

## JOSEPH VITKIN

1912 - 1876

Joseph Vitkin was a precursor of the Second Aliyah, a teacher, and a communal worker. He was born in Mogilev, Belo-russia and immigrated to Erez Israel in 1897, where he worked as a laborer. Later he became a teacher and headmaster at a Gederah school, where his reforms led to his being invited to become headmaster of the school in Rishon le-Zion. In 1904 he became headmaster of the school at Kefar Tavor (Meshah), and two years later he returned to teaching in Rishon le-Zion, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Vitkin was the precursor of the Second Aliyah, both chronologically and in his ideological contribution to the pioneering movement in Erez Israel. His influential 1905 pamphlet, entitled *Kol Kore el Ze'irei Yisrael*

*Asher Libbam le-Ammam u-le-Ziyyon* ("A Call to the Youth of Israel whose Hearts are with their People and with Zion"), signed *Havurat Ze'irim me-Erez Israel* ("A Group of Young People from Erez Israel"), contains all the principles of the labor movement of the Second Aliyah. He forcefully rejected "diplomatic" Zionism and condemned a Zionism that merely entailed shekel- and share-buying by Jews in the Diaspora. He demanded that Diaspora youth unite for *aliyah* and sacrifice for their homeland, as other nations do for their countries. He even outlined plans for a new type of settlement based on self-employed labor on nationally owned land. He ended the pamphlet with the appeal: "Hasten, Heroes of Israel, renew the days of the *Biluim* with even greater strength and vigor, for otherwise we shall be lost."

When the [\\*Ha-Po'el ha-Za'ir](#) Party was formed, he became a member and was the first to demand that, in addition to "conquest of labor" by Jewish workers as wage earners

on Jewish-owned farms, the party should advocate "conquest of the soil," i.e., agricultural settlement by Jewish worker-pioneers. He developed a theoretical and practical educational system uniting Jewish values with love of nature.

A selection of his writings appeared in 1912. A new comprehensive edition, containing letters, an appraisal, and a detailed bibliography, edited by E. Shoḥat, appeared in 1961. *Kfar Vitkin* in the *Hefer Plain* is named after him.