

## 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

**Stefan Reif**

the degree of

### **Doctor of Philosophy, Honoris Causa**

In recognition of his lifetime achievement on behalf of the preservation, research and accessibility of the 'Cairo Genizah' to the academic community and the public at large; for groundbreaking research that still serves as a treasure trove of information about Jewish and Israeli communities and their ways of life in the past; for the ability, along with the research and the preservation work, to assist and nurture generations of researchers, including those from the University of Haifa, who continue to uncover the wonders of the 'Genizah'; for his deep devotion to the University of Haifa, particularly with its Center for Interdisciplinary Research of the 'Cairo Genizah'; for being a true friend and loyal ambassador over the years to the State of Israel, Israeli academia and the University of Haifa.

Conferred in Haifa, Israel  
27 Iyar 5774/May 27, 2014



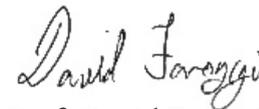
**Ami Ayalon**

Chairman of the Executive Committee



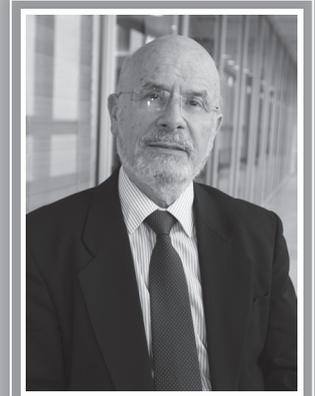
**Amos Shapira**

President



**Prof. David Faraggi**

Rector



## PROFESSOR STEFAN C. REIF

Stefan C. Reif was born in Scotland in 1944. In 1961, he completed his Certificate for Hebrew Teachers with distinction. Prof Reif earned a BA with first class honors in Hebrew and Aramaic in 1964. He then continued on to advanced studies in Judaic studies and Semitic languages, and in 1969 completed his doctoral dissertation at the University of London on a Hebrew liturgical manuscript from the late medieval period. Between the years 1968-1972 Prof Reif lectured at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, and from 1972-1973 served as academic dean and lecturer in Hebrew Language and Literature at Dropsie College in Philadelphia.

Prof. Reif began his central life's work in 1973, when he assumed responsibility for establishing and directing the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit at Cambridge University. He held this position with distinction for 33 years, until 2006.

The 'Cairo Genizah' is a treasure trove of Jewish manuscript fragments from the 10th to the 19th century, which describe life in the Middle Eastern Jewish community. The 'Genizah' documents span topics ranging from daily activities to religious laws. They were stored in an ancient synagogue in Cairo and most were brought to the library of the University of Cambridge in the late 19th century. For a long period, a large proportion of the 190,000 documents of the 'Genizah' remained untouched in crates and boxes within the library's storage rooms. As a result, the archives were largely in a state of neglect until the arrival of Prof. Reif.

Prof. Reif oversaw all cataloging and preservation, and encouraged international research on the 'Genizah' documents. He raised millions of British pounds in contributions from academic funds and private donors worldwide. Under Prof. Reif's direction, the Genizah Research Unit became an international center for researchers of Judaism, history, philosophy and medieval linguistics. In parallel, Prof. Reif cataloged the documents according to subject, and had the series published by Cambridge University Press. His activities made the historical collection more accessible to researchers.

Thanks to Prof Reif's work, which stemmed from an intense intellectual and academic enthusiasm, many large-scale projects have been based on the 'Genizah' as a source of knowledge regarding the Land of Israel and the Mediterranean.

Research on the Cairo 'Genizah', which was largely made possible by Prof. Reif's enormous industry and influence, significantly contributed to a wide variety of fields: social, economic and intellectual history; the study of ancient and medieval Jewish literature in areas of the Bible; liturgical poems; the Talmud; Midrash; Halacha; grammar; philosophy; linguistics (Hebrew, Arabic, Judeo-Arabic, Aramaic); daily religious life (prayer and customs); magic; history of medicine and science; commerce; law and other subjects.

In addition to directing the Unit, Prof. Reif researched and published numerous articles and books, primarily on the origins of Jewish prayers. He served as a guest professor and researcher in leading world institutions, among them Oxford, Pennsylvania and George Washington universities.

For years, Prof. Reif has assisted Israeli researchers, among them numerous scholars from the University of Haifa, who arrived at Cambridge University to investigate the 'Genizah' documents. For many, the Unit became 'the home away from home', largely due to the warm hospitality of Prof. Reif and his late wife, Shuli.

Since his retirement, Prof. Reif has divided his time between Cambridge, England and Israel and he remains active in the academic life of both countries. A Fellow at St John's College, Cambridge, Prof. Reif has served as, among other functions, special consultant on the 'Genizah' collection at Cambridge for research projects and fund raising. He also heads the academic committee of the International Center for Genizah Research and Teaching at the University of Haifa. Prof Reif is considered an energetic proponent and 'ambassador' of Israel at Cambridge, in London and throughout Great Britain.