



March 29, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

It is with deep sadness announcing that **Prof. Eli Loewenthal** of the Technion Schulich Faculty of Chemistry passed away last Saturday, March 27, 2021. The funeral took place today in Modi'in.



**Prof. Eli Loewenthal (1925 – 2021)**

Hans Jacob Eliyahu Loewenthal was born on January 27, 1925 in Hamburg, Germany, the first-born son of parents of rabbinical origin on both sides: Reform on the mother's and orthodox on the father's side. Although Hamburg was known for its relatively liberal atmosphere, his mother, with remarkable foresight, decided on one day of August 1938 to take the family on the next train to Amsterdam and then a boat to London. Eli attended a school in Finchley, London, received his B.Sc. in Chemistry from the Polytechnic college of the University of London, finishing a four-year program in two years (1945, with Honors). In the following three years, he worked in 3 chemical companies. While working at Chaim Weizmann's private lab in London, Eli met Prof. E. D. Bergman, who later became his doctoral supervisor. In 1948, he arrived in Israel together with other volunteers who enlisted in the Machal unit of the Israeli army to take part in the War of Independence. He started his Ph.D. research, first with Prof. Ephraim Katchalski-Katzir at the Weizmann Institute, and later with Bergman at the Hebrew University. After marrying Rachel Levinson, they spent one year at the University of Glasgow. Following his postdoctoral work with Prof. Gilbert Stork (1953-1955), he joined the Technion, accepting an offer from the Chemistry Dean, Prof. David Ginsburg. In 1962 he was promoted to Associate Professor, and in 1965 to Professor, working on organic synthesis of natural products and bridged systems, synthetic methodology, and stereochemistry. He spent Sabbatical leaves at MIT (1961) and Synvar Institute, Palo Alto, California (1968-69).

Eli was a devoted experimentalist of a rare class. All his papers are authored by either one or two names, reflecting his devotion to hands-on organic synthesis. He kept working at the bench long after retirement, even at an age he could hardly stand. Remarkably, he carried out his outstanding synthetic work on Colchicine all by himself, competing with substantial research groups in the USA and Europe. He even extracted his samples of natural Colchicine from Meadow Saffron he collected in fields near Haifa. Eli was a highly demanded guest in the labs of Albert Eschenmoser, Duilio Arigoni (ETH, Zurich), Carl Djerassi, and other famous chemists. Before the Internet era, Eli was a "walking encyclopedia" who offered his help to many faculty members who preferred to consult with him rather than dive into *Chemical Abstracts* and *Beilstein's* dusty volumes in the library. He traveled to London every year to read the patent literature, which was not available in Israel. For many years He built and developed the Technion chemical stores, which, on those days of non-trivial imports, were critical for securing chemical research on the entire campus. Generations of chemistry students at the Technion remember him as an inspiring teacher with an infectious love for organic synthesis.

Eli's son, Ron, married with two children, is a pediatrician in Modiin and Head of the Department of Tissue Typing at Tel Hashomer Hospital. With the family and Rabbi's permission, I've added to his grave printed copies of his three singly authored JCS papers on colchicine synthesis (shown above).

The ICS and the entire community of Israeli scientists mourn the loss of a great scientist.

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