



מכון ון ליר בירושלים
THE VAN LEER JERUSALEM INSTITUTE
معهد فان لير في القدس

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THE VAN LEER JERUSALEM INSTITUTE

MISSION

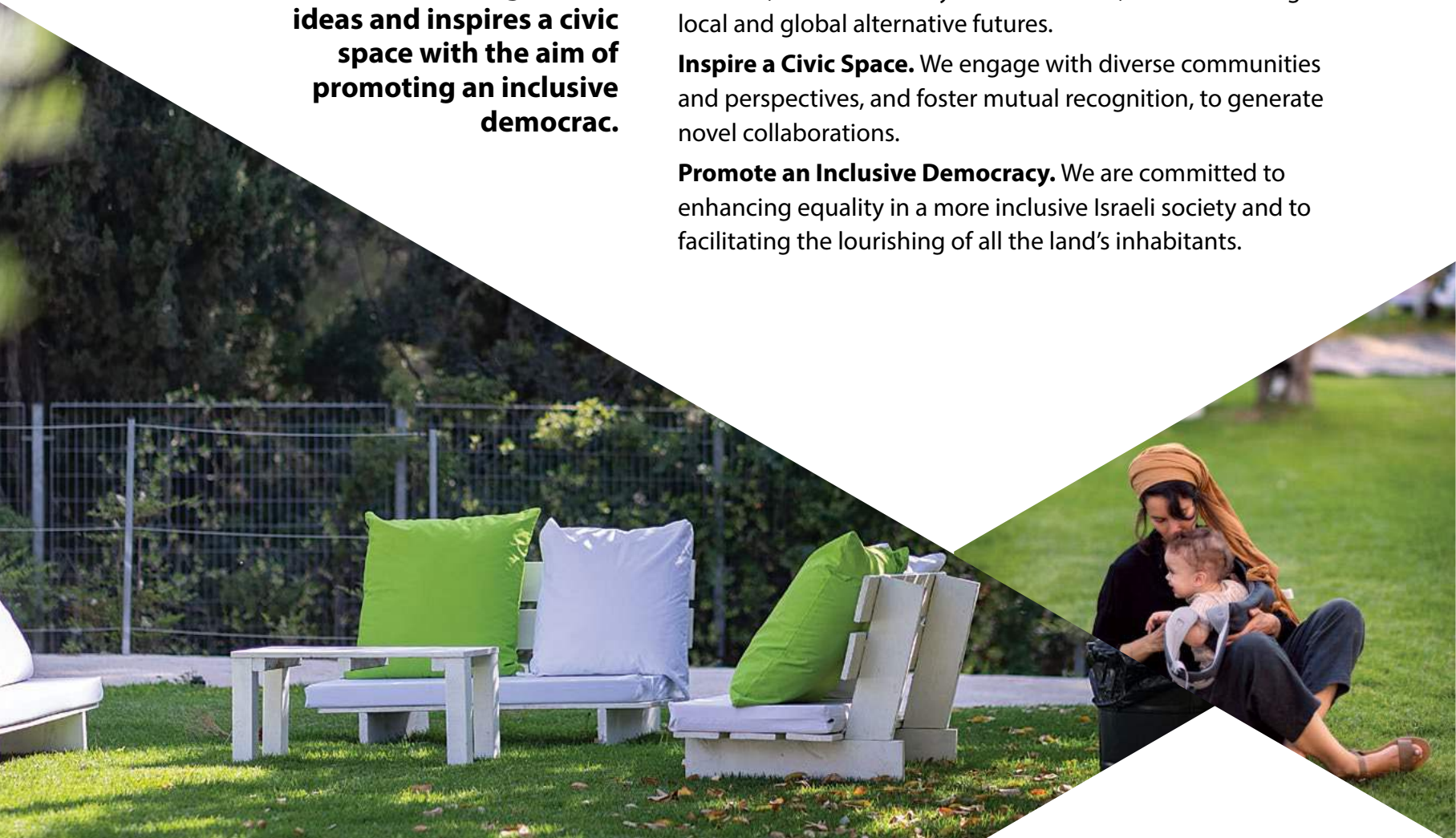
The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute forges bold ideas and inspires a civic space with the aim of promoting an inclusive democracy.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Forge Bold Ideas. We foster creative interdisciplinary research, and reframe key social concerns, in order to imagine local and global alternative futures.

Inspire a Civic Space. We engage with diverse communities and perspectives, and foster mutual recognition, to generate novel collaborations.

Promote an Inclusive Democracy. We are committed to enhancing equality in a more inclusive Israeli society and to facilitating the flourishing of all the land's inhabitants.





AIMS

Impact Academia.

We promote engagement with the Institute's research fields among leading scholars at prominent higher education and research institutions in Israel and globally.

Foster Young Leadership.

We cultivate promising individuals to connect transformative ideas to the contemporary world through academic studies, real-world experience and social engagement.

Shape Public Discourse.

We disseminate, engage, and expand the impact of our ideas among the interested and curious public from different sectors of Israeli society and international communities.

HISTORY AND ACTIVITIES

The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute was founded by Polly Van Leer as a cultural research institution for the betterment of humanity in 1959. Nearly 70 years later, we believe that creating novel ways of framing long-standing social problems can serve as a basis for developing new solutions to intractable problems that stimulate new understanding, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility, and, ultimately, a more inclusive democratic society. The Institute continues to advance research in the humanities and social sciences by developing a new language for approaching the ideological impasses underlying extremist rhetoric and socio-cultural divides. We do this by addressing five social concerns: Israel in the Middle East; Sacredness, Religion, and Secularization; Science, Technology, and Society; the Challenge of Living Together; and Gender and Feminism. We engage with people from all parts of Israel's diverse society, including students, academics, artists, professionals, and civil society activists. The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute is home to the Polonsky Academy, the leading international post-doctoral program in Israel, as well as to the Van Leer Institute Press, which publishes pioneering academic books and journals. We conduct numerous events each week that are open to the public—in person and online.

A portrait of Fay Twersky, a woman with short, curly brown hair, wearing red-rimmed glasses and a red top. She is smiling and looking slightly to the right. The background is dark. The portrait is positioned in the top left corner of the page, partially overlapping a light blue geometric shape that extends from the top right towards the center.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

We are in an unprecedented moment in Israel's history. The brutal Hamas attacks. The war in Gaza. All preceded by a time when the country was more divided than ever. Feelings run high in these moments and there can be an inclination to fight, to dismantle oppression, and decolonize systems. I understand that inclination to tear down, but I believe that during these times, we have an obligation to build and not further break. The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute is a builder – we build new ideas, new perspectives, and new leaders with courage and vision.

Democracy is a fragile form of government. It needs to be continually nurtured, supported, renewed and reinforced. The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute is committed to promoting,

in all ways available to us, an inclusive democracy. In my first year as Chair of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute's Board of Trustees, we engaged in a rigorous strategy refresh. We took stock of our work in the past and deeply considered our purpose and pathways to impact in the future. To meet the fierce urgency of the present, we set as our guide star, the promotion of an inclusive democracy. Israel's democracy, like many others around the world, is fragile and we want to do our part in bringing forward new ideas, engaging all members of Israeli society to consider new solutions to old problems and supporting the next generation of leaders to be creative problem solvers and bridge builders. The Institute has played a unique role in Israeli society since its founding in 1959, supporting pathbreaking scholarship, and convening conversations that pushed conventional boundaries. It continues to be a place for open minds, for exploration, for bridging

ideas and bridging divides. We need to treat this kind of place as sacred in our increasingly polarized world. I am inspired by Prof. Shai Lavi's leadership of the Institute and by the wonderful contributions to our mission from the exceptional staff and Board at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. Indeed, at a time when cynicism abounds, and we have experienced horrible losses of innocent human life, I am hopeful for the future because of the incredible young people I meet who participate in the Institute's leadership programs from all walks of life – Palestinians, secular Jews, modern Orthodox, ultra-Orthodox, Ethiopians, from the center and from the periphery and a full range of political views. They are curious and courageous, and they are our future.

Fay Twersky

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

These words are written, while the horrifying events of October 7 are fresh in our memory and the fate of the hostages is still unknown. The vicious attack by the Hamas on innocent civilians – children, women and men – has irreparably scarred our individual and collective souls. Israelis, Jews and Palestinians alike, have been mortified by the manifestations of human brutality. The attack has also led to unimaginable destruction and an unprecedented death toll in Gaza with no foreseeable long-term solution in the horizon.

It is too soon to think of the day after the war, but there is good reason to believe that the problems facing our society will not disappear. In fact, they are likely to be augmented: the internal

polarization within Israeli society between Jews and Arabs, the fate of Israel's fragile democracy in times of war and emergency, the stability of the region, and the absence of any prospects of peace.

But recent events, precisely due to their weight and magnitude, might also open new directions and new possibilities for Israeli society and for the region. It is here that the role of intellectuals and academics, especially of the younger generation, is crucial. And, it is here that the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute may have an

important contribution to make in reimagining our future in ways that will not repeat detrimental patterns of the past. Understanding the long-term impact of recent events and opening new routes to the future is the challenge of the hour. The Institute's enduring commitment to a more inclusive democracy for the benefit of all inhabitants of the land has become ever more pressing.

Prof. Shai Lavi



ISRAEL IN THE MIDDLE EAST

DR. ASSAF DAVID

“This wonderful poem is simply overwhelming.”

Internationally renowned Israeli novelist, the late A.B. Yehoshua, responding to a poem in Arabic translated by *Ofek* and published in *Ha'aretz* in 2021

We perceive Israel as being *of* the Middle East rather than merely *in* the Middle East. Our research contextualizes Israel in the region and explores the political, societal, and cultural bonds that connect Israel and its population to the Middle East. Our vision for Israeli-Palestinian relations is grounded in notions of inclusiveness, partnership, and power sharing between equal peoples. Our work aims to humanize the Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian “other” in Israeli society, through both academic endeavor and public engagement. While seeking to stimulate a paradigmatic and methodological change in Israeli academic disciplines, we also produce complex and nuanced analyses of regional issues for the Israeli public discourse. We hope to cultivate a civic conversation, and eventually develop a collective consciousness, conducive to a peaceful society shared between Jews, Palestinians and Arabs, regardless of the nature of future political formulae.



Research Activity

The binational interdisciplinary research group continues to explore the circumstances required to promote reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians based on political, communal, economic, and spatial partnership, rather than on separation. Our first international conference took place at the Institute in May 2023. The Israel in the Middle East research team held its first international conference in Heidelberg in February 2023, and is now working on a textbook consisting of original and translated articles.

Ofek for Arabic Media

In partnership with the Forum for Regional Thinking, *Ofek* makes content from the Arab and Palestinian media and public discourse accessible to Hebrew readers. Our bilingual, binational team publishes article translations, summaries, and analyses regularly in national and independent media outlets. In 2022, an upgraded website with video content and enhanced search capabilities was launched. Palestinian and Israeli translators and analysts underwent professional training that year, and were subsequently integrated into the regular staff of *Ofek*.

Maktoob

To bridge cultural gaps and encourage communication, the *Maktoob Book Series* makes Middle Eastern culture and Arab history more accessible to the Jewish Israeli population. Led by Prof. Yehouda Shenhav-Shahrabani, Dr. Yonatan Mendel, and Eyad Barghuthy, the project translates quality Arabic literature from the region into Hebrew. In 2022, four new books based on original novels written by Palestinian, Iraqi, and Lebanese male and female authors were published. The Institute organized

and hosted multiple public events to promote these books, as well as two workshops explicating *Maktoob's* binational translation model. *Maktoob's* subscription program continues, and has so far attracted more than 400 members.

East Jerusalem Change Agents

For the second year now, a group of promising and proactive young professionals from East Jerusalem has been gathering fortnightly at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. In a series of lectures and discussions, the participants have been acquiring intellectual knowledge and practical skills to create long-lasting socio-political change in the city. The program provides participants with insight into Jerusalem's social, economic, religious, historic, and political complexities. The participants also acquire tools to advance social goals and pursue socio-political initiatives. Their meetings with scholars and professionals have been eye-opening for all parties involved.

The Middle East Film Festival

In October 2022, the Institute and the Jerusalem Cinematheque organized the Middle East film festival for the second time. The program presented films from all over the region that shed light on social and cultural issues that occupy the people of the region. The festival brought to the Israeli audience the faces and voices of its neighbors, creating a complex and humane perspective on the Middle East. The screening of each film was accompanied by a short lecture by researchers who discussed the broad social, cultural, and political issues arising from the film and offered academic perspectives to the audience. We plan to proceed with this collaboration with the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv cinematheques, making the Middle East Film Festival a celebrated annual event.



SACREDNESS, RELIGION, AND SECULARIZATION

DR. YOCHI FISCHER

“The education system sometimes underestimates our ability to convey a complex understanding of secularism to our students. At this seminar, the opportunity given to us, the educators, to meet with researchers and to share and exchange knowledge and ideas was mutually productive, especially in these complicated times for our political and social future.”

Participant in the two-day seminar for educators

A woman with brown hair, wearing a black graduation gown over a white shirt, is speaking into a microphone. The microphone has a sign that says "HEBREW TIMES". She is outdoors at night, with trees and other people in the background. Some people are sitting on the grass, and there are small lights on the ground.

The debate concerning religion and secularism is arguably one of the major rifts dividing Israeli society today. Yet the discourse around it is conducted in simplistic terms that are at odds with recent scholarship and with many aspects of social reality. Concepts used in Israeli public discourse to analyze religious and secular realities are overly polarized and blindsided by local politics. Our research focuses on two main themes. First, we ask what the meaning of secularism is today: Is it a political ideology, a philosophical worldview, or perhaps a set of social practices? Second, we investigate the place and meaning of sacredness in our post-secular world—a world in which religion remains a central social and political factor even in societies that have undergone deep processes of secularization. We offer a critical, non-binary agenda that mitigates one of the major conflicts of our time and changes the perspective on the religious-secular dichotomy.

Secularism in Israel: Documentary and Seminar

To mark Israel's seventy-fifth Independence Day, we collaborated with television channel Kan 11 (of the Israeli public broadcasting corporation) in working on a special documentary series on Secularism in Israel: Past, Present, and Future. The series launched in July 2023 and has since received many enthusiastic responses.

Accompanying the release of the series, we organized a highly-successful two-day seminar for educators working in Israel's public school system. The participants watched episodes from the series and took part in discussions with scholars from the Institute. Participants discussed different

methods of teaching secularism and scularity in Israel today, and forged a network of teachers committed to the topic in order to facilitate the future exchange of ideas and methods.

Reading Secularism

Part of the difficulties we identify in the Israeli discourse about religion and secularism is the prevalence of a dichotomous, non-critical approach on the part of most actors, as well as a narrow outlook ignorant of religious-secular relations in other global contexts. As a way of somewhat rectifying these difficulties, we are preparing a comprehensive reader of the canon of academic works on secularism and secularity. The texts are being translated into Hebrew from several languages, and the book should be published by the end of 2023.

Re-visiting Jewish and Muslim traditions

In 2022 we assembled a multidisciplinary, international group of scholars (Muslim, Christian and Jewish) for a textual study group. The participants concentrated on reading Jewish and Muslim religious texts – both separately and together, in agreement with and in opposition to one another – from a critical, post-secular perspective. The group's work is laying the foundations for an intensive workshop for Jewish and Muslim undergraduate students, which will be held at the end of the academic year and will focus on the joint study of these and similar texts.





SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY

DR. HAGAI BOAS

“I came to respond to their need, to what they lack, to their helplessness, to their pain, to their desire to become parents.”

A surrogate in the focus group, “Patterns of Giving: Conversations between Surrogates and Organ Donors”

The climate crisis and COVID-19 pandemic have changed our lives. These global calamities have imposed constraints on the liberal and free society to which the citizens of the Global North were accustomed. Living alongside disease and natural disasters, with their social, political, and economic implications, has become “the new normal”. This reality is inundated with uncertainties and confusion about the legitimacy of scientific knowledge and professional expertise. Our mission is to explore the emerging norms and mores by focusing on two leading questions. First, we ask how the narrative of climate change, broadly construed as “the Anthropocene,” incorporates concepts such as responsibility, destiny, religion, humanity, etc. Second, we investigate the role of societies, communities, and collectives in contending with health challenges. We pursue this mission by conducting original research, discussion groups, open public lectures, workshops for young scholars, and conferences with policymakers and leading international experts.

Solidarity in Healthcare

This project is headed by an international study group which examines the theoretical understanding and the many faces of “solidarity”. Seven research teams explore the role of solidarity in overcoming different health challenges, such as organ donations, biobanks, international aid organizations, people with disabilities, loneliness, fertilized egg donations and surrogacy.

The Future of Bio-Medical Research

New technologies, discoveries and data banks render biomedical research today close to the vision of precision medicine, with patients as test subjects and the deep involvement of Big Pharma. In December 2022, the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute held an international conference in collaboration with the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, to examine the prospects and dangers this future entails. The conference brought together policymakers and stakeholders from the bio-tech industry, and researchers from public institutions, such

as universities and hospitals, to discuss ethical, regulative, and social challenges in biomedical research.

Welcome to the Age of Mankind

Geologists have termed the time we live in as the Anthropocene (*anthropo* meaning “human” and *-cene* the suffix for “epoch”) for the impact of the human print on nature. There is growing international academic discourse in the social sciences and the humanities on the impact of climate change, species extinction, and technological acceleration on human culture. In 2023, we published an anthology of articles with translations into Hebrew of key texts in this field. With articles by leading international scholars, this will be the first anthology that brings the Hebrew-speaking reader up to date on social and cultural aspects of the Anthropocene.

The Challenge of the Anthropocene

This special issue of “Theory and Criticism” presents original papers, essays, art works, translations and panel discussions that revolve around the meaning of living in the Anthropocene. Based on a workshop that gathered Israeli scholars interested in the Anthropocene from the perspectives of the humanities and social sciences, this special issue introduces Israeli readings of the Anthropocene discourse. Among others, papers discuss the concept of “new materialisms”, the local expressions of the Anthropocene, invasive species and more.




THE CHALLENGE OF LIVING TOGETHER

PROF. NISSIM MIZRACHI AND BEN BORNSTEIN

A joint initiative with the Shoharit Institute

“The forum provides me a political and theoretical home that does not exist elsewhere. This unique community allows me to meet brilliant, diverse and well-intentioned people, who truly expand my understanding of Israeli society.”

A member of the Forum for Political Thought



With increasing levels of social polarization, the question of how to live together in a deeply divided society is a pressing and complex challenge. The fact that core liberal values are conceived by non-liberals as a direct assault on their value-systems – the moral value of group identity, the sacredness of the imagined community – has created a two-layered crisis. First, a crisis of theory: since liberalism has become an exclusive academic paradigm, it often fails to see its own epistemic limitations. Furthermore, it would seem that the theory is recruited to promote liberal values. Moreover, it is a political crisis, as liberal efforts for coexistence encounter barriers of lack of empathy and understanding towards illiberal worlds of meaning. It is our desire to seek to extend liberal thought and to explore innovative ways of bridging religious, ethnic, and political differences. By connecting researchers, civil society leaders, and policymakers, we examine core issues in Israeli society and beyond, opening new avenues for thinking and acting in the face of our deeply divided society.



מכון ון ליר | חוקר הגירה ומקלט, מכון ון ליר

פנה ואיפה

Different Voices, Different Visions

Since 2021, we have been operating a common conceptual space for leading non-liberal peace activists to give voice to their visions. The group meets monthly to explore more inclusive and effective paths for imagining peace, while considering the moral and ethical issues that may arise accordingly. During 2022-2023, the group participated in several workshops and educational tours, and is now working on a joint lexicon for a shared society.

Non-Jewish Immigrants and Asylum Seekers in Israel

In 2023, a research group comprising senior officials from academia and civil society formed to discuss immigration policy and the treatment of refugees in Israel. In contrast to the polarized discourse that dominates the field, the group succeeded in creating an inclusive

discussion incorporating liberal-universalist and Jewish-nationalist positions. Now, the group aims to widen the discussion among additional key players in the field.

Conceptions of Tolerance

In a wide-scale and multi-method research study, we examined alternative concepts of tolerance and shared life among different groups in Israel. The results of the study, including those of a comprehensive survey, will be presented at the end of 2023 as part of a special seminar on the topic.

Towards a Sociology of Meaning

Based on the research community formed within the group, a special issue was published in *The American Sociologist* in December 2022, focusing on the post-liberal turn in Israeli sociology and the discipline as a whole. Additionally, a multidisciplinary anthology of research is being edited, featuring original articles that push critical theory's boundaries and set new directions for interpretive research.





GENDER AND FEMINISM

DR. MIRI ROZMARIN
RONNA BRAYER-GARB

“It is important to have data that can be used to reflect reality [...] According to the Gender Index published by the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, gender inequality in Israel is reduced by an average rate of 1% per year. A too slow, painful pace, which teaches us about how much work is still needed.”

Ayelet Razin, Head of the Authority for the Advancement of Women at the Ministry of Social Equality, speaking at the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality

Contemporary politics and social changes in Israel are threatening historical feminist achievements and women’s ability to fight for and maintain their liberties. With that, it seems that feminist theory and activism do not always have the answers to contemporary challenges. The Research Lab for Contemporary Feminist Political Subjectivities reexamines existing theory and practice while maintaining essential insights and critique, regarding contemporary gendered social arrangements. We provide a space for interdisciplinary feminist thought and offer new theoretical tools for addressing the gender reality today.

The *She Knows (Yoda’at)*—Digital Knowledge Center on Women and Gender in Israel, led by Prof. Hanna Herzog, Prof. Naomi Chazan, and Hadass Ben Eliyahu, is the most advanced and innovative information hub on women and gender in Israel. *Yoda’at* combines information gathering, comprehensive research and gender-equality activism, and is a hub for exchange of knowledge, analysis, know-how, and policymaking. We create a meeting point for activists, researchers, and decisionmakers to advance equitable social change in Israel. Our work demonstrates how conceptual theory can be brought to the public, affect civic and political discourse, and generate interest in social equality.

A “Toolbox” for Feminist Political Subjectivities

A research group of academics and activists devised a “toolbox” that brings together theoretical and practical knowledge to identify, analyze, and formulate transformative efforts for change. In 2023, in response to rising tensions in Israeli politics, the group held a conference with over 50 speakers in parallel sessions. The conference, A Feminist Toolbox for Our Time, brought together young and more established feminist academics and activists, who addressed many burning topics in feminist research and politics. The conference enabled the large crowd of over a hundred participants to discuss, debate, and propose diverse perspectives and new visions for feminist thought and politics.

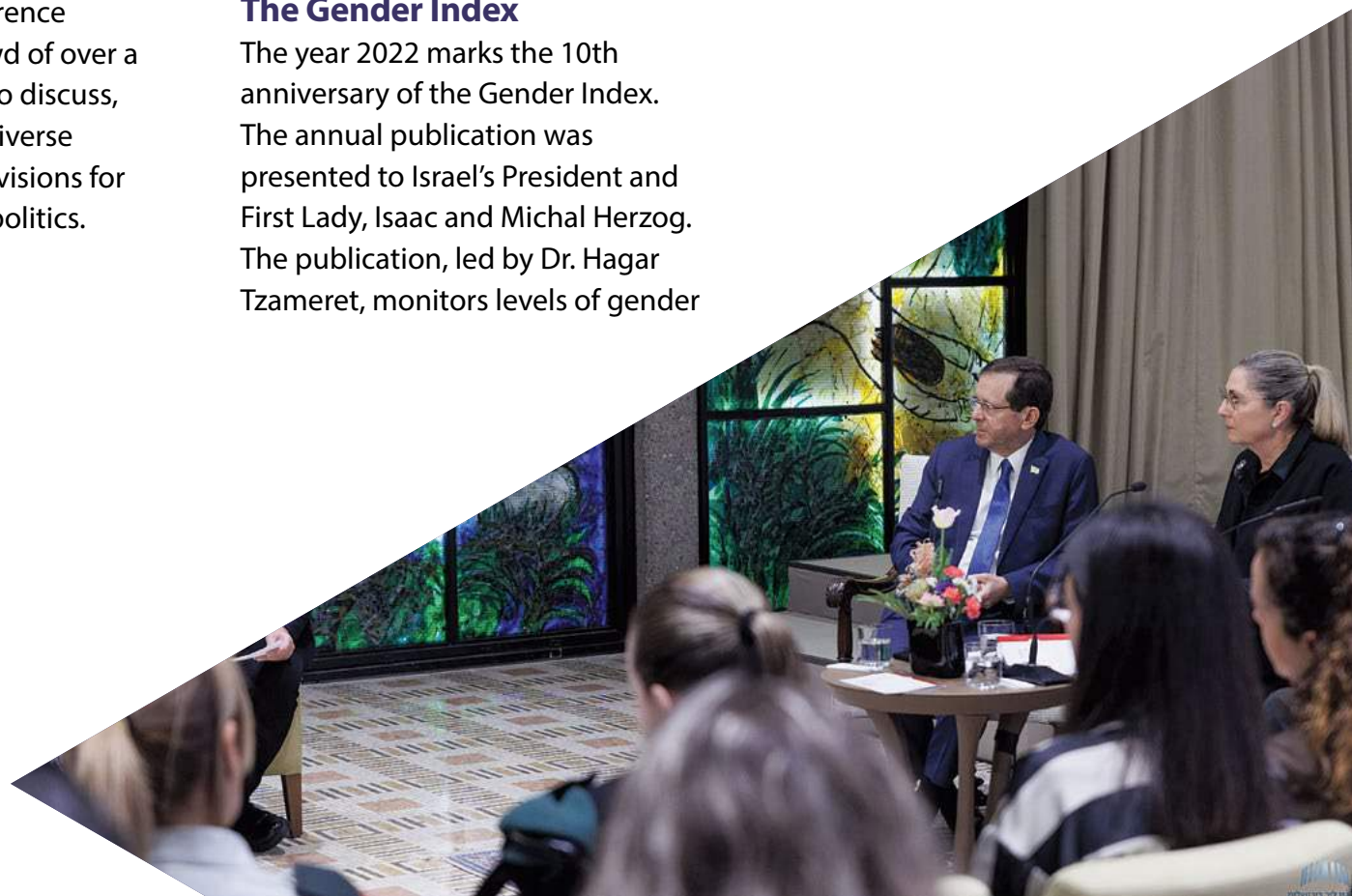
Transgender Studies and Feminism

This innovative research group brings together trans researchers and activists with feminist theory scholars and researchers to study and think together about contested issues and struggles that challenge the common goals of feminists and trans people. These topics are new to Israeli feminist activists and gender studies programs, and we hope it will lead to a more open and educated discussion that is necessary in the current transphobic political climate.

The Gender Index

The year 2022 marks the 10th anniversary of the Gender Index. The annual publication was presented to Israel’s President and First Lady, Isaac and Michal Herzog. The publication, led by Dr. Hagar Tzameret, monitors levels of gender

inequality across diverse issues in Israel, such as employment, education, poverty, violence, and health. Since the monitoring began in 2004, gender inequality has decreased by only 18%. During the ceremony, the President said, “The Gender Index is an important tool that presents a detailed picture of the inequality between men and women in Israel in various fields. We believe that women in key positions increase the quality and diversity of the decisions that affect our lives. Lack of gender equality hurts us all. We must work for the full and equal participation of women at all levels.”



The Polonsky Academy for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences, established by Dr. Leonard Polonsky in 2007, promotes excellence and creativity in academic research. Each year, we award up to seven postdoctoral fellowships, tenable for up to four years, to outstanding international and Israeli scholars working in any field of the humanities and social sciences. Polonsky Fellows conduct research both independently and in collaboration with ongoing multidisciplinary projects at the Institute. The Polonsky Academy's building was inaugurated in 2013, and offers the best possible conditions for innovative research, including professional autonomy, a scholarly community and a highly efficient network dedicated to the pursuit of their academic goals. The program has produced many sought-after candidates for coveted positions at leading institutions of higher education, such as the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, Oxford University, Strasbourg University, and the University of California.



THE POLONSKY ACADEMY

DR. HAGAI BOAS
SANDA FUCHS

“Such a debt of gratitude I owe, of course, to the Polonsky Academy. And while I am excited about my next professional step, I wish I could stay a bit longer at the Academy. The program’s quiet and relative freedom – it is a postdoc with very few strings attached – were exactly what I needed in order to get some work done. I think the program is excellent the way it is; I am fully aware that I will not have such ideal working conditions in the immediate future.”

Ray Schrire, Polonsky Academy alumnus

In 2022, Polonsky Academy fellows and alumni organized a number of international workshops and conferences. The “State-building, Political Thought, and the Other in Muslim Imperial Peripheries” workshop was organized by Ekaterina Pukhovaia in cooperation with Kerstin Hünefeld from the Buber Society of Fellows. The workshop on “Is There an Israeli History without Palestinian History” was organized by Nimrod Ben Zeev and Dotan Halevy in cooperation with Basma Fahoum from Stanford University. The “Imagination and Belief” international workshop was organized by Polonsky Academy alumna Elvira Di Bona in cooperation with the Israel Science Foundation.

LAW AND OTHER LANGUAGES

PROF. ORNA BEN-NAFTALI | PROF. SHAI LAVI

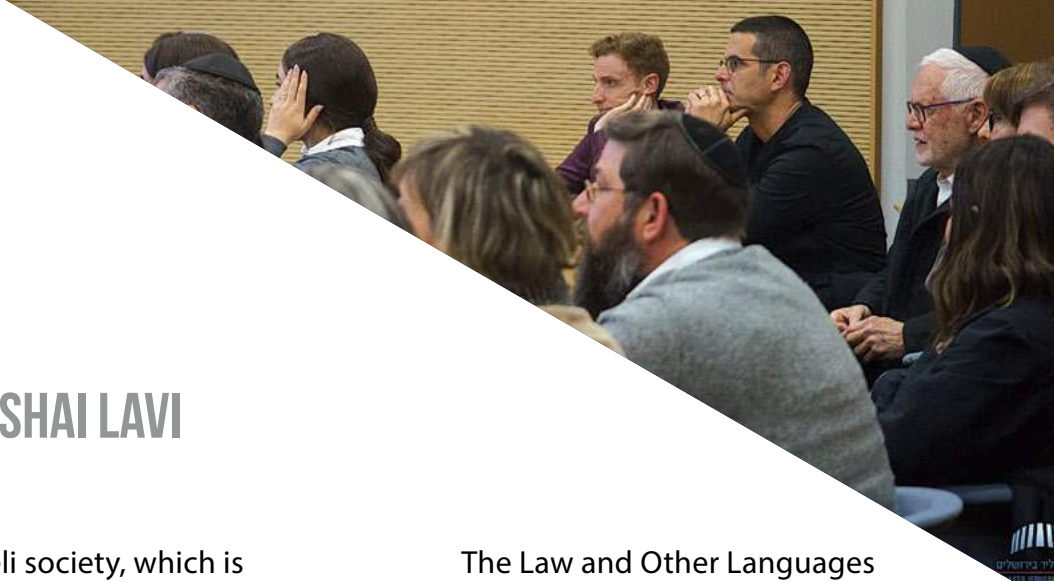
Law and Other Languages for a Just Society in Israel is an LL.M. program that aims to reexamine the role of law in Israeli society in light of the crisis of liberalism in Israel and around the world, and offers a unique framework for creating a new and unified legal and political language for Israeli society, which is characterized by deep social diversity. The program is run in partnership with the Emile Zola Chair for Human Rights at the College of Management. The program's point of departure is that liberal democracy is facing a deep crisis in Israel as well as in many places around the world. The rise of nationalism and populism, deepening economic disparities and social polarization are undermining the values of liberalism and liberal institutions, including the legal system, media, culture and academe.

In Israeli society, which is characterized by profound cultural and normative diversity, liberal values, including universalism, freedom from tradition and authority, and the principle of the rule of law, fail to serve as a common springboard for a shared society. Liberalism is perceived as being opposed to other value systems: democracy versus Judaism; secularity versus religion; the individual versus the collective; globalization versus provincialism; and liberty versus tradition.

The Law and Other Languages program seeks to re-examine the fundamental values of liberalism, to re-examine the role of law in the diverse Israeli society, which is characterized by different conceptions of justice, and to offer new directions for a shared life in Israel, in order to find a path to shared living. All this should be conducted without abandoning the values of liberalism, but with the understanding that they can no longer be a common starting point for all.

"I found myself using the materials and knowledge we received during the program for discussions that I conducted either in my social life or in my professional life. I also discovered that I read newspapers and posts on social networks differently and speak differently in meetings with students and preparatory schools as part of my work."

Michal Goren, law program participant



INTELLECTUAL JOURNEYS

DR. YOCHI FISCHER

“The exposure to opinions that challenged and even irritated me, took me away from my comfort zone and I began to learn how to deal with basic opinions that are completely different from my own.”

Malek Abo Sahion, Intellectual Journeys program participant



The Intellectual Journeys program immerses promising undergraduate students, from diverse and separate communities, into a world of deep ideas and civic commitment. In an intensive summer program, on the eve of their entry into higher education, the fellows learn to relate the liberal arts to the contemporary world through academic seminars, real-world experience, and personal development. The fellows explore big questions that challenge today’s world, such as how the tensions between East and West, religion and secularism, and nationalism and liberalism shape society, and how scientific innovations and the global economy affect our daily lives. The fellows continue to be supported by program staff during their first year at university, and they regularly attend cultural events and discuss their contents in the context of social, political, and economic challenges. For their final projects, each of the fellows is obliged to write a thesis on a social issue close to their heart, and then, in small groups, they lead public engagement initiatives on campus that aim to foster open intellectual discussion on the subject. Alumni continue to express their unique voices in the broader public by writing op-eds, organizing public debates, and volunteering in civil society.

The program has created a model that can be implemented within any higher education institution. Widespread adoption of the program would advance efforts made by universities and colleges to help students become deep thinking, socially responsible and culturally inclusive citizens. In order to multiply the impact of the program, in the fifth cycle of the program, we continued with the expansion of the program. The program was conducted in collaboration with two universities: a continued collaboration with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and

a new collaboration with Tel Aviv University. In this framework, the fifth cycle of the program consisted of two groups that were run simultaneously, each group comprising 15 fellows at each university. The collaboration was reflected in the following components: The fellows lived in university accommodation, received educational stipends, and were awarded academic credits, while some of the seminars were given by the university's lecturers. Further multiplication of the impact

of the program in the sixth cycle will be attained through continuing the collaboration with the two universities. When more academic institutions have taken on the program, we hope to see alumni from the various campuses coming together as a greater network for change in Israeli society.





The Intellectual Incubator for Documentary Filmmakers was formed in partnership with the Israeli Documentary Filmmakers Forum and the Jerusalem Cinémathèque. The program is a framework for thought and critique about the intellectual, social, and cultural contexts in which documentary films are conceived, produced, and received. It is also a place for developing ideas and for collaborative work of filmmakers and researchers. The Incubator supports the development of ideas and promotes cooperation among filmmakers and academic researchers, thereby advancing documentary filmmaking in Israel. The filmmakers who participate in the Incubator and their films benefit from greater intellectual depth and creative momentum, thus enriching documentary filmmaking in Israel.

DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS

RONNA BRAYER-GARB | DR. ASSAF DAVID

“Thanks to the Incubator program I devoted my time to working on developing the film and promoting it, and now I have a contract for my film with KAN - the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation.”

Zvi Landsman, director of: *The Guest – the Mysteries of the Life and Death of Jacob Israel De Haan*

In its fourth cycle, the project was centered on one common theme—Israel in the Middle East. As in previous years, the filmmakers recruited for the program included a mix of well-known accomplished professionals, and promising up-and-coming artists, men and women, Israelis and Palestinians. The projects touch on the political, cultural, social, and economic bonds that link Israel and its population to others in the Middle East, as well as on Israeli-Palestinian relations in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

The eleven selected projects dealt with a variety of topics. For example, ***A Poem for Asel***, tells the story of a friendship between two teenage boys - an Israeli and a Palestinian - reevaluated two decades after tragedy strikes and changes the Middle East completely; ***Her Name was Zehava***, tells the story of a 22-year-old Palestinian trans woman who had to seek refuge in Israel and committed suicide; ***The Day After***, is a web series which compares the conflict in Northern Ireland, and its historic resolution, to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and plausible solutions to it.

HAZMAN HAZEH MAGAZINE

DR. OFRI ILANY

Hazman HazeH is a magazine of political thought, culture, and science founded by the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute in 2018. The magazine publishes articles by leading writers and scholars in Israel and abroad, aiming to offer renewed thinking on key issues that are, or should be, on the public agenda. Every other week a new long-form article is published online; once a year the magazine publishes a print issue distributed to Ha'aretz newspaper subscribers. Both online and print editions are freely available to the public. The magazine's articles present in-depth engagements and interventions in a broad range of topics, including climate change, the crisis of liberalism, local and global political economy, religion and secularism, technology and the sciences, Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Judaism and Jewish life, and new feminist thought.

"What can history teach us about the current political crisis in Israel?"

Dr. Ofri Ilany, From the foreword of Hazman HazeH's fifth issue

A new format of audio recordings of Hazman HazeH articles was launched in September 2022 with the goal of bringing the magazine's contents to a broader audience. The new format has already led to a considerable rise in the magazine's exposure and has received praise from many listeners. We intend to develop the format and turn it into a podcast, which we expect will lead to a further increase in the magazine's exposure.

Since October 2022, the new editor of the magazine is Dr. Ofri Ilany. Starting from 2023, articles on the site appear more frequently, and the articles respond more immediately to current affairs. The effect is already evident in the exposure data for

the magazine: in the last year the average monthly number of visits to the website increased by 50% compared to the previous period.

The recent period has been devoted to rearrangement of the magazine's strategy: and diversification of its content. Among other things, the renewed magazine is aimed to address a broader readership, and already publishes articles in more diverse formats, including interviews, roundtables, and brief articles. More space will also be given to articles translated from additional languages besides English – including Arabic, French, and German.

In April 2022, the magazine's third print issue was published and distributed with the Ha'aretz daily newspaper to approximately 85,000 households and 5,000 newsstands in Israel. The magazine's fifth print issue was published in April 2023.





PUBLIC EVENTS AND DIGITAL PRESENCE

SHULAMIT LARON
DR. ADAM KLIN ORON

“I was delighted to see the auditorium full of people of all ages and persuasions. COVID-19 really hurt public activities, and the audience will love to enjoy your rich array of topics again.”

Website Visitor

Each year, hundreds of public events, including lecture series, film screenings, and conferences are held on our campus. The public activities are aimed at disseminating the ideas developed at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute – mostly in the context of our research clusters or based on the work of our senior research fellows. Speakers include Israeli and international scholars, journalists, political figures and religious leaders, and diverse audiences regularly fill the grounds of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. We utilize our many facilities, including two auditoria, various seminar and conference rooms, and a beautiful garden for outdoor events. All of these have cutting edge multimedia equipment which enable virtual, as well as on-site, participation. Most of our events are also streamed live, with the lion’s share of our attendants participating via virtual platforms, namely YouTube, Facebook, and our website – more than 100,000 views a month.

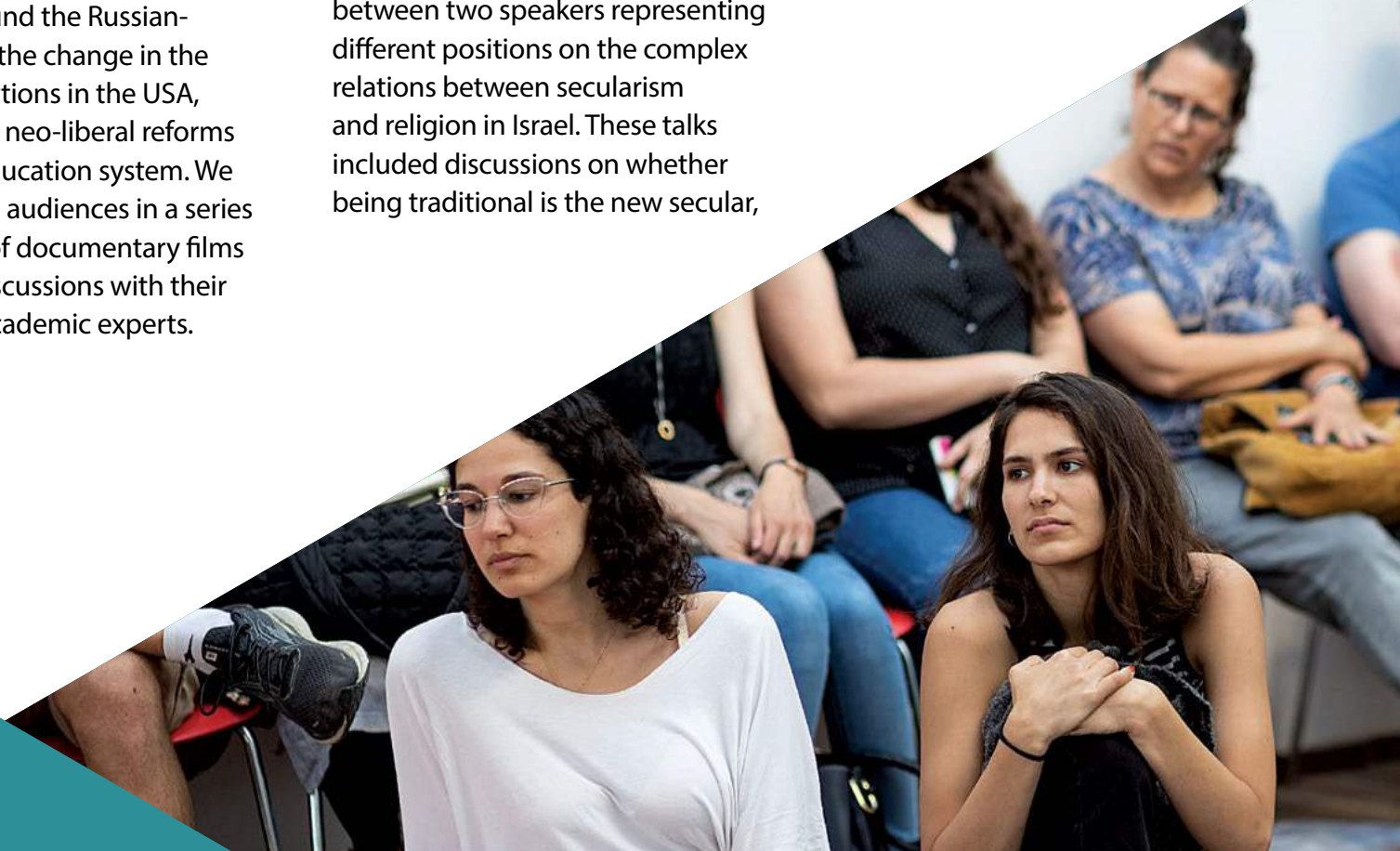
In 2022, we held more than 40 online events, with an average of 1,000 views for each event. We had a quarter of a million visitors to our website, over half a million views on YouTube, and our Instagram visits increased by 175%. Among our public activities was a lecture series led by Dr. Ofri Ilani on the Anthropocene, dealing with the impact of humanity on the planet – via discussions of the concept of despair in the age of global warming, capitalism and the environment, the Jewish angle on eco-activism and more. We also looked at the deep ideas behind current events, with events organized around the Russian-Ukrainian war, the change in the legality of abortions in the USA, and suggested neo-liberal reforms in the Israeli education system. We also welcomed audiences in a series of screenings of documentary films followed by discussions with their creators and academic experts.

A Jerusalem Festival of Ideas about Religion and Secularism

In May 2022, we organized a first-of-a-kind event: A Jerusalem festival of ideas about religion and secularism. The event included 11 talks, music, beer, food, and an exhibition. The event resulted from cooperation between several cultural institutions and attracted 700 participants from diverse Israeli backgrounds, including young people and adults, Jews and Arabs, the secular, religious, and ultra-Orthodox.

The lectures were the heart of the event: 45 minutes of discussions between two speakers representing different positions on the complex relations between secularism and religion in Israel. These talks included discussions on whether being traditional is the new secular,

a debate on secular utopia and dystopia, and a discussion on secular identity in Arab society in Israel. These talks exposed the audience to different approaches and opinions on secularism, religion, and the relationships between them. The variety of topics reflected the complex and non-dichotomic or dogmatic approach of the Van Leer Institute to these sensitive issues. The event successfully brought complex content to a diverse and broad public. It ended with a performance and discussion with the artist Rona Keinan on her music's secular and religious roots.





VAN LEER INSTITUTE PRESS

PROF. SHAI LAVI
RONIT TAPIERO

The Van Leer Institute Press is a publisher of original scholarship of the highest order. Since its founding in the 1990s, our mission has been to disseminate scholarship that promotes critical theory and contemporary thought, as well as honest and committed public discourse on key issues in Israel and abroad. The Press offers scholarly, nonfiction books, and online publications. We publish *Theory and Criticism*, a leading peer-reviewed journal in Hebrew, and together with Pardes Press, *Maktoob*, a series of Arabic language books translated into Hebrew. Since 2018, the Press also publishes *Hazman Hazeh*, an online and printed magazine in collaboration with *Ha'aretz* newspaper, and *Ofek*, an online news portal facilitating access to Arabic news and opinion pieces for Hebrew readers, in partnership with the Forum for Regional Thinking. Our publications draw media and public attention, and the public is invited to associated events.

Recent Publications

Gilbar, R., and S. Tamir, *Destruction, Donation for Research or Donation for Procreation: Attitudes of Patients regarding Excess Embryos from IVF Treatments in Israel* (research paper), Van Leer Institute Press, 2022.

Raz-Krakotzkin, A., *Biblical Consciousness, Mishna Consciousness: Safed and Zionist Culture (Theory and Criticism in Context Series*, ed. Y. Shenhav-Shahrabani), Van Leer Institute Press & Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 2022.

Sa'di-Ibraheem, Y., and K. J. Furani (eds.), *Inside the Leviathan: Palestinian Experiences in Israeli Universities*, Van Leer Institute Press & Dar Laila Publishing, 2022 [in Arabic].

Setter, S. (ed.), *Sex. Money. Noise. Theory and Criticism, Vol. 56*, Van Leer Institute Press & Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 2022.

Sher-Hadar, N., L. Lahat, and I. Galnoor (eds.), *Collaborative Governance in Israel: Theory and Practice (Theory in Context Series)*, Van Leer Institute Press & Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 2022.

Shtern, M., *A Civic Policy on East Jerusalem: Towards a New Theory of Change (Policy paper, Theory in Context Series)*, Van Leer Institute Press, 2022.

Maktoob

Abu Saif, A., *Pedestrians Who do not Cross the Street*, trans. Y. Mendel, ed. A. Shalhat and D. Rosenblit, Van Leer Institute Press & Pardes Publishing, 2022 [not distributed].

Al-Azzawi, F., *The Last of the Angels*, trans. Idan Barir, ed. M. Abu Baker and D. Rosenblit, Van Leer Institute Press & Pardes Publishing, 2022.

Barakat, N., *The Secret Language*, trans. K. Abdul Halim and B. Horvitz, ed. D. Rosenblit, Van Leer Institute Press & Pardes Publishing, 2022.

Jiryis, F., *The Cage*, trans. D. Baruch, L. Wattad, B. Horvitz and E. Koplewitz, ed. R. Raz and D. Rosenblit, Van Leer Institute Press & Pardes Publishing, 2022.





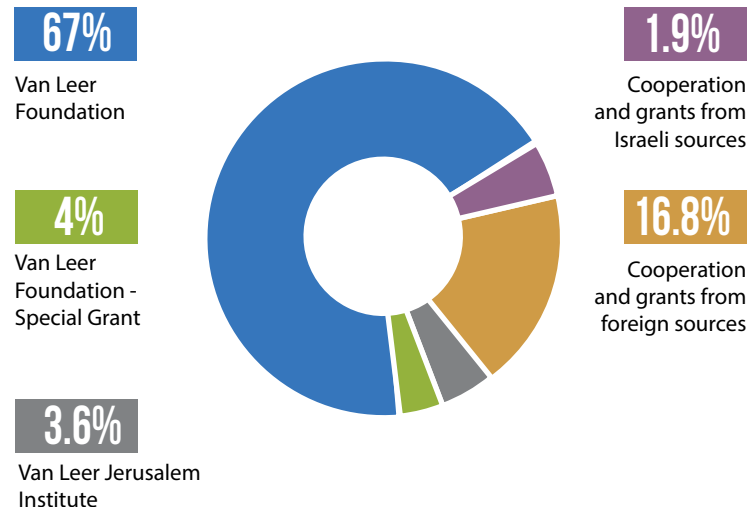
FINANCES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

SHIMON ALON

Financial data refers to CPA's report for 2022

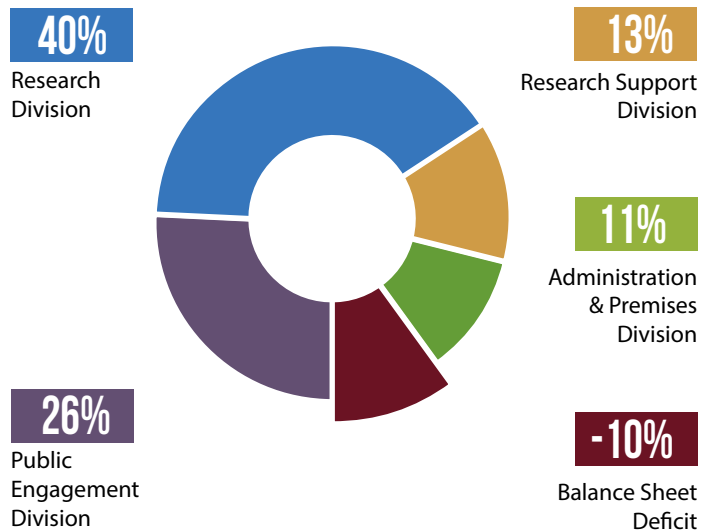
MAIN SOURCES OF INCOME

TOTAL 23,757,000 ILS



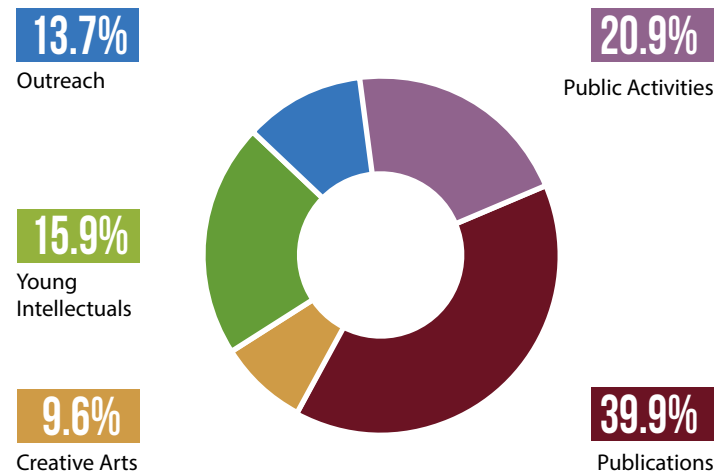
EXPENDITURE ACCORDING TO MAIN CATEGORIES

TOTAL BUDGET: 25,840,000 ILS



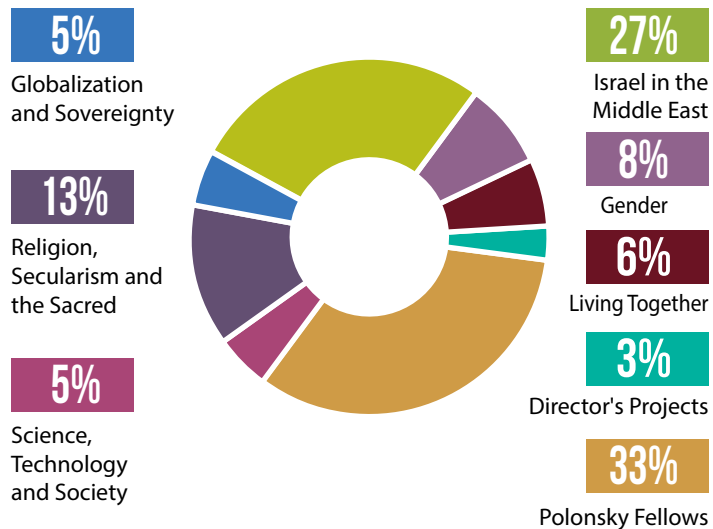
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT UNITS

COST 8,379,000 ILS

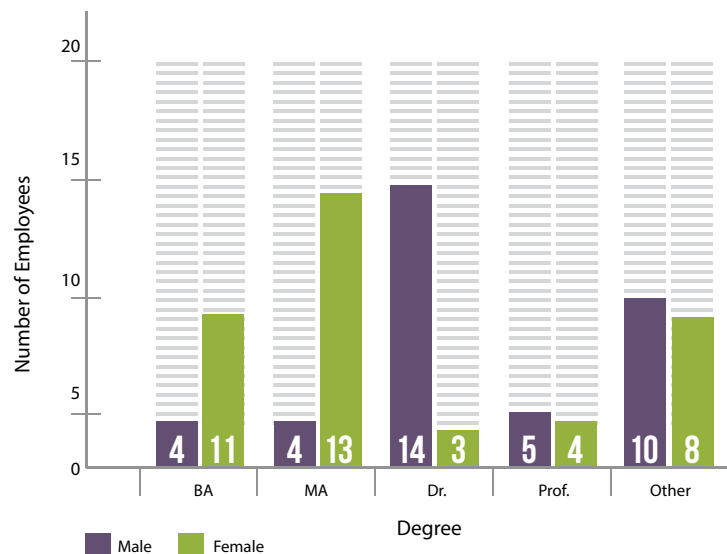


CONTENT UNIT RESEARCH

RESEARCH COSTS 13,102,000 ILS BY UNITS

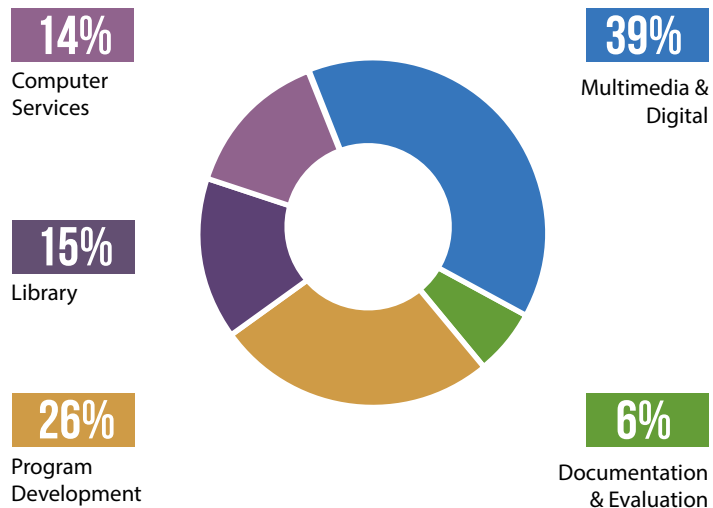


EMPLOYEES BY DEGREE AND GENDER



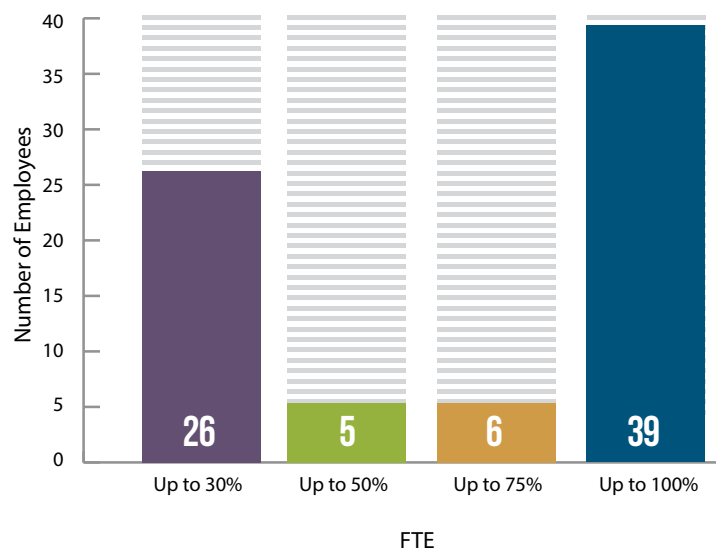
RESEARCH SUPPORT UNITS

COST 4,127,000 ILS



NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES BY FTE

TOTAL FTE: 46.17





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The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute was established thanks to the vision and generosity of the Van Leer family of the Netherlands. The Institute is grateful to the Van Leer Foundation for its ongoing support and commitment to the legacy of the Van Leer family. The Institute also gratefully acknowledges the Polonsky Foundation and our other philanthropic partners, without whom its wide range of projects and activities would not be possible.

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THE VAN LEER FAMILY

Bernard Van Leer, a Dutch Jew who made his fortune by manufacturing barrels for transporting oil, married Polly, the daughter of the head of the Jewish community in Amsterdam. The couple had two sons—Wim and Oscar. During World War II, the Van Leer family fled to the United States via England. The eldest son, Wim, enlisted in the British Army and served as a fighter pilot in the Royal Air Force. After the war, while his parents returned to the Netherlands, Wim had decided to immigrate to Israel. There he married Lia, who would later be the founder of the Jerusalem Cinematheque.

In the late 1940s, Polly Van Leer had arrived in Israel with a vision to establish a center focused on the promotion of human culture in Jerusalem. After founding the *Chronicles—Past News* newspaper, an English and Hebrew journal describing historical and biblical stories in modern journalistic language, Polly continued to strive for her original goal: turning Israel into a world center of humanistic values and science. She met with Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and after intense negotiations, he made her dream come true.

In December 1955, Polly submitted a plan to the government to build the Center for the Advancement of Human Culture. To ensure the continuation of the newly founded institute, the Van Leer family also put forward special legislation in the Knesset. In December 1958, this

law was approved by the Knesset, and with the support of David Ben-Gurion, the Van Leer Institution was established on a vacant lot in the Talbiyeh neighborhood in Jerusalem. The building, designed by architects David Reznik and Shimon Povsner, expressed the idea that “from Zion will come Torah,” as Polly had wanted.

Polly believed that the Jewish people in Israel and throughout the entire world were in spiritual distress, for which the solution was formulating a new way of life—“a new synthesis between traditional Jewish wisdom as interpreted from biblical texts and scientific thought” (from “Visions Meet,” Shaul c., 2009). For her, the establishment of the

“Temple of the Spirit of Israel,” now known as the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, alongside the Israeli National Academy of Sciences and Humanities, would create this same synthesis.

Polly Van Leer’s vision has come to fruition. For decades now, the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute has been conducting extensive and diverse research activities, with an emphasis on promoting the human spirit and values.



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**SOCIAL IMPACT
OF DEEP IDEAS**





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