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THE AVI CHAI PRIZE - 5763

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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. Below is a list of ten out of over 40 programs in Israel currently supported by AVI CHAI:

* **Tzav Pius:** a multi-faceted effort to promote mutual understanding among Israeli Jews. Tzav Pius includes a publicity campaign that calls for affirmation of the principles: "We respect Jewish tradition; we safeguard democracy." Tzav Pius also initiates and supports a variety of educational projects.

* **The Gavison-Medan Covenant:** an effort to promote "A Foundation for a New Social Covenant between Religious and Secular Jews in Israel," written by Professor Ruth Gavison and Rabbi Yakov Medan, for which they received the AVI CHAI Prize - 5761. The covenant presents new legislative arrangements and a model for reaching agreements on religion-state disputes. The Foundation is funding the publication of the covenant with the Israel Democracy Institute, and a program to educate the public about its content and message.

* **Kehillot Sharot:** brings together diverse audiences to experience, celebrate, and deepen their connection to Judaism through traditional Jewish music, especially *piyyut* (liturgical poetry). During 2003/04, the pilot phase is expected to expand to five *kehillot sharot* around the country.

* **Yesodot:** promotes democracy education within state religious schools. Yesodot offers year-long courses for principals and school staff on the relationship between democracy and classical Jewish thought. Yesodot also works with schools on integrating democratic values within school life and the classroom.

* **MiMizrach Shemesh:** a community leadership project that aspires to promote Judaism's social values in Israeli society, especially via the study and celebration of the Mizrahi (Eastern) Jewish heritage.

* **Pre-army Mechinot:** the Foundation supports nine mechinot around the country, which target either secular or religious and secular participants together. These mechinot provide an intensive year-long educational program that combines the study of Judaism and Zionism with community service, leadership development, and preparatory army training.

* **Morasha:** An initiative to explore the potential for developing a schooling option that addresses the values and needs of masorti (traditional) families. The project seeks to promote schools attentive to a masorti world-view that is rooted in faith and loyal to tradition, open to critical approaches to Judaism, connected to family and community, and committed to social values and communal responsibility.

* **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, as well as learning communities of ten families who meet monthly.

* **Learning Communities:** a training program implemented in partnership with Beit Midrash Elul. Facilitators and coordinators receive intensive training at Elul and accept responsibility to establish open batei midrash for the study of classic Jewish and modern texts in their home communities.

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

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The AVI CHAI Prize

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

The aim of the Prize is to recognize and reward individuals who contribute toward increasing mutual understanding and sensitivity among Israeli Jews of diverse religious backgrounds and different commitments to the 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 nine people of public stature in Israeli society who represent a broad spectrum of approaches to Jewish tradition.

The AVI CHAI Prize - 5763 is in the amount of NIS 100,000.

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.

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.

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.

The AVI CHAI Prize - 5761 was awarded to **Professor Ruth Gavison and Rabbi Yakov Medan** for their proposed "Foundation for a New Social Covenant between Religious and Secular Jews in Israel." For over two years Professor Gavison and Rabbi Medan were involved in a dynamic, in-depth dialogue, motivated by a sense of public responsibility and deep inner conviction, addressing the main controversies that divide religious and secular Jews in Israel, in an attempt to develop detailed, farsighted proposals for new arrangements pertaining to religion and state in Israel.

The AVI CHAI Prize - 5762 was awarded to **Mr. Adam Baruch** for his wide-ranging and distinctive writing that successfully bridges, in an original and unique way, between the language and values of halachic Judaism and those of contemporary Israel. For many years Adam Baruch's journalistic and literary writing has focused on his efforts to mediate between the worlds that comprise today's Jewish-Israeli discourse.

THE AVI CHAI PRIZE COMMITTEE

Menachem Fisch, Chairman

Professor of History and Philosophy of Science, Tel-Aviv University;
Senior Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies

Yairah Amit

Professor of Biblical Studies and Chair of Bible Teaching Program at
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Director, The E.M. Liphshitz College of Education, Jerusalem

Shmuel Feiner

Professor of Jewish History and Head of the Jewish History Department at
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Simona Ginsburg

Head of the Biological Thought Program, The Open University of Israel

Avinoam Granot

Founder and Principal of the Mor Metro West High School and
Aviv High School, Ra'anana

Benny Lau

Rabbi of Ramban Synagogue, Jerusalem;
Director, Women's Beit Midrash, Beit Morasha of Jerusalem

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The AVI CHAI Prize – 5763 is awarded to Hoshea Friedman Ben-Shalom for his pioneering initiatives to deepen tolerant discourse in Israeli Jewish society, mainly through the establishment of the first pre-army program for religious, traditional, and secular youth.

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The deepening rifts in Israeli Jewish society pose a genuine threat to the delicate fabric of Israeli solidarity. In order to heal the rifts, action is needed on two fronts: educational work to inculcate respect and appreciation for people with different approaches to Jewish tradition and identity, and breaking down the barriers of preconceived notions and suspicion that divide segregated, polarized groups. These tensions and divisions, which find salient cultural expression in attitudes toward religion, also have profound socio-economic roots. Hoshea Friedman Ben-Shalom identified these problems back in the 1980's and took upon himself an extraordinary educational mission in an effort to do something practical toward solving them. In a series of unique, daring projects, Hoshea showed how one can teach tolerance and respectful dialogue and achieve pluralism.

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Hoshea's role in founding Beit Yisrael, the urban kibbutz in Jerusalem, and forming cadres of army recruits known as the "Golani project" are noteworthy. His most significant contribution, however, is the Beit Yisrael *mechina* (pre-army program), which he established and heads in Jerusalem's Gilo neighborhood. Beit Yisrael is the first mixed pre-army program in Israel for male and female high-school graduates, religious and secular alike.

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Hoshea Friedman Ben-Shalom identified pre-military service-aged youth as the natural arena for fostering the identity discourse that is so vital to the cohesiveness of Israeli Jewish society. Success depends on the ability to conduct this discourse without obfuscating people's commitments and their profound disagreements. Mechina participants conduct such a shared discourse among themselves and in a wide range of community activities. The pre-army program that he initiated sets an example by being a vibrant and tolerant community that is well aware of its multifaceted nature and internal tensions and welcomes them. Mechinat Beit Yisrael is not merely the arena for a discourse *about* the condition of Jewish society in Israel, but a highly inspirational model of what this society can and should be. The discourse about Israeli society becomes, in Hoshea Friedman Ben-Shalom's hands, something that is not often seen: a new kind of Judaism that is open and multifaceted yet characterized by cohesiveness and solidarity.

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The Prize Committee

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Hoshea Friedman Ben-Shalom

Hoshea was born on Kibbutz Reshafim in the Beit She'an Valley in 1959. He comes from a hassidic pioneering family, descendants of the rebbes of Radzin and Vizhnitz. In 1962 his family moved to Kibbutz Sa'ad in the Negev.

Hoshea performed his military service as a soldier and commander in the Golani commando unit and in Battalion 13 of the Golani Brigade. Upon demobilization in 1981, Hoshea joined the founders of the urban kibbutz Reshit in Jerusalem's Bukharan neighborhood. Thereafter, he initiated and implemented his "Golani project"— he re-enlisted in the IDF in 1985 together with a group of youngsters from diverse social backgrounds, in an effort to produce inspired, dedicated commander-educators who would continue in educational work after demobilization. Hoshea continues to perform reserve duty in a variety of high ranking positions.

In 1992, Hoshea and several of his friends founded the urban kibbutz Beit Yisrael in Jerusalem. Kibbutz Beit Yisrael is an urban kibbutz of religious and secular members who work together to realize the vision of a sound Jewish society. The members work with the local residents to build a community that contends with the social and educational difficulties of Israeli society.

In 1997, Hoshea founded Mechinat Beit Yisrael—the first mixed pre-army program in Israel. This cadre of religious, traditional and secular young men and women postpone for a year their recruitment into the IDF. They dedicate the year to work in the community, study Judaism and Zionism and other subjects, examine personal values, and engage in a meaningful dialogue with people of differing commitment to Jewish tradition. To date, six groups with a total of about 200 youngsters have completed the program. Since Beit Yisrael's founding, three additional joint religious-secular pre-army programs have been established.

Hoshea and his wife Orly are the parents of five children.

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