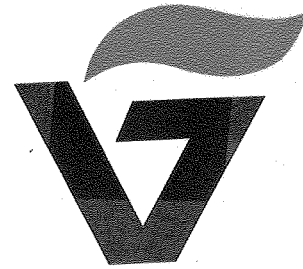


TOUCHED BY TECHNOLOGY

THROUGH THE EYES OF A TECHNION PROFESSOR

By Leah Colmer



I was a little nervous sitting in the hotel lobby as I waited to interview notable Technion Professor Adam Shwartz, Chairman of the Technion Department of Electrical Engineering, deeply steeped in computer applications, systems and networks.

Technology. It had really never been my friend. Yes, helpful at times, but more like a nudge, or even worse--like my little sister: stubborn and uncooperative unless I did things her way.

Professor Shwartz walks in and nonchalantly sits down. I shift uncomfortably in my chair. Could I do this interview? My new computer, modem and all, still lay in a tangled mess on my floor amongst various cords that I couldn't make heads or tails of. 11 days and counting since I brought my computer home from the store, and with the exception of knowing where the electrical outlet was for the power cord, I wasn't making any progress.

Pushing that image out of my head, I flash my bravest smile and prepare to begin. Before long, and much to my relief, Professor Shwartz is talking about the beginnings of the State of Israel and how the Technion played a fundamental role in facilitating that.

"For a long time in Israel, the Technion was the only civil engineering school. Anyone educated in Israel who was a civil engineer came from the Technion.

"When Israel was established, it was very backwards in terms of infrastructure," shared Shwartz. "Israel was like a third-world country. Roads were bad, and bridges seriously needed. The country required buildings, schools, and safe roads. All of this development came from the engineers educated at the Technion," stated Shwartz.

I smiled. Now this was something I could relate to.

The Technion is rated among the top universities in the world, with the Computer Science Department and the Faculty of Electrical Engineering having been ranked 15th in their fields respectively. These facts, although monumentally impressive, somehow manage to still escape common knowledge in both Jewish and non-Jewish circles alike.

"There's a lot, people don't know about the Technion," ventured Shwartz.

One such fact is Sci-Tech, a hands-on summer study program at the Technion for high school students who have a burning desire to learn the newest trends in Technology.

"Sci-Tech is a state-of-the-art experience, as all teaching and research are done in the labs. This is a unique combination and many students want to come to our labs for this very reason. It is very exciting

for anyone, but especially high school students who have endless curiosity and love to get their hands on anything and everything,” declares Shwartz.

Something Shwartz finds very rewarding is the relationship between students and professors. The faculty’s availability to students is something that is at the very backbone of the Technion. Any university could claim such a statement, but few could back it up the way Technion professors do. Shwartz’s schedule demonstrates this. With a crushing itinerary, Shwartz is making time later on in the afternoon to meet Mitchel Adler and Dr. Benjamin Weiss, both of University of Michigan. Adler is interested in Technion for graduate studies and Dr. Weiss will be joining the Technion for a year of post-doctoral work.

“I don’t know how they found out about me being here,” Shwartz says surprisingly.

Technology, I say to myself.

In fact, it is this very technology that Shwartz is so passionate about. Shwartz stated that studying at the Technion is not for the light of heart, but for those who like challenges, want to get the most out of themselves, and become the best professional possible.

“People are constantly using their brain at the Technion,” asserts Shwartz. With Einstein as one of the founding fathers of the Technion, I find it hard to imagine any other way.

While experts state that the average person uses only about 12 percent of their brain, Shwartz estimates that for those studying at the Technion that percentage is almost doubled. Indeed with Nobel Prizes going to two Technion graduates in 2004 this clearly seems to be the case.

We conclude, and Shwartz is off to see the two U of M students he has an appointment with. As I return home I look pensively at my disconnected computer entangled in a disheveled mess of wires, still useless to me and I dubiously wonder how much of my brain I am using.

Tentatively I open the manuals and begin to read the layers of instructions. Slowly I start to untangle mangled cords, connect wires and begin to get a glimmer of hope. By night’s end, little twinkling green lights are winking back at me and my computer is up and running, functioning effortlessly in top form. I was finally connected to the world. I give a sigh of relief. Technology had become a friend.

For more information about Sci-Tech or the Technion, please call the ATS office at 248-737-1990, or email leah@ats.org.