

Mr Israel Kipen

Israel Kipen was born in Bialystok in Poland in 1919. Kipen's secondary education was completed at the Hebrew Gymnasium in Bialystok where his love of the humanities, particularly Hebrew literature and history, was fostered and encouraged.

For a brief period in 1938, Kipen studied humanities at the University of Warsaw. With the onset of war, he became separated from family members, who were sent to Siberia, and he made a perilous journey across Russia to Japan. From there he was transported to Shanghai. Obtaining a passage to Australia in 1946, Kipen settled in Melbourne where he established himself as a successful knitwear manufacturer.

Israel Kipen became an active member of the community and helped set up an immigration reception centre in St Kilda known as the Bialystoker Centre. As one of the founders of the Mount Scopus College, he was a member of the School Executive from 1949 to 1958. The transformation of Bialik School from an afternoon and Sunday school to a full-time day school was one of the defining achievements of his presidency of the State Zionist Council, and for over twenty years until 1983 he was involved with establishing the school. Kipen was President of its Council for 17 years, during which time the Bialik School established itself as a progressive centre of Jewish education.

On retirement from his manufacturing interests in 1977, he enrolled in an Arts degree at Latrobe University and studied Hebrew at Melbourne University as a CAP Student. In 1978 he transferred to The University of Melbourne as a full-time Arts student. Completing his Honours and then a Masters degree in 1982 in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies, Israel Kipen also worked as a tutor in that Department from 1981 to 1984.

He was founding member of a committee set up by Arnold Bloch in 1981 to support tertiary Jewish education in Australia. Initially the committee provided funding to ensure the continuation of the teaching of Hebrew in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at Melbourne University; and Israel Kipen established close relations with Dr Ziva Shavitsky of that Department as she developed the study of Jewish language, literature and culture.

Also in 1981, he was invited by the President of the State of Israel to participate in the inaugural meeting to establish the International Centre for Teaching of Jewish Civilisation in universities in the diaspora. He remains a member of the Board of Regents at the present.

Over a long period Israel Kipen has made substantial contributions to the Centre for Jewish History and Culture and the Israel Kipen Lectureship in Hebrew Language and Literature was named in recognition of his crucial support of its work. He also worked closely with the late Dr John Foster of the Department of History in fostering Jewish history and was instrumental in the creation of the Arnold Bloch Lectureship in Jewish History.

In 1995 the Judaica collection at Monash University Library was named the Laura and Israel Kipen Judaica Collection.

In 1998 Israel Kipen published his autobiography, *A Life to Live*, a memorable account of the Jewish community of Bialystok, the descent of eastern Europe into barbarism, his own flight east that brought him to Australia and subsequent experiences. The book offers both a valuable record of his heritage and sharp impressions of Jewish community life in Melbourne.

In 1997 he published the scholarly work, *Ahad Ha-am: the Zionism of the Future*, which was partly based on his Masters thesis. The book is a prescribed text at the Centre for Jewish History and Culture here, and also at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.