

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

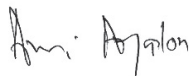
Ruth Berman

the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy, Honoris Causa

In recognition of her groundbreaking research that continues to serve as a foundation in linguistics and in Hebrew language research in particular, which has earned her prominence amongst researchers in this field; for the place of honor that her research has imparted to spoken Hebrew and Hebrew speakers, and for her role in strengthening Hebrew-language culture in Israel; for her persistence in merging research with practical work; for her international accolades and achievements that have brought great honor to the State of Israel and the Israeli academic community; and for imparting her knowledge and experience to a younger generation of researchers.

Conferred in Haifa, Israel
24 Sivan 5773/June 2, 2013




Ami Ayalon

Chairman of the Executive Committee



Amos Shapira

President



Prof. David Faraggi

Rector



PROFESSOR RUTH BERMAN

Linguist, Pioneer in Research on Acquisition of Hebrew as a First Language

Professor Ruth Berman (née Aronson) came to Israel in 1954 from South Africa. She received a B.A. in Language and Literature from the University of Cape Town; an M.A. in General and Applied Linguistics in 1964 from Columbia University; and a Ph.D. in Hebrew Language in 1973 from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Her first years in Israel included studies for a teaching diploma at the Hebrew University, followed by working as an English teacher in Be'er Sheva and later as a Ministry of Education supervisor of English teachers in the Negev. She was first exposed to linguistics thanks to a British Council scholarship to the University of Edinburgh in 1958, where she studied with the leading British applied and general linguists.

While studying for her M.A. at Columbia University in the early 1960s, as Ruth Aronson, she set up the Department of English as a Second Language at the United Nations International School in New York. On her return to Israel, she was invited to establish a language track in the English Department of Tel Aviv University, the first of its kind in the country, which subsequently became the still flourishing Department of Linguistics. She headed the English for Speakers of Hebrew project for teaching English in Israeli schools. These Language and Reader texts innovatively integrated principles of modern linguistic description in contrastive analysis of Hebrew as the students' source language and English as their target language with advanced pedagogical principles of applied linguistics.

Ruth Berman turned to Hebrew for her doctoral studies, resulting in dissertation that analyzed modern Hebrew syntax from the theoretical perspective of formal generative linguistics. The book she published in 1978, *Modern Hebrew Structure* extended this research to various facets of Hebrew (morphology, lexicon, and syntax) and to this day is a basic reference work on modern Hebrew for scholars around the world. Professor Berman's rich subsequent research in these domains was instrumental in turning the study of the standard everyday usage of native speakers of Israeli Hebrew into a legitimate field of academic research.

Prof. Berman's subsequent research on child language is responsible for establishing the acquisition of Hebrew as a first language as an academic field of research, placing Israeli Hebrew on the world map of developmental psycholinguistics (as in her 1985 monograph on *Acquisition of Hebrew*). In seeking an appropriate theoretical framework for researching language acquisition and language use in general, her work has shifted from formal generative linguistics to a functionalist-cognitive approach. This found expression in the work she co-authored in 1994 with Prof. Dan Slobin, *Relating Events in Narrative: A Crosslinguistic Developmental Study*, tracing the narrative abilities of native speakers of five different languages, including Hebrew, from early childhood across school-age to adulthood. This groundbreaking study has engendered rich research by scholars around the world on developing linguistic and narrative abilities in different languages. It also initiated Berman's subsequent work on narrative development and discourse analysis, and provided the basis for a largescale crosslinguistic project headed by Prof. Berman, in which narrative and expository texts were elicited from schoolchildren, adolescents, and adults, following closely parallel research procedures, in seven different countries including Israel. Results of this enterprise have been published in a book and in two special journal issues edited by Berman between 2002 and 2005, and have helped establish the domain of "later language development" as a viable field of academic research in Israel and abroad.

Prof. Berman has trained generations of young linguists and researchers and has supervised dozens of doctoral dissertations and masters' theses in the areas of modern Hebrew structure and typology, acquisition of Hebrew from infancy to adolescence, and development of text construction abilities. The former students of hers fill academic positions at first-rate institutions in Israel and abroad. Even today, as a *professor emerita*, she continues to mentor graduate students both in Israel and around the world.

Prof. Berman's work has earned her international recognition and numerous honors, including presidency of the International Association for Study of Child Language, the Humboldt Prize, Honorary Life Membership in the Linguistic Society of America and, most recently, the Israeli EMET Prize in Linguistics.