

Rothschild Prizes Ceremony

Speech by the Hon. Hannah Rothschild

27 November 2022

Member of Knesset Mr Ram Ben-Barak, Prof. David Shulman and Members of the Academic Advisory Committee, Winners of the 2022 Rothschild Prizes and their families, distinguished guests.

It's a pleasure to be here at the Rothschild Prize ceremony and to be back at a live event after so many disruptions over the past years. Despite all the progress in Zoom and metaverses and new digital worlds, there is really no substitute for being able to come together like this, especially to celebrate outstanding achievements of remarkable people.

The Rothschild Prize is quite an old timer for such a young country. This inevitably leads us to turn our gaze to the past – to the early years of the Prize and of the State of Israel, and to marvel at the growth and flourishing of both. Ceremonies were held before there was a Knesset building (inaugurated in 1966), in a variety of locations. One meeting even took place in the home of the first IDF Chief of Staff, Yigal Yadin, who was both a general and a renowned archaeologist, and a recipient of the 1963 Rothschild Prize. But over time our tradition has settled on granting this Prize in the Knesset building, and I believe this is because while the Prize may celebrate past individual achievements, it is a reflection of the Israel that Yad Hanadiv aspires to help build. There is a direct link between our ability to pursue science, to ask hard questions and explore new ideas, and Israel's ability to thrive.

There was a sensible tendency during the pandemic years to view science as 'an exit strategy' from that crisis. This was certainly true for the pandemic, but it seems to me that it is no less true for the many social, political and other challenges the world faces today. Solutions to these challenges require intense study of all that is human. So, this year's Rothschild Prizes in the Humanities and the Social Sciences come at an especially opportune moment, shining a light on decades of work that have changed our understanding of how human beings plan (or fail to plan) for the future, how we manage conflicts (past and present); and how attentive we are to the sounds and music that surround us.

Today's Prize winners have all made extraordinary breakthroughs in their respective fields. I'd like to thank Professor David Shulman and the Academic Advisory Committee for their painstaking work in the difficult process of selecting them.

The range of topics and their impact on scholarship is humbling. **Nira Liberman** has uncovered how our actual or perceived distance from events and people around us influences our behaviour towards them. **David Weisburd** has spent a career redefining the traditional understanding of urban crime. His demonstration that a tiny number of streets are responsible for almost 50 per cent of crime transformed police work around the world. **Jeremy Cohen** rewrote the history of Jewish-Christian relations in the Middle Ages and set a new standard for future scholarship in this area. His many admiring colleagues often refer to him as a 'scholar's scholar' – equally expert in Jewish and Christian intellectual history. The work of **Ruth HaCohen**, this year's recipient of the Rothschild Prize in the Humanities, resists categorization. It spans

musicology, philosophy, history and even cognitive science. Her most recent research taught us to listen closely to stories about noisy Jews, showing the long and often dark history from the blood libels of the Middle Ages through the music of Bach, Handel, and even how they continue to influence modern-day synagogue liturgy.

Because we want to make the most of an opportunity of having so many accomplished scholars together, I'm happy to say that tomorrow a full day of lectures will be dedicated to the work of the Prize winners, with the participation of over a hundred young scholars, whom we know will be inspired by the ability of dedicated scientists to achieve great things. I want to thank the organising committee of that event, as well as all the students and colleagues who so enthusiastically came together for this celebration of Israeli science.

I also want to take this opportunity to say thank you to the Yad Hanadiv team, which dealt with all aspects of the Prize from content to logistics and has made this ceremony possible.