

# Kosher seal of approval for water buffalo

Thanks to the initiative of two Bar-Ilan University researchers and Shmulik Friedman, Director of Grazing Land in Israel in the Ministry of Agriculture, Israel's Chief Rabbi – Shlomo Amar – is granting, for the first time, a kosher seal of approval to the Asian water buffalo.

Dr. Zohar Amar (no relation to the Chief Rabbi), of the University's Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology and Dr. Ari Zivotofsky (Interdisciplinary Brain Sciences) -- experts in the kashrut of exotic birds, animals and grasshoppers -- presented Halachic, anatomic and historic evidence regard-

ing the slaughter of water buffalo in Jewish communities to Chief Rabbi Amar. The two also presented him with testimony gathered from ritual slaughterers who slaughtered water buffalo in the past, in Jerusalem, Petach Tikva, Bnei Brak and the Galilee. The Chief Rabbi then visited the Hula Nature Reserve, where he saw first-hand the herd of water buffalo raised there and examined the dental structure of scattered skulls from deceased water buffalo.

Water buffalo meat is sought after by certain populations and has market potential within Israel and abroad. Authentic moz-



Dr. Zohar Amar, Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar and Dr. Avi Zivotofsky following Rabbi Amar's inspection of Asian water buffalo at Moshav Bitzaron (near Ashdod)

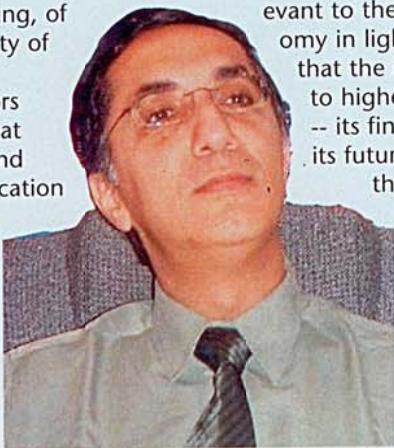
zarella cheese is produced from water buffalo milk,

which is also noted for its medicinal uses.

## Education and economic growth

New research published in *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, a leading academic journal edited by the Economics Faculty of Harvard University, finds a positive relationship between level of education and economic growth. The research is authored by Prof. Daniel Levy, of the Economics Department at Bar-Ilan University, along with Profs. Matthew Higgins, of the Georgia Institute of Technology, and Andrew Young, of the University of Mississippi.

The authors conclude that university and college education that leads to bachelor and higher degrees seems to contribute to society's long-term well-being,



Prof. Daniel Levy

not only in terms of higher income levels (which is due to the improved efficiency and productivity gains made by a more educated labor force), but also in terms of higher income growth rates. Therefore, policy makers need to make a greater effort to make higher education more accessible, especially to low income and low socio-economic segments of society.

According to Prof. Levy, the research findings are relevant to the Israeli economy in light of the fact that the issues related to higher education -- its financing, and its future, as well as the role and the size of public sector in the economy -- are currently topics of public debate in Israel.

## Brain, poetry and everyday language

A first-of-its-kind study published in a recent issue of *Neuropsychologia* reveals that different brain areas are activated in order to understand poetry and everyday language. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), researchers at Bar-Ilan University's Gonda (Goldschmied) Multidisciplinary Brain Research Center, Northwestern University in Chicago, and Tel Aviv's Sourasky Medical Center joined forces to examine whether the same areas of the brain which control language processing are also involved in understanding poetry.

The current study used neuroimaging technology (fMRI) to identify the areas of the brain involved in novel metaphor processing and, specifically,

brain areas that are thought to be active during tasks that require verbal creativity.

The most important finding is that a special right lateralized brain area is activated in order to understand poetic metaphors -- a region which is not involved in understanding natural language. These findings suggest that a completely different form of information and thought processing is needed in order to understand poetry.

The study was conducted by Bar-Ilan University doctoral student Nira Mashal, as part of an intensive research project led by Prof. Miriam Faust, Chairman of the University's Department of Psychology and Director of the brain and language laboratories.