



Plea for a Library

Isaiah Berlin Online aims to post, in the fullness of time, PDFs of all Berlin's uncollected and unpublished work, including lectures, interviews and broadcasts, so that it is conveniently readable and searchable online. The present PDF is part of this series.

The PDF is posted by the Isaiah Berlin Legacy Fellow at Wolfson College, with the support of the Trustees of the Isaiah Berlin Literary Trust.

All enquiries, including those concerning rights, should be directed to the Legacy Fellow at berlin@wolfson.ox.ac.uk

Plea for a Library

Letter, *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 December 1981, 16



National Library of Israel: Lady Davis Building, Givat Ram (1960)

TO THE EDITOR, *JEWISH CHRONICLE*

Headington House

SIR, – All universities in the West are suffering from severe cuts in their budgets, with serious consequences to education and research. The causes are well known – inflation, government economies, the low priority that education has in the thinking of some governments and finance ministers.

The Hebrew University is no exception to this sad state of affairs, although education is still, I believe, near the hearts of Israeli governments and legislators of whatever political persuasion.

The damage to the library of the Hebrew University is particularly severe. This library is not merely the library of the leading university in Israel, but at the same time the National Library: it stands in the same relation to the nation of Israel – indeed to the Jewish people – as the Library of the British Museum, now known as the British Library, does to inhabitants of the United Kingdom. The erosion of the University's budget is seriously affecting funds for the acquisition of even the most indispensable

PLEA FOR A LIBRARY

books. The majority of students are in no position to be able to pay for books – and this alone has created a painful problem.

No library, least of all a national library, can continue to fulfil its function, even in a reduced degree, unless it continues to purchase books and periodicals in the fields of learning the promotion of which is its principal reason for existence. It hardly needs saying that without books, without learning and the sense of both past and present which these enshrine, there could have been no state of Israel and no Judaism.

The Friends of the Hebrew University have recently formed a Library Committee, and its chairman is very keen to meet those willing to help its cause. In addition to financial contributions, sums set aside in wills and other forms of direct financial assistance, what would help greatly would be the donation of books, particularly rare books, collections and Judaica, and also meetings with those associated with publishing and the retail book trade who could, in some way, give practical advice and assistance likely to help the survival of the National Library.

We are also interested in meeting any group who might like to undertake a project of some sort associated with the library. Those interested – or those who know of others who may be interested – are invited to get in touch with the Director of the Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, [...], who will be happy to give further information.

(Sir) Isaiah Berlin, OM

Honorary President, Friends of the University of Jerusalem

© Isaiah Berlin 1981

Posted in Isaiah Berlin Online and the Isaiah Berlin Virtual Library 30 April 2023