THE
POLONSKY
PRIZES
FOR CREATIVITY & ORIGINALITY
IN THE HUMANISTIC DISCIPLINES
AT THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM
Dr. Leonard S. Polonsky CBE has had a successful business career in the financial services sector and is a philanthropist with particular interests in higher education, cultural heritage and the arts.

Dr. Polonsky grew up in New York City. He was a pupil at the prestigious Townsend Harris High School, and received his BA degree from New York University at age 18. Following military service in 1945–46, he pursued graduate studies in literature at Lincoln College, Oxford, and at the Sorbonne, Paris, where he received his doctorate in 1952. He taught in Heidelberg for several years before embarking on his business career.

Dr. Polonsky began working in financial services in New York in 1955, gaining further experience in Rome, Frankfurt, and Zurich, before establishing Liberty Life Assurance Company Ltd in London in 1970. Hansard Global plc, its successor, of which he is President, has been listed on the London Stock Exchange since 2006.

Dr. Polonsky has involved himself in a broad range of philanthropic activities over many years. In 2013 he was named a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) for charitable services by HM Queen Elizabeth II. He is a Companion of the Guild of Benefactors of Cambridge University, a Fleming Fellow at Lincoln College, Oxford, and an Honorary Member of the Royal College of Music, London.

Dr. Polonsky holds an Honorary Doctorate from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, of which he is a Governor and where he sits on the Board of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace. At the Hebrew University he established the Polonsky Prizes for Creativity and Originality in the Humanities, which have been awarded annually since 2004. Other support for the Hebrew University includes awards for study in China and scholarships for undergraduates of Ethiopian background.

He is founding chairman of the board of trustees of The Polonsky Foundation, which supports charitable projects in the UK, the USA, Israel, and Europe. Principal activities of the Polonsky Foundation include: the digitization of significant collections at leading libraries (the Bodleian Library, Oxford; Cambridge University Library; the British Library; the New York Public Library; the Library of Congress; the Vatican Apostolic Library); support for Theatre for a New Audience at the Polonsky Shakespeare Center in Brooklyn, New York; and the Polonsky Academy for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, and the post-doctoral fellowships it offers.

In Israel The Polonsky Foundation also supports the University of Haifa and the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, of which Dr. Polonsky is a Governor and Honorary Fellow.
Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Scholarly activity in the Humanities is expressed in different forms: monographs, the editing of original sources, journal articles and more, all of which are based on extensive research, intellectual analysis and writing. Every year, members of the Faculty of Humanities at the Hebrew University publish their scholarship in prestigious journals and academic publishing houses in Israel and abroad. It is such scholarly endeavors that have made the Faculty of Humanities in Jerusalem one of the leading centers of humanistic study in the world, and have contributed to the overall reputation of the Hebrew University as a foremost academic institution.

The Polonsky Prizes were established over a decade ago through the generosity and vision of Dr. Leonard Polonsky and the Polonsky Foundation. These prizes give clear recognition to both senior and junior members of the Faculty of Humanities and elsewhere at the University who have demonstrated the highest standards of scholarship in the humanistic disciplines. All the recipients of this year’s prize—both the Fleming Fellow at Lincoln College, Oxford, and an Honorary member of the Royal College of Music, London—were chosen by a committee consisting of members of the Faculty of Humanities, along with the Vice President for Research and Development, Prof. Isaiah (Shy) Arkin and myself. This year’s prize winners were chosen from a particularly strong list of contenders in the different categories, making the selection especially challenging. All in all, the high quality of all the submissions left me with a feeling of pride in the distinctive and excellent work being produced in the fields of Humanities at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It gives me great pleasure to thank the members of the prize committee for their hard work, as well as Prof. Arkin for his support, Ms. Rachel Nathan from the Faculty of Humanities who coordinated the work of the prize committee, and Ms. Ayelet Sagiv of the Authority for Research and Development at the Hebrew University, for crucial administrative matters, not the least coordinating this ceremony today.

We are grateful to the Polonsky Foundation for their support and encouragement. We look forward to next year’s competition, and the interesting and original studies that it will bring to our attention.

With best wishes,

Prof. Dror Wahrman
Dean, The Faculty of Humanities

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The Polonsky Prizes for Creativity and Originality in the Humanistic Disciplines - 2016
Mosaics of Faith: Floors of Pagan, Christians, and Muslims in the Holy Land

Prof. RINA TALGAM
Department of the History of Art, Faculty of Humanities

Prof. Talgam, the Alice and Edward J. Winant Family Professor of Art History, received her Ph.D. from The Hebrew University in 1996 and joined the faculty the following year. Her research interests include the art of the Middle East from the Hellenistic period to the Umayyad period, specialization in mosaic pavements, and the mutual influence between “paganism”, Judaism, Samaritanism, Christianity and Islam. The emergence and sources of Umayyad art, and ancient synagogues. Her books include, with Zeev Weiss, The Mosaics of the House of Dionysos at Sepphoris (Jerusalem, 2004), and The Stylistic Origins of Umayyad Sculpture and Architectural Decoration (Wiesbaden, 2004). In 2013, she received the Milken Prize for years of excellence in teaching.

Mosaics of Faith offers a comprehensive analytical history of the hellenistic, roman, byzantine, Umayyad and early Abbassid mosaics in the Holy Land (present day israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority). During these periods the Holy land became a central arena where different faiths met, communicated, competed and conflicted with each other. Mosaics are not mere decorations, for when approached critically they can be read as first-rate historical documents that sharpen and refine our understanding of societies, their ideologies, institutions, and liturgies. The inclusion of mosaics in the scholarly discourse makes possible a richer perception of the past and sheds light on both the intimate links and the disjunctions between art and text. The book examines the relations between the religious and secular spheres and indicates a considerable degree of dynamism in the drawing of the boundaries between them over the course of time. What makes this endeavor both timely and imperative are recent archaeological discoveries that have considerably enriched the existing corpus and, above all, have challenged prevailing assumptions.

The wide chronological range (a millennium) that is examined in this book enables one also to trap the processes of continuity and change at the transition between the periods along the diachronic axis. The inclusion of mosaics in the scholarly discourse makes possible a richer perception of the past and sheds light on both the intimate links and the disjunctions between art and text. The book examines the relations between the religious and secular spheres and indicates a considerable degree of dynamism in the drawing of the boundaries between them over the course of time. What makes this endeavor both timely and imperative are recent archaeological discoveries that have considerably enriched the existing corpus and, above all, have challenged prevailing assumptions.
The Eclipse of Anti-Fascism presents the history of the “Anti-Fascist paradigm.” As the backbone of the Italian Republic, from its inception to its decline, from 1943 up to 1989. The book develops as a historical biography, spanning political and historical debates, the press, journals, and countless reports. It offers, for the first time in the historiographic debate on modern Italy, a combined interpretation of three different orders of discourse: the war of liberation, the Jewish question, and Italian politics. It all analyzed together and intertwined with one another as both history and as memory. The result is an original interpretation of the way in which Italy has built, since the liberation, the interpretative paradigm of its history (the “anti-Fascist paradigm”). The book thus challenges the ‘ideology of the Republic,’ an ideology that, in spite of the Italian Republic’s forces victory over Fascism, preferred not to engage in a serious investigation of the past. They chose, instead, to deny and erase Italian responsibility for Fascism and the regime of Salò, throwing the blame solely on the Nazi ‘occupation’ and not on the violent ideological confrontation between Italian Fascists and Italian anti-Fascists in the context of a civil war. The book shows, beside political anti-Fascism, a parallel counterculture arose, a form of cultural resistance in civil society, committed to keeping alive the memory of the anti-Fascist struggle in general, and the political deportations and extermination of the Jews, in particular, pointing to parallels between the failure of Italian politics since the war, and the changing role ascribed to the Resistance and to the Jewish question in the dominant ideology. Consonni sees Primo Levi as the greatest interpreter of this reconstruction of Italian anti-Fascism. His work functions as a model for different approaches for analyzing anti-Fascism, Fascism, and Communism, through the lens of his experiences as a survivor, a writer, and an engaged intellectual. Finally, the book succeeds in proving that partially this process was due to the Catholic Church’s role as an active player in the Italian political discourse. Consonni finally contends that the result of this refusal to engage with the past creates a ‘melancholic’ history of modern Italy, in which the past does not pass away or, alternatively, passes too fast.

Prof. Manuela Consonni earned her Ph.D. summa cum laude in 2004 at the Hebrew University, where she joined the faculty in 2007. She is the current chair of the Department of Romance and Latin American Studies, Director of the Italian Studies Program, and since 2015, Director of the Vidal Sassoon Center for the Study of Antisemitism. She was a DAAD and Max Planck Postdoctoral Fellow, Berlin, a postdoctoral fellow at Cornell University, and at Scholion. She was a visiting scholar at the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture, Leipzig, and at UCLA. Her previous book, Resistenza o Shoah. The Memory of the Deportation and Extermination in Italy between 1945-1985 was published by Hebrew University Magnes Press (2010).
In Alexandria during the first centuries BCE, many scholars, among whom the most prominent were the chief librarians Zenodotus, Aristophanes, and Aristarchus, began compiling critical editions of the Homeric poems with commentary, while developing elaborate philological, rhetorical, grammatical, and literary methods and terminology. This exegetical tradition, inspired by the non-allegorical literary approach of Aristotle, continued to evolve during the Roman period outside of Alexandria, and was later assembled into large collections, which have come down to us mainly in the margins of Byzantine manuscripts and in several papyri. This huge body of commentary, written in a highly technical language and as yet to be translated, is of utmost importance for our understanding of the development of biblical exegesis in late Antiquity. However, except for a handful of studies which have focused only on select commentaries, Homeric scholarship has to date received very little attention from scholars of rabbinic exegesis.

In this study, Dr. Paz provides for the first time a comprehensive evaluation of the profound and diverse impact of the Homeric scholarship on the formation of rabbinic biblical commentaries and their modes of exegesis, especially as they are expressed in the Halakhic midrashim (3rd century CE). Based on the comparisons between the two corpora, he contends that the appearance of midrash as a distinct genre which contains diverse opinions, and uses explicitly complex exegetical methods and fixed terminology previously documented in Jewish commentaries, can be fully understood only against the backdrop of Greek exegesis. Moreover, the impact of the Homeric scholarship on rabbinic biblical exegesis was not merely technical but also had a profound effect on the way the rabbis perceived, and hence interpreted, the biblical text itself. The rabbis read and commented on the Torah according to the aesthetic, rhetorical, grammatical and literary standards of the period and shared with their Hellenistic contemporaries a similar understanding of the role of the commentator. In light of these conclusions, we may now reevaluate many of the scholarly assumptions regarding the origins of the rabbinic exegetical project by situating the rabbis in their larger historical context.
Piotrkowski’s dissertation, “Priests in exile: The History of the Temple of Onias and its Community in the Hellenistic Period,” seeks to provide a cohesive history of the so-called Temple of Onias in the Hellenistic period. Founded by the ousted Jerusalemite high priest Onias III in the 160s BCE somewhere in the Egyptian Heliopolite nome, the Temple of Onias was a phenomenon of ancient Diaspora Judaism and existed for over two centuries, outlasting even the great Temple of Jerusalem. However, due to a frustrating scarcity of evidence about it, it remains a nebulous chapter in the history of the ancient Jewish Egyptian Diaspora and in the study of ancient Judaism on the whole. This sparsity of sources leaves Flavius Josephus as our main source for the history of Onias’ Temple. In his dissertation, the Piotrkowski has not only addressed the most pressing - and still open - historical questions concerning the Temple of Onias, such as, the identity of the temple’s founder (Onias III or Onias IV), but also - for the first time - addressed issues pertaining to the Oniad community and its place in the Egyptian-Jewish Diaspora. Although the thesis focuses on a very specific subject, it casts a wide net and deals with a variety of key fields of research on ancient Judaism: Josephus, archaeology, Jewish-Hellenistic literature, Qumran, rabbinic literature, papyrology and inscriptions. Piotrkowski also investigated the role and function of the Onias Temple in the larger contexts of Ptolemaic, Seleucid (i.e. international) politics and culture. Here, he argues that the Temple of Onias as a temple of foreign mercenaries was by no means all that exceptional in its Ptolemaic Egyptian context. Its existence is to be set against the backdrop of an overall Ptolemaic defense strategy. Moreover, since its foundation occurred during Antiochus Epiphanes’ persecution of Judaism in Judaea, the author argues that it was not a rival sanctuary as is generally assumed, but the only functioning sanctuary in the Jewish world.

Priests in Exile: The History of the Temple of Onias and its Community in the Hellenistic Period

Dr. Meron Piotrkowski, born in Berlin in 1977, holds a B.A. in Jewish Studies, Political Sciences and Business Administration from the Free University of Berlin and an M.A. in Jewish Civilization from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He continued his studies in the field of ancient Jewish history at the Hebrew University and completed his Ph.D. in 2015 under the supervision of Prof. Daniel R. Schwartz. He is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Hebrew University, working on the Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum IV and a lecturer at Berlin’s Free University Institute of Jewish Studies.
Learning Latin in 16th and 17th Century England: Lily’s Grammar as a Case Study in Cognitive History

This M.A. thesis examines the cognitive aspects of the study of Latin in 16th and 17th century England. By bringing together cultural history with cognitive sciences, it aims to elucidate how early modern students thought, as they faced the challenge of learning a second language – a challenge that stood at the very core of grammar school education. To answer this question, it analyzes three different types of historical sources: on the level of ideas, influential pedagogical treatises are examined in order to uncover the explicit and implicit cognitive expectations of Humanist and Puritan pedagogues in the period beginning with Erasmus’s De Ratione Studii (1511) and ending with John Locke’s Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1690). On the level of learning tools, England’s most common textbook, Lilli’s Grammar, is investigated so as to reconstruct the cognitive implications of its methods, structure, style of writing, and graphic design as these were evolved and were changed by scholars and printers throughout the textbook’s many editions. Finally, on the level of study practices, the manuscript annotations found on more than one hundred copies of the textbook are inspected in order to understand the actual cognitive habits of early modern students. The points of convergence and divergence between these three levels of analysis help sketch a vivid, multilayered picture of the Renaissance classroom’s cognitive ecology in a period in which, due to the power of print to reproduce affordable, personal textbooks, schooling went through radical transitions.

Although the role education plays in shaping one’s mind is extensively researched by contemporary cognitive scientists, historians often overlook the cognitive aspects of early modern learning. This thesis, however, through its focus on the interaction of print and manuscript, shows that the study of Latin shifted from being focused on memory to becoming an activity designed for comprehension. It can thus be read as a case study of larger questions relating to the ways cognition interplays with historical reality.

PREVIOUS POLONSKY PRIZE WINNERS

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Department of the History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Jewry, and the School of History, Faculty of Humanities
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Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities
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Dr. Uzi Leibner
Institute of Archaeology, Faculty of Humanities
For his article: The Origins of Jewish Settlement in the Galilee in the Second Temple Period: Historical Sources and Archaeological Data

Young Researcher:
Mr. Eli Osheroff
Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, Faculty of Humanities
For his book: Where Did You Come From? The History of the Jewish People in Early Palestinian Historiography (1920-1948)

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Institute of Archeology, Faculty of Humanities
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Federman School of Public Policy and Government
For her dissertation: Expanded Citizen Participation and Participatory Inequality: A Vicious or Virtuous Circle?

MA/Doctoral Student:
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For her MA dissertation: “The Cultural Boundaries of Thinking”: Cultural Narratives in the Philosophy of Education of Friedrich Nietzsche and John Dewey

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For her book: From Prague to Pressburg: Halakhic Writing in a Changing World, from the “Noda B’Yehudah” to the “Hatam Sofer”; 1750-1819

MA/Doctoral Student:
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History, Philosophy and Sociology of Science Program, Faculty of Humanities
For his dissertation: Time and Emergence in Scientific Theories in England in the 19th Century

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Department of History

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Student Prize:
Ms. NIDA SHASHAR
Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, Faculty of Humanities
For her MA thesis: The Role of Niddah Laws in Daily Lives of Men and Women in the Ashkenazi World of the 15th-19th Centuries

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Mr. KOBI BERN-MAIR
Forum Europa, Faculty of Social Sciences
For her MA thesis: Images of Pain, Disease and Death in 1970s Israeli Art

Student Prize:
Ms. NOA SHASHAR
Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, Faculty of Humanities
For her MA thesis: Images of Pain, Disease and Death in 1970s Israeli Art
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Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, Faculty of Humanities
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Prof. RONNIE ELLENBLUM
Department of Geography, Faculty of Social Sciences and School of History, Faculty of Humanities
For his book:
Crusader Castles and Modern Histories (2000)

Student Prize:
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Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, Faculty of Humanities
For his MA thesis:
Stability and Change in the Responsa of Rabbi Moshe Sofer

Student Prize:
Dr. MOED PORAT
Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, Faculty of Humanities
For his MA thesis:
Studying the Treatise " Brit Hamenua " ( "Covenant of Serenity" ); Its Ideas, Literature Relationships and an Introduction to the Critical Edition

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Dr. DIEGO OLSTEIN
Department of History, Faculty of Humanities
For his book:
La laicos Mozárabes. Los Mozárabes de Toledo (Siglos XI y XII) en la Historiografía. Las Fuentes y la Historia

Second Prize:
Prof. GANNIT ANKORI
Department of Art History, Faculty of Humanities
For her book:
Palestinian Art

Second Prize:
Dr. JONATHAN DEKEL-CHEN
Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Faculty of Humanities
For his book:
Farming the Red Land: Jewish Agricultural Colonization and Soviet Power, 1934-1941

Young Researcher Prize:
Dr. TSIPPI KAUFMAN
Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, Faculty of Humanities
For her dissertation:
Between Immersiveness and Religious Behavior: Avodah be-Gashmiyut in the Early Stages of Hasidism

Student Prize:
Mr. EIR BERIEVICH
Department of History, Faculty of Humanities
For his paper:
Sally: A Comparative Survey into the Nature of Medieval Warfare

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Prof. VOSIF GABINEL
Institute of Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities
For his book:
Dancing at the Dawn of Agriculture

First Prize:
Prof. BERNY SHANON
Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences
For his book:
The Antipodes of the Mind

Young Researcher Prize:
Dr. ILIA KEREN
Faculty of Law
For her article:
Textual Harassment: A New Historico-Rerappraisal of the First Evidence Rule with Gender in Mind

Student Prize:
Dr. ELISHAVER RIGGI-SHAFIR
Department of Musicology, Faculty of Humanities
For her dissertation:

Student Prize:
Mr. GABRIELA SHENFIELD
Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies, Faculty of Humanities
For her dissertation:
La Organización Laboral del Imperio Inca: Las Autoridades Locales Básicas

Polonsky Prizes 2005

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Prof. GABRIEL HERMAN
Department of History, Faculty of Humanities
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