



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel

Ruth Kark, Margalit Shilo, Galit Hasan-Rokem, Shulamit Reinharz

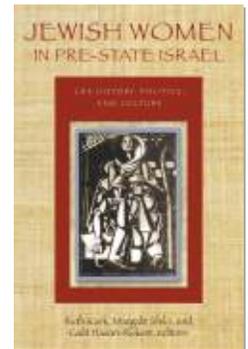
Published by Brandeis University Press

Kark, Ruth & Shilo, Margalit & Hasan-Rokem, Galit & Reinharz, Shulamit.

Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel: Life History, Politics, and Culture.

Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2009.

Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/15689>

## A Cross-Cultural Message

### *The Case of Evelina de Rothschild*

“In this whole great community [Jerusalem] there is not one single good school for girls, and all the daughters of Zion grow up without any education, without good training, without knowledge of the language of their nation and its history, be it only the smallest part, and therefore their spirits are not raised and they remain in their lowly state.”<sup>1</sup> This criticism, published in the newspaper *Hazevi* in the late 1880s, disregarded educational institutions already operating in Jerusalem and complained of the lack of a comprehensive educational network for women and of the inferior spiritual level of the female sector. In contrast to this critique, the system of male education in the Holy City has received copious praise from historian Yosef Salmon: “It is doubtful whether there was any Jewish society in the world which placed such emphasis on the education of its [male] children as Ashkenazi society in the Land of Israel at this time.”<sup>2</sup> The Jerusalem community, which had invested heavily in the education of its sons, showed little interest in educating its daughters. Yet, a girls’ school was operating in Jerusalem and at the turn of the nineteenth century; it became a well-recognized institution.

#### The Education of Jewish Girls: The First Seeds (1854, 1855)

The attitude of *halakhah* (Jewish law) to Torah study for women is debated in the Mishnah, in Tractate *Sotah* (3:4): “Ben Azzai [declared]: A man is under the obligation to teach his daughter Torah . . . R. Eliezer says: Whoever teaches his daughter Torah, it is as though he teaches her obscenity.”

The *halakhah* as practiced over the centuries was based on Rabbi Eliezer's approach. Even authorities who permitted women's study limited it to matters within the scope of her activities, or to self-study.<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Eliezer's opinion found its practical expression in the almost universal lack of regular educational institutions for Jewish girls throughout the generations, in all parts of the Diaspora. It was largely responsible for the stigma of ignorance usually attached to women. This was common to all girls almost all over the world.

A real change in all matters connected with women's education took place in Western Europe in the eighteenth century. Schools for girls were established slowly but surely and became very popular. Proponents of women's education did not necessarily advocate identical education for men and women, but did assure basic education for girls.

Until the eighteenth century, the education of Jewish women was not inferior to that of their non-Jewish sisters, whether in the West or in the East; at times, it was even superior. The advent of schools for non-Jewish girls, however, placed Jewish girls in an inferior position. The Jewish Haskalah movement, which arose in the wake of the European Enlightenment, adopted the latter's positive attitude to basic formal education for girls and encouraged girls to close the gap between themselves and their non-Jewish neighbors. Toward the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, the first Jewish schools for girls were established in Germany, France, and England.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, innovative educational institutions for girls also appeared in Eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup> Far-reaching innovations with regard to the education of girls occurred in the Mediterranean Basin as well. The revolution also reached the Holy City, where it had a unique facet.

Jerusalem of the nineteenth century had gone through many changes. Newly developing political conditions and modern technologies, coupled with long-standing religious longings and new winds of migration blowing from Europe were all factors that promoted the renewed growth of the Jewish community with a new vigor.<sup>6</sup> Jerusalem had grown at a special pace. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Jewish community in Jerusalem, only about two thousand men and women at the beginning of the century, had increased fifteenfold, and by the outbreak of the World War I, it counted forty-seven thousand.<sup>7</sup> The Jewish immigrants came from a variety of regions, in both Eastern and Western Europe, the Ottoman Empire including Yemen, and even from far-off Persia and Bukhara.

The very bad financial situation of the Jewish community of Jerusalem

was a concern for Jews all over the world. The *halukkah*, a unique long-established system, was responsible for money sent to the Holy Land from all the scattered Jewish communities of the Diaspora. Thus, the Jewish community aroused the interest of co-religionists who introduced new initiatives to the Holy City. One of them was — a girls' school.

The first initiatives for the establishment of schools for Jewish girls in the Holy City came from Western Europe, which was a testing-ground for educational innovations in society in general as well as among Jews.<sup>8</sup> The Rothschilds of France and the Montefiores of England saw women's education in the Land of Israel as one of their primary goals. As a matter of fact, the activities of Christian missionaries in Jerusalem, who pioneered the establishment of schools for Jewish girls in Jerusalem, provided the momentum for their activity in this field.

The philanthropist Albert Cohn, who represented the Rothschilds of Paris, founded the first girls' school in Jerusalem in the summer of 1854; Sir Moses Montefiore established a similar institution a year later.<sup>9</sup> In his report on his activities in Jerusalem, Albert Cohn described the girls' school as follows: "A girls' school, where all girls of the Jewish community will be taught women's handicrafts as well as religious and basic general subjects has been established under the auspices of Baroness Nathaniel Rothschild."<sup>10</sup>

Several issues, some procedural and some substantial, stand out in this concise report. Unlike traditional institutions founded by parents or teachers, the initiative for the establishment of new schools came from the outside. Moreover, unlike the then-common community-oriented educational institutions for boys, this school was open to girls of all Jerusalem communities. In its early days, the school's population comprised a few dozen girls, both Ashkenazi (European origin) and Sephardi (Near Eastern origin).<sup>11</sup> Underlying these differences were innovative educational concepts. Vocational training towards the womanly ideal of the housewife was presented as the school's primary goal, and so the most important subject was handicrafts — "sewing and spinning."<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, in the male sector of the Jewish community of Jerusalem, vocational education was customarily intended only for poorer students. Traditional education for boys was exclusively directed towards religious education, whereas modern education directed the pupil to prepare him- or herself for life, to fulfill a role in society.<sup>13</sup> This innovation was applied only in the girls' school. As a consequence of these educational approaches, basic studies for girls, such as, reading and writing skills, were presented as the last educational goal.

Mary Eliza Rogers, an English tourist, visited the Holy Land in the 1850s

and her book about daily life in the Holy Land has become a classic. She describes the atmosphere in the Rothschild school at great length. There were about fifty girls, aged seven through fifteen, some of whom were already engaged to be married. The (female) teachers were enthusiastic: “[O]ur guide exhibited to us, with evident pride and pleasure, a considerable stock of wearing apparel, the result of one week’s work in that room.”<sup>14</sup> The girls, too, “looked busy and bright,” and some of them were proficient in reading Hebrew.<sup>15</sup> Competition between the two new schools probably was detrimental to both. The Montefiore school existed only a short time.

The Rothschild school was of considerable importance and pioneering achievements. For the first time, Jewish girls in Jerusalem had become the target of conscientious and systematic educational efforts. The school was the first channel for the transmission of European educational and cultural conceptions and viewpoints, such as the need for formal education for women, for systematic training for domestic tasks, and for a basic religious education. Intended for all Jerusalem girls, it was particularly successful among Sephardi girls who, up to this time, had been excluded systematically from any education whatsoever.<sup>16</sup> Despite its meager achievements, the school blazed a new trail, but its importance was not recognized by all its contemporaries.

#### Evelina de Rothschild School, 1868–1894: “Bits of Education” or a “Real School”?

The Evelina de Rothschild School was a major point of interest, a veritable “tourist site,” for Jewish visitors concerned with change in the Jerusalem community.<sup>17</sup> Evaluations of the institution varied from one extreme to the other, depending on the visitors’ expectations. Thus, the closing words of a report published in *Halevanon* in 1869 were as follows: “This institutions will deserve the name of ‘school’ only if the teachers will be learned women.”<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to this critical comment, the school received a more favorable evaluation from the *hakham bashi* (the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem), who at one time publicly examined the girls. He openly declared his positive attitude to the school and to girls’ education in general: “I am happy to say that I derived great pleasure from seeing the young girls successfully displaying their achievements, both in the study of our holy tongue and in their knowledge of its sacred commandments.”<sup>19</sup> On another occasion, he admitted that “The Jews of Jerusalem have never had such a school for girls in Jerusalem.”<sup>20</sup>

For the first thirty-four years of its existence, the school operated as a kind of branch of the Rothschild Hospital, being managed by the wives of the hospital doctors.<sup>21</sup> For reasons of modesty and tradition, most of the teaching staff were women. The number of students increased apace; about fifty in 1868, by 1872 the number of students, aged from four to sixteen, had exceeded two hundred, and it continued to grow.<sup>22</sup>

The school, originally in the Old City, moved to the New City and a new principal, Fortuna Behar, the sister of Nissim Behar (the principal of the Alliance boys' school), was appointed in 1888.<sup>23</sup> This signaled a dramatic change in the institution, arousing considerable hopes both for an improvement in the general level of studies and for the intensification of Hebrew studies.<sup>24</sup> The new building soon proved too small to accommodate would-be students, and hundreds were turned away.

Over the years, the basic curriculum proposed when the school had been founded was expanded. Besides Hebrew reading and writing, the curriculum included sewing, arithmetic, history, geography, and natural science. There was as well a proposal to study "the local language [Arabic] and a European language [French]."<sup>25</sup> There was some criticism of Fortuna Behar for giving priority to French over Hebrew culture.<sup>26</sup>

What was the school's impact on its students? It seems that, whether consciously or unconsciously, the Evelina de Rothschild School for Girls instilled a sense of self-awareness. This was clearly expressed in a speech by one of the students, Bolisa Angel, at a school celebration in 1878. Beginning with an account of the story of Creation, she stressed how woman had been made from a man's rib. She was describing the conventional gender images—the man leaving his home to support his family was "clothed in magnificent garments," while the woman, staying at home to tend his needs, "is subservient." She clearly expressed jealousy of men, pointing to the shortage of girls' schools as an impediment to women bettering their social position.<sup>27</sup> Paradoxically, it was the acquisition of knowledge that opened her eyes and made her recognize her lowly position. As long as she had been denied any education, she did not realize her weakness. Were these thoughts of Bolisa Angel hers alone, or did they occur to her companions as well?

The importance of girls' education for social progress as a whole was pointed out in an article in *Havazelet* in 1886: "We have a hard and fast rule that you cannot be sure of an idea's realization unless it is taken up by women, for it is they who educate their children and also manage their husbands."<sup>28</sup> The Evelina de Rothschild School was a trailblazer in women's education in the East. For all its pioneering role, it seems to have sent out a

double message: It had a conservative outlook, on the one hand; but, on the other, it showed faith in women's intellectual talents and their importance in the education and support of their families. Owing to the relatively small number of graduates and the management's desire to insist that "Evelina" was a conservative institution, its public image was that of a small, rather unimportant, school. However, its slow educational efforts in the course of forty years prepared the ground for a real educational revolution.

### The Anglo-Jewish Association: Girls' Education as a Path to Western-Style Progress

Philanthropic involvement in girls' education received new impetus in 1894, when the Anglo-Jewish Association (AJA, known in Hebrew as *Aguddat Ahim*, literally: "Association of Brethren") took the Evelina de Rothschild School under its wing. The AJA was founded in 1871 by British Jews who wished to emulate the French Alliance Israélite Universelle and to cooperate with it.<sup>29</sup> Conscious of their improved political position, the Jews of Great Britain were anxious to help Jews of other countries, and particularly those of the Ottoman Empire. The AJA set itself both political and educational goals.<sup>30</sup> Its declared objectives being "to aid in promoting the social, moral, and intellectual progress of the Jews," it was particularly concerned with the education of Jewish boys and girls in Eastern countries.<sup>31</sup> This profound interest in education was shared by all sectors of the Jewish community: Zionists and anti-Zionists, nationalists and assimilationists. The special relationship of the AJA with the Evelina de Rothschild School was established with the full knowledge and assent of the Rothschilds, who continued to provide financial support.<sup>32</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the idea that girls' education was a highly significant tool for social change fueled the activities of many philanthropic organizations, some motivated by colonialist and/or missionary ideals. "If we get the girls, we get the race" was the motto of missionaries working intensively among young girls.<sup>33</sup> Or, alternatively, as expressed by AJA officials: "Give me the daughters, and the grandsons will look after themselves."<sup>34</sup> In fact, they considered educating girls to be more important than educating boys, particularly in Eastern countries, given the inferior status of women there.<sup>35</sup> It was generally accepted that "it is the mother who usually makes two-thirds of the man."<sup>36</sup> Women's public activities and girls' education were intimately connected, as witness the establishment of girls' schools all over

the world.<sup>37</sup> As put by gender historian Billie Melman, “In the colonial nation state, motherhood was perceived not merely as an expression of femininity, but as women’s national social service to the empire.”<sup>38</sup> Such perceptions were nourished by a variety of social movements that flourished in the nineteenth century and promoted women’s education, women’s training as teachers, the founding of kindergartens, and the ideal of domesticity. All these motives found their echo in Jewish girls’ schools in England as well, and in the extensive development of a network, founded at the time by Jewish philanthropic organizations, of girls’ education throughout the Ottoman Empire.

In contrast to the positive image of the Jewish woman in Western Europe, the Jewish woman in the East was viewed in an unfavorable light even in comparison with her non-Jewish counterpart in that part of the world. An AJA visitor to the Ottoman Empire observed that in cities like Damascus, and perhaps also other Muslim cities, Jewish women seemed to be inferior to both their Muslim and Christian counterparts.<sup>39</sup> The members of the AJA concurred with this evaluation, declaring that “the terrible influence of Islam upon the status and position of women must be checked and counteracted.”<sup>40</sup> The official organ of the AJA openly spoke of the need to emancipate Jewish women in the East.<sup>41</sup>

The declarations of the AJA representatives attest to a dual goal: “to give our Jewish boys and girls the virtues of the West without robbing them of the virtues of the East.”<sup>42</sup> Britain was the leading country in Europe with regard to involvement in the Holy Land, and British Jews’ concern with affairs in the country was in effect a continuation of the extensive interest taken by British Christians in the East as a whole.<sup>43</sup> The AJA saw its work as a national mission.<sup>44</sup>

### The Evelina de Rothschild School, 1894–1914: Flagship of the AJA

A first manifestation of the AJA’s generous supervision was the move to a spacious new building, which made it possible to admit many more students. In 1895, the Association bought a magnificent house, known as *Bet Mahanayim* (previously the home of a banker named Frutiger), comprising more than forty rooms.<sup>45</sup> The building earned considerable praise; for example, *Hazevi* wrote: “This building is one of the most beautiful in our city, and it has a large garden, beautiful, spacious and with sufficient space for a large school.”<sup>46</sup> The girls used to call it “the Queen of Sheba’s palace.”<sup>47</sup> It was the first step in the AJA’s intensive efforts to develop the school.

The number of girls studying in the school rapidly increased. However, even after the student population had doubled, mothers still came to the school's doors begging for their daughters to be admitted and given a chance to study. Adela Goodrich-Freer, an English tourist, described the hubbub at the school gates on the day of registration. The neighborhood was full of people, and fathers eager to have their daughters admitted literally threw them into the school courtyard over the fence.<sup>48</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were about 200 girls in the kindergarten (which was part of the school), and more than 300 in the school proper. The number peaked in the summer of 1913, with 676 girls in the kindergarten and the school.<sup>49</sup> The school management limited the students' age to fifteen at most, and the increase in school population leveled off, for lack of space.<sup>50</sup> Despite the growth of the institution, AJA officials were well aware that the profound problem of girls' education in Jerusalem had not been solved, and that only some 15 percent of Jewish girls in Jerusalem received formal education.<sup>51</sup> Other philanthropic organizations went into action, beginning in 1905, and established new girls' schools in Jerusalem; but many girls still had not found their place in a suitable educational framework.

Not only were the school's physical accommodations changed; the management was also replaced. In 1900, the veteran headmistress Fortuna Behar was dismissed; she was soon replaced by Miss Annie Landau, brought especially from London.<sup>52</sup> The replacement entailed numerous other administrative changes designed to streamline the running of the school, and a variety of educational measures that sought to change the atmosphere.<sup>53</sup> Miss Landau, as her pupils addressed her, made a decisive imprint on the school and was instrumental in making it an innovative, influential institution. Yehudit Harari, a teacher from Rehovot who joined the staff, described her warmly as an "educated English Jewess, with her energy and good taste; . . . bright, beautiful, gray eyes, childlike laughter and domineering voice."<sup>54</sup> The new headmistress, who was to rule the school with an iron hand for forty-five years, until her death in 1945, was absolutely convinced that she was discharging a mission and moreover that she would be able to influence the character of the Holy City.<sup>55</sup>

### An Integrative Educational Institution

The Evelina de Rothschild School sought to reshape Jewish society in the Holy City. The first successfully achieved objective was communal integra-

tion. The school provided for girls of all Jewish communities. Together with girls from Yemen, Morocco, Persia, and Georgia, there were Ashkenazi girls of Eastern European families and “real” Sephardi girls from the Balkans.<sup>56</sup> Around the beginning of the twentieth century, about one-half of the students were Ashkenazi, and the other half, Sephardi and Eastern.<sup>57</sup> In the school’s early years, girls of different communities were taught in separate classrooms, but by the end of the nineteenth century, the classes were mixed. This constituted a challenge to the traditional separation of communities in Jerusalem. Unlike the Alliance girls’ school in Galata, Istanbul, in which the curricula offered to rich and poor girls were different, the Evelina de Rothschild School aimed at complete integration.<sup>58</sup> The school regulations, like those of Alliance institutions, declared that it was open to non-Jews as well.<sup>59</sup> In fact, some Turkish officials sent their daughters to study at the school, a fact that testified to its high educational level and its ability to compete with Christian schools.

Another goal of the school was to raise the average marriage age of girls in Jerusalem. To achieve a good education, a girl had to spend more years in school. In a newspaper interview, Annie Landau told how her attention had been drawn to an earring worn by a Yemenite girl. Inquiries revealed that the girl was engaged. The young bride’s mother was astounded at the headmistress’s intervention, but Miss Landau saw in postponing the girl’s marriage a definite educational goal, which moreover also had a medical aspect.<sup>60</sup> Postponement of marriage would also make it possible to enhance the girl’s intellectual and physical maturity.

The school also devoted itself to ramified activities in the field of preventive medicine, thus making an important contribution to the health of Jerusalem’s inhabitants. Another expression of the desire to influence Jewish life in Jerusalem was the public celebrations held in honor of the festivals of Hanukkah and Purim.<sup>61</sup> These celebrations were occasions for theater performances directed by the teachers and moreover provided an opportunity to display the girls’ achievements in English and Hebrew before residents and visitors to Jerusalem.<sup>62</sup>

As part of its efforts to impart lofty spiritual and social values, the school also aimed to shape its students’ character and ethical qualities. Annie Landau believed in encouraging voluntary activities; the girls established a group they called Benot Zion, “Daughters of Zion,” whose members undertook to speak only Hebrew.<sup>63</sup> They also established a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals.<sup>64</sup> The desire to influence the girls’ way of life in the future as well was the motive for establishing a graduates’ association,

whose members were encouraged to revisit the school and hold weekly meetings, at which they would discuss Hebrew and English literature, also talking about their lives after leaving school.<sup>65</sup>

The social agents of these innovative ideas were the school's teachers, who had been educated in the pedagogical traditions of Western Europe. Annie Landau was the first harbinger of the trend of young Jewish women to come, mainly from Germany, to teach in the Holy City. They regarded their stay in the country as something of an adventure and a cultural mission at the same time, what one might term today "National Service."<sup>66</sup>

The school management tried to cope with the shortage of appropriate teachers in the country by training some of its graduates as teachers.<sup>67</sup> This also provided a temporary solution for some of the graduates, who wanted to continue their studies or work for a living, whether in the kindergarten or in the school proper.<sup>68</sup> Thus, in 1911–1912, the school introduced a special class for continued studies, essentially a kind of embryonic teachers' college.<sup>69</sup> The school took pride in being the first institution in the Land of Israel to train teachers for kindergartens and schools in the *moshavot*.<sup>70</sup>

### Evelina de Rothschild School — Society and Gender

Less than a decade after her arrival, Annie Landau could tell the *Jewish Chronicle* in an interview that the school had brought about a revolution in the girls' values: "I have been accused of making our girls unfit for their surroundings. I admit the impeachment. I was sent to Jerusalem to do that and I hope I may succeed."<sup>71</sup> The girls of "Evelina" underwent a veritable "spiritual metamorphosis," she said on another occasion.<sup>72</sup> "The Evelina School is even more than a school. . . . It is something also of a home."<sup>73</sup> As early as 1911, Miss Landau was able to assert, "By educating the girls of Jerusalem . . . , we are slowly but surely improving conditions in the Holy Land."<sup>74</sup> "Evelina de Rothschild" had become a tool of major significance for the reshaping of Jerusalem society, which was then in the throes of accelerated social transformation.

If one follows the curriculum and the headmistress's declarations, as quoted not infrequently in the Jewish press, one gets the impression that the Evelina de Rothschild School was conveying a rather complex, even paradoxical message, in terms of both national-religious and gender concepts.

The headmistress, who was strictly observant, wrote explicitly of her conviction that "the education of the Jewish girls of Jerusalem must be animated

by a deep and ardent religious spirit in order to produce strong Jewish personalities.”<sup>75</sup> Her school, she declared, was ultra-Orthodox, and it was her intention to respect Eastern culture, not to denigrate it, for “East and West have still something to learn from and to give to each other.”<sup>76</sup> Despite her religious principles, Miss Landau was in full agreement with Western Jews’ criticism of the *halukkah* and the ideology that it represented. The directors of the AJA called the *halukkah* a “cancer eating away the vitals of Jerusalem.”<sup>77</sup> The school aimed to help solve the problem by educating the girls to work for a living—not only as a response to a basic economic need but as an educational value. The girls were taught to love labor and to value economic independence.<sup>78</sup>

In one of her *Jewish Chronicle* interviews, Miss Landau stressed her belief that “it is every human creature’s right to strive to reach the highest rung in the ladder of life.”<sup>79</sup> This simple observation, offered with the utmost caution, ultimately produced the insight that every woman had the right to study, not only to achieve her goal as a mother, but also by the mere token of being human. Girls’ education, originally intended to contribute to the improvement of society by preparing women to educate their sons properly, became an end in itself. It is worth devoting some attention to the way the consequences of an innovative educational enterprise sometimes cause the innovators themselves to revise their concepts.

The teaching of Hebrew, as a language that could facilitate communication and unity among the different communities of the Holy City, redirected the Anglo-Jewish Association toward an area that it had not aimed for at all: the development of the new “Hebrew” nationalism. While “Evelina” became known throughout the *Yishuv* as a bastion of the English language, the paradoxical fact is that it became a valuable source of efforts to promote the study of Hebrew as a spoken language.

In view of the political dimension of Hebrew speech in pre–World War I days, the school management distanced itself somewhat from Hebrew and declared its view that English was more important, whether for the promotion of general culture or as a key for economic success in the future.<sup>80</sup> Some years after her arrival in the country, Annie Landau explained her complex attitude toward the revival of the Hebrew language. Denying any connection with the Zionist movement, she identified with the ultra-Orthodox establishment, declaring: “I am only a Zionist in that I give my life’s strength to my work in Zion.”<sup>81</sup>

Yehudit Harari, who taught at the school, writes in her memoirs of her amazement at the school’s official attitude: “How can one be religious, love

the land dearly, and yet oppose Jewish nationalism? [Miss Landau] prays every day for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return to Zion, and yet she opposes those returning to Zion!”<sup>82</sup> Many students at the school, rejecting this complex message, identified with the national longing for the revival of Hebrew and saw Hebrew as their mother tongue. Other graduates, however, left the country to work as nursemaids and nurses; the pride expressed by the school in their success in Western Europe and the United States is indicative of its attitude to Jewish settlement in the Holy Land.<sup>83</sup>

The Evelina de Rothschild School prepared its graduates to participate in the Zionist enterprise not only by teaching them Hebrew, but also by shaping the image of a new, rural woman. In 1900, the first Hebrew reader aimed specifically at girls — *Bat Hayil*, subtitled *Torat Em*, — was published by one of the school teachers, Yosef Meyuhas. It throws some light on the other female model that the school was trying to foster. The figure of the young woman most prominent in the various readings that make up the book is one living in the country or a town girl who spends vacations in the country; she is diligent, cheerful, always ready to help in domestic chores. Girls are described milking cows, making cheese, preparing jam from fruit, and so on. At first sight, *Bat Hayil* — the Hebrew phrase, by analogy with the biblical phrase *eshet hayil*, generally translated as “woman of valor” or “capable wife” (Proverbs 31:10), means “capable daughter” — seems to be a conservative figure: “a gracious crown to her husband and a good mother to her children,” but at second glance her depiction apparently fits the new *Yishuv* girls in the *moshavah*.<sup>84</sup>

On the tenth anniversary of her assumption of the office of principal, Miss Landau, the “Iron Lady” of Evelina de Rothschild School, summed up the achievements of the school’s graduates in the previous three years: About one-half were working in workshops run by “Bezalel,” the Jerusalem School of Arts and Crafts, or by the school itself. One-quarter had married and were now housewives. About 10 percent had left the country, some with their parents, others, on their own, seeking a living; a similar number were working in Hebrew kindergartens in various parts of the country; and still others were continuing their studies in new Hebrew schools.<sup>85</sup> Economic independence, home industry, domestic life, Hebrew education, emigration, further study — this picture reflects the influence of the school’s complex educational message.

The reform of the East as envisaged by the Evelina de Rothschild School was riddled with contradictions. The new woman shaped within its walls was at one and the same time an observant Jewess, a “real” European woman,

and a new Hebrew woman. Her declared mission was to care for her family and work for the good of society and the nation, while at the same time being an independent human being, entitled to self-realization. The ideal girl was perceived first and foremost to be performing her tasks in the family and in the community, and education was considered a primary tool in guaranteeing her success as a wife and a mother.<sup>86</sup> The decision to give priority to the education of girls was a revolutionary element of Jewish educational thought in general, and in particular in Jerusalem.