

Prof. Yaacov Choueka

Prof. Yaacov Choueka is a scion of a family of rabbis and scholars from Aleppo, Syria. He immigrated to Israel in 1957 and began studying in the Mathematics Department of the Hebrew University. For forty years he taught at the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science at Bar-Ilan University. He later became a tenured professor who taught generations of students in the fields of mathematics and computer science, many of whom are today in key positions in academia and the computer industry in Israel. Prof. Choueka published some 80 articles and studies. In recognition of his achievements, a three-volume Jubilee book was published in his honor that included articles in computer science and mathematics by leading scholars, some of whom were his students and students of his students.

Prof. Choueka's life work and achievement found expression in his exceptional mastery in the field of mathematics and computer science, and in his innovative development of computerized tools and advanced work environments.

He utilized these for large and important projects that were of milestone significance in the study of Jewish law and philosophy, thereby making an immeasurable contribution to the general public in Israel and worldwide. Among his numerous projects are: The Responsa Project. This computerized Torah database contains Torah literature from the Bible and Tannaitic period until the works of recent scholars. It serves today as a basic research tool for researchers, judges, rabbinical judges, rabbis, teachers and scholars of all communities and sectors.

It was founded at the initiative of Prof. Aviezri Frankel of the Weizmann Institute and Prof. Choueka was a participating member of the team. Prof. Choueka made a major contribution to the development of computerized tools for analyzing Hebrew, as well as integrated search engines for all versions of the Responsa Project project.

Another project was the Friedberg Genizah Project. A huge cache of manuscripts was laying in a geniza in ancient Cairo for about 1,000 years. To make this great treasure available to the general public, Prof. Choueka established the Genizim Unit to computerize the Genizah and later established an Internet site that includes a large portion of the Geniza fragments.

The Hachi Garsinan Talmud Bavli Variants Project was established with the aim of presenting a complete computerized synopsis of all the Babylonian Talmudic texts and making them accessible to the Daf Yomi learners and students of the Talmud. While focusing on the variant terminology and versions, a side benefit was the creation of the innovative Rav-Milim Hebrew dictionary.

In consideration of all the above, the selection committee has decided to award Prof. Yaacov Choueka the Katz Prize for 2019.


Professor Menahem Ben-Sasson Rabbi Aryeh Stern Rabbi Shlomo Dichovski