



מכון ון ליר בירושלים

THE VAN LEER JERUSALEM INSTITUTE

معهد فان لير في القدس

THE VAN LEER JERUSALEM INSTITUTE 2021-2022





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THE VAN LEER JERUSALEM INSTITUTE

MISSION

The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute fosters innovative interdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences. We develop new methods of addressing questions of global concern that are of significance to Israeli society and the region. Research and public engagement at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute currently take place in six thematic clusters: Israel in the Middle East; Sacredness,

Religion and Secularization;
Science, Technology and Society;
the Challenge of Shared Society;
Sovereignty and Globalization; and
Gender and Feminism.





In all areas, the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute seeks to break down obstacles to social change by overcoming commonly accepted dichotomies and suggesting novel ways to think about contemporary issues. We cultivate thought leadership through capacity building programs for 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, a leading international post-doctoral program in Israel, as well as to the Van Leer Institute Press, which publishes pioneering academic books and journals. We offer numerous events each week that are open to the public—on campus and online.

AIMS

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

To shape public discourse by disseminating alternative approaches for thinking about contemporary issues

To foster intellectual leadership through capacity-building programs

To promote new ways of living together in a deeply divided society and region

To advance a just and democratic social and economic order

A portrait of Fay Twersky, a woman with short, curly brown hair and red-rimmed glasses, smiling. She is wearing a red collared shirt. The background is dark. The image is partially obscured by a large, light blue geometric shape that points towards the top right corner of the page.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

I am delighted to be the new chair of Van Leer Jerusalem Institute's Board of Trustees. 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. As the world is rapidly changing, the Institute is rising to meet these new challenges. Under Prof. Shai

Lavi's leadership, the Institute is poised to contribute mightily and meaningfully to a vital and pluralistic Israeli society and beyond. It is supporting young scholars of all backgrounds, ethnicities, nationalities, and religious or secular practices. It is supporting research into a post neoliberal world and contributing ideas for new pathways to peace.

I first gave a talk at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute in 2008 when I was leading a delegation to explore how Israel's third sector approached measuring results. At the time, I was impressed with the diverse gathering

of people for such a conversation, with insightful questions, concerns and ideas to share. I have since seen that this is part of the Institute's DNA. It is 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 the opportunity to meet the challenges ahead and to be working with the exceptional board and the talented staff as we continue to chart our path forward.

Fay Twersky

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As the world continues to struggle with residues of the COVID-19 pandemic and international public attention is facing the atrocities of the war against Ukraine, we are reminded of the need for solidarity. Solidarity with refugees fleeing the war, solidarity with developing countries that have not yet received vaccines, and solidarity with the most vulnerable members of our own societies who in recent years have suffered medically, psychologically, and financially.

The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute is committed to bridging social and political divides within and beyond Israeli society. This requires us to reimagine our cultural, social, and political horizons. We ask what it means to think of Israel not simply *in the Middle East* but *of the Middle*

East. What happens when we question the religious-secular divide and gain a deeper understanding of secular and religious identities? Can we think beyond narrow economic interests and ask whether today's ruthless labor market is working for us? And, finally, can we see how when we act as "cosmopolitan liberals," and discard the importance of ethnic, religious, and national affiliation, we not only alienate large parts of society, but may also impoverish our own identity?

We at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute believe in the transformative power of ideas to open new ways of understanding our world and co-habiting it with

others. We seek to foster the intellectual leadership of Israeli society in years to come and work with young, committed, and creative people from all segments of Israeli society to accomplish this task. In a time of growing polarization, we believe in the power of new ideas to forge new bonds of solidarity.

Prof. Shai Lavi



ISRAEL IN THE MIDDLE EAST

DR. ASSAF DAVID

"Everything is so gloomy, but this institute is a beacon of light."

East Jerusalem Change Agents Program Participant



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 on notions of inclusiveness, partnership, and power sharing between equal peoples. Our work aims at humanizing 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 on regional issues for the Israeli public discourse. We hope to cultivate a civic conversation, and eventually develop a collective consciousness, conducive to partnership between Israelis and Palestinians, regardless of the nature of future political formulae.

Partnership-Based Israeli-Palestinian Peace

A new binational interdisciplinary research group has begun exploring the circumstances required to promote reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians based on political, communal, economic, and spatial partnership, rather than on separation. The group aims to publish a collection of articles imagining the physical, institutional, and ideological conditions necessary for partnership-based peace. This group replaces the group on Jewish-Arab co-nationalism within Israeli citizenship, which is currently assembling papers for its book.

Ofek for Arabic Media

In partnership with the Forum for Regional Thinking, *Ofek* makes content from the Arab media, academia, and public discourse accessible to Hebrew speakers. The bilingual, binational team publishes article translations, summaries, and analyses in national and independent media outlets. In 2022, the program will launch an upgraded website with video content and enhanced search capabilities. A training program will be introduced this year to help Palestinian-Israeli authors specialize in various regional topics when they join the professional 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**, we translate quality Arabic literature from all parts of the Middle East into Hebrew. In 2021, four new books were published based on original stories by Palestinian, Iraqi, and Iranian authors. The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute hosted multiple public events to promote the books and a three-day workshop on Maktoob's binational translation model. In May 2021, a subscription program was launched, and within only a few months, it had more than 300 subscribers.

East Jerusalem Change Agents

For the first time in our history, a group of promising and proactive young professionals from East Jerusalem gather 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 on Jerusalem's social, economic, religious, historic, and political complexities. The participants also acquire tools to advance social goals, such as drafting letters to authorities, writing position papers, analyzing urban plans, and pursuing social initiatives. Their meetings with scholars and professionals have been eye-opening for all parties involved.

Calligraffiti: Arabic and the Task of Thinking

Led by **Dr. Khaled Furnai**, literature scholars, artists, and educators met regularly in to seek ways for the Arabic language to function as a tool for encouraging sharp thinking and conveying cross-cultural wisdom. The creative process resulted in a series of calligraphic murals graffitied on public buildings in Akko, Jaffa, and Be'er Sheva in 2021. The fusion of the classical Arab tradition of calligraphy and the contemporary cultural context of graffiti, along with the contours of Arabic spelling and its transformation into an abstract mural, create a striking dynamic that leaves no room for indifference.


SACREDNESS, RELIGION, AND SECULARIZATION

DR. YOCHI FISCHER

“At the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, a pillar of intellectual life in Israel with no political affiliation, they have launched new initiatives aimed at opening up new ways of thinking.

These include the [...] research groups dedicated to core subjects like [...] post-secularism.”

Ziva Sternhell (Haaretz, Sep. 5, 2021)



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.



The Temple Mount in the Israeli Public Sphere

The Temple Mount is probably the single most volatile religious-political spot in Israel/Palestine. However, despite its importance, very little attention is paid to its meaning and influence by the Israeli public most of the time. During the last three years, we have been investigating the range of attitudes, views, and activities related to the Temple Mount. In 2022, we intend to publish a comprehensive reader based on our work. It will include transcripts of talks held with central actors in the field, essays by the group's members and the findings of an in-depth public opinion poll we conducted.

A Docuseries on Secularism in Israel

Secularism is rarely discussed as an independent concept. We tend to see it either as the neutral “norm,” or as an antithesis to religion. In both cases, we underestimate its inherent value and nature as a global process with specific characteristics. In preparation for the seventy-fifth Independence Day of Israel, we collaborated with television station Kan 11 in working on a special documentary series on Secularism

in Israel: Past, Present, and Future. In addition, we are working on a book for the general public on the subject of secularism that will be based on the research conducted for the series.

Sacred Places in an Age of Secularization

In December 2020, we held an online international research workshop about sacred places in a post-secular and global world. The workshop convened forty leading researchers from ten countries for discussions regarding the role that sacred places, and sanctity in general, play in today's world. The keynote lectures were delivered by three leading scholars—Prof. Robert Orsi, Prof. Kim Knott, and Prof. José Casanova. Following the workshop, in 2021, we edited and published these lectures and are now in the process of publishing further selected articles in a special issue of the journal *Political Theology*.

Aspaklaria Research Group

In the past decade, the Israeli Haredi public has undergone deep changes and is facing new challenges—both internally and externally. *Aspaklaria* is a research group comprised of Haredi [ultra-Orthodox] and non-Haredi scholars, aimed at rethinking key political and moral concepts from a contemporary Haredi perspective. Through deep conceptual and textual work, the group aims to develop a new Haredi language for the twenty-first century that may be of interest both within and beyond the community. The articles resulting from the group's work will be available to the public via a tailor-made website, addressing Haredi as well as non-Haredi readers.





SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY

DR. HAGAI BOAS

“Vaccination is not just about the rational calculation of a certain individual. It is about their family, their neighbors, their friends at work and the confidence their surroundings gives them. In other words, it’s about solidarity.”

Researcher from Solidarity in Healthcare Steering Committee

The COVID-19 pandemic and climate crisis 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 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 two-year project on the importance of solidarity in promoting healthcare is composed of three research teams and an international steering group. The research teams explore the role of solidarity in overcoming different health challenges. One team investigates the public commitment of biobanks, the second explores the willingness to be vaccinated in different societies, and the third asks about the interplay of altruism and community in non-directed organ donations. The steering committee discusses these case studies, along with other cases of society in healthcare, to develop novel understandings of solidarity in “the new normal.”

The Future of Bio-Medical Research

New technologies, discoveries and data reservoirs render biomedical research today close to the vision of precision medicine, with patients as test subjects and a deep involvement of Big Pharma. In December 2022, the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute will hold an international conference in collaboration with

the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, to examine the prospects and dangers this future entails. The conference will bring 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.

The Anthropocene Reader

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 plan to publish a new reader with translations to 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.

Science in the 21st Century and Life after Nature

Prof. Oren Harman continues his successful series of public lectures “Science in the 21st Century” for a fifth season in 2022. The series introduces scientists who crossed boundaries to gain a better understanding of the disruptive power of science and technology but also of the great promise they hold – the promise of change that enables us, and even requires us, to understand ourselves in novel ways. Taking another approach to looking at the relationship between science and nature, in early 2022, **Dr. Ofri Ilany** launched a new series of public lectures “The Anthropocene Epoch: Life after Nature.” The series confronts aspects of the environmental crisis that are not generally discussed, including philosophical aspects to fear of the end, religious approaches to the planet, the climate crisis and capitalism, and life in the era of extinction and ecological change.




THE CHALLENGE OF SHARED SOCIETY

PROF. NISSIM MIZRACHI

“It was a privilege to participate in the first meeting of Beyond the Liberal Imagination. It was fascinating and enlightening, but mostly it awakened in me a sense of hope.”

Researcher in the Forum for Political Thought



With increasing levels of social polarization between mutually exclusive, identity-based groups, the question of how to live together in a deeply divided society is perhaps the most pressing political challenge of our time. Liberal democracy recognizes pluralistic values, such as human rights, civil liberties, and equality, as inherent characteristics of society. However, to the marginalized groups intended to be protected by these values, this language can seem to undermine their conservative identities and traditional norms. We critically revisit liberal thought and introduce innovative ways of bridging religious, ethnic, and political differences. Our research, in partnership with the Shohat Institute, aims to develop new grammar, tools, and methods to offer solutions that incorporate a broader and more inclusive spectrum of beliefs and values. By connecting between researchers, civil society leaders, and policymakers, we examine issues of peace and racism in Israeli society through a post-liberal lens.

Different Voices, Different Visions

Many non-liberal groups in Israel are opposed to the discourse of the Israeli peace camp, but they are open to developing alternative approaches to thinking about and acting toward peace. In 2021, we built a common conceptual space for leading non-liberal peace activists to voice their visions of peace and its diverse meanings. The group meets monthly to explore more inclusive and effective paths for imagining peace, while considering the moral and ethical issues that may arise within each culture accordingly. In 2022, the group will participate in a two-day workshop and educational tours in aim of developing a cross-cultural lexicon for shared society in Israel.

On Color, Identity, and Activism

Over the past decade, Israel has witnessed protests by members of the Ethiopian community against police killings and institutional racism. These local developments resonate with US and global developments, prominently the Black Lives Matter movement. However, as these concepts begin to take local roots, they

continuously brush up against deep-seated articulations of groupness in Israel. Our group of ten, mostly Ethiopian, junior scholars, jurists, and activists investigates when the local takes on the global and challenges the adoption of African American black discourse in Israel. The group met regularly during 2021 and intends to produce a collection of articles that draws on, and links back to, local communities in 2022.

Conceptual Form for Political Thought

In a world suffering from exacerbating social polarization and loss of faith in liberal democracy, we must remap social issues and their existing solutions before reframing the issues to offer alternative solutions. Without abandoning progressive values, we move beyond prevailing visions of liberal thinking, understanding that they are not a common starting point for all. Activists and academics from the post-liberal movement seek

to strengthen collaborations and develop future political initiatives. The group consists of sixty participants from diverse ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds, who will continue to meet regularly throughout 2022.

Beyond Critical Analysis

We are in the process of preparing a multidisciplinary anthology of sociology research. It will include original articles that seek to push the boundaries of critical discourse and mark new directions for interpreting research. Simultaneously, we are editing a special issue for *The American Sociologist* composed of sociological works from all around the world, which will be published toward the end of 2022.





GLOBALIZATION AND SOVEREIGNTY

DR. KFIR COHEN LUSTIG

“It was clear that a great deal of thought went into our postcapitalism civic workshop; it helped us to discuss and experiment with ideas that were new to our organization.”

Workshop Participants from
Mahapach-Taghir

One of the most important outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic is the understanding that we need fresh economic thinking that can re-center global society on human prosperity and social equality. With the rise of neoliberal orthodoxy in the 1970s, the world shifted from a post-World War II society committed to promoting progressive social values to a global society whose primary driving force is economic growth. This neoliberal thinking gave rise to unprecedented levels of inequality, vacated the meaning of work, and brought nature to the brink of ruin. In an attempt to exit the deadlock between neoliberalism and social-democracy, we are developing a third innovative alternative: we call it postcapitalism. In this vein, we put forward theoretical principles and on-the-ground practices that seek to re-focus human ways of life on common and inclusive goals that prioritize human flourishing, freedom, and equality.

Postcapitalism in the Public Sphere

In 2021, our postcapitalist ideas gained further footing in Israeli public discourse, with concepts such as a short workweek, meaningful work, and universal housing appearing in mainstream media and in everyday conversations. Our two-day online collaborative conference brought together civic groups, researchers, writers, and activists to think critically about our current health, climate, and economic crises. In round tables, academic panels, and TED style talks, participants suggested postcapitalist alternatives in their own areas of expertise. The conference opened with a keynote lecture by Greek economist and politician, Yanis Varoufakis, and attracted more than 130 participants and 20,000 online views.

Speculative Fiction Novels

We live in epochal, crisis-ridden times that require imaginative and bold thinking about the future of human societies. Our unique writers' workshop brought together four novelists to weave together social theory and literature. Challenging the reigning liberal literary model of the "lone writer," the group worked together to create a shared postcapitalist imaginary world and

write speculative fiction that takes place in alternative postcapitalist futures. The collaborative writing experience implemented postcapitalist principles not only in the products of the writers' work, but also in the writing process itself. We hope to publish these novels in a book series titled *The Days of Tomorrow*.

Civil Society Partnerships

After participating in a six-month workshop to promote postcapitalist social action, five nonprofits continued to advance postcapitalist missions that fulfil human social ends. Mahapach-Taghir, a feminist Jewish-Palestinian organization, ran a country-wide workshop to help implement postcapitalist principles and practices in their community action; Green Course, a grassroots organization for environmental justice, and the Heschel Sustainability Center, put together a community-based report to introduce a cooperative model for green energy production; Koach La-Ovdim, a democratic workers' organization, ran a workshop for their union regional leaders to promote practices of workplace democratization; the Adva Center, a think-and-do tank that monitors social and economic developments

in Israel, completed a cooperative learning process on universal housing with a similar organization in Vienna, Austria. The Adva Center will present its conclusions and new housing model in April 2022.

A Global Perspective on Israel

Our research challenges the assumption that we can understand Israeli society within the bounds of its borders. Adopting a global perspective, we explain internal political conflicts, cultural trends, and economic policy in the context of global economy pressures and geo-politics. Accompanied by conferences, public events, and talks by internationally renowned researchers, 2021 was the year our research groups and dedicated research teams came to fruition. We turned our manuscripts on neoliberalism in Israel and on settlement resistance in to the Van Leer Institute Press, and in 2022 we will conclude our work on postcapitalism and neoliberalism in Palestinian society.





GENDER AND FEMINISM

DR. MIRI ROZMARIN
RONNA BRAYER-GARB

“Women in Israel earn 67 percent of what men earn, according to the 2020 Gender Index conducted by the Center for the Advancement of Women in the Public Sphere at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. And among Arab women, the gaps are even more stark.”

Yardena Schwartz (*Foreign Policy*, Jun. 17, 2021)

Contemporary feminist theory and activism are facing fundamental challenges that are threatening women's ability to evolve and respond to changes in the social and political world. The Research Lab for Contemporary Feminist Political Subjectivities reexamines existing theory and practice while maintaining essential insights about 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**, combines information gathering, comprehensive research and gender-equality activism. As 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

Ideas such as liberty, choice, and equality, that have stood at the base of liberal feminist thought, are no longer able to facilitate political action or explain current power relations. We identify, analyze, and formulate transformative tools to promote feminist social change. The “toolbox,” devised by a group of academics and activists, brings together theoretical and practical knowledge to synergize the efforts for change. Special attention is given to education in and outside the family, as part of culture and the arts, and for political citizenship.

A Feminist Schoolbag for the Beginning of the School Year

At the beginning of September 2021, we held an online public event to mark the opening of the school year. The event presented concerns and suggestions regarding gender issues in education, including intimacy-focused sex education; poverty and gender awareness in school, specifically regarding Arab girls and women; and suggestions for overcoming obstacles in advancing gender equality in the classroom. The event helped educators develop and expand the connection between feminist theory and practice in school and in the classroom.

Yoda’at

The She Knows (Yoda’at)—Digital Knowledge Center is the most advanced and innovative information hub on women and gender in Israel. Since the launch of the trilingual website in 2019, the knowledge center has become the central source of information and means for social change agents from numerous institutes, programs, and media outlets. The platform provides information and tools for advancing gender equality and tackling gender gaps in a variety of areas. As the pandemic deepened existing gender gaps, the website was an invaluable tool for decisionmakers and activists in understanding the ever-changing gendered implications of COVID-19.

The Gender Index

We annually publish the Gender Index and share its finding in the Knesset. The publication, led by **Dr. Hagar Tzameret**, monitors levels of disparity across diverse issues in Israel, such as employment, education, poverty, violence and health. Since the survey began in 2004, gender inequality has decreased by only 12%, and it has been at a standstill for the last seven years. When the ninth edition was presented to the Knesset’s Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality, in January 2022, MK Aida Touma-Suleiman, head of the committee, said, “Clear and decisive state action is needed to reduce gender gaps.”



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 Van Leer Jerusalem 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 desirable 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

"I am thoroughly indebted to the Polonsky Academy for the unique, privileged occasion to spend fruitful years in an inspiring academic and intellectual environment. The variety of opportunities and constant support were of enormous value in being awarded a position at the Hebrew University."

Tanja Werthmann, Polonsky Academy Alumna

In 2021, we introduced the Polonsky Salon, a new digital public platform for fellows and alumni to host academic discussions with internationally renowned scholars. These included conversations with Prof. Bernard E. Harcourt on social-justice litigation, Prof. Pamela Hieronymi on freedom and resentment, Prof. Uğur Ümit Üngör on mass political violence, and Prof. Sergio Tenenbaum on instrumental rationality. Polonsky fellows, **Dr. Carmen Dege** and **Dr. Jacob Abulafia**, collaborated with Dr. Tae Yeoun Keum from UC Santa Barbara on an international conference *The Force of Myth: Authority, Illusion and Critique in Modern Imaginaries*. The conference captured the many roles that myth – as a concept and as a narrative – play in the formation of modern thought in general, and in academic disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, political thought, and gender in particular. The conference was held online in June 2021 and attracted an audience of more than 150 people from different parts of the world.



The Intellectual Journeys program immerses promising undergraduate students, from diverse and separated 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. Accompanying the fellows during their first year at university, the students regularly attend cultural events and discuss their content in the context of social, political, and economic challenges. For their final projects, each of the fellows writes 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 with the wider public by writing op-eds, organizing public debates, and volunteering in civil society.

INTELLECTUAL JOURNEYS

DR. YOCHI FISCHER

"I was fortunate to be exposed to a wide range of issues on a deep level. I was able to observe introspectively, and even challenge my own views and core beliefs. Also, and perhaps most importantly, I met a group of wonderful, smart and inspiring people who are also interested in making positive changes to our society."

Ido Peleg, Intellectual Journeys Program Participant

The program has produced 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 the fourth cycle of the program, we partnered with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The fellows lived in university accommodation, received educational stipends, and collected academic credits, while some of the seminars were given by the university's lecturers. Multiplying the impact of the program, the fifth cycle will extend the model to Tel Aviv University. When more academic institutions have taken on the program, we hope to see alumni from the various campuses come together as a greater network for change in Israeli society.



DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS

RONNA BRAYER-GARB | DR. ASSAF DAVID

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. The Incubator offers filmmakers an opportunity for more thorough research and for developing the thoughts that underlie their cinematic endeavors. The aims of the Incubator are to support the development of ideas and promote cooperation among filmmakers and academic researchers, to advance documentary filmmaking in Israel. The filmmakers who participate in the Incubator benefit from greater intellectual depth and creative momentum, thus enriching documentary filmmaking in Israel.

In its third 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 ten selected projects ranged from a film about the politics of the second Prime Minister of Israel, *Moshe Sharett—The Road Not Taken*, to a film that is a requiem to the first generation of Jewish music stars from Arab countries, *The Orchestra*, to a documentary television series on the growing firearm violence in Arab society in Israel, *Living in the Shadow of Death*.

“I have learned so much throughout the program. The common theme of the different projects made every lecture and meeting very significant to my own project. It was also a great opportunity to meet new people in the field, and I have already formed new collaborations based on these new acquaintances.”

Danel Elpeleg, Film Incubator Program Participant

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 partnership with the Emile Zola Chair for Human Rights at the College of Management, the program introduces a new legal and political language that crosses cultural, national, and religious divides. We see law as being fundamentally connected to other fields, such as social, political, economic, and cultural domains, and believe that it is necessary to delve into these to obtain innovative legal thought and discourse that is inclusive of all parts of the population. Based on their rich social engagement experience and deep commitment to the prosperity of a diverse society, a small group of high-quality young lawyers, attorneys, and jurists participate in the program every year. Instead of reproducing existing tensions through destructive actions, the program uses law to offer a new horizon to all sectors of the Israeli public.

LAW AND OTHER LANGUAGES

PROF. ORNA BEN NAFTALI | PROF. SHAI LAVI

The first cycle of the program, launched in November 2020, included lawyers and attorneys from Israeli, Palestinian, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, secular, traditionally religious, and ultra-Orthodox backgrounds. The fall semester took place at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, the spring semester at the College of Management in Rishon LeTsiyon and a summer semester was completed online. At the end of the program, the fellows embarked on a four-day retreat at

the Tzuba Hotel in the Jerusalem hills, where they participated in daily educational tours. They visited the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in a geopolitical tour of East Jerusalem by Eran Tzidkiyahu to learn about the current controversy, and they toured holy places in the Old City of Jerusalem with Dr. Iska Harani to experience the different religious cultures. The second cycle opened in November 2021, and regular guided tours have been incorporated into the curriculum.

“The program raised many questions that bothered me before and have continued to preoccupy me ever since. Alongside the diverse academic experience, I met people with different views from a variety of backgrounds. This was a fascinating learning encounter. It teaches us to be humble and modest about our ‘truth’ and opinions.”

Riham Nassra, Law Program Participant





VAN LEER INSTITUTE PRESS

DR. TAL KOHAVI

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 and 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 Haze*, an online and printed magazine published both on its website and on *Ha'aretz* newspaper's online edition, 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.

Academic Publications

Adorno, W. T. (2021). *Aspects of Contemporary Right-Wing Radicalism: A Lecture – Theory in Context Series*. (N. Savariego, Trans.) Van Leer Institute Press & Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House.

Benyamin, S. (2021). *In between Home and the Streets: Lack of Housing Security in Israel*. Van Leer Institute Press & Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House.

Lahav, H. (2021). *Women, Secularism and Belief: A Sociology of Belief in the Jewish-Israeli Secular Landscape – Theory and Criticism in Context Series*. (Y. Shenhav-Shahrabani, Ed.). Van Leer Institute Press & Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House.

Lehrer, Z. (2021). *The Ethnic Code: Selection Practices and Ethnic Identities in IDF – Theory and Criticism in Context Series*. (Y. Shenhav-Shahrabani, Ed.). Van Leer Institute Press & Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House.

Setter, S., Ed. (2021). *South. Theory and Criticism, Vol. 54*. Van Leer Institute Press & Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House.

Setter, S., Ed. (2021). *Theory and Criticism, Vol. 55*. Van Leer Institute Press & Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House.

Maktoob

Al-e-Ahmad, J. (2021). *The School Principal*. (O. Noy, Trans., D. Yerushalmi, Ed.). Van Leer Jerusalem Institute & Pardes Publishing.

Barghouthy, E. (2021). *An Acre-esque Tale*. (B. Horvitz & Y. Shenhav-Shahrabani, Trans., K. A. Halim, Ed.). Van Leer Jerusalem Institute & Pardes Publishing.

Kachachi, I. (2021). *Al-Nabidha*. (Y. Benshalom, Trans., D. Darawshy, Ed.). Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and Pardes Publishing.

Shukair, M. (2021). *Walking like Naomi Campbell*. (Y. Shenhav-Shahrabani, Trans., L. Wattad., Ed.). Van Leer Jerusalem Institute & Pardes Publishing.



הגר להב
חילוניות מאמינות
סוציולוגיה של אמונה
בנוף החילוני בישראל



התמורה הנדולה
המקורות המדיניים והכלכליים שבה



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; twice 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.

HAZMAN HAZEH MAGAZINE

ASAF SHTULL-TRAURING

In September 2021, 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. This issue included among its titles, an article by Dr. Yochi Fischer providing an analysis of recent religionization trends in Israel; a translated article by Quinn Slobodian shedding light on the contemporary Libertarian right through a historical survey; an article by Ayelet Shachar mapping concerning trends in governmental naturalization and immigration policies worldwide; an article by Lior Zalmanson discussing the rise of the Metaverse; and an essay by Zahiye Kundos on the complex social and political dynamics within Arab-Palestinian society in Israel. Since its launch in 2018, the magazine's visibility and public presence has steadily increased, and in 2021 the magazine enjoyed a 20% increase

in website visitors compared to the previous year. We are currently working to expand our audience by producing audio recordings of selected articles.

"Hazman HazeH is perhaps the most interesting intellectual space in Hebrew today – and without the usual obstacles of academic writing."

Dr. Yoav Ronel, Bezalel Academy of Art and Design



PUBLIC EVENTS AND DIGITAL PRESENCE

SHULAMIT LARON
DR. ADAM KLIN-ORON

"You were one of the first organizations that transferred your activities to the digital sphere due to COVID-19, and in great quality too!"

Facebook User

Each year, we have hundreds of public events, including lecture series, film screenings, and conferences 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. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, all our events are also streamed live, with most of our attendants participating via virtual platforms, namely YouTube, Facebook, and our website.



In 2021, we held more than 60 events, with an average of 1,000 participants each month. Our website saw a 50% increase in visitors, the number of our YouTube subscribers grew by 30%, and our Facebook engagements increased by 63%. Among our public activities was a lecture series led by **Dr. Raef Zreik** that addressed the concept of "home" in philosophical thought. The series employed metaphors of home and exile, identity and nonidentity, and hominess and estrangement, to help shed light on the way we perceive the reality in Israel-Palestine and how it can shape our political imagination. In another event about the home in Israeli-Palestinian affairs, we screened segments of the film *News from the House* by Amos Gitai, followed by an interview with the lauded director by **Prof. Eva Illouz**. This event raised questions of cinematic ethics in a constantly changing geopolitical world.

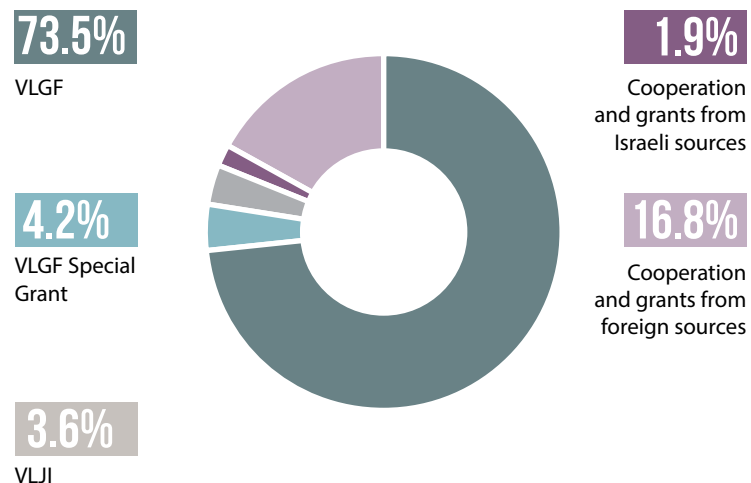
FINANCES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

SHIMON ALON

Financial data refers to CPA's report for 2021

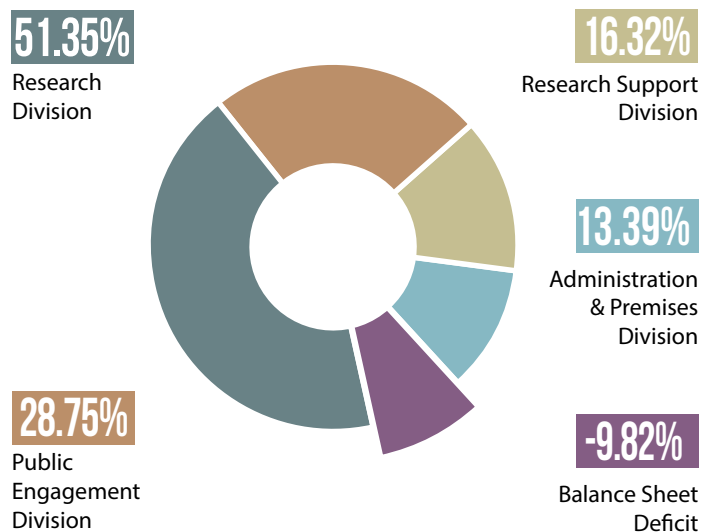
MAIN SOURCES OF INCOME

TOTAL 23,757,000 ILS



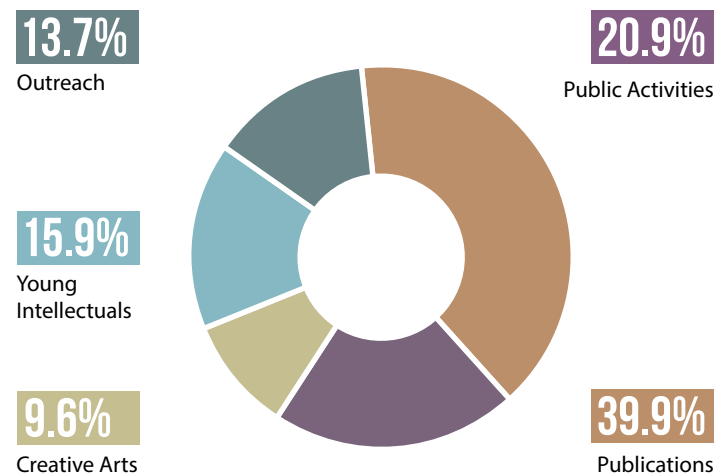
EXPENDITURE ACCORDING TO MAIN CATEGORIES

TOTAL 23,757,000 ILS



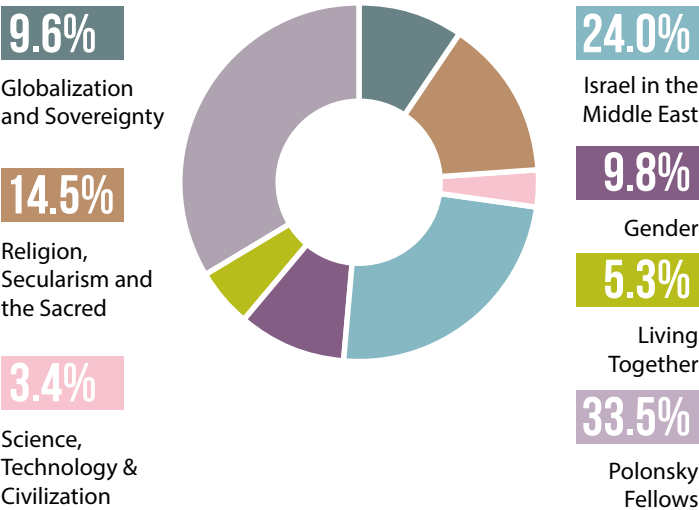
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

ACTIVITY % COSTS ACCORDING TO CONTENT UNITS
COST 6,831,000 ILS

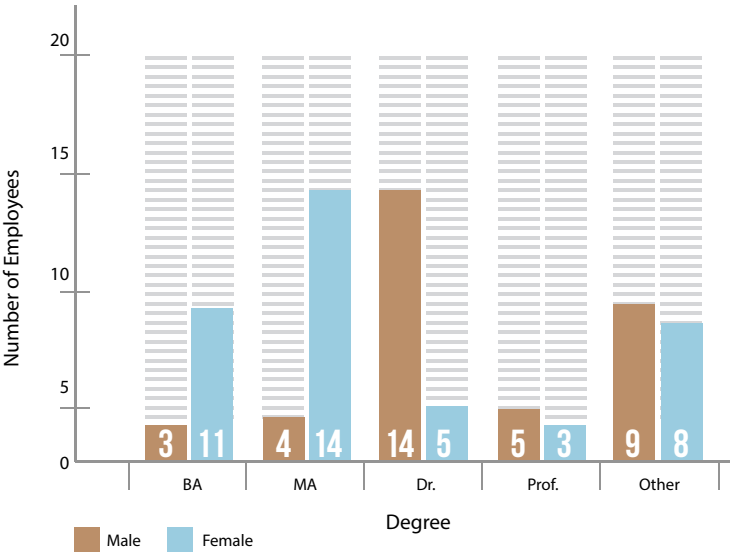


CONTENT UNIT RESEARCH

COST AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESEARCH
COST 12,200,000 ILS

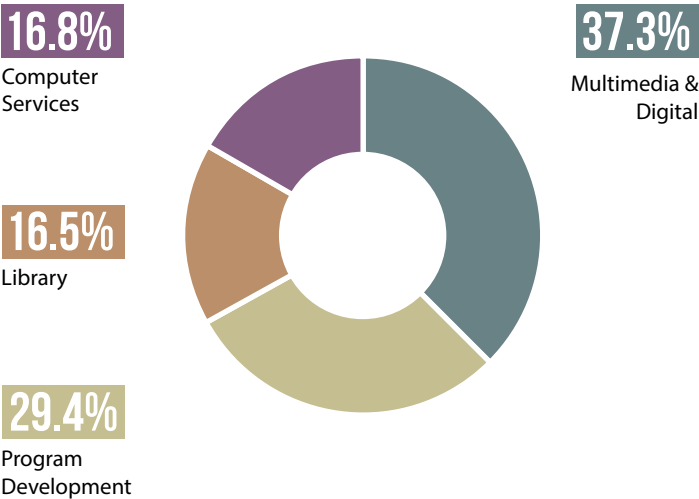


EMPLOYEES BY DEGREE AND GENDER



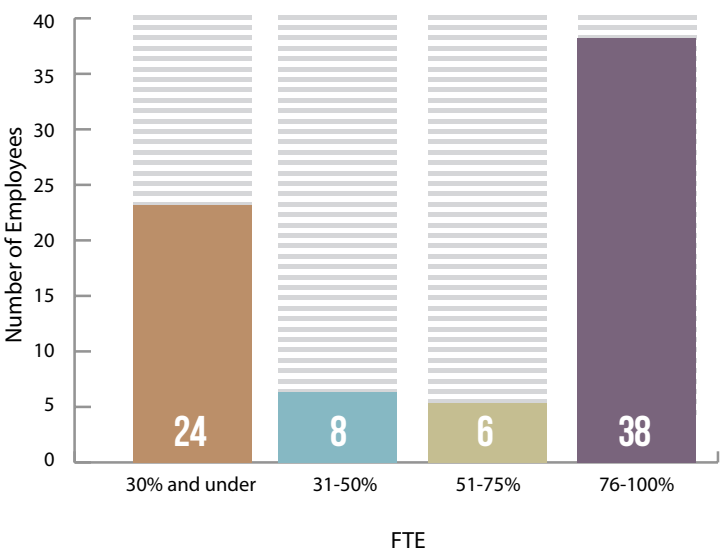
RESEARCH SUPPORT UNITS

% COSTS ACCORDING TO RESEARCH SUPPORT UNITS
COST 3,878,000 ILS



NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES BY FTE

TOTAL FTE: 49.07





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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 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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karenm@menidavis.com
+1-703-532-2516

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THE VAN LEER FAMILY

Bernard, a Dutch Jew who made his fortune by inventing the 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 Jerusalem Institute 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,” Katz, 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 came true. For decades now, the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute holds extensive and diverse research activities, with an emphasis on promoting human spirit and values.



PR: Daniel Jonas

Editors: Yona Ratzon and Daniel Jonas

Photography: Tamar Abadi, Neri Lieder and David Saad

Graphic Design: Lotte Design

Ceremony at the Jerusalem City Hall honoring of the inauguration of the Van Leer Institute for the Advancement of Human Culture, May 1956

Polly Van Leer, Mayor Gershon Agron, Bernard Van Leer, Mordechai Ish-Shalom
Photographer: David Rubinger



**SOCIAL IMPACT
OF DEEP IDEAS**





THE VAN LEER JERUSALEM INSTITUTE

43 JABOTINSKY STREET

JERUSALEM

VANLEER.ORG.IL

TEL. 02-5605222