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THE AVI CHAI PRIZE - 5757

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

AVI CHAI is a private foundation, established in 1984, which functions in Israel and the United States. Our 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 projects in Israel currently supported by AVI CHAI are:

\* Tzav Pius: a broad public campaign, begun in 1996, to encourage mutual understanding and respect among all sectors of the Jewish People. The campaign calls for affirmation of two principles: “We respect Jewish tradition; we safeguard democracy.” Tzav Pius now initiates and supports a variety of educational activities and publicity efforts.

\* Judaism and Democracy: a project of staff training and curriculum development initiated by Bar-Ilan University educators to instill commitment to Judaism and democracy in the state religious and non-religious school system.

\* Keshet School in Jerusalem: whose mission is to develop a learning community of students from religious and secular backgrounds. The Foundation funded a study grant and has supported the school since its opening in 1995/96.

\* Beit Morasha of Jerusalem: which combines the yeshiva system of learning with modern scholarship methods to train rabbinic leaders to address the needs of contemporary Israeli society. Recently, a Sephardic rabbinic training track has been added. Beit Morasha also offers study opportunities for the general public, and provides educational services to the state school system.

\* Jewish/Zionist identity seminars in the IDF: three-day seminars for the 6,000 cadets who annually participate in IDF officer training courses, in conjunction with Shorashim. The seminars encourage cadets to explore what being Jewish and Zionist means to them, and exposes them to questions and issues regarding the role of Judaism and Zionism in the State of Israel.

\* Tzohar: rabbis dedicated to revitalizing the role of Judaism in the State of Israel by engaging in meaningful dialogue with the secular world. They conduct halachic weddings sensitive to the desires and interests of secular couples, and intend to expand to other life-cycle events. Plans also exist to develop rabbinic think-tanks that will explore contemporary issues from halachic perspectives, and to develop a Beit Midrash for training of rabbis in the “Tzohar approach.”

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

\* Enhancing Jewish Studies in the school system: includes a variety of projects that target the training of teachers and development of Judaic curricula.

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 fifth 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 resident of Israel (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 - 5757 is in the amount of NIS 50,000 to each of the recipients.

**The AVI CHAI Prize in Israel - 5753** was awarded to **Dr. Daniel Tropper**, initiator and founder of GESHER. For two decades, GESHER has hosted joint meetings for youth from schools throughout the country. GESHER's goal is to bring together students who represent different orientations toward Jewish tradition in order to strengthen their Jewish-Zionist identity and nurture respect between religious and secular Jews.

**The AVI CHAI Prize in Israel - 5754** was awarded to **Aryeh 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 the entire country.

**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**, Rabbi of Tekoa. Rabbi Fruman was recognized for his many and varied initiatives to increase understanding and sensitivity among Jews with different approaches to Jewish tradition, and for his continuing search for a common language with which to develop respectful co-existence between all sectors of the Jewish people. Rabbi Fruman's approach was the inspiration for the formation of the community of Tekoa, where residents with different Jewish lifestyles live and study together with mutual respect and openness.

**The AVI CHAI Prize in Israel - 5757** is being awarded at the Knesset in Jerusalem. Because AVI CHAI Prize regulations allow the Prize to be awarded to a team which has worked and been active together, and whose contribution was made jointly, and because the AVI CHAI Board of Trustees agreed to grant this year two prizes of NIS 50,000 each, the Prize Committee decided to recommend to the Board of Trustees that the AVI CHAI Prize for 1997 be awarded to both co-founders of Beit Midrash Elul, Ruth Calderon Ben-Shachar and Moti Bar-Or.

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**David W. Weiss**

*Prof. Emeritus & Founder, The Lautenberg Center for General and  
Tumor Immunology, Hebrew University-Hadassah Medical School*

**The AVI CHAI Prize in Israel - 5757 is 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. The personal example of these two founders in establishing the principle of partnership and dialogue between religious and secular, continues to serve as the cornerstone of Beit Midrash Elul. Today, Elul serves as a model and source of inspiration for communal learning frameworks for religious and secular around the country.**

In the course of their activities at Elul, Calderon Ben-Shachar and Bar-Or strengthened the level of Jewish identity and Jewish studies of those learning there. Through the communal learning method, where men and women study together, both Calderon Ben-Shachar and Bar-Or developed a dialogue between people of different approaches to religion and tradition, towards living together with respect, cooperation, and tolerance.

Ruth Calderon Ben-Shachar who sees Torah study, in its widest sense, as a central element in her life, has been active in strengthening learning and Jewish identity amongst students in various frameworks such as Oranim, Efal, and institutions connected to the Kibbutz movement. In addition to these activities, Calderon Ben-Shachar was a member on the Shenhar Committee that examined the study of Judaism in secular schools throughout Israel. In 1996 she founded Alma Hebrew College.

Moti Bar-Or worked as a coordinator and facilitator at Geshar. As a result of his experience in Jewish education, he understood the necessity of establishing a joint Beit Midrash for strengthening Jewish studies, based on a wide variety of outlooks, and open to men and women, equally. He recently established Kolot, a Jewish Leadership Training Institute.

**The Prize Committee**

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## Ruth Calderon Ben-Shachar

Ruth Calderon Ben-Shachar was born in Tel Aviv in 1961.

During 1982-1986 she studied towards her B.A. in Jewish Philosophy, Bible and Philosophy at Michlelet Oranim, Haifa University.

Between 1986-1989 she studied towards her M.A. in Philosophy of the Sages, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, while studying at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem.

In 1989, she was a partner in the founding and management of Beit Midrash Elul in Jerusalem. After four years of co-managing Elul, and founding The Center for the Shaping of Life Cycle Ceremonies, she was appointed to serve on the Shenhar Committee which examined Jewish studies in secular schools in Israel.

In 1992-1994 she studied at the School for Educational Leadership in Jerusalem.

In 1996 she founded Alma Hebrew College and is currently Chairperson. The College deals with Hebrew culture, in all its diversity, and the critical examination of its development over the course of time.

She is now studying towards her doctorate in Talmud at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Calderon Ben-Shachar is married and the mother of two daughters.

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## Moti Bar-Or

Moti Bar-Or was born in the US in 1960. He made aliya with his family in 1970.

Between 1978 - 1985, he studied at the Har Etzion Yeshiva and completed his army service in the Armored Corps. During that time, he also graduated from the Herzog Teachers Training College.

Between 1985 - 1988 he worked as the educational seminar coordinator at Gesher.

From 1989 - 1996 he was a partner in the founding and management of Beit Midrash Elul in Jerusalem. Concurrently, he completed his M.A degree in Jewish History at Touro College in Jerusalem.

During 1996 - 1997 he researched the issue of developing an Israeli lay leadership force, which would link Torah studies and contemporary issues.

He then went on to found amutat Kolot, a Jewish Leadership Training Institute, which aims to empower its participants to promote the vision of a revitalized Jewish culture in the State of Israel.

Bar-Or is married and the father of four children.

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