

I don't know about you, but I'm impressed.

It does my heart good to know that from a university in the harshest region of Israel comes hope for reclaiming wastelands all over the world...and feeding millions.

But even more, I love what Ben-Gurion University means to thousands of fine young people.

BGU is Israel's youngest university -- one that has grown since it was founded in 1969 from 500 to more than 12,000 students.

Very special students.

Ben-Gurion University is for the strivers.

For the self-starters.

For young men and women who are willing to invest whatever personal effort it takes to have the chance to learn.

Who are they?

Many are from the development towns of the Negev.

BGU ranks number one in Israel in the percentage of students who come from families forced to flee from the Arab states.

At BGU today, you'll meet young immigrants from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union.

BGU is a special place.

For special people.

For the builders of Israel's future.

But even they need something to start with.

And that's where you and I come in.

Ben-Gurion University is facing an uncertain future. Because of economic austerity in Israel, the University is simply not getting the resources it needs.

I want to help the brilliant scientists at Ben-Gurion University "decode the hidden messages of nature" in the Negev.

I want to see Israel lead the way in teaching hungry nations to feed themselves.