Acknowledgments

I was introduced to the field of medical history through the research of my father, William Edward Seidelman. In our home in Hamilton, where my father was a professor of family medicine at McMaster University, I grew up seeing, firsthand, how meaningful and exciting this discipline could be. Indeed, there is no scholar whose work has had a greater influence on my own work than my father. I have loved and benefited from decades of reading his articles, listening to his lectures, and having conversations with him. Although the subject matter and region of my scholarship are different from his, I hope that when he sees commitment and excitement coming through in my book he recognizes his own imprint.

There is no person who has had a greater impact on me and my intellectual and personal achievements than my beautiful mother, Racheline Dayan Seidelman. I am so fortunate to have had her conversation, wisdom, love, advocacy, and sass to rely on throughout my life. When I think of the immigrants at Shaar Ha’aliya, I think of my mother’s own immigration story, the difficult changes that were forced upon her and her extraordinary resilience. And although everyone in my family is an avid reader, my mother’s relationship with books is the one that I most admire. I have learned from her to read broadly, to read critically, and to savor books. I am glad to be giving her an additional book to savor.
Everything I am and everything I have accomplished is because of my parents. They showed me and my sisters the value of intellectual and creative pursuits and then they gave us their support when we followed these pursuits on various unusual paths. They gave us a home filled with love, warmth, respect, stimulation, debate, integrity, and fun. Even as I am distanced from this home by years and oceans, I always carry it with me.

This project developed out of my PhD at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; I wrote this under the guidance of my advisors, Shifra Shvarts and S. Ilan Troen. I have learned so much from them—more than I can fully express—and I am grateful for all that they have done to help me.

I went through the PhD at Ben-Gurion University together with my dear friends Nimrod Zinger and Ari Barell. I am better off for their years of friendship, excellent advice, and enriching dialogue. Similarly, Nadav Davidovitch has been a generous friend and teacher to me from the days of our shared office overlooking the Negev desert. Early on in my PhD, it was my good fortune to be introduced to Allan M. Brandt when he spent a few weeks at Ben-Gurion University as a visiting distinguished professor. Allan’s compassion never ceases to amaze me. I am incredibly grateful to him for his kind words and magnanimous expressions of support. I would not be where I am today without his years of mentorship.

Toward the end of my time at BGU, I was fortunate to work as a research assistant to David Ohana and Michael Feige z”l. I cherish those days spent at the Sde Boker campus. My time was divided working serenely under the portrait of Ben-Gurion in the library and snatching breaks outside to take in the Zin Valley’s extraordinary vista. When I needed a diversion from all the quiet, I would visit David’s office as he and Michael shared impassioned (and not at all quiet) exchanges on Israeli history. I learned so much from them about Israel, writing books, and the joys of work and friendship.
But these fond memories are laced with terrible sadness: Michael Feige—a gentle man of peace and humanism—was killed in a terrorist attack in Tel Aviv in 2016. I will always see Michael as a role model for what scholars of Israel should be and how teachers should conduct themselves. I can’t say that I am always successful at implementing the lessons I learned from Michael. But I have them in my mind as examples to try to live up to. One of the last interactions I had with Michael Feige was at a conference in California when he took me aside to kindly ask about the progress I was making on this book. I wish I could have finished it in time for him to read it, but I am profoundly grateful that I had the opportunity to work with and learn from this special man.

I began the process of turning my dissertation into a book while I was teaching at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I could not have hoped for a more supportive and stimulating environment than the Program for Jewish Culture and Society. I always looked forward to the monthly workshops, where I gained an immeasurable amount from the rigorous and lively intellectual exchanges. Over the years, Gene Avrutin, Harriet Murav, Bruce Rosenstock, and Brett Kaplan warmly and repeatedly shared guidance and friendship. Michael Rothberg, Virginia Dominguez, Dara E. Goldman, Jonathan Druker, Zia Miric, Ofira Fuchs, and Jordan Finkin were kind colleagues who I always enjoyed encountering and whose insight during the workshops pushed me to think in different directions. Similarly, my wonderful colleagues in history, Craig Koslofsky, Peter Fritzsche, and Leslie Reagan, shared generous advice and illuminating conversations.

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