JEWISH WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES

By REBEKAH KOHUT

I

The exemption of the woman from the performance of all legal and ceremonial obligations imposed by Jewish law on the male has placed her in an anomalous position where she appears virtually ignored, whereas, morally, she is an object of exaltation. However, from time immemorial, we see her combating this supposedly inferior social status, and today we see that she has successfully assumed a place of leadership in the community, and has applied to this task all the inherent wisdom and beauty of spirit which have become proverbial of the Jewess.

As a matter of fact, time and tradition have always linked the ingenuity of the Jewess with the desire to do good. In Proverbs we find it said of the ideal woman: "She may open her mouth to wisdom, but her tongue must know the law of kindness." For thousands of years, the Jewish woman has applied her surplus energies to the law of kindness, or as society has come to call it, "charity." The conception of charity is also not a vague quantity which the Jew had to discover and formulate for himself. In Deuteronomy, we find the term amply explained and its elements adequately stressed to make it endure through the ages.

In simple and graphic style, charity is described thus: "When thou cuttest down thy harvest in thy field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, for the widow."

"When thou beatest thy olive tree thou shalt not go over the bow again; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, for the widow."

"When thou gatherest the grapes for the vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterwards; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow."

The field, the olive tree and the grapes have evolved through the centuries as symbols of the past. Then we had strange continents, ghetto streets and small shops. Now a new world—America. Larger ghettos and bigger shops. But the stranger, the fatherless and the widow are ever present.

The first implied reference to organized Jewish charity in America is found in the letter of the Dutch West India Company to Peter Stuyvesant, governor of New Amsterdam (as New York was called by its Dutch founders), dated April 26th, 1655, which says in part: "After many consultations, we have decided and resolved upon a certain petition made by the Portuguese Jews, [the first Jewish newcomers] that they shall have permission to sail and trade in New Netherland, and to live and remain there, *provided that the poor among them shall not become a burden to the company or to the community, but be supported by their own nation.*"

In other words, the first settlement of the Jew in America depended upon the execution of the above promise. It appears to have been comparatively easy for these first settlers to vindicate themselves in the eyes of Mr. Stuyvesant, for they were a group of sturdy industrious men, who quickly found means of self-support in the new land, and the ensuing trickle of immigrants was also made up of self-reliant people. Jewish womanhood was present at this pact in the first era of Jewish life here, in the person of Ricka Nounes, and was present in every succeeding period, where such pacts were undertaken or understood without any word from the neighbors.

From this point on, as Jews settled in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and points south, we do not hear of the woman stepping outside of her restricted communal pale, and her name was not sounded outside the confines of the hearth until about 150 years later. At the end of the eighteenth century, after the Revolutionary War, when the Jewish population of the states was about 2,000, and there were substantial Jewish congregations in Philadelphia, New York, Richmond, Newport, Charlestown, and Savannah, women were undoubtedly admitted to services on the Sabbath and High Holy Days, in a separate section of the synagogue, but certainly they were not given any voice in the

issues of these growing communities. There is no doubt, however, that with the piety and simplicity with which they carried out the other precepts of the Prayer Book, they also did "Zedakah," by helping the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, a new tide of immigration swept the shores of the recently formed United States; Jews formed a small but significant part of this influx. Unlike their immigrant predecessors who hailed from Spain, Portugal and Holland, these Jews came from England, Germany, and Poland, which had been swept by political and religious oppression after the fall of Napoleon.

Fortunately, the thriving Jewish communities here were able and willing to absorb the incoming streams of immigrants. And it is interesting, most interesting, that no sooner do we have a large colorful, polylingual and heterogeneous Jewish community, with all its healthy "ailments," we behold woman coming to the fore to do good. Such a community first came to life and maturity in Philadelphia. By 1815, Philadelphia already boasted of a number of synagogues built by German and Polish Jews, and some fraternal and benevolent organizations.

It was in this city that in 1819, the first step in organized woman's endeavor was taken. The story of this first woman's organization in America, known as "The Female Hebrew Benevolent Society," reads like a romantic chapter of pioneer life. Henry Solomon Morais in his "History of the Jews of Philadelphia" tells us that it was a stormy day in the month of October, and apparently a good many poor Jews were without adequate shelter. This state of affairs "came to the attention of two Jewish ladies, Mrs. Aaron Levy and Miss Hannah Levy and, sensible to the suffering, they decided to canvass some of the Jewish homes and enlist the women in their effort to aid the needy of their community."

In this way, we are told, these ladies formed the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, and we are further told that the Secretary of the Society was Miss Rebecca Gratz. This Rebecca Gratz is well known in American history. Jews and non-Jews are still inspired by her ineffable beauty and glamorous wit. And all of us are prompted to selflessness

and sacrifice by the unbounded devotion that Rebecca Gratz extended to her people. A woman of rare culture, a member of one of the most distinguished and beloved Jewish families in the New World, a person of great charm and wit, Rebecca Gratz was not satisfied with being the "Salon Dame," the hostess of an intellectual milieu. So she turned her head and her eyes to those outside of her drawing room, for she felt that there, among the less fortunate, was her calling.

I am elaborating somewhat on this first organization because its coming into being and the circumstances surrounding it are so very interesting to me as a woman and as a worker. I have before my eyes a picture of these very comely, sheltered, well-mannered, soft-spoken women, dressed in yards and yards of rich velvets, with beautiful plumage on their large hats; their dark eyes shining from under these hats with a full, warm glow. I also see them huddling their little hands into muffs as they enter the carriages which will take them to the house of Mrs. Levy for the first meeting. I am veritably charmed by the preamble which they wrote to their Constitution, which is as characteristic of the particular time and purpose, as the cause is eternal.

"In all communities, the means of alleviating the sufferings of the poor are considered of high importance by the benevolent and the humane. The subscribers, members of the Hebrew congregation (Mikveh Israel) of Philadelphia, and citizens of the United States and of the State of Pennsylvania, sensible to the calls of their small society and desirous of rendering themselves useful to their indigent sisters of the House of Israel, have associated themselves together for the purpose of charity, and in order to make the benefit permanent, have adopted this Constitution."

Thus, the first Constitution was composed by the first woman's organization in America, which incidentally is still in existence, functioning along the same lines as originally designated, and conducted largely by the descendants of its founders. The work of the Society was thoroughly systemized. The city was divided into districts, each in charge of a manager. Among these managers, we find such names as Sim'ha Peixotto, Ellen Phillips, Esther Hart,

Richea Hays, Phila Pesoa; many of these names are as prominent today as they were five generations ago.

Some years later, Miss Gratz spurred a group of these women to organize the first Hebrew Sunday School as a branch of the Society. It was resolved that: "Teachers be appointed among the young ladies of the Congregation." This school, which was formally opened on March 4, 1838, was the first Hebrew Sunday School in America. Then Miss Gratz started the Jewish Foster Home, the Fuel Society, and the Sewing Society, enlisting as many members of a family as possible, and delegating to them various duties, as she saw fit, thus helping to organize one of the most prosperous and exemplary Jewish communities of the New World.

II

By 1840, there were 15,000 Jews in the United States, and what was to be one of the most significant waves of Jewish mass immigration took place in the next ten years. For by 1850, we have 50,000 Jews in this country. The reasons for this are well known: The failure of the revolutions of 1848, and the Gold Rush in America. And as these masses were pouring into the port of New York, most of them realized immediately the opportunities west and south of New York. They were small tradesmen, and they picked up the peddler's pack with the same agility as they formerly handled the wanderer's stick. They scattered all over the country, settling in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The great bulk of the newcomers were Germans.

It was during this period of immigration, that the first woman's organization of national scope, the first effort on the part of Jewish women to effect a nationwide movement, was initiated by German Jewesses. This organization, "The United Order of True Sisters" was organized April 21, 1846, by a group of women who prayed at the Temple Im-Manuel (now known as Emanu-El), the most distinguished congregation in the city. The women originally took the name of "Unabhängiger Orden Treue Schwestern." The guiding spirit of this organization was Henrietta Bruckman, who inspired the women "to unite in sisterly affection and

esteem; to give moral and material aid to their dependents; to render philanthropic, civic and other services to communities in which the lodges are located." The medium of communication of the society was originally German, but after five years, the English language was adopted and The Treue Schwestern became the Grand Lodge United Order of True Sisters.

The U. O. T. S. has the distinction of being the first national as well as the first fraternal Jewish women's organization in the United States. Today, the Order consists of the Grand Lodge in New York City, and 34 subordinate lodges throughout the country, with a total membership of 12,000. Each lodge is engaged in its own special philanthropic and charitable work, besides co-operating in the general work of the central organization. Besides affording to its members the usual medical and financial aid extended by benevolent organizations, the latter provides a Widow's Endowment Fund, and maintains an Emergency Fund for aiding victims of national disasters.

There are eight lodges in Manhattan. These have formed jointly the New York Philanthropic League In Aid Of Crippled Children, founded by Mrs. Rose Baran. This League whose President is Mrs. Carrie Hollander, does incalculable good for unfortunate crippled children in New York City.

It is interesting to note that the U. O. T. S. is the first fraternal woman's organization in the country to erect its own club house, which not only serves as the National Headquarters but also as the meeting place for the Manhattan lodges, as well as the headquarters for the National Convention held in December. A great deal of the beauty dwelling within and without this house is a result of the continued efforts of its founder, Mrs. Emma Schlesinger, who is it chairman. The Order also issues a monthly organ, called "The Echo," which is edited by Mrs. Esther Davis.

Although the membership of the U. O. T. S. is entirely Jewish, it does not function as a sectarian body. All its activities and benevolent work is extended to all the needy and suffering, regardless of sex or creed. Among the well known names identified with the Order are Mina Schotten-

fels, Amelia Oppenheimer, Clara Sommerich, besides those mentioned above.*

Reform Judaism was taking a strong hold of the Jews in Germany and also making its way into the New World. This movement affected the social status of the Jewess in the circles of Reform Judaism, which introduced a great many modifications which spelled her emancipation.

One of the noted reformers of that period, Abraham Geiger, in his essay "The Position of the Woman of our Time," which found an echo in every part of the world, and gave rise to a great deal of controversy in Jewish communal circles, said: "Let there be from now on no distinction between duties for men and women unless flowing from the natural laws governing the sexes, no assumption of the spiritual minority of women as though she were incapable of grasping the deep things in religion."

The protagonist of Reform Judaism in this country was the venerable scholar, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, who arrived here in 1846, and, for a half a century, wielded great power in the spiritual life of American Jewry. It was Rabbi Wise who introduced the family pew, and later the participation of women in the choir. This innovation was followed by the inclusion of women in Minyan, the quorum of adults necessary for conducting a service. These changes and reforms served as an impetus to many of the women in the Reform Congregations to organize, but it brought out strong opposition in the more conservative groups, where the answer was also in a union of forces.

During the two decades after the Civil War, women's clubs and welfare organizations were springing up everywhere, both as auxiliaries of existing societies and as independent bodies. But each was an isolated organism. Let me mention but a few of these organizations which came to life during the early part of the second half of the nineteenth century: The Israelitische Frauen Verein, or the Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Association, founded in San Francisco in 1855; The Hebrew Free Sewing Society, Baltimore, Maryland, 1861; The Ladies' Hebrew Widow and Orphan Society,

*The president of the Grand Lodge is Henriette N. Prinstein, with Hermine Breitenfeld as Treasurer, Fanny M. Marx—Recording and Corresponding Secretary, and Julia Levy—Financial Secretary.

Denver, Colorado, 1864; The Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society, Charleston, South Carolina, 1869; and dozens of similar ones throughout the states.

III

Then a new era of immigration dawned. German Jews were beginning to enjoy greater freedom at home, and were no more lured to the States. And as German Jewish immigration was slowing down, the German Jews here were growing more prosperous and more influential from day to day. "The German Jews in America gain in influence daily, being rich, intelligent, and educated, or at least seeking education," wrote a German American in 1869.

However, there was no lull in Jewish immigration. In unprecedented numbers, Jews began to migrate from the Slavic countries, and this tide of East-European immigration lasted for about two generations and formed a goodly part of the four million Jews now living in the land of freedom.

The first substantial evidences of the presence of the new polyglot throngs were the welfare organizations created by the older and affluent citizens here, most of these being brought to life by men. In 1871, we have the establishment of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and two years later, the Union of American Congregations. In 1874, New York Jewry consolidated its charitable forces in the United Hebrew Charities. The Mount Sinai Hospital was erected at about the same time. About five years later, we have the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society and many other kindred organizations. This sequence of establishing Jewish centers was followed out by the Jews of Philadelphia, Chicago, and the other large Jewish communities, not to mention the innumerable synagogues, temples, fraternal organizations, social clubs, etc., that came into existence during that period.

However, no indication of any specific Jewish women's undertaking on a large scale was as yet evident. We know of women's auxiliaries to these institutions, and we know of dozens of small organizations founded and maintained by women for the traditional social duties, such as aiding poor

maternity cases, providing dowries for poor girls of marriageable age, arranging weddings for poor brides, and caring for the needy and the sick. These societies were usually organized as Landsmannschaften, being composed of groups coming from the same city or the same districts or country "back home." These groups usually were found in the ghettos, and functioned within the dimensions of the district.

And the ghettos were growing in number and scope. We remember 1881 and the pogroms in Southern Russia, which were followed by another mass immigration to these shores. I should like to recall that this catastrophe brought to the fore Emma Lazarus, one of the most gifted of the women of her generation, who with her lyrical pen, tried to arouse the world to protest against the injustice which was being done to the Jews. And it was Emma Lazarus who, giving up the warmth of her study chamber and the geniality of her world of dreams, stood in the grim structure known as Castle Garden and was the first to smile and extend a warm hand to the weary and battered Jews, "the huddled masses yearning to breathe free," who came to seek new life here.

Those were the years of the sweat-shop, those were the years of hopes and aspirations, those were the years when the children of pushcart peddlers studied to become statesmen, and those were the years when children of rabbis and scholars became gangsters and thieves. The Melting Pot, a subject for romance for many an imaginative mind, was hard and inhuman to many of these Jews. Their needs, social and moral, were growing by the hour, as the process of their adaptation to the new environment was taking place. Here were seething masses, hurtled from their sources, trying to transplant the roots. Here were strangers trying to find their way.

To help the masses out of this maze, to guide somewhat the bewildered throngs, came the National Council of Jewish Women, the first women's philanthropic organization of national scope. It may be said that the women who formed the Council came to put the House of Israel in order. Its formation is a chapter of the history of the Jews in

America which will always be underscored with the gratitude of the immigrant masses.

It was in 1893 that the Parliament of Religions was to take place in Chicago simultaneously with the World's Fair or the Columbian Exposition. To this Parliament of Religions the Jews were also invited by a communication to the Jewish communal and spiritual leaders. This was a most gratifying missive to the new Jewish world here, especially after the disheartening occurrences in other countries at about that time. In the *American Hebrew* of June 16, 1893, we read a letter signed by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and the Local Committee on Jewish Church Congregations, calling the attention of the entire Jewry to the auspicious event and in conclusion, saying: "Since the existence of our religion, no such opportunity as this has ever been extended to the Jew to set himself right before the whole world."

Some of the most prominent Jews and Jewesses rallied to this gathering. The Parliament of Religions was held under the auspices of the World's Congress Auxiliary of the Exposition, and among the women who presented papers were Minnie D. Louis on "Mission Work Among the Unenlightened Jews," Josephine Lazarus, sister of Emma, on "The Outlook of Judaism," and Henrietta Szold, of whom we shall hear more later, on "What Judaism Has Done For Woman."

But these singular instances do not constitute the entire function of the Jewish women at that Congress. For a group of Chicago women headed by Mrs. Henry Solomon decided to use this rare historic moment of universal importance, to conceive and give life to what was destined to become one of the greatest women's organizations in the world. Mrs. Solomon invited women from surrounding states to represent their respective communities at this momentous gathering. Ninety-three delegates, representing twenty-nine cities came to Chicago. I shall again resort to the *American Hebrew* in order to describe that first gathering, so that we may visualize it in the spirit which pervaded the entire event, for we must not forget that we are speaking of something which happened almost four decades ago, and

it is interesting to feel the spirit of the time, if only as transmitted through the written word. In the issue of September 15, 1893, we read the report: "Lack of space prevents our doing justice to the gathering of Jewish women in Chicago last week. . . The Congress was opened by Mrs. Charles Ehnrotten, Vice-President of The World's Congress, who introduced Mrs. Henry Solomon as the Chairman of the meetings. Mrs. Solomon, before delivering her address of welcome, called upon Miss Ray Frank, of Oakland, California, a student at the Hebrew Union College, to offer a prayer.

"Mrs. Louise Mannheimer of Cincinnati read a paper on 'Jewish Women Prior to the Sixteenth Century,' and was followed by Mrs. Helen Kahan Weil, of Kansas City, in a companion paper on 'Jewish Women From That Time To The Present.'

"On Tuesday, Miss Julia Richman, of New York, gave an address on 'Women As Wage-Earners' with special reference to directing immigrants."

Perhaps some of my readers remember Julia Richman. Perhaps some of them knew her. Her untimely death robbed the immigrant Jews of one of their staunchest friends and sympathizers. It was Julia Richman who formulated the Constitution and read it at the final session of the gathering. The chief purpose was stated thus: "Resolved, that the Congress become a permanent organization to teach all Jewish women their obligations to the Jewish religion." The name was adopted as the National Council of Jewish Women, and its objects outlined as follows: "It shall seek to unite in closer relation women interested in the work of religion, philanthropy, and education, and shall consider practical means of solving problems in these fields. It shall organize and encourage the study of the underlying principles of Judaism. It shall apply knowledge gained in this study to the improvement of the Sabbath school and the work of social reform. It shall secure the interest and aid of influential persons in arousing the general sentiment against religious persecutions whenever and by whomever shown, and in finding means to prevent such persecution."

Mrs. Hannah G. Solomon (Mrs. Henry) was elected president, and Miss Sadie American, Corresponding Secretary.

Thus, the Council of Jewish Women came into being in the Middle West, some thirty seven years ago, soon to become a household word to Jews the world over. Thus, was started one of the finest philanthropic organizations in America to serve as a source of joy and pride to American Jewry, and a source of mercy and Jewishness for all the Jews.

It is not easy to enumerate the achievements of the Council, not because the world has not kept record of them, but because they have been so extensive and intensive and have been marked by so much glorious undertaking and fulfillment that an outline would prove inadequate. But I will mention some of the outstanding accomplishments. First of all, the National Council of Jewish Women is the first and only national organization in the history of American Jewish womanhood that enables all groups of Jewry to meet on a common platform. Then, it deserves unstinted praise for its immigration work which took on worldwide proportions and which gained worldwide recognition for the expert program evolved for the protection of the Jewish immigrant particularly the Jewish immigrant woman and girl traveling to America.

This program provides for the immigrant aid at Ellis Island and at other ports of entry as well as in the local communities, and includes the education and Americanization of the foreigner.

What the Council did for the Jews of Europe after the World War marks one of its most noted chapters. The echoes of those piercing cries from the devastated Jewish settlements all over the continent will probably never cease to remind us of that dark period in the history of the Jews. 'In the spring of 1920,' I have noted in "My Portion," my book of memoirs, 'the president of the Council, the late Rose Brenner, appointed me chairman of the Reconstruction Committee and ordered me to go abroad and make a study of the conditions of the various countries and determine what aid was needed.

'So I left for Europe with my personal secretary. We visited London, Paris, Antwerp, The Hague, Rotterdam, Berlin, Kattowicz, Vienna, Budapest and Frankfort.

'If my tears could have left an indelible imprint, they would have made a line along the streets of Europe. . .

'Everywhere one met little children who had been lost in the shuffle; mothers looking into the eyes of the lost ones in the hope of finding their own children, who had strayed from them, when city after city and village after village had been evacuated. . .

'Amid this chaos, anti-Semitism was rampant. As was usual, the classes who had made the war sought a scapegoat to divert attention from themselves; and the Jew—already bowed and broken from his sufferings—proved a convenient one.

'Jews are massacred in the Ukraine, harassed in Poland, driven in refugee bands from place to place—a starving, footsore, weary-eyed army. The Asyl of Paris was filled with refugees; yet the misery was mild compared with the tented colonies in Belgium, and the overcrowded quarters in the German and Austrian cities. . . Twenty thousand refugees were living in tents at The Hague, besides the number who were quartered in the Montefiore Home in Rotterdam . . .'

We organized classes in English so that the people who were waiting for their turn to migrate would lose no time in learning the language of their new country. Council groups were organized at Riga, Libau, Rotterdam, Danzig, and Antwerp for constructive service to the Jewish emigrants through their ports.

In the autumn of 1920, a reconstruction unit headed by Celia Strakosch was dispatched to Europe to follow out some of the work which I outlined in my report. Another unit was sent in 1921, consisting of social service experts, and still another unit in the spring of 1922, headed by Mrs. Elinore Sachs-Barr and Doris Maddow, and one year later, Clara Greenhut and Dr. Margaret Paukner headed still another unit.

The vital part that the Council played in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Jewish war refugee can probably never be fully estimated. If I may use a concrete form of symbolism I might say that thousands upon thousands of Jewish lives were saved at that time through the efforts of the Council of Jewish Women.

We must not, however, forget that these above-mentioned activities are comparatively recent, and but few of all those pursued in the history of the Council. We must remember that for more than twenty-five years before this reconstruction work, the Council carried on philanthropic and communal tasks all through the states and that it always lived up to its motto "Faith and Humanity" to its fullest extent and in its most consumate sense. We must also remember that the membership and, with it, the efficiency of the Council grew enormously from year to year. The Council started with a membership of ninety-three. In 1896, three years later, the reports reveal 50 sections with a membership of 3,370. In 1914, when the Council was twenty years old, it had 56 sections in 24 states. In 1920, it had 164 sections, in 40 states, with a membership of 28,000. Of these sections five were in Canada, one in Cuba, and 41 were junior sections. In 1925, it reached a total membership of 52,000.

Along the lines of its usual activities, the Council has formed close to 100 study circles in religion and philanthropy throughout its chapters. Fourteen religious schools have been opened by individual sections. The Council sponsors two Vacation Societies caring for hundreds of children. Sewing schools, Jewish libraries, Sabbath schools, etc., have been formed in many parts of the country. But these activities, I take it for granted, are understood to be within the normal functions of an organization of this type. I shall therefore give a cursory review of some of the other activities and turn again to the work which the Council has done, I may say, on an international scale.

The Council provides many communities with their first volunteer workers in the field of Jewish philanthropy. Through its social welfare program, it has stimulated the establishment of many neighborhood houses, homes for girls, clinics, recreational centers, and vacation camps. It has also developed work among the blind and the deaf. It has aroused nation-wide interest in the movement to provide scholarship funds for deserving students, under the auspices of Council sections. It has established a Department of Farm and Rural Work, to keep the lonely Jewish women in the scattered rural communities of several of our most popular states, in touch with the Jewish world outside. It

has interested the Jewish woman in the progress and welfare of the child in the public schools, through its "School Friend" System.

Among its publications is "The Jewish Woman" the first periodical devoted entirely to the interest of Jewish womanhood; and "The Immigrant," a monthly bulletin on immigration questions published by the Council's Department of Immigrant Aid. Holiday calendars are also issued by the Council to schools, colleges, universities, and institutions, where the Jewish holidays are noted. Besides it boasts of an imposing list of publications of Jewish interest which are made easily accessible to all its Sections and members.

Not the least significant of the Council's achievements was its summoning of the World Congress for Jewish Women, which is the first international body of its kind in Jewish history. It was in 1923 that the Council acted as hostess to a group of representative women of the various Jewish centers of Europe, who were called together in Vienna. It was my great pleasure to be there and to see the World Congress of Jewish Women come into being, drawing its breath from some of the greatest Jewesses of our present generation. There were among us then Berta Popenheim and Paula Ollendorf of Germany, Anita Muller-Cohen of Vienna, women of magnificent cultural stature and women who embodied all the bounty of kindness and devotion to their race. We banded together to discuss the various problems which were facing the Jews of Europe after the war. What was to be done with the hundreds of thousands of orphans? What about the refugees? And what an appalling situation the homeless girl presented with white-slave traffic spreading its net! These and more stark questions faced us, and the Council, representing the most prosperous Jewish community in the world, of course, assumed most of the material burden of this international body. I am proud to say that I have served as its president since its inception and that at its last conference in Hamburg, in the spring of 1929, the Council was again very well represented and Mrs. Estelle M. Sternberger, who has served as Executive Secretary of the Council for the last few years, was elected Secretary of the World Congress.

Although the problems that confront the World Congress

naturally undergo certain modifications as time goes on, yet the work is always of vital importance in its fundamental Jewish aspects, and I would set this World Congress down as one of the glowing jewels in the crown of achievement of the Council of Jewish Women.

I should also like to mention that the Council participated in an exhibit of a general nature at Paris in 1905, also participated in the same year in the Jamestown Exposition, and in 1915, gave an exhibit of its work at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. In each instance, it carried off a gold medal in recognition of its excellent work.

In the many years of my association with the Council and in the various offices that I occupied, I have had the good fortune to meet most of the outstanding workers and its guiding lights. I shall mention only a few of them: Hannah G. Solomon, Marion L. Misch, Bertha F. Rauh, and the beloved Rose Brenner who departed from us all too soon. As for the splendid personality heading the Council now, Mrs. Joseph E. Friend, and the very brilliant service rendered by the Executive Secretary, Mrs. Sternberger, I feel certain that all of my readers know of them.

IV

The vast scope of the Council of Jewish Women absorbed the finest elements of Jewish womanhood in America. And the work of the Council spread like a powerful river down the valley of Jewish life; the valley with the numerous hills and rocks, with the endless rows of weeds. This mighty river sent its many branches far and wide,—all coming from the clear springs of charity, all going to the deep sea of welfare. For the extent of the Council work is all-prevailing and all-embracing.

Soon, however, another great woman's organization came to life, a peer we might call it, both in integrity of purpose and in its blessed vision. For the Council of Jewish Women and Hadassah are today among the most important Jewish national bodies in the country, and among the most forceful women's organizations in the world. Although the scope of the younger organization is more limited, yet Hadassah in its comparatively short existence, has managed to attract

the attention of the world to its unique type of welfare work.

I should like to outline briefly the premises upon which the Hadassah structure was founded. We are now passing from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. The Jews were facing the new century with mortification and renewed horror. For a good many years to come, they were not able to shake off the abominable effects of the Dreyfus case. Jews and non-Jews alike were shaken by this incident where the Jewish army officer was accused of the most disgraceful crime, and the world was shocked because it occurred in France, the religious and political haven of the modern world.

And if France could become anti-Semitic, what hope was there for the Jew in the notoriously anti-Semitic countries?

This was the state of mind of the Jews of the world. And out of this came a strong Zionist tide. Orthodox as well as assimilated Jew saw after the Dreyfus Affair that Zion was the only answer. And when Theodor Herzl came to the fore with his political program, and the first Zionist Congress, the response throughout the world was overwhelming.

Very soon, it reverberated in America. When the Federation of Zionist Societies of Greater New York and vicinity was organized in 1897, and one year later became known as the Federation of American Zionists, it boasted as members some of the best known names in American Jewish history. Professor Richard J. H. Gottheil became its president, with Dr. Stephen S. Wise, as secretary, and with Henrietta Szold, by this time a writer of note, and Judah L. Magnes, on the Governing Board. Soon the Federation had 25 societies throughout the states, and took its place among the active Zionist groups of the world.

The Zionist ranks were also recruited from the immigrant masses who were coming to America in large numbers at that time.

American Jews, those of adequate means of course, were heard of taking their annual vacation in Palestine rather than any of the other famous resorts. Jewish tourists wended their way to the hills of Judaea. Women were also among them. In 1911, a group of these women made a tour through the Holy Land, and returned with the light of Zion

gleaming in their eyes, and the work for Zion throbbing in their pulse. Henrietta Szold, who was then occupying the important post of Secretary of the Jewish Publication Society, was motivating this woman's expedition, and upon their return, Miss Szold realized the golden moment to organize the American women into a Zionist body.

Henrietta Szold arranged for a meeting, at which the women who returned were the speakers, and their stirring and moving accounts of "the Jewish pioneers there whose task was even more difficult than that of our pioneers here in the West", swept the small assembly of women, and right there and then, they organized into the Women's Zionist Organization of America. They chose the name "Hadassah," which was the Hebrew name of Queen Esther, and as their motto and inspiration "the healing of the daughter of my people," from the very beautiful and sad verse of Jeremiah:

> "Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people
> From a land far off:
> 'Is it not the Lord in Zion?
> Is not the King in her?'
> . . . . . .
> Is there no balm in Gilead?
> Is there no physician there?
> Why then is not the
> *Healing of the daughter of my people recovered?*"
> (Jeremiah 8:19–22)

Thus, Hadassah was born in 1912.

Before I tell about Hadassah's program and its adherence to the motto "the healing of the daughter of my people," I must stop for a moment and say something about the great need for Hadassah in Palestine. Let me first quote from a journalist's description of the country at that time: "Here was no paternal government giving homesteads to worthy men, but here were people buying back from Arab landowners at high prices, land that had been abused by generations of bad farming, that had to be carefully nursed back into fertility. Here, too, was constant danger from bands of marauding Arabs, intensely hostile to these people, trying to settle again in this land.

"Hardships were numerous. Physicians and nurses were too expensive, too difficult to be even thought of. Swamps abounded and mosquitoes were numerous—is it to be wondered that malarial fever was a common occurrence? Water was scarce, and the idea of biological protection never had a hearing. As a result, typhoid fever claimed far too many victims. The climate differed from that of Eastern Europe, whence came most of the colonists, but who was to instruct these people in the necessary change of diet?

"There was no provision for caring for maternity cases, except a missionary hospital to which mothers might be admitted only if their children were to be baptized into the Christian church. The Jewish mothers naturally refrained from using these facilities. The resulting infant death rate was frightful among the entire population."

Hadassah was going to heal. Hadassah was going to turn death into life. Hadassah was going to bring Western scientific culture into the land.

Technically speaking, Hadassah was founded with the dual program: to foster Zionist ideals in America and to establish a system of medical and social service in Palestine. Of course, every Hadassah member is automatically a member of the Zionist Organization of America, which has developed out of the Federation of American Zionists. This not only means paying the annual *Shekel* but also annual contributions to the Keren Kayemeth, or the National Fund, which is the land-buying agency and to which all Zionist factions contribute alike.

Now if Henrietta Szold gave to Hadassah life and purpose, then it may be said that Nathan and Lina Straus gave to Hadassah its first practical move in life. No sooner was Hadassah founded, than the Strauses financed the trip of two American Jewish nurses to do district nursing in Palestine. In 1913, Miss Rachael Landy and Miss Rose Kaplan left for the Holy Land to start Hadassah's task which was soon to gain recognition from the entire civilized world.

But the kind and magnanimous Strauses were not satisfied with representatives alone. So the aged couple took the trip themselves and saw the beginnings of Hadassah work. They watched the modern scientific methods of district

nursing being introduced into Palestine. Under the supervision of the Hadassah nurses and with the assistance of experienced midwives, maternity nursing in the home was established. But how inadequate these few agents of health seemed in the face of all the vast numbers who needed them!

So the Strauses provided the funds for a small Nurses Settlement which was opened at the home of the two American nurses in Jerusalem. Here, a class of girls were trained and instructed in the elements of nursing, first aid, and hygiene.

But just as Hadassah was getting its hopeful roots into the desolate soil of Palestine, the World War broke out and suspended all activities. For two years, all Hadassah work practically ceased, as did that of all other foreign welfare agencies. However, in 1916, when the Actions Committee of the World Zionist Organization appealed to the Zionists in America to send a medical unit to the disease-ridden territories of Palestine, the Zionist Organization here entrusted to Hadassah the task of organizing such a unit. With the aid of the Joint Distribution Committee and the World Zionist Organization, Hadassah organized a unit of forty-four physicians, dentists, nurses, and sanitary engineers, and in 1918, the unit reached Palestine and immediately plunged into the arduous task. The various hospitals, dispensaries, and health stations that were established were of course staffed and financed by Jews, but their ministrations were by no means confined to Jewish patients. We can easily imagine the pestilence and disease raging in the country at that time after the battles and skirmishes there. Hadassah threw its doors open to Jew and Arab alike, conducting inspection and waging anti-malarial campaigns.

In that same year, the first training school for nurses was opened with headquarters at the Rothschild Hospital in Jerusalem. This training school served a twofold purpose: it established a self-perpetuating group of nurses for the country, and it also gave Palestinian young women an avenue of employment. The three-year training course (given entirely in the Hebrew language) offers here the equivalent of any nurses' training course given in America, and the diploma is recognized the world over.

While all this intensive health work was going on in Palestine, Hadassah began, in the United States, a huge campaign for hospital apparel and linens. The Palestine Supply Department was formed under the leadership of Mrs. A. H. Fromenson with numerous Hadassah chapters turning out linens and hospital supplies through its sewing circles and linen "showers." At the same time, a program of Zionist cultural work was outlined here, and carried out by all the chapters.

In 1920, Hadassah here saw its first-born brought to light. Junior Hadassah, comprising the daughters and young sisters of the older Hadassah-members organized with the specific purpose of caring for the children of Palestine. This young group, which numbers more than 10,000 members, in 260 chapters throughout the country, founded and maintains Meier Shfeyah, a rural school for children, and a Nurses' Training School, besides, of course, supporting general Zionist efforts.

To date, senior and junior Hadassah have a joint membership of 50,000. And here is some of the monumental work Hadassah has done and is doing: There are four Hadassah hospitals and five dispensaries in Palestine, and provisions for medical service in fifty rural districts. There are 21 infant welfare stations, 18 pre-natal clinics, besides special clinics for obstetric and pediatric service, and a mental hygiene clinic. Hadassah is also soon to realize a dental clinic made possible through the assistance of a New York dentist, who is endowing the clinic in the memory of his wife, Clara Wachtel, whose name the clinic will bear.

Hadassah conducts regular medical inspection of 24,000 school children and a system of penny luncheons prepared by expert dieticians in 14 schools and 15 kindergartens. Continuous campaigns are waged against tuberculosis, small pox, trachoma, typhoid and malaria.

A million dollar fund is being sponsored by both junior and senior Hadassah jointly to help found a hospital in connection with the Hebrew University. Senior Hadassah also has a fund for scholarships for graduates of the nurses' training school in Palestine to come and study in America. There is also a fund for the publication in Hebrew of text-

books for the nurses. Again with junior Hadassah, $70,000 has been raised for the Jewish National Fund for the redemption of the Haifa Bay land.

I must not forget to mention the special hospitals which have been erected for the benefit of the Halutzim who are engaged in agricultural work in the remote sections of the country, and also the X-ray Institute which is now operating as part of the Hadassah Hospital of Jerusalem.

Two years ago, the names of the late beloved Lina and Nathan Straus, bigger and brighter than ever, came up again in the annals of Hadassah. The crowning glory of Hadassah, the Straus Health Centers in Palestine, became a reality. These Straus Health Centers, of which one is in Jerusalem and the other in Tel-Aviv, will unite all the public health activities in one institution. The keynote of these centers will be guarding health rather than treating illness. The first contribution of the Strauses toward the Health Centers was $50,000, but the late Lina Straus' devotion to Hadassah exceeded all financial bounds, and, about two years before her death, she gathered all the jewels which her family had presented to her up to that time, and gave these to Hadassah to go towards a Reserve Fund for these Centers. The jewels brought a great deal of money and were returned by the chapters to Hadassah, which, in turn, presented them to Lady Samuel, formerly the First Lady of Palestine.

In the past ten years, Hadassah has raised $3,500,000 towards its medical work, which requires about $600,000 a year. Again I wish to stress the point that all Hadassah work is extended to the non-Jews as well.

Before closing the story of Hadassah, one of the most magnificent chapters of Jewish womanhood in history, I wish to make reference to the immense growth in the Jewish population of Palestine to show the great needs that Hadassah had to fill. In 1916, Palestine had 85,000 Jews; after Balfour issued the historic Declaration, the population jumped by leaps and bounds, and in 1929, it was 157,800. And Hadassah is there, ready to serve these incoming masses, and to help make their dream of Zion come true.

I have already mentioned Henrietta Szold, whose name is synonymous with Hadassah. After her term of presidency which began with the first day of Hadassah and terminated

eight years later, many another loyal and devoted Jewess came to the fore and carried on the magnificent work of Hadassah. Among them are Lotta Levensohn, Alice Seligsberg, Mrs. Edward Jacobs, who was elected president at the last convention in Buffalo after many years of devotion and service to Hadassah, Mrs. Irma Lindheim, who served as president for three years, and Mrs. Robert Szold who had added glory to the name Szold, during her long association with Hadassah.

Thirteen years after Hadassah was instituted, the second National women's organization to espouse the cause of rebuilding Zion came into existence. It called itself Women's Organization for the Pioneer Women of Palestine. It grew out of the ranks of the Poale-Zion (Socialist Zionist Party), that faction of modern Zionism which speaks for the proletariat. In America, the Poale-Zionist Party was organized about twenty-seven years ago and has found great response among the Jewish workers, who are imbued with the spirit of Zionism. The women who are responsible for the Pioneer Women's Organization were and still are members of the Poale-Zion Party, or the National Jewish Worker's Alliance of America, its outstanding fraternal Order. Among these women are Mrs. Meyer Brown, Sophie A. Udin, Mrs. Louis Siegel, and Mrs. Baruch Zuckerman.

These women made the welfare of the worker in Palestine, particularly the working woman, their objective. In other words, they not only help foster in Palestine the usual welfare work with which liberal women are identified, but they also take steps to strengthen the position of the working woman there, in order to improve her social and economic status, and also to enable her to participate more fully in the upbuilding of the Jewish National Homeland. The Histadruth, as the Federation of Labor in Palestine is called, comprises 30,000 workers, including 12,000 women. It is with this group and the groups of young *Halutzoth*, the women Pioneers working on the land, that the organization concerns itself.

Immediately upon its inception, information was disseminated among the Jewish working women here, telling them of the life and the needs of the Jewish working women

in Palestine, the important part she plays in the moral and economic growth of the country, the heroism she has shown in overcoming the difficulties under which she had to rear her family while doing her work, etc., etc. As a result, the Pioneer Women's Organization in the five years of its existence has enlisted 5,000 women throughout the country and Canada, in 60 different clubs. In this short time, it has become the buttress of spirit and substance of the working woman in Palestine, so that the latter uses her new freedom to the best advantage in doing her share, if not more than an equal share with the man, in improving the living conditions of the worker. Those who have visited Palestine in the past few years speak with utmost admiration of the *Halutzah*, who with face uplifted toward the Eastern sun, her shoulders straightened by the new freedom, with her hands eagerly mothers the neglected soil which she loves so dearly. And the lot of this *Halutzah* has been greatly improved thanks to the efforts of the Pioneer Women's Organization.

The Pioneer Women's Organization has raised already $175,000 for the girls' *Kvutzoth*, or the agricultural settlements where the *Halutzoth* live and work, enabling the girl groups to acquire land for co-operative farms in Rechvia, Schechunath Borochov, Tiberias and Petach-Tikvah. Provision has also been made for other girls' settlements in Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa, the larger centers where they are employed. Funds have been given to them for the purpose of erecting farm structures, for the purchase of cattle and farm implements, and the development of dairies, bee-raising, and tree nurseries. Several agricultural training schools have been founded for these *Halutzoth*, which have already sent out a number of expert agriculturists who are now, in turn, directing the training in the newer girls' settlements.

Some of these settlements have already proven to be not only self-supporting, but profitable. So successful have they been in their dairy produce, honey culture, and, particularly, tree-raising that they have been able to dispose of all their excess quantity at a good price, and many of these girls have been invited by their Jewish and non-Jewish neighboring farmers to take care of their trees. There are ten such girls' settlements, or Kvutzoth, sponsored by the Pioneer Wo-

men's Organization, where 600 girls are housed and trained for agricultural and other work.

To provide the means for maintaining the agricultural training schools the organization carries on an independent campaign annually. In 1929 a total of $55,000 was raised. The money is remitted to the Women's Council of the Histadruth. The organization also maintains three kindergartens and day nurseries where children of working mothers are looked after during the day.

The National Fund, being the one institution which is a basic part of all Zionist factions, occupies an important place in the program of the Pioneer Women, which provides for participation in the general drive as well as special campaigns. In its immediate affiliation, it supports all the more general undertakings of the Poale-Zion Party.

In order to keep the members well informed of its activities in Palestine the organization publishes the "Pioneer Woman" a bi-monthly bulletin, employing both Yiddish and English. It also distributes the literature pertaining to or emanating from the working classes of Palestine. They have, however, found an even more effective method of arousing interest in their work by inviting leaders of the working women to come to America.

Another recent publication is a Hebrew one called "Divrei Poaleth" (What The Working Women Have To Say). This is a compilation of fifty-seven essays, written by as many women workers telling their experiences as toilers on the land. This work is indeed an interesting document in the history of the new woman and I do hope it will be translated into the European languages so that it will be accessible to the women outside of Palestine.

Instead of a president, the Pioneer Women's Organization is lead by an Executive Committee, which consists of Mrs. L. Siegel, B. Caller, and Mrs. Dr. I. Applebaum.

V

At the third convention of the Reform Rabbis held in Cincinnati, in June 1871, the idea of the Hebrew Union College was born, and with it, the idea of organizing all the Reform Congregations into the Union of American Hebrew

Congregations. About the Hebrew Union College and the great spirits that dwelt therein as well as the men it has sent forth to "Torah, Hohmah, Ma'asim Tovim," I cannot stop to speak here. We will pass over forty-one years of the existence of the Union, whose chief objects are the maintenance of the College and the promotion of religious instruction, and come to the creation of the counterpart of the Union, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods.

It was in December, 1912, that the President of the Union, Mr. J. Walter Freiberg, issued a "call to all ladies' organizations belonging to the Union to appoint or elect delegates for a meeting to be held in Cincinnati, during January 20–23, 1913. This meeting is for the purpose of organizing a Federation of Temple Sisterhoods."

Representatives of fifty Sisterhoods from almost as many cities attended this conference. Some of these women are no more with us, but their memory always serves to inspire the cause of this organization. The sessions were attended by huge throngs, and prominent speakers, men and women, addressed them. In summing up his remarks, Rabbi David Philipson of Cincinnati said to the women: "Your organization when formed will become the counterpart of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The two organizations will be the obverse and reverse of the same shield, the congregation as the basis of Jewish representation."

With the object of bringing the various Sisterhoods of the country into closer co-operation and association with one another, of quickening the religious consciousness of the Jew by strengthening spiritual and educational activity, and of working with and for the Hebrew Union College, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods took its place as the first national congregational organization in the country.

After thirteen years, the Federation numbers now 56,000 members divided among 340 Sisterhoods in the United States and Canada, and one Sisterhood in England. The numerous activities are carried on through National Standing Committees on Religion, Religious Schools, Hebrew Union College Scholarships and Dormitory Maintenance, Isaac M. Wise Sisterhood Memorial Fund, Union Museum, Uniongrams, Sisterhood Extension, Federation of Young

Folks' Temple Leagues, Student Activities, Programs, Peace, Jewish Literature for the Sightless, State Federations, Co-operation.

Recognition for much of the growth and increased influence of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhood should go first of all to its former presidents, Mrs. Abram Simon, Mrs. Joseph Wiesenfeld, and Mrs. J. Walter Freiberg, and to Mrs. Maurice Steinfeld, its present president. Among the other women who have gained distinction in their efforts in the name of the Federation are the late Mrs. Sally Kubie Glauber, Miss Edna Goldsmith, Mrs. Albert J. May, (a daughter of Rabbi Isaac M. Wise), Mrs. David Goldfarb, Mrs. Joseph Stolz, Mrs. Jacob Wertheim, and Mrs. Adolph Rosenberg.

Mention should also be made here of Miss Elsa Weihl, Mrs. Miriam Dreyfuss, and Miss Helen Straus, who have rendered invaluable service to the Federation, and thereby also to the Jewish community, in the capacity of Executive Secretary.

Just as the spirit and message of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise permeates the existence of the Hebrew Union College, and consequently the other institutions born of the inspiration glowing from the College, namely, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, so the spirit of Professor Solomon Schechter dwells in the midst of the Jewish Theological Seminary and the two organizations created to promote its teachings and principles—the United Synagogue of America, and the more recently established Women's League of the United Synagogue.

The former organizations foster Reform Judaism; the latter, conservative or traditional Judaism.

The Jewish Theological Seminary was established in 1886. It was not until 1902, when Doctor Solomon Schechter assumed the presidency, that the need for a united congregational body to work with the seminary was realized. However, it was not until February, 1913, that Doctor Schechter succeeded in bringing the United Synagogue of America into being. The establishment of a women's league was forecast at the organization meeting of the United Synagogue, when Doctor Schechter said: "I would even suggest

that the United Synagogue assign a certain portion of its work to women, and give them a regular share in its activities. They can become more than an auxiliary to us; indeed, helpful in many respects where, as conditions are in this country, their influence is more far reaching than that of their husbands."

However, five years elapsed before these wives of the United Synagogue members formed the Women's League. And as Solomon Schechter gave the impetus to the organization of the United Synagogue, Mrs. Schechter inspired the Women's League. This was in January, 1918, when the broader objects of the newly-formed organization had to be set aside to make room for an immediate program of work in connection with the War.

With the characteristic devotion and zeal manifested by the Jewish woman in those days, the Women's League immediately launched a special drive for funds to provide extra provisions, and other necessities for the Jewish soldiers stationed in nearby training camps. Of course, the chief concern was that the food should be *kosher* and served, as far as possible, in conformity with the Jewish dietary laws. The very first substantial achievement of the new group was the Jewish Students' House near Columbia University, which was originally intended as a canteen for the Students' Army Training Corps of the Jewish Welfare Board. This Students' House served as a cozy corner for the Jewish student soldier. After the Armistice, this House remained a gathering and study place for Jewish students and scholars connected with Columbia, the Jewish Theological Seminary nearby, and other schools. Soon, this example of The Jewish Student House was followed by the Philadelphia Sisterhoods, under the leadership of Mrs. Cyrus Adler, who erected one near Dropsie College. Today we also have similar institutions in Denver and Detroit. In all of these, hundreds of Jewish students living away from home are able to find a truly Jewish atmosphere and all that goes with it.

In speaking of the war activities of the Women's League, I wish to mention the substantial remittances of money and shipments of clothes made to the Jews of Palestine during the months of abysmal suffering in that country. And I

will also not omit the shipments of *matzoth* made by the Sisterhoods to the Jewish soldiers at their various camping points at that time.

It is very interesting and significant that at its second annual convention in 1919, a little more than a year after its inception, the League already numbered 57 Sisterhoods throughout the country with a total membership of 6,000.

Though still revolving around its axis, the tenets of conservative Judaism, the work of the Women's League has radiated diverse activities. Each Sisterhood conducts study circles on Jewish subjects, chiefly Jewish history. The observance of the Sabbath is always stressed and the adherence to Kashruth always emphasized. These measures are not only taken up by the Sisterhoods for their own immediate families, but each unit endeavors to see to it that the laws of *Kashruth* are observed in local Jewish institutions, such as hospitals, orphan asylums, and day nurseries. Similar effort is made in the cause of Sabbath observance. The Sisterhoods enlist individuals as well as groups to keep the Sabbath in more Jewish spirit, and to persuade institutions and business houses not to make their workers break the Sabbath.

The Women's League also publishes pamphlets on Jewish subjects which are distributed among the members and among the children in the Sabbath schools, which are the League's strongholds.

For a good many years now, the League has been awarding annual scholarships to students of the Seminary, and also doing a great deal of Jewish cultural work among the Jewish students at women's colleges. Prominent among the League's personalities, besides the late Mrs. Solomon Schechter and Mrs. Cyrus Adler, already mentioned, are Miss Emily Solis-Cohen of New York, Miss Sarah Kussy, Newark, Mrs. Moses Hyamson, New York; Mrs. Charles I. Hoffman, Newark; Mrs. Israel Unterberg, New York; Mrs. Samuel Spiegel, New York, who is now president; Miss Deborah Kallen, Boston; and Mrs. A. H. Vixman, New York.

What the Union of American Hebrew Congregations is to the Hebrew Union College, and the United Synagogue of America to the Jewish Theological Seminary, the Union of

Orthodox Jewish Congregations is to the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Yeshivah.

The Orthodox Congregations united in 1898 "to advance the interests of positive Biblical, Rabbinical and historical Judaism," and the Women's Branch, which came in 1924, many years later, naturally grew out of the same principles.

As in the case of the parent organization, the Women's Branch is aiming to further and intensify Orthodox Judaism in the home, in the religious school, and among students and in institutions of higher learning. The activities of the Women's Branch are divided into ten departments, each one concerning itself with a different phase of the work, all the phases converging toward the central point, the preservation and intensification of Orthodox Judaism.

It may be said that the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Yeshivah is the apple of the eye both of the older organization as well as the Women's Branch. This Yeshivah, whose locale has been transformed from humble ramshackle quarters on the East Side of New York, to its present magnificent edifice uptown, owes a good deal of its present beauty and glory to the efforts of the Women's Branch. More than $300,000 was raised by the women for the dormitory adjoining the Yeshivah. The Women's Branch also awards annual scholarships to needy students.

These Yeshivah students may be the pets of the Women's Branch, but they are by no means monopolizing the attention and devotion of the women. The Collegiate Branch of the organization holds large gatherings in celebration of each of the Jewish holidays, at which young students from all the schools are invited and are given an opportunity to enjoy the holiday in its true Jewish spirit. Furthermore, arrangements are made for members of the Women's Branch to invite out-of-town students as their guests for Sabbaths and holidays.

There is also an Educational Committee, which distributes appropriate literature in advance of each holiday, giving a resumé of the significance and observance of the festival. This literature is also circulated among its constituent Sisterhoods and individual members for their information and guidance.

The subject of *Kashruth* is one of the most important concerns of the Women's Branch. Not only are the women exhorted to observe scrupulously the Jewish dietary laws in their own homes, but as an organization, they have undertaken to investigate the *Kashruth* of manufactured food products. This is done by Rabbis, who are appointed by the Ritual Commission of the Union, and employed by the Women's Branch. Furthermore, they endeavor, wherever possible to persuade manufacturers to substitute *kosher* for non-kosher ingredients. Thus far, the Women's Branch has won the approval of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America for seven kinds of kosher crackers manufactured by a large baking company, for a butter product in wide use, for many of the canned and bottled goods of a national manufacturer, and for bread and cakes of another baking company. The *Kashruth* Committee also answers questions coming from housewives pertaining to certain household matters, after consultation with authorities.

Another important agency of the Women's Branch is the Family Purity Committee which has as its task to bring home once more the value and importance of the old laws of Taharath Hamispacha, under its supervision, efforts are being made to modernize the existing ritual baths.

But the crowning glory of the Women's Branch lies in its most recent achievement—the establishment of an institution of which organizations of much longer standing might well be proud. For in spite of its short existence, the Women's Branch is reaping glory and satisfaction from the Teachers' Training School for Girls. This school, which has already been in existence three years, trains young Jewish girls to become competent Hebrew and religious teachers, employing the most modern pedagogic methods combined with a genuinely religious spirit. This past year, ninety-five girls from all parts of New York and New Jersey enrolled in the school. The curriculum here compares favorably with that of any Hebrew Teachers' College in Palestine or in Europe, offering courses in the Hebrew language, history, religion, Mishnah, Agadah, pedagogy, and other kindred subjects. The language of instruction throughout is Hebrew.

VI

The idea of fraternal college societies is indeed a cheerful one. This American scholastic institution is associated with youth and the campus, and all the social amenities that make up college life. The idea of the Jewish fraternal college society, however, has a somewhat sad phase in it. Why should these Jewish boys and girls form their own fraternities and sororities, unless they were not made to feel welcome in the organization of their non-Jewish college mates? Nevertheless, this negative point has practically disappeared, with the rise of dozens of Greek letter societies of Jewish students who are motivated by constructive and nationalistic aims and views.

The first college fraternity in the United States was formed in 1776 at the William and Mary College in Virginia. There being very few Jewish families in the South in those days, it is not strange that no Jewish names are associated with the foundation of the famous Phi Beta Kappa fraternity. The fraternities which followed were either sectarian Christian or, if non-sectarian, set drastic limitations upon the admission of Jews. In the early days, when the Jewish population was small and there were comparatively few Jewish college students, the number affected by this exclusion from fraternities was too small for any thought of the organization of Jewish fraternities, whether as a defensive measure, or for frankly Jewish fraternal advantages. With the growth in the number of Jews attending our colleges the problem became increasingly acute, and eventually led to the organization of fraternities by Jews. This does not mean that all so-called Jewish fraternities were formed merely to provide a refuge for Jewish students who yearned for he kind of fellowship afforded by existing societies but were excluded from their membership, for a considerable proportion of the fraternities of Jews are at the same time Jewish fraternities. Such was the first of these societies: the Zeta Beta Tau, which came to life at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1898. The purpose of this first Jewish college fraternity was: "so that a socially congenial group of Jewish college men banded together to demonstrate by their every word and deed in public and in private the best of which

Jewish manhood is capable, and the inherent excellence of the Jewish character."

The Jewish sorority was the result of a similar evolution, and the first Jewish sorority was also Jewish in a positive way. It was Iota Alpha Pi and was formed in 1903 at Hunter College, "to promote opportunities for social contact among Jewish college women." In the beginning, the meetings were devoted to extensive study of women characters in the Bible, and also contemporary Jewish literature. Soon they plunged into social and welfare work, doing settlement case work on the East Side of New York, and helping individual cases of consumptives through the Denver Consumptive League.

At first, the Iota Alpha Pi was known as the J. A. P., and thus existed at Hunter as a local Sorority, until 1913. With the adoption of the Greek Letters, and with the addition of many new members, the original organizers grouped themselves into the Alpha Chapter, and the succeeding group became the Beta Chapter, which was in time inducted into the Hunter Pan-Hellenic Council.

In speaking of the original group the following names of the organizers should be mentioned: Hannah Finkelstein, now Mrs. Swick, Mrs. Olga Edelstein Ecker, Mrs. Sadie April Glotzer, Mrs. Rose Posner Bernstein, Mrs. Rose Delson Hirschman, Mrs. May Finkelstein Spiegel, Mrs. Frances Zellermayer Delson.

Expansion at first extended to chapters in the vicinity of New York City, with Delta Chapter at New York University, Gamma at the Brooklyn Law School, and Epsilon at the New Jersey Law School.

In 1924, a Rotation Scholarship Fund was instituted, with money to be loaned to worthy students on the expectation of it being repaid to the Sorority. This fund is well known to the Deans of the various colleges at which Iota Alpha Chapters are found, and they co-operate with the Society in the selection of students worthy of help.

In 1925, this Sorority began to issue its own bulletin, a dignified semi-annual booklet.

Among the women who have been very active in Iota Alpha Pi, beside those mentioned above, are: Professor

Vera Loeb, New York City, Miss Bertha Weinlander, New York City, Mrs. Beatrice Rosenthal Reuss, New York City, Mrs. Hilda Meyer Podoloff, New Haven, Connecticut, Miss Charlotte Sternberg, New York City, Mrs. Sadie Hayman Leiss, Brooklyn, Mrs. Meriam Wilson Futterman, New York City, Mrs. Ethel Isaacs Reisman, New York City, Dr. Leoni Newmann Claman, New York City, Meriam Perlstein Cane, New York City, Amelie Spiegel Rothschild, New York City, Daisy Cohen Shapiro, New York City, Hannah F. Sokobin, Newark, New Jersey.

Four years ago, Iota Alpha Pi celebrated a quarter of a century of existence. Members came from all over the country to celebrate the Silver Jubilee, many of them married and mothers of grown children, others shining in careers of their own. For Iota Alpha Pi boasts of many successful lawyers, politicians, musicians, and teachers. But doing its splendid bit of work for needy students, it is among the finest of American fraternal societies.

Seven years after Iota Alpha Pi was organized, Alpha Epsilon Phi, the next Jewish sorority was founded at Barnard College on October 24, 1909 by Ida Beck, Helen Phillips, Rose Salmowitz, Stella Straus, Rose Gerstein, Tina Hess, and Bertha Stenbuck, with the object of fostering close friendship between the members, of stimulating their intellectual, social and spiritual life, and counting as a force through service rendered to others.

The program of the Society is carried out in the usual fraternal way, every chapter doing local philanthropic work, with the national body of the Sorority giving scholarships for academic training as well as social service.

The total membership of Alpha Epsilon Phi is 1,900 of which number 1,400 are in the Alumni Group, and the remainder active members now attending college. They are divided into 24 chapters in various colleges throughout the United States and Canada.

The Sorority is governed by a National Council consisting of 9 members elected at each convention. Among its publications are "The Quarterly," collections of Jewish songs, and national directories of the Society.

Among those whose work has been especially influential are some of the past and present officers: Mrs. Samuel

Greene, Montclair, N. J.; Mrs. Nathan H. Feitel, New Orleans, La.; Mrs. Mitchell Edelson, Chicago, Ill.; Mrs. Ellis Slatoff, Newark, N. J.; Mrs. Nat Bloom, New York City; Mrs. Aaron Schaffer, Austin, Texas; Miss Harriet Moses, New York City, and Miss Elizabeth Eldridge, San Antonio, Texas.

Alpha Epsilon Phi has five national honorary members,—Mrs. Joseph Friend, New Orleans, La., now president of the National Council of Jewish Women, Mrs. Edward Lazansky, New York City, Mrs. Enoch Rauh, Pittsburgh, Pa., Mrs. Israel Unterberg, New York City, and Congresswoman Florence P. Kahn, San Francisco, Calif.

A very long and influential list of matrons have affiliated with the various chapters as honorary members or patronesses.

It was quite natural that Hunter College, being the only free college for women in New York City, and having as a result a preponderance of Jewish students, should have more than one Jewish Sorority, and in 1913, Phi Sigma Sigma was organized with the purpose "of working charitable good without regard to creed or sect."

Among the founders of the Society were Fay Chertkoff, Ethel Gordon Krauss, Estelle Melnick Cole, Claire Wunder McArdle, Gwen Zaliels Snyder, Josephine Ellison, Shirley Cohen Goldstein, Rose Scherr Seidman and Jeanette Lipka.

The growth of this Sorority is quite extraordinary. In 1918, the Beta chapter was chartered at Tufts College, and the Gamma chapter at New York University. In 1920, came Delta at the University of Buffalo, and Epsilon at the Adelphi College, Brooklyn, N. Y. Then came in rapid succession Zeta at the University of California; Eta, at the University of Michigan; Theta, at the University of Illinois; Iota, at the University of Pittsburgh; Kappa, at the George Washington University; Lambda, at the University of Cincinnati; Mu, at the University of California; Nu, at the University of Pennsylvania; Xi, at Temple University; Omicron, Louisiana State University; Pi, Syracuse University; Rho, Ohio State University; Sigma, Long Island University; Tau, University of Texas; and Upsilon, at the

University of Manitoba. The total membership of the 20 chapters is 1,105.

Among the activities and the achievements of Phi Sigma Sigma, are scholarships, the maintenance of Camp Rainbow, at Croton-on-the-Hudson, and the United Charities Camp for undernourished children. In commemoration of its tenth birthday, the Society endowed in perpetuity a bed in the Beth David Hospital in New York. The following year, the Zeta Chapter presented and equipped to the Duarte Sanitarium of California a model barber shop. In 1926, the Society financed the addition of a Children's Section to the National Library of Jerusalem.

The official publication of the Sorority is "The Sphinx" which is issued quarterly.

Sigma Delta Tau, the fourth Jewish sorority was founded in March of 1917, at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, with the pursuit of culture, scholarship, and charity, as its object. The founders of this Society were Regene Robinson Freund, Dora Bloom, Inez Dane Ross, Marion Gerber, Leonore Rubinow, and Pirie Miller Harris.

The total membership of Sigma Delta Tau is 700. Its chapters are found all through the states, and each active chapter undertakes some special worthy charitable activity within the city of its establishment. The National Organization has also a system of endowment funds for aiding girls through college, and the Scholarship Cup which is awarded annually to the chapter with highest scholastic standards. Its official organ is "The Torch."

The present national officers are: President, Mrs. Miriam Simon Levy; Vice-President, Alice Loeb; Secretary, Mrs. Mildred Elkes Wallens; Treasurer, Mrs. Olga Strashun Weil.

We have noted only the national Jewish women's organizations. Obviously the reasons for so doing is because to mention others, of which the number is legion, even a book would not suffice. However, it must be mentioned that just forty years ago, there was organized in New York City by that vivid personality Hannah B. Einstein, then President of the Emanuel Sisterhood for Personal Service,

Federation of Jewish Women's Organizations which should act as a clearing house for all organizations conducted by Jewish women in New York City. Under the brilliant leadership of Mrs. David Goldfarb the Federation to-day counts more than one hundred organizations in its membership. Realizing the value of such a federation as an educational and practical factor in human and humane endeavor, about thirty cities have followed New York's example.

The National Organizations, such as the Council, Sisterhoods and Temple Leagues, also have organized themselves into a Conference which acts as a clearing house for their activities, and helps to bring about better understanding among the Jewish women's organizations everywhere.

Just as the women of the Bible were noted for their remarkable outstanding traits which earned for them that poetic title, Mothers in Israel, and called forth the Psalmists most hallowed songs, so down the ages, Jewish womanhood has been conscious of her privileges and responsibilities, and has given good account of herself.

The forward march of women in general has found Jewish women keeping step, and while opportunities in education, politics, and professions have offered Jewish women great enrichment in their lives, they have, through the possession of these opportunities, integrated their efforts into Jewish life and Judaism, and have everywhere been a factor for good always.

The World War, the machine age, the recognized changes in the standards of life and living have necessarily called forth new effort, and greater need for services. But the pledge given by our pioneer Jewish American mothers is still kept by us, and we can hope and expect that the generations that will follow will remember and reverence it.