

Paul M. Vermes
1919–1997

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Paul M. Vermes passed away on 24 April 1997 after a prolonged illness. He retired in 1985 from his post as Director of the Division of Pesticides in the Department of Plant Protection and Inspection of the Israel Ministry of Agriculture. Paul Vermes, known to his friends as Paly, was born on 27 September 1919, the youngest son of his parents, in Timișoara (Romania). He completed his primary and high school education in Romania. In September 1937 he came with his family to Palestine. He entered the Kadoorie agricultural high school where he received his basic agricultural training, graduating in 1940. He then continued his studies in the first graduating class of the Faculty of Agriculture at Rehovot of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, graduating in 1945 with a M.Sc. Agr. degree. His thesis on 'Fumigation of Seed with Methyl Bromide' was supervised by Professor M. Plaut.

Following his graduation he was granted a scholarship from the University of Paris, where he received his Ph.D. degree in 1949. His doctoral thesis dealt with: 'Le Mécanisme de l'hérédité d'un caractère quantitatif chez *Drosophila melanogaster* Meig.'

In 1949 Dr. Vermes returned to Israel and commenced working at the Division of Plant Protection of the Ministry of Agriculture. During his first years at the Division, Dr. Vermes worked on pests of various field crops, including specific crops such as maize, sorghum, as well as sugar beet. When cotton production was introduced he concentrated mainly on cotton pests and became a leading expert on this subject. In the 1950s the invasions of the desert locust into Israel led him to work on the control of this pest as well and he became a greatly successful expert in this important field, too. During his work he was nominated to various committees and served with distinction also on specific crop management boards. In 1958 he traveled, on a USOM scholarship, to Arizona for 6 months of training and study. During his stay there he also became involved with citrus pests with the aim of replying to queries addressed to him by his colleagues from the Division in Israel. He sent back home very thorough reports on these pests, which enabled his colleagues in turn to advise and help the citrus growers.

In 1963 Dr. Vermes was transferred as research fellow to the Division of Plant Protection of the Agricultural Research Organization (ARO), The Volcani Center, at Bet Dagan. There he worked mainly on the evaluation and screening of pesticides. In 1963 and 1966 he traveled, each time for a few weeks, to Iran as an expert and consultant on cotton

pests. He also attended there an FAO international training course on locusts (in 1966). In 1969 and 1971 he participated in FAO Conferences and Meetings on Locust Control in Rome, being invited as an expert to the 15th Committee on Locust Control in 1971.

In 1978, after 15 years of research work at the ARO, Dr. Vermes returned to the Department of Plant Protection and Inspection of the Ministry of Agriculture as Director of the Division of Pesticides. This Division is responsible for the registration of agricultural pesticides and their use, including enforcement of the relevant regulations. The Division carries out the testing for residues of the pesticides and establishes, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, permitted limits of their residues in agricultural produce. The experience of Dr. Vermes in extension research and his broad knowledge of the field made him most suitable for this new post. He established very good cooperation with the pesticide industry, research establishments, the farmers and their organizations and the extension services, as well as with the relevant experts of the Ministry of Health.

Dr. Vermes attended many international congresses and meetings on Plant Protection, on Genetics, and on Biological Control of Pests, which became one of his main fields of expertise and interest.

Paul Vermes served as consultant, advisor and extension expert in various foreign countries: Peru, Argentina, Iran, Ethiopia and Thailand. After he was appointed Director of the Division of Pesticides in 1978, he attended regularly the meetings of the Codex Alimentarius Committee on Pesticide Residues of the WHO and FAO in the Hague, as the Israeli representative.

During his long professional career Dr. Vermes worked also on aerial spraying of pesticides, concentrating on low volume application, and published together with the late Dr. Shoshana Yathom a detailed research report on aerial spraying of vegetable crops. He wrote an authoritative chapter on industrial crop pests in the 'Encyclopedia of Agriculture' in Hebrew. Throughout his career he worked to a great extent on screening and evaluation of pesticides, biological control of pests, and arthropod surveys in various crops, including natural enemies of the pests.

Dr. Vermes' employment as Director of the Division was extended, because of his expertise, for one year beyond the official retirement age and he retired in 1985.

It is very difficult to describe fully Dr. Vermes' vast knowledge and expertise in a wide variety of professional fields as well as areas outside of agriculture proper. Thanks to his mastery of many languages (Hebrew, Yiddish, English, French, German, Hungarian and Romanian), together with his unique memory and ability to read rapidly, he was a walking encyclopedia. He was a born and talented extension specialist.

Dr. Paul M. Vermes will be recalled for his readiness always to help others and to share his vast knowledge in any field. The spectrum of knowledge and range of subjects he mastered included also economics and banking, as well as Judaism. He will be remembered and missed by all those who knew him, also, *inter alia*, because of his keen sense of humor and his treasure of incisive jokes which he had ready for each occasion.

Dr. Vermes is survived by a brother and a sister. May his memory be blessed.

*S. Elhanan
5 Goldberg Street
Rehovot 76283, Israel*