

Israeli Women

By Tamar Kaufman

Thirty years ago the women and men of the Land of Israel rejoiced together at the establishment of the first sovereign Jewish state in two thousand years. For their part, the women looked back with pride at the role they had played in building and defending the Jewish settlement, and they looked forward to even greater achievements in the free, democratic nation being born.

The women were immediately called upon to do their part in midwifing the birth of the new state, as it was attacked on all sides by powerful enemies. Bravely and untiringly mothers and daughters, sometimes side by side, served in every capacity imaginable: as doctors and nurses, as combat drivers and cooks, as armed escorts and guards. As they had done in the past, the women of Israel served with valor, courage and devotion the cause most dear to their hearts: Zionism. Egalitarians

After the cease-fire, women like Manya Shochat, Rachel Yanait (Ben Zvi), Ada Maimon, Sarah Azariyahu, all pioneers from the early days of the Second Aliyah, turned joyfully and with renewed strength to the work of building an egalitarian society where women and men would have the same opportunities to contribute to the People of Israel.

As elections to the first Knesset drew near, women were divided as to how to proceed. Before the establishment of the State, they had had to fight for their civil and political rights -- including the right to vote -- in addition to the right to work in any jobs they chose. During the struggle for the vote, an independent list of women candidates had run for the Representative Assembly and many of the local governments.

Saray Azariyahu, a leader of the pre-state suffragist movement, wrote in her book, *Excerpts from the History of the Women's Movement in the Land* (first published in 1949 by the Women's Association for Equal Rights, Jerusalem, and reprinted, after being discovered by this writer, in 1977 by The Women's Aid Fund, Haifa; both editions are in Hebrew.):

And so a great thing has happened in Israel -- our People has won a sovereign state of its own, founded upon democratic principles; our People has once again become master of its fate, and has taken into its own hands the design of its own life. And when, in the near future, the parliament is created in Israel, the Hebrew woman will also be able, like her sisters in the enlightened countries, to bring before the one legislative body her demands for a regime in which exist one law and one judgement for man and woman in all areas of life. (Author's translation).

Azariyahu, and some of the other suffragists, put their faith and trust in the new parliament, believing that women should work from within the various political parties in furthering their interests.

Other suffragists, however, felt that the independent women's list should continue to run in elections. In the past it had served to goad other parties into putting more women candidates on their lists, and to take women's interests somewhat seriously. They felt that this function was still valid.

History records that the second opinion won out. The Women's Association for Equal Rights teamed up with the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), and received one seat in the first Knesset.

During the course of the next thirty years, although the women's list ceased to run in national and local elections, women continued to be represented in Knesset and in municipal governments through the various political par-

ties. Although decreasing, the ratio of female to male representatives has always been better in Israel than in most other countries.

The status of Israeli women has changed with the development of the State. For example, a law forbidding bigamy was passed in 1959; in 1950, a law forbidding the marriage of minors was enacted; in 1951 the Equal Rights for Women Act became law; and in 1964 "Equal Pay for Equal Work" was enacted.

In some areas the rights enjoyed by Israeli women are the envy of women elsewhere. A pregnant worker is entitled to a "birth leave" extending from just prior to the birth to three months afterwards, with the right to remain home for a full year without fear of losing her job. If she quits her job during this period, she is entitled to the compensation she would have received if she had been fired. In addition, extensive day-care facilities for age groups from toddlers to nursery school are a boon to working parents.

Discrimination? Israeli women are not satisfied, however. For instance, although there is an "Equal Rights for Women Act," stating that any laws discriminating against women as such are not to be enforced, that law has a section which expressly excludes "personal status" (marriage, divorce, bastardy etc.), which is under the sole jurisdiction of the rabbinical courts. Since the religious court system is based on an Orthodox interpretation of the Oral Law, which many see as patriarchal, women may be discriminated against as a matter of course.

Another example: the fact that there is a law on the books requiring "Equal Pay for Equal Work" is no guarantee that the law is effective or the principle observed. Everywhere one turns in Israel one finds testimony to the contrary. In factories one can find two separate wage lists hanging on the wall, the lower wages for women and the higher for men. In the pages of the national dailies, personnel-wanted ads usually state the desired sex of the employee - and the openings are depressingly stereotyped.

The challenge for the future, then, is not to be satisfied with the achievements of the past, but rather to continue in the spirit of our foremothers in working toward a society in which equal opportunity is guaranteed all citizens.

Shalom Aloha

By Rabbi Samuel M. Silver

I went back to Hawaii recently, and I was dazzled.

I served there in uniform in World War II, and it was fascinating to get back.

Hawaii is the cross-roads of the world. Its scenery makes it a paradise.

Its beautiful architecture and gracious hospitality makes it a tourist's paradise.

The islands are already jammed with travelers, all of whom are well accommodated. When the supersonic comes along, the tourist boom will zoom.

It was a joy to meet the man who is the standard-bearer of Judaism in Hawaii, Rabbi Julius Nodel, who leads the only Temple, Emanuel.

Dr. Nodel is well known to thousands of U.S. Jews, especially in Cleveland, St. Louis and Portland, Oregon, where he has occupied pulpits.

Hawaii is lucky to have secured so gifted a rabbi as Nodel. He is eloquent; he is erudite; he is courageous.

His lovely temple houses a full program of activities, and is the scene of many gatherings of the Jewish Welfare Federation, B'nai B'rith, Hadassah, and an Orthodox congregation which meets on the premises of the temple. The traditionalist services, led by a group of able laymen, take place early Friday evening and Shabbos morning.

Dr. Nodel is the one called upon when any civic, educational, or religious group wants a Jewish spokesman. And he represents us resplendently.

The president of his congregation, Lt. Col. Leonard Wolfer, once with the Army Air Force, kvells about his rabbi, as does the rest of the congregation. And with justice.

I took in one session of a lecture series by Rabbi Nodel on comparative religion. His audience was enthralled by the sparkling profundity of the rabbi's lecture and by the way he answered questions.

Side by side with Rabbi Nodel is his wife, Else, Portland, Oregon's gift to Hawaii and her husband. She is a great asset to the Jewish community.

Hawaii is so beautiful it seems like a fantasy-land. And the state's rabbi can also evoke your wonder!

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