

University of Haifa

The Senate of the University of Haifa, by virtue of the authority vested in it by the constitution of the University and in accordance with the recommendations of the President and the Executive Committee

hereby confers upon

Ruth Arnon

the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy, Honoris Causa

In recognition of her pioneering, ground-breaking and inspiring study of the immune system, work that charted the path to innovative developments benefiting millions of patients around the world; for nurturing young researchers who are today at the forefront of medical research and the biomedical industry in Israel; for her enormous contribution to the State of Israel and for transforming the Israeli pharmaceutical industry into a global power in this important field; for her work as President of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, for promoting research in Israel, and for her contribution to the founding of the Mediterranean Sea Research Center of Israel, under the leadership of the University of Haifa.

Conferred on 12 Sivan 5777/June 6, 2017
Haifa, Israel



Mooly Eden

Chairman of the Executive Committee



Prof. Ron Robin

President



Prof. Gustavo Mesch

Rector



PROFESSOR RUTH ARNON

Ruth Arnon was born in 1933 in Tel Aviv. At the age of six she skipped a grade; at 13 she began studying at the Herzliya Gymnasium; and as a 17 year-old started her academic path, studying chemistry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. After one year of studies, she joined the academic reserve and earned her master's degree in biochemistry in 1955. From 1955 to 1957 she served as an officer in the IDF.

In 1960, Prof. Arnon received a PhD from the Weizmann Institute of Science for research into the immunological properties of proteins. In 1962, she completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the Rockefeller University in New York and then returned to Israel.

In the course of her work at the Weizmann Institute, Prof. Arnon again worked with Prof. Michael Sela, who had been her supervisor for her doctoral thesis. The two researchers initiated the use of synthetic polypeptides in the study of immunology. Prof. Arnon applied the idea that these protein-like substances could act as stimulants or inhibitors of the immune system, and thus made a breakthrough in the development of medications used both as vaccines and as medicines to treat autoimmune diseases. Together with her colleagues, Prof. Arnon developed Copaxone, a groundbreaking drug that can suppress autoimmune phenomena in multiple sclerosis. Development of Copaxone contributed greatly to the growth of Israel's pharmaceutical industry and its economy, as well as to Israel's prestige in the medical field.

Prof. Arnon became Vice President of the Weizmann Institute of Science after having served as Head of its Department of Chemical Immunology, and as Dean of the Faculty of Biology.

In 1991, Prof. Arnon was invited to become a member of the Israel National Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and served the organization in several capacities. In 2010, she was elected its President – the first woman ever to hold this role. As President of the Academy, Prof. Arnon contributed to the development of fields of science that are vital to Israel, and among others, worked toward establishing the committees to evaluate development of the potential of gas and oil in Israel. These discussions led to the founding of the Mediterranean Sea Research Center of Israel at the University of Haifa.

Prof. Arnon has won numerous awards for her scientific achievements, including the Robert Koch Award in Medical Sciences, Spain's Jimenez Diaz Memorial Prize, France's Legion of Honor, the Wolf Prize for Medicine, the Rothschild Prize for Biology, the Israel Prize in Medicine, and the AESKU Prize for Life Contribution to Autoimmunity.

She holds honorary doctorates from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Tel Aviv University, and the Leuphana University of Lüneberg in Germany. Prof. Arnon is also an honorary Yakir of Tel-Hai Academic College, and an honorary member of the Open University.