

Nina Salaman:¹ "The Fusion of the Old Judaism with the Modern Western World"²

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Abstract

Nina Ruth Davis Salaman (1877-1925) was a Hebrew poet, translator, and one of the first English female Jewish scholars of her generation, who was also a Zionist and social activist. She published many poems, translations of Hebrew poems mainly from the Middle Ages, and articles in books, newspapers, and journals. She was a member of the Women Zionists and of the Union of Jewish Women, instituted a Talmud Torah for girls, and participated in various non-Jewish charities such as the Women's Institute at Barley, a small village near Cambridge where she lived, Cottage Hospital at Alton and county institutions and charities in Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. Yet, despite these and other notable accomplishments, Nina Salaman's legacy has not survived beyond her lifetime. This article explores Salaman's life achievements as a female Jewish scholar and restores her place in Jewish history.

Nina Salaman's Poetry, Scholarship, and Prayer Book

A poet's success can be measured, among other factors, by the inclusion of his or her writings in seminal works. In a 1915 book about Zionism edited by Paul Goodman and Arthur D. Lewis, the list of contributors includes notable Jewish figures, such as Dr. Max Nordau, Achad Ha'am and Nahum Sokolow, as well as Eliezer Ben Yehuda, who revived the Hebrew language. Other contributors to this book are less known and comprise Louis D. Brandeis, Joseph Cowen, Paul Goodman, R. J.H. Hertz, Albert M. Hyamson, and Maurice Solomons.³ In addition to articles, the book includes two poems which were translated by Nina Salaman: an abbreviated form⁴ of Hatikvah,⁵ the Jewish National Anthem,⁶ and Chaim Nachman Bialik's poem "Surely the People is Grass,"⁷ as well as her own poem titled "War Times."⁸ The only other woman whose piece of writing was included in this book was Mrs. Paul Goodman, the editor's wife, who is described in the list of contributors as "Hon. Sec. English Branch of the Jewish Women's League for Cultural Work in Palestine."⁹ Salaman is described merely as "Mrs. Redcliffe N. Salaman, Author of "Songs of Exile."¹⁰

Furthermore, two other publications underrate Salaman's contribution. The Cambridge Collection of Redcliffe and Nina Salaman's correspondences and manuscripts (Redcliffe Salaman, 1843-1956),¹¹ contains a small journal from October 1918 titled *The Sinaist: The Organ of the Sinai League*.¹² This booklet features three articles by formally educated men: the first by the President Rabbi Dr. M. Jung, the second by Prof. D. Kauffman, and another by Edward J. Thomas, M.A. In addition, there is a poem, "The Sabbath," by Nina Salaman and "Sketches," a personal story by Hannah Trager. The second publication is another small

journal titled *Being a Jewish Miscellany* (1921),¹³ a collection of articles on Zionism. Salaman's poem, "The Dawn," which is about Zion, opens the booklet. Needless to say, it is the only poem. This third case of Salaman's poetry appearing in Zionist publications suggests a pattern: books or booklets with articles about Zionism usually featured a poem by Nina Salaman, but not any of her articles.

The following is Salaman's poem, which was included in Goodman's volume on Zionism:

"War Time"

AH, the clouded skies, the grieving hearts this
Winter!
Alas, the heavy rains, the flowing tears!
Ah, the grey days, hopeless of the sunshine!
Alas, the black nights and the lurking fears!
Where can man abide and find a gleam of day-
Break?
Where is now a land shut out from war?
Where a people now which shall, with heart of
Justice,
Lead the nations like a guiding star?
We of scattered Israel, dumb through all the ages
Since the Law awaked a dreaming world,
Had we not a word to reach the ear of nations
Ere the thunderbolt of war was hurled?
Wherefore else our agelong life, our wandering
landless,
Every land our home for ill or good?
Ours it was long since to join the hands of nations
Through the link of our own brotherhood. (Goodman and Lewis, 1915, 196)

The poem bemoans the imminent World War I, and there seems to be an allusion to the Prophet Isaiah's vision of Israel as the world's leading nation at the End of Times.¹⁴ Salaman believed deeply in the role of the Jewish nation in redeeming the world. She expressed the same sentiment in the introduction to her book *Apples and Honey* (1921): "How dear... the hope, how welcome to all of us the vision, how urgent, indeed, the task of establishing a home of Freedom, Justice and Peace on the mountains of Judea, the beautiful land of our forefathers! There Israel, weary and footsore, may yet renew the courage of his old inspiration and, in this saving himself, will save the world." (viii)

This idea is reiterated in another poem, titled "The Requitat:"

Judah, O help the world!
Judah, O save the world! Look, she is falling.
Hark, she is calling.

You can save the world,
Judah, alone...
Now you can stand
Upright and save the world
Free in your land. (*Apples and Honey*, 238-239)

Todd M. Endelman¹⁵ maintains that Salaman was "a well regarded Hebraist... at a time when Jewish scholarship in Europe was a male preserve." He then states that Salaman's prominence as a Jewish scholar was recognized in the fact that her funeral fell on a *Rosh Hodesh* (the first day of a Jewish month), a time when "It is customary to omit the funeral sermon... except in the case of an eminent scholar. The chief rabbi, accordingly, delivered a eulogy at her funeral." This same chief rabbi, R. Joseph Hertz supported Salaman when on Friday evening, December 5, 1919, she preached in an Orthodox synagogue, thereby breaking the taboo on women's preaching in the synagogue.

The sermon Salaman delivered in the synagogue on that Friday evening was published seven years earlier, and was the explanation of the weekly *parasha* (portion of the Pentateuch) in which Jacob struggles with the angel of god and his name is changed to Israel. She uses Rashi, the medieval Biblical commentator, to explain the reason for Jacob's name change. She compares that to the change of the name of Abram into Abraham, and claims that unlike the name Abram, which ceased to be used, the name Jacob remained in use. The name change was necessary because the name Jacob was associated with deceit, while the new name, Israel, implied that he had prevailed. Just as Jacob had some defect of character, so the "people of Israel developed faults which led to the downfall of their worldly state." (4) Salaman concludes her speech by quoting an external source from the introduction to the book *Jewish Contributions to Civilization* by Joseph Jacobs: "this is a little people, but it has done great things." (5)

Salaman believed that women should be more involved in the religious life of their community. Endelman writes, "[S]he was active in the Jewish League for Woman Suffrage, which campaigned not only to win the vote for women but to improve the status of women in the Jewish community..." and adds that "her behavior was quietly subversive of traditional gender roles. Her lectures and publications shattered what had been a male monopoly on Jewish scholarship in Britain."

Salaman's scholarship is evident in various booklets, housed at the Cambridge Manuscript Collection. In an article titled, "Women and Judaism,"¹⁶ she argues that Jewish girls should

get a better education in Jewish studies, as well as a "fundamental understanding of the form and spirit of the Hebrew language." (11) In other words, Salaman calls for the instruction of Hebrew and Jewish studies to girls, most probably because at the time "girls' religious education was much less comprehensive than that of boys..." (Susan Tananbaum, 2010). But Salaman did not only call for Hebrew and Jewish studies instruction for girls. She also established the Tottenham Talmud Torah for Girls where Hebrew and other Jewish subjects were taught, and kept donating money to this school from the royalties of her book.¹⁷ Another article that reveals her concern for women's issues is "What the Women are doing." [1922?]¹⁸ In this article, Salaman describes the support W.I.Z.O. and the Hadassah organizations are offering to the Jews in pre-state Israel. She mentions that women in many countries, including Austria, Poland, Tunis, Bessarabia, China, US, and Canada are involved in raising the funds. She writes about a society founded in 1908, 'Ezer Yoldoth' and another founded in 1920, 'Histadruth Nashim Ibriyoth', whose president was Lady Samuel, the wife of the High Commissioner Herbert Samuel and a friend of the Salamans. Unlike her scholarly articles, this article is more informative, and reflects her human interest in the Jewish society forming in pre-state Israel.

Salaman's other writings deal with Jewish poets and poetry, and the Jewish history they echo. In an article titled "Hebrew Poets of the Spanish Period of Jewish History (1916),"¹⁹ she reviews Hebrew poets and explains their poetry by giving examples and translations of the poems into English. She argues that "the names of Solomon Gabirol, Jehuda Halevi, and the Ibn Ezras tower above other writers of Hebrew verse." Salaman, a self-taught scholar, claims that nearly two hundred of Eliezer Kalir's Piyutim (hymns) are included in Jewish liturgies. She notes that a great scholarship and knowledge of the Jewish sources are evident in his poetry. Her extensive knowledge of non-Hebrew poetry resonates in a commissioned article titled "The Hebrew Poets as Historians (in two parts)" (1919).²⁰ She admits that "The subject of the Hebrew Poets as Historians is such a big one, that very soon after rashly promising to write this paper, I felt dismayed at what I had undertaken." She then mentions Dante's and Browning's poetry and Matthew Arnold among other renowned authors and asserts that Jewish poets have always written about massacres and pogroms.

Some of the poems are devastating, telling of horrendous torture and death of Jews, who facing the Crusaders' decrees of "Baptism, or Death," chose death. Many of these tragic poems have survived anonymously. In Part II of the article,²¹ Salaman demonstrates the way

Hebrew poets throughout the ages incorporate history into their poems. These examples consist mainly of poems that she translated into English.

Perhaps the most interesting Jewish project in which Salaman was involved, and which left a lasting mark on commonwealth Jewry was the Routledge *Festival Prayer Book*, renamed *Service of the Synagogue* (1906), which was edited by Arthur Davis, Nina Salaman's father, and the Chief Rabbi's nephew, Herbert M. Adler, and published in six volumes, one for each Jewish festival. The editor's note in the last volume²² credits the Davis family – Nina Salaman's father, Nina Salaman and her sister Elsie:

About the year 1900, he [Arthur Davis] conceived the idea of making a new translation of the Festival Prayers. Realizing the inadequacy of existing English renderings to express the form and beauty of the compositions that make up the Jewish liturgy, he aimed at the production of a new translation more worthy of the original. Commencing with Kol Nidre service, with the assistance of his daughters, Elsie Davis and Nina Davis (now Mrs. Redcliffe Salaman), he embarked on the work of translation, himself rendering prose into prose, whilst they devoted themselves to reproducing in poetry the poetical portions of the original. At this stage he invited Mr. Zangwill to join in the work of verse translation, and at the same time at his request I took over the general work of editing the book and of assisting in the prose translations. (208-209)

Many of the songs in the festival prayer book were selected from Salaman's book *Songs of Exile by Hebrew Poets* (1901). In this book, she included poems by Yehuda Halevi, Elazar ben Kalir and Solomon Ibn Gabirol, as well as passages from the Talmud, and Midrash Rabba. Her participation in the preparation of the festival prayer book and the recognition she gained thereafter are testaments to the fact that Salaman was successful in overcoming the gender barrier in Jewish religious life. More than a hundred years later, this United Synagogue prayer book is still in use in synagogues across Great Britain and Australia.²³

While Salaman was highly involved in Jewish life in Britain, she also cared about Jewish life abroad and often expressed a deep interest in issues that affected Jews everywhere. In a letter to her American Jewish friend, Rachel (Ray) Frank-Litman, Salaman expressed her concern about the "horror of the Dreyfus case" and added that "when the news of the verdict arrived people here were crying in the streets."²⁴ The Mendel Beilis trial made her take part in the English protest against the "horrible blood accusation."²⁵ In her last letter to her friend Ray Litman, she expressed great interest in what the latter had told her about the Hillel foundation.²⁶ Her interest in Jewish issues is also well-documented in her reports on her visits to the synagogues of Oxford and Cambridge on two consecutive Saturdays:

*The Visit to Oxford,*²⁷ Nov 28th, 1919

Salaman first describes the Friday service, whose attendance was very small – just a *minyan* (ten men) in the men's section and she alone in the women's section.

It appears that nowadays, all visitors to the Jewish men at Oxford are "run" by the orthodox section, who, in fact, have the Synagogue and the Adler Society in their own hands. This means about a dozen to twenty men, of whom a few flitter between the two camps. But, rightly speaking perhaps, it is only the orthodox who can be called a camp – the others, about thirty, are scattered, and absorbed by the general life of the University. I think it is clear that the orthodox are not unbending enough, that they make a little eclectic society among themselves, and that the others, less versed in Jewish learning and therefore less enthusiastic, remain out in the cold, neither attending the services because they are in Hebrew, nor, as a rule, the meetings of the Adler Society because the one group monopolises the discussion and appears contemptuous of them.

She adds that the president of the Congregation "should make a bridge between" the two communities.

*The Visit to Cambridge,*²⁸ Dec. 5th, 1919

Salaman describes a Shabbath service she and her husband attended at the synagogue in Cambridge, where fifty men were present on the Friday evening service. She mentions that she delivered a sermon before the end of the prayer, *Yigdal*,²⁹ and "After lunch a number of men came in and listened most intelligently to my paper on the Hebrew poets, and there was quite a good talk afterwards." Then she compared the two communities:

The difference which strikes one most between the Jewish men at Oxford and at Cambridge is that the small orthodox group at Oxford show a learning and devotion, and a knowledge particularly of classic Hebrew literature which, I don't think, can be found, except perhaps in one or two men, at Cambridge, while the remainder take practically no part in Jewish affairs at all; whereas at Cambridge, interest and responsibility in Jewish matters are far more widespread, almost every one taking his part to some extent, and some being well versed in modern Hebrew literature, but perhaps hardly one living such an absorbingly Jewish life as the little group at Oxford.

Nina Salaman's Correspondence and Social Milieu

Her letters to Ray Frank-Litman imply that Salaman associated with major Zionist figures of her time. In a letter from 1899, she mentions Claude Montefiore, who read a paper about the duties of English Jews in view of the rising anti-Semitism on the continent.³⁰ Claude Montefiore was the son of Nathaniel Montefiore and the great nephew of Sir Moses Montefiore, and a prominent Jewish scholar, leader and activist. Salaman comments that his speech would probably lead to an exciting debate.

In another letter from the same year, she mentions an invitation from Mrs. Leopold de Rothschild to meet "the delegates of the council of American Jewish women, who will report on their work and their aims."³¹ Leopold de Rothschild was a British banker, member of the prominent Rothschild family. In yet another letter from the same year, she mentions that she joined the Adlers at a service for poor people where Alfred Adler preached, and then at the

Bayswater synagogue for the rest of the day.³² Rev. Alfred Solomon Adler was the son of Rev. Dr. Herman Adler, the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain at the time.

Over twenty years later, married and a mother of six, she writes about the family of Herbert Samuel, the first High Commissioner of Palestine, and says that they "all seem very happy of the idea of going out to Palestine. They are very good friends and we shall miss them dreadfully."³³ In fact, she corresponded with Samuel for years, as evident in her correspondence with Israel Zangwill.³⁴

In her book about Israel Zangwill, Meri-Jane Rochelson mentions a letter from Salaman to her husband in which she describes "a visit she and Israel Zangwill made by bicycle to the Chief Rabbi J.H. Hertz at his provincial home in Littlehampton..."³⁵ Clearly, Salaman had a close, friendly relationship with the Chief Rabbi of Britain. Her lifelong close friendship and collaboration with Zangwill is well documented.³⁶ Zangwill, according to Rochelson (1) was "the most famous Jew in the English speaking world," a journalist, author, playwright, and spokesperson on Jewish affairs as well as other social issues at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Zangwill's letters to Salaman, he mentions Lord Robert Cecil as an acquaintance of Salaman, and Mrs. Bertrand Russell, who spoke warmly of her.³⁷

The Cambridge Collection contains papers relating to the "Palestine Exhibition and Bazaar," presided by Lady Swaythling, who, on June 30, 1912, wrote a letter to Nina Salaman thanking her for helping to organize the bazaar.³⁸ The purpose of the bazaar was to raise funds for the Bezalel School and the Evelina de Rothschild School in Jerusalem. Mrs. Redcliffe Salaman was a member of the general committee. The bazaar included a concert, a children's Hebrew play, a miniature ballet, and a scene featuring a street in Jerusalem.

As mentioned earlier, Salaman was very concerned about the 1911 blood libel in Kiev, Russia. The editor of *Darkest Russia* (Letter from March 7, 1912) tries to get help from Jews in the West. The editor asked Salaman to send copies of the letters she had sent him to the presidents of the Anglo-Jewish Association and the Board of Deputies. On March 23, 1912, he wrote again: "the Kiev Blood Accusation was considered at the Conjoint Foreign Committee on Wednesday, and that steps are being taken to persuade a leading London newspaper to send a special correspondent to investigate the affair and attend the trial." The Cambridge collection includes further correspondence between Salaman and the *Darkest Russia* newspaper with a request from April 19, 1912 asking her and her husband to collect

100 signatures. Naturally, the Cambridge Collection contains a petition signed by 100 prominent Jews, including Nina and Redcliffe Salaman.

Nina Salaman in the Public Eye

Israel Zangwill, her lifelong close friend and collaborator on the book, *Service of the Synagogue*, valued Salaman's work. In a letter from October 15, 1924, Zangwill compliments her on her scholarship by saying that "The fact is, dear Nina, that a book like yours is too learned and minute to be saleable in the outside world."³⁹ He is referring to her latest translations of Yehuda Halevi's poetry (1924), which was twelve years in preparation and published shortly before her death.

Rev. Dr. Abelson, M.A. D. Lit, wrote the following review about Salaman's "Elegies for the Ninth of Ab" (1920):⁴⁰

The compilers are (one of them is Mrs. Redcliffe Salaman (Nina Davis) ... Mrs. Salaman stands out, *facile princeps*, as our Anglo-Jewish poetess. We know of no one who has given us a clearer insight than she, into the character and spirit of Jewish poetry in general. By her verse translations of ancient and medieval Hebrew poetry, as well as by her articles and lectures on kindred branches of Jewish literature, she has made for herself a secure niche in the Temple of Learning.

Salaman's book, *Voices of the Rivers*⁴¹ received favorable reviews: "Most of [her verses] are full of true poetic spirit, and uncommon mastery over many metrical forms" (*Pall Mall Gazette*); "Graceful and dignified songs" (*The Scotsman*); "[E]very one of [the poems] is worth reading and re-reading" (*The Gownsmen*); "A charming collection of short poems, showing deep feeling and literary taste" (*Cambridge independent Press*); "Mrs. Salaman has an unmistakable poetic gift" (*Daily Graphic*).

Upon her death, obituaries⁴² were published in many newspapers, such as *The Jewish Guardian*, *The Jewish Chronicle*, *Herts and Cambs Reporter*, *The Times*, *The Jewish World*, and *The American Hebrew*. Obituaries were also published in German, Russian, Yiddish and Italian newspapers. These obituaries reflect the way Salaman was viewed by her contemporaries. Prof. Norman Bentwich, for instance, claimed that she was "perhaps the greatest Anglo-Jewish poet of Hebrew lore and was known as the "Queen of Hebrew Poetry."⁴³

An excerpt from Prof. A. S. Yehuda's obituary⁴⁴ states:

With the death of Nina Salaman, Anglo-Jewish literature has suffered the loss of *one of the most capable translators* [- S.K.] of the greatest singers during a brilliant period of Hebrew literature in mediaeval Spain. Her importance lay in the fact that she could fully and entirely understand them, and was thus actually, from the poetic standpoint, spiritually allied with them. Although she possessed talent as a writer of English poetry, and produced many beautiful original poems, she was herself well aware that she could aspire to a far higher significance as a translator of the classical poets of the Judeo-

Spanish period, and she thus won for herself a unique place of honor, peculiarly her own, in the literature of translations.

Her dignity, nobility, and extensive education charmed all who met her, whether she spoke of everyday affairs or of intellectual matters. Her conversation skills were reserved, prudent, cordial, and permeated with kindness. "... she was possessed of a natural modesty, which was often beautified by that naiveté and shyness so characteristic of the highly gifted. But it is by reading her works, particularly her translation of the Hebrew poems, that one may best realize the full greatness of her soul, the deeply religious spirit with which her sole being was filled. Her great love was her people."⁴⁵

Israel Zangwill wrote:⁴⁶

she was a poetess who found inspiration equally in Zionism and in Nature, and whose last labor of love was to translate Jehudah Halevi, she was *the spiritual queen of Anglo-Jewry* [italics mine – S.K.], the finest and in both senses of the term the rarest product of the fusion of the old Judaism with the modern Western life.

In the same newspaper, Herbert M. Adler wrote an obituary, in which he extolled her qualities as a poet and human being, saying that "No one could give such a translation (of a Yom Kippur poem) of this poem (Baruch ben Samuel – I am the suppliant, a Selicha from the additional service of the Day of Atonement) who did not ache and yearn with the poet".

Her husband also wrote a very long obituary, which he read at the Barely Women's Institute on June 8th, 1925:

Few women of any country or of any age have met with such a wealth of love, affection and admiration in their lives as did Nina Salaman and none have deserved it more. Nina Salaman was the best known, the most revered and, above all, the most beloved woman in the Jewish Communities of all the world. This position she achieved without making a single effort to attract attention, as such, to herself; without leaving her home or neglecting a single duty as mother, wife or neighbour, and all within a space of time so tragically short.

Redcliffe Salaman's purpose was mainly to talk about his wife's scholarship and artistic gifts: "She knew Latin and Greek, French and German (as familiar as English), Italian she read with pleasure, Hebrew – world recognized scholar." She was also talented in drawing⁴⁷ and music – she was a violinist and an excellent pianist, and had a delightful singing voice. Redcliffe Salaman says that there is no record in the history of any country or of any period of a woman who exhibited such depth of Hebrew scholarship along with the gift of poetry.

Nina Salaman possessed a "passionate love for Zion," and "loyalty to her people." "She was a regular user of the University Library...It was this double edged weapon of scholarship and poetic creative genius that Nina Salaman brought to bear on the task of translation. It is not surprising that on every hand she has been acclaimed as the perfect interpreter of the great

mediaeval poets. She could win to the secret of the most subtle passage." He explains that difficulty:

For I should explain that the Hebrew poets of the eleventh century of Spain wrote in Hebrew, thought in Arabic, and spoke in Spanish, and frequently the text contains Arabic expressions and Arabic idioms or forms of thought, expressed in Hebrew, so that the meaning can only be attained by one who in thought can place themselves in the peculiar atmosphere in which these poems were originally conceived...It was the gift of sympathy... that was the key which opened these locked gates of speech.

Her full bibliography was published in the *Jewish Guardian*, February 27, 1925, three days after her death and in the *Jewish Chronicle* a few days later.⁴⁸

Herbert M. Loewe, the great Hebrew scholar who knew her well, wrote an obituary titled *Nina Salaman, 1877-1925*.⁴⁹ He related that Salaman was to preside over the Jewish Historical Society of England in 1922 but was unable to do so due to her illness.

Arthur Davis, her father, was "a highly proficient Hebrew scholar and his thoroughness, his taste, his love for Judaism and Jewish learning were transmitted to Nina Salaman." Her sister, Elsie, the wife of Prof. S. Schryver, also contributed poetry to the *Jewish Quarterly Review* and to the *Mahzor*. She wrote about her sister:⁵⁰

Nina Davis made her first appearance in print at the age of seventeen. The *Jewish Chronicle* for June 22, 1894, contained her rendering of Ibn Ezra's "Song of Chess"; in the same year she contributed to the October issue of *The Jewish Quarterly Review* an essay and a poem on "The Ideal Minister of the Talmud." From this time until 1901 her literary output was regular, and it was enhanced in that year, when her marriage to Dr. Redcliffe Salaman took place. Henceforward womanhood and motherhood added strength to her pen." She educated her four sons and two daughters with Hebrew and love of Judaism. They lived, after London and Berlin, in Barley, a small village near Cambridge, and were in close touch with Cambridge Jewry and hosted at least five generations of undergraduates. She kept in touch with the students in Cambridge ... She engaged in many causes, general and Jewish (charity). "The Federation of Women Zionists and the Tottenham Talmud Torah for Girls were among her favourite institutions, and to these she devoted all the profits of her pen.

Nina Salaman's Contemporaries

It is worthwhile and interesting to compare Nina Salaman to her female Jewish contemporaries. In all probability, the greatest Jewish poet of the Victorian period is Grace Aguilar. Cynthia Scheinberg claims that "...Grace Aguilar (1816-47) was the most important Jewish woman writer in Nineteenth-century England." (153)

Scheinberg explains that "Aguilar intended her poetry to be read by Christian and Jewish audiences; just as her theological goal was to reach both Christian and Jewish audiences in the name of having "Judaism rightly revered by both groups." (Ibid) Scheinberg uses part of a poem by Aguilar with words like "Savior," "Friend," and "Fount of Love"⁵¹— images used in both religions, though usually more associated with Christianity (170). In contrast to Aguilar, Salaman wrote strictly to the Jewish audience, and her themes ranged from the beauty of the

Sabbath through aspiration for Zion to general themes like love and nature. Scheinberg claims that religion played a central role in Victorian literature and demonstrates this idea through the works of both Christian and Jewish female poets, particularly Amy Levy and Grace Aguilar. Salaman is not different in this respect because religion played a central role in her articles, not just her poems. Scheinberg attempts to prove that "poetry provided a sanctioned public forum through which women could voice their theological ideas and participate in debates about religious, political and gendered identity." (4) This is true for Salaman too. Her poetry reflects new theological ideas and the recognition she achieved as a poet enabled her unique voice to be heard.

But Scheinberg's idea about women's use of poetry as a legitimate channel to express their thoughts can also explain why Nina Salaman did not have a lasting influence on British Jewry. Salaman's main intellectual occupation was relegated to scholarship, not poetry. And since scholarship was a male dominated field, her contribution was barely acknowledged. Israel Finstein's chapter on Anglo-Jewish intellectuals mentioned only men: Israel Zangwill, Norman Bentwich (British barrister and legal academic, Zionist, best known for his work in the administration of mandatory Palestine), Harry Sacher (British lawyer and Zionist leader), Selig Brodetsky (British professor of mathematics, world Zionist executive), Solomon Schechter (academic scholar, educator, founder and president of United Synagogue of America), Lucien Wolf (journalist, advocate of Jewish rights), and Herbert Loewe (noted scholar of Semitic languages and Jewish cultures) among others— all contemporaries of Salaman.

In Eugene C. Black's *Jews in Britain*, several women are mentioned in a chapter about charity organizations: Lady Battersea (formerly Constance de Rothschild), Lily Montagu (from one of the most eminent families in Britain), Mrs. Lionel Lucas (from the eminent Goldsmid family and sister in law of Frederic D. Mocatta, vice president of the Jewish Board of Guardians), Nettie Adler (daughter of the Chief Rabbi), Mrs. Herman Tuck (whose husband figured prominently on the council of the United Synagogue and in the affairs of the Jews), Lady Magnus (wife of Sir Philip and daughter of the mayor of Portsmouth), Mrs. Alfred Nathan Adler (Chief Rabbi's wife) and Baroness de Rothschild. Nina Salaman's name is not included, perhaps because she did not belong to a well-known family.

In a word, Nina Salaman was not a member of a prominent family. Her scholarship concentrated on Hebrew poetry. She lacked formal education and was involved in charity to a

limited extent unlike the eminent women who devoted themselves to various worldly causes. Salaman focused mainly on Jewish subjects. She was educated by her father, who encouraged her to write. Information about Arthur Davis appears in Redcliff Salaman's obituary of his wife. At forty-five, Davis, an engineer, retired from his profession and spent his time between home study and the British Museum Library. He tutored his daughters daily and took them to the synagogue often. He conducted research on the *Massorah* (tradition). Davis, the only religious man in his family, was the son of a scholar, who was the friend of the philosopher Herbert Spencer. It is interesting to compare Salaman's family background with that of other Jewish writers from the same period. Anna Maria Goldsmid (1805-1889) received private Jewish education at home and helped her father in his work. Later she surprised the Jewish world by translating religious sermons. The sisters Celia and Marion Moss (1819-1873 and 1821-1907 respectively) received a Jewish education from their father, who read widely to his twelve children. Later they became editors, authors, and poets. Grace Aguilar (1816-1847) was educated at home by both her parents and then became a Jewish author, who wrote mainly about religious issues. Nina Salaman's background and education seem very similar to her contemporaries.

Contrary to these Jewish female writers, who were educated at home by their fathers, two well-known Jewish writers, Amy Levi (1861-1889) and Julia Frankau (1864-1916), rejected their Jewish identity. Amy Levi was the second Jewish woman to attend Cambridge and the first at Newnham College, while Julia Frankau was educated at home by Karl Marx's daughter. Amy Levi is the only Jewish writer included in two anthologies of Victorian women poets. The first anthology was edited by Angela Leighton and Margaret Reynolds (1991), who admit in the introduction that "One thing that can be said about Victorian women poets in general is that they are rarely 'at home'... home is either an ideal that is yearned for or else it is a prison house from which to escape." They add that "Victorian women's poetry shows a surprising diversity and unorthodoxy in its religious positions." Some were religious, while others, including Amy Levi, were agnostic or atheist. "Although still largely excluded from the main centres of higher education, women were, perhaps for that reason, drawn to more orthodox sources of learning – the sciences remaining outside the traditional classical and theological examples of Oxford and Cambridge." (xxxvi-xxxix). Nina Salaman fits this description. "Home" in her poetry is the return of her nation to Zion – the ideal that is yearned

for, and she herself was an observant Jew but also unorthodox in her feminist approach to women's participation in religious life.

In the second anthology, the editor, Virginia Blain states that "...while almost all of them [Victorian woman poets] held strong views on issues such as the education of girls and women, most would have seen their own writing as continuity, in whatever way, to a poetic mainstream rather than to a realm of women poets." (11) Furthermore, Michael Scrivener claims:

The British-Jewish writing current during the Romantic era illustrates how British Jews negotiated the problem of modernity which was quite differently [sic] than the Jews in continental Europe... British Jewry embraced modernity to such a high degree that there was anxiety over retention of Jewish tradition and maintenance of Jewish continuity, even if such modernism rarely took the form of reform Judaism. (159)

In spite of her approach to reforming women's role in religious observance, Salaman did not over-embrace modernity to the extent of endangering Jewish tradition altogether, as did many of her contemporaries. On the contrary, she was the one who instilled religious observance in her home.

According to Michael Galchinsky, who focuses on Anna Maria Goldshmid, Grace Aguilar and the sisters Celia and Marion Moss, the first Anglo-Jewish female writers of the 1830s paved the way for their counterparts in Europe and USA, and broke the taboo on women's learning and scholarship.⁵² Galchinsky does not include Amy Levy and Julia Frankau in his book, most likely because they could be considered as late Victorian writers and wrote against Jews and Judaism.

Galchinsky states:

Both to defend themselves and their religion against conversionist exposés, as well as to critique Anglo-Jewish men for defining them as the primary religious educators without providing them with the necessary knowledge, Anglo-Jewish women began to write... [They] called for increased female education primarily on the grounds that, as mothers, they needed Jewish knowledge to pass on to their children... Anna Maria Goldsmid argued for publication of sermons in English so that women, as "mothers and instructors," could become educated enough in their own homes to teach their children; She also started the West Metropolitan school for girls. Marion Moss started her school and her *Jewish Sabbath Journal*, the first Jewish women's periodical in modern history, and wrote sermons and tales and recommendations for synagogue reform, so as to make the tradition more accessible to women. (105)

Like the Moss sisters, Nina Salaman advocated similar things: writing sermons, establishing schools for girls, making synagogues more accessible to women, and increasing formal female education.

Galchinsky points out that the emancipation of Jews in England led to women's wish for liberation from gender discriminating Jewish laws. Grace Aguilar is an example of a woman who preached for more equality in religion. (30) Salaman preached along the same lines. In fact, almost every female writer in the Victorian era is described as a "reformer" in one way or another. According to Galchinsky, Anna Maria Goldsmid is described as "one of the most active women in Victorian Jewish history." She was a "translator, lecturer, reformer, pamphleteer on behalf of persecuted Jews abroad, founder of girls' schools, and advocate of teachers' colleges." (193) Once again, Nina Salaman initiated the same activism.

Conclusion

Poet and scholar Nina Salaman combined Jewish tradition with modern western culture and shared her scholarship with the Jewish community. She was well known and much revered during her lifetime by her fellow Jews in Great Britain. Her greatest contribution was the compilation and editing of a prayer book for the Jewish Holidays, which has been used in many synagogues for years. Why she has been forgotten is difficult to explicate. This unfortunate reality is even more difficult to expound in light of her fine scholarship and social activism in initiating new customs and institutions, such as women preaching in the synagogue and Jewish girls' schools. Hopefully, this article will promote the recognition in the role Nina Salaman played in contemporary Jewish history and restore the acclaim she duly deserves.

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Service of the Synagogue, A New Edition of the Festival Prayers with an English Translation in Prose and Verse. Published under the Sanction of the Late Dr. Herman Adler, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire. London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1906.

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Notes:

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- ¹ I wish to thank the Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Yarnton Manor, Oxford, for the help and support I received from the academic, administrative and library staff during my stay there while I was working on this study. I also wish to thank the staff in the Manuscript Department of the Cambridge University Library for the help I received while I was there. Thanks are also due to the staff in the Bodleian library in Oxford University for their help. But most of all I wish to thank my husband for enabling to me come to Oxford for this research.
- ² The quoted part of the title is from Israel Zangwill's obituary of Nina Salaman. The full context of the quotation appears in the article.
- ³ The list of names and occupations is taken from the list of "Contributors" from this book, 13-14.
- ⁴ Salaman's translation of the full version of "Hatikvah" appears in Salaman's books, *Apples and Honey* (1921), 276-278, and in *Songs of Many Days* (1923), 50-53.
- ⁵ She was the first person who translated "Hatikvah" into English from its Hebrew origin.
- ⁶ Goodman & Lewis, 281-282.
- ⁷ Goodman & Lewis, 43-47.
- ⁸ Goodman & Lewis, 196.
- ⁹ Goodman & Lewis, 13.
- ¹⁰ Goodman & Lewis, 14. The only other poet in this book is none other than the Hebrew national poet, Chaim Nachman Bialik, who, contrary to Nina Salaman, has achieved high acclaim.
- ¹¹ *Redcliffe Salaman: Scientific, Personal and Family Papers, 1843-1956*. Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives (Henceforth "The Cambridge Collection").
- ¹² Vol. II, No. 4, Ed. Leo Jung, in The Cambridge Collection, Box 25.
- ¹³ Published for the Manchester Young Men's Zionist Society. Massels the Printers, Cheetham, Manchester. In: The Cambridge Collection, Box 26.
- ¹⁴ Allusions to biblical verses are very common in Salaman's poetry, as well as in the poems and hymns that she translated and which can be found in the Jewish prayer books.
- ¹⁵ Endelman's short article (about two pages) describes Salaman's life and achievements without analyzing her impact or developing a thesis except for the claim regarding her exceptional scholarship. Yet it must be remembered that it is an encyclopedic article.
- ¹⁶ *Being a Jewish Miscellany*, June 1917, Vol. 1, No. 3, in The Cambridge Collection, Box 25.
- ¹⁷ As described in the obituary delivered by her sister Elsie – see later in the article.
- ¹⁸ From *New Palestine*, published by Women's International Zionists Organization (WIZO) of the United Kingdom. The Cambridge Collection, Box 26.
- ¹⁹ University Extension Lectures, Toynbee Hall, March 21st, 1916, West End Jewish Literary Society, printed on December 3rd, 1916. In: The Cambridge Collection, Box 25.
- ²⁰ University Extension Lecture, Toynbee Hall. January 29th, 1918. West-End Literary Society. Published October 1919. The Adler Society, Oxford. June 4, 1921. The Cambridge Collection, Box 26.
- ²¹ *The Menorah Journal*, Volume VI, No. 1, February 1920, 46-53. Published by the Intercollegiate Menorah Association, New York. The Cambridge Collection, Box 26.
- ²² *Service of the Synagogue, A New Edition of the Festival Prayers with an English Translation in Prose and Verse*. Published under the Sanction of the Late Dr. Herman Adler, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire. London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1909. Volume 6: Pentecost.

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- ²³ This Machzor is still used in synagogues in Great Britain, e.g. in the synagogue in Oxford (I used the Pentecost Volume when I was there in Shavuot 2012) and in some synagogues in Australia (according to email communication with Australian Rabbis from Melbourne and Sydney).
- ²⁴ Litman, September 15, 1891, 120.
- ²⁵ Litman, October 16, 1912, 130.
- ²⁶ Litman, September 19, 1924, 133.
- ²⁷ The Cambridge Collection, typed pages, Box 26.
- ²⁸ The Cambridge Collection, typed pages, Box 26.
- ²⁹ This is the famous sermon that was described before as the one that broke the gender barrier.
- ³⁰ January 19, 1899, Litman, 115.
- ³¹ May 30, 1899, Litman, 117.
- ³² September 15, 1899, Litman, 120.
- ³³ June 9, 1920, Litman, 132.
- ³⁴ Israel Zangwill's letter to Nina Salaman from March 23, 1918, in The Cambridge Collection, Box 24.
- ³⁵ Rochelson, 20.
- ³⁶ The Cambridge Collection contains hundreds of letters by Zangwill to Nina Salaman in Box 24.
- ³⁷ Letters from October 9, 1918 and from December 23, 1918 respectively. The Cambridge Collection, Box 24.
- ³⁸ The Cambridge Collection, typed pages, Box 23. The Bazaar was to be held at Portman rooms, Baker Street, on May 13th and 14th, 1912.
- ³⁹ The Cambridge Collection, Box 24.
- ⁴⁰ "The Book and Its Writers: "Elegies for the Ninth of Ab," *The Jewish Guardian*, 13th August, 1920. The Cambridge Collection, Box 26.
- ⁴¹ Reissue, Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, n.d. 1910, first edition. The Cambridge Collection, Box 26.
- ⁴² All the obituaries are from a bundle of newspaper clips titled "Salaman 67" in The Cambridge Collection.
- ⁴³ *The Jewish Chronicle Reporter*, November 7, 1959. An obituary.
- ⁴⁴ Nina Salaman and her Favorite Poet. *The Jewish Exponent*, April 17, 1925. An obituary.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ *The Jewish Exponent*, March 13, 1925 with tributes by Israel Zangwill and Mr. Herbert M. Adler (Two obituaries).
- ⁴⁷ In various places in The Cambridge Collection one can see some beautiful drawings that Nina (Davis) Salaman made especially when she was a young girl.
- ⁴⁸ The bundle of Obituaries, The Cambridge Collection.
- ⁴⁹ A booklet in The Cambridge Collection: bundle of obituaries. Reprinted from vol. XI of the transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England. Spottiswoode, Ballantyne & Co. Ltd. London, 1929.
- ⁵⁰ The bundle of Obituaries, The Cambridge Collection.
- ⁵¹ Scheinberg ignores the word "Father", which also appears in the same poem, perhaps because it has a strong Christian connotation but is also used in Jewish prayers (Our Father in Heaven).
- ⁵² Galchinsky, 19.