

# Israel — Site of the Crusaders' Movement

By LUCIAN O. MEYSELS

SOME historians and many other students of history had a tendency to look with disdain or ignore an important period in the history of the Holy Land — the Crusader Era, from 1099 to 1291 C.E.

While many in the western world, in art and literature, gloried in the exploits of men like Godfrey de Bouillon, Richard the Lion-Hearted or St. Louis, the Jewish people had good reason to remember the merciless pogroms in Europe and Palestine which often accompanied the Crusader movement. The Jews of the Holy Land joined the Moslems in fighting the Crusaders, and their heroic defense of the town of Haifa at the time of the First Crusade evoked even the admiration of their opponents.

As far as the history of Jerusalem is concerned, every school boy in Palestine was taught that the entire Jewish population of the city was massacred by the Crusaders in the main synagogue when the town fell to the Franks in 1099—or at least this version of the era was popular until recently.

Modern historical research, carried out by scholars in many parts of the world, and particularly at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has tended to revise the original judgment and throw a new light on the relations between the Jews and the Crusaders.

The main Jewish source on the events of the period are the documents found in the so-called "Cairo Geniza," a storeroom in the ancient synagogue of Ezra the Scribe in the old City of Cairo, where worn out and unused documents, as well as damaged and heretical books on religious subjects had been stored ever since the ninth century C.E.

Research on these documents, initiated by the late Prof. Solomon Schechter, the great scholar and founder of the Jewish Theological Seminary, is now concentrated at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem under the direction of Prof. Shlomo D. Goiten, chairman of the Hebrew University's School of Oriental Studies.

Those scholars examining the Geniza documents who are concerned with the Crusader period

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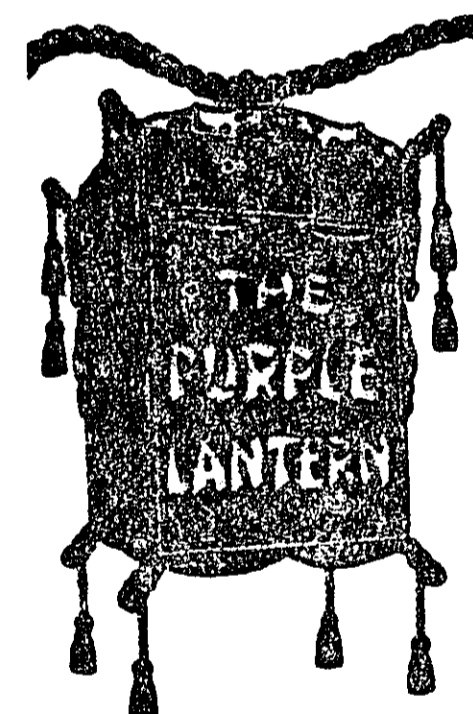
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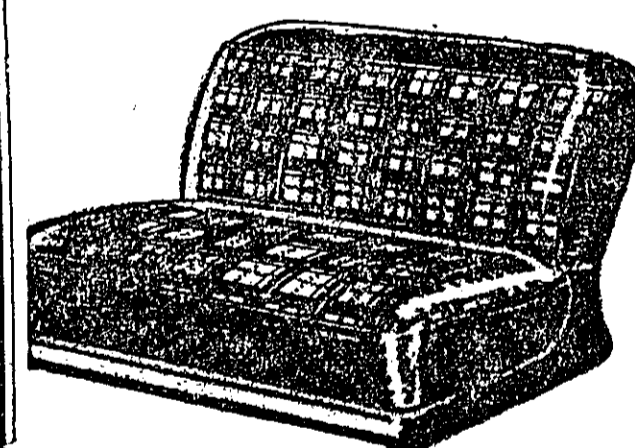
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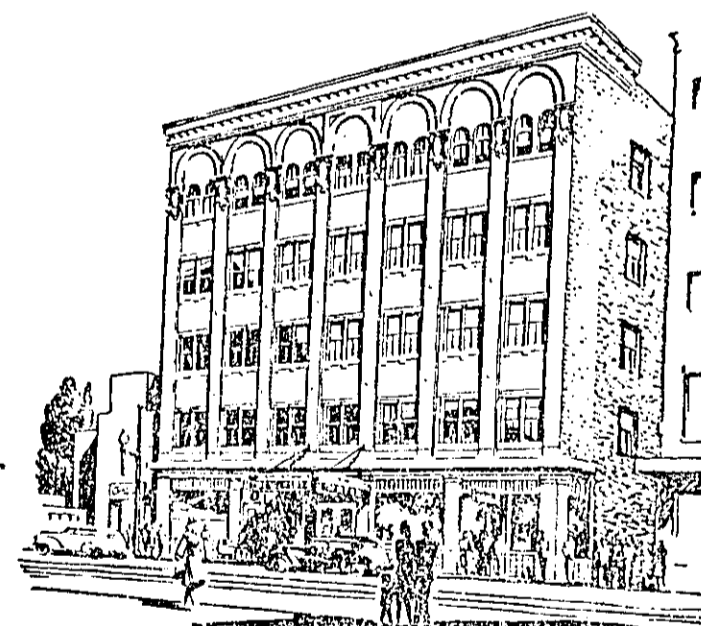
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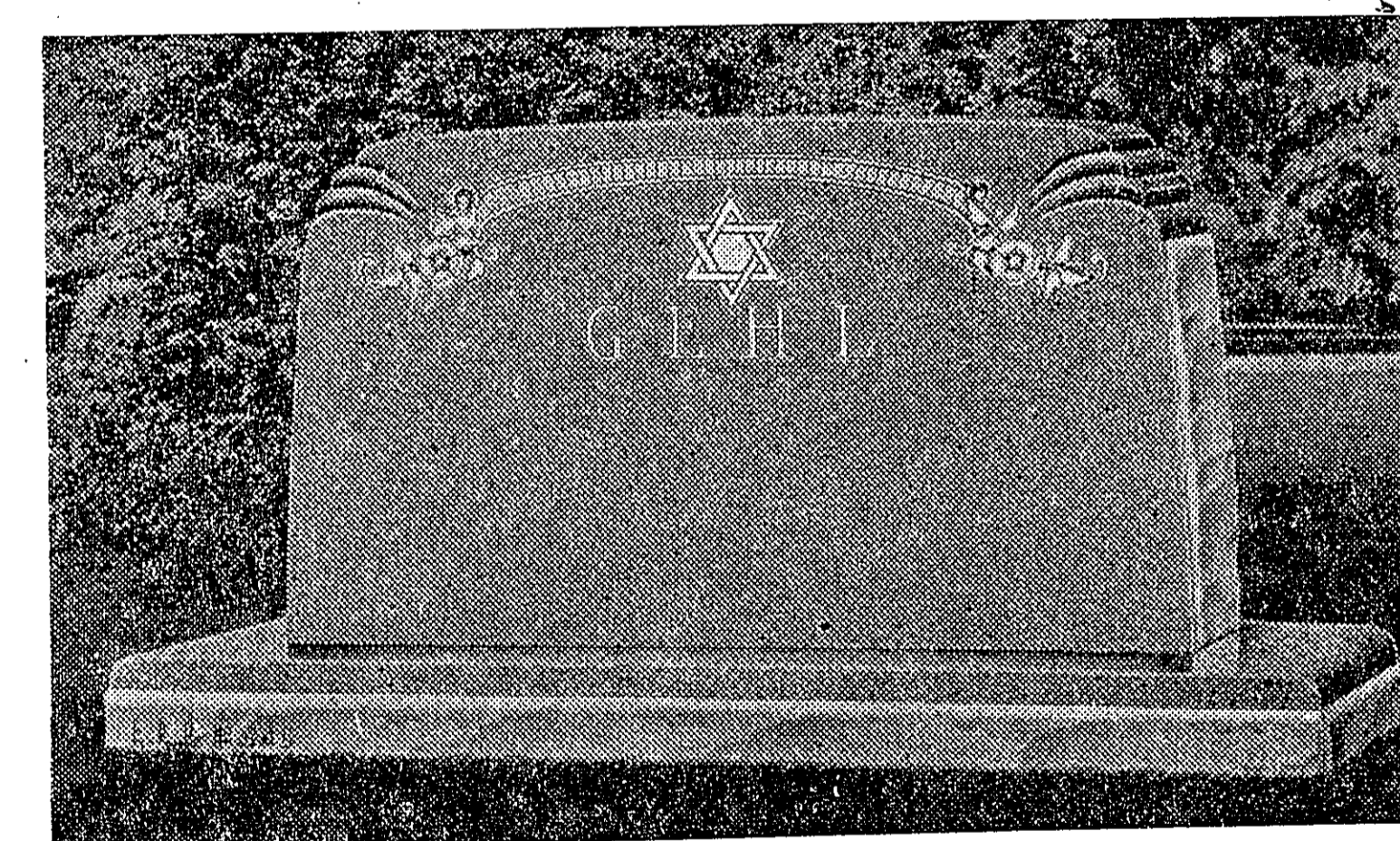
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