

SHMUEL YEIVIN — IN MEMORIAM

by BENJAMIN MAZAR

It is with deep sadness that we take leave of the renowned scholar, Professor Shmuel Yeivin, scion of Israeli archeologists, who devoted his life to the study of the Land of Israel and its antiquities. Yeivin acquired his love of his people and their land and his knowledge of the Hebrew language from his parents, who came to Eretz-Yisrael during the Second Aliyah; he obtained his deep knowledge of the Bible and his acquaintance with the Jewish spiritual heritage at the Herzlia Gymnasium in Tel-Aviv, where he was one of the first pupils; his academic training was acquired at London University, where he studied archeology under Sir Flinders Petrie — and, above all, he identified himself completely with the national renaissance in the Land of Israel, as did all of his family and relations.

Shmuel Yeivin excelled in his wide knowledge and learning, in his exact command of his mother tongue, in his honesty and strict conscience, all of which found expression, with even a touch of zealotry, in all aspects of his scientific and literary creativity, in the sense of: “He that loves rebuke loves knowledge; but he that hates reproof is brutish” (Prov. 12:1).

Yeivin was among the prominent figures of the national renaissance, and he participated in archeological excavations in Eretz-Yisrael, in Egypt and in Iraq. He saw in the study of the country’s antiquities and its history, particular that of the Biblical period, a sublime challenge and life-goal, an important contribution to the

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realization of the Zionist ideal and the restoration of the glory of Israel's past. His work, both in research and editing, was varied, encompassing many disciplines, including history, archeology, Bible studies, Hebrew linguistics, Egyptology, and Semitic philology. But his greatest interests were in Biblical history, in Egyptian sources relating to the Land of Canaan, in the problem of the alphabet, and in other weighty problems relating to the archeology of the Land of Israel.

Among his most important writings, in Hebrew and English, were the following: *Toldot ha-Ketav ha-'Ivri* (History of Hebrew Script), 1939; *Qadmoniyot Arzenu* (Antiquities of Our Land), together with M. Avi-Yonah, 1956; *The Israelite Conquest of Canaan*, 1971; *Milhemet Bar-Kokhva* (The Bar-Kokhba War), 1957; a collection of articles, *Mehqarim be-Toldot Yisrael ve-Arzo* (Studies in the History of Israel and Its Land), 1960; many entries in the Hebrew *Encyclopedia Biblica*; and selected chapters of the first five volumes of the series, *ha-Historyah shel 'Am Yisrael* (History of the People of Israel). He also made important contributions towards the creation of the basic tools and the establishment of the necessary institutions for the study of the land and its antiquities. He served with dedication as the first administrator of the Israel Department of Antiquities and as the founder of the inter-departmental program for Archeology of the Land of Israel and Near-Eastern Cultures at Tel-Aviv University, which later became a large archeological institute under the late Yohanan Aharoni. He was also a member of the executive committee of the Israel Exploration Society, a member of the Academy for the Hebrew Language, and one of the editors of the *Encyclopedia Biblica*.

His work over a period of fifty years deserves the recognition and appreciation of all devotees of the Land of Israel and its history.

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