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THE AVI CHAI PRIZE - 5761

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A Commitment to the Jewish People, Judaism, and the State of Israel

AVI CHAI's primary goals are to encourage mutual understanding and sensitivity among Jews of different religious backgrounds and to increase understanding and appreciation of Jewish traditions, customs, and laws. Some programs in Israel currently supported by AVI CHAI are:

* **Tzav Pius:** a broad public campaign to encourage mutual understanding among Israeli Jews. The campaign calls for affirmation of the principles: "We respect Jewish tradition; we safeguard democracy." Tzav Pius initiates and supports a variety of educational and community-related projects.

* **Keshet School of Jerusalem:** now kindergarten through tenth grade, with plans to develop through high school. Keshet embodies a learning community of students from religious and secular backgrounds, committed to respect for religious differences. Amutat Keshet has initiated a program to encourage the opening nationwide of additional schools in the spirit of Keshet.

* **Beit Morasha of Jerusalem:** trains educational leaders, men and women, to address the needs of contemporary Israeli society. The educational program integrates both yeshiva and academic approaches to Jewish scholarship.

* **Yahalom:** a program aimed at bringing together parents and children to study Jewish texts, within the framework of state elementary schools. Yahalom has expanded its scope of activity from schools with significant immigrant populations to those with a more "veteran" population.

* **Kolot:** an intensive year-long program of Jewish learning for leaders in business, media, and other professions.

* **Revivim:** a teacher training program to revitalize Jewish studies in state high schools, implemented by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The four-year program is offered to exceptional university students, who will receive a Masters degree in Jewish studies.

* **Tzohar:** rabbis dedicated to revitalizing the role of the rabbinate in Israeli society by engaging in meaningful dialogue with the secular world. Tzohar's activity began with halachic weddings adapted for secular couples. For the past three years, Tzohar has trained a cadre of young community rabbis to serve the entire spectrum of Jewish residents in their communities. Tzohar is now developing a training program for madrichot kallot (pre-marital instruction for brides).

* **Open Batei Midrash:** a training program implemented in partnership with Beit Midrash Elul. Facilitators and potential coordinators receive intensive training at Elul and accept responsibility to establish open batei midrash for the study of Judaism in their home community.

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* **The Center for Jewish Education in the Public School System:** a group of high schools connected with the Shalom Hartman Institute in a comprehensive framework that includes: a year-long curriculum for principals; a three-year program for training teachers in Jewish studies instruction; and pedagogic support for the teachers in building and implementing Jewish studies curricula in their schools.

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* **Parshat HaShavuah:** exposes students in state junior high schools to the weekly Torah portion. The curriculum enables pupils to become familiar with perspectives relating to Jewish tradition and culture and to become acquainted with texts from the classical “Jewish bookshelf,” while linking the relevant issues to their own world. The project, piloted in Jerusalem in partnership with the Jerusalem Educational Authority, is expanding to additional areas of the country.

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* **AVI CHAI Siddur:** a user-friendly and readable siddur published in two volumes for the home and Shabbat, for Israelis with little or no background in its contents. The siddur is now in its third printing and has sold over 10,000 copies.

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* **Alma Hebrew College:** a liberal arts center in Tel Aviv for the study of Hebrew culture and contemporary Jewish identity.

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* **Talmudic Institute for Women:** a three-year program of advanced Jewish learning at MaTaN. The program is intended to develop a cadre of female scholars able to reach the summit of Talmudic and halachic scholarship.

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* **Pre-army Mechinot:** the Foundation supports four such frameworks around the country, with the goal of fostering the Jewish and Zionist commitment of youth while preparing them for their army service.

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* **Research:** AVI CHAI has funded a follow-up to the 1993 Guttman study, “Beliefs, Observances and Social Interaction Among Israeli Jews,” to be completed by the end of the year 2001. The Foundation also is funding a feasibility study to explore possible educational frameworks for the population of “traditional” Jews in Israel.

* **Sabbaticals:** during 5761 (the 2001/02 academic year), the Foundation will fund sabbaticals for four professionals involved in the Foundation’s fields of interest, in order to advance their professional and personal development. Three professionals qualified and took sabbaticals during 5760, and we will continue to offer this program in the future.

AVI CHAI also works to promote its goals through a variety of projects in North America.

The AVI CHAI Prize

The AVI CHAI Prize is being awarded for the ninth year.

The aim of the Prize is to recognize and reward individuals who contribute toward increasing mutual understanding and sensitivity among Israeli Jews of different backgrounds and commitments to Jewish heritage.

The Prize may be conferred on any individual resident of Israel (the Prize is not awarded to an institution, organization, or any other public body) who has made a significant, ongoing or innovative contribution to creating a bridge between Jews with different approaches to tradition, and whose activities stem from an approach of understanding and appreciation for the various facets of Jewish life.

The Prize Committee is composed of eight people of public stature in Israeli society who represent a broad spectrum of approaches to Jewish tradition.

The AVI CHAI Prize - 5761 is in the amount of NIS 75,000 to each recipient.

The AVI CHAI Prize - 5753 was awarded to **Dr. Daniel Tropper**, initiator and founder of GESHER. GESHER's goal is to bring together students of different orientations to Jewish tradition in order to strengthen their Jewish-Zionist identity and nurture respect between religious and secular.

The AVI CHAI Prize - 5754 was awarded to the late **Arieh Ben-Gurion**, founder of the Kibbutz Institute for Festivals and Holidays. The Institute seeks to integrate Jewish tradition within kibbutz life and to foster innovative Jewish cultural models for the kibbutz and all of Israel.

The AVI CHAI Prize - 5755 was awarded to **Dr. Zvi Zameret**, Director of Yad Itzhak Ben-Zvi. Dr. Zameret's career and life provide a personal example of the successful dialogue between Jews of different religious backgrounds, and his actions foster respect for, and knowledge of, Jewish tradition in all sectors of Israeli society.

The AVI CHAI Prize - 5756 was awarded to **Rabbi Menachem Fruman** for his many initiatives to increase understanding and sensitivity, and his continuing search for a common language with which to develop respectful co-existence between all sectors of the Jewish people. His approach inspired the formation of Tekoa, where residents with different Jewish lifestyles live and study together with mutual respect and openness.

The AVI CHAI Prize - 5757 was awarded to **Ms. Ruth Calderon Ben-Shachar** and to **Mr. Moti Bar-Or** for their joint initiative in the establishment of Beit Midrash Elul in Jerusalem. They developed a communal learning method where men and women of different approaches to religion and tradition learn to study together with respect, cooperation, and tolerance. Today, Elul serves as a model and source of inspiration for communal learning frameworks for religious and secular around the country.

The AVI CHAI Prize - 5758 was awarded to **Professor Avraham Shapira** of Tel Aviv University for his efforts to educate the kibbutz movement and the general public in the Jewish cultural heritage. By virtue of his numerous spiritual, cultural, and educational endeavors, Prof. Shapira has demonstrated that differences of belief and conviction can be bridged and that dialogue between people of different approaches to religion can be fostered.

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The AVI CHAI Prize - 5759 was awarded to **Mrs. Tova Ilan** for her diverse educational activities, which culminated in the establishment of the Yaacov Herzog Center for Jewish Studies ten years ago and her work as its director since its founding. Mrs. Ilan's educational activities represent a model of how to conduct study and dialogue in a multicultural society such as Israel.

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The AVI CHAI Prize - 5760 was awarded to **Rabbi Professor David Hartman** for his life's work as an educator, philosopher, and writer, especially his founding and directing of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. Professor Hartman's rare combination of thought and action serve as a model of an uncompromising quest for tolerance, for listening to the other, and for fostering an understanding and appreciation of the Jewish heritage.

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THE AVI CHAI PRIZE COMMITTEE

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The AVI CHAI Prize - 5761 is awarded to Professor Ruth Gavison and Rabbi Yakov Medan for their proposed “Foundation for a New Social Pact between Religious and Secular Jews in Israel.”

For the past two years, Prof. Gavison and Rabbi Medan have been engaged in a dynamic, in-depth dialogue about the main controversies between religious and secular Jews in Israel, motivated by a sense of public responsibility and deep inner conviction. Underlying their work are basic principles that both accept: the importance of assuring the viability of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state and the need to minimize government intervention with regard to how individuals conduct their lives with respect to religious observance. Hence, they both believe that an agreed-upon political and legal framework must allow for the full expression of a variety of identities and ways of life, while maintaining the Jewish character of the state.

The initial proposals drawn up by Prof. Gavison and Rabbi Medan were discussed at the Shalom Hartman Institute by a review panel comprising thinkers and public figures from across the spectrum. During 2000/01, following these discussions, the first edition of the “Foundation for a New Social Pact between Religious and Secular Jews in Israel” was completed, with support from the Yitzhak Rabin Center for Israel Studies, and it is now being discussed in a variety of frameworks and public forums.

The collaboration between Prof. Gavison and Rabbi Medan was conceived, coordinated, and aided from the start by Yisrael Harel.

The very thorough and broad-based work of Prof. Gavison and Rabbi Medan has resulted in detailed proposals intended to serve as a basis for a new relationship between religion and state in Israel. Their effort to bridge the deepest chasm existing in Israeli Jewish society, based on respect and sensitivity for the fundamental commitments of the different segments of the population, is exemplary in its scope and thoroughness. Their important work has the potential to make a weighty contribution to determining Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state.

The Prize Committee

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Professor Ruth Gavison

Professor Ruth Gavison was born in Jerusalem in 1945 and resides there today.

She is a professor in the Faculty of Law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she holds the Haim H. Cohn Chair for Human Rights, and is a senior fellow of the Israel Democracy Institute.

Prof. Gavison has an LL.B. (with distinction), an LL.M. (with special distinction) and a B.A. in philosophy and economics, all from the Hebrew University. She earned a D.Phil. in legal philosophy from Oxford University in 1975.

Prof. Gavison was a visiting professor at Yale Law School (1978—1980) and at the USC Law Center (1990—1992). In 1998—1999, she was a Lawrence Rockefeller Fellow at the Center for Human Values at Princeton University.

Prof. Gavison was among the founders of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) in 1974. She served as its chair for many years and was its president from 1996 to 1999. Since 1998 she has been a member of the International Commission of Jurists. She is also a member of the presidium of the Yachad Council.

Her fields of research and teaching include the philosophy of law, human rights, Israeli society, and the role of laws and courts in divided democracies. At the Israel Democracy Institute she deals with mapping and bridging the central schisms in Israeli society.

Ruth Gavison has one son.

Rabbi Yakov Medan

Rabbi Medan was born in Jerusalem in 1950 and has been a resident of Alon Shvut in Gush Etzion since its founding in 1970.

Since 1976, he has taught at the Har Etzion hesder yeshiva in Alon Shvut, including in its rabbinical training program, and has taught Bible and Jewish philosophy at the Yaacov Herzog Center for Jewish Studies, which is affiliated with the yeshiva. Rabbi Medan also teaches in various colleges, including Michlelet Bayit Vegan in Jerusalem, Yiud, Efrata, Midreshet Lindenbaum, Midreshet Migdal Oz, Yeshivat Or Etzion, Sha'alvim, Yeroham and the Midrasha for Women at Bar-Ilan University.

Rabbi Medan is the editor of *Megadim*, the Bible journal of the Yaacov Herzog Center, and has published hundreds of articles in a variety of periodicals and journals—mainly religious publications—on Talmud, Bible, Jewish philosophy, and Eretz Israel.

Rabbi Medan's public activity includes membership in the national administration of Bnei Akiva, membership on the board of the Joint Institute for Jewish Studies (the joint conversion-preparation school recommended by the Neeman Commission), and membership on the YESHA Council (Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza).

Yakov Medan and his wife Rutie are the parents of seven children.

