

# HENRIETTA SZOLD FIRST TOTALLY FREE MODERN JEWISH WOMAN

NEW YORK -- "Henrietta Szold was the first totally free Jewish woman of the modern world," Meyer W. Weisgal said at the final event marking Hadassah's 60th anniversary year.

Dr. Weisgal, Chancellor of the Weizmann Institute, came from Israel to deliver the lecture on Miss Szold, the founder of Hadassah, at the Lowenstein Auditorium of Temple Emanu-el here.

He drew a parallel between Miss Szold and his mentor, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the architect of and first president of Israel whom Oxford University Professor Isaiah Berlin had called "the first totally free Jew in the modern world."

The daughter of a rabbi, Miss Szold was born in Baltimore in 1860. She was one of five daughters. There were no sons, and because of her brilliance her father trained her as he would his heir. While the other girls married, Miss Szold pursued a life of scholarship and social service.

"I have often speculated," Mr. Weisgal said, "on what might have been the fortunes of Jewish life and of Hadassah if Henrietta Szold had not been endowed with a great intellect and a Jewish learning as profound as that of any great intellect and a Jewish learning as profound as that of any great rabbi. Would there have been Hadassah, with its dominating influence on the American-Jewish scene? Would she have become the mother of thousands of Jewish children snatched from the claws of death and given new life?"

Describing her as "aristocratic and erudite" and also "warm-hearted and intensely feminine" he continued to draw parallels between the two great Zionist leaders:

"Both Chaim Weizmann and Henrietta Szold were wedded to a cause; neither ever fell victim to ideological dogma. Both struggled all their lives with the Jewish problem, alternately fascinated by its magnificent scope and repelled by its manifestations of provincialism," he said.

"While various factions of the Zionist movement eagerly debated the questions of a Jewish

majority, the respective advantages and disadvantages of a socialist or a free-enterprise society, and American Zionists in particular were torn over the question of whether Zionism was for the Jews in general or to be reserved for our suffering brethren in Europe, Henrietta Szold went straight to the heart of the matter: a year and a half after 38 women had formed Hadassah with funds amounting to less than \$300; 10,000 children in Palestine had been treated for trachoma by two Hadassah nurses."

He continued: "Both sought harmony and cooperation with the Arabs. In 1921 Miss Szold wrote:

... Palestine is an empty land. The Jew need not and will not rob the handful of Arabs of their rights or their property. Palestine could be made a land of immigration for the Jews if the Christian and Moslem agitators were not thinking of their own advantage. If our cause is just, wholly just and righteousness, we are bound to find just and righteous and peaceful means of conciliation. We shall ally ourselves with the best of our Arab fellows, to cure what is diseased in us and in them. Arukat Bat Ami and also Arukat Hagoyim, the healing of the daughter of our people and the healing of the nations."

Although she fervently wished for the ultimate creation of a Jewish State, Weisgal said, "the State was not her endziel, her final goal. Her final goal was a land pervaded with the Jewish way of life and she often said that if Zionism could not find a solution to the Arab-Jewish problem she would consider Zionism to have failed utterly. Not that she didn't blame the British for thwarting all Jewish efforts at conciliation. She did. But her's was a Messianic soul."

She was a peace-maker among individuals as well as peoples. Dr. Weisgal recalled how Nelson Glueck - noted rabbi and archeologist - was asked by Miss Szold to bring to her bedside - near the end of her life in 1944 - Dr. Weizmann and Dr. Judah L. Magnes, President of the Hebrew University, who had strong political and educational differences.

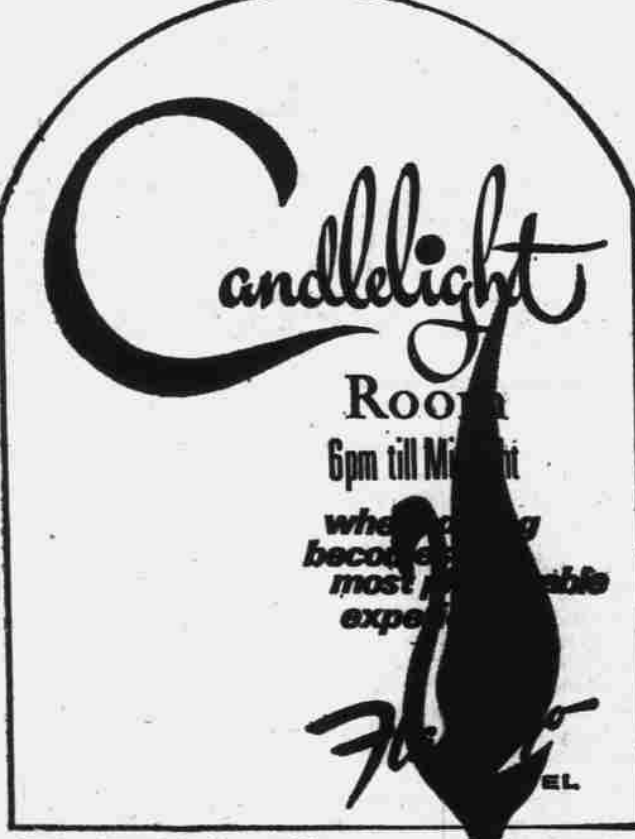
He described the scene: "They both appeared in her sick room, each standing on opposite sides of the bed. Miss Szold, though weak and

spent, raised herself up and asked them to shake hands, and she clutched both hands -- Magnes's and Weizmann's -- and said, in her resonant voice: 'Let this be a true b'rith shalom' (Pledge of peace). Magnes and Weizmann embraced and kissed each other. And Miss Szold became radiant."

Dr. Weisgal concluded: "Sixty years after the birth of Hadassah, it is inconceivable to think of the panorama of life in Israel without the great contributions made by Hadassah... Zionism, Jewishness and Americanism come together in Hadassah as in no other body."

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