

Events

Academic Symposia

“Text and Context”

The Open University hosted two meetings of the research symposium “Text and Context” at Beit Daniel with the participation of researchers in various disciplines from Israeli universities. The symposium aimed to foster open discourse based on texts from the Middle Ages through the beginning of the modern era in different areas. The objective was to create a historical-textual-cultural dialog unconstrained by the disciplinary norms of self-contained ex cathedra lectures.

Symposium with guests from Japan

This year, at Beit Daniel, we hosted a group of four professors from CISMOR, the Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions, recently established at the prestigious Doshisha University in Kyoto. Prof. Ada Cohen, formerly coordinator of courses in Bible Studies at the Open University and currently at Doshisha University, initiated and organized the trip and accompanied the group on its visits to various institutions of higher education in Israel. The symposium included a presentation about the Open University with an emphasis on its special activities among various sectors in Israel and abroad, followed by lectures by historians from the Open University as well as by one of the Japanese guests on topics pertinent to the Center’s research areas. The central theme linking the lectures was the encounter between religions and between cultures.

“Concealing and Revealing in Language: Hidden Texts”

An in-house symposium for Open University editors and publishing house staff, with lectures by researchers and experts in their fields, focused on the issue of covert and overt messages in texts in various fields: language, philosophy, history, psychology, graphic arts and art.

Symposia for Students in Academic Courses

Twenty open symposia were held this year by Open University academic departments. Each symposium was designed by the

teaching teams and related to one or more courses. The symposia focused on several target audiences: students, tutors, and, in many cases, also the general public interested in culture and knowledge. As there were no large lecture halls on the Ramat Aviv campus, most of the symposia this year were held in Beit Hatefuzot (Diaspora Museum) and one in the Eretz Israel Museum. In organizing some of the symposia we continued the tradition of collaborative efforts with other universities and cultural institutions. Such collaboration enriches the symposia, imparts prestige to both institutions and increases our exposure to new audiences.

Symposia held by the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies

- In the Name of the People: Reflections on Classic Democracy
- The Criminal World: Lawbreakers and Deviants in the Jewish World
- Jewish Society in the Second Temple Period
- Devastation – Reactions in Hebrew Literature to National Disasters (in collaboration with the Bialik Institute)
- Egypt, the Older Sister: The Revolution and the Jews
- Youth, Generational Struggles and Rebellion in the Middle East

As part of the series on new books in Judaica and philosophy, “Culture, Society and Myth”, (in collaboration with The Shlomo Moussaieff Center for Research in Kabbalah, Bar Ilan University), two colloquia were held this year:

- An evening dedicated to the book by Yosef Kaplan, *From New Christians to New Jews*
- An evening dedicated to the book by Ephraim Meir, *Jewish Existential Philosophers in Dialogue*

Four symposia were conducted as part of the series “The Jew and the ‘Other’” in collaboration with the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center and the Cymbalista Center for Jewish Heritage, Tel Aviv University:

- Self-definition in the Perception of the ‘Other’ in Antiquity
- Artistic, Cultural and Theological Images in Medieval Europe
- Between Repulsion and Attraction: From the German Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century
- Historical and Current Images Between Jews and Arabs in Modern Times

Symposia conducted by the Department of Literature, Language and the Arts

Three symposia were held this year as part of the course **Experiencing Theater: Introduction to Drama**. The plays selected (Corneille, "The Illusion," Khan Theater, Jerusalem; Hanoach Levin, "Ya'akobi and Leidental," Cameri Theater; Brian Friel, "In Two Voices," based on Chekhov's plays, Geshen Theater) illuminate topics and issues discussed in the course. Before viewing each play, a discussion was held with experts on theater and with the play's director and actors.

Symposia conducted by the Department of Sociology, Political Science and Communication

- Academia and Politics in Africa
- Trends in Israeli Society
- Post-Colonialism: A Challenge for Mainstream Sociology?
- The Genocide in Rwanda – Ten Years After (in collaboration with the Van Leer Institute)

Symposium conducted by the Department of Education and Psychology

- Parents of Children with Special Needs: How They Cope – The auditorium was packed with over 500 participants involved in some facet of assisting children with a broad range of disabilities, all seeking an understanding, a formula, academic analysis, some tips, the common mutual support of the large audience, or whatever

might help in their never-ending effort to do their best for children with special needs. The foremost researchers, experts and practitioners gathered to share their knowledge and experience in meeting the challenges of crisis, stress and despair and to offer strength and practical tools to adapt to the changing needs of children with disabilities. The symposium ended with a performance of "Allon's Smile" tracing a parent's touching struggle, trials and hopes in raising her disabled child.

Ceremonies: Honorary Fellowships

Every year as part of the graduation ceremony the Open University also confers honorary fellowships on prominent individuals whose academic/professional/public activities contributed to the State of Israel and to the Open University in particular. This year fellowships were awarded to Professor Michael Sela and to Ms. Galia Maor.

Prof. Sela, a renowned expert in immunology and one of Israel's foremost scientists, is a prominent member of the faculty of the Weizmann Institute, and has been a visiting scientist at leading research institutes worldwide. Prof. Sela is involved in Israel's cultural and artistic life and is a member of the Board of numerous cultural institutions. He has contributed to the Open University as a member of its Academic Committee and through his involvement in the University's development and teaching programs.

Outgoing President Prof. Eli Nissim (right) at the farewell party in his honor, with incoming President Prof. Gershon Ben-Shakhar

A festive farewell event was held in honor of Lord Moser (left), who ended his term as Chancellor of the Open University



Ms. Galia Maor, President and CEO of the Bank Leumi Group, is involved in Israel's financial and economic life and in activities for the benefit of society and the community. She also devotes time and energy to the Open University as a member of the Financial Committee of the Open University Council.

Beit Daniel

In July 2000, the Open University acquired the leasing rights to 42 dunams of the site known as "**Beit Daniel**", which spreads over 77 dunams in the heart of Zichron Yaakov.

At Beit Daniel, the Open University holds extra-academic programs in various areas, such as music, philosophy, interpersonal relations, the wisdom of the Kabbalah, health, literary writing, photography, and others. Courses are taught by foremost lecturers from academia and experts in the various fields.

In addition, Beit Daniel is the site of tutoring, study and enrichment activities of the Open University and other bodies, including seminars in music, poetry and art; recitals; symposia; teacher training; vocational workshops; conferences; and concerts.

Activities held on the site include one-day events as well as those which last a few days and include sleeping accommodations in the guest rooms of Beit Daniel.

Activities are held in four buildings on the site:

- **Beit Daniel**, the main building, includes the offices, the kitchen and the dining hall. The dining hall seats 70, and can seat a larger number by using the terrace and the lawn. These areas have been renovated by the Open University; other parts of the building are still not in use.
- **Writers' House** (*Beit HaSofrim*) has been entirely renovated by the OU. It has a seminar hall for 25-30 students with a fireplace that provides a special atmosphere to the room and the activities held there. The building also has seven new guest rooms.
- **Ruth House** (*Beit Rut*) has seven guest rooms which are in use in their original state, and another two guest rooms which are not in use.
- **Lillian Hall** (*Beit Lillian*) has been renovated by the OU. The building includes an auditorium which seats about 100 and a classroom for 30 students.

The "**Langa Estate**" is on the edge of the site. At this stage the estate is not in use. Together with the Council for the Preservation of Buildings and Sites and the Ministry of Education, the University is performing salvage operations to prevent further deterioration and disintegration of the site until funding is found for the renovation and restoration of the estate. The university is acting independently and in cooperation with other relevant bodies to obtain the resources needed for this purpose. The site includes extensive lawns and a natural grove.

The site of Beit Daniel

