THE POLONSKY PRIZES
FOR CREATIVITY & ORIGINALITY IN THE HUMANISTIC DISCIPLINES
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 B.A. degree from New York University at age 18. Following military service between 1945–46, he pursued graduate studies in literature at Lincoln College, Oxford, and at the Sorbonne, Paris, where he received his doctorate in 1952. For several years, he taught in Heidelberg, before embarking on his business career. In 1955, Dr. Polonsky began working in financial services in New York, gaining further experience in Rome, Frankfurt, and Zurich, before establishing Liberty Life Assurance Company Limited in London in 1970. Hansard Global plc, its successor, of which he is President, has been listed on the London Stock Exchange since 2006.

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

Dr. Polonsky holds an Honorary Doctorate from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, of which he is a Governor and where he serves 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 the founding chairman of the board of trustees of The Polonsky Foundation, a UK-registered charity that supports cultural heritage, education and the arts in the UK, the USA, Israel and Europe. Dr. Leonard Polonsky is a Patron of the British Friends of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. 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; the Bibliothèque nationale de France); support for Theatre for a New Audience at the Polonsky Shakespeare Center in Brooklyn, New York; and post-doctoral fellowships at the Polonsky Academy for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute.

In Israel, The Polonsky Foundation also supports the University of Haifa, Tel Aviv University and the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, of which Dr. Polonsky is a Governor and Honorary Fellow.
2022 PRIZE WINNERS

Prof. Elitzur Bar-Asher-Siegal
Category A: Faculty
First Prize

Prof. Yossi Maurey
Category A: Faculty
Second Prize

Dr. Ofer Peres
Category B: Postdoctoral Fellows
First Prize
In the Trail of the Wailing King: A Cultural Biography of a Traditional Indian Narrative.

Daniella Zeltzer
Category C: Ph.D. and M.A. Students
First Prize
What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Walking? Walking with Haredi Women.

Joel Binder
Category C: Ph.D. and M.A. Students
Second Prize
A Multi-Text Manuscript from Fourteenth Century Ashkenaz: MS Darmstadt, University and State Library, Cod. Or. 25 in Context.

Dear Friends and Colleagues

Since its founding in 1928, our faculty has been the country’s leader in research and teaching of the humanities. Our faculty’s researchers produce scholarship of the highest quality, making uncounted contributions to the world of knowledge in the process. We are the world leader in Jewish Studies, and also strive to excel in the study of Western civilization alongside Asian and African cultures. Our reputation and our international rankings continue to rise from year to year, and we find it important to present incentives to help maintain this progress.

The Polonsky Prizes for Creativity and Originality in the Humanistic Disciplines, established in 2004 through the vision and generosity of Dr. Leonard Polonsky and the Polonsky Foundation, do precisely that. They encourage creativity and “out of the box” thinking, which make for an engaging scientific dialogue within the humanities. The prizes are also an excellent way to recognize outstanding faculty members, postdoctoral scholars, and advanced graduate students, who have produced innovative scholarship of the highest quality.

The Polonsky Prizes are the highest honor that we offer as a faculty, and we therefore receive many outstanding nominations every year. Choosing this year’s winners was no simple task. As Chair of the Polonsky Prize committee, I can personally attest to the difficulty of choosing only four scholars from among so many impressive candidates.

I wish to thank my eighteen fellow members of the prize committee for their participation and contribution to this process, to Prof. Menahem Blondheim who helped with its design, and to Prof. Re’em Sari, Vice President for Research and Development, for his support. I also wish to thank Mr. Eldad Joffe from the University’s Authority for Research and Development, Ms. Shulamit Lasnes, and Ms. Hivit Koudinski from the Faculty of Humanities, for coordinating the work of the prize committee.

I am extremely grateful to Dr. Polonsky and the Polonsky Foundation for its continued support of our faculty and for helping us encourage cutting-edge scientific research in the humanities. We look forward to future Polonsky Prize winners who will join today’s honorees in making their mark on world scholarship by generating new and creative ideas, approaches, and findings that promote scholarly excellence.

With best wishes,

Prof. Nissim Otmazgin
Elitzur Bar-Asher Siegal holds a B.A. in Philosophy and Hebrew Language from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1999–2002, summa cum laude), and a Ph.D. from Harvard University (2009). He joined the Department of Hebrew Language, at the Faculty of Humanities at The Hebrew University in 2010 after holding a position of lecturer in Semitics at Yale University (2008–2010). He has served as Head of the Language, Logic, and Cognition Center at The Hebrew University (2016–2017, 2019–2021). Bar-Asher Siegal was a visiting professor at Harvard University (2012), Yale University (2017–2018; expected 2022–2023), and a visiting professor at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris (2016–2019). His work covers the two major academic fields of philology and linguistics; he seeks to develop new methodologies for finding points of contact between these two distinct but interrelated fields.

As people who live in society, reciprocity plays an important part in our lives. We notice its presence or absence, and it forms a significant component of our moral judgments and decisions. The values of the various societies call for reciprocating actions, for example by returning a favor or retaliating in kind, and our language reflects the importance we attach to this principle by noting whether states-of-affairs are symmetric in some manner—or not. The importance of reciprocity in our social lives suggests that we may be predisposed to identify it, and consequently—it is also unsurprising that languages possess designated grammatical tools for indicating reciprocal relations. Exploring how languages encode reciprocal relations can provide an important key for understanding the cognitive ability that underpins the recognition of these relations.

There are several ways to pursue this direction of study. It is obviously crucial to begin by asking the most fundamental questions: Do languages indeed have specifically designated structures for denoting reciprocal relations, or do they only encode some broader conceptual category that includes reciprocity? Another potentially promising line of inquiry is to investigate the origin of the linguistic expressions that signify such relations. Understanding how these constructions developed, yield generalizations about the situations that tend to be perceived as reciprocal. These are the types of questions that underpin the specific linguistic inquiries discussed in this book. It deals with the first type of questions by exploring the semantic and syntactic properties of the relevant constructions; and by undertaking a detailed examination of their history, with the second type of questions.

The unique contribution of this book stems from its methodology, which proposes a new definition for a reciprocal construction. It involves a comprehensive study of the relevant constructions (with examples from over one hundred languages and dialects), as it provides and substantiates a new analysis for the syntax and semantics of constructions extensively discussed in the literature.

The research develops new methods for describing the interactions between synchronic and diachronic data. For this purpose, the book outlines methodological assumptions for combining historical and formal-semantic approaches, presenting an innovative way of how diachronic data can inform semantic analyses.
Yossi Maurey's new book, Liturgy and Sequences of the Sainte-Chapelle: Music, Relics, and Sacral Kingship in Thirteenth-Century France, revolves around several liturgical songs of praise—called sequences—composed for the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris during the thirteenth century. The Sainte-Chapelle is the glorious royal chapel that King Louis IX (1226–1270) had constructed in his palace—primarily to house the Crown of Thorns and other relics. The former, in particular, was a potent symbol of the Capetian kings’ claim to sacral kingship. The magnificent chapel, and in particular its iconography, has long been a source of fascination and study. The liturgy of the Sainte-Chapelle, and the ways in which it propagated that ideology, has so far been understudied. The book, which is a study of one of the most important subsets of the liturgy, is a critical step in pushing forward our knowledge of how the French monarchy articulated and imagined the relics as part of its broader ideological vision.

As inert objects, relics could not accomplish much without being ‘activated’ in one way or another, whether in prose, paintings, or in music. It is these modes of activation that endowed the substance of relics with identity and meaning rendering them so powerful and effective. The text and music of the liturgies studied in the book were some of the most critical mechanisms of activation; they enabled the power of the Sainte-Chapelle relics and articulated the nature of that power. To non-specialists, musical notation constitutes an impenetrable barrier that precludes analysis and meaningful insights. In his book, Maurey aims to integrate music and liturgy into the history of the burgeoning Sainte-Chapelle during the thirteenth century as a vehicle for constructing its theological and political program. Music is not the object of this study per se, but rather—it’s role and effectiveness in reflecting and shaping the sacral dimensions of the Sainte-Chapelle.

Yossi Maurey holds the Hans Salter Chair at the Musicology Department of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, now in his second term as department head. A specialist in medieval music and liturgy, his research explores the confluence of theology, music, manuscript culture and ideology, and the ways in which music creates new communities and realities. Maurey is the author and editor of several volumes, including St. Martin in Music, Ritual and Hagiology (Polonsky Prize 2015); Sounds from the Past: Music in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean World; and Espace sacré, mémoire sacré: Le culte des évêques dans leurs villes. He is now researching how crusading ideals were championed through music and liturgy in the Middle Ages.
The legend of the human king Pururavas and his elusive lover, the celestial nymph Urvashi, has been retold since ancient times to the present day, throughout the Indian peninsula. It has been related in countless works of various genres, from ritual literature through temple mythologies, to poetry and drama. Despite it drawing vast scholarly attention, only a few well-known versions of the tale have been studied, while other versions— particularly non-Sanskrit ones—remain untouched by modern scholarship.

In his dissertation, Peres draws on the Pururavas myth's wealth of variations to explore the interrelations of narratives and religious shifts in South Asia. The multiple versions of the myth studied here, represent the major stages of the narrative's evolution, which correspond to three main phases in South Asian religious history: the Vedic era (12th–5th c. BCE); the establishment of the “Hindu” theistic cults (2nd–10th c. CE); and the “vernacular age” of the second millennium CE, in which regional literary and religious forms gained prominence. For the latter, Peres utilized the Tamil speaking region at the southern tip of the Indian peninsula, as a case study.

Within each of these phases, the variations of the story are studied in their religious and social context. Thus, the story of Pururavas serves as a peephole to the backstage of tradition, through which Peres shows how textual adaptations were used in ancient and premorden South Asia to introduce ritual and theological innovations, to validate popular beliefs and practices, and to compromise ideological tensions between conflicting social identities.

Ofer Peres is a scholar of South Asian religions and literature. He received his Ph.D. in 2019 from the Department of Comparative Religion at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and is currently a postdoctoral fellow of the Minerva Stiftung at Heidelberg University. In his research, he explores the role of adaptations, translations, and other literary practices in promoting cultural transitions in premodern South Asia through philological study of texts in Sanskrit and Tamil. His main fields of expertise include South Asian religious history, Vedic myth and ritual, south Indian devotional traditions, and early modern Tamil literature.
Walking is a pedestrian activity peculiarly elusive to academic categorization. This is particularly so if we consider the complexity of talking about walking, since performance does not necessarily manifest in the literal form and is an embodied form of knowledge. When engaging emotions, representations, senses, and a body’s socio-cultural context, walking provides a fertile hermeneutic tool to explore reflexivity, bodily awareness, and how the intangible experience of walking can be conveyed verbally and in writing.

This research examines the performative nature of how Haredi women walk. It was built on two sets of interviews: (i) with previously secular Jewish women who chose to become ultra-Orthodox and women who went through the opposite process. The interviews examined how their transformative hybrid identities and performances are embodied through their walking and walking awareness; (ii) with secular actresses who played ultra-Orthodox women in Israeli television dramas and fiction films as to how they learned to perform the walking style of Haredi women. In placing the narratives of both sets of women side-by-side and examining their similarities and differences this thesis examines how women reflect on walking as well as how they learn novel walking styles. Sensitive to the different qualities of movement, the actresses’ training and experience in acting enabled them to distinguish between different kinetic bodily feelings and opened up a lens through which to return to the other set of interviews, which could then be critically analyzed.

This paper, in weaving the narratives together—and at times apart—explores potential junctures and opens up questions such as: Is there a category of “Haredi physicality,” and: how can performance affect internal orientations? Lastly, Zeltzer questions how can this engagement, in turn, supports her in finding her own scholarly voice to write about walking.

Daniella Zeltzer holds a B.A. (Honors) in Equity Studies and Anthropology from the University of Toronto and an M.A. in Cultural Studies from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she wrote her thesis on the phenomenology of walking and performance of the body. Her scholarly focus spans two fields: embodied knowledge and performance, and food studies—particularly explored through more participatory and communal research methodologies.

Zeltzer is currently focused on exploring and challenging food production and consumption. She is fascinated with food traditions and identities, and the place of boundaries in our food system, as well as communal, participatory slow cooking. Over the past few years, most of her time was dedicated to codeveloping the Food Rescuers, a community-based organization aiming to create a more just and sustainable urban food system.
RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

JOEL BINDER

Joel Binder holds a B.A. in Humanities and Social Sciences from The Open University of Israel and an M.A. from the Department of Talmud and Halakha at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is currently a doctoral candidate at The Hebrew University and the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. His work focuses on the codicological study of medieval Hebrew manuscripts and their wider cultural and socio-historical contexts.

Binder’s Master’s thesis, written under the supervision of Prof. Simcha Emanuel, focuses on a unique multi-text manuscript written in fourteenth century Ashkenaz. This manuscript contains a wide variety of texts spanning many fields of knowledge, such as Midrash, Halakha, Musar, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, chiromancy, lexicography, riddles and more. Some of the texts are unique to this manuscript: among them are the earliest known collection of popular riddles as well as the earliest known Hebrew–Yiddish dictionary. Both latter texts were hitherto unknown to scholars.

The study of Hebrew manuscripts from the Middle Ages, that started in the nineteenth century with the beginnings of the Wissenschaft des Judentums movement, concentrated on the textual and historical aspects of the manuscripts’ world. The systematic and scientific study of the physical aspects of Hebrew manuscripts began in the 1960s with the establishment of the Hebrew Palaeography Project. To this day, these two aspects of Hebrew manuscript studies—the textual-historical and the physical—remain detached from one another. Binder’s thesis combines these two aspects of manuscript studies. This methodology enables the understanding of the complex formation process of some of the texts as well as the reconstruction of the worldview of a fourteenth century Ashkenazi Jewish man who was not a member of any intellectual elite and nonetheless was someone espousing wide intellectual horizons. This is evident from the limited library of diverse works that he recorded for himself and that, as the study shows, was ultimately integrated into one volume—MS Darmstadt, University and State Library, Cod. Or. 25.
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Death, Performance and Text in the Early Upanisads

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The Role of Niddah Laws in Daily Lives of Men and Women in the Ashkenazi World of the 17th-19th Centuries

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Forum Europa, Faculty of Social Sciences
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**DR. HILA KEREN**  
Faculty of Law  
*Textual Harassment: A New Historicist Reappraisal of the Parol Evidence Rule with Gender in Mind*

Student Prize:  
**DR. ELISHEVA RIGBI-SHAFRIR**  
Department of Musicology, Faculty of Humanities  
*The Modern in Music 1980-1920 against the Crisis of Historicism and the Breakdown of Rational Paradigm: A Critical Analysis of a Style*

Student Prize:  
**MS. GABRIELA STERNFELD**  
Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies, Faculty of Humanities  
*La Organización Laboral del Imperio Inca: Las Autoridades Locales Básicas*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>First Prize</th>
<th>Young Researcher Prize</th>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>PROF. GABRIEL HERMAN</td>
<td>DR. TZACHI ZAMIR</td>
<td>DR. EMMANUELLE MAIN</td>
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<td>MR. RONNIE GOLDSTEIN</td>
<td>MS. OPHIR MINTZ-MANOR</td>
<td>The Effect of Pre-school Attendance on Primary School Achievement</td>
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THE POLONSKY PRIZES
FOR CREATIVITY & ORIGINALITY
IN THE HUMANISTIC DISCIPLINES
At The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

June 2022

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