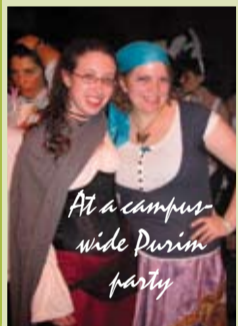
Two young women pursue a quality education and a fulfilling social life in their undergraduate years.

most "stressed out" department. There are 270 students in my year. It is very competitive, yet there are always groups of students studying together. I have a permanent study partner, and the Department has two active websites. English Literature, on the other hand, is small, with about 25 students in my year. There are Canadians, Americans and Israelis including a fair share of Bedouins. It is more intimate and more relaxed."

Revital (left) with friends on campus.



At the weekly Salsa Dance



At a campus-wide Purim party



At Movie-on-the-Lawn Night.

&

Elizabeth Shafir, originally from Glasgow, is also studying for her Bachelors in English literature – at Haifa University. Her route however, was circuitous and unexpected. After completing her exams at a prestigious British private school, Elizabeth, who had already been accepted to university in the UK, decided to take a gap year. "I had been to Israel quite a few times on family holidays, and I liked it, so I thought it would be a good place to take time off." Elizabeth signed up for an ulpan on Kibbutz Yotvata near Eilat. Under the desert sun, her plans underwent a remodelling.

"Within weeks, I met the man who was to become my husband." Head

over heels, Elizabeth stayed on the kibbutz for an extra year where she worked in the date orchards and lived with Yura, her betrothed. Far from the Glasgow drizzle, the marriage ceremony was held next to the



Elizabeth with her husband at the beach.

kibbutz swimming pool with the red mountains of Edom as a backdrop.

Heading to Haifa, where her husband studies Mechanical Engineering at the Technion, Elizabeth began her academic career in the topic she had always planned to pursue—English Literature. The newlyweds reside in the married students dorms on the Technion Campus. Although more involved with each other than with student life, Elizabeth finds the atmosphere at Haifa University amicable and interesting. "Both in the city and in the university, there is quite an interesting mix of people. Walking through the corridor, one can easily hear four or five languages being spoken within the span of a few steps."

In the English Literature Department, there are students from Europe, North America, Israel and South America. "I've found my professors to be very forthcoming and helpful, and although much of our work is writing, some students have begun studying together for exams. Compared to the kibbutz, Haifa is a pretty *happening* place. I love the fact that I can get around so easily without a car, and the low-key cosmopolitan atmosphere of the city."

Whereas the young couple are both students, and manage on a limited budget, "we thoroughly enjoy the street cafes and the gorgeous views." Elizabeth admits that she filled their flat with the copies of the literary classics and all she really needs is a cozy chair.

Whether by plan or by proxy, undergraduate studies in Israeli universities are proving challenging and fulfilling for both Revital and Elizabeth. ❖

Undergraduate

Regional Colleges

A Corner of her Own

Peri Gershoni looks around her, and can't imagine studying anywhere else. Nestled in the Galilee panhandle between the Golan and Naftali mountain ranges, the Tel Hai Academic College is green in every sense of the word. The college is surrounded by the greens of comfortably established kibbutz gardens, old oak groves and newly forested slopes. The green of environmentalism is tangible in the vibrant student activism and the academic specialties of environmental sciences and technologies. Green, as in 'new', also defines the school.

In the late 1980s, the Israel government mandated the expansion of the Regional College Network, affiliating each new college with an accredited university. Although focusing on a more limited curriculum than that of the universities, these colleges often have quite high academic standards. They attract qualified students who enjoy the range of locations and the intimacy of a smaller campus, while demanding educational excellence.

Peri, is in her second year of her BSc in Nutritional Science. "I never would have

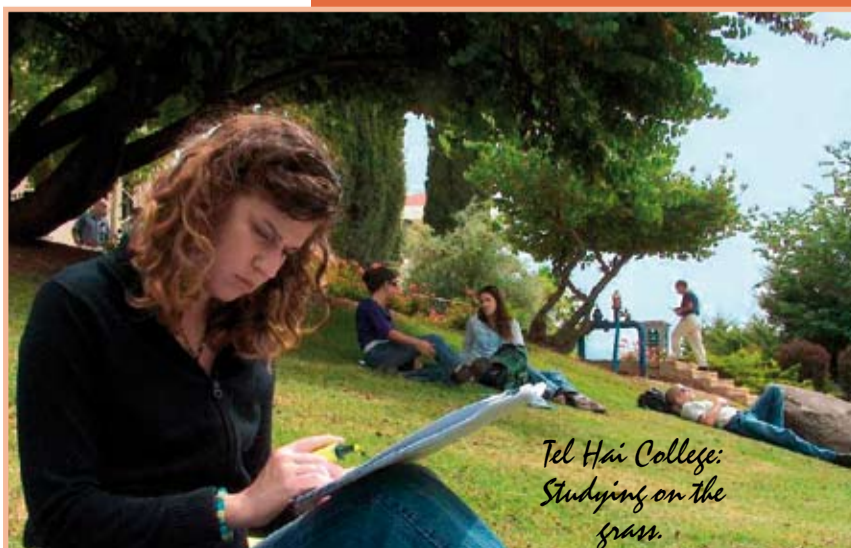
thought of coming all the way up here to study, but by chance I met someone who suggested I come for the Open Day. I fell in love with the place. It is so welcoming and so beautiful."

Peri came to Israel after graduating from King David Linkfield High School to do a kibbutz ulpan. I always knew more or less what I

"Green, as in 'new' also defines the school."

wanted to study, although I hadn't really thought about where. While on ulpan, I asked my Hebrew teacher if she thought I could study in Hebrew. When she gave me the go ahead, I figured I would stay in Israel."

No mean feat, Peri began her freshman year with a course load that included organic chemistry, biology, physics, calculus, botany and statistics – in Hebrew. "I worked really hard, but all my professors were accommodating. I found books in English, my tests were translated into English and I managed quite well." Renting an apartment with three friends from school on a nearby kibbutz, Peri says, "I am challenged in my studies, I have made wonderful new friends, I am independent and happy. This was the best decision I ever made."



Tel Hai College: Studying on the grass.

continued on next page

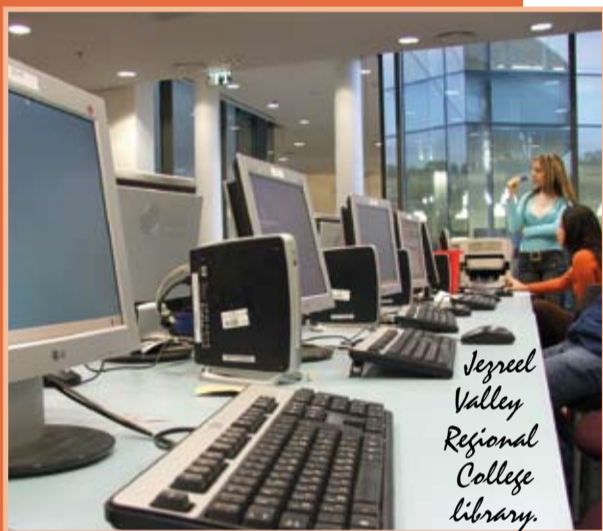
A Place of Her Own, cont.

&

Twenty-year-old Raizy Davidowitz chose to study at Hadassah College in Jerusalem where she lives in the heterogeneous, utterly quirky, urban neighbourhood of Nahlaot. While on the Bnei Akiva MTA programme, Raizy decided that she wanted to live in Israel. "I love Jerusalem – its spirituality, its physical beauty, its unexpected mix of humanity. There is nothing like taking walks in Jerusalem: I always discover new neighbourhoods, alleyways and shops. In South Africa, I felt trapped in my own house. Stepping out for a relaxing stroll was not even an option."

Although interested in studying Optometry, Raizy had not even known about Hadassah College. "It was at the suggestion of a friend that I looked into the programme. It offered a relatively small school in the city centre with a good Optometry Department."

"The classes are relatively small. We have a counsellor who kind of checks to see that we are alright. I feel like I may have been lost in a huge university setting. Although some students study together, being downtown in a large city, the College is primarily a place to study. At least for me." Raizy shares an apartment with two friends from home, so she has a bit of South Africa and a lot of Jerusalem, which suits her just fine. ❖



Sezreel Valley Regional College library.



Communications student conducting an interview with fellow students on the Ort Braude College of Engineering campus.



In a lab at Karmiel's Ort Braude College of Engineering.

Specializing in Art

Art studies are offered through a number of tracks in various types of institutions:

- Academic study tracks in Universities, Colleges, Academic Institutions
- Teaching Degrees (BeD) specializing in art at Academic Teachers Colleges.
- Diploma of Practical Engineer through Engineering Colleges in subjects such as photography, graphic design, industrial design, etc.
- Certificate tracks in Art Schools that offer specialization in one or more disciplines, for example, art and theater schools, music schools, and more. Studies in these schools emphasize development of personal skills and abilities. Art Schools generally give certificates recognized for professional purposes, but they are not academic degrees. Studies are generally between two to four years.



Larry Brandt and his violin.

cians play here on a regular basis, and we have the privilege of taking master classes with some of the best – among them Vadim Repin, Pinchas Zuckerman and Zakhar Bron."

Although studying in Hebrew was difficult at the beginning, it soon became a non-issue." The language of music, however, proved a trifle more troubling to overcome. "I had learned and internalized the musical notes – A, B, C, etc. since the age of four. In Israel, as in Europe, they use terminology called solfège – Do, Re, Mi, ... Now, that translation took some getting used to."

Completing his first degree last year, Larry continued right on to a

Masters. "I play solo repertoire, chamber music and am a member of the Academy Orchestra. Our orchestra appears around the world. Over the past few years, we have performed in Berlin, New York, Madrid and Zurich." After school and practice hours, Larry performs at private functions, teaches a bit, and what else? – works as an advisor to a hi-tech/music start-up. This is Israel, after all.

In music, art and dance, Israel ranks with the capitals of the world. Performances abound and educational programmes are copious.

&

Talya Korb, who had always had a penchant for the arts was told by her shaliach to "go to university in South Africa. It is too hard in Israel, and anyway, you will never be accepted." Her obedient streak winning out, she began Drama at WITS. "I loved the studies, but I didn't feel I was in the right place." Her stubbornness soon surfaced, and Talya decided that she would have to see for herself if she could make it in Israel.

"I had been in Israel on Bnei Akiva programmes, and although aliyah was never a given, it was becoming a realistic option. After the year at WITS, I came to Israel and did a summer ulpan at Haifa University. During that period, I applied, and was accepted to a number of art schools. I didn't know much about

any of them, and was told that Bezalel Art Academy was the most prestigious, so I patted myself on the back at having been accepted, and registered in the Department of Film, Video and New Media. The first week of school, I was petrified; I nodded and smiled a lot, with only a vague idea of what was going on." Yet despite a course load which included scriptwriting, editing, photography and art history, Talya, by the second semester, was writing her papers in Hebrew. "You soon understand everything without even realizing it has happened." Now in her third year, Talya enjoys the combination of the "hands-on and artsy."

Just as her initial immersion into studies was scary, so was her sudden independence – preparing food, paying bills, doing laundry. "For my first two years, I lived in the dorms, which is relatively unadventurous, but even that living arrangement was light years from life in South Africa."

"The sheer fun of independence and freedom from fear grows on you." Now Talya lives with her boyfriend (another former South African), in an upscale Jerusalem neighbourhood. She isn't the pub-hopping type, but her social life is filled with friends. Talya who keeps kosher and Shabbat, regularly eats her Friday night meals

with friends. "We had a huge Shabbas get-together last week with ten friends staying over." Talya loves her studies, her independence and her freedom, but "when we adopted a feisty street cat, our house became home. If I could look after another creature, I was truly settled." ❖

"The sheer fun of independence and freedom from fear grows on you."



Talya Korb, art student

Aesthetic Achievements

Commuters in north Tel Aviv became accustomed to the sight of a young man resolutely pedalling toward the university every morning with a violin strapped securely to his back. The cyclist is violinist Larry Brandt, a Masters student in Music at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music at Tel Aviv University. "At the age of two, I had wanted to play the violin, but my parents wouldn't pay for lessons until I could hold the violin by myself," and a toddler tweaking the strings was more than most teachers could cope with. So Larry began lessons at age four.

Born and bred in Cape Town, he became concertmaster of the Beau Soleil Music Centre Orchestra. "Before I graduated from Herzlia High School, I began to think about my study options. After a performance of the Aviv Quartet in Cape Town, I went backstage and introduced myself to their first violinist, Sergey Ostrovsky. He graciously listened to me play, took an interest and recommended I look up his former teacher at Tel Aviv University."

Larry participated in the Birthright trip with the intention of taking the opportunity to audition for university while in Israel. "Mind you, as much as I loved music, I had barely been to ten symphony concerts my entire life in South Africa. The classical music scene in Israel is spectacular – there is no comparison to South Africa. I try to go to at least two concerts a month. Students in our programme get free tickets to the Israel Philharmonic. World class musi-

The Arts

Lucky Convergence

Israel is a technological powerhouse. Known as Silicon Wadi, it is home to R&D centres for almost all the giant hi-tech companies. It is a world leader in technology and bio-tech startups. South African students find that in terms of both educational and job alternatives, Israel is an oasis of opportunity.

Although that is not the reason either Irwin Shuman or Dafna Admony are studying in Israeli universities, it is an added plus.

Admits Dafna Admony from Greenside, "I didn't want to stay in South Africa. I just didn't feel safe. I couldn't even sit in my garden without looking over my shoulder." Dafna's forecast for the South African Jewish community is bleak. "Before I left, I saw many Jewish South Africans leaving, and the entire community is dwindling at an alarming rate."

Completing her Bachelors and Honors degree at WITS, Dafna registered for her Masters there, but "left after a few months. Israel was familiar to me; I had come on holidays. I knew the universities in Israel were highly regarded, and when I saw the benefits available for tuition from the Student Authority, I decided to take the plunge."

Dafna can now be found in the Masters Program in Medical Sciences at Tel Aviv University, with a speciality in microbiology and immunology. Her classes are primarily at the Med-

ical School Campus and her work is in Ichilov Hospital in downtown Tel Aviv. Dafna is researching antibiotic resistance to secondary infections. "The research in Israel is much more advanced than that in South Africa, and the lab in Ichilov is phenomenal. Yet, I would say that, certainly at WITS, there was more emphasis on lecture attendance and writing essays. Israeli students are totally different: they share everything and are willing to help each other—to the point of outright copying."

"Socially, I relish my freedom. I don't have a car. I can walk wherever and whenever I want. I have a wide and diverse circle of friends; an amazing boyfriend, and I have learned to be independent. I also feel that I have more in common with the people in Israel. In South Africa, with non-Jewish friends, I found myself getting infuriated with what I considered knee-jerk anti-Israel stances. Here, no matter what the parameters of a discussion or argu-

ment, I don't feel that indiscriminate hostility.

It was quite sad to see what was happening in South Africa; it is such a beautiful country, but my freedom and my future were too important to me to remain there."

&

Irwin Shuman from Cape Town graduated from Herzlia High School,

had been in Bnei Akiva High School programmes, grew up in a Zionist home,

and came to Israel "with the intention of staying." He attended Yeshivat Har Etzion in combination with his army service, and upon discharge was ready to continue his family tradition of engineering. "I had a South African friend

"...when I saw the benefits available for tuition from the Student Authority, I decided to take the plunge."

who recommended Ben Gurion University and I'm happy he did. The people in Beer Sheva and at the university are down-to-earth and nice. I would compare it to a university out in the Cape Province. Because it is in the "middle of nowhere", students have to build a life for themselves. Not only that, but rents are refreshingly affordable, less than half of those in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem.

"My first year at Ben Gurion was in the Mechina or Preparatory Year programme. My South African matriculation was not recognized in Israel, so there was little way for me to

get around it. But it was a good year of refresher courses and settling in." Now, in his third year of Mechanical Engineering, Irwin is particularly interested in thermal problems – heat exchange and transfer in large systems such as power plants and aircraft. "I think the curriculum is the same as in South Africa; in fact, the same as in any engineering programme in the World. I'm using a textbook my Dad used in South Africa – his was the 2nd edition, and mine is the 7th.

"I have the advantage of English here because many of the textbooks don't even exist in Hebrew; Israelis avoid them and rely on lecture notes and summaries."

Enjoying both worlds—access to English textbooks and the Israeli practice of group study—Irwin quite enjoys the studies, but admits the long hours leave him little time to take advantage of the many campus activities. In essence, Irwin explores the motion of objects—robotics, aero-robotics, and he is confident that there will be work in this burgeoning field. "Particularly in Israel, where there is such accelerated technological development."

Israel's top calibre science research may not be exactly what brought Dafna or Irwin to Israel, but through their studies, they have become part of the nucleus of the dynamic and innovative Israeli industry. ❖



Dafna Admony in her research lab.

The Sciences

📖 The Israel Student Authority "Minhal Hastudentim"

Who are we?

The Israel Student Authority, operated jointly through the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption and the Jewish Agency, assists immigrant students in Israel. Its mission is to encourage student aliyah, to assist in academic integration, promote student absorption within Israeli society, and to assist on a personal basis throughout the absorption process.

What is the assistance offered to new immigrant students?

- Standard University tuition fees: for a B.A./M.A./ Certificate studies/Practical Engineering studies.
- Social and cultural events, excursions, and seminars.
- Counsellors that offer individual and group guidance.
- Information and guidance for overseas candidates
- Guidance and counselling on academic issues.
- Individual and group tutoring
- The Shachak program (the social-community program).
- Referrals to scholarship funds and loans for financial assistance.

What are the conditions for receiving assistance?

Status:

- New immigrants/ child of immigrants.
- Returning minors (*katin hozer*).
- *Ezrachim olim* (an immigrant born overseas to an Israeli parent).

Period of stay in Israel:

Students must begin their studies within 36 months following aliyah, and complete studies within 7.5 years of aliyah.

Note: Service in the Israel Defense Forces or National Service (*Sherut Leumi*) is not included, and rights to assistance are frozen for the duration of service. However this does NOT effect the age restrictions, which are still applicable to discharged soldiers.

Age stipulations

- Candidates for Mechina must begin their studies before their 23rd birthday.
- Candidates for undergraduate degrees must begin their studies before their 27th birthday.
- Candidates for practical engineering studies must begin their studies before their 28th birthday.
- Candidates for graduate studies must begin their studies before their 30th birthday.

Academic conditions

- Matriculation certificate / high school diploma
 - Meeting the acceptance requirements of the institution
 - Normal academic transition from one year to the next.
 - Studies in institutions and tracks that are recognized by the Israel Student Authority (we do not give assistance for studying in branches of foreign universities in Israel)
- Aid is not granted for an additional degree at the same level, regardless of whether the first degree was obtained in Israel or overseas.*

- Extent of assistance: up to 3 years of study
- Students in their third year of studies are required to do community service (*Shahak*)

Pre-Aliyah services run by the Israel Student Authority:

We can....

- Help you find the study track you are looking for
- Give you information & advice about studying in Israel
- Evaluate your documents from abroad
- Confirm your eligibility for assistance
- Check with the university if you are exempt from Mechina
- Advise you on Hebrew ulpan programs and how best to prepare for studying in Israel

Each year the Student Authority assists about 7000 immigrant students from all over the world fulfill the dream of studying in Israel...

The English Desk invites you to be in touch and fulfill your dream:
Naomi Shmuel – naomis@moia.gov.il



Members of the Student Organic Co-op at Hebrew University

Ready for Anything

You've completed an ulpan and can chatter away comfortably about the price of cucumbers, the weather, and that cute guy who lives around the corner. But are you ready to begin university in Hebrew? A safe bet is to follow the prescribed route and attend what is known in Israel as "Mechina", or Preparatory Year.

Taryn Korb was reading Law at WITS when she did an about-face. A native of Glenhazel and a King David graduate, she had been to Israel on youth movement programmes and continued to be involved in informal Jewish education. The itch to go back just wouldn't abate.

Although Taryn could "get by" in Hebrew, she is "grateful for the opportunity to have a year of preparation and adjustment." Arriving "cold turkey" at Tel Aviv University, the Mechina was her first taste of Israeli university. "The programme was for new immigrants, so there were South

Americans, Russians, North Americans and some Europeans. On the one hand, it was like high school, even more rigid in terms of attendance. Everything was compulsory and you had to pass all your courses or you couldn't be accepted into the university. It was Hebrew, and Hebrew and more Hebrew. On the other hand, it was great socially. You study until the afternoon and then you can hang out on the beach or sit at cafes (before doing your homework)."

Now a student in English Literature and Gender Studies, Taryn is very glad she had a year to polish her Hebrew and adjust to life on campus. "Tel Aviv University is very intense academically. The level is much higher than it was in South Africa – in both my departments. Now, neither Hebrew, nor finding my way around campus nor university bureaucracy, is an issue"

&

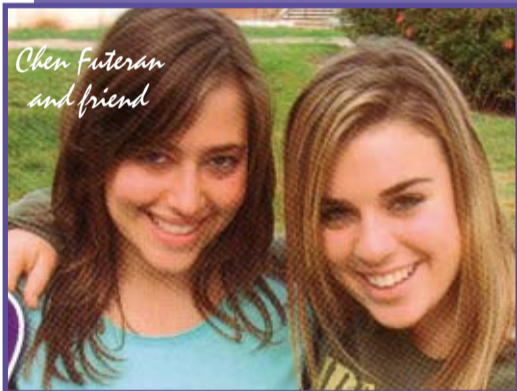
Chen Futeran knew from an early age that she wanted to make aliyah. Feeling comfortable in Hebrew, and having been on programmes in Israel, she really "didn't want to 'waste' a year on 'preparation'." "But I am happy I did it." Now midway through her first of seven years of Medicine at Hebrew University, Chen says, "My Hebrew was good before

I started the Mechina, but I don't think I would have managed so well this year if I hadn't had that extra cushion.

"It is a bridge between high school and university. The Mechina demands less class hours and less homework than in Medical School. While we lived in dorms with Israeli students, there was much more structure and oversight than in regular university classes. In the Science Mechina, Chen studied math and sciences in Hebrew for the first time. "Instead of sitting through my first month in a fog, I began Medical School fluent in scientific terminology. Having completed the Mechina actually eased the load in my first year of regular classes because I got an exemption from first-year physics, and statistics is basically a repeat of what I studied in the Mechina."

Chen, who is renting an apartment with friends in downtown Jerusalem, enjoyed the time she spent on the main Hebrew University campus of Mt. Scopus. She got a sense of student life in all its typical Israeli boisterousness – "almost all the student life and student politics happen on Mt. Scopus. She now studies on two other Hebrew U. campuses – Givat Ram and Ein Kareem, which are far from the maddening crowd. I'm glad I got to experience it, but right now," she has time for books, and very little else. ❖

"It is a bridge between high school and university."



Chen Futeran and friend



The amphitheatre at Hebrew University.

Mechina

University Preparatory Programs for Immigrants

Mechina programs for new immigrants are one-year programs intended for students who completed high school overseas and who hold a high-school completion certificate that is not considered equivalent to an Israeli bagrut - such as the South African Matric.

Mechina is compulsory for all universities, aside from Bar Ilan. Most other academic institutions do not obligate students to take the Mechina, but it is strongly recommended.

Mechina programs are held at these universities only: Haifa University, Tel Aviv University, the Technion, Bar Ilan University, and the Hebrew University.

Each Mechina program begins with a university summer ulpan, after which students study in one of the following study tracks: humanities, social sciences, engineering, sciences. Acceptance to the science & engineering study tracks is dependent upon passing an exam in mathematics.

The Mechina uses one of the three years tuition entitlements for new immigrant students.

Exempt from Mechina are students with Bagrut equivalency (such as IB) or students who have studied at least one academic year abroad.

Mechina is not required of students registering for graduate programs.

Mechina involves a five-day week, about thirty hours per week.

You are studying in Israel. Jewish holidays are national holidays. There is a palpable feeling of purpose. National debate tackles issues concerning the destiny of the Jewish people.

But it was the added value of religious community that Yair Gordon sought and found at Bar Ilan University. With a matriculation from Yeshiva College in hand, he passed up WITS and opted for aliyah. Just being in Israel is intoxicating for Yair - "I find it exhilarating to be actively part of the fulfilment of the Jewish nation."

Studying at a university founded on the principle of 'Jewish learning and the Torah of Israel, together with all the latest findings in the fields of human research' is the icing on the cake. At Bar Ilan University where Yair is studying for a double Bachelors Degree in Education and Jewish Philosophy, he is part of an institution which inspires the cultivation of religious and academic thought in the national religious movement.

He lives in a dorm on campus. "The milk and meat kitchens are separate. There is always a minyan in the campus shul, even during the week. On weekends, students get together, each bringing a dish, and share the Shabbat meal." The Student Union organizes both religious and general events—movies, guest speakers, Campus Shabbatot, plays. Yair relishes the inter-

mingling of the holy and secular – "for instance when a political rally for Gilad Shalit was organized, it began with a reading from Psalms." Bar Ilan suits Yair so seamlessly, the idea of "fitting in" seems almost trivial.

While Bar Ilan is the only religious university granting Bachelors, Masters and doctoral degrees, many Academic Colleges geared for the religious student are accredited to grant Bachelor's degrees. The Jerusalem College of Technology has campuses for men and women and specializes in the sciences. Teachers Colleges and Nursing Schools also cater to the religious student.

&

Malka Lis knew well what it meant to study in a language other than her mother tongue. She came from the small Jewish community of Cardiff and attended one of the few Welsh-language schools. "My parents figured there would be more of an emphasis on Welsh nationalism than on Christianity, as is common in the English-language State schools."

Malka had thought about attend-

A religious atmosphere and a rigorous academic curriculum prove the winning combination for Yair and Malka.

Look No Further

ing university in Manchester, but after spending time at a Midrasha in Jerusalem with Bnei Akiva, she decided to make aliyah. As she became more religious, she "wanted to study in an all-women's school." While attending an ulpan and Preparatory Studies programme in Jerusalem, she stumbled upon Mivchar, a small Haredi college in Bnei Brak, an extension college of Haifa University. The school offered a solid academic track in Occupational Therapy, her profession of choice, as well as a speciality in hand rehabilitative therapy which she plans to pursue.

"There is nothing really Haredi about it, but all the girls are frum," says Malka. Her 35 classmates in second year Occupational Therapy, are a mixture of haredi and modern orthodox women. Modest dress is adhered to and the atmosphere is safely secluded. "Although the teaching standard is very high, our school is so small and the library so insignificant, that I often have a hard time finding textbooks in

English. Theoretically, I could order it from the Haifa University library, but I prefer just relying on our social network. We are a small, tight group and there is a lot of studying together. Someone will summarize a lecture and send it out by email to everyone."

Her first year in Occupational Therapy included anatomy, physiology, biology and sociology – all in Hebrew. "The Hebrew soon becomes second nature. But" she admits, "it would have been a bit more helpful to have come to Israel fluent in Hebrew, rather than in Welsh." ❖



An outdoor concert

Where can you find high standards in higher education combined with a religious environment?

Where can you qualify yourself & strengthen your Jewish identity simultaneously?

Where can you face history and discover your roots while preparing yourself for the challenges of the future?

Where, if not in ISRAEL!?

A full list of study options can be found in the booklet "A Kosher Degree".

Please note that some religious institutions have mixed gender classes, such as Bar Ilan University, and some have separate classes for men and for women, for example Machon Lev (for men) and Machon Tal (for women).

Religious Academic

Hannah Glaff has a bachelors degree in Law and French Literature. Asher Orkaby a bachelors degree in history. Both had many graduate options available to them. Both chose to continue their education in Israel.

Hannah had been active in the Federation of Zionist Youth in London. "I spent a gap year in Israel, and aliyah was in the cards since then." Hannah wanted to live in flat, pedestrian-friendly, less religious, socially vibrant Tel Aviv, and she was interested in Middle East politics. Tel Aviv University's Security Studies beckoned.

"It is an interdisciplinary degree with courses in military strategy, international and national security, conflict management and diplomacy. I tend toward the diplomacy side of things." She is researching Arab-Jewish relations in Israel. I always had a desire to

know what the "other" is thinking. My seminar thesis is on the impact of Jewish-Arab NGOs on Israeli society."

"University in England is more traditional. Here there is less structure, although the facilities are comparable. The Israeli students tend to be older and most hold down jobs in addition to their studies. I was working part-time: translating, editing and writing. Although the tuition for my degree is essentially paid for by the Student Authority, I am glad I came with some savings."

In addition to work and study, Hannah is active in Tel Aviv English speaking circles. "There are quite a few social events and ongoing activities for English speakers in Tel Aviv. I keep in touch with friends in Israel, as well as in England through Facebook."



"I tend toward the diplomatic side of things."

Hannah Glaff

Asher Orkaby was also interested in the Middle East. Although he was raised in Brooklyn, the cadences and flavours of the Occident were familiar; his father's family hails from Yemen. Asher asserts, "Israel is the safest place for a Jew to study the Middle East, and all the universities have highly reputable departments. Although Asher knows Hebrew, he chose the English-language Masters programme in Middle Eastern Studies at Ben Gurion University."

While Asher exercised his option to read some courses in Hebrew, he "found the English-language classes small, intimate, and of very high quality. There are twenty-seven students in my year—primarily from North America and Europe. In addition, he was drawn to



Asher Orkaby and family

the campus life and desert beauty of Beer Sheva. "The entire city is the campus as it's pulse pumps around the students and the university."

The Middle East Studies program entails one year of course work, followed by a Masters thesis. Asher, fascinated by family stories, chose to research the effect of the Jewish exodus on the Yemeni economy in the 1950s. Asher has studied Arabic, and fortuitously, "one of the world's experts on Yemeni dialects teaches at Ben Gurion. I am studying with world-renowned professors and no matter how well known they are, they are totally accessible." ❖

The Psychometric Exam

One of the more unfamiliar challenges facing students wishing to study in Israel is the Psychometric Exam.

What is it and who is required?

The Psychometric is a multiple-choice university entrance exam equivalent to the American SAT I. The test consists of verbal, logical reasoning and quantitative reasoning, and English and is based on academic ability.

Most Israeli universities and colleges require those applying for undergraduate studies, including students who have some academic background, to take the Psychometric Exam. Some study tracks and some academic colleges do not require psychometric, and will accept you on the basis of past achievement and a personal interview.

A student taking the Psychometric Exam in a foreign language must also take a Hebrew proficiency exam (the Ye'el exam). The Hebrew Exam is a separate part of the Psychometric Exam and scores are not averaged into the overall Psychometric scores. Grading for the Psychometric ranges from 300 to 800 points; a minimum of 450 points is necessary for acceptance to higher education studies. The general faculty admission requirements are:

- Humanities: minimum 450 points
- Social Sciences: 500-600 points and over
- Economics, Natural Sciences, Exact Sciences, Engineering: min. 600-700
- Psychology and Medicine: minimum 700 points

The Psychometric Exam results are valid for seven years; there are several exam dates throughout the year, and one may take the exam once a year. The exam may be taken in English either in April or July (although if applying to a select faculty you will probably be required to take it in April in order that the results be available on time). If you are particularly motivated you can take both SAT and Psychometric; the university will use the higher score.

It is very worthwhile to prepare yourself for the Psychometric Exam, you can either do so independently (there are many private courses available) or in subsidized courses as part university preparatory course (at extra cost). Courses in foreign languages open in accordance with demand.

Why not do the SAT?

As you may take the Psychometric in English, it might prove to be the same level of difficulty as the SAT. Compare by looking at past exams on the internet in order to determine for yourself which is more appropriate. Bear in mind that you lose points when the SAT score is converted into a Psychometric score, and that the SAT is not accepted by most medical schools in Israel.

Almost all students in Israel take the Psychometric Exams and after preparing most feel quite confident. Don't let this exam scare you away it is a stepping stone on your path to studying in Israel. Sample tests and exercises may be found in registration kits, as well as in bookstores, and on the National Institute for Testing and Evaluation (NITE) web site: <http://www.nite.org.il/>

If you have questions about doing the exam in a foreign language you can contact NITE directly At P.O.B. 26015, Jerusalem 91260, Tel: (02) 6759555; public@nite.org.il

Medicine's Changing Face

Due to either social, cultural, economic, historical or genetic factors, Jews are prominent in the field of medicine. More than in many other callings, the ranks of Israel's medical and paramedical professionals have a large representation of immigrants, some having studied in Israel, some abroad, and some a combination of both.

Gila Levitan had completed her degree in physiotherapy from the University of Sydney when she settled on her decision to make aliyah. "I wanted my home to be in a place I felt deeply about." While living in an Absorption Centre and studying in an ulpan, Gila volunteered in a hospital.

She noticed in Israel what she had seen in Australia—"recurring patterns of diseases of lifestyle such as diabetes, stroke and heart disease. Much of their devastation can be prevented by changes in diet and exercise. I realized that 21st century medicine is moving toward the preventative, rather than the solely curative." Hearing from a friend about the Masters Program in Public and Community Medicine at Hebrew University, Gila investigated the option. "The School has a solid international reputation and I thought that studying in Israel would be an excellent way to make connections and ease myself into the field."

Gila, whose parents left South Africa for Australia in the early 1980s, is completing a circuitous route to Israel. "Aliyah for me is a journey of self-discovery and independence. I am proud when I work things out for myself. Whereas the step to study in Hebrew was daunting, I have the opportunity to make connections with people in my field and reap the benefits of the renowned academic staff at the university. Most of all, I feel I can really

make a difference in public health by combining my current studies with the skills and experience I brought with me from Australia."

Now in her first year of medicine at Ben Gurion University, Neta Elani was born in Johannesburg to Israeli parents. Her family moved to London when she was 12, and when she was 18, she made aliyah, joining Garin Tzabar. Adopting the rite of passage common to her Israeli contemporaries, she took a long journey to India, before returning to Israel to study. Steeped in a patchwork of cultures, Neta loves London, but "didn't want to study in England. Israel is less formal and more fun."

She chose Ben Gurion University because "despite the very rigorous course load, there is an atmosphere of cooperation." Coupled with the academic camaraderie, is a vibrant campus life. After studying until they are cross-eyed, "we go out together

to party in one of the many student bars in the city."

Recently instituted in the Medical School is a weekly Communications Course. "We learn to speak with the patients and understand them in their entirety rather than through their illness. Every month we concentrate on a different type of population: children, pregnant women, the mentally ill, etc. We also deal with different ethnicities and cultural approaches to health and doctors."

Neta and Gila will be well-equipped to don the mantle of medicine's changing face in the coming decades. ❖

"Aliyah for me is a journey of self-discovery and independence."



Gila Levitan

Health

Studying Health Professions in Israel

Health professions are divided into two main tracks; the academic track and the professional training track.

Studies in the academic track take place at universities or colleges, and include standard health professions such as medicine, physiotherapy, nursing, and communications therapy along with fields such as x-ray and imaging, optometry, biotechnology, medical laboratory science, environmental health, and others.

The professional training track leads to a professional certificate (not an academic degree). Certificates are recognized by the Ministry of Health, which grants licenses to practice in medical professions. Some of the fields of study include training for practical nurses and dental assistants. Technical colleges also offer study programs in the field of medical equipment.

A Place in the Sun

English-Language Study

A “Place in the Sun” is a Channel 4 reality show about Brits following their dreams. Established families leave the chilly drizzle of the UK to buy property and build a home in lands where the rays of the sun banish the biting cold. London-bred Daniel Savery wrote for the series, working on-site from Mexico to Provence. He spent four years watching others bravely face bureaucracies and foreign tongues to live out their dreams, until he finally decided that he too would realize a personal vision of making a life for himself in the Jewish State.

“I come from a Zionist family, many of whom had already made aliyah. My girlfriend and I so loved coming here on holiday after holiday, we decided that we should just live here.”

Although an accomplished journalist, he “had always wanted to study English literature. Researching online, he found the Bar Ilan English-Language

Creative Writing Masters Program. Currently more than half a year into the two-year programme, Daniel “can’t recommend it enough. I am thoroughly impressed by the calibre of teaching and material. Our Israel-based professors are top-notch, and there is a regular stream of visiting professors from some of the best universities in the world, such as Harvard and Columbia.”

Daniel, who made aliyah with his girlfriend, Shira, sees the programme not just as a career move, but as *food for the soul*. “Since the programme requires literature courses, I have been exposed to writers I had never read, particularly Americans. I find that historical surveys of literature, essentially the history of human feelings, invite one to view the world differently. Individuals basically write because they want to; they have an urge to touch others. This course takes someone with capabilities and hoists them into a different league of expression.”

In Daniel’s year, there are fifteen students ranging in age from 25 to 60, “some of them quite accomplished writers. Once a week, we concentrate on writing, and there is an open review. We read each other’s stories and give feedback. A writer can sit across from his or her computer and re-read a piece some fifty times, but self-editing cannot compare to the impressions of fifteen other first-time readers. It has been so fantastic to have this calibre of input from both my professors and peers – on structure, character

development, narrative voice, everything. I know that everyone in my programme feels that their style has improved, even over this short period of time.

“For our thesis, each one of us picks our best pieces, stories or poems, and works one-on-one with an instructor of our choice. By the time I have completed my thesis, my writing will have been reviewed, revised and reworked scores of times, leaving me with a publishable body of work.”

Daniel, although devoting most of his time to studies, has squeezed in some journalism work. “There are many English-language writers in Israel, but I think there is a lot of work out

“Just spending time with students from so many different cultures is an educational experience.”

there if you look in the right places.” Setting his computer aside, and slipping out of his writing den, Daniel can’t get enough of Tel Aviv. “It rains in London so people sit in pubs. Here people sit outside, and cafes are everywhere. Shiri and I sit and relax, enjoy the great fresh food, meet friends, sometimes stroll down to the beach.” It is cosmopolitan, heimish; intellectually stimulating and neighbourly all at once. Having his cake and eating it too, Daniel savours life in Israel, while pursuing an English-language profession and vocation.

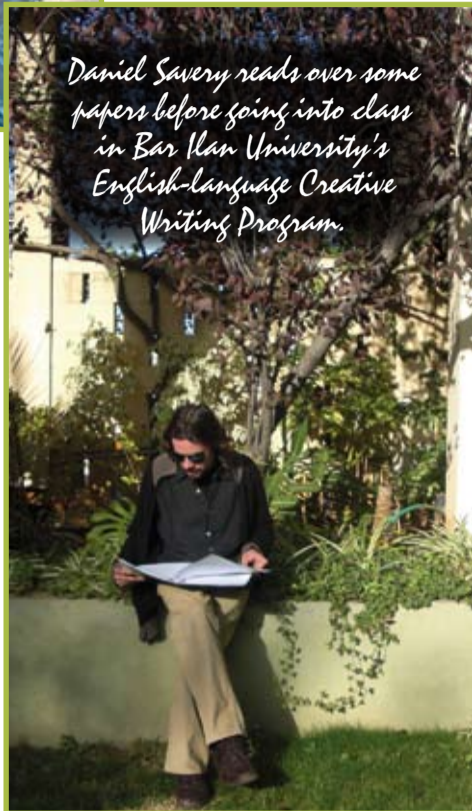
Gaby Charnas and Mikhail Kramer, both undergraduates, don’t study English, yet they study in English. The Interdisciplinary Center, or IDC, is a private, accredited, highly reputable college with a four undergraduate tracks taught entirely in English.

“Someone came to my high school, King David Linksfield, and spoke to us about the IDC,” says Gaby. “I thought, ‘well this is interesting. I can study at a good school, in Israel, in English. Worth looking into.’” Gaby had been pondering the idea of attending university outside of South Africa. “I wanted to be independent – to burst out of my South African bubble, and I liked the idea of being in Israel.”

Gaby studies Government at IDC. “That means government strategy and diplomacy. The first year we had introductory courses, and this year we are studying international law, the formation of the European Union, American History, etc. The students are from all over the world—about half North American, the remainder French, German, British. It creates a fascinating atmosphere, with an amazing array of languages, backgrounds and opinions. Just spending time with students from so many different cultures is an educa-



Gaby Charnas between classes at the IDC.



Daniel Savery reads over some papers before going into class in Bar Ilan University’s English-language Creative Writing Program.

tional experience.”

Gaby shares an apartment with classmates in Herzliya. “IDC has become something of a family. Most of us in the International School are here without our family, so we have created an extended network—a family of friends. Shabbat dinners and lunches are always a social event, more often than not, including someone from our Government programme.”

&

Mikhail Kramer, a native of Sandton, is in his second year of the IDC Business track. He also relished the idea of independence. “I had had enough of Johannesburg, and enough of being spoon-fed. I wanted to do things by myself.” While classes are “interesting”, and the quality of the professors, “high”, one of the “real advantages of IDC is the amazing networking with students from all over the world.”

Mikhail has also turned his penchant for jolling into a business. He established an event promotion outfit with a friend, and can be found behind the scenes at many of the biggest dance parties in Tel Aviv. When 7 am rolls

around, getting out of bed can be difficult if you haven’t yet hit the sack. Mikhail claims, however, that classes can be scheduled to accommodate his nocturnal habits. He appreciates the international atmosphere, the calibre of the instructors and the attractiveness of the school grounds. Yet, the beach, the freedom, the parties and the independence are also part of Mikhail’s life at IDC. ❖

Israeli International Cricketer Davi (David) Meyers, recent graduate of the Masters programme in Government at the IDC. “The IDC School of Government is at the cutting edge. Local and world leaders in government, business and academia—breeze through its corridors and lecture halls. What is said today at the IDC is read tomorrow in the media.”



Beyond the Books

Shahak: The Student Volunteer Program for Giving and Receiving

By Naomi Shmuel from the Israel Student Authority

In their third year of study immigrant students receiving Student Authority assistance are given the (required) opportunity to volunteer as a form of ‘social service’ to the community. For many students with busy schedules what begins as a necessary requirement, soon transpires into a wonderful opportunity to connect with Israeli society in ways never expected.

Sava, a Material Engineering student gave extra lessons in maths and English to a fourteen-year-old boy suffering from cancer.

“I started out helping him with his studies. At some point along the way I found myself helping his mother take care of him. The experience taught me a lot about human resilience and taking responsibility. The last year helped me to understand that I can cope with difficult situations that are not normally encountered everyday. I am determined to continue to volunteer after completing my studies.”

Shahak, an acronym for social and community service enables students to gain an insight into Israeli society and often to form lasting friendships. For many volunteers it is a great opportunity for self-discovery.

Mealen chose “The Jerusalem Rape Crisis Center”, for her volunteering, where a short intensive course prepared her for the task ahead.

“After the course, I went into high schools in Jerusalem and talked to students about the things that I learnt. I felt that I was doing a very important service to the community. Sometimes it is very hard to volunteer. It is hard talking about this subject with teenagers. But I discovered that I could do it, and it did a lot for my self confidence!”

Grow both academically and personally. With Shahak, immigrant students make their mark on Israeli society. Don’t just read about history, help make it...

Israel Student Authority: naomis@moia.gov.il
The Israel Centre SA: aliya@israelcentre.co.za