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Photo: Stanley Batkin

Israel Shatzman

Israel Shatzman retires this year after almost half a century at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the last eighteen years as professor of ancient history. He entered as a student in the departments of history and Hebrew literature, and never left. With a happy sense of timing, he also completes this year a second two-year stint as President of the Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies.

Shatzman was born in 1934 in the wine-growing colony of Binyamina, on the lower slopes of the Carmel Ridge. He moved to Jerusalem in 1956, following his military service, together with his wife and lifelong companion, Tehiya, also from Binyamina. The farmer's habit of rising at dawn and getting down early to work has remained with him to this day. In Jerusalem he combined the study of history with that of literature, and although he was drawn more and more to ancient history, his study of Hebrew literature as an undergraduate has left a permanent mark. His writing displays a double awareness, on one hand of the need for care and accuracy in scholarship and on the other of an equal need for readability and good style. In this he has taken his models from antiquity, when the writing of history was seen as a high form of art and good style as a necessary ingredient of the persuasive rhetoric of what is written. His doctorate was written under Chaim Wirszubski, and was a pioneering attempt to deal with the interdependence of economic, social and political factors in the life of the Roman Republican elite. After completing his doctorate, he spent two years in Cambridge, working there with P.A. Brunt, and preparing the thesis for publication. It appeared later as *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics* (1975), establishing itself at once as the standard work in the field.

The history of Rome and its Empire is only one of many areas to which Israel Shatzman has contributed, making them overlap to fruitful and helpful effect. He belongs to an older school of scholarship, and sees the whole ancient world as his oyster, not confining himself to a single, narrow and limited topic of research. Thus his expertise in Roman military history has gone hand in hand with a growing interest in Jewish history in the Second Temple period; this has issued in a number of books and articles, and another is soon to appear. Some of his most substantial writing, in particular in the area of military history, has taken the form of reviews and review articles, and this journal has benefited greatly from his work in this thankless area.

Shatzman's writing differs from that of many of his colleagues in another way: much of it is in Hebrew. This is a product both of his deep conviction that Hebrew as a modern language is and should be adequate to scholarly writing and of his ambition to reach out to broader audiences in this country, students and general readers alike, with fresh and erudite syntheses of the history of the ancient world.

Despite the stream of publications, both in Hebrew and in English, which have issued from his pen, Shatzman has been no ivory-tower recluse. He has also served both the broader community of students of the classics and ancient history and the university community in Israel. In addition to taking on the more normal university professor's chore of head of department (1976-79) he has devoted two (very active) terms to our Society as its president, concerned with every aspect of the Society's work and with the needs of this journal, of which he was one of the editors for six volumes. Beyond the

walls of his own university, he also served a term as head of the department of history in the then newly established University of the Negev in Beersheba (1970-74). More significantly, from a national point of view, he also left his mark on two of Israel's most important and successful institutions. The first was the Open University of Israel, where he spent five years (1979-84) as Vice President for Academic Affairs, helping to create and foster the unique academic identity that characterizes the Open University and its students. The other institution is the Jewish National and University Library, in Jerusalem. Here Shatzman was Director for seven years (1990-97) and had to preside over a difficult period of financial problems, as well as the computerization of the library's collections, a task which was largely carried to completion during his term of office. The start of his term of office also coincided with the fall of the Iron Curtain, and he seized the opportunity to acquire copies of great numbers of Hebrew manuscripts in the important collections in former Communist countries and to add them to the holdings in the Institute for Microfilms of Hebrew Manuscripts in the Library. The emergence of the national collection from this difficult period with its functions unimpaired and its collections intact, and even extended in important directions, owes much to the devotion and the skill with which he guided it for seven years. His calmness and quiet efficiency have contributed much to the promotion of all the projects he has undertaken.

Like other academics, Shatzman has travelled abroad on sabbaticals, spending periods as a visiting scholar in Harvard (1981-82), Wolfson College, Oxford (1986-87), Berkeley (1993-94) and Columbia (1998), but he is no globetrotting member of the jet-setting professoriate. He is visibly happiest in Jerusalem, enjoying the serenity of his home and the view over the hills of Judaea about which he has written for four decades and more.

As he retires from active teaching and from his other public duties, Shatzman frees himself for activity closer to the hearts of the readers of this journal. We wish him a long, productive and happy retirement.

DJW

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