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GRAPEVINE

• By GREER FAY CASHMAN

■ [BAR ILAN University](#) has announced the name of the recipient of the inaugural Jonathan Sacks Institute Prize. Prof. Robert Putnam, Emeritus Professor of

Public Policy at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, has been recognized for his ground-breaking research that is very much in line with the work and values espoused by the late Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks.

The prize was established by the Gewurz family of Montreal in memory of Samuel Gewurz, to recognize individuals who have made exceptional contributions as public intellectuals, advancing the ideas, values, and practical concerns central to the work of the late distinguished leader and thinker.

Speaking about the award, Prof. Jonathan Rynhold, Academic Director of the Jonathan Sacks Institute, remarked: “Both Prof. Putnam and Rabbi Sacks highlighted the threats posed by excessive individualism, religious extremism, and polarization. Their research emphasizes the necessity of dramatically increasing social capital – the networks, norms, and trust that enable cooperation for mutual benefit, both within and between groups.”

Prof. Putnam’s groundbreaking research has significantly shaped global discourse on social capital, civic engagement, and community cohesion. His seminal works, including *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000) and *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (2010), were frequently engaged with by Rabbi Sacks in his writings, such as *The Home We Build Together* and *Morality*.

With over fifteen books translated into twenty languages, Putnam is the most cited academic in the field of political science in the past fifty years. A recipient of the National Humanities Medal, America’s highest honor for contributions to the humanities, his expertise has been sought out by global leaders, including presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, as well as British prime ministers Tony Blair and David Cameron.

When informed that he had been selected for the prize, he stated: “Jonathan Sacks was one of the greatest moral, intellectual, and religious leaders of the last half century. I am deeply honored to receive the inaugural Jonathan Sacks Prize.”

[BIU](#) President Prof. [Arie Zaban](#), in congratulating Putman on the award, thanked The Rabbi Sacks Legacy “for their confidence in Bar-Ilan University by supporting the establishment of the Institute and entrusting BIU with the mission of preserving and advancing Rabbi Sacks’ legacy for the benefit of Israel, the Jewish people, and humanity at large.”

The Jonathan Sacks Institute Prize carries a monetary award of NIS 100,000 (\$30,000) and will be formally presented at a special ceremony to be hosted this month by BIU.

The Jonathan Sacks Institute at BIU was established in 2023 to honor and perpetuate



ROBERT PUTNAM  
(Courtesy Harvard University)

his legacy through programs and research, geared to ensure that Rabbi Sacks’ ideas receive the attention and recognition they deserve within academia, especially as they relate to contemporary moral, social, and political challenges. In addition, the institute is developing a diverse network of alumni with leadership potential who can make a practical impact on the future of Israeli, Jewish, and world society, inspired and guided by his vision.