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Immanuel Velikovsky

Genesis of the first Jerusalem 'Scripta'

Two years before the Hebrew University on Mt. Scopus in Jerusalem was officially inaugurated in 1925, two volumes of SCRIPTA UNIVERSITATIS, a collection of scientific papers, were published under the imprint of the Hebrew University Library which did not even exist at the time (now an integral part of the National and University Library). The man who played a major part in the compilation and production of the SCRIPTA was Immanuel Velikovsky. In his, as yet unpublished, autobiography he tells the story of this remarkable, pioneering work. Dr. Velikovsky is the author of *Ages in Chaos* (four volumes) *Oedipus and Akhnaton* and *Earth in Upheaval*.

The following chapter from his autobiography is published here for the first time.

WHEN IN APRIL, 1974, I PASSED THROUGH THE Hague, Holland, I visited the patrician building in which the old publishing house of Martinus Nijhoff is housed and took a few copies of the parchment edition of the two volumes of *Scripta Universitatis*,* ("Mathematica et Physica" and "Orientalia et Judaica") that they had stored for me by then for a full fifty years. In the fall of 1923, before leaving Europe to settle for the next fifteen and a half years in Palestine, I went to the Hague and contracted Nijhoff to be the distribution agency for Europe. The volumes were printed in Leipzig at the printing plant of Kreysing, and the stock was apparently destroyed during World War II when Leipzig was heavily bombarded.

Over fifty years have already passed since the publication of these volumes, a milestone in the history of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and in my life as well. Although the volumes were published under the imprint of the National Library and the University of Jerusalem, the University was then only a piece of land on Mount Scopus, with a foundation stone on it from before World War I and nothing else. The National Library, housed in a two-story unpretentious stone building in Jerusalem had been founded decades earlier by a fanatical lover of books, Dr. Joseph Chasanowich, who, residing and practising medicine somewhere in the pale of Tzarist Russia, for many years collected books for a modest beginning of a National Library in the far-away Turkish province of Palestine. He died destitute in 1919 during the revolutionary war in the Ukraine. A year later the library, which carried his name, was renamed "National Library", and Dr. Hugo Bergmann became its first director. A writer in philosophy, he had arrived in Jerusalem in the early twenties from Prague.

The idea of a University in Jerusalem was first advanced by Hermann Schapira, professor of mathematics at Heidelberg, at the First Zionist Congress in 1897. I do not think that he ever visited Palestine — travels in those days were not what they are today. The idea of the University lay dormant for the next quarter of a century.

My father, Simon Yehiel, provided me with means to publish the *Scripta*, the idea for it we conceived together. These volumes became the real founding stone of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, today one of the most prominent places of higher learning in the world; it observed with some festivities its fifty-year Jubilee in the spring of 1975.

Simon, the son of Jacob Velikovsky, was born in February 1860 in the town of Mstislav in White Russia. At the age of thirteen he left the house of his parents, and the next several years he spent as a *matmid* (the most persevering) student of the Yeshiva of Mir, seldom leaving the study room, robbing the night of sleeping hours, and sometimes pouring water into his shoes in order not to fall asleep. But by the time he was close to being ordained he felt that he had lost the full naive faith in orthodoxy, and from then on fell under the influence of his erstwhile school friend from the days of the cheder, or grammar school, the future great Jewish historian Simon Dubnov. The influence was toward secular self-education and the embrace of Western culture, and my father learned Russian with the help of a Hebrew-Russian dictionary. He, on his part, tried to imbue Dubnov with the idea of the Jewish Renaissance in Zion, as Dubnov himself narrated in the Tel-Aviv newspaper *Ha-aretz* many

* The full name of this multilingual publication reads *Scripta Universitatis atque Bibliothecae Hierosolymitanarum*, and it also has an equivalent Hebrew title. The last long Latin word is the genitive plural of the adjective form derived from Hierosolymis, or Jerusalem.

years later when both reached the age of seventy, Dubnov still remaining the proponent of cultural autonomy for Jews in the lands of the Diaspora. Since youth their ways never crossed again; he outlived my father who died in Tel-Aviv in December 1937 in his 79th year; himself an octagenarian, he was murdered by the Nazis in Riga in 1941.

After his Yeshiva years, throughout my father's life, from low beginnings and manual work, through ups and downs of his business career, first in Smolensk, then in Vitebsk, where I was born, then in Moscow — all other pursuits in life being secondary — he lived under the spell of the first glimpses of the Renaissance of the Jewish people in its ancient land, with Hebrew becoming again a spoken language — and this already in the years before Theodor Herzl's Zionist Congresses. He participated in the Second Congress in Basel when I was three years old.

At the beginning of World War I, through his persistent efforts among his acquaintances in Moscow, land for two collective settlements was purchased, and farms were initiated in Migdal, Galilee, and Ruhama, in the Negev. My father still had not seen Palestine, but he made it possible for me to visit the land, then a Turkish province, for the first time when I was seventeen. For the revival of the Hebrew language he undertook with the help of Dr. Joseph Klausner, a renowned scholar, as editor, the preparation of terminology in various fields like botany and anatomy, and the publication of philological collective works, *Sfotenu* ("Our language"). During World War I my father tried from his home in Moscow to develop the successful beginning with Migdal and Ruhama into a collective purchase of land in Palestine on a large scale for future settlements — had it been successful, all the problems that now plague the area would not exist, or not exist to their present extent, and far fewer Arabs would have had to be displaced. But this activity came under the surveillance of the secret police of the then new Communist regime, and in September 1918 I took my parents, threatened by arrest, to the Ukraine and the Caucasus, where we spent over two and a half years in vain efforts to reach Palestine. During these years of civil war we saw much destruction and ourselves came close to being engulfed.

In 1921, at the height of the famine in Soviet Russia, I returned from the Caucasus to Moscow, where I took my overdue medical exams (I completed my final two terms of medicine at Kharkov University) and obtained for my parents the first legal exit ever given by the regime, allowing them to leave Soviet Russia for Palestine. I then returned to the Caucasus to bring them from there, and almost lost them. They had left for Latvia and later for Germany, I arrived via Lithuania and Sweden. Reunited in Germany, my father wished to do something significant with the little of his fortune that he saved. It was then that we came upon the idea of a collective publication which would bring scientists and scholars of Jewish faith together — to prepare the intellectual foundation for the future Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and at the same time to advance science. Also we wanted to show the role the Jews occupied in the scientific world. The name Jew conveyed the idea of a trader, a middleman, a needle-worker, usually destitute, a *Luftmensch* — but occasionally also of a rich banker, like Rothschild.

In pursuing my idea, I met at a gathering in Carlsbad Prof. Heinrich Loewe, a librarian at the Berlin University Library and approached him; he realized the scope of the idea and guided me (he prided himself on having guided, years earlier, Chaim Weizmann, then a student in Berlin, in Zionist education). My father, after giving me the funds, left with my mother for Palestine, since recently in British hands after being conquered from the Turks to become a mandated territory, the mandate of the League of Nations having been to create there a "Jewish National Home".

Loewe and I came into written contact with hundreds of scientists and scholars. Weizmann, then the president of the World Zionist Organization, on a visit to Berlin, agreed with our plan and gave us his blessing. With all the energy stored during the years of wandering I immersed myself in the realization of the plan. I had no previous experience with the publication of a scientific journal. One of the first tasks was to find a printing plant that could set in Hebrew as well as in European languages, but also had type for mathematical articles, and oriental scripts like cuneiform, Arabic, or Ethiopian. After surveying a long list of printers, we selected Kreysing in Leipzig.

Each contribution was to be published both in the original language of the author and in a Hebrew translation. Soon, the response showed that two fields were best represented, *"Orientalia and Judaica"* and *"Mathematica and Physica"*. Einstein, then in his forty-third year, one year after he was awarded the Nobel prize, agreed to act as editor for the latter series. Soon we had contributions from a

galaxy of illustrious names in mathematics, physics and engineering, like Harald Bohr (whose mother was Jewish), L. S. Ornstein, J. Hadamard and others.

The answers from the scholars were by far not all in the affirmative: some French Jews refused to participate with German Jews in one venture: the wounds of World War I were not yet healed; some German Jews wished to be known only as Germans "des Mosaischen Glaubens" (Germans of Mosaic faith), an attitude that did not save them years later from the onslaught of the Nazis.

Freud, when requested to participate, answered in longhand, but refrained from contributing a paper: his readers would not be able to find his articles if printed outside of his own journals.

The collection of letters that thus came my way had historical-cultural value. But as I found on a recent visit to Israel, not much of this collection is still preserved.

The work of translating the contributions into Hebrew required the combined effort of quite a few Hebraists versed in the subjects, especially mathematics, physics, and engineering, while translations in Judaica and Oriental Studies did not require pioneering work. I took the task very seriously. For instance, the article by Edmund Landau, the eminent Goettingen mathematician, was given for translation to three different scholars: Landau's own pupil Amira, a graduate of the Tel-Aviv Gymnasium, working for his doctorate (in years to come he himself was a professor of mathematics at the Hebrew University), Dr. Jakob Grommer, assistant to Prof. Einstein and Dr. H. A. Wolfson, a former professor at Kharkov University and at the time on a temporary sojourn in Kovno (Kaunas), Lithuania. I also engaged Simon Rawidovicz, a young Hebrew writer, to work as the editor of the Hebrew translations, and also to see to it that there should be a certain uniformity in the use of scientific terms by various translators.

To translate the monographs by Levi Civita and Gino Loria from Italian into Hebrew it was necessary to find an Italian Hebraist knowledgeable in physics and engineering, and I was fortunate enough to find such a person in Dr. Nathan Sholem. Today, with many institutions of higher learning and many scientific publications, Israel has no problems of such a nature — but it was a time when the field was virgin.

The secretarial work was all done by Rose Bembach, a dedicated worker, whom a cruel illness later snatched from normal life. Elisheva Kramer, a violin student under Adolf Busch, volunteered to help. I figure that every manuscript went through the mail more than a score of times, once after every one of the steps — each paper was typed (most were sent in handwritten), then corrected by the author, seen by the editor, sent to the translator, to the printer, to the editor of translation, and this was repeated for the series of galleys, on the same round.

I visited Einstein several times, and once or twice sent Elisheva Kramer to him. He admitted to me that he did not understand many of the articles, which were in various fields of physics and mathematics, but he relied on the reputation of the authors. He lived on the upper floor of an apartment building in a quiet residential section of Berlin. Still unconvinced that the Jewish nation needed to be preserved, he once asked me: "Are not all races equally ancient?" I asked him to the window, next to which he had a small telescope, and told him to look down on the street: "Do you see those cobblestones of which the road is made? They are ancient, but they are not collected and preserved in a museum."

In February 1922 I travelled by boat and train to Palestine, the land to which I felt strongly attached all the years following my departure in the spring of 1914, after I had spent the winter there upon dropping out of Montpellier University at the very beginning of the academic year. I knew the land when it was infested by malaria, without roads, almost without shade trees — in 1914 there was only one auto in the entire country, belonging to the manager of Agudath-Netaim, the plantation company for which I and Michael Marek, who like myself dropped out of the University of Montpellier, were hired to work in the field. After my return I spent the next five months in the country, directing the progress of *"Scripta"* from afar, but it actually came to a stalemate. Loewe admonished me in letters to come and continue the work we started together. He also came to Palestine, and later we travelled with David Yellin, leader of the Jewish community in Jerusalem to Mount Scopus, and I photographed them at the foundation stone of the future University. I returned in July 1922 to Berlin to plunge myself again into the task.

When on the sixth of January 1923 Dr. Weizmann came to Berlin we met again and I acquainted him with the progress of the work; he was impressed. For years the idea of a Hebrew University occupied his mind, but nothing happened. Now he spoke to me in

Hebrew: *Thiye av l'universita* ("Be the father of the University"). I was not yet twenty-eight. He wished that I should take upon myself to bring the University into existence, and thus to materialize the plan, which had not progressed since 1897. I did not promise, and Weizmann thought, as it appeared later, that I wished to think it over.

Already since my return from the visit to Palestine, in July 1922, I went rarely to the Moabit section of Berlin where Loewe lived, and soon took the entire work of editing and publishing upon myself. Possibly, he was a little hurt, but generally he was a good-hearted man, with smiling eyes in his broad face, framed between a large bald top covered with a few tufts of hair overlaid from aside, and a glorious greying beard, which he liked to stroke.

I met personally only a few on the large list of those who agreed to collaborate. One of them was Professor A. von Wassermann, the discoverer of a diagnostic test for syphilis, in his office at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Dahlem near Berlin. On the same visit I saw also Professor Neuberg who dominated the field of biological chemistry. Professor A. Fodor, of the University of Halle, felt and complained that Neuberg closed him the doors to scientific advance and publications. He was soon in contact with Weizmann, later to become the first professor in the University of Jerusalem. I also visited Professor Ernst Cassirer, the philosopher, in his mansion in Hamburg. In the early spring of 1923 Elisheva and I took out our marriage licence (civil marriage, preceding religious rites) in Hamburg, where her father, George Tuvia Kramer, had a Hebrew bookstore and also published books on rabbinical subjects, among them the codifice *Shulhan Aruh* of the early sixteenth century by Joseph Caro of Safed.

On April 15 we were married in Berlin by the well-known Rabbi Munk in the courtyard of his religious congregation; the dinner, thereafter, we had at the insistence of our landlady, only recently widowed, in her apartment. Professor Loewe represented my parents by reading a telegram sent to his address: "We bless you with Psalm 128".

The next afternoon we spent some time in the Berlin University Library, studying the ways scientific institutions published their proceedings. A visit to a library became an observance on some of our anniversaries, till today, by now our fifty-fourth.

With collaborators of *Scripta*, I had only once an unpleasant experience. Professor Radcliff Solomon of London, when invited to participate, sent in a paper on "What became of the Philistines?" The paper was forwarded by me to the printer, and the galleys arrived together with the plate prints of the lithographs for the illustrations. I read the galleys one morning, still in bed, and was aghast. Radcliff Solomon reproduced scenes from the bas-reliefs of Ramses III in Medinet-Habu that depict Pereset, recognized in the historical literature as the biblical Philistines. Now Semites are supposed to be dolichocephales, or of long skulls; Pereset on the bas-reliefs were brachicephales, or round-headed. Three thousand years later among the Jewish legionnaires fighting under the British General Allenby, many were round-headed, as seen on photographs which, I believe, Radcliff Solomon made himself.

The argument seemed very flimsy to draw the conclusion that the Philistines became absorbed into the Jewish People. And, to add to it, the way I felt then and saw the purpose of the *Scripta*, it would have been almost sacrilegious to spread such an idea which would obtain, by publication in *Scripta*, a sanction of scholarship. I wrote to Solomon an apologetic letter and ordered the lithographs to be sent to the author for his use wherever he might succeed. (Actually, two years later, at the opening of the Hebrew University, I received a reprint of the article with a few triumphant words by the author who came to participate in the opening — by then we lived in Jerusalem.)

When all this took place, I could not have anticipated that decades later I would write a volume on *Peoples of the Sea*, as a part of my reconstruction of ancient history, and Pereset would largely figure in it; and that I would be able to show that Pereset were Persians and not Philistines, and that the time was not before the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites, but long after the destruction of the Judean monarchy.

A work in the volume on "Orientalia", by E. Mahler of Vienna, dealt with the chronology of the el-Amarna Period; of it, too, I could not anticipate that I would use it five decades later for certain source arguments in dealing with the cuneiform letters found in el-Amarna, in the frame of the same work on *Ages in Chaos*.

Scientific contributions that I received from scientists in the field of biological sciences — and there were a few great names — had not a true scientific value; a paper such as was sent by von Wassermann I did not find to be of an adequate level: popularization instead of a scientific contribution. Thus the

only monograph I selected for print was by Professor D. Katz from Rostock who claimed to discern special nerve endings that could register vibration.

I also published separately from the *Scripta* a popularizing work by Dr. Jacob Greenberg, who worked as one of our translators, on "*Atom and Ether*" in Hebrew; and I made a new edition of the two Hebrew volumes, *Sfotenu*, published by my father in Russia, with scores of philological essays and short vocabularies, edited by Dr. Joseph Klausner, later one of the leading Hebraists of the Hebrew University.

At that time Berlin became a cultural centre for Hebrew and Judaica, and several publishing enterprises were initiated; thus Nahum Goldmann began a multivolume *Jewish Encyclopedia*; Chaim Nahman Bialik, the great Hebrew poet in his earlier years, then more absorbed in commercial publishing of Hebrew books, having seen the plan of *Scripta* and its fulfillment, said to me in his affected way: "This is the greatest collective work (for Judaism) since the conclusion of the Talmud."

Except for two short vacations to the Harz and to the Saechsische Schweiz (near Dresden) all my time was taken up by work. In the beginning of my stay in Berlin I also participated in several post-medical courses given to physicians, a number of them from various foreign countries, at Charité Clinic of the University of Berlin. My mother wrote me letters advising me to specialize in some branch of medicine, since specialists were needed in Palestine, but I was more and more absorbed by *Scripta*. The published volmes served the National Library in Jerusalem (later University Library of Jerusalem) for exchange with many scientific institutions for their publications.

The Hebrew University was begun in 1924 and inaugurated in 1925: at the time of the inauguration the two volumes of the *Scripta* were placed in front of Lord Balfour who came to the inauguration ceremony; and the wind coming from over the valley in which lies the Dead Sea was playing in the pages of these books, on which my father had spent a large part of his fortune, and to which I had dedicated several years of passionate work.

Gideon Ofrat (Jerusalem)

The Utopian Art of the 'Bezalel' School

The 'Bezalel' School of Arts and Craft was to be, in the words of its founder, Boris Schatz, "the basis for an utopian realisation of a perfect society".

The author of this article is a young lecturer in aesthetics at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

THE APPEARANCE OF A CENTRE FOR THE PLASTIC arts in Jerusalem at the beginning of the twentieth century was an astonishing and extraordinary occurrence. Of the fifty thousand Jews who lived in Turkish-ruled Palestine at that time the great majority were very devout and subsisted on the Halukkah collections which were sent by Jews the world over to maintain this nucleus of utter orthodoxy in the Holy Land. The handful of Jewish intellectuals in the country at the time was interested principally in literature. Moreover, the attitude of most Jerusalemites to the visual arts was intensely hostile, and the new institution's supporters lived mostly outside Palestine. Yet the *Bezalel School of Art* actually preceded the establishment of the Hebrew University, or any other secular cultural institution in Jerusalem or, for that matter, in the entire country. And what is even more astonishing is the fact that, from its isolated position on a bare hill outside the city as it was then, it quickly became a successful enterprise and the biggest employer in Jerusalem.

Only the exceptional blend of utopian aspirations — national, philosophical and socio-cultural — that animated the personality of Boris Schatz, *Bezalel's* creator, could have brought it about. For, indeed, it was much more than an art school or workshop — it was to be the basis for an utopian realization of a perfect society.

In 1902 Theodor Herzl published his *Altneuland*, a bold, unquestionably prophetic, but culturally bizarre utopia. The Viennese liberal envisioned German-speaking "Israelites", whose artistic values reflected the European decadence of his day. When the novel's protagonists, Miriam and Friedrich, go to Jerusalem they visit the artist Isaacs. Herzl's idea of Israeli art, occupying two pages of the book, is explicit: the artist's residence stood