

JUDAH LEON MAGNES AN APPRECIATION

By Professor Leon Roth

Dr. Judah Leon Magnes took over the Hebrew University in Jerusalem at a time it was nothing but debts and an empty — although magnificent — site; as he said: It had only views and prospects to live on. He built it up from the very foundations. In the early years he was responsible for every stone that was laid, every tree that was planted, every pound that was cajoled out of somebody's pocket into the budget, every person who was appointed to the staff. It was he who saw to it that the bus ran on time and that orange peel didn't litter the grounds.

As the University developed he grew with it. He would talk of it as a father of a precious child. And not in general terms only. He learned the details of every department's work, and as he spoke of them, his face shone with self-effacing pride. He was not only the driving spirit; he was the very embodiment of the institution.

I well remember, on the night of the cessation of hostilities after the Second World War, meeting a solitary figure, on a point in St. Paul's Road, looking over the valley to Scopus. It was Magnes. He had ordered the university buildings to be illuminated, and had gone out to see the lights which he still hoped could, in the fullness of days, be a beacon to a storm-tossed world.

An orator of the first magnitude; he never appeared on public platforms in Palestine and confined his message to his annual address at the opening of the university year. Though an opponent of the state idea in general — he inclined to the view that all government is iniquitous — he yet accepted the Jewish State when it came and was prepared to give it his help. He was never a one-sided fanatic blinkered by party loyalties or pseudo-principles. He was a whole man, keenly sensitive and always open to persuasion; and he was not afraid of assuming responsibility.

It has been said of him that he preferred to be on the losing side, and he certainly loved a fight. The number of lost causes he championed was extraordinary. He is principally known — and reviled — for the courage and energy with which he took up the cause of the Arabs. But his heart was big and he had room for all. The appeals to his sympathy were endless and they were always met whether they came from private individuals or public institutions; and he was so eager to help that he often did not wait to be appealed to. In particular he tried to remedy all abuse of authority. It is characteristic that he was the first here to interest himself in the state of the prisons, and during the last melancholy years of the Mandate he was the recognized intermediary between the all-too-numerous prisoners and the authorities. It mattered nothing to him that many of the prisoners on whose behalf he intervened were mem-

bers of the terrorist groups who from 1929 on had threatened his own life. Here were men and women — in most cases, unfortunately, boys and girls — strayed, erring, misled, but for all that human beings, and as such they called out the humanity in him.

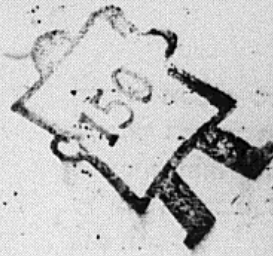
The country itself fascinated him. He knew it by heart. And he loved to show people around. Any new road, any new village, any new excavation, called him at once. He was certainly better than any professional guide. And he had friends everywhere — Jewish farmers, Arab peasants, simple workmen, gardeners, plumbers, taxi-drivers, as well as the industrialists and the diplomats and the scholars. All he asked for was sincerity, the sincerity he himself gave.

In his last years he became much less inclined to rely on accepted formulas. His concern with moral and religious problems became personal. He wanted to know the

truth. And he begged for help, craved for help. Any book, old or new, any article, which he thought he could learn from, he read; any person he thought he could learn from, he approached. For these were the things that mattered; good and evil, right and wrong, how we should live our lives. Surely, he thought, someone knows, someone can at least help to knowledge.

As one reflects on Magnes, he would seem to stand out principally as a great human being. He had that rarest of all things: compassion. He felt for, and with, other people. His life did not end happily in the accepted sense. He died far away from home. But exactly where he belonged is not clear. I myself have sometimes thought that he was one of the chosen few whose home is not with the transient here and the fleeting now, but who, even in this life, dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

אין דרך לשלום כאן ובמזרח התיכון
 כולו אלא על יסוד מדיניות ברורה
 ומוצהרת המטפחת שיתוף יהודי-ערבי
 יום-יום ושעה-שעה במשך תקופה
 ממושכת" — י. ל. מאגנס ז"ל



דן-שבועון

ירושלים

העורך: יהושע התלמי
 בהשתתפות פרופ' א. סימון ונתן חפשי

כסלו—טבת תשי"ב
 דצמבר 1951 — ינואר 1952

חוברת ה-1. שנה שלישית



ה ת ו כ ן

- ר' ב. — פיצויים דיפלומטיים
- ד"ר מ. פלסנר — משרד החוץ כלפי פנים
- ד"ר ש. שרשבסקי — זה לעומת זה
- ג. שטרן — 5 שנים למות פאול חוסייני ז"ל
- א. אביאבנר — בעולם הערבי
- נ חפשי — היש מציל?
- מ. גולדנברג — ממנגינות הזמן (שיר)
- י. צימרמן — הדיברה הראשונה
- י. התלמי — בשולי העתון והזמן
- 1. על מלה "נבערה"; 2. פרס גיתה
- 3. לבובר; עם סיום ה"שכטיאדה"
- ר' ב. — האמת על דיר יאסין
- פרופ' ל. רות — ד"ר יהודה מאגנס ז"ל (אנגלית)
- עו"ד א. גוסטא — ארבעה מכתבים (אחד לראש הממשלה
- ושלושה לעורך ג'רוזלם פוסט. (אנגלית).

כתובת המערכת:

"נר" ירושלים

ת. ד. 7025

כתובת ההנהלה:

"נר" תל-אביב

ת. ד. 3103

דמי חתימה

לשנה:

שתי לירות

לחצי שנה:

לירה אחת

מחיר חוברת זו: 150 פר'