מכון ויצמן למדע
WEIZMANN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE

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Scholarship Program Bears Fruit

Where are ISEF alumni from Weizmann today?

Forty years ago an ambitious scholarship program for Israelis from immigrant and underserved communities began investing in Israel's future, one mind at a time. Founded in 1977 by Edmond J. Safra z"l, Lily Safra, and Nina Weiner, the ISEF Foundation has now awarded more than 20,000 scholarships for higher education and helped more than 6,000 underprivileged young Israelis earn degrees. Some of them have earned their MScs and PhDs at the Weizmann Institute of Science and have gone on to make their mark in the world of science.

Dr. Michael Yartsev runs the NeuroBat Lab at the Helen Wills Neuroscience Institute at the University of California Berkeley. He completed his PhD in 2012 under the guidance of Prof. Nachum Ulanovsky at the Weizmann Institute with the support of an ISEF PhD Fellowship. Dr. Yartsev is fascinated with the neurobiological mechanism by which bats acquire their vocalizations, targeting a core process that is shared with humans called "vocal learning." ISEF supported Dr. Yartsev, beginning with his BSc and MSc at Ben-Gurion University, and continuing through his PhD and beyond, providing an ISEF International Fellowship to support Dr. Yartsev's postdoctoral research at the Neuroscience Institute at Princeton University. After completing his postdoctoral research, he joined the University of California Berkeley. "My time at the Weizmann Institute was transformative to my career, as it exposed me to the extraordinary model system: the bat."

Prof. Haim Suchowski, who earned his MSc and PhD from the Weizmann Institute in 2011, leads a group exploring nano-optics and ultrafast physics at Tel Aviv University. Their goal is to use light to control and study quantum systems. This includes exotic pursuits such as exploring the dynamics of ultrafast "hot" electrons, or creating negative and even zero refractive materials that are 100% transparent to light at certain wavelengths. During his master's studies, he was involved with ISEF activities on campus, tutoring and mentoring Ethiopian youth through the Sparks of Science Program in Memory of Moshe Pergament. He then became an ISEF-Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellow in nano-photonics at the University of California at Berkeley. He is a frequent collaborator with his Weizmann mentor, Prof. Yaron Silberberg in the Department of Physics of Complex Systems.

Dr. Orly Salama-Alber *(photo by Shelly Hamer-Rogotner)*

As an ISEF Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Dr. Orly Salama-Alber explores how proteins recognize carbohydrates. This basic biological mechanism is central to understanding the action of certain antibiotics and other types of drugs, how microbes and bacteria infect cells, and a number of biochemical processes important to the food and textile industries. Her work builds on many of the skills she learned as an MSc and PhD student working with Prof. Ed Bayer, in the Department of Biological Chemistry at the Weizmann Institute of Science, completing her PhD in 2013. "As an MSc and PhD student at the Weizmann Institute, I was constantly exposed to innovative and inter-disciplinary research while having access to the most advanced instruments and services I needed for my work. In addition, I was given the opportunity to attend several international courses in my field of interest, x-ray crystallography and structural biology, which broaden my expertise. My work at the Weizmann Institute was published in several peer-reviewed journals and granted me several scholarships, including the ISEF Fellowship, which paved the way to my current postdoctoral research position."