JESSIE SAMPTER:

A PIONEER FEMINIST IN AMERICAN ZIONISM

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ABSTRACT

Life for nineteenth century American woman was full of restrictions and limitations. Frowned upon or simply not permitted to enter "male" spheres of activity such as the professions, business and politics, many middle class women turned to philanthropy and reform work as the sole acceptable outlet for their energy, talents, and time. American Jews of German descent adopted the "Victorian ideal of womanhood" popular in the United States at this time, propelling many German-Jewish women to engage in charitable Zionist activity despite the general lack of support for Zionism in America earlier in this century. Among this group of bourgeois German-Jewish women involved in American Zionism was a poet, Jessie Ethel Sampter, whose contributions to the movement far exceeded those of the norm. Despite her limited Jewish education and upbringing, and extreme physical limitations, Sampter emerged as a pioneer feminist and Zionist, both in America and in her adopted country, Palestine.

SOMMAIRE

Le dix-neuvième siècle a été une époque de restrictions et de privations pour la femme américaine. Exclues de "l'univers masculin" en ce qui concerne les professions, le commerce, la politique, plusieurs femmes de classe moyenne se sont tournées vers la philantropie ou du travail réformateur, seules concentrations dans lesquelles leur energie, leur talent ainsi que leur temps pouvaient être reconnus. Les juives américaines d'origine allemande ont adopté "l'idéal victorien de la femme" très en vogue à l'époque aux Etats-Unis. Cet idéal poussa de nombreuses femmes juives allemandes à s'engager dans des organisations de charité sionistes alors que le sionisme avait tres peu d'adeptes en ce temps là. Parmi ce groupe de juives allemandes bourgeoises impliquées dans le mouvement sioniste américain se trouvait une poétesse, Jessie Ethel Sampter dont les contributions au mouvement dépassèrent largement les normes attendues. Malgrè une éducation juive plutot restreinte et des limites physiques assez importantes, Sampter se distinga en taut que pionnière féministe et sioniste aussi bien en Amérique que dans son pays d'adoption, la Palestine.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis will examine the life and ideology of Jessie Ethel Sampter, an early American Zionist woman. Sampter is worthy of study as she represents a unique phenomenon. In a period when the conventional middle class woman's primary role in life was that of housewife and mother, Sampter remained unmarried throughout her life. In a day when the majority of German Jews in the United States accepted Reform Judaism and rejected Jewish nationalism in favour of assimilation to American ways, Sampter embraced both her Jewish heritage and the concept of Jewish peoplehood. At a time when the typical American Jew was either non-Zionist or actively anti-Zionist, Sampter adopted the ideology of Zionism as her personal motivation in life. Lastly, in a period when mainstream American Zionists saw Palestine simply as a haven for persecuted Jews, Sampter claimed Palestine as her home.

In order to better appreciate the unique and significant qualities of Jessie Sampter's life and character as an American woman, Jew, and Zionist, one must first understand the role of women in turn of the century America, as well as the state of affairs of the Zionist movement in that country. This introduction will thus explore these issues.

Women as Reformers in Turn of the Century America

The role of women in nineteenth century America was characterized by limitations and restrictions. The popular and most widely accepted concept of women at this time was that of the Victorian ideal of womanhood; namely, women were to be pure and pious, sexually innocent, imbued with moral virtue, and engaged solely within the private domain of family. Women were defined as the hub, or the constant about which family life revolved; as such, they were expected to marry, mother children, and glory in their motherhood. They were judged, both by medical specialists as well as the community at large, as physically and intellectually incapable of entering "man's domain" or the public sphere of business, professions, and politics.

Few careers were open to middle class women in the early and mid- nineteenth century. It was deemed inappropriate, vulgar, and even dangerous for women to take

leave of their sheltered existence and engage in work outside the home. It was assumed that no family that could afford to live on a single income would permit women in the household to compete in the labour force, as this would have resulted in a drop in family status, as well as certain questioning as to the naturalness of these women.

There were, of course, exceptions to be found as certain daring women increased their educational levels, thereby expanding their professional opportunities. Through the last third of the century, traditional male professions, such as medicine and law, were pried open by a few select women, while emerging professions, namely social work and library science, provided women with new options.[1]

However, on the whole, the vast majority of middle class women did not flock to enter the professions, where they could expect to encounter discrimination and harassment based on gender. Rather, they remained within the confines of the traditionaliy accepted sphere for women.

The American Civil War was a catalyst in the battle for transforming and broadening woman's role in public life. The Civil War forced thousands of women into activities outside the home. As a result of the emergency situation, women found themselves eagerly occupied in hospital and relief work. Many wives of soldiers were left to their own resources to support themselves and their families. "Thus, war- related exigencies served to undermine traditional notions about women's proper sphere of activities."[2]

In the decades following the war, the increasing industrialization of the American economy transformed the reality of women's work within the home. A domestic revolution in American households took place as the sewing machine was popularized, canning factories developed, furnaces and stoves were improved, and ready-made clothing became increasingly available. Scientific progress helped to speed the process of household management, thereby allowing for greater amounts of leisure time for middle

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[1] Barbara Kuhn Campbell, The "Liberated" Woman of 1914: Prominent Women in the Progressive Era (New York: Umi Research Press, 1976) 47.

[2] Ibid., 106.

and upper class women.

Women attempted to fill this leisure time by engaging in activities heretofore closed to them. Some sought higher education, a minority pursued careers. Many began to participate actively in American public affairs via women's organizations.

The emergence of women's organizations at this time reflected the growing belief of the day that women were particularly suited to contribute to the reformation of American society. A significant aspect of the cult of true womanhood was the ideal of religious virtue and high moral standing. Whereas man was endowed with greater brain and brawn, woman was possessed with moral superiority. While man was compromised by his own inherent weakness to resist alcohol and sexuality, and was further corrupted by the harsh realities of the world of business and politics, woman was a pillar of piety, goodness, and restraint. Woman's traditional position in the family was to raise the moral standards of her husband and sons; in the mid to late nineteenth century, she took on the added responsibility of challenging the moral standards of American society. Woman's appropriate field had always been considered to be caretaking and nurturing; this scope was simply expanded to include not only women as wives and mothers, but as social reformers, too.

> Women in these decades, far more keenly than their pre-Civil war sisters, had the mandate to "tame" society. One no longer spoke merely of aiding a neighbor or improving the welfare of a particular community but of transforming, even feminizing, an entire culture.[3]

Not only were women considered characteristically and inherently capable in this area, but it remained one of the few fields deemed appropriate for women's participation. The spirit of reform pervading women in nineteenth century America was socially acceptable and respectable. Philanthropy was one of the few outlets through which middle and upper class women could demonstrate talents, utilize organizational skills, exert influence on American society, and have an impact on public affairs. Women were

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[3] Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1978) 23.

attracted to the humanitarian aspect within reform work, while they were excited by the possibilitites of using their time and energy in genuinely useful ways.[4]

The nineteenth century saw a burgeoning of women's organizations, ranging from early Church-related charity groups and missionary societies, to later women's clubs, temperance locals, settlement houses, and even national women's associations. These women's organizations which emerged in mid to late nineteenth century America differed from the earlier women's groups in that they were primarily secular in nature, national in scope, and formal in organization. "Founded and led solely by women... carving out a separate realm of female activism, major women's associations provided stepping stones between the domestic world and public life."[5]

The inception of women's clubs in the late 1860s appealed to large numbers of middle class American women. The first club, Sorosis, formed in New York in 1868 was particularly popular and active. Founded initially as a literary society devoted to educational discussions regarding art and literature, its focus eventually shifted to social reform. Membership in such clubs mushroomed until by 1896, the General Federation of Women's Clubs claimed a membership of one hundred thousand. In 1912, it boasted over a million members.[6]

Certain societies centred around the temperance crusade of the 1870s to battle alcohol and close saloons. The Women's Christian Temperance Union, founded in 1873, maintained a membership of one hundred and fifty thousand by 1890. Other societies fought to gain the right to vote for women, establish asylums, and create employment programs for the poor.

These early women's clubs were the predecessors to the Progressive Movement of the early twentieth century, in which women played such a vital role. Near the turn of the century, women's organizations emerged with the sole mandate of urban welfare

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[4] Campbell 52.

[5] Nancy Woloch, Early American Women: A Documentary History (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1992) 475.

[6] Campbell 148.

work. The National Consumer's League of 1899, and the rash of settlement houses founded in these years are examples of this phenomenon. (Hull House, established in 1889 in Chicago, and the Henry Street Settlement, founded in 1893 in New York are among the most well-known.) Social workers in settlement houses provided instruction in hygiene and child development to immigrant mothers in the United States, while they attempted to inculcate the recent arrivals to the country with American values and practices. Later, settlement house workers tried to enact structural legislative reforms.

Progressivism produced an atmosphere conducive to the expansion of woman's political role. It enabled women to challenge the ideal of the primarily homecentred, submissive woman of the nineteenth century. The ideals of the Progressive Movement of the twentieth century complemented the values for which women had been agitating for decades. Progressivism fought for the promotion of national health via the illegalization of child labour, the implementation of compulsory school attendance, and the improvement of water standards. Women active in the Social Progressive Movement struggled to better living conditions for the American poor, develop "mother's pensions" for women deprived of a husband through death or divorce, and establish protective legislation for working women. The movement produced leaders who called for the destruction of corrupt political machines and monopolies which stifled individual rights and creativity, and the establishment of democratic and responsive government as well as institutions for social welfare. The chief concern of this period was the relationship between government, business, labour and the public.[7]

Progressive reformers in the United States were intent on improving the country, by preserving the social world that had once been the heart of American culture. They longed to return to the age before the establishment of big businesses, corrupt management, and the destruction of the natural beauty of the land. They were horrified by the urban slums, overcrowded, dirty and unhealthy cities. They called for the direct election of senators, more stringent laws regarding sanitation, and available public health

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[7] William L. O'Neill, The Progressive Years: America Comes of Age (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1975).

clinics.[8]

Although the overwhelming majority of socially prominent women in the Progressive Movement in the early years of the twentieth century was Protestant, a significant percentage was not. Many American Jewish women of Germanic origin were intimately concerned and involved with the same causes as were their Protestant sisters.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, when German Jewish women had been newly arrived immigrants in the United States, they had worked alongside their husbands in establishing small businesses and stores. As many German Jews climbed the socioeconomic ladder and achieved a certain comfort in their new land, they began to accept and adopt the American ideal of "true" womanhood. German Jewish women in America were subsequently relegated to managing the household and children. In fact, by the close of the nineteenth century, the German Jewish community in the United States, while retaining its Judaism, had assimilated the mores, values, and ideological patterns of the American middle class of which it was a part. Consequently, German Jewish women in America faced the same restrictions as did other women in their socioeconomic class, and showed the same predisposition to social welfare and reform work. "By the end of the nineteenth century, the Americanized German Jewish woman was scarcely distinguishable from her non-Jewish counterpart."[9]

Although German Jewish women in America emulated non-Jewish middle class women and contributed to their organizations, they were occupied, as well, with their own network of specifically Jewish institutions and societies. The concept of *tzedakah* (from the Hebrew word for justice, the traditional term for charity) has historically been central to Judaism, causing philanthropy to be a natural element within Jewish communities of all ages. German Jewish women were thus in keeping with Jewish tradition when they extended aid to the less fortunate recent Jewish immigrants to their

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[8] Neil Cowan and Ruth Schwartz Cowan, Our Parents' Lives: The Americanization of Eastern European Jews (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1989) 42-43.

[9] Charlotte Baum, Paula Hyman, and Sonya Michel, The Jewish Woman in America (New York: The Dial Press, 1976) 53.

country. Another factor which contributed to the creation of specifically Jewish charitable associations in the United States was the lack of acceptance accorded Jewish women in the general philanthropic organizations. The National Council of Jewish Women, founded by Hannah Greenebaum Solomon as a unifying umbrella for the growing number of Jewish women's clubs in 1893, claimed religious, educational and philanthropic goals.

With the advent of the mass immigration of Eastern European Jews to America in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the bourgeois German Jewish women increased their charitable activities. Although some argue with bitterness that German Jews aided their immigrant co-religionists only out of a desire to Americanize them so as to eliminate possible embarrassment and increased antisemitism, many claim that the German Jews responded to the crisis situation by providing genuine invaluable care for their Eastern European kin.[10] The reality is probably a combination of the two views; one fact that remains indisputable is that German Jewish women in America, in keeping with the middle class American women's tradition of philanthropy, responded to the plight of the Jewish immigrants by establishing innumerable charitable organizations.

Jewish women provided social work services for the immigrants on New York's Lower East Side, and took part in Lillian Wald's Henry Street Settlement which was mentioned earlier in the introduction. Jewish women were instrumental in the founding and running of societies such as the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society, United Hebrew Charities, and other institutions which provided free education and medical care.

Hadassah (later identified as the Women's Zionist Organization of America) began as a philanthropic organization in which the majority of members was composed of German Jewish middle class women interested in social welfare work. Although Hadassah was a Zionist organization focused on health and welfare in Palestine, it was a product of the same ideals as the Social Progressive Movement in America. German Jewish bourgeois women took part in Zionist activity more as a result of the American

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[10] Arthur Hertzberg, The Jews in America (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989) 181-184.

idealization of women's reform work than as an expression of belief in Jewish nationalism.

> Hadassah's success was in part the result of the philanthropic and charitable character of the organization, which appealed particularly to an increasing number of middle- class Jewish women... Hadassah was headed by a group of women... many of whom had spent years as social workers in settlement houses.... It was essentially a charitable organization to which a Palestinian sentiment was added.[11]

In fact, Irma Lindheim, president of Hadassah in 1927, publicly attributed the organization's success to its founder's wisdom in focusing on welfare work in Palestine rather than the possible broader and more nationalistic Zionist vision.

> Hadassah has a specific purpose. It has deliberately narrowed its purpose. Its great founder and leader... reduced the general Zionist idea to a particular part of its program and then proceeded to develop bit by bit the instrument with which to construct this part.[12]

In 1909, Henrietta Szold, future founder of Hadassah, undertook a trip to Palestine. In Palestine, she was equally impressed by the beauty of the land as she was shocked by the misery of its inhabitants. Disease, malnutrition, and a lack of sanitation and proper medical facilities horrified her. Upon returning home in 1910, Szold transformed the Hadassah Study Circle for women, dedicated to the study of Jewish history and Zionism, into a more practical, philanthropic organization. Thus, the Hadassah Chapter of Daughters of Zion was established with the goal of developing a system of nursing and hospitals throughout Palestine, in order to provide health and welfare services in that land. Later called simply Hadassah, the organization was methodical and successful, gaining over five thousand members in its first six years, and

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[11] Yonathan Shapiro, Leadership of the American Zionist Organization, 1897-1930 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971) 51.

[12] Irma Lindheim, "Hadassah: The Bond for Jewish Womanhood," The New Palestine 24 June 1927:572, quoted in Shapiro 204.

performing active welfare work for Palestine.[13]

This women's organization combined philanthropic aid to the sick and diseased of Palestine with Zionism. It adopted the tenets of social reform already popular among American Jewish women and directed this activity towards Palestine. Only the leaders of the organization were hard-core Zionists, while the majority of the membership was interested mainly in health work. Consequently, Hadassah did not project an overly Zionist stance so as not to repel any potential members. Despite its large numbers and voting power, Hadassah refused to take a stand in American Zionist politics. The women's organization remained somewhat independent of the Federation of American Zionists, and did not officially endorse the Basle Program of Herzl's First Zionist Congress. Hadassah's reasoning proved to be sound; in the early years after the reorganization of the Zionist Organization of America, that movement failed to attract a considerable number of members, while Hadassah grew in popularity and strength. Leaders of Hadassah built an organization which served as a counterpart to American charitable associations appealing to middle class women in the Progressive Era; therein lay the basis for its success.[14]

In order to appreciate the success of Hadassah and the significant role played by women in the American Zionist movement, one must first understand the history of Zionism in America. The second part of the introduction will outline briefly the history of Zionism in the United States.

Outline of Zionism in America

Zionism in turn of the century America was neither a popular mass movement, nor an acceptable ideology in the ranks of Jewish leadership. Many traditional Orthodox Jews, recently arrived immigrants of Eastern European origin, considered Zionism to be nothing less than Godless heresy because of the secular character of the movement and

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[13] Joan Dash, Summoned to Jerusalem: The Life of Henrietta Szold (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) 112.

[14] Shapiro 205-206.

its refusal to patiently await the messianic redemption. The more assimilated and established German Jews were not interested in a nationalist ideology which they thought would provoke accusations of dual loyalty, thus threatening their status in America. German Jews in the United States were most often adherents of Reform Judaism which rejected the national element of Judaism and viewed it solely as a religion; as a religious entity, the Jews no more needed their own land than did the Protestants or any other religious group. Lastly, Jewish socialists, founders of the labour movement which became the most dynamic social movement of American Jewry, generally viewed Zionism as a competitor and a distraction from the real concerns of social and economic exploitation of the masses.

Many American Jews rejected Zionism as a result of their belief that the movement would have a negative influence on their lives in the United States. They considered the Zionist movement a step back towards the Jewish ghetto mentality of the medieval and early modern period. As Americans, they failed to see the need for a separate national home for the Jews, claiming instead that Jews must acculturate to their new adopted country. As the financier and diplomat Henry Morgenthau Sr. (1856-1946) stated,

> We have fought our way through to liberty, equality and fraternity. No one shall rob us of these gains... We Jews of America have found America to be our Zion. Therefore, I refuse to allow myself to be called a Zionist. I am an American.[15]

Many German Jews in America were unwilling to accept the dismal prediction of Zionists regarding the future of Jewish survival in the Diaspora. They rejected the call for the building of a Jewish national home, failing to see the need for a Jewish haven or refuge from antisemitism. Rather, anti-Zionists claimed that the rise in Jewish nationalism was the source of increased antisemitism; as such, they repudiated Zionism as a danger to the welfare and status of the Jews in the Diaspora.

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[15] Henry Morgenthau Sr. Quoted in "Louis D. Brandeis and the Empowering of American Jewry," by Melvin I. Urofsky, Menorah Review 30(Winter 1994): 1

The spread of Reform Judaism among German Jews in the United States ran counter to the best interests of the Zionist movement. Reform Judaism which originated in Germany, wished to remove the national component from Judaism, negated the concept of "exile," and, consequently, rejected the return to Zion. Reform Judaism claimed that the Jews were already at home in the countries in which they lived, and had no reason to long for the reestablishment of their people in a national home. As the leaders of the movement said, "America is our Zion and Washington our Jerusalem."[16]

Indeed, Reformers argued that the Jews no longer constituted a distinct people; Judaism was a religion, not a nationality. As stated in American Reform Judaism's declaration of principles, the Pittsburg Platform, which was adopted at a meeting of Reform rabbis in 1885,

> We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the administration of the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.[17]

In keeping with this line of thought, leaders of Reform Judaism opposed any development in Jewish life which strengthened the ties uniting the Jews as a separate nation; this included, of course, vehement opposition to the rise of Zionism.

The Reform movement reinterpreted the promised and long-anticipated messianic coming not in the traditional literal manner, but as a metaphor for the enlightened age when all nations would live together in peace. In that future period, wherever Jews lived would be Zion. Thus, Reform Jews argued, American Jews need not support the Jewish return to Palestine. The claim that Palestine should be restored as the Jewish homeland seemed to them to run counter to the hope that Jews in America would become equal partners with non-Jews in the greater American nation.

More important, Jewish immigrants to the United States had already made their

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[16] Naomi W. Cohen, American Jews and the Zionist Idea (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1975) 6.

[17] Marc Lee Raphael, Profiles in American Judaism (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984) 29.

decision and cast their vote, not in favour of Palestine, but rather the new Zion of America. As Mary Antin, well-known writer and herself an Eastern European Jewish immigrant to the New World, explained:

> America was in everybody's mouth. Business men talked of it over their accounts; the market women made up their quarrels that they might discuss it from stall to stall; people who had relatives in the famous land went around reading their letters for the enlightenment of less fortunate folk...[18]

Most of those Jews who finally arrived in this "magical land of opportunity" were not interested in being uprooted once again; they wanted to settle in the *goldene medine* (the United States was often refered to as "the golden land" by Eastern European Jewish immigrants), and create a home for themselves by contributing to its progress.

Finally, the established German Jews, many of whom enjoyed financial success in America, viewed Zionism as a threat to their security in their relatively new land. As assimilationists, the German Jews had attempted to minimize the differences between themselves and their neighbours. They had settled in many states around the country, due to the economic reality of the opening of the frontier, as well as their preference to join the American people, rather than create what they deemed a new Jewish ghetto. Despite the discrimination which they faced as a result of their religion, these Jews embraced their new country, and attempted to become an integral part of it. Thus, when the Zionist movement emerged, claiming Jewish allegiance to Palestine, German Jews in the United States feared accusations of dual loyalty on the part of antisemites. They wanted no part of a movement which brought into question their allegiance to America. Consequently, Zionism found no significant support in the organized American Jewish community of the late nineteenth century.

Considering the prevailing attitude in this period regarding American Zionism,

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[18] Mary Antin, The Promised Land, Quoted in World of our Fathers by Irving Howe, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976) 27.

In fact, Mary Antin's best-selling autobiography The Promised Land, published in 1912, expounded the assimilationist theory of Americanization. For Antin, acculturation to America entailed shedding all Jewish customs and beliefs.

which could be described at most as hostile and at the very least as uninterested, the development of the movement in that country is indeed remarkable. As a result of the tireless efforts of hundreds of Eastern European Jewish immigrants and a handful of German Jewish Americans, many of whom comprised the organization's leadership, Zionism in the New World was born.

In 1884, the first *Hoveve-Zion* society (Lovers of Zion, the pre-Herzlian Zionist movement of Central and Eastern Europe) was established in New York. Other societies quickly followed in Boston, Chicago and Baltimore, but they were small in numbers, lacking in organization and resources. These societies, consisting overwhelmingly of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the United States, failed to capture the loyalty of American Jewry.

Eighteen ninety-seven was an exciting year in Zionist history; this year witnessed both Theodor Herzl's call for the first World Zionist Congress which convened in Basle, Switzerland, as well as the establishment of the Federation of American Zionists (FAZ), the first national Zionist organization in America. FAZ's infancy was somewhat unimpressive, as it was ineffective and inefficient, for it was a loose federation in which the constituent organizations jostled for power. However, a changed set of circumstances and new leadership stimulated the growth of the Zionist movement in the United States.

Early American Zionist leaders, such as Reform rabbis Bernard Felsenthal, Gustav Gottheil, his son Professor Richard Gottheil, and Stephen S. Wise, certainly impacted upon the American Zionist organization, yet they failed to create a popular movement which could be widely embraced by American Jews. The man responsible for transforming Zionism in the United States was the first Jewish Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis, who brought to Zionism a respectability and status which it had so sorely lacked in past years.[19]

Louis Brandeis succeeded in meeting the challenge necessary for the eventual success of Zionism in the United States. He synthesized Zionism with Americanism, effectively silencing the debate over dual loyalty. As he said,

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[19] Walter Laqueur, A History of Zionism (New York: Schocken Books, 1972) 180.

> My approach to Zionism was through Americanism. In time, practical experience and observation convinced me that Jews were by reason of their tradition and their character peculiarly fitted for the attainment of American ideals. Gradually, it became clear to me that to be good Americans, we must be better Jews and to be better Jews, we must become Zionists![20]

Elsewhere, Brandeis wrote,

> Indeed, loyalty to America demands rather that each American Jew become a Zionist. For only through the ennobling effect of its strivings can we develop the best that is in us and give to this country the full benefit of our great inheritance.[21]

Liberated from the constraints placed upon it by those who defined Zionism in opposition to Americanism, the movement was free to expand and spread among the American Jewish public. Brandeis' personality was commanding, his management was organized and disciplined, and the organization grew under his leadership. As Brandeis reconciled Zionism with Americanism, so he transformed the Jewish desire to develop Palestine into a movement with potential to attract different elements to its ranks.

Brandeis assumed leadership of American Zionism in 1914, when the outbreak of the First World War dramatically intensified the crisis of Eastern European Jewry and made the issue of Palestine's future a relevant political question. Brandeis immediately began emphasizing the democratic and humanitarian aspects within the movement. He saw in Zionism an expression of the democratic spirit of the Jewish people, and he brought this issue to the forefront of the movement, thus attracting many new members. Brandeis imbued the Zionist movement with new life, as he combined his liberal and socially progressive beliefs with the call for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

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[20] Louis D. Brandeis. Quoted in "Louis D. Brandeis and the Empowering of American Jewry," by Melvin Urofsky, Menorah Review, 30 (Winter 1994): 2.

[21] Louis D. Brandeis. "Zionism is Consistent with American Patriotism," The Jew in the Modern World, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) 394.

Brandeis defined the parallels between Zionism and Progressivism; for Brandeis, Zionist ideals meant primarily social reform. He saw a future Jewish homeland as an experiment in social justice and righteousness, reflecting many of the ideals of the Social Progressive Movement in America in which Brandeis played a part. He maintained that Zionists had an advantage in the opportunity to experiment with new forms of democratic social institutions in a pioneering society in a small land.[22] As he explained,

> Let us all recognize that we Jews are a distinct nationality of which every Jew, whatever his country, his station, or shade of belief, is necessarily a member. Let us insist that the struggle for liberty shall not cease until equality of opportunity is accorded to nationalities as to individuals. Let us insist also that full equality of opportunity cannot be obtained by Jews until we, like members of other nationalities, shall have the option of living elsewhere or of returning to the land of our forefathers.[23]

The Progressive Era, which began in America at the turn of the century and lasted until approximately 1918, was an age of reform and modernization. This period in American social history which has been described earlier in the introduction impacted in a significant way on the activities of American women. Brandeis' synthesis of Progressivism with Zionism roused middle class Jewish women to extend their reform work to include Palestinian causes. Earlier in the century, the typical German Jewish woman opposed Zionism, for she felt the ideology was un-American, and ran counter to her beliefs. It was largely due to Brandeis and his ability to imbue the Zionist movement with social progressive ideals that many German Jewish women in the United States engaged in Zionist activity. Of course, there were exceptions, as some women such as Henrietta Szold and Jessie Sampter turned to Zionism before Brandeis.

Another woman who turned to Zionism even before it became fashionable in the United States was the Jewish poet Emma Lazarus (1849-1887). Lazarus, who is best remembered for her sonnet "The New Colossus" which is engraved on the base of the

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[22] Cohen, American Jews and the Zionist Idea 14-24.

[23] Louis D. Brandeis. "In the New World," The Zionist Idea ed. Arthur Hertzberg (New York: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959) 522.

Statue of Liberty, first adopted Zionism as a result of her experiences with the suffering Jewish immigrants in America. As such, she is characteristic of American Zionists who turned to Zionism to reform society and present real solutions to alleviate the misery of the poor and unfortunate in society. In other respects, though, she was atypical, for her commitment to a Jewish homeland in Palestine came earlier than did the adoption of Zionism by other American Jews. In fact, her life foreshadowed that of the subject of this thesis, Jessie Sampter, more than it reflected the "typical life of an American Jewish woman of her time.

Similar to Sampter (whose biographical details will be explored later in the thesis), Emma Lazarus was born into a wealthy, prominent Jewish family in New York. Her father was a third generation American who made a successful living in the sugar refining industry. Her family, which was unusually close-knit, was affiliated with the oldest congregation in America, the Sephardic Shearith Israel of New York.

Again similar to Sampter, Lazarus was a physically frail girl, educated by private tutors within the confines of her home. She received little formal Jewish training, as the Lazarus family was not steeped in tradition or observance. Yet, her home life was not indifferent to Judaism, and the family did not neglect to celebrate some of the more important Jewish holidays. Although Lazarus' parents raised their children in an atmosphere more American and cosmopolitan than Jewish "as befitted a member of the old Jewish aristocracy of New York",[24] the young poet did express a faint Jewish consciousness even in some of her earliest poems. Yet, this interest in things Jewish was based more on a Jewry of the distant past, rather than on a living, contemporary people. It was not until the late 1870s that Lazarus became inspired to consider and write about the Jewish situation in her own day.

Emma Lazarus' writings first appeared in 1866 and almost immediately attracted the attention of Ralph Waldo Emerson, to whom she dedicated her second volume of poetry Admetus and Other Poems. In 1874, her first novel Alide: an Episode of Goethe's Life was published, and was followed two years later by the historical tragedy

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[24] Dan Vogel, Emma Lazarus (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980) 14.

The Spagnoletto. Despite the praise which her poetry received, spiritual unease troubled the young poet. She found the decorous, liturgy-centred Judaism of the upper middle-class American Jews unsatisfying. Her restlessness did not abate until the early 1880s, when Lazarus was aroused by the plight of Eastern European Jewry, and became determined to integrate the vitality of the Jewish immigrants' cultural and religious lives into her own. Jessie Sampter would follow Emma Lazarus' example.

Lazarus's interest in contemporary Jewish problems was first awakened by George Eliot's novel Daniel Deronda, with its call for a Jewish national revival.[25] She was finally stirred to action when she heard of the pogroms which erupted in the early 1880s in the Pale of Settlement in Czarist Russia. Lazarus first encountered Jewish refugees fleeing the Russian violence when she joined immigrant relief workers on Ward's Island. She was impressed by the Jews' dignity and courage in the face of their misery, as well as their obvious pride in their religion and people.

Inspired with a new cause, Lazarus began to study Hebrew and explore Jewish history. She published translations of great medieval Jewish poets such as Judah Halevi and Solomon ibn Gabirol. In 1882, in reply to antisemitic attacks in the American press, she wrote polemic essays defending and praising her fellow Jews in Century Magazine. In that same year, a new book of poetry, Songs of a Semite appeared, which included poems such as "The Dance to Death", a verse tragedy regarding the burning of Jews in Germany during the Black Death, and the Zionist-oriented poems "The New Ezekiel" and "Banner of a Jew".

According to Lazarus' biographer Morris U. Schappes, "The pogroms evoked a passionate reaction she had not known before, and led her into active struggle against the brutalities abroad that her imagination rendered so vivid and her conscience made so

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[25] George Eliot's Daniel Deronda is a remarkable literary work. It appeared in 1874, when modern Jewish nationalism was in its infancy. At that time, this renowned non-Jewish author published a novel in which the hero, an intelligent, respectable, and cultured Jew, espouses a proto-Zionist ideology.

personal."[26] She responded to her newly awakened passion not only in poetry, but in more concrete and practical ways as well. Lazarus called upon her fellow American Jews to engage in social action to help their Eastern European kin. She set forth her ideas and plans in "An Epistle to the Hebrews", which was published in fifteen sections in the American Hebrew from November 1882 to February 1883.

In "An Epistle to the Hebrews", Lazarus outlined a comprehensive program to revitalize American Jewry. She called for greater commitment to Jewish education and in particular the study of Hebrew literature and Jewish history; the mobilization of American Jews for practical help for the suffering immigrant Jews in the United States as well as those remaining in Europe; and lastly, the unity of world Jewry. She wrote,

> We must help our less fortunate brethren, not with the condescending patronage of the prosperous... but with the keen human sympathy of men and women who endeavor to defend men and women against outrage and oppression, of Jews who feel the sting of every wound and insult inflicted upon their blood kindred.[27]

Although Lazarus' program for a rejuvenated American Jewry was somewhat novel and certainly impassioned, it was her views of a Jewish national awakening and creation of a Jewish national state which distinguished her as a pre-Herzlian Zionist woman in America. She had earlier expressed the belief in a Jewish return to Palestine in her poem "The New Ezekiel" which concludes with the following verse:

> The spirit is not dead, proclaim the word,
> Where lay dead bones a host of armed men stand!
> I ope the graves, my people, saith the Lord,
> And I shall place you living in your promised land![28]

In "An Epistle to the Hebrews", Lazarus built upon this theme of the Jewish

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[26] Morris U. Schappes, introduction, Emma Lazarus: Selections from her Poetry and Prose (New York: Book League, 1947) 13.

[27] Emma Lazarus, An Epistle to the Hebrews (New York: Jewish Historical Society of New York, 1987) 42.

[28] Emma Lazarus, "The New Ezekiel," The Poems of Emma Lazarus (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1888) 15.

reclamation of Palestine. Long before Zionism became a contemporary force in the United States, she appealed for funds to colonize Jews in Palestine. Anticipating the trend of later American Zionists, and borrowing perhaps from Eastern European Zionists of her day, Lazarus called upon the Jews to occupy themselves with physical labour, such as farming and construction. She wrote, "Antipathy to manual labor is one of the great social diseases of our age and country... What we need is the building of our national physical force."[29]

Lazarus' Zionism was based partly on her desire to deepen Jewish life via a national and cultural revival in America and Palestine. However, the brunt of her activity and ideology was geared towards solving the Jewish problem of religious intolerance and antisemitic violence by creating a safe haven for persecuted Jews. She wrote,

> The melancholy and disgraceful fact being established that, in these closing decades of the nineteenth century, the long-suffering Jew is still universally exposed to injustice... the inevitable result has been to arouse most thinking Jews to the necessity of a vigorous and concerted action of defense. They must establish an independent nationality... [30]

Lazarus anticipated the American Jewish rejection of her ideas which was indeed, vehement and immediate on the part of most American Jewish leaders. Yet, she reassured them that she expected American Jews simply to extend economic aid and political support to their fellow Jews in establishing a homeland. American Jews were not expected to emigrate to the Jewish national state en masse.

> There is not the slightest necessity for an American Jew... to rest his hopes upon the foundation of any other nationality, or to decide whether he individually would or would not be in favor of residing in Palestine. All that would be claimed from him would be a patriotic and unselfish interest in the sufferings of his oppressed brethren of less fortunate countries, sufficient to make him promote

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[29] Lazarus, An Epistle 36.

[30] Emma Lazarus, "The Jewish Problem," The Century Feb. 1883, quoted in Schappes 73.

> by every means in his power the establishment of a secure asylum.[31]

In her life and beliefs, Emma Lazarus shared many similarities with Jessie Sampter. Both were sensitive young writers, reared in affluent homes, and educated in an atmosphere of ethical humanism and cosmopolitanism more than traditional Judaism. Both women were left unsatisfied with their family's observance of Judaism, and after being stirred by the suffering of Eastern European Jews, began to delve deeper into their Jewish heritage, exploring its history and literature. Both remained "spinsters", or rather single women, as they challenged the accepted limitations placed on women in their day, by personally daring to enter the seemingly "unwomanly" spheres of intellectual and literary activity. Most significantly, both arrived at the solution of a Jewish national home in a day when this idea was largely unpopular among their peers.

In fact, Emma Lazarus exerted a real and substantial influence on the life of Jessie Sampter. This influence was conveyed by a woman who played an important role in each of their lives, Josephine Lazarus. Josephine was Emma's older sister and Sampter's friend and mentor. In the early 1900s, Sampter was a regular visitor to the Lazarus home, where she would discuss various religions and philosophies together with Josephine, and their mutual friend Mary Antin. Later, Sampter's first major publication The Great Adventurer[32] was dedicated to J.L. (Josephine Lazarus).

Although Josephine did not share many of her younger and more prominent sister's views with regard to a revival of Jewish life in America, she did believe in the importance of the Jewish return to Palestine. In an article entitled "The Jewish Question" which was published in The Century, Josephine Lazarus wrote, "Of all the schemes of colonisation, the one that appeals most to the imagination is the return to Palestine."[33]

Yet, neither of the Lazarus sisters's lives was as profoundly affected by their

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[31] Lazarus, An Epistle 41.

[32] Unfortunately, I could not locate this book.

[33] Josephine Lazarus, "The Jewish Question," The Century Jan. 1892, quoted in Haven and Home by Abraham Karp (New York: Schocken Books, 1985) 150.

commitment to Zionism as was Sampter's. As was mentioned earlier in the introduction, Sampter was truly a unique woman and Zionist in her day. She took the dream of the Jewish return to Palestine further than did the vast majority of American Zionists of this time; she adopted it as her own personal philosophy and let it dictate the path of her life.

As a German Jewish woman born in the United States in the latter years of the nineteenth century, Sampter's childhood and early adult experiences mirrored those described in this introduction as typical among women of the period. Yet, Sampter's character and life were anything but typical. In contrast to most other affluent assimilated German Jewish women in America, she did not reject Zionism. As opposed to the majority of American Zionists, she did not view Zionism simply as a philanthropic outlet which provided added meaning to life, or which served as a humanitarian, liberal movement in which one could fulfill a leadership role. Sampter did not see the promise of Zionism as something marginal to her; rather, she made the ideology the focus of her life. Unlike the vast majority of American Zionists, Sampter did not relegate the movement to a part of her life; she lived Zionism, as it became the very essence of her existence. Thus Sampter was atypical, as a devoted Jew of German descent, as a strongly independent woman, and as an American Zionist. The following sections will describe Sampter's unusual life, her Zionist ideology, and will provide an analysis of her contributions to the Jewish people and its homeland in Palestine.

BIOGRAPHY

Early Childhood in New York

Jessie Ethel Sampter was born to a life of ease and plenty on the twenty second of March, 1883. The second daughter of Rudolph and Virginia Sampter, an affluent German Jewish couple, Jessie was brought up amidst the comforts of the Sampter Mansion on Fifth Avenue in New York. Despite the fact that Sampter was a timid and nervous child, she enjoyed a happy childhood with her older sister Elvie, and numerous cousins. The upper class Sampter household was complete with governesses to raise the children and domestics to care for the home, as well as the beautiful gardens in which the cousins enjoyed playing.

Similar to many other German Jewish immigrants in the United States, Rudolph Sampter abandoned much of his Jewish religious observances and traditional practices. Consequently, his daughters grew up in a home where Christmas and Easter replaced Hannukah and Passover celebrations. As an avowed agnostic, Rudolph discarded Judaism only to discover a new belief in the Society for Ethical Culture, founded by his friend Felix Adler.

Adler's Society for Ethical Culture deeply influenced the young Jessie. Felix Adler, son of Reform rabbi Samuel Adler of Temple Emanu-El in New York, was a philosopher and educator who advocated an ethic apart from any religion or dogma. He sought a new ideology consistent with modern thinking to fulfill his spiritual needs; he discovered this fulfillment in a religious synthesis which he himself created, "an aclectic religion of ethics whose ethical authority lay grounded in Kant, whose ethical models were presented by the Prophets,... and whose socially activist orientation was shaped by... the German social-aid tradition."[34] Adler was a social reformer who called for advancements in child welfare, medical care for the poor, labour and civic reform. Jessie Sampter reponded intensely to this new teaching which helped develop her sense of

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[34] Benny Kraut, From Reform Judaism to Ethical Culture (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1979) 66.

ethical and social ideals; it is these same ideals which play such an integral part in her later rediscovery of Judaism and adoption of Zionist ideology.

Although the ideals of Ethical Culture influenced Sampter, she was not wholly satisfied with the abstract notion of universal ethics. As she matured, she engaged in a long quest for something to imbue her life with meaning. It is through this search that she eventually stumbled across Judaism, the religion into which she had been born, and Zionism, the natural fulfillment of her beliefs.

Already from earliest childhood, Sampter exhibited an inclination towards an artistic spirit and literary talent. She was a prolific writer, and much of her poetry and later prose and journalistic writings were published as books or in various newspapers and magazines. Although a literary criticism of her work is beyond the scope of this thesis, some of Sampter's extensive writings will be used in order to shed light on her thought, particularly with regard to her views on Judaism, Zionism, and the Jewish people.

In 1895, Sampter's carefree childhood came to an end with the untimely death of her father. That same year, thirteen year old Sampter was afflicted with what was then called brain- fever or infantile paralysis, and what is known today as polio. Restricted to bed rest for several months, Sampter eventually recuperated, yet her fingers remained weakened, and her spine developed a curvature which had to be corrected by a brace. The frail and delicate girl was transformed into an even more sickly teenager, and was forced to abandon her dream of becoming an accomplished violinist. Yet the illness failed to break Sampter, but rather made her into a fighter. As Bertha Badt-Strauss writes in Sampter's biography,

> Perhaps her indomitable will to go her own way in matters spiritual as well as in everyday life, enabled her in later years to become the advocate of ideas which all her family opposed; this will grew up in the days of her illness.[35]

Since her father's death, the Sampter business was no longer the success it once

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[35] Bertha Badt-Strauss, White Fire: The Life and Works of Jessie Sampter (New York: The Reconstructionist Press, 1956) 13.

was, leaving the family far from affluent. Yet, their lifestyle continued to include lengthy family trips to Europe where Sampter met Ralph Waldo Emerson's sister and grandchildren, a granddaughter of Nathaniel Hawthorne, as well as Israel Zangwill, early Zionist leader and prominent anglo-Jewish writer.[36] Sampter produced many youthful poems during these summer tours; one deserves special mention as its Jewish subject matter renders it significant, and can be seen as a foreshadowing of Sampter's later interests. The poem "Cry unto Moses"[37] deals with a tragic event in the history of the Jews in England, and was perhaps influenced by the author's meeting with Zangwill.

In Search of Meaning and God

Sampter was a natural student and educator who considered group discussions as the best way of exploring issues and introducing new concepts to willing minds. Just as she first met with Mary Antin and Josephine Lazarus in the early years of this century to discuss various religions and philosophies, so she created "The Seekers Club" comprised of young men and women interested in group discussions on a variety of issues important to them. The group met on a weekly basis with their respected teacher to explore life, art, religion and truth. Sampter collected the group's discussions and essays, and compiled them into a book entitled The Seekers, which was published in 1910. "In the same way as she later advocated the kibbutz as an experiment in collective living, she offered this little book as an experiment in 'collective thinking'."[38]

The six young people involved in The Seekers Club had all been raised by

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[36] Israel Zangwill was an English author of humourous short stories, plays, "ghetto" novels depicting the world of East London Jewry, and essays conveying the author's intellectual and spiritual concern with Jewish existence in the Diaspora. His most acclaimed works include Children of the Ghetto (1892) and Dreamers of the Ghetto (1898). Zangwill was an early supporter of Theodor Herzl, but he left the World Zionist Organization when the Uganda Plan was rejected. Zangwill founded the Jewish Territorial Organization, dedicated to the creation of a Jewish homeland that need not necessarily be Palestine. Zangwill returned to the World Zionist Organization and its Palestine orientation after the Balfour Declaration was issued.

[37] Cited in Bertha Badt-Strauss' White Fire. Unfortunately, I could not find this poem.

[38] Badt-Strauss 23.

families similar to Sampter's in that they were steeped in American culture but lacking in Jewish culture. At this point in her life, Sampter considered this to be a definite advantage. In her introduction to The Seekers, she writes that the authors "were free from those clogging superstitions and false perspectives which result from an early training in any symbolic and fixed creed."[39] It is interesting to note the dramatic change in Sampter's views on the matter later in life as she matured and developed into a more committed and spiritual Jew. The Seekers was not a literary or financial success, yet it is significant as the first in a long series of educational experiments in Sampter's life.

In the winter of 1909, Sampter's mother passed away. Her older sister Elvie had married three years before, and now Jessie became quite restless and lonely. She joined the Poetry Society of America, which attracted many well-known poets of the day, and there she met Dr. Merle St. Croix Wright, president of the society and a Unitarian minister. Dr. Wright was to play a decisive role in Sampter's life.

Sampter had already exhibited an interest in different religions and ultimate religious questions. At this point in her life, she continued her search for a meaningful religion by exploring various worship services. She was dissatisfied with Adler's Society for Ethical Culture, found Jewish Reform temple services to be "wordy and meaningless", while Orthodox synagogues offered "a strange service in a strange language."[40] Finally, she tried a Unitarian church service where Dr. Wright was officiating, and was attracted by its disregard of ceremonies and dogma. It was in this church that Sampter discovered Zionism.

As part of his sermon, Dr. Wright read excerpts from The Book of Pain and Struggle Called the Prophecy of Fulfillment by Hyman Segal. This book which embodies the experiences of the masses of Jewish immigrants arriving in New York after the Russian pogroms, is centred around a man who is seeking his purpose in life. Near the end of the book, the protagonist discovers a parchment which informs him of his intended

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[39] Jessie Sampter, Introduction to The Seekers. (New York, 1910), quoted in Badt-Strauss 24.

[40] Badt-Strauss 30.

mission.

> In pain and struggle I sought thee,
> That thou bring faith to mankind.
> Go therefore in haste: For the land
> Languishes without its own people
> And man without his ancient faith.[41]

When Sampter read this book, she was transformed, as she realized the truth of its words, and her own purpose in life. She felt as though a whole new world had been opened to her; her long search for meaning was over in her discovery of Zionism.

Dr. Wright introduced Sampter to Segal at a session of the Poetry Society, and Segal in turn introduced Sampter to his friend, Henrietta Szold.

Sampter was known to say later in life that she had had three great teachers of Judaism: Henrietta Szold, Mordecai M. Kaplan, and the Jewish people itself.[42] Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, taught Sampter his belief in the gradual development of the Jewish spirit and of Judaism as a civilization. (Kaplan's impact on Sampter will be further explored later in the thesis). The Jewish people itself taught Sampter throughout her life in America where she "discovered" her own kind on the impoverished Lower East Side of New York, as well as later in Palestine. Szold, though, was not only a teacher to Sampter, but a consistent presence in her life, a friend, and a mother figure. Szold maintained a great formative influence on Sampter's life, as she revealed to her the beauty of Jewish customs, the poetry of religious service, and the significance of the Land of Israel in the future of the Jewish people.

Sampter's Mentor: Henrietta Szold

Henrietta Szold was an American Zionist, philanthropist, scholar, founder and first president of Hadassah, and leader of Youth Aliyah. As the eldest of eight daughters born in Baltimore to Rabbi Benjamin Szold, an immigrant from Hungary and a member

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[41] Hyman Segal, The Book of Pain and Struggle Called the Prophecy of the Fulfillemt (New York: Massada Publishing House, 1910) quoted in Badt-Strauss 32.

[42] Jessie E. Sampter, "A Confession," The Reconstructionist 16 April 1937: 13-14

of the positive historical school within Judaism (today called Conservative Judaism). Henrietta Szold received the attention and education typically reserved for sons. She later imparted some of this knowledge and love of Jewish learning to her younger friend and disciple, Sampter.

Despite the fact that the two women stemmed from entirely different backgrounds with regard to Judaism, Szold and Sampter shared similar views on the Jewish nation and Zionism. They believed that Zionism's aim was not only the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish homeland, but the restoration of the Jewish people as a healthy nation, in Zion and the Diaspora. Their dream of Zionism entailed cultural salvation and national rejuvenation for the Jews. Their concept of Zionism went beyond territorial concentration and political autonomy for the Jews. Both women were devoted to social progressive ideals such as civic reform, child welfare, health services, and gender equality. They called for pacifism, cooperation between all peoples (particularly between Jews and Arabs), and unity within the Jewish nation. Both Szold and Sampter saw in Zionism an opportunity to accomplish this dream and implement these ideals. As Sampter wrote, "The Jewish nation in Palestine was to be not only another nation, but a distinctive nation, to bring salvation amid the orgy of injustice and violence. It was to be our experiment in righteousness..."[43] Similar to Sampter, Szold learned much from the Jewish people itself. Combined with her father's teachings, it was the massive influx of Eastern European Jewish immigrants to the United States in the 1880s which helped Szold to discover Zionism. Many of the immigrants in Baltimore, and particularly the Hebraists and intellectuals among them, gravitated to the Szold family. Henrietta Szold taught at and superintended a night school for the immigrants and it was primarily from them that she learned Zionism.

Szold's discovery of Zionism has already been described in the introduction to this thesis, thus there is no need to recount the details here. Suffice it to say that Szold succeeded in transforming Zionist activity in America, particularly, though not

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[43] Jessie Sampter. Letter to Sonya, an American friend, 25 May 1921, quoted in Badt-Strauss 79.

exclusively, for women. Then, in 1933, at the age of seventy-three, Szold undertook one of the most impressive and important tasks of her life. Youth Aliyah, the rescue of German Jewish youth, entailed bringing adolescents to the relatively safe haven of Palestine in order to complete their education on *kevuzot* (collective settlements). By 1948, over thirty thousand children and young people had been rescued and brought to Palestine under the care of the program.[44]

Szold was a formidable and highly capable woman. She thought it important to educate Jews in America regarding the necessity of Zionism in the lives of Jews everywhere and its particular relevance to American Jews. She accepted this burden of spreading the word among American Jews regarding the role of Palestine in the future of world Jewry, but she looked for help in this task. She recognized in Sampter some of the capabilities which she had herself and saw in the younger woman an added talent that could be used to benefit the Zionist cause in America, literary ability. Szold encouraged Sampter to write about the Jewish homeland and the essence of Zionism, and was pleased when Sampter herself decided to use her talents to promote Zionism.

In the summer of 1913, Szold wrote a letter to Sampter in which she expressed her feelings about the younger woman's work.

> I am glad that you are going to write. You will serve Zionism best in that way. I believe it is what we need most- good writers from whose work Zionism will radiate as a fine aroma. We have had the brochures, the apologia, the party pamphlet, the disquisition, the essay- now we should have literature based on Zionism as a pervading conviction and life philosophy.[45]

Yet, before Sampter could begin to write about Zionism, she first had much to learn about the Jewish religion, history, traditions and languages. Szold welcomed Sampter into her house and exposed her to the dignity and beauty of the Jewish tradition.

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[44] Irving Fineman, Woman of Valor: The Life of Henrietta Szold (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961)

[45] Henrietta Szold, Letter to Jessie Sampter, 15 July 1913, quoted in Henrietta Szold: Life and Letters by Marvin Lowenthal (New York: The Viking Press, 1942) 80.

For the first time, Sampter began to celebrate the Jewish holidays, study the sacred texts, and learn her people's history. She was taught Hebrew by Rivkah Aaronsohn, the daughter of one of the founders of Zichron Ya'akov, one of the first modern Jewish agricultural colonies in Palestine.[46] Sampter began to identify with the Jewish people, her people. As she later wrote in an article entitled "A Confession",

> The sufferings of the Jews were as my sufferings, their weakness as mine, their power and evercomings [sic] and their future were mine. In the space of a few years I lived through intensively what I had missed for generations. In synagogue service, in diligent study and in traditional living among the poor of my people, I recapitulated my lost history.[47]

According to her biographer, Sampter's studies opened her eyes to a new world and focused her newly discovered interests. "From now on, all her life belonged to one idea and one only: service to her Jewish people. Zionism became her religion, her way to God."[48]

Sampter's Teacher: Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan

To further her education, Szold introduced Sampter to Mordecai M. Kaplan, who had a great influence on her views of Judaism and Jewish history. Kaplan defined Judaism as an "evolving religious civilization". By civilization, Kaplan meant that the Jewish people must possess all the characteristics of that term such as a history, language, culture, social organization and ideals, spirit, land, and polity. Kaplan's Zionism, though, did not negate the Diaspora, but rather considered the continued flourishing of creative Jewish life outside of the Land of Israel as positive.

As a "religious civilization", Kaplan maintained that the Jewish role in the world

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[46] Rivkah Aaronsohn is also remembered as the younger sister of Aaron and Sarah Aaronsohn, two of the leading figures in NILI, a secret intelligence group established with the aim of assisting the British forces to conquer Palestine during the First World War.

[47] Jessie E. Sampter, "A Confession," The Reconstructionist 16 April 1937: 14.

[48] Badt-Srauss 34.

was to shed light on the purposes and values of human existence and of God. Yet, Kaplan rejected the rigid dogma of his early Orthodox education and preferred to describe God in impersonal terms, and highlight the necessity of the secular elements within Jewish civilization. Kaplan's notion of Judaism emphasized its social implications rather than its dogmatic aspects. He believed that Judaism must work towards the progressive improvement of humanity and the development of a just and cooperative social order. These ideals were very much in keeping with Sampter's earlier beliefs, and thus strongly appealed to her.

Lastly, by "evolving", Kaplan meant that Judaism must be viewed from a historical consideration, and not a metaphysical one. He believed that Judaism must be dynamic and ever changing; the Jewish civilization uses the past as source material for new growth, and constantly develops and reconstructs new forms and expressions. Kaplan argued that the Jewish people, and not the Jewish religion, must be at the centre of Jewish life, for the religion exists for the people.[49]

Dr. Kaplan was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and was rabbi of an Orthodox Synagogue in New York before Solomon Schechter appointed him dean of the Teachers Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1909. Kaplan soon began teaching in the Seminary's rabbinical school, while also enjoying a busy public life. He was one of the leaders of the New York Kehillah experiment[50]; he founded the first synagogue-centre in the United States; and he established the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation and The Reconstructionist, the periodical of this movement.

Kaplan also held weekly study sessions in his home during which he offered his students a novel approach to Judaism. Sampter attended these Saturday afternoon sessions, along with others who played prominent roles in American Jewish life such as

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[49] Ira Eisenstein and Eugene Kohn, ed, Mordecai M. Kaplan: An Evaluation (New York: Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, 1952) 155-192.

[50] Arthur Goren, New York Jews and the Quest for Community (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970)

the Zionist philosopher and educator Horace Kallen, and two Hadassah co-workers, Alice Seligsberg and Lotta Levenson.

Zionist Work In America

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Sampter's studies and writings became even more urgent. The war in Europe fanned the flames of nationalism and antisemitism, and the Jews of Eastern Europe faced growing threats and destruction. Even more precarious was the future of the *Yishuv* (Jewish community) in Palestine. Sampter was concerned for the very survival of the Zionist movement, whose moral, economic, and human resources were derived primarily from Europe. Due to the United States' official policy of neutrality, in effect from the outbreak of the war until April 1917, as well as the fact that the war propelled American Jewry into the position of the leading Jewish community in the world, the centre of Zionism shifted from Europe to the United States. Yet the American Jews were not prepared to handle the new responsibilities. As has previously been stated in the introduction to this thesis, the American Zionist movement at this moment was poorly organized and small in numbers and power. Sampter responded to the emergency situation with action by writing Zionist manuals and propagandizing the need for Zionism throughout the country.

Along with Alice Seligsberg, an American Zionist, Hadassah leader, and social worker, Sampter developed the "Folder Propaganda", in order to preach the basic tenets of Zionism by distributing small booklets at nominal costs at Hadassah meetings. Nationalism and Universal Brotherhood, an essay which will be examined later in this thesis, was one such booklet.

Sampter was exceedingly busy during the war years working for the Zionist cause. She expended much time and energy writing Zionist manuals and booklets, but she also undertook a more dramatic step in educating American Jews by establishing her School of Zionism. In July 1914, Sampter announced the new School of Zionism that Hadassah was planning for the upcoming year. This project grew to considerable dimensions during the war years, as it infused American Zionist women's activities with new life.

Indeed, in writing to Sampter about the value of her School, Henrietta Szold stated that "I am more than ever convinced that yours is our most important work."[51]

Sampter's School of Zionism in New York offered three types of courses in club leadership, public speaking, and Zionism. It attracted women from various backgrounds who wished to play active roles in the Zionist movement. It is significant that the material prepared by Sampter for the School became the basic educational course for Hadassah for two decades.[52]

The most notable outcome of the School was the publication of the famous Zionist textbooks, edited and largely written by Jessie Sampter. These Zionist manuals, Course in Zionism (1916), Guide to Zionism (1920), and Modern Palestine (1933) were Sampter's most successful literary-educational ventures as is evident not only from the fact that they influenced many young Americans, but that each manual required a new edition. The Guide to Zionism was called "the most complete essay on Zionism ever published in America"[53] and it was well-received by the American Jewish public. It was published at a very hopeful period in Zionist history, when the Supreme Council at San Remo resolved that the Mandate over Palestine be conferred on Britain, charging her with the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people as laid down in the Balfour Declaration. American Jews were beginning to accept the real possibilities within Zionism, as they also opened their eyes to the dangers facing Jewish communities in certain parts of the world. The Guide thus became available at a time when American Jews were willing to accept it, and were interested in learning more about events taking place in Palestine.

Modern Palestine was a comprehensive and even more popular textbook. Its foreword was written by Albert Einstein, who had long been an active supporter of

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[51] Henrietta Szold, Letter to Jessie Sampter, 27 March 1917, quoted in Lowenthal 97.

[52] Margaret Doniger, "Remembering Jessie Sampter," Hadassah Newsletter 19(January 1939): 86-87.

[53] Publisher's Note in Guide to Zionism by Jessie Sampter, (New York: Zionist Organization of America, 1920) *i*

Zionism.[54]

The Zionist manuals were written primarily for small groups of students to study together. Each chapter is followed by a short bibliography and suggested topics for essays on related subjects. As was typically her way, Sampter had created the textbooks to be used as an impetus for group discussions and study sessions.

Along with her School and Zionist manuals, Sampter was busy during the war years with one more project. It was a book entitled Book of the Nations which was published in 1917, and which provides the reader with insight into the thoughts and feelings of the author at this time. At first glance, the Book of the Nations seems to be an adaptation of the prophetic writings of the Bible, as it imitates their writing style and deals with similar themes. Like the ancient prophets, the protagonist of the Book of the Nations is sent as a messenger to his people to reveal to them the despair of God as a result of their wickedness and sins. Also like many of the prophets, the protagonist pleads with God to spare the nations of the world, and to enable humanity to repent and return to the true path of God. The Book of the Nations is, in effect, a message of the author to the nations of the world to learn from past mistakes and attempt to coexist in harmony, rather than continue the pattern of violence, hatred and war.

The small and unusual book reveals the profound alienation and despair experienced by the author at this time. Both as a pacifist who considered the current war a tragedy of immense proportions, and as a Zionist who was living in a house full of family members who did not share her ideals, Sampter was alone in her beliefs. Sampter's family and friends received the book with confusion and some embarrassment due to its strange nature and "Jewish" content; it was favourably received by the critics,

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[54] First introduced to Zionism before the First World War, Albert Einstein participated in a Jewish intellectual circle in Prague, which included Franz Kafka and Max Brod, to discuss Zionism and other Jewish issues. In 1921, Chaim Weizmann, future first president of the State of Israel, asked Einstein to join him on a fund- raising tour of the United States. Einstein, who was already world renowned as a physicist and discoverer of the theory of relativity, agreed to raise funds to purchase land in Palestine and provide aid for the establishment of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. After Weizmann's death, Einstein was asked by David Ben-Gurion to stand as a candidate for the presidency of the State of Israel, which he respectfully declined.

although it had minimal impact and sold poorly.

The Coming of Peace, a small collection of Sampter's poetry, was published two years later in 1919. The selection was comprised primarily of poems which had previously been published in various newspapers and other publications. One of the poems in particular displays her feelings about war:

> Brother, my brother, I slew thee with my hand,
> And spilt, to serve a righteous cause, thy blood
> upon the land:
> Brother, my brother, I cannot understand
> Why I, to keep the Lord's command,
> Must break the Lord's command.[55]

That same year saw the publication of a happier book written by Sampter. Around the Year in Rhymes for the Jewish Child is a selection of songs, prayers, and children's poems which is used even today by Jewish teachers who are keeping Sampter's work alive.

In 1918, upon completion of Book of the Nations, Sampter's hard work and depression over the war finally took its toll on the physically frail author. She suffered first from pneumonia and then a nervous breakdown, which she later referred to as a "vision". Sampter's sister, Elvie, recommended a psychiatrist who helped her overcome this mental crisis.

It was about this time that Sampter decided to travel to Palestine. Although Elvie was reluctant to see her go, she realized that it was pointless to argue with her. Sampter's dream was tied up with Zionism and the Jewish return to Palestine, and she intended to live there herself. She was not a woman who could preach an ideal without living it. She was "not a sentimentalist, to whom the mere emotional response to ideals was sufficient, but a practical person, who was always looking for opportunities to participate personally in their achievement."[56]

In 1919, Sampter left for Palestine as a literary reporter for the Zionist

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[55] Jessie E. Sampter, "Brother, My Brother," The Coming of Peace (New York: Publishers Printing Company, 1919) 6.

[56] Eugene Kohn, Foreword to Badt-Strauss. *i.*

Organization of America. She had consented to go for one year only and then decide if she would like to stay. It is interesting to note her feelings before embarking on the voyage. In the final days before her departure, she wrote a letter to Elvie, dated July 16, 1919 in which she expresses her thoughts.

> I write in the full consciousness that my not returning to America is among the likelihoods, either because I may not outlive the year of probation, or because at the end of that year I shall have found in Palestine that spiritual fulfillment, that 'at-homeness', and that opportunity for full-hearted service which I expect to find there and which would necessitate my staying. This consciousness makes my last days here with you very hard, but also very wonderful.[57]

It is significant to reflect upon Sampter's awareness throughout her relatively short life of her frailty and physical limitations. This becomes evident in a reading of this letter, as well as in much of her writings, both personal and professional. It is equally interesting to note the conflicting emotions which she experienced upon leaving the United States, for this is a recurring theme throughout her life in Palestine. Although she does indeed find that "at-homeness" in Palestine, she remains, as well, torn between her love of family, her comfort and familiarity in America, and her attachment to the harsh beauty of Palestine.

Arrival in Palestine

When Sampter arrived in Palestine, she was brought almost immediately to the Hadassah hospital where she regained the strength that she had lost during the long trip. It was there that she met Leah Berlin, a community worker from Russia, who became Sampter's closest friend. When Berlin's mother came from Russia to Jerusalem, they took a larger house, and Sampter moved in with them.

Sampter's first fall and winter in Jerusalem were difficult, but at the same time, she experienced a contentment in Palestine that she had never felt before. She wrote to

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[57] Jessie Sampter. Letter to her sister, Elvie Wachenheim. 16 July 1919. Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219/3.

her sister,

> ... And I am happy, too, very happy... So far, being here means to me all that I dreamed it would.../ As for the land itself, I could not have imagined it. It is wonderful beyond words. I had heard that its beauty was in soft coloring and light and atmosphere, but to see and to hear are two different things. With all the discomforts... and there are many... I find life here in Jerusalem marvellously restful and peaceful. I love to be here more than I have ever loved being in any place.[58]

Henrietta Szold, too, wrote to Elvie of Sampter's happiness in Jerusalem, when she arrived the following year. Szold wrote as one mother figure to another that Elvie need not be concerned about her sister.

> Jessie is one of the serene ones. Indeed, she is more wonderful than ever... There can be no doubt of it, she is perfectly happy here. She seems to feel that she has found exactly her setting. Her pen cannot keep pace with her brain... Altogether, you can dismiss all worry on Jessie's account from your mind. She is surrounded by friends, new and old.[59]

Both Sampter's and Szold's accounts were truthful, but not entirely so. Sampter did fall in love with Palestine, but she was not blind to the problems within the *Yishuv*. Sampter's early years in Jerusalem were never wholly satisfactory, as she found a gap existed in religious life in the Holy Land. Since she discovered Zionism years before, she had become increasingly religiously observant. In the United States, many Zionists in her circle were not strictly observant Jews, but were comfortable with a religious way of life that appealed to them. However, in Jerusalem, Sampter could find no one with whom to pray.

Sampter belonged in no congregation as the overwhelming majority of the early Zionist settlers in Palestine (particularly those who arrived in the Second Aliyah between

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[58] Jessie Sampter, Letters to her sister Elvie Wachenheim, 23 September 1919 and 1 October 1919, quoted in Badt-Strauss 63-64.

[59] Henrietta Szold, Letter to Elvie Wachenheim. 30 May 1920. Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219/4.

1904 and 1914) was not only secular but typically antireligious. Many members of the *New Yishuv* were hostile to the religion in which they had been raised. As secular Jewish nationalists and socialists, they considered religion to be a stumbling block to the attainment of their goals; they saw in Judaism a religion which rendered its followers placid and passive to remain in the Diaspora until the miraculous coming of the Messiah.

On the other side of the spectrum was the *Old Yishuv*, a community of traditional Jews who had lived in the Land of Israel for generations and were content to spend their days in study and prayer in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. Many of these Jews who lived in the four religious centres of Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias, were not Zionists, did not wish to work the land or create new settlements, and had no political aspirations. In fact, they viewed the arrival of the secular and modern Zionists with dismay, for they resented their lack of observance of *halakha* (Jewish law), and feared that their Zionist activity was heresy, as God had not yet ushered in the Messianic age. This Orthodox Judaism was far too conservative, rigid and traditional to suit the needs of Sampter.

As Sampter explained, "The modern Jews do not pray at all; and the Adukim, the Orthodox Jews do not allow their women to pray with them."[60] Sampter herself found it ironic that she could be more comfortable with her spirituality in New York than in Jerusalem, for in Palestine, one was either secular or ultra-Orthodox.

Sampter's views on religion and especially on religion in Palestine changed dramatically throughout her life. This issue will be expanded upon later in the thesis, when Sampter's ideology is explored in greater detail.

The second problem which Sampter encountered in Palestine, causing her distress, was the failure of the European and other Western Jews to accord social justice to the Oriental Jews, and especially to the Yemenites.

Yemenite Community in Palestine

A significant influx of Yemenite Jewish immigrants to Palestine began in 1882.

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[60] Jessie Sampter, Quoted in Badt-Strauss 66-67.

News of the recently built Jewish settlements began reaching the Jewish community in Yemen, and it responded with increased immigration. The Yemenites settled primarily in Jerusalem where they looked forward to a life of religious sanctity in the Holy Land. In Jerusalem, Yemenites found employment mainly as artisans and quickly founded a special artisans quarter in the Arab village of Silwan.

The second large wave of immigration began in 1908 and was largely due to the efforts of a Russian Jew of the Second Aliyah, Shmuel Yavnieli, an emissary from Palestine who spent two years in Yemen, providing the Jews there with first- hand accounts of life in the ancient Jewish land. A Labour leader in Palestine, Yavnieli was sent to Yemen at his own request by the Palestine Office of the Zionist Organization, in order to encourage Yemenite Jews to immigrate to the Jewish homeland. The Jews of Yemen saw in Yavnieli a harbinger of the imminent redemption of the Jews and he was consequently successful in stimulating the immigration of many Yemenite Jews to Palestine. This important wave of immigration numbered in the thousands and was primarily composed of Jews who were interested in settling in *moshavot* (cooperative settlements) and partaking in agricultural work. These Jews travelled to Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Jewish agricultural settlements, and laid solid foundations for an agricultural colony of their own.[61]

Yemenite Jews spoke Hebrew and Arabic, and were familiar with the Palestinian climate and landscape. In Yemen, the Jews had earned their livelihood primarily as craftsmen. In Palestine, this was no longer possible, for with the exception of working as stonemasons or silversmiths, there was little demand for artistic crafts. Fortunately, the Yemenites were accustomed to hardship and labour; most adapted to the Yishuv's economy by finding employment as manual labourers. Many established themselves on the land by becoming hired agricultural workers for other Jewish farmers. Some bought land and developed separate colonies for themselves in Judea and the Galilee.

Although the Yemenite Jews worked hard and enjoyed relative success, they were

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[61] Itzhak Ben-Zvi, The Exiled and the Redeemed. Trans. Isaac A. Abbady (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957) 21.

burdened with an added hardship of discrimination on the part of Ashkenazi Jews, who comprised the majority in Palestine. Many Ashkenazim were not willing to accept the dark- skinned, foreign Yemenites as equal partners in the building of the land. They took advantage of the Yemenite Jews' tolerance for heavy labour and little pay, and were ungenerous in granting land to these recent newcomers. As Herbert Lewis, author of After the Eagles Landed: The Yemenites of Israel, writes,

> Conditions were difficult in most cases for the new settlers from Europe, too, but they at least had the wholehearted support of the political machinery of the Zionist movement... There was much greater suffering for the Yemenites who were often exploited, looked down upon, and badly mistreated by the farmers, workers, and townspeople.[62]

Lewis does present the other side of the story which includes resentment on the part of the Ashkenazi settlers as a result of the Yemenites' unwillingness to acculturate to Palestinian life and join the larger Jewish community of the *New Yishuv*.

The Yemenite community was a traditional one, steeped in pre- modern life, and unaccepting of equal participation in life by women and children. In Yemen, women were regarded as chattel, and were denied basic rights such as education, and social and economic opportunity. Jewish households were polygamous; women were expected to bear children and satisfy the demands of their husbands. In Palestine, a number of Yemenite women worked as housekeepers and maids in order to augment the family earnings.[63]

When Sampter saw the plight of the Yemenite community in Palestine, and primarily the lot of the women and children, she knew that she had discovered her mission. As much as she yearned to join the *halutzim* (pioneers) in tilling the land, she was aware that her frail body would not permit her to do so. Rather, it fell upon her to ameliorate the lot of the Yemenites in Palestine.

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[62] Herbert S. Lewis, After the Eagles Landed: The Yemenites in Israel (London: Westview Press, 1989) 48.

[63] Ibid.

Sampter was shocked at the lives of the Yemenite women and children; she saw their lives as consisting almost entirely of work, while the men spent their day in the religious study of Talmud. This premodern, patriarchal society in which hardship and discrimination against women and children was commonplace jarred Sampter's western sensibilities and she longed to help her fellow Jews. Sampter hoped to raise their social consciousness through education, and thus established and taught night classes for Yemenite working girls. Later, the classes extended to include discussion groups for adults.

In 1924, after only a few years in Jerusalem, Sampter moved to Rehovot, so that she could live near a large colony of Yemenites. Earlier that year, Sampter had adopted a young Yemenite orphan,[64] and she wanted her daughter, Tamar, to be raised amidst the beautiful orange groves and vineyards in Rehovot. Sampter had yearned for a child for many years, and she considered Tamar to be a special gift and one of the greatest joys in her life. She was rare as a single mother at this time, yet this uncoventional life choice was in keeping with all the nontraditional decisions Sampter made throughout her life. She provided for the little girl, and helped transform the shy, frightened and timid orphan into a happy and healthy child.

During the 1920s, Sampter struggled to maintain a Yemenite kindergarten and night classes. The schools were constantly in danger of closing due to lack of funds, yet Sampter always received a necessary donation in time to ward off the imminent crisis.

The Passover Riots

In the spring of 1920, Sampter's quiet life in Palestine came to an end with the notorious "Passover riots", during which anti-Jewish violence broke out first in Jerusalem in March, and in Jewish settlements in Upper Galilee the following month. These attacks demonstrated the ability of the Arab national movement to inflame the Arab masses,

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[64] Tamar had been abandoned by her parents and was found in a basket at the door to an orphanage during a snowstorm. She was consequently called Tamar Sheleg (snow) until she was legally adopted by Sampter and acquired her adoptive mother's family name.

particularly when encouraged by Haj Amin al-Husseini, the mufti of Jerusalem. It is at this point that Sampter's attitude regarding the co-existence of Arab and Jew in Palestine is brought into question. Sampter, the peace-loving poet, had earlier viewed the Arabs with fascination and interest. In addition to her belief in true cooperation between Arab and Jew, she was very much taken with the exotic image of the Arab, common among westerners. She was of the belief that Arabs and Jews could live peacefully in Palestine, perhaps not together, but certainly side-by-side. Yet, it is a tribute to Sampter's profoundly optimistic nature, that despite the riots and the violence which plagued Palestine during the following years, she maintained this conviction throughout her life.

As a pacifist, Sampter abhorred violence, and called upon the Jews to restrain themselves from avenging the murders in their midst. Yet, she understood the reality of the Middle East, and was aware that the Jews would not gain a national home without paying a tremendous price. In an article describing the events surrounding the riots, Sampter justified the sacrifices being made by the Jewish pioneers in Palestine as a necessary part of the struggle to win their homeland.

> We have come to our land to win our land, not to find peace... In Russia, one flees from pogroms. In Palestine, one does not flee; one seeks the place of danger. A man may be driven from another man's house; but his own house is his fort. In it he stands or falls... We did not come to Palestine to be safe, but to create safety for our people.[65]

By the summer of 1920, Sampter's optimistic mood had returned due to the appointment of the Jewish High Commissioner in Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel. Many

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[65] Jessie E. Sampter, "Jaffa- 1921," Article, 2 May 1921. Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219 1/1.

This article was written after another series of anti- Jewish attacks which occurred in May 1921. The outbreak of violence in Jaffa was followed by large- scale riots in Rehovot, Petah Tikvah, Haderah, and other places. The Haycraft Commission of Inquiry into the riots of 1921 concluded that the fundamental cause of the violence was the Arab hostility to the Jews due to political and economic causes, and connected with Jewish immigration to Palestine. Thus the White Paper of June 1922 was issued, restricting Jewish immigration to what was deemed the 'economic absorptive capacity' of Palestine.

in the *Yishuv* were overjoyed with the new British High Commissioner; they heralded him as *Messiah ben Joseph*, precursor of *Messiah ben David*, the man destined to usher in the Messianic period.

Sampter, along with many others in the *Yishuv*, believed that the British government was committed to aiding the Jews in the establishment of their national homeland. Sir Herbert Samuel's wife, Lady Beatrice was an active co-worker of Sampter's in Jewish communal affairs. The poet's personal relationship with the High Commissioner and his family was most certainly the cause of even greater disappointment when it became clear that the British government's intentions were not so inclined in favour of the Jews.

Sampter's jubilation over Sir Herbert Samuel's appointment did not last long as disillusionment with the British government set in. New Arab riots against the Jews erupted; Samuel himself, under pressure from his own government as well as the Arab nationalists, prevented shiploads of Jewish immigrants from disembarking in Palestine; and many began questioning whether Great Britain was indeed an ally of the *Yishuv*.

Visit in America

In these years, Sampter was occupied writing numerous articles, as well as an autobiographical book which was never published.[66] After completing the book, she suffered from mental depression and poor physical health, and decided to visit her sister in America. She was hopeful that the visit would enable her to regain her strength, while her sister's company would help restore her healthy state of mind. A letter which she wrote to Elvie prior to her visit conveys Sampter's deep attachment to Palestine, and her feelings at the thought of leaving the land.

> Sometimes I am almost terrified at the idea of not being able to return here... For my heart is bound up with this land. It is hard to explain how it holds me, and how, with all my longing to see you, I sometimes feel as if I could not

[66] Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate this manuscript.

leave it.[67]

Sampter arrived in America in 1921, and enjoyed a quiet and restful visit with her sister. She was examined by a psychoanalyst who helped her to finally recuperate. This stay in America confirmed for Sampter that Palestine was indeed the place for her. She had found her niche there, and was determined to return, despite the opposition that she encountered from her less Zionist-oriented family members and friends. She returned to Jerusalem in 1922, adopted Tamar and moved to Rehovot in 1924, and was sent on a tour of the Valley of Jezreel by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) in the following year.

Touring the Valley of Jezreel

The tour of the Emek (Valley of Jezreel) was sponsored by the JNF to enable Sampter to write a series of articles on the region for the New Palestine. This periodical in which Sampter's articles had appeared since its inception in 1922, was published weekly by the Zionist Organization of America. Although Sampter's initial plan was to furnish the periodical with articles, she was inspired by the land in such a way that she felt compelled to express her thoughts through poetry. The tour resulted in the publication of The Emek, a new book of poetry.

Sampter was spell-bound by the sights, sounds, and activities which she experienced in the Emek, or what she preferred to call the "Valley of the Children". In the Emek, Sampter saw a moneyless and classless society, her dream of the ideal society of the future which she later saw realized in Kibbutz Givat Brenner. She was enthralled with the collective settlements in the Emek as they reminded her of the social justice which she and her American friends had striven to embody in the ideal of Zionism. She saw the work being accomplished by the young settlers who developed the land into a fertile region. And she appreciated the natural beauty of the area.

In the Prologue to The Emek, Sampter captures the feelings of belonging which she experienced in the region.

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[67] Jessie E. Sampter, Letter to Elvie Wachenheim, 21 August 1921, quoted in Badt-Strauss 84.

I went home to the Emek.
I rode alone through the fields and the groves,
But everywhere I came hands were waved to greet me,
Hands stretched forth to meet me and draw me in.[68]

Despite her enthusiasm, Sampter was not blind to the problems which existed in the Emek, and she included poems about them in her book. She wrote about the issue of gender inequality which plagued the men and women in the *kevutzot* (agricultural collective settlements). She composed poems about the gap between the secular and the religious, the Westerners and the Easterners. Lastly, she wrote satires mocking the tourists who came to Palestine. She depicted the Gentile tourists as "begloved and begoggled and becamera-ed" who "greet with nose-stopped condescension a... young and bearded Jew."[69] Her description of the Jewish tourists was not any kinder, as it too captured their arrogant inability to grasp the essence of the settlers in Palestine.

In summer they burn and in winter they freeze
Then why do they come and why do they stay?
No stoves in the winter, in summer the fever...
No movies, no crowds, nothing doing, no future,
No hope for advancement, no wealth, no career;...
Don't you long for Fifth Avenue, pine for Broadway?
Don't you long for a bath in a white porcelain room?
Can they stand these discomforts, this pricking and sticking;
Just camping at night and just working by day?
Then why do they come and why do they stay?[70]

In this poem, Sampter expresses a certain amount of frustration with American Jewry. Throughout her years in Palestine, Sampter repeatedly made financial requests of her family and friends in the United States. Sampter realized that Palestine did not represent the ideal life for all of world Jewry, and in particular not for the affluent and assimilated American Jews who had made a comfortable home for themselves in the New World. Yet, she expected American Jews to support Jewish efforts in Palestine

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[68] Jessie E. Sampter, Prologue to The Emek (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1927) *ii*.

[69] Jessie E. Sampter, "Gentile Tourists," The Emek 69-70.

[70] Jessie E. Sampter, "The Jewish Tourist Speaks," The Emek 23.

emotionally, financially, and politically. Sampter called upon world Jewry to unite around the ideal of the Jewish homeland, regardless of whether each individual intended on making Palestine his/her home. According to Sampter, "The question Zionism poses is simply this: Do you want to live a healthy, normal, free life in Palestine? Or, if you do not, do you want a section of the Jewish people to have a chance to do it?"[71] Sampter mocked the uncomprehending tourists, not because they had chosen not to live in Palestine, but rather because they did not seem to understand why others had.

In 1925, Sampter undertook another trip to America where she published The Emek. During her visit, she required a serious operation,[72] and consequently returned to Palestine in January of the following year in a weakened state.

Upon her return, Sampter decided to follow through on a project which she had been considering for a while; in order to contribute to the development of Palestine, Sampter wanted to build a house in Rehovot. Of course, she abided by her socialist convictions and employed only unionized Jewish labourers. Sampter's awareness of the significance of construction in the Jewish homeland becomes apparent in a letter which she sent to her sister. She wrote, "It is different building here, from building elsewhere; it is not only building a home, but building the country."[73]

This was a time of genuine happiness in Sampter's life, as she luxuriated in the prospect of living in her new house with her daughter. Unfortunately, the idyllic period was brought to an abrupt end with the riots of 1929.

Increased Violence in Palestine

Sampter was in Tel Aviv in August 1929 when the anti-Jewish violence erupted in Palestine. The riots had been preceded by minor disputes between Jews and Arabs over a period of ten months about the Jews' right to pray at the Western Wall in

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[71] Jessie E. Sampter, Letter to Elvie Wachenheim, 9 July 1921, quoted in Badt-Strauss 85.

[72] The nature of the surgery is unclear.

[73] Jessie E. Sampter, Letter to Elvie Wachenheim, 3 Dec. 1926, quoted in Badt-Strauss 106.

Jerusalem. These arguments were exploited by Haj Amin al-Husseini who accused the Jews of designs upon the Moslem holy sites in the city. The riots began when an armed group of Arabs attempted to attack the Jews in Jerusalem, but were largely repelled by Jewish defenders. The violence spread to other parts of the country. On Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, the Arabs of Hebron attacked the small Jewish community which belonged mainly to the Old Yishuv, murdering seventy people. The Jewish community of Safed likewise suffered devastating losses. It is significant that the Arabs chose to unleash the worst of their hatred and fear of Jewish nationalism on the segment of the Jewish population in Palestine which was non-Zionist and had no political aspirations. British officials did not disarm the Arab attackers, nor did they provide much protection for the Jews. The riots served as a reminder of the ever-widening gap between Arab and Jew. The minimal response on the part of the British officials served as proof to Sampter that the Jews were alone in their struggle for a national home. The British were not their allies.

Sampter arrived at these conclusions and detailed them in an indignant and accusing article which she entitled "Testimony".[74] In this article, Sampter provides a vivid account of the mutilations which took place during the massacre. Yet, her anger is not directed primarily at the Arab attackers, but at the British bystanders who had the power to prevent the violence but made little effort to do so. She writes with bitterness that "such side-shows for the amusement of colonial employees should be sternly forbidden", and questions whether the British failed to interfere due to their policy of "governing by dividing".

As much as Sampter felt that the British were responsible for the riots, she believed that it was encumbent upon the Jews to ensure that a repeat performance did not take place. In order to secure a safe future for the *Yishuv*, Sampter argued for mass Jewish immigration with financial backing, unity within world Jewry in its support of the *Yishuv*, and direct negotiations with Arab leaders. She also encouraged all Zionists throughout the world to work towards shaping positive public opinion in favour of the

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[74] Jessie E. Sampter, "Testimony," New Palestine 29 Sept. 1929.

establishment of a Jewish homeland.

Sampter's opinion of the British Mandate and her Arab neighbours changed as a result of the 1929 riots. Perhaps this transformation is made most evident by the fact that this peace-loving poet allowed Jewish settlers to store ammunition in her house, while she herself purchased two guns for protection. Sampter's confidence in her world had been shattered.

It was about this time that Sampter first began to contemplate selling her house in Rehovot and joining a *kevutzah*, "the ideal form of colonization for Palestine". Due to the riots and the increased obstacles faced by the *Yishuv*, Sampter no longer wished to maintain the added concern of owning private property. After the violence had subsided, the British dealt another blow to the Jews by absolving the mufti of Jerusalem of any responsibility for the massacres, and by issuing the White Paper of 1930 which pared down the significance of the Balfour Declaration and further curtailed Jewish immigration to Palestine. Sampter was concerned about the political situation in Palestine, which was further aggravated by economic problems.

In the spring of 1926, a severe economic crisis in Palestine set in, challenging the success of the boom of previous years during which immigrants of the Fourth Aliyah (1924-1928) helped develop urban centres and industry in Palestine. In contrast to settlers of the Second and Third Aliyot who had flocked to rural Palestine, creating kibbutzim and *kevutzot* in which they worked the land, the members of the Fourth Aliyah congregated in the cities, particularly in Tel Aviv. This new wave of immigration was different in social composition from its predecessors. There was a decrease in the number of agriculturally-minded pioneers who immigrated to Palestine in these years, primarily as a result of the ban on departure from Soviet Russia. On the other hand, there was a rise in the inflow of middle class Polish Jewish shopkeepers and artisans, due to the economic crisis in Poland as well as the antisemitic restrictions imposed on Polish Jews by the finance minister Grabski. Another factor was the limitation on immigration to the United States, introduced in 1924, the same year in which the Fourth Aliyah began. Most of the settlers of this wave of immigration had no real desire to change their urban way of life and thus settled in Tel Aviv and other cities. They invested their

capital in workshops, factories, hotels and restaurants, but reserved the bulk of their investments for construction. The building and expansion of the cities of Palestine in the years of the Fourth Aliyah were remarkable.

Unfortunately for the *Yishuv*, the boom was followed by a dramatic economic crisis. Worsening financial conditions in Poland in the late 1920s caused a dramatic reduction in the flow of capital from that country to Palestine. Dramatic decreases in income, combined with high levels of unemployment, and a near cessation of construction resulted in the impoverishment of many families in Palestine. The economic crisis was a severe blow to Zionism, causing emigration out of Palestine to outweigh immigration. The first signs of economic recovery came in 1929, when immigration was again renewed but the constructive atmosphere was battered by the riots. The economic collapse in that same year in America served to deprive the *Yishuv* even further of its most generous financial supporters.

Sampter found it difficult to maintain her confidence in this turbulent period of violence, and political and economic crisis. Owning a home was simply an additional worry which Sampter was beginning to feel was unnecessary. Other relevant reasons combined to provide Sampter with an impetus to part with her beloved house. As a socialist, she found it difficult to justify living in a more luxurious style than her neighbours. Sampter wanted her daughter to be raised with a sense of social justice, and she herself wished to fulfill her own part in the building of the Jewish homeland. However, before undertaking the final decision to sell the house, Sampter made one last visit to the United States with her daughter, Tamar.

Sampter had relinquished her American citizenship by this time, as she wished to live in Palestine without the special favours sometimes accorded citizens of Western countries. In America, Sampter gave a series of lectures on Zionism at Columbia University. The lectures were a great success, and Sampter returned to Palestine with Tamar in 1931 feeling hopeful as to the impact of her Zionist work in the United States.

Upon her return to Palestine, Sampter continued working with the Yemenite community in Rehovot. She had earlier acquired the help of Maya Rosenberg, a trained psychologist, who performed a wonderful job in the Yemenite kindergarten. The "Maya

Rosenberg Institute" in Rehovot is named after her today.

Then, in 1933 after several years of contemplation, Sampter sold her home and together with her close friend Leah Berlin, joined Kibbutz Givat Brenner which was situated on a hill two miles south of Rehovot. Sampter derived great satisfaction from joining the Kibbutz; in a letter to her sister she explained her feelings. "All economic worries are taken from me, also all household worries. I cannot imagine better security in this uncertain world..."[75]

Sampter donated the money from the sale of the house to the Kibbutz to create a rest home there "for workers and teachers." "*Bet Havra'ah*", the convalescent home, was intended to serve as a respite from heavy labour, while it provided workers with a sense of comfort, rest, and relaxation. Its name was changed to "*Bet Yesha*", in Sampter's honour after her death in 1938.

Discovery of Krishnamurti's Teachings

It was at this period in her life that Sampter befriended a well-educated Austrian Jewish agricultural worker in Palestine. Her letters refer to him as "Ben Shlomo" and he introduced her to the writings of the Indian spiritual teacher Jiddu Krishnamurti. Sampter's interest in Krishnamurti was considerable, and she tried to render his wisdom avaliable to the Jewish settlers in Palestine by arranging to publish a booklet of his selected essays. Sampter wrote the introduction to the booklet which was entitled "*Al Ha-Ikar*" (About the Fundamentals).

Jiddu Krishnamurti was born in India in 1895, and at the age of thirteen, was "discovered" by members of the Theosophical Society, an organization in which his family was involved. The young boy was heralded as the "World Teacher", whose advent had been proclaimed by the Society. Krishnamurti quickly emerged as a powerful and uncompromising spiritual teacher, whose lectures and writings were not linked to any specific religion. Firmly renouncing the messianic image foisted upon him by his

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[75] Jessie E. Sampter, Letter to Elvie Wachenheim, 7 July 1933, quoted in Badt-Strauss 133.

followers, in 1929 Krishnamurti dissolved the "Order of the Star", an organization established by those who claimed him as their guru. This dramatic act was intended to transmit to Krishnamurti's followers his belief that gurus and all other mediators were unnecessary in the quest for truth and happiness. As Krishnamurti questioned, "Is it not much simpler to make Life itself the goal- Life itself the guide, the Master and the God, than to have mediators, gurus, who must inevitably step down [sic] the Truth, and hence betray it?"[76]

The second reason for Krishnamurti's rejection of the role of leader or messiah was the freedom which he sought and discovered in his own personal fulfillment. Krishnamurti did not wish to be burdened or restricted by his disciples' ideals. He explained, "As I am free, as I have found this Truth, which is limitless, without beginning or end, I will not be conditioned by you."[77] Later he added,

> I am concerning myself with only one essential thing: to set man free. I desire to free him from all cages, from all fears, and not tc found religions, new sects, nor to establish new theories and new philosophies."[78]

Krishnamurti's primary objective was to enable people to discover truth, happiness, and fulfillment, not in organized religions or movements, but rather through personal thought and transformation. He believed that real freedom can be experienced only through a complete evolution of the human spirit which each individual has in his/her power to initiate, not in some future time, but in the present day. He spoke of the need "to know the self as it is, not as one wishes it to be" so as to avoid illusions and instead deal constructively with reality. As he explained, "It is only that 'which is' that can be transformed, not that you wish to be."[79] The need for self-knowledge and an

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[76] Jiddu Krishnamurti, Quoted in Krishnamurti: The Years of Awakening by Mary Lutyens (London: Butler and Tanner Ltd., 1975) 261-2.

[77] Ibid., 262.

[78] Ibid., 273.

[79] Jiddu Krishnamurti, Quoted in Krishnamurti: A Biography by Pupul Jayakar (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986) 294.

understanding of the restrictive influences of organized religions are reiterated throughout Krishnamurti's writings.

Krishnamurti toured India, as well as Europe and North America, attracting large audiences in numerous cities.[80] He lectured on the urgency of breaking down the barriers which exist between people as a result of racial, national, religious, and class prejudices and which give rise to needless violence and suffering. He emphasized the importance of living at one with nature, as opposed to the prevailing attitude towards the earth which seeks to exploit it for human benefit. Lastly, he encouraged his followers to enjoy life with all their power and to embrace it in every way possible.

These teachings appealed to Sampter, for she felt that their message could provide the necessary motivation to render collective living a success. Like Krishnamurti, Sampter believed in the importance of the establishment of peaceful relations between nations. As a socialist, Sampter was attracted to Krishnamurti's rejection of class differences. Lastly, she discovered in Krishnamurti a kindred spirit on whose teachings she could rely in her quest for fulfillment and personal satisfaction. She was particularly inspired by Krishnamurti's attitude which encouraged all people to overcome the obstacles placed in their path and live life to the fullest. As she wrote, "Every kind of life is life if one lives it."[81] Together with her friend Ben Shlomo, she tried to spread the essence of Krishnamurti's teachings to the community of Jewish workers in Palestine.

Kibbutz Givat Brenner

In 1933, Sampter joined Kibbutz Givat Brenner as a member. At that time, the Kibbutz housed two hundred and eighty adults and approximately an equal number of children. The commune was mostly economically independent, as almost every

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[80] Krishnamurti continued to speak all over the world until his death in 1986 at the age of ninety. He founded schools in England, the United States, and India, and established the Krishnamurti Educational Centre of Canada in Victoria, British Columbia. His dialogues, journals and letters have been collected into over sixty books.

[81] Jessie E. Sampter, "Validity," Article, 1926. Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219 1/4.

profession and trade was represented by its members. The Kibbutz grew its own produce, and sold eggs, flowers, dairy products, fruits and vegetables. The most significant social problem within Givat Brenner was overcrowding due to a shortage of buildings. This problem became more pronounced with the arrival of many new immigrants, primarily from Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

Sampter was exceedingly worried about the fate of the Jews in Germany. Her sole source of consolation was the existence of the *Yishuv* in Palestine, ready and willing to accomodate as many new immigrants as arrived. "Thank God that there is a haven for Jewish youth in Palestine" she wrote, and later continued,

> It makes Palestine even more vital as a haven for these refugees who are passionately fond of German culture. Already German children are sent to Palestine and saved from humiliation and death... In fact, it is the only way to bear these awful times, if you are able to do something to help.[82]

Despite harsh immigration restrictions created by the British, approximately fifty thousand German Jewish immigrants came to Palestine between 1933 and 1935. The significant expansion of the Jewish community and the gains of Zionism incited increased Arab violence directed against the Jews and their land. A number of the more radical elements within the *Yishuv* called for revenge against these attacks; Sampter responded with her usual request for peace and tolerance which was reiterated in *Hagannah*'s[83] official policy of restraint. "More than ever is now needed the warning to the few hot-headed young people among us to abstain from all reprisals, to withold their hands from revenge, from imitating the murderers who would provoke us to barbarism."[84]

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[82] Jessie E. Sampter, Letter to Elvie Wachenheim, 7 July 1933, quoted in Badt-Strauss 133.

[83] *Hagannah* (Defense) was the representative military body responsible for defending the *Yishuv* in Palestine. Created in 1920 as a result of the Arab riots, *Hagannah* was not the sole Jewish military organization in Palestine, but it was the most widely accepted. *Hagannah* was later transformed into the Israeli army, *Zahal* (Israel Defense Forces) upon establishment of the State in 1948.

[84] Jessie E. Sampter, Letter to the Editor, The Palestine Post 30 June 1938.

As a member of Kibbutz Givat Brenner, Sampter was required to contribute to the commune according to her capablities. Thus she spent her days doing handiwork, knitting clothing, decorating the Children's House and the Diningroom, and writing stories and poems in both English and Hebrew, which were often published in the Hebrew Labour newspaper Davar ("The Word"). Her book of poetry, Brand Plucked from the Fire, was published in 1937 to favourable reviews in both the Jewish and non-Jewish press. Sampter studied the Bible and taught classes in languages: Hebrew to newcomers, and English to children on the kibbutz. She held discussion groups on poetry, and translated Hebrew poems and plays into English.

In 1935, Elvie and her husband came to Palestine to visit Sampter. When they left, they departed with the feeling that they would never see Sampter again. This feeling was accurate, as in the ensuing years, Sampter became increasingly ill, suffering first with pneumonia, and later with heart problems and a bout of malaria. In March of 1938, Sampter was confined to her room so as to preserve her strength. Yet, despite her physical limitations, Sampter maintained a vibrant life. Sampter's friend, Dorothy Kahn[85] described her:

> But restriction of movement could never touch the inner flame with which Jessie's body had nothing to do. Whether she could walk up and down the tree-lined paths or whether she was compelled to remain in her small bed, Jessie walked over the world with her spirit.[86]

Sampter spent the last months of her life engaged in feverish writing. She finished an English translation of Chaim Nachman Bialik's children's poems. Entitled Far Across the Sea, the successful book has since appeared in numerous editions. Together with Dorothy Kahn, she compiled her essays on kibbutz life into a book called Collective. Sampter contemplated the Arab-Jewish conflict, and wrote a study on the subject entitled Ihud (Unity). Although she had a terrible sense of foreboding concerning

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[85] Dorothy Kahn, the American social worker is best remembered today for heading the United Nations' Department of Social Affairs between the years 1951 and 1954, and for her role advising the Israeli government on social welfare administration.

[86] Dorothy Kahn, Quoted in Badt-Strauss 152-153.

the future direction of world events, she tried to maintain an optimistic outlook and engaged in a study of world history.

In November of 1938, Sampter went to the hospital in Petah Tikvah for a regular general examination. She passed away in the hospital later that day. Her funeral was held a few days later at Givat Brenner, and was attended by members of the Kibbutz, newly arrived German refugees, as well as Yemenite children and workers from Rehovot. Henrietta Szold spoke at the funeral regarding Sampter's lifelong search for truth and meaning. In her tribute, she described how Sampter liberated herself from the prison of her frail body, discovered Jewish nationalism through internationalism, and came to Palestine as a Labour Zionist in order to embody the ideal of making a difference in the future of the Jewish people.[87] Szold informed the Yemenite children of the great loss which they had suffered in the passing of their good friend, and she inspired the German Jewish immigrant children to follow in Sampter's footsteps so as to serve Zionism in the most meaningful way. In speaking of Sampter to the children, Szold helped to sustain the memory of her personality and significant contributions to Zionism.

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[87] Julia A. Dushkin, "Farewell to Jessie Sampter," Hadassah Newsletter 19(Jan. 1939) 88.

IDEOLOGY

Jessie Sampter's ideology is interesting to study, not only for its content, much of which is still highly relevant today, but also as a means to understanding the unique personality behind the thoughts. Sampter is indeed a woman worthy of study. Hers was a rare journey from an assimilated, affluent German Jewish home in New York to an agricultural collective settlement in Palestine. Raised in an atmosphere of Ethical Culture, Sampter engaged in a quest for truth in which she rediscovered Judaism and turned to Zionism as a creative expression of her social, ethical, universal and national ideals.

Sampter's lifelong search for meaning was hardly uncommon in Jewish intellectual circles of the time, nor indeed in any community of people in any period. The distinctiveness of her experiences is that she, in the end, found fulfillment in the adoption of Zionism. This self-fulfillment is evident in "Peace", a poem written by Sampter in the latter years of her life.

> I am free now, free and satisfied.
> Stand on the hill with me and gaze;
> Vineyards and orchards of whose fruit we tried.
> Stand on the barren hill and praise.
>
> I know now what is good; I know also what is best,
> And the world's steward trusts me with the key.
> Having striven freely, I can freely rest;
> Even of my dream of freedom am I free.[88]

The self-fulfillment and freedom which is expressed in the above poem came to Sampter as a result of her experience of living her ideals. It is these ideals, personal philosophy and values which are the subject of the following section.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice as a value was an integral part of Sampter's ideology, and one of

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[88] Jessie E. Sampter, "Peace," University of California Chronicle 35(January 1933)

the few that remained unchanged throughout her life. As a child growing up in New York, she was influenced by the social and ethical tenets of the Ethical Culture Society. She later applied many of these same ideals to her vision of Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish national home. Sampter's homeland was to serve not only as a haven for the physically oppressed and spiritually robbed Jews of the Diaspora, but as a centre of social justice and democracy for all humankind, a "gateway of peace between Europe and Asia, a highway for the world."[89] Sampter's dream of Zionism was what she termed "a dream of a regenerate humanity"[90]; through the suffering and rebirth of the Jewish nation in its national home, a new and better life would dawn for all humanity as the Jewish land would serve as an example of social justice for all.

Sampter's understanding of the role of a future Jewish commonwealth draws from the Biblical concept of the Jews as a "light unto the nations". It is reminiscent, as well, of the writings of Moses Hess, German Jewish socialist and pioneer of Socialist Zionism. In his Rome and Jerusalem (1862), Hess outlined his ideal of a socially just Jewish homeland. Sampter's vision echoes those of her contemporaries, as well. In her thought one can clearly see traces of Henrietta Szold's and Louis D. Brandeis' influence. Both of these Zionist leaders called for the creation of a Jewish national home based on social justice.

Szold and Brandeis formed part of the Social Progressive Movement which attracted many notable Jews in turn of the century America. The Progressive Era has already been detailed in the introduction to this thesis; it was an age of social reform, during which middle class men and women in America called for a return to a simpler and more just way of life. Sampter responded to this call by implementing progressive ideals in her daily life, as well as by combining them with her Zionist dream. The amalgamation of the two causes, Zionism and Progressivism, worked well for Sampter as she helped to establish a Jewish homeland which would embody many of the values

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[89] Jessie E. Sampter, What our History Means (New York: The Judean Press, 1916) 16.

[90] Jessie E. Sampter, Quoted in Badt-Strauss 34.

of the Social Progressive Movement.

As a social reformer, Sampter focused her energies on the downtrodden members of Palestine's Yemenite community. She was troubled by the lack of social justice and equality accorded the Yemenites, or rather "the authentic Jews", as she oftentimes referred to them who "tend to form a servant class of hewers of wood and drawers of water."[91] Sampter had chosen to settle in Palestine in order to partake in the creation of a Jewish homeland which would serve as a beacon of light and righteousness to the world; she thus found it impossible to accept injustice against fellow settlers on the land.

In a time when *Mizzug Galuyyot* (Integration of the Exiles) was still seen as the ideal means to establish a unified Jewish nation in Palestine, Sampter opted for cultural diversification.[92] She encouraged the Yemenites to take pride in their unique heritage and history, while becoming an integral part of the *Yishuv*. In the Zionist textbook Modern Palestine, she wrote, "It is important that Yemenite youth should finally be assimilated with the rest of Jewish youth, although this must be effected without losing their distinctive values or respect for their own traditions."[93] In defiance of the cultural inferiority complex experienced by many Yemenites, and in particular the younger generation of Yemenite children born in Palestine, Sampter called for a return to the "lovely unique chant of their Bible... the pure, crisp Hebrew" and a "relearning of the

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[91] Jessie E. Sampter, "Assimilation," Article, 19 Aug. 1935, Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219 1/7.

[92] In fact, the popular slogan of *Mizzug Galuyyot* influenced social policy in post-1948 Israel. A basic factor in the relationship between the *edot* or communities in Israel was the long-standing dominance of the Ashkenazim in the economic, social, political and cultural spheres. Upon arrival in Israel, various immigrants were expected to assimilate to the culture and way of life of the westernized Ashkenazi community. However, the policy of *Mizzug Galuyyot* created much tension between the various *edot* in Israel, and has since come under attack, as non-Ashkenazim have increased their efforts to maintain their own distinct cultures and to take pride in their communities.

[93] Jessie E. Sampter, Modern Palestine. Ed. Jessie Sampter (New York: Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, 1933) 104.

ancient songs and dances of their people."[94]

In The Key, an English-language children's story written in 1925, Sampter illustrates the commonalities between all Jewish children in Palestine. She encourages the Ashkenazi children in the story to accept their Yemenite neighbours as brothers and sisters living together and sharing a common goal of the creation of a Jewish homeland. Sampter describes some of the discrimination suffered by the Yemenites who were considered as servants and workers, rather than equal partners in the development of the land.

> Some of the neighbours' small children ran in, little fair-headed Russian and Rumanian Jews who were used to look upon the Yemenites as their servants. "Come along and play, " called Ruth, who could not stand these distinctions. Mother always told her: "In Palestine, whether we come from America or Russia or England or Germany or Persia or Yemen, we are all Jews.[95]

Unfortunately, the children have already adopted the prejudice of their parents.

True to life, Sampter details the hardships faced by the Yemenite children, robbed of much of their childhood as a result of the income which they must contribute to the family earnings. Sampter depicts "little Miriam, only eight years old, who never has a chance to play because she already goes out to do work."[96] She describes, as well, the lot of the Yemenites who own no land, but must work as servants or farmhands on other people's property.

> My father works in an orange orchard and earns three shillings a day. My mother earns the same, going out to do washing or cleaning... and my little sister Miriam and I go to be servants. It is not good. I like to work, but not for

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[94] Jessie E. Sampter, "Assimilation", Article, 19 Aug. 1935. Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219 1/7.

[95] Jessie E. Sampter, The Key, Children's Novel, 1925. Kibbutz Givat Brenner Archives. Givat Brenner. p. 21.

[96] Ibid., 8.

strangers.[97]

Although the children's story does not offer any solutions to the economic problems plaguing the Yemenite community, it does end on a positive note with regard to the social relations between the children. As a result of the efforts of one young girl and her mother, the children learn to accept one another, play together, and even appreciate the different fairy tales and songs that they have each learned in their respective homes. Near the end of the story, a small Yemenite girl named Shama exclaims with some surprise to her new friend Akiba, "You are an Ashkenazi boy, and yet you were kinder to me than most Yemenite boys would have been. I would never have believed it."

To this statement, Akiba responds, "I am a Jewish boy and you are a Jewish girl. I think in Palestine it is time we understood that we are all Jews and all Jews are brothers."[98] Akiba's sentiments reflect the author's own desire for respect and acceptance between all communities in Palestine.

SOCIALISM

Sampter believed that the best way to achieve social justice was through democratic socialism. Thus, her second major commitment in Palestine after her Yemenite work was to the flourishing of the collective settlements in the land, the *kevutzot* and kibbutzim. Sampter maintained that the Jewish homeland in Palestine would be assured by the practical accomplishments and ideological convictions of the agricultural communes. In writing to her sister of her own experiences on Kibbutz Givat Brenner, Sampter explained,

> Life here is very free and there is a great deal of personal consideration. Each one is treated according to his needs... The ideal which guides us is, as far as possible, to give to

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[97] Ibid., 17-18.

[98] Ibid., 30.

each his needs, and get from each whatever he can give.[99]

Despite their best intentions, basic human nature did not always permit kibbutz members to live according to pure socialist doctrine. Sampter was aware of the faults inherent within the system, but judged it as successful under the circumstances.

> As you [Elvie] say, it does not always work out so well. Still, I should decidedly call this experiment a great success, not in relation to the ideal, but in comparison with life in other places.[100]

Sampter's first encounter with a collective settlement came during her tour of the Valley of Jezreel in 1925. The socialist poet was enthralled with the young labourers whom she saw living and working together toward a common national goal. Despite the hardships of disease, swamplands, hostile Arab neighbours, lack of agricultural experience, and primitive living conditions, Sampter recognized the happiness and satisfaction on the faces of the settlers. She felt as though they had discovered a most just and proper way of living.

Sampter traced the roots of democratic socialism back to the ancient Jewish prophets. She believed that the modern settlers in Palestine were fulfilling the vision outlined by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah thousands of years earlier. Sampter looked towards the Bible for confirmation of the way of life of the settlers, and saw in the holy text the seeds of modern democracy and social justice. She wrote,

> The Jewish people brought into the world the ideal of democracy, both international and intra-national. Democracy is a purely religious ideal, based on the fatherhood of God and upon faith in the equality of man...[101]

In her writings, Sampter quotes Jewish religious laws and texts calling for general

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[99] Jessie E. Sampter, Letter to Elvie Wachenheim, 12 February 1934, quoted in Badt-Strauss 138.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Jessie E. Sampter, "The Jewish Position," The Maccabaean Magazine September 1915: 5.

education, the restriction of the formerly accepted institution of slavery, the safeguarding of equal rights for all before the law, and support of all members of the community. Sampter believed that the Zionist movement was based on the "prophetic and democratic character of Jewish thought" with basic principles of "equal suffrage and equal representation for man and woman, poor and rich."[102]

In spite of her inability to join the halutzim *pioneers* as an agricultural worker, Sampter adopted the principle of self-denial which characterized their movement. In a poem entitled "Batya" (named after a friend of Sampter's), she explains her sentiments concerning the workers and their rejection of things material.

> Only by thus living, without possession and without desire
> For personal belongings are we free,
> Social and free, clean of the self-seeking
> That dulls the edge of the keen sword of love.
> So must we build our land with fellowship
> Complete...[103]

In keeping with this philosophy, Sampter rejected her own material wealth, and gave her possessions to Kibbutz Givat Brenner when she joined it as a member. She felt uneasy regarding her early comfortable lifestyle in New York, and no longer wished to be concerned with unnecessary possessions. Sampter believed that personal property and possessions lead to inequality, which in turn leads to exploitation of the weaker elements in society. She argued that individuals who are concerned with loving things could not love each other.

In accordance with her socialist convictions, Sampter maintained that money was a source of enmity and conflict. In 1926, she wrote a short essay entitled "Open your Eyes" which deals with her views on material wealth.

> Money is a wall between people over which they blindly throw the stones of barter, suspicion and mutual exploitation. Money signifies a polite unconscious enmity, a stony facade. Why not arrange the community larder, where each gets his share according to his need and to the

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[102] Sampter, Guide to Zionism 8.

[103] Jessie E. Sampter, "Batya," The Emek 14.

economic situation?[104]

In this essay, Sampter hints at her later commitment to the socialist way of life enjoyed by the members of Givat Brenner. Indeed, her years on the Kibbutz provided her with an opportunity to live her ideals, and not merely preach them. As her understanding of kibbutz life grew, Sampter became increasingly conscious of the problems within the settlements. Yet, her gravest criticism was lack of privacy and an overabundance of work. First as a visitor and later as a member, Sampter remained convinced that the kibbutz was the ideal form of colonization for Palestine, and of living a life based on equality, justice, and democratic socialism.

ARAB-JEWISH RELATIONS IN PALESTINE

The place of the Arabs in Palestine plays a large role in Sampter's Zionist ideology. In her articles, essays and letters, Sampter displays an optimism regarding the Arab-Jewish conflict consistent with her socialist and pacifist convictions; even the repeated outbreaks of violence in Palestine did not undermine Sampter's deeply held belief in the possibility of mutual cooperation and peace between the two peoples. However, unlike some other Zionist thinkers who grappled with the complicated reality of the Arab-Jewish conflict, Sampter failed to adequately discuss the real issues. Despite her continued calls for peaceful communication and interaction between the Arabs and the Jews, and her hopeful pleas for an end to the violence, Sampter never arrived at a clearly defined concrete solution to the problem.

This lack of clarity on Sampter's part may reflect less her failure to consider the issue in its entirety, and rather more the full complexity of the situation. This complexity is attested to by the large number of theories and plans proposed by the early Zionist thinkers and pioneers in Palestine who, like Sampter, were not blinded to the serious implications of the conflict with the Arabs.

Not all early Zionists considered the Arab presence in Palestine to be of top

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[104] Jessie E. Sampter, "Open your Eyes," Article, 1926. Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219 1/4.

priority or concern. In fact, in writing of Palestine, Theodor Herzl, the father of Political Zionism, referred to the country as "the land without a people awaiting the people without a land". Other early Zionists were less naive. When Ahad Ha'am, the pioneer of Spiritual Zionism went to Palestine in the 1890s, he returned with many reports of the Arab population in the land. Unlike other Russian Zionists of this period who expressed confidence in their writings that Jews and Arabs could live peacefully together, Ahad Ha'am reported that the Arabs would be placated only so long as they believed that the Jews constituted no real danger. The day that the Zionists would begin to threaten Arab dominance in Palestine, Ahad Ha'am predicted that the Arabs would respond with violence. However, according to Zionist historian Walter Laqueur, "few envisaged the possibility of a clash of national interests."[105]

Some lonely warning voices, including that of teacher and agriculturist Yitzhak Epstein did emerge in the early years of the twentieth century. In 1905, at the time of the seventh Zionist Congress, Epstein proclaimed that the Arab question was the most important of all the problems facing Zionism. He felt that the Zionists should enter into an alliance with the Arabs and actively support them in the attainment of their national aims. Epstein argued that the Jews must limit themselves to purchasing only the land that others were not already cultivating and recommended helping the Arabs raise their standard of living. He hoped to see Arabs taking full advantage of Jewish services made available to them, such as hospitals and schools. Critics of Epstein included members of the Zionist Executive who wondered who would supply the funds for Arab health and education considering the Jews never had sufficient finances for their own enterprises.

Other Zionists such as Israel Zangwill believed it was unrealistic to expect the Jews and the Arabs to co-exist. Consequently, he favoured the idea of an amicable and voluntary population transfer. He believed that the Arabs would be willing to participate in such a venture if they were first satisfied with their own national aspirations and were sufficiently financially compensated.

Although the idea of a population transfer was deemed immoral and unacceptable

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[105] Walter Laqueur, A History of Zionism (New York: Schocken Books, 1972) 210.

by official Zionist leadership, the notion of a bi-national state was entertained by a number of Zionist leaders, including the members of "*Brit Shalom*", an association founded in Jerusalem in 1925. The principal idea guiding *Brit Shalom* was that Palestine should be a bi-national state in which Jews and Arabs could enjoy equal civil, social, and political rights, without distinction between majority and minority. The two nations would each enjoy autonomy with regard to their respective domestic affairs, but would be united in common interests. *Brit Shalom* attracted no mass support, either from Zionist leaders or settlers in Palestine, as most felt that the proposed program held out little real promise.

Sampter's writings do not express her opinion of these various theories regarding Arab-Jewish relations. In fact, her essays and articles at times reflect a naivete in their simplicity and an innocence in their evaluation of the hostile, dangerous, and entirely complex situation.

When Sampter first arrived in Palestine, she wrote articles and letters to her sister about the comeraderie that existed between the peoples of Palestine. "... Hate there is, but it flourishes elsewhere... The Jewish settlement from the beginning was of advantage to the Arab peasant, which they were quick to perceive..."[106] At this time, Sampter believed, as did many Zionist leaders, that the Arabs appreciated the economic, educational, agricultural, and medical progress which Jewish colonization had brought to Palestine. It was indeed logical to assume that the Arabs in Palestine would be pleased with the benefits accorded them as a result of Jewish efforts and initiatives. Yet, this was not the reality; rather than appreciation, the Arab community felt threatened by the arrival of the Zionists, and acted upon their fears and frustrations.

The Passover Riots of 1920 served to shake Sampter's vision of peace and mutual cooperation between Arab and Jew. Yet, she did not attribute the violence to the common Arab worker or farmer in Palestine, with whom the Jews could live peaceably. Rather, she felt, as did many Zionist thinkers, that the Arab masses were easy prey for

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[106] Jessie E. Sampter, "Arabs and Jews in Palestine," 1923, quoted in Badt-Strauss 75-76.

ambitious politicians and religious fanatics, due to the typical Arab's primitive living conditions and limited educational level. Sampter believed that the riots had been inspired by Arab religious and political agitators, such as the mufti of Jerusalem.

As Sampter questioned in an article entitled "Arabs and Jews in Palestine"[107], a few years later in 1923,

> Why, with those manifest signs of hatred... do Arabs and Jews still work together on the land, buy and sell and trade in all the necessities of life and act in all private relations precisely as they always have acted?[108]

Sampter answered her own question in an article about the Passover Riots. She wrote,

> Our foes are not the Arabs. Today, with our raw wound, I do not blame the hand that stabbed us. The Arab is a good friend, simple, untutored, beautiful and erect in his folk ways; he is my friendly neighbor, to whom I say 'Saida' for his 'Shalom'... Our foe is the foe of humanity, imperialism, dirty politics militarism, pulling the strings for the farce, the tragedy that has been enacted in Jerusalem.[109]

Until this time, and for a few years after the riots, Sampter was very optimistic as to the support of the British government for the establishment of a Jewish national home. The first wave of riots caused her to question her belief in the Mandate; the next serious attack in 1929 served to dispell any remaining faith in the British as allies of the *Yishuv*. She wrote,

> It is easier to forgive the Arab terrorists acting in hot blood and ignorance than the calculated political cruelty of the [British] Government. We can have no more illusions

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[107] I have been unable to find this article.

[108] Jessie E. Sampter, "Arabs and Jews in Palestine", 1923, quoted in Badt-Strauss 75-76.

[109] Jessie E. Sampter, "Passover- 5680," The Maccabaean June 1920: 173.
Sampter's western orientation and near condescension vis-à-vis the Arab is evident in this passage.

now... of both our open and disguised enemies...[110]

In fact, Sampter oftentimes considered the British, the "disguised enemy", to be more dangerous and immoral than the Arab terrorists. She despised the duplicity of the British rulers, who claimed to be peacemakers, yet encouraged bloodshed.

In order to restore and maintain the friendly daily cooperation between Jews and Arabs that had existed prior to the riots in some regions of the land, Sampter called upon both parties to work together for the common good of Palestine. After the riots, Sampter encouraged both Jews and Arabs to reject the atmosphere of fear and hostility, and to begin again to rebuild what had been destroyed. In keeping with her socialist beliefs, Sampter encouraged Jews and Arabs in Palestine to work together in joint enterprises, not as employer and employee, but as partners.

A central concept in Zionist ideology of this period was *Kibbush ha-Avodah* (Conquest of Labour). This idea which was espoused primarily by A.D. Gordon and other settlers of the Second Aliyah, entailed the participation of Jews in all types of work, whether they be arduous or even dangerous, necessary to settle the homeland. The Second Aliyah was characterized by socialist young adults whose aim of Zionism was not to establish a class of landowners whose vineyards and orchards would be worked by Arab peasants. Rather, the settlers wished to see Jews active in every area necessary in rebuilding the Jewish national home. This policy caused much anger and resentment on the part of the Arabs who felt threatened by the attempt to replace them with Jewish labour.

The creation of the *Histadrut* in 1920, the largest labour union and the largest volunteer organization in Israel, again raised the issue of joint Arab and Jewish labour enterprises. Initially known as "*Ha-Histadrut ha-Kelalit shel ha-Ovedim ha-Ivriyyim be-Erez Israel*" (the General Federation of Jewish Labour in the Land of Israel), one can infer simply from its name its mandate to support specifically Jewish labour in Palestine. In spite of their socialist perspective, the founders of the *Histadrut* placed greater emphasis on the importance of creating a Jewish society than on maintaining positive

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[110] Jessie E. Sampter, Letter to the Editor. The Palestine Post. 30 June 1938.

relations between Jewish and Arab labourers in Palestine.

Although Sampter took pride in the accomplishments of the Jewish work force in Palestine, she did not feel that the Zionists could afford to exclude the Arabs in the establishment of a national economy. Rather, Sampter preached cooperation with the Arabs in the development of the land. She called for labour solidarity between Arab and Jew which would result in an end to exploitation and oppression on both sides.

In a poem which was written shortly after the 1920 riots, Sampter reminded both Jew and Arab that they are descendants from the same forefather. Together, they can achieve what they would fail to accomplish on their own.

> Ishmael, my brother, lift not your hand against mine.
> Have we not one father? Is not this land his shrine?
> We are one flesh and blood,we have one need and hunger.
> Ishmael, lift not your hand- I am the younger.
> ...
> Ishmael, my brother, lift not your hand against me!
> They have deceived you, these others, because you are simple and free,
> Saying: "We will divide them, brother shall rise against brother,
> Since these lands and their fruits are for us and not for another."
> ...
> Raise not your hand against mine! I fend, but I would take it.
> Between two worlds we meet, twixt wars, and we can make it
> The gate to the world's peace, the horror of thieves and vampires,
> A little shrine of peace to quiet the ramping empires...
> Where every man shall dwell under his fig and his vine,
> You under yours, Ishmael, and I under mine.[111]

Although a pacifist, Sampter saw the need for Jewish self-defense, and encouraged members of the *Yishuv* to protect themselves against the Arabs. Yet, she maintained a strict definition of defense; reprisals and vengeance were unethical, unnecessary, and beneath the moral standard of the *Yishuv*. "The Little Nation", a poem about the Jewish people, concludes with the following words:

> What is gained by knowledge and justice is from
> everlasting to everlasting;
> But what is gained by the sword shall be lost by

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[111] Jessie E. Sampter, "Ishmael, My Brother," Brand Plucked From the Fire (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1937) 90-91.

the sword.[112]

In contrast to her initial fascination with Arab tradition and culture, Sampter responded to the riots of 1929 with a new evaluation of Arab civilization. She continued to describe the Arabs as basically good and capable of co-existence with the Jews, but introduced a new element to the debate. According to Sampter, the Arabs in Palestine were more primitive and less culturally and ethically developed than the Jews.

> But for striking individual exceptions in both groups I see the Palestinian Arabs as in a stage of culture and civilization lower than that of the Jews; and this makes it impossible for them at present to understand our conception of national or personal ethics. We must live with them, or rather side by side with them... in friendliness and mutual helpfulness, in honesty and in co-operation.[113]

By depicting Palestinian Arab civilization as inferior to that of the Jews, Sampter provided a rationalization for the violent events which had taken place. She created a logical excuse for illogical acts of hatred. Although Sampter's conclusions are questionable, it is easily understood why the peace-loving poet would choose to believe in such a justification for immoral and inhumane behaviour.

In the Zionist textbook, Modern Palestine, Sampter argued that the welfare of Palestine was dependent on the solidarity of its inhabitants. She concluded with the following statement: "To love our neighbor as ourselves is no easy injunction. But our future depends on our obeying this inner command."[114]

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Sampter's early experiences with the Society for Ethical Culture, the "Seekers Club", and the Unitarian Church have been described in her biography. Included in that section were explanations of her initial belief that science should replace religion, and that

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[112] Jessie E. Sampter, "The Little Nation," The Coming of Peace 34.

[113] Jessie E. Sampter, "Testimony," The New Palestine 27 September 1929: 241.

[114] Sampter, Modern Palestine 376.

lack of religious education was an advantage. Sampter's discovery of Zionism in a Christian service leading to the return to her Jewish heritage, and the exploration of that heritage with the help of Henrietta Szold, Mordecai M. Kaplan, and others including the Jewish people itself have been detailed. This section, thus, will deal with Sampter's religious beliefs and the transformation that occured in those beliefs during her years in Palestine.

When Sampter first arrived in Jerusalem in 1919, she was dismayed to find no congregation in which to pray. Since her return to Judaism a few years earlier, Sampter had learned much regarding Jewish history, languages, prayer, and the Bible. Along with many of her Zionist friends in America, she had adopted a highly spiritual attitude which combined a desire for the Jewish return to Palestine with hope for a religious revival in that land. As she wrote, "I believe only in Palestine can Judaism be recreated. Only there will it have the freedom from pressure to grow naturally."[115] One can imagine, then, her disillusionment in discovering that the Jews in Palestine were overwhelmingly either secular Zionists, uninterested in a revival of Judaism, or ultra-Orthodox members of the traditional and conservative *Old Yishuv*.

Among the Zionists in Jerusalem, Sampter initially discovered a secularity which she found difficult to accept in the Jewish homeland. Yet, as she spent time in Palestine, Sampter began to notice signs of spirituality and the observance of some Jewish customs even among the secularists. In fact, a minimal religious observance was imposed upon the secular Jews simply by virtue of their living in Palestine. In an article entitled "Holy Days in the Holy City", Sampter explains,

> Among the nationalist Jews, the modern Jews, there is no religious observance save that sweet normal habit of Judaism that is natural here. A Jew is a Jew. Even if he is an atheist, he keeps kosher and his usual business stops on the Sabbath... Intellectually, he is against the Adukim, the Orthodox.[116]

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[115] Jessie E. Sampter, "A Confession," The Reconstructionist 16 April 1937: 14

[116] Jessie E. Sampter, "Holy Days in the Holy City," Article, 4 Nov. 1920: 3. Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219 1/1.

This recognition of the "sweet normal habit of Judaism" even among modern Zionists is transformed later in Sampter's life to a whole-hearted acceptance of the spirituality of the secularists. Sampter's later writings display an admiration for the pioneer's adaptation of Judaism to suit modern needs and reflect modern times. This transformation will be further explored later in this section.

Despite Sampter's failure to find a congregation in which to worship, she did feel the holy atmosphere of Jerusalem, not in the synagogue, but rather in the silence of the fields and beauty of the streets and market place. "And I knew the Land was holy, because its beauty cannot be told or said. It can no more be imagined or pictured than the melody of a song still unheard."[117]

Among the ultra-Orthodox Jews, or *Adukim* (the devout) as Sampter refers to them, the young American woman found a holiness whose faith was other-worldly and unconcerned with present times. Their "faith is only in the far past or far future, their eyes are shut to the world, and their ears are deaf to the present voice of God."[118] Sampter appreciated the holiness of the *Adukim*, but could not relate to their rigidity in law, their strictness of interpretations, and their views regarding women. She wrote, "I love these Jews; I revere their faith, their emunah (belief); I hate their precepts, their dat (religion)."[119]

Sampter recognized the role of the *Adukim* in having maintained the Jewish faith and connection with the Land of Israel throughout the years, but she was not interested in adopting their form of Judaism. She wrote, "These people have held the Land for us; they have kept the faith for us in dusty bottles. But now they offer us only the dust and the bottles. Faith is ours as well!"[120]

Sampter rejected the quietist stance of the ultra-Orthodox Jews who regarded

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[117] Ibid., 1.

[118] Ibid., 6.

[119] Ibid., 5.

[120] Ibid., 6.

modern Zionists as the enemy, preferring to await the arrival of the Messiah to usher in the age in which the Jews would again rule in the Land of Israel. Sampter's poem entitled "Mashiah" (Messiah) raises the following question:

> Shall we doze til' Mashiah has come,
> Shall we rest till our children are gray,
> Shall we wait for a guide and a drum
> When our hearts beat the way?[121]

The American poet herself had engaged in a long quest for truth and God, and could consequently understand the deep devotion and spirituality of the *Adukim*. Yet, Sampter felt that the ultra-Orthodox were failing to transmit a live Judaism. In spite of their spirituality, or perhaps as a result of their intense convictions, the ultra-Orthodox in Palestine were allowing Judaism to stagnate, and grow old and irrelevant. Sampter shared the view so common among members of the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) that the *Adukim* had crippled and fossilized Jewish law by not enabling it to develop with the times. In contrast to the secular Zionists who responded to this religious stultification by abondoning Judaism completely, Sampter offered a different solution of imbuing Judaism with a new spirit.

> It is the spirit not the law, that we must save. The law is implicit in the spirit... We need a new worship, a new law in the spirit of the old, also in the spirit of humanity's newer conceptions of brotherhood and of human obligations. We no longer need a dead Judaism to keep us alive. We dare to return to our living faith.[122]

Sampter differentiated between Judaism in the Diaspora and in Palestine. In the former, there existed a real danger of assimilation; consequently, Sampter saw the need for a certain degree of stringency there in observing Jewish law. Yet, she argued that in Palestine, territorial concentration allowed for a more fluid Judaism, consisting of spirit, song, and tradition, as opposed to law and worship. She recognized the religious rejection of the modern Zionists as a rebellion against the unbending law of the ultra-

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[121] Jessie E. Sampter, "Mashiah," Poem, Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219 1/3.

[122] Sampter, "Holy Days in the Holy City," 18.

Orthodox, and she sought to create in Palestine a comfortable, relevar d living Judaism which would attract the secularists, rendering their activities more meaningful.

> The strict observance of traditional law is what preserved Judaism and with it the Jews in the Diaspora... In Palestine, Jewishness need not be confined and protected against the inroads of alien life... The concept of tradition should replace that of law.[123]

Elsewhere, she wrote, "The shell that had preserved us against decay and destruction in the winter of an alien atmosphere must be broken and cast away when the seed begins to sprout in the warmth of its own soil."[124]

Later in life, Sampter abandoned her dream of a religious revival in Palestine, not out of a sense of hopelessness, but due to the realization that the *halutzim* were indeed religious in their own way. "Halutziut is not untraditional; it is only unconventional."[125] Throughout the years in Palestine, as Sampter gained more experience living among pioneers, she began to doubt their secularity. It was true that many of the pioneers did not pray, nor did they adhere to *halakha* (Jewish law). Yet, Sampter saw in their way of life a different type of spirituality which was just as significant as traditional Judaism for the *Adukim*. She viewed their attitude towards life in Palestine, labouring on behalf of a Jewish homeland, as a new expression of religious belief.

> The dispersion replaced Temple service with prayer; Palestine replaces it with work. It is this religious devotion, unspoken, deeply lived, which imbues our pioneers, which makes their endurance of hardship not only possible, but joyous.[126]

Sampter believed in the inherent goodness of work, and in particular agricultural

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[123] Sampter, Modern Palestine 367-368.

[124] Sampter, "A Confession," The Reconstructionist 16 April 1937: 14.

[125] Sampter, Modern Palestine 367.

[126] Ibid., 366.

work in Palestine. Like A.D. Gordon, Hebrew writer and Zionist philosopher[127], Sampter argued that freedom and work are a gift from the land to the people. More than a gift, though, they comprised a new form of religious commitment. "Freedom and work: That is the faith of the Emek."[128]

As a member of Kibbutz Givat Brenner, Sampter witnessed the hard physical labour of the *halutzim*, and contributed to their modern and unconventional expression of Judaism. The poet participated in the writing of their Passover *Haggadah*, used in their novel celebration of the holiday. In this period, it became common for kibbutzim to create their own Passover *Haggadot*, reflecting their unique philosophy and world view. Each year, kibbutz members would add a page containing relevant news regarding the activities of the settlement during the past year. Although these *Haggadot* deviated from the original, they were certainly traditional in their affirmation of Jewish freedom in the Land of Israel, and their attempt to serve as a link in the chain of Jewish history.

Similarly, Sampter experienced the secular Zionists' custom of celebrating other Jewish holidays in unconventional, though not less meaningful ways. She was inspired by the joyful singing of the *halutzim* on the Sabbath, followed by wild dancing of the hora. In this way, Sampter argued that the pioneers were living a religious life, as they freed Judaism from the synagogues and brought it alive in their daily lives in the fields.

> On Friday evening there is singing, chanting
> Of Hebrew ecstasies about our God
> That would in other lands be called a prayer.
> Here it is not a prayer, here it is re-creation.
> Hands join in circle, feet begin to beat,
> The circle sways, the feet and hands
> And heads and bodies sing and dance,
> The Hora turns now right now left,
> With swaying, praying, playing forms,...
> Dancing with passion, dancing with power,

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[127] Aaron David Gordon's philosophy came to be known as *Dat Avodah*, religion of labour. He believed that a return to nature through physical labour would enable workers to rediscover religion and to regain a sense of cosmic unity and holiness.

[128] Jessie E. Sampter, "The Children's Village on Mount Moreh," The Emek 19.

With love and joy till the midnight hour.[129]

Sampter was disturbed by the lack of unity between the modern Zionists and the ultra-Orthodox Jews. Despite the obvious differences, Sampter saw many similarities between the two groups, and she longed for the development of greater cooperation between them. For Sampter, the ideal was the blending of spirituality and action, faith and work. Among the secularists, faith might be interpreted as freedom or labour, whereas the religious would view it as belief in God. Sampter admired the members of the Mizrachi movement (religious Zionist movement) who believed that by contributing to the development of the Jewish homeland, they were fulfilling a religious obligation. She considered this concrete activity on the part of religious Jews in Palestine to be ideal, as it enabled the Jews to bring together the word and the deed.

In 1927, Sampter wrote a poem depicting the active participation on the part of some Hasidic Jews in the reclamation of the land. She was most enthusiastic about the arrival of two Hasidic leaders who deviated from the ultra-Orthodox isolation of the *Old Yishuv* and led their followers in becoming farmers in the Land of Israel. Entitled "The Yeblona Rebbele", the poem deals with the Hasidic leader of Yablone (Jablonna) in Poland, Rabbi Yehezkel Taub, who together with his followers, settled on the Jezreel Valley border in 1924. This Hasidic group was joined by another group of Polish Hasidim led by Rabbi Isaiah Shapiro of Kozienice in founding a *moshav* in the Zebulun Valley. The *moshav*, called Kfar Hasidim, was affiliated with the worker's branch of the Religious Zionist Movement, *Ha-Poe'l ha-Mizrachi*. In 1927, it was established as a permanent village by the Hasidim who drained the malarial swamps and developed farming.

Up to his knees in mud
The Yeblona Rebbele
Up to their knees in mud
That were up to their ears in theology...

Talk of faith and works:
This is a working faith

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[129] Jessie E. Sampter, "The Sabbath at Merchaviah," The Emek 25-26.

That comes with its praying shawl
To wipe up the swamps of the Holy Land...

There was no inquisition
As to earlocks or beards or teffilin [phylacteries],
For the Yeblona Rebbele knows
That in the Holy Land...
There's not much difference between the holiness
Of this man and that man who works.[130]

Thus, Sampter's understanding of religion changed throughout her life. Her experiences in America and later in Palestine led her to believe in the significance of Judaism, not as a rigid set of rules, but rather as a living entity which served to unite the Jewish people with their land, while rendering life more meaningful.[131] Sampter's long quest for God ended in personal fulfillment and a sense of satisfaction with the choices that were made along the journey.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Although Sampter lived years before the blossoming of the women's movement in the 1960s, she shared many of its views with regard to the status of women and their role in the world. As an early feminist, Sampter maintained strong convictions concerning equality of the sexes in work, religion, and other areas of life.

Sampter's feminist attitudes formed part of her general belief in freedom, equality, and social justice. Similar to her concern for the Eastern European immigrants on New York's impoverished Lower East Side, and her shock at the maltreatment of the Yemenites in Palestine, Sampter experienced disappointment and outrage when she witnessed injustices against women. In Palestine, Sampter was strongly opposed to the

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[130] Jessie E. Sampter, "The Yeblona Rebbele," The Emek 40.

[131] Sampter's belief echoes the mystical view of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Palestine, who synthesized Zionism with traditional Judaism. Kook held the innovative view that the secular pioneers were rendered holy, despite their personal violations of Jewish law, by virtue of their being occupied with the holy work of reclaiming the Land of Israel.

role of women both in the *Old* and *New Yishuv*.

Sampter's rejection of the type of Judaism practised by the ultra-Orthodox in Jerusalem has already been detailed in this thesis. Yet, her dismay over the status of women in this community has not been dealt with in much detail.

When Sampter first arrived in Palestine and experienced worship services among the *Adukim*, she wrote, "Could I have walked to the large synagogues in the old town, it would have served me little, for hidden away in the screened porch where alone women are permitted to worship, I could not have worshipped with joy."[132] Sampter felt alienated from these Jews who would not permit her the dignity of praying in a fashion to which she had become accustomed in America. Her affront was genuine and lasting, as is apparent by the bitterness she expresses in writing of a Zionist women's meeting which took place a short time later in which a number of men participated. In writing of the men, Sampter stated with some sarcasm, "We allowed them to sit in the room with us, as there was no gallery upstairs where we could hide them away."[133]

Sampter, the advocate of social justice for all, was shocked at the power yielded by the rabbinate to control the Jewish women of Palestine. According to Sampter, these men influenced the British government to maintain aspects of Jewish civil law which were oppressive to women. This was possible, for the British Mandate continued the Ottoman tradition of providing autonomous religious communities in Palestine with authority in questions of personal status. Sampter was filled with pity for the religious "dear patient women" whom she saw "walking humbly a few paces behind their lords and masters."[134] And she was indignant that a few ultra-Orthodox men maintained power incongruous with their actual numbers in the Jewish community in Palestine.

Sampter questioned the validity of such religious observance. She wondered whether a spiritual life which imprisoned some of its members was indeed justified, as

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[132] Sampter, "Holy Days in the Holy City," 5.

[133] Ibid., 16-17.

[134] Ibid., 5.

she doubted that religion without communal unity was deemed desirable by God. Sampter questioned, "What is the spiritual life but the unified life?... The spiritual life of the community [must be] a unified life, not a life where one half worships and the other half works..."[135]

Sampter attempted to derive some satisfactory answers to her questions from members of the ultra-Orthodox community; she failed, though, to discuss her thoughts with them, as the religious men refused to meet with, or even speak to her.

In the agricultural settlements of the modern Zionists, Sampter encountered problems of a different nature with regard to treatment of women. Her writings on the subject reflect the diversity within the reality of the *kevutzot* and kibbutzim. On the one hand, the liberal, socialist and democratic convictions of the Jewish settlers found expression in the philosophies of their communes. These philosophies espoused full equality between the genders in all areas of life. In fact, many early Zionist women were attracted to the movement as a result of its liberating ideology. On the other hand, the reality of the settlements was not always in keeping with their philosophy, causing dissatisfaction among some of their members. Sampter's writings deal with both these phenomena, revealing the discrepancy between theory and practice with regard to equality of women in the collective settlements.

An example which best illustrates the duality within women's lives in Palestine is that of the *shomrot*, or watchwomen. *Ha-Shomer* (The Watchman) was an organization of Jewish guards in Palestine which was active between the years 1909 and 1920. It was founded by members of the Second Aliyah, many of whom had participated in revolutionary activities and Jewish self-defense in Eastern Europe. These pioneers were critical of the use of non-Jewish guards in protecting life and property in Jewish settlements. Within a short period after *Ha-Shomer*'s founding, Jews in Palestine were able to take pride in the fact that they were now capable of defending themselves.

One of the moving spirits behind the founding of *Ha-Shomer* was a woman, Manya Wilbushewitz Shohat. Together with her husband, Israel Shohat, she helped

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[135] Ibid., 17.

establish an association in which both Jewish men and women contributed to the protection of Jewish settlements from physical danger. In the beginning, women played an instrumental role in *Ha-Shomer*. According to Sampter, "These men and women worked together from the start; there was no question of sex in the facing of danger. In those days more men came, but the women were of the same metal."[136]

The writings of Chaya-Sarah Chankin, early *halutza* and contributor to a collection of memoirs of the pioneer women in Palestine,[137] confirm Sampter's observations. In her writings, she describes the participation of at least one woman on the first evening of the watch in the colony of K'far Tabor in the Galilee.

> The first evening of the watch. The patrols are out... One of the women workers... told a friend that she did not want to work in the kitchen: she loved the silence and the darkness of the night, she loved weapons and horses, and she wanted to join the guard. The young man had confidence in her... When night fall came...the young man took the eastern side of the colony; the woman took the western side.[138]

Yet, with the development of the organization and the years of relative peace which followed, women were gradually relegated to less dangerous and less important functions. Women began to play a minor role, primarily in medical aid and the training of men in self-defense. Sampter recognized what was taking place, and she sought to fight the restrictions being placed on the *shomrot*. Despite her hatred of violence, Sampter saw the need for self-defense and wanted women to participate in this noble activity which raised the confidence and self-respect of Jews everywhere. She asked,

> Shall half of the community protect the other half? Shall half lie on the floor while the other half is facing the

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[136] Jessie E. Sampter, "Watchwomen," The Jewish Frontier November 1936: 1.

[137] The book, which was edited by Rachel Katznelson Shazar, is entitled The Plough Woman and provides individual accounts and recollections of several of the earliest women in the *kevutzot* and kibbutzim of Palestine.

[138] Chaya-Sarah Chankin, "The Jewish Guard," The Plough Woman. Ed. Rachel Katznelson Shazar (New York: Herzl Press, 1975) 33-34.

> shots?... What will our daughters say when they grow up and are differentiated from the little boys with whom until now they shared everything? Will a mother send her fifteen year old boy to go on guard while she hides in the room?[139]

Sampter felt that women were fully capable of protecting their communities. Furthermore, she felt that it was their responsibility to do so. "The pioneer Jewish woman must stand by her man at this hour in defence, and at a later hour again in the work of cooperation and peaceful upbuilding."[140]

In the history of *Ha-Shomer*, one can see the initial emancipation of women in Palestine which was subsequently partially lost with the re-establishment of restrictions based on gender. Yet, this is only one example in the struggle to maintain gender equality in the *Yishuv*.

Among the agricultural workers, it was initially assumed that women would fulfill the same jobs in the settlements as the men. Indeed, the whole family and social structure were geared towards enabling women to work alongside men, rather than perform only domestic duties, as was traditionally the role of women in numerous societies in many ages. Children were raised in children's houses, separate from their parents. This freed mothers from the responsibility of remaining at home in order to care for the children; at the same time, it served to provide the children with an opportunity to grow as independent individuals with their peers. Other domestic necessities, such as food and laundry service were also collectivized.

Sampter felt that this unconventional arrangement was to women's advantage, as it permitted them the possibility of motherhood while enabling them to partake in agricultural labour. In contrast to some others who criticized the separate living quarters of parent and child as being unnatural, Sampter considered it progressive. Indeed, women on kibbutzim were granted opportunities not yet enjoyed by working mothers in private farms or cities. She explained,

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[139] Sampter, "Watchwomen," The Jewish Frontier November 1936: 5-6.

[140] Ibid., 6.

> The trend to individualistic homing is not so much an instinct as an old habit; and the Palestinian working woman who has the strength and courage to overcome it, lives a freer, richer life, does more work and has more leisure than the woman on a small farm or the city woman who has a job.[141]

A great deal has been written on the subject of the communal life of the kibbutz and its liberating potential for women. Although the literature is inconclusive, revealing the discrepancy between the ideals espoused by the kibbutz members and the somewhat less than ideal reality of life on the kibbutz, many of the early pioneer women themselves have written in favour of certain elements within communal living such as group upbringing of the children. Despite the many problems associated with such an arrangement, and the numerous other problems with regard to lack of equality for women in the kibbutzim, the *halutzot* (pioneer women) as a whole seemed satisfied with the freedom accorded them by collective upbringing of the children.[142]

According to Nina Richter, one of the early members of a kibbutz,

> One thing we have achieved by our method of child upbringing, and that is the liberation of the mother in the group... We see now that it is only by the method of group upbringing of the children that the mother can be a free member of the social structure. Once relieved of this heavy yoke, certain that everything will be done, physically and spiritually for the good of her child, the mother can devote herself to the work which she has chosen.[143]

Sampter was encouraged by the spirit of the *halutzim*. At times, she viewed the kibbutz as a successful experiment where men and women lived together as equals. She

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[141] Dorothy Kahn and Jessie Sampter, "Love in the Kibbutz," Collective, 76. Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219/7.

[142] In recent years, there has been a move back towards nuclear family living arrangements in kibbutzim, as radical socialism has become less popular among kibbutz members. Pragmatically, it is also less necessary today to free all hands on the kibbutz for work. Lastly, security concerns have also played some role in the trend to more traditional family- oriented upbringing of children on kibbutzim.

[143] Nina Richter, "The Child in Group Upbringing," The Plough Woman 195.

wrote of the work performed by both men and women, and the child-rearing which was done equally by both parents. Some of her poetry conveys a sense of satisfaction with the freedom available for women in the kibbutzim.

> In Tel Yoseph
> There are boys in the kitchen more than girls,
> For the girls do not know
> That their rebellion against the kitchen
> Is a rebellion against a slavery
> That they have happily escaped.
>
> One can be as free in a kitchen as in a field.[144]

Yet, Sampter was not unaware of the other side of the coin. Even in the collective settlements, she found that the pioneers did not always live up to their ideals. Despite their best efforts, women still fulfilled more gender specific roles such as cooking and laundering, and still failed to be adequately represented in leadership areas such as politics.

> Women, for lack of training, are still weak on the public and administrative side; and in the completely democratic government of the kvutzah, where the town meeting is the responsible body, women are not yet taking their share of public work.[145]

According to Sylvie Fogiel-Bijaoui, author of "From Revolution to Motherhood: The Case of Women in the Kibbutz, 1910-1948",

> The most radical change for women in the kvutza... was the creation of a new type of woman at the crossroads of Jewish history: that of the halutza who refused to be the 'eternal number two' and fought to share with men the same duties and the same rights... Between this positive development and sexual equality, however, there remained a long way to go and in fact, within the kvutza, women

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[144] Jessie E. Sampter, "Tel Yoseph: Civilization," The Emek 60.

[145] Jessie E. Sampter, "Married Women in Kvutzot," Article, Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219 1/7.

were never the equals of their male companions.[146]

Among the *halutzim*, Sampter found some disillusionment on the part of women who had immigrated to Palestine in order to contribute to the development of their land, and yet spent their days caring for children in the Children's House or cooking for other kibbutz members. They longed to join the men in the fields, but were relegated to kitchen duty instead.

> It's a pity
> The girls who cook had learnt no skill abroad.
> Hard to cook in huge cauldrons for a hundred,
> With nothing good to choose from, and a longing
> To plow and plant the earth.[147]

Sampter was aware of the special problems still facing women in the *Yishuv*, yet she was equally conscious of the vast improvements that had taken place in Palestine as compared to other regions around the globe. Despite the relative progress, Sampter found it imperative that women in Palestine continue to strive for full and real equality, in the social, educational, economic, familial, and religious fields. Sampter illustrated the importance of these efforts by explaining that "without justice to us [women] there can be no justice, without our participation in life there can be no whole life, no whole Jewishness, no whole Palestine."[148]

ANTISEMITISM

Although Sampter did not favour the establishment of a Jewish homeland simply as a safe haven for Jews, she did feel that the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine would help alleviate the problem of antisemitism throughout the world.

Sampter believed that the source of the problem lay in the present impotence of

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[146] Sylvie Fogiel- Bijaoui, "From Revolution to Motherhood: The Case of Women in the Kibbutz, 1910-1948," Pioneers and Homemakers. Ed. Deborah Bernstein. (Albany: State University of New York, 1992) 214.

[147] Jessie E. Sampter, "Bet Alfa and Hefzibah: The Two Groups," The Emek 44.

[148] Sampter, "Holy Days in the Holy City," 21.

the Jewish people. As a result of their dispersal throughout the world, and subsequent weakening of national ties, the Jews became easy scapegoats, as well as a despised element within society. Jewish efforts to assimilate only served to increase the hatred, as assimilation emphasized to all the degraded circumstances of the Jewish nation.

Sampter distinguished between premodern antisemitism which was largely couched in religious terms, and modern antisemitism which was political and racial.[149] Like the Zionist thinkers Theodor Herzl and Leo Pinsker, Sampter felt that the very existence of modern antisemitism was an indication that neither modernity nor education could serve to eradicate hatred of the Jews. In fact, the combined forces of emancipation and secularization caused a rise in antisemitism, as they liberated the Jews, enabling them to enter mainstream society in unprecedented numbers. The Jews became part of society, yet remained unwanted and unaccepted by that society, and thus became a hated element.

According to Sampter, Jews are seen as "strangers in a strange land." They do not belong in the countries of the Diaspora, yet they have no land of their own, and are consequently dispossessed, and lacking in respect and power. She explained, "The Jew is like the beggar 'on the town' who has no house. When he is driven from one house, he must perforce seek another... His visit is no honor and his welcome must always be precarious."[150]

How, then, can one fight against antisemitism and its influence? Sampter proposed a simple response: one cannot, and therefore, one must not attempt to combat antisemitism.

> To combat anti-Semitism is as impossible as to combat war. One may defend oneself against it, as one defends oneself against an attack in war; but that does not end war, though it may repulse an enemy. War goes on, this or another-

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[149] The term "race" was commonly used in this period as a synonym for nation or ethnicity. Dominant scientific opinion today does not recognize the Jews as a biological race.

[150] Jessie E. Sampter, "The Jewish Position," The Maccabaean Magazine September 1915: 3.

and so does anti-Semitism.[151]

Hatred of the Jews, Sampter argued, is not unique; it is simply another illogical expression of fear, economic pressure, and social competition, resulting in injustice. Due to its irrational nature, antisemitism is impossible to fight. This form of hatred is immune to debate and words, for it lives deep inside the mind of the antisemite.

> This ideology is a mask or a helmet; it is not a thing one can argue with, disprove, or even expose. It is as invulnerable as the logical delusions of the insane, because it is the same thing, the justification of an intrenched position.[152]

Sampter maintained that antisemitism was invulnerable and invincible. Assimilation did not eradicate the problem, but rather accentuated it. Argument and debate were useless, while education and emancipation failed to solve the issue. Even liberal legislation and Jewish self-defense were not adequate guards against prejudice. The only solution proposed by Sampter to alleviate the Jewish condition ignored antisemitism entirely, and focused instead on the Jewish people.

According to Sampter, the Jews are capable of weakening the existence of antisemitism. In order to achieve that aim, they must defy the antisemites by living with all their might. Jews must ensure that their nation flourishes and prospers. A unified Jewish presence throughout the world with a strong centre in Palestine is the only effective weapon against antisemitism. Since hatred of Jews thrives on decay and deterioration within the nation, the best remedy must be an empowered and rejuvenated people with confidence and self-respect. As Sampter explained,

> The first step that we have to take to destroy anti-Semitism is not to combat it but to live with all our might, to be ourselves, to cast off the shrouds which assimilation has tried to wind about a living body.[153]

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[151] Jessie E. Sampter, "Cure the Causes," How to Combat Anti- Semitism in America: A Symposium (New York: Jewish Opinion Publishing Corporation, 1937) 72.

[152] Ibid., 73.

[153] Ibid., 76.

Sampter felt that this first step could most efficiently be accomplished with the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine. She thus called upon all Jews to unite in the struggle for the development of a homeland. Although she realized that immigration to Palestine was not a realistic step for many Jews, she urged them to partake in the establishment of a Jewish homeland by studying Hebrew and Jewish history, or joining a Zionist organization. In so doing the Jewish nation would be strengthened and antisemitism would be weakened.

The second step in Sampter's plan called for the consolidation of democratic socialism throughout the world. Sampter encouraged a commitment to the values of democratic socialism, for she felt that these ideals would help bring about a world wherein social justice would replace all forms of hatred and prejudice. A unified Jewish body with an established homeland would help mitigate antisemitism, while the spread of democratic socialist beliefs would eradicate general hatred and injustice from the world.

Sampter's views regarding antisemitism and its influence are thus strongly intertwined with her belief in Zionism. On the one hand, she felt that the Jewish return to Palestine was partially instigated by the existing antisemitism in the world; on the other hand, she argued that a productive defense against antisemitism was a rise of Jewish nationalism. Thus, she encouraged the creation of a Jewish homeland and a rejuvenation of the Jewish people as the sole effective weapon against antisemitism. She called upon all Jews everywhere, regardless of their desire to settle in Palestine, to contribute to the strengthening of the Jewish nation and its homeland. In so doing, Sampter changed the focus of the debate on the Jewish question from one centred on hatred and discrimination, to one emphasizing the positive rebirth of the Jewish people in Palestine.

PARADOX OF PALESTINE

Despite Sampter's unfailing love for the Land of Israel and the intensity of her beliefs regarding its future, she was capable of writing of her experiences in Palestine with some objectivity. In her articles and essays, Sampter reflected many aspects of life

in the *Yishuv*. The American poet succeeded in conveying not only descriptions of the land's beauty and holiness, but of its harsh roughness, and primitive conditions. Sampter wrote of the poor standard of living, the endless physical labour, and the disease and violence which tragically affected the lives of the settlers.

Due to her affluent childhood in America, Sampter was in a relatively unique position; unlike the majority of the Jewish immigrants to Palestine who originated in Eastern Europe, she had first-hand experience of the opportunities in the *goldene medine* of America, and yet saw the potential for more meaningful things in Palestine. She wrote of both these phenomena, providing her readers with a glimpse into the paradox of Palestine.

Before Sampter's departure for Jerusalem in 1919, she wrote a letter to her sister conveying her awareness of the dangers inherent in her journey.

> I am going in the consciousness of certain very definite physical dangers of which I have purposely not spoken to you... If any accident befalls me remember that I preferred that danger to my safety here. But safety is nowhere, and would be the negation of life.[154]

Even prior to her arrival in Palestine, Sampter had made a conscious decision; she chose a difficult, yet more meaningful life in the Jewish homeland over a life of comfort and ease in America. Yet, she did not make this decision as an ascetic bid for a heavenly reward or for the sake of some dim future. On the contrary, Sampter, along with many other Jewish settlers, chose to make her life in Palestine due to the joy and satisfaction inherent in living a life of significance on behalf of the entire Jewish people. The *halutzim* did not sacrifice their happiness but rather added to it by living and working in Palestine.

In a later letter to her sister, Sampter summed up her feelings on the subject. She wrote, "You are living in the safest and sanest of countries. But I don't envy you."[155]

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[154] Jessie E. Sampter, Letter to Elvie Wachenheim. 16 July 1919. Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219/3.

[155] Jessie E. Sampter, Letter to Elvie Wachenheim. October 1938, quoted in Badt-Strauss 156.

Sampter was a proud American for much of her life. and was aware of the potential within that country. Yet, she renounced her American citizenship in favour of Palestine and the important contributions which she was making there.

In a poem entitled "Civilization", Sampter expresses the dichotomy between America and Palestine.

> Talk of civilization:
> There's an American girl at Tel Yoseph
> From a sophisticated home of comfort.
> She is most at ease
> In her blue smock and her white kerchief;
> There's a light in her eyes that her sisters may envy for its beauty,
> And seek cosmetics or a style of dress to give them.
> But there's a beauty
> Cannot be imitated; it's too real...
> It shines from the eye:
> Freedom and wisdom,
> Simplicity.[156]

It is this simplicity, freedom and wisdom which Sampter found lacking in the United States, but discovered in Palestine.

Freedom was indeed the motto of the Jewish homeland for the American poet. She saw in Palestine an opportunity for Jews to live not as strangers, or visitors in a foreign country, but as members of a nation rooted in its own land. Despite hardship and labour, Sampter felt that Palestine offered possibilities for Jews to develop and cultivate their unique culture in a way which America never could. She believed that only in Palestine could one live the most meaningful Jewish life.

> "Life is bitter here, it is terrible," he said,
> "I would tell nobody to come."
> "Then why do you stay- why have you stayed so long?"
> "Because I am a Jew; I have no other place.
> Here I am free. And freedom
> Is dearer than bread or joy."[157]

Sampter was enamored with the beauty of Palestine. And she believed in the

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[156] Jessie E. Sampter, "Civilization," The Emek 60-61.

[157] Jessie E. Sampter, "The Sabbath at Merchaviah," The Emek 24.

inherent value of work. Yet, she saw the results of too much work and too little comfort in the weary eyes of the settlers who aged before their time. Although she was aware of the significance of their efforts, often saying that it was exciting to be living history, Sampter was equally conscious of the sacrifices and pain of hard labour.

> We had comfort and money; we came to be human.
> We are crowded and hungry; but now we are men.
> What we prayed we are doing, what we hoped we are making,
> And the land of our dreams is the land of our pains.[158]

Yet, Sampter believed that the sacrifices were worthwhile, as only in Palestine could a Jew experience that feeling of at-homeness which she herself sought when she left the United States. Only Palestine could provide that self-respect and confidence necessary in a whole human being. And only a Jewish homeland could serve as a haven and a home for the entire Jewish people.

Lastly, Sampter considered the difficult work to be worthwhile as she saw the fruits of the settlers' labour in the budding trees and fertile soil where once there had been only swamp or desert. She believed in the gift of the land which demanded work for freedom.

> Shade from the staring sunlight, rest when the day is fading.
> Oh, but the days of effort, hunger, heat and sweat,
> Hell for the sake of heaven! Half the year it was pasture,
> Half the year it was desert, til we came and broke the land.[159]

Sampter wrote about and experienced the dual nature of Palestine: its beauty and promise of redemption, along with its harsh climate and hostile atmosphere. She balanced both elements in her writings and her life, yet judged in favour of Palestine in both cases. As she wrote,

> O Jerusalem,
> Dark and terrible and human
> And shining white as a city in the heavens.[160]

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[158] Jessie E. Sampter, "The Mizrachi Group," The Emek 38.

[159] Jessie E. Sampter, "The Orchards," The Emek 29.

[160] Jessie E. Sampter, "City in the Heavens," Brand Plucked From the Fire 20.

NATIONALISM AND UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

As an advocate of democratic socialism, equality of all people, and universalism, Sampter was often confronted with the accusation that belief in Jewish nationalism was contradictory to her other convictions. Many argued that nationalism and universalism were mutually exclusive; consequently, an individual could not espouse both ideologies, but had to choose between them. Sampter disagreed with this position, and sought to justify her views, both in her writings and her life.

According to Sampter, universalism and nationalism were not diametrically opposed, but rather were complementary concepts. In fact, the most devoted universalist would be more effective if (s)he was committed, as well, to a specific nation and its culture. Sampter explained that those who argued for the dissolution of nations in an effort to create a harmonious and internationalist world were wrong in their reasoning. According to Sampter, the dissappearance of separate nationalities and development of a monotonous sameness would result in lack of harmony in the world, for harmony and sameness are opposites. Where there is sameness, there can be no harmony, for inherent in the definition of harmony is the existence of a balance between differing parts. Harmony requires a balance of various elements, and not a monotnous flatness. Consequently, the existence of various nations is essential to the aim of establishing peace and harmony in a universalist world. Sampter explained,

> Internationalism does not mean the destruction of nations and one vast undifferentiated humanity, but the cooperation of nations in a society of nations... Nations are the units in internationalism as individuals are the units in society.[161]

Sampter saw social evolution as the progression from family to tribe to city to nation and finally to internationalism. Each of these was a step towards peace. Yet, the

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[161] Sampter, Modern Palestine 20.

The similarities between this passage and a Yiddish- language essay written by the philosopher Chaim Zhitlowsky and published in New York in 1908 are unmistakable. Yet, I have not found any evidence that Sampter was interested in the works of Zhitlowsky, who was the chief theoretician of Diaspora nationalism and one of the foremost exponents of Jewish secularism and Yiddishism.

family unit continued to exist, as did the city. Why then should the nation not thrive even after the development of an international federation? Sampter posed this question to all those who would do away with nations in the attempt to establish internationalism.

Sampter traced her views back to the ancient Jewish prophets. She argued that the most universalist prophets were indeed nationalists and internationalists, although not cosmopolitans. As she wrote, "Their ideal of brotherhood included the brotherhood of nations."[162] Elsewhere she added,

> I believe with the prophets that humanity is one as God is one... But also with the prophets I believe that internationalism implies the existence of free, orderly, self-respecting nations, of which the normal Jewish nation is to be one.[163]

Later, Sampter wondered with some bitterness why every people but the Jews, was permitted the luxury of existing as a nation and of contributing to its own particular culture. To Sampter, it seemed ironic that the Jews would support the accomplishments and rights of every nation but their own. She asked, "... I do not see why the Jew, who originated this idea [of the brotherhood of nations] should believe in and belong to every nation except his own."[164]

In Nationalism and Universal Brotherhood, a booklet published by Hadassah, Sampter further explored the compatibility between the two philosophies. She mocked the notion that one cannot favour one nation and still remain an internationalist. "To say that if we love one country most, we are therefore opposed to internationalism, is like saying that New Yorkers are opposed to the United States if they take a special interest in New York."[165] According to Sampter, this argument holds true in a similar debate concerning the dual loyalty of the American Zionist. Although the Zionist feels a special

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[162] Ibid., 22.

[163] Jessie E. Sampter, "I Told You So," The Maccabaean March 1918: 80.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Jessie E. Sampter, Nationalism and Universal Brotherhood (New York: Hadassah, 1914) 4.

connection to the Jewish homeland, this feeling in no way hinders his/her attachment to America. This belief will be further explored in the following section.

Sampter believed that international morality does not call for the reduction of all cultures into one, or the compression of all languages into a universal tongue. On the contrary, diversity of cultures and languages is necessary in a free, interesting and spirited world. People must continue contributing to the richness of the world by enabling their unique national characters to flourish. Yet, it is encumbent upon the various nations not only to accept their commonalities but to appreciate their differences. Nations, like people, must learn from one another, thus gaining an insight into their own culture, as well as the other. Sampter added, "By all means let us exchange cultures. But then we must have cultures to exchange."[166]

Sampter's views on nationalism and internationalism are reminiscent of those of the eminent American philosopher and educator, Horace Kallen. Sampter was familiar with Horace Kallen on a personal level, as both of them attended weekly study sessions held by Mordecai Kaplan before the outbreak of the First World War. It is unclear whether Sampter was influenced by Kallen or arrived at a similar ideology on her own, but the parallels between their views on nationalism are unmistakable. Like Sampter, Kallen saw the need for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine in order to enhance the Jewish cultural heritage. Regarding America, both believed in the concept of cultural pluralism which supports the contribution of each ethnic and cultural group to the richness of American culture. Both also championed the ideal of a world in which all varieties of nations and cultures would be able to live together in harmony.

Kallen described his belief in cultural diversity in even stronger terms. According to Kallen's concept of pluralism, the individual who believes in true democracy must also recognize the right to be different, and must accept multiplicity in faith, culture, and ability. For Kallen, democracy and Americanism implies a pluralism and variety which are natural, creative and necessary.

Sampter shared Kallen's belief in the desirability of diversity among people

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[166] Ibid., 5.

stemming from cultural, national, and ethnic differences. In order to achieve this aim of a free, moral and culturally-rich world, Sampter called for the establishment of a confederacy of nations and the development of internationalism as a fulfillment of Jewish prophesy. In concluding, she summed up her views with the basis of her argument that "universal brotherhood includes the brotherhood of nations."[167]

VALUE OF ZIONISM

The primary focus within Sampter's ideology can be summed up in one word: Zionism. Sampter believed in the message of Zionism and its potential not only for the Jewish people, but for the entire world. Her definition of Zionism included within it the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth which would serve as an experiment in social justice for all; Sampter's Palestine was to be a beacon of light for all humanity. The Jewish national home would guarantee protection to all holy sites within it, and would contribute to peace between various religious groups.

Sampter had many ideas and aspirations with regard to the potential universal benefit of Palestine. This section, though, will be limited to the value of Zionism to the Jewish people, as a nation and as individuals throughout the world.

Sampter viewed Zionism, not merely as medicine for the wounds of the Jewish people and the world, but as "an enhancement of life, a promise of achievement."[168] She saw in Zionism the possibility of uniting world Jewry into a confident, self-respecting, strong nation capable of contributing to the world on every level. As a unifying force, Zionism would attract Jews from all walks of life. In every country, despite socio-economic status, land of origin, and religious observance, Jews would be united in a movement working towards the common goals of establishing a homeland and bettering their nation. As a popular movement, Zionism would fight the lure of assimilation; this, in turn, would serve the dual purpose of strengthening the Jewish

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[167] Ibid., 7.

[168] Jessie E. Sampter, "The Jewish Position," The Maccabaean Magazine September 1915: 5.

nation and weakening antisemitism.

Sampter was realistic in her belief that many Jews would not choose to settle in Palestine; she did not express frustration or bitterness in that reality. As opposed to numerous other Zionist thinkers who called for the negation of the Diaspora and "the ingathering of the exiles", Sampter recognized that Zionists came in many shapes and forms, and could express their nationalism in ways other than immigration to the Jewish homeland. In keeping with that view, Sampter encouraged all Jews to support the realization of a Jewish national home despite their intention to remain in the Diaspora.

> I ask all Jews, citizens of many lands, to help with influence and wealth in the re-establishment of the Jewish homeland in Palestine. I ask only those to go there... who wish and long to go there and express the Jewish soul.[169]

In contrast to many anti-Zionists who believed that Zionism would ultimately have negative effects on the lives of Jews outside of Palestine, Sampter felt that the creation of a Jewish homeland would bring only benefit to Jews everywhere. As has previously been stated, Zionism would raise the self-esteem of all Jews, while reducing the impact of antisemitism. The Jewish homeland would serve as a haven for oppressed Jews, providing them with a refuge and a respite from persecution. Sampter was increasingly conscious of this crucial role of the future Jewish homeland with the rise of Nazism in Germany. Lastly, similar to the Zionist thinker Leo Pinsker, Sampter saw in the creation of a Jewish national home the potential to lift the Jews from their present status of being "strangers in a strange land". As she wrote, "Then even if we are strangers elsewhere, we will be strangers with a country to which we can turn if we are wronged and from which we can repay what we receive. Then we will no longer be beggars but guests."[170]

In keeping with this reasoning, Sampter argued against the claim that Zionism would endanger the status of Jews in the Diaspora. She felt that the controversy over dual loyalty of the Zionist Jew in the Diaspora was unnecessary; rather than bringing into

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[169] Sampter, "I Told You So," The Maccabaean March 1918: 80.

[170] Sampter, What our History Means 16.

question the allegiance of Jews, the existence of a Jewish homeland would confirm one's loyalties. As a citizen of a country in the Diaspora, the Jewish individual's status would improve from the added dignity of undivided loyalty. Jews outside of Palestine would no longer be seen as living there because they have nowhere else to go, but because they prefer to call that country their home, despite having a national home of their own. Like Louis D. Brandeis, Sampter argued that loyalty to Zion enhances the individual as an American, for true Americanism demands of the Jew a commitment to Zionism.

> To belong to and work for the Zionist cause no more conflicts with the duties of American citizenship than to belong to organizations working against child labor and exploitation of women, or for industrial democracy, international education, scientific pursuits, or for any other purposes furthering human justice or well being.[171]

Zionism provides the Jewish nation with an opportunity to live and thrive, rather than merely to exist and survive. It permits a religious revival that is impossible elsewhere, for nowhere else is Judaism a normal and natural expression of the land. As Sampter explained, "A Jewish way requires Jewish ground under our feet and Jewish enterprise. It implies a past and a future, history and prophecy, memory and direction in the eternal present. We can have all these only in Palestine."[172] Thus the Jewish homeland is possible only in Palestine, for only the ancient land can unite the Jews, and inspire the courage and commitment necessary for the development of the land.

According to Sampter, the Jewish homeland would help solve the problem of mass Jewish migration from one country to another. It would diminish the flux and disorganization caused by the maladjustment of a people without a polity. With the establishment of a national home, Jews who are in flux as a result of social or economic restraints would settle in Palestine, rather than a strange land.

Lastly, Zionism, both in its practical work in Palestine and in the organizing of the Jewish people everywhere is of immeasurable value. The Zionist movement should

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[171] Sampter, "I Told You So," The Maccabaean March 1918: 80.

[172] Jessie E. Sampter, "A Confession," The Reconstructionist 16 April 1937: 15.

be appreciated simply for its organizing and educational power, even before the attainment of a Jewish homeland, its primary aim. According to Sampter,

> A Jew who... values the noble ideals of devotion and discipline that it [Zionism] demands everywhere of Jewish men and women, one who understands and rejoices that the revival of Jewish education in the last years is due to the development of Hebrew language and thought in Palestine, such a one must, to be consistent, support the Zionist Organization.[173]

Sampter thus saw great possibilities within the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. As a liberal socialist, woman, Jew, and believer in democracy and the Jewish people, Sampter believed that a Jewish national home would serve as an embodiment of her ideals. She maintained that Zionism would prove to be a benefit to all humanity, and of special value to the Jewish people.

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[173] Sampter, Guide to Zionism 10.

CONCLUSION

Contributions to Zionism: An Analysis

Jessie Sampter is not a well-known name today, even in Zionist circles, or among Jewish historians. Yet, her influence on Zionism, and contributions to the movement continue to be felt in a meaningful way. Although Sampter's vision of a Jewish homeland serving as a model of an ideal society based on social justice has not been fully realized, her goal of a Jewish national home has been attained. Due to the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel, the debate over dual loyalty is no longer as pertinent as it was in Sampter's day, for Jewish identity in the twentieth century has undergone a radical transformation. As well, Sampter's dream of world Jewry unified by the common aim of Zionism has largely been achieved; a majority of Jews throughout the world who choose to identify as Jews today embrace the Jewish State in one way or another.

Yet, Sampter is not well-remembered today. She did not assume a leadership position within the Zionist movement either in America or in Palestine. In fact, Sampter was not a Zionist leader in the sense that she headed an organization or movement; rather, she was an educator, and propagandist on behalf of the cause. Although she was devoted to the general aims of Zionism, Sampter staked out her own claim in causes still unpopular in her day, such as the role of women in the *Yishuv*, the plight of Yemenite Jewry, and relations between Arab and Jew. As a result, Sampter's contributions may seem less remarkable, but one must take into account the extraordinary journey of this historic personality from the fringe of Jewish life to its centre. Sampter was not born into a traditional Jewish or Zionist family; she was forced to wrestle with the pressures of her family and friends who disapproved of her unconventional activities. She spurned her father's belief in the Society for Ethical Culture to become a committed Jew and Zionist. Unlike many American Jews of this period who opposed Zionism, Sampter not only dedicated her life to educating and propagandizing on behalf of the Zionist cause, but chose to embody the ideal by settling in Palestine. In spite of her physical ailments and frail body, she joined the pioneers and became a poet of *halutziut* (pioneering).

These achievements are significant in their own right, but are rendered even more so when one considers that they were accomplished by a woman in a time when being born female was a handicap in and of itself.

In the introduction to this thesis, the restricted life of women in turn of the century America was explored. It was mentioned how few outlets remained open to middle class women through which they could satisfy their talents, utilize their time, and effectively expend their energy in a productive manner outside of the home. As a result, many women turned to philanthropy, an "acceptable" female pasttime, and many Jewish women turned to Zionism. Yet, Sampter's Zionist activity went far beyond the norm for bourgeois American Jewish women wishing to engage in charitable work. By virtue of her life decisions and achievements, Sampter challenged the established view of women as unworldly, home-centred, physically weak and intellectually inferior.

It is noteworthy that included in the list of women of this period who are remembered for their historical contributions are a significant number of "spinsters", or rather single women. It would appear that those women who chose to devote themselves to a serious cause were either too busy to commit, as well, to family life, or were regarded as less than desirable when compared to the more conventional women of the time. The list of such women devoted to Jewish or Zionist causes is rendered all the more significant when one considers the limited number of women who are indeed remembered in the history books at all. It includes such well-known personalities as Rebecca Gratz, George Eliot, Emma Lazarus, Henrietta Szold, and lesser known, but not less vital women such as Lillian Wald, Alice Seligsberg, Leah Berlin, and Rachel Bluvstein, known simply as Rachel the poet. Together with Jessie Sampter, these women deserve special mention not merely due to their exceptional characters and achievements, but due to the fact that they managed to attain all that they did in what was primarily a "man's world".

Sampter must be remembered not merely for her accomplishments: her poetry, writings, teachings and Zionist work, but rather for the inspirational manner in which she conducted her life, as she dedicated to the Jewish people everything which she had to offer. This frail and sensitive woman refused to allow convention to dictate her choices

or impede her way of life, either as a Jew or as a woman. Rather, Sampter's extraordinary path from assimilation to Jewish nationalism and Zionism, and ultimately to a life in Palestine serves as a living demonstration of one woman's capacity to cross barriers and overcome restrictions in a quest for personal satisfaction and meaning. As her lifelong friend Mary Antin wrote after Sampter's death,

> How beautifully she fulfilled all her major undertakings! She wasted nothing of her talents. Every gift she had, all her energy, was constantly in use, fully integrated with her main purpose... Her development as a force in Jewish life went far beyond Josephine Lazarus' prediction.[174]

Antin's praise and appreciation are indeed remarkable considering her own choice to assimilate and expound an assimilationist theory among American Jews.

Another area in which Sampter displayed significant ability was the field of writing. As a prolific poet, essayist, and journalist, Sampter received recognition for her talents from an early age on. She was considered an accomplished writer; although her poetry dealt with many issues, it was particularly acclaimed for its Jewish content which rendered it useful for the Zionist movement. Her selection of poems, Brand Plucked from the Fire[175] was translated into Hebrew after her death by the writer and journalist Pinchas Lender. The book contains an introduction written by Henrietta Szold which outlines the story of Sampter's dedicated life and contributions in Palestine. Around the Year in Rhymes for the Jewish Child is still used today primarily in Jewish schools. Finally, many Reform prayer books include several of Sampter's poems.

Sampter's primary role in life was not only poet and author, but educator. She used her talents to reach out to an audience of many, bringing to them the Zionist message. Sampter was a born teacher; her educational activities began with the creation of the Seekers Club, and continued from there to include the Folder Propaganda, small booklets propagandizing the basic tenets of Zionism for Hadassah, the School of Zionism,

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[174] Mary Antin, Letter to Elvie Wachenheim. 29 Nov. 1938. Central Zionist Archives. Jerusalem. A 219 1/7.

[175] The title is a Biblical expression from the Book of Zechariah 3:2.

and the publication of her three Zionist textbooks. The School of Zionism was an innovative and inspiring accomplishment, while the textbooks influenced many young Americans and were considered the most comprehensive material concerning Palestine in the early years of the twentieth century.

Sampter continued to fulfill the responsibility of educating others about the essence of the Zionist dream in her articles, essays and poems written while in Palestine. These writings appeared regularly in numerous publications including among others the Hadassah Bulletin, Maccabaean, New Palestine, Jewish Frontier, Young Judaean, Opinion, and The Reconstructionist. As a correspondent in Palestine, she helped bring to life the reality of life in the *Yishuv*, while shedding some light on the complex political situation and religious, social, and economic conditions in the Jewish settlements. Lastly, a series of lectures on Zionism given by Sampter at Columbia University helped clarify many of the concerns and issues of the American public regarding the Jewish community in Palestine.

Sampter's contributions to the Yemenite Jews in Palestine must not be overlooked. Although many in Palestine considered the Yemenites to be the "stepchildren of the Jewish people", Sampter adopted their causes as her own, and offered them the advantages of general education and training. Sampter struggled to overcome the widespread prejudice among the Ashkenazi Jews regarding the Yemenites, and the unfair treatment of many Yemenite men towards their wives and children. In both cases, Sampter was almost alone in her battles to achieve equality and social justice. Yet, as in all her undertakings in life, she gave everything of herself in her aspirations to better the world. As Margaret Doniger wrote in an article honouring Sampter after her death,

> In a prosaic world, she dared to think and strive for that which to most others seemed vague, remote and abstract-basic spiritual truths. To her, truth alone was reality. Today her life seems a rare example of courage, of keen spiritual awareness and fulfillment.[176]

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[176] Margaret Doniger, "Remembering Jessie Sampter," Hadassah Newsletter 19(January 1939): 86

The courage of which Doniger wrote was evident throughout Sampter's life, as she made decision after decision in favour of leading a life of meaning rather than a more conventional one of comfort and safety. Sampter's personal fulfillment became increasingly apparent as she lived her ideals. Her final contribution to Zionism which provided her with the opportunity to express her ideals in the best possible way was her decision to join Kibbutz Givat Brenner as a member.

Sampter's work and writings in the Kibbutz are significant, but not more so than the contribution of her income and rest home. Sampter's convalescent home, renamed "*Bet Yesha*" after her death continues to exist today and remains as a tribute to her memory.

According to David Geffen, author of an article about Sampter, "She is a symbol, not only of the Zionist idea, but also of its personal realization- of aliya, of individual hardship and effort and satisfaction."[177] Thus Sampter should be remembered, despite her inability or lack of desire to attract the spotlight. Sampter's contributions as a woman, poet, and a Zionist are significant and noteworthy, while her ideology and personal philosophy remain as relevant and inspiring today as they were during her lifetime.

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[177] David Geffen, "A Pioneer Poet," The Jerusalem Post 24 March 1983: 5.

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