



The Institute for the Research of Jewish Law

Jewish jurisprudence is as old as the Jewish people themselves. Going back to our ancient past, our forefather Avraham had a profound sense of justice as seen in how he settled the quarrel that arose between his and Lot's shepherds and in his entreaty to G-d to reduce the sentence deserved by the inhabitants of Sodom. He courageously declared "Shall the Judge of the entire universe not do justice?" (Gen. 18:25). We also find that Judah was the judge in his daughter-in-law Tamar's trial. Above all, we find Moses standing at the head of a complex and multi-tiered justice system.

Jewish jurisprudence is the craft of a *posek* and *dayan* who have to intersect the rulings of the Torah and Jewish law with practical life, and deal with disputes, quarrels and intrigues between people. As *meseches* Sanhedrin 8a adjures us, they are to view a case involving pennies as important as a case involving millions.

Countless Jewish legal verdicts were determined in *batei din* from the Jewish people's first *beit din* which was founded in Moses's times until today. Jurisprudence evolved by utilizing the following devices: one ruling relying upon another, maintaining the scriptural verses' meaning and the Oral Law's provisions, utilizing logic, deductive reasoning, binding precedents, verdicts, provisions and ordinances. As our sages say in the last mishna of *meseches* Bava Batra (Chapter 10, Mishna 8), "Rabbi Yishmael says that one who wants to become wise should immerse himself in monetary laws, for there is no discipline in the Torah greater than it. It is like an overflowing spring".



Ever since it was permitted to commit the Oral Law to writing, a great part of this multi-faceted system has been recorded by Jewish sages in all generations. Some were written down as clearcut legal rulings, others as arbitrated solutions for questions submitted to the sages, and still others as interpretations of Talmudic topics, and so on. Today we are in the possession of a treasure trove of thousands of volumes, the fruit of immense Jewish scholastic achievement spanning over 2000 years, from the period of the Mishna until today.

The Institute for the Research of Jewish Law was founded in 1963 at the initiative of Prof. Menachem Alon z'l of the Faculty of Law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Since its inception, it has spearheaded research of Jewish law from the perspective and provisions of modern jurisprudence. Its staff members were and are prominent legal scholars including Torah scholars who have mastered all of Shas and *poskim*.

The Institute's accomplishments are remarkable.

It has made the full range of responsa by Rishonim accessible to researchers in every field-legal, academic, and Torah-related. The Institute has published a long list of books on various disciplines of Jewish jurisprudence in Hebrew and English, which are considered classics for students of the subject. It also publishes The Jewish Law Annual, a yearbook on Jewish jurisprudence.

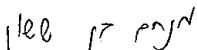


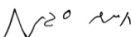
The Institute contributes to strengthening the status of Jewish jurisprudence in Israeli law through various ways. It also supports restoring jurisdiction of monetary law to the rabbinical courts. The contribution of the Institute's books and research is evident in many rulings where use was made of Jewish law due to this knowledge having been made accessible by the Institute.

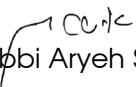
The Institute offers various courses in Jewish jurisprudence at the Faculty of Law, which are taught by leading jurists in Israel. The Institute also hosts seminars, workshops and roundtables that focus on a wide range of subjects, often in cooperation with other universities.

The Institute's director, Dr. Binyamin Porat, is a researcher, jurist and Torah scholar who has successfully led the Institute's continuing research and activities. He has brought new researchers into its ranks, and superbly guides and directs its activities and research topics.

In consideration of all the above, the selection committee has decided to award The Institute for the Research of Jewish Law the Katz Prize for 2018.


Professor Menahem Ben-Sasson


Rabbi Haim Sabato


Rabbi Aryeh Stern