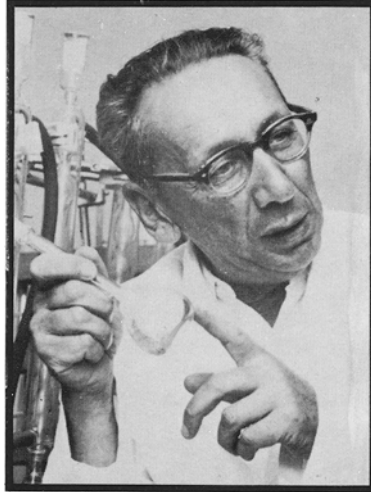


OBITUARIES

ZVI AVIDOV (1896-1984)



IN MEMORIAM

Zvi Avidov (born Henry Zvi Klein), emeritus professor of agricultural entomology, passed away on February 16, 1984. Avidov was born into an Orthodox Jewish family in Znín, Germany (Poland after World War I) on November 13, 1896. During his childhood the family moved to Berlin, where he received his primary and secondary education. While in high school he joined the 'Blau Weiss' Zionist youth movement which duly oriented him to agriculture as the first step toward the realization of his idealistic aspiration, namely, to immigrate to Palestine and become a farm laborer in the nascent Land of Israel.

After some two years of practical work at the Steinhorst agricultural training farm near Hannover, Avidov was drafted in 1916 into the German Army and served for two years in the Signal Corps on both the Eastern and Western Fronts of World War I. Upon demobilization he returned to agriculture, but this time at the Technische Hochschule in Berlin. However, he could not wait to complete his university studies at this school, and in February 1921 Avidov arrived in Palestine to join a group of fervent young pioneers who sought employment as agricultural laborers in the newly established Zionist settlements in the Galilee and Sharon areas of the country.

In 1923 Avidov accepted an offer by the late Prof. F.S. Bodenheimer to join him as a technician in his one-man Department of Entomology. This department had been opened a year earlier by the Palestine Zionist Executive (PZE) as part of the Agricultural Experiment Station which the PZE had founded in Tel Aviv in 1921. Avidov's first assignment there included outdoor ecological observations on insects in general, and field trials in the control of noxious species in particular. All these were carried out at the Ben Shemen farm, which served as one of the two field substations of the Tel Aviv center.

In retrospect, it was quite audacious on the part of Bodenheimer and Avidov in 1922-23 to undertake rigorous entomological research, fashioned after the best German scientific and technological traditions, in an underdeveloped country like Palestine of the early 1920s. The country at that time did not have any electricity, let alone libraries, museums, minimum research

facilities, or even at least another qualified entomologist with whom to converse. However, this early association in both research and extension work between these two idealist entomologists proved extraordinarily fruitful, notwithstanding the primitive facilities and the paucity of funds. In fact, the two of them during that period laid the foundations, and subsequently built the structure, for the science of agricultural entomology in Israel, to its present eminent stature.

In 1926 Avidov was appointed tenured assistant entomologist and transferred to the Tel Aviv center of the PZE Station. In the early 1930s the Station, with all its personnel, was moved from Tel Aviv to a new campus in Rehovot, and in the mid 1960s its name was changed to The Volcani Center within the framework of the Agricultural Research Organization of Israel's Ministry of Agriculture. At that time it was finally moved to its present campus at Bet Dagan.

For 35 years Avidov participated most productively in the research and extension activity of this institution, first as a junior and later as a senior member of its Division of Entomology. In the early 1950s he also served as deputy director of the Station. Through his meticulously tenacious work he was able to provide Israel's burgeoning agriculture with essential research results obtained on the spot, and with scientifically validated guidance as required for the effective protection of new and old crops against the ravages of insect and mite pests.

In 1958 The Hebrew University of Jerusalem invited him to join its faculty as head of the Department of Entomology at the University's Faculty of Agriculture in Rehovot. Two years later he was appointed full professor of agricultural entomology. Avidov's close ties with higher education in agriculture in Israel actually began much earlier, as he belonged to the first class of graduates of the Faculty of Agriculture to complete their studies for the M.Sc. degree in 1944. Resuming his university training in Israel in 1942, after interrupting it in Germany in 1922, was followed, in 1945 (at the age of 49), by his receiving his Ph.D. degree from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem – awarded for the first time here in agriculture. His doctoral dissertation on the biology, ecology and control of the tobacco whitefly (*Bemisia tabaci*) has, since its publication in English, become a classic. The tobacco whitefly has, in the intervening years, gained worldwide notoriety both as a severe and direct damager of many crops, and as a vector of a number of serious plant virus diseases. Hence, small wonder that nearly every author of a paper on this whitefly anywhere in the world refers to Avidov's basic study of this insect.

Avidov's contribution to entomological research in Israel was particularly prominent in the field of pest control, of which he was co-founder and promoter. Apart from being instrumental in the training of the first cadres of practitioners and instructors in this specialized field of agricultural practice, Avidov also established and headed the Department of Entomology at the Hebrew University's Faculty of Agriculture. At this department he devotedly trained an entire generation of scholars, teachers, extension specialists and students of the science of crop protection. During 1959-62 he served as dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, an office which provided him with the opportunity to make some unique contributions toward the shaping of the country's higher education and research setups, not only in entomology but in agriculture at large.

Even after retiring from university teaching commitments and administrative chores in 1965, Avidov continued full time with an intensive research program and supervision of graduate student work, concentrating mainly on the biology of natural enemies of citrus scale insects and the development of methods for their mass rearing. The extensive report which he published in 1970, summing up this study, is another widely quoted source work on this topic that has not lost its currency in the 15 years since its completion. In 1969 he published, together with I. Harpaz, his updated English version of *Plant Pests of Israel*, which is still the standard manual on the subject. As from the mid 1970s his deteriorating health compelled him to gradually relinquish all research activity.

On the occasion of Avidov's 75th birthday in 1971, the Department of Entomology in Rehovot published a comprehensive bibliography of his scientific publications. It comprises ten textbooks (seven of them in Israel's national language, Hebrew), more than 100 original research publications (in English, German and Hebrew), and some 60 articles and review papers. All his