

# MESSAGES FROM JEWISH LEADERS MOURN ESHKOL

BY DR. EMANUEL NEUMANN

CHAIRMAN, JEWISH AGENCY-AMERICAN SECTION

In the passing of Levi Eshkol, the government and people of Israel, as well as Jews throughout the world, have lost an outstanding leader. As an Israel cabinet member for almost 18 years, six of them as Prime Minister, and as a member of the Jewish Agency Executive for 21 years, this pioneer Zionist has been a master builder, a tower of strength and a dynamic and creative leader. As head of the Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency from 1951-1963, he made an unsurpassed contribution to the development of Israel's agricultural settlements and the absorption of hundreds of thousands of immigrants. His place in the history of the Jewish people is assured.

## PREMIER LEVI ESHKOL

1895-1969

(Israel Sun Feature Service)

In the small town of Oratowa in the Kiev District of the Ukraine, on October 25, 1895, a son was born to Yosef and Dvora Shkolnik, and they named him Levi. It was a big family, sons, daughters and even grandchildren all lived together and conducted several businesses collectively, all members of the family working very hard and very devotedly.

The little Levi began attending the Cheder at the age of four and at the age of eight began to study the Talmud. He was also thought secular subjects such as mathematics and Russian. Although he prepared for examinations to the Russian "gymnasium" he was not accepted there because of the numerous clausus and continued his studies in Vilna. Here, as a boy of 15, he became deeply involved in Zionist work. Mr. Eshkol used to say that during those days they spoke Hebrew even in the streets and debated whether the Jewish People was a nation.

In 1913, when Mr. Eshkol was 18 years old, the first Eretz Yisreal worker's delegation came to Vilna and told about the difficulties the people in Eretz Yisrael experienced, and of how there was such a shortage of young people, Jews that is, and at this moment, Levi Eshkol decided to go on immediate "aliyah" (immigration) to Palestine.

He arrived in Jaffa in the spring of 1914 carrying nothing more than a red-covered pillow given him by his mother and also a small bag.

His first job in Eretz Yisrael consisted of working as a building worker at a pumping station constructed at the Yarkon Ribor to irrigate the citrus groves of Petach Tikvah.

Soon afterwards he was put in charge of the accounts in the workers' kitchen and not long thereafter was elected to the workers' committee, which consisted of 24 young men and 1 young woman. This group went out to cultivate the land in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Arabs, who had gone up to Jerusalem to join the Turkish army would occasionally illik for fist fights with the small Jewish community.

Mr. Eshkol belonged to the Hapoel Hatzair Party which later joined up with Ahduth Ha'avoda to become Mapai, the Israel Labour Party, in 1930.

Mr. Eshkol was a member of the 40th Royal Fusiliers



LATE PREMIER'S WIDOW, MRS. MIRIAM ESHKOL, WALKS BEHIND COFFIN AT FUNERAL. TWO DAUGHTERS FROM AN EARLIER MARRIAGE ARE AT RIGHT. (ISRAEL SUN PHOTO)

BY RABBI ISRAEL MILJER  
CHAIRMAN, AMERICAN ZIONIST COUNCIL

We mourn the loss of Levi Eshkol, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, who dedicated his life to the Zionist cause and to the upbuilding of the Land of Israel based on the democratic precepts and vision of the Jewish prophets.

He belonged to that generation of the few who before World War I disregarded almost universal disapproval and disbelief, came to the barren, neglected, and lawless Turkish province of Palestine, worked with their hands to recreate its soil, suffered malaria and starvation, faced grave dangers, created a new form of communal life, and eventually brought about the State of Israel.

We send our condolences to his widow and our words of encouragement to the people of Israel to continue to stand firm in their search for a secure homeland, just as their leader, Levi Eshkol, would have wanted them to do.

in the Jewish Legion (the Palestine Battalion) although his army career had an unfortunate beginning: He returned late to camp one day because he had attended the cornerstone laying ceremony of the Hebrew University, and was court-martialled and lost his stripes.

He was released from the army in 1920 and appointed Director of the Agricultural department of Hashomer Hatzair. Also in 1920 Kibbutz Degania Beth on the Kineret was founded and Eshkol was one of its founders. In 1921 he took part in the convention which founded the Histadruth.

Despite all his public appearances and activities he always went back to Degania Beth whenever his work permitted this. Until his death Mr. Eshkol, was a member of

By CHARLES BICK  
TRUSTEE CHAIRMAN AZYF

The American Zionist Youth Foundation joins in the deep sorrow of the Government and people of Israel and Jews all over the world on the passing of the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, Levi Eshkol in Jerusalem.

Throughout his life Mr. Eshkol played a decisive role in the implementation of the Zionist dream. He was one of the builders of the State of Israel and contributed immensely to its socially pioneering character and to its growing prestige in the world.

In addition to his lifetime devotion to the settlement of the country and to the economic development of Israel, Mr. Eshkol displayed profound statesmanship when called upon to assume the Prime Ministership of Israel in 1963. Serving in that capacity he led the State of Israel through severe crises to the Six-Day War victory toward greater security and the hope of permanent peace.

this kibbutz.

At the beginning of Hitler's rule he was the head of the Settlement department of the Palestine Office in Berlin and in the course of his work helped organize the transfer of immigrants and property from Germany.

He also worked to acquire arms for defence and was once caught concealing weapons in agricultural machinery which was to be sent to Palestine and was sent to prison. This happened in one of the European capitals.

In 1944, Mr. Ben-Gurion appointed Mr. Eshkol to act as Secretary of the Tel-Aviv Labour Council.

He was one of the initiators to lay a pipeline to the Negev which permitted the establishment of settlements which began to be set up in the Negev during 1946. At the same time he was busy in the high command of the Hgana where he served as treasurer for several years.

When the State was established he was appointed Director-General of the Ministry of Defence. He was one of the founders of Israel's ordinance and arms industry.

In 1949 he became the head of the Jewish Agency's Agricultural Settlement Department. This post he held for over ten years - even after he became a Member of Knesset.

In October 1951 he became Minister of Agriculture and also served as Minister of Development.

Not long after he became Minister of Finance he helped initiate the establishment of the Bank of Israel and the Economic Planning Authority.

In June 1963 he became Prime Minister and Minister of Defence after the sudden resignation of Mr. Ben-Gurion.

He went abroad several times during his term of office visiting, America, Europe, England and Africa.

On June 1, 1967, a few days before the Six Day War, Mr. Eshkol handed the reins of the Ministry of Defence over to Moshe Dayan and appointed two Ministers without Portfolio: Messrs. Menahem Begin and Joseph Saphir.

During Mr. Eshkol's term of office, diplomatic relations were established with Western Germany (March 1965). The submarine cable to France for telecommunications was completed in November 1968 and Israel's first jet engine plant was inaugurated. In 1966 Mr. Eshkol also took over as head of the Atomic Energy Commission.

He leaves a wife, Miriam and four married daughters.

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