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THE AVI CHAI PRIZE - 5758

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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 two principles: "We respect Jewish tradition; we safeguard democracy." Tzav Pius initiates and supports a variety of educational activities and publicity efforts.

* **Tzohar:** rabbis dedicated to revitalizing the role of Judaism in the State of Israel by engaging in meaningful dialogue with the secular world. Best known for conducting halachic weddings for secular couples, they are now undertaking the task of training and placing community rabbis who will serve an entire community.

* **Keshet School (Jerusalem):** seeks to develop a learning community of students from religious and secular backgrounds, committed to respect for religious differences.

* **Beit Morasha of Jerusalem:** trains educational leaders to address the needs of contemporary Israeli society. A Sephardic rabbinic training track, intended to develop modern Zionist spiritual leaders of Sephardic background, was recently inaugurated. In addition, Beit Morasha provides educational services to the state school system.

* **Yahalom:** a program presently aimed at exposing immigrant families to Jewish texts and sources by enabling parents and children to learn together.

* **The Center for Jewish Education in the Public School System:** state (secular) high school principals and teachers meet to study traditional Jewish texts, learn important Jewish concepts and issues, and reconceptualize the place of Jewish tradition in their lives and the lives of their school communities.

* **Another Journey:** in an effort to bridge the cultural divide that exists between high school students of state religious and non-religious schools, this program utilizes a variety of cultural media and contemporary films as triggers for discussions between students.

* **Jewish/Zionist identity seminars in the IDF:** two-day seminars for cadets who participate in IDF officer training courses, in conjunction with Shorashim. The seminars encourage cadets to explore what being Jewish and Zionist means to them.

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* Open Batei Midrash: a training program, implemented in partnership with Beit Midrash Elul and the Israel Community Center Association. Facilitators and potential coordinators nationwide receive intensive training at Elul, and accept the responsibility to establish a viable Jewish study framework in their home community.

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* Parshat HaShavuah: a project intended to expose middle schoolers to the weekly Torah portions throughout the year; allow pupils to become familiar with perspectives relating to Jewish tradition and culture; and enable them to get acquainted with various texts from the classical "Jewish bookshelf".

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* Machon Ahavat Emet: a new pilot program to nurture the value of Ahavat Yisrael (love of fellow Jews) within the haredi community. The project develops curriculum and programs for elementary schools that emphasize respect for all Jews, regardless of their religious background.

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* Adult Jewish study programs include: an experiment to create autonomous adult Jewish learning groups; development of clear and easy-to-use home and Shabbat siddurim for Israelis with little or no background; and the development of an intensive program of Jewish learning for executives in business, politics, and media.

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* Research: as part of our efforts to encourage discussion about the Jewish character of Israeli society, AVI CHAI has commissioned a follow-up to the 1993 Guttman study of "Beliefs, Observances and Social Interaction Among Israeli Jews," to be completed by the year 2000. The Foundation is also exploring possible research projects on Israeli youth and haredim.

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

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The AVI CHAI Prize in Israel

The AVI CHAI Prize is being awarded for the sixth consecutive year.

The aim of the Prize is to recognize and encourage significant initiatives that contribute toward increasing mutual understanding and sensitivity among Israelis of different backgrounds and commitments to religious observance in Israel.

The Prize may be conferred on any Israeli citizen (not 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 the Jewish heritage.

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

The AVI CHAI Prize in Israel - 5758 is in the amount of NIS 50,000.

The AVI CHAI Prize in Israel - 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 in Israel - 5754 was awarded to the late Arye Ben-Gurion, founder of the Inter-Kibbutz Holiday Archives. The Archives seek to integrate Jewish tradition within kibbutz life and to foster innovative Jewish cultural models for the kibbutz and all of Israel.

Arye Ben-Gurion passed away on June 6, 1998/ 12 Sivan 5758. His memory will be cherished by all, and the Inter-Kibbutz Holiday Archives will serve as part of his living memorial.

The AVI CHAI Prize in Israel - 5755 was awarded to Dr. Zvi Zameret, Director of Yad Itzhak Ben-Zvi. Dr. Zameret's career and lifestyle 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 in Israel - 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 in Israel - 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 in Israel - 5758 is being awarded to Professor Avraham Shapira at The Cymbalista Synagogue and Jewish Heritage Center at Tel Aviv University.

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The AVI CHAI Prize for 5758 is awarded this year to Professor Avraham Shapira of Tel Aviv University, member of Kvutzat Yizrael, one of the leaders in the endeavor to reunite the kibbutz movement and the general public in Israel with their Jewish cultural heritage.

In his many and diverse initiatives, and his spiritual, cultural, and educational endeavors, Avraham Shapira has demonstrated that differences of belief and conviction can be bridged, and that dialogue between people of different opinions and approaches to religion and tradition can be fostered.

His articles in the field of Jewish philosophy and Jewish modern history developed from his lectures and research at Tel Aviv University, but their significance extends beyond the academic world.

Shdemot, the quarterly that he founded and edited, has developed into a medium for dialogue and spiritual-social cooperation beyond the barriers of politics and ideologies that divide the various streams in the kibbutz movement. Jewish philosophers and writers of all walks of life have taken part in this quarterly, and a meaningful culture of spiritual and social-cultural dialogue has developed, bringing hearts closer together and generating a renewed interest in Jewish sources.

The Prize recipient was among the founders of the Center for Jewish Studies, a joint enterprise of Oranim School of Education of the Kibbutz Movement and Haifa University. His activities were instrumental in drawing various groups in the kibbutz movement closer to different streams in US Jewry.

Professor Avraham Shapira founded the Mikra L'Yisrael ("Bible For Israel") project, a scientific-historical commentary of the Bible.

Of late he has brought the works of Jewish authors and thinkers to the attention of the Israeli public through "The Jewish Bookshelf," a series that he founded and continues to edit, published by Am Oved. He has restored these works to the forefront of public attention, so they can serve as the basis for the edification and conscience of the Israeli reader.

Among his works of compilation and editing, special emphasis was placed on the writings of Gershom Scholem.

The Prize Committee

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Professor Avraham Shapira

Avraham Shapira was born in Haifa in 1935.

He completed his army service in the Nahal Corps.

He has been a member of Kvutzat Yizrael since 1955.

Between 1960 - 1962 he studied for his BA in Hebrew Literature, General Philosophy and Jewish philosophy at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

In 1960 he founded the Shdemot quarterly, which he edited until 1970. Around Shdemot he gathered a group of people from all walks of the kibbutz movement. Along with Amos Oz he initiated the group's enterprise: "The Seventh Day: Soldiers Talk About the Six-Day War" and was its editor.

From 1968 - 1991 was a member of the Ofakim series editorial board, published by Am Oved.

In 1972 he completed his MA cum laude in Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

In 1975 he was among the founders of the Center for Jewish Studies at Oranim - School of Education of the Kibbutz Movement and Haifa University.

During 1977 - 1978 he was a Visiting Professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, and at that time established relationships between the kibbutz movement and different streams within American Jewry. He initiated the Mikra L'Yisrael project, a scientific-historical interpretation of the Bible, and was its editorial coordinator (1981 - 1989).

In 1984 he received his Ph.D. magna cum laude in Jewish Studies from Tel Aviv University, and as of 1985 he lectures at Tel Aviv University, in the Department of Jewish History.

Between 1985-1987, and in 1990, he developed curricula on Judaism and Zionism for the National Military Academy and the Israel Defense Forces, and served as their academic director.

In 1991 he established "The Jewish Bookshelf" series published by Am Oved, and serves as its editor.

Over the years, Shapira has compiled and edited literary-contemplative endeavors in the field of Judaic studies and Jewish cultural legacy, significantly including the writings of Gershom Scholem.

Avraham Shapira is married to Iris; they are the parents of Yaniv, Sivan and Yonat.

