

The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute 2019



מכון ון ליר בירושלים

THE VAN LEER JERUSALEM INSTITUTE

معهد فان لير في القدس



The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute (VLJI)

fosters innovative interdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences and develops new ways of addressing questions of global concern that have special import for Israeli society and the region. Through cultivating new ideas and devising innovative methods of proposing solutions, the Institute strives to shape the public agenda on crucially important and socially sensitive issues that touch on the main foci of tension in Israeli society. Since 1959, the Institute has been a leading center for advanced studies and for intellectual public discourse. Its vibrant and diverse community of scholars and its international reputation have turned it into an incubator for novel ideas.

Aims

To be a hub for groundbreaking ideas in the humanities and social sciences

To probe, define and shape the public discourse and to disseminate alternative ways of thinking about current topics

To foster thought leadership through capacity building programs

To promote new ways of living together in a deeply divided society and region and to advance new ways of promoting a just and democratic social and economic order

The activities of the VLJI are exciting and inspiring. The combination of rigorous scholarship and the ability to convert it into practical application is rare in our times. Van Leer's academic excellence makes it possible to translate the insights of brilliant thinkers into practical action for the benefit of Israeli society and ultimately for the rest of the world.

When VLJI scholars look at Arabic as a language and the problems of inculcating it into the education system, they also see it as an expression of broad cultural values to be disseminated among all population groups in Israel. When a research team at VLJI focuses on the boundaries between ethical and unethical medical practice, the importance of their findings is invaluable for Israel, but no less so for other countries grappling with similar issues.

The significance of young Israelis from all backgrounds making common cause, or using film to tell a difficult story, is boundless. Through all these, VLJI is shaping a story, exploring problems, and, ultimately, trying to produce ways of thinking that advance the wellbeing of all of Israel's populations, and beyond. I hope that our Institute will continue this work and that others, inspired by VLJI, will emulate our exploration of boundaries and borders between peoples and ideas, and seek even more innovative ways of solving problems.



PHOTOGRAPH: DEREK TAMEA

Message from the Chair

Rabbi Baroness Julia Neuberger DBE



Message from the Director
Prof. Shai Lavi



Ideas matter. Innovative ideas, no less than political and economic forces, shape our world. Today, in Israel, as in the rest of the world, we face new challenges to democracy, social justice, regional stability, and environmental sustainability.

New ideas may help us better understand these predicaments and offer new ways for shaping our future. Our current research at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute addresses a broad range of topics: secularism and democracy in a post-secular age; the possibility of social justice within global economic constraints; the ethics of climate change and gene-editing; and the place of Israel in a rapidly transforming Middle East. As we develop novel ideas, we are constantly searching for innovative ways for introducing our ideas to a wider public. During the past year, we launched three new and exciting platforms for public engagement: The magazine *Hazman Hazeh* (These Times), in collaboration with *Ha'aretz*, makes academic research and insight accessible to a wide readership.

Our new intellectual incubator for documentary filmmakers allows young as well as established documentarists to develop and perfect their next project and take it to new heights; and our Intellectual Journeys program fosters a new generation of young and committed intellectuals from all walks of Israeli society.

In an age of political populism, sustained public engagement with ideas enriched with insights from the humanities and social sciences is a necessary condition for a sustainable democracy and for its thriving. This is what we at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute are committed to nurturing and disseminating.

The Evolution of the Sensitive Soul

An exhibition at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, May 2018

For the series "Talking about Science in the Twenty-First Century"

Moderated by Oren Harman

In advance of the publication of

The Evolution of the Sensitive Soul

By Simona Ghobad and Eva Jablonka

Illustrated by Anna Zeligowski

The nature of consciousness is one of the greatest enigmas scientists face, and many believe that science will never be able to elucidate it. We approach this problem from an evolutionary perspective, which focuses on the origins of consciousness during the history of life. We argue that consciousness is a facet of the capacity for open learning and that it was the evolution of learning that led to the emergence of consciousness in the Cambrian era, 542 million years ago. Consciousness is ancient and diverse, and the scientific-evolutionary understanding of it leads to surprising biological, psychological, philosophical, and ethical insights. The drawings in the exhibition add a visual dimension to the verbal descriptions, explanations, and interpretations and generate understanding in the observer that is based on the affective and aesthetic aspects of human cognition.

Consultant: Avi Muller
Production: Yael Givon

אבולוציה של הנפש המרגישה

הוצגה בסדרת "דוברים על המדע במאה ה-21"

המוזיאון הירוק, תל אביב

במסגרת סדרת "דוברים על המדע במאה ה-21"

המוזיאון הירוק, תל אביב

הטבע של התודעה הוא אחד מהמסתוריים ביותר, ורבים מאמינים כי המדע לא יוכל לפתור אותו. אנחנו מתקרבים לבעיה זו מתוך פרספקטיבה אבולוציונית, המסתירה את מקורה של התודעה במהלך ההיסטוריה של החיים. אנו טוענים כי התודעה היא פן של היכולת ללמוד, וכי היא התפתחה במהלך ההיסטוריה של החיים, לפני 542 מיליון שנה. התודעה היא עתיקה ודיווה, וההבנה המדעית-אבולוציונית שלה מובילה להבנות מפתיעות ביולוגיות, פסיכולוגיות, פילוסופיות, ואף אתיות. הציורים במוזיאון הירוק מוסיפים ממד ויזואלי לתיאור, ההסבר וההבחנה, ומייצרים הבנה אצל הצופה המבוססת על היבטים אפקטיביים ואסתטיים של התודעה.

יועץ: אבי מולר
פיקוח: יעל גיון





**What goes on
within this
beautiful campus?**

Activities

To achieve its goals, the Institute undertakes projects in four main themes: **sacredness, religion and secularization; globalization and sovereignty; science, technology, and civilization; and Israel in and of the Middle East.**

In addition, the Institute is active in the areas of **Judaism, feminism, and political economy.**

In all the areas of its activity, the Institute promotes local and international research projects and academic publications and initiates innovative platforms for public engagement with ideas.

The Institute develops and conducts training programs for thought leadership, fosters the creative arts, and encourages the public to enjoy its cultural activity. In close cooperation with a large range of Israeli and international research institutions, VLJI conducts joint projects with visiting scholars from around the world.

Van Leer Institute Press publishes scientific and non fiction books and journals, that are the fruits of research and public engagement work conducted at VLJI.

A black and white photograph of three men sitting at a long table in a meeting room. The man on the left, wearing glasses and a light-colored sweater, is pointing his right index finger towards the camera with a questioning expression. The man in the middle, also wearing glasses and a dark sweater, has his hand to his chin in a thoughtful pose. The man on the right, with grey hair and glasses, is looking towards the camera. On the table in front of them are various items: a laptop, a glass of water, a smartphone, a pen, and some papers. The background shows a window with vertical blinds.

How does VLJI do all this?



Research Clusters at VLJI

Sacredness, Religion and Secularization

Dr. Yochi Fischer

The growing presence of religion in the public sphere has become a reality in many countries. While intellectuals of the late 19th century prophesied the gradual decline of religion, today it is clear that religion continues to thrive, sometimes in new forms.

This research cluster focusses on tensions between religion and secularism and the role that new forms of sacredness plays in post-secular societies. The topic is especially pertinent for Israel, as ongoing tensions surrounding Temple Mount suggest, but resonates with developments across the globe, whether it be the fate of ISIS in the Middle East or the growing influence

of evangelical movements in the US. We question the ways in which scholars and the general public view the tensions between religion and secularism. We propose that religion and secularism are not fixed and contradictory identities, but are best understood as interrelated and co-dependent processes of sacralization and secularization. The emergence of new religious forms and the growing presence of religion in the public sphere is an integral part of secular society. Understanding the interdependence of these identities and processes opens new ways of comprehending these tensions and is likely to progress towards resolving them.

Globalization is the way politics, economics and cultural exchange take place in our times. Who we are and how we live our lives is no longer simply a local challenge confined to national politics. Because it is undeniable that globalization is transforming the ways of the world, we are working towards devising new bodies of knowledge that may elucidate and address this historical change in Israel, in the region, and beyond.

Advancing what we call Interdisciplinary Global Thought, our activities develop new conceptual approaches to the problems of the present moment while making such knowledge accessible and meaningful to the broader public. The research group "Neoliberalism in Israel," for example, traces the transformation of Israel into a global society; Israel has become not merely another place in the world but is a metaphor and metonymy for world trends and transformations.

Our MA Internship Program will work with graduate students and NGOs focusing on immigration and refugees to develop a concept of Global Citizenship to fit the changing realities of nation states. In one of our leading projects, a book series entitled Global Objects, each book will tell a creative, interdisciplinary story about a global object and the way it shapes and changes our world. Current objects: Paper, Coal, Porcelain, and the Atmosphere.



Globalization and Sovereignty

Dr. Kfir Cohen Lustig







Science, Technology, and Civilization

Dr. Hagai Boas

The transformative powers of science and technology are dramatically changing the world we live in. The pace of these changes is ever-increasing, affecting not only our planetary ecosystem, but also the way we lead our daily lives.

This cluster of research projects studies the cultural, political, and normative implications of scientific and technological innovations.

Israel has always embraced science and technology. This is the perfect place to study the integration of Israel's renowned innovations in science and technology, with its hi-tech industry and its artificial reproduction techniques and other biotechnology inventions. We focus on innovations in technology and science that correspond to life in an advanced scientific society, like Israel, that facilitate a debate about the implications for civilization that these transformative powers entail.

Together with the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, we are embarking on a project to raise normative questions regarding science and technology in the 21st century. Our project, titled "Bioethics, Science and Society," gathers scientists, social scholars and medical professionals to reflect on timely technological and scientific innovations today, and to suggest a platform for introducing the social and political implications of these innovations to the public.



Israel in and of the Middle East

Dr. Assaf David

Israel is of the Middle East, not simply in the Middle East. We envisage the advancement of a comparative perspective on Israel and other Middle Eastern countries, in order to contextualize Israel in the region and explore the political, cultural, and societal strings that tie Israel and its population to the region. Using the Arabic language to promote civic thinking and perception rather than military-security ones is our main strategy.

Our projects seek to fulfill this goal. The *Maktoob* book series is a pioneering initiative for the translation of extraordinary novels from Arabic to Hebrew. Our main research group provides the conceptual framework for the idea of Israel of the Middle East. The *Ofek* website is a home for quality content highlighting modern Arab critical thinking. Other projects deal with Turkey and Israel, civic education, and the promotion of Arabic language teaching in the state education system.



Living together within and beyond the boundaries of liberal thought

Prof. Nissim Mizrachi and Dr. Eilon Schwartz (*Shaharit*)



The question of a shared life in a plural society is perhaps the most acute political question of the early 21st century. Issues such as women's prayer, gay pride parades or Haredi integration into academia stir up the public discourse constantly. But this is not just a local challenge. The question of how to accommodate groups that hold profoundly different views about social justice and the "common good" yet share the same political space has become critical, and the rise of populism across the world attests to the contemporary crisis of liberal democracy.

This is also a challenge for contemporary social sciences that have difficulties in understanding the worldview of the disadvantaged groups who, perhaps more than ever, tend to reject the framework of liberal thought. The joint project of VLJI and *Shaharit* dealing with these issues includes two two-year research groups (sociology and political economy) and a joint conference, held at VLJI in March 2019, which exposed new initiatives, seeking to create alternative visions for the liberal discourse of peace.

Gender and Feminism at Van Leer

Dr. Miri Rozmarin and Ronna Brayer-Grab

The Gender and Feminism projects at the Institute aspire to re-examine existing paradigms and theoretical conventions in feminist theory and in the academic field of Gender Studies. Our point of departure is that contemporary feminist theory, as well as feminist politics and activism, are facing fundamental challenges, which are threatening our ability to evolve and respond to changes in the social and political world. Concepts and perceptions, such as liberty, choice, and equality, that form the normative basis for feminism, are no longer adequate to describe the multiplicity of gendered experiences and conditions. The gender and feminism projects at the Institute are committed to enhancing Israeli democracy and increasing the knowledge foundation that will allow for greater gender equality and social justice.

The Conceptual Research Incubator for doctoral and post-doctoral students re-examines feminist concepts in order to encourage innovative and relevant feminist research and political action. The “Yoda’at–Israel Knowledge Center on Women and Gender” – led by Prof. Hanna Herzog, Prof. Naomi Chazan and Hadass Ben Eliyahu –which incorporates the annual Gender Index, is the most advanced and innovative information hub on women and gender in Israel.





The Polonsky Academy

The Polonsky Academy for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences, established by Dr. Leonard Polonsky in 2014, is one of the newest international fellowship programs worldwide, that aims to promote cutting-edge research in these fields. Each year, the Polonsky Academy awards up to six postdoctoral fellowships, tenable for up to five years, to outstanding international scholars working in any field of the Humanities and Social Sciences. The Polonsky Academy is committed to providing an environment for research excellence. Fellows work under the best possible conditions for innovative research, including professional autonomy, a scholarly community, and a highly efficient network dedicated to supporting fellows in the pursuit of their academic goals.

Polonsky Fellows obtain positions at some of the most prominent universities such as Berkley, Oxford, and Hebrew University. Its vibrant international community of scholars is engaged in research on topics as diverse as literature and therapy, democracy and technology, ethics and virtual reality, philosophy of sounds, Ottoman history, 16th century kabbalah and more. The research is conducted both independently and in collaboration with ongoing projects at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute.

The fellows at the Polonsky Academy are provided with state-of-the-art services for their research, including individual offices, a library, advanced IT, a lecture hall and multiple meeting spaces in the award-winning facility (the building won the National Design Prize in the Public





Buildings Category in 2015). The Polonsky Academy on the Van Leer campus, located in one of the most beautiful neighborhoods of Jerusalem, aims to serve as an intellectual home for both the fellows and the alumni. The Polonsky library and the Van Leer library together contain over 40,000 books and journals focusing on the humanities and social sciences. In addition, the Libraries hold an important collection on the history of science. There is also access to an online catalog of the libraries' holdings

and a subscription to the online database JSTOR.

The libraries are for the sole use of Library Fellows, whom we select annually based on their scholarly contributions to research. They include Israeli academics, visiting professors from abroad, journalists, intellectuals, and public figures. A monthly Library Fellows Seminar enables Fellows to present and share their research with other members of the Library community.



Senior Research Fellows and Academic Collaborations

The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute is proud of its senior research fellows, internationally renowned Israeli academics in their respective fields. The fellows run research groups and research projects, actively partake in capacity building programs, and represent VLJI and the work done at the Institute in the public sphere.

Prof. Bashir Bashir, Open University
Prof. Khaled Furani, Tel Aviv University
Prof. Oren Harman, Bar-Ilan University
Prof. Nissim Mizrachi, Tel Aviv University
Prof. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Dr. Miri Rozmarin, Bar-Ilan University
Prof. Yehouda Shenhar, Tel Aviv University
Prof. Varda Shiffer, Van leer Jerusalem Institute
Dr. Raef Zreik, Tel Aviv University

How do we reach out to the local and international public?

Hazman Hazeh Magazine

Asaf Shtull-Trauring

Hazman Hazeh (These Times) is a new online magazine of political thought, culture and science published by the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. The magazine publishes long-form articles and essays by leading scholars and writers from Israel and abroad, aiming to offer renewed thinking on key issues that are, or should be, on the public and intellectual agenda in Israel. Since its launch in August 2018, the magazine has established its presence in the Israeli public sphere as a platform for discussion and debate. Alongside publishing articles on its own website (www.hazmanhazeh.org.il) the magazine has a syndication with Israel's leading broadsheet newspaper, *Haaretz*. The magazine also reaches its readers through a weekly newsletter.

Intellectual Journeys: A Program for Fostering Young Intellectuals

Dr. Adam Klin-Oron

This program introduces fifteen young adults from diverse groups in Israeli society to the world of deep ideas. Leading Israeli academics and intellectuals provide the fellows an intensive eight-week summer program, and continue to guide them during their first academic year at the university with individual coaching on a personal project. The program also serves as a laboratory and model for liberal arts education in the 21st century in a deeply divided society, and is supported by an international advisory committee. Ethnicity, cultural and religious diversity are key aspects of the program and are crucial intellectual tools for developing a multi-faceted perspective. In their final projects, fellows engage intellectually with the wider public through writing op-eds, organizing public debates, teaching young adults, or volunteering in NGOs. The program, supported by the Polonsky Foundation, draws a growing number of diverse, brilliant and socially committed applicants.

The Intellectual Incubator for Documentary Filmmakers

Dr. Yochi Fischer

The Intellectual Incubator for Documentary Filmmakers at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute was formed in conjunction with the Israeli Documentary Filmmakers Forum and the Jerusalem Cinematheque, and supported by the Polonsky Foundation. It is a framework for thought and critique about the intellectual, social, and cultural contexts in which documentary films are conceived, produced and received, and it is also a place for developing ideas and for the collaborative work of filmmakers and researchers. The incubator offers filmmakers an opportunity for more thorough research and for developing the thoughts that underlie their cinematic endeavors. This initiative is part of a wider decision of the Van Leer Institute to engage with artists and the arts to advance new avenues for the Institute in the development and dissemination of ideas for social change. The aims of the Incubator are to support the development of ideas and promote cooperation among filmmakers and academic researchers, in order to advance documentary filmmaking in Israel. The filmmakers who participate in the incubator, and their films, will benefit from greater intellectual depth and creative momentum, thus enriching documentary filmmaking in Israel.

Public Events

Shulamit Laron





Built as a center for the meeting of minds, a space where local and international scholars congregate to exchange and explore ideas, the VLJI has, since its inception, prized its public events. The buildings' welcoming spaces and open architecture embody this formative vision of the Institute's founders. Today the VLJI continues to initiate a vibrant and dynamic array of events that display its research work to the public, and to create an ongoing interface between the institution and its environment. The Institute's many conferences and workshops, colloquia and symposia, lecture series and book discussion panels as well as other public meetings, generate a stimulating discussion. The public forums bring together leading thinkers from Israeli and international academia, journalism, public policy, and politics, thus fostering the open exchange of ideas that is the lifeblood of the Institute.



The Tom de Swaan Lecture Series – Vita Activa, Vita Contemplativa: The Role of Ideas and the Responsibility of Intellectuals in Contemporary Society

Neil MacGregor, Director of the Humboldt Forum and former Director of the British Museum, delivered the inaugural lecture, titled **An Enlightenment Ideal in the Modern World: The Civic Role of the Museum.**

He raised the question of why have a museum, what is the need and purpose of a museum? A global history, he replied, cannot be told by texts. Most societies do not have writing, and their history must be told through things. He emphasized the need to provide a place where all citizens could inform themselves about the world, spoke of the museum as a place of public political debate about global injustice, and highlighted the challenge for museums worldwide to create a global citizen.

Lecture Series

Ksharim [Braids] Umm Kulthum: “She Is a Universe” Three lectures by Dr. Pini Ifergan (Department of Philosophy, Bar-

Ilan University, and the Spinoza Center at the VLIJ). Through two types of discussion, conceptual and historical, Dr. Ifergan looked at how the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum evolved into a unique figure whose mark is evident to this day, not only in the Arab world but also in Israel. In the conceptual discussion, a consideration of philosophical theories was at the heart of the attempt to explain how cultural icons come into being and what gives them their aura of uniqueness. In the historical discussion, Dr. Ifergan traced Umm Kulthum’s development from a young singer in Egypt’s rural periphery to a figure renowned throughout Egypt and the Arab world.

Lecture by Philip Gorski (Professor of sociology and religious studies, Yale University): **What Is Replacing Traditional Religion? The Challenge of Secular Political Religion and of Religious Nationalism.**

Prominent political pundits on the left and the right have suggested recently that the waning of traditional religion has opened up a space for new “political cults.” In doing so, they evoke the theory of secular “political religion” that was developed to account for the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. Is political religion back? In his talk, Gorski argued that claims concerning the return of political religion are overwrought and underdeveloped, and he reflected on the relationship between religion and politics in a post-secular age.

Literary Evening

The Annunciation in the Literature and Thought of Amos Oz Amos Oz (1939–2018), one of the foremost Hebrew writers and one of the most important Israeli thinkers, is famed worldwide. His novels



(from *Where the Jackals Howl to Judas*), novellas, essays and articles put him in the first rank of 20th-century Jewish writers. The panel discussion was devoted to a study of the fictional and philosophical works of Amos Oz, the intellectual writer.

Book Discussion Panel

Dmitry Shumsky - *Beyond the Nation-State: The Zionist Political Imagination from Pinsker to Ben-Gurion* (Yale University Press, 2018)

Exhibition

The Evolution of the Sensitive Soul

(Within the series: Talking about Science in the 21st Century Moderated by Prof. Oren Harman) On the occasion of the publication of the book: *The Evolution of the Sensitive Soul: Learning and the Origins of Consciousness* By Simona Ginsburg and Eva Jablonka; Illustrated by Anna Zeligowski (The MIT Press, 2019)



Van Leer Institute Press

Dr. Tal Kohavi

Van Leer Institute Press is a publisher of original scholarship. Since its founding thirty years ago, its mission has been to disseminate scholarship of the highest order that promotes critical theory and contemporary thought as well as honest and committed public discourse on key issues in Israel and beyond. VLIP offers scholarly and nonfiction books, academic journals, and online products that are mainly the outcome of research conducted at the Institute in the areas of society, culture, sovereignty and globalization,



religion and secularization, science and technology, gender, Israel in the Middle East, and economics.

Books Published Lately

Dynamics of Continuity, Patterns of Change: Between World History and Comparative Historical Sociology – In Memory of Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, edited by Benjamin Z. Kedar, Ilana Friedrich Silber, Adam Klin-Oron
This volume pays tribute to S. N. Eisenstadt's persistent commitment to

the interdisciplinary dialogue between sociology and history in general, and between comparative historical macrosociology and world historians in particular. It revisits the classic issue of continuity and change, so central to Eisenstadt's work, by inviting historians and sociologists to review it from the point of view of new research topics or new analytical developments (in English).

Encounters: The History and Anthropology of the Israeli-Palestinian Space

Edited by Dafna Hirsch

This book offers a view "from below" of social arenas in the Israeli-Palestinian space. It portrays a reality of a shared space and of interwoven histories, characterized by processes of separation and othering alongside social relations and mutual shaping.

Justice, Privatization and the Objectives of the Educational System By Yossi Dahan

The Invisible: Women and the Palestinian Cities By Manar Hasan

Gender at the Base: Women, Men and Military Service in Israel Edited by Orna Sasson-Levy, Edna Lomsky-Feder

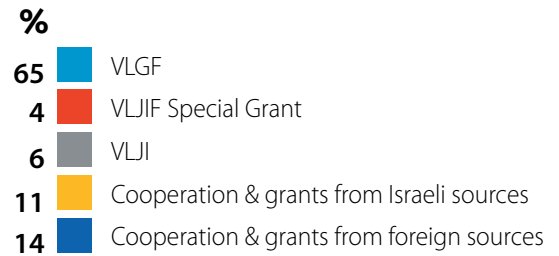
Political Aspects of the Lives of Arab Citizens in Israel Edited by Aziz Haidar

The Plural Me: The Political Economy of Organ Transplantation By Hagai Boas

Financial and Human Resources Data (2018)

Main Sources of Income

Total budget 2018:
ILS 28,381,000



Expenditure According to Main Categories

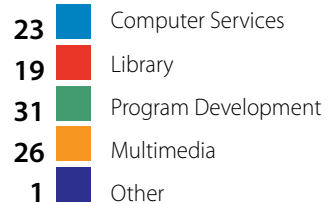
Total budget 2018:
ILS 28,381,000



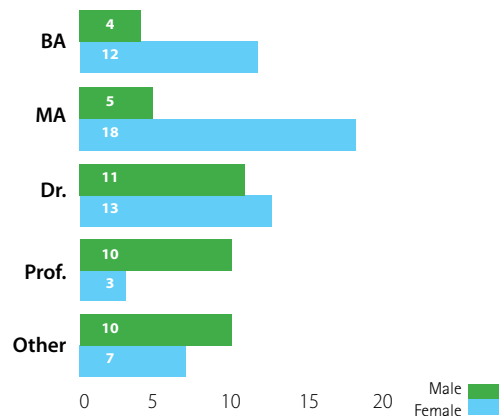
Research Cost (ILS 16,538,000) By Units



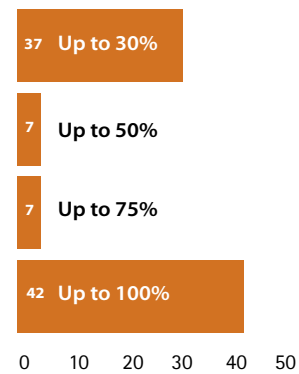
Research Support Cost (ILS 3,103,000) By Units



Public Engagement (ILS 7,884,000) By Units



VLJI Staff by Degree and Gender



Number of VLJI Staff by FTE

* Financial Data refer to CPA's Report for 2017

The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute 2019

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The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute 2018-2019

The VLJI was established thanks to the vision and generosity of the Van Leer family of the Netherlands.

The Institute is grateful to the Van Leer Group 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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Jewish Women's Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago
Kibbutz Movement
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Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung
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The Abraham Fund Initiative
The New Israel Fund

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