

Transforming the Humanities at The Hebrew



The rocky plateau of Mount Scopus rises above the other hills of Jerusalem and is crowned by the edifice of The Hebrew University. On the northern face of its rugged peak is the landmark Yitzhak Rabin Building, home of the Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies. Nearby, a new building is being planned to house the new Mandel School for Advanced Studies in the Humanities. This forward-thinking project reflects the profound commitment of the Mandel family to revolutionizing the role of the humanities in Israel at The Hebrew University.

As Morton Mandel, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Mandel Foundation, explained, “The humanities classroom is where ancient meets modern, history touches modernity, and new ideas and ways of thinking are born.”

The Mandel Foundation’s \$18 million grant for a building to house the new Mandel School for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, combined with an evergreen gift of \$2.5 million per year for elite academic programs, makes this one of the largest gifts in support of the humanities anywhere in the world. The Mandel Foundation has similarly supported a humanities transformation at Brandeis University in the US.

Stated Professor Menahem Ben-Sasson, President of The Hebrew University: “This gift is transformative and signifies a major step towards the restoration of the humanities to their rightful place within higher education.”

The cultures of the world increasingly form the basis of scholarship at The Faculty of Humanities. While the traditional academic focus has been on studying the development of individual cultural traditions, Hebrew University faculty and students are now exploring “the ongoing interaction and mutual influences between different peoples and cultures,” explained Professor Reuven Amitai, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. Professor Amitai sees the new Mandel School as playing a strategic role in achieving this expansive intellectual model, which also includes “cooperative ventures, both teaching and research oriented, with colleagues in other faculties at the university.”

Rector of The Hebrew University, Professor Sarah Stroumsa, expressed her pride in this revitalization of the humanities, stating: “The new Mandel School will serve as a magnet for scholars from around the world and offer a welcoming interdisciplinary environment that creates opportunities to develop new ideas.”

Professor David Shulman, recipient of the 2011 EMET Prize for general achievement in Indian Studies, remarked: “The new Mandel School marks the best moment we’ve had since the 1970s to advance a vision of the humanities and support a new generation of scholars.



University of Jerusalem



Hebrew University has a wide intercultural horizon which embraces a range of cultures throughout the world.”

The concept of broader horizons takes many forms. Professor Yuri Pines, Chairman of the Department of East Asian Studies, provided one such example. “The

organization of History at Hebrew University now recognizes Latin American history, Indian and Asian history in addition to the traditional Eurocentric view of history. We are experiencing internationalization,” said Professor Pines.

Perhaps as a result of this dynamic integrated model, an increasing number of foreign students, particularly from East Asia, are enrolling in Hebrew University programs. This has led to friendships between Israeli and East Asian students and has created international ties through academic conferences at the university.

While this is a time to celebrate the achievements that the Mandel School will foster, it is also a time to reflect on the priority needs that underlie this revolution in the teaching of the humanities. Scholarship aid is needed for Hebrew University students, as are funds to recruit new faculty adept at interdisciplinary research. There is a pressing need for the university to renovate some of the original “beehive” structures found in older buildings on Mount Scopus and to increase library resources, maintaining the university’s commitment to global academic leadership.

American Friends have the opportunity to support The Faculty of Humanities, which is preeminent among institutions of higher learning in Israel and a world leader in many areas of research. For further information about how you can participate in this transformative vision, please contact AFHU’s National office or an AFHU office in your region.



TOP LEFT: The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies

BOTTOM LEFT: DR. EILAT MAZAR excavates an ancient city wall in Jerusalem

ABOVE: Nuremberg Mahzor © courtesy of Dr. David and Jemima Jeselsohn; photo courtesy of the National Library of Israel

TOP RIGHT: Excavation of a cave in Georgia

CENTER: Students working in the Ginges Library Information Center

BOTTOM: Enjoying the Mount Scopus campus

Restructuring – A time for change



Passover piyyut from the Nuremberg Mahzor

THE SCHOOL OF ARTS

The very essence of what it means to be human has been expressed, throughout the ages, by displays in music, art and theater. The study of these fields in cultural, philosophical, and historical contexts demands the highest form of intellectual rigor. The School of Arts is committed to those pursuits not only via its dynamic teaching programs, but also through its diverse research activities. Many are based on interfaculty collaborations across the whole range of university disciplines.

The School of Arts also assumes the role of providing a rich cultural life throughout the university campus with performances, concerts and exhibitions. Multidisciplinary art initiatives with scientists have already produced highly innovative projects where the novelty and complexity of scientific ideas finds new expression in the creative imagination of artists.

“Preserving an outstanding academic tradition while continuing to innovate – that’s the challenge facing the Faculty of Humanities,” explains its Dean, Professor Reuven Amitai.

At The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, teachers and students are developing new research agendas, assimilating into new academic structures and participating in the creation of innovative programs of study, all defined by academic rigor.

Numerous departments within the Faculty have been reorganized into five teaching schools. At the same time, the Faculty’s five longstanding institutes remain the focus of its research activities.

Advanced students are encouraged to pursue far-ranging interdisciplinary studies, and undergraduates are exposed to wider disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. Academics themselves are adopting more integrated approaches to research at newly established research centers. The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies is already home to one such initiative, and the Mandel School for Advanced Studies in the Humanities will form an integral part of the ongoing realization of this vision.

THE SCHOOL OF HISTORY

The School of History is an umbrella entity encompassing four departments: the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, the Department of East Asian Studies, the Department of History, and the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry. It regularly collaborates on joint projects with the Institute of Archaeology and with the Department of the History of Art.

Unlike other Israeli universities, the School of History at The Hebrew University focused, from its inception, on the content of undergraduate studies, providing high-level introductory courses on world history and historical thought. The School has a special program for nurturing outstanding students, offering special courses designed to hone their research skills. Faculty are developing enrichment programs for the School’s graduate students.





THE SCHOOL OF LITERATURE

Reflecting the Faculty of Humanities' commitment to providing students with broad-based courses, The School of Literature offers its undergraduates a World Masterpieces program that begins with the Bible, and encompasses works from the Renaissance through to the modern period. There is also an "Introduction to Literary Theory from Plato to Nietzsche" course, with the final semester devoted to 20th century literary theory.

The foundation courses are accompanied by studies relating to each of the literatures offered by the School: Hebrew, Russian, Spanish, Italian, French and English. The School promotes cross-disciplinary studies with other Schools within the Faculty of Humanities. Such combinations enable students and academics to be exposed to the richness of diverse scholarly resources.

THE SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE SCIENCES

This School brings together scholars and students from across the Faculty of Humanities who study language itself. At its heart is The Department of Linguistics and The Department of Hebrew and Jewish Languages. Various faculty members are also affiliated with other departments such as Romance and Latin American Studies, Arabic Language and Literature, East Asian Studies, Germanic and Slavic Studies, Indian Studies, English, and Philosophy.

The School has pioneered an interdisciplinary approach to the study of language. Plans are in progress to facilitate active collaborations with researchers interested in language in other HU Faculties, particularly in the social sciences and the exact and computational sciences.

THE SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIONS

The School of Philosophy and Religions has seven affiliated academic units: the Departments of Bible, Comparative Religion, Jewish Thought, Philosophy, and that of Talmudic and Jewish Law, combined together with the Program in Cognitive Studies and the Program in the History and Philosophy of Science.

Active cooperation also exists with other universities: for example, a program of study titled "Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe" is being developed by Hebrew University in cooperation with Ruhr University in Bochum, Germany.

Inaugurating an "honors" program has enabled the School to ensure that its outstanding students can be exposed to alternative methodologies and develop the necessary disciplinary depth to pursue advanced work.



The opening page of the Book of Genesis from the 'Crown of Damascus' Bible manuscript

The Faculty of the Humanities: Expanding Intellectual Horizons

Hebrew University's Faculty of the Humanities covers a wide range of disciplines. A new generation of young scholars has joined the Faculty, adding to the diversity and distinction of the academic courses being taught and to the interdisciplinary research being launched.



PROFESSOR MICHAL BIRAN

INNER ASIA'S NEGLECTED HISTORY: PROFESSOR MICHAL BIRAN

Chinggis (Genghis) Khan, the Mongols, the Silk Road and Samarkand are all part of a day's work for Professor Michal Biran. A member of the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies and the Department of East Asian Studies, Professor Biran studies the history of Inner

Asia, the area stretching from northeast China via Mongolia and up to the gates of Europe.

"There is a fascinating interchange of cultures in Inner Asia," she says. "Yet, while all the world's cultures have passed through this area, Inner Asian studies is a black hole in world history. Since the peoples of Inner Asia were nomads, you can only elucidate their history from their neighbors. Chinese or Muslim sources provide the pieces of a puzzle that I am trying to put together to form a whole picture."

Jerusalem-born Professor Michal Biran is a Hebrew University alumna who knows Arabic, Persian, Chinese, Russian, French and German in addition to Hebrew and English. She has studied at Harvard and in China and Russia, received Fulbright scholarships for her graduate and postdoctoral studies, and did a fellowship at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study. In 2005, she was awarded Hebrew University's Yoram Ben-Porat Presidential Prize for Excellent Young Researcher. The following year, she won the Rothschild Foundation's Michael Bruno Memorial Award for Israeli scholars of exceptional promise, and in 2007, the Landau Prize in East Asian History and Cultures. Professor Biran currently heads the Faculty of Humanities' President Fellows program for doctoral students.

Her work often focuses on the cross-cultural contacts between China, the Muslim world and Europe, as well as the Mongol empire. Her most recent book is *Chinggis Khan* (2007). In 2010, together with Professor Reuven Amitai, Dean of the Faculty of the Humanities, Professor Biran led a study tour of Mongolia. Hebrew University students and faculty traced the footsteps of Chinggis Khan and convened an Israeli-Mongolian conference.



PROFESSOR DAVID ENOCH

COMBINING LAW AND PHILOSOPHY: PROFESSOR DAVID ENOCH

Professor David Enoch is firmly grounded in abstract thinking. At age 39, David Enoch is a Professor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities and the Jacob I. Berman Professor of Law at the Faculty of Law.

While Professor Enoch's academic interests include moral, legal and political philosophy, his forte is the field of meta-ethics, which he describes as "the philosophical sub-discipline that does not study normative issues—such as what is right and what is good—but rather questions about these questions." Professor Enoch clarifies: "What does it mean for an action to be right? Are there any moral truths and moral facts and, ultimately, do these questions have any true impact on ethical discourse?" A Tel Aviv University law graduate with a doctorate in philosophy from New York University, Professor Enoch headed a research group on meta-ethics at Hebrew University's prestigious Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS) during the 2007/2008 academic year.

Professor Enoch has been a visiting professor at Columbia Law School, and admits that while he sees himself "temperamentally" as a philosopher, he finds himself only slightly unusual as a member of a Faculty of Law. "Most influential law schools have philosophers on board," he says.

The recipient of HU's Yoram Ben-Porat Presidential Prize for Outstanding Young Researcher in 2006 and the Zeltner Prize for a Young Scholar in 2005, Professor Enoch combines abstract discussions with legal argument and theory. He offers an example. "Take the distinction between intended and foreseeable actions, and the moral status of their consequences." This theoretical topic, Professor Enoch explains, becomes relevant when discussing terrorism (intended harm) and counter-terrorism (foreseeable collateral damage) and the moral and legal implications of these actions.

Applying philosophical questions to legal issues, David Enoch has written about peer disagreement and reason-giving and how they pertain within a jurisprudential context. His upcoming book, *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism*, is being published by Oxford University Press.