

## MICHAEL E. STONE - 80



It is hard to believe that Professor Michael Stone, this always cheerful and hard-working scholar, the patriarch of Israeli Armenology is already 80. Like most of the Jewish intellectuals, he also was destined for wanderings - England, Australia, USA, and only finally find a shelter in the blessed country of his forefathers - in the Biblical Israel.

M. Stone was born in Leeds, England (October 22, 1938). In 1941 his family moved to Sydney, Australia, where he was raised. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Melbourne in Semitic Studies and the Classics in 1956-1960. At the same year he immigrated to Israel. After a year-long acclimation program at the Hebrew University (1960-1961), M. Stone was transferred to Harvard University, USA and there completed a doctorate under the supervision of Professor Frank M. Cross in the Department of Near Eastern Languages (1961-1965). His doctorate addressed the conception of eschatology in 4 Ezra. Afterwards he became a lecturer in Comparative Religion at the University of California, Santa Barbara. In 1966 he returned to Israel, where became a lecturer in Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and in the following year - associate professor.

In 1980 M. Stone became full professor of Armenian Studies and was named as the Gail Levin de Nur Professor of Religious Studies. In 2007 he retired from the Hebrew University, where he continues his research and lecturing as a professor

emeritus. M. Stone travelled much as a visiting scholar and held professorial positions at academic institutions worldwide.

Studies of M. Stone are devoted mainly to two fields - Jewish thought and literature of the Second Temple period including its transmission into the Middle Ages, and Armenian studies. His work emphasizes texts and their interpretations but extends beyond a narrow textual focus to ideological analysis within religious and intellectual history. Credited with «single-handedly pioneering the study of the Armenian language, literature and history», M. Stone's works are focused on several topics within this subject; he has published several monographs dealing with Jewish literature translated into Armenian.

In his monograph «The Armenian Version of 4 Ezra» M. Stone published the first full critical edition of texts connected with the Armenian biblical canon. Following its publication, M. Stone produced several volumes of texts and exegesis addressing biblical or Jewish traditions. These volumes contain manuscript texts edited anew including the first editions of documents that were previously unknown. In this vein, many of M. Stone's articles are dedicated to the publication of texts, and in so doing he established a wide body of texts that were important both for Armenian and Pseudepigrapha studies.

In 1981 he published «The Penitence of Adam», the first edition of the Armenian version of the Armenian Adam book. Later this was followed by concordances of Armenian deuterocanonical literature about Adam (1996, 2001) and additional literature related to Armenians and other Adam traditions.

With these publications M. Stone initiated a new field of study and research - deuterocanonical literature in Armenian, which is the transmission of biblical and Jewish traditions in Armenian. In so doing he had lasting influence on Armenian studies as well as the study of deuterocanonical literature. In recent years he has focused on the problem of functioning of these traditions within the Armenian culture and how their transformation reflects changes in the religious and intellectual history of the Armenian nation. He presents diachronic questions that were never before posed and traces shifts of religious, intellectual, and cultural history that were hardly addressed. These questions touch on understanding the human condition and existential purpose. Furthermore, the diachronic research of entire traditions highlights changes that occurred in Armenian thought throughout generations and ties them to Armenian history, politics, religion, and thought.

M. Stone's interest in Armenian manuscripts led him to study the Armenian script. He published a number of technical descriptions of manuscripts and co-published with Dr. Nira Stone the Catalogue of the New Armenian Manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Ireland). He edited and published Armenian graffiti from Sinai in a significant work which deals with the historical, epigraphic, and linguistic consequences. The inscriptions shed light on ancient Armenian pilgrimage, on the character of the pilgrims, and on their linguistic usages. He proved that a portion of the Armenian

inscriptions from Sinai and Nazareth are the oldest ones in the world and were inscribed within decades after the creation of the Armenian alphabet (405 AD).

M. Stone published numerous Armenian inscriptions from Israel and made several significant discoveries regarding Armenian pilgrimage and monasticism in the Holy Land. He was the editor-in-chief of *The Album of Armenian Palaeography*, a large project that exhibits and analyzes the development of the Armenian script beginning with the most ancient dated manuscripts up until the nineteenth century. In the course of preparing this work he devised techniques for producing script tables directly from digital images of the manuscripts themselves. On one side of each opening there is a picture of the manuscript; on the other there is a copy of a segment of the text, palaeographic discussion, and bibliography. The book is supplied with development tables.

With Israeli archaeologist Dr. David Amit, M. Stone has studied the medieval Jewish cemetery in Eghegis (Vayots Dzor province of the Republic of Armenia). This thirteenth-century cemetery is akin to no other - not only in terms of Armenia but of the Jewish oriental communities. On the tombstones there are inscriptions in both Hebrew and Aramaic that tell about the life of the Jewish community in Armenia, about which previously there was no information. His studies on the Jews of Armenia continues today.

M. Stone recognized very early on the potential of computer applications for Armenian studies. In 1971 he completed his first computer aided research on Armenian. Since then he has used a computer application to compare manuscripts to produce scientific editions of texts as well as concordances. He wrote monographs devoted to other fields of Armenian studies; for example, the publication of his joint study with Dr. M.E. Shirinian dealing with the edition, translation, and exegesis of an ancient philosophical work preserved only in Armenian and with R.R. Ervine on patristics.

In 1995 M. Stone founded the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls at the Hebrew University for the purpose of integrating new information from the scrolls with the existing information about the Second Temple Judaism. Today the Center is one of the important research institutes on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

M. Stone also founded the International Association of Armenian Studies (*Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes*) in 1980, held the office of its president until 2000, and since then is the honorary president. The membership in the organization today numbers more than 200 scholars representing different countries.

M. Stone is an Honorary doctor of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Foreign member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (Netherlands), Foreign member of the *Istituto Lombardo Accademia di Scienze e Lettere* (Italy), Honorary member of the *Associazione «Padus-Araxes»* (Venice), Expert member of the Armenian Philosophical Academy, Founder and honorary Life President of the *Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes*, Foreign member of the

Ararat Academy of Sciences, Professor of Armenian Studies. M. Stone was also awarded with the Matenadaran (Yerevan) Commemorative Medal.

The editorial board of «Fundamental Armenology» congratulates Professor Michael Stone with the 80th anniversary and is hopeful that he shall continue his productive studies in Armenology.

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