

Yosef Yoel Rivlin

Jerusalem Post Staff

Professor Yosef Yoel Rivlin, the educator, orientalist, and scion of the famous Rivlin family, died on Wednesday night at the age of 81. He was laid to rest in the Mount of Olives cemetery on Thursday.

Among those carrying the bier were Mr. Menahem Begin, State Controller Yitzhak Nebenzahl, and Mr. Menashe Eliachar. The funeral was attended by over a thousand people who included Religious Affairs' Minister Zerah Warhaftig and Supreme Court President Shimon Agranat as well as the members of the Jerusalem Betar football team, which is managed by his two sons.

Two days before his death he had complained of abdominal trouble, and was about to be operated on at



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the Hadassah hospital when he passed away. Only last week, he completed his multi-volume translation of a "Thousand and One Nights" from the Arabic to Hebrew. He is survived by a wife and two sons.

Yosef Yoel Rivlin was born in Jerusalem in 1890, a fifth generation from the renowned rabbi and disciple of the Gaon of Vilna, Hillel Rivlin, who came to live in Jerusalem 160 years ago. His father was Rabbi Reuven Rivlin, son of Rabbi Yosef Yoel Rivlin, the leader of the Kolel Haprushim (general council of Jerusalem's *minagdic* community), and his mother, Itta Rivka, was a sister of the legendary Petah Tikva *shomer* Avraham Shapiro. His mother died on the day of his *brit mila*.

Prof. Rivlin received his early education in the Eitz Haim *heder*, the Lemel School, and the Ezra Teachers Seminar, where his relative and mentor, Rabbi Yehiel Michael Pines, taught Talmud and gave him private lessons in Talmud and general Jewish subjects. For a year he studied in an Arab high school. "Garden of Knowledge," in the Old City.

Having qualified as a teacher, he worked in the Lemel and Alliance Schools until, in 1917, in a general round-up of Jews and Arabs, he was imprisoned for four months and then exiled to Damascus.

He remained in Damascus for a time after his release, serving as principal of the Hebrew School for Girls set up by the Zionist Executive, while at the same time pursuing his Arabic studies.

In 1922 he went to Frankfurt for university studies where he earned a Ph.D. degree. He returned five years later and in 1929 he was appointed a teacher at the Hebrew University's Institute of Oriental

Studies (later to become the Institute of African and Asian Studies), being promoted successively to lecturer (1936) senior lecturer (1947), and associate professor (1961). In 1928 he was elected to the Teachers' Union Central Committee, serving as its chairman from 1930 to 1941. He was also a leading member of the Hebrew Language Academy.

Among his hundreds of published works are a biography of Mohammed, a translation of the Koran into Hebrew, numerous works on Islamic law and history, and the monumental "Thousand and One Nights." He served as president of B'nai B'rith and at one point was proposed as a candidate for the office of President of the State of Israel.

In 1962 Prof. Rivlin was awarded the Freedom of the City of Jerusalem.

His first wife, Rachel Yehuda, died in 1935, and he remarried to Rachel Rivlin who was a City Councillor during the Agron mayoralty and who bore him two sons.