

The Russian Program in Jewish Studies



Outstanding students of the Jewish Studies Program from the former Soviet Union participate in a Seminar in Israel

Students located in 26 different cities throughout the former Soviet Union from the vast expanses ranging from St. Petersburg to Kamchatka, from the Baltic States to Asia, study an academic program in Jewish and Israel Studies specially prepared in Russian. This program, now ten years old, was designed to answer the pressing need of students throughout the C.I.S., who are now permitted to explore their roots and heritage. Approximately 10,000 students are enrolled in the program which offers 13 courses, and another 12 courses are in preparation towards offering a complete Bachelor's degree in the field. The Open University of Israel studies have made extensive inroads in the C.I.S., with a number of universities asking to be a part of these programs and to cooperate and include these programs in their curriculum. A number of students participating in the program have decided to immigrate to Israel, and the Open University holds a conference every year for its students in Israel. The following are a few comments of recent immigrants to Israel who have studied in "The Russian Program," as it is popularly known:

Ivgenia Kriboruk of the Ukraine, is now a student at Ben-Gurion University in the Negev. She took a substantial number of courses in the former Soviet Union and transferred all the credits she accumulated to Ben-Gurion University, which gave her a head start on her studies and her advancement in Israel. Young and pragmatic, she moved to Israel as part of the youth program, Aleh, in which groups of young people move to Israel in conjunction with the Jewish

Agency, preceding their parents. Her father was not Jewish, her mother was. She decided she wanted to move to Israel and that she wanted to learn about her Jewish roots. "My studies gave me a spirit of patriotism, especially the course on the history of Jerusalem, and all the difficulties that Jews endured, and in spite of everything they retained their pride and determination. That inspired me and I too felt pride in being Jewish." Ivgenia is continuing her history studies

at the Open University while studying at Ben-Gurion University.

Vlad Sokolovsky, from Tashkent, has been active for years in the Jewish community and served as a coordinator in the Open University center in Tashkent. He has a Bachelor's degree in History from Uzbekistan and is completing a Master's degree at the



Around the World

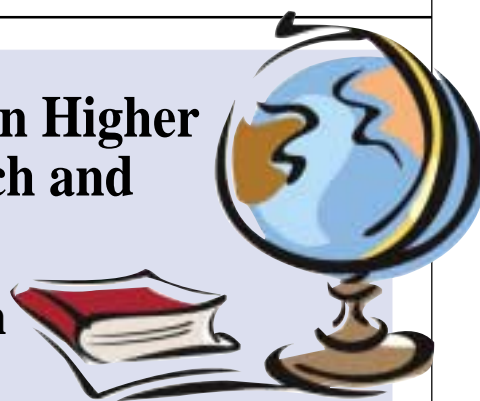
Hebrew University in Jerusalem. As a historian and a Jewish community leader, he found his studies at the Open University especially helpful. "I took all the courses I could at the Open University. That filled a niche that was empty in my world, because I had no objective information on that entire field. And the Open University provides a wealth of information. The course material also provides a better understanding and perspective for Russians who immigrate to Israel." A romantic side of his story began with a conference for coordinators, which brought him to meet Ina Wolfson from the faraway town of Rostov on Don, who is now his wife. They recently got married in Israel.

Roclan Salikov, a policeman from a remote town in the Ukraine, heard about studies at the Open University from a fellow policeman. Studying the courses at the Open University gradually had a far-reaching effect on him. He was fascinated with finding out about himself and his Jewish roots and learning about Israel. When he arrived in Israel he worked in manual labor in the Ashdod port. But whenever he had a spare moment at work, he would sit down and do homework on his course materials. His manager saw how diligent he was in his University studies, and told him that he was promoting him because he saw what a serious person he was. He was transferred to a better paying position, with no "shlepping." Roclan says he has become the authority among his colleagues on current events topics, government and politics, Israeli and Jewish history and a broad range of other subjects, due to the abundance of knowledge he acquired from his courses.

Vitali (Hiam) Kashkevitz, from Siberia, was a military man in the former Soviet Union, who was totally

UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge:

Global Collaboration on Higher Education



Prof. Sarah Guri-Rosenblit has been appointed member of the Scientific Committee for Europe and North America in the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge, as the sole participant from Israel, for a period of four years. The Forum is a global initiative aimed at widening the understanding of systems and structures, policies, trends and developments in higher education systems worldwide. It provides a platform for researchers, policy makers and experts to engage in relevant research issues. The Forum is composed of five regional scientific committees (for Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, the Arab states, and Europe and North America) and a Global Scientific Committee composed of the five chairs of each of the regional committees and additional scholars in the field of comparative higher education research.

Publication and dissemination of research findings is one of the

remote from his Judaism and, while technically he was Jewish, he knew little about it. When he started taking courses about Jewish history, he began devouring them with a voracious appetite. He felt that he had finally found his roots and a sense of

pillars of the Forum initiative. A publication series on the UNESCO Forum will be launched, including working documents, concept papers and abstracts on higher education, research and knowledge. The Forum also intends to publish a book annually on the research findings.

The Scientific Committee for Europe and North America has nine members from Germany, Britain, Sweden, Finland, Spain, The Czech Republic, the USA, Latvia and Israel. Its first meeting took place in June 2003 in Paris, and was devoted to setting its research agenda. Prof. Guri-Rosenblit has been working with two colleagues from Germany and the Czech Republic on a comparative study focused on the trends and impacts of the diversification of higher systems in various parts of the world. Preliminary results of this collaborative study will be presented at the next meeting of the Committee in March 2004 in Paris.

belonging. A total transformation of his outlook and approach ensued. Even after he moved to Israel, he continued to take Open University courses at a dizzying pace. What he learned about himself through the courses influenced his decision to be a part of Israel.