GENDER AND EDUCATION IN THE LIFE WORK OF HENRIETTA

SZOLD

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
San Diego State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Women’s Studies

by
Kimberly Ann Long
Spring 2008
SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

Thesis of Kimberly Ann Long:

Gender and Education in the Life Work of Henrietta Szold

Bonnie K. Scott, Chair
Department of Women’s Studies

Susan E. Cayleff
Department of Women’s Studies

Lawrence Baron
Department of History

3/27/08
Approval Date
Copyright © 2008

by

Kimberly Ann Long

All Rights Reserved
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Gender and Education in the Life Work of Henrietta Szold
by
Kimberly Ann Long
Master in Arts in Women’s Studies
San Diego State University, 2008

Henrietta Szold (1860-1945), an avid supportive of women’s education, was an ardent believer in the special skills women could bring to the Zionist movement. These skills included the practical and organizational work of mothers. Szold utilized her conception of women’s special maternal skills to legitimize her public presence within the Zionist movement. Yet, due to the use of this rhetoric, Szold limited her public presence because of maternalism’s essentialist notions of womanhood. By exploring the historical context of maternalism within the framework of Szold’s life work within the United States and pre-state Israel, I explore how one American Jewish woman created a public persona and its effectiveness in light of the work she accomplished and the sacrifices she made in her personal life.

Szold is referred to as the “mother of Israel” for her work on behalf of Youth Aliyah, an organization that began in 1933 with the purpose of saving Jewish youth from Nazi Germany. Before heading Youth Aliyah, Szold taught high school; founded, administered and taught at a night school for Russian immigrants in Baltimore, Maryland; tutored world-renowned scholars at the Jewish Theological Seminary; attended the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York as the first female student; worked for the Jewish Publication Society as editor, secretary, and translator; served as one of the co-founders and the first and third president of Hadassah (the Women’s Zionist Organization of America); and headed the Portfolio for Education and Social Service in the yishuv (the Jewish community in pre-state Israel). Never a woman to shy away from duty, Szold became the role model for future generations of American Jewish women. However, this icon never strove to be a role model. Rather, Szold’s mission was to educate Jewish women in Jewish religion, history, literature, and eventually Zionism so that they too could participate in the restoration of Judaism, which to Szold would only occur through Zionism.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SITUATING GEOGRAPHIES, DISCIPLINES, AND HISTORIES: A BACKGROUND TO THE LIFE OF HENRIETTA SZOLD</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feminist Research Methodology</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Doing” Women’s History</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Zionist Historical Context of Szold’s Life</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American Jewish History: Struggles for Unity and Identity</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maternalism and Zionism: Hadassah, The Women’s Zionist Organization of America</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Educational Theme</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>BRIDGING WORLDS: EDUCATION AS A SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS TOOL</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Familial Bonds and Roles</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journalism and Education: A Rallying Call to Action</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educator and Administrator: The Russian Night School (1882-1893)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Jewish Intellectual I: The Jewish Publication Society (1888-1916)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jewish Intellectual II: The Jewish Theological Seminary (1903-1906) and Louis Ginzberg</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Judaism and its Counterparts: Daughters of Zion</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>EDUCATION &amp; GENDERED WORK: HADASSAH UNDER SZOLD’S LEADERSHIP</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Herstory: Women’s Societies and Clubs</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Beginnings of Hadassah</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hadassah and Zionist Work</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Szold’s Leadership and the Rhetoric of Maternalism</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hadassah and Muskeljudentum (Muscular Jewry): Gendered Politics of Zionism</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions ............................................................................................................. 62

4 AN EDUCATOR BRIDGING WORLDS IN THE YISHUV ......................... 63
  Zionist Struggles in the Holy Land ................................................................. 64
  The Necessity of Bridges: The American Zionist Medical Unit, Hadassah
  and Education ................................................................................................. 65
  Portfolio of Education (1927-1930) ............................................................... 68
  Youth Aliyah (1933-1945) ........................................................................... 72
  Gendered Constructions of Zionist Work ...................................................... 79
  Arab-Jewish Relations, Hadassah and Education ......................................... 80
  Szold as a Bridge ............................................................................................. 86

5 CONCLUSIONS: CONSTRUCTING A LIVED LIFE ...................................... 88
  The Healing of the Daughter of My People .................................................. 89
  Faith and Community .................................................................................... 92

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................. 94
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An old saying comes to mind as I begin to write the acknowledgements page, “It takes a village to raise a child.” In the four years since I began at San Diego State University, and yes it has taken me four years to complete this thesis, I have been blessed to have been guided by numerous individuals during the many phases of this thesis. In many ways, the following individuals served as my village as my thesis went from a conceptual idea to a materialized product. I would like to begin by thanking my ever-patient and ever-thoughtful thesis chair, Professor Bonnie Kime Scott. Without Professor Kime Scott (and her dog Daphne’s Zen-like presence), I am not sure I would have ever finished this thesis. Her encouraging words and faith that I would finish helped steer me back to my computer time and time again. As for the original conception of a biography on Szold as my thesis, I gratefully thank Professor Susan Cayleff. Professor Cayleff’s class “Narrating Women’s Lives” was instrumental in helping me conceptualize and begin work on this biography. Professor Human Ahmed-Ghosh, in her usual direct and forthright manner, reminded me of the benefits of finishing my thesis and that this was indeed a thesis, not a dissertation, even if I kept trying to make it into the later. I would be reticent not to include Teddi Brock, who as the administrative coordinator of the Women’s Studies department, was my, as well as many others, resource for everything with which she could help us. I strongly believe that Teddi Brock is the foundation glue for the Women’s Studies department, and that without her, there would be massive chaos. Professor Joellyn Zollman provided my thesis with the contextual background of American Jewish life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that I initially lacked. Her helpful and insightful comments allowed for a deeper understanding of Szold’s mindset and philosophy. Professor Lawrence Baron assisted me in a wider understanding of Jewish and Zionist history. He also patiently waited as I kept promising that a completed thesis would be forthcoming. In her gracious and giving manner, Hadassah archivist Susan Woodland assisted me with the framework in which I focused on Szold’s life and work, education. She diligently tracked down letters, pamphlets, speeches, an interview and many other resources within the Hadassah archives. Further, she was able to answer my
pressing questions about key figures in Szold’s life and in the organization of Hadassah
without ever losing patience, even when I was at my most ignorant. And last, but not least in
this list, is Professor Joyce Antler, without whom I would never have wandered upon the life
of Henrietta Szold. It was Professor Antler’s insistence on the significance of American
Jewish women’s lives and work and primary sources documenting these women’s lives that
found me falling in love for the first time with archival research while at Brandeis University.
To her, I owe a debt of gratitude for her wonderful instruction and guidance at the beginning
of my graduate career. This list is not comprehensive of everyone who has guided me
throughout this thesis, but it does briefly illustrate the wonderful and resourceful individuals I
was able to turn to throughout the thesis process.

Now, this village did not begin or end with academics. I want to give a round of
applause for those who walked this laborious path with me as friends, family, and
coworkers. To my class cohorts, thank you for still loving me when you were all done and I
was still doing my best to procrastinate on finishing this chapter of my life. And to my
family, who listened as I vented my frustrations and pain at the process of writing a thesis,
thank you for caring enough to support me when times got rough, financially and
emotionally. In addition, I want to thank my family for patiently waiting as I threw
temper-tantrums at the mere mention of my “thee-thee.” To my dearest Brett, thank you for
being you and showing me I could finish even if it meant less “us” time. Finally, for my
mom, well, there are no words that could do justice for the energy, love, support and patience
she showed throughout yet another chapter of her eldest daughter’s life. It is to her that I
dedicate this thesis.
CHAPTER 1

SITUATING GEOGRAPHIES, DISCIPLINES, AND HISTORIES: A BACKGROUND TO THE LIFE OF HENRIETTA SZOLD

But biography should be more than chronicle. It should stimulate thought, influence action, lead to introspection and creation.

– Henrietta Szold (1942)¹

It is my goal within this thesis to “stimulate thought, influence action” that will “lead to introspection and creation” as I examine the life work of Henrietta Szold (1860-1945), an American Jewish intellectual, educator, and Zionist. One of the prominent threads throughout her life work is education. From her own education as a rabbi’s daughter to her position holding the education (as well as social service) portfolio for the Palestine Executive Committee, Szold was both a pragmatist and an American progressive. Jewish Studies scholar Michael Brown connects Szold’s American upbringing and progressive political philosophy with her work in the yishuv (the Jewish community in pre-state Israel). By way of Brown’s and other scholars’ work and my own archival research, I argue that Henrietta Szold’s work within the United States and the yishuv is more significant than scholars previously have stated, particularly in regards to women’s use of education as a political tool.

Upon first learning of Henrietta Szold in an American Studies course taught by Professor Joyce Antler at Brandeis University, I was taken with the non-traditional work Szold performed as a Zionist leader and a Jewish intellectual, while she also subscribed to traditional gender roles. Szold’s duty to her community determined her traditional as well as non-traditional roles. What sparked the impetus to write a thesis on Szold was her commitment to learning and education. Education is a theme throughout all her work, whether in America or in pre-state Israel. Szold’s own upbringing as a rabbi’s daughter

¹Quoted in Fineman 11. Originally from a 1942 Henrietta Szold letter to Hadassah member Mrs. David de Sola Pool.
taught her the importance of education in providing understanding, and thus, bridging the divides between peoples and cultures. A pacifist for the majority of her life, Szold believed conflict and wars could be avoided through educating oneself in another’s culture and beliefs. In the yishuv, she preached peace and understanding through education rather than Jewish preconceived conceptions of the Arab population in pre-state Israel.

In relating Szold’s life and her work, it is necessary to define the gendered boundaries of a woman’s life during her life span of 1860-1945. Szold’s life did not fit into the social norms of the day, which were set by Christian men and women. In addition, Szold’s life defies traditional categorization within the social norms of her own Jewish and Zionist community where, until the past few decades, men’s lives have been recorded more earnestly than women’s. Thus, Szold’s legacy was silenced through the multiple identities she held as a Jew, a woman, and a female leader in a predominately male-led Zionist movement. By examining Szold’s life through the lens of her own self-representation as found in her letters and articles, and her biographers’ representations of her work, a more holistic and accurate depiction of Szold’s life can come into being. Focusing on this holistic view of her lifework, the process by which roles were gendered during her lifetime (1860-1945) will be looked at through the lenses of sex, ethnicity, class, age and education.

Feminist Research Methodology

At the beginning of my research, I found that in order to understand Szold, I had to understand her work, since it consumed most of her waking hours and is what ultimately defined her in many of her biographers’ eyes. The most proficient way of doing this is by viewing cultural artifacts, which Jewish feminist sociologist Shulamit Reinharz writes “are products of individual activity, social organization, technology, and cultural patterns” (147). Cultural artifacts then reflect the values, beliefs and norms of the particular culture and time period in question. Reinharz also reminds the researcher that our interpretations of cultural artifacts fall under the same subjective influences as our own readings of the “data” of a life (147). When I was researching the life of Szold, there were many times I did not understand the driving force behind Szold’s decisions about her life. It was here that I had to reflect on my own interpretations of happiness and contentment and question whether these interpretations were analogous to Szold’s.
Cultural artifacts can be divided into four types: (1) written records, (2) narratives and visual texts, (3) material culture and (4) behavioral residues (Reinherz 147). I will be concentrating on (1) written records and (2) narratives and visual texts. These cultural “data” are more readily available and provide the most dynamic way to understand Henrietta Szold’s life work. The written records I have consulted with are both primary and secondary sources. Henrietta Szold’s writings constitute the greater part of my primary sources. These writings include correspondence with family, friends, religious and Zionist figures, and her speeches and reports. Archival research has played an instrumental role in my research, with visits to Schlesinger Library’s archives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Brandeis University’s microfilm and archives in Waltham, Massachusetts, and the Hadassah Archives at the Center for Jewish History in New York, New York. I reference secondary sources such as biographies on Henrietta Szold, Zionism, and Hadassah (the Women’s Zionist Organization of America), and articles and books on late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries’ gendering of roles within the American Jewish community and pre-state Israel’s history during Szold’s lifetime. Particular secondary sources whose arguments are foundational for my research are those constructed by feminist American Studies scholar Joyce Antler, feminist Jewish Studies scholar Baila Shargel Round, and feminist historian Mary McCune on American Jewish women’s history. These scholars examine how American Jewish women’s traditional role as caretakers and nurturers allowed for their participation in the public space of Zionism.2 It is from this public space that women’s educational and social work, such as Szold’s, could be conducted.

As a twenty-first century, non-Jewish, middle-class, white, female feminist, I acknowledge that the beliefs, values and conceptions I hold affect my interpretation of Henrietta Szold’s life. Thus, as a value-laden person influenced by the contemporary politics, economics, and social issues of the day, I do not subscribe to positivist claims of neutrality in research.3 Positivism obscures the struggles and tensions between women and within women

---

2 There is a good amount of research on women’s “innate” ability to nurture and the opportunities it presented for women in the public realm. See Erica B. Simmons’ Hadassah and the Zionist Project (2006) and Koven and Michel’s Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States (1993).

3 Positivist researchers believe research can be value-free or neutral. Research, whether undertaken with this notion of neutrality or not, is always reflective of a person’s socio-economic, political and historical location.
themselves, thereby rendering many women’s lives invisible in the process. I have chosen instead to employ standpoint research methodology. Standpoint research methodology socially situates women’s lives, in Szold’s case based upon her ethnicity, class, age, religious affiliation, education, and political beliefs. Therefore, I will be working socially located and constructed knowledges. Further, standpoint methodology begins research from the borders of the social, economic and political ladder of society, and from this marginalized position proceeds to “study upward” those with privilege. It should be noted that this methodology is a continual and fluid process, and henceforth, research is in a constant state of flux as new knowledges are constructed. By researching the life of Henrietta Szold, I claim to be studying from the boundaries of society precisely because she is a first generation American, Jew, and woman. Despite her location as middle-class and educated, the norm of North American society is based on a white, Protestant, male model. In practicing standpoint epistemology, I will position an American Jewish woman, Henrietta Szold, at the center of my research, thereby, displacing the Protestant male norm and providing a glimpse into “[an]other’s” life. Feminist philosopher of science Sandra Harding describes feminist standpoint epistemology in the following way:

The subject/agent of feminist knowledge is multiple, heterogeneous, and frequently contradictory in a second way that mirrors the situation for women as a class. It is the thinker whose consciousness is bifurcated, the outsider within, the marginal person now located at the center, the person who is committed to two agendas that are by their nature[s] at least partially in conflict . . . It is starting off thought from a contradictory social position that generates feminist knowledge. (52)

Harding’s description of knowledge from “contradictory social position[s]” is parallel to the social locations of Szold. Her multiple identities as a Jewish woman, Zionist, and Jewish intellectual provide for insights into the struggles of first generation American Jewish women as well as other situated knowledges constructed by her position along the outsider/insider continuum in her community (discussed below), in pre-state Israel and in her family. Her writings then can provide for an analysis of how religion and culture affect the history in the gendering of society’s roles.

Just as there are pitfalls for positivist research, there are also limitations for standpoint research. One of the limitations of standpoint methodology is the absence of a coherent base from which research can be grounded, which positivism through essentializing women
possesses. According to Harding, this can be remedied by utilizing history systematically. Viewing history systematically entails looking at the time period(s) under question from various and superimposed lenses, such as class, race, gender, religion and/or age, critical of the system of patriarchy; and including these lenses when analyzing the significance of one’s subject. Moreover, using history systematically will provide for a cohesiveness from which to examine histories often neglected or rendered invisible, such as women’s history, specifically Jewish women’s history. Through standpoint research, then, I will focus on socially situated knowledges by employing the organizational base of viewing history systematically.

As a subject of knowledge, Henrietta Szold is clearly not privy to the privilege of historical hindsight, the political, social and economic gains from the feminist struggles of the second and third waves, or the position of the researcher whose analysis determines which texts and information to include and which not to include. My historical social positioning in reference to Szold’s as well as the conflicts within the roles performed by Szold must be reflected on continuously. Harding’s conception of “strong reflexivity” allows for this continuous fluid dialogue with myself, and at times with other scholars, examining what values, beliefs and conceptions I (as well as her previous biographers) bring to the study that are not aligned with Szold’s own values, beliefs and conceptions.

Hesse-Biber and Yaiser describe research as a process that can be viewed “holistically” with its own “synergy.” Standpoint methodology, as discussed earlier, entails viewing phenomena from the “bottom-up,” and does not view knowledge as singular, static or fixed (22). The synergetic process is really the reality of life – the contradictions, tensions, similarities, and differences – which when viewed in an integral manner provide a “holistic” picture of my subject’s life. The contradictions in my research, as mentioned above, come from the different values, beliefs, and locations that I myself hold and that Henrietta Szold held during her life. My research creates its own synergy as I read and analyze writings by and on Szold to understand the traditional and unconventional gendered roles she held during her life.

While I cannot engage in conversation with Szold, I can be an active listener to the voice that emerges in her writing. Marjorie Devault argues that women’s talk is an arena of knowledge production, “language itself reflects male experiences, and that its categories are
often incongruent with women’s lives” (227). Women, then, do not always find words to express their own experiences. In viewing Szold’s representation of her life, I look at how she was silenced by the very institution of language as androcentric discourse in addition to the ways in which Szold might have resisted this acute limitation on expressing herself fully. Further, language will need to be looked at as a form of social control whereby only certain subjects can be discussed and only by specific people. Hence, I will be paying particular attention to who is permitted to speak as well as to write, who the writer’s audience is, what is spoken, what is assumed, what is silenced, and the significance of language as it pertains to class, race, gender, and religion as well as historical time period.

The “synergy” of this process is continually cultivated as I use the tool of reflexivity in engaging with and developing a relationship with my research subject. Recognizing and acknowledging the power differential in the research process through the tool of reflexivity will also serve to guide me and to dismantle some of the limitations placed by social, economic, religious, cultural and/or political barriers. Further, I will be employing feminist social scientist Nancy Naples’ conception of the “outsider phenomenon”: “My own feelings of outsideness became a resource through which I was able to acquire an insider perspective on many residents’ perception of alienation from others in their community” (374). My position as an outsider to the Jewish community, and to the time period of Szold’s life, will afford me a greater depth of perception on my subject of knowledge, Szold. Further, Szold’s writings suggest that she herself felt many times like an outsider, as a Jewish woman, a female Zionist leader and female Jewish intellectual (374).

My own position as an outsider to the Jewish community and religion contributes to my minimal knowledge of Jewish sacred and philosophical texts. Language can also be seen as a limiting factor in my understanding of Szold’s life. Szold was fluent in French, and later in Hebrew. Many of these letters were written to her cohorts in Europe and pre-state Israel, and are stored in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem. However, she has written a large number of letters in English, which have been saved by her sister, Bertha Levin, the Central Zionist Archives and Hadassah. These letters provide a holistic view of Szold, as an American Jewish woman, an American Jewish female Zionist and as an American educator, themes that are predominant in my thesis. Hence, my major shortcoming in researching Szold’s life is recognizing the connections between her faith, her faith’s sacred texts and
prayers, and her life work. To remedy this significant limitation, I have consulted with Jewish historians and spent time studying Judaism as a religion and women’s space within it.

Finally, feminist research would not be complete without a commitment to not only locating myself socially, economically and politically as well as “deploy[ing] critically” reflexivity, but to conduct the research in an ethical and political framework that allows for further use of this research as grounded in accurate knowledge production (Lal 205). To do this, I turn to feminist historical analysis to provide for the contextual background of Henrietta Szold’s life and, hence, the significance of her life’s work.

**“Doing” Women’s History**

Feminist historians Joan Scott, Nancy Cott, Sherna Berger Gluck, Ellen Dubois and Caroll Smith-Rosenberg have written extensively on the history of women within the context of family, societal norms, gendering of society, and women’s oppression and resistance. In the field of Jewish women’s history, American Studies scholar Joyce Antler, sociologist Deborah Bernstein, and historian Mary McCune’s work on American Jewish women has been instrumental to my arguments. Drawing from the work of these scholars, I will be situating Henrietta Szold’s educational work within the United States and the yishuv through a feminist historical analysis, specifically discussing American Jewish history and Zionist history.

When recounting Henrietta Szold’s life work, particularly her educational work, I have encountered what feminist historian Sherna Berger Gluck calls “presentism” (32). Realizing that I come to the life of Szold from my position as a third wave feminist whose life reflects the remarkable achievements of the first and second waves as well as that of those working on behalf of women’s rights between the “waves” of feminism, it has been challenging to not project today’s meaning and ideas onto Szold’s life. Szold was an incredibly articulate, practical, organized and determined woman. She inspired many women to join the Zionist movement and become public agents of Jewish change, but she herself did not at first take to suffragism, as her sister Rachel Jastrow did. Further, Szold’s work was positioned so as to capitalize on women’s traditional role as caretaker and nurturer to legitimatize women’s public voice within the Zionist movement. It has been a challenge to face that Szold, even as she stood as a very public political figure, argued that women’s work
was to be mainly within the role of “mother,” whether of the yishuv and/or of one’s children. She, like many women before and after her, changed her stance on women’s rights and women’s education in the course of her life. I argue that even though she does not define herself as a suffragist or feminist, she fought for social change that did directly affect the lives of women and children in the United States and in the yishuv.

“Presentism” is not the only dilemma I faced when writing of Szold’s life. Feminist oral historian Julia Swindells believes that the very production of ‘authentic’ voices can be oppressive:

There is no “authentic” voice of woman in history, no unity of that sort, transcending history. Neither should we muddle up the business of enabling voices to be heard with finding sisters suddenly “liberated” in their lives as in the sounds of the texts. Rather, we should be asking questions about specific histories, specific texts . . . Whose subject is being inscribed? (Quoted in Reinharz 139)⁴

In other words, “who is speaking when women speak for themselves,” whether in oral histories or in personal correspondence and diaries (138)? Another feminist oral historian, Katherine Goodman, believes that “authentic” voices may just be imitations of fictional genres (Reinharz 139). Regardless of which position the researcher takes, Reinharz asks “is it the voice of oppression, the voice of imitation, the authentic unsilenced self, or multiple voices” that are speaking (139). In reconstructing Szold’s life, I have continually questioned biographers’ and others’ recounting of Szold’s words, particularly looking at their intention in quoting Szold, whether they indeed are Szold’s words, and how memory has affected these quotations. Viewing the significant challenges in reinscribing “authentic voices” within Szold’s life history as described above, I have chosen instead to concentrate on the message and philosophy behind Szold’s recounted words. Szold’s own writing will be critically examined in light of the following questions: Who was her intended audience? What period was she writing in? Was she writing for public reiteration or for the eyes of her family and/or friends? What was spoken of in the letter and what was silenced or contradicted? How did she represent herself? Though most of this thesis will be focused on Szold’s life work, her

writing will be used whenever possible to holistically represent her life. When Szold’s words are quoted from secondary sources, such as Fineman and Dash, I have made every attempt to track down the original source of these quotes, whether they are letters, speeches, or published materials. However, this has not always been possible because many of Szold’s biographers quoted her either directly (mainly biographers who were Hadassah members and Szold’s friends) or from primary sources that were not footnoted in the secondary source (Fineman, Levin). Because Szold’s biographers Fineman and Levin, and those who were Hadassah members had access to Szold’s personal letters, speeches, and published materials, I believe that when I have used Szold quotes from these sources, they are either exactly what Szold herself wrote or said, or are as close to her words as possible. In the event that I feel the quotations do not represent what she would have said, I have chosen not to include them.

The precise date scholarly interest in Jewish women’s history emerged is contested by historians, but that history was arguably present by 1893 when Papers of the Jewish Women’s Congress were read at the Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition. Feminist historian Pamela Nadell argues that these papers were written by some of the pioneers in the field of Jewish women’s history, “While their standards of scholarship do not, of course, meet the test of a later era, these women of the Jewish Women’s Congress self-consciously saw themselves as ‘working faithfully and earnestly in research and scientific pursuits’” (103). Hence, these women saw themselves as authors of women’s history. I treat the Hadassah member biographers of Szold as such. Nadell refers specifically to Henrietta Szold as one of the pioneer historians based in part on Szold’s speech “What Judaism Has Done for Women” presented in 1893 at the Jewish Denominational Congress at the World’s Parliament of Religion.5 Further, Szold can be positioned as a historian because of the content of the many lectures she gave during her lifetime, particularly to Hadassah groups, and her vast writings discussing Jewish women in history (104). I concur with Nadell; thus, Szold will be viewed throughout this paper as an active participant in the production and re-production of women’s history. Positioning Szold’s writings and lectures as central, rather than marginal, to American Jewish and Zionist history is another key strategy I will utilize.

---

THE ZIONIST HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SZOLD’S LIFE

Henrietta Szold’s life mission was to bring a massive renaissance to Judaism in order to establish active Jewish religious and spiritual life among the American diaspora. Issues of assimilation and intermarriage between Jews and Christians have continued throughout the history of the United States to be viewed as problematic to Jewish longevity. Thus, to Szold, a renewal and return to Judaism and Jewish life was necessary. Szold grew to believe this renaissance would only occur through a return to Zion, specifically Jerusalem, as referred to in Psalms 137: 1-6, and this could only be achieved through Zionism. There are many different Zionist movements, such as Political Zionism, Religious Zionism, Cultural Zionism, Practical Zionism, and Socialist Zionism. Szold is said to have followed Cultural Zionism, which is sometimes called Spiritual Zionism. Yet, Szold’s Zionism was of her own self-definition as was that of many Zionist followers regardless of their specific Zionist affiliation. Given the firmness of her belief in Zionism, it is imperative to have a basic understanding of Zionist ideology and Zionist history, which is a multifaceted movement still active today.

In 1896, Theodore Herzl launched the modern Zionist movement with the publication of his book Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State). Herzl (1860-1904), considered the father of modern political Zionism, argued that Zionism had to “[empathize] the need to secure political recognition of the claim for a Jewish homeland” before attempting resettlement in Palestine (Medoff and Waxmann 142-143). Born in Pest, Hungary, Herzl was educated at a Jewish elementary school, but according to Zionist historian Melvin I. Urofsky, “his education [predominately] reflected the ideas of emancipated, assimilated German Jewry.” Even though he had completed his law studies in Vienna, Herzl was a journalist by trade. He began in 1892 to write of the increase of anti-Semitism in Europe. He was strongly influenced by the events of the Dreyfus Affair, which he reported on at the turn of the century. Herzl approached the prominent Jewish banking family, the Rothschilds, for their

---

6 The term refers to the dispersion of Jews from Israel when they were exiled to Babylon after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 587-58 B.C.E.

7 Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935) was a French captain accused of selling French military secrets to the Germans in 1894. His trial sparked an intense maelstrom of anti-Semitism. He was eventually exonerated.

8 The Rothschilds are a Jewish banking family made famous for funding numerous national projects and
financial support of Zionist projects. He continued to study the “rising tide of anti-Semitism” (Urofsky 20). By 1896 his expanded “address,” originally addressed to the Rothschilds,⁹ was published as Der Judenstaat in which Herzl argued that political Zionism was the only way to ensure the survival of the Jewish race.

Another noteworthy nineteenth century Zionist leader is Leon Pinsker (1821-1891), an “assimilated” Russian physician with strong socialist ties. Pinsker believed assimilation had failed to achieve the humanity of Jews in non-Jews’ eyes. In his well-known pamphlet Auto-Emancipation (1882), Pinsker argues for Jews to liberate themselves (Urofsky 15). Auto-emancipation took three forms: Socialism, Zionism and/or immigration. After Pinsker and his followers met in Prussia in November 1884, the movement Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) was established throughout Europe. Pinsker chaired the Odessa Committee, which was the governing board of the movement (17).

The 1880s were a momentous time period in Russia. In 1881, pogroms broke out in the Ukraine as Jews were falsely accused of assassinating the Czar. The Jews of Moscow were expelled in 1891-1892. These pogroms continued on into the early years of the twentieth century. Poverty, further restrictions and limitations placed on Jews, and forced expulsions, as seen in Moscow, led to concern worldwide for Eastern European Jewry.

Emigration became a theme at this time and countries such as Argentina, the United States and Palestine were considered as safe harbors (Almog 10). In the chaos, the Hovevei Zion movement settled Jews in colonies in Palestine, worked to restore Hebrew as a commonly spoken language worldwide, and established a network of financial, political and social support for endeavoring to resettle in Palestine, the Holy Land. Through this movement, Zionism followed “the commonly held belief that Jews constituted a religious community, which was acceptable, mutates mutandis, to Orthodox and Reform Jews alike” (11). Yet, Hovevei Zion did not identify as a Zionist movement, “Hesitant as to goals and methods, they never articulated a consistent philosophy, and later drew back in confusion from the political

---

⁹ The Rothschilds formally rejected his address only to later provide generous funding for Zionist projects in the yishuv.
implications of Herzl” (Urofsky 17). Nevertheless, *Hovevei Zion* was the model from which Zionism drew when planning resettlement in Palestine.

Szold’s affiliation with Zionism began in 1881 when she joined the Hovevei Zion. Her attraction to Zionism was based on her own understanding of Jewish history. Zionist historian Shmuel Almog describes Zionism as a cross between nationalism and history, positioning Zionism as requiring historical roots more so than any other nationalist movement (14). The historical roots Almog refers to are the ancient connection Jews had with the land of Israel, Zion. Religious Jews throughout the centuries have prayed daily for a return to Zion, a return to the land of Israel. According to Almog, there are three themes that are common in the writings of early Zionists: historical continuity, revolutionary change, and classical restoration (12). All of these sometimes contradictory themes are common throughout Jewish history. The question of the survival of Jews in a world full of anti-Semitism, assimilation and indifference found creative solutions to this question in revolutionary change and classical restoration, themes that allowed for Jews such as Szold to be attracted to Zionism.

According to Almog, Zionism also served as “an agent of modernization” (13). In order for Zionism to become effective, it had to look to the future while moving away from “its back-to-nature mood.” Though Almog mentions that Zionism “modified its outlook,” I believe Zionism was a combination of the old world with the resources of the new world (3). New world resources – hospitals, schools and recreational centers – were built in the yishuv while retaining the Jewish and cultural traditions and rituals of one’s place of birth. In Chapter 4, we will see how Szold, Hadassah’s co-founder and first president, utilized Zionism’s modernizing influences to develop the foundations for future medical, educational and social service departments to assist pre-state Israel in its development as a physically and spiritually healing community. Zionist intellectual Ahad Ha’am (pseudonym for Asher Ginsberg) influenced Szold’s Zionist work. Ha’am (1856-1927) was the key figure in the Cultural Zionist movement. Cultural Zionism, in contrast to Political Zionism, wanted to “revive Jewish creativity and national consciousness” by making Palestine “a Jewish national (cultural) center for Jews in [the] Diaspora around the world,” rather than a nation state.

---

10 Cultural Zionism is sometimes also referred to as Spiritual Zionism.
(Medoff and Waxmann 51). Ha’am’s Zionist appeal to Szold was one of the methods through which Ha’am sought to “revive Jewish creativity and national consciousness,” education. Szold believed that providing members of Hadassah with a Zionist education would provide healing for the diaspora. The emerging role of American Zionists affects our understanding of Henrietta Szold.

**American Jewish History: Struggles for Unity and Identity**

Historian Jonathan D. Sarna argues that American Judaism began to change in the late 1870s:

The critical developments that we associate with this period [beginning in the late 1870s] – the return to religion, the heightened sense of Jewish peoplehood and particularism, the far-reaching changes that opened up new opportunities and responsibilities for women, the renewed communitywide emphasis on education and culture, the ‘burst of organizational energy’ [i.e. clubs], and the growth of Conservative Judaism and Zionism – all reflect different efforts to resolve the ‘crisis of beliefs and values’ that had developed during these decades. (“A Great Awakening” 46)

Hence, the changes in America, such as expanded opportunities for women and the focus on education, transformed American Jewish life. Key here is that Szold’s formative years were during this time period. Her understanding of women’s roles and the place of education were changing during her lifetime. According to Sarna, the transformation of American Jewish life was complete by 1914, and much of it had to do with the mass immigration of Russian Jews. Significantly by 1914, Szold had headed a night school teaching recent Russian immigrants to America English and vocational skills. Hence, the transformations Sarna discusses affected Szold’s life.

Historian Deborah Dash Moore dates the “the birth of a new American Judaism” to the later date of 1905 when she argues that American Jews developed, if they had not already embraced, an “historical self-consciousness” that “found expression in the celebration of the 250\(^{th}\) anniversary of Jewish settlement in America” (Moore 41). New York became “the capital city of American Jewry,” which created tension between established Jewish organizations and the new American Judaism of its recent East European immigrants (Moore 41). Many noted American Jews, such as Louis Lipsky, Judah Magnes, Leo Levy (later president of B’nai B’rith), Cyrus Adler, Israel Friedlaender, Solomon Schecter, Hayim
Zhitlowsky and esteemed Jewish educator and reformer Samson Benderly came to New York during the early twentieth century. Szold arrived in New York in 1902 at the age of forty-two. The new American Judaism encouraged religious diversity and changed the unifying focus from religion as the center of Jewish life to Jewish people as an ethnic group. This is significant due to the emergence of denominational Judaism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which created division within in the relatively small community of Jews in the United States.

The mass immigration of Russian Jews from 1880 to 1924 brought with it a return to traditional Judaism. The Russian Jews’ focus on the cultural aspects of the Jewish community, regardless of religious affiliation, was problematic for their relations with their German and Sephardic co-religionists. These co-religionists were fearful of retribution to their community because of these traditional cultural practices. Anti-Semitism was still blatant socially, economically and politically. As early as the 1870s, anti-Semitism had been revived in the diaspora. Jewish banker Joseph Seligman was not allowed to stay at the Hilton-owned Grand Union Hotel in 1877; and Jews were said to be unwelcome at Coney Island in 1879. Another source of tension between the newly arrived Russians was their promulgation of Zionism. Zionism was not popular during this time period with American native-born Jews and German Jewish immigrants, many of whom had not experienced or were distanced from the violent anti-Semitism their Russian co-religionists had lived through. In addition, native-born American Jews were fearful of the charge of dual national loyalties, and thus, a possible increase in anti-Semitism. Further, many German Jews and native-born Jews viewed America, the diaspora, as Zion. Nonetheless, the mass immigration of Russian Jews, numbering roughly 2.5 million, provided some of the impetus for the dramatic shift in American Jewry, specifically its relationship with Zionism.

Jewish historian Jonathan Sarna believes Zionism’s significance lay in its “unifying ideal, [its] future-oriented goal, and, paradoxically, [its] hastening [of] Americanization, as Zion became for many Jews a utopian extension of the American dream” (“American Judaism” 202). American Zionism was more than just a movement for Jews to re-establish their own national homeland. Zionism was part of the Americanization process as they transferred the “American dream” of equality and justice onto the “Zionist dream” of establishing a democratic Jewish state.
Hadassah, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, also served as part of the Americanization process, particularly in regard to its work in the yishuv. A vital force in the Zionist Movement, Hadassah’s membership during the interwar period of World War I and World War II outnumbered that of the male-dominated Zionist Organization of America. Hadassah’s success was due in part to the maternalistic rhetoric that was quite prevalent among reformers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

**Maternalism and Zionism: Hadassah, The Women’s Zionist Organization of America**

Maternalism is defined by feminist historians Seth Koven and Sonya Michel as “operating on two levels: it extolled the private virtues of domesticity while simultaneously legitimating women’s public relationships to politics and the state, to community, to workplace, and marketplace” (“Womanly Duties” 1079). This is the manner in which Hadassah, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, which Szold co-founded and served as president twice, developed their social service and educational work in the yishuv and their Zionist educational programs in the United States. Voluntary organizations such as Hadassah trained women in this “distinct political mode and agenda” through their campaigning, raising funds, and managing the organization’s budget. Koven and Michel point out that motherhood was not seen “as their special burden or curse[,] but as a peculiar gift that encouraged them and justified their efforts to gain some measure of personal and political autonomy” (“Womanly Duties” 1084). Motherhood was, then, seen as empowering to women while it provided for their legitimacy within the public sphere (“Womanly Duties” 1091).

As a movement, maternalism has its roots in the early nineteenth century as Western women began to organize on the basis of morality and social reform, much of which was connected with Christianity (Koven and Michel, “Womanly Duties”). Significantly, Koven and Michel argue that “maternalist[ic] ideologies often challenged the constructed boundaries between public and private, women and men, state and civil society” (“Womanly Duties” 1079). Though not all maternalistic organizations would define themselves as feminists, Hadassah did attempt to improve the lives of women, whether directly or indirectly, which arguably is feminist work (1091). However, Hadassah did not refer to itself as anything other than a women’s organization.
Henrietta Szold, as co-founder, president and “symbol” of Zionism for women, utilized the traditional notion of women as caretakers and nurturers to give the Zionist movement the needed skills she believed only women held. Some of these skills were seen as inherent in women, such as caring and nurturance, and others, such as organizational skills and pragmatism, were skills learned from their assumed roles as mothers and daughters. Biographer Sarah Kussy, a Hadassah member, described Szold’s role as interpreter for Zionism, Palestine needed to be interpreted to American Jewish womanhood. Its identification with the Jewish people, their past mission, their future hopes, all had to be made clear. Zionism with its various physical and spiritual implications had to be explained and Henrietta Szold was the interpreter.\textsuperscript{11}

Through Szold, American Jewish women came to understand the importance of the movement. Further, through Szold’s authority as leader and her use of maternalistic rhetoric, women found a space within the movement. Chapter 3 goes into further detail about the use of maternalistic language to create a public space for American Jewish women to participate in the male-dominated Zionist movement and the history of Hadassah.

**The Educational Theme**

Henrietta Szold held many different positions throughout her lifetime. I have chosen to focus on the narrative of education that streams throughout her life. Other narratives could have been chosen, such as social service, Jewish intellectualism, Baltimore native, rabbi’s daughter, or Zionist, and indeed each is integral to Szold’s life. However, in being integral to her life, each can be examined through the narrative of education. This approach at once incorporates these other narratives and brings new perspectives to them. Throughout my research on Szold, I asked myself who Szold was beyond the traditional label of a “woman of valor,”\textsuperscript{12} why she was so fondly remembered, and what her response to a thesis written on her life would be. Each of these questions informed my research and writing process. Many times I considered focusing strictly on Szold as a human being, rather than examining her in


\textsuperscript{12} In Proverbs 31:10, a “woman of valor” is described as a valuable commodity to a man because of her thriftiness, her strong work ethic and her efficient administration of the home.
light of how she is commonly referenced as a selfless duty-bound meticulous worker. As I came to know Szold and her life more holistically, I found this was an impossible task. Szold was her work and even when she lamented about her lack of personal life, she would continue to choose duty for the good of the community over personhood.

In this thesis, I will cover Szold’s early educational work, such as her establishment of the Russian night school in Baltimore, Maryland in 1882, her correspondent work for the Jewish Messenger, and her position as an interdisciplinary teacher at Miss Adams’ School in Chapter 2. Szold’s mid-life work for the Jewish Publication Society (hereafter, JPS), her time at the Jewish Theological Seminary (hereafter, JTS), and her work as a language tutor to the faculty at JTS will be discussed in light of her relationship with Louis Ginzberg and her ascription to Intellectual Judaism in Chapter 2. Szold’s work as president and co-founder of Hadassah, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, will be discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to her role as a mentor for the organization and her use of the political tool of education for women’s inclusion within the male-dominated Zionist movement. In addition, Chapter 3 will examine her role as a Zionist leader in a movement that defined itself in masculine terms, which invites an analysis of the traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity the Zionist movement held. Szold’s work on behalf of the Palestine Executive, and Youth Aliyah will be discussed in Chapter 4 and will provide the content of her educational work in the last decades of her life.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{13}\) Youth Aliyah was a movement, later an organization, conceptualized by Recha Freier and organized and carried out under the direction of Szold from 1933 until her death in 1945. The movement brought children from Nazi occupied territories to the yishuv.
CHAPTER 2

BRIDGING WORLDS: EDUCATION AS A SOCIAL
AND RELIGIOUS TOOL

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1860 to two Hungarian immigrants, Henrietta Szold viewed America as home while also valuing her religious and cultural heritage. Her father, Rabbi Benjamin Szold as well as her mother, Sophie Schaar, were influential in Szold’s development as a woman, intellectual, educator, writer, and social service reformer. Szold’s focus on education proved to be the common factor between the various groups she encountered throughout her life, particularly between her sisters and her parents, between recent Jewish immigrants and native-born Jews or already established immigrant Jews, between men and women in regards to women’s place within the Jewish community, and between Gentiles and Jews. Szold is usually portrayed as a “woman of valor,” signifying her selfless duty-bound service to the Jewish community. This, however, disregards her personhood and life experiences by encapsulating her whole life into the fixed image of a “woman of valor.” Yet, Szold did serve as a role model due to the very traits that brought her this title. Many women and men believed Szold to be their exemplar because of her scholarly aptitude, her social service work, her duty to her family and community, and particularly, her role as editor, translator, and secretary to the men in her life. In sum, Henrietta Szold’s life was one of duty, pragmatism, and commitment to education.

FAMILIAL BONDS AND ROLES

Love, gratitude, devotion, and duty characterize Szold’s relationship with her parents from her youth until the time they both passed away. In a letter written to her parents while a teenager, Szold wishes them a good Jewish New Year and writes,

I can only reiterate the old promise that I have already made so often, that is: to do my duty untiringly and cheerfully, to be extraordinarily diligent, to obey you

---

14 Szold’s parents arrived in America in 1859 with her mother’s brother and her father’s cousin.
painsstakingly, and to love you with all gratitude and filial emotion at my command . . . (Quoted in Dash, “ Summoned to Jerusalem” 13)

These words illustrate not just her lifelong devotion to her parents and family, but her attitude to every other endeavor in which she was asked to participate. The letter, originally written in German, bespoke of the teaching of her father on the importance of aus der Fulle, which means “out of the abundance of the heart.” This mindset of duty, diligence, filial gratitude, and obedience exemplifies Szold’s life work and appears in her letters throughout her life (Dash, “Summoned to Jerusalem” 13). Szold, later teaching at Misses Adams’ English and French School for Girls, 15 wrote, “A letter -- remember this -- is always a talk -- what you would say to your correspondent if you were with him” (Quoted in Fineman 65). Her many letters throughout the years, saved in her sister’s attic in Baltimore, Maryland, portray a woman whose beliefs and principles followed aus der Fulle.

Irving Fineman in his biography on Henrietta Szold, Woman of Valor: The Life of Henrietta Szold, 1860-1945 (1961), depicts a scene in Szold’s life as a five-year-old child. As she remembered it, she was seated on the shoulders of her father watching Abraham Lincoln’s coffin being carried through the streets of Baltimore. In actuality, Rabbi Szold was part of the procession and thus, was not the one holding little Henrietta. Most accounts place her Uncle Eduard as the one holding up an eager and morose Szold on his shoulders (Fineman 21). Rabbi Szold’s support of President Lincoln’s political platform demonstrates his belief in justice. In remembering herself on her father’s shoulders, Szold’s memory points to the valorization of her father and his beliefs as well as her strong attachment to him, as a person and as an ideal of Jewish life and manhood. 16

Rabbi Szold, a supporter of Lincoln in the strongly Democrat state of Maryland, was also quite unorthodox in personally educating his daughter in the Torah, the first five books of the Jewish Bible, and in the Talmud, the collection of ancient rabbinic writings. During Henrietta Szold’s youth, mainly boys were educated in the Torah and Talmud; however, this

---

15 Miss Adams’ English and French School for Girls was run by three Southern women whose fortunes had been lost in the Civil War (Dash, “Summoned to Jerusalem” 15).

16 While attending the University of Vienna, Rabbi Szold was part of the 1848 revolution in Vienna. Due to his involvement, he was banished from the University and later, finished his secular education at the University of Breslau. Marvin Lowenthal’s Interview with Szold. Sunday, December 29, 1935, Easton, Connecticut. Hadassah Archives, RG 13, Box 24, Folder 3. Pp. 20-21.
did not stop Rabbi Szold from giving a privileged education to his eldest daughter, Henrietta. American Jewish writer Anzia Yezierska (1880?-1970), raised by a father who was a Talmudic scholar, writes of her disenfranchisement from Jewish learning, specifically in her family. In her fictional autobiography, *Breadgivers* (1925), Yezierska portrays her father as representing the Old World while she represents the New World. Her struggle for autonomy in her childhood home and recurring disappointments at the hands of her father and brothers spur her eventual departure from her family of origin. While struggling to make a living in the sweatshops of New York and in the odd jobs she could find, she continually focused on her education. At one point, she is said to have lied on her application to the Teacher’s College at Columbia University, suggesting she had graduated from high school when she had not. Because of the financial needs of her family and her own departure from her family’s home at an early age, Yezierska was unable to finish high school. In contrast to Szold, whom biographers have repeatedly characterized as having the utmost reverence and devotion to her father, Yezierska despised her father and all that he stood for – the Old World and its traditional Talmudic scholar’s home. According to ancient Jewish tradition, females were not permitted to study the Talmud. Yezierska’s story places Szold in an advantaged position as a rabbi’s daughter whose father educated her as others would their eldest son.

As the eldest of the Szold daughters by many years, Szold was both her father’s daughter as well as his personal assistant, helping with many of his writings and sermons for services at Oheb Shalom as well as his “confidante, companion, and disciple” (Antler, “The Journey Home” 99; Fineman 26). This was the typical role the eldest child held in a scholar’s home (Schwartz 47). However, the degree to which she assisted her father involved composing some of his sermons as well as engaging with him in constant dialogue about his sermons and writings (Dash, “Summoned to Jerusalem” 14). The knowledge and ability to compose sermons placed Szold in a particularly vexing position for a young woman in the late nineteenth century at a time when it was still not religiously accepted in Jewish society.

---

17 Throughout her life, Anzia Yezierska claimed to have been born in opposing years. Her precise birth year is unclear even in her homeland of Poland because of irregularities in birth records.

18 Sophia Szold, Henrietta’s mother, suffered two miscarriages by the time Henrietta was five.

19 Oheb Shalom was a German Jewish congregation in Baltimore, Maryland.
for women to be educated to the Torah and Talmud. The only choices for learned women at this time were to marry a rabbi or other learned man (such as a professor), or continue to work under her father or some other male in a similar manner (Schwartz). This theme is not specific to just Szold’s experience, but applies to other educated young women. Many of these educated young women turned to settlement work. Settlement work involved educated middle-class to upper class young women moving to immigrant and working class neighborhoods to educate their neighbors on medicine, parenting, leisure activities, vocational skills, and English writing and speaking competence. Szold’s duty to the scholarly male, particularly her father, was a prominent theme lasting beyond her father’s death in 1902.

Szold’s relationship with her sisters was one of devotion as well. Fineman characterizes this relationship as that of “a third parent . . . – a bridge between them and Mamma and Papa” (41). After Szold’s mother, Sophie, lost two babies, Rebecca and Estella, within a few years of each other, she became withdrawn (Fineman 27). Szold filled in as a mother to her sisters, particularly the younger ones. When Adele took sick with scarlet fever and, years later, Bertha with diphtheria, Szold insisted on caring for them. Szold instructed her siblings in German and in religious and other secular school subjects (41). “American-born like [her sisters] and, though old enough to be looked up to, still young enough to laugh and play with them,” Szold served as the bridge between her parents and her siblings, especially in respect to her father (41). While Rabbi Szold personally educated Szold, she was her siblings’ tutor. As an educator, in this case, Szold became “a bridge” between generations, and later, between different cultures, Jewish denominations, and between men and women (as will be demonstrated in this and succeeding chapters).

---

20 Szold, herself, later led the establishment of settlement work in pre-state Israel under the auspices of Hadassah in the 1910s and 1920s.

21 Szold lost another sister, Johanna, in her early years. Johanna died at the age of three and half of scarlet fever (Fineman 39).

22 Szold’s sisters, in order of birth, were Rachel, Sadie, Johanna, Bertha, and Adele.
JOURNALISM AND EDUCATION: A RALLYING CALL TO ACTION

Graduating early from Western High School (then, Western Girls’ High School) at the age of sixteen and a half, Szold was asked to step in for an ailing principal the very next semester. It is also noteworthy that Szold was not only the valedictorian, but also the only Jew attending this secular school. At the age of seventeen, Szold began teaching at Miss Adams’ School in Baltimore. During the fifteen years Szold was at Miss Adams’ School, she taught “arithmetic, algebra, geometry, ancient history, botany, physiology, English, German, French, and Latin.” Szold had hoped to attend Vassar College, but due to the depression in the late 1870’s, her family’s modest budget, her devotion to attending to her family, and the rarity of females attending college, Szold stayed and began her first career, teaching. She was prepared for this career by the many years she spent instructing her siblings and by her father’s endowment of scholarly aptitude. Szold taught not only at Miss Adams’ School, but also in the weekend classes at the religious school of her father’s temple, Oheb Shalom, and as a private tutor. Furthermore, she was a leading member of both Baltimore’s Botany Club and its Women’s Literary Club (Lowenthal 15).

In matters concerning women’s higher education, Szold wrote anonymously in the May 1883 issue of Education magazine about her disappointment that John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, was only open to male students,

If, at the same time, a superior college for young women could be endowed in Baltimore, whose advanced students could be admitted to the great opportunities of the University for special study, all plans might be happily harmonized and the Monumental City add to its other attractions the fame of a great university town. (Quoted in Levin, “Henrietta Szold: Baltimorean” 2)

According to Alexandra Lee Levin, Szold family biographer and wife of Szold’s nephew, the Baltimore American made Szold’s comments a subject for its daily editorial on July 23,

---


24 In the 1890s, Szold spoke of Vassar to a graduating class, “We didn’t dare mention Vassar, except in terms of awe with which one speaks of a remote object one has never seen and dares not hope to approach” (Quoted in Dworkin 39-40).

25 A good friend of hers, M. Carey Thomas (1857-1935), did go onto college and even earned her Ph.D. in Zurich. At that time, women were not permitted into Ph.D. programs in the United States. Thomas later became a professor and dean, and then, president of Bryn Mawr College, a Quaker women’s college in Pennsylvania.
1883, and newspapers as far as San Francisco carried copies of it. Szold, whose privileged education came from the teaching of her father and at an all-girls’ high school, not only taught girls, but also believed in women’s higher education. Atypical for the era, Szold’s interest in education lay beyond the traditional realm and suggests her genuine passion for advancing women’s rights if only in the arena of education.

Significantly, Szold’s utilized her writing to advocate for women’s higher education. In *The Antebellum Jewish Press: Origins, Problems, Functions*, journalism scholar Barbara Straus Reed writes, “The dependence of the Jews on their writings as a force for unity in the face of the need for constant change held true no matter from which Jewish tradition . . . they emerged,” and Szold was no exception to this (1). Many of Szold’s personal letters and other writings, specifically those published in the *Jewish Messenger*, reflected on the themes of Jewish unity amid increased assimilation and intermarriage, and decreased religious affiliation. Her early writings for the *Jewish Messenger* were published beginning in 1878 when she was only seventeen years of age. Samuel Myer Isaacs, the founder of the *Jewish Messenger*, outlined his objectives for the newspaper in the article entitled, “Object . . . Course . . . and Principles.” One of these was to “encourage young students to write original vehicles and translate themes from other languages” (Reed 24). By creating a place for the paper’s Baltimore Correspondent, Henrietta Szold, he did precisely that.

As the Baltimore Correspondent, Szold wrote under the pseudonym “Sulamith.” The pseudonym is meaningful; at this juncture in history, it was unusual for Jewish women writers to desire a byline. Szold presumably felt comfortable with having a pseudonym not only because it was tradition, but also because she had avoided publicity for much of her life even into her renowned later years (Dash, “Summoned to Jerusalem” 16). Perhaps, Szold also found anonymity appealing because of the views she professed, which were radical for a

---

26 Better known as S.M. Isaacs, this well-known writer became a publisher in 1857. He had already contributed much commentary to the Jewish community on matters of orthodoxy and education. Isaacs believed the *Messenger* needed to be free from public venting, but even as he preached this he used his editorials to promulgate a return to Judaism as a way of life. He was hugely against Reform Judaism’s efforts, such as those promoted by *The Israelite*’s founder and editor, Isaac Mayer Wise.

27 Isaacs believed thoroughly in the objectives he had set out so much so that he had the article printed multiple times in the newspaper.

28 Sulamith, the female figure in Song of Songs or, more commonly known in English, Songs of Solomon, foreshadowed the love of King Solomon for his shepherd lover.
young woman during this time period. In addition, Levin believes that her “extreme
diffidence as to her abilities was one of Henrietta’s characteristics” such that articles in
Harper’s, the Critic, and the Nation went unsigned, and thus, are lost to scholars seeking
Szold’s literary writings (Levin, “Henrietta Szold: Baltimorean” 2).

While Szold’s writings either went unsigned or were penned under a pseudonym, she
used her writings as a platform to voice her opinions on Reform Judaism, Jewish culture,
national and international affairs, and Jewish life in Baltimore. However, biographers have
argued that her writings were not autonomous, but reflected her father’s influence on her.
American Studies scholar Joyce Antler considers this time in Szold’s life as a period where
“she was too much under the thrall of her father’s benign but controlling influence to assert
her own interests” (“Zion in Our Hearts” 131). Szold biographer Joan Dash, in her comments
on Szold’s writing for the Messenger, follows the same line of thought when she writes that
Szold was “a girl of eighteen repeating her parents’ ideas” (“Summoned to Jerusalem” 16).
In addition, Dash views Szold’s early writings as “stiff and short,” but “her style improved,
the stiffness melted and the ideas were more often her own than her father’s, although there
was not yet anything strikingly original” (“Summoned to Jerusalem” 16).

My own readings of Szold’s writings, though limited in scope, offer a view of Szold
not illustrated by the previous biographers. I found Szold’s writings a bit stiff and
“over-elaborate,” but over time she developed a voice that though seemingly similar to her
father’s, was not entirely of his teaching. As a young woman with considerable knowledge of
Jewish texts and traditions, Szold was an outsider not only with her peers, but also with her
writing cohorts. While many female writers were discussing social events and prescriptive
literature on being a better wife, mother and/or daughter, Szold’s voice emerged as a rallying
call to Jews everywhere to live a Jewish life according to Jewish law, rather than assimilate
to the degree that many did at the time. Szold writes in the Jewish Messenger on Friday,
March 29, 1878:

We cannot exactly complain of lethargy, or indifference to the cause of Judaism,
but the Jewish community seems to have thought that to satisfy the benevolent
and religious cravings is sufficient. The extensive fields of Hebrew lore,
philosophy, poetry, and the other departments of literature, and the noble language in which it is expressed, all have been allowed to remain barren.\textsuperscript{29} She implies that the traditional Jewish learning by the general Jewish population in America is desolate. In “remain[ing] barren,” “the extensive fields” she names require education.

Szold’s own frustration with the Jewish community, specifically in Baltimore, derives in part from her lack of awareness of her own exceptional education. Again education is a topic in the July 12, 1878 issue of the \textit{Jewish Messenger} when she discusses the “highly talented” youth who “throw away the opportunities” of attaining “an excellent education” in order to pursue “dancing, dressing and kindred pastimes!”\textsuperscript{30} Szold believes that these pastimes “are to be enjoyed at their proper seasons but are not to be made one’s end and aim.” Rather, she asks how these youth would feel if they were:

to reflect [on] what good is to be done, how much is to be learned, how many are to be helped and instructed, what a number of bleeding wounds are waiting for healing balsam, how much there is to be admired in this world, how many pure pleasures are given to be enjoyed, but all of which only an eye, opened by knowledge and refined by education, can perceive, they would know that it is like blasphemy to give up soul and body for such bagatelles [a rallying call to the Israelites’ sons and daughters].\textsuperscript{31}

Szold gives her own bagatelle, or rallying call, when she writes, “Only, when the sons and daughters of Israel will take an exalted view of life, anxiously numbering the grains of sand in their hour glass, and usefully employing everyday, will we be equal to the mission of a nation of priests.”\textsuperscript{32} It is evident here that Szold is hoping to persuade her peers that by following in the path of their ancestors they would be find a much more fulfilling life.

Szold was not a woman of indifference when it came to education, which is revealed by the multiple educational and leadership roles she held throughout her life. Her call to arms requires her community to radically change in order to address effectively the tensions felt by all Jews, such as the conflicting identities of being a Jew and an American. Szold believes this change can occur through the education of the youth in their Jewish history, literature

\textsuperscript{29} Sulamith. \textit{Jewish Messenger}. Friday, March 29, 1878. P. 2.
\textsuperscript{30} Szold’s criticism of Jewish youth anticipated what has become known as the Jewish Literary movement of the 1970s and 1980s.
\textsuperscript{31} Sulamith. \textit{Jewish Messenger}. Friday, July 12, 1878. P. 5.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
and traditions. To Szold, Judaism was a way of life, a view resulting from her own social location as a rabbi’s daughter educated in the Torah and Talmud. This way of life was at risk of extinction if the Jewish youth continued “to give up soul and body” to worldly pleasures. Szold may not acknowledge her social location as a rabbi’s daughter in her rallying call to the youth and their parents; however, her bagatelles put her in the position of a spiritual leader asking her community to return to its roots. Regardless of whether her writing is thoroughly original or not, Szold had a remarkably powerful voice for a young woman still in her teens. Szold’s ideas may be reminiscent of her father’s, but by suggesting she was merely restating what her father said, her agency is obscured as a female writer who was constructing her own voice in the public eye at the young age of seventeen. Further, Rabbi Szold was not a female whose own authority as an educated Jewish writer was under attack.

Szold’s ability to discuss with her father, not just his own work and other religious scholars’, but her own was a vital step in her maturing as an individual and as a writer. Still engrossed in her daily transcriptions of her father’s work, necessitated by his arthritis and rheumatism, Szold gave many a prophetic glimpse into the woman she would become (Dash, “Summoned to Jerusalem” 9). At once a devoted daughter to her father and to his work, she was also an independent critic undaunted by her young age or her sex. Moreover, her individuality as a writer is seen as she reproached interpreters of Jewish works and developed a string of critics different from those of her father. Most Szold biographers refer to a California critic who questioned Szold’s authority as a scholarly critic by referring to her as “a pan and a pot scourer,” referencing the kitchen, where this critic believed women belonged. Her scathing reply to this critic demonstrated her familiarity with such scholarly authorities as Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Mendelssohn, Schlegel, and Spinoza. Her scholarly knowledge and writings did not cause her to “neglect the peculiar privilege of women to attend to the physical comfort of their more awkward fellow creatures.” In addition, she wrote that she did not “consider it a disgrace, or belonging to a lower sphere, to occupy myself with the various branches of domestic economy” (Quoted in Fineman 47). Szold, therefore, believed that one could be a traditional woman and a non-threatening educated writer.

Education is a prevalent topic in her other writings for the Jewish Messenger as well. She writes in the July 12, 1878 issue that erecting a monument in honor of Reverend Samuel M. Isaacs of New York was “thoroughly un-Jewish.” Rather, she suggests that a fund be
established in memory of Isaacs “for educating Jewish children in destitute circumstances, for cultivating our history and literature, or for some such purpose which would be likely to meet his sanction, and to give it the name the ‘Isaacs’ Fund.”’ For Szold, a monument is a sign of idolatry, rather than respect to Reverend Samuel M. Isaacs. Her pragmatic character is highlighted when she suggests an alternative to the monument, a fund for educating children whose social location does not afford them the privilege of a Jewish education. Szold believes fervently that the solution will be children, in whose future Judaism will continue or be “consumed by the scorching fire of materialism, infidelity, and skepticism.” She asks how one can “study our history and be left cold, unmoved, not feel a thrill of highest pleasure pass through his heart” because “once it is studied by our own people, when love, pride, and ambition are awakened.” In Szold’s view, education is a tool for “a return to simplicity, to fervent, true religiousness.”

Szold’s belief in women’s education is highlighted when she speaks of the “lack of intelligence, and indifference to literary pursuits and distinction existing in Jewish social circles.” This has led “people [to] meet night after night and have not a mind stored with knowledge which they can apply to the discussion of the topics of the day.” Instead, having nothing else to do, they “gossip, indulg[ing] in that most abominable of social practices[.] It is that habit which degrades women and makes men the most listless, insipid creatures . . .” Szold does not make a distinction between the education of women “to literary pursuits” to that of men of “literary pursuits.” Here she includes men alongside women with no mention of differentiation in type of education. Hence, it is assumed that women as well as men need to be educated to enhance the spiritual and religious condition of their lives.

In her correspondence, Szold also spoke of the role of women within the Jewish community; specifically, she addresses how women, in her view, are most effective to their family and community. Szold, while acknowledging the charitable work of the Ladies Sewing Society, suggests a more practical use of their funds and time:

---

33 Sulamith. Jewish Messenger. Friday, December 27, 1878. P. 1. Coincidently, this correspondence is on the front page of the Messenger. This was the first instance when Szold’s writing was printed on the front page. Her correspondence discussed a change in the education of Jewish children to compensate for the absence of a strong Jewish education at home.

instead of the members of the Society themselves doing the work, it [should] be given to several needy seamstresses, who thus would have employment and means of subsistence. For the Jewish housewife, so sorely needed in her own house and at her own fireside, there would be at least one opportunity less for leaving her home; and a number of little deeds of charity could in this way be embraced in the execution of the grand, philanthropic idea of clothing the naked.  

Szold believes that the “Jewish housewife” is needed in her home. She writes in the same correspondence, “It seems to me [that in Kayserling’s work] every accomplishment and virtue [a] woman requires should be used in adorning and beautifying her home.” However, this belief not only changes throughout the course of her life, but is an area of tension between what she says she longs for – a family of her own – and the path she follows when called to serve her community. This area of tension becomes more apparent when she was living in New York working for the Jewish Publication Society and attending the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Szold’s work, as one of the few females writing in the genre of Jewish scholarship and on educational reform within the Jewish community, was published in The Messenger, The Jewish Exponent, and Herod and Mariamne (Fineman 64). However, writing was not the only educational endeavor Szold undertook. Encouraged to speak before literary clubs and the Young Men’s Hebrew Association, Szold overcame her fear of public speaking to speak before women’s and men’s organizations. Most noted in her early years was her talk for the Maryland State Teacher’s Association entitled “Elementary Schools – Training Schools” given in 1887 (she would have been twenty-seven years old). This talk provides insight into Szold’s philosophy of education, particularly that of tailoring children’s education to their needs,

Do we always bear in mind that conveying information is only a subordinate part of the teacher’s work? It is the living, the organic, the concrete, that in which life throbs and pulsates, as in his own quickening blood, that attracts a child. In every study he must be shown growth, which is life . . . (Quoted in Levin, “Henrietta Szold: Baltimorean” 2)

---


36 Szold is most likely referring to Meyer Kayserling (1829-1905), a noted Jewish rabbi and historian.

37 By 1902, the London Jewish Chronicle had referred to Szold as one of the foremost essayists in the United States (Dash, “Summoned to Jerusalem” 26).
Her talk questioned the lessons of teachers, who did no more than convey information. Szold believed in active learning, where students’ needs, ideas, and personalities are considered when creating lesson plans. This educational philosophy is revisited in Chapter 4 in discussions of Szold’s work on behalf of Youth Aliyah.38

Similar to Szold’s writings, public speaking was an avenue not only for reforming education within the community, but also for bringing attention to the import and value of women’s role within the Jewish community. At the 1893 Columbian World’s Fair in Chicago before the Women’s Parliament of the World’s Congress of Religions, Szold gave a speech entitled “What Judaism Has Done for Women.” Notable in her speech is her extension of the domestic duties of Jewish women into the public sphere of their communities, “Judaism permits her daughters to go forth into this new world of ours to assume new duties and responsibilities and rejoice in its vast opportunities.” Connecting the “new world” with Judaism illustrates Szold’s acknowledgement of the need for Judaism to adapt to changing times, particularly that of women’s new public status within the new world. She ends the above quote with “But it says: ‘beware of forgetting your dignity.’”39 The warning positioned right after challenging traditional Judaism’s conception of women’s place suggests Szold’s own trepidation with being accepted in the public sphere as a woman.

Though at once anxious about her presence in the public sphere and passionate about her work lecturing or writing for educational reform or on the need for women’s domestic skills to be utilized within the community, Szold’s lectures and journalism proved to be a bridge between men and women. This bridge allowed for ideas usually reserved for conversations between women to be advocated for within the public sphere. Further, Szold’s lectures were not just given in front of her own community, but reached the gentile community as well. This placed Szold in the position of moderator between two cultures, Gentiles and Jews. Hence, Szold writings and lectures provided a bridge between sexes and between cultures. Szold continued to be a bridge between cultures as she administered and taught East European Jews at the Russian night school.

---

38 Youth Aliyah was a movement closely administered and carried out by Szold where youth in Nazi-occupied territories were brought to pre-state Israel.

EDUCATOR AND ADMINISTRATOR: THE RUSSIAN NIGHT SCHOOL (1882-1893)

Often when recalling her childhood, Szold idealized the home on Lombard Street in Baltimore where the Szolds had lived for many years. Lombard Street was the Szolds’ second home, larger than their first, but with a similar atmosphere. Recently arrived immigrants and family friends would show up unannounced to partake in the family dinners and hearty discussions of politics, Jewish tradition and philosophy, great works by German and Austrian scholars, and local events and news. The family invited many to stay for more than dinner.

It was here that Szold learned of the plight of the Russian immigrant Jew. These immigrants survived the Russian pogroms of the 1880’s and the May Laws of 1882, only to be rejected by their co-religionists in America as either too traditional in their religious observances or too radical in their ardent beliefs in Zionism and socialism. Szold and her father met and greeted some of the newly arrived Russians at the ports in Baltimore to welcome them and assist them with their transition to America. These were some of the faces that showed up for family meals. In her twenties at the time, Szold saw first-hand the hope and spirit Russian Jews could bring to the diaspora. Ostracized by German Jews, Russian Jews were in a particularly challenging position.

Having already turned out biting newspaper critiques of assimilationist American Jews, Szold saw in the Russians a source of reinvigoration of Jewish religion and culture in the diaspora. The Russians required English language skills and other vocational skills to become self-sufficient and successful in America. With the help of her father and funds from Isaac Bar Levinson Hebrew Literary Society, Szold founded a night school for Russian Jewish immigrants where she served as administrator and teacher. Here, English was taught along with vocational skills. Men, women and children attended the night school.  

---

40 The May Laws were introduced by Tsar Alexander III of Russia on May 15, 1882. This official discrimination of Jews included banning Jews from living in certain areas, placing quotas on the numbers of Jews in secondary and higher education, and placing quotas on Jews in largely Jewish professions of the day.

41 The Isaac Bar Levinson Hebrew Literary Society of Baltimore was founded by a group of young Russian Jewish scholars in 1889. See Benjamin H. Hartoges’ “The Russian Night School of Baltimore.” American Jewish Historical Society 31 (1928): 225-229.

42 Russian Jews were not the only students at the night school. German Jews as well as gentiles attended
Szold biographer Irving Fineman believes that Szold’s “womanliness” drew “men . . . to work with her for a worthy cause,” the Russian night school (90). Fineman’s biography of Szold is filled with references to Szold’s feminine characteristics in an effort to distance, rather than celebrate, Szold from her own uniqueness as a highly educated, well-spoken, intelligent, and highly public woman. Suggesting the time period he was writing in through his use of the term “Amazon”, Fineman describes Szold as the opposite of a “manlike Amazon”; “Her ideal woman was not the manlike Amazon, but eshet hayil, the ‘woman of valor’,” and thus, the title of his book (90). Fineman’s whole argument is that Szold’s “womanliness”, which confers upon her the title “woman of valor”, outshined her achievements. In depicting Szold as a “woman of valor,” Fineman silences Szold’s personhood beyond her devotion to her community. She is seen in a manner that does not encompass the full reality of her life and personhood. In reality, Szold secured financial support through her intellect, pragmatism, and her filial relation to a well-respected rabbi in the community.

After receiving financial support for the night school in 1889, Szold was soon absorbed with the “practical education” of Russian immigrants (Lowenthal 77). Szold’s nights and weekends were consumed with teaching the Russian Jews while her days were spent teaching at Miss Adams’ School. She continued to write for the Jewish Messenger and other Jewish newspapers. The night school grew with extra classrooms and more teachers. Her commitment to education was stronger than her interest in courtship, at this point, though fellow teacher Mr. Benjamin Hartogensis had shown interest. Her administration and teaching at the Russian night school was more than just charity work, but practical service work in which students were taught bookkeeping, arithmetic, Hebrew, sewing (for the women), and, of course, English (Dash, “Summoned to Jerusalem” 25). The Russian night school illustrates how as a young adult Szold found the resources for providing social services to immigrant Jews and made an impact on her Baltimore community. Appreciation for her educational efforts with immigrants was not lost on her community or first generation the school.

Many female athletes during the middle of the twentieth century were referred to as “Amazon” because of their physical prowess and dress, which suggested manliness. Fineman is obviously trying to portray Szold, a public figure similar to athletes, in contrast to her contemporaries.
citizens. In the 1930s, New York Mayor La Guardia spoke of this appreciation when presenting her with a key to the city, “If I, the child of immigrant parents, am today Mayor of New York . . . it is because of you. Half a century ago you initiated that instrument of American democracy, the night school for the immigrant” (Quoted in Dash, “Summoned to Jerusalem” 259). Szold’s work on behalf of one of the first night schools in the United States was one of the models the public school system expanded on in the years after the school had disbanded.

Szold’s role within the night school as administrator and teacher was another arena where she served as the bridge between cultures. The night school served not just Russian Jews, but German Jews and gentiles. Within a few decades, Szold would be doing analogous work on behalf of Hadassah.

**THE JEWISH INTELLECTUAL I: THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY (1888-1916)**

In 1893, the Jewish Publication Society of America (hereafter, JPS) asked the thirty-three year old Szold to become its paid Executive Secretary. Already having served in this capacity as a volunteer for five years, Szold accepted after much deliberation. This position required Szold to move to Pennsylvania where the Society’s office was located. Szold had yet to live outside of Baltimore or, for that matter, away from her family. American Jewish historian Jonathan Sarna reflects that to be a wage earner in late nineteenth century America and to be away from home was a “mixed blessing” for women, “It implied independence and offered the prestige that accompanies work well done, but it carried with it bleak overtones of needing a job because one could not depend on a husband.” Szold was far more concerned with her family’s welfare than in finding a husband. At the time, Szold’s family was undergoing transitions and was in need of money. Her sister Rachel had married and departed to Wisconsin; her sister Sadie had died from rheumatic fever; and her father had

---

44 While volunteering at JPS, Szold had worked in her usual meticulous manner on Heinrich Graetz’s *History of the Jews* (1891-1898), which had already been published in London, but needed extensive editing. She had also created a rather comprehensive 492-page index (Sarna, Jonathan. “Henrietta Szold: Hadassah Preludes.” *Hadassah Magazine* June/July 1990, P. 19. Hadassah Archives, Record Group 13, Box 41, Folder 4, P. 20). Notably, Szold’s name was absent from the publication’s credits.

been forced to retire as rabbi at Oheb Shalom (Sarna, “JPS” 48).\textsuperscript{46} Family and friends encouraged the apprehensive Szold to accept the position. Prepared for the position by her father and by her own reviews of Jewish scholarship, Szold took the position and put off her own dreams of writing. She handed over the responsibilities for running the Russian night school to her former suitor, Mr. Hartogensis (Lowenthal 49). Szold described her position of Executive Secretary to the JPS to her parents as entailing: “evaluating manuscripts, copyediting, proofreading, indexing, working with the printer, keeping track of manuscripts, and corresponding with authors, as well as preparing publication committee minutes” (Quoted in Sarna, “JPS” 48).\textsuperscript{47} Szold presented this position to her family and friends as “very ladylike [and] gentle” perhaps in an effort to convince herself of this. She may also have been acknowledging that her work was largely under-appreciated and underpaid considering the enormous responsibilities outlined in the above quotation. In addition, Szold found working in a paid position to be “a very unpleasant sensation” (Quoted in Sarna, “JPS” 49).\textsuperscript{48} Nonetheless, Szold accepted her pay without negotiation and continued to remain anonymous in her own contributions to JPS.

Szold’s achievements at JPS included the translation of ten books, her almost exclusive work on the annual American Jewish Year Book, and her editorial work on Graetz’s History of the Jews as well as the 492-page index for the book. Sarna includes among her contributions to the JPS “the support she gave aspiring authors and her effort to cultivate different kinds of Jewish literature.”\textsuperscript{49} It can safely be said that Szold’s work on behalf of the JPS was a remarkable achievement that was not publicly acknowledged, especially by her supervisor Mayer Sulzberger.\textsuperscript{50} Even years after she left JPS, she was still

\textsuperscript{46} In an attempt to modernize its worship, Oheb Shalom, the congregation Rabbi Szold had served since 1859, voted to replace Rabbi Szold as head rabbi (Dash, “Summoned to Jerusalem” 29).

\textsuperscript{47} As found in Henrietta Szold Letter to “Folks.” April 10, 1894. Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center, Jewish Publication Society of America Papers, Szold Box 1.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{50} Sulzberger did not utter a word of appreciation for Szold’s work until the tenth anniversary of the Society (Sarna, “JPS” 49).
referred to as a secretary.\textsuperscript{51} Clearly, her work was not simply that of a secretary; she was also a translator, an editor, and a publicist. However, at the twentieth-fifth anniversary of the Society in 1913 one newspaper wrote,

\begin{quotation}
A noticeable feature [of author’s night] was the unanimity with which scholars whose books have been published by the Society paid tribute to Miss Henrietta Szold for the assistance she had rendered them in preparing their works for publication . . . Many another author or would-be author owes much to her kindly and wholehearted helpfulness – some, indeed, who do not realize their debt to her, so freely has the service been rendered and so modestly . . . America has produced no other Jewish woman who has meant so much to Jewish scholarship.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quotation}

Szold’s achievements on behalf of the JPS are clearly the work of a distinguished Jewish scholar, writer, editor, and advocate for writers. She was, in this capacity, a guiding force for the JPS.

The JPS’s goals of uniting the Jewish community and bringing Jewish literature translated into English to the masses were close to Szold’s own hopes and goals. Szold’s focus on education was prominent here; even if she later called JPS “too academic, too secular” and complained that it did not come organically from contemporary experiences, such as those of the Russian Jews she had befriended at the night school. Szold believed the JPS was “afraid of publishing a book that issued from actual life of a section of the Jewish community” because JPS saw itself as “always behind the time.”\textsuperscript{53} Feminist American Studies scholar Joyce Antler considers Szold’s work on behalf of JPS as doing “little to advance the mission of educating Jewish women” because “it failed to reach the vast majority of women who had little Jewish education” (Antler, “Zion in Our Hearts” 131).

While this is true, Szold was an advocate of both female and male writers and translators. Szold took particular pride in her discovery of one translator in particular. Helena Frank, an English translator of Yiddish texts as well as the cousin of the Duke of Westminster, was hired to translate Yiddish writer, I.L. Peretz’s, collection of stories due to Szold’s influence.


(Sarna, “JPS” 84). Frank would not have been hired if it had not been for Szold’s insistence “that Yiddish culture would have an important role to play in American Jewish life” (Sarna, “JPS” 83). Szold served as a bridge between the “academic” Society and that of the majority of the Jewish population, at this time mostly Eastern European Jews, with her campaign to translate Yiddish texts to English. By the end of the nineteenth century, New York housed the largest population of Jews, particularly that of Eastern Europeans Jews whose language and cultures were intertwined, which allowed for the creation of successful Yiddish newspapers and theatres still in existence today. Once again, Szold played the role of cultural moderator between the Russian Jews and other Eastern European Jews and her German co-religionists.

In a 1935 interview with biographer Marvin Lowenthal, Szold refers twice to “the best thing [she] ever wrote” as being “a characterization of all the books [JPS] had gotten out” published in recognition of JPS’s twenty-fifth anniversary. These references to her work as a literary accomplishment illustrate that Szold’s own beliefs about herself changed over the course of her life. She went from accepting her anonymity as an author, editor, and translator for the JPS and disliking working for money to recognizing and finding pride in her work. Acknowledging that her work was largely unrecognized or under-appreciated by her male cohorts, Szold recalls that the countless letters she handwrote for the JPS over the years “were all destroyed, I know that.”

JEWISH INTELLECTUAL II: THE JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (1903-1906) AND LOUIS GINZBERG

According to biographer Irving Fineman, Szold’s involvement with JPS was also a result of her belief in the revival of “intellectual Judaism.” She wrote of this in a paper on Yehudah Halevi, “A God-Kissed Poet,”

We are too apt to despise the intellectual Judaism. There are many among us who . . . believe that the fear of the Lord is not only the beginning, but also the

---


55 It is unknown who destroyed these letters. However, it is clear Szold’s work went largely unrecognized far beyond the period she worked for JPS, which could have led to the destruction of these letters as insignificant to JPS.
end of all wisdom, and hence criminally refuse to be students of our literature and our law... the fear must possess even the staunchest, most pious heart that, unless fed from intellectual springs of unsounded depths, our sublimest spiritual truths, seeking expression in ceremonial observances, may in our safeguarding degenerate into sentimental or mystical speculations, and our symbols, instead of remaining vehicles, become ends in themselves. (Quoted in Fineman 91)

When her father died in 1902, “intellectual Judaism” propelled her to continue his work by enrolling that same year in the Jewish Theological Seminary (hereafter, JTS) in New York. Szold, her sister Adele, and her mother moved to New York together. At JTS, she hoped to continue her studies of the sacred Jewish texts: “I am going to carry out the ambition of my adult life and take a regular course in Hebrew studies.” She had “a particular purpose – or hope – the hope that I may some day be able to publish my father’s manuscripts.”56 With the help of her friend Cyrus Adler, on faculty at JTS,57 the reputation of her father, and her own reputation, Szold was accepted into the Seminary after she was asked to publicly state that she did not intend to become a rabbi (Fineman 113). Significantly, Szold was the first woman to attend JTS. Her experience there was that of an older woman (she was forty-three years old upon admission) who knew her place and whose whole purpose was to advance her studies. While there, she also became a tutor to foreign-born faculty who required assistance with their English speaking and writing skills. Again, through the role of tutor, Szold served as a bridge between immigrant Jews and the native-born American Jews. In her role as the token female intellectual at JTS, Szold also served as a bridge between patriarchal conceptions of women’s place and the possibility of women’s higher education.

What is informative about this time period is that her responsibilities were refocused, moving from service to her father to a new attraction, Louis Ginzberg. An esteemed Talmudic scholar at JTS and one of the authors published by JPS, Ginzberg’s entrance into Szold’s life marked the first time she publicly admitted to feeling romantic love. As a student of his at JTS, through her position as “secretary” at JPS, which published his work, and her attraction to him, Szold readily accepted his requests to translate and edit his lectures and other work. The relationship between Louis Ginzberg and Henrietta Szold is a complex maze, further confused by

---

56 Henrietta Szold Letter to Dr. Hertz. August 30, 1903, No location listed (assume Baltimore, MD). Hadassah Archives, Record Group 13, Box 1, Folder 6.

57 Cyrus Adler (1863-1940) later served as President at JTS (1924-1940).
the work of scholars who either silenced her love for Ginzberg by leaving out any reference, completely or nominally, to Ginzberg as her love interest (Lownthal; Fineman), and/or misinterpreted her unrequited love as the main cause Szold became a Zionist (Fineman).

Baila Shargel’s collection of Szold’s letters and diary entries, published in *Lost Love: The Untold Story of Henrietta Szold* (1997), marked the first time a scholar had looked exclusively at many previously unpublished documents to bring a feminist perspective to the much misconstrued relationship between Szold and Ginzberg. Shargel critiques Fineman’s analysis of Szold’s life, specifically the structural format of his biography, which was divided into three sections: “Her Father’s Daughter,” “The Turn: Trial and Transfiguration,” and “Her Mother’s Daughter.” Fineman writes that the “transfiguration” of Szold’s life happened when Ginzberg rejected her. Thereafter, she abandons “the ‘masculine’ life of the mind” in favor of the “‘feminine,’ ‘practical’ pursuits” for and in Palestine. To Shargel, this is inaccurate because Szold had always participated in traditional feminine activities, such as playing the piano, sewing, and working in her family’s garden. Shargel argues that if “the Fineman thesis” were correct, “then Szold’s life after the ‘transfiguration’ would have found her absorbed in practical endeavors to the exclusion of intellectual activity,” which did not occur. There are many incidences throughout the remainder of Szold’s life where she does traditionally masculine tasks, such as writing proposals, writing and preparing documents on the status of education and social services in Palestine, and writing letters to Hadassah informing them of the current situations in Palestine. In agreement with Shargel, I too do not see a clear division in Szold’s life “between paternal and maternal imperatives” (Shargel 320). Szold was never merely an intellectual (read: masculine) or merely a “practical” social worker (read: feminine). Szold was more complex than even those two supposedly competing, binary identities. In fact, Szold believed her “whole intellectual make-up” was from her mother “because as in the case of my mother I am practical. My mind runs to details and I have a sense of duty.” Yet, Szold’s “mode of thinking” was different from her mother’s, “on account of the fact that father set out to give me an education based on one principle. He always said adopt some central idea; never depart from it, but relate everything to that central idea.”

Szold’s central idea was her duty to her community through her focus on education, whether of herself at the JTS or of others.

---

58 Marvin Lownthal Interview with Szold. Sunday, December 29, 1935, Easton, CT. Hadassah Archives
Szold represented the relationship between Ginzberg and her as all consuming in her letters and diary entries, written after the announcement of his engagement to another woman, Adele Katzenstein. While in Europe visiting his dying father, Ginzberg proposed to Adele. Ginzberg and Szold had written multiple letters during his time overseas, but never once did he mention he had become engaged until he arrived back in the U.S. She had withdrawn from the Seminary, never finishing her father’s work, and instead, immersed herself in Ginzberg’s work, canceling many social outings and responsibilities to be at his beck and call. For three years, Szold’s life revolved around Ginzberg and her hope he might propose to her. However, when her hope was crushed by his announcement of engagement to a much younger woman in her 20’s (Szold was thirteen years his senior), Szold took the news at first in a quiet “lady-like fashion.” Soon, however, she confronted Ginzberg, who denied ever having thought of her as anything other than a friend. Whether or not this was true has been open for debate among many scholars (Antler, “Zion in Our Hearts”; Sarna, “JPS”; Shargel), but one thing is clear, Szold’s pain was unmistakable. Szold had had suitors previous to Ginzberg, and received another proposal soon after Ginzberg’s rejection, but never let anyone enter her heart as she did Ginzberg. After her father’s death, Szold transformed her grief into a passion and dedication to her studies at JTS and her work with JPS. Once Ginzberg, a man who reminded her of her father, another Old World (traditional European) Talmudic scholar, appeared in her life as a teacher at JTS, an English student and a writer at JPS, Szold transferred the affection she felt for her father onto him. Both men were recipients of a substantial amount of arduous work done by Szold on their behalf. This work was largely invisible to the public.

59 Szold’s father was traditional in many senses of the word, but untraditional in that he taught his eldest daughter the Torah and the Talmud during an era when women were not expected, or even allowed to be trained as such.

60 This is not to deny Szold’s feelings for Ginzberg, but rather to explain why she was so devoted to Ginzberg that she denied herself adequate sleep and her studies at JTS (she stopped studying there when her JPS work became too burdensome, largely due to Ginzberg’s demands on her time), and consistently broke appointments with friends and family when Ginzberg came calling.

61 In the case of Ginzberg, Szold did receive credit for the editing she did for The Legend of the Jews, but not for the time and effort she put into translating his work into English, whether it be for his renowned volumes on the history of the Jews, academic articles, or lecture. In the case of her father, this work was expected of Szold as the eldest unmarried daughter. However, she not only served as his secretary, but as his theological equal with the help she gave toward his sermons, and other religious works.
Through analyzing her relationship with Ginzberg in her diary, Szold found things to be grateful for, “God bless him and that other woman, and God help me!” (Quoted in Shargel 213). Shargel views Ginzberg as instrumental in Szold’s eventual development of a feminist consciousness; he gave “her valuable advice and support, and provided the courage to consider terminating her association with the JPS.” In acknowledging her own responsibility for her subordination and the absence of due credit for her work at the JPS, Szold writes in response to Ginzberg, “I wonder how much of it is due to the goading of others, how much to overwrought nerves-thoroughly feminine reasons, I hear you generalize, feminine lack of independence and feminine unsteadiness” (Shargel 317). Even in questioning her values, Szold felt duty bound to the Jewish Publication Society and to Ginzberg, both male forces using Szold’s knowledge and dedication to her work and duty to “intellectual Judaism” to further their own work. While Ginzberg was in Europe visiting his ailing father in 1907, Szold and Ginzberg corresponded through the mail. Szold, at the time, did not know that he was away meeting and pursuing his future wife. In three of his last letters to Szold before arriving back in the United States, Ginzberg refers to Szold as a “victim” and himself as the perpetrator (Fineman 160-161). Puzzled by this, she ignored his out of character description of her. His reference to her as a victim in three consecutive letters perhaps relays his own apprehension about their “friendship” and its future as he was at the time pursuing Adele, his future wife.

Szold, though, never portrayed herself in public as a victim. In her diary, she even goes so far as to thank him, “Whatever he did or did not, he made me happy, and for that I must thank him forever! But again the question comes, was it happiness?” (Quoted in Shargel 199). Philosophical but practical, Szold acknowledges her sense of “happiness,” whatever that may have encompassed. After reading a touching book by Maurice Hewlett, The Queen’s Quair, Szold blames herself:

So being a queen does not save one from the pangs I suffered, and she was young and beautiful! How is it that I never saw those things in literature before? I have wronged myself impossibly by my hard work. I estranged myself from men and from their writings; I had no time for either. I knew men only when they needed me, and books only when I was forced to need them. A one-sided attitude toward the whole world only because I gave myself no time for men... I believe now

---

62 As found in Szold’s journal entry of December 31, 1908.
that there was more in me than ever was brought out. I suppressed myself, and circumstances helped me to do it thoroughly. (Quoted in Fineman 203)

During the three years Ginzberg and Szold worked on his seven volume *Legend of the Jews*, Szold never mentioned her love for Ginzberg to anyone, let alone Ginzberg. It was not until the devastating announcement of his engagement that Szold confided in others her true feelings for him. For those three years, she fretted about her age in relation to the younger Ginzberg (Fineman 131). Shargel describes this time period for Szold as “a season of self-definition through suffering, of belated yet peremptory expulsion from an Eden of sexual ignorance and personal innocence” (3). In what Fineman describes as an “idealism” concerning the men in her life and what these men represented, Szold soon began to question this “idealism” after her heartbreak decrying that “I [have found] my Baltimore purity and innocence [though] there probably was as much scheming and seething [within Baltimore], only it seems never to have reached me” (Quoted in Shargel 256). Szold’s silence about her love for Ginzberg can be seen in light of her discomfort at their age difference, her limited experience in romantic and sexual matters as well as this “idealism” of scholarly men, but particularly for what these men represented for her, something she could not claim. Both men were entitled to be rabbis because of their sex, but Szold, always publicly uncomfortable with her own knowledge, could not. In constantly dealing with the restrictions of the time period, Szold was aware that she would never be respected or accepted in the academic, religious or secular community in the same manner as a man.

Yet, for a woman in her late forties, what does this silencing mean? After meeting a young woman who planned to teach at Columbia, Szold writes,

I wish I dared shout it out to every young girl not to turn away for a moment from her natural destination. Do I mean that women are not to be educated to be self-supporting and self-reliant? No! But they must also be taught not to lay too much stress upon mere intellectual efficiency. Their artificial vocation, for use in an emergency, is secondary to their real vocation. And how real the real one would have been for me, I know only now, when my heart hungers for love and for the opportunity of loving. (Quoted in Fineman 261)

Szold, hence, feels *at this point in her life* that if she had only valued the traditional role of women in Jewish life as wives instead of being so caught up in intellectual pursuits (and I add the practical work in her career as an educator), she might have found the happiness and
love she so desired. Curiously, she dismisses all of her contributions to “intellectual Judaism” through her editing and translating.\(^{63}\) Perhaps this is because others were not acknowledging the importance of her contributions, and because she knew all too well that she was an outsider as an academic, a Jew, and a woman. Ironically, all of the work Szold had done on behalf of her father and Ginzberg was in a manner very similar role to that of wife, unpaid and many times, taken for granted.

**ZIONISM AND ITS COUNTERPARTS: DAUGHTERS OF ZION**

Due to her feelings for Ginzberg, Szold had already withdrawn from the Jewish Theological Seminary, but now she also retreated from some of its contiguous community. Her position as secretary of the Jewish Publication Society required continual contact with Ginzberg over the remaining editing and translating to be done on his manuscripts for the multi-volume work *Legend of the Jews*.\(^{64}\) Ginzberg had spent a great deal of time, previous to his engagement, at the Szolds’ home,\(^{65}\) where Szold had helped him with his manuscripts, lectures and speeches beyond her capacity as “secretary” at JPS. Szold’s heartbreak did not cause her to turn from passive to fervent Zionist as Fineman claims. Before even meeting Ginzberg, Szold was already a charter member of the proto-Zionist *Hibbat Zion* movement.\(^{66}\) Further, the intensity of her feelings for Zionism are most likely due to her interactions with immigrant Russian Jews whom she had previously taught at the Russian night school, not from simply a broken heart. Arguments favoring Fineman’s claim are at odds with Szold’s ingenuity and drive in establishing the Russian night school, writing under the pseudonym Sulamith, working for the Jewish Publication Society in the scholarly capacity she did as translator and editor, and following her dream of furthering her studies (though she prematurely quit in her duty to Ginzberg and his work) at the Jewish Theological Seminary. This level of enterprise bespeaks of the strength of

---

\(^{63}\) It is important to note that these diary entries are written during times Szold was under emotional distress. They do not represent what she may have felt after time had elapsed from the heartbreak. However, Szold continuously throughout her life mentions her desire for a traditional life as a wife and a mother. Curiously, she never actively sought this traditional life outside of Ginzberg.

\(^{64}\) A classic Jewish text, *Legends of the Jews* is composed of seven volumes.

\(^{65}\) Szold was keeping house with her mother and her sister, Adele.

\(^{66}\) Hibbat Zion began in the 1880’s, prior to the contemporary Zionist movement, and fought for the revival of Jewish life in the Holy Land. By the First Zionist Congress in 1897, Hibbat Zion had established agricultural settlements in pre-state Israel.
Szold’s own voice, passion, and personhood. True, both her father and Ginzberg were significant to her life, but Szold was her own person, as evidenced in this chapter. A multitude of factors, some indirectly a result of her burnout from her immense duties at JPS and Ginzberg’s romantic dismissal, created the woman who was to be an unwilling role model to Jewish women for decades to come.

In 1907, Szold joined the Harlem female study group, “Daughters of Zion,” at the suggestion of good friend, Rabbi Judah Magnes.\(^67\) Lotta Levensohn, Magnes’ secretary, was the originator of the idea for this particular Zionist study group (Simmons, “Mothering the Nation” 14-15). After a vacation that included a journey to Palestine in 1909, Szold embraced Zionism with even more passion. She had also found the strength and courage to end her work for the Jewish Publication Society. Szold’s Zionist activities increased on February 24, 1912 when Hadassah, the New York chapter of the Daughters of Zion, was formed. Its members were comprised of the former study group, of famous Zionist’s wives and other passionate Zionists.

Throughout Szold’s life, her focus was on education because she believed through it different worlds could be bridged. To Szold, education was a tool to combat Jewish assimilation and apathy. Her duty to her community and her pragmatism succeeded in creating a legacy beyond that of just a “woman of valor.” Henrietta Szold’s contributions to American Jewish life entail a wide spectrum of talents and abilities, and we move now to her later role as Hadassah president and co-founder.

\(^67\) Judah Magnes (1877-1948), a fellow Zionist and close friend of Szold’s whose own Zionism instigated his aliyah (immigration of Jews to Palestine) to the yishuv in 1922. In pre-state Israel, Magnes is noted as a founder, chancellor (1925-1935) and president (1935-1948) of Hebrew University. Controversy surrounded Magnes in Palestine as it did Szold because of their affiliation with Ihud, a pro bi-nationalist organization.
CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION & GENDERED WORK: HADASSAH
UNDER SZOLD’S LEADERSHIP

What I believe flows from my central conception of Zionism; that a center must be built in Zion and that a center implies a periphery, the diaspora, Jewish receptive giving materially, receiving spiritual values. Palestine plus diaspora equals Zionism. Hadassah had from the start assumed a double task, a Palestine purpose and an American Zionist purpose. I feel that the time has come to stress the latter more than hitherto, through the Jewish and political education of its members.

– Henrietta Szold68

In a time period of social reform featuring settlement workers such as Jane Addams and Lillian Wald, Jewish women were organizing on behalf of themselves and, as with Henrietta Szold and the Russian night school in Baltimore, on behalf of fellow community members. Jewish groups organized and run by women, such as Hadassah (1912), the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, were established under the rhetoric of maternalism. Hadassah, under Szold’s leadership as its early president and mentor, utilized this rhetoric to legitimate women’s public presence in the Zionist movement. This chapter looks at the advantages and drawbacks of the maternalistic rhetoric, through the example of Hadassah and its symbolic leader, Henrietta Szold, in establishing a public space for women in the male-dominated Zionist community.

HERSTORY: WOMEN’S SOCIETIES AND CLUBS

The first female Jewish benevolent societies were formed in the early nineteenth century. These organizations were largely composed of middle-class Ashkenazic Jewish women whose privileged lives of leisure afforded them time for their involvement. Through participation in these organizations, women’s influence moved beyond the private sphere. The private sphere, which usually was defined as the female sphere, was the home. However,

by the time of the establishment of these societies, women were becoming more engaged in synagogue life. Women’s influence expanded beyond the home as “part of an interactive social process that involved a complex reworking of gender ideals and the division between private and public space within the Jewish community” (Wenger 18). American Jewish historian Beth Wenger ascribes this, not just to the “expanding sphere of female influence – from the home to the public arena,” but also to the myth of enablers (17). Wenger defines these mythical enablers as “behind-the-scenes agents whose selfless activities empowered those around them” (18). The traditional ideal of the “woman of valor” required a woman to be industrious in the administration of her home and to be an excellent religious and moral educator whose work was done in the name of selfless service. These female benevolent societies did not transgress the prescribed Jewish ideal of the “woman of valor” precisely because these women continued to be portrayed as enablers (Wenger).

The ideal of the “woman of valor” was shaped and prescribed both by men and women. The radical changes in gendered space and roles were effective primarily because women’s voluntarism was seen as part of the ideal of the “woman of valor.” The myth of Jewish women as enablers followed in such a manner that these radical changes in gendered spaces did not contradict the ideal, but rather, continued to symbolize “the [Ashkenazic] Jewish family’s successful acculturation and middle-class status” (Wenger 20). In reality, these organizations left a groundbreaking legacy as the first organized women’s groups run by and for women.

With the advent of women’s clubs in the 1890’s, particularly the founding of the first national Jewish women’s organization, the National Council of Jewish Women, in 1893, women no longer were willing “to be used merely to raise money and to act as figureheads in the management of sewing societies and ladies’ auxiliaries” (Wenger 25).69 The “active and independent role” the women’s clubs sought led to many heated battles over the range of influence one could yield from a home “base” (24, 32). Wenger writes that the “appeals on behalf of the Jewish home reflected anxiety over the state of Jewish life and a desire to set limits upon women’s public involvement” (34). Hence, the contestation over women’s

---

69 Rebekah Kohut was the first president of the New York section of the NCJW and the first president of the World Congress of Jewish Women (Wenger 25).
“proper” place was a construction reflective of changes specifically within the Jewish community and of changes in the Jewish community within the larger general society. Also known as the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, Hadassah followed in the tradition of these women’s clubs.

**THE BEGINNINGS OF HADASSAH**

On a European trip with her father in 1881 when she was twenty-one years old, Szold experienced what American Studies scholar Joyce Antler calls her “first epiphany” (“The Journey Home” 101). At the oldest synagogue in Europe, Alt-Neu Shul in Prague, women and men were separated during worship. In the women’s gallery, a woman who acted as minister transmitted what had been said in the men’s synagogue below. It was here that Szold saw that her work was to minister to women who lacked a strong background in Jewish education that she herself held.

Her second epiphany came during the much written about visit she and her mother made to the Girls’ School in Jaffa in 1909. Seeing children afflicted with eye infections, like trachoma, playing in the sand outside the school, Szold recalled in 1935 her mother’s advice, “this is what your group [Daughters of Zions] ought to do. What is the use of reading papers . . . ? You should do practical work in Palestine [pre-state Israel] . . .”70 According to Antler, after her “second epiphany,” Szold redirected her vision to include “a practical program of philanthropy that not only aided the desperate plight of women and children in Palestine [,] but provided educational and spiritual nurturance to American women in the Diaspora” (104). The “educational and spiritual nurturance” of the volunteers was a common theme in the arena of women’s organizations and clubs (Wenger 26). According to biographer and former Hadassah secretary Rose Halpin, Szold said, “The [Hadassah] women must make themselves responsible for Zionism among the young, but we ourselves are not yet ready to educate – we must first educate ourselves.”71 Through their own education, Hadassah women found their own spiritual nurturance, which they then passed on

---


to youth and other women. Israel Friedlaender, a close friend and fellow Zionist, suggested the motto “the Healing of the Daughter of My People” (*aruchat bat-ami*) for Hadassah, which proved to be apt for Szold’s own vision of Zionism. For Szold, one of the organization’s founders and its first president, Zionism was a spiritual endeavor that would restore the Jewish people to a home free of persecution, but most importantly, it would restore faith in Judaism and Jewish customs and traditions.

Szold’s second epiphany was actualized in 1912 when the members of the study group, Daughters of Zion, and other like-minded Zionist women formed Hadassah, as the New York chapter of the larger Daughters of Zion, at Temple Emanu-El in New York. As a study group, the Daughters of Zion had reflected on Jewish current events and issues, Zionism and its classic texts, and Jewish history. Hadassah continued to do the same, but broadened its focus to provide health and social welfare services in pre-state Israel. In an interview with Szold biographer Marvin Lowenthal, Szold said that on Purim of 1912[^72] the group conceptualized their focus; “we had a meeting of 60 women at Temple Emanuel and there it was decided that we would form ourselves into an organization for the propagation of Zionism in America and the establishment of health welfare for women and children in Palestine.”[^73] This is precisely what Hadassah, still in existence today, is best known for achieving.

**HADASSAH AND ZIONIST WORK**

Based on Szold’s recollections of her visit to Palestine, Hadassah’s founders acknowledged the need for modern scientific health care there. Hadassah then became organized around health work, and most specifically, around providing education on nutrition, trachoma and other diseases, and parenting for those they served in Palestine. Their first mission consisted of sending nurses to Palestine. This plan met with obstacles and financial barriers, but eventually it was carried out through the generous funding of

---

[^72]: In the interview, Szold said the year was 1911. This may have been the result of an error in the transcription of the interview, or that at seventy-five years of age, Szold had forgotten the precise year Hadassah was formed.

philanthropist Nathan Straus\textsuperscript{74} and Hadassah’s own fundraising efforts. Strauss is noteworthy for his role as a philanthropist who in 1893 funded one of the first milk stations in New York. The public health movement in America circa the 1890s saw milk as key to the health of children. Digestive and nutritional disorders were proven to be “primary cause of infant mortality” (Simmons, “Mothering the Nation” 75-78). Hadassah was able to begin its health work in Palestine through Strauss’ financial support of a nurse to be sent to Palestine for four months. Soon, more funds were raised, allowing Hadassah to send two American-trained nurses, Rose Kaplan\textsuperscript{75} and Rachel Landy, to Palestine. Leaving on January 16, 1913, these women were able to open a small clinic in Jerusalem on March 23, 1913. The clinic focused on the eye disease trachoma and maternity cases.

The nurses followed the model of the settlement movement back in the United States. Szold had admired the work of Lillian Wald (1867-1940), whose Henry Street Settlement House in New York’s Lower East Side was renowned for its role in beginning the settlement house movement. Wald, a nurse by trade, believed the most effective way to reach those in dire need of health care was to establish settlement houses in immigrant neighborhoods like the Lower East Side of New York. These nurses lived in the community they were serving. A public health advocate, Wald radicalized the health care system in the United States during her lifetime. The work she initiated and developed included classes for immigrant children and adults in English and in vocational skills (similar to the Russian night school Szold founded)\textsuperscript{76}, playgrounds to teach immigrant and working class youth recreational activities,\textsuperscript{77}


\textsuperscript{75} After the nursing settlement was closed at the beginning of World War I, Rose Kaplan volunteered in Alexandria, Egypt. She assisted with the health care crisis caused by the mass numbers of Jewish refugees who had left war-torn Palestine for Egypt. In 1916, she died of cancer in Egypt.

\textsuperscript{76} See Chapter 2 for more information on the Russian night school Szold founded, administered and taught at.

\textsuperscript{77} Many immigrant children did not have the privilege of playtime in their daily lives because they worked to financially help out their families. Some of these children were either taken out of school or never placed in school due to the economic situation of the family. The purpose of the playgrounds was to teach healthy recreational activities.
and a number of other programs instrumental in providing support to immigrants. Szold believed that the example of Wald’s settlement work could be adapted to Palestinian life. She enlisted a third nurse to be educated in the American model of settlement houses. The nurse was to “spend two months closely observing the work of the Nurses Settlement of New York [and] the health work in the schools” before leaving for Palestine.\(^7\)

Szold also personally consulted with Jane Addams on her work establishing the Hull House Settlement in Chicago. In 1913, Addams traveled to Jerusalem to observe Hadassah’s nursing settlement. Upon her return, Szold, whom Judge Louis Brandeis\(^7\) referred to as “the Jane Adamms [sic] of our Jewish world,” was treated to a “big luncheon” at the Hull House organized by Addams herself. Addams presented Szold with a copy of her memoirs and expressed her admiration of the work Szold was overseeing (Brown, “The Israeli-American Connection” 145). At the first annual convention of the Daughters of Zion held in New York on June 29-30,\(^8\) 1914, the clinic in Jerusalem was described as a settlement house with two residing nurses, a part-time doctor and several midwives. Services were available to all, Arab or Jew. Midwives, who had a history of treating the physical ailments of Palestinians prior to the opening of Hadassah’s nursing clinic, were hired because of their language skills and the Palestinians’ trust in them. The first project of Hadassah, though a small endeavor, provided American Zionists with a model to build upon as well as a professional outlet for educated women.\(^9\)

Due to the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Nursing Settlement was closed, and the nurses were sent home. In 1916, the American Zionist Medical Unit (hereafter, AZMU) was established at Judge Louis Brandeis’ suggestion. The unit provided Palestine with health workers and American scientific advancements in health related areas. However, this was not


\(^8\) Louis Brandeis (1856-1941), the first Jewish Supreme Court Justice (1916-1939), was the leader of the Zionist Organization of America from 1914-1920.

\(^9\) The Daughters of Zion, first organized in 1912, changed its name in favor of the New York chapter’s name, Hadassah, in 1914.

\(^9\) College-educated women were often disappointed at the lack of professional opportunities awaiting them upon graduation. Many found the settlement movement to be their best option for utilizing their education upon graduation.
done overnight. Szold resigned as the first president of Hadassah to help run the struggling AZMU. Idealized by Hadassah members as the symbol and instigative force behind the organization, Szold’s successor urged her to become honorary president of Hadassah. Szold did not believe in absentee administrating, but reluctantly agreed. In 1920, Szold’s life changed radically when she moved to Palestine to help run the AZMU. On her deathbed in 1944, Szold said, “I have not lived one life, but several, each one bearing its own character and insignia.”\(^{82}\) Her work to this point on behalf of Zionism, in particular with Hadassah, had allowed her to educate Jewish women by calling upon their common goal of a homeland. Taking up the administrative running of AZMU was the beginning of her work to educate, not just women, but also Zionist men in the importance of education and women’s self-determination.

**SZOLD’S LEADERSHIP AND THE RHETORIC OF MATERNALISM**

Hadassah’s work in the field of health care soon expanded to include broader educational and social welfare goals in Palestine. Szold’s period as Hadassah’s president (1912-1921, 1923-1926)\(^{83}\) provided the foundation for an organization that soon became the largest Zionist organization in the world in the era between World War I and World War II (Simmons, “Hadassah” 1). The movement of Jewish women into voluntary organizations such as Hadassah was not new, as shown by the women’s societies and women’s clubs, particularly the National Council of Jewish Women. The commonality of Zionist beliefs allowed for the members to cross ethnic, class and denominational barriers. This, it can be assumed, was not always done smoothly or completely.\(^{84}\) Other organizations, such as the Orthodox women’s Zionist group Mizrachi (later Amit women) and the labor-focused Zionist group Pioneer Women (later Naamat), competed for Zionist women’s membership.

---


Szold’s influence as co-founder can be understood through the early requirements for membership of the different local chapters of the Daughters of Zion. According to Hadassah member and Szold’s close friend Alice Seligsberg,85 “[Hadassah] was not permitted to have more than one chapter in a city, and that chapter had to include rich and poor, Americanized socially élite and foreign born.”86 Hadassah, as this quotation illustrates, was based on peoplehood, and thus, unity.87 The only requirement for membership in Hadassah was that the new member believed in the first World Zionist Convention’s platform.88 The platform followed Theodore Herzl’s Zionist ideology of the returning of Jews to their homeland in Palestine. Szold, reminiscent of her concern for the Russian immigrants’ welfare in Baltimore, believed that every woman with a Zionist leaning should be recruited, regardless of class, ethnicity or education. This meant the participation of immigrant Jewish women, many of whom barely subsisted, alongside some American-born Jewish women whose socio-economic status might afford them the luxury of leisure time. Historian and Jewish Studies scholar Eric L. Goldstein relates Hadassah’s broad outreach in recruiting members to Szold’s understanding of diversity; “Szold saw the diversity of American Jewry . . . as a quality which gave it the unique ability to aid Jews and understand Jewish needs in other parts of the world, in war-torn Europe and especially in Palestine” (30). Hence, Szold believed that the multitude of views and dissenting voices were important for reaching American-born Jews who held a narrow outlook of the world, and had not necessarily experienced the anti-Semitism of their co-religionists.

More importantly, Szold viewed the recently arrived immigrants’ participation as a source for inspiration and education for American-born Jews whose affiliation with Judaism

85 Alice Seligsberg was a good friend and confident of Szold’s, particularly after the loss of Szold’s mother in 1917, and also, as a female Zionist compatriot living in Palestine. A social worker and Hadassah member, Seligsberg proved to be an intellectual equal to Szold.


87 However, as much as Szold believed in peoplehood, she also believed in women’s sphere as a maternal arena. She did not endorse women’s suffrage, which was one of the reasons she did not join the NCJW, because it called for the political rights of women. Despite this, Szold’s sister, Rachel Jastrau, was a suffragist (Antler, “The Journey Home” 99). Szold, however, would later involve herself in the political rights of Hadassah’s members in the American Zionist movement and of women in the yishuv (the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine).

88 The first World’s Zionist Convention took place in Basle, Switzerland in 1897.
had been waning. Similar to the suffragist movement, the leaders of Hadassah were middle-class and usually native-born Americans. This should not be surprising as the time commitment for positions of authority and the connections needed for funding were not something working class women, whether immigrant or native born Americans, typically had. Significant here is the place of middle class women in positions of power, which they already held over working class women socially and economically as employers.

These middle class American Jewish women of Hadassah utilized the rhetoric of maternal moral authority to legitimize their public presence in the male-dominated Zionist movement. Already the discourse of settlement workers and other social reformers of the early twentieth century, maternalism was part of the larger framework of the American Progressive movement. Taking its lead from Britain, America became disenchanted with the rigid mores of the Victorian Era. “The cult of true womanhood” was one of these restrictive phenomena, which based its premise on the feminine as fragile and morally superior and the masculine as earthly and morally inferior.\(^{89}\) True womanhood was prescribed to bourgeois, middle class white women, but did not closely align with Jewish gender roles. Jewish women were expected to be industrious administrators of the home, and hence, strong providers rather than weak dependants. Jewish women built on this sentiment and Progressivism’s maternalistic rhetoric to move beyond the home. These women argued that their traditional role as mothers and daughters afforded them special skills of organization men did not have. Women, still considered morally and spiritually superior, were believed to be natural caretakers and nurturers. Thus, women were needed in the public sphere to be social reformers because they knew best how to organize and provide for society as mothers who were hoping to provide a better tomorrow for their children. Though still criticized to a lesser degree for their departure from the home, women were able to participate in public social service in larger numbers during this time period as the result of maternalism.\(^{90}\)

\(^{89}\) Barbara Welter coined the phrase “cult of true womanhood.” Her ground-breaking article “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860” articulated the four qualities a “true woman” was to have: piety, purity, submission, and domesticity. The “cult of true womanhood” was class and race bound, and thus, excluded women “other” than white, middle to upper class women. American Quarterly XVIII (Summer 1966) 1: 151-174.

was regarded as a “natural” extension of women’s work within the home as continued culture-bearers of society.

This discourse carried over into the actual work Hadassah did as “mothers” of the yishuv (the Jewish community in pre-state Israel), or caretakers of “the greater house of Israel.” The Hadassah-sponsored programs for which Szold was the administrator included the School Luncheon Program (1923) and Tipat Halav (“Drop of Milk”). Both of these provided nutritional and other health-related education for children and women. As is usual in the history of women’s work, these services were considered by the larger Zionist movement to be unproductive to the building of the nation because they were focused on problems generally associated with the domestic sphere. These domestic issues, such as infant mortality, childcare, and children’s nutrition, were not deemed significant to nation building precisely because they were considered women’s work. To Szold, women’s contributions were not only productive, but also essential for establishing a Jewish nation. This is illustrated in her speech at the annual World Zionist Organization convention in 1915, “We go to Palestine equipped as American Jewish women particularly are, with philanthropic and social work, with the purpose of bringing to Palestine the results of American healing art.”91 The “American healing art” Szold speaks of is American scientific discoveries in the field of health and social service. Palestine during this time period did not have a public health system nor did it have any social service or education department. Szold is credited with the innovation and pioneering work of these departments in Palestine (see Chapter 4 for more details). The American healing art of scientific advancements in health and social service afforded these women not just a role in public social service, but most importantly, an authoritative voice in organizing and providing their brand of nurturing healing within the Zionist movement in America and abroad.

It was no mistake that Hadassah’s motto was the “Healing of the Daughter of My People.” Szold believed, as did the Jewish clubs mentioned earlier, that the work these women carried out would not only benefit those seeking help, but themselves as well. To

---

engross themselves in Zionist Jewish renewal could bring about change on two sides of the world – in the United States and in Palestine. There are many references to the spiritual nature of the work Hadassah members carried out, but most significant was the language of maternalism and its connection with the education of the future leaders of a Jewish national home. It was here that the connection between education and spiritual enrichment played an important and ever rewarding influence on the lives of many of those involved. Women, the religious culture-bearers of the home, spread their influence through rhetorical maternalism. They also positioned their work in the spiritual realm through their contributions to the new national homeland. Jewish Studies scholar Ellen Umansky argues that though “Hadassah’s goals were not explicitly spiritual . . . working for practical change – can be expressions, as they were for Szold, of religious and moral convictions” (346). Yet in their actions, which portrayed these “religious and moral convictions,” Hadassah members were formulating their own paths to sacredness, to the healing of their spiritual selves.

Feminist historian June Sochen argues in *Consecrate Every Day: The Public Lives of Jewish American Women, 1880-1980* that Jewish women had a long history of volunteer work; they “had already experience[d] the joys and frustrations of synagogual and communal work before the arrival of the [Russian] immigrants” (48). The lessons learned from these organizations were carried over into the new generation of volunteer organizations such as Hadassah. In the 1890’s, Rebekah Kohut, a fellow Zionist and member of NCJW, described Jewish women’s public engagement as radical:

> because, no matter what Gentiles did, Jewish women were expected to stay at home and occupy themselves with housekeeping, sewing bees, card playing and tea parties.\(^92\) To have opinions and to voice them was not regarded as good form even in the home. But to have opinions and to speak them out in a public meeting! One would have to belong to my generation to understand.\(^93\)

Thus, for Henrietta Szold and other Hadassah women, public speaking was more than a slight foray into social reform work. Rather, the use of the rhetoric of maternalism to engage in public speaking was a revolutionary strategy for the time period. Szold as an individual and

---

\(^{92}\) The activities of “sewing bees, card playing and tea parties” are mostly middle-class and Bourgeoisie pastimes.

Hadassah as an organization would not be the subject of books today if it were not for the rhetoric of maternalism which afforded Jewish women a public voice and public voices, respectively, even if it limited these very same voices to the role of nurturers and caretakers.

**HADASSAH AND MUSKELJUDENTUM (MUSCULAR JEWRY): GENDERED POLITICS OF ZIONISM**

Zionism, as mentioned in the first chapter, was not a neutral or androgynous movement. Rather, Zionist ideology, as reflected in Herzl’s Zionism, called for an uprising of the Jewish masses whereby Jews (read: Jewish men) would no longer be seen as feeble and subordinate. These stereotypes were based on Orthodox men who spent their days and evenings studying the Torah and Talmud. In anti-Semitic rhetoric, this made all Jewish men weak. In response to this caricature of Jewish masculinity, Jewish men under Herzl’s conception of Zionism would be physically sturdy pioneers of their newly rediscovered homeland. Masculinity then was a solution to anti-Semitic images. Images of virility and muscular strength were infused into the language of Zionism. Feminist historian Mary McCune writes of this phenomenon as it relates to Hadassah. Juxtaposing the image of Hadassah members as “ladies” with the Zionist image of “Muskeljudentum,” McCune provides a compelling argument of the gendered dynamics of Zionist politics and ideology:

The male leaders of the Zionist movement used explicitly masculine imagery such as the New Jewish man of a Muskeljudentum (Muscular Jewry) and language replete with references to revitalizing Jewish manhood to illustrate what they hoped to accomplish by normalizing the Jewish people through the attainment of a secular nation-state. (135)

This muscular Jewry was opposed to the old halukah tradition where elderly who chose to live out their last days in Jerusalem were supported by the diaspora. Viewing Hadassah’s philanthropic work as similar to halukah, many male Zionist leaders and members felt women’s Zionist work was as fundraisers.

Hadassah leaders utilized the themes of practicality and maternalism to legitimate their voice, and thus, their place within the male-dominated Zionist arena. As Hadassah

---

94 For a broader understanding of constructions of Jewish masculinity, see A Mensch Among Men: Explorations in Jewish Masculinity edited by Harry Brod (1988), and Daniel Boyarin’s Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man (1997).
struggled to maintain autonomy separate from the Zionist Organization of America, the language of maternalism moved women from the periphery of the movement to a solid and unique grounding within the movement. Their gendered complementary model of Zionism professed that women, through their innate capabilities as mothers and daughters, were better suited to social work. Viewing the future of Judaism within its youth, Szold continued to stress the necessity of education and social service in the yishuv. This ran counter to the Zionist images of muscular Jewry. The male-dominated international Zionist organizations tended to focus exclusively on the political and economic maturation of a national home, rather than the social and educational problems presenting themselves during this time. However, it can be argued that Hadassah’s focus on health care is equated with strengthening their homeland, and thus, was part of the theme of muscular Jewry. Health care, with its focus on the physical and mental well-being of its patients, can be seen to inhabit both this muscular Jewry and the maternalism of Hadassah’s services.  

Nonetheless, Hadassah faced much resistance to their public voice in the Zionist movement. The male-dominated Zionist movement presumed women were educated in Zionist ideology and current issues and used this as reason for women’s exclusion from “real” Zionist work (that other than fundraising). McCune points out that male Zionists rarely attended meetings called to address women’s insufficient Zionist education (145). Further, Szold’s passionate belief that education was part and parcel of the Zionist movement, and hence, the revival of the Jewish community and way of life, proved these claims were largely baseless. From the beginning Hadassah published suggested reading lists, such as classic Zionist works by Theodore Herzl, Leon Pinsker and Ahad Ha’Am, in its Bulletin, a monthly magazine published by Hadassah. Hadassah’s Zionist study groups were encouraged to be fervent Zionists prior to organizing on behalf of Hadassah through educating themselves in Zionism and the present situation in Palestine (151-152). Jessie E. Sampter’s  

\[96\] A Course in Zionism (1915) and A Guide to Zionism (1920) also provided a counter to these continuing

\[95\] Thanks to Professor Joelyn Zollman for her comments on health care and muscular Jewry.

\[96\] Jessie Ethel Sampter (1875-1938), a writer, social activist and Zionist, was a close friend and mentee of Szold’s. Szold had a strong influence on Sampter’s conversion to Zionism. Each kept in touch throughout their years mutually residing in New York and Palestine. Hadassah’s School for Zionism (1915-1919) was founded in New York. Hadassah required each chapter leader to take classes at the School in New York or through its correspondence classes while also encouraging chapters to begin their own Schools of Zionism.
arguments between the male wing of Zionism in the United States, the Zionist Organization of America, and the female wing, Hadassah.

Some of the arguments against women’s involvement in social movements centered at the time around the growing professionalization of the social work field. Hadassah, as a volunteer organization, was dismissed because their practical and maternal work was seen as charity work, which “evok[ed] the unorganized, unprofessional, and possibly dangerous volunteer activities of middle-class ladies,” rather than philanthropic work, which was “associated with organization and efficiency” (McCune 144-145). That these women were not trained professionals discounted their life experiences as helpmates, nurturers, and administrators of the home.

In any work related to Hadassah and her duties in Palestine, Szold always consulted with professionals in the fields of health care, social work and education. In addition, she required that volunteers be educated in Zionism and the operational technicalities of Hadassah’s work while professionals were to give the same selfless service as that of the volunteers:97 “She led and inspired local voluntary assistants. She trained a professional staff drawing her trainees from the heart of the ‘opposition’. Her approach was as always through education seasoned with patience.”98 Again, Szold’s emphasis on education is key to her public and personal engagement with Zionism and Jewish life.

Even as the language of maternalism allowed women access to the public sphere, the rhetoric also reinforced the double bind that women commonly found themselves in. They were to be enablers, as Wenger clarified, but when they attempted to move beyond this role and speak autonomously, Zionist leaders, such as Louis Lipsky99 and Chaim Weizmann,100 opposed them repeatedly. Their male cohorts may have expected them to remain in the role

---


99 Louis Lipsky (1876-1963), an editor, journalist and leading Zionist figure, served as secretary (1914-1917) and chairman (1917-1922) of the Federation of American Zionists. He was later president of the Zionist Organization of America (formerly the Federation of American Zionists; 1922-1930).

100 Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952), a scientist, was the president of the World Zionist Organization (1921-1931 and 1935-1946) and first president of Israel (1949-1952).
of enabler, but that very role called for a public voice in the movement. Hadassah stepped up to provide that public voice. Focusing on the “maternal” work of building a nation, Hadassah, under Szold’s leadership and guidance, provided a voice for the educational and social services extant in the yishuv. However deafening the false accusations against Hadassah were, whether it be their presumed mismanagement of funds or the futility of a separate autonomous women’s Zionist organization, these women continued to assert their due as equal participants in the Zionist enterprise. Szold wrote to the president of the Cleveland chapter of Hadassah, I.J. Biskind on March 8, 1916. In this letter, Szold confronted the political restraints Hadassah faced by describing her own interactions with the “Provisional Executive Committee” of the Federation of American Zionists, who were “always putting Hadassah into a class by itself.” She states that the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Federations wrote her about his concern that Hadassah was not “doing real Zionist work”:

Why ameliorating conditions in Palestine is not Zionist work, I fail to understand; in what respect we differ from other Zionist Organizations in this country, seeing that we pay the Federation tax (which is larger than any other’s); seeing that we pay our Shekel; seeing that we support the National Fund; seeing that we make collections for the Emergency Fund; seeing that we were the first to bring about a proper affiliation of suborganizations with[en] the Federation of American Zionists by insisting that our Convention shall be merely a Subconvention [sic] of theirs – how, in view of all this, we fail, we fail of being a Zionist organization, passes my understanding.  

In addition to Szold’s support of women’s political rights within the Zionist movement, two of Hadassah’s national presidents, Rose Jacobs and Irma Lindheim, proved to be quite vocal in their opposition to Hadassah’s expected submersion into the ZOA. Clearly Hadassah members found their autonomy within the larger movement through the inspiration of Szold and other articulate and courageous leaders of the organization. Nevertheless, Hadassah was limited by the maternalistic rhetoric precisely because it re-inscribed traditional gender roles without questioning the construction of the gender roles. Maternalistic language may have engaged women in the movement publicly, but time and again they faced political opposition.

---

101 Dues.
to their legitimacy as a self-autonomous organization, which notably limited their political voice in the national and international movement. 103

Like their early president and mentor, Hadassah usually took a neutral position in relation to politics.104 Szold, a self-proclaimed pacifist for a good portion of her life, believed that through neutrality women could accomplish the most work. However, as mentioned, Hadassah again and again experienced conflict with the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) and international Zionist movements. These conflicts were over money, representation on Zionist committees, the right of women within the Zionist movement, and especially whether women’s contributions were of any real “practical” use to the strongly masculine-defined movement. The work Hadassah did was typically considered work accomplished by the larger Zionist community. This perception discounted Hadassah’s efforts and achievements. Historians Seth Koven and Sonya Michel believe that “women often lost control over maternalist [sic] discourses when they were debated in male-dominated legislatures or became linked to other causes” (“Womanly Duties” 1106). Within the larger Zionist movement, Hadassah found itself struggling precisely with this. The women were expected to be enablers, not independent agents.

After World War I, Hadassah became an entity under the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA). Concerned over the disbursement of money Hadassah had collected, the Central Committee, which had never fully acquiesced to the merger of their organization with the ZOA, took a more self-determined stand. The ZOA had been dispersing Hadassah funds through the World Zionist Organization (henceforth, WZO), whose leader Chaim Weizmann took a similar position on women’s engagement in Zionist work to that of Louis Lipsky. These funds were funneled through the London office of the WZO to the American Zionist Medical Unit (AZMU). The Unit and Hadassah’s Central Committee exposed what


104 See Hasia R. Diner’s “A Political Tradition? American Jewish Women and the Politics of History” in Jews and Gender: Studies in Contemporary Jewry XVI. Edited by Jonathan Frankel. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. She argues that Jewish women’s history does not account fully for the political nature of such organizations as Hadassah and the National Council of Jewish Women. While these organizations would promote their political stance as neutral, their actions contradicted this.
they claimed was the careless and infrequent distribution of funds by the WZO. Hadassah was also concerned about the Keren Hayesod, or Foundation Fund, which was set up for the nation-building of Palestine. The Fund was to collect monies from Hadassah and then distribute them to the formerly Hadassah administered AZMU. In the merger of Hadassah into the ZOA, Hadassah was assigned the role of enabler and charity worker, and hence, expected to be silent on the larger issue of financial infrastructure and plans.

McCune believes that the tension between Hadassah and the larger Zionist movement centered not on the distribution of funds, but on politics. However, the tension played out in the proxy conflict over financial distributions to the AZMU. In 1920, the American Zionist community was split between two factions – the Brandeis and the Lipsky-Weizmann groups. The split was caused by Brandeis and Weizmann’s differing economic policies.\textsuperscript{105} Ultimately, Louis Lipsky, whose close association with Weizmann was a source of contention within the Brandeis camp, took over as the male national leader of Zionism. Yet, seven years later the tensions between the Brandeis and Lipsky-Weizmann camps were still present. Hadassah’s close affiliation with the Brandeis camp created tensions with its relations to fellow Zionists, nationally and internationally. The Lipsky-Weizmann faction wrongly depicted Henrietta Szold, in her guidance and representation of Hadassah in the yishuv, as the person responsible for these tensions. Lipsky and his camp viewed Hadassah’s questioning of the Keren Hayesod (National Fund) as treasonous. They set out before the 1928 Zionist convention “to postpone the national meeting of Hadassah (which was supposed to take place prior to the convention), and furthermore [Lipsky attempted to modify] the voting rules in order to disenfranchise some 5,000 Hadassah members” (Berkowitz 189). However well-planned this endeavor was, it did not make it past Hadassah’s Central Committee and Szold, when she heard of this, called for women to push forward for their autonomy, “The fact implies the duty of framing Zionist policies. Let no one tell you that it is womanly not to exercise the right, not to fulfill the duty.”\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{105} The split is said to have began at the international Zionist meeting in London in 1919 “when Weizmann had to yield unwillingly to Brandeis’ terms” for future Zionist plans and structure (Halpern 4). According to historian Ben Halpern, “the crux of the dispute . . . was the issue of an appropriate structure that would facilitate non-Zionist cooperation in building the Jewish national home” (4).

\textsuperscript{106} “A Message from Henrietta Szold to the Women of Hadassah.” Presented at the 14th Annual Hadassah Convention in Pittsburgh, PA on June 27th, 1928. Hadassah Archives, Record Group 13, Box 39, Folder 33.
Hadassah faced countless accusations of disbursement fraud and unwillingness to relinquish its authority to the Palestine Executive. Considered “power hungry,” Hadassah fought one battle after the other. Earlier in 1919 when Hadassah refused to follow the orders of the Palestine Executive under director Menahem Ussischkin\(^{107}\) in regards to the AZMU (later Hadassah Medical Organization), much debate was sparked over Hadassah’s apparent refusal to adhere to “national discipline” as defined by following the Palestine Executive (Berkowitz 186). Later years proved more contentious as Hadassah became an even more powerful and resourceful contributor to the yishuv through its hospitals, social service projects and educational programs. Jewish studies scholar Michael Berkowitz writes that Hadassah’s “own power of the purse was formidable,” which to a community that viewed donations as contradictory to its goal of national self-sufficiency was a source of constant and relentless strain between the yishuv and Hadassah (187, 191). If the money was administered through a body native to Palestine, this contradiction to its image and goals was resolved in the minds of the yishuv.

Szold frequently found herself attacked for her endorsement of Hadassah’s self-autonomy. A pragmatist, Szold believed in order, accountability and efficiency. The funds, as administered through local governed organizations in Palestine and by the ZOA, were never accounted for as diligently as Hadassah required. Hadassah benefactors wanted to know exactly what amount of their money was spent on each project. Local administrative bodies consistently found this a hindrance to their agenda (Berkowitz 186-192). Hadassah’s refusal to adhere to the “national discipline” or national loyalty of the Palestinian-built organizations proved to be a continual strain between the two.

Politics, hence, was an arena in which Hadassah women did participate. These women in their fight to be a self-determined voluntary organization may not have realized they were fighting as well for their rights as individual women to be self-autonomous and have voting rights, but they were quite aware of the inequalities and prejudices of the time as a women’s organization. As in any organization, women within Hadassah held differing stances on women’s political rights. Szold herself believed in women’s rights as expressed in

\(^{107}\) Menahem Ussischkin (1863-1941) was a key figure in instituting Hebrew as the official language of the yishuv.
a reference letter she wrote on behalf of her friend Miss Elizabeth A. Smythe for the role of supervisor, “As a rule, I am not in sympathy with the demand made by women that women as such, merely as a vindication of their rights, should be put into places hitherto filled by men. The fittest candidate, man or woman, has the strongest claim, in my opinion . . .” 108 Hadassah member Lotta Levensohn believed that Szold’s “advocacy of women’s rights” was part of what “shaped the course of her Zionist thinking,” and that this advocacy would “not [have] been lost upon many of the women, who perhaps themselves do not realize how far her influence reacted upon and enriched their characters.” 109 Jewish Studies scholar Michael Berkowitz maintains “there was never any intention [by Hadassah leaders] to subvert the male leadership of Zionism” (186). However, Hadassah’s legitimacy, as seen through the usage of maternalism as a rhetorical strategy, was certainly an attempt to “subvert the male leadership of Zionism” to include women’s voices and practical contributions. While Jewish Studies scholar Mira Katzburg-Yungman argues that Hadassah was “not a feminist movement aiming at the betterment of women but rather an organization to link women for Zionist activity” (181), it is clear Hadassah did fight for “the betterment of women” in order to provide their international community with the needed educational and social service activities it required. Hadassah member Lotta Levensohn wrote that

women accustomed to nothing more than simple housekeeping accounts became expert in financial affairs; leaders of small clubs learned to apply large-scale organization methods to Hadassah chapters with hundreds of members; girls timid to stand up in open meeting became platform speakers; office workers became presiding officers; teachers, as well as writers, produced leaflets of all sorts and press material; lawyers led study groups; physicians found themselves in their element; and a great army of housewives expanded their sympathies and their activities beyond their own homes and their local charities. 110

Hadassah members in their struggles as an organization for autonomy were also fighting for women’s social, political and economic rights. Obviously there was some feminist consciousness, however limited by Hadassah’s own rhetoric of maternalism.


CONCLUSIONS

The expansion of domesticity may have appeared to be and have been for many women at the forefront in the argument of maternalism, but women of Hadassah were also utilizing their voices politically as they fought for self-determination and equal membership within the greater national and international Zionist communities. The language of maternalism may have hampered the evolution of their political voice beyond social service and education, but it additionally aligned women closer to the central politics of the day, whether by debates spurred by their actions and voice, or by their very material presence in the yishuv. Thus, through the rhetoric of maternalism, women participated in redefining what and who constitutes “politics.” Furthermore, the theme of education, religious and secular, so apparent in maternalistic rhetoric reinforced the need for the continued public presence of women in the yishuv as seen in Szold’s decision to abandon her planned retirement from Zionist activities (discussed in the next chapter). In re-inscribing the need for women’s public presence within the Zionist movement, education became a political tool used to further women’s sphere of influence. Hence, education became a bridge for women between themselves and the political sphere of society.
CHAPTER 4
AN EDUCATOR BRIDGING WORLDS IN THE YISHUV

Failure in a Jewish cause is better than success in any other.

– Henrietta Szold (1897)\textsuperscript{111}

As a sweeping movement, Zionism provided hope and fulfilled the dream of returning worldwide Jewry to their homeland. With a history of poems, language, and prayers devoted to the return to the Promised Land, Zionists, secular and religious, steadied themselves for a new beginning in pre-state Israel (heretofore referenced as Palestine). There were many paths within Zionism, such as General Zionism, Socialist Zionism, Religious Zionism, Revisionist Zionism, and Cultural Zionism. Szold, as a devoted believer in the education of world Jewry in Jewish history, philosophy, and literature, would be classified as a Cultural Zionist, according to Jewish historian Michael Brenner’s definition of Cultural Zionism.\textsuperscript{112} Szold dreamed of a safe haven for all Jewry where Jewish literature, history and religion would flourish. Much of what she believed to be Zionism was based on bridging the religion and its history with its people. Hence, Zionism was not just about a movement returning Jews to the Holy Land. Rather, it was also about an affirmation and dedication to international Jewish presence and spirit, and whose failure was “better than success in any other [cause].”

From when she moved there in 1920 until her death in 1945, Henrietta Szold’s work within Palestine continued along the same path of education as detailed in Chapters 2 and 3. However, during this time period Szold contributed not just to the Zionist cause and to

\textsuperscript{111} Henrietta Szold to Dr. Hertz. Baltimore, MD. October 5, 1897. Hadassah Archives, Record Group 13, Box 1, Folder 6, P. 1.

\textsuperscript{112} Cultural Zionism’s goal, as defined by Brenner, “went beyond the primary task of establishing a homeland safe from persecution and sought to create a new secular culture in the Hebrew language” (101). However, Szold came from more of a religious, if not more spiritual, place in hoping Zionism would bring about a Jewish renaissance in the proportion to the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment.
Jewish women’s lives, but also to Jewish children by way of her appointments as director of the educational and social work portfolios of the Palestine Executive,\textsuperscript{113} and as director of Youth Aliyah, an organization that brought Jewish children to Palestine from Nazi-occupied territories.

**ZIONIST STRUGGLES IN THE HOLY LAND**

Fundamental to the international legitimacy of the Zionist mission was the Balfour Declaration (1917), issued during World War I. Written by Arthur James Balfour, Britain’s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Balfour Declaration recognized the Jews’ hope for the rebuilding of a Jewish national home in Palestine while requiring that the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish population not be infringed upon. This monumental document gave legitimacy to the Zionist mission. Never before had a Western power recognized the need for a national Jewish homeland.

Most of European Jewry, which previously had dominated international Jewish politics, was now in Nazi concentration camps. This placed the American Jewish community in the new role of leaders of Jewry. Alarming to the Jewish community in the yishuv and abroad, the White Paper of 1939 limited immigration into pre-state Israel. It came at a time when Hitler’s Third Reich had already risen to power (1933), Germany’s Nuremberg Laws (1935)\textsuperscript{114} were in effect, Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass)\textsuperscript{115} in November 1938 had already occurred, and World War II had begun (1939). However, many Western nations, including the United States with its Johnson-Reed Act,\textsuperscript{116} restricted immigration based on the country of origin. The restricted immigration of Jews was in part due to the fact that

\textsuperscript{113} This supervising board established the framework from which the government of Israel now runs.

\textsuperscript{114} The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 revoked Jewish citizenship, called for restrictions on Jewish rights, such as marital rights, and called for a detailed definition of who was considered Jewish. At this time in Germany, 550,000 Jews lived in Germany.

\textsuperscript{115} Kristallnacht resulted in physical destruction of Jewish homes, businesses and synagogues as well as the deportment of 30,000 Jewish men to concentration camps.

\textsuperscript{116} The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 further limited immigration to what was deemed to be the norm during the 1890’s. Country by country quotas were set according to the population records of the 1890’s, thus, supposedly ensuring a return to the ethnic make-up of the 1890’s. This Act was preceded by a 1921 measure to restrict immigration of “undesirables” and, as such, was reflective of the mass immigration America had and was experiencing.
anti-Semitism was at its height in America during the 1930’s and following World War II.\textsuperscript{117} A significant factor in many Western countries’ refusal to increase their Jewish immigration quotas was the fact that German Jews were not allowed to leave Germany with much money. This caused various Western countries to assume that German Jewish immigrants would become wards of the state in the already economically depressed countries of the 1930’s. An international conference was called in Evian, France in July 1938.

The Evian Conference established an international organization to begin working on a solution to the Jewish refugee crisis. Most of the countries, with the exception of the Dominican Republic, would not admit more than their immigration quotas allowed. American Jewish leaders attempted with the Wagner-Roger Bill (1939) to issue visas for 20,000 refugee children under the age of eighteen into the United States. However, the Bill did not pass, similar to other unsuccessful measures, which necessitated organizations such as Hadassah to advocate on behalf of Jews internationally, and Jews in pre-state Israel.\textsuperscript{118}

**The Necessity of Bridges: The American Zionist Medical Unit, Hadassah and Education**

Szold was one of the key figures in establishing a much-needed infrastructure in Palestine. During the interwar years, Szold focused on the immediate concerns of health care, and as always, on education. The American Zionist Medical Unit (furthermore, AZMU), a portable hospital that was sent to Palestine to treat cholera and typhus epidemics, as discussed in Chapter 3, had its own educational component. In 1920, Szold moved to Palestine to help run the fledgling AZMU. At the end of World War I, a nursing school was established to provide Palestine with trained nurses. The school was eventually named Henrietta Szold-Hadassah School of Nursing in 1936. As the acting director of AZMU, Szold

\textsuperscript{117} Franklin D. Roosevelt, a hero to many Jews during this time, did not liberalize the immigration quotas even after rumors of Nazi concentration camps were substantiated.

\textsuperscript{118} The SS St. Louis incident in 1939 further illustrates the refugee crisis and fueled American Jewish support for Zionism. This incident included 937 German Jewish refugees who had been given valid Cuban visas. Upon arrival, Cuban officials refused them entry unless they paid an additional $500 per person. Unable to come up with these funds, the ship headed to Miami, Florida in an attempt to find temporary asylum. The refugees met with further trial when the United States government required the refugees to apply for a visa similar to other immigrants. The ship was forced to return to Europe, where the majority of the passengers did not survive the concentration camps.
developed educational programs, such as educating mothers on the symptoms and causes of malaria.

Hadassah President Tamar de Sola Pool recalls Szold’s work on behalf of the AZMU:

Henrietta Szold, though she was neither doctor no trained social worker, had vision, willingness to work, and a power of organization of rare quality that weighed the scales heavily in her favor. She was inclined to minimize her ability, yet she was no automatic follower of patterns set by others.  

Szold needed this vision in her new position as acting director, a position she felt compelled to assume because of the sudden departure of the AZMU’s director, Dr. Rubinow. It was not until three years later that a medical doctor, Dr. E.M. Bluestone took over this position. Even after Dr. Bluestone succeeded her, Szold stayed on and served as a bridge between Dr. Bluestone’s Western bias and the Palestinians’ needs, “I don’t think Dr. Bluestone would have staid [sic] if I hadn’t been here. Don’t take this to mean that I am clever and can unravel knots. I can’t. But he needed me to sustain his courage, and also to translate Palestinian statements of fact.” Clearly, Szold believed she had been of use to the Unit beyond her organizational and diplomatic skills. Her role in the retention of Dr. Bluestone and in assisting him as a translator of Palestinians’ needs, reflects Szold’s consciousness of her role as a bridge between Western medicine in the form of Dr. Bluestone and Eastern traditions and concepts of medicine as practiced by the Palestinians. Yet, as Tamar de Sola Pool’s quote mentions above, Szold understated her contribution. She organized the AZMU and circumvented the problems associated with reconciling Western medicine with Eastern traditions and beliefs.

Szold’s work within the male hegemonic institution of medicine and medical administration required modesty precisely because of her token status as a woman. As a female public leader in Palestine, Szold drew her courage and strong sense of duty. To walk into a traditional society, such as Palestine of the 1920s and subvert traditional gender norms

---


120 Dr. Bluestone was a young American doctor who returned home before the completion of his two-year contract (Dash, “Doing Good in Palestine” 105).

of the Zionist movement and of the Middle East in her role as the acting AZMU director required not just courage and a sense of duty, but the pragmatism for which she is known. Yet, just as she subverted gender norms, she also conformed to the Zionist ideals of duty, pragmatism and courage prescribed to men and women. Szold may not have fit into the muskeljuden image as discussed in Chapter 3 in her role as an administrator, but her work was just as valuable. She saw a job needing to be done and set about doing just that. Szold lived on the border between the typical male role of hospital administrator and the traditional female role of “wife” in her efforts to encourage Dr. Bluestone’s retention as AZMU’s medical director.

Szold’s experience living and working in Palestine, as well as her knowledge of current events in Palestine, put her in the position of being an interpreter not only for Dr. Bluestone, but also for Hadassah. This was necessary in order “to keep Hadassah in America informed on every phase of its work in Palestine,” without which Hadassah would not be able to further fundraise. Szold’s letters were filled with news that at once could be considered informational and educational. Most Hadassah women, just like many American Zionist men, had no intention of moving to Palestine, and many had not visited Palestine. Szold’s relationship with Hadassah can be characterized as that of a mother-daughter relationship. Before the departure of AZMU’s director Dr. Rubinow, Szold returned to the US. Resuming the presidency of Hadassah upon her return, Szold strengthened the growing organization with her leadership skills and first-hand knowledge of what Palestine required to be a homeland for world Jewry. This mother-daughter relationship played out throughout the remainder of Szold’s life and work, particularly in regards to Youth Aliyah and Arab-Jewish relations. Szold, always the educator, many times despaired of her “daughter’s” behavior and requests. However, Szold remained, largely due to Hadassah’s efforts, the organization’s role model in her position as the “living symbol” of the Zionist movement.

123 Szold’s sister, Rachel Jastrow, was gravely ill, which is the reason behind her departure to the United States.
While back in the United States, Szold also served as acting president of ZOA when ZOA’s President Louis Lipsky was abroad as well as ZOA’s vice president. Szold’s multiple roles, whether in Palestine or in the United States, convey a picture of a well-respected and trusted public leader. While she claimed to be apolitical, Szold’s roles were unquestionably political. Her work on behalf of the yishuv, the Jewish community in Palestine, was political in nature as well. Szold efforts to promote education and social welfare as important components of building a Jewish state were the political platform to which Szold ascribed. Her organizational prowess, proven leadership record, and ardent belief in the importance of education positioned Szold in roles of leadership. All of these leadership positions required her to face the politics akin to any position of power. Szold’s purpose, first and foremost, was the children in Palestine, whom later became the children she never had.

**PORTFOLIO OF EDUCATION (1927-1930)**

After Szold’s first trip to Palestine in 1909, she discussed education in the yishuv with close family friend Doctor Judah Magnes. For Szold, it was again duty that called forth, “our duty . . . [is] to secure, first, complete information about educational endeavors, achievements, and needs in Palestine, and then to institute a commission, as it were, a Central Board . . . to unify, instead of duplicating, [others’] efforts.” This duty was one Szold was familiar with due to her prior experience administering and teaching at the Russian night school. Her methods are characteristically pragmatic and organized when she discusses the lack of “a true public school system for Jews so fortunate as to have a single language of their own, namely Hebrew, which is the basic requirement for a common school structure.” In the eyes of key Zionist leaders, particularly that of the President of the World’s Zionist Organization, Chaim Weizmann, Szold seemed the perfect person to head the development of an educational system in Palestine. From her work with the New York

---


126 Ibid.
Kehillah (Jewish community; 1908-1922) to her position as the educational director of the Zionist movement, Szold’s background in Jewish educational work was widely known (Gal, “Hadassah” 34). Through her position as educational director for the Zionist movement, Szold had fought steadfastly for the establishment of a public school system in Palestine. Thus, in 1927, Szold was appointed to the Palestine Executive Committee on the portfolio of education.

An editorial in the newspaper The New Palestine applauded Szold’s appointment to the Palestine Executive, “Miss Szold has attained a position in Jewish life which no other woman in modern times has achieved.” The editorial declared Szold “the spiritual and intellectual leader not only of American Jewish womanhood, but of Jewish womanhood the world over.” Szold’s journalistic years, her years on the Jewish Publication Society and her role as first president and mentor of Hadassah prepared her for this hailed leadership position. Her very presence on the portfolio for education made her a pioneer in women’s rights.

Szold’s connection with Hadassah did not end with her new position. She acknowledged the additional support she would need from Hadassah, “My dependence on you is greater than yours on me. It is therefore I who plead for understanding, cooperation and support.” Szold knew that she would need financial support from Hadassah because funds from other American Zionist organizations, though pledged, were not always forthcoming. Szold believed that education suffered more from budgetary woes than other Zionist endeavors in Palestine. This in large part is due to the construction of Zionists as builders, muskeljudentum, whose goal was to physically build a society. Leading Socialist Zionists, such as David Ben-Gurion, did not see a need for developing an educational system or social service system. When her cohorts talked of founding an University, the realistic Szold would remind others of the importance of beginning at the first stepping-stone, which would be kindergartens. To Szold, the solving of educational problems in the yishuv

---

129 Ben-Gurion (1886-1973) was later the first Prime Minister of Israel.
was “the foundation stone on which the true progress of the Jewish Community can be built up.”

Under the British Mandate, elementary school was neither required nor free. An education system is vital to the running of any state, not the least a community aspiring to build a Jewish national home. Szold writes of the lack of funding for education,

Not only has it been work from eighteen to twenty hours without cease, but [sic] it has been a self denial in work itself such as I have never experienced. Sit at my desk and shift and shift small sums like L2 and L3 from page to page of the budget for education, in order to make it possible to open one school after the other. Why, they are asking for money for chalk and I haven’t it to give them!

Even with these budgetary constraints, Szold carried on. For Szold, regardless of “sadness or joy[,] I know (Palestine) means duty.” Writing to her good friend Jessie Sampter, Szold wrote that her feelings towards this new position could “be summed up in one word – terror. You talk of tact, wisdom, power, willingness [sic] to sacrifice. What are they all in the face of the circumstances? In a word, I do not feel heroic.” This last line portrays a woman who was fully aware of the battles she would have to fight to bring a stable educational system to Palestine. Taking over this position required this pioneer to once again challenge herself in the name of duty.

Szold’s work also included dealing with the politics of the different Zionist groups in Palestine. Szold biographer and Hadassah President Tamar de Sola Pool discusses how the factions of Zionism, which included “Labor, Mizrahi [sic] and General Zionists,” created even more problems in allocating a workable budget to fund education in Palestine. Each of the tripartite Zionist groups had their own views on how the educational system should run. Szold’s response to those of the Orthodox faith, mainly Mizrachi (a religious Zionist organization), was to keep the church, in this case temple, and state separate, “I am religious

---


and Jewish myself, but I do not believe in the rule of priests. School children must not be drawn into religious strife."\textsuperscript{134} Clearly influenced by her own American upbringing, Szold’s educational philosophy was American in form, but Palestinian in context.\textsuperscript{135} Szold’s mission was first and foremost to create an educational system that best served the children of the yishuv, which required meeting the needs political parties that did not put a priority on elementary education.

Early on Szold had consulted with leading American Jewish educators, specifically Dr. Alex Dushkin\textsuperscript{136} and Dr. Samuel Berkson, for advice and for assistance. She hoped to persuade both to come join her in establishing an educational system in Palestine. The existing system was full of strife and unrest. She was quite aware that “Certain results will surely not be attained.” After she conducted an “intensive consideration of the status in the Education Department,” she was “convince[d] . . . that ‘balancing the budget’ mean[t] destruction of certain aspects of what has been built up in the course of nearly forty years.”\textsuperscript{137} Her fears were allayed at the prospect of having both Dr. Dushkin and Dr. Berkson’s help in Palestine. However, Dr. Dushkin was not able to join them, “The one disappointment in your letter is that you are not coming. Berkson and myself have had pipe dreams. You and he together during this first year of his incumbency could have put the schools on the right track.”\textsuperscript{138}

In describing to Dr. Dushkin and Dr. Berkson’s what it might be like if they came to Palestine, Szold writes “One thing at all events is certain, your days will overflow with planning and working and, I hope, fulfillment, for educational problems old and new crop up at every turn, and the problems are not of technique, not of organization, but spring from our


\textsuperscript{135} Thanks to Professor Zollman for her help in understanding Szold’s work and mindset while living in Palestine.

\textsuperscript{136} Dr. Alex Dushkin presided on the New York Board of Jewish Education.


psychic make-up.” These problems were “determined by our past and also by our stormy present.” Szold believed that the educational system, if established properly, would “lead us step by step upward.” 139 Education, then, was the balm that would heal the thousands of years of Jewish persecution all the while rebuilding the very same community.

Though Dr. Berkson and Szold quarreled at times, they viewed education similarly. There was some criticism of Szold’s appointment of Dr. Berkson as director of education, specifically because of his American approach to education. Szold, on the other hand, believed that Palestine would be enriched by this education, which she herself had received as a child. Historian Allon Gal describes Szold’s teaching model as that of the Second Temple Period, where there were “small classes and direct, value-oriented teacher-pupil relationships.” Szold hoped to merge this model “with the modern American ideal of pluralistic-democratic society as described in the works of educator John Dewey and social philosopher Horace Kallen” (“The Zionist Vision” 33). 140 Further, the combination of these educational models also influenced Szold’s work with Youth Aliyah.

**YOUTH ALIYAH (1933-1945)**

Like many female reformers of the nineteenth century, Szold’s work on behalf of Youth Aliyah in the 1930’s and 1940’s amounted to “spiritual motherhood.” 141 Originally the idea of German Jew Recha Frier, Youth Aliyah became known as the child of Szold. The purpose of Youth Aliyah was to rescue Jewish children in Nazi-occupied territories. When approached by Frier in regard to the movement that would later be called Youth Aliyah, Szold at first declined to help. She felt that there were not adequate enough resources for the children already residing in Palestine; thus, it was impossible to properly provide for

---


140 John Dewey (1859-1952) was one of the leading educators of the Progressive era. His work became re-popularized after the Cold War. American Jewish philosopher Horace Kallen (1882-1974) coined the term “cultural pluralism,” which was a reaction to the idea of America as a melting pot. Instead of being a detriment to creating a unified America, Kallen argued that each culture brought its own unique traditions and ideas, which then strengthened America from within.

immigrant children. Packed and ready to leave Palestine for good, Szold found herself in a vexing position. Her experience on the portfolio of education for the Palestine Executive, and her 1931 appointment to the yishuv’s Va’ad Leumi (National Council) as the party responsible for creating a social welfare system from nothing made her the ideal candidate, if not the only well-experienced and suitable candidate. However, Szold and her sister, Bertha Szold Levin, had just finished touring the countryside of Palestine after planning to depart together for Baltimore where Szold would retire from her Zionist duties and live a “normal” life.

However, once again duty called. Szold’s experience as a pioneer in education allowed her to systematically apply what she had learned while working on the Palestine Executive’s portfolio for education. Between 1933, when Szold commenced leadership of Youth Aliyah, and 1945, when Szold passed away, she visited Germany three times. With each successive trip, Szold returned to Palestine more dejected by the situation in Germany. Hadassah President and Szold biographer Tamar de Sola Pool described the purpose of Szold’s first visit in 1933 as a mission “to help bring order into the hectic efforts to assemble, select, prepare the youth for their migration.” 142 Szold herself describes it as such:

I went to Germany – to Berlin and Hamburg, and on to Amsterdam and Paris, for the specific purpose of looking into the preparations for the transfer of children to Palestine. And so the European trip became one of the milestones in my life [italics mine]. I was in Berlin on election day, and I was a witness to the perfection of propaganda that preceded it. 143

This milestone occurred as a result of witnessing Adolf Hitler become Chancellor in January 1933. With Hitler’s rise to power, the situation worldwide for Jews became more dire.

The necessity of a movement such as Youth Aliyah was now ever more clear to Szold. In 1935, Pool writes that Szold arrived in Germany “for a wrenching meeting with six hundred parents” each requesting a report on their individual children while “others plead[ed] for the rescue of their little ones, [just] as the Nuremberg laws144 made the work more


144 Hitler proclaimed the Nuremberg Laws at an annual political party conference in September 1935. The
desperately urgent.” The Nuremberg Laws disenfranchised Jews and legally defined the criteria for being classified as a Jew. These laws discriminated against Jews, and made Jews foreigners in their own native land. Her 1937 trip was “by special permit of the Gestapo” and was “a weekend interruption [during] the business of the Zionist Congress in Zurich.”

After this visit, she wrote to her sisters that “those three days will be unforgettable for their misery. What I saw in Germany two years ago was a grueling experience; what I saw this time cannot be described in language at my command.” The language Pool uses to describe those who met her “on the way-station between Berlin and Jerusalem, in Zurich that night” is both Biblical and maternal; “those who met Miss Szold could hear in her silence the voice of Rachel weeping for her children.” The image of Rachel weeping alludes to a well-loved Biblical matriarch, thereby, illustrating Szold’s tremendous responsibility in her position as head of Youth Aliyah, her genuine devastation and despair at the situation German Jewry now faced, and the maternal role Szold held within the Zionist community and Youth Aliyah movement. Szold’s visits speak of her commitment to duty, but more so to the responsibility she felt for each child in her care as though she were her/his mother. In the years to come, Szold would be considered one of the mothers of Israel.

Youth Aliyah was obviously no small task. Taking children from their family was one thing, but then placing them in a foreign land where a foreign language, Hebrew was the primary language spoken was quite a feat. To ensure the least trauma, only children from the ages of fifteen to seventeen were allowed to participate at first in Youth Aliyah. Later as the word of the atrocities committed by the Nazis spread, children younger than fifteen were brought over via Youth Aliyah. They were required to learn Hebrew before their departure, perform settlement work (such as they would encounter on a kibbutz), and gain other

intention of the Laws was to provoke support and unity among the party (Gartner 312).


147 Ibid.

148 German and Arabic were also spoken, but youth were discouraged from using these languages.
necessary skills they would need. Parents would pay for the children’s trip or at least contribute what they could. Soon, Youth Aliyah’s standards, such as age limits and health and physical requirements, were discarded. Just as this was occurring, the British Mandate released the 1939 McDonald White Paper. The McDonald White Paper, as discussed earlier, limited Jewish immigration for the next five years after which all Jewish immigration was to be terminated. This sparked a wave of illegal immigration (aliyah bet) and emphasized the urgent necessity of Youth Aliyah.

As head of Youth Aliyah, Szold worked to get visas from the British government, secure suitable living arrangements, raise funds, interview each child about their religious preference, and ensure their religious and secular education was appropriate. Szold’s hands-on approach to Youth Aliyah earned her the title “Mother of Israel.” She greeted each boatload of children and afterwards she and her assistant, Hans Beyth, interviewed each child separately to determine the best way to meet their needs. They also visited the children already placed to ensure they were receiving the necessary care that they required.

The politics of placement soon became an issue in the yishuv as the Orthodox tallied their “recruits” against that of the Labor party’s. Szold took the hot seat because of the divergence in the educational goals of different Zionist groups. The goals reflected the fear of each group that their sovereignty would be challenged by the next generations’ allegiances. Many children refused to follow their parents’ religious affiliation; even after Szold suggested that their parents would prefer that they did. The consensus reached during the establishment of Youth Aliyah required that children choose for themselves, if they were old enough (around twelve years of age), their religious or non-religious affiliation. The Orthodox found this particularly grievous because few children chose Orthodox care. However, Szold did not relent from adhering to the consensus established by the leading Zionist parties.

To implement a proper educational system for the youth, Szold “trained her own corps of pedagogues.” They were called “‘Madrihim’ – the path-guides – not teachers in the strict sense of the classroom, not procreators of the children under the parental roof, not monitors or supervisors.” Instead, these madrihim were “the new fathers and the new mothers, the new teachers and the new leaders . . .” According to Pool, the madrihim trained every six months in national seminars where “in alternate groups” they trained “under
Henrietta Szold’s guidance and made Youth Aliyah into one of the greatest instruments of ‘The Healing of My People’ in Jewish history.” Szold placed a high importance on these substitute mothers and fathers. She required them to “have a perfect command of both Hebrew and German” so that the children would be able to easily communicate with them.

Language was key here. Most Zionists promoted and believed it should be a requirement for all Jews to learn Hebrew. As a cultural Zionist, Szold was no less convinced than others that the building of a nation required an official language reflecting the heritage of the people. That language was Hebrew, an ancient Semitic language spoken by the Israelites. Her vision included not just those in the yishuv speaking Hebrew, but also those in the diaspora; “This year the influx of fugitives from Germany into Palestine lays an additional duty upon the whole world of Jews inside and outside of Palestine, especially toward the revival of the Hebrew language.” Language symbolized not just Jewish heritage, but also the renewal and healing of worldwide Jewry. Though Szold detested the nationalistic and close-minded tendencies behind the slogan rak ivrit! (“in Hebrew”) ubiquitous in the yishuv, and valued what Gal refers to as “the multilingual panorama of the Yishuv,” she believed Hebrew could blossom beside other languages (“The Zionist Vision” 34-35). This is reflected in Szold’s establishment of language requirements for the madrihim, “He must know German so that the youngsters can see in him the past [and most likely, be comforted by their native language], Hebrew so that he should represent the future.” The last phrase speaks clearly of how important the knowledge of the Hebrew language was. Szold as well as many other educators and Zionists viewed the children as


\[152\] As mentioned in an earlier footnote, one of the leading figures in the rebirth of Hebrew in the yishuv was Menahem Ussishkin (1863-1941). Another figure was linguist Eliezer Ben-Yehudah (1858-1922), “who demanded that public life in the Yishuv be purified of traces of English” (Gal, “The Zionist Vision” 35).

their future. The future required building not just the physical components of a Jewish nation, but also building upon the cultural heritage of the Jews. Hence, the madrihim were also required to be knowledgeable in Hebrew literature and Jewish history.\textsuperscript{154}

Szold’s goal for Youth Aliyah was to provide not just an educational foundation for these children, but as always to bring healing to worldwide Jewry. The madrihim were responsible “for [the children’s] spiritual and intellectual development. Psychologically they must be very close to them.”\textsuperscript{155} Aware that these children would be in turmoil over beginning a new life in a new land with a foreign language and without their parents, Szold continued to be attentive to the children’s needs, “We come up against a great problem when we try to impart to these young people in [sic] Eretz-Israeli education, without taking into account the strata and the classes from which they come.”\textsuperscript{156} This sensitivity to the children’s needs based on their educational and social background was not new to Szold. She had done similar work in the Russian night school that she founded and directed in Baltimore, Maryland as discussed in Chapter 2. Again we see Szold, bringing an American form of education to the yishuv while keeping the context in line with the needs of building a Jewish nation with children from a multitude of different linguistic, educational, spiritual, psychological and physical backgrounds.

Some of Szold’s Zionist friends were concerned with the preferential treatment given to refugee children over that of the native-born children in Palestine. Szold acknowledged the problem in responding to her friend Jessie E. Sampter’s request that she address this imbalance, “I cannot mix the two problems. It would endanger the Youth Aliyah such as it is, for the redemption of the German youth, without benefiting our Youth. The danger I apprehend would exist no matter what the attitude is toward the Youth Aliyah.” The Youth Aliyah persistently was “threatened by our Jewish Zionist Government, from a mistaken notion that the collections are a menace to the Keren Ha-Jessod” because supposedly Youth Aliyah’s collections diverted money away from the Fund. Szold was familiar with the

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.


politics of fundraising and the struggles of indigenous children. At one time, she herself had held the position that bringing parentless children into Palestine when Palestinian children were not taken care of properly was problematic. Further, the Palestinian Government under the British Mandate was in the process of evaluating the number of certificates given to Youth Aliyah because of increasing militant Arab opposition. Through a series of commissions, the British restricted Jewish immigration into Palestine. Szold’s comment to Sampter, “The times are not propitious” was quite astute.\textsuperscript{157} However, her decision to focus on the children of Youth Aliyah had more to do with the events transpiring abroad in Germany and other Nazi-occupied territories.

Szold’s Youth Aliyah work may have been heavily criticized, but many of the children of Youth Aliyah were in awe of this dedicated and pragmatic woman. At the 1935 Zionist Congress, Szold presented her first formal report on Youth Aliyah. She arrived to find the podium ornamented with roses while the aisle was decorated with petals. The youth announced that they were establishing a colony in her name, “Your indefatigability . . . your devotion to the work [on behalf of Youth Aliyah] and your power to build new Jewish lives will inspire us in the performance of our own duties. Shalom.”\textsuperscript{158} Szold’s devotion to her work ran deep. In speaking of the youth set to arrive at Givat Brenner,\textsuperscript{159} she described them as “my children.”\textsuperscript{160} Though never a mother herself, these children represented what she considered her best work and the children she never had. They also represented the survival of worldwide Jewry. In a letter to Hadassah President Tamar de Sola Pool, Szold describes the importance of these children,

These wards of our people, whose ties to parents and home we severed, were brought here by us to be trained as citizens and builders of the new-old land

\textsuperscript{157} Henrietta Szold Letter to Jessie E. Sampter. Jerusalem, February 16, 1936. Hadassah Archives, Record Group 13, Box 30, Folder 1. P. 68.


\textsuperscript{159} According to Youth Aliyah historian Norman Bentwich, Givat Brenner “was the original outpost of the German Haluz” (52).

sanctified by the words and the lives of legislators and prophets as well as by our fervent faith in an honorable future.\textsuperscript{161} Szold herself describes these youth as warriors and future mothers of worldwide Jewry, "These young warrior-builders fulfilling our behest and the mothers of our future hosts of peace, freedom, and justice demand of us to be mindful of the teaching of our people's history."\textsuperscript{162} Fascinating here is her reinforcement of traditional gender roles promoted by Zionism.

**GENDERED CONSTRUCTIONS OF ZIONIST WORK**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the image of *museljudentum* ran throughout most Zionist publications and discourse. Though Szold herself was childless and disparaged at the work presented to her because she was a woman, and thus considered a nurturer, she upheld these gendered roles. Professor Feigenbaum, who sought advice from Szold about his daughter’s education, found Szold’s dismissal of his daughter’s education as worthless because Szold believed she should marry surprising.\textsuperscript{163} In glancing at Szold’s life, it is easy to see why she would support traditional gender roles even while subverting these roles in her public life: her traditional upbringing and her drive for creating order. Traditional gender roles can be seen to create order by providing a place and a purpose for everyone. Feminist editor, journalist and teacher Lesley Hazleton argues that the roles within modern Israeli society are traditional precisely because of the instability of the region, “Israelis tend to seek out the security of normality especially in male-female relationships, since they cannot find it in their national life” (107). Feminist historian Deborah S. Bernstein agrees, “fulfillment of their family roles was publicly valued not only as women’s calling and obligation, but also as their contribution to the collective goal of nation-building” (293). Hence, women may not have been *museljudentum* within its narrow definition, but they were still considered part of the rebirth of a Jewish nation.

\textsuperscript{161} Henrietta Szold Letter to Tamar de Sola Pool. No location found, September 10, 1941. Hadassah Archives. Record Group 13, Box 43, Folder 29.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{163} “Minute of a Meeting at the home of Mrs. Sulamith Cantor on June 30th, 1946.” Brandeis University, Farber Archives, Rose Jacobs Collection, Series II, Folder 120. P. 14.
Szold’s work in typically male-dominated positions may seem to contradict her traditional view of gender roles. The distrust Szold encountered as a sole woman in many of the administrative meetings and the rhetoric of the Zionist movement could account for this. Feminist biographer Hanita Brand believes that women in the public sphere during this time in Palestine felt the intense scrutiny and set out to prove their loyalty to the cause by supporting traditional gender roles (101). However Szold interpreted women’s roles in the building of the nation, it is clear she believed everyone was needed, whether as a mother, a nurse, a factory worker, and/or a teacher. She further adhered to the necessity of education in her approaches to building a Jewish nation with her belief in bringing awareness to the history and culture of the yishuv’s Arab neighbors.

**ARAB-JEWISH RELATIONS, HADASSAH AND EDUCATION**

*A counterstance locks one into a dual of oppressor and oppressed; locked in mortal combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence. . . All reaction is limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against.*

— Gloria Anzaldúa (217)

By 1922, the Allied governments had approved the Balfour Declaration and the British incorporated it as the British Mandate for Palestine. Before 1922, Palestine had been a part of the Ottoman Empire. British rule was hotly contested within Palestine. The British tried to appease the Arabs while also contending with the pledge they had given to the Zionists to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Arabs, who had resided in Palestine for centuries, were more than disturbed with the increased immigration of Jewish settlers and the nationalistic goal of most of these Jews. Multiple riots broke out in the ensuing years. As a result of Palestinian Arab Riots in 1929, which claimed 133 Jewish lives, the Shaw Commission set out to investigate what had caused this intense animosity. The Shaw Commission was headed by Colonial Officer Walter Shaw and included three other members, all of whom stayed in Palestine from October to December 1929. After listening to Arab, Jewish and British representatives of their respective communities, the Shaw Commission found Jewish immigration and land purchases were the reasons behind the Arab violence. It further “charged that during World War I, the British had made contradictory promises to the Jews and the Arabs concerning Palestine’s future, thereby further complicating the situation” (Medoff and Waxmann 157). The Shaw Commission’s Report resulted in the Passfield White Paper, issued in October 1930, which “announced plans to
establish a legislative council to take part in governing the country; criticized the effect of Jewish land-purchasing activity on the Palestinian Arabs;” vowed to look further into that matter; “and opposed ‘unrestricted Jewish immigration’ to Palestine.” This was based on the theory that Jewish immigration would eventually displace Arabs in the economic sphere. By early 1931, the White Paper had been declared void after Jews worldwide protested (183).

Again in 1936, the Peel Commission was formed under Lord Peel to look into the continuing Palestinian Arab violence that erupted from April to November 1936. The Commission recommended a “a partition of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states, with borders to be drawn largely according to demographic considerations” giving the Zionists the Jezreel Valley, Galilee, and part of a corresponding coastal strip while the rest of the Palestine would be an Arab nation. The plan also required 225,000 Arabs to resettle in the newly defined Arab nation (Medoff and Waxmann 138). Arab and Jew alike met the plan with anger and resentment. Divided as the Zionist movement was over this plan, in August 1937 at the World Zionist Congress, Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion publicly supported the principle of partition. The Congress voted 300 to 158, and thus, a compromise solution of negotiating with the British resulted. The following year witnessed renewed Arab violence, no doubt as a result of this Commission’s suggestions (139). Another Commission was drawn together, this time headed by Sir John Woodhead. Arabs boycotted the Woodhead Commission during the entirety of their investigation from late April until July 1938. Its October 1938 suggestions included abandoning the Peel Commission’s proposals by limiting the area of the Jewish State to just the coastal strip and also declared that there was no partition plan that would be mutually agreed upon by Arab and Jew (186). Thus, in November 1938, the British government issued a revised White Paper denouncing the Peel Commission’s suggestions and proposing a conference to be held in London to include both Arab and Jewish representatives. The conference resulted in a failure that sparked the British issuing the White Paper of May 15, 1939. This Paper, also referred to as the MacDonald White Paper, “limited Jewish immigration to a maximum of 75,000 over the next five years; restricted land acquisitions; and proposed the creation of an independent, bi-national” Jewish and Arab Palestine that would be formed “after a ten-year transitional period.” Though the MacDonald White Paper met with loud Jewish protests, it stayed in effect until Israel became a state in 1948, which officially ended British rule in Palestine (183).
Szold’s participation in the B’rit Shalom movement, a movement to bring about Arab-Jewish reconciliation, and then Ihud, a bi-nationalist movement, characterizes her attitude towards her Arab neighbors in Palestine, which was one of education and mutual understanding. Early on Szold, like other Cultural Zionists, was disheartened by the treatment and lack of esteem Zionists exhibited towards Palestinian Arabs and their lives. She strove for an educational understanding that she hoped would bring about better civil relations and communication, which is what B’rit Shalom sought. Szold had personally experienced the Arab riots occurring such as those in 1921 and 1929, and those in the 1930’s. Nonetheless, she strongly believed education was the only path to peace. Historian Michael Brown criticizes her attitude towards the Arabs as her “American baggage [that] was most evident and also ultimately irrelevant, if not misguided. Her pacifism, her commitment to cultural pluralism, and her empathy for blacks all came into play on this issue” (“Henrietta Szold’s Progressive American Vision” 67). Clearly referencing American Progressivism, Brown does not take into account Szold’s influence as Hadassah’s “living symbol of Zionism.” Moreover, he does not take heed of the fact that she was one of the first Americans to speak of the dangers in assuming the Arabs would allow the Jews to build a Jewish state in a land where Arabs were the majority. As early as 1920, on her way to Palestine to supervise the AZMU, Szold writes that “There were scores of things I have been wondering about, especially the very serious Arab situation in Palestine, of which the powers that be [in the Zionist movement] are, it seems, not to be held wholly guiltless.” Further, Brown also does

---

164 B’rit Shalom began in 1925, the same year the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was opened. The group was led by Samuel Bergman, Gershon Scholem, Judah Magnes and Martin Buber. It disbanded in 1930 (Gal, “Hadassah” 97).


not consider the other factors that might have influenced Szold’s philosophy, such as Zionist compatriots and friends.

Szold’s mindset did not come from just the American Progressive movement, but also from within the larger Zionist movement as well. She followed the philosophy and writings of Ahad Ha’am (1856-1927), who was mentioned earlier. He too asked for Zionists to adopt a peaceful strategy in their relations with their Arab neighbors. According to Jewish historian Eric Goldstein, Szold was influenced by Ha’am, a Russian Jew, “as early as 1896, when she borrowed a metaphor from his essay ‘The Holy and the Secular,’ which likened Hebrew to a vessel capable of infusing its contents with sanctity.” Goldstein further observes that Szold’s argument in the Zionist periodical Maccabaean followed Ha’am’s own argument that “Zionism also had to solve an internal question, one concerning ‘the establishment of the Jewish Life for the Jew.’” In addition, Szold translated some of Ha’am’s essays into English in 1904 (25-26).

Historian Allon Gal asserts that Szold’s close friendship with fellow Cultural Zionist Dr. Judah Magnes influenced her philosophy towards Arab-Jewish relations. Magnes was also instrumental in her co-founding of Hadassah. Both moved to Palestine in the 1920s to help in the building of a national homeland and belonged to Ihud. 167 Significantly, his politics were also pacifist (in later life, Szold became skeptical of the practicality of pacifism). Both Szold and Magnes “envisioned a Jewish Palestine that, in conjunction with the American Diaspora, would be a model and peace-committed society” (Gal, “Hadassah” 97). Their involvement in Ihud reflected their hope that the Jewish nation would be a role model of peace between various peoples. Gal also points to another supporter of bi-nationalism in Hadassah president and Szold compatriot Rose Jacobs, whose influence during the 1930’s helped promote HaShomer HaTza’ir’s 168 bi-national philosophy (“Hadassah” 98). At the Hadassah Convention in 1937, Szold’s speech was entitled “The Arab-Jewish Relationship is the Acid Test of the Zionist Movement.”169 At an earlier Hadassah Convention in 1929,

167 Magnes was President of Ihud
168 HaShomer HaTza’ir was a Zionist Socialist youth movement founded in 1913.
169 Szold, Henrietta. Speech presented at Hotel Chelsea in Atlantic City on October 27, 1937. Hadassah Archives, Record Group 13, Box 39, Folder 59.
Szold had given a similar speech (Soehen, “Both the Dove” 80). In her speeches, she asked Hadassah members to become educated on Arab culture, language, history, and literature, and Muslim religion, and to push for this education within the wider Zionist movement. She believed the Zionist movement would otherwise ignore its ethnical obligations to humanity. Cultural Zionism emphasized that Jewish values should be incorporated and represented in Zionism.\(^{170}\) Significantly, Szold appealed to women to promote peace between Palestine’s neighbors.

Hadassah as an organization changed its platform following the Biltmore Conference in New York in 1942, a conference that came out against bi-nationalism. The larger Zionist movement believed that a bi-nationalist state was not practical. Szold biographer and former Hadassah President Rose Halprin believed that a bi-nationalist state would reject “the foundation stone of Zionism, namely, the creation of a society by the Jews in their own homeland through immigration and the revival of Judaism.”\(^{171}\) As such, Halprin viewed Szold’s membership in Ihud as conflicting with Szold’s other Zionist work, such as the Youth Aliyah. However, Szold believed that “The Ichud [sic] is a free voluntary organization with one aim of clearing up the subject of the relations between the two peoples settled in Israel,” but that “It is true that we Ichud [sic] members are not endorsers of the Jewish Commonwealth policy.” However, “the Ichud [sic] program was not framed in opposition to the Biltmore Program,” but rather was a response to the Holocaust unfolding in Europe.\(^{172}\)

This reversal in Hadassah’s aims undoubtedly led to friction between Szold and the organization.

In this regard, the mother-daughter relationship between Szold and Hadassah was similar to a teenager’s embarrassment over her mother’s actions. Szold’s involvement in Ihud occurred around the same time as the Biltmore Conference. As a result of her involvement with Ihud, Szold was highly criticized both in America, by her daughter, Hadassah, and

\(^{170}\) My appreciation goes to Professor Lawrence Baron for his comments here on the connection with Cultural Zionism.


internationally by other Zionist organizations. She eventually distanced herself from Ihud to avoid unwanted controversy. Szold was always the mother figure, ever supportive and full of advice and guidance even when she was criticized by Hadassah for not being forthcoming on news in Palestine (which was due to her onerous duties, not out of neglect), or when they disagreed in small and large matters (i.e. Ihud). Szold biographer and Hadassah member Tamar de Sola Pool believes that the tension between Hadassah and Szold over her membership in Ihud was “minor in retrospect and mainly organizational in nature, [and] was one of the most difficult moments in the close filial relations between Henrietta Szold and the National Board of Hadassah.”

The mention of filial relations conjures up an image of family, most particularly that of a mother. Szold, then, is a mother not just to the Youth Aliyah children, but also to Hadassah.

When in 1943 American presidential hopeful Wendell Willkie visited Szold in Palestine, in hopes that she would have an answer to the Jewish-Arab tensions, she expressed her position:

Mr. Willkie, this problem has been with me for many years. There is no other appropriate place in the world where the persecuted Jews of Europe can come. And no matter how much we may wish it, that persecution will not end in your lifetime or in mine. The Jews must have a national homeland. I am an ardent Zionist, but I do not believe that there is necessary antagonism between the hopes of the Jews and the right of the Arabs. I am urging my fellow Jews here in Jerusalem to do those simple things that break down the prejudices, the difference between people. I urge each of them to make friends with a few Arabs to demonstrate by their way of life that we are not coming as conquerors or destroyers, but as part of the traditional life of the country, for us [a] sentimental and religious homeland.

The above quote sums up Szold’s realistic philosophy and outlook on the Arab-Jewish relations in Palestine. It also brings to light her strong belief in Zionism as a necessity as well as her outlook as a Cultural Zionist concerned about Arab-Jewish relations. Further, in being

---


visited by a presidential hopeful and in her promotion of bi-nationalism, Szold displays a sense of political prowess.

**SZOLD AS A BRIDGE**

Szold, the “living symbol of Zionism,” was also a symbol of change and of a Jewish homeland. All the while, she led an untraditional Jewish women’s life. Her self-sacrifice, consistent determination and sense of duty allowed for Szold to be both a gendered symbol of tradition and of modern womanhood. In an address at Hadassah’s 25th Jubilee Celebration in 1937, Szold refers to herself as “only the symbol” of Hadassah, and thus, Zionism. She continues to explain why she is only a symbol, “Judaism and Zionism never depend on one particular person, but on the people and the land as a whole which constitute the idea itself.”

Even Israel’s Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, in addressing a Hadassah pilgrimage in Jerusalem, could declare that Henrietta Szold “was eminently worthy to stand at the head of this noble band [Brandeis, Magnes, Stephen Wise].” He acknowledges that he “often had differences of opinion on political matters with Henrietta Szold, but even when I disagreed with her I could not help appreciating the moral grounds of her errors – or what I considered errors.”

Respected by her Zionist cohorts, Szold served as a bridge between children and adults, between Arabs and Jews, between philanthropists and the children their donations supported, between Hadassah (the American diaspora) and the needs and events in Palestine (the yishuv), and between women and men. Even on her deathbed she served as a bridge through her political skill as a negotiator reconciling two political antagonists. When on December 25, 1944, both Dr. Chaim Weizmann and Dr. Judah Magnes, Zionist leaders whose politics could not be more different, came to visit Szold in the hospital shortly before her death, she said, “There is another thing that is on my heart, and this gives me great joy, and that is to see the two of you together.” Dr. Magnes writes that both of these leaders were

---


“very much moved . . . On the way out Dr. Weizmann said to me: ‘We must never quarrel.’ I said: ‘No, that seems to be a . . . (injunction from on high).’”177 In such a capacity, Szold served pre-state Israel as an ambassador and as a strong female role model in a largely male-dominated Zionist movement. And, precisely because she served as a mediator between people, Szold was and still is a highly esteemed as a symbol of Zionism.

This “mother of Israel” proved to be a mother not to just Hadassah, but to the Youth Aliyah children, the recipients of the services provided by the departments of social services and education that she helped establish, the many women and men she took under her wing as cohorts in Zionism, and even to Zionist leaders, such as Magnes and Weizmann. Szold did not die on February 13, 1945, at the age of eighty-four, childless. She also did not die homeless. Her home was created by her very own legacy. She set up a trust fund from the money she received for her 75th birthday along from Hadassah, friends and family, and donations collected by Hadassah in honor of the late Felix M. Warburg. This trust fund became an institution named “Lemaan Hayeled VeHanoar” (For the Sake of Child and Youth). The purpose of this institution was “to centralize all information on child welfare in Palestine, prevent overlapping, study needs and initiate projects and child legislation.” When Israel became a state in 1948, “the Institute was renamed in memory of its founder and designated as ‘The National Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences’ to be financed jointly by the Government, the Jewish Agency and Hadassah.”178 The Institute remains active today providing Szold’s final act, as a bridge between the past and the future.


CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS: CONSTRUCTING A LIVED LIFE

One must, in order to be truthful, sincere and instructive, and in order to control, stimulate, one must present the shortcomings as well as the virtues, the defects as well as the positive qualities.

– Henrietta Szold (1936)\(^{179}\)

Feminist religious studies scholars have brought to the forefront figures often obscured by dominant patriarchal discourse. Henrietta Szold (1860-1945) is one of many women whose name has been appropriated by this discourse, specifically by mainly male Zionist leaders, who view her only as an icon of strength and fortitude for the Zionist cause. Szold was one of the co-founders and an early leader of Hadassah, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America; a writer, editor, and translator; an international Zionist leader in a mainly male dominated Zionist movement; and a social reformer in America and in early twentieth century Palestine. Szold was a determined and passionate woman whose faith shaped her life, but never strove to be the symbolic image she was portrayed as by the Zionist movement. Rather, she dismissed her myth-like status in Hadassah as destructive to the Zionist movement because she felt it wasted her time by requiring her to respond to fan mail and meet with members and friends of Hadassah in Palestine. Szold’s hopes, desires and dreams in the healing of her faith’s people were at odds with the status afforded her during her life and in her death.

Szold functioned as both an educator and as a transmitter of American ideals and values for the diaspora and yishuv community. Her work was done on behalf of the Zionist cause, which Szold believed would provide a renaissance in Jewish life, culture and religion. Zionism, to Szold, would save Judaism from extinction by anti-Semites and also from Jewish assimilation. Therefore, in Szold’s mind, Zionism offered Jews worldwide stability and safety from persecution, and education in Judaism’s traditions and beliefs.

\(^{179}\)“Address delivered by H. Szold at the N.Y. Regional Conference, Temple Emanuel, January 13, 1936.” Hadassah Archives, Record Group 13, Box 39, Folder 51.
Szold is well-known within international Zionist circles for the founding of Hadassah, her work on behalf of Youth Aliyah, her organizational and detailed work for the general Zionist movement’s organizations, public speeches supporting the development of Jewish life in pre-state Israel, and her contributions as an educator and social reformer in pre-state Israel. What is not well known until recently is her apprehension regarding the roles she performed and what that entailed for her personally. To understand the motivations, beliefs and values of Szold as she played the role of dutiful daughter, Jewish intellectual, social reformer, educator, and Zionist leader, Szold’s personal life must be further expounded. Szold was a path-breaking pilgrim on a road determined by her faith and the values imparted to her through her Jewish heritage and upbringing.

**THE HEALING OF THE DAUGHTER OF MY PEOPLE**

Hadassah’s motto was not just for the yishuv (the Jewish community in pre-state Israel). Szold stressed that the organization’s members would also find spiritual healing through Zionism. Szold never specifically mentioned her own healing, but in her private letters to friends and family, her personal frustrations were discussed. According to American Studies scholar Joyce Antler, the price of Szold’s duty-bound life was heavy, “Driven by the organizations’ needs and the demands of Zionism . . . Szold felt deprived of the opportunity to express her private self” (“The Journey Home” 99). In a letter to Jessie Sampter, a close friend living in Palestine, Szold expressed her personal discontent:

“My life is made up of so many, many routine, confused details that there is no pattern to it. Occasionally there arises from the swirling mass of ‘categorical imperatives’ that keep me submerged spiritually, a momentary, blue electric shaft, in light of which I see my plans for myself made oh! so many years ago. The plans were for something so different from that which has come about, and they were so much finer than this incessant wrestling with projects, organizational details, and defensive tactics.\(^{180}\)

Hence, this “living symbol of the Zionism” who sought spiritual healing for others through her work on behalf on Zionism did not always find spiritual contentment in this work. Arguably the above quote could have been written during a dark and very stressful time.

period in her life. However, in Palestine, Szold was always under enormous pressure from outside and from within to be all and do all.

A woman who set out to bring “healing to the daughter of my people” felt a void that no amount of duty, detail or organization could ever fully diminish. Antler effectively argues that Szold’s sense of duty left her without a personal life; and “Szold acknowledged that her own acceptance of duty, however onerous, reflected the fundamental necessity of feminine idealism” (“The Journey Home” 127). Szold speaks of this feminine idealism in a speech before the Women’s International Zionist Organization (WIZO) of Palestine in 1935 where she said that “the greatest of all lessons . . . the subordination of the individual will and desire to the common need” (Quoted in Antler, “The Journey Home” 127). Hence, Szold prescribed her own selfless service to duty to other women. To Antler, Szold’s unwavering commitment to duty “meant stilling her own womanly voice” (128). Antler was speaking of Szold’s own disassociation with the normative middle class American Jewish women’s life as wife, mother, domestic, caretaker, and nurturer. Emma Erlich, Szold’s secretary and friend during her time in Palestine, also mentions this, “she had no home, no family, no personal life” (Quoted in Antler, “The Journey Home” 128). According to Antler, Szold experienced “an ongoing conflict between personal and private duty as [she] struggled to express [her] values, visions, and commitments as [a] twentieth-century Jewish [woman]” (99).

Similar to the women of her generation, there were sacrifices made in her pioneering roles. Her epiphanies to minister to women and to provide Palestine with the practical health and social services required her to silence her own voice in order carry out these visions. This silencing occurred each time this duty-bound and detail-orientated woman endeavored to place the community before her own personal desires and needs.

I believe this is especially acute within her own sense of self as an educator. Continually disparaging her lack of formal training in Jewish philosophy, sacred texts, and thought, Szold silenced her own sense of worth as a professional. Though many of Szold’s personal writings have an air of the wise and prophetic soul she was, she was also riven

---

\(^{181}\) As found in Szold’s “Address to 1935 WIZO Conference.” Central Zionist Archives, Henrietta Szold Papers.
with self-doubts and regrets. Szold writes to a close family friend of the analysis she undergoes each year to ensure that she is living up to the ideals of her father,

I spent the day [of her father’s death] consciously and subconsciously examining myself, to determine to what extent my life measures up to the standards my father set for me. More of less I do that always, not only on the anniversary of his death, I rarely make a decision without referring it to him. You do not want me to confess to my inadequacies, do you?182

A perfectionist, Szold’s castigation of herself for her colorless focus on detail and duty however was not shared by her contemporaries. Hadassah former president and biographer Rose Halprin alludes to the reality of Szold, rather than the idolization of her or Szold’s own self-doubt,

She was no saint, but a great human being. Because she was human she possessed a bit of vanity peppered delightfully with sufficiency of temper and properly spiced with a sense of humor to make her one of us. She had the capacity for infinite pity but never permitted sentiment to become maudlin. For her, the ethics of her fathers became a guidepost to daily living. She was a truly educated woman and, yet, never looked down upon those simpler in training and education. She was no orator but could hold an audience glued to its seats. She never used language glibly without thought and content. For her, the detail made the ideal realizable; no achievement was possible without a hard toil. Constantly she taught: ‘Not the word but the deed is important. The opportunity is only half an opportunity if it is not seized.’ This is what she had to say about this trait in herself: ‘I am so constituted that I see no promise in any movement which is not built up slowly, bit by bit, each layer a stone, each trowel full of cement applied between layers tested by every known principle of organization.’183

And, this is exactly how Szold laid the foundation for Israel’s current education and social service departments and the Youth Aliyah movement. Apparent in all her work was the theme of education. For Szold, education was a political, religious, and cultural tool. It was also a way to create a sense of rootedness in one’s own heritage – in the new world and in Palestine.

From those close to Szold, it was also a sense of rootlessness or homelessness that propelled her to fight on behalf of her persecuted community. Much has been written on the


theme of rootlessness in the writings of Jewish figures in history. This is a common theme for a people shifting from one land to another due to anti-Semitic persecution. In Szold’s case, however, this was far more significant as she was not just a Jew, but also a Zionist, a woman and a public leader in a patriarchal society. There were few, if any, role models for her life. Szold lived on the margins of society, a place where she only belonged in the mainstream Jewish community as a model of selfless service. Further, her intellectual, educational and social service endeavors would have been ignored, if it had not been for biographies Hadassah commissioned on Szold and Hadassah’s reliance on Szold as a “living symbol of Zionism.”

Many times throughout the research and writing process of this thesis, I have wondered if she was ever “truly happy.” Here, I see “presentism” at its most polished. I assumed happiness was the goal based on the individualistic freedom advocated for in the twentieth-first century. Perhaps, duty to her community and family was “happiness” for her and for many women during this time period. Further, Henrietta Szold believed that her work with Youth Aliyah, work that consumed the last years of her life, was her most important work. This was where she found healing herself – in becoming a mother figure to thousands of immigrant children brought over by Youth Aliyah. Henrietta Szold’s life may have been duty bound, but her works show her own growth as a woman of faith determined to find healing for her community, and possibly, for herself.

**FAITH AND COMMUNITY**

Just as Esther is seen as the savior of the Jews, whether she is a real figure or not as some scholars have debated, Henrietta Szold became the icon of Zionism for her work on behalf of not only the Zionist movement, but also the people of Palestine, Arab or Jew. Her belief that Zionism would bring about the transformation of Jews from a persecuted people attempting to assimilate through materialism and culture to a healing community proud of their culture and heritage is what positions Szold as more than an icon. Szold was a woman whose beliefs shaped her life. She believed it was her purpose not only to educate Jewish women, but also to restore the community to its faith and thus, foster healing. Her Zionist

---

184 Thanks to Professor Zollman for her comments on this topic.
beliefs then were not based on politics and/or plays for power and sovereignty as can be seen in some of her contemporaries as well as some of the actions of the state of Israel today. Rather, Szold’s work was based on her upbringing: the faith of her father and mother, the instruction in Jewish intellectual thought by her father, the example provided by her mother as a dutiful social service worker on behalf of the Jewish community, her own beliefs about the significance of the Zionist movement for the larger Jewish community, and her sense of duty and ethics carried throughout all the hard work she accomplished throughout her life.

Henrietta Szold’s life was one of faithful duty to her Jewish faith and, correspondingly, its community. Her faith is seen in all her works throughout her life, whether in taking the Biblical reference to Solomon’s courted lover, Sulamith, as a pseudonym when critical of the Jewish community and its absence of faith or in helping to found and in leading the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, Hadassah, named after an important heroine of the Bible. Often lives are described as a product of their time, but I argue that Szold’s life was more than this. Her life was one of innovation, faith, critical inquiry, duty, and belief in not just the richness of her Jewish heritage, but of its significance to the world. To her, Judaism had something to offer not just to its community, but also to the world. Szold believed that Zionism could provide an example for the world of a faith-based community and the power of such a community for its people and its faith. Many biographers, the international Zionist community and Hadassah have immortalized her work and her life. Even when appropriated as a symbol of Zionism, Szold stands out for her own pragmatic work on behalf of all – Arab or Jew.

Though she did not live to see the statehood of Israel in 1948, she remains a resource for its continuing negotiation of peaceful survival.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS CITED


Swindells, Julia. Liberating the Subject? Autobiography and 'Women's History': A Reading
of The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick. Paper presented at Conference on
"Autobiographies, Biographies and Life Histories of Women: Interdisciplinary

States in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." Jewish Women in Historical

Urofsky, Melvin. American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust. Garden City, New York:

(Summer 1966): 151-74.

Wenger, Beth. “Jewish Women and Voluntarism: Beyond the Myth of Enablers.” American

Yezierska, Anzia. Breadgivers: A Struggle a Father of the Old World and a Daughter of the

WORKS CONSULTED

Adelman, Tzvi Howard. “Self, Other, and Community: Jewish Women’s Autobiography.”
Nashim 7 (Spring 2004): 116-127.


Berkson, Isaac B. “Jewish Palestine in the Postwar World.” Journal of Educational


Davidman, Lynn, and Shelly Tenebaum, eds. Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies. New

Dubnow, Simon M. Jewish History: An Essay in the Philosophy of History. Philadelphia,
PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1907.


