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Arie Dubson was an active member of the Habonim Zionist youth movement. He received his degree in mathematics and physics at the National Polytechnic Institute in Mexico. He made aliya in 1980 and completed his master’s degree in business administration and operation research at the Hebrew University. Dubson is the general manager of the A.M.N. Foundation for the Advancement of Science, Art and Culture in Israel, which sponsors the EMET Prize. He has always had great appreciation and respect for the pursuit of knowledge.

Q: The EMET Prize was created by Alberto Moscona Nissim, founder of the A.M.N. Foundation, which distributes the prize, and Sol Dubson, your late father. What was the thinking behind the creation of the prize?
A: Alberto was a true Zionist and was very interested in the sciences. He always wondered why no Israeli had ever received the Nobel Prize for scientific achievement and decided to create a ‘Nobel Prize’ for Israelis. Of course, since the EMET Prize was first awarded in 2002, a number of Israelis have won the Nobel Prize in the sciences. We are very glad to say that all Israelis who have won the Nobel Prize had previously been awarded the Emet Prize. Alberto also wanted to encourage the pursuit of excellence and to show what could be accomplished.

Q: What type of research has the foundation undertaken to promote research and development in Israel to improve the welfare of Israeli society?
A: The A.M.N. Foundation for the Advancement of Science, Art and Culture in Israel supports research in universities in Israel, such as Tel Aviv University, Hebrew University, Ben-Gurion University and the Weizmann Institute. Each university decides how to use the funds that we make available to them. At Ben-Gurion University in Beer Sheba, for example, the money is used to provide grants to BA students.

Q: Among Israelis, how does the EMET Prize compare with the Nobel Prize?
A: Let’s put things into proportion. The Nobel Prize is, after all, the Nobel Prize. But for Israelis, the EMET Prize in academic circles has become one of the most sought-after and recognized awards. For winners of the prize, It’s not only the cash award that makes it special, but being part of the family of EMET Prize recipients is a special honor. It is the most prestigious prize given in Israel.

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Q: In your opinion, has the establishment of the EMET Prize led to greater advancement in the sciences and humanities in this country?
A: In Israel, research is conducted for the advancement of society, regardless of the prizes that are awarded. We come here to recognize their accomplishments; and by doing so, we contribute a little grain of sand to these advancements. In addition, the prize money that is awarded helps researchers continue their studies and analyses.

Q: You have been quoted as saying that the EMET Prize is the Zionist element in your life. Please explain.
A: I was born in Mexico in 1956, and I made aliya in 1980, almost 40 years ago. I believe that my work on behalf of the EMET Prize, which is done on a voluntary basis, and my family’s support of the prize contribute to the State of Israel as a Zionist activity. By working on behalf of the prize, I am doing more than living in Israel and being part of an incredible country - I am contributing something additional to it.
Q: Was the pursuit of education and knowledge an important family value in your childhood?
A: I was raised in an atmosphere of culture – of believing in its value to humanity in any field – whether it is the arts or social sciences or exact sciences. This has provided me with the curiosity to continue learning and supporting the pursuit of knowledge. I think that gaining knowledge is one of the best things a human being can achieve.

Q: You have a master’s degree in business administration, a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and physics and are a student of philosophy and music. Which subject do you like best?
A: That’s a difficult question. I really love music. I don’t play it very well, but I am still a piano student. I’ve been studying piano for 20 years. I consider myself a student. I would like to be a perennial student!

Q: Each year, there is a significant number of women recipients. Do you expect that other minority groups will be represented in future EMET Prize awards?
A: I hope so. The prize is open to everyone – we don’t discriminate against any group. We want the most qualified individuals to receive the EMET Prize – that is the most important thing. The number of women that have received the prize is increasing, not because they are women but because of their excellence in their fields.

Q: What stands out in your mind about this year’s EMET Prize recipients?
A: This year, we have two outstanding laureates in the field of translation – Hannah Amit-Kochavi, a noted translator of Arabic works into Hebrew, who has translated modern Arabic poetry, drama and plays; and David Weinfeld, who has translated the greatest works of Polish poetry into modern Hebrew. The fact that we honored two individuals who have translated works from these languages represents Israel and shows the beauty of a culture that is composed of many different cultures and languages. This is an example of the vision of the EMET Prize.

Q: What keeps the EMET Prize going, year after year?
A: I would like to thank all the people who work on the EMET Prize. All the members of the awards committee work on a voluntary basis and provide us with help and support. It is a wonderful thing!
Twice in my conversation with Prof. Avner De-Shalit at his home in Mevaseret Zion, his eyes opened wide in excitement. The first time was when he told me about the powerful period in his life when he was filled with idealism. He and his friends established Kibbutz Samar after the horrible scenes he witnessed during the Yom Kippur War. The second time was when he explained the unique research method he has developed in his sociology/political science studies.

De-Shalit, 62, was born in Rehovot and was raised in an academic family. His father was a professor at the Weizmann Institute, which he says with a smile “solidified his resentment of the natural sciences.” Married and a father of three, De-Shalit has a BA in political science from the Hebrew University. He received his doctorate from Oxford University in 1990. Returning to the Hebrew University, he was chair of the Political Science Department and was one of the founders of the Political Science, Philosophy and Economics (PPE) program. He served as the head of that program for two years, and then became dean of the Faculty for Social Sciences. He is this year’s winner of the prestigious EMET Prize awarded for excellence in academic and professional achievements that influence and contribute significantly to society. The professor and I discussed many topics, among them his research on identity created in major cities; his university teaching method; political activism; and his future research. Here are some excerpts:

Q: In your studies, you deal with the issue of poverty. Is there a difference between poverty in the past and how we experience and talk about it today?
A: I am not a historian, but there are different factors that I can talk about regarding the term. If we are looking at the 19th century, for example, then the answer is absolutely ‘yes.’ We see poverty differently. In the 19th century, poverty was an absolute status. Poor was a specific circumstance, whereas in contemporary times ‘poor’ is a comparative term. We see less (absolute) poverty when comparing status, but there are still some people who are in desperate poverty. It’s a complicated term to define but still exists. Some countries are able to reduce poverty rates. Even our government has lowered the spread of poverty. There is less poverty, but the depth of poverty has increased. That is to say, the number of people situated seriously below the poverty line. That is because many states, including the social democratic states, have given up the hope of coping with the permanent poor or the ‘very poor’ -- that is, the jobless or the homeless, etc.

Q: In your research, you talk about poverty and disadvantage. How do you differentiate between the two?
A: One thing that characterizes my research is that although I deal with the issues in a normative way, that being a philosophical examination of political topics, while trying to find solutions I use a different methodology. In my research, I am less interested in what philosophers have to say and more what the common person thinks. When I ask a research question, I go to the people in the street as a starting point. I spoke to the poor and found that the line between the poor and the disadvantaged is a blur and difficult to define. There are so many factors, so I talked, and by talking I mean often a two hours conversation, not only to those who are literally poor but also those in the family of the disadvantaged, which is a result of many factors. I try to see what is common to all of them. After talking to 92 people in Israel and England, we found that there is a lot in common. There is a wide family of the disadvantaged. The desperate poor are on the edge of this family.

Q: Do you feel that your method compromises on the precise scientific proof, and is it something you are trying to convince others in the academic world to do?
A: Many colleagues criticize this method. People worry that my work is not scientifically sound. But I think the opposite. I walk 15 kilometers a day in every city in...
which I conduct research because I must be in different areas at varying times of the day. You must design the research in a random and spontaneous way. I try to get more than just the shallow answers. I think it’s better for science, especially those that deal with society. Since I try to deal with the complexities of issues, I can’t rely only on dry polls. My method allows for people to express their theories of the people themselves and why they think that way. So I might lose in some terms (e.g. I can interview only those whose languages I can speak), but I gain on the depth and complexity which I can apply to the research.

Q: In your research on the environment, you ask a unique question regarding our obligation to the next generation. What does that mean in an academic context, and what do you mean by it in general?
A: This is, of course, first and foremost a moral and philosophical question, but the environment also touches the heart of political science. In many ways, it has become a political question. This question also touches other areas of my research. When a country has to decide where it should place polluting factories, it is a social and environmental question combined. As Robert Bullett, an African-American sociologist in the United States showed, when Louisiana had to decide where to put its nuclear reactor, an all-white committee decided to put it in an all black economically disadvantaged area. This pattern can be seen throughout the world.

Q: What did it mean for you to receive the EMET Prize?
A: I was very excited, honored and touched by the EMET award. It is an amazing recognition from the state and the community. We have a lot of conversations in Israel about the tensions between the general community and the elite in the universities and between academia and the state. Here was a moment of unity, calm and healthy logic.

In my research, I am less interested in what philosophers have to say and more what the common person thinks.

Moved by the Ethiopian community’s protests, Prof. De-Shalit plans to donate most of the prize money to academic scholarships for Ethiopian students. This in many ways epitomizes Prof. De-Shalit. His greatest concern and passion that has inspired his life and academic career can be described in one phrase: “human beings.”

A RELATIVE PEACE

Prof. Azer Gat

By MATAN DANSKER

One thing that struck me when I entered Prof. Azer Gat’s apartment in Ramat Gan was how calm and serene the man was, given his areas of research and expertise. These include tense concepts such as war’s causes and evolution, military theory, strategy and nationalism. Born in Haifa in 1959, Gat is one of the most engaging people in the academic landscape. He received his doctorate from the University of Oxford and twice served as chair of the Department of Political Science at Tel Aviv University (1999-2003, 2009-2013). He is the founder and head of the Executive Master’s Program in Diplomacy and Security and the International MA in Security and Diplomacy at Tel Aviv University. He currently holds the Azer Weizman Chair for National Security. Gat was awarded the EMET Prize in the fields of political science and strategy for his extensive research on the phenomenon of war, strategy and military thought, which combines various disciplines and requires expertise in the fields of evolution, anthropology, history and the social sciences. I sat down with him to talk about his various research projects.

Q: What is your main contention regarding the status of war throughout history?
A: I am arguing that war has been in decline since the Industrial Revolution, with a major exception in the trend being the two world wars. I try to explain why this decline occurred.

Q: What conclusions did you come to regarding this trend?
A: When you look at earlier periods in history, you cannot find long periods of peace. Now we see that since 1945, there have been no wars between the major powers. The reason for that is nuclear deterrence. In my research, I looked at other periods of peace in history. The second-longest period of peace between the great powers was between 1871 and 1914, and the third between 1815 and 1854. Why is that? The intuitive answer given is the economic and other devastating ramifications of modern war in terms of human life. However, in my research, I show that it is not true. In the past, war was just as destructive and lethal, in proportion to population of course, yet wars continued. The reason for the decrease in war was the Industrial Revolution. We saw a rise in affluence. The developed countries are richer than ever before. Production per capita is growing, which means we live on investment at home, industrial growth and exchange with other countries. Therefore, investment in war is a distraction from growth. The rationale of the modern world is not that war has become more costly, it’s that peace has become more rewarding. Countries that were invested in war are now invested in peace. This logic applies much more to developed countries than to those that have not yet successfully embarked on the road to modernization.
Q: Would it be fair to say that there are case studies of certain ideologies and psychological mindsets that go to war even when it conflicts with the economic reasoning you mentioned?
A: Of course, there is often tension between ideology and pragmatism. But I’ll take your question in a different direction. There have always been pacifist ideologies such as Buddhism or even Christianity which originally opposed war. All failed to prevent war in the countries in which they spread. Islam has a dualistic attitude toward war. It is prohibited in the Muslim community; but from its inception, it has failed to prevent war in the House of Islam. So ideology has a connection with reality. It can’t work in the abstract, where reality doesn’t conform to ideological precept. In all the developing countries, you no longer see either inter-state or civil wars. We take for granted that America does not conquer Canada. The same goes for Japan and South Korea, which do not threaten each other, despite a history of enmity. Where do we see a threat of war? From countries like North Korea and China that are less developed nations. The peak threat of war is in the most undeveloped countries like in the Middle East and Africa, where the link to the modern rationale is not developed.

Q: Do you see media and news media as playing a role in the investment of countries in peace and the reduction of war in the world?
A: I don’t think there’s a connection. You see the avoidance of war long before modern media and news media. This claim is made many times in the context of the Vietnam War. For the first time, scenes of war were brought into the American public’s living room. This supposedly swayed American public opinion against the war. This is not true. We see this pattern way before the rise of media, as with the British withdrawal from Ireland, for centuries part of the UK. Television only contributed to the process, as newspapers may have also done in the past. But by and large, I don’t think the media has played such a major role.

Q: What was it like for you to win the EMET Prize?
A: It is considered one of Israel’s most distinguished awards, and I was very honored to receive it.

Q: In what other projects are you currently involved?
A: I am writing a book that deals with ideological fixations. This is a subject that has always intrigued me. It refers to the way people are only able to see things through the ideological prism in which they are entrenched. We all know this from Israel and, of course, in the United States with conservatives and progressives. I am writing a book about this topic that is tentatively titled ‘Ideological fixation, truth, morality and other templates of the mind.’

My conversation with Gat delved into other areas as well. In addition to his other research topics, he spoke about the Middle East, which he sees as a demonstration of his theory on war. He spoke in this context specifically about China, which he thinks is the most important political question of the century. Ultimately, the conversation with him was an optimistic one, based on deep research and compelling data that has a global impact on our existence. The professor’s research puts into perspective the world we live in. Despite its problems, it may be gradually progressing on the road to peace, as has already occurred in his most developed and affluent parts.
Three Israeli scientists who developed insights and inventions related to the immune system have won the 2019 Life Sciences Bio-Medicine Award from the EMET Foundation. The winners are Prof. Michal Schwartz of the Department of Neurobiology at the Weizmann Institute of Science; Prof. Yinon Ben-Neriah from the Lautenberg Center at the Institute for Medical Research Israel-Canada; and Prof. Yair Reisner of the Department of Immunology at the Weizmann Institute of Science. They work not only to improve and save people’s lives through their medical research but also strive to inspire the next generation.

“Invest in following your curiosity,” Ben-Neriah said was his advice for budding scientists.

“Try to think out of the box, and always keep your eyes open when interpreting the results of a new experiment,” Reisner offered.

And Schwartz? “Love what you do, and do it consistently,” she said. “Have patience, and don’t be afraid to discover things you don’t expect.”

The winners talked to The Jerusalem Post about their work and what’s next for Alzheimer’s and cancer research in Israel and around the world.

Schwartz has made revolutionary contributions to brain research, showing the role of the immune system in maintaining the brain’s health and helping mitigate its dysfunction.

Q: Can you tell Post readers more about your research?

Schwartz: The brain is isolated from the blood by barriers that are collectively called the blood brain barrier. Although the brain is the highest tissue in terms of consumption of oxygen and is dependent on robust blood supply, there is no direct contact between the blood vessels and the brain’s tissue. Accordingly, the brain has long been considered to be isolated from the immune system. Since the middle of the last century, the dogma has been that immune cells are not allowed to enter the brain under any circumstances; and if they do enter, it is a sign of pathology. My team challenged this dogma and broke it by suggesting that there are beneficial and necessary relationships between the brain and the immune system in health and disease.

“Love what you do, and do it consistently,” she said. “Have patience, and don’t be afraid to discover things you don’t expect.”
Q: So you changed the direction? How did you know to do that?
Schwartz: My journey started more than 20 years ago. I was challenging the issue under the initial assumption that it does not make sense that the brain, the most precious and indispensable organ in our body, could not benefit from the immune system for support and repair. I was the world pioneer to demonstrate that the immune system indeed maintains the brain's health and ensures its functional plasticity and facilitates its repair. We discovered that cognitive performance of the brain is impaired if the immune system is compromised. Moreover, we found that in Alzheimer’s disease and dementia, the function of the immune system affects the timing of disease onset and the way it progresses, and that boosting the immune system can modify the disease. Thus, through step-by-step understanding of the underlying mechanisms, we were able to propose and develop an immunotherapy that will empower the immune system to help the brain to combat Alzheimer’s disease, dementia and other diseases.

Q: What will the next steps be?
Schwartz: My dream is to further develop our immunotherapy in order to convert these incurable diseases into chronic but manageable disorders.

Reisner developed strategies for overcoming immune barriers in bone marrow transplantation for the treatment of leukemia and other cancers.

Q: Please explain why this is such a breakthrough.
Reisner: In the past, bone marrow transplantation was limited to patients who had genetically matched sibling donors in the family. As such, only about 25% of the patients could benefit from this treatment. Our studies enabled doctors to use family members other than matched siblings. This allowed them to treat almost every patient who needs a bone marrow transplant.

Q: At least two of your breakthroughs are already in the clinic. Please tell our readers more about them.
Reisner: The first major breakthrough was in the context of bubble babies. These patients are born without T cells due to a genetic abnormality. In the past, they were kept in a protective bubble. Generally, they had a very low chance of having a matched sibling bone marrow donor because the parents were afraid to have more children with a similar genetic disease. Our approach enabled the use of one of the parents as a bone marrow donor, although a parent is by definition mismatched. In this way, we found a cure for bubble babies. The first patients were treated with this approach in the early 1980s, and they are now healthy adults in their 40s.

Q: What is another example?
Reisner: The second breakthrough was in the context of bone marrow transplantation for leukemia patients. Here, the barrier of graft rejection was
more difficult compared to bubble babies because prior to the treatment, leukemia patients have a more robust immune system. We have discovered that by using megadoses of bone marrow stem cells, we can overwhelm the immune system of the recipient and thereby overcome rejection. The mechanism by which megadoses of stem cells can attain this goal was the focus of our research for many years, but of course the translation of these insights is exciting. Recently, I was invited to Perugia in Italy to celebrate 25 years since testing this approach in the first patient in Perugia. At the ceremony, I was delighted to meet many patients cured by these mismatched transplants.

Q: You have some new research that suggests novel sources of progenitor cells to treat lung diseases.
Reisner: We have discovered stem cells in the lung that can be used for the treatment of lung diseases in a procedure akin to bone marrow transplantation. Although we have established the proof of concept in a mouse model, we are still far from clinical application.

Ben-Neriah in his lab has been studying the signaling of inflammation and cancer through genetically modified mice. Earlier in his career, the scientist was able to clone the BCR-ABL oncogene, which is the culprit of chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML). Ultimately, he identified the first effective BCR-ABL small molecule inhibitor, paving the way for the development of the anti-CML drug Gleevec. The BCR-ABL gene shows up in patients with certain types of leukemia.

Q: Why do you think you won the EMET Prize?
Ben-Neriah: I think my lab is a good example of a group of scientists who focus on basic research but in the back of our minds are always thinking about potential therapies and have even been able to translate some of our basic research into medical therapies for treating cancer.

Q: So, it’s important.
Ben-Neriah: Without supporting heavy basic research in Israel, we won’t have any big achievements in any discipline - not cancer or any other area.

Q: Israel always seems to be coming up with new cancer treatments or ways to impede cancer. However, more people die from cancer in this country than from anything else. Why is that?
Ben-Neriah: That says something good about Israel. Cancer is the leading cause of death in developed countries. In less developed countries, people die from other causes, such as infectious diseases.

Q: Are we getting closer to a cure for cancer?
Ben-Neriah: Cancer is such a diverse and big disease that we cannot solve the problem all at once. We are making progress slowly for curing different types of cancer.
Prof. Benjamin Kedar, the 2019 EMET Prize laureate in history, is professor emeritus of medieval history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, served as chairman of the board of the Israel Antiquities Authority (2000-2012), and was vice-president of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities (2010-2015). He was awarded the EMET Prize for the outstanding intellectual abilities that he has brought to the field of historical research in Israel and for his significant research into the Crusader period and the Mediterranean world of the Middle Ages; for his original insights into inter-religious and inter-cultural encounters in the past and present; and for his work and research in the field of comparative history and Jewish history.

Kedar was born in Nitra, Czechoslovakia, in 1938. His family avoided deportation to Auschwitz and went into hiding in September 1944. They were liberated by the Russians at the end of March 1945. Kedar moved to Israel in 1949, and his parents arrived two months later.

Q: How did your upbringing influence your life in terms of your decision to become a historian?
A: There are two answers. First, my mother's family is one of the oldest Jewish families of Prague. They have been documented since 1615, and I heard stories about my ancestors from my mother time and again. That was one spark that led me to be
interested in family history. The other thing was that I was fairly precocious. If you are in hiding for seven months at the age of six, you try to understand what is happening, who is who, and who is fighting against whom. I was very much interested in World War II after liberation, and although I was only a boy, I read adult-level material. That is another reason for my early interest in history.

Q: Is the Israel of today – the ‘start-up nation’ that focuses on technology and sciences -- overlooking what history and the humanities can teach us?  
A: I think that the interest in the history of this country is very strong, and it has political overtones. The so-called historical right of Jews to the land of Israel is on everyone’s lips, so I wouldn’t say that history is a neglected topic. I do think that there is an interest in the history of the country among lay people. There are numerous activities in the field of history that many people attend, such as those at Yad Ben-Zvi, Machon Avshalom and the universities. People who are not studying history as a profession come to learn what happened in the country’s past. In this sense, I think that interest is strong. Archeology is still popular as a subject, and people follow major excavations and major findings – perhaps not as much as in the early decades of Israel, but the interest is still there.

Q: One of the main areas of your work has been the Crusades and the Frankish kingdom of Jerusalem. How did you become interested in this subject?  
A: My interest arose from a course about the Crusades that I took in my first year at Hebrew University in 1958-59. My teacher – Joshua Prawer, who later became my mentor and friend – took us on a four-day excursion to Crusader castles and churches. This combination of studying written sources and studying the objects themselves made a huge impression and was a formative experience for me.

Q: In your book Looking Twice at the Land of Israel: Aerial Photographs of 1917-18 and 1987-91, you proposed a new way of looking at the history of the country during the 20th century through aerial photographs. What gave you that idea?  
A: What brought me to this is the quest for looking at things in a straightforward manner. Nowadays, everyone says there is no such thing as objectivity in history, and it is true. Yet, when you look at an aerial photograph of Beit Shemesh in 1918, which was then the small Jewish village of Har Tuv and the Arab village of Artuf, you see the railroad station and the line from Jaffa to Jerusalem. Then, when you look at the area again as it looked in 1990, you see all the changes that happened – what was built, what was destroyed, and what remained - and it is objective. I tried to show through these photographs what the country really looked like at the end of the Ottoman period, which is a subject that is hotly disputed. Ardent Zionists tell you that the land was empty and barren, and the Arabs and Palestinians will say that it was a paradise, with orchards and thriving villages. When you look at my photographs, you see that both sides are right – to a point.

Q: What does receiving the EMET Prize mean to you?  
A: It’s nice to receive a prize, but the important things are the historical works one writes and the research one does, the students one guides, and especially the discoveries one makes. These are the great moments in my life as a historian – to discover texts no one has ever seen, and to propose solutions to problems that no one ever contemplated. These are the great moments, and I was fortunate to discover a series of important texts. It’s very nice to have one’s achievements recognized, but I think that real recognition is in one’s own work and how one’s studies are received by other people in the field.

Q: How do you feel when you make a new discovery?  
A: When you find something that no one has seen before you, and for a while you live in a world in which you are the only spectator. And then you write about it, and then other people comment and start studying. It is a moment of intimate relation between the discoverer and the discovered.

Q: What lessons can we learn from the study of history?  
A: I don’t believe in simple lessons from history – that one looks at a certain period and says, ‘If we do it this way we are going to fail, and if we do it this way we will succeed.’ This is not how one draws lessons from history. One should understand that history teaches us the linkage between political, social, economic and cultural phenomena. This is something that may make you more sensitive to such linkages in the present and not to think in a simplistic way about them.
Professor Mechal Sobel, winner of the 2019 EMET Prize in the Humanities for History, has, in her four major books, addressed the meaning of racial identity, the understanding of self and the other, and the social construction of race relations in the United States. In the words of the EMET Prize committee, “Professor Sobel’s works have restored voices that over generations had been suppressed or barred from the mainstream historical narrative.” An American by birth, Professor Sobel has lived in Israel for most of her adult life. She conducted her entire academic career at the University of Haifa, where she taught African American history and culture from 1969-2006.

In her first book, ‘Trabelin’ On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith’ (Princeton, 1988), a fascinating study of the religious history of slaves and free blacks in antebellum America, Sobel postulated that African slaves, after coming to America, created a faith that preserved and revitalized African understandings and usages, while merging them with Christian understandings of Jesus and individual salvation.

Her second book, ‘The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia’ (Princeton, 1989), was hailed by The New York Times as “a work of great importance, and not only to the scholars who will be its primary audience.” Sobel proposes that blacks, contrary to what had been previously thought, greatly influenced the perceptions, values, and identity of white people. Despite the different world views between these two groups, there was a deep symbiotic relatedness between the two.

Throughout her career, Professor Sobel has argued that the key to historic change in American society lay in the ability of individual Americans to incorporate the ‘other’ into their dreams and lives. This was expressed in “Teach Me Dreams: The Search for Self in the Revolutionary Era” (Princeton, 2002), which was an analysis of the dreams and lives of Revolutionary-Era individuals, as recorded in the narratives of 100 people of that era. Sobel’s research revealed 18th Century America to be a culture in which analysis of dreams was encouraged in order to help people better understand themselves. Through this work, Sobel established a new field in historiography, the research of feelings.

In 2011, the American Historical Society conveyed Honorary Foreign Membership to Professor Sobel, an honor accorded annually to only one foreigner. In the words of the Society, “Dr. Sobel is one of the most imaginative historians at work today.” As one reviewer observed, “her books have altered profoundly the way in which ... American history is understood.”
The EMET Prize in Exact Sciences is an award that celebrates research in sciences such as physics, chemistry or astronomy -- sciences whose laws are capable of accurate quantitative expression.

The 2019 Exact Sciences prize focuses on Israel’s top scientists in the fields of physics and space. This year, two people won: Prof. Tsvi Piran of the Racah Institute of Physics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Prof. Mordechai (Moti) Segev of the Faculty of Physics at the Technion.

Piran and Segev share the award, despite their fields of research being very different. Segev, explained Piran, “works on Earth, while I ‘live’ in the sky. Moti is an experimentalist, while I am a theoretician. Our sharing the prize demonstrates nicely the breadth of the science of physics.”

Segev and Piran each spoke with The Jerusalem Post about their research and how they feel about winning the EMET Prize.

Q: How did you get started?
Segev: I always liked physics, and I looked for an area where one can do both experiments and theory. I wanted an area of science where things happen and one that is also linked to technology. There aren’t many areas of this sort.

Q: What makes your work unique?
Segev: Most scientists are either theorists or experimentalists, but never both. It’s hard to do both because it requires different expertise. This is one of the major advantages of my research group: the ability to do both theory and experiments.

Q: Please give me an example.
Segev: My work on topological insulator lasers is an example. We used concepts borrowed from the cutting edge of research in condensed matter physics, found a way to transform them into photonics, and then made a huge jump by employing them to lock together very many miniature lasers. Today, miniature lasers -- also known as diode lasers or semiconductor lasers -- are used everywhere, from your CD drive and in your computer to all optical telecom systems and the Internet. But they can emit only weak power. There is a 40-year-old
dream to put together thousands, or even millions, of such diode lasers on a chip and to somehow make them act as a single, high-powered, highly coherent laser source. This idea has failed up until now. But last year, my team was able to show that by using ‘topological concepts,’ we can force 40 lasers to lock together. In doing that, we had to go against everything known about topological systems in solid-state physics because lasers must have gain, and electronic topological insulators do not support gain. The overwhelming belief was that topological systems cannot support gain. But we have shown, in theory and experiment, that the topological features survive in the presence of gain and, in fact, enable making a topological landscape for lasers.

Q: So, the field of physics impacts our daily lives?
Segev: It is in everything we do. We have the Internet because of one of my ‘scientific fathers,’ Prof. Amnon Yariv of Caltech. Together with Herwig Kogelnick, he invented the specific laser that is coherent enough to drive the communication lines of optical fibers. We have global positioning systems (GPS) because of space science. We have digital cameras -- the image sensor employed by most digital cameras is a charge-coupled device (CCD) -- because people from photonics and electronics joined forces. These are just tiny examples of the huge world of photonics, and I haven’t even started to talk about other fields of physics...

Q: What’s next?
Segev: What is gratifying to see is that our younger generation, my former students who are now professors -- those trained by me or other good people -- are also at the forefront of research. We all hope that our young colleagues will be better than our generation, and we are extremely encouraged by their success. I have a nice statement in Latin by Galileo Galilei on my office door. It translates into English as follows: ‘Sad is the mentor whose students did not surpass him.’
Piran is a leading theoretical astrophysicist and the world’s foremost expert on gamma-ray bursts. He, too, told the Post about his work.

Q: Please define gamma-ray bursts.

Piran: Gamma-rays are a form of high-energy radiation. They are sort of ‘cousins’ of the more familiar X-rays that are used commonly in medicine, but gamma-rays are more powerful and more harmful. On Earth, they are commonly produced in decay of radioactive materials. In the late 1960s, it was discovered that nature produces short bursts of powerful gamma-rays that last a few seconds and arrive from random directions in the sky. The discovery was accidental. The United States had launched spy satellites whose task was to monitor that the Soviets were not performing nuclear explosions in space. Such explosions would have produced strong bursts of gamma-rays. The satellites discovered gamma-ray bursts. But they don’t arise from man-made nuclear explosions. Rather, they arise naturally from explosions that take place in outer space in remote galaxies. Luckily, these explosions are rare, as a nearby explosion of this kind could have wiped out life on Earth. In fact, it is possible that one of the major life extinction events that took place several hundred millions of years ago arose due to a nearby gamma-ray burst. Today, we know that gamma-ray bursts occur when very massive stars end their lives and collapse to form black holes or when two unique stars called neutron stars collide and merge. One event of the latter kind was recently detected jointly by the National Science Foundation’s Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) and the European-based Virgo.

Q: You are one of a handful of internationally leading scholars in astrophysics. What drew you to the subject?

Piran: Outer space is the last frontier. It allows us to explore conditions and situations, such as black holes or gravitational waves, that we cannot even imagine exploring on Earth. In particular, outer space research is the only one that allows us to explore Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity in its full glory. I have been attracted to physics since childhood. Later on, I discovered Einstein’s theory of relativity and became fascinated by this theory and its implication, from which followed my ongoing interest in astrophysics. As new frontier explorations of space keep surprising us with new phenomena that we could not have imagined before, there are ample challenges for new explorations.

Q: Are there many others like you in the field?

Piran: In Israel alone, there are several dozen researchers working in different universities on astrophysics. In theoretical astrophysics, Israel is considered an International leader. Worldwide, there are thousands of researchers working in astrophysics. However, astrophysics doesn’t have immediate application. Astrophysical discoveries, such as gravitational waves or the picture of a black hole, fascinate the general public and constantly make international media headlines.
A PROFICIENT POLYGLOT

Hannah Amit-Kochavi speaks nine languages, but her life’s passion is translating from Arabic to Hebrew

By ALAN ROSENBAUM

Hannah Amit-Kochavi, the 2019 EMET Prize recipient in the field of culture and art, taught Arabic-Hebrew translation in the MA translation program at Bar-Ilan University and the Arabic Department of Beit Berl College. A noted translator of Arabic works into Hebrew, Amit-Kochavi has translated modern Arabic poetry, drama and plays, in addition to her Hebrew translations from other languages. In 2010 she received the Tchernichovsky Prize for translations of classical literature into Hebrew for her selection from The Arabian Nights.

Q: When did you learn Arabic?
A: Formally, I began studying Arabic in eighth grade at the Reali school in Haifa, but I heard Arabic at home, as it was one of the languages spoken in our family. The sound of Arabic was not strange to my ears. My maternal grandparents, who emigrated from Russia and lived in Jerusalem, spoke Arabic. My grandfather took his matriculation exams in Arabic at the Lemel School for Boys in Jerusalem, which was considered one of the top schools in the early 1900s. My grandmother, who came to Israel in 1920, spoke a ‘market’ version of Arabic for her shopping needs.

Q: Why did you choose to specialize in Arabic-to-Hebrew translations?
A: I primarily translate from Arabic into Hebrew. I do this out of choice because I think that this is the most important contribution I can make to the society. I chose to stick to Arabic rather than translating other languages. It was not easy. I told English, ‘If I leave you, there will be enough people to take care of you.’ If I leave the Arabic language, she’ll be all by herself. I feel very happy that I did that. I think I did the right thing. My grandfather worked for the British Mandatory government and was in charge of the passport department, which at the time was a very important job for a Jew under British rule. As a member of the Hagana, he obeyed his British masters during working hours. But after work, he would take blank passport forms home and the graphic artist of the Hagana would come over, and together they made copies. In this way, they saved many Jewish lives before and during World War II. This is part of my family history and ethics. You have to think of your society, not just of yourself and those closest to you. That’s another reason why I chose Arabic - because of a responsibility to society and to justice.

Q: Do you translate other languages in addition to Arabic?
A: I speak nine languages, though not all at the same level. I’ve translated Arabic into English, Hebrew into English, English into Hebrew, French into Hebrew, Italian into Hebrew. Because I sang alto in a classical choir for 13 years, I used to translate all the texts that we sang for the other members to understand. I have translated from many different languages.

Q: What is your favorite language?
A: I don’t have a favorite language. It’s like having many children. Each one is different, and I love each of them. My strongest languages are Hebrew, English, Arabic and French. There is a great aptitude for languages in my family. And because my grandparents were second cousins, I always say that I got a double dose.
Q: What books written in Arabic are popular when translated into Hebrew?
A: Novels are popular and poetry, especially poetry by great poets like Mahmoud Darwish and Taha Muhammed Ali. It’s the greatness of the poetry that persuades people to read them. In the case of Darwish, it is also his political stature.

Q: What is the level of interest in reading Arabic literature among the Israeli public?
A: It goes up and down all the time. Currently, certain individuals in the field are working very hard. For example, Tami Chapnik of the Kinneret publishing house has been supervising the translation of Arabic and Iraqi novels very successfully. Prof. Yehouda Shenhav of the Translators’ Forum at the Van Leer Institute has collected almost 100 translators, and we formed an active group called Maktoob. We translate, we meet, we discuss, and we publish. We translate all kinds of Arabic literature - classical and modern, prose, poetry, anthologies and plays. We are trying to create a higher level of translation performance. And we cooperate, which means that each translation is a cooperative effort of several Jews and several Arabs who alternate between translating and editing. The kinds of functions that are usually separated are united through dialogue. We believe in personal dialogue.

I translate from Arabic because I think that this is the most important contribution I can make to the society.

Q: Do you think that translating Arabic works into Hebrew can lead to greater understanding between Arabs and Jews?
A: That is the million-dollar question. When I started out, I was very young, and I believed in it ardently. Today, I am not so sure because naturally, people who read these translations are those who are not against them. I do believe that knowing your enemy is better than ignoring him. If you know someone, if you know what they say and write, it makes it more difficult to dehumanize them, and dehumanizing them makes us less human as well.

Q: What does receiving the EMET Prize mean to you?
A: The very fact that I was considered and accepted and won is very important to me. I received the EMET award not just for being a translator but for everything else that I did for my field - for reviews that I published and for others that I trained as translators in academic frameworks. At this point in my life, I am especially content that people appreciate what I have done; not just because of the awards but because of what I have to show for all the translations that have been published and have been read – more than I ever thought. The research that I have published about translation is read all over the world. When I decided that I would dedicate myself to the good of my country, I think I have succeeded in a way. If you translate, it is good for you. It’s good for your mind, it’s good for your health, and it’s good for your soul.

OPENING A WINDOW INTO THE WORLD OF POLISH POETRY

Interview with David Weinfeld has translated some of the greatest works of Polish poetry into Hebrew and in doing so, influenced Hebrew poetry

By ALAN ROSENBAUM

David Weinfeld, the 2019 EMET Prize recipient in the field of culture and art – translation, is renowned for his extensive work in translating Polish, Yiddish and English poetry and prose into Hebrew. His translation of poetry has substantially influenced the development of Israeli poetry.

Q: Where and how did you develop your language skills?
A: I was born in Poland in 1937. After World War II broke out, our family fled to Russia. In Russia, I learned Polish and Hebrew. We spoke Yiddish at home, but we read Polish. My family made certain that my Hebrew education was adequate, and I studied Bible and Talmud. In 1946, after the war, we returned to Poland and lived in Cracow. In the mornings I studied secular subjects in a Polish school, where Polish was spoken, and in the afternoons I attended a Hebrew-speaking heder [a school for Jewish children where Hebrew and religious knowledge
are taught). This was the last heder in Cracow. Our family made aliya in 1950, and we lived in Tel Aviv.

Q: What is your favorite language?
A: Hebrew is my favorite language, but I am also very connected to Polish literature, which I have read since my youth. I was interested in reading poetry.

Q: What led you to the world of translation?
A: I read and studied the works of Polish writers whose words spoke to my heart, like those of Czesław Miłosz, winner of the 1980 Nobel Prize in Literature; Zbigniew Herbert, one of the most well-known and most translated post-war Polish writers; and Wisława Szymborska, recipient of the 1996 Nobel Prize in Literature. I wanted to translate these writers into Hebrew so that young Israeli poets would read these works and understand and appreciate their material and their style. Some of these poems have become part of Hebrew poetry. They are widely read, and people relate to them. I was fortunate because all the literary editors at the time who published these works, such as Yoram Branovsky, literary editor of Haaretz, spoke Polish and had a great appreciation for the language.

Q: How have your translations influenced the world of Israeli poetry?
A: Polish poetry — in particular, those that I have translated into Hebrew — has certain stylistic and conceptual qualities with clear wording that deal with the complex and painful world of Polish culture in the 20th century. These Polish writers found a way to deal with this world. Their poetry contains a great amount of irony, and the flip side of the irony is the pain of the Polish experience. I think that the clarity and lucidity of their work influenced Israeli poetry.

Q: You have translated prose, as well as poetry.
A: Correct. In the area of prose, my primary work was the Hebrew translation of a collection of stories written by Ida Fink, the Polish-Israeli author who wrote about the Holocaust in Polish. She won the Israel Prize in Literature in 2008. The Hebrew version was well received by the Israeli reading public.

Q: Which do you prefer to translate — poetry or prose?
A: I prefer to translate poetry. Poetry uses flowery, elaborate language which lends itself to translation. Simple texts that contain everyday conversation and verbal exchange are often very difficult to translate into Hebrew. I have often asked myself why this is so, and I am not certain. Perhaps Hebrew is not flexible enough to translate these types of conversations. Slang is also difficult to translate into Hebrew.

Q: How do you choose which poems to translate?
A: The majority of poems that I have translated speak to me, either from a conceptual perspective or from a melodic aspect.

Q: What is the process of translation like?
A: It is difficult to convey the melodic nature of a poem that was written in Polish into Hebrew. Sometimes I sit for a long time on a translation. I may put it aside and return to it — even after a few months. Occasionally, I will get a moment of inspiration. I do my translation work using a fountain pen.

Q: How does a translator learn to translate well?
A: I have no idea. The most important thing for a translator is to know what he can translate and what he cannot. Translation is always a compromise between what the translator can do and what the language permits. I regret that there are certain Polish authors that I was unable to translate. Although I enjoyed their poetry very much, they did not lend themselves to translation into Hebrew.

Q: What does winning the EMET Prize mean to you?
A: I am grateful to those who have chosen to award the prize to me.
Jacob Turkel
“It [the EMET Prize] shows the younger generation that there is hope for the future and there is something to aspire to. It shows that advancement and progress are not only possible but necessary. Every EMET Prize winner is an example of greatness in his or her field.”

Prof. Ruth Arnon
“The EMET Prize gives more of a chance for very accomplished individuals to receive the recognition they deserve.”

Arie Dubson
“The EMET Prize makes me feel like I’m part of something larger than myself. It gives me a sense of belonging. It belongs to me, and I belong to it.”

Jaime Aron, Adv.
“It means, for me, that we are supporting the fight for excellence in Israel.”

Prof. Michael Sela
“I have been with the EMET Prize since the beginning. There is no question that from a scientific point of view, this it the most prestigious prize in Israel -- more so even than the Israel Prize.”

Shlomit Barnea, Adv.
“This prize represents academic achievement at the highest level. We look for unique contributions - whether their achievements will serve society as a whole as much as possible.”

Ilana Ashkenazi
The EMET Prize illustrates the potential for achieving excellence and helping to create a better world. The contributions of the outstanding individuals who have received the prize are unique and worthy of recognition.

Maj. Gen. (res.) Prof. Isaac Ben-Israel
“’Emet’ is a Hebrew acronym for art, science and culture, which mean it is everything. It is not only in science or only in academics. For me, I would like the public to speak about people who did something significant for the society or the state.”