

## **Nathan Spiegel (1905-1995)**

Last autumn, just before the beginning of the last half-decade of the century, Nathan Spiegel passed away. His life had extended over almost the whole of the twentieth century. I think that the dates of his birth and of his death, 1905 and 1995, illuminate both his personal life as a Jewish intellectual, tossed around during this stormy epoch, and his own modesty: "I was not born with the century, but just a little later", he once told me, and he died just a little before its end.

Nathan Spiegel was born in New York, where his parents were trying to build a new life, but he returned as a boy to Poland; there he grew up and, in the independent Polish state born after the First World War, received a thorough education in classics and ancient philosophy, crowned in 1931 by a Ph.D. at the University of Cracow. Spiegel saw his future as a teacher of classical languages and philosophy, primarily in high schools, and wrote several books in Polish to such an end. The German attack on Poland in September 1939 was for him, as for many European Jews, the beginning of a period of wandering and difficulty. He had the luck to be close to the demarcation line between the areas of German and Soviet occupation of Poland, and was able to cross over to the Soviet zone. For more than six years, he lived in various parts of the Soviet Union, expelled from one area to another, often arrested, interrogated, released for no apparent reason, earning his living by teaching Polish, Russian, Greek, Latin, philosophy, mathematics, and surviving often only by a miracle. Returning to Poland after the war, he found a warm welcome among certain of his former colleagues and teachers, and began to teach Classics at the University of Rokitnica; in 1951 he was appointed Rector and Professor of Classics at the Institute of Higher Education in Warsaw, where teachers for high schools are trained. It seemed that Spiegel had, at last, found an institution where he could teach his favourite subjects and also pursue scientific research in ancient philosophy. But in 1957, following one of the periodic upheavals in the Polish regime, he came to the conclusion that the time had come to move to Israel; he had lived with this idea for a number of years, but had always hesitated to make the move, in view of his advanced age, his very limited knowledge of Hebrew, and the great difficulty which he envisaged in finding employment in the field towards which he had devoted so many years of preparatory study. Nonetheless, towards the end of 1957, he arrived in Israel, together with his wife Dorothea, who had shared all his suffering and all his success. Soon he was in the Ulpan Akiva in Natanya, and after only three months of study acquired a remarkable degree of fluency in Hebrew, speaking, reading and even writing it well above the normal level of the average Israeli.

During the spring of 1958, he went to Jerusalem to see Professor Alexander Fuks, though without realising that this visit would be a major turning-point in his life. After a short conversation (in Polish), Fuks decided that something must be found for Nathan Spiegel in Jerusalem, and a few weeks later he was able to offer him a temporary job as Librarian of the Seminar of Classical Studies at the Hebrew University. Spiegel settled in a tiny apartment in the Katamon quarter of Jerusalem; soon he was at the Library every morning, finding new fields of activity for himself with every week that passed. Within a few months he had become a kind of universal

tutor for the students of Classics, ancient philosophy and ancient history, and a friend and advisor for the lecturers, always ready not only to help in finding books and scientific articles, but also to track down quotations and answer queries on every subject across the whole range of classical studies, and never too busy to help in translating difficult passages in Greek or Latin.

The man who had devoted years to the explication of the most obscure statements of Greek philosophers and the very intricate difficulties of Roman legal texts to University students in Europe now found himself patiently explaining to young Israelis the mysteries of the Latin ablative absolute and the Greek genitive absolute. But he was happy to work, to share his vast knowledge, and he began progressively to plan a large programme of research, involving translations from both Latin and Greek into Hebrew and monographs on a variety of subjects: his first book in Hebrew was a study "On Aristotle's Theory of Poetry, Mimesis and Katharsis" which appeared in 1971. Meanwhile, Spiegel had ceased to be Librarian in the Classics Seminar and had begun to teach, first in the Hebrew University's preparatory courses in Latin and soon thereafter in the Classics Department itself, giving courses in Greek and Latin Literature, with a concentration on philosophical texts; he became an Associate Professor in 1972.

The success of Spiegel's career was, sadly, disturbed by a grave illness from which his wife suffered for many years; she became completely paralysed, needing constant care. For more than twelve years, Spiegel carried an impossible burden: he tended his wife devotedly for long hours every day, fulfilled his duties as a teacher at the university, and in the early morning and late at night pursued his scientific work. It was in these years that he produced a complete translation into Hebrew of the *Enneads* of Plotinus, accompanied by an introduction, which is an excellent monograph on Plotinus and Neo-Platonism, and notes illuminating this most difficult of texts; he also produced during this period a translation of Spinoza's *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*.

When he retired from teaching at the end of 1974, Spiegel began writing a series of works in Hebrew which constitute a veritable introductory encyclopaedia of the classical world. These include studies on various literary genres — Greek tragedy, ancient rhetoric — on different authors and other figures — Seneca, Cicero, Horace, Homer, Socrates, Marcus Aurelius (together with a Hebrew translation of the *Encheiridion* of Epictetus) — on philosophic schools and problems — Epicureanism, Scepticism, the history of Greek ethics. He also wrote an important study of how ancient writers and thinkers viewed the problems of war and peace; in 1980 he published, in the form of a "Dialogue between Nathan and David" (both himself), a provisional summing-up of his ideas and thoughts on society, culture, morals and the state, based on his studies and experience with delicate allusions to some of the events of his life. Later on, he produced three volumes in which he tried to offer to Israeli readers, particularly of the younger generation, some of the concepts and tales of the ancients which have become a living part of modern European culture: *Tales Words Tell*, *The Wisdom of Ancient Greece*, and *Odysseus and the Sirens and other Greek Stories* (all in Hebrew). When he died Spiegel was preparing a companion volume to *Tales Words Tell*, and was working on another dialogue with "David". In his last years he suffered from many debilitating illness, and his eyes almost failed him, but he maintained to the end a modest and unassuming way of life, never

complaining, feeling that he had to carry on with the task of bringing the heritage of the Classics to the Hebrew reader of today. He found solace in applying to himself the teachings of ancient wisdom, and transformed the last years of his life through his ability to transmit to others the riches and happiness that his years of learning had given him.

Nathan Spiegel received many prizes and honours, among them the Israel Prize, and was an Honorary Member of the Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies.

M.A.

### **Yehuda Landau (1928-1995)**

Yehuda Landau was born in Wilno and brought to Israel as a child. He was brought up in Tel Aviv, where he was one of the more outstanding pupils in his school. His teacher of Greek and Latin at school was Dr. — later Prof. — Hayim Rosén, and it was in his school days that he became an avid reader of philosophical texts. Once he was caught by others, during the interval between lessons, reading Fichte; and for many years his nickname among his friends was Fichte.

At the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Landau studied philosophy, Biblical studies, and Classics. He began to teach classes in ancient philosophy while still doing his MA, which he obtained with distinction. An extended version of his MA thesis — on Plato's *Philebus* — was published as a long article in the Hebrew philosophical quarterly *Iyyun*, and won a prize offered by David Ben Gurion for the best study on Plato published in Hebrew in those years.

He wrote his doctorate under the supervision of the late Shlomo Pines. While preparing his thesis, he spent some years at the university of Lille, working with the distinguished philosopher and historian of philosophy, the late Eric Weil. There he met his wife Elizabeth, and they were married a few months before they returned to Israel. Their daughters, Michal and Naomi, were born a few years after they settled here.

On his return, he was invited by the then rector of Tel Aviv University and its first professor of Classics, Benzion Katz, to teach ancient philosophy in the new university. His position was shared between the departments of Classics and Philosophy, and he was soon promoted to the rank of Associate Professor in both departments. He was a thorough, devoted and extremely patient teacher, who made his students read their texts closely and showed them that Greek philosophy, far from being antiquated, was interesting and very much alive. Early in his long career at Tel Aviv, he spent two years as a visiting professor at the University of Pennsylvania, where his courses included some early modern philosophy.

His book *The Desire of Matter Towards Form in Aristotle's Philosophy* was published in Hebrew in 1972. It is a paradigmatic example of a proper study of Aristotle, always keeping close to the words of Aristotle himself and drawing on various parts and aspects of his acroamatic writings to explain a concept which Aristotle himself uses frequently but never explains. After that, he published little,