

Press Release

Hebrew University lecturers to receive Japanese foreign minister's award

Jerusalem, Sept. 15, 2008 – The Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation Award will be presented to two Hebrew University of Jerusalem lecturers in Japanese studies at a ceremony to be held Sunday, Sept. 21, at the university's Mount Scopus campus.

The two winners of the prestigious award are Kyoji Tsujita, head of Japanese language instruction in the Department of East Asian Studies at the Hebrew University, and his wife, Mariko Tsujita, a former lecturer there. The award is being given to them for their dedication to the promotion of mutual understanding between Japan and Israel over a period of many years.

The Tsujitas represent in Israel the Japan Christian Friends of Israel organisation, commonly known as Beit Shalom, consisting of tens of thousands of Japanese who support Israel through voluntarism, fund raising and other ways. Members of the organisation, centered in Kyoto, study Hebrew and Bible. Among their activities are the Beit Shalom houses, which host visiting Israelis in Japan, and a museum in the Hiroshima area for the teaching of the Holocaust to children.

The Tsujitas came to Israel and lived in Jerusalem for many years, giving birth to their children there. They subsequently returned to Japan in order to give their children a Japanese education, but after their children grew up they returned to Jerusalem and to the Hebrew University. They each have master's degrees from the Hebrew University, Kyoji in linguistics and Mariko in political science. In recent years Kyoji has coordinated Japanese language instruction at the university, while Mariko taught various subjects related to Japan.

The couple established, together with the founder of their movement, the late Rev. Takeji Otsuki, the Mizra Society of Friends of the Hebrew university in Japan. Mizra has contributed a chair in Bible studies in the name of the Rev. Otsuki at the Hebrew University. The organisation also supports young researchers at the university. Father Otsuki also established a scholarship for graduates of the Department of East Asian Studies in order to enable their further studies in Japan.

Former Israeli President Yitzhak Navon, who heads the Friends of the Beit Shalom organisation in Israel, will be present for the presentation ceremony to the Tsujitas, as will the Japanese ambassador in Israel, Yoshinori Katori; member of Knesset and former rector of the Hebrew University, Prof. Menahem Ben-Sasson; the incoming rector of the university, Prof. Sarah Stroumsa; former president of the university, Prof. Hanoch Gutfreund; and Prof. Ben-Ami Shillony of the Department of East Asian Studies.

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About the Hebrew University

With 24,000 full-time students, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is Israel's pre-eminent institute of higher education. Its faculty members pursue projects that are both essential to Israel's future and the benefit of humanity. It is a centre of international repute, with formal and informal ties extending to and from the worldwide scientific and academic

community. Students come from all over Israel and across the Middle East to study in an atmosphere of academic and research excellence.

About the British Friends of the Hebrew University (BFHU)

Established in 1926, The British Friends of the Hebrew University is the oldest established Jewish charity in support of higher education. The charity works to promote and enhance the reputation of the Hebrew University, ensure that underprivileged students are given the opportunity to complete their studies, and help HU to maintain its standard of excellence and worldwide reputation for research.

BFHU acts as the UK's gateway to Hebrew University research, expertise and faculty, and provides financial and pastoral support for prospective and current students at HU, as well as supporting visiting and sabbatical Hebrew University lecturers during their time in the UK.