Dear Friends

December of 2010 will go down in our University annals for the terrible Carmel fire that killed 44, destroyed thousands of acres of forest and threatened the safety of the University itself. This was not an easy time for anyone, and on campus we made it our top priority to secure the wellbeing of all our students and staff, and to provide the best possible logistic assistance for the Emergency Central command that was set up on the campus during the terrible days of the frightening disaster. The University of Haifa extends its deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their loved ones in this tragedy and sends its hopes and prayers for recovery to those suffering injury and trauma.

We are able to cope with such crises thanks to our dedicated staff and the support of friends around the world. We are also able to realize our vision for the University’s present and future with the help of those dedicated to maintaining the University’s place as a leading academic institution.

Dr. Yossi Bachar, former Director General of the Ministry of Finance and currently Chairman of Israel Discount Bank, worked with us hand-in-hand for the past three years as Chairman of the Executive Committee and was a driving force in promoting the University. It is with sincere appreciation for his support that we bid Yossi farewell upon completing his term. We are very proud to be welcoming Adm. (ret.) Ami Ayalon as the new Chairman of the Committee and look forward to fruitful cooperation.

Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze’ev, President

University to memorialize Carmel fire victims

Among those killed in the massive fire on the Carmel were members of the University of Haifa community. Some were graduates and others were relatives. The University, along with its Chairman, Mr. Leon H. Charney, feels duty-bound to commemorate those who helped protect not only the Carmel but the University too. Thanks to a generous gift from Mr. Charney, the University will be awarding 44 scholarships over three years in a unique project to honor the memory of each of the 44 men and women who tragically died in the fire. The project intends to establish personal ties between the students and families of the victims. “The students’ academic and professional accomplishments will forever carry the memory of those who are no longer with us,” said President of the University, Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze’ev, who also extended his personal thanks to Mr. Charney for his heartfelt generosity.

Chairman of the Board of Governors, Mr. Leon H. Charney, reflects on how the University coped with the Carmel disaster

“The fire on the Carmel turned into a national disaster, with horrific loss of lives, homes, and livelihood. Prof. Ben-Ze’ev ordered a timely evacuation of the campus, and ensured logistic support for the Emergency Central Command on campus. This was carried out in conjunction with VP for Administration Baruch Marzan and Rector Prof. David Faraggi, both of whom also provided personal assistance on the campus throughout. I applaud their judicious action ultimately enabling the authorities and firefighters to save many lives. I also commend the international campaign that Amos Gaver, our VP for External Relations and Resource Development, established as he insightfully discerned the safety, security, and humanitarian needs resulting from the disaster.”
New MA programs in English
The University of Haifa will be offering several MA programs that will be taught in English for Israeli and international students.

Recognizing the need and increasing demand to open up more of the University’s leading MA programs to non-Hebrew speakers and international students, a number of programs are to be offered in English, starting October 2011-2012. These will include studies in National Security; Creative Arts Therapy; Child Development; Holocaust and Genocide; Man and the Sea; and Learning Disabilities. “We are taking an essential step that will provide more opportunities for graduate students who wish to benefit from some of our top programs. It is an exciting shift that will expand our student body and further raise the standards of MA studies at our University,” said University Rector, Prof. David Faraggi. International students will be able to attain a full MA degree from the University of Haifa in one calendar year of study (three semesters), or they could choose to receive a joint degree from the University of Haifa and a partner university. Students who wish to benefit from studying just one semester in English at the University of Haifa will also be able to do so, as part of an MA program from a partner university that will award the degree.

Conserving our heritage
The new MA in Conservation of Material Culture Heritage is first of its kind in Israel

One of the University of Haifa’s exciting new programs is the first of its kind in Israel. Studies in “Conservation of Material Culture Heritage” just completed a very successful and encompassing first term, focusing on various aspects of conservation: archaeological conservation, preservation of historical structures, and conservation of artifacts and artwork.

Material culture heritage conservation is well developed internationally, and for many years it has been a highly regarded area of study and research in the world’s top universities. Over the past few years, the field has been gaining more recognition in Israel too, and concern for conservation awareness for Israel’s cultural values has been coming from government offices, local and national authorities, and even private individuals. There is an increasing demand for professionals in the field, and for academic research that can address the complexities and questions that go hand-in-hand with conservation in Israel. “Until now, anyone wanting to specialize in the various areas of conservation had to travel abroad to do so. With this new program at the University of Haifa, specialized practice and research of the field in Israel will be available in an academic framework,” said Dr. Ravit Linn, who is heading the program.

Along came a spider
A new and previously unknown species of spider discovered by a team from the University of Haifa-Oranim has been chosen by DISCOVER magazine as one of the top 100 scientific discoveries of 2010. In January 2010 the team of scientists, headed by Dr. Uri Shanas, discovered this enormous spider, the largest of its type in the Middle East, in the southern Arava region. The finding also received astounding international media coverage, including The New York Times, International Herald Tribune, BBC, National Geographic, FOX, and more. “There are likely many more species that are unknown to us,” said Dr. Shanas. “If we do not preserve the few habitats that remain for these species, they will become extinct before we can even discover them.”

A winner, but in danger of extinction: Cerbalus aravensis (Photo: Yael Olek)
OECD Secretary-General receives honorary doctorate

Secretary-General of the OECD Angel Gurría received the University of Haifa’s highest accolade, the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, honoris causa, at a gala event in November at the University. After participating in an intriguing panel discussion alongside Israel’s Minister of Finance Dr. Yuval Steinitz, where he shared fascinating insights on growing global inequalities, Mr. Gurría was accompanied by MK Steinitz and Keter Israel CEO and Chairman Sami Segol to receive the award from University President Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze’ev and Rector Prof. David Faraggi. “This is a great honor for me but also a commitment. I am committed to not forgetting that on the day of receiving this degree we spoke of equality – how it can be achieved to improve humanity,” said Mr. Gurría.

Visiting a Legacy

A year after Soraya Nazarian donated to the University of Haifa a magnificent marble sculpture, “Legacy”, designed and created with her own hands, she and her husband, Younes Nazarian, longstanding friends of the University, brought a group of close friends to see where it graces the central crossroads on the campus.

Also at the event, which was superbly orchestrated by VP Amos Gaver and the Division of External Relations and Resource Development team, were former Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel, and Bahá’í International Community Secretary-General Dr. Albert Lincoln.

Mr. Gurría received the tribute in recognition of his inspiring and impressive leadership as Secretary-General of the OECD; his efforts in promoting economic cooperation through minimizing trade restrictions; reducing economic inequality; combating poverty; and investing in human capital through better education and health services. The ceremony was followed by a festive luncheon for an intimate gathering, including Mr. Gurría’s wife, Mrs. Lulu Gurría, Israeli industrialist Dov Lautman, and Mrs. Tova Segol.

Celebrating 75

The University of Haifa and the Israel National Security College Alumni Association proudly celebrated and honored Prof. Arnon Soffer on the occasion of his 75th birthday in December. Prof. Soffer, Head of the Chaikin Chair in Geostrategy at the University, has been teaching at the NSC for 30 years and head of its research center since 2007.

“Today you are celebrating 75 biological years but your energy, your physical and mental abilities, are those of a young man who wants to change the world - and indeed you do. You are brimming with ideas of how to turn Israel into a better place,” said University President Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze’ev in his address to Prof. Soffer.

The event provided the perfect opportunity to announce the establishment of a University of Haifa award for excellence in the field of national security in honor of Prof. Soffer. Standing beside Prof. Ben-Ze’ev for this announcement were Vice President for External Relations and Resource Development Amos Gaver and Dr. Pascal de Crousaz, a personal friend of Prof. Soffer and head of the Israel desk at Pictet & Cie, Private Bankers who are sponsoring the award. The announcement was followed by a ceremonial signing of a collaboration agreement between the University and the NSC by Mr. Gaver on behalf of the University and NSC Commander Gen. Gershon Hacohen on behalf of the college.

Amos Gaver (right) and Gen. Gershon Hacohen (center) sign a collaboration agreement between the University of Haifa and the National Security College. Looking on (left): Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Eyal Ben-Reuven, Chairman of the NSC Alumni Association

Above L-R: Dr. Pascal de Crousaz, Prof. Arnon Soffer, Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze’ev, Amos Gaver
The blazing fire on the Carmel Mountains broke out on the first morning of Chanukah, Thursday, December 2. Students and staff watched as flames spread with unimaginable speed across the forest facing the campus to the east.

President of the University, Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze’ev, with the agreement of the Rector and Vice President for Administration and following consultation with the Israel Police and the fire services, decided to evacuate the campus in an orderly fashion by early afternoon, even though there was no immediate danger on campus at that point.

By early Thursday evening, the security forces set up their central command on the campus. Designated tents for the police force, fire services and home front command were erected opposite the University’s Multipurpose Building. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Shimon Peres, Minister of Defense Ehud Barak, Minister of Internal Security Yitzhak Aharonovitch and Minister of the Interior Eli Yishai gathered in the plaza opposite the Jacobs Building on the second day to observe the spreading fire. Officials conducted ongoing assessments of the situation from the campus over the days of the fire.

The University, located in the heart of the largest national park in the country, is pained by the loss of 44 lives, and the destruction of thousands of acres of forest, homes and property.

Government officials, rescue forces, Haifa Municipality delegations and media representatives praised the dedicated logistic assistance the University provided during and following the disaster.
The blaze proved how vulnerable the University of Haifa campus is to such disasters. In response, the University launched the Carmel Fire Campaign to purchase life-saving equipment, and upgraded fire protection and prevention systems to meet more stringent standards for the safety of the campus main facilities. The Campaign is also providing for humanitarian aid to address the financial and emotional needs of the University community affected by the crisis.

The University’s top priority continues to be the safety of its students and staff and will do everything possible to continue ensuring their safety to the fullest extent in the future.

The Friends Associations of the University of Haifa have been working with us very closely to promote this campaign,” said VP of External Relations and Resource Development, Amos Gaver. He noted the widespread appeals sent out by Friends in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, the United States, Israel and even Panama.

You are invited to support the Carmel Fire Campaign. For more information, contact Amos Gaver, Vice President for External Relations and Resource Development, at +972-4-8240093.
Industrialist Dov Lautman receives University of Haifa Business Leaders Forum award

Israeli businessman and industrialist Dov Lautman, founder of Delta Galil Industries, received the University of Haifa’s Business Leaders Forum award at the University’s gala dinner event earlier this month at the Hilton Tel Aviv. “I thank the University of Haifa, which contributes greatly to many social projects in the north; and it is an honor for me to be receiving this award from the University,” said Mr. Lautman upon receiving the award in recognition of his longstanding contribution to Israeli society.

Among the impressive crowd attending the event, which was orchestrated by CEO of the University’s Friends Association Shira Ben-Or, were Minister of Education Gideon Sa’ar, Bank of Israel Governor Prof. Stanley Fischer, Israel Discount Bank Chairman Dr. Yossi Bachar, Bank Leumi President and CEO Galia Maor, Keter Israel CEO and Chairman Sami Segol, Mano Holdings Chairman and President Moshe Mano, Younes and Soraya Nazarian, and more.

“The Business Leaders Forum aims to connect the business world with the extensive academic and research activity taking place at the University of Haifa in order to increase commercial-financial ties between business leaders and the academic world,” said VP Amos Gaver.

Former president of Uruguay hosted in Argentina

Former President of Uruguay and current Uruguay Senator Dr. Luis Lacalle was the keynote speaker at a special cocktail and panel organized by the Argentinean Friends of the University of Haifa at the Alvear Palace Hotel in Buenos Aires. Dr. Lacalle discussed the challenges facing Latin America in light of the new political and economic landscape, highlighting the historical events leading to the economic and political agreement between the Mercosur countries - Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Wine tasting launches £1m appeal to support “ARTS-based” cancer therapy

British Friends of Haifa University hosted a delightful wine-tasting evening at Dartmouth House in Mayfair, London. The event was to support the work of University of Haifa’s Dr. Sarit Larisch, who is heading the pioneering “ARTS-based Cancer Therapy” research project. In her keynote address to more than 80 guests, Dr. Larisch described her project, which could revolutionize the way new drugs are developed to help and cure cancer patients. “I’ve spent 10 years understanding how the molecular mechanism of cell death and proliferation works and we now have most of the picture. Our research is at an exciting and crucial stage,” said Dr. Larisch.

Sir Walter Bodmer, one of the world’s leading scientists and cancer specialists, voiced his interest and support at the event. Also in attendance were Chateau Golan owner Shuki Shai, Ramon International Insurance Ltd. Managing Director Danny Raveh, Shimshon Torn-Hibler, Ronnie Fox and Robert Atkin. “We need to raise about £1 million within one year to ensure this important project reaches its next stage,” said British Friends Chairman Gary Hersham at the elegant and very successful event coordinated by the association’s Executive Director Jack Raymond. “This will include providing the laboratory with a new imaging machine and funding for additional Ph.D. students.”
Ami Ayalon appointed Chairman of Executive Committee

Admiral (ret.) Ami Ayalon has been appointed Chairman of the Executive Committee of the University of Haifa. Ayalon has previously served as commander of the Israeli Navy; director of the Israeli Security Agency (the Shin Bet); member of Knesset; and cabinet minister. He is currently chairman of AKIM Israel, the National Association for the Habilitation of the Intellectually Disabled in Israel.

“I am convinced that Ami Ayalon, with his extensive and proven experience contributing greatly to Israel’s security and development, will be able to assist the University in its ongoing development and in its taking a foothold as a research university leading in academic and humanist excellence,” said University President Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze’ev.

Ayalon has an MA in public administration from Harvard University and served most of his military service in the Israeli Navy. He was awarded the IDF’s Ribbon of Valor for his role in the raid against Green Island, Egypt, in 1969 and earned the Chief of General Staff’s Citation for leading operations against Lebanese terrorist cells. In 1992, Ayalon was appointed Navy commander and advanced to the rank of top admiral. In 1996 he concluded his military service and took the position of head of the Shin Bet, serving the organization until 2000. He instituted a “Code of Ethics” in the Shin Bet and campaigned for it to be enshrined in law, for which he received an honor from the Movement for Quality Government. In 2003, Ayalon and Dr. Sari Nusseibeh established “The People’s Voice”, an initiative to advance the peace process, based on a statement of principles for the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Ayalon pursued a political career from 2004 until 2008, when he resigned from government. While serving as Chairman of AKIM Israel, he presently heads the Forum to Promote Civilian National Service.

Brazil teams up with University of Haifa

The triumphant winners of the World Universities Debating Championships that took place in January are the University of Haifa’s own debating team, Meir Yarom and Michael Shapiro. In the final round, this duo prevailed over contestants from the Netherlands, Slovenia and Malaysia, to take the trophy in the English-as-a-Second Language category.

The University is very proud of this prominent victory, the WUDC being the world’s largest and most prestigious of debating competitions. More than 300 teams from 150 universities representing about 50 countries competed at this year’s competition in Botswana.

The path to winning this championship took Shapiro, studying philosophy and general history, and Yarom, a law student, through nine preliminary rounds, where they contested and defeated native English-speaking teams too, up to the grand final. The final motion that they debated wasn’t easy: “This house believes that the courts should break up consistently dominant political parties”. Coaching the University of Haifa’s debating team is Uri Zakai, who has seen his trainees attaining repeated victories in Israel and abroad. The University wholeheartedly congratulates and thanks Uri for his ongoing dedication to the team.

The University of Haifa conveyed its solidarity with the citizens of Brazil during the recent terrible floods. “We cannot express how sorry we are for the tragic losses experienced by the people of Brazil,” said University President Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze’ev.
With the new library wing near completion and renovations of the old library soon to begin, thanks to the generosity of the Nazarian family, Dr. Sharon Nazarian Baradaran, President of the YoS Nazarian Family Foundation, was thrilled to hear from Library Director Oren Weinberg and architect Asaf Lerman about the progress of this exciting project.

Canadian Friends of Haifa University and American Society of the University of Haifa joined forces to organize an intimate fundraising luncheon that was hosted by Eleanor and Michael Davis, members of the Canadian Friends. VP Amos Gaver was keynote speaker at this successful gathering in Florida, describing the role that the University played during the recent fire in the Carmel.

Upcoming events

February 13, 14
In the Name of Love. University President Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze’ev will share Valentine’s Day with guests at two special events. British Friends of the University of Haifa, London.

March 7
Bank of Israel Governor Stanley Fischer. Keynote speaker: Bank of Israel Governor Stanley Fischer. The German Society of the University of Haifa, chaired by Mrs. Sonja Lahnstein, Germany.

March 9
Bank Hapoalim Platinum Banking event, cosponsored by Israel Friends of the University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel.

March 10
Women as Victims of Violence During Times of War. A talk hosted by Argentinean Friends of the University alongside other organizations. Argentina.

The University of Haifa, in response to the enormous floods and cyclone that devastated Queensland, Australia, calls upon the University community and friends to make a contribution to assist aid for victims of the disaster. For further details, contact Paul Israel, Executive Director of Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce, at: 03-5106464, 054-4423385 or email: pauli@iacc.org.il.