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– Media Alert –

Sylvan Adams Nefesh B’Nefesh Bonei Zion Prize Announces 2021 Recipients

Annual Bonei Zion Prize is awarded to English-speaking Olim who have made significant contributions to the State of Israel

JERUSALEM, March 7, 2022 – Seven outstanding Olim (immigrants to Israel) from English-speaking countries have been awarded the 2021 Sylvan Adams Nefesh B’Nefesh Bonei Zion Prize, recognizing Anglos who have made a major contribution to the State of Israel: www.boneizion.org.il.

The honorees include: **Prof. Daniel Chamovitz**, President of Ben Gurion University, in the field of Education; **Dr. Jonathan Rieck**, Director of Emergency Medicine at Barzilai Medical Center, in the field of Science and Medicine; **David Marcu**, CEO of Israel Elwyn, in the field of Community & Non-Profit; **Micha Odenheimer**, Founding Director of Tevel B’Tzedek, in the field of Global Impact; and **Josie Katz**, Singer & Actress, in the field of Culture, Art & Sports.

The Lifetime Achievement Award was awarded to **Rabbi Dr. Daniel Tropper** for his exemplary work over multiple decades in Jewish education, and specifically in recognition of his establishment of Gesher, the social impact organization that emphasizes the goals of mutual respect, dialogue, and co-existence to strengthen and unify the entire Jewish people and nation.

In addition, the Young Leadership Prize has been given to **Michal Berman**, Founder of Tel Aviv Art Studio for her exemplary dedication and accomplishments as a young leader in Israel.

(Please see bios of all winners below)

This year’s prizes, announced today, are sponsored by Sylvan Adams, a Nefesh B’Nefesh Oleh, real estate developer and philanthropist who is committed to developing the State of Israel. Adams is steadfast in his goal of showcasing the impact and achievement of Israel and Israelis to the world, viewing the Bonei Zion Prize as an integral piece of this mission.

“It is a privilege to recognize these inspiring Olim for the exceptional leadership and contributions they have made nationally and globally, especially during these uncertain and challenging times,” said **Rabbi Yehoshua Fass**, Nefesh B’Nefesh Co-Founder and Executive Director. “The Bonei Zion Prize recipients are models of excellence in the community and shining examples of the incredible impact that Olim make in all facets of life in Israel.”

Hundreds of Olim from English-speaking countries – including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, UK, and USA - were nominated for the prize. The prize recognizes outstanding Anglo Olim who have helped Israel in a meaningful way by encapsulating the spirit of modern-day Zionism and contributing in significant ways towards the State of Israel. Recipients were chosen by a prestigious panel of committee members in the following categories: Science & Medicine; Community & Non-Profit; Education; Global Impact; Culture, Art & Sports, and Young Leadership.



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The following are the details of the 2021 Sylvan Adams Nefesh B'Nefesh Bonei Zion Prize recipients:

Education – **Prof. Daniel Chamovitz** is the 7th President of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Previously he served as Dean of the George S. Wise Faculty of Life Sciences at Tel Aviv University, where he also founded the Manna Program in Food Safety and Security.

Prof. Chamovitz grew up in Aliquippa, PA, and is a proud alumnus of Young Judaea. He took part in the Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad in Jerusalem, and then studied at both Columbia University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he received his Ph.D. in Genetics. He carried out postdoctoral research at Yale University under fellowships from the European Molecular Biology Organization and the Human Frontiers Science Research Program. He returned to Israel on the prestigious Alon Fellowship of the Council for Higher Education in Israel for Outstanding Young Researchers. His scientific career has been characterized by novel and field-defining research on plant biology, biochemistry, developmental biology, and systems biology. He has published numerous peer-reviewed research articles and served on the editorial boards of several scientific journals. Prof. Chamovitz has also held positions as a visiting scientist at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, and a visiting Professor at the School of Advanced Agricultural Sciences at Peking University.

Prof. Chamovitz is a sought-after speaker and science commentator. He has lectured worldwide on issues of global food security. His 2012 book, *What a Plant Knows*, was translated into 19 languages and was featured in the world press and media.

Prof. Chamovitz made Aliyah from Pennsylvania in 1984.

Science and Medicine – **Dr. Jonathan Rieck** is a leading figure in the development of emergency medicine in Israel, as one of three doctors to establish the first real emergency department in the country, at the Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer. He currently serves as the Director of Emergency Medicine at Barzilai Medical Center in Ashkelon.

Born, bred and educated in London, Dr. Rieck completed his medical studies at the Royal London Medical Hospital in Whitechapel. In 1984, he moved to Israel and began his residency at the Sheba Medical Center in Internal Medicine. In 1987, he conscripted as a doctor and served in the Golani Brigade for a year and a half in active field service, subsequently spending 20 years as reserve duty in an active field intelligence unit. He served as a physician for Hapoel Tel Aviv Football Club, as well as for other professionals in the field of sports training, initiating new approaches to maintaining health and preventing injuries.

In 1999, following the establishment of the first emergency department, Dr. Rieck was appointed Acting Head and then Deputy Head of the Sheba Emergency Room at Tel Hashomer. After 27 years working at Sheba, he inaugurated the Acute Diagnostic unit at Assuta Hospital in Ramat Hachayal. Despite the tremendous success of this unit, Dr. Rieck decided to join Barzilai Hospital as the head of the Emergency Department, in his continued effort to improve the public health system in the field of emergency medicine. In the last four years, the department has undergone a complete transformation – they have moved into a new building, gained academic recognition with its residency program, and served at the forefront of the Covid-19 response and simultaneous rounds of Gaza fighting for the residents of the south. Dr. Rieck has lived in Raanana for the last 19 years. He is married to Revital, with 3 children - Noa (22), Tamir and Nimrod (17).

Dr. Rieck made Aliyah from London in 1984.



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***Community & Non-Profit** – David B. Marcu has worked with Israel Elwyn, a non-profit organization that supports more than 5,200 individuals with disabilities throughout Israel, since 1984 – the year he moved to Israel and the year the organization began operations. During that time, he served in many positions for Israel Elwyn, including as CEO since 1993. He has recently been appointed Senior CEO, taking on a more strategic role to position the organization for the future.*

Marcu's advocacy and leadership with Israel Elwyn has revolutionized the way Israeli citizens perceive individuals with disabilities, and this initiative has ensured that the needs and services of these individuals are acknowledged on Israel's national agenda. Marcu has also been a partner in helping to identify services for individuals with disabilities who make Aliyah.

Marcu has a BA in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandeis University, an MA in Talmud and Rabbinics from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and an MBA in Business Administration from Temple University. Among his volunteer positions, Marcu is a past President of the International Association of Jewish Vocational Services and is currently on the board and serves as Treasurer of the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies. He served on the board of the Israel Council for Social Welfare and, until recently, on the board of the Israeli Civic Leadership Association, which serves as the "umbrella" group of all nonprofits in Israel. Marcu was International President of United Synagogue Youth in 1977-1978.

Marcu is married to Rona (Solomon) Marcu, father of Aviya and Elisha, and grandfather to Shoham, Liya and Agam.

David made Aliyah from the United States in 1984.

***Global Impact** – Micha Odenheimer is a journalist, rabbi, social entrepreneur and activist. He was born in Berkeley, California, graduated from Yale University with a BA in Religious Studies, and was ordained as an Orthodox Rabbi.*

Since moving to Israel in the 1988, Odenheimer founded two non-profit organizations. The first, the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews (now the Association of Ethiopian Jews), founded in 1993, is an advocacy organization working for the full integration and absorption of Ethiopian Jews into Israeli society. The second, Tevel b'Tzedek, founded in 2007, aids subsistence villages in the Global South (Latin America, Asia, Africa and Oceania) and introduces young Israelis and Diaspora Jews to the challenge of global poverty through service-learning programs.

As a journalist, Odenheimer has written for Haaretz, the Washington Post, the Jerusalem Post, and other publications from Ethiopia, Somalia, Iraq, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Haiti during times of crisis and transition. He has also written extensively on the Jewish world and on Judaism and social justice. Odenheimer was awarded the Boris Smolar Award for Journalism in 1998 and the Flegg Jewish Peoplehood Prize by Hebrew University in 2005. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife, Sossie Vanek, and their three children, Natan, Tamar and Ayala.

Micha made Aliyah from California in 1988.



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*Culture, Art & Sports – **Josie Katz** was born in Pittsburgh, PA, and moved to Israel at the age of 19 as a volunteer of the Habonim youth movement. Despite not knowing Hebrew when she arrived, Katz quickly became integrated into the culture, eventually becoming an Israeli pop superstar and one of the first women of rock n' roll in Israel.*

In 1966, Katz co-formed the band, “The High Windows”, or “Ha’Chalonot Ha’Gvohim” (The High Windows), alongside Arik Einstein and Shmulik Krauss, which became a major success and household name throughout the country. They released several hits that are still popular today, including “Einech Yechola” (You Cannot), “Zemer Nuge” (A Sad Song), and “Ahava Rishona” (First Love). The band had a significant impact on the Israeli music scene, revolutionizing Israeli popular music which was considered to have an innovative sound and techniques back in Israel of the 60’s.

Katz’s career continued to flourish, even after the band’s dissolution in 1968. She was a member of an additional two highly successful groups – “Kef Ha’Tikva Ha’Tova” (Fun of Good Hope) and “Ha’Tov, Ha’Ta V’Ha’Neara” (The Good, The Bad and the Girl). For decades, she has produced successful music in collaboration with different Israeli artists and has performed in a variety of films and festivals. As an actress, Katz appeared in the TV show, Lul (Coop), and in the films, Shablul (Snail), Shod Ha’Telefonim Ha’Gadol (The Big Phone Robbery), and Sus Etz (The Wooden Horse). She is a pop icon, and her legacy on the Israeli music landscape remains to this day.

Josie made Aliyah from the Pennsylvania in 1959.

*Young Leadership – **Michal Berman** is the owner, art teacher and art therapist at Tel Aviv Art Studio. The studio offers special art workshops and activities for people of all ages. With a background in both fine arts and teaching, Berman always had an enormous passion for art and inspiring others to create.*

Originally from New York, Berman came to Israel at 22 years old and served as a Lone Soldier in the IDF. Following her service, she attended the University of Haifa, where she graduated with a master’s degree in art therapy.

Berman opened Tel Aviv Art Studio as a unique space for people of all ages, aimed at forming connections between Israelis and new Olim through art. In collaboration with the Nefesh B’Nefesh Tel Aviv Hub, the studio offers Paint Nights for Olim in the local community, where they can meet new people and network over canvases and paint palettes.

The studio also offers special workshops specifically for soldiers who suffer from PTSD. Through these activities, Berman aims to break stigmas about post-trauma and demonstrate the power of art as a therapeutic tool. The studio serves as an example of how the process of making art can help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and overcome grief.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, Berman collaborated with Soul of Rwanda, an organization that aims to assist and educate homeless children in Rwanda through various educational activities. She connects with them weekly through Zoom and leads art classes using hand gestures, shapes and movement as a means of communication. Her volunteer work offers the children an educational framework to keep them motivated and empowered despite their challenging reality.

Michal made Aliyah from New York in 2011.



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***Lifetime** – Rabbi Dr. Daniel Tropper, Founder and President Emeritus of Gesher, has invested a lifetime in bridging the gap between Jews of different orientations by promoting mutual understanding, tolerance, and co-existence in Israeli society. He received his Rabbinic Ordination from Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and a PhD in History at Yeshiva University.*

In 1970, he ran the first Gesher seminar in Kfar Etzion for students from a secular school and a national religious school. Today, Gesher has grown to become a social impact organization, influencing more than one million Israelis – secular, religious, and Haredi youth, IDF soldiers, and opinion shapers – to lead the way towards establishing Jewish unity.

In addition to his work with Gesher, Rabbi Dr. Tropper has continued to make a significant impact in the field of Jewish education through various institutions. As assistant to the Minister of Education, he established the Tali school stream, Israel's largest pluralistic in-school Jewish Studies program that offers educational programming and resources to thousands of children in diverse communities across Israel. He was the first Director of the Joint Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, and he founded both the Atid and Afikim Programs for intensifying Jewish Education and Keren Kehillot, the Roof Organization for Garinim Torani'im. He has published scholarly articles and op-ed pieces in Israel and the Diaspora. He is the author of "Chuda Shel Machat ", essays on the High Holy Days.

In 2000, Rabbi Dr. Tropper established the Gesher Film Fund, which quickly gained recognition as one of four funds in the country supported by the Israel Film Council. One of the foundation's most notable achievements is the "Mixed Jerusalem" series, which won the three most prestigious categories at the Israeli Academy of Film and Television: Best Series, Best Actor and Best Actress. In recent years, the foundation has produced series and films that have received critical acclaim in Israel and abroad, including Kathmandu, Get, Shtisel, and more.

Rabbi Dr. Tropper is the recipient of many prestigious awards for his life's work in promoting dialogue and tolerance among the Jewish people, including the Speaker of the Knesset Award for Jewish Unity, the Avi Chai Prize for outstanding efforts to increase understanding and sensitivity among diverse groups, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Flegg Award for Understanding and Acceptance within the Jewish World, and the esteemed Yakir Yerushalayim from the Jerusalem Municipality. Rabbi Dr. Tropper is married to Faigie and the father of 10 children.

Rabbi Dr. Tropper made Aliyah from New York in 1969.

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