# University of Haifa

confers upon

# Yuli-Yoel Edelstein

## The Outstanding Leadership Award

In recognition of his many years of public activity during which time he stood as a beacon, shining a light on the values of democracy, civil rights and the rule of law in Israel; for his contribution and his activities on behalf of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, who have become an inseparable part of Israeli society; for his struggle to safeguard civil rights for all the citizens of the State of Israel and for preserving the character of the State of Israel as a Jewish, democratic and law-abiding state; for his uplifting personal story which serves as an inspiration to so many people in Israel and beyond its borders.

Conferred on 22 Sivan 5778/June 5, 2018
Haifa, Israel

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# YULI-YOEL EDELSTEIN

Yuli-Yoel Edelstein was born in 1958 in the city of Chernovtsy in Ukraine in the former Soviet Union. Following graduation from high school, he tried to gain admittance to the Institute for Foreign Languages, but was rejected because he was a Jew. Edelstein, therefore, started to learn at a teachers' training college.

In 1979, Edelstein applied for an exit visa to immigrate to Israel, but his request was denied. He moved to Moscow, where he conducted clandestine Hebrew lessons and attempted to spread the language to many cities in the Soviet Union. Because of his Zionist activism, he was arrested by the KGB in 1984 on fabricated drug possession charges and sent to a Soviet forced labor camp. In 1987, following international pressure, Edelstein was released from the forced labor camp and immigrated to Israel together with his family.

During his period of incarceration in the forced labor camp, Edelstein was recognized in Israel as a Prisoner of Zion.

After his arrival in Israel, Edelstein completed his education through the Mandel Jerusalem Fellows program at the prestigious Mandel Leadership Institute for educational and social leadership development and served in several school management capacities. In 1996, together with Nathan Sharansky, he founded the political party 'Yisrael BaAliyah', becoming one of its leaders. In elections held that year, he was elected to serve as a member of Knesset (MK), and was appointed Minister of Immigrant Absorption in the Netanyahu government. During Edelstein's term in this office, many Russians came on Aliyah from republics of the former Soviet Union, and he worked tirelessly to integrate them into the labor market and into Israeli society, and to establish housing options for immigrants who did not have means of their own to obtain appropriate housing.

Between 1999 and 2003, Edelstein served as an MK, as Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, and as Chairman of the Yisrael BaAliyah faction. In 2001-2003, he served in Ariel Sharon's government as Deputy Minister of Immigrant Absorption. In the 16th Knesset, his party merged with the Likud Party and Edelstein was elected to the Knesset and served as Deputy Speaker of the Knesset.

During the 18th Knesset, in March 2009, Edelstein was appointed Minister of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs in the government of Benjamin Netanyahu, with responsibility for relations with Diaspora Jewry, leading the war against anti-Semitism, and strengthening Israel's image in the world.

In the 19th Knesset, in March 2013, Yuli Edelstein was elected as Knesset Speaker by a large majority. He again won the confidence of the current Knesset, the 20th, when he was elected Knesset Speaker for a second term.

Over his many years serving as Knesset Speaker, Edelstein has spearheaded a number of projects including, initiated the 'Green Knesset' project – making the Knesset the "greenest" parliament in the world; led the transparency revolution, which allowed every citizen to get an immediate update on Knesset proceedings; made the Knesset building accessible to people with disabilities and special needs, through a belief that the Knesset is home to all of Israel's citizens without exception; and fought for maintaining the Knesset's honor and stature by setting up 'KATAF' – the Knesset Unit for Parliamentary Coordination and Supervision to strengthen parliamentary supervision and set times for questions directed to ministers in the plenum.