

NECROLOGY

SOLOMON ZEITLIN

(May 28, 1886–December 28, 1976)

Dr. Solomon Zeitlin, the Distinguished Professor of Post-Biblical Literature at Dropsie University, died in Philadelphia on December 28, 1976, at the age of 90. He was born in Chasniki, Russia, on May 28, 1886, attended the gymnasium and later the Academy of Baron Günzberg where he also became a life-long friend of Zalman Shazar. Zeitlin obtained Semicha in Russia in 1904 and the Th. D. at the École Rabbinique, Paris, in February 1913. He was also Éleve titulaire de la section des sciences religieuses in the University of Paris, 1913.

After coming to America in 1915, he matriculated at Dropsie College, and for two years served as a Fellow in Rabbinics at that institution. His doctoral thesis was *Megillat Taanit as a Source for Jewish Chronology and History in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*. His doctorate was granted on March 8, 1917.

From 1918 on he taught Jewish History at the Rabbinical College (Yeshivat Rabbenu Itzhak Elchanan), having been invited there by Dr. Bernard Revel, the first graduate of Dropsie and the first President of Yeshiva College. In 1919, he joined with Professors Louis Ginzberg, Israel Davidson, Israel Friedlander and Alexander Marx of The Jewish Theological Seminary, and Professors Jacob Lauterbach and David Neumark of Hebrew Union College and Professor Henry Malter of Dropsie, in founding the American Academy for Jewish Research and was very active in the first years of the Academy's existence. His monograph, "The Origin of the Synagogue: A Study in the Development of Jewish Institutions," appeared in Volume II (1931) of the *Proceedings*.

In 1925 on the death of Professor Malter, Zeitlin was invited by

Dr. Cyrus Adler to become Professor of Rabbinics at Dropsie. After the passing of Dr. Adler in 1940, Zeitlin served continuously as the Editor of *Jewish Quarterly Review* until his own death.

Zeitlin also served as Editor of the *Jewish Apocryphal Literature* series published by Dropsie. He was active in a literary debate with Professor Toynbee on the question of the Jewish claims to the Holy Land and he also wrote extensively on the problem of "Who is a Jew?" and on "Jews — Race, Nation or Religion." Thus he often combined his research in ancient sources with a deep interest in the problems of his own day.

Dr. Zeitlin possessed a fabulous memory, and a keen and scintillating mind. He was internationally known as the "stubborn controversialist," particularly in his views on the Slavonic text of Josephus and the authenticity of the Dead Sea Scrolls in relation to the Second Commonwealth era and its sects. His fame rose with his many studies of the Second Temple era and the Tannaitic period and its Halakhah. He probed the origins of Christianity, the Crucifixion of Jesus, the works of Josephus and the Greek and Roman literature, tying these in with dexterity to early Talmudic sources.

Zeitlin wrote over 400 articles and many major books in his field. Especially noted is his series, *The Rise and Fall of the Judaean State*. The last and third volume in this series will shortly be published by JPS. A fourth volume of his *Collected Writings*, dealing specifically with themes of Halakhah, will soon be brought to light by Ktav. A full listing of Zeitlin's works, with summations and appreciations of his writings will be found in S. B. Hoenig's book: *Solomon Zeitlin, the Scholar Laureate: An Annotated Bibliography*.

Professor Zeitlin's students throughout his half century of teaching were very devoted to him. He sought at all times to encourage younger men in Jewish research and scholarship. Many were inspired both by his boldness and uncompromising approach in his search for truth. At the same time they admired his genuine modesty and personal conduct and behavior.

Zeitlin's passing at the age of 90 symbolizes the end of an era in

Jewish scholarship which was initially identified with early training in East European academies and which, its subsequent Westernization notwithstanding, remained rooted in that rich milieu. Indeed, Zeitlin was one of the outstanding products of this symbiosis and a living testimony to the stores of creativity that were latent in East European Jewry. He was colorful, articulate and polemical, but always perceptive, genuine and sensitive. In his long life he witnessed many changes around him, but he remained remarkably unchanged and true to his major pursuit — the study of Judaism. He will be sorely missed by all those who were privileged to have known him and to have enjoyed his great learning and humaneness.

חבל על דאבדין ולא משתכחין

David Weiss Halivni

Sidney B. Hoenig