Annie Landau's School for Girls • 1900–1960

The Best School in Jerusalem

LAURA S. SCHOR

THE BEST SCHOOL IN JERUSALEM

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LAURA S. SCHOR

The Best School in Jerusalem

ANNIE LANDAU'S SCHOOL FOR GIRLS · 1900–1960

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Joseph Martin Schor

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FOREWORD

Given the sophistication of contemporary Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Israel, it is difficult to imagine that a little more than a century ago, the holy city to which Jews face three times a day in their prayers was in truth a city of squalor. Beggars and disease were rampant. Food was unhygienic and in short supply. As historian Laura Schor explains, the city suffered from social problems as much as from physical ones. Jerusalemites were divided sharply between Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities; girls in both ethnicities married at twelve or thirteen with almost none of them having received any education at the time of their weddings; and 50,000 of the 60,000 Jews who lived in Jerusalem were supported by welfare. Into this maelstrom of misery stepped Annie Landau (1873–1945), an Orthodox Jewish British optimist who believed in "the critical role to be played by women in the development of the Jewish people" (8). Guiding the activity of the rest of her life was the belief that the only way to harness the untapped potential of women was to educate the girls!

Current attitudes toward education in the twenty-first century are generally so positive that, again, it challenges the imagination to think that the people of Jerusalem did not welcome Landau's commitment to build a school that truly educated girls. And yet she succeeded. Her ability to implement her mission-driven work rests on her intelligence, extraordinary energy, single-mindedness, and perhaps also the fact that she remained unfettered by a family of her own. Like the American Zionist Henrietta Szold, Annie Landau never lived to see the State of Israel declared. Nevertheless, the State of Israel is deeply indebted to both of them.

Annie was one of eighteen children born to her father whose first wife bore him the first five. Annie was the oldest of the children to whom the second wife,

Chaya, gave birth. Again, stretching the bounds of the plausible, the Landau family was committed to educating every single one of those children in secular subjects while simultaneously imbuing them with Jewish knowledge at home. Neither of her parents—Chaya and Marcus—saw any contradiction between high-quality secular and Jewish education. Annie adopted this approach in all of her subsequent educational enterprises. It is notable that Marcus and his friends were highly critical of the standard of Jewish education in London and developed a plan for a strong alternative. Annie's views as an adult mirrored those of her father. As he wrote in an editorial in the *Jewish Standard*, a newspaper he founded, "There is no reason to assign to woman an inferior position either in religious or intellectual matters" (20). Not surprisingly, the nine daughters of the Landau family achieved as much as did the nine sons.

Both in Great Britain and the United States, the end of the nineteenth and the start of the twentieth century were preoccupied by discussions of girls' education. This is no surprise since it was also the period when people were wrestling with competing concepts of women's roles in society, specifically their right to vote. Prominent physicians argued that educating young [white] women represented race suicide, as educated women would not marry or have children. Others argued that exposing women to liberal ideas would make them irreligious and promiscuous. Added to this was the general confusion among Jews concerning the appropriate response to modernity. Should they embrace or shun new opportunities? The Hirsch School that Annie attended as a teenager came down clearly on the side of integration, an approach she would later advocate in Jerusalem. Her subsequent training to become a teacher underscored this approach and also taught her the essential and complex skills of school administration.

Supported by funds from the Ladies' Committee of the Anglo-Jewish Association and regularly evaluated by prominent figures of the London Jewish community, the Evelina de Rothschild School existed long before Anne Landau arrived in Palestine. The school, like many institutions in the early twentieth-century *yishuv*, reflected effective partnerships between the Jews in the diaspora and those in the holy land. These outside influences compelled earlier administrators in the school to decrease crowding, enhance healthy behaviors, and upgrade instruction. The growing excellence of the school, it was also hoped, would protect Jewish students from the missionary institutions always eager to baptize Jewish girls.

As the nineteenth century came to a close, Annie was offered a teaching position in the Evelina School in Jerusalem. Soon after she took her place among the teaching staff, however, the headmistress left and Annie was put in charge. The conditions she inherited, as described colorfully by historian Laura Schor, were abominable. One can see easily that the school Landau was beginning to lead had many—possibly competing—objectives: to be an antidote to early marriage, to ward off missionaries, to teach girls to live healthy lives, to provide a bilingual education, to train the students in marketable skills, and to imbue them with a love of Orthodox Judaism, among others. Given this great array of purposes, it is not surprising that the demand for admissions rose precipitously. In the spring of her first year as headmistress, "300 children applied for 200 places" (46). To its credit, the new graduates were getting jobs rather than living off welfare. Nevertheless, opposition to the school also grew, sometimes for ludicrous reasons. To her Ashkenazi rabbinical critics, for example, "Arithmetic was deemed an inappropriate subject because the plus sign looked like a cross, while geography was forbidden since pupils would have to learn about cities with names like St. Augustine or San Francisco" (47). Landau had a unique view of education—not only did she intend to develop the minds of the students, she also strove to minister to their physical, spiritual, and communal needs. She took particular satisfaction in the girls' learning by example to help each other.

And there was one more administrative role she immediately adopted—director of fundraising. Landau used her frequent trips "home" to London to address individuals and groups about the needs of the school. Laura Schor makes good use of the transcripts of these speeches to trace the record of the school's setbacks and victories. Landau's 1902 report, for example, ended with a plea to expand the physical plant of the school to accommodate the four hundred girls who were denied admission. The following year's evaluation described the physical features of the school in very harsh terms, including a comment about the shocking ratio of six latrines for nearly six hundred students. Landau used this information in her persuasive fund-raising.

Grounded in meticulous archival research and interview data from her discussions with Rothschild School graduates, Dr. Schor's vivid description of the school and its children transported me mentally to those trying days in Jerusalem, two decades before the ground was broken for the Hebrew University and Hadassah Hospital and nearly five decades before the cre-

ation of the State of Israel. Landau stressed repeatedly and doggedly that the greatest need of Jerusalem was the education of women (66). Likewise her enthusiasm for and definition of her work can serve as a model for current school principals. Landau cared not only for the children themselves but also for their parents, whose homes she visited. And beyond that, she cared for the graduates, especially for their continued commitment to religious Judaism and to gainful employment. Moreover, "when the girls who finished the program were hired abroad, they became her ambassadors to the homes of potential donors to the school" (65).

Laura Schor rounds out her portrayal of Landau with vignettes about many other aspects of her life. She explains, for instance, why Landau did not identify as a Zionist—it stood in the way of her religious identity and of her commitment to teaching the girls English. Schor describes the communal living arrangement for single women teachers with no family in Jerusalem. In doing so, Annie Landau reminds me of Jane Addams and her creation of settlement houses in the United States. Schor sketches the monthly salons attended by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim residents of Jerusalem, along with professionals and artists, established in Miss Landau's shared home. Throughout her life, Annie loved to dress for parties and to open her home for social events.

Nevertheless, violence was never far away. The chaotic, debilitating conditions of World War I, in which the Ottomans sided with the Germans, led to the closing of the school and Miss Landau's relocation to Egypt. The war years saw the population of Jerusalem cut in half on account of starvation, disease epidemics, emigration and deportation, reducing the population to 26,000 Jews of whom 3,000 were orphans. Half of these young people—the girls—had become prostitutes. The new occupiers, the British, saw this as a *necessity* for the 26,000 British soldiers stationed in Palestine (86). Annie engaged the debate about the legalization of prostitution, thereby preventing the Orthodox leadership of Jerusalem from denying the very existence of prostitution and drunkenness in holy Jerusalem. She also turned to women as strong as she was to form organizations that would address the ills of the city.

The ills of World War I were revisited on Jerusalem a little more than a decade later during the Arab Riots of 1929—disease, murder, lack of food, lack of housing, and as Landau saw it, "periodic Zionist agitation" (123). People fled *to* Jerusalem, even though Jerusalem had a hard time taking care of its

own citizens. Schor characterizes the 1930s as a time of rapid growth and modernization of the city, alongside Arab violence against Jews. And shortly after the decade of the 1920s ended, and World War II erupted, Landau faced the new challenge of integrating refugee girls into the school. So successful was she that her successor, Ethel Levy, gushed: "Nobody was more helpful in bringing Jews out of Hitler's hell after 1933 than Miss Landau" (152).

But the story was not so simple. Annie was torn as to where the future of world Jewry lay. Was it in Europe, particularly her beloved England, which ironically was engaged in bitter conflict with the Jews of Palestine? Or was it in Palestine, the homeland of the Jewish people? Or was it—God forbid—neither? And what should her attitudes be to the Arab population of Jerusalem? Was there an opportunity for "inter-communal cooperation" (161) and social service? Or were the various sides stuck in mortal combat with each other? And could she, as a "proper British and Orthodox" Jew continue to lead "her girls" who increasingly hoped for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine?

Annie Landau was one of the few fortunate people who live to see their dream realized. By actually tackling the true challenges of the children while teaching them to believe in themselves, the Evelina de Rothschild School under Landau's leadership created several generations of talented women who contributed enormously to the welfare of the Jewish people and the development of Jerusalem. We, as readers, are fortunate to have Laura Schor embrace the project of describing the school in a way that makes its leader come alive and that allows the history of the school to illuminate the changing nature of the city.

Founded in 1997, the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute is devoted to telling the stories of countless chapters in Jewish and women's history so that we may learn from our past. Laura Schor has gifted us with the story of one such chapter, and we can all benefit from studying it.

Shulamit Reinharz

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It would have been impossible to write this book without the help of several individuals who agreed to be interviewed and in some cases provided substantial sources from their personal collections. I am deeply indebted to each of them.

Ruth Sless, the daughter of Ethel Levy, graciously allowed me to read papers that were saved by her mother. These papers, referred to in the book as the Ethel Levy Collection, were an invaluable source. In addition, Sless gave generously of her time during several interviews over a period of three years. Her sparkling recollections of Jerusalem, the Evelina de Rothschild School, and Annie Landau are central to my narrative.

I also interviewed twenty graduates of the Evelina de Rothschild School and spoke more casually with several others. The twenty are named in the list of sources. In particular, I must single out Rachel Harris Babad Pirani, who during the course of several interviews patiently recounted her experiences and ultimately gave me a copy of her diary to use in my research. Adaya Hochberg Barkay gave me copies of her poetry and also agreed to comment on the manuscript at an early stage. Her support for the project has been unflagging. Elisheva Shifman Baram spoke with me at length and sent follow-up materials about herself and her classmates that were very useful. Shulamit Kishik-Cohen spoke with me twice and gave me a copy of the book about her life. Marta Zayonce Shamir was generous with her time and also gave me a copy of her memoirs as well as photos, copies of report cards, and other school memorabilia.

Two distant members of the Landau family—Chaim Ashkenazi, the widower of Helen Landau, Annie's niece; and noted neurologist, Oliver Sacks,

Annie's nephew—shared family records and photos that helped me to understand Annie Landau's family life.

Shalva Weil, a colleague and a friend, interviewed her father, David Dimson, about the 1930s, when he attended Landau's parties in Jerusalem. She also shared family letters from the Mandate period. Shira Leibowitz Schmidt, another colleague and friend, interviewed Miriam Bujowsky in Bnei Brak about her years at the Evelina School.

Hannah Newman, who taught for many years at the Evelina School and is now retired, shared memories of her mother, Esme Aaronson, a teacher of the 1930s. Liza Slutsky, who taught for several years at the Evelina School and wrote a thesis about its early years, invited me to burrow through an old closet in the school library, where we found old reports, prayer books, and report cards.

In addition, I was helped by the professional and courteous support of archivists and librarians in London and Southampton, in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and in New York City.

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INTRODUCTION

Annie Landau, the headmistress of the Evelina de Rothschild School from 1900 until her death in 1945, aspired for her school to become the best girls' school in Jerusalem. Landau, educated in London and Frankfurt, arrived in Jerusalem in the last decades of Ottoman rule. The city she found was impoverished, and the education of girls was of little importance to its residents. Most girls were illiterate; they learned to cook and to care for children by assisting their mothers. The fortunate ones learned to read and write in small, short-lived schools created by European Jewish philanthropists and missionaries.

The Evelina de Rothschild School, opened in 1854, was unique among this group of schools, both in its inclusive outreach to the typically divided Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities and in its longevity. Despite the elevated status of the school, when Landau arrived, she found squalor and a lack of discipline. She soon set about creating standards for pupils and for teachers.

Landau's plans did not find favor with the Orthodox Jewish community, which rejected her modern curriculum. Nor did her plans find favor with Zionists, who approved of her modern approach but firmly rejected her bilingual program of study. Nevertheless, Landau persevered. Her vision for the school was fully realized during the years of British rule (December 1917–May 1948), when many considered her school the best school in Jerusalem. Beginning in the 1920s, Landau was assisted in her work by the highly competent Ethel Levy, who continued to implement her predecessor's vision when she assumed the leadership of the school in 1945.

The Evelina de Rothschild School taught the daughters of old Jerusalem families alongside the daughters of new immigrants; religious and secular girls learned Jewish and modern texts together; those from poor families

dependent on charity and those from affluent families shared double desks. Girls who were educated at the Evelina de Rothschild School in the 1930s and 1940s made significant contributions to the early history of Israel. The achievements of Landau make it clear that she was dedicated to bringing a new spirit to Jerusalem, specifically to the girls of the city.

Landau was not a great national leader; she steered clear of political parties, but she was an innovator in the realm of girls' education and in understanding its significance in creating a new civic model in Jerusalem. During her years at the helm of the school, she demonstrated extraordinary talent and developed a variety of strategies to overcome enormous difficulties: financial shortfalls, persistent malnutrition, public health crises, periodic violence, and two world wars. Through it all, she persevered steadfastly. In doing so, she acted as a new role model for the Jewish girls of Jerusalem, teaching them self-reliance, self-esteem, accomplishment, and a vision of a better future.

In July 1911, Annie Landau set sail from Jaffa for London. She had lived in Jerusalem since 1899, where she had already won a reputation as an educational leader and a charming hostess. In London, her childhood home, she gathered her friends and supporters to tell them stories about her school and her pupils in Jerusalem. The tales she shared were designed to convince those who had little knowledge about her school of its importance to the future of the Jewish people. She wanted their support for her plans to further develop the girls' school that had become her life's work.

Landau's stories were collected and published as a booklet titled *An Appeal to Jewish Women on Behalf of the Anglo-Jewish Association*. Writing with a dramatic flair, she ushered her readers into the fetid dwellings of her malnourished pupils:

> Shall I take you with me into these homes of our children, into narrow and steep courts where the children herd in holes, without light, without air, without covering, old and sick and young crouching together upon the dank and reeking earth? Everyone in Europe has a dim idea that the economic condition of Jerusalem is a sad one. Sixty years ago there were but a few thousand Jews in Jerusalem. But since then the influx of our brethren from those countries where Jews were persecuted has been very great. The Jewish population of Jerusalem has risen to 60,000, of whom at least 50,000 are supported by charity, of that kind of which a French writer said, "Charity creates the misery it tries to relieve and can never relieve half the misery it creates."[1]

With this evocative description, Landau sought to engage British Jewish women in her project not only to educate but also to modernize the Jewish girls of Jerusalem. She was determined to refashion them in her own image, creating religiously observant women who would be self-supporting and who would contribute to their families and their people. Landau knew that she had set a difficult task for herself. She explained that for centuries, Ashkenazi Jews had lived in the holy cities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias, surviving on *chaluka*, charity sent by those who remained in Europe. Immersed in Jewish learning and prayer, the small numbers of Jews in the Holy Land continued to believe that they should be supported by those who lived in the Diaspora. The Sephardi communities, living apart from their Ashkenazi coreligionists, were equally poor and devoted to study and prayer, with the exception of a few families who engaged in commerce and local businesses and supported the poor of their community.[2]

In Jerusalem both of these communities educated their sons in schools that were very similar to those in their countries of origin, where learning was limited to the study of religious texts. The schools for Ashkenazi boys were called *cheder* or *Talmud Torah*, and the language of instruction was Yiddish. The schools for Sephardi boys were called *kuttab*, and the languages of instruction were Ladino and Arabic. Hebrew was not spoken in either of these schools but was taught as a sacred language. Girls of both communities were typically married at age twelve or thirteen, had many pregnancies, lost many babies, and remained dependent on their husbands and their families of origin. They were given no formal education, although some Sephardi girls were sent to the home of a *maestra*, a woman who took care of little girls and taught sewing to older ones.[3]

Seventy-two years before Annie Landau arrived in Jerusalem, Sir Moses and Lady Judith Montefiore had first traveled to the city seeking ways to address the poverty, disease, and ignorance that appeared to be endemic in the city. The Montefiores, and the Rothschilds who followed in their footsteps, responded to the needs of the Jews of the Holy Land as part of their growing concern for the Jews of North Africa, the Levant, and eastern Europe.

They were joined by other modern Jews who were moving into positions of greater influence in London, Paris, Vienna, Frankfurt, and Amsterdam. These leaders, new members of the middle class, felt a responsibility toward their impoverished kin. Still struggling to determine their own identities as Jews living and working in Europe's most advanced societies, these well-educated

men and women wanted to help, but they rejected the system of *chaluka*. They hoped to change the traditional relationship between the Jews of Jerusalem and the Jews in Europe.[4]

The catalyst for the reexamination of this relationship was an incident that came to be known as the Damascus Affair. In 1840, dozens of Syrian Jews were imprisoned and tortured, charged with murdering a priest and his servant in order to harvest Christian blood to bake matzo for Passover. The specious allegation that Jews required Christian blood to make matzo had been the cause of much violence in earlier centuries, but this blood libel, as it was called, had been dormant in Europe for hundreds of years. When it emerged in Damascus, it was taken up by French officials who were protectors of the Catholic Church in Syria. Antisemitic Catholic newspapers in Europe began to circulate the unsubstantiated story of Jewish perfidy, spreading fear among the newly emancipated Jews of western Europe.[5]

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Jews had become citizens and participants in the economic and cultural life of the great European capitals. Sensitive to the charge of dual loyalties, emancipated Jews proclaimed that they had only one nationality: French, English, or German. Judaism, they affirmed, was a religious practice, not a national identity. The Damascus Affair challenged this paradigm. Using the vehicle of the newly founded Jewish newspapers, they lifted their voices to protect their far-flung brethren living in squalid conditions who endured periodic outbursts of violence. By 1860, Western Jews had grown into a group of well-educated and concerned men and women committed to ameliorating the conditions of impoverished Eastern Jews. The first organization they formed was the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris.[6]

Though eschewing the term *nationality*, these Jewish leaders expressed solidarity with their people and were determined to spread the benefits of modern education to them. Through education, Western Jews hoped to raise the status of Eastern Jews in their local communities. The Alliance quickly started building French Jewish schools in North Africa and in the Levant in the areas where France had influence. A decade later, the Anglo-Jewish Association replicated the endeavors of French Jews, building schools in areas of British influence. Several decades later, German Jews launched the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Judens with similar objectives. Beginning in 1848, there was a sharp growth in missionary activity in Jerusalem, drawing the attention

of European Jews to the needs of that city. All three philanthropic groups turned their focus to Jerusalem, where legal restrictions were imposed on all non-Muslims and where disease was endemic.[7]

Building on the work of the Montefiores and the Rothschilds, the new European Jewish organizations continued the effort to replace reliance on foreign charity with investment in education for self-sufficiency. They established schools that taught vocational skills and modern Western languages as well as Hebrew and some Arabic. The goal was to provide youngsters with technical expertise in order to promote a culture of participation in the local economy.

However, Sephardi and Ashkenazi community leaders, fearful that the recommended changes would lead their children away from strict religious practices, rejected these new ideas. Ottoman authorities, wary of increased Western influence, also viewed these new schools with suspicion. Hence, Jewish teachers and other emissaries from the English, French, and German Jewish organizations were viewed with hostility by local authorities.

Annie Landau was among those recieved little welcome upon their arrival in Jerusalem, and like many leaders, she created a foundation myth to justify the bold actions she took in her first years as headmistress. She continued the story of her project with a description of the establishment of the Evelina de Rothschild School:

> More than half a century ago, . . . Albert Cohn, visiting the city with Sir Moses Montefiore, and noting the utterly uncared for condition of the girl-children of the Holy City, provided the means with which a room was hired, and a Spanish Jewess—quite without education herself (it would have been hard to find an educated woman in Jerusalem at that time)—was engaged to look after the five little girls whose mothers were courageous enough to let them form the "School." . . . On the death of Baroness Evelina, the young daughter of Baron Lionel and the wife of Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, the institution took her name and received . . . a large annual donation, sufficient then to cover its upkeep. Gradually, the school widened its scope, and a regular curriculum was introduced.[8]

Landau's account was a mixture of truth and legend. Her picturesque description of the Spanish Jewess and the five little girls was repeated in many articles and stories about the school, although the actual history is somewhat more prosaic. Albert Cohn, the philanthropic consultant to the French Roths-

child family, arrived in Jerusalem in 1854 with fifty thousand francs and plans to establish a hospital, schools, a maternity clinic, and a loan fund. He rapidly achieved each of these goals, adding a soup kitchen to care for the hungry.

The combined social assistance—medical care, schooling, and assistance for women in childbirth—had a great effect on the impoverished Jerusalemites. Even parents who resisted the idea of educating their daughters were not indifferent to the benefits of free food, clothing, and boots. Those who were suspicious of doctors and medicine were reassured by the presence of a synagogue established in the hospital. The maternity program also provided a layette for new babies, which was a great benefit for poor families. Since all these programs were viewed as related, good experiences with one had an influence on attitudes toward the others.[9]

It is not surprising that most of the schools supported by European Jewish organizations that opened in Jerusalem in the decades before World War I were short-lived. Foreign-born teachers who faced difficulties from the authorities, from community leaders who didn't share their values, and from illness caused by unhygienic conditions and poor-quality food arrived in the city full of hope but then left when their health deteriorated or their spirits flagged. Even the Evelina de Rothschild School, by far the most stable of the schools, knew decades of uncertainty caused by short-term teachers, irregular attendance by the pupils, and the lack of a proper school building.[10]

The school founded by Albert Cohn was quite different from previous efforts to provide a bit of education for the girls of Jerusalem. The earlier attempts frequently involved a woman with no educational qualifications opening a room in her home to a small number of pupils of mixed ages. Attendance was restricted to either Sephardi or Ashkenazi girls. Learning was limited to recitation of prayers and some reading, writing, and basic arithmetic. Most of the time was spent sitting on the floor sewing or embroidering. In contrast, the Evelina de Rothschild School featured vocational training and secular education as well as prayers and Hebrew. Ashkenazi and Sephardi pupils were taught together, a new practice that would continue to be unique among Jerusalem schools for many years. Finally, the rooms in which this education took place were called a school, not a *cheder*, the room where traditional learning took place.

The original Evelina de Rothschild School in the Old City had five rooms in which five women taught about fifty girls. It was located adjacent to the new Rothschild Hospital and was supervised by the hospital director. The pupils

received free supplies for their academic subjects and materials for vocational education. They also received clothing and shoes, often for holidays. When new secular subjects—history and nature studies—were introduced in the 1870s, several Ashkenazi families removed their daughters. French was added to the curriculum in 1872.[11]

Unlike most of the girls' schools, which remained small and were short-lived, the Evelina de Rothschild School, funded at first by the French Rothschild family and later by their British relations, endured. The school, which started with fifty pupils, grew to serve more than triple that number by the end of the nineteenth century. In 1889 Fortunée Behar, formerly a teacher for the Alliance in Constantinople, was hired as the first professionally trained headmistress of the Evelina de Rothschild School. Under her leadership, the school moved out of the Old City to temporary headquarters on the Street of the Prophets.

A few years later, the administrative supervision of the school was passed to the Anglo-Jewish Association. With its approval, in 1896, Behar arranged for the purchase of Frutiger House, located nearby, about equidistant from the Damascus Gate and the growing community of Meah Shearim. This forty-room building housed the Evelina de Rothschild School for many years. As soon as the new building opened, a kindergarten for girls and boys was added to the program; it was the first modern Jewish kindergarten in Jerusalem.[12]

Landau continued the history, explaining her effect on the mission of the school:

> I was sent to Jerusalem by the Anglo-Jewish Association at the beginning of 1899 with orders to reorganize the school on English lines . . . the task at first seemed almost an impossibility, so great were the practical difficulties on every side. How great the task, how heavy the responsibility, is apparent from the fact that it was then (and remained till a few years ago) the one and only institution in Jerusalem which had for its aim the upbringing of a generation of women firm in their faith, modern in education, and sound in their knowledge of those life principles so essential to the motherhood of a strong and independent people. [Because I was] Entrusted with the inner organization of the school and the creation of a new curriculum, it soon became clear to me 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. Through the stress we lay upon religion and religious tradition, the moral standard and tone of the

> school are heightened and strengthened, while the secular education not only does not suffer, but is, on the contrary, all the more conscientiously carried out.[13]

Once again, Landau's story was a bit of a gloss on the actual record. She was, in fact, hired to teach English at a pivotal moment in the school's history, when efforts at modernization were beginning to influence cities under Ottoman control. In the early years of the school, when it was located in the Old City and supervised by the head of the Rothschild Hospital, pupil attendance was erratic and the curriculum was constantly revised to reflect the availability of teachers. In the last years of the nineteenth century, under the supervision of Fortunée Behar, the school moved into the more hygienic new city, and school attendance, though still erratic, improved. Landau's arrival in Jerusalem marked the beginning of a new period in the school's history.

Within a few months, Landau was appointed to take over for Behar. She quickly reorganized the administration and the curriculum in keeping with recommendations from the Anglo-Jewish Association.[14] These measures satisfied the Anglo-Jewish leadership, but Landau saw the need for even more: a complete overhaul of the program, beginning with a clear statement of purpose. She did not want to be the headmistress of a school that taught only those skills that would help girls to earn a bit of money to help their families. Although the need for additional income was real, Landau had a larger objective.

In her view, the girls of Jerusalem were an untapped resource that had to be developed if the goal of Jewish regeneration in the Jewish homeland was to succeed. She envisaged her program as a merger of faith and modern education. This dual education created women who provided leadership of all sorts: in educating the young, improving social conditions, and fostering cultural development. These leaders were young women and old, married and single, mothers and those without children. In the early decades, Landau included boys in her kindergarten classes—she wanted them to be well educated, too—but her special interest was girls' education. Once other opportunities for boys existed in Jerusalem, she removed them from the school.

Landau was unusually perceptive in recognizing the critical role to be played by women in the development of the Jewish people. She was at odds with traditional Jewish communities in Jerusalem that adhered to strict limitations on women's dress and movements so as not to "lead men astray." She

questioned Zionist leaders who spoke of equality for women but failed to provide opportunities for them to develop beyond traditional roles. Landau never wavered from her belief in women's abilities and in the necessity of harnessing their talents. She began her life's work of creating and constantly modifying curricular and extracurricular programs to prepare her pupils for the roles she imagined for them. In the process, she met with stiff opposition. She was able to continue in the face of adversity because of the loyal support of Claude Montefiore, the great nephew of Sir Moses and Lady Judith, and the Ladies' Committee of the Anglo-Jewish Association.

Although Landau's program was buttressed by the financial and moral support she received from London, in Jerusalem she was on her own to solve problems for which she had no previous experience. Not long after she became headmistress, a camel found its final resting place at the entrance to her school. Landau sent a request to the Ottoman governor of Jerusalem asking him to arrange for the removal of the decaying carcass. After a few days, having received no reply, she sent a second letter that revealed her growing confidence:

> Your Excellency, as the presence of a dead camel outside my School is a grave danger to the health of our several hundred children, I must beg to inform Your Excellency that if the carcass is not removed before 5 o'clock this evening, I shall be compelled to have it removed at my own expense and placed outside Your Excellency's door, as I do not know how to dispose of dead animals.[15]

This letter resulted in the quick removal of the carcass. Landau paid no bribes, nor did she turn to a male teacher to intercede with the authorities. She addressed the issue firmly and clearly. As a result of this and many similar actions, Landau became a force to be reckoned with in Jerusalem. She reported her successes to her benefactors in England to demonstrate her capability in dealing with local matters.

Landau found allies for her work in an unanticipated quarter: the mothers of Jerusalem. These deeply religious, overworked women, many suffering from malnutrition and illness, were minimally educated and often superstitious. Landau, who met socially with European community leaders—doctors, professors, and bankers—also made time to call on her pupils at home, engaging their mothers and trying to educate them in basic hygiene, nutrition, and preventative medicine. She understood the important role that mothers played

in the traditional family, in which men supervised the education of the sons and women that of the daughters.[16]

Yet even while Landau understood the importance of the mothers' help, she was not afraid to confront them about beliefs and practices she considered antithetical to her mission. The mothers, survivors of early marriages, multiple pregnancies, and the loss of many babies, resorted to amulets and magic phrases to ward off the "evil eye." Landau recognized that she would have to convince them to work with her if she hoped to rid her pupils of such ideas and usher them into the modern world. She relied on her knowledge of Jewish practice to separate superstition from Jewish observance, and she had no hesitation about removing all amulets from her pupils as soon as they entered the school. Landau enforced standards of personal hygiene that were at first opposed by the parents. In cases of suspected malnutrition, she sent letters home, to be read aloud by the girls to their illiterate mothers.

She also negotiated with mothers about keeping their daughters in school past the age of twelve or thirteen, when many were betrothed. She urged her pupils to delay marriage for several years for health reasons (many infants and mothers died during early pregnancies) and so that they could complete their education. At first, the mothers remonstrated with Landau, fearing that if their daughters waited to marry until they were seventeen or eighteen, they would be considered too old. In time, recognizing the improved health of their "late-marrying" daughters, they became Landau's staunch supporters.

Landau's British friends did not understand her passion for her adopted city. They frequently asked why she remained in Jerusalem when she could have returned to a more comfortable life in London. Landau's attempts to explain focused on her sense of mission:

> We are very happy in Jerusalem, happy because of something attempted, something done. We see every day more and more, notwithstanding that many a disappointment is not spared us, how beautifully our girls' lives begin to unfold, how day by day some dormant sense of feeling and honor is quickened. Our pupils do not sever their connection with the school once they are out of its walls. In order to keep in touch with our girls after they have left, we instituted our "Old Girls' Club" which, meeting once a week, has always a crowded attendance. Good books in Hebrew and English are discussed, we sing and drill a little, and, above all, the girls are encouraged to speak freely to us about their

joys and their sorrows, thus enabling us to help them with advice they know to be well meant and sincere.[17]

She reminded them of the big picture, the underlying reason for her work:

> By educating the girls of Jerusalem, however, we are slowly but surely improving conditions in the Holy Land. For when these girls are mothers they will teach their children a new creed of independence, of self-help, and these children will not wait for charity to help them. With the Almighty's help they will create industries for themselves—they will live, not merely exist. It is my firm conviction that the pitiful state of things in Jerusalem has come about because the education of women has been neglected.[18]

Annie Landau was a builder. She created a school that introduced a new, modern spirit to Jerusalem. Her pupils articulated the belief that they were part of a joint venture with their headmistress to improve conditions in the city. Using distinctly British terms of reference, one alumna said that she felt that she belonged to a "royal family." Another commented that Landau dubbed her and her sisters "treasures." A third used the term "angels," while a fourth said that she was encouraged to feel as though she wore a "halo."[19] By echoing her words, these pupils demonstrated their feeling of belonging to Landau and to her world of high-mindedness and purpose. Landau called on her girls to join her in building their homeland using their new skills.

The Evelina de Rothschild School, popularly known as "Miss Landau,"[20] was not the only school for Jewish girls in Jerusalem, but it educated the largest number of pupils and is the only one to survive to the present day. Several other schools were founded in Jerusalem by Jewish organizations from western Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. The Lamel School, funded originally by Elise von Herz-Lamel and later by the Hilfsverein, taught in German and later in Hebrew. For several years it responded to community pressure by teaching only traditional subjects, but ultimately it turned to a more modern curriculum. The Alliance Israélite Universelle, which established a large network of schools throughout Palestine, taught in French, with Hebrew reserved for sacred studies.[21]

Although each of these schools and the missionary schools enrolled numbers of Jewish girls in Jerusalem, none of them influenced the history of the city and of the country as much as the Evelina de Rothschild School. Part

of the effect of the Evelina School derived from the values and leadership of Annie Landau. Her unique vision and her persistence in the face of adversity became legendary. The good fortune of the pupils to become fluent in English without compromising their abilities in Hebrew at a time when English language skills were demanded by the Mandatory government was another reason that they became influential women in Palestine and later Israel.

"Miss Landau's girls," as they were called, modeled themselves after their headmistress and their teachers. Like these adults, the girls expected to work hard to help in the development of their country. They understood that they were growing up at a special moment in the history of their people, and they were encouraged to contribute their skills and talents, nurtured during their school years, to build a bright future.

The story of the graduates is a little-told narrative of young girls who grew to womanhood in Jerusalem during years of struggle, strikes, riots, and war. Within this environment of severe hardship, these girls found a garden oasis in the Evelina de Rothschild School. Here they learned about a world beyond sandbags and barbed wire, beyond poverty and disease, and beyond religious hatred. They learned poetry and chemistry; they studied Bible and horticulture; they practiced sports and recited daily prayers. They viewed slides of Baroque and Renaissance masterpieces and learned to sing classical music in a choir. They learned popular English girls' songs and games as well as Hebrew songs and games. They were encouraged to write in English and Hebrew in the *School* magazine. The Evelina School afforded them time and space to develop mature adult identities and roles appropriate for building families, communities, and a nation.

The girls entered the school from vastly different backgrounds. In the 1930s and 1940s, refugees from Hitler's Europe joined the already eclectic group of girls. They spoke different languages at home; their parents were of different socioeconomic and educational levels; some families were religiously observant and others were not; and, like all children, they had a variety of skills, talents, and ambitions. Their stories reflected the complicated times in which they grew.

In their later lives, most Evelina graduates were remarkably aware of the effect that their school, teachers, and classmates had on their development. Former classmates kept in touch with one another and frequently compared notes on the influence of the school on their lives. Class photos adorned their