

## Fourteenth Annual Award Ceremony of the Marc and Henia z"l Liebhaber Prize for the Promotion of Religious Tolerance in Israel 2011 (5771)

The Liebhaber Prize was established by Rabbi Marc and Dr. Henia z"l Liebhaber to promote religious tolerance and cultural pluralism in the State of Israel.

The prize is awarded for a significant contribution toward the tangible achievement of religious pluralism and tolerance in Israel. The candidate must exhibit a personal commitment to democratic principles and tolerance, integrated with basic Jewish values and ethics.

The recipient is to be chosen by a public committee that will judiciously review all recommendations.

**The amount of the prize is 100,000 NIS.**

The members of the 5771 jury are:

**Prof. David Golinkin** | Chair, President, Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies

**Prof. Daniel Sperber** | Israel Prize Laureate; President, Institute for Advanced Torah Studies, Bar Ilan University

**Mr. Ya'akov Tsur** | Chair, Schechter Institute Executive Committee

**Rabbi Marc N. Liebhaber**, a respected and well known leader of the North American Jewish community, is former President of the World Council of Conservative/Masorti Synagogues (Masorti Olami) and Rabbi Emeritus of B'nai Emet Synagogue in St. Louis Park, MN, where he held a pulpit for many years. He and his beloved late wife Henia, a respected physician who passed away in 2010, established the prize in 1996 as an expression of their deep commitment to promoting Jewish tolerance and pluralism in Israel.

## Past Prize Recipients

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**Jacky Levy** and **Shlomo Gronich**, 2009 recipients, are Israeli artists who for years have been using their art to bring Israelis together. Levy, a media commentator and stand-up comedian, succeeds in reaching audiences through his ability to understand varied cultures and lifestyles, and his deep belief in dialogue as a way of life. Shlomo Gronich, a gifted musician and composer, communicates Jewish community and openness through his music whose lyrics emphasize Jewish unity in Israel and throughout the world.

**Muki Tsur**, 2008 recipient, is an educator, writer and historian who has made an immense contribution to Israeli life and culture from the Kibbutz Movement's literary journal, *Shdemot*, to its *Batei Midrash* in Oranim and Efal; pre-army preparatory programs and his prolific publications.

**Rabbi Michael Melchior**, 2007 recipient, is a former Knesset member and leader of the left-wing religious Zionist party, *Meimad*, who has devoted his life to bringing the disparate groups of Israeli society together through dialogue and joint action, with a special emphasis on improving relations between Israel's ultra-Orthodox, religious and secular populations.

**Deborah Goldman Golan**, 2006 recipient, is Director of the *Bamidbar Center* in Yeroham, a creative *Bet Midrash* operating in Israel's south since 1990. The Center is a major force in the region in promoting Jewish knowledge based on egalitarian and pluralistic principles.

**Ruth Lehavi**, 2005 recipient, is founder of the *Keshet School* in Jerusalem and today principal of its high school. Lehavi's pioneering enterprise reflects one of the only attempts to bring religious and non-religious pupils of all ages together in one school framework.

**Osnat Elnatan**, 2004 recipient, is a senior director for employment programs for special needs populations at the JDC (Joint) Israel and founding Director of *Kehilah*, a social action organization located in Bet Shemesh.

**Judith Edelman-Green**, 2003 recipient, is founding director of the *B'nai Mitzvah* program for children with special needs, which she directed from 1995-2004, together with the *Masorti Movement*. Today she is involved in establishing *Kfar Rimon*, a village for adults with special needs.

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**Dr. Gili Zivan** and **Sharon Leshem-Zinger**, 2002 recipients, have established a network of community study programs where religious and secular Israeli Jews study together Jewish texts. Dr. Gili Zivan is Executive Director of the Ya'acov Herzog Center for Jewish Studies and Sharon Leshem-Zinger is Educational Director of the Kolot BaNegev Institute.

**Dr. Aryeh Geiger z"l**, 2001 recipient, a man of vision and principles and a true educator, was the founding principal of the Reut School in Jerusalem which fosters religious tolerance among its students.

**Rabbi Roberto Arbib**, 2000 recipient, directs the Masorti Movement's Midreshet Iyun and Kehilat Sinai in Tel Aviv. He is spritual leader of Neve Schechter, the new home of Midreshet Iyun and the Masorti Kehilah in Neve Zedek which will open in Fall 2011.

**Shai Zarchi**, 1999 recipient, a founding member of the Midrasha at Oranim, today teaches Judaism and Hebrew Literature and directs the Tehuda Bet Midrash for Jewish Leadership.

**Bambi Sheleg**, 1998 recipient, is a journalist and editor of Eretz Acheret ("A Different Israel"), a magazine dedicated to promoting Israeli and Jewish discourse on issues of society and identity.

**Hoshaya Friedman Ben Shalom**, 1997 recipient, is the founder of Jerusalem's urban kibbutz Bet Israel, for religious and secular Israeli families, and an army preparatory program for youth within the "Bet Israel" community.

## Liebhaber Prize Recipients for 2011 (5771)

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### **Yehoram Gaon and Rabbi Prof. Naftali Rothenberg**

The Marc and Henia Liebhaber Prize for the Promotion of Religious Tolerance and Cultural Pluralism in Israel for 2011 is awarded to Mr. Yehoram Gaon, artist and public figure and to Rabbi Prof. Naftali Rothenberg, researcher, educator and spiritual leader.



#### **Rabbi Prof. Naftali Rothenberg**

Rabbi Prof. Naftali Rothenberg, chair of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute's Jewish Culture and Identity division and editor of its *Identities: Journal for Jewish Culture and Identity*, also serves as Rabbi and spiritual leader of Har Adar, a suburban community outside Jerusalem. In his public life, he works ceaselessly in building bridges between the various religious streams in Israeli society.

A graduate of the Kamenitz Yeshiva in Jerusalem with a doctor of Philosophy from Rutgers University in New Jersey, Prof. Rothenberg serves as a member of the Academic Committee of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Research. His main fields of research are: the wisdom of love; environmental philosophy; political philosophy; philosophy of Halakha; culture of peace.

He has published numerous articles on philosophy, Jewish thought, and Halakha and has authored and edited 11 books.

Although an Orthodox rabbi, Rothenberg identifies with the struggle of non-Orthodox streams of Judaism to secure their rightful place in Israeli society and recognizes their contribution to the survival of the Jewish people and its continuity. In that capacity, he has arranged many public and undisclosed meetings between groups of Jews who normally have no contact. He also organized an international academic conference on the Conservative Movement in 2009 and the Reform Movement in 2007 and often participates in discussion groups between the different religious streams.

Prof. Rothenberg seeks out dialogue with those of opposing world views, calling on Orthodox circles to accept diversity both within their movement and outside it, as it grapples with new ideas associated with modernity. Prof. Rothenberg, with strength of conviction and a deep yet broad knowledge of Jewish sources, has made a substantial contribution to promoting religious tolerance and understanding in Israel.



## **Yehoram Gaon**

Yehoram Gaon, Israel Prize Laureate for Culture and Hebrew Song and recipient of the Yakir Yerushalayim Award (worthy citizen of Jerusalem award), has carved out a musical legacy in his own time which is inextricably tied to Judaism, Jerusalem and Eretz Yisrael.

Born in Jerusalem to David and Sarah Gaon, and after serving in the IDF's Nahal entertainment troupe, Gaon joined the "Yarkon Bridge Trio" which composed and performed numerous songs that went on to become legendary hits of Israel. He played the starring role in the original Israeli musical comedy, "Kazablan" (1966), catapulting Gaon into the limelight as one of Israel's top entertainers.

Gaon's songs are personal and patriotic, traditional and multi-cultured. He has evolved into a beloved figure in Israel, releasing scores of albums including Ladino romance songs and tunes for Shabbat and the holidays. Known for his ability to musically synthesize elements of east and west, he has given Israel such classics as "Shalom Lach, Yerushalayim" and "M'al Pisgat Har Hatzofim."

In addition to his music, Gaon is a media personality and public figure. His on-going Friday afternoon radio broadcast, "Gaon on Radio," is popular with a cross-section of Israelis. The program's message of mutual respect, community activism and tolerance stresses the importance of family values, the home and Jerusalem for Israeli society.

Yehoram Gaon is actively involved in civic affairs. He was a Jerusalem Council member for eight years, holding the Portfolio for Cultural Affairs and Special Educational Needs. He is a member of various non-profit organizations including the Committee for the Advancement of Ladino, Yad Ben-Zvi Fund, The Association for Soldiers Welfare, The Tower of David Museum and more. Through his life-time achievement in the arts and public affairs and his deep love of Israel and the Jewish people, Yehoram Gaon has contributed significantly to religious tolerance and the cultural life of Israel.