



Prof. David Passig

How would you manage your financial portfolio if you were privy to information about Israel's economic situation – years before events unfold? In what way would you prepare yourself for a war – if you were given the estimated date and the place of the next one?

The above questions would seem fitting scenarios for a “back to the future” science fiction film. Yet, the BIU Churgin School of Education's Prof. David Passig has predicted the answers to such queries and more, in his book *The Future Code*, published in July 2008 by Sifrei Hemed: Yediot Aharonot. On the best-seller list since September, *The Future Code*, which focuses on Israel, has attracted the avid attention of the Israeli media. Prof. Passig has been interviewed extensively and has appeared on enumerable television talk shows.

The field of Futures Studies seeks to understand what is likely to continue, what is likely to change, and what is novel. Part of the discipline thus seeks a systematic and pattern-based understanding of past and present, and to determine the likelihood of future events and trends. Prof. Passig, with a PhD in Future Studies from the University of Minnesota, is a futurist, specializing in future technologies and their impact on economic, social and educational systems. Head of BIU's Faculty of Social Sciences' Graduate Program in Communication Technologies, he is in demand around the world as a consultant in his unique field.

The Science of Predicting the Future

At Bar-Ilan's one-of-a-kind Virtual Reality Laboratory, which Prof. Passig heads, he studies how future technologies impact cognitive skills. At the same time he is working on developing future methodologies – “to find the logic behind systems in order to figure out future trajectories, with the idea being to organize these futures in order to provide a basis for future decision-making,” says Prof. Passig. “The aim is to identify the driving forces behind the system so as to avoid negative trends and enforce positive behaviors,” he adds.

How does Prof. Passig achieve this goal? “Through the building of new models based on Systems’ theories and models,” he answers. “On the basis of these models, we can make predictions about the future and design solutions related to economics and security in Israel. For instance, what drives economic development? We add new perspectives to existing economic models by taking into account the demographics and different age groups of specific populations.”

“The economic crash of 2008 was a foregone conclusion,” says Prof. Passig. “In my book I reveal how in 2006 I forecasted the time it would happen, the kind of crash that would occur and the length of the slump way before it occurred. I can predict with a significant degree of validity that it will last for about 12 years after which Israel has the potential to become one of the world’s most advanced top economic forces, since it is in an opposite and positive trajectory than most of the industrial economies.”

Prof. Passig’s book lists a variety of trends he predicts. Some have already begun to unfold. “When the book was written and published they were inconceivable,” he says. “However, by the summer of 2009 they are not wild cards anymore, but valid possible trends.” Among them:

- Based on the cycles of wars as evolved in the last couple millennia, Israel will be part of a war by 2020 which will define its history of the 21st century. This war could be a decisive battle with its neighbors.

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- In most of the nations surrounding Israel an accelerating process of social and national decay is underway. A flow of masses might storm the borders of Israel and no peace treaty will hold the collapse of the borders.
- The US might be persuaded to cut its strategic ties with Israel in response to the outcry of various local and international groups.

- Zionism of the 20th century has probably exhausted itself. Israel would greatly benefit from developing a collective covenant that will lead it to greater achievements in the 21st century.

Futurists are the agents of long-term planning – thinking ahead. The value of knowing what will happen is self-evident. Yet, regretfully, says Prof. Passig, despite being in possession of the tools for being aware of future events, our political and economic leadership unfortunately do not assume responsibility for planning for the inevitable. This is also a problem in public institutions. Ten years ago Prof. Passig predicted that every university would be deeply involved in nanotechnology. On the basis of this knowledge academic institutions should have been better prepared to accommodate this field and would not now be scrambling to put together facilities. He predicts that the next big “thing” will be robotics – and that now is the time to prepare for this future trend.

“Futures Studies is extremely multidisciplinary – bringing together lots of totally different and unrelated fields,” says Prof. Passig. “This is unique at Bar-Ilan University, where everyone tends to support each other and work together,” he adds. With this in mind he is developing a new multidisciplinary approach to improve communication between all the disciplines. Hopefully, Israeli leaders in government, economics, and education will pay heed to Prof. Passig’s predictions and prepare well for the future!