

**Israel Shatzman**

1934-2017



Israel Shatzman was born in Binyaminah, one of the villages in Mandatory Palestine named after members of the benefactor Rothschild family, to a family that cultivated vineyards and olive groves; the rabbi and great Genizah scholar Solomon Schechter was an uncle of his mother. Upon the compulsory army service he came to study at The Hebrew University and fell under the spell of the twin lights of Ancient History there, Alexander Fuks and Chaim Wirszubski. It was under the influence of the former that he published his first, and only, paper on Greek history,<sup>1</sup> but he soon turned to the latter and to Roman history. His revised dissertation was published<sup>2</sup> after a post-doctoral year at Cambridge, where he enjoyed the opportunity of collaborating with Peter Brunt, during the latter's brief interlude there. Back at The Hebrew University, where he taught until his retirement, there followed a steady flow of papers, of which perhaps the best known, and very well received, solved once and for all an old question.<sup>3</sup> He was a dedicated teacher and his Hebrew language *History of the Roman Republic* (Jerusalem 1989), well researched and up to date like all his works, serves as the standard textbook for Israeli students.

Slowly but persistently his attention turned towards military history on the one hand, and to the history of the land of Israel under Roman rule on the other; among the products of both these interests pride of place belongs to a book on the Jewish armies in Palestine.<sup>4</sup> This was to be one among a growing number of studies on Roman Iudaea: they all exhibited not only a thorough acquaintance with Classical sources and scholarship, but also a great familiarity with Jewish

<sup>1</sup> 'The Meeting Place of the Spartan Assembly', *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica* 96 (1968), 385-389.

<sup>2</sup> *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, Collection Latomus 142, Bruxelles 1975.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Roman General's Authority over Booty', *Historia* 21 (1972), 177-205.

<sup>4</sup> *The Armies of the Hasmonaeans and Herod; From Hellenistic to Roman Frameworks*, Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 25, Tübingen 1991.

sources, including the intriguing Qumran documents,<sup>5</sup> and a constant resolve to keep in step with the latest developments in the archaeological discoveries in his country. He was a habitual visitor to excavations in Israel — and also abroad, whenever the opportunity offered itself. A main interest remained Roman imperialism and its manifestations in Iudaea, including the thorny subject of its defensive system, but also questions of purely Jewish history, such as the much debated conversion of the Idumaeans, arrested his interest as well. As always, his studies displayed a meticulous scrutiny of all available sources and of even the most out-of-the-way scholarship — not always an easy task in a small country in which the classics are very far indeed from the centre of attention. The weighing up of evidence and drawing of conclusions was always as cautious and level-headed as was the man himself.

Israel Shatzman was a well-liked and highly appreciated colleague, his wise counsel, never given without serious consideration, was sought by many. A token of this liking and appreciation was a *Festschrift* presented to him on his seventy-fifth birthday,<sup>6</sup> with contributions, in Hebrew and in English, by thirty-one friends, colleagues and pupils. He was intimately involved in the affairs of his University where he served, i.a., as Chairman of the Department of History. However, his talents were also employed beyond the confines of the University: he served, among other appointments, for five years as Vice-President for Academic Affairs of The Open University of Israel and for seven as Director of The Jewish National and University Library (as it then was). He was one of the editors of volumes 1-5 and 10 of the *Scripta Classica Israelica* and also served a term as President of the Society that publishes this journal.

A truly modest person, he was a warm family man with an unusually wide range of friends from all walks of life, to whom he and his wife of fifty-eight years were always the most generous hosts. A deep shadow was cast over his last years by the death of his son Omer in a traffic accident and in his last three years by a debilitating condition. Despite his physical incapacity he managed to publish in this period for students of the Open University a textbook on Roman Imperialism and his Hebrew book on *The Dux and the Roman Army in Palaestina from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest* is expected to be published shortly. Israel is survived by his wife, three daughters and three granddaughters.

Joseph Geiger

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., 'The Military Aspects of the War Rule', in M. Kister (ed.), *The Qumran Scrolls and their World* i (Jerusalem 2009), 341-383 (Hebrew).

<sup>6</sup> J. Geiger, H.M. Cotton, G.D. Stiebel (eds.), *Israel's Land. Papers Presented to Israel Shatzman on his Jubilee*, Raanana 2009. It contains a bibliography up to the date of publication, and an appreciation (in Hebrew) by his old friend Uriel Rappaport. An appreciation and bibliography, on the occasion of his retirement, have appeared already in *Scripta Classica Israelica* 22, 2003.