

Press Release

Stockholm, Sweden 2020-10-20

## **BERMAN LITERATURE PRIZE**

A new international literary award to be launched in Sweden

**Berman Literature Prize** is an international prize, established in 2020 through a donation by the Swedish couple Thomas and Catharina Berman.

**Berman Literature Prize** is worth SEK 750,000 yearly and will be awarded for ten years. The first Berman Literature Prize award ceremony will take place in Stockholm, June 2021.

**Berman Literature Prize** will go to an author who, regardless of background or genre, has worked in the spirit of the Jewish tradition.

**Berman Literature Prize** has the following ethos and declaration of intent:

### **»KNOWLEDGE IS SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BE TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU«**

There is more than one Jewish tradition, and the tradition that the Berman Literature Prize seeks to highlight has changed in constant dialogue with other cultures and languages. This means that for thousands of years it has preserved a rich history and literature, while simultaneously encountering the languages and texts of other cultures. Tradition and renewal have interacted, giving rise to a constant critical rereading of religious texts as well as literature and songs, poetry and philosophy. This is a tradition of knowledge in which interpretation, interpretative concepts and memory are at the centre, and because of historical circumstances involving persecution and discrimination, it is often written from a marginal position and from the experience of exile.

It is an ongoing exploratory discussion, and all the forms it takes have one thing in common: an impassioned and sincere belief in the ability of the literary text to transcend times and cultures, to let words convey experiences and thoughts between people. The aim of the Berman Literature Prize is to honour authors in recent years who, regardless of background or genre, have worked in the spirit of this tradition.

See more information on page 2:



Catharina and Thomas Berman (©: Jonas Ekströmer/TT)



Maria Miesenberger: Reflection on the Presence of Time  
(©: Norrköpings Konstmuseum)

### **The Founders:**

Thomas Berman was born in Stockholm in 1943 and grew up in Norrköping. Catharina Berman (born Wranne) was born in 1949 and grew up in Stockholm. In 2019, the Berman family began discussions about a donation to a literature prize dedicated to the Jewish tradition. In the spring of 2020, the Berman Literature Prize was founded and the organization, consisting of a committee and a jury, was established.

In 2016 Thomas and Catharina Berman donated a sculpture group by the Swedish artist Maria Miesenberger to the city of Norrköping. This donation's purpose was to give something back to Norrköping, which has meant so much to Thomas Berman and his family.

Thomas Berman's maternal grandfather Mauritz Stern came impoverished to Sweden in the beginning of the twentieth century. Together with his brother Karl, Mauritz started Sterns Fashion House in Norrköping in 1913. Selling ready-made clothes and fashion garments, the company grew to become one of Norrköping's biggest employers. Nils Berman, father of Thomas, eventually came to work in the company. Thomas Berman's grandfather Jacob Berman also came to Sweden around 1890, where he started a new life in Malmö.

Nils Berman studied literature and art in Lund, under scholars such as the famous Swedish professors John Landquist and Ragnar Josephson. As a very active writer and critic, Nils Berman published several books on Book and Library History. During his lifetime he built up one of Sweden's largest book collections.

Catharina Berman comes from an entrepreneurial family in Stockholm with literary interests. Her grandfather, Erik Olof Wiklund, came from a poor background in Ådalen but gained the title of docent in Latin and Greek at Uppsala University and later became a member of parliament for the Social Democrats.

The Berman family histories led to the idea of a donation, with the purpose of giving something back to Jewish culture and literature.

The result is the Berman Literature Prize.

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Graphic profile and logotype by Nina Ulmaja

Read more at **[WWW.BERMANLITERATUREPRIZE.COM](http://WWW.BERMANLITERATUREPRIZE.COM)**