Esther Carmel-Hakim

Chana Maisel: Agricultural Training for Women
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Translated by Fern Sackbach
2016

First Published by Yad Tabenkin in 2007

Cover photography: Nahalal School Archive
Book design: Zanefa Walsh
Published with the support of: Dr. Phyllis Hammer

The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, Waltham, Massachusetts, USA
2016
Acknowledgements

My book, *Chana Maisel: Agricultural Training for Women*, is based on the doctoral thesis I prepared for the University of Haifa’s Land of Israel Studies Department, under the guidance of Prof. Margalit Shilo and Prof. Yaacov Goldstein.

For the preparation of this book, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to those who helped me complete this task and to see the book through to publication:

Prof. Shulamit Reinharz, Prof. Sylvia Barack Fishman, and the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute at Brandeis University, which recognized the importance of translating the book into English and Dr. Phyllis Hammer who provided the funds;

Prof. Margalit Shilo of Bar-Ilan University, a researcher of the Land of Israel and a trailblazer in the discipline of historical research on women in the Yishuv, for writing the introduction to this book;

Prof. Sylvia Fogel-Bejawui who recommended publication of the Hebrew version of this work to Yad Tabenkin, and to the staff of Yad Tabenkin, foremost among them the editor Yaakov Setter, all of whom helped me in every way possible;

The English translator, Fern Seckbach, for her professional work and pleasant manner;

The foundations and institutions that gave me financial support to see the book published, including The University of Haifa and its Authority of Advanced Studies, The JNF Research Institute under the direction of Dr. Gabi Alexander, The Havazelet Foundation, and The Max Stern Academic College of Jezreel Valley.

To my husband, Haim Hakim, who considered the publication of this book an important endeavor and who supported me at every turn.

To my children, Tal, Lior, Yael, and Ayelet, for the
consideration they showed in graciously letting me steal computer
time from them.

My deepest appreciation goes to the many people who helped
me in my research and enabled me to experience a lengthy,
fascinating encounter with special women leaders. Revealing
their stories and life work became a journey into the unknown.
Many wonderful people assisted me directly and indirectly in
illuminating and charting this territory and making it available to
everyone. To all of them, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude.
Thanks to their support, I was able to share the unique life story
of Dr. Chana Maisel-Shochat with the general public so that they
would understand that the project she initiated – the agricultural
training for women – must receive the attention it so richly
deserves in the history of settlement in Eretz Israel.

Dr. Esther Carmel-Hakim
Kibbutz Ramat-Hashofet, Israel
January 2016
Foreword

Immigrants to Eretz Israel defined the Zionist revolution as a cultural-economic-geographic and gender transformation. Yet, although the men’s turning into farmers has been discussed at length, the path the women followed to enter the agricultural sector has scarcely been mentioned. Much has been written about the exclusion of women from Yishuv history and about the gap in women’s agricultural professionalization. This gap has now been filled by Dr. Esther Carmel-Hakim. Her dissertation, written under my guidance and that of Prof. Yaacov Goldstein of the University of Haifa, served as the basis for this book.

In this volume, Dr. Carmel-Hakim demonstrated the three-way connection between the agricultural training for women in general, the Jewish women’s organizations in the Diaspora, and the pioneering women in Eretz Israel. This triple link is the heart of the book, and Chana Maisel-Shochat’s personality and resourcefulness are the threads tying it all together.

*Chana Maisel: Agricultural Training for Women* — the name the author gave to the agricultural revolution initiated by Maisel describes concisely and thoroughly the story of the international women’s movement in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The author also surveys briefly the trend toward agricultural education for women that began in Britain, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. Alongside these phenomena, Esther Carmel-Hakim describes the organization of Jewish women within the Zionist movement and women’s achievements in the early days of the Yishuv. The exposition of these issues required meticulous efforts in locating documentary material. The author availed herself of more than twenty archives on four continents and used varied original material written in numerous languages.

The chapters that deal with Kinneret as the first Yishuv settlement model, the cooking courses, the hostel for young
women, the women workers’ farms, and the most important of Maisel's achievements—the Young Women’s Agricultural School at Nahalal—present a complicated path of trial and error on the way to creating a generation of Jewish women agriculturalists. The author also reveals the ambivalent attitude toward these educational goals of the institutions responsible for settlement. While the Histadrut and the Zionist Executive offered total moral support, those bodies refrained from giving them proper economic support. Thus, the new institutions that were intended to solve the issue of the women farmer and laborer were established and operated with the backing of Jewish-Zionist women’s organizations the world over.

Dr. Esther Carmel-Hakim deals not only with filling the gaps in our knowledge of the history of Eretz Israel, but she also clarifies how the Zionist revolution shifted from the city to the countryside. One cannot understand the exceptional position of agricultural settlement in the Zionist endeavor without comprehending the incorporation of women into the project. The pioneering society understood well that the Zionist endeavor would not take root without promoting the halutzot (pioneering women), but it refused to allot funds to the women’s project in the way that it provided means for the men’s. At the same time, the halutzot respected the male establishment and did not revile it for discriminating against them. They formulated a strategy that enabled them to advance by means of capital donated to them by women throughout the Jewish world. The women's projects even created the new feminine image of the Hebrew woman: a suntanned young woman working in the field, but also a women engaged in the domestic agricultural branches while relying on the financial resources supplied to them by women.

The vision that guided Chana Maisel and her students is the same one that motivated the author and resulted in this book. Esther Carmel-Hakim wants to inform us of the Zionist faith of
the women founders and to firmly establish the highly important place of women in the Zionist endeavor. Without them, the Zionist story is incomplete.

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Chapter One:
Setting Out for Eretz Yisrael
During the Second Aliyah

In 1983, Chana Maisel was born to a wealthy Jewish family of six daughters and six sons in Grodno. As early as her high school days, she played a prominent role in Zionist activities, joining the Poalei Zion association under the influence of her neighbors—Bezalel and Leib Yaffe—who were among its founders. In 1903, upon completion of her studies with honors, she was elected to head the group in place of Leib Yaffe. Maisel was interested in everything happening in Eretz Yisrael and wanted to understand why the members of the First Aliyah had failed. She was incensed by the attempt to place the blame on “the Jewish woman” who had not met the challenge, as surmised from articles published at that time in the journal Altneuland. Maisel felt that the problem with the integration of women in Eretz Israel was rooted in the insufficient preparation the young female olah [immigrant] received for living there and in the minuscule help provided her. Since Maisel espoused the view that agricultural labor was the foundation of Zionism for women as well as men, she decided to train herself for agricultural work before she immigrated to Eretz Yisrael.

Chana’s intensive work for Poalei Zion in Grodno led to her arrest by the Czarist police. When she was released, she was forced to move to Odessa. In 1905 Maisel was elected as a representative to the Seventh Zionist Congress in Basel on behalf of the Poalei Zion association. She set herself the goal of arriving in Eretz Israel equipped with the ability to work in agriculture, since the Zionist settlement idea alone was insufficient; one had to be equipped with practical training. At that time, women in Russia were not
accepted for agricultural studies at institutions of higher learning, and Maisel, who had applied to some of these schools, was also rejected. When the Congress ended, she remained in Switzerland to study natural sciences at the University of Berne. Her aim was to acquire theoretical as well as practical training in preparation for agricultural work in Eretz Yisrael. She later left Berne and transferred to the gardening school for women in Niderlenz, also in Switzerland. About a year later, she was accepted at the University of Besançon, in France, where she studied from 1907 to 1909, while simultaneously working at an experimental station for vegetables and orchards. She completed her studies in France and was granted a doctorate in science with honors. Aliza Shidlovsky wrote about those days:

Only this week did I hear how on the day she received her agronomy degree in France, Chana went with her diploma in hand to buy a boat ticket to Eretz Yisrael, in recognition of the idea that without a female farmer, no Hebrew farm would be established, and that the female worker had to be trained. And she accomplished the start.

Acting similarly at that time was Malvina Neumann, an exceptional figure for a young religious woman from Vienna, who, the same year Maisel immigrated to Eretz Yisrael left Vienna to study at a large farm for milk production at Gaubitsch. We can learn about her ideas as a religious woman and about the need to educate herself for agricultural work, from a letter to her friend Mina:

We are forbidden, obviously, to stand idly by and dip our hand into the plate. Only if you help yourself, will God help you. We must first of all live in Zion. Everyone tells me that I cannot be a farmer, but I
want to be.\textsuperscript{10}

The steps taken by Maisel and women like her were based to a large extent on the achievements of the new women’s movements. From 1918 on, the British Parliament and the United States Congress gradually approved amendments granting suffrage to women.\textsuperscript{11} At the turn of the century, there were two major movements seeking equal rights for women in the U.S. and Great Britain also influencing Jewish women in Eretz Israel and the world over. One was the suffragist movement whose members came, in the main, from the developing middle class especially in Britain. The other, the Socialist movement, encompassed a number of feminist elements. In Russia, the women’s movement consisted of three branches: feminist, nihilist, and radical. The Russian revolutionary movement was stoking the hope that the uprising would usher in the longed for equality among men and women. Because women could participate as equals in revolutionary and terrorist activity and reach important positions of command, many women, including students, played an active role in Russian revolutionary organizations. In reality, however, they lived in an underground that gave them a sense of equality rather than actual equality. Even though the women who joined in the revolutionary activity did not act specifically to promote women’s issues, they did advance them to a great extent indirectly. In 1879, there were 169 Jewish women among 796 Russian students. The first Jewish female revolutionaries were active as early as the 1870s, and their number increased in the 1880s and 1890s.\textsuperscript{12}

Maisel and her colleagues benefited as well from the swift development of the teaching of agriculture for women at the turn of the century. For example, in the United States the needs of World War I led to the founding of special courses for the Women’s Land Army, most of the initiative for which came from individual women and women’s organizations.\textsuperscript{13} The original
funding was raised by the founders, themselves; only later did some schools receive support from the governments or from the administrations in the areas in which they operated. Agriculture schools for women were founded first in Britain (1892), and then in Germany (1897), the United States (1901), and Switzerland (1906). The main subjects were gardening; growing vegetables, flowers, and fruit trees; raising poultry and bees; dairy farming and animal husbandry; home economics; soil types; and pest control. All of these were fields familiar to women. The majority of students in these schools were urban women aged eighteen and over; the very founding of these institutions shows that this profession was sufficiently attractive to this type of woman. Upon completion of their studies, these agronomists intended to work as salaried laborers or to own small farms on which they would raise vegetables and poultry. The move of urban women to the country, by choice and design, contrasted with the world trend at the time, when women were streaming from the village to the city—abandoning agriculture as a source of livelihood and switching to manufacturing and industry.

In addition to the general feminine struggle, Maisel and her colleagues also had to cope with the status of women in East European Jewish society, which was patriarchal and traditional in nature and maintained a clear division of functions between men and women. Men filled the roles of heads of families and community leaders, earning esteem, prestige, and power; while the women held the position of mothers and their husbands’ wives. The woman had meager religious education and could not serve as religious or community leaders, though they did play a vital role in economics and Jewish culture.14 Within the home and family, women had a greater measure of power than in public.15

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, those Jewish parents who wished to do so sent their daughters to government elementary schools where they acquired general, non-Jewish
education. The girls who were exposed to general schooling experienced a great gap between secular culture and the informal Jewish learning they had received at home. In time, Chana Maisel, who had been influenced by the atmosphere of the Haskalah, came out against her parents who withheld Jewish and Hebrew education from their daughters.

**First Period in Eretz Yisrael**

Chana Maisel set foot in Eretz Yisrael in August 1909 and began to work in the Judean towns [moshavot]: Petah Tikva, Rishon Letzion, and Rehovot. She wanted to become familiar with the branches of labor in the country; she studied them and sought a place of work that would afford her local experience to augment the knowledge and practical training she had brought from abroad. Moshe Smilansky describes how astonished he was during one of her field trips, when she took an interest in how he fertilized his field’s vegetable garden.

Chana did not find a permanent job in the Judean moshavot, so she moved to Sejera in the Galilee toward the end of 1909. On January 10, 1910, she sent a letter to Bezalel Yaffe in which she outlined a modest plan for founding an agricultural training farm. She explained that “the farm will enable me simultaneously to support myself from my labor and to prepare myself for my future activity—‘mother’ of a school for girls or a special agricultural institution.” At this stage she envisioned an educational institution under her direction that would equip her students with knowledge in three branches of agriculture: vegetable, poultry, and dairy farming. Her aim was to train young Jewish women to function as farmers’ wives or as skilled agricultural workers—salaried or independent—who would work with these crops and products. The produce would be sent for sale to the moshavot in the area and would replace Arab produce. Her rationale for this training project was the farm’s contribution to the settlement
endeavor in Eretz Yisrael with no mention of the future school’s contribution to the welfare of the women:

About the great value of such an endeavor, I need not tell you. You certainly know the Jewish moshavot well enough to appreciate the benefit that this might bring to our settlement work. Until now, many have complained about the female Jewish settlers, but until now nothing has been done to change the situation. What can I do about that? I lack financial means and am armed only with good will and specific knowledge. I see this as an open question.  

Maisel’s initial stance, therefore, touted the benefit of the training project, which was intended primarily to advance Zionist settlement and not necessarily to promote women. Her attitude to the issue of financing reveals a rather modest approach: she aspired to find an economic body that would be prepared to establish an agricultural farm under her management, while she also thought about possibly finding the funding herself.

The Second Aliyah was a time of searching for a model for the female laborer. With what image should she identify: with the Russian peasant woman, or with the local felahit (Arab peasant woman)? At that time no framework existed for the formal training of women in agriculture, nor was there any model for the female pioneer worker (halutzah) to emulate or learn from. In the First Aliyah moshavot, no figure of the female laborer had been created that the Second Aliyah halutzot could identify with, while the Jewish woman in the traditional Sephardi community was concerned usually only with caring for the home.

Two labor parties, Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir and Poalei Zion, took shape in Eretz Yisrael in the time of the Second Aliyah. In both there was sparse involvement of women. Active in Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir were Chana Maisel, Ada Fishman-Maimon, Sara Malkin, Hayuta Bussel, and Yael Gordon. Involved in Poalei Zion were
Manya Shochat, Rachel Yanait, and later on, when it had become Ahdut ha-Avodah, Chana Chizik, Rachel Katzenelson, and Golda Myerson. Bloom found that the women of Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir contributed more to strengthening women’s status in Eretz Israel than did the women of Poalei Zion.\textsuperscript{28} The two parties strove to give women equal standing vis a vis the rights of men, but in reality various difficulties intruded on the way to implementing the idea. Thus, Joseph Baratz wrote about the role intended for the young women in the kevutzah:

This ratio between the sexes was calculated in advance: six men were intended for working with the mules, two for guarding, one for coordinating things and doing the bookkeeping, one as a “filler” for any necessity, while the two girls were for housekeeping—for cooking and laundry.\textsuperscript{29}

Rivka Mahnimit wrote in her diary:

September 1911. With the other immigrants they bring me to Chaim Baruch’s filthy hotel in Jaffa. Before evening, discussions about work in the “Laborers’ Club.” Yes, if I will agree to cook and launder, I will find work there too, in the distant Galilee, praised by everyone one. I am seventeen.

11.12.1911 … The work hours: from four thirty in the morning until nine at night. After work I do something for the fellows: fix torn trousers or wash a shirt. I am the only \textit{haverah} on the farm.\textsuperscript{30}

Ada Fishman commented in her book:

A change in attitude to the woman, as a second-class citizen, still rooted in the haze of the prehistoric
generations—will come only after a lengthy process, of development and slow progress. Here I want to tell things as they really were, so that we can know just how primitive were both the perception and the understanding of the *haverim* at the time regarding the problem of the female *haverah*, when they made a joint effort to lay the foundations for the new working society.\(^{31}\)

Truth be told, the young women, similar to the young men, knew very little about the job of cooking and baking. They found it difficult to meet the task of providing nourishing, tasty food for the members of the kevutzah. They had trouble grappling with the physical challenge of exhausting kitchen work. The men’s criticism of the results was scathing.\(^{32}\) Tehiya Lieberzohn (1970) wrote that “the laborers here recognize the right of the woman only to be a cook … and she was also a cook in the *kevutzot*, this is thoroughly a dog’s life. In short, the laborers here want enslavement of the cook! She has no human rights!”\(^{33}\)

A fundamental debate swirled around the work in the kitchen. This is the way Fishman put it, “The woman laborer wanted to rebel against kitchen work as her main branch of employment, she wanted to but she couldn’t, out of helplessness, from knowing that the gates to field work were barred to her and that only a select few would be allowed to pass through them.”\(^{34}\)

Wilkansky noted the problematic in kitchen duty, while complimenting the *halutzah’s* love of field work, “There is no reverence toward this institution: not for those eating at its table nor for those setting the table. The female worker enters the kitchen dead set against it, and she counts the days until she can recite the blessing “blessed am I who is released from this,” their whole heart is drawn to the field.”\(^{35}\)

So it was that the kitchen turned into a metaphor for woman’s
inferior status and the controversy over working in the kitchen was
decidedly a feminist rebellion.

The halutzot themselves wondered about the nature of their role. Yael Gordon made the first public statement against “the Pale of Work” defined for the female laborer and placed the blame on the men’s attitude that considered the halutzah simply a cook. In a speech she gave at a workers’ assembly in 1910, she said:

And if until now we have seen only a few halutzot coming for the purpose of “conquest of labor”, then the guilty parties are the young men, who are used to continually denigrating the young women laborers who come to work [emphasis mine—EC-H]. This attitude has to change, because it is not right, and when this approach changes, many young women will come for field work and other tasks. But no one has the right—to outline a path for her in advance and to tell her: We need you as a cook. She will find her job herself according to her own choice.36

Miriam Ostrovsky (Baratz) did not agree with Yael Gordon and saw no loss of respect in the role of cook:

I do not understand why haverah G was so frightened of the job of being a cook. I see no disrespect in this. To run the household—this is the work for which the woman is fit and the man unfit. On the contrary, the man is more fit for field work than the woman. And since the [male] worker cannot sustain his field work without someone to run the domestic side for him, then young women are obliged to take upon themselves this role, for which they are better suited, and to fill it.37

Later on, Miriam Baratz will become the first woman to work
in the dairy and become the expert on raising cows in the first Kevutza: Degania.\textsuperscript{38}

Yitzhak Wilkansky, manager of the Ben Shemen farm and a Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir leader, suggested a way to cope with the lack of [female] cooks among the kevutzot, by ascribing idealistic, ideological value to the kitchen work. He beseeched the cooks:

> To reveal the Divine Spirit hiding among stove-tops.
> The prosaic kitchen is the starting point without which it is impossible to achieve our aspirations; there are no high crafts and low crafts for the halutzot: every job leads us to our desired goal, whether in the open space of the field or within the walls of the home—it is exalted and lofty.\textsuperscript{39}

The ambition of the halutzot to free themselves from the kitchen and to break the conventions of “men’s roles–women’s roles” was the opening shot in the Jewish feminist battle in Eretz Yisrael. Agriculture was not the only an ideological-national aspiration, it was also a means for instilling feminist values and producing a change in women’s status in Eretz Yisrael. At the close of the discussion at the convention, an amendment was added to a proposal, “The Histadrut must attract the pioneering [female] workers to labor in general, and especially for the purpose of managing housekeeping.”\textsuperscript{40} One sees from this compromise that both men and women remained bound to the deeply entrenched images of the society in which they were raised.

Three years after the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir meeting in which kitchen work was discussed, Tehiya Lieberzohn wrote in an article in Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir:

> Many thought that the idealistic young woman who comes to Eretz Yisrael—her function was to serve them. The inexperienced young women acquiesced
to this approach and believed that [by working] in cooking and services they were solving most of our issues in Eretz Yisrael. Any young woman who dared to doubt this assumption was considered odd.⁴¹

Lieberzohn argued against the men who exploited the women’s inexperience to force them to cook and serve them. She also attacked the women who gave in to this dictate, accepted the man’s authority over them, and dared not disagree.

A year later, at the first Women Workers Convention at Merhavya, Yael Gordon extended the debate beyond the issue of the kitchen:

> We aspire to the equality of the woman and her liberation, which will give her the opportunity to fulfill her role as a woman and human being and at the same time as a productive member of society. And that is what we should aspire to, especially within our young society that is taking shape in Eretz Yisrael, out of the nation’s desire to maintain its identity and to preserve its “ego” through labor and creativity.⁴²

Sarah Bussel, who had arrived with hopes of working in agriculture, reconciled herself to the situation and wrote the following in her memoirs:

> Since my coming to Huldah, I have felt for the first time that I am breathing the air of Eretz Yisrael, the land about which I dreamed. I saw the haverim as superior beings—for are they not pioneers realizing the hopes held by the people for two thousand years? They are reviving the country through their labor. I have willingly taken it upon myself to work with my female comrade in cooking and housekeeping. The farming
jobs were not [accessible]—not the vegetable plot, nor the henhouse nor the barn, but it is enough for me to know that I am helping the halutzim.\footnote{43}

In a later period, Hayuta Bussel spoke about the gap between the egalitarian work in the Diaspora and the reality of discrimination against women in Eretz Yisrael:

The haverah played a very active role in Diaspora work for the benefit of Eretz Israel. And as part of preparation toward Eretz Yisrael, her activism sometimes surpassed that of the haver … Together they prepared themselves, the haver and haverah, and when they reached the country they also spoke a common language: “We will go on aliyah, we will act.” And then, when they did immigrate, reality slapped them in the face. No sooner had they trod on the soil Eretz Yisrael, then all ideas were up for grabs, and as if from under the surface the issue popped up: for the haver there remained only the question of whether he would find work, while for the haverah there were many issues: whether there was work and the right to work.\footnote{44}

Actually, the question of the female agricultural worker was rather marginal for the male laborers as a group, and it did not come up for discussion even once at their assemblies. The laborer M. M. Shmuelevitz, who wrote under the pseudonym Y. Mamashi, made clear just how trivial the issue of the female agricultural worker was in the thinking of male workers. In a speech to his comrades at one of the meetings, he said:

I have been in this country for almost five years now, and I have taken part in many laborers’ assemblies. What has not been talked about at those gatherings? ...
Everything comes up for discussion, but I have never heard that on the agenda of the assembly was the issue of the female agricultural worker as well [emphasis added], or that any speaker, even inadvertently, touched upon this issue.45

Permanent female workers were accepted in communal groups only as kitchen staff, and even that was only on a daily basis, with their wages lower than those of their male counterparts. But, after the Women’s Training Farm was established, the workers from the Merhavya settlement turned to the farm’s graduates, asking them to come to Merhavya, and as early as 1913 the young women clearly defined their conditions for acceptance.46

Haverot participated in three successful cooperative attempts: in the collective Manya Schohat founded at Sejera there were eighteen workers, six of whom were women; at Um Juni (Deganya), women were paid—by a group of male workers—to cook and do the laundry; at Merhavya, in a cooperative established in line with Oppeheimer’s system, the situation of the first female laborers was as bad as it could be.47 The major questions at issue from the women’s point of view were the following: How could the halutzah change herself while the attitude toward her was no different from the past? How could the halutzah become a different woman if her attitude toward herself was not clear to her? Was it that she wanted to function like the men? Was it enough for her to provide the traditional services for the men, or did she want to take an active role in working the land?48

The Initiative for Establishing an Agricultural School for Women

At that time in Eretz Israel there were five male-only institutions for the study of agriculture. The agricultural school at Mikveh Israel had been founded by Alliance Israelite Universelle in 1870. The four others were educational or training farms: at Sejera,
founded by JCA (Jewish Colonization Association) (1899); three educational farms of the Palestine Office—at Kinneret (1908) and at Ben Shemen and Huldah (1909). At Sejera women were provided a certain opportunity to acquire agricultural training as part of the “collective” initiated and established by Manya Schohat in 1907. The collective model there, however, lasted less than a year and was not applied elsewhere. To be sure, the women in the collective were involved in agriculture, but they toiled shoulder to shoulder with the men in dry crops and other field work, with no consideration for their physical limitations and in the belief, shared by the women themselves, that they must prove equal to the men, and perhaps even compete with them, to prove their true partnership in the Zionist endeavor. Years later Kayla Giladi related:

In those days there was no possibility for “our type” of girls to find any kind of work. Not even as maids in private homes. Krause was the first and only person to help us gain an education in the different branches of the agricultural farm. He knew full well that no agricultural settlement could succeed, if women were not trained for it. In actuality, we took part in all the jobs with the men: we plowed, we harvested, we cleared the ground, we carried heavy sacks of grain on our backs, we loaded grain and hay onto wagons, and so on. The only thing we did not do was sow the seeds. On the farm, that important job was given to only two of the fellows.

Manya Schohat, as well as the farm manager Eliahu Krause—with whom a contract was arranged between the farm and the collective, permitting the young women to work in agriculture—recognized, of course, the importance of training women in agriculture and their participation in the work, but the solution
they reached, that the women would work like the men, could not meet the test of reality. Kayla Giladi described it as follows:

I, too, switched from kitchen work to agriculture. I began by pulling out broad beans, together with Arab women experienced in that; the work exhausted me. I was not used to working bent over. One ordinary day I went out to the field, I took the plow in hand, and the oxen ... immediately ran off with the plow to the forest. With me chasing after them. I caught them, brought them back to the furrow, and they ran off again, and so it went—the entire day. Crushed, broken, and enraged, toward evening I finally returned to the farm with the oxen.\(^5\)

Her statements clearly show that among the women of the Second Aliyah there were some who wanted to achieve full equality in agricultural work, to the point of being just like the men in everything: plowing, guarding, and external appearance. But since many of these young women could not meet the high physical demands, this attempt failed. When Maisel arrived at Sejera, the halutzot who were still at the farm were introduced to an idea that astounded them in its simplicity: women do not have to try to be equal to men in work that is beyond their ability or their physical characteristics, but rather they must find their own “feminine voice” in agriculture, which meant training themselves in those specific branches that matched their qualifications.\(^5\)

Verification of this can be found in the memoirs of Sarah Krigser, one of the first “ploughwomen” at Sejera:

For us, agricultural work meant becoming equal to the fellows, but then Chana Maisel came to us and taught us agriculture in the broadest sense. Before then we had worked in threshing and in transporting
grain…. Chana made us party to her ideas about agricultural training for young women. Then new horizons opened for us, … we convened by ourselves in a room, and Chana Maisel spoke to us about the need for a budget for a barn and a chicken coop and a vegetable plot, to make possible work more suitable for the woman laborer. For us this was a new, exciting idea, actually this was the beginning of the women workers’ movement in Eretz Yisrael. Chana talked about separate meetings only for haverot. The young women should not have to engage in work that was inappropriate for their physical structure. At that time, it was commonly accepted that at work in every agricultural settlement there were two female laborers whose job was to cook the soup and porridge outside in big pots over [a fire of] tree branches. Chana Maisel’s ideas, however, slowly led to a significant change.\textsuperscript{54}

Maisel offered new perspectives for the women and a broad range of tailor-made opportunities for agricultural work. By seeing the distinct place of the woman in agriculture, Maisel laid the foundation for a separate social organization which heralded the country’s women workers’ association. At Sejera, Maisel began to raise vegetables with the encouragement of Krause, the farm manager, and she showed the women how it was possible to have them join in the work of other agricultural branches beside dry crops. Maisel worked at Sejera for almost an entire year. Yehoshua Brandstatter, a halutz who came to Eretz Israel in 1910, met her there and was impressed, as were many others, from her determined, moral figure.\textsuperscript{55} In spring 1910 Maisel had to go to Russia to inform her parents of her sister’s death.\textsuperscript{56}

In a letter from January 10, 1910, to Bezalel Yaffe, Chana concentrates on:
1) The need for training female workers in agricultural branches fitting for women: cultivating vegetable plots, raising poultry and dairy farming. In her words, “It is necessary to prepare skilled female agriculture workers and agricultural settlers. How to achieve this now is hard for me to say … a farm whose main branches will be growing vegetables, raising chicken, dairy farming.”

2) Expressing her aspiration to see woman working in agriculture in a number of possible ways after having been trained for it:

   And for all those jobs I would employ young Jewish women. The yield I would send for sale to the moshavot in the area and by doing so would, in effect, remove the Arab trader from the market in those places. The young working women would develop into exemplary settlers, or into women who on their own account would raise vegetables and poultry, or who would work for others in those same capacities.

3) Considering herself not only as the person coming up with the idea, but also as the one who would put it into actual effect and lead the way in this groundbreaking endeavor.

   I would not want to leave the farm now, since it enables me simultaneously to earn my keep from my own work as well as prepare myself for my future activity as the mother of a “girls’ school” or a special agricultural institution.

   Maisel’s determination was expressed in her ambition to establish a school no matter what, whether funding would be found or whether she would remain penniless, and as she put it,
“During the year I wish to try to influence any group at all to establish an agricultural institution for young women, or to find a way to build it almost barehanded.”

In November 1910 Maisel returned to Eretz Yisrael, taking up residence at the Zion Hotel in Haifa and making a living working for the agronomist Eliahu Blumenfeld, who had come on aliyah from Russia and bought an olive orchard on the slopes of the Carmel. The poet Rachel Bluwstein, who arrived in the country the previous year, wanted to study agriculture, and on her way to Sejera was directed to Maisel. Blumenfeld did not agree to accept Rachel as a laborer, but he did allow her to live with Maisel and work with her. So it was that Rachel became Maisel’s first pupil.

**Mustering Resources**

Maisel and her comrades were pioneering women within the Zionist movement itself. In Hibbat Zion, there was almost no place for the woman. No women were among its activists nor its writers; women were not seen in the movement’s session at the Katowice Conference in 1884 nor at the Hovevei Zion conference in April 1890. In the utopian works written in the early days of the Zionist movement, from 1882 through 1920, clashing, contradictory approaches to the status of women were expressed. In his essay “Zion of the Jewish Woman,” Martin Buber argued that the woman who had maintained her family in the past was now abandoning her role and causing the deterioration of Judaism in the modern era. Buber, therefore, called for the women to return to the good characteristics of Jewish motherhood to restore order in their lives: they must return to tradition and to the “natural” role of the woman. Initial attempts were made from 1888 on in Galicia to link the women’s organizations and the Zionist movement, but the only topic on the agenda was slave trade in Jewish women. In Lvov in 1910, the first national conference of Zionist women’s associations in Galicia convened, led by Roza Pomerantz-Meltzer.
In the First Zionist Congress, held in 1897 in Basel, eleven women took part, the wives of the important Zionist leaders as well as a number of Jewish female Swiss university students, who were interested in the new national movement. Women had the right to participate and express their opinions at the congress, but they only observed and listened. In a bold move at the Second Zionist Congress, assembled in 1898, the by-laws established equal rights for women, and they were given the right to vote. In reality only a few women participated in committee work.

After four Zionist congresses, in which women barely left a trace, Miriam Schach criticized the passive image of women in the Zionist movement. In 1907 she declared the founding of an association by the name of Verband jüdischer Frauen für Kulturarbeit in Palästina (the Organization of Jewish Women for the Advancement of Cultural Works in Palestine; known as Kulturverband). The women of the Kulturverband, like Jewish women elsewhere, suffered double discrimination: on the outside, because they were Jews; and at home, because of their gender. Women did not study the sacred texts like the men, and they could not take part in the leadership of the community. They were called upon, above all, to fulfill their role in home-related tasks. Activity in community charitable organizations was the only venue open to women at the time. The women who were connected to the Zionist movement and sought an arena for action that was not available through the charitable organizations, or the Zionist movement, became interested in vigorous activity in the Kulturverband, mainly in the spheres of education and employment. The Kulturverband’s first act in Eretz Yisrael was support for the Jewish hospital Shaarey Zion in Jaffa. Next they turned to the founding of schools for young women that would provide training in crafts: embroidery, lace-making, and later also sewing. Apparently there were also gymnastics and singing. The language of instruction in these schools was Hebrew. Prior to World War I, about 600
young women studied in these schools. The organization also confronted, among other things, the activity of the Christian missionary, especially in Safed.\footnote{Ideas concerning agricultural settlement and working the land in Eretz Yisrael were part of the backbone of Zionist ideology and its implementation. The notion that the historical right to the Land of Yisrael is insufficient to grant ownership and that it must be reinforced by tilling the soil, was expressed in the words of Ussishkin, who declared, “Only land that we will water with the sweat of our brow will really be ours.”\footnote{Wilkansky wrote similarly, “A people whose land belongs to its workers is strong and firm, and all the passing storms cannot move it from it[s soil]. Against the farmer’s plow, all weapons of destruction explode.”\footnote{The aspirations of the Zionist women and men were identical for the most part: to immigrate to Eretz Yisrael and to work the land. These aims coincided with the young women’s experience as members in mixed Zionist groups in which life was conducted in an egalitarian manner.\footnote{Many young women possessed Zionist awareness, which had been nurtured by their social background and from the Zionist movement to which they belonged. As one reads their writings, one sees clearly the hope some of them had of playing an active role in tilling the soil. They thought that only if they actually took part in this work would they be entitled to demand full equal rights with the men. Sara Malkin put it as follows, immediately upon arriving in the country in 1905: \begin{quote}
I still had a few dozen francs left from the journey, but my soul yearned to work. For two ideas had brought me to Eretz Yisrael: that the purpose of Zionism is to live in Eretz Yisrael; and that every person in Eretz Yisrael must engage in working the land, to toil and to create.\end{quote}}}}}}\footnote{Hayuta Bussel wrote:}
I have seen our status in the Diaspora and it is downtrodden and humiliating—and I turned my yearning toward life in nature. I loved the field. I would steal out of the house and go to the gentiles’ street to look from afar at the farmers at work. I saw their children taking part in the harvest and the gathering of fruit, and I described in my mind’s eye village life in Eretz Yisrael, my house surrounded by trees and flowers and everywhere tanned, laughing children, engaged in every task. One thing was clear to me: in Eretz Yisrael we will be tillers of the soil, we will sow and plant.\textsuperscript{79}

Sarah Bussel related how she joined the Zionist association in her city, and later immigrated to Eretz Yisrael with the expectation of working in agriculture:

She explained the goal of her associations to me [her brother Yosef Bussel] in these words: “to revitalize the Hebrew language and to redeem Eretz Yisrael from its desolation. To build,” he said, “with our own hands, to plow and to plant, and all of us, the entire nation, we will be tillers of the soil.” From then on I clung only to this idea and it suffused my being.\textsuperscript{80}

Shulamit Gutgeld (later Bat-Dori) pointed out in her article, “On the Issue of the Young Woman in Eretz Israel,” that the young ladies who immigrated with the Second and Third Aliyot expected equality when they came to the country:

Most of the young women who went on aliyah and came to the country in the past fifteen years were “exceptional” youths, who, while still in the Diaspora, took an active part in the life of the various Zionist associations, found enough courage and energy in
their souls to sever links with home and tradition, to immigrate to the country and to devote themselves to labor … Obviously young women such as these, who in the Diaspora had been managers, or at least an important, productive factor in their circles, did not think there was any kind of difference between them and the young men, with whom they lived and worked. They immigrated to the country with a strong internal sense of equality with the boys, their long-time friends, especially in light of the fact that they had acquired their egalitarian position through their own vigor and courage.\textsuperscript{81}

In reality, claims researcher Margalit Shilo, most of the farmers’ wives in the period of the First Aliyah did not expect to take part in working the soil, and they actually distanced themselves from agricultural farm work.\textsuperscript{82} The value of manual agricultural labor was in dispute in the context of the men’s work, so how much more so regarding women.\textsuperscript{83} Yaffa Berlovitz thinks that only a handful of educated women expressed any aspirations: nationalist, feminist or egalitarian; and among this minority one could discern the first buds of striving for gender equality. Most of the women were uneducated and had no definite ideology, and their joining the settlement endeavor was based on following their husband, in most cases, out of subservience and constraints.\textsuperscript{84} On more than one occasion, these motives led to refusals and grumbling against settling the land, a phenomenon that became more strident in times of crisis.\textsuperscript{85} Among the women of this Aliyah were some fifteen writers, whose output depicts the woman as inferior, insensitive to the discrimination against her, and opposed to any attempt to go beyond it.\textsuperscript{86} A number of the women in the moshavot of the First Aliyah worked in education, medicine, and welfare.\textsuperscript{87} Widows sometimes had no choice but to deal with their
agricultural holding, and some of the women did help in building up the farms.\textsuperscript{88} 

When the halutzot of the Second Aliyah arrived in the country, they encountered a reality totally different from what they had expected, and they had to fight suspicion against them coming from inhabitants of the First Aliyah moshavot, and hostility or apathy toward their aspirations for equality with the men, on the part of their male comrades. Most of the young women were adolescents aged sixteen to seventeen, only a sprinkling among the halutzim, with their number never more than a few dozen (about 10–20 percent).\textsuperscript{89} From 1911 on the female laborers numbered a few hundred, most stemming from Eastern Europe. Though coming from traditional families, they had been influenced by the entire gamut of revolutionary ferment in Russia, by anti-Semitism, and by persecution and pogroms.\textsuperscript{90} They set their sights on the combined vision of national renaissance in Eretz Yisrael and the creation of a new social order. Some of them expected a new society, one of whose characteristics would be a change in woman’s status.\textsuperscript{91} Most of them had left the warm, protective bosom of their families abruptly, turned their backs on the traditional feminine role that awaited them in their homes, and traveled alone to a faraway, undeveloped land whose living conditions were harsh and whose future was uncharted.\textsuperscript{92} The women who came on their own to Eretz Yisrael were characterized by high social and national consciousness as well as strong identification with the needs of the public. They arrived in the country filled with enthusiasm over the possibility of realizing the Zionist dream and imbued with new ideas about equality among humankind. They wanted to devote their lives to bringing the social and national vision to fruition in Eretz Yisrael, as full, equal partners with the men, both ideologically and in practice. From the women’s point of view, working the land in general, and agricultural endeavor in particular were of additional importance, parallel to the national
goals. Through actively joining in this work, the women hoped to advance their aspiration for creating an egalitarian, working society, and as they saw it, agriculture served as their prime target, being the most concrete expression of the attainment of their ambition to combine the two visions—the national and the social.

Zionism, which had started out as a national-utopian vision, a kind of intellectual ideal that enraptured men and women alike and boasted of its liberal, egalitarian attitude toward women, was revealed – when put in practice - to be replete with conservative, stereotypical perceptions that created a discriminatory approach to women and left them out of the circle of productive work. The halutzot, in whom the same Zionist flame burned as had ignited the spirit of the male halutzim and had led the young men and women to abandon their families, to immigrate to Eretz Yisrael, to grapple together with the difficulties of daily survival, the halutzot found themselves, in the end, in a minor role that meant providing services for the men. These men were the only ones who carried on the Zionist idea, to work in agricultural labor. Hoisting this type of work on the banner of Zionist realization stimulated the women’s awareness of their relative inferiority and awakened them to recognizing the need to define their role and to fight for their incorporation as equals into the agricultural endeavor.

Zionist feminism may be regarded as the awakening from the utopian dream of a new, egalitarian society in the Promised Land with practical gender consequences that derived from the idea of agricultural work. The feminist awakening led to the prominence of women who did know how to navigate the general rebellion. With the awakening of bitter women at that time and their desire for a constructive solution, these women contributed to the consolidation of the new image of the Hebrew female laborer. What Sarah Thon and Maisel, both of whom were among the standard bearers of Zionist feminism in Eretz Yisrael, kept in mind was the image of the new modern woman halutzah, who had been
educated and trained in domestic science and in auxiliary farming, in a way that freed her from dependency upon men. At the same time, the modern halutzah did not aspire to compete with them or to dispossess men of their roles. Chana Maisel and her colleagues understood that the women themselves held the key to changing the status of the pioneering women.

Maisel believed that the realization of Zionism in Eretz Yisrael depended upon working in agriculture; a model she felt was correct and suitable not only for the male halutzim but also for the female. The pushing of the latter into the traditional service jobs, which caused dissatisfaction among the Second Aliyah halutzot, led one of the leaders of Zionist feminism to look closely into this failure. With her strong feminist feelings, Maisel understood that for women to join in the work as equals in the agricultural-vocational sphere, they had to change from being passive to active, to acquire skills and knowledge in the fields of agricultural work. Maisel and others of her generation considered themselves part of the Zionist-socialist movement. They were linked to the movement and to the men with bonds of loyalty, so Maisel never thought to point an accusing finger at society, and to ask it to change. The best she knew was that the cause of women’s low status in the settlements was their professional incompetence. The solution lay in self-change, which would be effected through agricultural training in those vocations that would not make them compete with the men.

Reality and living conditions in that period were not easy. The pioneers had to become accustomed to physical labor, to grapple with difficult conditions in order to earn a livelihood and to cope with the seasonal nature of the work. Beyond these problems came confrontation with the farmers who owned the land, since they preferred to employ Arab workers, who came cheaper and had more experience. This explained why Jewish laborers were a minority in the moshavot in comparison to Arab workers.

Agricultural work with field crops in Galilee and in the
orchards of Judea involved considerable physical hardship that most of the young women could not cope with, and even if they could—those who assigned tasks refused to allow the girls to partake in “man’s work.” The women’s situation was much worse than that of the men, even in those areas in which there was ostensible equal partnership with men. The terms of daily existence were not easy for them, and their housing conditions were insufferable. A woman could not join the living accommodations of the men, and she needed her own corner, which no one found for her, since no one took care to locate it. The women’s descriptions of the time mention that in the summer, their living quarters were out in the open, and in the winter they took shelter in storage sheds or in the kitchen. The women laborers of the Second Aliyah demanded the right to an equal social standing in work, too. They wanted to obtain full equality in roles and tasks that would make it possible for them to be complete partners in agricultural work. But they encountered imperviousness, hostility, and lack of understanding, all rooted in traditional perceptions and conservative concepts that were prevalent among all strata of the Jewish population in Eretz Yisrael.

In spring 1910, through Bezalel Yaffe’s intercession, Maisel met Arthur Ruppin, director of the Palestine Office in Jaffa. She tried to obtain his support for the establishment of an institution for the agricultural training of women. As he later related:

One day in 1910, Bezalel Yaffe came to me at the Palestine Office and introduced me to a young woman named Chana Maisel, who had recently received her diploma as an agronomist from one of the French universities and had immigrated to Eretz Israel to work in this field by providing agricultural training for young ladies. Until that time, in selecting candidates for settlement in the agricultural moshavot in Eretz
Yisrael, no thought was given to the women but only to men: toward the agricultural education of women nothing had been done thus far, so that the wives of the Jewish farmers, aside from a few exceptions, were more of a burden to their husbands than a help ... In actuality Chana Maisel’s plan appealed to me and I was sympathetic toward it, but from the outset I did not see any possibility for helping her to carry out her plans, because she could not implement them, having no agricultural farm at her disposal.\textsuperscript{96}

In reality, the Palestine Office demonstrated consistent opposition to maintaining a special, permanent women’s framework. The Office acquiesced to temporary frameworks, such as groups of women workers who dealt with raising vegetables that were set up through short-term financing measures. But developing an educational farm, which required long-term budget planning and which was not aimed for profit in even the long run, was not acceptable to Ruppin. Maisel received no actual help from him but was given a letter to Professor Otto Warburg, head of the Palestine Department of the Zionist Organization, whose main office was in Berlin. Warburg expressed sympathy for Maisel’s plans but did not assist her because of the commonly accepted order of priorities in the Zionist Organization. He directed her to his wife, Anna Warburg, chair of the Kulturverband, which operated in Eretz Yisrael simultaneously with the Palestine Office.\textsuperscript{97}

The Zionist women in Berlin, members of the Kulturverband, were sympathetic to Maisel’s ideas; they decided to help and volunteered to raise the funds needed to establish the Women’s Training Farm (Hebrew: Havvat ha-Almot, lit. the Maiden’s Farm).\textsuperscript{98} Betty Lishansky, secretary of the Kulturverband, arrived in Eretz Yisrael in spring 1911 and was accompanied by Maisel to a meeting with Ruppin who enabled the opening of the Women’s
Training Farm at Kinneret. Sarah Thon, who immigrated to Eretz Yisrael with her husband in 1907 and who was appointed the first representative of the Kulturverband there, served as the main liaison with the country’s halutzot. Thus, Thon became a key figure in the formation and depiction of the image of the modern female agricultural worker in Eretz Yisrael. David Smilansky described this development in the Zionist Organization newspaper in Russia, “It was very, very difficult to create the foundation for this project. Only thanks to the great energetic devotion of Mrs. Thon did this endeavor take its first steps.” On a number of occasions Thon found herself facing a conflict of interests between her activity for the Women’s Training Farm on behalf of the Kulturverband and that of the Palestine Office in which her husband worked. Apparently, Maisel tried to obtain assistance from Thon since she was a woman, so that she would explain the needs of the farm to Yaakov Thon (her husband) in order that he, too, would help. For example, in a letter Maisel sent to Dr. Thon, she asked him to hear about the Women’s Training Farm’s needs from his wife.

1 In 1897, Grodno had a population of 25,000, half of whom were Jews, the majority of which dealt with trade and artisanship, see Joseph Shapiro, Eliezer Shochat (Tel Aviv, 1973) [in Hebrew], p. 12.
3 Maisel cites an article by Warburg that appeared in the journal Altneuland. Warburg’s opinion was based on his experience with German colonial settlement that incorporated women, too. On the basis of this approach, Warburg firmly supported, in his various capacities, Maisel’s attempts to give agricultural training to women. On Warburg’s experience with German settlement and his work as an adviser in the Colonial Office and as founder and editor of Der
Tropenflanzer, which was devoted to the settlement’s agriculture, see J. Derek Penslar, *Zionism and Technocracy* (Bloomington, 1991), pp. 61–63.


5 Eliezer Shochat, one of the founders of the association established in Grodno in 1902, wrote, “This was a Zionist association with a special socialist nuance, which considered manual labor—and foremost working the land—the basis for the homeland and building of Eretz Israel.” See Rabin, *Entziklopedya*, p. 166.


7 Two possible reasons explain the refusal: (1) the *numerus clausus* against Jews in institutions of higher learning in Russia; (2) the opening of institutions of higher learning for women, at the initiative of Czar Alexander III (1881–94). Czar Nicholas II (1894–1914) permitted courses of higher education for women, but certain subjects were still barred to them. See Richard Stites, *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia* (Princeton, 1978), p. 168.

8 Nahalal School Archive, Maisel Documents File, verification of studies in Niderlenz and Berne.

9 Aliza Shidlovsky, in Rachel Katznelson-Shazar, *Im Pe’amei ha-Dor* [With the Trend of the Generation], vol. 1, p. 6, Tel Aviv, 1959.

10 Malvina Neumann to her friend Mina, prior to her aliyah to Eretz Israel, March 18, 1909, Miriam Dobrinsky Personal Archive. “Now we no longer need religion, is that really so? Perhaps it is not as necessary for us now as it once was, but we need it and will continue to do so, even when the country we will totally ours. Only then will it be able to come to full bloom. But the Messiah
can only come when humankind will be ready for it.”

11 The “women’s movement” is the term applied to women organizing themselves throughout the world for the purpose of fighting for equal economic, social, and political rights, from the close of the nineteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth. Later these movements were called feminist women’s movements.

12 From 1869, a number young Jewish women left the country to acquire higher education, going mainly to Switzerland. In 1872 it also became possible to attain higher education in Russia, and the number of Jewish women students was as noted above. Active in this group in the 1870s and 1880s were Jewish female revolutionaries and terrorists, including Hanna Rosenstern, Betty Kaminsky, Hasia Greenberg, Raisa Grossman, and Sophia Ginsburg. See Eliyahu Tcherikover, Yehudim be-Itot Mahapeikhah [Jews in Revolutionary Times] (Tel Aviv, 1957), pp. 206–7. Tcherikover points out a tragic characteristic in the lives of the Jewish female revolutionaries, estrangement from family connections and conversion to Christianity, or even worse—suicide, death sentences, and murder. Manya Shochat was almost the only Jewish female revolutionary who later joined the Zionist movement. See Yaacov Goldstein, Manya Wilbusheiwitz-Shochat (in Hebrew; Haifa, 1991); Naomi Shepherd, A Price Below Rubies (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 2, 53–56.


15 Dafna Izraeli and Deborah Bernstein, “*Ha-Po’alot ba-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah*” [Women Workers in the Second Aliyah], in *Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah: Mehkarim* [The Second Aliyah: Studies], ed. Israel Bartal, p. 294 (Jerusalem, 1997).


17 Chana Maisel, “*Ha-Hinnukh ha-Kafri shel ha-Tze’irot*” [Rural Education for Young Women], in *Be-Sha’ah Zu* [At This Time] (1916), p. 62.

18 Smilansky, in *Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah* [The Second Aliyah], ed. Brachas Habas, pp. 696–97 (Tel Aviv), 1947.


21 An idea that was realized in women workers’ groups during WWI and on women’s farms after the war, before they turned into agriculture schools.

23 Margalit Shilo, “Havvat ha-Po’alot be-Kinneret 1911–1917” [The Women’s Agricultural Training Farm at Kinneret, 1911–1917], Cathedra 14 (1980): 84. Even though it is commonly thought First Aliyah women did not work in agriculture, there were female farmers who did so; research has not properly assessed them. On the whole, however, the more the farmers’ lifestyle improved, the more the number of women in the moshavot involved in agriculture declined.


26 Shmuel Ettinger, “Ha-Ide’ologiyyah shel ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah” [The Ideology of the Second Aliyah], in Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah: Mehkarim, ed. Israel Bartal, pp. 7–9.


29 Joseph Baratz, Kefar al Gedot ha-Yarden [A Village by the Jordan] (Tel Aviv, 1959), p. 8. Miriam Baratz, his wife, did not accept this gender division and fought for women’s participation in agriculture by going ahead and engaging in it. She learned how to milk cows from the wife of the sheikh of Um Juni, went to work in the barn, and was forced to confront prejudice to gain a workplace.


32 There is a great deal of testimony revealing the men’s attitude, which embittered the lives of the cooks even more than the difficulties of the work itself. See also Hayyim Brenner, *Shekhol ve-Kishalon* [Breakdown and Bereavement] (Tel Aviv, 1972), p. 60.


35 Yitzhak Wilkansky, *Ba-Derekh* [On the Way] (Jaffa, 1918), pp. 304–5. Wilkansky went on to describe the frustration over kitchen work, “there [in the field] is the desired space, there the worker sees and feels how his creative powers and his manual deeds take shape in blossoming, in growth, and in coming to fruition, but those [women] working at cooking what are they and what are they worth: in steam they evaporate and in smoke they are worn out, and the measure of their lives is not even that of one short day.”

36 Yael Gordon, “*Be-Tamtzit ha-Vikkuhim shel Asefateinu*” [The Debates at Our Assembly in Brief], *Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir* 3 (1911): 16–17.

37 Miriam Ostrovsky [Baratz], ibid.


40 *Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir* 3 (1911): 17. See Josef Shapiro, *Ha-Poe’el ha-Tza’ir—ha-Ra’yon ve-ha-Ma’aseh* [Ha-Poel ha-Tzair—The Idea and the Practice] (Tel Aviv, 1968), pp. 104–5.
Fishman, *Tenu’at ha-Po’alot*, pp. 23–24. In her article “*Po’alot Rishonot be-Merhavya*” [First Female Laborers at Merhavya], Shoshana Schwartz noted, “I will mention the time of my arrival at Merhavya with a group of girls, who were sent by Chana Maisel from Kinneret. They were selected from the school’s first class. They were led by the late Sara Malkin. When we arrived at Merhavya, we found only haverim there, with no female workers on the farm, in the kitchen, in the barn, in the vegetable plots, or in the orchards. Thus, we were the first gar’in [settlement group] of girls at this initial, isolated site in the Jezreel Valley.” See Gershon Geffner, ed., *Sefer Merhavya ha-Ko’operatzya* [The Book of Merhavya the Cooperatzya] (Tel Aviv, 1961), p. 191.

pp. 213–14; Alex Bein, Toldot ha-Hityashevut ha-Tziyyonit mi-

48 Yosef Bussel tried to live an egalitarian life with his wife, Hayuta, but when he stayed home to watch over his infant daughter while his wife went to a Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir meeting, all his friends mocked her. See letter by Hayuta Bussel to A. D. Gordon, 1911, Bet Gordon Archives. See also Muki Tsur, At Eineikh Bodedah ba-Marom [You Are Not Alone on High] (Tel Aviv, 1998), pp. 264–67.


51 Kayla Giladi, in Bassewitz and Bat Rachel, Haverot ba-Kibbutz, p. 27.

52 Ibid.


On Eliahu Blumenfeld, see Geffner, Sefer Merhavya, p. 191

Chana Maisel, “Pegishateinu ha-Rishonah” [Our First Meeting], Devar ha-Po‘elet 4 (1963): 111. Rachel, who hoped to be a worker of the land in Eretz Israel, was pleased by the opportunity given to her, she remembered with yearning her days in Haifa, and she expressed this in her poem “Ganenu” [Our garden], which she dedicated to Maisel. See Uri Milstein, ed., Rahel, Shirim, Mikhtavim, Reshimot, Korot Hayyeha [Rachel, Poems, Letters, Writings, a Biography] (Tel Aviv, 1985), p. 202.

Maisel and Rachel worked in Haifa. At Krause’s specific request Maisel “was borrowed” from her work for Blumenfeld and came to Sejera with Rachel Bluwstein. In early April 1911, Maisel and
Rachel moved to Kinneret, and so it was that the farm for female students was opened. See Uri Milstein, *Shirei Rahel: Sod Kismam* [Rachel’s Poems: The Secret of Their Charm] (Kiryat Ono, 1993), pp. 338–41.


64 This issue was the concern of women’s organizations the world over in that period, including Jewish ones. At an international Jewish conference on the trade in adult and adolescent women that took place in London in 1910, Bertha Pappenheim (1859–1936), a religious Jewish feminist from Germany, described Jewish women involved in prostitution, and merchants and pimps in Orthodox garb going about the streets of the cities in Galicia and Romania recruiting women for prostitution. Jewish woman also ran brothels, according to Pappenheim’s testimony, in the Jewish quarters of Cracow, Lvov, and other cities. See Nathan Michael Gelber, *Toldot ha-Tenu’ah ha-Tziyyonit be-Galitzya 1875–1918* [History of the Zionist Movement in Galicia 1875–1919], vol. 2, p. 809 (Jerusalem, 1958); Shepherd, *Price Below Rubies*, pp. 233–38.

65 Gelber, *Toldot ha-Tenu’ah ha-Tziyyonit be-Galitzya*, p. 11.


Miriam Schach, sister of the Zionist leader Fabius Schach, was an active Zionist in Paris, a city whose Jews found it hard to accept or adopt the Zionist movement. On her, see Michael Berkowitz, “Transcending ‘Tzimmes and Sweetness’: Recovering the History of Zionist Women in Central and Western Europe, 1897–1933,” in Active Voices, Women in Jewish Culture, ed. Maurie Sacks, pp. 46–47 (Chicago, 1995).

Yoffe, “Ha-Ishah ba-Kongres ha-Tzyyioni,” p. 4.


On the miserable situation of the hospital, see Arthur Ruppin, Pirkei Hayyai [Episodes from My Life], vol. 2, pp. 108–9 (Tel Aviv, 1968).

Sarah Thon published an article in the German paper Die Welt on women’s work and their employment situation in Eretz Israel in 1910, and she surveyed the activity of the Kulturverband women’s association in establishing schools. The article was also published in a book that appeared in English in 1911. See Israel Cohen, ed., Zionist Work in Palestine (London, 1911), pp. 103–4.

Farber, Hed Kinneret, p. 134.


Wilkansky, Ba-Derekh [On the Way], p. 122 (Jaffa, 1918).

Izraeli and Bernstein, “Ha-Po’alot ba-Aliyyah,” in Bartal, Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah, p. 295.

Malkin, in Habas, Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah, p. 488.

Bussel, in Habas, Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah, pp. 141–42.

Ibid., p. 550.

6–7.


83 Ibid.

84 Of course, there were some cases that were the opposite, in which the woman initiated aliyah, but they were few, such as that of Batya Makov, who left her husband abroad without a divorce and came to Eretz Israel with her children in 1890, where they were among the founders of Rehovot. See Moshe Smilansky Mishpahat ha-Adamah [Family of the Earth], Book One (Tel Aviv, 1943), pp. 234–41.

85 Yafa Berlovitz, Lehamtzi Eretz Lehamtzi Am [Inventing a Land, Inventing a People] (Tel Aviv, 1996), pp. 50–54.

86 The very appearance of women’s literature in Eretz Israel, let alone its scope, surprised many. There were fifteen women authors and writers out of a population of 55,000. See ibid., p. 54.


88 Ibid., pp. 28–40.

89 Izraeli and Bernstein, “Ha-Po’alot ba-Aliyyah,” in Bartal, Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah, p. 294.

90 Bloom, Ha-Ishah bi-Tenu’at ha-Avodah, pp. 5–19.

91 Goldstein, Ba-Derekh el ha-Ya’ad, p. 62.

92 To obtain a passport to Eretz Israel, Malvina Neumann, a student at the Women’s Training Farm, needed her parents’ authorization, see “Parents’ Authorization for Obtaining a Passport in 1912,” private archive of Miriam Dobrinsky (Malvina Neumann’s daughter).

93 Lieberzohn, in Katznelson-Rubashov, Divrei Po’alot, p. 9.

94 Margalit Shilo, “Ha-Iviriyyah ha-Hadashah” [The New Hebrew
Women were in an inferior position, among other reasons, also because they did not know Hebrew, owing to their lack of formal Jewish education, so they could not take part in discussions carried out in Hebrew. See Lilia Bassewitz, Ve-Lu Rak Hed [And If Just an Echo] (Tel Aviv, 1981), p. 111.


The Kulturverband was the first public body to create direct contact between women in the Diaspora and women in Eretz Israel. See the annual reports of this organization, CZA Z4/1634, Z4/1635.

Sarah Thon reviewed plans for founding the farm as early as 1910. See Cohen, Zionist Work, pp. 103–4.

Shilo, Havvat ha-Po‘alot, pp. 81–112.

Ibid., p. 89.


CZA L2/77/II, letter from Maisel to Dr. Thon, Dec. 26, 1912, regarding various arrangements in the farm’s yard, “I strongly urge your good self to speak with Mrs. Thon, so that you should decide about the issue of our yard. I am writing again about this to Mrs. Thon, and expressing my opinion to her, and I would like her to present herself to you as the advocate for the young women.”
Chapter Two:
Agricultural Training for Women in Other Countries, a Source of Inspiration and a Model for Agricultural Training in Eretz Yisrael

Institutionalized agricultural training for women in Eretz Yisrael was influenced to a great extent by ideas and movements for improving society. From the frameworks, curricula, and educational goals of the institutions for agricultural training in Europe and the United States toward the close of the nineteenth century also had an impact. Chana Maisel, who had acquired her agricultural education in Europe at an innovative institution, adapted it on the basis of the experience that had accumulated in a number of institutions in Europe and America. She modified the training in line with the goals of the Zionist movement in Eretz Yisrael and the specific conditions of Eretz Yisrael at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Britain

In Britain institutions for the agricultural training of women aimed to enable educated women to join branches of agriculture as professionals. World War I and the need for skilled female agricultural workers acted as a catalyst for the development of these institutions. England expanded the training to farmers’ wives by means of extension work based on these schools. As in all other European countries, there was no agricultural education for women in Britain until the end of the nineteenth century, and women could not learn the practical side of agricultural work. The path to studying actual tasks was open solely to farmers’ daughters. Institutions of higher learning that offered agricultural education
and training were intended for men only. Schools for agriculture and home economics for women opened in the mid-nineteenth century, and only after that change did universities open their

The discussion over the need for an institution for agricultural training for women arose in Britain in light of the vital need among women who intended to settle in the United Kingdom’s colonies abroad, and also in light of the question, Who actually constitutes the target audience for agricultural training: female farmers or urban women? Britain’s interest in agricultural settlers for its overseas colonies prompted the establishment of agricultural schools for women. In reality, most of the female students in agricultural schools were women about to marry and move to British colonies abroad. In this way, there is some similarity to the halutzot who came to Eretz Yisrael and immigrants who wanted to begin a life of agricultural labor in a new land, and to that end needed agricultural training.

An 1887 article in a British woman’s journal cited a memorandum that had been delivered to supervisors over national education, on the need for including professional training for agricultural work in the rural schools. The piece cited the fact that some 60,000 women farmers were working in Ireland; so girls, just like boys, needed agricultural education in the fields of dairy, poultry, and bees. A letter to the Daily Express presented a plan for an educational farm for women in which the subjects of study would be dairy; butter production; raising of vegetables, fruits, and flowers; raising of bees, poultry, rabbits; and production of preserves: “Dairy work to be to be taught to girls through the medium of a housefed cow, and instruction in butter making to be made continuous throughout the year by purchase of milk from neighboring farms. Through the means of a quarter-acre garden adjoining the school farm, girls also should receive instruction in the culture of fruit, flowers, and vegetables. Bee keeping, rabbit keeping, the management of poultry, and the preservation of eggs,
should likewise be comprised in the industrial training they receive."

These were the main female agricultural branches in almost all the institutes for agricultural education founded afterward around the world. In 1887 articles voicing the necessity for agricultural training for women began to appear in the press. They spoke about the need to make agricultural work in the farmyard branches more modern, professional, and systematic. In truth, the agricultural schools were not founded for farmers’ daughters but for middle-class women who were seeking new professions. These schools, as we shall learn, served as the basis for extension work for women, which actually trained women already living the rural life.

It may be that there were earlier instances in which educated women found their way to dealing with agriculture, but the accepted date marking the entrance of professionally trained women into agricultural work in England is 1892 when the Swanley School was founded, followed by the Studley School in 1898, as separate schools for women in which gardening was taught as a vocation. Urban women aged eighteen and over were the main students. The very opening of these institutions attests to the fact that the profession attracted this type of woman. Upon completion of their studies, these women planned to work as employees or as owners of small farms in which they would raise vegetables and poultry. Of note is the fact that urban women moved to the countryside, contrary to the world development at the time when masses streamed from the rural area to the city and abandoned agriculture as a livelihood in favor of manufacturing and industry.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Britain had no institution for training women similar to the agricultural colleges for men. There, men received practical and technical training, and women were barred.

The institution closest to a typical English agricultural college was the Swanley School for women, at which agricultural subjects
and gardening were studied. Theoretical studies, but not practical, were open to women in all colleges. This may be the reason why only a limited number of women took advantage of the opportunity for purely academic studies.\(^5\)

In 1915, Louisa Wilkins published *The Work of Educated Women in Horticulture and Agriculture*.\(^6\) This volume is actually a report on a study solicited by the Women’s Farm and Garden Union to evaluate the venues available to educated women for working in agriculture or horticulture as a profession. The report mentions seven institutions at which women could study horticulture and agriculture. Typically, the course of study was from one to three years, and it was recommended to not begin before the student was sixteen. Wilkins found that according to the 1911 population survey, 94,000 women were engaged in agriculture in England, most of whom were farmers’ wives or daughters who worked on family farms. In 1912 cooperatives of women farmers began to operate, but it was difficult to estimate opportunities for this joint effort.\(^7\)

Owing to the conditions created by World War I, many women were forced to go out to work and earn their keep. Many preferred to work in nature rather than in the city. The recruitment of large numbers of men into the army led to a demand for a women’s work force that could till the soil, save the crops, deal with the cattle, and carry out many jobs previously performed only by men.\(^8\) The public became interested in helping the farmers so that they would be able to meet the demand for food. The female population was needed to expand the work force. In certain areas it was difficult to convince the conservative farmers to accept women for work, but those who did so had no regrets. For example, a booklet written shortly after the United States entered the war, entitled *Woman on the Land*, published in 1918, contains a detailed description of the contribution of the women of France and England to the war effort, when they replaced men who
had volunteered for the army and filled their role in agricultural work. Wilkins’ research, which dealt only with educated women who had turned to agriculture and not to farmers’ wives, aimed at pointing out the advantages of women’s work in agriculture, both for themselves and for the state. But the answer to the question, did women find work as employees or as initiators of their own projects after their agricultural training, depended mainly upon the money at their disposal. Those without means had to find work as wage earners. When the first graduates of the women’s schools completed their studies and set up gardens on previously uncultivated soil, many of them failed to support themselves from agriculture. The failures stemmed from a lack of money or a lack of experience.

After World War I additional opportunities for the agricultural training of women in England became available, as enumerated by Akiva Ettinger, in a 1918 article: (1) Extension work: This practical instruction was given in short courses at a certain farm: evening classes, lectures, and female extension workers who visited the women on small farms. Extension instruction was connected to a central school. (2) Study farm: a year-long course with dormitory stay. The female students paid for their studies. In 1918 in England, there were twelve such farms for women. On five of them the women learned only milking and the preparation of dairy products; at two, dairy operation and poultry raising; at one, they learned poultry raising and home economics; at one, horticulture and agricultural theory; at two, in addition to dairy operation, they also had classes that included the practical side of agricultural work. The general aim was to shorten the courses on the farms to three months. (3) Agricultural colleges: in Britain there were two women-only colleges, and two co-ed ones. These institutions offered comprehensive courses in agriculture and the program lasted over a year. (4) Universities: At seven universities in England, women were able to take courses in agriculture.
women could complete their studies and receive degrees; there were short courses as well. Reading University was the main institution at which women received training in teaching, managing a dairy, gardens, and so on.\textsuperscript{16}

An article in the journal \textit{School and Society}, “Agricultural Education for Women in England,” told of a meeting held in London in 1920, whose aim was to train women as agricultural workers on a national basis. The innovation was — in consideration of the women’s achievements in food production during World War I — that the British government recognized the need to encourage women who had not been born into farming families to obtain agricultural education and join in the food production on the farms. It seems that the crisis of World War I, and the need for women to help supply food led the government to provide financial support for the agricultural training of women. As a sign of appreciation for the excellent achievements of Swanley Horticultural College in increasing the local production of fresh and preserved food during World War I, the government recommended that the institution be offered a generous allotment to allow the school to develop and take in more students. This came about during a period when the state was in need of scientific production of food, on the one hand, and had to find employment for educated women, on the other. Swanley, the article claimed, had the abilities to meet both these needs.\textsuperscript{17}

After the British occupied Eretz Yisrael, connections with England became stronger and the Yishuv paid more attention to models of agricultural training for women available in England.

In conclusion, agricultural education in England focused solely on agricultural occupations and did not include training toward garden planning or landscape architecture, and similarly there was no emphasis on home management as was true in Germany.
Germany—Agriculture and Home Management

In the mid-nineteenth century, the women’s movement for equal rights began to operate in Germany. Only a small fraction of women belonged to it, in distinction to the movements in England and the United States. The struggle of the women’s movement in Germany focused on opening institutions of higher learning to women and allowing women access to more professions. Less stress was put on suffrage. The founder of the women’s organization in Prussia (Reifensteiner Verband), Ida von Kortzfleisch, decided that schools should be founded to train women of the Prussian aristocracy to manage agricultural farms. This training was aimed at women who, by force of circumstance, had to run their farms by themselves.\(^\text{18}\) The women who studied in the agricultural schools in Germany, coming from farm-owning families themselves, differed from those who studied agriculture in England.

Reifensteiner Verband’s first school opened in 1897 and was intended for the study of home management and agriculture. The initiators funded the establishment of this school as well as many others.\(^\text{19}\) They hoped that the women who would acquire training in the institution would be able to contribute not only to educating themselves but all of German society as well. Their motivation was nationally inspired. At the schools the women studied how to run a home as well as agricultural branches of the farm, with the aim being to develop responsibility for the entire farm in the service of strengthening Germany. Under the influence of the educational concept of the school, the agricultural schools for men also began to accept women.\(^\text{20}\) At that time, it was no little thing to convince German society that a woman was capable of managing an agricultural farm. Providing training for women contributed indirectly to reinforcing the status of women in Germany and helped them in their struggle to attain equality in German society.

The idea of “women’s communes” developed from routine
life in the schools. Its source was the comradeship that the students experienced as they studied and worked together. The consequences of cooperating in a life of study and work went far beyond the acquisition of skills and knowledge in various branches of agriculture. Such life experience led to plans for cooperation and equality even after graduating from the agricultural school. A similar phenomenon of the growth of female comradeship and communes can be found at the Women’s Training Farm founded at Kinneret, whose graduates formed the women laborers’ havurot (small collectives) during World War I and later the women workers’ institutions that may be considered women’s communes. The schools in Germany helped develop home-grown foods, and owing to their success, became a model in Germany and outside as well. Some women who had acquired an agricultural education in Germany went on to teach in similar schools in neighboring countries.

The School for Horticulture in Niederlenz, Switzerland

The Swiss women’s organization that established the horticulture school for women in Niederlenz was founded in 1888. Like other women’s organizations throughout the world, it too began its activity with the establishment of schools for home management, feminine handicrafts, and care for the ill. As mentioned above, in a few European countries, such as Britain (1892) and Germany (1897), horticulture schools for women were established that provided students with professional training. The Swiss organization strove to provide agricultural training for women to enable them to take an integral part in professional agricultural work. The school’s founders clearly understood that without proper training, the women would not be able to find work. The school officially opened on April 1, 1906, with agricultural subjects taught from practical and theoretical aspects. Chana Maisel was accepted at the school and was in its first
The Swiss women’s organization that founded the school in Niederlenz adopted the following goals: (1) to train women, an untapped workforce in Switzerland, to work in horticulture. (The addition of a cheap labor force would make it possible, despite the price of land and the salaries that would be paid, to increase Swiss agricultural production). (2) to provide education that would enable the intensive growing of vegetables and fruits in Switzerland (the increase in production would lower the need for importing these items); (3) to contribute to the improvement of the nation’s health by transferring families from the city and factories to work in the rural area (the struggle against tuberculosis); (4) to begin a new era for women derived from acquiring a new profession; (5) to see horticulture as a healthy, satisfying, and economically worthwhile profession for women. Agricultural work was preferable to working in factories or in cottage industries.

The Swiss school was built on the model of the Prussian women’s organization in Germany. Supervision over the school was in the hands of the women’s organization. The female teachers lived at the school, while the male teachers lived elsewhere. Eight students were registered in the first class for the two-year program in horticulture, and another seven signed up for a six-month course training hospital nurses. All the students came from middle-class families. These were young ladies who wanted to acquire agricultural training to become teachers in this field or to become horticulturalists and earn their livelihood in a relatively new profession for educated women. This phenomenon of agricultural education for young middle-class women is typical of all the institutions for agricultural training for women in the early twentieth century in the United States and Europe. One may assume that the explanation for this is economic. The farming families did not have the wherewithal to pay for higher education for their daughters who could learn practical work in their parents’
home. Another explanation is that one of the aims of agricultural training was to open the way to a new profession for women. Thus, women with an awareness of and ambition for improving their economic situation participated, and not farmers’ daughters. The sources of funding came from tuition, sales of agricultural produce, and contributions by organizations and individual women. To be sure, the school was recognized as important by regional leaders and canton governments, but the warm feelings the school received were expressed only in words. The establishment continued to support agricultural schools that trained only boys and they did so generously. They did not consider it their place to train women, and therefore did not fund the horticulture school for women in Niederlenz. The federal government as well as the Ministry of Industry directed the women’s organization to the Ministry of Agriculture to receive funding. The latter claimed that this support was not among its functions. The women’s organization had to raise all the funds needed to establish and operate the school, and it did so through advertising and the publication of articles in the press, which was sympathetic to the idea. The topic of funding schools for agricultural training of women and the male establishment’s absolving itself of responsibility for founding and funding repeated itself in Germany, Switzerland, the United States, and Palestine. Had it not been for the dedicated volunteering of the women’s organizations, it is highly doubtful if these institutions would ever have become operational. The male establishment everywhere tested the seriousness of the women’s intentions before committing financial support to them. Only after the school opened did the canton and the government agree to provide funds for it.

A pamphlet put out by the school in 1907, commemorating a year since its founding, published the requirements for receiving a diploma. One had to pass theoretical and practical examinations in raising vegetables, growing fruit trees, preparing bouquets,
planning flower gardens or an orchard of fruit trees, as well as planning for general expenses and the costs of purchasing seedlings. In contrast to agricultural schools in England, which stressed the farmyard professions, in Germany home management was also included. The innovation that the Swiss school added to the curriculum was the planning of gardens (that later became landscape architecture). This trend toward planning flower gardens and landscape architecture became a central direction taken by agricultural schools for women in the United States.

**United States**

In the United States, the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth has become known as the “Progressive Era.” Among the many questions raised in the sphere of vocational education was “The Girl Question.” In these considerations of how to prepare young women for the future, a range of opinions was voiced as to gender relations in all of society. These were not simply pedagogical debates but rather discussions about the place of women in society. Women’s organizations played an active, practical role in fashioning the image of “the girl” by demanding, supporting, and assisting in the inclusion of vocational training among the various subjects for female adolescents in secondary schools. Women’s organizations that supported vocational training in home economics to young women, considered this type of education as the platform for realizing their concept of the role of women in society. Middle-class women’s organizations, which agreed with the premise that the destiny of women and men differed, nevertheless felt that there was no reason to discriminate against the girls because of these differences. They strove to prepare the women for their role as wives and mothers, and considered these functions as a profession requiring scientific training in home economics. They believed that this scientific, progressive education would not only promote the woman herself,
but would help, indirectly, the advancement of society as a whole, by lowering the divorce rate, improving the state of hygiene, decreasing infant mortality, and encouraging women in rural regions not to leave their homes and move to the city.\textsuperscript{29} The correct way to attain these goals was, in the opinion of reformers and women’s organizations, through training a skilled homemaker.\textsuperscript{30}

In contrast, radical women active in the trade unions argued that the vocational training necessary for young women was the technological kind that would enable them to compete and advance in industrial workplaces, and in this manner to approach equality in the setting of wages, which would give them economic independence.\textsuperscript{31} They believed that proper vocational training and equal salaries were the conditions necessary for the liberation of the woman.\textsuperscript{32}

The congressional committee established in 1914 for the purpose of examining this issue and presenting recommendations to Congress\textsuperscript{33} reached conclusions that coincided with the approach of the women active in trade unions. Yet, in reality, when the recommendations for legislation were presented, it turned out that those who had greater influence on the results of the legislation were precisely the middle-class women’s organizations,\textsuperscript{34} so the greatest amount of federal funding went to the training of home economics teachers and supporting courses in home economics. As a result, high schools encouraged gender division in vocational studies. When it became possible for adolescent girls to choose vocational courses,\textsuperscript{35} many of them opted neither for home economics nor for technological-vocational training but rather for commercial fields such as shorthand, clerical work, and bookkeeping, professions that enabled them to become part of the work force.\textsuperscript{36}

The introduction of the subject of home economics into schools derived from both feminist and conservative motives. Middle-class women’s organizations considered this subject a fitting
way to socialize woman for her role. They thought that professional housework would enhance the power of the woman and lead to positive changes in society. Others considered that the training itself was a way for providing a skilled domestic work force, which would ensure the preservation of the existing social order and its values. For black girls, preparation in home economics offered an actual improvement in their life situations. Many groups pinned high hopes on this training, each according to its own approach.  

Despite the efforts of radical women in trade unions to create, through vocational education, professional skills and a sense of responsibility that would allow the women to advance in the hierarchies of workplaces, the strong opposition of the unions themselves among employers and educators, sabotaged the success of this program. Powers found that commercial-vocational education for office workers, stenographers, and bookkeepers, professions considered middle-class, academic, and feminine and dubbed “pink collar,” precisely the vocational education that did not draw attention and was not supported by the women’s organizations, was quite popular because it promised the graduates a desirable employment future in the commercial sector. Business owners preferred to hire female high-school-trained graduates rather than teach women on the job. The educated women’s aspiration to turn home economics into a scientific subject that would include chemistry, biology, and physics as well as management, funding, and budgeting was never realized.

From Powers’ study it turns out that departments for home economics in secondary schools never went beyond the areas of sewing and cooking and never reached the level of scientific home economics that was the goal of the women’s organizations. When home economics was first taught in the early twentieth century, a significant decline occurred in the girls’ registration for classes in mathematics and the sciences. Before the change, the curriculum for boys and girls had been similar. Following the introduction of
home economics, boys and girls were separated and the expectation was that young men and women would have different employment goals and seek different vocations, with the school taking an active part in creating these anticipations.\textsuperscript{39} Powers’ concludes that the introduction of home economics into high schools in the United States never realized the hopes pinned on it.\textsuperscript{40} The expectations for “social salvation” in reality turned into the preparation of mayonnaise, sewing on buttons, and doing laundry, and when the girls were given the opportunity to choose, most of them opted for other subjects. That meant that the intervention of the women’s organizations and other interested parties in the determination of the curriculum and its funding, the aspirations of the adolescent girls and their parents in conjunction with chances for finding a job are what ultimately dictated the choice of a training track for girls. Yet, the disappointment from including the subject of home economics in United States high schools did not end the attempts to integrate these subjects into the curriculum both in America and elsewhere. The yearning for the training of women for their role in society stayed strong.

In Eretz Yisrael, a successful example of combining vocational studies in home economics with agricultural subjects in the curriculum can be found in the Training Hostel of Domestic Economy and Agriculture in Tel Aviv, and later on, at the Agricultural School for Young Women at Nahalal. In both of these schools the integration of these subjects was a fitting response to the students’ needs. The schools received a large number of applications, far beyond their absorption capacities.

Parallel to this, at the turn of the century (1890 – 1920), attention began to be paid in the U.S. to the contribution of women to agriculture. Reformers who wanted to influence the advancement of the rural community related to the farmer’s household as a socioeconomic unit. The woman, as an agent of change, could influence and bring progress and technology to the
In 1900, 300,000 white and 440,000 black women worked in agriculture as day laborers in picking cotton, tobacco and harvesting sugar cane, and so on. The profession of agriculture ranked sixth in terms of women’s occupation. During the period in which the “New Woman” and the “Outdoor Girl” became models for modern urban women, and many common characteristics were found between them and rural women, “the New Woman was not satisfied; she sought self-improvement and greater personal freedom than was deemed acceptable under nineteenth-century social dictates.”

Both models focused on women who were emotionally independent and physically strong. They were determined to develop their vocation and future by themselves. To a certain extent, the phenomenon in the United States was similar to the “back to a life of nature” and “working the land” idea that had been adopted by some of the east European halutzim and halutzot who immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in the first Aliyot.

Owing to the economic cooperation that exists in a farm unit, it is not possible to define woman’s agriculture work along accepted class definitions. A farm woman who milked her cow, separated the fat, and sold her products in the city was considered a capitalist according to socialist and Marxist standards of those days, because she owned the means of production and also profited from selling the result. Simultaneously, owing to the physical effort demanded by her work, she was considered a laborer. So it would not be precise to assume that all women who lived in rural areas benefited from a life of equality. Rather because of the nature of existing links in rural life, and the relations among the home, the family, and the farm, the connections between men and women had qualities that could not be maintained in urban areas. So it was not by chance that U.S. suffrage was first granted to women in the outlying western states—Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, and Utah. Owing to the difficulties of frontier living, women were made part of most
spheres of life with the result that new values and institutions were created. Perhaps the expectations of urban women for enhancement of their status and partnership in conducting family life had already been met through the very existence of rural life. Rural women had the opportunity to exploit their ability in the commercial area and to help their husbands manage the farms. The care of the dairy animals and milk production were usually the responsibility of the women, as was handling of the poultry. This can be compared to the situation of a small part of the farm women of the First Aliyah who played an active role in the agricultural work of their family in the moshavot. But the situation was totally dissimilar to the situation of the young women laborers of the Second Aliyah. They did not function on a family farm and were not party to making decisions regarding farm work. At most, they were employed to carry out the housework for groups of male laborers, and at rare times as hired hands in the orchards.

Two schools for horticulture and agriculture for women were founded in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century: the first, Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture for Women, in 1901 in Groton, Massachusetts by Mrs. Gilchrist Low; the second, the Pennsylvania School of Horticulture and Agriculture for Women, opened in Ambler, Pennsylvania in 1911. These two schools for agricultural women were founded by women who had visited England, been impressed by the women’s schools they had seen, and decided that in the United States there was room for the opening of these professions to women. Gilchrist and Haines each saw the advantages of horticulture, landscape architecture, and agriculture for the “natural” qualifications of women: the possibility for the expression of an aesthetic sense, gentleness, delicacy, patience, intuition, maternal nurturing and instinct—characteristics that were usually identified with femininity. Their goals in founding the schools were to instill in educated women a love of rural life.
and to make possible vocational training under suitable conditions through a combination of scientific theoretical study with practical work under dormitory conditions. The subjects offered in the schools were horticulture; raising of vegetables, flowers, and fruits; landscape architecture, raising poultry and bees; animal husbandry; milk; and production of home-grown food.

The founder of the school in Ambler, Jane Bowne Haines, came to the idea of establishing a women’s school devoted to horticulture and agriculture when, in 1905, she visited a number of schools for horticulture for women in England and continued on to similar schools in France and Germany. On these trips she was greatly impressed with the schools’ achievements and the attainments of their graduates. When she returned to the United States, she concluded that there was a place in her own country for women to study the raising of vegetables. As a member of a Quaker family, Haines had a tradition of love for and a special attitude toward working the land, which led her to the desire to deal with agriculture. Haines consolidated her ideas about motivating women to receive agricultural training and put them into effect with women with whom she had gone to school. She gathered a group of supporters composed of graduates of the university in which she had studied, and with them created a body that was active on behalf of the school. They collected the money needed to open and operate the school in Ambler. In a speech she gave to her colleagues at the end of 1910, Haines said that the goal of the school was

“To offer practical training in horticulture to educated and earnest-minded women who have a love for a country life and aptitude for country pursuits. The first students in the school will have much of the fun, for they will be given an insight into the foundation of things; the laying out and planting of the gardens and
grounds, and the creating of custom and precedent so dear to all schools and colleges. One principle we will keep before us above all others and would particularly enforce is the trained hand with the trained mind, which means mastery and success.”

The school in Ambler covered seventy-one acres and had orchards, nurseries, hothouses, beehives and poultry yards. Also operating at the school was a model kitchen. In two dormitory residences there were rooms for twenty students and classrooms.

The Groton School covered seventeen acres, which included pasture, orchards, flower gardens, vegetable gardens, and a plant nursery. On the school farm were cows, pigs, chickens, and horses, and the students grew vegetables during the war effort. The school’s operating model came from the schools in England and Europe. The weight given to the study of horticultural subjects was highly significant, and the development of farmyard trades resulted from current needs created by World War I.

Since the farmers’ families usually could not pay for agricultural training in dormitory conditions, on the one hand, and women could not leave their farms for extended periods, on the other, the administration proposed the Smith-Lever Act. This law established the organized instruction of advanced methods for the production and processing of agricultural produce for women already living in the country, along with the provision of information on managing a rural or urban home. On May 8, 1914, President Woodrow Wilson signed the law that provided for extension services, that is, agricultural instruction in the rural area through the federal Department of Agriculture, colleges, and universities. The Smith-Lever Act was implemented by means of local teachers working in practical instruction and assisted by the aid of local women’s associations in the country and cities. In its first year (1915), the department’s staff had seventy-one practical
agricultural instructors and thirty-seven for home economics who gave over 4,000 demonstrations. In 1922, within eight years of the law's passage, 800 teachers specializing in practical instruction worked in this field, covering the forty-eight states. The administration had adopted the approach that training women in rural districts would promote the farmers’ enterprises, would make them more modern and efficient, and would contribute to the economic and social development of rural districts. Through the training of women, the federal government hoped to develop rural areas and by means of extension services it also hoped to introduce technological and scientific innovations into the farmers’ homes and farms.

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, the agricultural schools played a vital role and gave special courses for women in an organization called the Women’s Land Army. The graduates of these courses offered practical instruction to other women, who played an important part in food production. The crisis in food production caused by the entrance of the United States into the war, therefore led to the public suddenly realizing the need for agricultural instruction, including agricultural training for women. The Advisory Committee of the Women’s Land Army emphasized the recruitment of educated women, particularly students, for agricultural work in the summer of 1917, and the speed with which those women acquired training and were able to contribute to saving the harvests through picking, harvesting, sorting, and packing. Special work camps for women were set up to help the farmers. Their success assisted them in overcoming the prejudices and discrimination toward the employment of women in agriculture. The organization helped locate lodgings for female laborers and assisted them in finding work on the farms.

Precise descriptions are available of the conditions of housing, transportation, training, type of work, and the salary paid to the women who were recruited for the campaign. Documentation is
also available concerning the reactions of the farmers who received assistance within this framework, responses related to a positive, previous attempt for educated women’s employment in agriculture, and a recommendation to other farmers to participate. Thus, for example, one of the farmers wrote to the committee, “For more than ten years, I have had experience in the employment of women on my fruit farm. This has been with college girls who have come from cities to learn the practical side of horticulture, the propagation of plants in connection with their study of botany. We have found from experience that women are better adapted to this work than men for the reason that they follow instructions closer.”

In 1917, the United States struggled with Britain’s situation at the beginning of the war. But the experience that had accumulated in the agricultural training of female students during peace time turned into a vital project in the time of war. The new conditions encouraged farmers, who previously had not believed in women’s ability to take part in agricultural work, to give them the opportunity to learn and to replace men who had been drafted. In 1917, the female students proved that within a short time they could physically and emotionally prepare themselves to master agricultural work. Thus, American women proved they could engage in agricultural work. They succeeded in meeting the expectations placed on them and in increasing the output of agricultural production in the time of crisis. The Advisory Committee of the Women’s Land Army took upon itself the task of encouraging women to take the place of the men who had been drafted into the army and sent overseas. The Committee succeeded, despite the doubts prevailing at the beginning of the campaign. A similar phenomenon occurred in Eretz Yisrael during World War I, when women who had been educated on the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret collected additional female laborers and created groups of women workers for growing vegetables.
Moreover, news of the Smith-Lever Act stirred interest in Eretz Yisrael. Detailed information about the act and the reasons behind it were offered in the Hebrew periodical, *Ha-Ishah*, which appeared in Eretz Yisrael in 1927:

“This is the first time in the history of this country [the United States] that the government has seriously considered the issue of help that must be given to the woman in the villages and colonies, to the woman bearing the yoke of hard labor. Until now the legislators of the nation did not understand the importance of the woman’s influence in villages and colonies on rural life. So, thus far, we have given help to the men among the farm people. We worried about their horses, their sheep and their cattle, but their wives and their daughters were completely ignored. The law that we are proposing here, provides the means necessary for teaching household management to ladies and young women, and we feel there is no more important activity than this in our country.”

**Summary**

At the turn of the century, from the close of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth, as part of the social processes that the women’s movements in Europe and the United States underwent, individual women and women’s organizations began to establish agricultural schools for women. The motives for these local projects were rooted in local needs, but one can certainly identify shared characteristics among the schools in England, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. Most of the initiatives resulted from endeavors of individual women and women’s’ organizations. Not one of the schools was founded by authorities. In each case the primary funding was raised at their
initiative, and only afterward did the schools, in certain places, receive the support of the governments or the districts in which they operated. The goal of these projects was to enable women to enter new vocations with feminine characteristics, ones that had been defined at the end of the nineteenth century as vital for the farmyard trades and which required nurturing, attention to detail, persistence, devotion, and care. The target audience of these schools was mainly educated women. In Germany agricultural education in the first schools was intended for women of the farm-owning Prussian aristocracy, and in England, Switzerland, and the United States for women who could pay for agricultural education, most often middle-class women rather than farmers’ daughters. The extension service, by contrast, was aimed at farmers’ wives and daughters. Two types of instruction prevailed in the schools. The first took place in dormitories for middle-class women who could pay for obtaining a new profession. They received academic education accompanied by practical work in “women's” branches of agriculture in combination with study of home economics. The second was the extension service system, based on agricultural schools, intended for farm women and their daughters who could not leave their farms. The extension service’s practical instructors went to the country and the farms to teach agriculture and home economics through demonstration and examples. This type of instruction was given in England and the United States. The topics of study varied in the schools, the main ones being horticulture; raising vegetables, flowers, and fruit trees; raising poultry and bees; dairy farming and animal care; home economics; soil types and pest control—all of them agricultural branches with which women traditionally had dealt. There were two innovations: the introduction of academic subjects and the planning of small and large gardens and orchards. These topics paved the way for the profession of landscape and garden architecture, a new area for women. The schools’ influence extended beyond their initial
purpose of the acquisition of a vocation and the realization of
the ideal of leaving the city for healthier work in the “bosom of
nature.” Through their graduates, the schools passed a message
to society regarding the ability of women to be creative and to
contribute to society. These ideas received particular emphasis
during World War I when many men who had dealt with food
production were drafted into the army and replaced by women.

The agricultural schools for women discussed in this chapter
developed as part of the economic, national, and social processes of
the particular countries mentioned. Women, with their agricultural
training, were directed toward satisfying the needs of society and
not necessarily their own. The development of agriculture relied
upon the introduction of technological and scientific innovations
into the countryside, with the women being the agents of this
change in farmyard vocations. In Eretz Yisrael, by contrast, other
components were added to agricultural education in response to
satisfying the needs of the women themselves.

1 Queen’s College in 1848 that was opened as a women’s college
and Bedford College, in 1849.
2 On this discussion, see Englishwoman’s Review 109 (1882):
4 The article mentions a letter dated February 1, 1887, in which
Sharman Crawford detailed the plan for an agricultural study farm
for women, Englishwoman’s Review 166 (1887): 91–92.
5 Woman on the Land (1918), p. 22.
6 Louisa Wilkins, The Work of Educated Women in Horticulture
and Agriculture (London, 1915).
7 Ibid., p. 36.
8 In an article written in 1916 on women as farmers and
agricultural workers, the fact was noted that educated women took
only a quarter of the time needed by uneducated women to learn the agricultural tasks. Some 400,000 women were recruited to help to replace some 300,000 men in agriculture who had been drafted into the army. “Women as Farmers and Farm Laborers,” *The Journal of Education* (1916): 456–57.

9 Woman on the Land.

10 Wilkins, Work of Educated Women.

11 Woman on the Land, p. 21.

12 Russian-born Akiva Ettinger completed agricultural studies in Germany in 1898, worked for Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) in Russia until 1911, and after that in Argentina and Brazil. When Ettinger was assigned management of the Agricultural and Settlement Department by Ruppin, he already had sixteen years of experience as an agronomist for JCA. Owing to the war, Ettinger actually took up his position only in 1918, and during the war was employed by the main JNF office in The Hague. Abraham Rosenman, *Ha-Keli le-Yishuvah shel Eretz Yisra’el* [The Instrument for the Settling of Eretz Yisrael], pp. 92–93; Akiva Ettinger, *Im Hakla’im Ivrim be-Artzeinu* [With Hebrew Farmers in Our Land] (Tel Aviv, 1945), p. 113. Ettinger reached Eretz Yisrael in August 1918, coming to Tel Aviv, the home of the Zionist Commission; from it he received the job of organizing and managing the Agricultural Settlement Department that during the war had been administered by Yitzhak Wilkansky.


14 The two women’s schools were Swanley, where they studied horticulture, home economics, dairy operation, and poultry, and Studley, where they learned horticulture, agriculture, and home economics.

15 Cambridge, Oxford, Durham, Manchester, Leeds, Reading, and
In his article Ettinger stressed that in England raising poultry was considered a profession of national value, particularly fitting for women. Therefore, the government took care to prepare women as teachers for this subject. Also the demand for gardening had greatly increased since World War I, and many women were involved in this field.

The great call for women with training in agricultural work and horticulture was proven when the demand for employing the Swanley graduates rose from 130 in 1914 to 648 in 1918. An agricultural expert from Oxford noted that in the future agricultural processing in England would be evermore intensive and that such processing was of national importance for England and economically justified. *School and Society* 22, no. 292 (1920): pp. 86–87.

Worner-Heil, *Frauenschulen auf dem Lande*, p. 6. Many men among the Prussian aristocracy served in the army, and the women were left behind to administer not only the estates but also the agricultural farms they owned. Worner-Heil’s book is based on the doctorate she wrote on the thirty schools of the Prussian women’s organization in Germany, and it provides many details on the difficult stages of their establishment and the achievements of these schools.

In total the Prussian women’s organization set up thirty schools; details about them can be found in Worner-Heil’s study.


Ibid., p. 8.

Ibid., pp. 8–9.

The information on the school at Niederlenz was taken from a pamphlet in the school’s archives that was published to mark its first anniversary and an article on the school that appeared in a Swiss journal, Dr. Heidi Neuenschwander-Schindler, “Eine Pioniertät des SGF die Grundung der Schweizerischen

24 Ibid. Mentioned in the article were France, Belgium, and Finland, but no other material has been located on schools for women in those countries.

25 Niederlenz school archive, list of students.

26 See the section above on the schools in Germany at that time.

27 When the school’s administration preferred to hire a male teacher for agriculture, an average Swiss man, over two young German women with agricultural training (one of them holding a doctorate), since it felt that this choice would help in recruiting government financial sources, the bachelor teacher was asked to get married upon his acceptance to the teaching staff owing to the constant presence of girls at the school. See Neuenschwander-Schindler, “Pioniertat des SGF,” p. 5.

28 Pamphlet marking the completion of the school’s first year, in the Niederlenz school archive.


30 Ibid., 17–18.

31 Ibid., p. 4.

32 Ibid., pp. 27–31.

33 Of note is that in the same year a congressional committee was established to examine the issue of vocational training in high schools, the Lever-Smith Law, supporting an extension service for women in rural areas of the United States, was passed.

34 Powers, “Girl Question” in Education, p. 64.

35 Ibid., p. 129.

36 Ibid., pp. 113–14. The attractiveness of these fields in high school was prompted by the girls’ expectation to marry in the future a suitable husband, with greater chances for finding one in
an office rather than in school. Ibid., p. 119.

37 Ibid., pp. 22–23.
38 Ibid., pp. 128–29.
39 Ibid., p. 129
40 Ibid., p. 126.
43 Ibid., p. 8.
44 Ibid., p. 194.
46 The school in Ambler began its operation with its first three students in February 10, 1911. The first dormitory building was dedicated in 1915; until then the girls lived in nearby places.
47 Richard B. Kimball, “A Little Visit to Lowthorpe,” *The House Beautiful* 3 (1916): 111–13. This article contains a picturesque description, with illustrations, of a visit to the first school for landscape and garden architecture, and vegetable and flower gardening. This institution is not described as a vocational school for the completion of education but as a school whose mission is to provide a profession from which it will be possible to earn a decent living in the real business world. The professions of horticulture and landscape architecture were not accessible to women prior to the opening of the women’s school in Groton.
48 The application pamphlet for the Amber school states that it is very difficult for women to acquire agricultural training and that the school was intended to remedy this.
Students for whom there was insufficient room in the dormitories, or who did not want to live in it, rented apartments in the area. The school in Ambler expanded and became academic after Louise Carter Bush-Brown, a 1916 graduate of the school, began to direct it in 1924. Bush came to Ambler with administrative experience and she advanced the school in a number of areas: it granted an academic degree and the number of students rose to fifty. In 1958 it became part of Temple University, and its courses were opened to men. The number of students rose from 50 to 150; in addition to horticulture, it offered landscape architecture. Temple University Archive, Horticulture School File.

In 1909 the school in Groton changed its curriculum, and became a school for landscape architecture, with studies taking about two years to complete.

In 1945 the Groton school merged with the Rhode Island School of Design. Archive of the Groton Library, file of the School of Landscape Architecture and Agriculture.

The law was named for the two congressmen who initiated it: Senator Smith of Georgia and Senator Lever of South Carolina. The law determined an allotment of government money for female extension work instructors, who would provide agricultural and home economics guidance to the public that was not able to reach institutions of higher learning. The inculcation of learning was organized according to districts, states, and the federal level. Senator Lever was the first director of the Department of Extension Services.

Further information on the law can be found on the United States government Internet site [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/about/offices/legis/pdfs/smithlev.pdf](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/about/offices/legis/pdfs/smithlev.pdf)

Canada, which at that time was also a British colony, is also mentioned in the pamphlet as a country that had to grapple with a lack of men for agricultural work at the beginning of the war. \textit{Woman on the Land} (1918), p. 7.

Chapter Three:  
Women's Training Farm at Kinneret—First Model

The first educational farm for women was founded in April 1911, less than two years after Maisel’s *aliyah* to Eretz Yisrael, an expression of her determination and ability to convince others to bring her ideas to fruition.\(^1\) Toward the close of 1912 the Kulturverband sought an additional teacher to work at the Women’s Training Farm to deal with the subjects of cooking and home economics. Elfriede Bambus was identified and at the end of December 1912, they decided to take her on.\(^2\) Prior to Bambus’s arrival, Neumann attested in a letter to her friend Mina:

> Now another thing. You have certainly read the article about Kinneret in *Die Welt*. If so, the theory of home economics one learns here as we used to say, is “kadahat” [nonsense; lit. fever]. There is no farmyard. The coop has maybe fifteen chickens. We received one cow four weeks ago. Now, so they say, they want to organize everything better. I am very happy that a woman teacher will be coming here, I think she studied in Munich. She also comes from Russia, and she has already been in Palestina once before.\(^3\)

In its early years, the Women’s Training Farm suffered from three main problems: (1) lack of funding; (2) difficult living conditions; and (3) ideological, emotional, and cultural tensions and clashes. In contrast to the original plan, the young women joined the workers’ farm at Kinneret, managed by Yoel Golde, as both a separate and a dependent body.\(^4\) From the letters of the student Malvina Neumann and the teacher Elfriede Bambus, it
turns out that it was not only Maisel who was troubled by the lack of ready cash. Neumann told her friend Mina that Maisel was going to the Zionist Congress in Vienna and added, “Look into this and, perhaps, you also know people to whom Maisel can turn to shnorr money for the farm.”5 The development plans for the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, for its expansion and transfer to a site next to Lake Kinneret, were never realized owing to the outbreak of World War I in August 1914.

The farm became independent only in 1912, when a contract was signed between Hevrat Hachsharat Hayishuv (Palestine Land Development Company) and the Kulturverband in Berlin. According to that document, the organization took upon itself all responsibility for the annual budget.6 Shoshana Bluwstein referred to that when she wrote, “Now we are a farm in our own right, the future training farm. Chana is striving to turn our farm into an educational farm for young women, a farm for agricultural training.”7

After a visit at Kinneret, Thon criticized the female agricultural laborers and demanded that they first fulfill their role as homemakers, as she understood that function.8 As she wrote to them:

If you would only hold back a bit from striving to copy the men and pay attention to the main role you should assume: to be good housewives, diligent workers, and natural people, in whom complete harmony reigns in all measures of their lives, and to create the future of our nation here … young women, who out of idealistic aspiration left their parents, their families, their professions, and the routines of their lives and came here to be tillers of the soil, never prepared themselves for the harsh living conditions, and never considered what fate awaited them in their new environment.
She concluded her penetrating article with the following:

The female laborer’s room, her kitchen, her garden, and her entire way of life must attest to the idea that working here are modern women with a democratic Zionist philosophy. Witness to their modernity will be the up-to-date working system: to their Zionism—the love for Eretz Yisrael, the true Hebrew home, and and the Hebrew language—the mutual work of man and woman and the mutual recognition and important role and holy duty they fulfill here, shared obligations as well as rights.9

Thon did not want to destroy conventions or to disrupt the entrenched social order. And she never thought for a moment that women can or need to strive to fill the same roles the men. Her goal was to promote women within the existing framework and to open new employment possibilities for them that would establish females as professionals in “feminine” fields and would reinforce their traditional status as proud homemakers. The model she focused on was that of the modern, educated farmer’s wife, “a helpmeet,” who considers managing the home as an important part of her role as a woman. In that, Thon identified with Maisel’s approach that linked the two spheres: home management and field occupations, and considered them jointly as a true, vital need in woman’s activity, without which she would not be able to participate in the agricultural settlement endeavor.10

David Smilansky told of another visit to the Women’s Training Farm:

A short time ago, Dr. Bodenheimer, accompanied by Dr. Ruppin, visited the farm at Kinneret, and since he realized that the farm filled all the hopes invested in it, and it was truly of great importance for the New
Yishuv, he decided to build on Jewish National Fund (JNF) land at Qarq a large stone house for the female workers of the farm.

And he concludes, “Eretz Yisrael should have been covered with a large, extensive network of farms such as these.”

Some of the women on the farm suffered difficulties in adjusting to the climate and had health problems, as we learn from letters by the teacher Bambus and the student Malvina Neumann. The latter’s letter from the Mission Hospital in Tiberias illustrates the problems and hardships, “I am wailing and groaning and tossing about the bed, one could go crazy as if a thousand mosquitoes had attacked me … I would scratch myself to bleeding with iron nails were it permitted.” While she was staying at the farm, her difficulties grew owing to the costs of medical treatment. She felt that to survive under harsh conditions, one needs “spiritual [and emotional] maturity, a resilient nature, and a steadfast vision, otherwise things just won’t go [well].” In this letter she points out how hard it was to work and study at the same time. She did not attend the academic lessons Maisel taught, explaining “I don’t go to even one class. For I think that it is unwise to go to one class at two in the night and to get up at six in the morning for work.”

Gaps between what the teaching staff expected and the students’ attitude toward the functions they were to perform created additional problems. Bambus, for example, had been trained at a school for home economics and agriculture in Germany, so beyond the physical challenges she encountered, she also had to adjust to the culture of behavior of the halutzot, most of whom came from Russia, young women who were fed up with housework and wanted to engage only in agriculture. In her letter to Lishansky, she wrote:

You have no idea how much time, effort, strength, and
patience are needed for a single person to stand in front of twenty girls [and] to somehow maintain order and cleanliness. Here are almost only Russian girls to whom housework is foreign, in general—any devotion to work is unknown to them. The girls lack any sense of keeping things straight, and it seems to me that I will not succeed in teaching them to understand how to care for a house and how to show respect for whatever it contains. They have to be shown everything, while incessant arguments (that no longer impress me) are going on, but when they have finished the job [the laundry] in a good, clean way, they are satisfied that they have learned something, and that also makes me happy now. You would advise me to train an assistant from among the twenty girls, but that can’t be done. The young ladies lack all discipline, they rebel and argue about everything with constant harping, so that it is hard to work together with them. And the girls who have been with us longer are not ready to take tasks and responsibility upon themselves because of authority issues toward the other girls. They are never willing to accept instructions from one of their own group.¹⁶

Bambus’ impression was identical to that of Thon, both of whom were disciples of the German school of thought that considered home management as respectable and important in the education of the modern woman. In contrast, the halutzot from eastern Europe were looking for a way take part in agricultural work, mainly in the fields. At the end of her long letter, Bambus commented on the young woman’s flawed—in her opinion—order of priorities:

My personal opinion is that it is a great pity that field work is considered more important than running a
household and taking care of animals and garden. For ultimately, the aim is that the girls will be farmers’ wives with families. Then children will be born, and the home and education will keep the women busy, so that it will no longer be possible to work in the field. Dr. Shochat always says that three years ago no girl wanted to do the housework, and now they, in any event, do maintain the house by themselves. Some of them even want to learn to cook (yes, to cook, but nothing else). I believe that Mrs. Shochat could never have started in any other way, but it seems to me that the time has come for a moderate change in the curriculum in the direction of home economics. This will become possible only if we get another teacher specifically for the home.\textsuperscript{17}

From this letter we can see that even though the student expressed a certain willingness to study cooking and home management, differences of opinion still existed between Maisel and Bambus, on the one hand, and the students, on the other, regarding both the imperative for this type of learning and their future goals: laborers or farmers. An example of attitude can be found in the testimony of Shoshana Bluwstein, “What kind of vocation is this? All her life the woman has worked in the kitchen, ‘kitchen and children’, this has been a common saying in every generation. What did the woman ever see in her life? She never left the confines of the children’s room, or the kitchen … kitchen as a type of bitter necessity—but to create a diploma for it?\textsuperscript{18}” Bambus felt the teaching conditions were almost impossible. Like Maisel, she worked from morning to evening and felt that she had no time left for lesson planning or for herself, “After all I am not a simple peasant woman—I have intellectual interests. They expect more than routine topics from me.”\textsuperscript{19}
Alongside this harsh description replete with grievances, about two months later Bambus knew how to compose a different, idyllic description of the Women’s Training Farm for the promotional purposes of the Kulturverband. From the gap between what was put on paper and reality, one may assume that Bambus did not lose hope and was very much interested in the farm succeeding despite all its problems. She was ready to paint the harsh reality in pink, if only to obtain additional donations.

In the first two years of the farm’s activity, its course of study took only one year. Afterwards, the studies took two years to complete. The students at the farm learned Hebrew, so that they could be integrated into public life and participate at meetings. At the farm the young women were also introduced to the idea of permanent settlement and sinking roots—a new ideal for the halutzot, who until then had seen their true destiny in “conquering labor” and not necessarily in settling.

A graduate of the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, Atara Shturman, noted:

About this young women’s farm much has been said. I will describe what it gave me. First of all, the beginning of speaking Hebrew. The diminutive term of endearment that was my name, Kreindele, was immediately changed [translated] for me by Rachel Bluwstein into a serious Hebrew name—Atara—with her saying, “What is this Kreindele? You are the crown on my head! [a play on words, Kreindel in Yiddish means crown] That’s how I entered a different atmosphere, more rooted and interesting. The day was divided into work and vocational studies and the evenings were devoted to Hebrew lessons. Kinneret was the most splendid period of my life. It showered me with happiness. Here I acquired a great deal of
information and many concepts. Here I became familiar with the character of the Galilee laborer who was striving for permanence and striking roots. I saw this laborer living in an atmosphere full of bothersome social problems, the likes of which I had not known in the Hashomer association. Until then the goal had been the conquest [of labor]. The connection between the young women’s farm and the nearby groups was solid and this influenced the course of our lives.24

Yael Gordon, one of the farm’s first students, noted in a later letter to the secretariat of Mo’etzet ha-Po’alot [Women Workers’ Council]:

I recall that when Chana Maisel came to the country twenty-two years ago, telling us of her idea—to create an institution for the agricultural training of young women, to learn how to cultivate vegetables, raise poultry, and manage a barn as well as housework and cooking, the tasks upon which the peasant’s farm was based the world over and which women had the strength to carry out—we felt, that the idea was great and that it was liable to lead to a revolution in the work of young women coming to the country. At that time there were only a few young women working in agriculture, or to define it better, as hired hands among the farmers in Judea. The rest of them were employed in sewing, knitting socks. And those who worked in the laborers’ kitchens did not know their job, they had not prepared themselves for that. Our thinking then was not yet directed toward learning professions, we were mainly striving for field work in the bosom of nature … The idea of providing agricultural vocational training to the female laborer spread beyond the
boundaries of the institution.  

Gordon’s letter reinforced what was beginning to become clear: training in the farmyard vocations had to be acquired and those branches of agriculture had to be learned well and professionally, so that women could be added to the agricultural farms in Eretz Yisrael. Before World War I, most of the Jewish farms were based on a single main branch: raising field crops in the Galilee, and cultivating orchards and vineyards in Judea. At Kinneret, the young women learned that field work alone was not enough. The Women’s Training Farm played a major role in preparing professional resources for the branches that were new to the developing Jewish farm, mainly the cultivation of vegetables.

The principle of speaking and teaching in Hebrew at the Women’s Training Farm was important to Maisel, and she upheld it strictly. After the teacher Elfriede Bambus was hired, Maisel wrote to the Kulturverband that she was pleased about this, but she stressed that she attributed great importance to the use of Hebrew in the teaching on the farm:

> Usually, the dominant language is Hebrew. At the table, they talk among themselves in Hebrew, even though I sometimes have to translate into Russian for the girls who have recently arrived and are not yet in command of Hebrew in daily use. The second teacher, if she does not have command of Hebrew, will have to learn the language. This is the first condition for accepting teachers, since I think that we cannot maintain a national Jewish educational institution whose dominant language is not Hebrew.

**Personal Events at the Women’s Training Farm**

In the early days the friendship intensified between Maisel and
Eliezer Shochat, a member of Merhavya’s “kevutzat ha-kibbush” (conquest group), and they planned to marry. Unfortunately, Shochat was arrested by the Ottoman authorities in May 1911, after a clash between the shomer (guard) Mordechai Yigal, a member of the same group, and Arabs who tried to steal his horse, resulting in the death of one of the attackers. Eliezer Shochat and seven of his comrades were held for four months in the Nazareth jail and seven and a half months in the Acre jail. They were freed only after paying a bribe.28

Shochat and Maisel were married at the Kinneret farm in 1912, the same day that Leah, Chana’s sister, married Avraham Wilansky. The bride, the groom, and the wedding ceremony were described by Shoshana Bluwstein:

Wedding: This was a performance that we had not anticipated, and precisely in our camp. One of the girls who got married was L. [Leah], with whom I had come to Kinneret, sister of Ch. [Chana Maisel]. She was considered a good worker, and she aimed for the right goals, in the plant nursery and the garden, the kitchen, and the farmyard. She actually was a pleasant girl, with gray eyes showering sparks of joy, under brows as black as a raven’s wing. Her gaiety, her mischievousness, used to fill the entire house. Who didn’t recognize her high, infectious laughter even from afar? And suddenly, L., what happened? A guest from her hometown, a Hebrew teacher, came to Kinneret. Every evening after work she would go off by herself, and then we would see her in the company of this fellow. They would take walks and also read on the Sabbaths. And then one cloudy morning (for any “non-cloudy” morning was devoted to work), L. got up and along with H. set off on a walk. In the evening they returned, and all of the
sudden a ring sparkled on one of her fingers. That was the secret and its revelation. A wedding. The sisters. We congratulated Chana and she laughed. “It’s high time. I am already … years old,” with her looking so young and fresh. But we were sad about our funny girl L. We also did not understand this. At the beginning H. was embarrassed, too. For her, L. had been one of her most advanced workers, for whom the trades were most important. And now she had chosen another way.29

Before the wedding a terrible tragedy occurred. One day, Alexander Berkner, who had changed his last name to a symbolic Hebrew one, Barak-Ner (glint of a candle), arrived at the Women’s Training Farm. Barak-Ner, who suffered from epilepsy, had come to Eretz Yisrael from Russia five years earlier. He worked as a shepherd in the moshavah and at the Kinneret farm. In his diary, written in Hebrew, from September 1910 to September 1911, he expressed the emotions and feelings of a halutz grappling with loneliness, hunger, and cold; of yearning for his sister who had died young of malaria; of unemployment and backbreaking work.30 When he met Chana Maisel, he was totally smitten with love. In his diary he wrote:

What is there between me and you, lovely C.M! [Chana Maisel]Yesterday you were so beautiful! I lifted my eyes to you, I gazed at your very wise eyes—and a wave of heat suffused my heart. For you were created to chase the chill from the soul of man … [September 1911]. For a few nights now I have been sleepless, and last night, too, I awoke several times. I arose earlier than ever: The dark of night still covered the earth. What awakened me? — I will confess: Chana M. got up to take her place on today’s duty roster and I wanted to help her a bit. I intended to get up before her in
order to do some of her work but I did not manage to do so … September [1911], noon: Romance beat in my heart. Yesterday I asked that sleep should come, for it eluded me until very late: because of that it was hard for me to get up. Yet, today calm pervades my soul. A poetic spirit rests on me, and with this I can restrain myself from erring against the principle of “Hebrew only.” As this situation touches my heart, I must sing the romances [love songs] I still remember from days past. I am very sad that songs such as these do not exist in our language, or at least I do not know them. Chana M. is a pleasant creature. How good it was for me and how quiet my warm heart. Sorrow and joy kept trading places. I looked at her shining eyes and at her face all the time, when we sat at the table … Why was the sound of her speaking so sweet to me? Apparently she senses what is in my soul. Yet, it is as if I were in disguise, for she did not touch me. Indeed, I will not always succeed in my masquerade.

Something broke Barak-Ner’s spirit, and he shot himself, wounding himself seriously and dying in agony. Naomi Shapiro, a pharmacist-medic who worked at Kinneret gives us this description:

Kinneret, Friday, Oct. 27, 1911

Now I must inform you of a case that will surely surprise you. Alexander the shepherd has committed suicide; he shot a bullet into his heart and died in terrible suffering. As you know he had epilepsy. And in general he was fed up with his life. Recently, he had an episode of falling, and he was quite sad about it. For three days he lay in his room and did not eat or
drink and then he suddenly got up in the morning and walked a bit outside, went into the room and looked to see if anyone was passing by, put the pistol to his heart and shot, falling to the ground with a terrible cry. Immediately everyone at the farm gathered, of course I came right away and I gave him two subdural shots of Ether Caphre and a shot of Cofein. After a while he began to speak and pointed to show that they should put him on the bed. The bullet had hit his heart, passed through the other side, and fallen to the ground. Mr. Haft had just gone to fetch the doctor, and he too came quickly and saw that there was no hope for Alexander to survive. He was bleeding internally and externally. Even though the doctor had stanched the flow immediately with gauze, the blood kept dripping through the pads. We gave him a few more shots, that is, myself and Dr. Blyden, and he also drank the medicine the doctor gave him. He then began to speak with a clear mind, and asked only that death come quickly and redeem him from his sorrows. This situation continued until eight o’clock in the evening. The entire time he was crying out and moaning, but before his death he did not scream at all and his soul departed. Obviously, this incident made a strong impression on me, for this was the first time that I saw a person kill himself. Some people looked through his writings and found a sealed letter with the request that it be given to Chana Maisel. I very much wanted to know what was written in it, but I did not want to make Chana sad. I suspect that he loved her, even though she paid him no attention since she is a very serious young lady. And second, she has a fiancé and he is Shochat who is in the jail in Nazareth (please
The Farm—A Focus for Fundraising

Starting in 1912, a year after it had been established at Kinneret—and even though it had fewer than twenty students—the Women’s Training Farm received considerable attention in the Kulturverband reports as compared to the association’s schools for making lace that already existed in various places in Eretz Yisrael. The special interest stimulated by the farm, despite its initial modest dimensions, derived from its being perceived as groundbreaking for the New Yishuv. Young women working in agriculture was a refreshing, compelling innovation, which was exploited as promotional material to attain the organization’s goals. By using visual material, Zionist women in Europe were able to construct and fashion new images for the Jewish women in Eretz Yisrael, just as they wished to create on the farm they financed. Through the Women’s Training Farm, the organization forged for itself a marketing tool to raise additional funds for its activities in the Yishuv. To that end, the association frequently sent out large numbers of pictures and descriptions, which illustrated and described the tilling of the soil by the halutzot.

In her letters Neumann mentioned the many tourists who visited the farm, “Tourists come all day, they would take away our very souls if they could. They all ask the same things.” Apparently the sight of young Jewish women working in agriculture attracted many tourists to the farm. But their incessant questions were burdensome to the young women. In another letter, Neumann complained about the production of propaganda:

Three men filmed the farm for the cinema. On the one hand, I’m pleased that I was not photographed, while on the other, you, dear parents, could have seen me. When the students filmed the girls, they had to
promise that this would not reach the papers, since they did not want to be on sale everywhere for a few grush.\textsuperscript{39}

By means of these short films and the photographs of the halutzot, Zionist women succeeded in publicizing the farm. In addition, they contributed to the formation of the image of the new Jewish woman: a modern halutzah, who specialized in agriculture as her livelihood.\textsuperscript{40}

The Baron Edmond de Rothschild and his wife, Adelheid, visited the farm after hearing about it from Sara Thon and promising her that they would visit.\textsuperscript{41} The Baron and his wife stayed at Kinneret for two days and were impressed with the farm. A review of their stay reports that

He [Baron de Rothschild] was particularly pleased over the fact that girls, too, among the Eretz Yisrael youth had (finally) begun to participate actively in the rejuvenation of the land…. Baroness de Rothschild made use of the afternoon hours for a tour of the Women’s Farm at Kinneret. She thoroughly explored the farmyard and all of the structures, and expressed her great admiration for this institution to Mrs. Thon and Dr. Ruppin. The Baron’s visit to Kinneret was the final stop in his historic visit to Eretz Yisrael. At the exit of the moshava Dr. Ruppin, Mrs. Thon, and the director of the farm were waiting for him. The Baron happily received the invitation to visit the young ladies’ farm, and under the guidance of Mrs. Thon and the teachers, Mrs. Shochat and Bambus, he toured each building.\textsuperscript{42} [Baroness] de Rothschild received the impression that “this was, in her opinion, a great, important thing, to give the Jewish girls the opportunity to become proper farm women and to earn a livelihood from their own
work in general.”

It seems that Maisel’s project—rebuffed with “don’t call us, we’ll call you” when it was just an idea—became upon its founding a national endeavor generating interest. The farm attracted the attention and curiosity of tourists and personages in the Jewish world. The unique phenomenon of an institution for agricultural training, in whose furrows the future young women of Eretz Yisrael danced, charmed many Jews from abroad. This image was exploited to the *nth* degree for promotional purposes, for the purpose of having money pour into the country although not necessarily into the farm’s empty pockets.

Despite the attention and curiosity, the Women’s Training Farm, the only women’s institution of the Zionist movement in Eretz Yisrael, suffered from deprivation and discrimination. In 1916 Maisel described factors preventing its development:

(1) A dearth of funding and a lack of support—“because the decision to establish the farm did not come from Yishuv institutions, but stemmed from a narrow circle of women.”

Maisel complained that not only were the Zionist institutions not the initiators behind the establishment of the farm, but they even discriminated against it from the day it was founded until the outbreak of the war, in contrast to other Palestine Office institutions:

And an attitude such as this exists on the part of the Yishuv institutions in Eretz Yisrael for the women’s institution, too—for the young women’s farm. With all the great effort continuously applied toward developing the farm, these institutions did not find it necessary to provide it with real help. They sufficed with platonic sympathy for the institution. An approach such as this is not right. It is the duty of the institutions to take an interest in all the bodies in the country with no
difference as to gender. And it is not right to put the entire burden of caring for the young women working in the moshavot and farms on the women’s associations and to consider this issue to have no interest to the institutions.\(^{45}\)

(2) Insufficient land—the small dimension of the farm limits the vocational instruction in all branches of agriculture.

(3) Special needs, which derived from the farm being a groundbreaking, pioneering project and therefore lacking any type of prior model from which its teachers could learn, forced its teachers to turn to the advanced institutions abroad to acquire knowledge, to learn about innovations, and develop and set high standards of study for the farm.\(^{46}\)

The Contribution of the Women’s Training Farm

As an institution of learning for young women, the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret was a unique, original project that paved the way for integrating pioneering women into agriculture and for improving their social and professional status. The farm was the incubator for the image of the Hebrew female agricultural worker. She was a person graced with the ability to work and to express complete devotion to the Zionist idea. She possessed a focused worldview and was equipped with vocational knowledge in the agricultural fields suitable for women.\(^{47}\)

With the founding of the Women’s Training Farm, Maisel had gathered, for the first time, a group of women who wanted to work in agriculture. They reached a consensus that defined the integration of women into agriculture as a gender problem.\(^{48}\) This historical meeting represents the establishment of the first support group for women that dealt with the specific problems in agriculture and contributed to raising public consciousness about these issues. This initial women’s meeting helped to form collective
“feminist consciousness,” and contributed to the consolidation of possible methods for modifying the situation, mainly through self-change. The contribution of the farm to the Second Aliyah halutzot has been described by Aliza Shidlovsky, a trainee in the first class, as follows:

I must cite the blessing the training farm was for those halutzot who had come to Eretz Yisrael out of a yearning to live in the rural area, straight from their school desks and from homes where everything was ready-made. They came out of longing to till the soil—and no work was found for them, not in the orchards of Judah and not in the [male] laborers’ groups—other than to the extent that they were needed in the kitchen and other services [emphasis mine—EC-H]. So the educational farm at Kinneret was a lifesaver for them, educating them and guiding them toward their future.49

Hayuta Bussel,50 one of the first female agricultural laborers, a woman who fought for equality of the sexes and who tried to apply this idea in the life she shared with her husband, wrote:

They did not always give the woman suitable work that can be found in every profession. More than once the haver carried out the easy, professional work, while the haverah did the hard, grunt work. And there were supervisors who knew how to rationalize this division in a number of ways: it is not proper for the emancipated woman to ask for privileges for herself, and if she does not have the strength to do the difficult jobs shoulder to shoulder with the man—she must lovingly accept her role in traditional women’s work. Yet, in the Eretz Yisrael reality, the movement for the
Hebrew women’s liberation developed. The *haverah* did not see her salvation in declarations alone, and she was referring not only to demands for political rights but above all—*the right to work and productivity*.

When she spoke about the “grunt work” women did, Hayuta Bussel was referring to cooking and laundry. Under the physical conditions of the early twentieth century, these were demanding jobs that lasted for hours, longer than fieldwork, which ended with sundown. In light of this harsh reality, the women asked primarily for an equal division of obligations in work and in productivity. But they did not know how to make this come about. Maisel showed them the way to change their situation. The creation of branches of agriculture fit for women and the development of the farmyard branches, raising vegetables, orchards, the barn and chicken coop as well as studying home economics. She felt these were the solution to the problem of the female laborer.

Aside from agricultural training, the farm graduates gained self-confidence and a sense of self-worth, which helped them set down conditions for their being accepted into the *kevutzot*. Nevertheless, in the first negotiations with Deganya, in which they demanded that the collective accept no fewer then six female members, they were not successful. The request to take in a sizable number of graduates stemmed from the women’s desire to insure that none of them would be restricted solely to the kitchen. Accepting a large number of young women would make work rotation possible. The Deganya members refused. They were afraid that a substantial increase in the number of female laborers would lead to an economic crisis, since they believed that the value of a woman’s work was far less than a man’s. After the negative reply had been received from Deganya, the women conducted negotiations with Merhavya. The graduates presented the following conditions: the cooperative had to accept a group of ten female members who
would determine the group’s composition. All the female workers would work for a monthly salary, and the pay for their work in the initial period would be equal to the minimum the male worker received.55 These terms were accepted and a group of young women moved to Merhavya. A second group of Women’s Training Farm graduates joined Ben Shemen, where they developed an independent unit for raising vegetables on the farm and proved their ability to complete their first year of activity with no deficit.

The agricultural education at the Women’s Training Farm marked the change in the status of the pioneer woman. This solution enabled women to extricate themselves from vocational discrimination deriving from their physical inferiority. They developed a different type of agriculture, not yet accepted on the Jewish farm: agriculture adapted to the physical characteristics of women.56 This creative, dignified option made possible the integration of women into agriculture and the enhancement of their social and professional reputation without creating competition that would threaten the men.57 In addition, the Women’s Training Farm bred female leaders: Aliza Shidlovsky, Sara Malkin, Chana Chizik, Leah Meron, Rachel Katznelson, Yael Gordon, and Hayuta Bussel.58

First Female Laborers Convention (1914)

Three years after the first gathering of the seventeen female workers at Kinneret in 1911, they assembled for six days at Merhavya on Shavuot (June) 1914, the first elected national convention of female laborers.59 Thirty delegates took part, twenty-three from Galilee and seven from Judea, representing 209 women workers.60 The broad press coverage at the time attests to the interest the convention stimulated, and perhaps even to the beginning of the public discourse on women’s place in the workers’ movement in Eretz Yisrael and on her integration within the Zionist settlement endeavor. The convention’s agenda
included a discussion on the situation of the women in society and on the Women’s Training Farm and its role as a preparatory site for rural life and for managing a household. Maisel lectured about the Women’s Training Farm and a discussion was devoted to the manner of accepting students. A National Committee was elected that included Chana Maisel from the farm at Kinneret, Sara Malkin and Yael Gordon from Merhavya, and Leah Meron from Ben Shemen—all four of them graduates of the Women’s Training Farm. The election of the fifth member was turned over to the female workers’ assembly in Petah Tikva. The convention’s decisions were as follows: (1) The convention recognized the country’s dearth of experienced female laborers, thereby reinforcing the importance of the Farm as an institution responding to the need for training women as professional laborers. (2) The convention indicated the areas of endeavor suitable for specialization by women. Topping the list were kitchen management, then cultivating vegetables and farmyard skills. (3) The convention underscored the need for democratization on the Farm, and by so doing essentially proposed expropriating its exclusive management from Maisel and transferring it to “a joint committee of teachers and representatives of the young women that would organize the internal life on the Farm” [emphasis mine, E.C.-H.]. (4) The convention demanded that the Zionist Organization establish another farm in Judea. (5) A request was made for changing the organizational underpinnings of the Farm, that is, transferring it to the Palestine Office.

The points raised in the convention’s debates reflect to a great extent the Farm graduates’ attitude to the institution in which they had acquired their training and to the status of women laborers in the Yishuv. The convention attendees wanted to weaken the link between Maisel and the Farm and to hand the Farm over to democratic, self-management under the organizational auspices of the Palestine Office. The convention strove to gain control over
agricultural education, which had added value politically and as a means for raising money. The subject of managing the kitchens apparently was stressed in order to placate external elements, an attempt to reduce the woman’s agricultural vocational aspirations so as to gain the support of the male establishment.

The convention also reached decisions about women workers’ groups, an organizational substructure intended to arrange the female laborers’ work in the various farm and farmyard branches efficiently and economically. Moreover,

the convention has decided that it is worthwhile organizing groups of women laborers dealing with the cultivation of vegetables in such a way that new hands will be able to work alongside the experienced women in the group. The existing and future groups must be composed of haverim (male, plural) and haverot (female, plural). The function of the haverot in these groups should not be limited to kitchen work … The groups must encompass and develop all branches of the farm in which haverot are able to work. Those female laborers who work in the kitchens must try to organize auxiliary farms adjacent to the kitchens, thereby bringing their work closer to rural living and life in nature and also making it possible for them to take turns at different kinds of work.64

From these decisions one can clearly see that within a short period of three years the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret succeeded in shaping the image of a special type of female agricultural worker. She had a defined worldview, productive ability, and devotion to the idea—a female worker who could direct, guide, and imbue other young women with enthusiasm for working in agriculture.

The convention’s agreements launched the women workers’
movement as a national, apolitical organization. The movement's development and the application of its recommendations and initiatives concerning women's work were cut short half a year later owing to the outbreak of World War I. Before the convention, twenty-five graduates had been trained at Kinneret and another twenty were studying there. Of the 100 female agricultural workers then in Eretz Yisrael, half of them had been trained at the Kinneret farm, meaning that they shared a common vocational, cultural, and social background.  

Rather large groups of women workers studied and worked at the women's training farms at Kinneret, Migdal, Ben Shemen, and Merhavya. In total they constituted about fifty female agriculture workers who lived in groups relatively consolidated both ideologically and socially. In their daily lives these women tried to put into practice what they had learned at the Women's Training Farm at Kinneret, and they began to lead the social struggle to allow women to enter into agricultural work. The graduates of the Women's Training Farm initiated female workers' assemblies and were among the main activists in those years. The speeches and decisions taken, and even implemented, expressed the fundamentals they had acquired, internalized, and crystallized in their training period at the Women's Training Farm. Among the most outstanding of these principles was mutual aid among the women and maintenance of their own separate organizational framework, which proved to be quite advantageous from their point of view.

Separate activity as women gave the women power and a possibility for group assistance, helping them move toward change and improvement in their status. Cooperation, mutual support, and the independence to make decisions concerning themselves, yielded results that would not have been achieved had the women operated as individuals or as a tiny minority among groups of men. This solidarity proved especially productive during the war period,
a time of crises, hunger, and unemployment. During wartime, the women’s activity as part of female communes enabled them to survive on their own. Other groups of female laborers organized themselves around graduates of the Kinneret Women’s Training Farm during the war. These women were employed in productive work under the professional leadership and personal guidance of the graduates.

The women laborers’ foremost aim was to prove their ability be professional, experienced agricultural workers. To achieve this goal, they tried to expand the framework for women’s agricultural training and to recruit as many young women as possible, who would be integrated into the workers’ colonies upon conclusion of their training. Even though the women strove for recognition of their professional value and improvement in their status, they did not think of occupational equality and did not intend to compete with the men or to push them out of the traditional farming branches. Maisel’s philosophy on the issue of “feminine branches of agriculture” had been accepted and internalized. Since the days of Manya Shochat’s collective, no women had tried to demonstrate their strength in field crops and plowing.

Agricultural training led to a change in the status and image of the young women of the Second Aliyah. Training enhanced the value of the woman and her work in her own eyes and in the eyes of others. The women instituted the principle of alternating jobs, which made it possible to vary their tasks and to improve the way they performed their work. Groups of women laborers, with their whole gamut of activities, particularly agricultural work, were a sign of this turning point in the history of the Jewish woman.

Unfortunately, their desire to turn the groups into permanent projects received no support, perhaps because of the cessation of support from the Palestine Office. In an eulogistic statement Yitzhak Tabenkin made concerning the abolition of women laborers’ groups, he said:
They were the ones who expanded the dairy farming, poultry, and plant nursery branches. The women laborers’ groups were formed to provide work for the women worker, matching vocational professions to the woman, for the purpose of the education of the working woman, her entry into new economic branches, her unrestricted acquisition of further education in suitable branches of work, and her liberation from the servitude and insult of being only a cook in the workers’ kitchen. And mainly from the need for a work life near the field and the desire to situate herself and her existence through working in the country.⁶⁷

The spread of the Women’s Training Farm graduates throughout the country created informal branches of influence and helped turn the female agricultural workers into a small, homogeneous national community, relying upon a number of centers in which a few women, who were developing into leaders, began to achieve prominence.

Thus, one may see the founding of the women’s workers movement as the ripening of a social process that led to a change in the perception of the place of the female Jewish worker in the Yishuv. The movement gave women a higher professional standing. Undoubtedly, the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret and the agricultural education it provided the women were a significant part in this change.

1917—Closing of the Farm

When Baron Rothschild visited the farm he declared, “Without me—settlement work would not have come into being; had it not been for the Zionists—it would have died long ago.”⁶⁸ He meant that without the financial resources he had made available for
agricultural settlement, it would not have been possible to begin. Yet, without the perseverance of the halutzim, the settlement endeavor could not have continued. This statement was perhaps true regarding initiatives carried out by men, but it was less apt for the women’s institution—“the women’s farm” at Kinneret. To be sure, the farm did receive backing from the Palestine Office and the Kulturverband, but it did not survive after the outbreak of World War I, when its main source of funding, the Kulturverband, could not continue to support it.

In summer 1914, with the outbreak of World War I, the economic situation of the country declined sharply. At that time there were some 1,500 laborers in Judea and Galilee, about 200 of them women, who even during peacetime had suffered from harsh conditions and a lack of work. Now they found themselves in an even more stressful situation. The women workers were the first to lose their jobs. On the whole, employers saw the women pioneers, the halutzot, as a burden that it would be best to be rid of. “Many of the Yishuv activists advised the halutzot to go back to their families in the Diaspora,” but Maisel and her comrades tried, despite the difficulties, to work to keep at least what they had. In a letter to Betty Lishansky, Maisel writes of the lack of basic necessities and funding, “I don’t know how to help myself, nor from where to take money, [while] the farms managed by the Palestine Office receive the money they need from Dr. Thon.”

In the spring of 1916 the Turks arrested Maisel, holding her in the Tiberias prison, where members of Kinneret and Deganya were also detained. The Turks searched them for weapons and intelligence material. Like the men, Maisel was tortured and severely beaten; they threatened her life and finally released her. In the summer of 1917, soldiers of the Turkish and German armies entered the Women’s Farm and confiscated its dwellings for use as a military hospital. In August 1917, Maisel officially informed the Palestine Office of the closure of the Women’s Farm.
Led by a few farm graduates, a group of female laborers worked for about three years on the section of the farm that had not been expropriated by the Turks. Among the Turkish and German forces stationed in the country during the war years, there was high demand for agricultural products, particularly vegetables. This situation provided an economic and social infrastructure for the immediate implementation of the decisions taken at the Merchavya meeting on the establishment of groups of women workers to raise vegetables and to set up auxiliary farms alongside workers’ kitchens. During the war and shortly afterward, eleven women’s groups (only three assisted by men) for growing vegetables were set up in Palestine. These groups operated in Petah Tikvah, Ekron, Ben Shemen, Mikveh Israel, Merchavya, Sharona, Tiberias, and Metullah. In Jerusalem, the women’s group was headed by Berl Katznelson. The “Group of Twenty” unemployed women operated at Kinneret as well as the team of women laborers that had been accepted to work the Women’s Farm after its closure in 1917. Women’s groups for growing vegetables helped part of the Yishuv come through one of the most difficult periods in its history safely, and they participated in turning the Jewish agricultural farm from a single-branch unit into mixed farming. Women workers’ groups were the ones who introduced the growing of vegetables in Deganya and Merchavya and, in effect, the women agriculture workers created a kind of women’s “Gedud Avodah” (labor battalion).

Yitzhak Tabenkin criticized the Palestine Office’s decision to shut down the women workers’ groups. He described their contribution and achievements as follows:

The women workers’ group serves as an educational locus for the working woman: education toward a sense of responsibility, carrying the burden for the farm, fulfilling obligations and attaining rights, becoming
accustomed to public life, and freely adapting individual aspirations to the needs of the collective. Education such as this, apt for her nature and geared toward her future role, the woman laborer cannot attain on an agricultural training farm, a place without worries or responsibility, nor in a mixed kevutzah, a place without care or consideration for the nature and needs of the female worker as a woman.77

Tabenkin, who was able to understand the distinctiveness of the women’s groups as the only framework enabling the women to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for incorporating them into agricultural work, concluded his article with an expression of concern. He wrote that it was not enough to recognize the need for women workers’ groups. It was necessary to nurture them.

**Plans for Reestablishing the Farm**

Maisel left the country, still under Turkish rule, in November or December 1917, taking with her to Damascus and Brusa (near Constantinople/Istanbul) six-year-old Geda-Gideon, the son of Manya and Israel Shochat, her husband’s brother. Her goal was to bring him to his parents who had been deported to Turkey at the beginning of the war.78 Travelling was very difficult, the war front was near, and the season—cold winter days—was harsh. The passengers on the trains between Damascus and Constantinople were mainly military personnel, posed a danger for a woman traveling on her own. But Chana was blessed with courage and resourcefulness.79 She continued on to Constantinople to meet with the exiled Dr. Arthur Ruppin, and she remained in the city for three months until her papers were arranged. At their meetings, Maisel told Ruppin about her plans to establish an agricultural school in Eretz Yisrael for young women.80

A few months later, from April to September 1918, Chana
studied at the Königliche Gärtnerlehranstalt zu Dahlem agricultural institute in Berlin, and following that participated in an auxiliary farm course at the Koch- und Haushaltungsschule Seminar, while from September 1918 to March 1919 she was a student at Pestalozzi institute. In Berlin she took part in a meeting in Chaim Arlosoroff’s apartment at which the He-Halutz movement in Germany was founded. During her stay in Berlin, in May 1919, Maisel published an article on “the woman as a pioneer,” in the Zionist journal Die Arbeit.

During 1919 Maisel made plans to reestablish the Women’s Training Farm. On February 2, 1919, she wrote to Ruppin about her intention to study the production of dairy products in Holland and about her desire to reopen the preparatory farm:

I think it very important to hire a teaching staff for the first training farm. A teaching staff can not be created instantly “from the ground up” … it would be worthwhile, even now, to make contact with architects, who are thinking about beginning to build in Eretz Yisrael as soon as possible, so that they should visit and observe appropriate institutions which would be of help to them when they attend to planning the farm. Yet, I am too practical to contact the young women who are continuing their education or the architects before I obtain power of attorney from a suitable institution.

Maisel’s efforts were successful, and in their wake the Zionist Executive included the establishment of an agricultural training farm for young women in its plans. In her letter, Maisel asked that Ruppin act on her behalf to obtain power of attorney from any official institution, so she would be able to work toward preparing a foundation for the teaching and building plans. Even though she did not receive the desired document, Maisel did complete her own
private continuing education program. She went from Germany to Holland, where she studied together with her friend and later partner, Miriam Gershon. They learned cheese production in a Dutch farmer’s cheese factory. Simultaneously, Maisel continued with her activity to promote the establishment of the women’s agricultural training institute through the connections she made with other women’s organizations. At the end of 1919 Maisel left Holland and went to England so as to proceed from there to Eretz Yisrael.

In the plan for establishing the new institution, Maisel consolidated and incorporated a number of principles: (1) the intended school should be suitable for a sizable number of students, at least 60, so that it would be worthwhile to hire teachers and instructors who were expert in each branch, something impossible in a small school. (2) The school should occupy a large area, so that it would be possible to develop a model mixed farm. (3) The school must be located in an area with a mild climate (not hot like at Kinneret) and without malaria, which took a high toll on the students. It should be close to a big city so it would have a market for its agricultural produce whose sale would help cover expenses. Yet not too close to the city, so the young women could maintain their rural way of life. The school must be located within a Jewish settlement, so it would not have a security problem.

2 Personal file of Elfriede Bambus-Frank, CZA A76/I. See Claudia Prestel, “From Berlin to Jerusalem: Elfriede Bambus—German Jew, Feminist, Zionist,” *Nashim* 4 (2001): 233–55. Among other things, Bambus’s contract stated, “You will have to teach cowman’s work [since] the raising of cows and dairy farming, home management, [and] agricultural studies are the purview of Dr. Maisel, and in this there will be no changes. The subjects we have designated for you,
you can already begin in October.”

3 In an article that appeared in *Die Welt* on July 18, 1913, p. 931. Also published there was an item on behalf of the Kulturverband, which presented a plan for a woman’s farm at Kinneret: giving the farm’s aim as to provide young women with fitting agricultural training, along with a description of it, the curriculum, and the admission requirements. This was the article to which Neumann responded. Neumann to Mina in the summer of 1913, Miriam Dobrinsky Archive.

4 Shilo, “*Havvat ha-Po’a lot,*” p. 91.

5 Neumann to Mina, summer 1913, Miriam Dobrinsky Archive.

6 CZA L2/77/I. The contract, written in German, was in force retroactively from January 1913. For a Hebrew version of the contract, see Bloom, *Ha-Ishah bi-Tenu’at ha-Avodah,* pp. 108–9.

7 Shoshana Bluwstein, *Alei Kinneret* [On the Shores of Kinneret] (Tel Aviv, 1940), p. 21. Other students in the first period were the poet Rachel Bluwstein, Sara Malkin, Chana Chizik, Leah Maisel (Chana Maisel’s sister; in time she became Leah Wilansky, WIZO treasurer), Leah Meron, Sara Shmukler, Atara (Krul) Shturman, and Yael Gordon. See Yehudit Harari, *Ishah ve-Em be-Yisra’el* [Wife and Mother in Israel] (Tel Aviv, 1959), p. 344. Rachel Katznelson spent time on the farm as a Hebrew teacher. See Rachel Katznelson, *Adam kemot she-Hu* [The Person as She Was] (Tel Aviv, 1989), pp. 21–22. Letter from Hannah Yardenai, one of the students at the Women’s Training Farm and a founder of Nahalal, to Rachel Katznelson, June 12, 1963. Hannah and Yaakov Yardenai, *Ha-Halom ve-Shivro* [The Dream and Its Meaning] (Haifa, 1989), p. 68.

8 Deborah Bernstein, “*Po’alot ve-Halutzot ba-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah*” [Women Workers and *Halutzot* in the Second Aliyah], *Idan* 4 (1984): p. 152, argues that there is no support for Thon’s claim, if one examines the writings of the *halutzot*. They actually accepted, with no objections, the fact that a difference existed between them
and the men. They took upon themselves the role of the caring, nurturing, supportive female comrade but adamantly demanded that they not work only in the kitchen.

Sara Thon, “Li-She’elat ha-Po’alot ha-Hakla’iyot” [On the Issue of the Female Agricultural Workers], Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir, no. 23 (1913): 7. This article prompted two others in response: one, from a group of female laborers, “Devarim Ahadim Odot Ma’amarah shel ha-Geveret Thon” [A Few Things about the Article by Mrs. Thon], Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir, no. 26 (1913): 12–13; the other, Tehiya Lieberzohn, “Li-She’elat ha-Po’alot” [On the Question of Women Workers], Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir, no. 27 (1913): 11–12. In both articles, the authors stressed that they had no intention of imitating the men, but they did aspire, similarly to them, “to become healthy in body and spirit through labor, to obtain through it the same freedom, beauty, and harmony of soul that Mrs. Thon speaks of so enthusiastically in her article.”

In contrast to the conclusion drawn by Berg, pp. 139, 152, who argues that Maisel sought to take the women out of the kitchen and put them in the field and moreover claims the fact that she included home management and cooking studies in her educational curriculum was a kind of political move, intended to obtain the support of the conservative women’s organizations. See M. Gerald Berg, “Zionism’s Gender: Chana Meisel and the Founding of the Agricultural Schools for Young Women,” Israel Studies 6, no. 3 (2002): 135–65.

David Smilansky, Ir Noledet, pp. 135–36.

CZA A76/I, a letter from Bambus to a relative in Berlin, June 20, 1913, in which she writes about having worked at the agricultural farm for a few weeks and her plan to go to Kinneret.

Neumann to Mina, undated, Miriam Dobrinsky Archive. In a letter to her friend, she also describes in detail the coexistence between the Arab and Jewish women patients in the line to the hospital’s restroom, “It’s really idyllic, for the movies this would
be a great show” (letter to Mina, undated), Miriam Dobrinsky Archive. In a letter to her parents from Sept. 3, 1913, she writes, “It is now much cooler here. At 10 a.m. the temperature in the room is 30–34 [Celsius], in the afternoon 33–36. The nights are also cooler. Now I go twice a day to wash myself.”

14 In a letter to her friend Mina from Nov. 4, 1913, she wrote, “The main reason I want to write to you today is the issue of money. If you can raise it, please send me as much as you can. Every day I need two eggs and two cups of milk. On the Women’s Farm, there is neither this nor that, and I do not want to get sick again. Also, I always need more medicines, which I have to pay for by myself,” Miriam Dobrinsky Archive. And in another letter, “One must always have a little money available, for if one comes down with a fever, a change of air is called for lasting two–three weeks.” Neumann to Mina apparently around July 17, 1913, Miriam Dobrinsky Archive.

15 Letter, March 1913 from Neumann to her parents, Miriam Dobrinsky Archive.

16 CZA A76/I, from Bambus to Lishansky on Dec. 26, 1913.

17 Bambus had specialized in the care of cattle, dairy farming, and cooking. See Prestel, “From Berlin to Jerusalem,” p. 240.

18 Bluwstein, Alei Kinneret, p. 27.

19 CZA A76/I, from Bambus to Lishansky, Dec. 26, 1913.


22 On Jan. 10, 1912, in her Russian-language diary, Rivka Mahnimit wrote, “Tomorrow there will be a meeting. Many things will be discussed there. But it is still so hard for me to understand the debates, since I understand just a little bit of Hebrew.” See Rivka Mahnimit, in Bassewitz and Bat Rachel, Haverot ba-Kibbutz, p. 38.

23 Yosef Vitkin, “Kibbush ha-Karka ve-Kibbush ha-Avodah”
In this article Vitkin called on “Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir” (the young laborer) to conquer labor through conquering the soil and settling it, meaning, “that the laborers capable of settling and who aspire to do so, will be able, after their work in the moshavot as laborers, to attain this goal.” Yosef Aharonowitz wrote an article in response and, in contrast to Vitkin, called for conquering work before conquering the soil. Yosef Aharonowitz, “Kibbush ha-Avodah o Kibbush ha-Karka” [Conquering Labor or Conquering the Soil], Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir, no. 12 (1908): 1–6.

Shturman, in Bassewitz and Bat Rachel, Haverot ba-Kibbutz, p. 10.

Labor and He-Halutz Archives–Lavon Institute, IV-230-15, from Yael Gordon to the Women Workers’ Council, Nov. 10, 1931. Gordon, together with the first students of the farm, wanted to underscore the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the institution, and she added in her letter, “Female laborers’ groups organized agricultural farms on their own. Female workers’ farms were established in many spots in the country; at this time, diverse, multi-branched agriculture began to develop among the communal groups in Eretz Yisrael. Previously, agriculture had been based almost exclusively on field crops, and to a large extent credit must be given to Chana’s educational institution for breaking ground in a new direction toward planned, diverse farm agriculture.”

Chanah Maisel related that she and her husband, “in all the years of our life together we spoke only Hebrew.” See Shapiro, Eliezer Shochat, p. 11. The letters they exchanged, housed at the Nahalal school and in the Labor Archive, were written in Hebrew. See Appendix 4.

Maisel to the Kulturverband, Jan. 27, 1913, CZA A76/I.


I wish to thank Dr. Gur Alroi who drew my attention to Alexander Berkner’s diary which is held in the Lavon Archive, IV-108-1-6, file no. 6.

Yaakov Haft, the first bookkeeper in the Kinneret farmyard.

Dr. Yeshayahu Blyden, who was the physician of the moshavot in Lower Galilee, lived in Tiberias.

Letter from Naomi Shapiro to her parents, Oct. 27, 1911. Copied and edited by Naomi Polani, Moshavah Kinneret Archive.


Prominent among them was the description by Elfriede Bambus, “A Life in the Day of the Farm.” CZA A76/I. See Appendix 3.

Neumann to Mina, summer 1913, n.d., Miriam Dobrinsky Archive. The same complaint is mentioned in the context of hospitalization in the Tiberias hospital, “Strangers often come and look through the hospital, as if it were an exhibition.” Neumann, n.d., Miriam Dobrinsky Archive.

The film was made upon the initiative of Noah Sokolovsky and the Mizrakh Company in Odessa for the coming Eleventh Zionist Congress in Vienna. Filming took place in Eretz Yisrael in spring 1913, and it documented the Old Yishuv and the New in Judea, the Shefela (lowland), and Galilee. The movie garnered success
when shown in Europe on the eve of WWI, and after the war all traces of it were lost. In 1997 the original negative of the film was found in Paris, in the Archives du Film du Centre National de la Cinématographie, France’s national film archives. The movie was preserved and reconstructed in cooperation with the Jerusalem Cinematheque by Yaakov Gross in 1998. It was also distributed in video format under the title “The Life of the Jews in Palestine 1913.” The Women’s Training Farm appears in it for one minute.

40 Berkowitz, “Transcending ‘Tzimmes and Sweetness’,” p. 43.

41 In her letter, Neumann mentions that the baron would be coming to visit the farm in another two weeks. Neumann to her parents, Feb. 13, 1914, Miriam Dobrinsky Archive.

42 Die Welt, March 20, 1914, in Thon, Ha-Ma’avak al Shivyon, p. 76. Ruppin considered Rothschild’s visit a great achievement, in that he succeeded in convincing the baron of the importance of the Zionist endeavor.


46 Ibid., p. 61.

47 In statements marking twenty-five years of Kvutzat Kinneret Rachel Katznelson said, “Growing out of Kinneret, with the women laborer’s convention that took place at it, with the attempts at training and conquest of agricultural work for the female laborer, with the training farm founded by Chana Maisel, with the first organization of unemployed women—was the women’s workers’ movement. Go over the documents in Divrei Po’alot, and you will see that almost all the women’s workers group of that period were formed at Kinneret or received their content from the Kinneret
“yard.” The women workers’ projects as well as the topics of their conventions were in essence very practical, close to daily life and its needs. Yet, this was a revolutionary movement. Far-reaching and long on vision,” in Habas, *Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah*, p. 428.

48 Fishman, *Tenu‘at ha-Po‘alot*, p. 17, “During Passover [1911] there gathered at Kinneret the first meeting of women workers. The number of participants was seventeen *haverot*. It was a closed-doors meeting. Permission was not given to *haverim* to enter for two reasons: (a) the *haverot* knew that the *haverim*’s interest was not the result of a serious approach to the issue under discussion but just out of curiosity; (b) the general difficulties of pronunciation among the *haverot* especially in Hebrew … At this first meeting of *haverot* there was more outpouring of the soul than basic inquiry.” Sarah Krigser, too, mentions this meeting, in Habas, *Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah*, p. 507.


50 Hayuta Bussel abandoned her work as a nursery school teacher and went to the Galilee moshavot because she wanted to work in agriculture, “In my heart of hearts I always felt that as long as we did not raise our own vegetables—we had not reached our goal of educating ourselves for rural life. So I decided to study the cultivation of vegetables and went to Kinneret.” See Habas, *Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah*, p. 753.

51 Hayuta Bussel, “*Bi-Tenu‘ateinu*” [In Our Movement], Katzenelson-Rubashov, *Divrei Po‘alot*, p. 96.

52 “I do not know how many hours filled my work day. I only know this, that I would get up at three in the morning and work non-stop until eight–nine in the evening. We were 25–30 people. We had to cook, bake, and even clean the rickety house. Cooking was done outside over stones. The smoke was blinding.” This was how Miriam Baratz described her first days at the workers’ farm at Kinneret, Habas, *Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah*, p. 524. A similar
description was given by Shoshana Meron on the situation at Ruhama, Habas, *Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah*, p. 561. And Rivka Mahnimit depicted conditions at Poriah, “At that time there was no set time for work, we toiled from dawn until late in the evening, from five to eight, there was a great deal of work: cooking and baking, laundry and mending and taking care of the apartments. The fellows worked less than I did. They finished their daily work and came home with everything ready for them” (Bassewitz and Bat Rachel, *Haverot ba-Kibbutz*, p. 37).

53 Fishman, *Tenu’at ha-Po’alot*, pp. 23–28. Fishman wrote that the reputation of the experienced female laborers, who were in the first graduating class of the farm, spread in Eretz Yisrael, and they received an invitation to join Deganya. Their condition they made was to enter as a group of six so as to insure the introduction of the farmyard branches. Following the negative reply from Deganya, they decided to divide themselves into two groups and to turn to Merhavya and Ben Shemen.

54 Even-Shoshan, *Toldot Tenu’at ha-Po’alim*, p. 213. This argument by the Deganya members underscores, as I see it, the verity of the double standard by which the laborers of the Second Aliyah judged the farmers in the settlements. The First Aliyah farmers invoked the very same reason of Jewish workers’ low productivity when they opposed accepting Jewish laborers in place of Arabs. In those instances the Hebrew workers claimed that the ideal of Jewish labor justified the hiring of Hebrew employees who were less skilled and cost more than the Arab workers, but when it came to the women’s work, they did not stand by the principle of equality.


56 In her article “*Ha-Hinnukh ha-Kafri shel ha-Tze’irot*” [Rural Education for Young Women], p. 57, Maisel wrote, “Among nations living on their land the rural domestic farm holds an important place. Each farmer has his own more or less private farm, and any farmer who would go to the market to buy
vegetables, eggs, and the like, would be astonishing, and it would be a badge of shame regarding his farming ability. They know the value of the domestic farm and try to develop it as best they can. We are the opposite, we seriously denigrate this.”

57 Competition that was difficult for the pioneering women to cope with, as we have seen in the case of Kayla Giladi; see Bassewitz and Bat Rachel, Haverot ba-Kibbutz, pp. 27–28.

58 Yehudit Harari, Ishah ve-Em be-Yisra’el, p. 344.

59 Dafna Izraeli considered this meeting as the beginning of feminist consciousness of the Second Aliyah’s young women, who defined their problem as a group and sought a solution for it in common and not as individuals. See Izraeli, “Tenu’at ha-Po’a lot.”

60 Fishman, Tenu’at ha-Po’alot, p. 28; Even Shoshan, Toldot Tenu’at ha-Po’alim, p. 216. Ha-Abdut 5, nos. 32–33 (1914), p. 62; no. 36, pp. 26–27; nos. 40–41, pp. 34–37; Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir, no. 37 (1914), p. 20; no. 38, pp. 12–13; Fishman, Tenu’at ha-Po’alot, pp. 30–32.

61 Fishman, Tenu’at ha-Po’alot, pp. 29–30.

62 Ibid., p. 32. Out of the six speakers mentioned by name in the article on the convention in Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir, only regarding one, Sarah Y., is there question about her coming from Kinneret.

63 Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir, no. 37 (1914), p. 14.

64 Fishman, Tenu’at ha-Po’alot, p. 31.


CZA Z3/1635, 14.11.1915, from Maisel to Lishansky. The letter contains harsh descriptions of the Women’s Farm’s struggle for survival.

Nahalal School Archives, essay by Farber, biography of Chana Maisel, p. 33a. A letter from Maisel to Farber from July 17, 1917. The comments in the letter, following Tehiya Lieberzohn’s book *Pirkei Hayyai*, are to correct errors in the chapter “Chana Maisel’s School during Wartime,” pp. 103–6. The letter describes in detail Maisel’s arrest by the Turks in 1916 as well as the decision to close the school, in 1917.

Shilo, *Havvat ha-Po’alot*, pp. 105–9; CZA L2/77/II from Sept. 10, 1917. A letter from Maisel to Wilkansky on the decision to close the farm. Shimon Rubinstein, *Mashber u-Temurah* [Crisis and Transformation], vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 1990), p. 609; CZA L2/77/II. On Sept. 25, 1917, Chanah Maisel wrote to Wilkansky from Kinneret, after two weeks in Beirut, and asked for instructions to arrange for a group of young women at the farm to finish what was necessary there and to move on to Judea. The Kulturverband report dated Aug. 19, 1918, in honor of the organization’s tenth anniversary, states that owing to the war the farm had been closed, its building turned into a hospital, and its contents sold. See
On the women laborers’ farm at Kinneret, see Eliezer Shochat and Haim Shorer, eds., *Pirkei Ha-Po\'el ha-Tza\'ir* [Selections from *Ha-Po\’el ha-Tza\’ir*], vol. 7 (1936), pp. 244–47.

Similar to the situation that developed in Britain and the U.S. where women’s help was needed in food production because of the recruitment of men into the army.


Hayuta Bussel writes in her memoirs, “I could not continue my work at Deganya without agricultural training, and even then I felt that only equipped with knowledge and experience could the women worker hold her own in the battle with the rule of male members of the kibbutz. As early as that stage, the women members understood that if they would not start a mixed-farming enterprise, the woman laborer would always remain only a worker in the housekeeping services” (Hayuta Bussel, “*Me-Hayyav u-Moto shel Yosef Busel*” [From the Life and Death of Yosef Bussel], in Habas, *Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah*, p. 735).


Staying at the same hotel with Chana Maisel was Hannah Cohen who married Ruppin a few months later, Ruppin, *Pirkei Hayyai*, p. 280.


85 Maisel to Ussishkin, head of the Delegates Committee, CZA S15/20100/II, February 7, 1920. She mentioned the fact that she had studied with Miriam in Holland. Miriam Gershon recalls the period in her memoirs. Afterwards Gershon taught cooking classes together with Chana Maisel on Nahalat Binyamin Street in Tel Aviv.

86 CZA S15/20100/II, a letter, dated December 25, 1919, from Maisel to Ettinger of the Agricultural and Settlement Department.
Chapter Four:
Cooking Courses Project

On July 1, 1920, British civil rule began in Eretz Yisrael and the first high commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, assumed his role. The Balfour Declaration and the appointment of Samuel, a Jew and public figure, created great expectations. The large number of immigrants who arrived between 1918 and 1929, known as the Third and Fourth Aliyot, came from Russia and Poland. Russia had been going through social upheavals since World War I. The revolution and civil war there had left their mark on the olim. Many had been influenced by the vision of the social, and subsequently the communist, revolution, in 1917. Numerous Jews had been uprooted and turned into wandering refugees. Families fell apart, parents were cut off from their children, and people of means were suddenly pauperized and left, bereft of capital and turned into laborers in the wake of revolt.¹

In her study of the transformation in women’s status in the hityashvut ovedet (rural laboring sector of the Jews moving to Eretz Yisrael), Ora Rosen draws a collective portrait of the halutzot at that time:

They were natives of villages and cities located in the Pale of Settlement in the pre-Bolshevik revolution period, and they had grown up in a changing revolutionary society. When they immigrated to Eretz Yisrael, some of them were at the end of a certain stage in their studies or in the acquisition of a profession. Some came from Orthodox families and had shifted from religious observance to lives solely of tradition and the maintenance of values. Others were daughters of assimilated families who yearned for Jewish symbols
and customs. A portion of them had a revolutionary background, while others came from Zionist-oriented homes. There were halutzot who came from uprooted families who had lived a refugee life in the period of the expulsions during the war and revolution.²

These young immigrant women had gone through the revolutionary period in Russia as well as the pre-war years when the revolutionary movements had gained new strength. Then the civil war came in its wake. Some had actually taken part in revolutionary activity and gained experience, a feeling of partnership, and self-confidence. They saw it as obvious that in the future socialist society, one without exploiters or exploited, the status of the woman would be equal to the man’s.

Many of the new immigrants, men and women alike, came to Eretz Yisrael in the framework of the He-Halutz movement. Life in the movement had been a kind of training for living in Eretz Yisrael. In the hakhsharah [agricultural preparation] groups of He-Halutz and in its collectives, life had been organized along egalitarian and communal lines. Both male and female members were preparing for a life of labor in Eretz Yisrael. Equality between the sexes was an integral part of life as organized in the hakhsharot overseas, and despite critical statements by a of number young women immigrants on the extent of inequality, it seems that the young men, in general, worked together with the young women in service jobs, while the young women also performed physical labor, which had been considered solely the domain of the men.³

The female immigrants’ educational level was not uniform: some of them had learned Russian at home with private teachers, and in some instances they had also studied Hebrew. Some of them had been to Gymnasium (secondary school), completed their studies, and continued in university; others had taken various courses opened in Russia at the start of the revolution that
provided educational opportunity to the masses; still others had been forced to support their families and, to that end, had learned baking, sewing, and the like.

Most of the halutzot who arrived in Eretz Yisrael had some Zionist consciousness. A few of them had been influenced by male relatives, and boyfriends or comrades who had lived through the revolution and its aftermath, and like them, these girls had joined the Zionist movement. Among the women who came from Soviet Russia between 1924 and 1929 and were considered members of the Fourth Aliyah, there also were those who had belonged to Socialist-Zionist youth movements. Yet, considering the background and nature of most of the immigrants to Eretz Yisrael in that period, the Fourth Aliyah was defined as a middle-class–urban Aliyah. Many women, even from among the halutzot, came to the country out of lack of choice and not from Zionist awareness, they needed to emigrate as a result of the situation in eastern Europe and the closing of the quota–driven gates to the United States.

**Agricultural Training of Young Women as a Response to the Male Laborer’s Distress**

From 1919 to the end of 1923 over 34,000 immigrants arrived in Eretz Yisrael. Such a relatively large number of immigrants arriving in such a short period of time created serious organizational problems for the Yishuv, one of the most pressing being the supplying of food, particularly for those who had come without a family. Most of the immigrants defined as halutzim found work in the organized labor groups that initially dealt with public projects and preparing the soil for agriculture. The rate of construction, mainly in Tel Aviv, moved apace. There were a great number of laborers, and the workers’ parties sought a solution to feeding them. For example, the Labor Department of the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir party cared for 1,786 people in August 1920. Ha-Po’el
ha-Tza’ir decided to establish a workers’ kitchen in Jaffa. As a result, the demand grew for experienced women cooks.

Later on, Maisel related that the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir kitchen in Jaffa was managed inadequately by one woman, with the help of four other women. The supervision by the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir party, which had rented the building and opened a workers’ kitchen in it, was minimal, and all they did was determine the price of food.

The idea of establishing a workers’ kitchen may have been good, but the reality was disappointing, as described by Dr. Shapira:

Should anyone be surprised that the issue of the meal in the public kitchen has turned into suffering instead of serving as a pleasant site for a short respite? And who is to blame for that? Lack of trained young women, who understand the theory of nutrition as befitting the Eretz Yisrael climate, who know the cooking profession, and who know that the ability to work of hundreds of young laborers and the fate of their health is in their hands. But where can one find such young women as these, who will be able to fill this responsible position? When no one has taken care of training them or guiding them in this direction? The situation in the kitchens on the roads and other work sites was no better than this.

Pesya Gorelick of Givat ha-Shelosha described the workers’ kitchen in Petah Tikva:

There was no cabin for the kitchen. In the middle of the yard was a large cauldron set on stones, and that’s where we cooked. The sun’s rays burned our bodies, the
clouds of sand and sea breeze frequently overwhelmed our faces, and the smoke “ate” our eyes. For heating, we hauled piles of twigs on our backs, taking them from abandoned fences in the moshava, and our hands were full of scratches. We did not always succeed in bring the water to boil, and only infrequently was the food entirely cooked. There were also times that we had nothing to cook, and we just stood around helplessly in the face of the terrible dearth.¹⁰

Since the gender division made the feeding of the men the responsibility of the women, the well-being and functioning of hundreds of laborers was in women’s hands. Dr. Shapira criticized the fact that no one had prepared the women to fill their role as suppliers of prepared food, albeit without indicating who should have seen to this training. Miriam Gershon, who surveyed the conditions of the public kitchens for the Hadassah organization in 1920, reached similar conclusions:

I was most disappointed. The girls had no notion at all of how much items cost nor of how to buy. One of the young men made the purchases. The [female] cooks made no estimates and did no planning. I tried to give guidance to the cooks in groups. I found it very hard to send such a negative report to America. *I thought it worthwhile to learn cooking and nutrition, and not only to pave roads* [emphasis mine, E.C.-H.].¹¹

From Lieberman’s article one can learn that there was no interaction between the different “kitchens” and that each operated individually and coped with its own unique problems—in most cases not very successfully. Of serious note is that in the criticism written about the kitchens, the various writers did not refer to the needs of the young women but to those of the kitchen and the
male laborers.

Maisel returned from Europe in December 1919 and joined her husband, Eliezer Shochat, who was working at Mikveh Israel. There she replaced a plant nursery instructor who left for Tel Hai. Apparently in spring 1920, when she was working at Mikveh Israel, the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir party turned to Maisel with the request that she help organize cooking courses. This is what we learn from her letter to Azaryahu in which she explained how the cooking courses developed.\textsuperscript{12} Maisel was sought after owing to her success in training the girls at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret. The graduates of that farm were the ones who managed the kitchens and organized the vegetable gardens. Maisel, who had been planning to establish an agricultural school for young women, answered the call from Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir to become part of the cooking courses, since she saw this also as an opportunity to be involved with agricultural education in addition to the cooking studies themselves.

Kitchen as a Pioneering Destiny—Chana Maisel’s Workers’ Kitchens

Chana Maisel suggested to Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir that it take responsibility for the party’s workers’ kitchen, which operated on Nahalat Binyamin Street in Tel Aviv, and open cooking courses there for young women. The classes were intended to serve two purposes: (1) the immediate, direct goal was to provide good nutrition at a low price for the men; (2) a comprehensive, long-term goal was to create a framework that would provide professional training for women. Maisel kept her eye on the needs and future of the female laborers, not only on the needs of the workers’ kitchen. She hoped to integrate into the cooking courses agricultural training in the farmyard vocations for the women. She drew on the European model of agriculture schools that included cooking and home economics in the agricultural courses studies.
In those institutions the female students learned to raise some of their own food, mainly vegetables, fruits, eggs, honey, and dairy products.13

The first step toward starting cooking classes was to organize a teaching staff. At that time there were no accredited cooking or home economics teachers in the country, so Maisel offered Miriam Gershon, who had been trained at a home economics school in The Netherlands, to come to work with her. Gershon accepted the proposal and arrived in the country on May 1, 1920. She met Maisel at Mikveh Israel and worked there for a short time. After that she set out for Kiryat Anavim and Jerusalem on behalf of the Zionist Executive.14 As Gershon accumulated experience working in these kitchens, she began a mission for Hadassah and, over a period of a few months, visited many of the country’s kitchens. In August 1920 Gershon received a letter from Maisel asking her to come to Tel Aviv immediately to be present at the arranging of the kitchen in which the cooking course would be held. Maisel indicated she had difficulties organizing without her and requested that Miriam join her in consultations concerning the beginning of the courses. Gershon teamed up with Maisel and together they set to work.15

Maisel and Gershon chose a model they were familiar with and which they felt was suited to the country.16 In the first stage, home management and cooking would be stressed in line with the traditional view, which defines the woman as the one who provides the nutritional and cleaning services. Yet, Maisel expanded the curriculum beyond this initial purpose, when she incorporated areas of agricultural and other training, such as raising vegetables, cleaning, bookkeeping, and putting up preserves.17

Maisel paved the way for enhancing the prestige of the farmyard activities that did not require large areas of land. These would become important branches that women could develop and through which they could provide most of the agricultural
products needed for the kitchen. Her approach meant that “Graduates of the courses were supposed to learn how to raise the major part of agricultural produce required by the kitchen.” Applying this philosophy, Maisel tried to add the growing of vegetables and flowers and raising of poultry, cattle, and bees to the cooking courses.

But until she was able to implement her extensive plan, she began to institute it in part. In December 1920 Maisel put a beehive on the roof and chicken coops in the yard. At the same time, she turned to the Tel Aviv municipality to obtain a permit to place beehives and a chicken coop in the yard of the building that was to serve as a kitchen. In addition to Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir, which was the initiator, other partners in the establishment of cooking courses were the Zionist Commission, the Tel Aviv Municipality, and teachers who had been educated in Europe and the United States—Chana Maisel, Miriam Gershon, and Esther Rosov.

The Federation of Women Zionists of the United Kingdom was founded in Britain in 1918. WIZO (Women’s International Zionist Organization) was established in 1920. WIZO began to assist the cooking classes by providing part of the funding to set up the temporary kitchen alongside the kitchen on Nahalat Binyamin Street in Tel Aviv. According to Gershon, the cooking courses brought about a change in the way the halutzot perceived the profession. Put off by kitchen work, young women took an interest in learning how to cook, and this job became a type of pioneering endeavor. Batya Muchnik, one of the students in the first graduating class, wrote:

To sit with the money box and to know how to manage the cash accounts. To learn how to cook, to wash dishes and large pots, to make purchases in the market and to look for the cheapest products, to know how to buy everything we needed for the sum of money we were
given … and we did not deal only with the practical side, but we were also given lectures by Chana and her two teachers—Lina Hecker and Miriam Gerzon (Gershon), who were really guiding mothers for us.22

Gershon mentioned the competition between the prestigious jobs in construction and road paving versus cooking. She pointed out the attempts by Ada Fishman, who occasionally visited the cooking classes and asked the girls to stop cooking and come work on road paving or construction. Gershon felt that work on the road surface was physically harmful to the young women, so she strove to heighten the status of cooking as a preferred feminine vocation. The workers’ kitchen in Nahalat Binyamin and the cooking courses alongside it began to garner prestige. The appreciation of kitchen work grew, owing to the professionalism that the women acquired in managing the kitchens. This gave the students a feeling of satisfaction and led to an ever-increasing demand for the services of the institution in which they studied. The kitchen underwent a transformation—from a place in which traditional, low-level work took place, to a center whose activity demanded professional knowledge. Batya Muchnik, who went with Sarah Freeman to the workers’ kitchen in Rosh ha-Ayin after finishing the cooking classes, wrote, “We both saw that the course we had completed was useful to us, [so that we could] give from what we had received to others who were so needy in this field.”23

The Cooking Classes Gather Momentum

The results of the professional training were obvious. The kitchens changed for the better, a change echoed in an article by Zvi Lieberman, written only a year after the opening of the courses. As part of his job, Lieberman was responsible for the workers’ kitchens. He explained that:

[An] important step toward improvement and a
solution of the issue of the kitchens is, undoubtedly, the “Cooking Courses” institution, which was founded by Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir, at the start of 1920, under the management of C. Maisel Shochat. And now, after the institution has been operating for a year and a quarter, we can point to its value with satisfaction and state that the experiment has succeeded. This institution is likely to bring about a revolution in the kitchens and to lead gradually to a solution to this problem, which has continued to trouble us the entire time we have been working in the country.24

Within a relatively short period, the cooking courses became highly esteemed by the Histadrut institutions, as expressed by Histadrut representative Zvi Lieberman. One can also learn of the actual appreciation by the Zionist Executive from the distinguished people who came to eat at the cooking classes’ restaurant besides the workers and halutzim. Among them were Chaim and Vera Weizmann, H. N. Bialik, and A. D. Gordon.

As a result of the May 1921 riots, all the immigrants’ homes and their kitchens in Jaffa had been destroyed, and the Jaffa Jews came to Tel Aviv as refugees.25 For a certain time the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir kitchen on Nahalat Binyamin Street in Tel Aviv was the only place where immigrants and laborers could enjoy hot meals. The extra burden of preparing the meals interrupted the normal course of studies, so in December 1921 Maisel proposed that WIZO, with which she had been in contact since 1919, turn to the Zionist Executive Financial Department to ask it to establish another kitchen for halutzim.26 Maisel wrote to Bezalel Yaffe, then the chief director of the Geulah Company for land acquisition in Eretz Yisrael and requested that he intercede on her behalf with the owner of an empty lot between Nahalat Binyamin Street and Allenby Street. Maisel requested that the owner of the lot allow her
to erect a hut on it to serve as another temporary kitchen. WIZO responded to the challenge and volunteered to assist in setting up another facility on the lot. In early 1922, WIZO rented a fifteen-room house as a student residence to house the students of both classes. This structure also served as the place where the students had their academic lessons and heard lectures. Esther Rosov was in charge of the building and was the home management teacher. WIZO’s temporary kitchen provided an average of 60 to 150 meals a day. At the same time, the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir kitchen, which was at least identical in size, supplied another 60 to 150 meals a day. That meant a total of 300 meals were provided daily by two kitchens. In a letter from Rosov to WIZO, written after the opening of the Hostel and the closing of the temporary kitchen in May 1923, she tells of some 500 diners a day during the Passover week.

The cooking classes generated important changes and attained achievements in a number of areas. The most significant accomplishment was the modification of the attitude toward cooking, turning it from a low-level job, mocked by many—and “carried out by young women owing to bitter necessity”—into a function of national value for the Yishuv. Distinctly noticeable during the Second Aliyah period was contempt for providing living conditions for the workers and the inferior image of cooking, which led to the refusal of the halutzot to deal with it. The cooking courses caused a turnabout owing, to a great extent, to the new concept they represented— the idea that considered home management a professional field, which included the theoretical and practical basis of nutrition, study of kitchen administration, including bookkeeping and purchasing skills, theory and application for attaining yields of agricultural products and processing them into foods. According to the graduates’ testimony, they felt deep satisfaction when they succeeded under difficult conditions and a lack of financial resources, to provide nutritious,
better tasting meals. The transformation in perception is also clear in the professional status of the young women who completed the cooking courses. They were more easily integrated into the laborers’ groups, and most of them willingly organized and managed public kitchens. The graduates began to direct kitchens that provided food for groups of workers carrying out public works for the Mandate government and for bands of *halutzim* working in temporary enclaves, waiting to move to permanent settlement.

The second achievement was the advancement of women’s training in the very agricultural professions considered “feminine”: poultry and beekeeping, followed by the cultivation of vegetables and flowers.\(^30\) It turned out that the cooking courses were not only an institution for educating women, but also a profitable, successful business in the developing urban area. They proved that the workers’ kitchen could bear the costs of three teachers, cover all its expenses, and have enough left over to invest in equipment and the structure in which the kitchen operated. With the help of the orderly management of accounts, self-production of part of the food, and professional cooking, it was possible to provide the workers meals at no financial loss.

The third achievement was the start of WIZO’s initial activity in Eretz Yisrael. From then on, during all of the 1920s, support for the professional training of women came mainly through the operations of WIZO in the country. The organization invested most of its resources in this endeavor.\(^31\)

In view of the success of the cooking courses, the question may be posed as to why the Zionist Executive did not consider it necessary to fund the opening of similar institutions. After all, this one was economically successful and had even paid back the loan it had received to begin its operation. Why did the Zionist Executive feel that it was not obligated to offer additional economic support for cooking courses? The answer seems to be rooted in the way the decision-making bodies related to all topics concerning women.
Their vocational training and their integration into the country was considered marginal and inferior. This approach by the policy makers is what prompted Maisel, and afterward Women Workers’ Council, too, to address the Zionist women’s organizations abroad with requests for assistance. Perhaps, since the Zionist Executive had to deal with many distressing situations and suffered from a chronic lack of financial resources, it ignored issues that had found a solution, even a partial one. Either way, this policy forced the women to grapple with their problems by themselves, and they did. The recruitment of women and women’s organizations to support the cooking courses along with their involvement in other feminine initiatives led to a paradox. Without the support of the women, the women’s projects could not come to fruition, since the male institutions did not come to their aid financially. Yet, since the women had proven their ability to help themselves and to find sources for monetary backing, the male institutions ignored them entirely and placed the entire financial burden solely on the women. The Zionist Executive’s lack of involvement and the decentralization of the responsibility for the various kitchens among the various parties, along with the attempts by the officials of the different institutions to keep each operating kitchen within their own area responsibility—all these prevented the establishment of a dedicated national framework that could promote the issue of the kitchens. To be sure, the course graduates did improve the kitchens in which they worked through the application of the experience and theoretical knowledge they had accumulated, but no body was established that would keep track of their work or keep their information up to date. One may assume that a broader view on the part of the institutional bodies as to the problems in feeding the workers could have led to better results.

1 Bernstein, *Ishah be-Eretz Yisra’el*, p. 27; Anita Shapira, *Yehudim*


3 In her memoirs, Sarah Blumenkrantz, who at eighteen joined the Mishmar ha-Volga [Volga Guard] group, whose official name was “Commune of Agricultural Workers—He-Halutz,” wrote that everyone, women and men, took care of the domestic chores in turn, with no difference between them, since all of them were “experts” to the same extent in this type of work. This way of life, according to her, is what toughened the halutzim, prepared them for the future in Eretz Yisrael, and created a sense of equality and expectation of it among the female members. See Bassewitz and Bat Rachel, Haverot ba-Kibbutz, pp. 71–74. Bernstein, Ishah be-Eretz Yisra’el, pp. 28–29.


5 Tel Aviv Municipality Archive, 1-208, a contract between N. Greenspan and the Labor Department of Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir (Oct. 8, 1920). Even-Shoshan, Toldot Tenu’at ha-Po’alim, p. 26; Moshe Braslavsky, Po’alim ve-Irguneihem ba-Aliyyah ha-Rishonah [Workers and Their Organizations in the First Aliyah] (Tel Aviv, 1961), pp. 77–81. Afterward, laborers of the Second Aliyah set up kitchens, but most of them did not meet expectations. “Actually, for fifteen, twenty years we have been involved with organizing kitchens, but we have found only a few of them to be more or less satisfactory. In most of the kitchens the food is not tasty and more expensive.” Zvi Lieberman, “Mitbehei ha-Po’alim” [Workers’ Kitchens’], Ha-

6 Dutch Immigrants Archive, Miriam Gershon file, manuscript by Henriette Boas on Gershon; Pesya Gorelick, “Yishuv Kibbutzi be-Tokh Moshavah” [A Collective Settlement within a Moshava], in Bassewitz and Bat Rachel, Haverot ba-Kibbutz, p. 99; Rachel Rosenfeld, “Shelavim” [Stages], in Bassewitz and Bat Rachel, Haverot ba-Kibbutz, p. 59.

7 Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir 42–43 (1920): 19–21.

8 Nahalal School Archive. From Maisel to Mr. Azaryahu, January 21, 1934. In the letter, Maisel gives the history of the development of the “cooking courses” at the Home Economic and Agriculture School.

9 CZA F49/2773, from an unpublished manuscript by Dr. Shapira entitled Mi-Sejera ad Nahalal [From Sejera to Nahalal], p. 26. The book was written for the WIZO Information Department in 1949. Maisel, who went over the manuscript, added holographic comments.

10 Bassewitz and Bat Rachel, Haverot ba-Kibbutz, p. 99.

11 In her memoirs, Gershon told that after her aliyah in May 1920 she was recruited by the Zionist Executive to cook at Kiryat Anavim for 300 laborers under primitive conditions, “We lived in tents without water[…] I cooked outside over stones.” From Kiryat Anavim the Zionist Executive sent Miriam Gerson to cook in a kitchen in Jerusalem’s Meah Shearim neighborhood, where she met Henrietta Szold, who asked her to examine the “kitchens” in the kibbutzim for Hadassah. Riding on muleback, Gershon went from one “kitchen” in the country to the next, and she came to conclusions similar to those of Zvi Lieberman; Dutch Immigrants Archive, Dinur Center, Miriam Gershon File, manuscript by Dr. Henriette Boas, pp. 47–49.


CZA F49/1224. A letter written in 1919 (undated) from Maisel to Miriam Gershon in Holland. In another letter to Gershon in August 1920, she asked her to be present while the kitchen was being organized for the cooking classes. Additional correspondence between Miriam Gershon and Ettinger, CZA S15/2447.

In her book, Kaplan claims that the members of the Jewish feminist movement in Germany supported giving training in home economics to immigrants from eastern Europe so that they could adjust to the German way of life and would be able to assist Jewish public institutions in the communities, such as homes for the aged and feeding and cleaning services. See Marion Kaplan, The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany (London, 1979), pp. 174–78.

Maisel’s statements as quoted Dr. Shapira’s manuscript, p. 27. CZA F49/2773.

Tel Aviv Municipality Archives 1-283, December 21, 1920, Maisel asked for permission to place a beehive on the roof of Schirman’s home and the chicken coop in Greenspan’s yard. The municipal committee authorized her request on the condition that the laws of hygiene and sanitation be observed.

Esther Rosov was the third teacher, in addition to Maisel and Gershon.

World (Jerusalem, 1996).


23 Ibid.


25 CZA F49/2773, according to Dr. Shapira’s manuscript, p. 27.

26 Maisel was in contact with WIZO through Edith Eder and Romana Goodman, who presented the extensive plan for an agricultural school at WIZO’s founding convention in London in 1920.

27 CZA A46/18/6, December 25, 1921, letter from Chana Maisel to Bezalel Yaffe entitled “Courses in Domestic and Agricultural Education for Young Women.” That same day, Bezalel Yaffe wrote to the Tel Aviv Municipality and obtained its agreement to place the hut on the lot. As noted, Yaffe had been Maisel’s friend in Grodno, where they worked together in the Zionist movement. He immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1909 and was a member of the Tel Aviv Committee and chairman of the Supervisory Committee of the Girls School in Jaffa; he helped Maisel establish the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret. See Katz, “Betzalel Yafe,” in Tzahor, *Ha-Aliyyah ha-Sheniyyah: Ishim*, pp. 214–16.

28 According to CZA A46/18/6, WIZO paid the rent for the building, about 45 EP. Eder mentions paying a high rent for the building as well as the need for a dormitory to provide proper training. After the move to the Hostel structure that WIZO built, the building that had been rented became the Balfouria Hotel.

29 Farber, *Hed Kinneret*, p. 52. Farber quotes Maisel’s summary as given in one of her lectures on the contribution of the cooking courses.

30 The Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir Party initiated the establishment of the kitchen and rented the first building, the Zionist Executive funded the initial courses, and WIZO set up the temporary kitchen, rented the dormitory building, and took care of obtaining additional financial support from the Zionist Executive.
CZA F49/1321, p. 15, summary of WIZO’s expenses in Eretz Yisrael from 1921 to 1943.
Chapter Five:  
WIZO in Eretz Yisrael

WIZO’s support for the establishment of the workers’ kitchen matched the traditional aims and concepts of a women’s organization towards women’s functions, such as preparing food for a needy group or assisting in finding lodgings for women immigrants. However, was the WIZO leaders’ agreement to go beyond the traditional-feminine boundaries by granting their support not only to the establishment of a workers’ kitchen but also to the women’s agricultural training project. WIZO’s backing was of great practical, as well as economic, importance, since it enabled many young women to obtain an education and learn a profession. Moreover, that very economic support brought basic recognition that gave the institutional stamp of approval for this women’s educational project. This, in turn, contributed to its enhanced prestige and to a considerable change in the status of the endeavor’s graduates. During its first decade of activity, agricultural education for women became WIZO’s main project in Eretz Yisrael. With that fact in mind, the question arises: why did a middle-class, Zionist women’s organization from the West focus its support on agricultural training for women?

Operating alongside the suffragettes in Britain were a number of Jewish women’s charity associations striving to improve the Jews’ standard of living in Eretz Yisrael and to combat the Christian missionaries operating there. Already functioning in the Ottoman period, these Jewish organizations opened schools for young children as well as welfare centers, and supported them. They also provided poor Jews with food and medical care, so they would have no need to rely on the generosity of the Christian mission. At a convention held in England in 1912, it was decided that all groups, both those operating on a Zionist basis as well as those
aiming to provide charity, would assist the projects of the German Kulturverband.⁴

When the right to vote was granted to women in Britain, Jewish women, too, were given the opportunity to take part in political life.⁵ The Jewish female activists defined social feminism through their activity in volunteer organizations.⁶ The Zionist movement, in which the women sought an opportunity for independent action, was one of them.

A number of factors led to the establishment of a separate Zionist women’s organization in England at the end of WWI: (1) the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917, aroused a great deal of hope for the actual building of a national homeland for the Jews in Eretz Yisrael; (2) the conquest of Eretz Yisrael by the British and the transfer of the Zionist movement’s offices to Britain; and (3) dissatisfaction among the women members of the British Zionist Federation with their level of their participation and their influence on the movement’s activity.⁷

Of the women who initiated the establishment of a separate organization of Zionist women, three were wives of Britain’s Zionist leaders—Rebecca Sieff, Vera Weizmann, Edith Eder—and they were joined by Romana Goodman, the founder of the Kulturverband branch in England. In 1918 the Zionist Federation authorized the creation of the women’s own organization. The founders chose Rebecca Sieff as its president, opened an office in London in February 1919, and set up committees for activities in the spheres of information and the collection of clothes for orphans in Eretz Yisrael.⁸ The Zionist women’s organization in Britain strove, from the outset, to be an international association for all Zionist women in the world; it worked energetically toward that end and implemented its plans within a year and a half.

In April 1918, with the approval of the British government, a delegation of the Zionist Commission (Va’ad ha-Tzirim); led by Chaim Weizmann and included David Eder and Israel Sieff⁹
went to Eretz Yisrael. Four months later in September 1918, Chaim Weizmann and Israel Sieff returned to England (David and Edith Eder remained in Eretz Yisrael).\textsuperscript{10} Their wives, Rebecca Sieff and Vera Weizmann, decided they had to go to Eretz Yisrael and investigate the situation themselves. Upon their arrival in the country, they were joined by Edith Eder. The three women operated as a limited delegation of a “female Va’ad ha-Tzirim” and inquired into what could be done with the money that they hoped to collect for the women and children in Eretz Yisrael.\textsuperscript{11}

The women’s delegation, which toured the country in October and November 1919, was shocked by the physical condition of the halutzim, particularly by the inhuman situation in which the halutzot operated. They decided that drastic action had to be taken to change what they had seen.\textsuperscript{12}

Later, Vera Weizmann described her impression of the visit:

Mrs. Eder and Mrs. Sieff, and I, as we toured the country, were very impressed by the hard work done in rebuilding Palestine, by the devoted Halutzot, a new name at the time for our pioneering working women. But we were no less perturbed, even appalled, by the arduous physical conditions of their lives. Eager and energetic and praiseworthy as they were, they misinterpreted the concept of “equality” between men and women [emphasis mine, E.C.-H.]. We thought these enthusiastic, idealistic women were mortgaging their future motherhood and even risking their health for this principle of equality: they were working ten or twelve hours a day breaking rocks and stones for road-building and repair, carrying heavy loads, performing superhuman tasks. Their bare, simple homes were neglected; their cooking was haphazard at best, and the results of their culinary efforts anything but
satisfying; dietary standards were neither known nor even considered. They and their men folks snatched whatever food they could lay their hands on.\textsuperscript{13}

Resounding throughout Weizmann’s statements is her traditional perception of the roles of women and men as well as her criticism of the \textit{halutzot}'s aspirations for equality. A physician by profession, Weizmann feared that the women’s desire to share the demanding physical jobs equally with the men reflected not only a denial of femininity and its physical limits but also constituted a real danger to the women’s health. Yet, she was well aware of the lack of any framework for women’s vocational training or education that would prepare them to fill the traditional female role for which they were ostensibly intended.

Weizmann, and like her, Sieff, concluded that they needed to prepare the \textit{halutzot} and train them to carry out what they perceived as the function of women. Weizmann wrote in her memoirs, “The whole situation worried us a great deal until it dawned on us that something drastic had to be done. On our return home, therefore, we decided to form a women’s organization, the purpose of which would be to fill the gaps and shortages which had faced us so disturbingly when we were in Palestine.”\textsuperscript{14}

The wives of the Zionist leaders of England were quite disturbed by the lack of consideration of women’s needs, as they understood them—the training of the Yishuv women to enable them to fulfill their traditional role in the household. They advocated for an educational framework for studying home management and economics that would make use of new scientific and technological knowledge. On their visit they became very concerned that among all the activities in the Yishuv, there was no practical consideration of women, their roles, or their needs. Those who espoused equal rights for women also noticed the lack of
attention to the feminine aspect of aliyah.

Sieff did not know Maisel or her work, yet reached conclusions similar to hers.\textsuperscript{15} Sieff saw a pressing need for training institutions for the halutzot who were arriving in the country, so that they could be absorbed in and contribute to the building of the national homeland. Sieff found no advantage in applying full equality between women and men.\textsuperscript{16} She was in favor of a gender-based division of functions and preferred that the woman remain a mother and homemaker. At the same time, she believed that vocational training for women should be available so as to teach women how to apply modern technology. A woman with the fitting background and knowledge had to be sought who could create such a training institution.\textsuperscript{17}

Upon their return to England in November 1919, Vera Weizmann and Rebecca Sieff decided, together with the other members of the women’s federation, to establish an international Zionist women’s organization.\textsuperscript{18} Apparently, in London they met with Chana Maisel.\textsuperscript{19}

In July 1920 the first WIZO conference was held in London, simultaneously with the assembly of the first Zionist convention after the war.\textsuperscript{20} The question as to whether it was right to found a separate Zionist women’s organization led to a debate. Salient in her opposition was Dr. Rosa Welt Straus, the representative from Eretz Yisrael. She felt that the women should operate within the framework of the Zionist movement, to be part of it, and not to isolate themselves and establish a new organizational structure. Rebecca Sieff, in contrast, supported the creation of a separate body after she saw how the women had not managed to gain any actual influence within the Zionist movement even though they had the right to vote.\textsuperscript{21} Even so, Sieff was careful to dissociate herself from the possibility that the women’s organization would, heaven forbid, be identified with feminist activity, since their goals were different: the Zionist women’s organization was interested in
contributing to the national endeavor, unlike the feminists who strove to increase their power.²² Sieff saw in the establishment of a distinct organization a framework that would allow the women to develop and enhance their abilities and professional skills. Thus, their work would complement that of the men in the building of Eretz Yisrael and not compete with them. The Zionist women, said Sieff, want to take part in the activity and share in the responsibility of the Zionist movement, something barred by the general Zionist movement framework. In her opinion, the neglect of and disinterest in the women’s standing in the Yishuv played a significant role in the faltering management of the Yishuv’s affairs. Sieff felt that if the women would operate as an independent entity, they would be able to achieve many aims not only for themselves but for the advancement of the Zionist Yishuv in the country.²³

When discussion began at the 1920 WIZO conference about the organization’s aims and the projects in Eretz Yisrael, Romana Goodman read aloud a letter from Maisel, concerning the founding of an agricultural school for young women.²⁴ Goodman proposed that a grant of £28,000 be obtained for the purpose of setting up the school and maintaining it during its first year. According to her, the Zionist Commission had already allotted almost the entire sum, and only an additional £2,000 was needed.²⁵

As the conference’s debates continued, Edith Eder reiterated Maisel’s idea for creating an institution for the agricultural training of women, and she described the efforts that had been made to realize this goal. From Eder’s words one can see the inklings of the idea’s development, from a framework solely for the study of cooking and home management to a combined educational program that would also include agricultural instruction—from a school to an educational-vocational framework that would prepare the young women for a suitable life in conjunction with agricultural education.

Managing such a project, which included both a school and
a dormitory, was beyond the ability of any single person, Eder argued, and she suggested appointing an administrative committee to which Maisel or anyone else who would be chosen to run the school would report about the project. The committee would be composed of an expert agronomist, teachers, farmers’ wives, and agricultural laborers, that is, people who could closely follow the practical work. WIZO, too, had to be represented on the committee to become familiar with the conditions and to oversee expenditures. WIZO was responsible for providing money for the school, and it also had to participate in allotting the money to the proper venues. The first step to be taken by WIZO was, or so she felt, to collect money and send an expert to Eretz Yisrael to look into the situation. As for the educational side, Eder noted that the heads of three colleges of agriculture in Britain who had read Maisel’s proposal for creating an agricultural school for young women agreed that this plan had been thought out carefully.

Maisel, who was experienced in forging links with a women’s organization abroad, turned to the new Zionist women’s organization in three ways: she met in London in 1919 with some of the organization’s leaders who had returned from a visit to Eretz Yisrael (in November of 1919); she wrote a letter to Romana Goodman, so that Goodman could read it to the conference; and in Eretz Yisrael she met with Eder and convinced her to be the ambassador and faithful representative of its women laborers on the WIZO’s Executive Committee in Britain, since she had stayed in Eretz Yisrael for a lengthy period and had been able to gain familiarity with the reality in which the halutzot operated.

Many factors coalesced and led to WIZO’s decision to take upon itself the responsibility for establishing the agricultural school for young women. To be sure, Eder and Goodman did have some influence on the conference’s resolution itself, but it was Chana Maisel and the idea of her school that made the greatest basic contribution toward the decision by the WIZO executive, as can
be seen in an article on the beginnings of WIZO. At that time, the founders of the organization were looking for a goal that would inspire the donors and stimulate its members. In the early 1920s Zionism was associated mainly with agricultural work in Eretz Yisrael, so it was that Maisel’s idea landed on fertile soil.

Thus a link was created that was a perfect fit between the organization’s internal need for an exhilarating goal and a ripe, fully developed idea. This connection was productive and led to a unique contribution by women in a realm that, until then, had been considered totally masculine. Despite the revolutionary nature of the idea of training women in agriculture, it was not so far-reaching that it shattered the traditional worldview of the bourgeois WIZO women. Because it had already been tried successfully by the Kulturverband before WWI, the WIZO women could easily adopt it, and the WIZO leaders could consider it one of the important goals of the new organization, without undermining or challenging the gender division of the new society that was about to crystallize in Eretz Yisrael.

**Chana Maisel Navigates WIZO**

The first World WIZO Conference was held in Carlsbad on September 8, 1921, when the Twelfth Zionist Congress convened there. Thirty-one representatives from thirteen countries took part, along with guests from other Jewish organizations. The harsh reality prevailing then in Eretz Yisrael was discussed widely in the sessions that dealt extensively with the issue of the role of women in establishing the national home. Criticism was aired on that occasion of the limited gender perception of the *halutzot*, and suggestions were made as to possible kinds of action to improve the situation.

In the opening speech, Eder spoke of the women’s limited possibilities for work and of WIZO’s duty to take responsibility for changing the situation. She disparaged the prevailing aspiration...
among the *halutzot* to compete with the men in traditional male jobs, and, as a solution, she proposed to train them as cooks in order to improve the low-level nutrition of the *halutzim* that stemmed from the women’s lack of knowledge in this domain. To correct the situation she proposed opening a hostel for women that would essentially be an institution for education in cooking and agriculture. In her remarks, Eder did not refer directly to the workers’ kitchen nor to the cooking classes Maisel conducted in Jaffa, but from her statements one can clearly see that this was the model she was putting before WIZO, with a recommendation for adopting it and applying it elsewhere.\(^{30}\)

The idea Maisel proposed to the WIZO conference was attractive and benefited by being backed by a well-defined, detailed plan of action. It was a good match for the WIZO in terms of the hopes of the organizations’ founders. Particularly alluring to the conservative WIZO leaders was Maisel’s suggestion to combine vocational training with study of those farmyard branches that were identified as women’s work even by those Western European institutions for agricultural education that sought a proper balance between innovation, on the one hand, and preservation of existing traditional values on the other. With this approach, WIZO women wanted to integrate the *halutzot* into agricultural work, the heart and soul of the Zionist ideal of that time.

At the end of that first conference in September 1921, WIZO decided upon its spheres of activity in Eretz Yisrael: agricultural education, home economics, legislation, and health and welfare services. The first paragraph in the resolutions dealt with establishing a hostel or a dormitory for young women, the founding of which had been agreed upon by the Federation of Women Zionists in England even before WIZO was established. WIZO adopted the project and set up the home in a year and a half, but not in its original format—solely as lodgings—but rather with the addition of Maisel’s plan to offer agricultural training for
women. To carry out the plan and to found the hostel, WIZO enlisted Maisel as director.

The document’s second paragraph concerned the establishment of an agricultural school for women, a decision implemented with the opening of the school five years later at Nahalal in 1926. In addition to the administrative committee in London, the conference also decided to set up another committee in Eretz Yisrael, whose most prominent members were Edith Eder, Dr. Helena Kagan, and Chana Maisel.

The relative ease with which Maisel managed to convince the representatives of the various countries to support her proposal is evident in the memoirs of Dr. Nadia Stein, the Romanian representative at that conference. Even before they had gone to the gathering, the Zionist women in Romania had decided to collect money to organize a residence on Mt. Carmel in Haifa for Jewish halutzot working in the city, but under Maisel switched to supporting the hostel.31

As previously mentioned, dormitories such as these were the way the Jewish and non-Jewish women’s organizations could help integrate into western society female immigrants who had come to the countries of western Europe from those of the East32. When Maisel proposed this plan of action to WIZO, the women of Romania and those of other countries enthusiastically adopted the idea and began the process of implementing it. Years later Maisel wrote about the influence she had wielded at her meeting with the Zionist women:

I suggested that World WIZO buy an area of 7.5 dunams on Aliyah Street in the Tschelenow neighborhood, whose construction was just starting and which was still a desolate area, and to erect on that plot a “hostel” in which the halutzot would find not only lodgings but also initial training in agriculture
and home economics that would help them become part of the life in Eretz Yisrael. This was the beginning of the School for Domestic Economy and Agriculture and agriculture that kept the name “Hostel” for many years.33

Dr. Nadia Stein’s memoirs reinforce Maisel’s testimony, “I will never forget the impression Chana Maisel-Shochat’s words made on us. Only then did we understand how little information we actually had about Eretz Yisrael and the problems that were sorely troubling the halutzot.”34

As she had succeeded previously (1910) to convince the Zionist women of Germany to support the establishment of the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, so it was that Maisel persuaded World WIZO to dedicate most of its resources to the agricultural education of women. Maisel played a pivotal role in mobilizing the Zionist aspirations of the Jewish women in the Diaspora and guiding them toward supporting the agricultural training of women in Eretz Yisrael. Under Maisel’s influence the WIZO delegates to the Zionist Congress acted as a lobby for the women agricultural workers and helped pass the decision on the allotment of money for the establishment of an agricultural school for women.35

Establishing the Hostel in Tel Aviv

The Hostel, the first WIZO institution in Eretz Yisrael, was established on a plot of seven and a half dunams in the Tschelenow neighborhood. As the representative of the WIZO Executive in Palestine, Maisel signed the arrangement for the acquisition of the land in 1922. The lot was chosen in light of the experience of buying the workers’ kitchen in Jaffa. It turned out that a kitchen that also had available a large plot for raising vegetables and room for a chicken coop could save on a large part of its expenses by
raising vegetables for its own use, thereby also lowering the cost of the workers’ meals. With that in mind, WIZO looked for a piece of land near the city on which they could build the dormitory and the Training Hostel of Domestic Economy and Agriculture.

In her speech to the WIZO conference in England (a gathering of the Federation of Women Zionists) about half a year after the young women began to cultivate the area, Edith Eder explained why the hostel’s original aim as a home for new immigrant women had been changed into a school with a dormitory, offering preparatory studies in home management and agriculture. The plan, Eder attested, had been consolidated in conjunction with Maisel during Eder’s lengthy stay in Eretz Yisrael. The idea was to combine the need for housing for the relatively large number of women immigrants who had come to the country with the need to provide fitting training for the halutzot, which would enable their preparation for a life of work in the country. After the two had examined the situation, they reached the conclusion that the most urgent, appropriate training for the halutzot was a balance of learning how to operate a kitchen and agricultural education. In her statement, Eder emphasized the importance WIZO saw in creating a new female image in Eretz Yisrael. Experienced halutzot learning alongside new immigrant women could, in her opinion, ease the acclimation of the newcomers to the country.

**Expansion of WIZO**

In summer 1922, WIZO began to cooperate formally with the Kulturverband. The agreement promised WIZO distribution of its associations in the various countries and, through their branches, enabled the dissemination of its ideas calling for the establishment of agricultural training institutions for women in Eretz Yisrael. The Jewish women’s associations in Europe, which prior to WWI had been identified with the Kulturverband and were familiar with the Women’s Training Farm, now joined the advertising and
fundraising for WIZO projects. Associations and branches that could not send money sent construction material and equipment for the hostel. At the request of the representatives of the Mizrachi women’s organization, WIZO agreed and incorporated into its constitution that the Sabbath and kashrut would be observed in all of its projects in Eretz Yisrael. So it was, through a policy of compromises and accommodations, that WIZO expanded its ranks and brought together Jewish women with differing political philosophies and from different streams in Judaism for a common project in Eretz Yisrael. Beyond that, WIZO also succeeded in disseminating throughout Europe and elsewhere the idea of agricultural and domestic science training for women in Eretz Yisrael.

**Evaluation of the Project**

In February 1923, a beautiful two-story building was dedicated in Tel Aviv’s Tschelenow neighborhood. It had dormitory rooms, a kitchen, a laundry, a parlor, and the appurtenances for the study of home management. The curriculum was covered in a year, and other subjects were added to it: laundry, raising of poultry and bees, and cultivation of flowers and vegetables. The teaching staff remained as it had been for the cooking courses—Gershon, Rosov, and Maisel. They were joined, at a later state, by Anna Yaffe and Rosza Yevnin.

The cooking courses’ students moved into the new building in the opening months, but they also continued to work in the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir workers’ kitchen located in a house at 32 Nahalat Binyamin Street, Tel Aviv, where the cooking classes took place. Behind the house, on adjacent land, the women planted a vegetable garden, built chicken coops and beehives, and learn the values of farmyard branches of agriculture. The home retained the name Hostel, meaning temporary housing for female new immigrants. In reality, however, the institution became “a school for studying
home management and agriculture.” It may be considered the first absorption center in the country for the vocational training of female new immigrants. Through the establishment of the Hostel and its early administration, Maisel convinced WIZO women of her capabilities and her determination to set up and direct an educational institution. She succeeded in creating and sustaining an institution, achieving economic independence (even though funding was guaranteed by WIZO) from selling meals to the laborers. Moreover, from a kitchen supplying inexpensive meals to workers, Maisel developed a training school for women that taught home management and agriculture and served as a model for the founding of two other similar institutions—the workers’ kitchen in Petah Tikva and the women workers’ farm in Nahalat Yehuda—and another institution for “Extension Services” (itinerant agricultural instruction) for women in Tel Aviv and then throughout the country. The training and guidance in these new institutions were provided by instructors who were graduates of the Hostel’s cooking courses.

The general WIZO report, presented at the Zurich conference of July 1929, contained a review of the training provided to fifty graduates of the Tel Aviv Hostel. The graduates had scattered among various places: twenty-four to hityashvut ovedet—kibbutzim, moshavim, and women’s farms; fifteen to the kitchens of institutions and kevutzot; seven to places in the city; two were extension service instructors; and two continued with their studies. A high percentage of the graduates met the expectations of the WIZO founders. They were active in their places of residence and in the vocations they had studied, contributing to the creation of a new image in the Zionist endeavor: a pioneering, productive woman. WIZO succeeded in maintaining its momentum and established additional projects in Eretz Yisrael.
1 As noted, the first activity of WIZO in Eretz Yisrael, in addition to the contribution of 500 EP for opening the temporary kitchen after the riots of May 1921, was renting a large building that would serve as housing for the cooking courses’ students (see chap. three, n. 28).


3 Ibid., p. 5; Kuzmack, *Woman’s Cause*, p. 90.


6 Kuzmack, *Woman’s Cause*, p. 159. There were also organizations that worked at first to improve the lives of women and later turned into political organizations. WIZO itself stood for election to the First Knesset, and even managed to have one Knesset member, Rachel Kagan. But the need to make political decisions during Knesset votes, which angered groups with different political tendencies, ultimately forced Rachel Kagan to leave WIZO, which wanted to be apolitical. Some while later Kagan joined the Independent Liberals Party. Interview with Raya Jaglom, May 16, 1999.

7 CZA F49/2777, The Beginning of WIZO (1964), p. 2. Rebecca Sieff explained the reasons for founding WIZO, “When the women Zionists in England examined the achievements of women in the Zionist movement, the movement that granted women the right to vote in 1898, they were disappointed. In their opinion, the granting of suffrage was not enough to stimulate among the women a feeling of responsibility, and it did not help the men in the Zionist movement to overcome their prejudices toward women.”

branch had apparently been established even before WWI when the Kulturverband opened branches in various places in Europe and North America to assist women and children in Eretz Yisrael in line with a decision by the organization taken upon its founding at a congress in The Hague, in 1907. The organization assisted lace-making schools, helped the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, and provided medical treatment, but it lost much of its ability to help owing to the difficult economic situation in Europe at the end of the war.

9 The Zionist commission was intended to be the temporary representative of the Zionist Federation in Eretz Yisrael, for only a very short interim period, until new organizational instruments would be consolidated. In actuality it served for more than three years, from April 1918 until September 1921. See Hagit Lavsky, Yesodot ha-Taktziv la-Mifal ha-Tziyyoni, Va’ad ha-Tzirim 1918–1921 [Elements of the Budget of the Zionist Endeavor, the Zionist Commission, 1918–1921] (Jerusalem, 1981), p. 4. Israel Sieff, Memoirs (London, 1970), pp. 97–106. Israel Sieff claimed in his memoirs that the Zionist Commission was essentially the first government of the Yishuv, when it took upon itself the functions of the Palestine Office and later transferred them to the Zionist Executive in 1921. Abraham Rosenman (Ha-Keli le-Yishuvah shel Eretz Yisra’el, pp. 83–88), claims that the Zionist Commission dealt in the three years of its existence mainly with its own issues, namely, frequent change of personnel, and a budget level that was disappointing in contrast to the high expectations after the Balfour Declaration.

10 Lavsky, Yesodot ha-Taktziv, the Zionist Commission members were frequently replaced. In September 1918 David Eder was the only remaining member of the original committee.

11 It must be stressed that these women traveled to Eretz Yisrael separately from their husbands, who were the Zionist leaders in England and members of the all-male Zionist Commission. They
did so especially to examine the situation of women and children in Eretz Yisrael. Many works, such as, for example, Greenberg and Herzog (Ofra Greenberg and Hanna Herzog, *WIZO Irgun Nashim Voluntari be-Hevrah Mithavvah* [A Voluntary Women’s Organization in a Society in the Making] (Tel Aviv, 1978)), p. 9, state incorrectly that they accompanied their husbands. This independent journey of the leaders’ wives was important—since the women decided on their own what to see and where to visit. Sieff’s letter to the Federation’s *First Annual* and Vera Weizmann’s memoirs prove that they did, indeed, focus on the condition of the women and children. See CZA Z4/1927. Vera Weizmann, *The Impossible Takes Longer* (New York, 1967), pp. 91–95. A similar description of the visit by Israel Sieff’s wife Rebecca, as part of that limited delegation, is found in his *Memoirs*, pp. 122–23.

12 CZA Z4/1927, *First Annual Report of the Federation*, p. 12. An example would be the schools the Jewish women’s organizations in England had established for the female Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe to help them to find their place in the culture and modern way of life in England. See Kuzmack, *Woman’s Cause*, p. 84.

13 Weizmann, *Impossible Takes Longer* (New York, 1967), p. 91. Weizmann relates in her memoirs that she was very disappointed from her visit to Eretz Yisrael, which seemed to her a desolate waste where living conditions were extremely harsh.

14 Ibid., p. 92.

15 One sees from the fact that in her letter Sieff mentions the need to look for a person with the proper training, capabilities, and experience to establish an institution for home management education that she was not aware of the work or experience of Chana Maisel, who had founded a similar institution in Eretz Yisrael seven years earlier, at Kinneret. The three wives of the Zionist leaders in Britain reached the same conclusion as Maisel, but she saw agricultural training for women as an integral part of
this institution.


17 Ibid., pp. 11–13. In the continuation of Rebecca Sieff’s letter.

18 The fundamental decision to establish an international Zionist women’s organization was adopted among the women of Britain at their first assembly in 1918, but recognition that the time had actually arrived to turn this decision into reality came only after the visit to Eretz Yisrael. Vera Weizmann wrote, “Thus it came about in 1920 we three – Mrs. Eder, Mrs. Sieff, and I – enlisted the help of Mrs. Romana Goodman and, later, Mrs. Olga Alman, both of whom were active in the English Zionist Federation, and proceeded to work out our plans,” (Weizmann, *Impossible Takes Longer*, p. 92). CZA Z4/1927, dated November 21, 1919; Z4/1927, dated December 1, 1919.

19 CZA temporary WIZO filing, WIZO History file. Maisel’s letter of November 14, 1971, to Y. Freundlich of the editorial board of Weizmann’s writings, “With the end of the war, I went to London to meet the active leaders of the Zionist women’s organization of Great Britain and to win them over to the idea of establishing an agricultural school for girls in Eretz Yisrael.” Gershon, who had worked with Maisel in Holland, mentions that in 1919 she visited England together with Maisel who recruited the WIZO founders to support her plans. Archives of the Dutch Immigrant Association, Miriam Gershon file, manuscript by Henriette Boas on Gershon, p. 36. Brasz, *Irgun Olei Holland*, p. 6.

20 CZA F49/3062, Minutes of WIZO’s founding conference, July 1920. WIZO’s first convention was held, a year later, at the Twelfth Zionist Congress in Carlsbad in 1921.

21 The first woman elected to the Zionist Executive was Henrietta Szold, who was chosen in 1927 at the age of 67. She directed the Department of Education and Health, and after that managed the welfare section on behalf of the Vaad ha-Leumi (National
Despite Sieff’s statements, however, the WIZO women did actually increase their power.

CZA Z4/1111, July 1920, WIZO minutes, pp. 9–10.

Romana Goodman founded the London branch of the Kulturverband; she knew Chana Maisel and was familiar with her work at Kinneret, the organization’s main project in Eretz Yisrael, and therefore also with all its main activity. Maisel herself did not participate in the convention, but she did send a letter to Goodman. She apparently also presented her ideas to Edith Eder when she was in Eretz Yisrael, and the latter could speak in her name at the Zionist convention in London.

No documents have been found verifying such an allotment by the Zionist Commission.

When first steps were taken to establish the Women’s Agricultural School at Nahalal, an Administrative Committee was appointed to oversee it on which served representatives of WIZO, the Zionist Executive, the Jewish National Fund (JNF), and the Histadrut.

Edith Eder, who prior to the convention had been living in Eretz Yisrael along with her husband, Weizmann’s replacement as chairman of the Zionist Commission, had apparently received Maisel’s plan for an agricultural school as early as March 1920, so she could pass the detailed program on to the heads of the agricultural colleges and still receive their responses to it before the July 1920 convention. Their only reservation concerning the plan was that they felt the curriculum was overly ambitious.

Letter from Maisel to Freundlich, in which she mentions her meeting with the WIZO founders in 1919, without specifying a date; it seems that Maisel met Eder only in Eretz Yisrael, since at the time Maisel was in London, in 1919, Eder was already in the country with her husband; Edith Eder, who came to the Zionist
movement after having been active in the British Labour Party, felt a special affinity to the women workers in Eretz Yisrael and to Maisel’s ideas. From the founding convention until her death in 1944, she identified with the worldview of the female laborers, and she served them as an active, loyal representative in WIZO. Ada Fishman wrote in the memorial pamphlet *Edith Eder in Memoriam* (London, 1945), p. 35, that Eder was very close to the worldview of the women workers because of her links to the Labour Party. WIZO’s goal, as Eder later defined it (ibid., p. 37), determined that “Our aim was not simply, or even mainly, to educate our girls for productive life in Palestine, it was rather to educate and develop the women in Palestine so that they may take their own proper place in the upbuilding of the national home.”

29 CZA F49/2778, in an article called “The Early Years of WIZO,” p. 3, “One of the strongest influences on the shaping of the WIZO’s program came from Chana Maizel-Shochat … Subsequently Chana’s ideas were incorporated into [the] WIZO program and have become the basis of WIZO’s work in the sphere of training girls in agriculture.”

30 CZA F49/3062, Minutes of the first WIZO Convention in Carlsbad, September 4–8, 1921, pp. 3–4.

31 CZA F49/2773, Dr. Y. Shapira, p. 28. Memoirs of Nadia Stein.


33 CZA temporary cataloguing, WIZO History file, Maisel’s letter of November 14, 1971, to Y. Freundlich on the editorial board of Weizmann’s writings.

34 CZA, F49/2773, Dr. Y. Shapira, p. 28.

35 Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des 12. Zionisten-Kongresses in Karlsbad, 1921, p. 761. The Congress decided to allot 10,000 EP for the founding of an agricultural school for young women, Labor Archives IV-235-4-1, meeting of Ha-Merkaz ha-Hakla’i (Agriculture Center) on October 23, 1921, p. 317. Mentioned is the sum of 10,000 pounds (EP) that
was approved by the Zionist Congress for the establishment of an agricultural school.

36 David Eder had replaced Weizmann as head of the Zionist Commission and the Eder family lived in Jerusalem from 1919 to 1921.

37 During the Third Aliyah about 3,457 unmarried women arrived in Eretz Yisrael (Yehuda Erez, Sefer ha-Aliyyah ha-Shelishit [The Book of the Third Aliyah] (Tel Aviv, 1964)), pp. 4–6.

38 In her speech, Eder took care to mention that the kitchen of the cooking courses would be conducted according to the laws of kashrut, see Women’s International Zionist Organization. Addresses Delivered on the Occasion of the Fourth Annual Conference of the Federations of Women Zionists Held in London, July 23, 1922, pp. 12–16.

39 Farber, Hed ha-Kinneret, p. 54.


41 In 1935 WIZO transferred the Training Hostel of Domestic Economy and Agriculture from the Tschelenow neighborhood to the Nahalat Yitzhak neighborhood; Tel Aviv developed and the area of the school turned into a busy commercial center.

42 Romana Goodman reported positively on the Hostel at the Third WIZO Conference, held in 1923 simultaneously with the Thirteenth Zionist Congress in Carlsbad, Jewish Guardian, September 28, 1923, National Archive of Canada (NAC), Ottawa MG30/Aa 82, vol. 12, an article on the WIZO Conference.

43 The Zionist Review, January (1922), p. 148, a report on the planning of the Hostel, the purchase of the land, and plans for the institution.

44 The women workers’ farm in Nahalat Yehuda was founded in 1922, and Chana Maisel help to establish it. The directors were Chana Chizik, who had been Maisel’s student at Kinneret; Sima
Efron; and Rachel Rosenfeld. See Rivka Alper, Banot ba-Nir [Girls in the Meadow] (Tel Aviv, 1946), p. 102.

The acceptance requirements to study at the Hostel, as publicized in a WIZO pamphlet in 1927, were knowledge of Hebrew and passing the entrance examinations, held twice a year. In 1927, when there was some doubt about the continued existence of the workers’ kitchen on Nahalat Binyamin Street in Tel Aviv, Henrietta Irwell, the agent of London WIZO’s Executive Committee in Eretz Yisrael, bought the building, and WIZO became the sole owner of the kitchen. See Pioneers and Helpers, June 1927, p. 4.
Maisel family, Grodno 1923. Hanna, fifth from the right. (Courtesy of Rachel Stern, who is standing beneath her mother, Leah, third from the right)

Hanna Maisel, Girls Gymnasium graduate, Grodno 1902. (Courtesy of Rachel Stern)
Three years after gymnasium graduation, Hanna was a Zionist counselor. Above, Hanna with a Zionist group, 1905.

Hanna Maisel with Bezalel (center) and Leib Yaffe, Grodno 1904. (Courtesy Rachel Stern)
Students at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret (Courtesy of Aharon Yisraeli, Kevutzat Kinneret)

Students at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret (Courtesy of Aharon Yisraeli, Kevutzat Kinneret)
Source of inspiration, Women’s Horticultural School at Niederlenz, Switzerland (Courtesy of the Niederlenz School Archive)

The chicken coop at the Women’s Training Farm (Courtesy of Aharon Yisraeli, Kevutzat Kinneret)
Milking in the barn at the Women’s Training Farm (Courtesy of Aharon Yisraeli, Kevutzat Kinneret)

Nahalat Yehuda farm, 1924 (Courtesy of the JNF Archive)
Petah Tikva, 1924 (Courtesy of the JNF Archive)

The Hostel for young women, Tel Aviv, 1925 (Courtesy of the JNF Archive)
The kitchen in the Hostel, 1925 (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)
In December 1920, the first plenary conference of the General Histadrut convened.¹ Eighty-seven delegates participated in the convention; four were women: Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, Leah Meron, Manya Shochat, and Sarah Lishansky. Other women attended the conference as guests. The women workers and their unique problems were scarcely discussed. Yael Gordon, a guest, spoke of the difficulties in integrating women into work in general and into agricultural work in particular, but her statements drew no attention. At the closing session of the conference, when the Supreme Council of the General Histadrut was elected, of which no women were members, Ada Fishman, a guest at the conference, announced that a gathering of women workers had been held simultaneously at which it had been decided to demand that their representatives be given a place on the General Histadrut Council. In the end the conference decided that in addition to the representatives of the political parties, two more representatives of the women workers would be chosen.² Fishman, like many of the halutzot, still believed, that at least in theory, equality existed between men and women in the workers’ movement. Yet, when the women workers realized, at the founding conference of the General Histadrut, that they would not be able to change the men’s priorities, they began to doubt that the workers’ movement was egalitarian. As a result, they decided to promote their own interests in a separate framework. Fishman wrote, “We have not gathered here today to construct a special platform for ourselves. Our only wish: to educate ourselves and to be together with our working comrades, the creative forces in our working society.”³ Even a
militant activist such as Fishman was afraid to state openly that the women had begun a struggle. Instead, she preferred to emphasize their educational goal. One can feel her deep disappointment at the founding conference of the Histadrut. She believed in the workers’ movement. She thought there was no need to fight for equal rights in the labor movement, since this basic notion was included among the socialist principles that the Erezt Yisrael laborers had adopted. But she came to the conclusion that the new organization would not lead to the desired change in attitude toward the women workers. Except for Yael Gordon, who stated at the conference, “Even the work in the kitchens is a problem. This should not be a monopoly of the female worker,” no proposal was raised to demand that men take part in the jobs of cooking and home management. The possibility that men, too, could share in difficult kitchen work was not mentioned. Rather than fight with the men, the women workers sought practical ways and proper structures in which it would be possible to educate and train women in separate frameworks, while at the same time making sure to create additional branches of work fitting for women.

Gathering of Women Workers at Balfouria—The Founding Conference of Mo’etzet ha-Po’alot (Women Workers’ Council)

A general organization of women workers actually occurred before the male workers organized themselves. This was the conference of women workers in Erezt Yisrael at Merhavya in 1914. Another women workers’ conference, only for those in Judea—since Galilee was still under Turkish rule—was held in summer 1918. After the Histadrut conference, the leaders of the women workers decided to establish their own separate organization that would operate within the framework of the general body. The women workers’ conference met in Balfouria on March 27–29, 1921, with the participation of forty-three delegates
representing 485 women workers from thirty-six places of work. At the conference, female immigrants from the Second and Third Aliyot met each other.

At that time Maisel directed the cooking courses in the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir kitchen, played an active role in her party, and took part in wording the conference’s decisions. The first two statements were of a declarative nature and dealt with the vital participation of working women in all spheres of life and occupation and the renewal of *aliyah* of *halutzim* and *halutzot*:

(1) The general Women Workers’ Conference, in recognition of the vital element in the creation of study-farms for the purpose of educating women workers toward work in the country, demands that the Zionist Federation establish such institutions in the beginning of 1922. (2) The Conference demands from the Zionist Federation that among the new agricultural arrangements that will be created in Erezt Yisrael in 1922, (permanent) agricultural farms for the young working woman will be established. Note: these institutions and farms must be at the disposal of the General Federation of Labor [the Histadrut].

The phraseology of these decisions shows us the working women’s wish to see their institutions as part of the General Histadrut. Perhaps they believed that the labor federation was interested in the agricultural training of women and that it would invest resources in projects that would insure the employment of women. In reality, eight years later, in 1929, all the working women’s farms were transferred to the exclusive ownership of the women’s organizations and Women Workers’ Council, and the Histadrut withdrew its patronage from them.

As to agricultural training, the conference determined:
(3) The Conference considers it imperative to situate beside workers’ kitchens vegetable gardens, sites for raising poultry and bees, and dairy installations. Similarly the Conference sees the need for organizing such farms near roads and so on according to the conditions of the location.

The Conference recognized “the need to establish additional cooking courses along the model of the classes given in Jaffa.”¹⁰ We can gain some insight from looking closely at these resolutions: First, agricultural training was of the highest importance to the participants in the Conference, and most of the meetings’ practical decisions addressed this priority. Second, the institutions Maisel founded became models for imitation. The Conference actually adopted her models for the agricultural training of women and demanded that the Zionist Federation set up similar institutions: training farms, working women’s farms, and the cooking courses. These three types of training were all the product of Maisel’s actions and initiative.

Maisel herself was elected as one of the five members of the secretariat of the Women Workers’ Council. Joining her were her students from Kinneret: Leah Meron, Ada Fishman (chosen secretary-general), Penina Reinharz, and Yehudit Maltz.¹¹ The Women Workers’ Council was supposed to represent women workers’ issues in the various Histadrut institutions, but in reality it was a weak body without influence reflecting its lack of control of resources.¹² Because The Women Workers’ Council had no budget of its own, it depended on allotments received out of the kindness of the Histadrut and The Agriculture Center (Ha-Merkaz ha-Hakla’i). These two institutions pushed the needs of the Women Workers’ Council to the bottom of the budgetary order of priorities, leaving the Women’s Workers’ Council powerless to advance the implementation of its decisions.

Half a year after the conference, Fishman wrote to Hayuta
Busel:

For the start of the year we are thinking of beginning actual practical work for the *halutzot*. On the agenda of our work program—beside the women’s farms—is arranging for auxiliary farms alongside the workers’ kitchens in the cities and moshavot. If we are able to carry this out—of course, with the help of the Agriculture Center—it will be possible to employ dozens of workers in these jobs. The main principle in organizing these jobs is to turn the kitchen into an auxiliary farm, thereby making it possible for the *haverah* working there to change places from time to time and engage in farm work. If the material issue regarding arranging these farms, as mentioned above, will come to a positive resolution, we will need a work force so as to organize groups in various places … at the moment I won’t go into details. We are waiting for the return of H[averah] Chana Maisel from the Congress, and then we will be able to decide together with what and how we are going to initiate the work.¹³

The work plan, then, was fairly consolidated. The model Maisel had fashioned in her cooking courses was the basis for the plans of Women Workers’ Council, which Fishman, as its first secretary, tried to promote. The Council expected to obtain funding from the Agriculture Center.¹⁴ The Women Workers’ Council did not give Maisel the credit she deserved for designing the model according to which the Council planned its projects. Before she went to Nahalal, Maisel was a member of the Women Workers’ Council secretariat, participated in some of the meetings of the Agriculture Center, and tried to advance the issues of agricultural training on her own.

The cooperation between Maisel and Fishman was expressed
in decisions by the Women Workers’ Council, where Maisel’s vision and knowledge regarding agricultural training for women joined with Fishman’s readiness to fight to bring the idea to fruition. In reality, the relations between Fishman and Maisel were complex. Fishman had learned agriculture from Maisel in Petah Tikva, and perhaps at Nahalal too, and had also located resources for financing the agricultural training of women. After she was dismissed from her position on the secretariat of the Council in 1927, Fishman followed in Maisel’s footsteps. She, too, created contacts with WIZO in Romania and, with its help, established the agricultural school Ayanot, which started out as a women workers’ farm. Unlike Maisel, who concentrated exclusively on agricultural education, Fishman fought for women’s rights in the Knesset to which she was elected on behalf of the Israel Labor Party, Mapai.

The joint efforts between Maisel and Fishman continued until Maisel developed strong ties with WIZO and was elected to WIZO’s Executive Council in Eretz Yisrael. From then on, the link between them weakened. Fishman focused on her function as general-secretary of the Women Workers’ Council, in the framework of which she tried to consider all the women workers and not only those in agriculture, while Maisel remained steadfast to her goal of establishing a training school for women in agriculture.

Disagreement on the Division of Resources

The most difficult problem for the Women Workers’ Council was lack of capital. Before the Twelfth Zionist Congress in Carlsbad, the Women Workers’ Council asked that the Agriculture Center add to the Congress’s 1921–22 budget two paragraphs relating to agricultural training for women: (1) a budget for founding an agriculture school according to Maisel’s plan; (2) another allotment for establishing women workers’ farms. When the Women Workers’ Council saw that the Agriculture Center was
not cooperating with them, it demanded to send Maisel to the Zionist Congress as its representative.

The Agriculture Center refused this appeal, claiming that the delegates were going to the Congress only in the name of political parties. Ultimately, Maisel went to the Congress as a representative of her party, Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir, and also participated in the WIZO conference that was held at the same time. Maisel persuaded the WIZO delegates to support agricultural training for women, and their backing led to the Zionist Congress’s decision to allot 10,000 Egyptian pounds (EP) toward founding an agricultural school, and in addition, to allot 30,000 EP for assistance to agricultural settlement, for establishing groups and moshavim, and for transfer of halutzim to agriculture.

But in an Agriculture Center discussion after the Zionist Congress, a meeting which included a debate on the issue of who would be responsible and how the Congress’s allotment of money would be distributed, not one of the Women Workers’ Council representatives took part. The members of the Agriculture Center did not agree to pay for Maisel’s trip to the Congress, “As for participation in the travel expenses of H. Maisel to the Congress—the selection of delegates and sending them does not come under the rubric of the Federation of Agricultural Workers. Delegates travel only in the name of the parties that chose them.” This decision did not prevent the Center from requesting the right to decide what should be done with the money earmarked by the Congress explicitly for the agricultural training of women.

The Agriculture Center members demanded control of the money Maisel had raised at the Zionist Congress through her means of persuasion, although she arrived without being funded by the Center. It turned out that the Center members had somewhat different plans for the money that had been collected than those decided upon by the Congress. The Center members—Yaakov Hafter (representative of Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir), Avraham Kolar and
Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (representatives of Ahdut ha-Avodah)—thought about transferring part of the budget that had been approved for an agricultural school to the budget for establishing women workers’ farms.

At a meeting of the Agriculture Center on October 23, 1921, Avraham Herzfeld expressed his arrogant, disparaging attitude toward the Women Workers’ Council, which he felt, was not worthy of deciding by itself what should be done with the money intended for the training of the women workers. In his statements Herzfeld professed to know better how to distribute the money, despite the Congress’s decision and in opposition to it. Herzfeld proposed that Maisel take care of finding funding for “her” project from other sources, or set up the school at a slower pace and in stages; that way she would be able to make do with the diminished budget that would be available to her, after the Agriculture Center would take a bite for the benefit of the women workers’ farm. From this we see that the women’s ability to obtain money independently was exploited to their detriment. Herzfeld put it this way:

As to the money, an unpleasantness arose. The decision by the Congress was a bit unclear. As you know we set aside 10,000 [Egyptian] pounds for the school and 5,000 for a farm for young women. In the end we made a cut and allotted only 10,000 EP for the young women’s education, that is, under the rubric of the school. There we did not cling to the interpretations, since we knew that the women’s association had promised the school, so we would be able to use this money for the women workers’ farms. That was how we thought. But now you have heard that Chana Maisel thinks that all this money is for the school and that for the farms we will make use of other sources … I am of
the opinion that the Women Workers’ Council holds
the decisive key to this issue. We must not drag out
the issue of the money, for if we truly want to organize
a model school, then even 10,000 pounds will not
be enough. I suggest allotting only 5,000 pounds to
the school, with the rest of the money going for the
women workers’ farms. Chana will find the money she
needs from other sources. She can also open the school
gradually over a period of two to three years. If we
make this our decision, then we can really set these two
things on a solid basis.\(^\text{18}\)

Perhaps the members of the Agriculture Center recognized
the importance of the women workers’ farms and because of that
decided to allot greater resources to that end. Yet, at least from
Hafter’s remarks, this does not seem to be the case, “It is clear to
me that this year we must make the arrangements for a women
workers’ farm … if we don’t organize the women workers’ farms
this year, they will feel that we didn’t do anything for them. We
must inquire how much is needed for them, and whether we can
also participate in the school. The ‘Women Workers’ Council’ will
undoubtedly decide about this.”\(^\text{19}\) That is, neither the need nor the
urgency to find a solution for training women in agriculture were
what led the Agriculture Center to decide on allotting resources
to women workers’ farms but rather a paternalistic approach—to
silence the women, so that they should not be insulted, that they
should not feel nothing was being done for them.

Maisel was not present at this important meeting. Neither was
Ada Fishman, a member of the Agriculture Center and secretary-
general of the Women Workers’ Council. The reaction of these
two women to this meeting has not been located. Clearly in light
of the contemptuous attitude of their partners, who supposedly
were party to the idea of equality and participation of women
in the labor movement, it is not surprising that Maisel severed her relations with the Histadrut almost completely when she received full support from WIZO.\textsuperscript{20} The decisions adopted by the Agriculture Center at the end of that meeting were that (1) “with the 10,000 pounds allotted by the Congress to the young women, a farm as well as a school for young women will be organized; (2) of the thirty thousand allotted for shifting halutzim and halutzot to agriculture, we are arranging for twenty-five women workers within the limits of the funds allotted for this.”\textsuperscript{21}

In actuality, the Agriculture Center decided to enlarge the budget intended for establishing a farm for the young women, on the account of the allotment for founding an agricultural school for women. The backing needed for setting up the first working women’s farm in Nahalat Yehuda was taken from the budget intended for transferring halutzim and halutzot to settlement, and all the financing intended for founding a school was taken by the Zionist Executive’s Department of Agricultural Settlement for other agenda items, since in 1921 land was not located for this purpose. This, perhaps, was only the official reason, while the true reason was that establishing the agricultural school for young women was not at the top of the order of priorities, so its budget was transferred to other projects.

Another decision taken at that Agriculture Center meeting that affected the women workers, and which remained only declarative and was never carried out, concerned the auxiliary farms alongside the workers’ kitchens: “It has been decided that alongside all the permanent kitchens, agriculture farms must be set up, and the Center must try to implement this. As to affiliation, this must be clarified with Va’ad ha-Po’el [the Executive Committee].”\textsuperscript{22} This decision was apparently never put into practice owing to different orders of priorities of the Agriculture Center, which was occupied with settlement in the Jezreel Valley. The struggle for planting gardens next to the kitchens, therefore, was waged by the Women
Workers’ Council alone.\footnote{23}

At the beginning of September 1921, public works on creating roads was slowing down, and the laborers began turning, in ever-increasing numbers, to building construction. Some attempts were made to have women workers join construction jobs, but most of the halutzot preferred agriculture.\footnote{24} In a letter sent in 1922 from the Women Workers’ Council to members of the movement, and published in Pinkas, Ada Fishman mentioned progress in providing agricultural training for women workers, “The first action of the Women Workers’ Council after the riots in May 1921 was to organize a vegetable garden alongside the workers’ kitchen in Petah Tikva.”\footnote{25} Under the guidance of experienced women workers, sixteen women worked in the vegetable garden and in the workers’ kitchen, and studied gardening and home management. Funding came from WIZO, and half a year later the agricultural farm next to the Petah Tikva kitchen was handed over to the authority of the Agriculture Center, which continued to support it financially and helped it become firmly established.\footnote{26}

Along with reporting on the successful establishment of the institutions for agricultural training for young women in Petah Tikva and Nahalat Yehuda and the authorization to receive a budget from the Zionist Congress and WIZO for founding institutions for agricultural training, Fishman noted two failures: the first, the attempt to open a cooking and agricultural course in the workers’ kitchen in Haifa, which did not go well; the second, the expulsion in effect of ten halutzot from agricultural training at Mikveh Israel. In 1919, a group of women workers cultivated 100 dunams under the direction of Eliezer Jaffe and guarded the structures of the Mikveh Israel school. Despite its success, the group was forced to leave at the order of the Alliance executive board in Paris as the time neared for the opening of the school after World War I. Fishman wrote, “The Women Workers’ Council obtained [from other than the Zionist Executive ] the sum of 500
EP for the purpose of arranging employment for ten halutzot in educational work in Mikveh Israel.  For two months they carried on negotiations with the Mikveh Israel board about this, and then came the directive from Paris forbidding halutzot from gaining a foothold there.”

The Haifa Conference Adopts Chana Maisel’s Policy

In September 1922 the number of women workers in the country reached 5,138. Two-thirds of them lived in the cities. Included among the total were members of organized communal settlements who were waiting to settle on land. Participating in the Second Women Workers’ Conference, which met in Haifa in September 1922, were thirty-seven delegates representing 600 women workers, members of the General Histadrut in the city and the rural areas. The main topics on the agenda were the situation of the agricultural worker and agricultural education. To be sure, during the 1920s agriculture and agricultural settlement held center stage in the activity of the Zionist bodies in the country, the Zionist Executive on one side and the laborers’ organizations on the other. A detailed report by Fishman, general secretary of the Women Workers’ Council, told of the attempts at carrying out the decisions of the First Women Workers’ Convention at Balfouria. Except for a modest start for a women’s farm at Nahalat Yehuda, the Women Workers’ Council did not succeed in advancing the topic of agricultural training for young women.

In a lecture she gave at the conference, Maisel expressed her current, consolidated concept of agricultural training for women. Over the course of twelve years her stance had undergone an essential transformation. She copied the main thrust of her idea from the aims of Jewish settlement in Erezt Yisrael and applied those aims to the personal and professional advancement of the women. Her plan for training women in agriculture had changed from a modest practical proposal into an innovative,
comprehensive plan that incorporated achievements related to the image of the woman, her place in society, and her appropriate status. In her words, “an agriculture school, women workers’ farm, and cooking courses are the institutions by means of which the pioneering *haverah* will be able to train herself for agricultural work and thereby take an important place in work and life.”

At the Women Workers’ Conference in Haifa, in the summer of 1922, Maisel explained her program in a lecture entitled “Toward Agricultural Education for Women Workers.”

The school should be spacious so that it could offer fitting vocational instruction and so that its produce would be profitable. The students, aged eighteen and over, would be people with a sense of responsibility, initiative, and self-confidence. And as she put it, “In the agricultural school, the *haverah*-student must understand that the institution is hers and that she is responsible for it. This is the intended system of the school. Without this, there is no value to vocational education.”

The financing for the future school would come from the budgets of the Zionist Congress and donations from women’s organizations. Under her influence the Women Workers’ Conference in Haifa adopted the following statement:

> The Conference recognizes the added significance of the women workers’ farms in the guise of institutions for training the agricultural workers and charges the Agriculture Center, together with the Council, with taking care of reinforcing the existing women workers’ farms in Nahalat Yehuda and Petah Tikva, and of establishing at least one more women workers’ farm at the beginning of next year. The Conference places responsibility on the experienced agricultural *haverot* who are capable of being instructors on the women workers’ farms to respond to the call of the Council,
and to come to its aid for a certain time in reinforcing and firmly establishing the existing women workers’ farms and in the setting up of new farms.\textsuperscript{34}

This decision reveals the great importance the women workers’ movement attributed to agricultural training. By choosing it as a central project, the women workers’ movement proved that despite the process of urbanization in the Yishuv in general, and despite the fact that most of the laborers lived and worked in the city and not in agriculture, the women workers’ movement orientation remained steeped in agriculture, the village, and communal settlement.\textsuperscript{35} Of course, the conference members were close to the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir movement, which considered settlement and working the land the fundamental issue.\textsuperscript{36} Moreover, the leaders of the women workers’ movement strove to establish institutions for agricultural training for women. They hoped and expected not only to prepare new female immigrants for agricultural work but also to strengthen, with their help, the women workers’ movement as an independent organization, which would be both politically and socially influential.

\textbf{From Workers’ Kitchen to Women Workers’ Farms—Petah Tikva and Nahalat Yehuda}

The first women workers’ farm was actually an expansion of the workers’ kitchen in Petah Tikva that Maisel had helped to establish. The kitchen, which operated during World War I, was dilapidated, and its rehabilitation has been described by Aliza Schidlovsky, who came to assist Maisel in giving practical instruction, “The workers’ clubhouse, which stood almost desolate, was turned by a group of women workers, who had received guidance from Chana Maisel, into a workers’ home that fed more than 300 laborers during the work season.”\textsuperscript{37}

The operational model was applied to the group of women workers who remained at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret
at the end of Word War I, after the farm there had been closed. As early as the First Women Workers’ Convention at Balfouria, Maisel as enunciated the ideological background for establishing a women workers’ farm. When the opportunity arose to implement this idea in Petah Tikva, the Women Workers’ Council, Maisel, and the Zionist Executive joined forces and together established the first farm. The reinstitution of a group of women workers in Petah Tikva was “for the purpose of training and for uncovering sources of employment.”

The Petah Tikva group was composed of sixteen young women who had worked on the Tiberias-Tzemah road and the Afula-Nazareth road and the grape harvest in Rehovot, as well as some who were graduates of the Herzlia Gymnasium. Next to the workers’ clubhouse was an area of four–five dunams, where they developed a nursery for ornamental and fruit trees. Another ten dunams were leased for a garden at Ein Ganim, and a group of women laborers worked alternately in the garden and in the workers’ kitchen, under the guidance of the instructors.

Aliza Schidlovsky, a graduate of the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, was an instructor in the vegetable garden, and Sarah Klebner, a graduate of the cooking courses, taught in the kitchen. Maisel herself was at Petah Tikva in the initial period, after the cooking courses in Tel Aviv had entered a set routine and before she left for the Zionist Congress at the end of the summer to garner support for agriculture training. Maisel began to prepare a plot of land for raising vegetables next to the house. In her letter to Herzfeld dated May 29, 1921, she requested the immediate provision of the beds that had been promised for the young women who were sleeping on the floor. In the meantime, she sent them three beds from the cooking courses’ building. Likewise, she asked him for funding for building a fence.

WIZO adopted Maisel’s approach on combining the cooking with agricultural training and provided funds for the start of the work in Petah Tikva. Edith Eder announced this decision at the
Fourth Annual Conference of Zionist Women in London in July 1922. Greatly influenced by Maisel—perhaps owing to their socialist backgrounds, Eder spoke of the plan presented by Maisel at the 1921 WIZO Conference in Carlsbad. So it came to be that the Women Workers’ Council, ostensibly the female wing of the Histadrut, received funding for its first project precisely from WIZO and not from the Zionist Executive or the Agriculture Center. Only later did those two bodies provide funding for the women workers’ farm. Half a year after its establishment, the situation of the group in Petah Tikva was very good. The young women had learned many of the garden and kitchen tasks according to a predetermined plan.

In 1923, the women workers’ group that had crystallized in Petah Tikva over the year asked the Agriculture Center for help in purchasing a plot of land in the area and for setting up an independent agricultural farm. After many discussions, the Agriculture Center and the Settlement Department of the Zionist Executive agreed to this. The halutzot considered the possibilities for the piece of land that would be best for them, and together with Maisel they selected an area on which an almond orchard had been planted. Six months later the women workers were still occupied in the workers’ kitchen, but a few of them had already moved their living quarters to the land for the farm. They put up tents and began to prepare the soil. One of the group members was sent to Ben-Shemen to study poultry raising. Two instructors came from the women workers’ farm in Nahalat Yehuda. Hanna Lerner came to establish the barn, and Ayyala Lukov, to give instruction in the plant nursery. Yael Gordon and Sara Malkin too, were members of the farm. Elisheva Kaplan, later Eshkol, who was also one of the founders of the women workers’ farm in Petah Tikva, invited Ada Fishman to join the group in 1923.

The shift from the workers’ kitchen to the women workers’ farm was carried out with forethought so as to allow for the
agricultural training of the young women at every possible opportunity.

In a letter dated December 16, 1923, Ada Fishman wrote to Maisel in Petah Tikva, “I feel that for Petah Tikva what is needed is an agricultural force to get things moving here, and there is something to put in motion … it’s hard to say that the Agriculture Center is not taking an interest in this group, in any event the farm of the Petah Tikva group will proceed more slowly than any other women workers’ group.” Fishman also explained what she would do with the money, and at the end of the letter she urged Maisel to support her request:

I have asked you to support our proposal at the coming meeting of the Executive. We know that the Women’s Federation has taken upon itself the establishment of [an agricultural] school [for young women], which will certainly have to be its first project, but it would not be detrimental to the school if the sum of 100 pounds would be allotted for the women workers’ farm in Petah Tikva. And, as you know, without the necessary means there is no possibility for work. It is your duty to help us with this, and we are waiting for your reply.47

For Fishman, as for Maisel, both members of the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir party, there was no problem in cooperating with or taking help from a middle-class women’s organization for the purpose of the advancing agricultural training, basing themselves on a worldview that saw agricultural work as the main idea. So it was that Fishman persistently urged Maisel to use her influence with WIZO to obtain its assistance for the women workers’ farm in Petah Tikva:

As a result of all the foregoing, I turn to you now: a few of the group members have said that you, because of
your positive attitude to the group, have also said that something must be done this year to establish a farm. So we have decided to turn to the Executive of the Women’s Federation with a request to now allot at least 100 pounds for the group.  

At this stage, Maisel and Fishman were not cooperating with each other, since both were competing for the same sources of funding. Maisel argued that the women workers’ farms had more supporters (the Women Workers’ Council, the Agriculture Center, the Zionist Executive), so WIZO had to focus its support on the school at Nahalal. Only after she had received the patronage of Hadassah-Canada, toward the close of the 1920s, when support began to arrive regularly, was she able to be more generous and help transfer the women workers’ farms to the aegis of WIZO. In her memoirs, Riva Zaslavsky described the beginnings of the women workers’ farm in Petah Tikva and mentioned the indecision, shared by the Agriculture Center, concerning the nature of the women workers’ farm in the moshava, “Should it be a collective group, that is, a commune of women workers, with the emphasis being on communality, or should it be a study-farm, with the stress on learning the branches of agriculture? Most of the members decided in favor of a study-farm.”  

After the liquidation of the women workers’ groups, which had existed during World War I, the First Women Workers’ Convention, held in March 1921, decided to establish two new women workers’ farms. Fishman explained that at that time, in the early 1920s, the members of the Agriculture Center were occupied with the first settlement activities in the Jezreel Valley, and the Women Workers’ Council, which wanted to promote the founding of women workers’ farms, encountered great opposition not only from the Zionist Executive’s Settlement Department but also from the Federation of Agricultural Workers, “The members of
the Agriculture Center were busy with more important matters of settlement, and they had no interest in dealing with minor issues. It was enough to just mention the need for a women workers’ farm for training olot, and immediately many would respond with derisive snorts of laughter.”⁵² The impression created by these events was that the women had internalized the men’s perception that women’s issues were “trifles,” Thus the women found it difficult to persist with their demands to receive the maximum funding needed for training women workers. The Women Workers’ Council continued its efforts to establish the women workers’ farm, which would require fewer resources than opening the school. It was mainly Maisel who continued to fight for the latter institution. The women workers’ farm was intended to be “a school for [young] adult women, who were studying the work while at the same time supporting themselves from it.”⁵³

The three sites proposed for the establishment of the women workers’ farm were Rehovot, Nahalat Yehuda, and Kiryat Anavim. For their part, the women wanted to organize the farm near an existing Jewish settlement for reasons of security and with an eye to the possibility of marketing agricultural produce. In the moshav Nahalat Yehuda, a farmer’s plot of land, which included nine dunams, a small house, and a small barn became available. The Agriculture Center and the Women Workers’ Council received control over it and turned it into the foundation of the first women workers’ farm, starting with ten members. The funding for the initial arrangements of the farm was taken from the budget for transferring halutzim to agriculture. At the end of 1922, after a year of work, the women workers’ farm had become firmly established in Nahalat Yehuda. At that stage, it was still not clear to the bodies involved in its beginning—the women laborers working there, the Women Workers’ Council, and the Agriculture Center—just what type of training institution they wanted to establish. Would it be a study-farm? A separate women workers’ farm? And would
“mechanical education” also be given there (how “to maintain a flock” and “to manage accounts,” according to Yael Gordon’s definition), or “organic education” for agriculture, which would create a link between the female worker and the land and develop a sense of selfhood. Yael Gordon put it as follows, “women workers’ farm: or study-farm? On the farm there was no study regiment, yet in contrast there was self-identity in work, pioneering. Very slowly they came … to a clear goal of a women workers’ farm training the haverah for the general farm.”

Payment for the infrastructure for the farm and the initial equipment purchases came from the Zionist Executive, and until 1928 the farm was forced to depend on that body. WIZO’s intervention and the funding it provided made it possible to put the farm on a solid basis and develop it further. Women workers’ farms attracted women who wanted to switch to agriculture. Most of them were halutzot from the Second, Third, and Fourth Aliyot, but some were native-born women who had internalized the idea of working the land after having been exposed to it during their schooldays, and still others were young women immigrants who come to Erezt Yisrael with their families and who wanted to acquire agricultural training to help their parents or to establish a farm in the future.

The Women Workers’ Movement Versus the Agriculture Center

More than a few fights and debates took place at meetings of the Agriculture Center and those of the Women Workers’ Council over the issue of the functions the women workers’ farm were to fulfill, and the correct type of action that would lead to the realization of their goals. The logic behind the women workers’ farm had already been determined at the First Conference of the Women Workers’ movement at Balfouria. At a discussion that took place in June 1924 between representatives of the Women
Workers’ Council and representatives of the Agriculture Center, Ada Fishman enumerated the usefulness of the three women workers’ farms in Petah Tikva, Nahalat Yehuda, and the Borochov neighborhood, (1) a solution for lack of available work; (2) education of the young woman toward activity which was not usually achieved in mixed groups; and (3) education for communal life and mutual assistance in preparation for life on the kibbutz or moshav.56

Fishman knew that the women workers’ farms would not solve the problem of lack of work for many women laborers, so she gave greater importance to additional benefits. She felt that education toward initiative and independence would be obtained with greater success in gender separated groups. Since she considered the women workers’ farm as based mainly on cooperation and equality, she did not want any special status for the female practical instructors. On this topic, differences of opinion came to the fore with the Agriculture Center considering agricultural training the main function of the women worker’s farms.57 Tzippora Bat-Ami, who later coordinated the women’s farm in Hadera, argued that the women’s farm would achieve its aim if the young women would work there for two years, a sufficient period of time, in her opinion, for training. She warned against accepting possible support from WIZO, which she defined as philanthropy and charity, and she was afraid that it would lead to the intervention of the organization in various areas of the women workers’ farms. Owing to similar reasons of fear of dependency, she also cautioned against hiring men laborers on the farm.

The Agriculture Center, in contrast, wanted agricultural training mainly for its female members who belonged to the organized settlement groups. So it gave precedence to the female members of kibbutzim and moshavim. This sharpened the difference between the masculine approach, which wanted to professionalize the training and produce female graduates with
professional knowledge who could help develop branches of agriculture on their farms, and the feminine approach, which considered the main issue the education of the woman and her personal development. The central argument of the women workers’ farms’ members against the representatives of the Agriculture Center was that the female members of the collectives who came for training did not remain long enough to complete the studies and left when their communal group settled on its land. This situation created a problem, since it interrupted the continuity of the training and made it difficult to plan a work schedule. Representatives of the Agriculture Center made it clear to the women members that they, the men, would determine the regulations of the women workers’ farms, which they viewed simply as a means and not an end.  

Kolar put it this way:  

Here we will not decide on the regulations, here we will listen to the women members’ opinion, which will serve as material for preparing the set of rules. The discussion with women members about their own experience will be material for the future regulations … the women workers’ farms are places for agricultural training. The composition of these groups, the way they have accepted members until now, is definitely not good, and they must accept mainly members from kibbutzim.

The women accepted the paternalistic stance of the men in the Agriculture Center with no real protest. It seems that the women who founded the women workers’ farms and bore the brunt of maintaining them and grappling with the day-to-day difficulties, agreed that they would not determine the regulations regarding their lives. Perhaps they had despaired after so many battles, or they had internalized the masculine approach on which they had grown up, so they relinquished their wishes and let the men decide
and establish the rules for the women workers’ farms.

The women explained that the problems that cropped up on their farms were caused by the kibbutz women leaving after a short period, but the truth was that even among the active members of the women workers’ farms there were differences of opinion about this: whether to train the women members of the kibbutzim who were headed for settlement and need training in future branches that would be established in the permanent settlement, or perhaps to bring women from the mass immigration closer to the Women Workers’ Movement and educate them and draw them closer to agriculture. Herzfeld, who came to realize on his own the damage caused to the women workers’ farms, agreed to accept only a limited number of collective members for admission. His position derived from his thinking that he would be able to use the graduates of the women workers’ farms who did not belong to a kibbutz like an army mustered for the purposes of the General Histadrut.61 Herzfeld explained:

We think that women workers’ farms will serve aliyah in the broadest sense … the members of our generation are army members in the full sense of the word … the women member who does not come from a kibbutz is completely immersed in this place. The time that the haverot must be at the ready to serve the [General] Histadrut begins after they finish their work at the women workers’ farms, only then do they begin activity and usefulness, and then they will be able to be of great assistance to us in our settlement endeavor. The haverot in the women workers’ farms must receive training in kitchen work, for only thereby will they be able to serve the permanent settlings on the land, since the situation of the kitchens in the new kibbutzim is extremely bad and needs many improvements.62
Herzfeld referred to the women as if he were their patron. He claimed that he was able to decide for the women workers who were finishing their training on the women workers’ farms, what their future role would be and where they would be headed. The discussion on the future of the women workers’ farms and their mode of functioning was not one between equals but rather a discussion between those making the decisions versus those who were supposed to accept the dictates of the representatives of the Agriculture Center.

Beyond the debate over the question of who would be the candidates for the women workers’ farms, on which there were differences of opinion even among the very representatives of the Agriculture Center as well as among the representatives of the women workers’ farms themselves, decision-making in the Agriculture Center was the purview of the men. The women workers were obliged to obey the men’s dictates and instructions. All of this, despite the fact that actual economic aid from the Agriculture Center was extremely limited in comparison to the help given to the mixed settlement-farms, such as kibbutzim and moshavim, and even though those settlements received greater help because the Agriculture Center did not lay down for them whom to accept or how to manage things.

Elisheva Kaplan, a founder of the women workers’ farm in Petah Tikva and a member of the Women Workers’ Council’s secretariat, argued that the women workers’ farms were not able to realize simultaneously all the goals they had set for themselves since there were contradictions among them. An order of priorities had to be set. Kaplan asked whether the aim of the women workers’ farm was to make a profit, or to train new immigrant women while employing practical instructors?

Ada Fishman opposed the idea that the members of the women workers’ farms were a conscripted army of the Agriculture Center. “I am against the term ‘going to help.’ The women worker should
go wherever she wants to.” The idea that there would be a group of *haverot* with special rights, *haverot* of the kibbutzim, who do not have to stay for the full course was unacceptable to her. If the experienced women workers would go to places as requested, the farm would be left without the necessary nucleus to remain viable. If the graduates would not stay the entire two years to coordinate everything, there would be no basis for the women workers’ farm. In such a situation, the institution would turn into a school amassing debts. Chana Chizik, too, rose up against giving extra privileges to *haverot* of the kibbutzim. Granting such a thing would create problems in the *kevutza* and should be given only in special cases.

The discussion revealed that in 1925, three years after the establishment of the first women workers’ farms in Nahalat Yehuda, Petah Tikva, and the Borochov neighborhood, the members who managed and maintained the farmers were still deliberating such questions as defining the aims and the candidates for receiving training on these farms. In neither body was there a decision on the farms’ main mission. The problems of land, water, and funding made it difficult to set the women workers’ farms on a firm basis. The veteran women workers from the Second Aliyah still carried the burden, and the *haverot* from the kibbutzim who wanted professional training, were more faithful to their communes than to the farm. Between the two possibilities, the women workers’ farm or settlement with their comrades, they chose the latter and did not take into account the needs of the women workers’ farm.

The Agriculture Center, was preoccupied with great task of setting up habitable sites and saw in the women workers’ farms a marginal phenomenon, especially considering the number of women that were on them. Its representatives were impatient. They did not want to hear about the true needs of the women workers’ farms. Instead they made every effort to extract as much
as possible from them for what appeared to be the general goal of agricultural settlement with minimum investment. This attitude on the part of the Agriculture Center harmed what was inherent in the women workers’ farms, the desire to become the new female image. The instrumental constraints in the field overtook the feminist aspirations of the farms’ founders.

Rachel Yanait Initiates the Women Workers’ Farm in Jerusalem

The women workers’ farm in Jerusalem differed from other agricultural training projects for women that were founded in Erezt Yisrael and were connected to women’s organizations abroad. The uniqueness of the Jerusalem farm founded by Rachel Yanait was its link with the women’s organization of the Poalei Zion party in America and its influence on the organization.

Like her comrades in the Second Aliyah, Yanait considered agriculture the most important challenge in building up the country and carrying out the personal revolution that the creation of a new society could produce. Yanait strove to bring others to take on the missions she had taken upon herself. After World War I, she established a small nursery in Jerusalem where her father and orphans sent by “War Orphans Committee” worked. In her words, “At the end of summer in 1919 I was already in Jerusalem—it was my lot to realize my dream and to gain a foothold here on the soil—with the start of my work at the nursery. I wholeheartedly desire to train boys and girls for this work and am striving to cover the denuded Judean Hills with forest trees.” Later, Rachel Yanait was forced to transfer the nursery to a plot in the Bukharan neighborhood. She did this with ha’averot from Gedud ha-Avodah who joined her when that labor force reached Jerusalem in December 1921. The Zionist Executive’s Settlement Department ordered seedlings, and Yanait turned to the JNF (Jewish National Fund) for its approval to move the nursery to JNF land in the
Jerusalem section of Rehavia. But then a dispute broke out between Rachel Yanait, who was a member of the Women Workers’ Council, and the Gedud ha-Avodah on the issue of the ownership of the nursery. At a meeting of the Women Workers’ Council and the Agriculture Center on December 2, 1924, Yanait announced that she was putting a halt to her cooperation with the latter.\textsuperscript{69}

On the site, in addition to the nursery, Yanait planted a vegetable garden and began giving lessons in agriculture. At that time water was brought to the nursery through a small pipe and was supplied grudgingly. Digging a separate water pit could supply the farm with the water it needed.\textsuperscript{70} To pay for the excavation Yanait turned to the women of the Poalei Zion party in the United States. Connections with Poalei Zion women had been forged by Manya Shochat three years earlier in July 1921 when she went to the U.S. with Berl Katznelson and Yosef Baratz as emissaries of the General Histadrut on behalf of Bank Hapoalim.\textsuperscript{71} At that time, Manya Shochat laid the foundation for the creation of the Pioneer Women organization, which was officially established three years later.

With the help of the JNF, Yanait obtained the funding to prepare the plan for excavating the water pit for the women workers’ farm. Rachel Yanait informed Sophie Udin of Pioneer Women in America, who had already visited in Erezt Yisrael in 1921.\textsuperscript{72} For this task, Udin recruited another six women from those active in Poalei Zion in America to organize around a defined goal, and they went into action. Through this project, Rachel Yanait and Manya Shochat created an incentive for the Pioneer Women organization. Sophie Udin and her colleagues in Poalei Zion women used the petition from Rachel Yanait and Manya Shochat to come to the aid of the \textit{halutzot} at the women workers’ farm. Udin and her friends utilized the petition as a tool to advance their organizing separately from the men. They hoped that their volunteering on behalf of the \textit{halutzot} in Erezt Yisrael would allow
them to create their own agenda, despite the male hegemony in the Poalei Zion party. As was true of other women in America in the 1920s, they experienced the economic and social change that was opening opportunities for American women. Under the leadership of Udin they explained that an independent women’s organization within the Zionist labor movement was a better way to achieve their goals. To this end they published Rachel Yanait’s letter containing a description of the nursery and the halutzot working in it. In the letter Yanait noted that over the course of two years the nursery had supplied 130,000 seedlings to seventeen newly inhabited sites in Galilee and Judea. If the water pit that would be the source for irrigation water would not be dug, the nursery would have to be closed. The text was published in the Yiddish newspaper and influenced many women.

The image of the Hebrew halutzot raising tree seedlings to make the desolated hills bloom plucked at the heartstrings of the Jewish socialist immigrants. Udin and her friends not only succeeded in raising the sum of $500 needed for the excavation, they were also helped by the women’s enthusiasm to establish a separate organization for women in the Zionist labor movement in America. At the Fifteenth Convention of Poalei Zion at the end of 1924, Udin presented a request for authorization to found a separate women’s organization. The Poalei Zion leadership, similar to what was accepted in Socialist parties, opposed the establishment of a separate organization for women. Ultimately, the party approved their distinct body under the name “Pioneer Women,” with the support of Manya Shochat, Rachel Yanait, and Golda Myerson (Meir), from among the Women Workers’ Council leadership, and women members of the Ahdut ha-Avodah party. This was how a women’s group separated itself from the Poalei Zion party in North America and became a distinct organization called Pioneer Woman. In 1926, the first convention of the new organization was held in New York, and Leah Biskin was elected its
first national president.\textsuperscript{79}

The women active in the new organization came from immigrants and working women in America, and they were proud of their labor identity in contrast to the two middle-class groups, the Congress of Jewish Women and Hadassah.\textsuperscript{80} To nurture their identity, the Pioneer Women members were helped by emissaries from the Women Workers’ Council who came from Erezt Yisrael. Rachel Yanait was the first such person to come to the U.S. to assist in opening branches. She stayed in America from December 1927 to May 1928. After her, Golda Meir came first for a few months (December 1928 to June 1929) and then for three years, 1931–34. Golda Meir was followed by other emissaries. As one of the active women pointed out, these emissaries gave the movement its soul.\textsuperscript{81} During the organization’s first two years, 1925–27, Pioneer Women collected the respectable sum of $25,000 for the agricultural training of women in Erezt Yisrael.\textsuperscript{82}

Yanait looked for a larger piece of land than that given to her in Rehavia. At the Zionist Congress in Basel, which she attended as a delegate, she hoped to obtain authorization to purchase land for a women workers’ farm under her management.\textsuperscript{83} On this trip Yanait obtained a small loan and, for the remainder of the sum needed, the Pioneer Women gave a loan to the J.N.F. In 1927 this money was used to buy fifty dunams near Armon ha-Natziv (the high commissioner’s palace). After three years of wandering, the women workers’ farm in Jerusalem had obtained its own permanent site. Toward the end of the year, the members began erecting buildings and preparing the land.\textsuperscript{84} By the close of the first year the vegetable garden had produced its first crop, fruit trees had been planted, and the chicken coop had been set up. Twelve haverot worked at the site and established a women workers’ farm there with a number of branches of agriculture. The bloody riots of August 1929 made it necessary to evacuate the women workers’ farm, and its members were sent as reinforcements to the Haganah positions.
in the city. During the riots, the farm was destroyed and the vines in the vineyard were ruined. When order was restored, the farm was effectively reconstituted, with the help of funds from Pioneer Women and two other women’s groups, one in Boston, the other in Chicago, which helped with the renovation of the farm.  

Support for the women workers’ farm in Jerusalem was the first assistance that Pioneer Women gave to the Zionist endeavor. Afterward it began to help other projects for women’s agricultural training. Since Pioneer Women was identified almost exclusively with the Ahдут ha-Avodah party and operated as an extension of its sister party, Poalei Zion in America, Fishman feared that the money from Pioneer Women would not reach all the women workers’ farms but only those linked to Ahдут ha-Avodah. Thus question provoked a struggle within the Women Workers’ Council and the Agriculture Center over the issue of who had the authority to decide the destinations for the money that came from Pioneer Women.

The idea of agricultural training and the appeal for help encouraged the women to disassociate themselves from the mother party and create a separate women’s organization. The assistance supplied by Poalei Zion women to the halutzot in Erezt Yisrael reinforced their confidence and sense of satisfaction. These components helped the leaders of the group in America strengthen the independent organization of the women in the Poalei Zion party. As time went on, the women did not stop at supporting the halutzot but extended their spheres of activity to reinforcing Hebrew schools in the United States, expanding the youth activity of Poalei Zion, and later supporting the Habonim youth movement. Similarly, it carried out brisk activity between American Jewry to increase the idea of supporting Erezt Yisrael.

The Struggle over the Women Workers’ Council’s Budget

In the 1920s the Women Workers’ Council did not have the
authority to decide alone how to assign the money that came from abroad, and in effect, its budget was part of the Agriculture Center. Actually, the women were subordinated to the Agriculture Center, and their entire budget was subsumed within the Center and was even authorized by the Center. Struggles over control of the funds that arrived from America, differences of opinion, and conflicts of interests developed between the two bodies. The Women Workers’ Council wanted to direct the funding supplied by Pioneer Women to the women workers’ farms, for which the money had been collected. To that end it tried to create a direct link with the benefactors from America. The Agriculture Center, which was interested in allotting money to various needs, including acquiring land for settlement groups, used the funds that had been collected for agricultural training of women as it saw fit.

The friction reached such proportions that the Agriculture Center’s treasurer threatened to cease all dealings with women workers’ farms. At the same time as the Agriculture Center tried to maintain complete control over the money coming from America, the Histadrut’s Executive Committee did not provide its part for the Women Workers’ Council’s budget, claiming that the funds had to come from the Agriculture Center. The Executive Committee’s support for the Women Workers’ Council budgets of 1927–1931 was the ridiculous sum of 172 EP, which came to only one half of one percent of the incoming funds of the Women Workers’ Council.

Despite the Women Workers’ Council’s success in raising funds in America to benefit the women’s agricultural training project, it still had no real budget of its own and remained dependent upon the good will of the Agriculture Center, whose members decided how the Pioneer Women money should be distributed. Rachel Yanait, the person who initiated the raising of funds from Pioneer Women, expressed the frustration of the Women Workers’ Council members, “The Histadrut institutions have accepted the idea of
abandoning the women worker’s institutions and their economic endeavor. They shove us into the Women’s Federation, as if we have not set foot in the realm of Histadrut activity.”

When the General Histadrut’s Executive Committee decided to send Golda Meir on a mission to Pioneer Women in 1928, Ada Fishman opposed the move. She was afraid that the money that would be raised in America would go only to Ahdut ha-Avodah farms, as had happened in the past. At the time money had been transferred from Pioneer Women directly to three women: to Rachel Yanait to be put at the disposal of the Jerusalem women workers’ farm, to Leah Meron in the Borochov neighborhood of Tel Aviv, and to Chana Chizik in the women workers’ group in north Tel Aviv. Fishman demanded that two women go to America, one from each party. At the end of the discussion, it was decided to send one emissary. The decision resulted from the balance of power on Executive Committee, the majority of whose members belonged to Ahdut ha-Avodah. A year earlier Fishman had been dismissed from the position of the Women Workers’ Council general secretary, and Golda Meir had been chosen to replace her. Fishman, whose dedication to the women workers’ movement and to its main project—agricultural training—went beyond political considerations, responded to the changing situation and began to seek cooperation with women’s organizations not necessarily identified with the labor movement. The Agriculture Center, for which political and self-advancing considerations were an important component of its decisions, became problematic and served as a conduit for transferring the money collected by Pioneer Women. When it ceased to be a fair broker for these funds, the women’s organizations abroad and the main activists of the Women Workers’ Council were forced to to circumvent the Agriculture Center as a middle-man transferring money to the women workers’ farms.
“Extension Service” for Women—Local Implementation of a British and American Idea (1927)

The Fourth Aliyah Crisis as a Factor Accelerating Agricultural Training

The cooking courses, Training Hostel for Domestic Economy and Agriculture, and the women workers’ farms were able to provide agricultural training for only a relatively limited group of women. With the intensified waves of the Fourth Aliyah and the beginning of the economic crisis at the end of 1925, the WIZO leadership, along with the Hostel management, understood clearly that the training had to go beyond the borders of the Hostel and reach other audiences of women. Added to that was the need for urgent aid to women who were most hard hit by the economic crisis. Toward the close of 1925, the first inklings of a severe economic crunch began to appear in Erezt Yisrael. Tel Aviv suffered more than any other place because the construction sector was concentrated there. The reasons behind the crisis stemmed from various developments in Erezt Yisrael and abroad. The construction sector in Tel Aviv collapsed and many workers were left jobless. The Zionist Executive had not foreseen the disaster and had not earmarked funds to deal with it, while the (British) Mandate government did not get involved.

As expected, the hardest hit by the disaster were women, and many women workers were on the verge of starvation. In March 1926, Ada Fishman and Rachel Yanait, representatives of the Women Workers’ Council, wrote an open letter to the Zionist Executive:

For more than a year now you have been asked in particular to deal effectively with the issue of the devastating lack of work for the women workers in Erezt Yisrael. You well know the catastrophic situation of the women laborers. Hundreds of them hunger for work, even at times when work is found for the men, so
how much worse is it now in this difficult situation.\textsuperscript{100}

In response to this letter and to other pressure from the Women Workers’ Council, groups of women workers in the cities volunteered to help single women in running auxiliary farms and to help them grapple with the crisis. In contrast, married women in the city suffered from a lack of any assisting body or institutional address to which they could turn in a time of trouble.

The crisis created an urgent need to help a broad sector of women who until then had not received any real aid from institutions. Three women and one man initiated a policy whose aim was to ease the distress of the urban women: Esther Rosov, Miriam Granovsky, Frieda Mayeroff, and Akiva Yaacov Ettinger.\textsuperscript{101} The idea to operate an “extension service” for women in the field of agriculture was based on experience accumulated in the United States and Britain. In a memo to WIZO in 1927, Esther Rosov wrote:

\begin{quote}
There is another way to help the housewife and that is by a roving teacher who will visit the moshavot and kevutzot, organize the women, and give lectures on home management, using magic lantern slides on this subject, and she will distribute the content of the lectures in writing. After the study of home management becomes routine, it will be possible to expand the program and lecture on farmyard jobs, that is, raising poultry, cultivating vegetables, raising bees, running a dairy, and so on.\textsuperscript{102}
\end{quote}

Actually, after she had completed her studies at the School for Home Management and Agriculture in California and after she had acquired practical experience in hands-on guidance of women on farms and in villages, Rosov had raised this idea with Maisel.\textsuperscript{103} Owing to Rosov’s training and experience, Maisel
invited her to teach at the Training Hostel for Domestic Economy and Agriculture. Rosov cooperated with Maisel over the idea of initiating an extension service for halutzot. Maisel thought, however, that creating an infrastructure and center for the study of agriculture and home management took preference over setting up this type of service. Five years after she had begun working, and as a result of the severe economic crisis, Rosov took up her initiative again, and this time she was able to implement it. Rosov thought extension work would help women who for various reasons had not acquired the knowledge needed for optimal functioning in their new country. She felt that these women needed practical guidance, especially during a period of economic hardship.

WIZO took up Rosov’s idea operationally during a visit to Erezt Yisrael by Henrietta Irwell.104 Another initiative by Rosov, carried out the same year by WIZO, was the publication of handbooks in Hebrew for those women could not attend lessons on a regular basis but needed instruction on running a home and setting up auxiliary farms and gardens.

Ettinger was familiar with the topic of extension work and applied it according to the American model.105 He realized that this practical economic guidance had garnered great success, and he proposed adapting it to branches of agriculture and home economics for women in Erezt Yisrael. In his article, “On the Question of Practical Guidance toward Home Management Knowledge,” published in 1927, Ettinger reviewed the difficulties women had to face in the course of getting used to rural life upon their immigration to the country. He thought that these adjustment problems were among the most severe facing Jewish settlement in Erezt Yisrael.106 To make things easier for them, Ettinger proposed helping the women through systematic learning and continuing education programs on aspects of home economics. He felt that the Hostel in Tel Aviv and the agricultural school at Nahalal would not be able to shoulder the provision of assistance
to women with families. To reach a wider audience of women he suggested following the “extension service” model as accepted in the United States. Rosov responded to Ettinger’s article and noted that she had already turned to WIZO and recommended organizing extension and demonstration work in home economics in Erezt Yisrael. In her response, Rosov told of her experience in accompanying an extension worker in the United States for a few months, according to the system in operation at the time, which was based on the Smith-Lever Act, a federal law.

Miriam Granovsky also tried to help the women who wanted to acquire agricultural knowledge. In her article in Ha-Ishah (The Woman) she supplied an answer to the question of how it would be possible with meager means to educate the Jewish woman to be the best possible farmer. Granovsky presented a stance identical to that of Rosov, supporting the idea that the American model should be followed. According to the Smith-Lever Act, cooperation was forged between agricultural schools and the American Department of Agriculture, with the aim of providing “practical extension work” in the areas of home economics and agriculture for farmers and their wives. Granovsky, like Ettinger and Rosov, felt that the first act required was the consolidation of a group of roving female extension teachers who would get to work as soon as possible.

Frieda Meyeroff, another figure in organizing the extension work, turned to the WIZO executive committee and proposed to demonstrate cultivation of vegetables to women. In April 1927 Meyeroff put her argument to WIZO:

The women’s need is not only to make maximum use of the small sum at hand but also to earn a few lirot [pounds]. One of the ways to save is through raising vegetables. The stress is on growing vegetables in the yard, because by doing so they will be investing their
meager funds and producing something with them. Whenever fruits and vegetables are in ample supply, it is possible to preserve them.\textsuperscript{111}

Later on Meyeroff related:

During the depression of 1927, at the time of economic distress for the urban Yishuv, I turned to WIZO with a proposal for coming to the aid of the city woman and helping her with advice and practical guidance on how to set up vegetable gardens and very small chicken coops to meet home needs.\textsuperscript{112}

When requesting aid from WIZO, Rosov and Meyeroff relied on the organization’s aims, as they had been adopted at the Carlsbad conference: education of women toward rural life and the management of home economics. They felt it was only natural to extend the agricultural training for halutzot to city women as well, especially in light of the severe economic crisis.

The idea to provide help outside the framework of demonstration teaching at a fixed site gained the support of Henrietta Irwell, who visited Erezt Yisrael for four months in 1927.\textsuperscript{113} Irwell was familiar with extension work in England and told the WIZO Council members about it in the summer of 1928.\textsuperscript{114} She recommended that WIZO fund the project in Erezt Yisrael, and the organization decided to support it with the sum of 100 EP. The first practical instructors in the extension work program were graduates of the Hostel. Rosza Yevnin, Anna Yaffe, and Frieda Meyeroff coordinated the extension teacher’s work.\textsuperscript{115} Assistance to the women of Tel Aviv began with extension work in vegetable gardens that were developed near the huts in which the unemployed lived. At a lecture Anna Yaffe gave upon the occasion of the completion of ten years of extension service, she explained how the extension instructors worked among the Tel Aviv women:
Through personal contact with the women of the country, by going from house to house and convincingly introducing our approach to the need for economic training to each and every woman in her home and yard, we urged a uniform character to our new lives that demanded increased productivity from everyone.116

Yaffe’s principles stress three aspects of the extension training and service: personal contact between the instructors and the women, nurturing a uniform life style that would bring city dwellers closer to agriculture and to rural life, and making the women productive. Meyeroff and Yevnin joined the effort to convince housewives of the benefit of raising vegetables, since most women had no knowledge at all of agriculture in general, and of cultivating vegetables in particular.117

The first WIZO pamphlet, entitled Pioneers and Helpers reported on Rosov’s initiative. The name chosen for WIZO’s organ hints at the role the organization had chosen for itself: the “Pioneers” were the women in Erezt Yisrael and the “Helpers” were the Zionist women in the Diaspora.118 Its first issue reported on the beginning of the training and the extension service and on the publication of the WIZO’s first Hebrew language instructional pamphlet written by Esther Rozov, Meshek Bayit [Running a Household].119 The fact that this pamphlet appeared in Hebrew a short time after WIZO entered the field of extension training and instruction demonstrates once again just how swift and practical was the cooperation between the Zionist women’s organization abroad and the Erezt Yisrael women active in advancing women’s issues. A local initiative, based on knowledge and experience gained abroad with the financial backing of the Zionist women’s organizations, did indeed help new women immigrants adjust to conditions in their new home.
The Extension Work Project—An Evaluation

The growing of vegetables with the help of the WIZO extension service met a number of goals: (1) adjustment to new conditions in a new country; (2) reduction in a family’s living expenses; (3) enrichment of the family’s range of foods; (4) improvement in the home environment and turning it green, thereby influencing the family’s education; (5) transforming the woman from consumer to producer through her education, and in doing so fashioning a new society. Within one year, the extension instructors worked with the women in planting more than one hundred vegetable gardens in the city itself. There is no better proof than this of the women’s readiness to learn and of the justification for the project itself.120

The extension and demonstration work managed to avoid the limitations of the regular institutions of learning, schools, and women workers’ farms that could assist only a small number of women workers and immigrant women. With the extension service, the training was brought to the doors of many women who needed it. With this instruction, the women learned how to create a vegetable garden near their home. The average size of a garden was about 110 sq m.121 Their yields provided for the needs of the family and eased their economic distress. Their fresh look improved the external appearance of the residential neighborhoods. After the women had received training in household subjects and garden work, their self-confidence grew and they changed from women lacking status to women food producers.122

The extension service and its achievements were mentioned in Pioneers and Helpers and in Ha-Ishah, in which appeared a short report on the garden project:

The WIZO federation in Tel Aviv has established vegetable gardens near private houses for the self-supply of the families. From November 1927 through May
1928, ninety of these gardens were created, with an area of some 10,000 sq m. For this objective we spent 205 PP [Palestine pounds]. WIZO intends to establish gardens like these in other cities, too.

In a speech at the WIZO Conference in August 1927, Maisel told of the success of the extension work project and mentioned 150 gardens. She looked forward to its positive influence on “education toward labor and agriculture” for all family members, “But no less important than that is the fact that the area around the house was cleaned and that the children and rest of the family will now become accustomed to the refreshing, green color of the plants, and very slowly learn to enjoy and respect this work.” In 1938 WIZO convened a conference to mark ten years of extension work and published a special pamphlet presenting a summary of the achievements of this important endeavor.

The Investigative Committee for Examining the Functioning of the Women Workers’ Farms

At the end of 1928 the Zionist Executive decided to establish an investigative committee to look into the issue of the women workers’ farms in Erezt Yisrael. This committee would advise the Executive on how to define those farms’ aim and to determine which system would be best for obtaining the goal that would be formulated. The committee members were Chana Maisel, Yitzhak Wilkansky, and Sophia Berger. Wilkansky and Maisel were also representatives of the Zionist Executive on the Supervisory Committee overseeing the women workers’ farms. The letter of appointment to the committee, which was sent from the Zionist Executive in November 1928, specified four women workers’ farms for examination: Petah Tikva, Nahalat Yehuda, Hadera, and the Borochov neighborhood. The appointment letter itemized the following questions:
A. Is the exclusive goal of the women workers’ farms to produce experienced female agricultural workers who will then participate in the agricultural settlement endeavor of the Zionist Federation? If not—what other goal should these farms have? B. On the basis of the investigation that will be made concerning their known places of residence and the labor of the women workers who have passed through the women workers’ farms over the ten-year period, please clarify to what extent the aims indicated in section A have been achieved. C. Is the system currently applied in the existing farms relevant for the goals that these farms should have, in the committee’s opinion? If not—what emendations should be instituted in this system?\textsuperscript{128}

The committee’s report was submitted to the Zionist Executive on May 5, 1929, half a year after it was established and following visits to women workers’ farms and conversations with the women who worked there. In reply to the questions as presented in the appointment letter, the committee responded:

The goal of the women workers’ farms is not limited to the training of experienced agricultural workers exclusively for agricultural work, but also for the training of experienced agricultural workers to work in the various aspects of that field and in different branches throughout the country, both as settlers (farming housewives) and as professional workers. From the material at the disposal of the committee on 201 haverot who were trained at four women workers’ farms, the following data were collected: 62 haverot are now in kvutzot or kibbutzim, 10 haverot are in moshavim, 44 haverot are in moshavot as single women, 20 are haverot in workers’ farms and havurot
(small communes) of women workers, 19 haverot are in the city, 14 haverot are abroad, and the current location of 32 haverot is unknown.\textsuperscript{129} This means that the number of haverot who went to women workers’ farms in agricultural settlement is 136, which is about 65 percent of the total.

It may be that other haverot whose locations could not be confirmed should be added to this number. From conversations with the haverot and from observations during visits to the farms, the committee realized that the haverot were sufficiently trained in practical agricultural work, and this knowledge made it easier for them to be absorbed in their places of settlement. Thus, the committee considered the results of the women workers’ farms as satisfactory. Regarding the system currently used on the women workers’ farms, the committee found positive and negative aspects. The positive: (1) the limited population size of the farms, about 20–30 haverot on each; (2) the farms are under self-management. The negative: (1) the lack of study of home economics as a subject on the women workers’ farms; (2) lack of equipment appropriate for the work, resulting in the exhaustion of the workers; (3) a lack of experienced haverot who can serve as instructors.\textsuperscript{130}

The committee recommended that the farms remain with limited population and that some changes and improvements be made, mainly in the areas of farm equipment, building, and team of instructors.\textsuperscript{131} Sophia Berger commented on the way the young women were accepted to the women workers’ farms and the way the budget was managed. She also added the havurot of women workers and the Nahalal school to the list of sites at which young
women received agricultural training.

Maisel and Wilkansky noted that the women workers’ havurot were a project of the Zionist Executive, whose aim was to create places for the absorption of immigrant halutzot so as to introduce them into the work life of Erezt Yisrael. They provide the women no opportunity at all to gain a basic knowledge of the profession of agriculture. The kibbutzim are not training places; they are economic sites, in which the young women apply what they learned in the women workers’ farms. Maisel and Wilkansky estimated that if all the institutions for agricultural training for women would develop as desired, there would be room for 185 young women at the most per year. Berger’s disagreement with Maisel and Wilkansky concerned candidates’ acceptance, even though this topic was not included in the committee’s appointment letter. Berger felt that there was no need to accept to the women workers’ farms young women from kibbutzim and havurot, which she felt were in themselves places for training women; Maisel and Wilkansky challenged this assumption.

It is difficult to understand why the Zionist Executive created the investigative committee in December 1928, when a few months previously it had already severely curtailed its participation in the budgets of the three women workers’ farms that it possessed. And at the end of 1929 the Zionist Executive announced its total abandonment of the farms. One gets the impression that this committee was established after the Zionist Executive had decided to rid itself of its responsibility for the women workers’ farms. Perhaps, they could not find money for the farms owing to the difficult budgetary situation of the Zionist Executive. In any event, it seems that no use was made of the committee’s conclusion since they apparently did not meet the expectations of those who had set it up with the desire of perhaps proving that the farms did not meet the hopes of their founders to provide agricultural training for women. Thus, even though the investigative committee’s
findings showed that the farms were achieving their goal and their existence was fully justified, the Zionist Executive decided to stop all support for the women workers’ farms.¹³⁴

At the same time, other problems plagued the women workers’ farms: (1) The cessation of aliya meant that at the end of 1928 there were not enough experienced haverot to take the places of those who had left the women workers’ farms; (2) There was a decline in the profitability of the main branch of the women workers’ farms—the nursery—owing to the loss of the monopoly that the women workers’ farms had had on orders from the JNF and the Mandatory government. Moreover, graduates of the women workers’ farms opened nurseries on their own farms, which competed with those of the women workers’ farms. (3) A decrease—and later total cessation—in the financial support that had come from the Zionist Executive created a lack of confidence among clients as to the continuation of the women workers’ farms’ activities and to a decline in the number of orders received for seedlings, a fact that made the situation even worse.¹³⁵

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¹ Zeev Tzahor, Ba-Derekh le-Hanhagat ha-Yishuv [On the Way to the Yishuv Leadership] (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 112–24; Even-Shoshan, Toldot Tenu’at, pp. 431–47; Yonathan Shapiro, Abdut ha-Avodah ha-Historit [Historical Abdut ha-Avodah] (Tel Aviv, 1975), pp. 37–43; Fishman, Tenu’at ha-Po’alot, p. 85. General Histadrut is also known as the General Federation of Laborers in the Land of Israel.


³ Ada Fishman, “Likrat Ve’idat ha-Po’alot” [Toward the Women Workers Convention], Pirkei Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir, vol. 5 (1937), pp. 234–236; idem, “Mi-Ve’idat ha-Po’alot” [From the Working Women’s Convention], ibid., p. 237.

⁴ Asufot, anthologies on the history of the Labor movement (1970),
There are some who consider the conference in Merhavya as the beginning of the women’s workers’ movement in Erezt Yisrael.

Fishman, *Tenu’at ha-Po’alot*, pp. 66–85.

On the founding of the women workers’ movement, see Dafna Izraeli, “*Tenu’at ha-Po’alot be-Eretz Yisra’el mi-Reishitah ve-Ad 1927*” [The women’s labor movement in Erezt Yisrael from its beginnings until 1927]. *Cathedra* 56 (1984): 109–40.

Fishman, *Tenu’at ha-Po’alot*, p. 86. Fishman points out that beside the delegates, men and women guests came from all over the country.

Fishman, *Tenu’at ha-Po’alot*, pp. 89–90.

Ibid., p. 90.

Ibid., p. 92.

Manor felt that there was also an economic reason behind the scant participation of the members of the Women Workers’ Council’s secretariat in the different institutions. Namely, since all members, other than Ada Fishman who received a salary, worked voluntarily, they only came to meetings at which women workers’ issues were discussed. See Manor, “*Mishkei Po’alot*,” p. 92.

Letter from Fishman to Hayuta Busel, September 26, 1921, Ada Maimon (Fishman), *Le-Orekh ha-Derekh* [Along the Way] (Tel Aviv, 1972), pp. 222–23.

During that period the Agriculture Center and Women Workers’ Council cooperated. Funding was the main problem that prevented implementing the plans for agricultural training. The Center was occupied at that time with settling the Jezreel Valley, and the influence of the Women Workers’ Council representatives on the Center was not powerful enough to make it give serious support to its plans.

Ada Fishman’s name appears on a list of the women workers who were graduates of the first class at Nahalal who worked for the establishment of the school in 1923. Nahalal School Archive, List.
of students.

16 Labor Archive, IV-235-4-1, a joint meeting of the Women Workers’ Council and the Agriculture Center on July 23–24, 1921. Herzfeld recommended to not explicitly mention the working women’s farms but to use for their founding part of the budget that was earmarked for the agricultural school for young women. Of note is that during that entire time Maisel was in contact with the Agricultural Settlement Department and planned, together with Ettinger and Wilkansky, the budget for establishing the agricultural school.

17 Labor Archive, IV-235-4-1, meeting of the Agriculture Center, August 16, 1921.

18 Herzfeld, Labor Archive, IV-235-4-1, meeting of the Agriculture Center, October 23, 1921, pp. 316–17.

19 Ibid., p. 317.

20 Regarding this, more than once criticism was levied against Maisel, since the money for the school at Nahalal arrived directly, without the Agriculture Center being an intermediary.

21 Labor Archive, IV-235-4-1, meeting of the Agriculture Center, October 23, 1921, p. 317.

22 Ibid.


24 Fishman, Tenu’at ha-Po’alot, pp. 95–105.

25 On May 1, 1921, Arab rioters attacked Jewish passers-by and residents in Jaffa and its neighborhoods and over forty of them were murdered, among them the author Haim Brenner and Tzvi Schatz. Dozens of the attackers were killed, and many were arrested and tried in court. See Yehuda Slutsky, “Me-Hatzharat Balfor ve-ad la-Me’orot Tartzav” [From the Balfour Declaration to the 1936 Riots], in Ha-Yishuv bi-Ymei ha-Bayit ha-Le’ummi [The Yishuv in the Period of the National Home], ed. Binyamin Eliav, pp. 23–25 (Jerusalem, 1976).

Ada Fishman and Chana Maisel were two of the women workers at Mikveh Israel. See Rachel Yanait, Eliahu Krause (Jerusalem, 1963), p. 40. That explains why Fishman wrote so painfully about the decision of the Alliance executive. See Fishman, Tenu’at ha-Po’alot, pp. 70–71.

Fishman, “Le-Matzav ha-Ovedet,” p. 66, Matzav ha-Po’elet [On the Female Worker’s Situation], a report by the Women Workers’ Council. Fishman, Tenu’at ha-Po’alot, pp. 70–71. Similarly, see Y-N [Yitzhak Tabenkin], “Ba-Avodah” [Among Labor], Kunteres 16 (1919), p. 24, “The Mikveh group fell victim on the altar of the morality of ‘our great one’ from Paris, this city is it not, as we know, the nest of nuns and the symbol of morality, and our benefactors who live well in it simply cannot bear the idea of young women being found in a place where male students gain their education.”

Fishman, Tenu’at ha-Po’alot, p. 192. Fishman explained that the greater majority of the women workers in the cities were members of the Oriental Jewish communities who worked in private houses or in doing laundry. Employed in agriculture were 31 percent, in manufacturing 7 percent, and working in the city, 60 percent.


This addition to the definition of an agricultural school apparently derived from the lessons Maisel learned from her experience with the cooking courses. In its other details the school’s curriculum was similar that that of the program presented two years earlier to the Department of Agriculture and Settlement. See Maisel, “Le-Hinukh Hakla’i, p. 6.
While most of its leaders were women agricultural worker who came with the Second Aliyah (Manor, “Mishkei Po‘a lot, 1911–1945,” p. 102).

In contrast to the Po‘alei Zion Party (and later, the Ahdut Ha-Avodah Party), which aspired according to its Socialist-Marxist perception to create and encourage a Hebrew proletariat that would reverse the vocational pyramid of the Jewish people.


Alper, Banot ba-Nir, p. 75.


Alper, Banot ba-Nir, p. 76. About half a year after the work of the group had begun in 1922, Schidlowsky could indicate that the attempt to turn the workers’ kitchen into an agricultural farm, for a study-educational purpose, had proved itself. Shochat and Shorer, Pirkei Ha-Po‘el, vol. 7 (1936), pp. 247–48.

As cited in Farber, Hed ha-Kinneret, p. 54.


Alper, Banot ba-Nir, p. 78.

Ibid., p. 80.

Ibid., p. 82.

In the eulogy Ada Fishman wrote for Elisheva Eshkol, she mentioned the fact that she had invited her to join the women workers’ farm. See Maimon, Le-Orekh ha-Derekh, pp. 205–6.

Nahalal School Archive, Correspondence, 1923.

Ibid.

In theory, Maisel had already obtained support at the first Hadassah-Canada convention in 1921. Actual funding only began
to arrive in 1924.


52 Fishman, Tenu’at ha-Po’alot, pp. 149–50.

53 Ibid., page 150.


55 Fishman, Tenu’at ha-Po’alot, p. 233.

56 The women workers’ farm in the Borochov neighborhood was the third farm established with the help of the Zionist Executive. Founded in 1923 on thirty dunams of land, it stood on the site of a workers’ farm that had been abandoned. It was established by Leah Meron, one of the students at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, and eight halutzot from the Third Aliyah, with the help of Chana Chizik, another of the former students at the Kinneret farm. See Alper, Banot ba-Nir, pp. 121–28.

   The low level of achievement orientation among the girls in the mixed groups has been verified in recent years in studies that examined educational attainments in separate and mixed groups. These studies show that boys gain more and attain higher achievements in mixed groups, while girls attain higher achievements in separate groups. See Rhoda Unger and Mary Crawford. Women and Gender (New York, 1996).

57 Labor Archive, IV-230-1-B.

58 Labor Archive, IV-235-2, File 341a, minutes of a meeting of the women workers’ farms in Nahalat Yehuda.

59 Ibid., p. 3.

60 On the regulations that were ultimately accepted, see “Proposal


62 Labor Archive, IV-23502, File 341a, pp. 4–5: “At the end of the two years of work by the *haverot* on the farms, they were at the disposal of the farm and the Histadrut. And should the Agriculture Center find it necessary to leave one or another *haverah* for a third year on the farm, then she must stay there.”


65 Taking into account the women workers’ farms meant postponing their joining the original *gar’in* (group of people intending to start a new settlement), until the completion of the training period on the women workers’ farm, which usually lasted two years.

66 In the 1920s there about 20 affiliated women on each of the six farms, that is a total of 120 women on the average each year.

67 Yanait, *Eliahu Krause*, p. 42. As early as 1919 there was an attempt to grow vegetables in Jerusalem by women of the Old
Yishuv. Sara Malkin managed these gardens; work in them went on for a year and a half and was halted for lack of funds. See Maimon, *Hamishim Shenot Tenu'at ha-Po'alot* [Fifty years of the women’s labor movement] (Tel Aviv, 1957), p. 97.

68 Alper, *Banot ba-Nir*, p. 17, “And now haverot from Gedud ha-Avodah responded favorably to come to work with her at the nursery after the road work at Migdal had been completed, and the Gedud decided to set up a unit in Jerusalem. This was in December 1921.”

69 Labor Archive, IV-235-20, meeting of the Agriculture Center on December 2, 1924, at which it was decided to turn the nursery into a women workers’ farm, thereby making certain that ownership would be retained by the Women Workers’ Council.


71 On the development of the idea of sending the delegation and the composition of its members as well as its missions in the United States, see Goldstein, *Manya Wilbusheiwitz-Shochat*, pp. 13–23.

72 Yanait wrote the letter in February 1924.


74 Alper, *Banot ba-Nir*, p. 20


76 The men in the party argued that woman had equal rights in it, so there was no need for a separate organization. The women argued that the low number of women in the party resulted from their feeling that there was no importance ascribed to their marginal activity and that was the reason that more women did not

77 Rozhansky details the chain of developments on this issue through to the Po’alei Zion convention in December 1924, at which, after fundamental debates, the establishment of a separate organization for women was approved. Rozhansky, “*Mifleget ha-Po’alim*,” pp. 392–93. Yonathan Shapiro, *Abdut ha-Avodah*, pp. 25–36.

78 Hyman and Moore, *Jewish Women in America*, p. 1073.

79 No other details on Biskin have been located.

80 Hadassah was founded by Henrietta Szold in 1912. See Lowenthal, *Henrietta Szold*. Hadassah was preceded by a national organization, National Council of Jewish Women, which was founded in the United States in 1893. The aim of this Jewish women’s organization was to maintain Jewish heritage and to foster the Jewish religion. See Nelly Lass, *Jewish Women in a Changing World* (Jerusalem, 1996); Hyman and Moore, *Jewish Women in America*, pp. 968–79.

81 In addition to Golda Meir active were Chana Chizik, Rachel Katznelson (Shazar), Elisheva Kaplan (Eshkol), Ada Maimon, and Beba Idelson, as emissaries of the Women Workers’ Council to the clubs and cities throughout the United States. They drew public attention to the work of the Women Workers’ Council, the General Histadrut, and the Zionist movement. See Hyman and Moore, *Jewish Women in America*, p. 1074.

82 *Ha-Ishah* 1 (1927), pp. 40–41, an article which reported on the founding of a new women’s association in America that would come to the aid of the *halutzot*—The Pioneer Women. In 1926 forty branches of the organization collected $12,000, gave support to the groups in Ben Shemen, to a group that later founded the women workers’ farm at Afula, and to groups in Petah Tikva and Tel Aviv, and they decided to collect $25,000 in 1926–27.


Alper, *Banot ba-Nir*, pp. 38–39; “A New Women Workers’ Farm in Jerusalem,” *Ha-Ishah* 7 (1928), p. 65, “After great effort, Jerusalem is soon to be blessed with a new Hebrew agricultural farm—a women workers’ farm”; Alper, *Banot ba-Nir*, p. 50. In 1932 the Fourth Women Workers Convention decided to turn the women workers’ farm in Jerusalem into an educational farm for young women; the decision was implemented later.


As Rachel Yanait had done with Sophie Udin.

Labor Archives, IV-235-36, meeting of the Agriculture Center, June 9, 1927.


Golda Meir and Rachel Yanait were sent to the US to raise funds. The Pioneer Women’s donations saved the women workers’ farms from bankruptcy, when the Zionist Executive cut off its support to them in 1928.

Labor Archive, Executive Committee Archive, Minutes of the 21st Council of the Histadrut, January 9, 1929. This was the situation, when in 1930 alone Pioneer Women raised the sum of $25,000 that it sent to Erezt Yisrael. See Rachel Yanait, in Katznelson-Rubashov, *Divrei Po‘alot*, p. 235.

Labor Archive, IV-230-3, Executive Committee meeting, September 20, 1928; at that time, owing to power struggles within the Women Workers’ Council, Golda Meir replaced Ada Fishman as its general secretary. On these struggles within the Women Workers’ Council, see Izraeli, *Tenu‘at ha-Po‘alot*.

The women workers’ farm in the Borochov neighborhood was founded in 1923. In its first years it was administered by Leah Meron, a graduate of the Kinneret farm. Meron, “Mishkei Po‘a lot,” pp. 124–25. The women worker’s group in north Tel Aviv, and the women workers’ farm on Borochov were not included within the
framework of this study, which concentrated on those projects in which the women’s organizations were more financially involved. For further information on the two farms mentioned, see Alper, *Banot ba-Nir* and Manor, “*Mishkei Po’alot.*” In the 1930s the group managed by Chana Chizik became a women workers’ farm. See Maimon, *Hamishim Shenot,* pp. 100–102. Alper, *Banot ba-Nir,* pp. 173–93.

94 Labor Archive, IV-230-3, meeting of the Executive Committee, September 20, 1928.

95 The majority of the Executive Committee, who belonged to Ahdut ha-Avodah, continued to support the link between Pioneer Women—the sister party of Ahdut ha-Avodah abroad—and the women members of Ahdut ha-Avodah in Erezt Yisrael.


97 See below, a selection from the letter by Fishman and Yanait to the Zionist Executive on the women workers’ distress. CZA S15/21665, March 28, 1926.

98 Amikam in Binyamin Eliav (ed.), *Ha-Yishuv bi-Ymei ha-Bayit ha-Le’ummi* [The Yishuv in the Period of the National Home] (Jerusalem, 1976), p. 321, the number of unemployed Jews rose from 1,000 in October 1925 to 7,000 in June 1926. (The number of inhabitants had increased within a short time from 27,000 at the end of 1924 to 40,000 at the end of 1925. Another 8,000 Jews lived in Jaffa at the time.) Bein, *Toldot ha-Hityashevut,* pp. 264–67. In August 1927, the number of unemployed Jews reached its high point of 8,440, almost half of them in Tel Aviv.


100 CZA S15/21665, an open letter to the Zionist Executive from Rachel Yanait and Ada Fishman, March 28, 1926.

101 A native of Switzerland, wife of Dr. Avraham Granovsky, one of the initiators for building workers neighborhoods according to the principle of garden cities. See David Tidhar, *Entziklopediyya*
le-Halutzei ha-Yishuv u-Boneha [Encyclopedia of the Pioneers of the Yishuv and Its Builders], vol. 1, p. 274. She, almost certainly, had an affinity for the idea of garden cities and auxiliary farms in the cities for workers, which she wanted to implement through an extension service. Mayeroff was the wife of Yehuda Mayeroff, and the mother of Shaul (Mayeroff) Avigur and Tzipporah Mayeroff, who married Moshe Sharett.

102 Archive of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council (AJVRC), Nahalal School file, 109.09 1926–27. The memo to WIZO is undated, but since it notes that Rosov has already been at the Training Hostel of Domestic Economy and Agriculture for five years, it seems it was sent in 1927.


104 Irwell, one of the founders of WIZO in England, was visiting at that time in Erezt Yisrael, and a personal contribution from her made it possible to begin the extension work. See *Eser Shenot Hadrakhah* (1938), p. 7.


108 This law determined a new system of extension training and instruction for women in rural and urban home economics to benefit and improve all branches of women’s work.

109 Miriam Granovsky, “Li-Shel’at ha-Haksharah ha-Haklai’it” [On
the Question of Agricultural Training]. *Ha-Ishah* 6 (1928): 16–18 and the conclusion of the article in *Ha-Ishah* 7 (1928), pp. 14–18.

110 The Smith-Lever Act was passed in Congress in 1914.


113 Rosov-Uzieli, “*Li-She’elat Hadrakhat ha-Ishah*,” p. 26. Henrietta Irwell, in *Pioneers and Helpers* 4 (1928), pp. 6–7. Irwell could already tell of the successes of the project, which was put into action following her recommendation and the funding she took care to receive for it from WIZO.

114 At the WIZO Council in 1928, Henrietta Irwell said that the role of Zionist women in the Diaspora was to learn of the innovations in their own countries and to pass them on to the *halutzot* in Erezt Yisrael, *Pioneers and Helpers* 4 (1928), p. 6.

115 Anna Yaffe, in *Eser Shenot Hadrakhah*, p. 8; Greenberg and Herzog, *WIZO*, p. 57.


117 Tzipporah Galili, in *Eser Shenot Hadrakhah*, (1938), pp. 26–27, “The women with the gardens were mostly women who had never worked in a garden before.”

118 *Pioneers and Helpers* (June 1927), p. 3.

119 Rosov proposed publishing this pamphlet in 1927, see Rosov to WIZO, a detailed memorandum that she wrote to the WIZO Executive, see AJVRC, Nahalal School, file 109.09. There she wrote that in addition to “extension work,” “it was vital to publish inexpensive pamphlets that would help the housewives while they worked. From these publications she would learn to organize her home while taking into consideration the conditions in Erezt Yisrael.”

120 We did not locate precise data on the number of unemployed women, and some of them had gardens.

121 “*Yedi’ot me-ha-Aretz*” [News from Erezt Yisrael], *Ha-Ishah* 7
(1938), p. 33.


123 Chana Maisel-Shochat, “Avodat WIZO le-Hinnukh ha-Ishah be-Hakla’ut u-Meshek ha-Bayit” [WIZO’s Endeavor for Training the Woman in Agriculture and Home Management], Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir 44–45: 9.

124 Eser Shenot Hadrakhah (1938).

125 CZA S15/7152, in letters from the Zionist Executive to Wilkansky, to Maisel, and to Sophia Berger, a request was expressed according to which these three people should constitute the members of this investigative committee. A letter dated November 24, 1928, to WIZO informed the organization that the Zionist Executive had decided to replace Stern from the Department for Agricultural Settlement with Sophia Berger so as to create a majority of women on the committee and not to include on it a representative of the Department for Agricultural Settlement.

126 Sophia Berger was the director of the Orphans Committee of the American Joint Distribution Committee, and she was the WIZO representative on the Supervisory Committee.

127 The women workers’ farm in the Borochov neighborhood was not included in this volume because the women’s organizations had limited involvement in its establishment. For further information on that farm, see Manor, “Mishkei Po’alot”; Alper, Banot ba-Nir; Maimon, Hamishim Shenot.

128 CZA S15/7152.

129 Petah Tikva, Borochov neighborhood, Nahalat Yehuda, and Hadera.

130 CZA S15/7152. The four-page Report by the Committee for the Issues of Women Workers’ Farms was presented to the Zionist Executive on May 5, 1929, and included the majority opinion (Maisel and Wilkansky) and the minority opinion (Sophia Berger).
Inherent in this conclusion by the investigative committee may be a linguistic allusion differentiating between Maisel’s approach and that of Fishman, who just at that time was working energetically for the establishment of a large women workers’ farm for 200 women laborers in Nes Ziona.

CZA S25/7152. For some reason the committee did not mention the WIZO Training Hostel of Domestic Economy and Agriculture.

Manor, “Mishkei Po’alot,” p. 212; Labor Archive, IV-235-913, p. 3. Even though the Zionist Executive pledged to see through to conclusion the firm grounding of the farms and to release them from the debts they had accumulated by 1929, it did not do so.

Yossi Katz and Shoshana Neuman claim that the results of the women workers’ farms are astounding when one examines their success in enabling most of the graduates to become part of agricultural work in various branches, vegetables, vineyard, orchard, chicken coop, and cattle and dairy. The very creation of the women workers’ farms as an instrument for coping with the gender division in the labor market and the opportunity provided by them to acquire a profession, in which they found work and appreciation, was a particular, invaluable achievement in the employment situation prevailing for women in the early twentieth century. See Yossi Katz and Shoshana Neuman, “Women’s Quest for Occupational Equality: The Case of Jewish Female Agricultural Workers, in Pre-State Israel,” Rural History 7, no. 1 (1996): 50.

Labor Archive, IV-235-913, p. 2.
Chapter Seven: 
The Crowning Jewel: The Young Woman’s Agricultural School at Nahalal 
From Idea to Consolidated Plan

The idea to train women for work in agriculture went through a number of developmental stages between 1910 and 1922 until it crystallized into a detailed plan that began to be put into effect. On January 10, 1910, a few months after she immigrated to Eretz Yisrael, Chana Maisel sent a letter to Bezalel Yaffe, manager of the Geulah Company, who came from the same hometown as she did, Grodno. In her letter she delineated a rather modest plan, explaining, “The farm would allow me to support myself simultaneously from my labor and to prepare myself for my future activity—mother of a girls school or special agricultural institution.” At that stage, Chana envisioned a kind of educational institution under her administration, which would teach its students three branches of agriculture: vegetable cultivation, raising of poultry, and dairy farming. She yearned to train young Jewish women for the role of farmer’s wife or skilled agricultural worker, salaried or independent, who would work in these areas. The produce would be marketed in the local moshavot and would serve as a substitute for Arab products. At that time, Maisel did not realize the national importance of the endeavor nor its inherent potential to change the status of women in the country. Rather, she emphasized the significance of the training project for settlement in Eretz Yisrael, with no mention of its value for everything related to the benefit and needs of the women whom the future school would train. Her letter states:

Of the great value of this project, I don’t need to tell
you. You are certainly familiar enough with the Jewish moshavot to assess the benefit that such an idea could bring to our settlement endeavor. Until now many people have complained about the Jewish women settlers, but thus far nothing has been done to change things. What can I do about that? I lack any financial means but am armed solely with good will and specific knowledge. This question remains unanswered for me.⁴

Maisel’s initial position focused on the contribution of the training project to the advancement of Zionist settlement, not necessarily to that of women or to finding a solution to problems that women encountered. Her approach to the issue of funding is relatively modest. She sought an entity that would be willing to establish an agricultural farm under her management, and she thought about the possibility of financing it from her own resources.⁵

Five years of activity on the Women’s Training Farm, and meeting with the worker—students, led to a change in Maisel’s concept. The main thrust was shifted from the general settlement goal to personal and professional benefit and the advancement of the women themselves within the whole range of settlement. Similarly, Maisel did not overlook the great gap between what there was—a training institution—and what was desired—a more consolidated, expanded education aimed at the women’s benefit. Maisel garnered practical experience in agricultural education and reached a turning point in her ideas. Home economics, cooking, home management, and the plant nursery were introduced into the curriculum on the Women’s Training Farm. Maisel came to the conclusion that while most of the halutzot did indeed want to take part in the building of the land, they lacked the experience or knowledge to do so. Moreover, she also hoped to train girls from the Old Yishuv and farmers’ daughters. In her opinion:
An organized institution with goals for rural education for young women could make the farmers’ daughters come to like rural life, link them more closely to the farm and work, introduce orderliness, knowledge, and joint recognition of all enjoy the special charm that a school spreads over everything. And how many young women are there in a city whom it would be possible to remove from the mire of idleness and vacuousness and attract to labor and the rural area and thereby make them beneficial to themselves and the entire Yishuv, if there were only places of preparation for this?\footnote{6}

In the summer of 1920 Maisel wrote an article on an agricultural school for young women. The curriculum for such a school was submitted to the Settlement Department and to the Zionist Commission.\footnote{7} In her mind’s eye, Maisel saw practical and academic studies of all the traditional farmyard branches, including raising bees and maintaining orchards.\footnote{8} According to her approach, the agricultural settlers would enjoy a western, modern standard of living, that would include modern management, budding industrialization, and a cultural life. The aim of the school was to educate and integrate young Jewish women into agricultural work by inculcating them with knowledge about all the rural farming branches, including modern household management: cooking, keeping accounts, and preparing canned foods and dairy products.\footnote{9} The academic studies were the weightier part of the curriculum. Maisel also gave special value to national education. She demanded that her students know Hebrew, and she planned to deepen their emotional link and bond to Eretz Yisrael and to expand this affinity through studying history, Hebrew culture, Bible, and modern literature.

In summer 1922, two years after the consolidation of her detailed curriculum, and over a decade after she had written her
first program for agricultural training in 1910, Maisel explained her syllabus in a lecture she gave at the Women Workers’ Conference in Haifa. The lecture was entitled “Toward Agricultural Education for Women Workers.” The funding of the future school would come from budgets of the Zionist Congress and from donations from women’s organizations. The grounds of the school had to be spacious so that the proper professional instruction could be given and its yields would be profitable. The students, aged eighteen and up, would have a sense of responsibility, initiative, and self-confidence.

Over a period of twelve years, Maisel’s idea of agricultural training had undergone a kind of essential transformation—and turned from a practical proposal into a revolutionary vision, inherent in which were ideological achievements innovative for their time related to the woman, her place in society, and her proper status. In Maisel’s words, “An agricultural school, women workers’ farms, and cooking courses are the institutions with whose help the pioneering haverah will be able to prepare herself for agricultural work, and thereby take an important place in work and life.”

Questions of Funding and Questions of Principle

From the time of her return to Eretz Yisrael at the close of 1919, Maisel worked energetically to promote her plan for establishing a women’s school for the study of agriculture. Her struggle to obtain funding for its establishment and ongoing maintenance was accompanied by intense correspondence with numerous bodies.

The obstacles blocking her way and the repeated postponing of the date for establishing the school, despite recognition of its importance, demonstrates that the project rested at the bottom of budgetary priorities of the Zionist movement’s institutions. Apparently, what deterred many of the funding bodies, even if they
Maisel envisioned the practical aspect—the agricultural education the school was going to give its students—as the task of the Department of Agriculture and Settlement to insure the funding of the institution through the Zionist Organization. As time went on, it became clear that the Zionist Organization was willing only to grant general support and encouragement to the idea.

Maisel turned to two bodies in the Zionist Executive: the Department of Technical Matters headed by Gedalia Wilbusheiwitz and the Department for Agriculture and Settlement under Akiva Ettinger, posing the question, “The time has come to clarify what is to be expected from the Zionist Organization for this institution; only friendly feelings and sympathy or actual arrangements?” Following his work in JCA and the studies he had undertaken for the Odessa Zionist Committee, Ettinger believed that

Nothing has been done to make it easier for women to adjust themselves to their new environment and its demands. A beginning was made, though grudgingly, regarding agricultural education for young women with the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret. In addition to that, there were a few attempts on the part of young women in Eretz Yisrael to organize themselves into groups for cultivating vegetables. Interest was aroused even outside the country, albeit also at a low level … these beginnings are the only signs that they were aware of the important issue of women’s education in farm work and the common branches of agriculture. Yet, these beginnings are not the solution to the current problem. That demands much greater effort and means
as well as systematic, comprehensive work.\textsuperscript{14}

Ettinger appreciated the crucial experience acquired during the six years that the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret had operated. He recognized the importance of agricultural training for the development of the farmyard branches of agriculture and the ability of farmyard training to facilitate women’s accommodation to the new environment in Eretz Yisrael. Yet, he too, limited his support for Maisel. He believed that a great deal of investment and effort was needed to attain good results. Ettinger thought that the goal of the agricultural school was to train women for agricultural settlement in Eretz Yisrael, primarily as future wives of farmers. He also mentioned training women laborers to work as hired hands or to manage their own farms.

Maisel found an ally in Yitzhak Wilkansky, director of the Department for Agricultural Experiments whose goal was to apply the latest agricultural knowledge to conditions in the country and to train pioneer men and women to earn their livelihoods from agricultural work and to be self-sufficient.\textsuperscript{15} Wilkansky considered the agricultural training of women to be very important. He noted that at Kinneret a new image of woman had been fashioned that had been missing from the Jewish settlement endeavor:

> The first study-farm was founded at Kinneret by Mrs. Maisel-Shochat. The harsh climate hampered the development of the farm. For various reasons, even this institution did not find the assistance that it needed. Despite the difficult conditions of its surroundings, the experiment worked out well. In the students it produced, we see the \textit{prototype of the female agricultural worker that we lack} [emphasis mine, E.C-H.].\textsuperscript{16}

Wilkansky helped Maisel with the preparation of the curriculum and the plans for the school building.
The fact that the two senior agronomists on the Zionist Executive recognized the need and importance of the women’s agricultural training project comprised Maisel’s initial breakthrough into support. Ettinger and Wilkansky’s backing, even if it did not result immediately in the Zionist Executive taking economic responsibility for the project upon itself, did inadvertently help recruit additional supporters, contributors, and investors.

As the representatives of the male Zionist establishment saw it, Maisel’s school was first of all an endeavor intended for women, and only after that was it training focused on agriculture and the development of its various branches. The bureaucrats believed that the women and their various organizations should take care of its financing. Thus, Ettinger wrote to Rebecca Sieff, chairman of the WIZO Executive in London, itemizing the budget needed for setting up the school:

I find it proper to note, even though these sums are large, that it is very worthwhile that Zionist women interested in the development of the Hebrew Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael and in improving the role of the women in the building of the Yishuv—will make the effort to find the required sums for equipping the agricultural school for young women and maintaining it in its first years.17

Support from the Women’s Organizations

In March 1920 Maisel replied to the letter she had received from the Technical Department of the Zionist Executive and commented on the estimated budget needed for establishing the school.18 The plans for the building and the curriculum were ready, so she expected actual work to begin in early September 1920. In addition, Maisel sent Ettinger a list of the needed types of seeds
for vegetables and flowers that had to be imported urgently from California, since she believed that she would soon be located at the school.\textsuperscript{19}

Ettinger confirmed the data of Maisel’s budget proposal, and estimated that the total sum needed for the first year of activity would come to about 30,000 EP. He expressed doubts about the possibility of obtaining it from the Zionist Organization.\textsuperscript{20} Ettinger approved funding the training of women workers in beekeeping and the raising of seedlings as well as for purchasing seeds, but as for the main investment—erecting the buildings of the school—he suggested to Maisel that she obtain the means from other sources, that is, the women’s organizations.

Maisel complained bitterly about the Zionist establishment’s sloughing off its responsibility for funding the school. She turned to Henrietta Szold and described the plans as well as the budget needed. Szold saw only one possibility for raising the money, namely, “to turn to a few matrons with the [financial] means and to ask them to participate in establishing a fund for building and equipping the agricultural school. Ms. Szold took it upon herself to approach these women.”\textsuperscript{21} After Szold had agreed to help, Maisel asked Ettinger for a few English copies of the school’s curriculum and its budget to hand over to Szold.\textsuperscript{22}

In June 1920 Maisel learned that at a Zionist Commission session, a decision was reached to fund the school over a three-year period. For the 1921 budget they had allotted only 10,000 EP, instead of 29,000 EP. She protested and argued that 10,000 EP would be enough only for equipment and an operating budget for one year, with no amount earmarked for construction, so

\begin{quote}
I, therefore, stand firm with the opinion I expressed to him during our conversation, that if the attitude toward setting up the agriculture school for young women is serious and genuine, not one peruta (cent)\end{quote}
should be subtracted from the budget for arrangements for the aforementioned school, and they must include the sum in full in the budget for agricultural work for the coming year.  

Maisel wrote similar letters to Ruppin and Ussishkin, the deputy chairman of the Zionist Commission. She asked them to amend the decision and to present the entire budget to the Zionist Conference in London. At the same time Ettinger wrote to Maisel that he was taking care of the purchase of thirty beehives and all the equipment needed to raise bees. Despite the budget cut, Ettinger still believed that the school would open within a few months, and he continued to assemble the required equipment.  

But Maisel’s campaign to obtain the necessary funding failed. At the Twelfth Zionist Congress in Carlsbad in 1921, only 10,000 EP was approved for the agricultural training of women. The allotment of this sum in itself was an outstanding achievement of the WIZO women’s lobby, which had invested great effort in obtaining it. It should be noted that this was the first time in its history that the Zionist Congress had granted money to funding a women’s project. In doing so it recognized the ability of women to contribute to the development of agriculture and to be a meaningful factor in Jewish settlement in the country.

**Hadassah-Canada Adopts the Project**  

After WWI the Canadian Jews strove to separate themselves from their mother organizations in the United States and to create their own bodies. Their national-Jewish-Canadian basis made it possible for them to see themselves as partners with the Jewish people in building a national home for Jews in Eretz Yisrael. They also saw themselves, to a certain extent, as intercessors between the Zionist Organization and the British government and as responsible for the generally sympathetic attitude of Canadian
statesmen toward the Zionist movement in Canada. As early as the 1890s, Zionism was the central topic among Canadian Jewry. The first branch of the Kulturverband in Canada was founded in Montreal in 1911. The first branch of Hadassah in Canada was founded in March 1917 as a result of Henrietta Szold’s visit to Toronto as a guest lecturer to women’s circles, and the movement grew quickly throughout Canada. Here, too, Zionist women chose to organize themselves separately from the male Zionist establishment and to seek their own vision and challenges that would enable them to contribute their part to the Zionist realization in Eretz Yisrael. The juncture between this aspiration and Maisel’s ideas for agricultural training led to the creation of a consolidated plan for assistance. The practical results were expressed in the aid given to the Training Hostel of Domestic Economy and Agriculture in Tel Aviv and to the Young Women’s Agricultural School at Nahalal.

At the Sixteenth Canadian Zionist Federation Convention held in Toronto in January 1919, Lillian Freiman was appointed to head the Palestine Restoration Fund, while her husband, Archie Freiman, was elected Federation president. Lillian believed that instead of giving charity, one should encourage productivity and provide the means of production. For example, she proposed sending sewing machines to the Yishuv rather than clothing.

Dr. Shemaryahu Levin, an emissary to Keren Hayesod and the JNF in the United States and Canada, brought a memorandum in English from Maisel about the agricultural school for young women, which also included sketches of the building plans to the founding conference of Hadassah-Canada chaired by Lillian Freiman in February 1921 in Montreal. Levin read part of the memorandum to the Hadassah-Canada Women and was warmly received. Hadassah-Canada found in the idea of establishing an agricultural school for young women a challenge of its own, differing essentially from the topics on the agenda of the United
States Hadassah organization. Hadassah-Canada adopted the project described in the memorandum. Thus, with one historic decision, the founding of an agriculture school for women in Eretz Yisrael became its main endeavor. The practical significance was that Hadassah-Canada agreed to raise the hefty sum of $88,000 to establish the school in addition to the fixed annual quota it had pledged, namely to collect $50,000 for Keren Hayesod of the Zionist Organization. Three months after the first Hadassah-Canada national conference and its recruitment in founding an agricultural school for young women in May 1921, Doctors Chaim and Vera Weizmann visited Canada. At a reception held in their honor in Montreal, Vera Weizmann proposed that Hadassah-Canada join WIZO, and that it did.

Hadassah-Canada met its commitment and raised the sum needed to set up the agricultural school. About half a year later, Maisel received a letter from Dr. Thon, Ruppin’s secretary:

Dr. Ruppin showed me the letter that you wrote him on June 26, 1921, with a comment for you that Mr. Ussishkin has told me that in America the sum of $80,000 has been collected for the Women’s Training Farm and that this message has been given to you as well. This response contains no mention of a plot of land from the JNF for the farm, nor of money for the building from the Zionist Organization. As I think about it, I feel that you will certainly obtain the land from the JNF, but this is not so regarding the money for the building which the farm will have to take from the funds collected in America.

This letter, which was sent two weeks before the Twelfth Zionist Congress in Carlsbad, might have meant a successful conclusion to the issue of fundraising for establishing the school. This, however, did not come to be, for two main reasons: (1) JNF
and Keren Hayesod, which expected to raise a great deal of money, did not collect the sums they hoped for, and their income was not enough to cover their own needs.\(^{40}\) (2) The land needed for the agriculture school had not yet been located and because of that the $80,000 raised by Hadassah-Canada was transferred to other purposes.

Once again the school was left without funding, and the fundraising campaign had to begin anew. Another effort at fundraising was begun at the Third Hadassah-Canada Conference in January 1924 in Toronto, at which the guest of honor was Dr. Chaim Weizmann.\(^{41}\) The organization’s women again assumed responsibility for the task and decided to support the endeavor.\(^{42}\) This resolution stimulated a new debate over the precise sum needed: were they to raise the sum of $80,000, the total budget for the school, this time too, or only part of it, $15,000, and earmark the remaining money for their other projects in Eretz Yisrael. In the end, they voted to collect the total amount required for establishing the school.\(^{43}\)

**Preparations for Establishing the School—The Search for a Site**

Maisel wanted a site that was “not only fitting but also permanent.”\(^{44}\) She turned to the committees of the *moshavot*, Rishon Lezion and Rehovot, and to Menahem Ussishkin, who headed the Zionist Commission.\(^{45}\) She also contacted Ettinger and asked to consult him about the location of the land before she acquired it and to help her obtain a purchase license from the Mandate government. On July 30, 1920, she wrote:

> According to information I have received from the London Zionist Conference, it is possible to hope that they have approved the agriculture budget, including the budget for equipping the agricultural school for young women. I think that the issue of the location
(of the land) now needs immediate attention. So I suggest to your good self that you provide me with the material opportunity on behalf of the Agriculture Department to visit those sites that may be considered when determining the location of the school, such as the land at Karkur, land near Rishon Lezion, and so on; I want to study these sites, so that I can see whether or not they are fitting for our purpose.\textsuperscript{46}

Maisel wrote to Ruppin and Bezalel Yaffe about her attempts to prompt WIZO to lease the land of the “Montefiore Orchard” near Tel Aviv to establish the agricultural school for young women there.\textsuperscript{47} Bezalel Yaffe tried to help and wrote about this to the Montefiore Fund, but to no avail; the price of the land was high, and it could not be registered under the name of WIZO.\textsuperscript{48}

At that time Maisel was also involved in promoting and managing cooking classes, and after that, with setting up the Hostel. At a meeting of the Zionist Executive Agriculture Committee on July 3–4, 1922, the budget for agricultural work for 1922–23 was discussed, and inter alia, the location of land for the agricultural school for young women.\textsuperscript{49} Two options were at hand: land in the Nahalal moshav or the “Montefiore orchard.” The committee decided on a budget of 5,000 EP for the school but did not decide on its location.\textsuperscript{50}

Bezalel Yaffe tried to convince the institutions to acquire land for the school. He told Maisel of the possibility of purchasing an area of 150 dunams from German Templers on the border of “Ir Ganim.” In August 1922, Maisel sent letters about this to Ruppin, who at that time was in Carlsbad at the Zionist Conference, and to Ussishkin, in which she wrote:

For over ten years now the Zionist Organization has been promising to arrange for the agricultural school for young women. A year ago the last Zionist Congress
allotted a hefty budget for this purpose. And a month or two ago, the Agricultural Committee reinforced this decision of the Congress and allocated a sum for setting up the school in the coming year which was rather generous considering the current financial situation of the Zionist Organization.\textsuperscript{51} … But all these decisions will remain only on paper as long as we don’t have land. We must, therefore, finish with this phantom of a young women’s agricultural school; we must get a grip on the land. If we had land and if the Zionist Organization had made some kind of start, undoubtedly, other organizations, too, would have taken part, to a certain extent, and the school would have been built slowly and begun to operate. The land of the Germans that has become available to us now for this purpose, and which more or less meets our needs, is, to be sure, not cheap, but we simply cannot miss this opportunity. We must buy it and finally solve the issue of land for the young women’s agricultural school. I don’t find it necessary here to go into this at length, for there is no one like you who is so well versed in this school’s history, all the hopes and all the disappointments; the continuous expectation and the difficulty surrounding this issue, and from what I have written, understand the situation. I, therefore, ask that you do all that you can, so that the JNF will purchase the land that I mentioned, thereby laying the foundation for the agricultural school for young women.\textsuperscript{52}

Again Maisel vented her frustration that despite obtaining a budget and general recognition of the school’s importance, no practical start had been made owing to lack of available land. She
used all her powers of persuasion to promote the acquiring of the German land, which she and her colleagues Krause and Wilkansky felt met most of their requirements. But to this petition, too, like her previous ones, Maisel did not receive a positive reply. In those days Yaffe presented his plan for the moshav ovdim.\textsuperscript{53} Maisel knew Yaffe well from the Kinneret period, when he headed the American Ha-Ikkar ha-Tza’ir group that had taken upon itself to operate the farm. At Kinneret, Yaffe made sure that the women workers at the Women’s Training Farm would receive wages equal to that of their male counterparts for jobs in housekeeping and agriculture, so now she contacted him.\textsuperscript{54}

Together they consolidated the idea that one of the new moshavim would allot part of its land for an agricultural school for young women. This idea was a true breakthrough that ultimately led to the establishment of the school on land belonging to moshav Nahalal in the Jezreel Valley. Eliezer Yaffe, who might be dubbed “one of the first feminists,” was concerned with women as women, first of all when he gave men and women equal pay for equal work and also when he ensured the right of a single woman to obtain a farm unit for herself. Yaffe wrote the following in the booklet \textit{The Foundation of the Workers Moshavim} [Hebrew]:

\begin{quote}
The woman herself, alone and separate from the man, is not taken into consideration for anything. The human material for the moshavot and moshavim are the men, all the efforts are on their behalf and the goal is expected to be achieved by from them … but the women—they are outside the system. They will accompany their husbands, but no more. There are some who will look upon these ‘escorts’ as a necessary evil, raising difficulties and weighing down “the builders of the nation and its settlement.” Even at the base of our young yishuv, from its start through to today, the
\end{quote}
woman has been thought of as superfluous.\textsuperscript{55}

Yaffe criticized this negative attitude toward women, and in the continuation of his article notes that on the moshav, women will be given the right to join as members without being interrogated concerning their family status or their plans.\textsuperscript{56} Yaffe sought to annul the negative approach of “human society” toward the woman by means of the model of the \textit{moshav ovdim}, in which equality of the sexes is one of the main values.\textsuperscript{57}

Relying on Yaffe’s expressed opinions, Maisel, who had been a member of the group that had established the first \textit{moshav}, Nahalal, made contact with Eliezer Yaffe. She was aiming to come to an agreement with him that a certain part of the land that would be allotted to the new \textit{moshav} would be turned over to the agricultural school for young women. Since March 1922, there was already an agreement in principle among the Nahalal moshav members for the setting up of a school on a portion of its land.\textsuperscript{58} Seven months later, in the name of the moshav Nahalal committee, Shmuel Dayyan wrote to the JNF that the general assembly of the moshav Nahalal members had authorized building a school on 500 dunams of the moshav’s land.\textsuperscript{59} The main stumbling block was uncertainty about the problem of malaria in the environment. At the end of the summer it became clear that malaria had not been totally wiped out, but the danger from the disease had been considerably reduced, and there was hope that the situation would continue to improve. So Maisel made the decision that the school would be built at Nahalal. In the fall of 1922 Maisel wrote to Miriam Hoofien, WIZO treasurer in Eretz Yisrael, informing her that she was going to Nahalal to finish the negotiations for the school’s land.\textsuperscript{60}

In November 1922 Wilkansky wrote to the Department of Agricultural Settlement:

\begin{quote}
At a meeting of the Agriculture Committee, a
committee made up of Mrs. Maisel, Mr. Krause, and the undersigned was charged with clarifying the fitting location for establishing this school. After it became clear that there is no appropriate site for the school other than Nahalal, the committee took a decision that the school should be founded at Nahalal, and we have already presented to the JNF Executive the agreement of the moshav committee to turn over the area needed for the school from Nahalal land. Obviously, it will not be possible to open the school this year, but perhaps this year should be used for making the required preparations that will allow the opening of the school in 1924.\textsuperscript{61}

Thus, the episode of the search for a location for the agricultural school for women came to an end, but hesitations persisted concerning malaria, which stemmed from the swamps near Nahalal. Only when these fears were assuaged and the testing of the spring water proved that it was fit for use did Maisel decide to begin work on the site.\textsuperscript{62}

\textbf{A. Determining Facts on the Ground}

Since a fitting plot of land had not yet been located, the budget allotted for its purchase and the establishment of the school could not be used.\textsuperscript{63} The sum earmarked for the establishment of the young women’s agricultural school was applied to other purposes and the institution’s founding was postponed, even though all preparations for setting to work on it had been completed. Maisel’s reservations about the time to begin preparatory work for the school had receded when she found out, in November 1922, that Wilkanksy had written a very important letter.\textsuperscript{64}

Wilkanksy had informed the Agricultural Settlement Department that the budget of 10,000 EP for the agricultural
school that had been authorized a year earlier at the Zionist Congress in Carlsbad had been cut by more than half, and that from this sum of 4,200 EP, it would be able to use only 400 EP in the first stage. Seeing how the allotments were dwindling, Maisel decided to create facts on the ground and to begin practical action toward organizing the school to prevent another year’s postponement.65

Wilkansky’s letter also stated that the school under Maisel’s direction would not be directly subordinate to the Department of Agricultural Settlement but would the responsibility of the experimental station managed by Wilkansky.66 This decision, made without consulting Maisel, greatly disappointed her, since she saw in it a change for the worse in the standing of the school and a decline in the importance of this institution. Maisel also feared that the school’s subordination to the experimental station and her inability to have direct connections with the Department of Agricultural Settlement as all other agricultural settlements did have would make it more difficult for her in the future to raise the funds necessary for operating the school.

On January 2, 1923, Maisel informed the directorate of the Department of Agricultural Settlement that she had begun working toward setting up the Agricultural School for Young Women in the Jezreel Valley.67 She started its establishment with 150 lirot (pounds) cash68 and 200 lirot (pounds) in checks. She bought a pair of mules and hired one worker to help out.69

She described this arrangement in a letter to Miriam Gershon:

I have received from the Zionist Organization another 200 EP, not in cash but rather in construction materials. With the latter we are building coops and a cabin for ten young women and a cabin for the laborer who works with the mules and an equipment shed…. Ten beds, a few tables, benches, fifteen chairs and a
small cabin, and a few other things I am taking from the “cooking classes” in Jaffa. The “cooking courses” are the rich aunt and must help the poor training farm at Nahalal … Make sure to obtain cows in Holland and money for the cows, and that Germany should collect the necessary instruments and tools. Write an article about the young women’s farm. Write clearly what the German and Austrian [branches] are to collect, such as, vessels for the dairy farm, kitchenware for the internal arrangement of the house; Romania, lumber for the cabins.\textsuperscript{70}

A month later Maisel wrote:

I have begun: our mules are already plowing our land at Nahalal. In a short time, the cabins for housing will be up and we will start working. Because of that I need you so much. So that you will free me from some of the work. Come quickly! What should you bring for work at Nahalal? I need so many things that I don’t know where to begin.\textsuperscript{71}

Maisel’s numerous letters from those days describe the many difficulties and serious lack of funding as well as her determination and great resourcefulness in fundraising for the school. In the three years that had passed since she had returned to the country after World War I, and while she was simultaneously running the cooking courses, Maisel had acquired much experience in gathering resources and equipment, and she had also created contacts with women’s associations in European countries and the United States. She exploited her connections with the cooking courses to obtain equipment and her links with Miriam Gershon to begin raising donations and equipment in Europe for the school. She gave Gershon explicit instructions to whom to write and what to ask
for. She also did not give up on the Department for Agricultural Settlement, and she demanded the entire allotment as had been authorized once again after the budget cut, namely, the sum of 4,200 EP.\textsuperscript{72}

During Maisel’s absence, at the close of 1923, Eliezer Shochat supervised the construction work on the nearly finished dining hall that was almost finished as well as the plowing and soil preparation, and he wrote her about what was happening.\textsuperscript{73} The troubles were never-ending, and Maisel strove unceasingly to look for funding to proceed with the building. On February 23, 1923, she wrote to Betty Lishansky, the Kulturverband secretary in Berlin, about the progress in the work at Nahalal, about the contribution of 200 EP to buy cows, and about other funds that had been obtained with the help of Miriam Gershon to purchase the cows in Holland. She wrote about how fifteen hives had been transferred from Tel Aviv to Nahalal, with the intention of putting them to work in the spring. Similarly, she itemized what she had received from abroad, and she asked Betty Lishansky for 4,000 meters of netting for the chicken coops and about thirty mosquito nets to cover beds.\textsuperscript{74} At the same time Maisel received tiny sums from the Zionist Executive; the contributions from the European women’s organizations helped improve conditions to a certain extent but were not sufficient to found the school.

\textbf{B. The WIZO Conference, 1923}

As the time for the convening of the Thirteenth Zionist Congress in Carlsbad drew near, the Agriculture Center, which did practically nothing for the establishment of the school at Nahalal, was interested in getting credit for its founding and therefore was about to make a one-sided decree about its opening. Maisel asked the Agriculture Center to postpone that official declaration until after the Zionist Congress, when she hoped to acquire additional funding:
After our joint meeting concerning the Agricultural School for Young Women at Nahalal, I thought about the decisions we had made and I came to the conclusion that we should wait to declare the opening of the school until all arrangements have been made and completed in full, since we cannot and do not have the right to be swept up by such enthusiasm that we would declare its opening without any arrangement for it. Therefore, immediately after the declaration, we have to begin the preparation for the most basic conditions for accepting the students: a place to live and arrangements for work. I must now go to Carlsbad to insure the minimal budget needed for the school … the declaration, should it be made now, instead of improving things would only cause damage: in the eyes of the public we would be seen as deceivers.

Maisel continued:

On the same day I also spoke with the members of the WIZO Executive and with its secretary. They, too, asked me, to not decree the opening of the school until after that organization’s conference, which will take place in Carlsbad immediately after the Congress. Since I am trying to influence the WIZO Executive to play a large role in founding and maintaining the school, it would not be good to make such an important decision before I have the understanding and agreement of that organization in hand. The main goal of my trip to Carlsbad is to convince the WIZO Executive to help us with the school under current harsh conditions.75

Still hoping to receive funding from the Agriculture Center, Maisel met with its members concerning the school’s issues, even
though in her heart she understood that real help would come from other sources. She decided that the feelings of the WIZO women should be given greater consideration than turning to the Agriculture Center, so she supported the explicit request of the WIZO representatives on the Zionist Executive to hold back from announcing the opening of the school. Standing on the school site at the time were three cabins, a few tents, and the foundations of the barn. Dormitories and classrooms had not yet been erected. Under such conditions, Maisel refused—in contrast to the stance of the Agriculture Center—to announce the opening of the school.

The differences between Maisel and WIZO vis a vis the Agriculture Center led to a break between them, and Maisel ceased, apparently, to take part in its meetings. Afterward, in a letter in reply to the Central Committee of the Ha-Poel ha-Tza’ir party (1923), she informed them of the cessation of her activity in the Center, explaining that “the young women who work in the country are the party to which I devote all my efforts.”

At the Third WIZO Conference, held in Carlsbad at the time of the Zionist Congress, one could discern the Jewish women’s international connections as well as the existing link between their organizations. In addition to the WIZO representatives from various countries, attending the conference were also Rebecca Kohut, president of the World Congress of Jewish Women, and two representatives of American Hadassah.

Anna Warburg, one of the founders of the Kulturverband in Berlin, was elected its honorary president, a choice indicating that the Kulturverband branches were in the process of combining with the WIZO institutions. Romana Goodman, who was elected president, brought a report to the conference on WIZO’s work in Eretz Yisrael in 1921–23 as well as WIZO’s plans and hopes for the school at Nahalal. Vera Weizmann, the treasurer, related at that same conference that most of the money raised in the first two years had come from Britain and Canada, and she appealed
to the other delegates to make sure that in their countries the contributions would grow thus enabling WIZO to increase its activity in Eretz Yisrael. At the WIZO conference Maisel gave a report from Eretz Yisrael. She spoke about the Hostel and its success and of the plans being made at Nahalal toward the establishment of the agricultural school. At the conference there was no universal agreement as to how WIZO should operate.

On the second day, Hanna Thon, the representative of the Federation of Hebrew Women, spoke quite critically about WIZO’s order of priorities. She argued that WIZO was investing all its effort in fundraising and neglecting education toward national consciousness among Jewish women. Thon linked this outcome to two problems: one, WIZO addressed mainly middle-aged “bourgeois” women, while neglecting young women who could bring new ideas to the organization; second, WIZO had not turned to the women in Eretz Yisrael to ask them what their own needs were. She felt that the pledge to set up an agricultural school with a budget of £15,000 was too heavy a burden and would not allow WIZO to operate in other important areas such as education toward national consciousness. Thon’s suggestion to cut back the sum allotted for the school was not accepted, and WIZO decided on a budget that included £15,000 for the school at Nahalal, £1,800 for the Mother and Infant Care center, and £800 for the Hostel that already had been established.

WIZO’s decision to support the Nahalal project was immediately put into effect with the transfer of the sum of £100 and a pledge to send the same amount every month. The treasurer, Rosa Ginzberg, told Maisel about the transfer of the funds for the months of October and November. From reading the minutes of November 1924, one can see that from the time that WIZO took responsibility for the school, not one lira [pound] of the Zionist Executive’s budgets was invested in it. From the latter’s point of view, this was simply an opportunity to break off
connections with the school as the Agriculture Center had already done, and to release itself from any obligation. The withdrawal of the Zionist institutions made WIZO realize that involvement in the financial aspect was no longer sufficient. In addition to its responsibility for the school, it now strove to obtain authority over and ownership of the property, and these aspirations led to a fierce confrontation with the Zionist Executive.

C. The Administrative Board and the Argument over Ownership

Immediately upon her return from the Third WIZO Conference in Carlsbad, Maisel initiated the establishment of a committee to supervise the school. She wrote to Ettinger about her plan. He replied that the Supervisory Committee’s first meeting about the school for young women would take place on January 8, 1924, and he listed the names of the participants: Akiva Ettinger, Eliahu Krause, Yitzhak Wilkansky, and Hadassah Samuel. The WIZO board understood that with the start of its participation in permanent support for the school in the sum of £100 each month begun in October 1923, ownership of the school would be transferred to WIZO.

The members of the Zionist Executive, which continued to talk as if it supported the institution, did not understand things the same way. Thus an argument broke out over ownership. At that first meeting of the Supervisory Committee, the relationship between the Zionist Executive and WIZO and the issue of ownership and supplying the needs of the school were discussed. Ettinger strove to shift all responsibility to WIZO, apparently with the aim of no longer having to bear the financial burden of the school. Wilkansky wanted a situation in which WIZO would fund it, but the Zionist Executive would continue overseeing the development of the school.

Krause suggested that legal ownership would be that of the Zionist Executive, and after a trial period of three years, it would
be transferred to WIZO. At the meeting the following conclusion was reached: legal ownership was undivided, and according to the majority—the Zionist Executive would be the owners.  

The role of the Founding Committee was to make sure that the school would open in 1925 and to prepare a curriculum, budgets, and so on. At that same meeting the committee determined the composition of the team of judges that would make the decision in the competition for the planning of the two dormitory buildings for the school.

After the meeting of the Supervisory Committee, Maisel wrote to the WIZO board about the argument over the establishment and ownership of the school. Maisel admitted that it had been difficult to decide. She was convinced that the Zionist Executive would easily transfer responsibility for the founding to WIZO, since the Zionist Organization was in financial difficulty and had not fulfilled its fiscal obligations to the school. Yet, despite that, she had reservations over whether WIZO was capable of raising the resources needed for setting up the school. She was afraid to ask the Zionist Executive to transfer ownership to WIZO and afterward find out that the women’s organization did not have the ability to implement the project, so she preferred that the two bodies work together despite the problems and that each take responsibility for the construction of one of the buildings. In April 1924, WIZO sent the large sum of £3,200, which had been collected in Canada for establishment of the school. Ownership of the school passed to WIZO in May 1924. It seems that Maisel finally agreed to transfer possession of the school only after Hadassah-Canada had taken upon itself full responsibility for it, and the organization did indeed demonstrate within a short time its ability to raise the large sums needed for founding the school.

The committee’s meetings were held about once a month. The members of the Founding Committee were Ettinger, the chairman; Krause, Wilkansky, Hadassah Samuel, and Maisel.
With the transfer of responsibility to WIZO in May, a number of the members were replaced. The forum’s name was changed from the “Founding Committee” to “Administrative Board.” Arthur Ruppin, without whom it was impossible to make any important decisions, was the chairman. For the meetings of the committee to be effective, Maisel coordinated the meeting’s agenda with Ruppin. The other members were Felix (Pinchas) Rosenblüth (treasurer), Wilkansky, Krause, Hadassah Samuel, Henrietta Szold, Leah Berlin, and Maisel. The topics included construction budgets, equipment for the school, the curriculum, and the composition of the teaching staff. At first, they decided that the funding for the construction would come from the Department of Agriculture and Settlement of the Zionist Executive.\(^97\)

At the committee meeting on February 19, 1924, the members discussed the competition for the design of the school building.\(^98\) The winner was Lotte Cohen, an architect who had immigrated from Germany and worked with Richard Kaufman, who had designed Nahalal. There was great significance in the fact that a woman designed the first school of agriculture for women in Eretz Yisrael.\(^99\) Cohen’s plan shows an awareness of the importance of a comfortable learning environment. Included in each of the dormitory buildings’ plans were showers and toilets, an innovation at that time, and privacy was insured for the teachers through an individual bedroom for each. A separate building, which contained the school’s office, was planned for the director. Another structure was designed for the few men who would be employed in the jobs involving difficult physical effort and in guarding.\(^100\) According to the plan, at least six teachers would instruct sixty students, and for each main subject there would be one special teacher.\(^101\) The architect Cohen participated in the meeting on June 5, 1924, in which there was a discussion of her plan for the dormitory buildings.

The people praised the structure as being particularly fit for
the uses it was intended. Over the years the buildings were dubbed the “Hilton,” and the “Sheraton” of the Jezreel Valley. These and other nicknames emphasized their comfort and relative luxury in comparison to the other residences in the area which were built according to much lower standards. Yishuv leaders used the dining hall for events and meetings.102 The press covered two important visits to the school - that of Archie and Lilian Freiman from Canada in January 1927,103 and that of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, the President of Czechoslovakia, in April 1927.104

To appreciate the daring and distinctiveness of the dormitory building and the strong impression it left on those viewing it, one must keep in mind the place and period in which it was built. As early as the 1920s, during the initial days of settlement in the Jezreel Valley, there were three models of agricultural settlements: kibbutzim, kvutzot, and moshavim.105 All the agricultural settlements exhibited the same construction: the farm structures for working cattle and cows were built with a rigid frame—most often cement—while the residences and public buildings were constructed of temporary materials—mainly wood. For this reason, the structure of the dormitory stood out for being built of rigid materials. It had comfortable residential rooms for the girls, an advanced kitchen, a dining hall furnished in rural simplicity, and the most outstanding feature: a shower and toilets built as part of the structure itself, an innovation at the time considered luxurious.106 Interestingly Maisel the pioneer, who lived a modest, almost austere life, was nevertheless imaginative in her approach to the planning and execution of the dormitory. This openness should be seen as a sign of the revolution in Yishuv society that ascribed great importance to the school and considered it its flagship. The building was described as follows in Devar ha-Po’el: All the public buildings designed by Lotte Cohen, despite the limited means available, display simplicity,
warmth, character, and a special atmosphere…. The agricultural school at Nahalal, a plain building with a few wings, whose individuality is noticeable immediately upon entrance, is set in a round plaza. Inside it was of normal, modest dimensions, yet there is splendor and motion in the wide steps. The entire building is charming. Attention and understanding were paid to the arrangement of the rooms and suiting them to their various functions. It is pleasant to walk here in the passages open to the landscape and to feel the spirit of labor that the institution has induced in its students. Great importance was also attributed by L. C. [Lotte Cohen] to the way the work was carried out, to the adjustment of the carpentry work to the different materials. With all their utilitarianism, her buildings reveal a great deal of character and became etched in one’s memory.¹⁰⁷

At the first board meeting after the transfer of the responsibility for the Nahalal school from the Zionist Executive to WIZO, attendance was full. Chairing the session, Ruppin mentioned that Rebecca Sieff and Hadassah Samuel were the women who had turned to him to help in organizing the Executive Committee for the farm, so he had invited them to be present.¹⁰⁸

The composition of the Administrative Board was set: Krause (representative of the Zionist Executive), Wilkansky (JNF representative), Rosenblüth, and WIZO-Canada representatives Hadassah Samuel and Leah Berlin, and Chana Maisel herself. At the meeting it was decided that the Administrative Board would deal with the following issues: examining the plans for the building, concluding a contract with the contractor, buying an inventory of animate and inanimate objects, appointing teachers, arranging the annual budget, and overseeing the farm. Likewise, it
was decided that the board would function until the end of 1924 when WIZO would appoint a new board.

A month after the transfer of the school to WIZO’s control on June 20, 1924, and after it seemed that the money for the building was available, Maisel wrote about her feelings toward the board’s work:

> The plans for opening the school are making me very sad. For a period of months we had meeting after meeting, and it seemed that this issue was not moving along at the necessary speed. We are missing out on the best time for construction—the summer months…. The London Executive has no reason to delay the construction work and the organization of the school, since by doing so it is causing great damage to the school and its farm.¹⁰⁹

Maisel hoped to open the school around Rosh Hashanah [September] 1924, and she asked Hadassah Samuel to make sure that the London committee would transfer all the money (£7,700) that had been approved as the minimal budget for the school. She asked to find out who was authorized to turn the work over to the engineer and the contractor, which tells us that there was still confusion concerning authorities and that construction had not yet begun. In the reply letter from the WIZO Administrative Board in London, directly to Maisel, it turned out that WIZO was not able to approve the start of construction before its precise cost was clarified.¹¹⁰ The actual sums available to WIZO were £2,700 from Canada and another £1,100 from an anonymous donor.¹¹¹ Its representatives were waiting for an answer from Canada about another £3,000 which was supposed to arrive by October. They knew that if a positive reply did not come from Canada, they would be in a difficult situation, as there was no authorization as yet to start building.¹¹²
auspices of WIZO did not lead to the beginning of the work, which would have allowed the school’s opening on Rosh Hashana [September] 1924.

On June 30, 1924, the third session of the new committee discussed its composition and the anticipated allotment from WIZO.\textsuperscript{113} The preparatory work for the building was turned over to the Office of Public Works of the General Histadrut, since it had already started the erection of the barn and was already working on the plot. It was agreed that these jobs would cost no more than 200 EP, since there was no certainty that all the money would come from WIZO.

At the same time, Maisel continued to maintain contact with Rosenblüth and to consult with him on all matters related to the engineers and the construction plans.\textsuperscript{114} Likewise, she wanted to conclude all her obligations and accounts with the cooking courses.\textsuperscript{115} While she was waiting for final approval from London, Maisel hoped to complete all the plans for construction at Nahalal.\textsuperscript{116} Rosenblüth informed her on July 16, 1924, that after the replies had been received from WIZO, the sum of 3,800 EP was at the disposal of the school, enough to allow the beginning of limited work.

Rosenblüth asked whether to begin with the structures in the yard or with the dormitory, and he requested that Maisel bring the proposed budget for 1924–25 to the next meeting of the Administrative Board. The final approval from London was slow in coming, and Maisel threatened to quit the school’s administration:

As for the rumor that I am about to leave the administration of the school. I wonder how such a rumor reached Prague. I did write to Mrs. Lishansky, chairwoman of the Kulturverband, that I do not know whether I will continue my work at the school or leave it. The reasons for my doubts are simple. I managed
the issues of the school on behalf of the Zionist Executive until it began to take shape. I took care of them without anyone having told me to do so, but out of recognition of the need for this project and out of recognition that no one beside me would be concerned enough. For that reason, for about a year now, I have been directing the organization of the school on the spot we chose for it, without their having told me about this officially, but with the full agreement of the Zionist Executive, which thus far has provided most of the funding invested in this endeavor. Now, the school has been transferred to the sole auspices of the Women’s International Zionist Organization. The new body, by taking on the school, is not obliged to accept the previous director. It has the authority to appoint any director it sees fit. Back in April I wrote this to the organization, and I asked them to choose a director and to determine the mutual relations, rights and obligations between WIZO and the school’s director. I have yet to receive a reply to this letter of mine. The women’s organization, which received the school, has not asked me to manage it in its name, but it also has not informed me to whom to turn it over. It may be that it is looking for a director. If it will find a fitting person, I will be pleased for the school. Of course, it will be difficult for me, at first, to leave it and my desire to finish what I started is easy to understand. But if such a things should happen, I will not falter…. I still have enough energy and faith for this.117

This letter shows us Maisel’s frustration. She still did not have a firm contract with WIZO, even though she had been a member of the WIZO board in Eretz Yisrael since its founding in 1920. She
was not satisfied with the rate at which the work was progressing, and she was disappointed that WIZO had not officially asked her to continue to manage the establishment of the school. She did, however, deal with everything connected to setting it up. She wrote to the craftsmen and tradesmen and to the various departments in the Mashbir, and she prepared the orders for equipment. On August 7, 1924, Maisel invited an orchards expert to come to give practical instruction to the female laborers working and helping in its establishment. In the middle of August, the hoped for authorization finally came from WIZO, and Maisel wrote to Hadassah Samuel to clarify who should sign the work agreement with the contractor. She also turned in a report on the progress of overseeing the school’s establishment. In September, Maisel reported to Rosenblüth that the start of the work had been postponed again, and she asked him to speed up Solel Boneh, the Histadrut construction company. Afterward, she also requested the remainder of the school’s budget for 1923–24.

D. The First Period: November 1924–April 1926

The cornerstone for the dormitory building was laid on October 22, 1924. The work progressed apace, and the barn and the yard structures were erected simultaneously according to the grand plan decided upon by the Administrative Board. The design determined that the barn building would have two stories made of cement: the upper level would be used for storing bales of hay and straw, and the lower one would house the cows. Set into the floor would be cement channels for collecting urine, and a track for the wheeled cart that would take the manure to the covered manure pit. The barn would hold thirty-five cows and would be one of the most advanced in the country. Maisel was also prepared to promote the chicken coop branch, as we learn from her letter to Schlossberg:
I have consulted our expert for raising poultry and he thinks that it is not worthwhile sending chickens here in March. They would arrive in the country too late and would not be able to raise a new generation from their eggs this year … He thinks that it is possible to obtain superior species in Eretz Yisrael.\textsuperscript{122} He feels that it is preferable to send money for the purchase of chickens in the country or for buying machinery that would make the work with poultry easier.\textsuperscript{123}

The different types of building components, the standard of the sand for the plant nurseries, the quality of the plumbing equipment for the lavatory structures, and the economic activity show a high level of planning and execution for the dormitory structure.

Weizmann and Ruppin visited Nahalal in October, at which time a memorandum was signed between the JNF and the school regarding the land; the date for the laying of the cornerstone for the dormitory building was set.\textsuperscript{124} After offsetting the expenses, 5,460 EP remained for building the barn and the first dormitory structure. Since the estimated budget for the dormitory and barn came to 5,868.52 EP, Rosenblüth, the treasurer, argued that further effort was necessary to obtain the entire sum.

Other items they discussed were the fixed expenses, maintenance of students and teachers, annual expenses for seeds, fertilizer, food for the poultry and cattle, irrigation, and fencing. The committee authorized the budget, and likewise decided on the appointment of the following teachers and determined their salaries: Hanna Levin, bookkeeper and assistant to the director of the school (7 EP a month); Shlomo Yedidya, a male teacher for raising fruit trees for half a year (9 EP a month); and Elimelech Levin, a male teacher for raising poultry for a year (8 EP a month). In addition, it was decided to appoint Maisel as director (20 EP
a month). With the laying of the cornerstone for the dormitory, the official appointment of Maisel as director, the appointment of teachers for the school, and its transfer to WIZO, a new stage began in the establishment of the school.

In the middle of March 1925, the discussion had already begun on the 1925–26 budget. The budget proposal in Krause’s handwriting, which was presented to the school’s Administrative Board on February 15, 1925, itemized the curriculum of practical studies. It was decided to work with a balanced budget and to lower it from 2,300 EP to 1,600 EP (the difference between expenses and the school’s annual income). The decision was “to begin immediately after the budget is fixed through negotiations over obtaining the necessary funds” for the continuation of construction. The Administrative Board considered it obvious that Maisel and Krause were the ones who had to continue to make sure that the money required for the school would come in, since at this stage WIZO had not as yet taken full responsibility for funding the school, and it could not be relied upon as an exclusive source for financing. Maisel thought that if WIZO could not provide all the budget required, the school would be forced to ask the Zionist Executive again to participate in the 1925–26 budget. Maisel asked Ruppin to help her in convincing WIZO to provide the entire budget, and if it would not do so, she would free herself of all responsibility for the Nahalal School.

The final settling of accounts with the Zionist Executive took place, so it seems, in March 1925, after an exchange of letters with Eliezer Bavli of the Zionist Executive, and Mrs. Abrahams, the WIZO secretary, about the situation of the school’s debts. Even though the Zionist Executive transferred responsibility to WIZO and despite the improvement in the allotment of resources, it was still necessary to make sure the money was received. Maisel had a problem devoting her time and emotional energy to dealing with financial matters.
The budget proposal for 1925–26 reveals that the expenses had been planned concerning the staff and the various branches. It turns out that the intention had been to begin actual work in all branches simultaneously. This plan was presented for Ruppin’s review.  

In February 1925, only five months after the laying of the cornerstone and WIZO’s official entry as a body involved in the funding of the school, Maisel wrote a detailed report to the Administrative Board about how things had progressed from the allotment of land to the beginning of WIZO’s intensive involvement in the school’s establishment. Most of the money came from Hadassah-Canada. The buildings under construction had required an investment of 6,700 EP. Sources were lacking for the erection of the following structures: a second dormitory, a bakery building, a laundry, housing for married teachers, a dairy building, a manure pit, housing for incubators, and a storage shed for the chicken coops. Nevertheless, owing to the completion of most of the structures, it was possible to open the school in 1925–26 on the condition that the funding needed to operate it would be guaranteed. A report intended for the Administrative Board on the beginning of institution’s operation states:

Currently there are seventeen female apprentices, two male apprentices, a laborer for the work animals, three professional workers, a bookkeeper, and a general director. Immediately upon [the school’s] opening, 30 to 40 [female] students will be able to study there. In the past year and a half, since WIZO took responsibility for the establishing the school, it has managed to advance the institution to a great degree. If it succeeds in completing the construction and insuring an annual budget, this will undoubtedly be a very important act on behalf of agricultural education.
for women and for national settlement.\textsuperscript{134}

From the report one sees that as soon as WIZO accepted responsibility for founding the school, the pace of preparations accelerated, and the plans as carried out seemed to be an almost precise realization of Maisel’s 1920 plan.

The main difference between the school that was about to open and the Women’s Training Farm concept was professional training, since teachers specific to particular areas had been recruited to teach. The farm was large and modern, and the housing, as noted, had been built according to much higher standards than typical in agricultural settlements of the time.

\textbf{E. The Curriculum in the Early Years (1924–1926)}

The agricultural school at Nahalal was established along the classic European model of an agricultural school for women, which included the traditional home management subjects as well as the farmyard and was not aimed at training women in all the agricultural branches.\textsuperscript{135} The school’s management, with Maisel in charge, accepted the \textit{gender} division in agricultural work that existed in Europe. Maisel strove to find and make exhaustive use of the prevailing feminine ideas in branches of agriculture, that is, to train the students in the farmyard branches that were more fitting for women.

From the beginning of the 1925–26 school year, two groups of students studied at the school. The first year was devoted to basic studies about all branches of a farm, with the pupils divided into four study groups that changed places among themselves every week.\textsuperscript{136} In addition, there were academic lessons in the following subjects: maintenance of the individual; housework and laundry; cooking and making preserves; chemistry, botany, and zoology. The students were also given a bit of academic knowledge about dry crops, horticulture, raising poultry, and making dairy products.
Hebrew language and literature, too, were part of the lessons’ program, but the bulk of their time was devoted to practical work. The two-year curriculum received the approval of the Education Department of the British Mandate government.

### The Nahalal Agricultural School for Girls: Curriculum in 1924–1926

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Studies</th>
<th>1925 Number of lessons</th>
<th>1926 Number of lessons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Botany</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoology</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural chemistry</td>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil and fertilization theory</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating vegetables</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raising poultry</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising bees</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual maintenance and cooking theory</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy industry</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making preserves</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew language and literature</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raising animals</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Ziona Rabau (Katinsky), the home economics teacher, wrote to her
parents, a short while after coming to Nahalal:

Next week we will begin lessons on making all kinds of fruit and vegetable preserves in special jars … if we succeed, we will expand the branch and have all the students take part … Beside that I am starting to organize a small museum of all the materials related to home management and laundry.¹³⁸

At the end of the first year of their studies the students chose a field of specialization, but the final decision was in the hands of the school’s pedagogical committee which considered the interests of each student. The girls worked in that area throughout the year. In the second year there were lessons in the following academic subjects: raising vegetables, cultivating nurseries and growing flowers, cultivating fruit trees, raising dairy cows, processing milk products, raising poultry, raising bees, agricultural engineering, managing a farm and accounts, soil science and fertilization.

In the curriculum that the school published, the operational method was also specified: in each group, one student was chosen as the leader for a period of three months, and she was accountable to the administration for the order and cleanliness of the work area in which the group functioned, as well as for the group’s work roster, which was made in consultation with the teacher. At the end of the school year, the students were examined by a panel of experts. During the year, they were given in-school tests three times. The pedagogical committee was authorized to expel students who did not demonstrate sufficient progress in their studies.¹³⁹

The list of students accepted into the school for the 1925–26 school year included forty new students.¹⁴⁰ Together with those of the previous year who had remained for the second year, the school had over fifty students.¹⁴¹

In the WIZO report, written shortly after the official opening of the school, Maisel related:
Since September 1925, we have been eating bread baked by the girls themselves. The flour was ground from the wheat we grew. Most of the feed for the chickens and cows we produced from our field. The cows give 70–80 liters of milk a day. Some of it is sold. From the nursery we have sold fruit trees and also a large part of the ornamentals. The raising of chicken is going well, too. Soon we will have over 1,000 chicks. The species of successful chickens was prominent at the agricultural exhibition. The representative of the King of Egypt bought a large number of chicks to raise. We also supply eggs to our kitchen, and settlers are waiting in line to buy eggs for incubation. Our vegetable garden provides us with an abundance of produce for our kitchen, but in the meantime is not for sale owing to a lack of water. The wheat fields and other winter crops are doing well thanks to the various agricultural machines we purchased in the fall. The beekeeper supplies us with honey for our own use.¹⁴²

This optimistic report reflects the relatively swift progress of the farm since WIZO-Canada had begun its enthusiastic support. All the school’s farm branches were ready to accept students. The winter crops could supply most of the cattle feed, the sizable yield of milk made possible the study of the production of milk products, the nursery enabled sales and a modest profitable income, and the chicken coop’s achievements were on a national and international scale, as seen by the purchase of chicks for Egypt. The specialist teacher Elimelech Levin was responsible for bringing this branch to such a high level of achievement. With the progress on the farm and with the construction, the date for the official dedication of the dormitory was set for April 7, immediately after Passover.
Group photo of the students in the Cooking Courses, 1923 (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)

Working in the field at the Hostel, 1925 (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)
The celebration for the opening of the Agricultural School for Young Women, Nahalal 1926 (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)

The school dining hall, Nahalal 1925 (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)
The School for Young Women, Nahalal 1925 (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)

The school’s plant nursery, Nahalal 1925 (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)
Five Students at the Nahalal school, 1927 (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)
A student plowing with a horse, 1927 (Courtesy of Rina Smilansky, a student in the first graduating class)

The chicken coop at the Nahalal school, 1926 (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)
Borochov farm, 1926 (Courtesy of the JNF Archive)

Workers at Nahalat Yehuda farm, 1926 (Courtesy of the JNF Archive)
A dormitory room at the Nahalal school, 1926 (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)

The kitchen of the Nahalal school, 1926 (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)
The school’s first graduating class (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)

Hanna and Miriam Gerson with a farmer and his crew in Holland, 1919 (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)
Hanna on a visit to the Macdonald Agricultural College, Ontario, Canada, 1951. Left, Florence Kurt, chairperson of the Nahalal School Committee of Hadassah Canada; right, Dr. Margaret Macready, director of the college. (Courtesy of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council Archive)
Hanna, 1956, dedication of the dining hall, with the participation of representatives of Hadassah Canada

Hanna (bottom row, first from the right) in Switzerland with Leib Yaffe and friends (year unknown)
Poster of Zionist women organizations
First Cows from Holland—An Example of Determination and Dedication to the Goal

On August 8, 1922, at a session of the Professionals’ Council called by the Agriculture Center that dealt with the development of dairy farms in Eretz Yisrael, the issue of improving dairy installations was discussed. The purpose of the meeting was to determine the correct way to improve the local stock of cows and what to do to introduce additional high quality stock. The veterinarian, Dr. Kabakovitz-Neriah, claimed that no attention was being paid to veterinary care and that on the farms there were no people who knew how to deal with animals. He said:

Customarily on the farms, for a few months some young woman or another handles the cow, and she has already learned the amount of castor oil or Epsom salts that one should give to a cow with stomach trouble, and then her turn for another job comes and off she goes to plow, and she is replaced by another young woman who asks the doctor a serious question: What should be done for a constipated cow?143

At the end of this discussion, Wilkansky and Krause recommended not bringing Dutch cows to the country until it became possible to raise green fodder. The majority of the committee, however, decided in any event to try to introduce a small number of them to Eretz Yisrael. Without taking into consideration the decision against this action, and with the help of a donation from Yavne’el and money raised by Miriam Gershon’s father in Holland, Maisel ordered Dutch cows, and they were sent to the country together with cows bought by a group of settlers from Binyamina.144 Later on Miriam Gershon described the cows’ journey:

I will never forget the big moment when I received
notice in the kitchen that the cows were coming with the *halutzim* from Deventer [Holland], who were taking care of the cows on the way … The trip was difficult by way of Algeria, the cows got sick, and so did the fellows. I ran from the kitchen to the Jaffa port, the girls laughed when they saw the ship from afar … When we reached the ship from the shore, I spoke to the cows in Dutch so they would not feel strange. Since it was stormy, the ship set sail for Haifa, and unloaded the cows only there. The crane in the port was adjusted for small cows, so it could not lift the cow. One of the cows fell in the water and almost drowned. Eventually, they got them onto land. This was the first shipment of Dutch cows to Eretz Yisrael.¹⁴⁵

As things developed, it seems that Maisel did not consult widely with experts before deciding to purchase the first Dutch cows for the school. She used her connections with the Zionists in Holland,¹⁴⁶ and they helped her to add the cows that had been bought for the school to the first shipment of Dutch cows coming to Eretz Yisrael.¹⁴⁷ The animals reached Nahalal after an arduous journey and a quarantine period at Binyamina. At Nahalal the cows were housed first in Eliezer Shochat’s barn. One died and the other was sold afterward. In December 1923, Maisel asked Stern, secretary of the Department of Agricultural Settlement, to turn to Yehoshua Brandstatter, an expert in cattle, even though he had already left the department, so that he could purchase more cows for the school.¹⁴⁸ In the end Haim Sturman bought cows for the school in Beirut, Lebanon.¹⁴⁹ Other Dutch cows were acquired about a year later in spring 1925, upon completion of the construction of the barn, which had room for thirty-five cows.¹⁵⁰ The new barn at Nahalal was considered the most advanced in the country.
The episode with the cows shows us that Maisel was willing to take chances so as to place the Nahalal school in the forefront of modern agriculture in Eretz Yisrael. Despite the opposition of Wilkansky and Krause to the importation of these cows, Maisel did not hesitate and acted to bring them in. The first attempt that ended in failure did not weaken her resolve, and by her persistence, she managed to establish at the Nahalal school an advanced barn with cows of different breeds.

The School in Full Swing

A. Dedication of the School

In March 1926 Maisel wrote to the WIZO Executive about planning for the opening ceremony:

Dr. Weizmann took upon himself to be chairman and Lady Samuel will open the school. On behalf of the WIZO center in London, Mrs. Weizmann and Mrs. Marx will be taking part. We have heard about the program from Palestine: the celebration will take place in the garden. Invitations have gone out to representatives of the government and the various agricultural organizations and moshavim. At 5:30 p.m. refreshments will be served. Our 35 students have taken responsibility for organizing the event. They will be wearing white dresses with blue ribbons. One group will receive guests near the gate, a second will guide them and show them the house, a third will show them the planted gardens, and a fourth group will show the guests to their places. A printed program will be distributed among the attendees.¹⁵¹

In April 1926, the official opening of the Agricultural School for Young Women at Nahalal was celebrated. Covered by the country’s press this was an event on a national scale in which the most
distinguished guests participated.\textsuperscript{152} Because it rained that day, the ceremony was held in the school’s dining hall.\textsuperscript{153} The chairman of the ceremony was Chaim Weizmann, and the guest of honor was Beatrice Samuel, the wife of the ex-high commissioner Herbert Samuel. On behalf of the Mandate government, the governors of the north and the [Jezreel] valley of Eretz Yisrael, including the district ruler Abramson participated. Invited and attending were Rachel Don Yihya, the WIZO secretary; Prof. Franz Oppenheimer; Dr. Max Bodenheimer; Arthur Ruppin; Jacob Thon; Chaim Kalvarisky; Akiva Ettinger; Yitzhak Wilkansky; Eliahu Krause; Shlomo Dyck; Levi Shkolnik-Eshkol, representative of the Agriculture Center; David Hacohen, representative of Solel Boneh; Ada Fishman, representative of Women Workers’ Council; Albert Romano, president of the Zionist Organization of Bulgaria; and Ahmed Badari Bey, representative of the Egyptian government. After Weizmann’s opening speech, Beatrice Samuel spoke in Hebrew, and said, among other things:

I especially remember the meeting in the home of Mrs. Weizmann, when the women brought their gold jewelry, this time not for the [Golden] calf, but for the work of WIZO. At this meeting Mrs. Eder spoke and told us about the three projects that the organization was aspiring to found in Eretz Yisrael: a home for infant care, a residence for young women, and the agricultural school at Nahalal. Step by step the organization has succeeded in all of these, and we are here today to celebrate the realization of part of this dream. This is not the end of the work but its beginning.\textsuperscript{154}

Badari Bey brought greetings in the name of the Egyptian government’s Ministry of Education.\textsuperscript{155}

In her speech Maisel reviewed the history and travails of
agricultural training for women in Eretz Yisrael, and at the close of her remarks said:

> When I look back on all that this school has gone through, I come to the conclusion that all that must be done for the development of the woman in Eretz Yisrael, has to be carried out first of all by the women’s organization, whose duty is to stand as halutzot in the forefront of a project such as this one. Yet, the Zionist Executive is not released from fulfilling its duty, and as I conclude I express my hope and wish that the Zionist Organization will do everything possible on its part to increase institutions such as these, which will help the development of agriculture in Eretz Yisrael.

Maisel ended with the “imperative” that the initiative and financial support for the women’s training project would come from the women’s organizations, and only after that, after the foundations had been laid, would the Zionist Executive join in, contribute its part, and fulfill its obligation toward women’s development in Eretz Yisrael. She did not forget the men who had helped the project for agricultural training of women come to fruition, foremost Arthur Ruppin and Eliahu Krause.

Ada Fishman brought greetings on behalf of the Women Workers’ Council and explained to the audience that “the Zionist Executive was the body that was supposed to deal with this institution, which is destined to train the female Hebrew worker in Eretz Yisrael, and when it does not do so—the women’s organization should be blessed for doing the work. May it be that the school will educate a generation of women workers for a workers’ society.” Fishman was not comfortable with the situation whereby women’s associations or organizations were the ones to take care of the agricultural training for women, and she took advantage of this platform to mention it. A year after that,
Fishman sat as the representative of the Women Workers’ Council on the Administrative Board of WIZO, the organization that had become the great supporter of the large women workers’ farm in Nes Ziona, which in time became the agricultural school for women Ayanot.

Weizmann spoke last, and he stated that the school had received about 1,500 applications from interested women. That being the case, he said, the building should be expanded and other similar projects and institutions should be established. He did not say who should initiate or fund them.\footnote{158} As we have come to realize from the previous chapter, the other projects for agricultural training, which came into being after the opening of the Nahalal school, were also established and funded by Jewish women’s organizations abroad. On the eve of opening day, a party was held for the school’s students with the participation of members of the \textit{moshav} Nahalal and other nearby settlements. The “Valley Orchestra,” which played at the party was an orchestra composed of members of \textit{kibbutz} Ein Harod and members of \textit{kibbutz} B of Ha-Shomer ha-Tza’ir, which was then located in Afula, eventually becoming \textit{kibbutz} Mishmar ha-Emek.

**B. Teachers and Teaching at the School**

In the first period of preparation toward establishing the school at Nahalal, three members of the moshav, who had garnered experience in the branches of dry crops, nursery, and poultry, served as teachers-practical instructors. The first practical instructor was Avraham Gluthman, a graduate of an agricultural school in Poland, who had spent time as a practical teacher at Mikve Israel and in plant nurseries.\footnote{159} He was replaced by Shlomo Yedidya from Ein Harod, and then by Shlomo Weinberg (later Oren). The second practical teacher, Elimelech Levin, was a member of “the American group,” and one of the country’s experts in raising poultry. The third, Eliezer Lerner, had experience with dry crops.\footnote{160}
Employment contracts were also signed with Shmuel Yedidya, an expert in orchards and horticulture; \(^{161}\) with Lichtinger, an expert in cultivating vegetables; and with Zinnaman, an expert in raising cattle. No teacher was found for home management.

Maisel hoped that female teachers, who could be role models, would be the instructors at the school. The expert teachers would not only have training in agriculture but would also have a pedagogical background, and they would be able to serve as an example. They would influence the students and fashion their new image. In truth, Maisel did not have enough women teachers, so when the school went into operation most of the teachers were men and only a few were women. Some of the teachers had no academic degree at all and functioned mainly as practical instructors. Maisel tried to convince the WIZO women to pay for sending talented young women abroad for studies so that they would be able to return to the school as practical instructors-teachers. Thus she wrote:

We are lacking female teachers not only for home management and cooking but also for agricultural subjects. Of course, we can find a limited number of professionals in the most common branches in the country, but they have not received pedagogical training and in most cases prefer the practical field over instruction. Even in those instances when they take upon themselves to engage in professional instruction, there is no doubt that in dormitory schools for young women, especially in the rural areas, female teachers would be more appropriate. Young male teachers most often cannot find the proper stance in relation to the students. Moreover, the male teachers have no interest in the professional ability of the woman, and they do not care about developing and enhancing it. So there
is no doubt that female teachers with professional education would be able to give the students more than the male teachers do, since on the whole the students need education no less than professional training, and only a team of female teachers would be able to educate the woman for the functions she will fulfill.\textsuperscript{162}

A number of reasons guided Maisel in her search for women teachers for the agricultural school: first, female teachers would be able to be a model to identify with and to inspire the halutzot and girls of the country who would come to study agriculture. Similarly, Maisel felt that male teachers were prejudiced and had no faith in the woman’s professional ability, so they would not succeed at the task of developing it to the utmost. Also, sexual attraction might be detrimental to the learning process and functioning of both parties, since the male teachers, mainly young men, would find it difficult to keep the necessary distance from the students and would have trouble developing the proper attitude towards mature students living in dormitories.\textsuperscript{163}

Thus, Maisel made sure to train female teachers in her institution.\textsuperscript{164} In London she met Ziona Katinsky (Rabau) from Tel Aviv, and the latter wrote about this encounter:

Maisel considered me virgin soil for her ideas and aspirations. She spoke with me at length and made me aware of my duty to educate the next generation—to building up the land, to agriculture, to home management, and so on. In her quiet way and with her logical statements she spoke to my heart and stirred my conscience. I was enticed by her words and decided to change my field from academic education that I had first chosen to studies of practical education—so it was that I entered the Faculty of Domestic Science at the Royal College affiliated with the University of
Maisel made sure that Rabau would receive tuition for three years as a gift from Margit Samuel, a cousin of the high commissioner. Rabau did indeed complete her studies and come to teach at Nahalal. Rabau’s father, a yeshiva graduate and a Jewish scholar, was disappointed with her choice and wrote her:

Simcha the Yemenite knows how to do the laundry and clean without university, so why do you have to devote the time of your youth with such useless studies as these? Wouldn’t it be better to register at the Faculty for Jewish Studies, gain knowledge, and delve deeply into the sources of our teachings and our ethics.

In a similar way Maisel made sure that her student Rina Farber would receive a study stipend abroad from WIZO. Farber returned to the Nahalal school as a teacher and later was the manager of the orchard branch. She held this job faithfully for many years until her retirement. Eventually she wrote a book about the Nahalal school.

Only in the mid-1930s was Maisel able to consolidate a staff of young female teachers, who would give practical instruction in the agricultural branches and who were also trained and capable of teaching classes covering theory. The practical instructors in the early 1930s were Rivka Gevirtzman, barn manager for cattle raising and for dairy products; Sonya Janowski, manager of horticulture and raising bees; Shoshana Singer, manager of the vegetable garden; and Rina Farber, manager of the orchards. Hanna Ravid taught chemistry, and the only male teacher in the school, Elimelech Levin, taught the raising of poultry. A number of teachers came from the experimental station or from Mikveh Israel and taught a few classes, but they did not live at the school and did not manage agricultural branches.
The language of instruction at the school caused a dispute that broke out suddenly. Despite the great importance attributed to Hebrew, a few of the teachers did not have command of it. This information reached the press and the leadership of the Conference of the Federation of Teachers, when at a meeting of the Administrative Board on February 15, 1925, it was proposed to accept Shlomo Weinberg, who had come from Germany, as a teacher even though he did not know Hebrew.\textsuperscript{171} He was a well-known expert in growing fruit trees and in horticulture. Ruppin was in favor of accepting him for a year, after which he could, perhaps, find a job at the experimental station. At that same discussion, Maisel opposed hiring him. Finally, Weinberg arrived at Nahalal with his family, and since he did not know Hebrew, his lessons were translated by a student, Ruth Hecker, who came from a German-speaking home.\textsuperscript{172} In time his wife Elisheva related:

Weinberg and I came on \textit{aliyah} in 1925. That year an agricultural school for young women was opened at Nahalal to which Weinberg was accepted as a teacher for the branches of gardening: nursery, fruit trees, vegetable garden, and so on. At that time no one in Eretz Yisrael was even thinking about flower gardens. The main concerns were practical issues: how to raise vegetables without irrigation; what fruits were fit for the climate of the country, and the like. Later, when the cities grew and the \textit{moshavot} developed, a request arose for organizing gardens. Then Weinberg went back to the field close to his heart: garden architecture.\textsuperscript{173}

In an article called “An Idol in the Temple,” in August 1926 Dr. Avraham Baruch, a teacher at the Herzlia Gymnasium, objected to any teaching in German at the Agricultural School for Young Women at Nahalal. He asked:
What is this? Have we stooped so low? Is the defamation of our tongue in such a manner as this on the part of our national institutions not even worthy of attention … Apparently something is rotten in the state of Denmark! We must protest over this problem. The Federation of Teachers still has the obligation to stand in the breach in Hebrew education in our land. Yet, no Jew in our country, no federation, no institution is relieved of the duty to express its opposition and protest this deed. We must remove the “idol from the Temple” so that the affliction will not spread.

We must point out that despite the basic awareness of the use of the Hebrew language in the Jewish educational institutions in Eretz Yisrael, not all the teachers taught in Hebrew in every one of them. The leaders of the battle for the exclusivity of the Hebrew language were sensitive and assertive toward teaching in a foreign language in the Jewish schools, so even without examining the reasons that led to teaching in German, they attacked the Nahalal school and publicly vilified the phenomenon. Another complaint reached the school from the Teachers Federation center, which had gotten its information from the press, asked if it was true, and if so, how the situation would be changed in the coming school year.

Maisel responded to the two complaints. To the Davar board she replied the very same day, and afterwards criticized Dr. Baruch who had not taken the trouble to get to know the school and the spirit it was imbued with. For had he done so, she wrote, he would have realized that

There are few settlement sites where the Hebrew language is as dominant as it is in our place. And he would also know as I do that the Agricultural School for Young Women deserves great credit for disseminating the language among the working
Had he looked into the education of the halutzot toward work, he would have found that in every institution that I have directed to this day, including the Agricultural School for Young Women, the young ladies have become accustomed to and educated toward work and Hebrew-speaking as if they were inseparable things. Yet, at the same time, he would know that occasionally I was forced, and to my sorrow, I must still today in my educational, agricultural, and home-oriented work, hire as professional workmen people in whom education and professional experience as well as cultural education [emphasis in the original] have been blended, despite the fact that they do not know Hebrew. These experts always adjusted themselves to us, gaining a knowledge of the language in a more or less short period. Their influence on professional development and on education toward labor was always beneficial to the institution.\textsuperscript{178}

Maisel added that the teachers were learning Hebrew and would teach in that language and that none of them were contemptuous of it. She wrote similar explanations to the Teachers Federation, as well, but these responses did not satisfy its members.\textsuperscript{179}

The great importance that the Yishuv attributed to the Agricultural School for Young Women at Nahalal led to prolific discussion about what happened there. At the Fourth Conference of the Teachers Federation, an entire discussion was devoted to the school. On the issue of Hebrew, the conference took a decision as follows:

The conference of the Eretz Yisrael teachers heard with great sorrow and bitterness that the information is correct about the desecration of the Hebrew tongue at the Agricultural School for Young Women at Nahalal.
The response from the director of the institution to the Teachers Center is not at all satisfactory, and there is no reason that can justify this severe harm to our language within the walls of an educational institution in Eretz Yisrael. The conference labels this deed a national transgression and wonders about the people there, who did not become aware of this mishap in time and did not remove this stumbling block, the conference demands that these people come to the aid of the Center in removing this obstacle. The conference demands that this distortion be repaired and obliges the Center to pay attention to this issue with all means possible. The conference appeals to all the Zionist educational institutions in the country that receive support from the Zionist Executive to put themselves under the supervision of the Zionist Executive’s Education Department.\(^{180}\)

This decision is included in a letter that arrived on September 14, 1926, which also had a request to provide a clear reply to the question about what the institution is doing about this issue. On September 29, 1926, Maisel replied and wrote that the teacher Weinberg would learn Hebrew during the 1926–27 school year. As for the cooking teacher Erna Rosenbaum, another German speaker, she was a practical teacher and did not give classroom lessons. In the end, both teachers learned Hebrew and taught in it.\(^ {181}\)

**C. The Issue of Discipline and Imposing Authority**

Gertrude Bram, who had been hired at the request of Vera Weizmann to work in bookkeeping and in managing the warehouses at the Nahalal school, attempted suicide in the fall of 1926. Maisel wrote about Bram:

She really knows bookkeeping and warehouse
management well, but she is so far from our type of halutzot, that she could not find a place for herself in the school. She suffered terribly from the attitude toward her. Beside that, she apparently has other private problems that are even greater … everything took its toll on her until yesterday [when] she took a large amount of veronal powder. We immediately did what we could to save her, and we brought her that very night to Hadassah Hospital in Haifa, there is hope that she is out of danger … Now we have to face the question of where she should go from the hospital. I am not sure she would want to return to Nahalal, and I am certain that she does not have to do so. It will be very bad for her and also for our girls. This is poison.

In the continuation, Maisel asked Shur “to find the young woman a place.”

Maisel, who was familiar with the phenomenon of suicide from her family, feared the negative influence this event might have on the students and tried to find a way to help the woman without returning her to Nahalal. Since she had hired Bram to work upon WIZO’s recommendation, she considered WIZO responsible for her fate. She turned to Mrs. Shur and to Mrs. Don Yahya, clerical staff in the WIZO office, as follows:

But what to do with her now? I do not think we can permit ourselves to leave her in [our] institution, since the influence of an incident such as this on emotional girls, such as our young women who grew up during the World War, is not good. I also cannot forgive her for doing such a thing in an institution with 40 young ladies. But now, we must take responsibility if we let her go when she still has no place and no money.
The pressures existing in the school were not light and not every one could bear them. Maisel was afraid of the influence of such a case on the students, since she knew their life stories from the registration documents they had turned in to the school.\textsuperscript{184} The girls had written about pogroms, leaving home, and abandoning school, wandering, the refugee experience, hunger, and the fears that had been their lot as children during World War I.

The students rebelled against the teacher Malka Sapir, whom Maisel had brought from Germany and on whom she had pinned great hopes for her contribution to the school. In October 1926, Maisel wrote to Germany to persuade Sapir to come earlier:

Should it be possible for you to come even in October–November this year, it would be of help to me … undoubtedly your work is more necessary in this country than what you are studying (please forgive me for my allowing myself to tell you that). But right here, I feel just how much we miss having Instructors for practical work as well as for the academic instruction for the halutzot, and I am quite sorry that you have remained outside of our land and away from our work for such a long time.\textsuperscript{185}

Sapir arrived at the school in Nahalal in May 1927, during Maisel’s stay in Europe; Esther Rosov was substituting for Maisel.\textsuperscript{186} Upon her arrival, Sapir made demands on the students for order and discipline on a stricter level than had been customary at the school, but the attempt to bring about a change and to institute new arrangements in Maisel’s absence failed. The students refused to clean their rooms at set times and insisted on their right to have the male members of their groups visit them in their rooms. Rosov wrote Maisel a number of letters about the discipline problems, and in the end, Sapir decided to quit her job. To be sure, she waited two weeks before leaving, so it would not look like she
had given in to the students’ pressure, but it was clear that it was
the students who had made her leave.  

Rosov, who handled all ongoing issues, soon realized that
beside the lack of funds, the most difficult problem was the lack of
discipline. She felt that her hands were tied since she did not want
to impose serious punishments and she was similarly not interested
in any scandals on the eve of the Zionist Congress and the WIZO
Conference in Basel. So Rosov wrote to Don-Yichye, the WIZO
Secretary, as follows:

Yesterday evening the work roster arrangement was
supposed to take place, but instead we had an angry,
hurtful discussion with the students. Of late I have
seen many young men guests. One morning I saw
one young man sleeping in a room in which another
five girls were sleeping … yesterday at the discussion
I said that in no way would I agree to this [excessive]
freedom. The young women started to explain to me
that in all the *kevutzot* and farms the young men are
allowed to stay overnight if they have no where else to
sleep, and that here too, they have occasionally slept
over … I told them that they are living under a great
illusion if they are comparing life in the *kevutza* to the
school, and this is a basic error. There was a great deal
of anger over this issue. But finally they agreed that
it is impossible to have male guests sleeping over in
the bedrooms…. This whole issue is very typical: they
are sure that they have complete freedom here and
can behave like all the other *haverot* in the different
*kevutzot*: they have no sense at all of being “students” in
the dormitory of a school.  

From this letter we learn that the staff encountered serious
problems of discipline and that the students who revered Maisel
took advantage of her absence when she traveled. A day later Rosov wrote a seven-page letter to Maisel and gave the details about the students’ rejection of the practices Sapir had tried to institute in the school:

Dear Chana, there is total anarchy here. If the Congress were not going on now, I would ask you to take the required steps here immediately. To give each of them the regulations again and to expel anyone who would not agree to recognize them or the way the school is run. It’s a shame we have to waste energy on them … Malka Sapir arrived two weeks ago. She makes a very good impression. But the students hate her, because she demands discipline and watches over them … they also attacked Mr. Weinberg (they always set upon him and I really think that he is one of the best teachers in his field available in the country) … You have great influence, but when you are away for a few days, the students overturn *everything you have managed to get into them* [emphasis mine—E.H.-C.]. And this must be put to a stop…. The young women’s attitude to me is very good, but that is not enough for me.189

Time passed and professional teachers were still lacking. To solve the problem, Maisel requested that the management of the Training Division of the Settlement Department ask Dr. Kabakovitz-Neriah to come to Nahalal to give a few lessons in the anatomy and physiology of milk cows as an interim solution, until a teacher for that subject was found among the residents of Nahalal.190 Rosov became ill and found it difficult to handle things; at the end of July she asked Maisel to return even before the Congress.191 After she spent a few days in Tel Aviv and recovered, Rosov resumed acting as director, but she had no interest in becoming involved in the selection of new students. She made a
resolute proposal:

And even more important is the question of accepting new students. I think this must be postponed until your return: I can in no way take upon myself the choosing of students, there must be a program worked out for the new school year, both in terms of the studies as well as in terms of the internal living arrangements. I feel that in its present form, this is not the school we should have.\footnote{192}

As she went on, Rosov wrote that she understood the importance of Maisel’s participating in the Congress, so she agreed to wait until its conclusion; Rosov also wrote that she did not know when the graduating students were to finish, and even more important was the issue of taking in new students. In the end, Rosov substituted for Maisel until her return in September.

\textbf{D. The School’s Constitution}

A year after the official opening of the school, it was still trying to institute norms of behavior, and it took another whole year and a new curriculum to turn the regulations and constitution from a written document into a daily code of behavior, which would insure the proper functioning of the school. The girls were mostly over eighteen, some of them in their twenties or even older, young, assertive women. Perhaps owing to that, the school was unable to impose its set of inflexible rules on its students to the full.\footnote{193} In contrast to the students, the staff of the Agricultural School for Young Women considered it to be a school in every sense, and it could not agree to behavior such as was prevalent among the groups of \textit{halutzim}, kibbutzim or on the women workers’ farm, behaviors such as free love, hosting men in the dorms, no set time for lights out, not keeping their rooms clean, and so on.

In a printed, twelve-page pamphlet from 1928 entitled, “Plan
for the Agricultural School for Young Women at Nahalal,” there is a breakdown into the most minute details of the various topics connected to the operation and functioning of the school, the institution’s aims, the course of studies, the organization of the practical work, dormitory life, examinations, choice of subjects, conditions of acceptance, time for turning in applications, the students’ rights, and the rules of the dormitory.¹⁹⁴

The requirements for acceptance were mastery of reading and writing in Hebrew and basic knowledge of arithmetic. In reality, the requirements were lowered, and it was sufficient to have graduated elementary school to get in. This is, apparently, the reason for the low level of the academic studies in comparison to a regular high school such as, for example, the Herzlia Gymnasium.

This pamphlet shows us that Maisel had thoroughly studied the curricula and regulations of the agricultural schools in Europe, and she intended to adopt the European model and to apply it at the agricultural school for women in Eretz Yisrael.¹⁹⁵ Special emphasis was given to the practical work, by which the girls received agricultural training. There were, of course, academic lessons, but they were not on a high level, and the attitude toward them was not the same as the regard for the practical lessons and demonstrations in branches of agriculture.

The institution’s aims were defined anew in this document, saying: the role of the school is to prepare young women for managing an agricultural family home or a *kevutza*, to become familiar with the branches of the mixed agricultural farm with all that it encompasses, to direct and carry out by themselves the agricultural work the woman is responsible for, and also in time of need to help with the work the man is responsible for. A secondary aim was the need to train women to become professionals in the various agricultural branches of the farmyard and in home management.

To achieve these aims, a constitution was decided upon
which determined that most of the lessons would be devoted to studying practical work, from six to eight hours a day. In the summer there would be no academic lessons, and rainy days would be devoted to academic lessons for up to six hours a day. In general, they studied for an hour before the practical work, and two hours after it. The students had two weeks of vacation a year, taking turns, so as to not leave the farm without workers. Once a month there were hikes in the nearby area, and once a year a full field trip. The first year students traveled to the Jezreel Valley and Galilee, while the second year students went to Judea and Samaria.

There was a roster for students’ cleaning the rooms and doing the dining room dishes. A students’ committee managed the internal life in the school. The young women received twenty-five grush from the school for minor expenses and medical help from Kupat Holim. In 1928 tuition was three and a half EP a month, and it was stressed that students who paid tuition received no special privileges in contrast with those who did not pay. This paragraph in the regulations demonstrates Maisel’s egalitarian approach by which she wanted to maintain, to the extent possible, equality among the students, with no connection to the economic situation of the parents or the organizations that had sent them to study.

According to the constitution, lights out was at 10:00 pm, and only the dairy workers had the right to come in and go out during the night hours. Entry was strictly forbidden to unknown men.196

The girls were obliged to bring equipment with them, as in all schools with high standards, referring to clothing and hygiene materials.197 At work the girls wore pants. After work it was expected that they would wear dresses, as can be seen in pictures from that era. The school did not supply mattresses, and the students made them out of straw. The school did not provide equipment or clothing, including work wear, and the girls had to supply them.198
The Students

The First Pupils

Even before the official opening of the school, Chana Maisel began to prepare the agricultural farm and to recruit the work force needed for the advance jobs. To that end Maisel turned for help to the Labor Department of the Zionist Executive and to the Women Workers’ Council, which saw fit to employ out-of-work halutzot for whom these institutions sought occupation. Maisel proposed to give jobs to unemployed women in organizing the tree nursery in the school compound, and the institutions approved her request. In March 1923 the first young women arrived in Nahalal. At this stage the school resembled a women workers’ farm more than an agricultural school, and the students—were laborers more than they were apprentices.

Within a month, twelve girls had assembled. The group, later known as “the nursery group,” was employed in putting together crates for seedbeds and in planting forest tree seeds for the JNF; the Zionist Executive gave Maisel a loan of 25 EP for their work. At first the girls lived in tents, then they moved to huts built for chickens, and when the poultry arrived the young women were supposed to again live in tents. Yehudit Bloch, who was among this group of girls, told about the early period at the Nahalal school. In her narrative she describes the living and working conditions. Most of their time was spent in work, but intermittently they received practical training, similar to the way it was given in the women workers’ farms. Actually, the difficult working conditions were like those in the other women workers’ farms. Her use of the plural in her description reflects a cohesive social web, suffused with an atmosphere of mutual aid and cooperation, which gave the group members a feeling of belonging and perhaps even a challenge. It is possible that something in Bloch’s harsh depiction was supposed to tug at the heartstrings, so
as to open the spigot of funding abroad. Bloch’s memoirs served the Zionist-agricultural message and its three main goals: (1) raising money for agricultural settlement; (2) enhancing the status of agricultural training as a means for placing settlement in the country on a firm basis; and (3) fashioning a new image of the Jewish woman—the *haltuzah*. Thus, she wrote:

> We had to transfer the seedlings from the crates to the planters and to put the planters in the ground in flowerbeds. Digging in the flowerbeds was difficult … The soil had become dried out and was as hard as stone. We had to loosen the soil with pick-axes, water it, turn it over with hoes … We took turns every month for doing the housework, kitchen duty, and laundry. If someone did not know how to do the jobs in the kitchen, a colleague who was better at it came to help her. We lived in the hut for a short time. When our numbers had grown, we received tents … we lived two to a tent. In them we had no lack of mosquitoes, flies, and fleas of all kinds, despite our mosquito netting. Every three days we poured kerosene on the mats that were the floor for the tent, and even so, we suffered greatly from the large number of fleas in the ground.  

In the WIZO Archive files at the Zionist Archives these memoirs were found in English translation. Perhaps they were used to disseminate information, conduct public relations, and fundraise for the school. Berkowitz claimed that the Zionist women took particular care to make sure that their population of contributors would be impressed by the practical work in Eretz Yisrael via pictures, letters, stories, pamphlets, and even models of their projects in the country.
Acceptance Requirements

Even in the early period (1924–25), Maisel received applications from girls who wanted to be accepted into the school.205 She responded to them by explaining that there was insufficient housing and work for the girls already there. So, for example, she replied to Azaryahu’s application:

The Agricultural School for Young Women has not yet opened and the complete curriculum and conditions have not yet been established. The school will be opened after the construction of the most necessary buildings is completed, so it is not yet known, whether the school will be opened in Pesah 1925 or rather toward Rosh Hashanah. It has been decided that in the interim we must definitely determine the curriculum and conditions. I will be able to accept your daughter, as I promised, only with the opening of the school, since until that time conditions will be difficult. There is a lack of housing, and the practical and academic studies will not be properly organized owing to a lack of teachers.206

From the many applications Maisel received even at this early stage, one can see her positive reputation and that of her institutions, as well as the great demand for agricultural training among the girls in the Yishuv. Kevutzot and kibbutzim wanted to train their female members. People from the veteran moshavot and the cities, who considered working the land an ideal, wanted their daughters to achieve it with the help of the appropriate training they would receive, and there were also requests from individuals in Jerusalem and Haifa.

In response Maisel wrote:

The Agricultural School for Young Women at Nahalal
will open in September 1925. It will accept young women aged eighteen and over who know Hebrew and who have completed at least elementary school. The fee is 3 EP a month during the first year, for maintenance and instruction. 207

As noted, Maisel insisted on knowledge of Hebrew at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret and in the cooking courses. This was in contrast to other principles in which she displayed a certain flexibility, for example, with regard to the age of the applicants—girls who were under eighteen. This approach derived from Maisel's worldview, according to which Hebrew-speaking was part of the revival of the Jewish nation in its land. This condition helped her filter out candidates who yet not acclimated to the country, or who had just arrived and were not yet ready, from her point of view, to become part of the institution’s study and school framework. Maisel stuck to the Hebrew principle and made no compromises, neither for relatives nor acquaintances. So it was, for example, that she rejected the application of Hayuta Busel’s niece because she did not have command of Hebrew:

I am sorry for the sadness my letter caused you. I see no possibility to change anything. If your niece does not know how to write and speak Hebrew freely, this is an inviolable condition for acceptance. Despite all my desire to make an exception for you, I cannot take her. Do not forget that a principal must never go beyond the limits, even if she sometimes wants to, but must always fulfill her obligations with total integrity. For sixty pairs of eyes are perpetually watching her with great suspicion.
I know that many friends are angry at me over such things as these, and I am very sorry that you do not understand that there are rules obliging both the directors and the
students, and that without them the cultural, ethical atmosphere necessary for any group of women living together, and especially in an educational institution, will not prevail.  

The letter illustrates the pressures applied at times on Maisel as well as the difficulties in selecting students when the flow of applications was great and the number of places limited. The letter also shows us something of Maisel’s character. When she had to decide about accepting a student whose qualifications did not meet the school’s requirements, she always decided in favor of the institution she headed. She tried to choose the most fitting students for the framework she had established and for the goals she had set. To anyone who did not know Hebrew, she suggested that she learn the language and then reapply a year later.

Maisel wanted to imbue her school with a specific character: an institution for women aged eighteen and over, educated, in command of Hebrew, and capable of paying three EP per month. The collection of a tuition fee was a practice that differed from the previous training institutions she had directed, the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret and the Training Hostel of Domestic Economy and Agriculture in Tel Aviv, in both of which no tuition was paid.

Who applied to the school?

In 1929 the school had sixty-six students who came from various places: 12 from Jerusalem, 3 from the moshavot, 1 from Shfeya, 17 halutzot (7 of whom were in workers’ havurot; for the others, there is no indication of their origin), 12 members of kibbutzim that had gone to settle in the Jezreel Valley, 5 members of kibbutzim that had not yet settled on their land, 14 from moshvei ovedim, and 2 who had come from Germany. It turns out that about two-thirds of the students were halutzot who
had come from abroad, and only one-third had been educated in Eretz Yisrael. Since the number of places was limited, it was necessary to choose the most suitable candidates carefully. It is not surprising, therefore, that most of the graduates did, indeed, turn to agricultural work after the completion of their studies.

The numerous application letters received by the school show that the institution attracted attention from various sectors and was considered a respectable educational framework about which its students could feel pride. This meant that applicants who did not intend to work in agriculture also turned to the school. Institutions and organizations abroad asked that their active members be accepted to the school. JNF in the United States called for Maisel to accept one of its activists. Parents wanted to give their daughters “the very best.” Antebi, the principal of the girls’ school in Safed recommended his pupil, Miriam Shur, a native of Safed who had moved with her family to a moshava. In her application letter Shur wrote, “I will return to the moshava to develop the farm together with my father.” And in reply to the question as to whether she was aspiring to a rural life or an urban one and why, she answered:

I am striving only for a rural life. Our land will be redeemed only from the countryside. The farmer will redeem it. He with his plantings and improving his farm will benefit the country, and I will march together with my father the farmer, together with all the workers in Eretz Yisrael. Housework, too, will be my lot. I am not embarrassed by housework. The woman is more capable of this work than the man. Thus, she holds this position. Can’t we consider this work, preparing food for the home, just like preparing feed for the chickens and cows in which the man takes part, and this is non-house farm work?
Was this the letter with which Miriam wanted to convince people that she was suitable for the school, or was this her philosophy on gender roles? In any event, Miriam was apparently not accepted into the school—perhaps because she was too young—given that her name does not appear on the list of students. Mr. Golani, principal of another school in Safed, recommended two of his pupils, as did the principal of the Hebrew elementary school in Haifa.214

The applications to the school can be divided into a number of types.

(1) Young women who were interested in agricultural training: among this type were adolescents who needed preparation for actual work in agriculture. These included halutzot who had gained experience working in groups or moshavot and had in one way or another dabbled in agriculture; girls from agricultural settlements or daughters of settlers who needed proper training so as to help their families develop the family farm. Applications were sent even by halutzot who had not yet come on aliya. They had heard about the school and wanted to go there directly from abroad.215 Application letters came from halutzot who had come to the country alone and wanted agricultural training, and letters arrived from kibbutzim that wanted to prepare its women members prior to permanent settlement on its land as well as afterward, so that they would be able to work in the branches of agriculture.216 To this type also belong young women motivated by a vision of agricultural work as well as graduates of schools in Eretz Yisrael, lacking experience but imbued with the ideal of agricultural work that they strove to realize. Among the applicants were young women who had immigrated to the country in childhood, received their education, internalized the Zionist idea of working the land, and wished to put the idea into effect.

(2) Girls who worked in Eretz Yisrael who wanted a post-high school, dormitory, educational framework with agricultural
training: applications from parents and bodies striving to provide their daughters or members an education considered good and useful. Many parents wanted their daughters to study at the school but could not pay.\textsuperscript{217} Letters arrived from figures who were closely connected with the founding of the school while other persons were connected to Maisel personally. Jacob Thon asked to accept his daughter Yehudit; Moshe Smilansky asked likewise for his daughter Rina.\textsuperscript{218} Esther Rosov, a teacher at the Training Hostel of Domestic Economy and Agriculture, recommended her niece. Yael Gordon recommended the sister of a friend. Aliza Shidlovsky of Kinneret asked to accept her sister-in-law, Sarah Schidlowsky, after the latter had spent six months at Kinneret. The principal of the Herzlia Gymnasium recommended his pupil:

Miss Livni Dina, is a graduate of the twelfth grade [of Herzlia Gymnasium], she studied at the institution for twelve years and was consistently outstanding in her deportment and her work. A talented person, she has demonstrated her leanings toward agriculture and intends to dedicate herself to this profession. We are certain that her work at the institution under the direction of your good self will be satisfactory and we would be grateful, if you would expend every effort on behalf of the above-mentioned young woman to accept her as an official student.\textsuperscript{219}

The applicants tried to exploit any sentiment possible—from the personal to the moral or ideological—and they even tried emotional blackmail and the threat of suicide. In the summer of 1925 Ruth wrote an application letter to Maisel:

Dear Miss! Save me!! From urban rot. For six years I have been looking forward to this school. And now that it has opened I am like a lonely, buffeted leaf and
come to ask for mercy. Infinite mercy. The thought of your not accepting me is causing me extreme distress! I am ready to commit suicide. I have no money for anything. But I may possibly sew for a while and in that way get in to the school. Perhaps there is no bed, I will bring [one] and sleep outside. I will buy my food, and if there are thirty students, I will be the thirty-first. How many years does one have to study? Next year I will certainly pay, they will send me [money] from home. Please accept me. [Since] I don’t know Hebrew, and because I can’t ask properly. Please do me the great kindness and tell me in what way I can get in. Five pounds I can give. I can pay by doing work. I am very healthy and can only study agriculture. Please, miss, consider this: it sometimes happens that a girl is not able to work, [so] they dismiss her, and I can take her place. I am afraid of receiving a negative answer. I am simply trembling. Perhaps it is money that is needed, I will work with all my might. Perhaps after a month or two, it may be that I will be ready. Perhaps I should come to Nahalal? For example, I have a friend who could pay, maybe that would be enough for the two of us? Please reply, I will be completely crushed if they will not accept me. Ruth.  

We do not know what happened to Ruth. Apparently, she was not accepted to the school, since her name does not appear in the list of students.

Graduates of the School

Since there was no possibility at the time for university agricultural training, the Nahalal school was the institution for the highest level of agricultural training. Any young woman who
wished to study agriculture strove to be accepted.

From statements by members of the school’s first graduating class, we learn that their time studying at Nahalal was of the greatest significance for most of them. The majority indicated the influence of these studies on their worldview and their work. The graduates realized that their expectations from the school had been realized in full, and most of them had good memories of their Nahalal period, from the positive atmosphere prevailing there and from the teachers. The students who came from different backgrounds coalesced into a group, and Maisel was an esteemed figure for them as director and mentor. All of them respected her. According to Carmeliya Shifris, Maisel’s motto was, “A woman must have a profession and goals in life. To do something that satisfies her. There must be partnership between husband and wife, and the wife determines what will be in the house.”

Most of the students internalized the education that the school founder wanted to inculcate them with. They were members of or participated in the establishment of many settlements, including Yagur, Ramat Yohanan, Kefar Yehoshua, Geva, Gevat, Yifat, Mishmar Haemek, Gennigar, and Deganya. Many of them were practical instructors for different periods of time on women workers’ farms and were considered agricultural professionals. The graduates were respected and esteemed by the communal settlement movements. Most of the graduates became part of the settlement endeavor and were among the founders of moshavim and kibbutzim that settled on their allotted lands at that time. They established and promoted the agriculture branches they had learned at school, and beyond the economic benefit that came from their work, they contributed a great deal to strengthening the status of women in the settlements themselves. Some of the graduates were not satisfied with working in the agricultural branches and became practical instructors in agriculture. Through their activity they increased the depth of agricultural knowledge in Eretz Yisrael’s
communal settlement endeavor. The achievements of a few of them even earned appreciation on a national level. Miriam Bat-Avraham of Kefar Giladi was awarded the Labor Prize for her achievements in vegetable garden work and especially in developing a new variety of broccoli. Yocheved-Genya Linn-Yavzuri, along with the poultry branch in her kibbutz, Mishmar ha-Emek, was awarded the Kaplan Prize, for achievements in the poultry branch, and especially for her help in developing a vaccination for Newcastle disease. Ruth Hecker-Horen of Kibbutz Yifat continued to work in agricultural until the age of eighty-eight. Drora Wilkansky-Etzion and Sara Shidlovsky-Gilad were among the founders of moshav Kefar Vitkin. In her kibbutz, Mizra, Michal Engel-Kfir established the plantation branch and managed it, worked for the Fruit Growers Association and gave practical instruction on its behalf in the north—the only female instructor among fifty male instructors. Pnina Shlein-Greenberg was a practical instructor in the fruit tree branch on the educational farm under the management of Rachel Yanait in Jerusalem.

Closing Remark

In 1945, with the end of WWII, the restriction against accepting boys to the school was lifted. The age of the students was lowered to sixteen–eighteen. In 1948, with the establishment of the State of Israel, children from moshavim joined the school and a matriculation track opened to which additional land was allotted. Chana Maisel stopped working at the school in 1960 (at the age of 77!). At her retirement the name of the school was changed to the WIZO-Hadassah Canada Youth Village in the name of Chana Maisel Shochat at Nahalal. After her retirement, Chana and Eliezer Shochat moved from Nahalal to Tel Aviv to live near their extended families. In the following years Chana Meisel wrote about her thoughts and lectured on them, took care of her husband during his illness, and after his death, collected sources for
a biography on him. She died on March 28, 1972, and was buried alongside Eliezer in the Nahalal cemetery.

1 A company that purchased land in Eretz Yisrael.
3 An idea that was realized in the women workers’ groups during World War I, and in the women workers’ farms after the war, before they turned into agriculture schools.
5 “On her account” apparently refers to her own private funds, should she have any, or when she would have them.
6 Maisel, “*Ha-Hinnukh ha-Kafri*,” p. 58.
7 CZA S15/20100/II.
11 Ibid., p. 6.
12 On Gedalia Wilbushewitz, Manya Shochat’s brother, see Rosenman, *Ha-Keli le-Yishuvah*, p. 86.
13 CZA S15/20100/II, May 16, 1920, Maisel to Ettinger.
14 The article, which is called “Agricultural Education for Young Hebrew Women,” was published a few months after Ettinger arrived in the country. See Akiva Ettinger, “*Hinnukh Hakla’i*,” *Ha-Po’e’l ha-Tza’ir* 1 (1918): 21–23.

Wilkansky, *Ba-Derekh*, pp. 332–33. Wilkansky accepted graduates of the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret to work in the Ben-Shemen farm in the professions they had studied.

CZA S15/20100/II, Ettinger to Sieff, April 28, 1920. After he itemized the budget for founding the school and estimated it: 16,000 EP for buildings; for purchasing animate and inanimate objects 6,225 EP, unexpected expenses 2,225 EP, budget for the first year 4,000 EP, a total of 29,000 EP.

CZA S15/20100/II, Maisel to Wilbushevitz, March 14, 1920. She did not agree to the changes and asked to make emendations to the budget. Maisel to Ettinger, March 16, 1920. Similarly, she asked him to approve the funding for the training of teachers for planting trees and for beekeeping at the school.

CZA L3/60/I, report by the Department for Agriculture and Settlement, which includes expenses for the future agricultural school for young women.

For setting it up, 25,000 EP, and another 4,000 EP as a budget for activity; CZA S15/20100/II, Ettinger to Maisel, March 28, 1920.

Continuation of Maisel’s letter to Ettinger. CZA S15/20100/II, May 16, 1920. Apparently, one of the matrons whom Szold turned to in Maisel’s name was Ida Danziger, a member of the Hadassah Executive Committee in New York; afterward Danziger founded the Women’s League that helped Maisel at Nahalal and with constructing housing for halutzot.

Copies in English of the school budget, March 28, 1920, are located in the Zionist Commission File in CZA L3/66/I.

CZA S15/0100/II, Maisel to Ettinger, June 5, 1920.

The chairman of the Zionist Commission was Chaim Weizmann. Those who followed him were deputies but in actuality served as chairmen, since Weizmann was outside the country.

The beehives were brought to the cooking courses, which opened in October 1920.

For details on the first WIZO Convention, which was held alongside it, see chapter 4, the section “Chana Maisel Navigates WIZO.”

On the decisions of the Twelfth Zionist Congress, see Stenographisches Protokol der Verhandlungen Des XII. Zionisten Kongress in Karlsbad, p. 761.


The branch was founded by Bella Posner, a Zionist speaker and organizer; she visited the Bnot Zion group, which joined the Kulturverband whose center was in Berlin. Bnot Zion collected money for activities in Eretz Yisrael. Branches like these of Bnot Zion, “Bnot Herzl,” “Bnot Brandeis,” and others were active from the beginning of the twentieth century in Canadian cities, with no national organization. See *Hadassah Jubilee* (1927), pp. 135–38.


In her activity, Freiman stressed that Hadassah was a women’s movement in the spirit of “the new woman.” She turned to the organization’s members as sisters and tried to forge a connection between Hadassah and other Zionist expressions that would lead to a broader feminine awareness. See National Archive Canada,
The convention was held immediately after the convention of the Zionist Federation of Canada in Montreal. After she had already been serving in the capacity for two years, Lillian Freiman was elected president of Hadassah-Canada, ibid. See Hadassah Jubilee (1927), pp. 141–42.

A complete Hebrew text of the memorandum is in CZA S15/20100/II. Maisel, July 1920. See Canadian Jewish Chronicle, February 4, 1921, p. 19.

Figler, Lillian and Archie Freiman, p. 78.

Editorial in the Canadian Jewish Chronicle, a week after the founding conference of Hadassah-Canada.

Canadian Jewish Chronicle, May 6, 1921, the reception for Vera Weizmann with 400 Hadassah-Canada members in attendance, among them its president, Lillian Freiman. Canadian Jewish Chronicle, April 22, 1921. Weizmann Archive, file of the manuscript of Vera Weizmann’s book, The Impossible Takes Longer, p. 29. It may be that Hadassah-Canada joined WIZO owing to the affinity of Canada for Britain and because of its identification with Weizmann in the debate between him and Brandeis.

Letter from Thon to Maisel on August 7, 1921, Farber, Hed Kinneret, p. 59.

After the Balfour Declaration was approved as part of the Mandate given to England, the Zionist movement had great expectations for an influx of contributions from world Jewry for the Zionist endeavor. Disagreements between Weizmann and Brandeis at the Zionist conference in London, and Brandeis’s breaking away from the Zionist Organization with most of the leaders of means from the United States immediately influenced the Zionist movement’s ability to raise funds. The hopes pinned on Keren Hayesod, which had been founded at the London Zionist conference as the financial instrument of the Zionist Organization
came to naught; the monetary funds did not manage to raise large sums for a number of reasons: (1) Most of the wealthy Jews of the United States held out after Brandeis’s split from the organization; (2) the Russian Revolution thinned the ranks of the Jews and made them inaccessible; (3) a great deal of money was transferred to Jews who had been injured in the pogroms in Eastern Europe. Keren Hayesod was able to raise less than ten percent of the sum anticipated every year. See Mordechai Naor and Dan Giladi, *Eretz Yisra’el ba-Me’ah ha-Esrim* [The Land of Israel in the Twentieth Century] (Tel Aviv, 1990), pp. 124–25.


42 Ibid., p. 15.

43 Ibid., p. 17. In a discussion about the name for the school, it was proposed to name it for Lillian Freiman, who initially opposed this and asked to name it for Hadassah-Canada and not only for her. Ultimately it was named “The Hadassah-Canada Agricultural School for Young Women,” while the second housing unit erected there was named Lillian Freiman house.

44 CZA L3/60/I. In a report by the Department of Agriculture and Settlement, October 1919 through March 1920, there was already notification of a 6 EP outlay for the purchase of tools for the Agricultural School for Young Women as well as the use of 30 EP for ordering seeds. All of this, even though land had still not been located. This can perhaps serve as proof that Ettinger really did intend to found the school as early as 1921.

45 CZA, S15/20100/II, February 7, 1920, Maisel to Ussishkin.

46 CZA, S15/20100/II, July 30, 1920, Maisel to Ettinger.

47 CZA, A46/18/6, December 25, 1921, from Maisel to Ruppin on the exchange of letters between WIZO and the Montefiore Fund. Maisel asked to transfer the lease for the orchard from Mikve Israel to her disposal, for the purpose of establishing the agriculture
school for girls.

48 CZA, A46/18/6, November 27, 1921, from Bezalel Yaffe to the Montefiore Fund.

49 CZA, S15/20914, minutes of the sixth meeting of the Agriculture Committee with the participation of Ruppin, Ettinger, Eisenberg, Herzfeld, Wilkansky, Yaffe, Krause, and Raab, July 3–4, 1922.

50 Out of a total budget of 116,000 EP as well as another 2,500 for women workers’ farms.

51 The budget was cut from the 10,000 EP that the Congress has authorized in 1921 to 5,000 EP, CZA S15/21111, letter from Wilkansky to the Department of Agricultural Settlement, November 7, 1922, in which he informs them of the decrease in the budget.

52 CZA S15/20100/II, Maisel to Ettinger, August 16, 1922.

53 On the early beginnings of the idea of the moshav and Ha-Ikkar ha-Tza’ir, see Shilo, Nitzanei Ra’yon, pp. 79–92.

54 Ibid., p. 92.

55 Eliezer Yaffe, Yesod Moshav Ovedim [The Foundation of the Moshav Ovdim] (Tel Aviv, 1919), pp. 20–21.

56 Yaffe devoted a whole section of his book to planning the farm of a bachelor or bachelorette. See Yaffe, ibid., pp. 76–78.

57 Indeed, Tehiya Lieberzohn, one of the first female workers and a student at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, was one of the founders of Nahalal and received her own farm. In reality, however, in comparison with the bachelor members, the attitude toward the unmarried woman was discriminatory. In 1932, after ten years of hard work, Lieberzohn was forced to sell her farm and leave Nahalal. See Lieberzohn, Pirkei Hayyai, pp. 119–38.

58 Moshav Nahalal Archive, Minutes of the General Meeting of the Members of Nahalal, March 25, 1922. Maisel and her husband, Eliezer Shochat, were among the founders of the moshav and even received a farm there; there may be a connection between this
fact and the willingness of the moshav to establish a school on its grounds.

59 CZA S15/21111, memorandum between the moshav and the training farm, October 17, 1922, and confirmation, on that same date, to the JNF of the relinquishing of 500 dunams of the moshav’s land for organizing a training farm, signed by Shmuel Dayyan.

60 The wife of Siegfried Hoofen, director of Anglo-Palestine bank, had immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1912 and been elected to the WIZO Executive there. Farber, *Hed Kinneret*, pp. 62–63.

61 CZA S15/21111, letter from Wilkansky to Ettinger, under whose supervision the future school at Nahalal now came, November 7, 1922.

62 Dr. Hillel Yaffe, with whom the Nahalal members consulted about where to locate the moshav, recommended Givat Shimron to them. The Nahalal settlers did not accept his opinion and settled in the valley, and owing to planning and implementation of new engineering methods introduced by the engineer Breuer, the problem of malaria was solved within a year. See Ilan Zaharoni, “*Bitzot she-ba-Emek*” [Swamps in the Valley], in *Emek Yizre’el 1900–1967* [Jezreel Valley 1900–1967], ed. Mordechai Naor, pp. 87–94 (Jerusalem, 1993).

63 CZA S15/20914, minutes of the sixth meeting of the Agricultural Committee, with Ruppin, Ettinger, Eisenberg, Herzfeld, Wilkansky, Yaffe, Krause, and Raab in attendance, July 3–4, 1922. Ettinger mentions that a budget of 10,000 EP that had been allotted for the agricultural school for young women had not be utilized for various reasons.

64 CZA S15/21111, Wilkansky to the Department of Agricultural Settlement, November 7, 1922, “According to the decision of the annual conference in Carlsbad and according to the decision of the Agriculture Committee, for 1922–1923 a budget has been determined for founding an agricultural school for young women
under the direction of Mrs. Maisel, the sum of 4,200 EP was allotted…. At present, to begin working on it, the sum of about 300 EP is needed.”

65 Chana Maisel, *Le-Toledot Hinnukh ha-Bat le-Hityashvat* [History of Girls’ Education toward Settlement]. (Tel Aviv, 1967), pp. 22–23. Maisel mentioned the economic committee of the Zionist Executive, which came to Eretz Yisrael in the fall of 1922, as demanding that no new projects be started in the country owing to the desperate financial situation of the Zionist Executive. The committee also informed Maisel that she should not begin arrangements for the agricultural school, since she would receive no budget for it. When Maisel understood the danger to the very opening of the institution towards whose founding she had devoted three years of effort, she decided to act even with limited means, to be sure that something would be done to begin its establishment.

66 CZA S15/21111, Wilkansky to the Department of Agricultural Settlement, Nov. 7, 1922, “According to the agreement between Dr. Ruppin and Mr. Ettinger and the undersigned, all agricultural education is transferred to the experimental station.”

67 Nahalal School Archive. File 1923. Letter from Maisel to the Department of Agriculture and Settlement, January 2, 1923, in which Maisel announces that she has set to work organizing the Agricultural School for Young Women. That same letter is found in CZA S15/20 100.

68 Nahalal School Archive, File 1923, Letter from the Zionist Executive’s Department for Agricultural Settlement, written on January 25, 1923, in which it authorized the transfer of 200 EP in checks and another letter approving 150 EP in cash, for the Agricultural School for Young Women. The signature on the letters is David Stern.

69 Contract with the laborer Eliahu Schlein, December 5, 1922, for agricultural work with animals, Nahalal School Archive. File 1923.
CZA F49/2773, Maisel to Miriam Gershon, in December 1922. Dr. Shapira’s manuscript, p. 31a.

CZA F49/2773, Dr. Shapira’s manuscript, p. 31a.

CZA S15/21111, Maisel to Stern, dated January 8, 1923. Maisel asked for the school’s budget after the cut of 4,200 EP. Ettinger replied that indeed this was the budget, but it was not clear how much he could give. Ibid., January 10, 1923.

Labor Archive, IV-1040-30, two letters from Eliezer Shochat to Maisel; in the first letter, dated January 1, 1923, he describes the progress in the work on the school, and in the second letter, he tells Chana (who had gone to the Zionist Congress in Carlsbad) about the fire ravaging the equipment storage shed. In the early months, when work at Nahalal had begun, Maisel divided her time between there and the Hostel. Some of the letters addressed to her, at that time, were sent to the cooking courses, and some, to Nahalal. The letters expressed Eliezer’s great concern for Chana, who was undergoing great daily difficulties (see Appendices).


Nahalal School Archive, File 1924, letter from Herzfeld to Maisel, May 6, 1924. Herzfeld requested from Maisel a report on plans for the school at Nahalal.

Nahalal School Archive, File 1923.

The World Congress of Jewish Women’s first congress had been held in Vienna a few months earlier; CZA Z4/1927, article in the *Zionist Review*, n.d., 1923, pp. 61–62.

September 28, 1923, *Jewish Guardian*, vol. 12, Canadian National Archive, MG30/Aa82.

Nahalal School Archive, File 1923. As early March 30, 1923, Maisel had received a letter of invitation from Betty Lishansky, in which she informed her of the International Congress of Jewish Women that would take place on May 6–13 in Vienna. At the
WIZO conference, Rebecca Sieff, president of WIZO England and its representative to the Vienna congress, announced the coming International Congress of Jewish Women that would be held on the dates noted and the connection between this congress and WIZO. Despite the invitation, Maisel did not attend the Vienna meeting owing to her work load at Nahalal.

81 Maisel’s speech, CZA Z4/3062.


84 Nahalal School Archive, File 1923, letter from Rosa Ginzberg to Maisel, dated November 2, 1923, informing her that WIZO England had sent £200 for the months of October and November to Maisel’s account in Haifa, for the school and that they hoped to send the same every month.

85 CZA L41/6555, Minutes of the Executive, November 13, 1924, and November 15, 1924, two meetings that took place at the experimental station to which the school had belonged from 1923. Part of this meeting entailed presentation of a report on the course of work, the financial status, and budget plan as consolidated by Krause, for purchasing equipment and animals and the appointment of teachers and a director.

86 The committee had various names: “Committee for Supervision,” “Founding Committee,” “Supervisory Committee,” and finally “Executive.”

87 Nahalal School Archive, File 1923, Ettinger to Maisel, December 26, 1923.

88 CZA Z4/1927, February 8, 1924, from Dora Howard to Joseph Cohen of the Zionist Executive in London. The WIZO Executive stressed the fact that this step (registering the school in the name of WIZO) was imperative for its propaganda among women.
Nahalal School Archive, File 1924, minutes of the first meeting of the Founding Committee of the Agricultural School at Nahalal. Later a contract was reached transferring ownership to WIZO.

Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, from Maisel to the WIZO Vaad ha-Po’el, January 21, 1924.

According to the plan, they were to erect two dormitories, each one for housing thirty students. In actuality, they finished the first building in 1926, while construction on the second began only in 1933.

Nahalal School Archive, File 1923, minutes of the Executive, April 4, 1924. It tells of the transfer of money to Maisel’s account, apparently to a bank in Haifa.

Nahalal School Archive, Copy Book, p. 200. Letter from Maisel to the Department of Finance of the Zionist Executive, May 19, 1924, “Since the Zionist Executive has handed over the Agricultural School for Young Women to the World Organization of Zionist Women, it is imperative to close accounts as quickly as possible between the above-mentioned school and the Zionist Executive.”

The final transfer of ownership was made only in 1927, when Hadassah-Canada paid the Zionist Executive for the initial investments in the school.

The minutes are located in three archives: CZA L41/655, Labor Archive, IV-235-2-373, and Nahalal School Archive File 1923.

Maisel considered the Settlement Department as the party responsible for the establishment of the school, so she provided it with the curriculum in order that it would present it to the Delegates Committee and the Zionist Congress.

Nahalal School Archive, File 1923.

Included in the plan were also a hospital and a pharmacy as well as all the school’s equipment. From a look at the plan, one can see how Maisel paid attention to the fine details and just how clear and solid was her vision of the future school.

Ettinger noted that farms should be built in the country according to work methods, professional practical instruction, and technical equipment as accepted by farmers in Europe and in line with the unique conditions of Eretz Yisrael. Akiva Ettinger, *Im Hakla’im Ivrim be-Artzeinu* [With Hebrew Farmers in Our Land] (Tel Aviv, 1945), p. 35.

At Nahalal there was always a cooking teacher, and when receptions were held some of the practical instructors of agriculture knew how to set a table according to European customs. The very location of the school in the moshav Nahalal, in the heart of the Jezreel Valley, turned it into an important hospitality center. In 1937, the speeches of the Peel Commission were broadcast on Voice of Jerusalem [Kol Jerusalem] from the dining hall.

This first visit of the president of Hadassah-Canada to Eretz Yisrael, and especially her trip, on January 26, 1927, to the school in Nahalal, whose establishment Hadassah-Canada had funded, resulted in Hadassah-Canada’s deciding to pay the Zionist Executive all of the school’s past debts and to erect the second building. On her visit, Lillian Freiman planted an olive tree on the site. See *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, March 25, p. 9. The paper contains an interview with the Freiman couple, made during their stay in Eretz Yisrael. Dorothy, the couple’s daughter, who had accompanied them on the trip, tells about it in her memoirs. See the private archive of Betsy Riegel, Ottawa, Canada.

Settlements such as, among others, Nahalal, Geva, Kfar Yehezkel, Ein Harod, Beit Alfa,..

Maisel wrote about toilets in the residential structure as early as
her first plan in 1920.


108 Labor Archive, IV-235-373, minutes of the Nahalal school administrative board, May 15, 1924.


110 Nahalal School Archive, File 1925, letter from Dora Howard, secretary of the London Administrative Board.


112 Nahalal School Archive, File 1923, letter from Dora Howard, secretary of the London Administrative Board, to Maisel, July 3, 1924, with an itemization of WIZO’s current monthly expenses in Eretz Yisrael: the Hostel, £90; the Nahalal school, £100; the infant home, £70, and the organization’s administration in Eretz Yisrael, £30.

113 Nahalal School Archive, File 1923, and also Labor Archive, IV-235-2-373, Minutes of the Nahalal school Administrative Board, June 30, 1924.

114 Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, p. 243, from Maisel to Rosenblüth, July 6, 1924.

115 Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, p. 245, from Maisel to Batya at the cooking courses, July 6, 1924.

116 Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, p. 253, from Maisel to Rosenblüth, July 12, 1924. She sent him a copy of the letter from London and asked him to prepare everything until a reply would come. She also requested another meeting with the school’s Administrative Board. There are no minutes of this meeting, which apparently took place at the end of July or the beginning of August.

117 Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, p. 281, from Maisel
to a friend (apparently in Prague), July 27, 1924.

118 A Histadrut body for the purchase and supply of equipment to small farmers and technological and engineering equipment to consumer and agricultural groups such as kibbutzim, moshavim, and youth villages at a particularly low profit rate so as to help the settlement endeavor and support the workers.

119 Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, p. 289, from Maisel to Shlomo Yedidya of Ein Harod, an invitation to engage in practical instruction in Nahalal.


121 Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, pp. 344, 345, 346, letters from Maisel to Samuel, Ruppin, and members of the Administrative Board, October 18, 1924, all of which are invitations to the cornerstone laying ceremony and program which was to be held on October 22, 1924.

122 Betsy Riegel, Lilian Freiman’s granddaughter, related in an interview, that in the 1920s her grandmother had sent Leghorn chickens from the Government Agricultural Experimental Station in Ottawa to Nahalal. This is reiterated in the periodical Ha-Ishah 6 (5688 [1928]), p. 38. In a collection of news from the school at Nahalal, “Considering the importance of the aforementioned branch, the Hadassah women’s organization in Canada sent a number of chickens for the raising of poultry.”

123 Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, p. 388, from Maisel to Mr. Schlossberg, December 19, 1924.

124 Ibid., Maisel to Rosenblüth, October 9, 1924, Maisel reports on the visit by Weizmann and Ruppin to Nahalal, during which she raised ideas for building a hotel as well at Nahalal for which the school would be able to provide catering, but she did not agree that the guests would be lodged in the dormitory. On the importance of tourism of western Jewry at that time to Eretz Yisrael, see Berkowitz, Western Jewry and the Zionist Project (Cambridge,
1997), pp. 73–95.

125 Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, p. 478, from Maisel to Samuel, March 12, 1925. In this letter she wrote that she had already prepared the budget for 1925–26 together with Krause and sent it to Ruppin.


127 CZA L41/655, from Krause to the Administrative Board of the agricultural school.

128 CZA L41/655, minutes from a meeting of the Administrative Board to Nahalal, February 15, 1925.

129 Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, pp. 495–96, from Maisel to Ruppin, March 29, 1925.

130 Eliezer Bavli worked in the Accounts Division of the Settlement Department. In 1927, after Shlomo Kaplinsky had finished his term, Bavli was appointed director of the department. See Rosenman, Ha-Keli le-Yishuvah, p. 112. Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, pp. 466, 470–71, Maisel’s letters from February 27, 1925, to Bavli, from March 2, 1925, to Mrs. Abrahams, and another letter to Reverdlov from March 3, 1925. She wrote about the transfer of property to the Zionist Executive.

131 CZA L41/655, from Krause to the Administrative Board of the agricultural school.

132 Only half a year after WIZO’s intensive involvement, from November 1924 to February 1925, in contrast to almost two years of funding by the Zionist Executive from January 1923 to November 1924.

133 A year and a half after the WIZO conference in Carlsbad in 1923, at which it was decided to allot ongoing funding for the school, but in reality half a year after the laying of the cornerstone for the dormitory building and the start of support for construction with the Hadassah-Canada money.
134 Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, p. 466. The report intended for the Administrative Board was written in Hebrew. Maisel usually wrote to London in German.

135 The branches of dry crops and fodder were not considered areas of study, and the male workers were employed in them. Those branches were aimed at supplying food for the cows.

136 Group A: cooking and preserving food; Group B: housework; sewing and laundry; Group C: dry crops, handling cows, and general farm work; Group D: horticulture and raising poultry.

137 Nahalal School Archive, Correspondence File 1925, Proposed Practical and Academic Curriculum.

138 Letter from Ziona Katinsky to her parents, November 23, 1930. From the estate of Ziona Rabau Katinsky. Katinsky pointed out that Maisel met all her requests for buying equipment for teaching and that although she would have liked to run the kitchen, too, it would have prevented her from teaching a great deal. From this we learn the great importance Maisel attributed to giving lessons on home economics subjects.

139 Breaking the rules of the school or dormitory led to student’s being ousted from them. Haya Gelmond was expelled after she joined a trip to the Hermon led by Zev Vilnay without receiving permission. She decided to remain as a worker at Nahalal, since she did not want to tell her parents what had happened. Two weeks later, thanks to the intervention of one of the teachers, she was readmitted. Interview with Gelmond, May 11, 1998.

140 Some had been forced to leave because of health issues or unsuitability, and sometimes for personal reasons. This explains the different number of students appearing on the lists for that year.

141 Not all students stayed for two years. A few of them had only come for one year. So on the registration lists for the years 1925 through 1928 appear sixty-five students. Some of them, twenty-five, had been accepted in 1925, while others for 1926, forty. It seems that not all students stayed for the school year, since on
opening day some thirty-five students were cited as studying at the school. In 1926–27 there were already sixty students mentioned.

142 CZA Z4/1927, Report by WIZO in German, March 16, 1926. The quote was taken from Maisel’s letter.

143 CZA S15/20447, minutes of the meeting on August 8, 1922.

144 Mr. Gershon directed the fundraising in Holland. He was assisted by the Kulturverband that had organized itself as an independent group in Holland in 1922. See Haim Peles, “Ha-Yahasim bein ha-KK”L le-vein Yahadut Holand 5666–5701” [The Relations between the JNF and Dutch Jewry, 1906–1941] (unpublished paper) (1999), pp. 47–48. Miriam Gershon wrote a letter to her father in Holland and explained the situation of the cows in Eretz Yisrael. Cows from Beirut and Damascus were small and did not give large amounts of milk. To raise money in Holland a lecture was given, entitled “Miriam’s Cow,” and in this way donations were received for buying Dutch cows for the Nahalal school. See Brasz, Irgun Olei Holland, pp. 9–10.

145 Ibid.

146 Nahalal School Archive, Copy Book, p. 73, in a letter dated December 8, 1923, Maisel informed Bavli that 140 EP had arrived in Nahalal from WIZO Holland. This tells us the Dutch branch sent money in addition to the cows. In another letter, too, dated December 19, 1923, to Mrs. Hoofien, the WIZO representative in Jerusalem asked Maisel for copies of the pictures taken at Nahalal on behalf of the JNF in order to send them for public relations purposes to The Netherlands and other countries.

147 CZA F49/2773. Additional information about the cows can be found in the memoirs of Yehudit Bloch, in Dr. Shapira’s mansucript, pp. 33–34. In a letter that appears in the Nahalal School Archives, in the 1923 Copy Book and dated November 12, 1923, Maisel thanks Mr. Gershon of Holland for his assistance in buying two cows for the school.

148 Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, from Maisel to Stern,
December 18, 1923.

149 Nahalal School Archive, Copy Book 1923, p. 141, Maisel to Shturman, February 28, 1924, payment for the purchase of Beirut cows, p. 168. Maisel to Stern on March 31, 1924. Maisel reported that Shturman had brought two cows and seven calves from Beirut. P. 204, from Maisel to Haim Shturman, May 25, 1924, Maisel was prepared to sell the Dutch cow for 50 EP. She told Shturman that the cows he had brought to the school were in good condition and that the average yield per cow was fourteen–fifteen liters a day.

150 Nahalal School Archive, Copy Book 1923, p. 423. Maisel to Brandstatter in Beit Alfa, February 4, 1925: she asked for his help in buying Dutch cows. The same day she also sent a letter to Clara in Jerusalem to help with buying a Dutch cow.

151 CZA Z4/1927, among the general pieces of information from WIZO’s head office in London, March 19, 1926, appears the program for the opening ceremony planned for April: Program for the Opening Celebration of the Agricultural School for Young Women at Nahalal, April 8, 1926.

152 On the first page of Davar, April 8, 1926, appeared an article entitled, “Opening Festivities for the Young Women’s Agricultural School,” specifying the names of all the personages who attended the ceremony. Given in addition were the texts of the speech by the wife the high commissioner, Mrs. Beatrice Samuel, and the closing speech by Chaim Weizmann. See Haaretz, April 12, 1926; Arthur Ruppin, Ha-Ishah, 1 Nisan (5686), p. 11.

153 Davar, April 8, 1926. Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Correspondence. Letter from Henrietta Szold to Maisel, April 12, 1926, containing an apology for not attending the ceremony. She had set out for it in the morning and was forced to return owing to the strong rain and the impassable roads, “I am truly sorry that I was not able to attend the celebration of the institution, which is so close to my heart, and to express my congratulations to you. I am sending your hereby by deepest blessing for the flourishing of the
institution and its prosperity, and may it be that the goal you have set for yourself in establishing this institution be realized to the full. In respect and appreciation, Henrietta Szold.”

154 *Haaretz*, April 12, 1926.

155 *Davar*, April 8, 1926.


158 Chaim Weizmann, *Davar*, April 8, 1926, p. 1. Quotation from Weizmann’s speech. In reality 1,500 applications have not been preserved, and the number is apparently exaggerated.

159 The Russian-born Gluthman graduated from the agricultural school in Czestochowa. He immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1913, worked as a practical instructor at Mikveh Israel, and was one of the founders of Nahalal. He was murdered on the way to Jerusalem in 1926. His widow Miriam was forced to leave Nahalal. See Mordecai Amitai (ed.), *Nahalal Hazon be-Hagshamato* [Nahalal, a Vision in Its Realization] (Tel Aviv, 1971), p. 7.

160 Farber, *Hed Kinneret*, p. 76.

161 Shmuel Yedidya of Ein Harod was replaced a year later by Shlomo Weinberg who had come from Germany.

162 Nahalal School Archive, File Farm 9.25–10.31, from a report of the Agricultural School for Young Women at Nahalal, February 1, 1929. Maisel herself managed to convince Ziona (Katinsky) Rabau, whom she had met in London, to teach home economics with WIZO funding. Rabau came to Nahalal and taught the subject there for about a year; afterwards she continued as a practical instructor in the WIZO kitchens. See Ziona Rabau, *Be-Hazarah le-Tel Aviv* [Back to Tel Aviv] (Tel Aviv, 1982), pp. 42–43.

163 According to the testimony of Haya Rubinstein in an interview (July 18, 1998), when one of the teachers was romantically involved with a student he was dismissed from the school. Maisel wanted to prevent such happenings by putting women in charge of
the agricultural branches with which the girls had daily contact.

164 Maisel encouraged her first student, Rachel Bluwstein, immediately upon completion of her preparation at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret to go to study agriculture in France. See Milstein (1993), pp. 359–60. Maisel convinced WIZO to send graduates of the institution to obtain higher agricultural education abroad so that they would return as teachers for the school.


166 Rabau, Be-Hazarah, pp. 42–46. In two letters to her parents, written in November 1930, she described in detail her work as a teacher of home management and cooking, her great satisfaction, and the mutual esteem between Maisel and herself. From the estate of Ziona (Katinsky) Rabau (November 10, 1930; November 23, 1930).

167 Rabau, Be-Hazarah, p. 43.

168 Pioneers and Helpers 1 (1929), p. 161. In the WIZO Administrative Committee budget proposal for 1929–1931, £1,500 were allotted for the training of teachers and practical instructors for the Nahalal school, and for the Hostel, £750 each year.

169 The book was entitled Hed Kinneret Higi’a ad Halom [The Echo of Lake of Galilee Came This Far] (Tel Aviv, 1980).

170 Farber, Hed Kinneret, pp. 89–90.

171 CZA L41/655, Minutes of the Administrative Board meeting, February 15, 1925.


174 A quotation from Shakespeare’s Hamlet.
“Tzelem ba-Heikhal” [An Idol in the Temple], Haaretz, August 5, 1926.


Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Correspondence File, from the Teachers Federation Center to the Nahalal school administration, August 25, 1925.

Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, pp. 28–29. Maisel’s letter appeared in Davar, August 31, 1926, alongside the letter by a Nahalal member complaining about the use of German in the school.

Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, August 29, 1926, from Maisel to the Teachers Federation.

Moshav Nahalal Archive, Agricultural School File.

Weinberg left Nahalal when Rina Farber came to teach about fruit trees. Orna Rosenbaum taught at the Nahalal agricultural school for many years.

Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, p. 21, from Maisel to Mrs. Shur on August 10, 1926.

Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, p. 22, Maisel to Don Yahya, August 12, 1926.

Each student was requested to write her life story as a condition for acceptance into the school. That way Maisel could get to know the students and the degree of their command of Hebrew.

Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, p. 61, from Maisel to Sapir, October 6, 1926, an invitation to work at Nahalal.

Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, pp. 374–76, 377–83, 401–4. From June 10 until Sapir’s announcement of her leaving on June 28, Rosov wrote three letters, most of which concerned the disciplinary problems, and in essence, Sapir’s quitting under the pressure of the students. Afterwards, Sapir worked as a cooking teacher at WIZO’s Training Hostel of Domestic Economy and Agriculture, and she wrote a book entitled *Ikkarei Torat ha-Hazanah* [Principles of Nutritional Theory], published by WIZO in 1932, which was also used as a textbook at the agricultural school at Nahalal.

Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, pp. 374–76, from Rosov to Don Yahya, June 10, 1927.

Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, pp. 377–83, from Rosov to Maisel, June 11, 1927. In an oral interview, Rina Smilansky related that the students loved Esther Rosov. She became close to the girls, she listened to them, and they could talk to her about intimate issues, something they never did with Maisel. She also mentioned that it was Rosov who instituted the use of toilet paper in the bathrooms in place of strips of newspapers. Interview with Rina Smilansky, July 13, 1998.

Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, p. 70, from Maisel to the Training Division, December 16, 1926. Maisel asked for authorization to have Dr. Neriah [Kabakovitz] teach a few lessons at Nahalal.

Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, pp. 435–37, July 30, 1927. Rosov apparently became weakened from being overburdened and became ill. After eleven days of sick leave, she returned to Nahalal with renewed strength, and she informed Maisel that she would remain until the end of the congress and
promote things at the school. See Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, pp. 440–41. In a letter from August 23, 1927, she asked Maisel not to hurry.


193 Interview with Zvi Etzion, October 15, 1998. Etzion came to Nahalal as a laborer. He received an offer to remain at Nahalal as a member on the Shochat family’s farm, which had become available after Eliezer Shochat had decided to work as a laborer in Petah Tikva, but Etzion preferred to set up a farm in a new settlement.

194 Labor Archive, IV-235-2-373, a pamphlet published by Hadassah Canada in 1928.

195 Maisel spent May to September 1927 in Europe.

196 According to the testimony of Haya Rubinstein, a student at Nahalal from 1930 to 1932, as a dairy worker she also went out to milk at 11:00 pm and combined that with meetings with Moshe Dayan, who was her boyfriend at that time. Other girls found ways to circumvent the strict instructions barring meetings with boys within the confines of the school. Four of the graduates of the first class married young men from Nahalal. Two married workers who had been employed at the school: Drora Wilkansky to Zvi Etzion, and Sarah Shidlovsky to Aryeh Gilad. These two couples and two other students who married fellows from Nahalal were among the founders of Kfar Vitkin. The eight continued to work in agriculture their whole lives through.

197 Nahalal School Archive, itemized lists of clothing, bedding, and shoes is stored in the Accepted Students File for 1930, August 18, 1930.

198 A letter from 1926 requests that the Hostel send to Nahalal boots—for which there was no use in Tel Aviv—that had been received as a donation from WIZO England,. Similarly, there were a number of letters regarding contributions of clothing sent from London to Nahalal. It seems that in 1930 the students were already
supposed to bring the necessary equipment with them.

199 CZA F49/2773, p. 32; letter from Ada Fishman to Hayuta Busel and Aliza Shidlovsky, January 9, 1923: Fishman wrote that the Labor Department of the Zionist Executive had authorized 400 EP to provide for twenty halutzot, ten for each nursery, one in Nahalal under the Maisel’s supervision, and one in the Borochov neighborhood. Maimon, Le-Orekh ha-Derekh, pp. 249–50.

200 The turnovers in the girls’ residences is described in a detailed report Chana Maisel sent to WIZO on November 12, 1923; the report is located in the 1923 Copy Book in the Nahalal School Archive.

201 Nahalal School Archive, Students’ Registration File. In the list of the school’s students, Yehudit Bloch is first. Together with her in the class of 1923/24/25 appear another ten students, a total of eleven, in the group that was considered the first graduating class; Ada Fishman was among them. Registered in the second class, 1924/25, were fourteen students, and in the third, twenty-five.

202 Jezreel Regional Council Archive, Maisel’s personal archive, Agricultural School at Nahalal File, File 1.

203 CZA F49/2773, p. 32.

204 Berkowitz, Western Jewry, p. 184.

205 Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, p. 427, to Rachel and Tzipporah, February 4, 1925. In response to their applications, Maisel explained that she was forced to reject them owing to lack of place and work.

206 Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, p. 348, October 20, 1924, from Maisel to Azaryahu, response to his request to accept his daughter. Replies to other applications are in the school’s Copy Book.

207 Nahalal School Archive, 1923 Copy Book, p. 396, reply letter from Maisel to Mr. Kolton in Kovno, December 29, 1924, in reference to an application to accept a student.

208 Nahalal School Archive, 1926 Copy Book, p. 110, from Maisel
to Hayuta Bussel, October 13, 1926.

The WIZO Administrative Board requested that Maisel make sure that two-thirds of the students studied for free and that one-third paid.

CZA F49/2242, Detailed report on the activity of WIZO during 1927–29, since the Fourth Conference had been held in Basel; pp. 23–25 deal with the school at Nahalal.

Nahalal School Archive, Application File for 1925–26, 104/1.90.03.

Nahalal School Archive, 1.90.06, from JNF United States to the Nahalal school, a request from April 5, 1925, to accept Lotte Lonson, an active Zionist who wanted to settle in the country (application in English). A letter from the Rome Jewish community 4/1.90.03, asking to hire at the Nahalal school an elementary school teacher from the community, who wanted to immigrate and work in agriculture.

Nahalal School Archive 4/1.90.03, application letter from Miriam Shur.

Nahalal School Archive, Mr. Golani to the director of Nahalal, August 28, 1925; Nahalal School Archive, 4/1.90.03.

Nahalal School Archive, File 4/1.90.03, a request in Hebrew from a student in Riga for acceptance into the school, October 10, 1926.

Nahalal School Archive, October 6, 1926, a request from the moshav Kfar Yehezkel to accept the daughter of moshav members from Argentina. *Havurat* Hadarom asked to take in one of its members. Members of kibbutz Kiryat Yearim, October 20, 1926, asked that one of its members be accepted at Nahalal, so as to learn and gain competency in branches that the farm wanted to develop. Kibbutz Ein Harod called for accepting a new immigrant into the school, a sister of one of the members. Kibbutz Gesher requested that one of its members become a student at the Nahalal school, since among them there were no *haverot* experienced in agriculture.
Aharon Spivak of Ekron (July 30, 1925), asked that his daughter be accepted at Nahalal so that at least the younger generation would be educated for agricultural work. Another letter came from Tova Rotstein, a native of Poland, who had come on *aliyah* and realized that she could not work in agriculture without preparation. Parents from Kovno wanted to send their daughter directly to the school in Eretz Yisrael. A student who had learned science in university wanted to study at the agriculture school in Eretz Yisrael.

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and be a practical instructor in Jerusalem with Rachel Yanait. Currently some of the schools buildings are used as a dormitory for Israeli and immigrant children in the Youth Aliyah program.
Summary

A common assumption in histories of the beginning of Zionist settlement in Eretz Yisrael is that equality prevailed between women and men by virtue of which they worked shoulder to shoulder in difficult agricultural jobs. This myth has been shaken in recent years with the publication of studies that show that not only did women of that time not have a role equal to that of the men, but they were directed to marginal tasks in line with the traditional, stereotypical concept, that maintains, “Women—to the kitchen.” In early Zionism, the halutzot encountered a discriminatory gender reality that did not coincide with the image of the new society that would arise in the Promised Land and that did not concur with their expectations of taking an equal part with the men in realizing the Zionist vision. The new society envisaged by the women was supposed to be founded on a gender concept that contrasted with the traditional-conservative one they had left behind when they immigrated to Eretz Yisrael imbued with Zionist enthusiasm. But that was not the case. The reality in Eretz Yisrael forced the women to confront issues that were not part of the male-experienced challenges at the start of Zionist settlement in the country, with the result that the role of women is lacking in archives, reportage, and historical discussions. In addition to grappling with the difficult day-to-day existence, the women had to define for themselves their role in the Zionist movement, their place in agricultural settlement, and the image of the ideal haltuzah.

Moreover, little has been written about the Zionist women’s organizations founded in the early decades of the twentieth country in the western world, about their unique approach to the Zionist settlement endeavor, and about the interrelations forged between these Zionist women’s groups and the halutzot in Eretz Yisrael.

While assembling the material for this book, new facts came to
light that were generally overlooked in the existing research works, facts that can illuminate and flesh out the incomplete picture of the settlement process in Eretz Yisrael. Analysis of the discovered information and locating the congruent contexts among them led to fresh insights that present a more complete depiction of the period than in material already published and form part of the innovations of this volume.

At the turn of the twentieth century, women’s movements in the western world began to fight for equal economic, social, and political rights and to establish women’s organizations that worked toward the opening of new professions for women. As part of this process and with the aim of encouraging urban women to relocate to rural areas, in opposition to the common trend of moving from the village to the city, the women’s organizations initiated the establishment of institutions for agricultural training, adapted to the various local needs of each country. In Germany, the training was aimed at providing the women of the Prussian aristocracy with the agricultural knowledge they needed so as to be able to replace their husbands who served in the army; in England—to train women intending to immigrate to colonies abroad; and in Switzerland—to increase self-production of vegetables and fruits, which would reduce dependency on imports from Italy.

Despite the different local needs and the conditions under which the training institutions operated in each country, great similarity existed among them as to patterns of operation, methods of study, and modes of administration. The reason for this similarity resides in the functional model of the European village, which was the source of inspiration from which the agricultural training institutions in Eretz Yisrael drew their basic ideas. The common denominator in the villages that operated according to this model was the gender division of roles according to which the women took on traditional-female jobs. Their agricultural training strove to teach them how to specialize, develop, and make these
professions more efficient without challenging the gender division or disrupting the fine social balance that prevailed between the sexes. Women who underwent the process of agricultural education learned about innovations in science and technology, produced greater yields more efficiently, and ultimately, enjoyed a higher standard of living. The awakening of the women’s movements in Europe and North America that led to women organizing themselves and that gave rise to the initiative for establishing institutions for agricultural training, also influenced the women in the Zionist movement. In Western Europe, the Jewish women looked for a way to help realize the Zionist vision without herself immigrating to Eretz Yisrael; and, the feminine awakening the world over encouraged them to separate from the existing Zionist framework and create for a distinct, independent framework for their activity. In Eastern Europe, the influence was expressed in the intensification of Zionist women’s expectations to share a role equal to that of men in aliya to Eretz Yisrael, and only after that, in their readiness to contribute to the building of the national home through personal, physical presence in the land.

These common interests forged a deep, complex link between the Zionist women in western Europe and the Zionist halutzot (mostly from Eastern Europe,) who immigrated to Eretz Yisrael. So it was that both of them strove to improve the status of women in the incipient national home there, to promote women to a position of independent individuals with a profession or trade, something that had been withheld from them in their countries of origin. Owing to this unique juncture between vision and capital, productive cooperation was forged that constituted a highly influential motivating force. The need to attain control over the distribution of funds and to gain influence that would enable them to direct the money toward their own purposes propelled the Zionist women in the west to strengthen their organizations and to achieve an influential position in the Zionist movement,
as they actually did. At the same time the pioneering women in Eretz Yisrael had to find a way to reinforce their status and actually take part in working the land, which was the most important ideal of the Zionist movement as a way for realizing the Zionist vision in that period, the first decades of the twentieth century. The means for effecting this goal was to educate halutzot in agricultural training institutes for women that were established with the aid of the funds coming from the women’s organizations abroad dedicated to the advancement of women in Eretz Yisrael, with maximum utilization of the interest common to both parties.

The turning point on the road to establishing an international organization for Zionist women occurred during a visit to Eretz Yisrael by the wives of the British Zionist leaders, “the female Zionist Commission,” in November 1919, a trip that had been made possible by the Balfour Declaration and the British occupation of the country. The commission’s women, who had come to examine the situation of women and children, were saddened by what they saw and the scope of the problems they found, and estimated the great financial resources needed to improve conditions. The Zionist women’s associations that operated separately in each country, that they would not be able to cope individually with this task, so an international organization of Zionist women had to be formed that would coordinate the work in the different countries and have all branches function in concert. Upon their return to England, they worked to implement this idea, with the result that within about a year WIZO, the Women’s International Zionist Organization, came into being.

In Eretz Yisrael, Chana Maisel played a decisive role in the founding of the institutions for agricultural training, and her unique contribution to this project has been given appropriate, in-depth exposure. A Russian-born agronomist, Dr. Maisel, who had acquired her professional education in agriculture in Western Europe, had broad professional knowledge and was familiar with
both societies - Eastern Europe and the west - an understanding that was important for the realization of the Zionist vision. Being acquainted with both of them enabled her to bridge the differences between them and allow them use to the full what they had in common.

The model for agricultural training that Maisel wanted to establish in Eretz Yisrael had not been consolidated. While studying the reality prevailing at the time in the country, Maisel realized that the model had to be one for the disseminated information. That meant that the institutions for women’s agricultural training had to equip their graduates not only with practical and academic knowledge but also with the ability to give practical instruction in agricultural vocations so that they could teach other women after they had completed their learning period, and by doing so, expand the circle of women working in agriculture.

The first model for agricultural training that Maisel set up was the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret. The use of the word “model” is intended to stress that at Kinneret basic patterns of activity were cast that were to be found in the agricultural educational institutions for women that were established afterward. One elemental mode was based on cooperation between the training body and Jewish women’s organizations abroad. The Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret was supported by the Kulturverband, a Zionist women’s organization in Germany that had chosen to help agricultural training, since the idea of the making the women productive in the prestigious field of agriculture matched the goals of the association and could contribute to designing the image of the new Jewish woman. The other pattern relates to the practical content of the training, as determined by Maisel, in light of what may be called “the dual concept” of the image of the woman, that is, the different interpretation given by women and men to the image of the
laboring *halutzah* equipped with agricultural training, a figure that was nurtured to the level of a pioneering myth. The men and the Zionist organizations that they dominated considered the attempts by the women to penetrate agricultural professions a threat to their sovereignty, according to traditional gender role divisions. The fact that Maisel, who was aware of this sensitivity, did not challenge the gender division of roles and trained the women to work solely in the farmyard branches and in housekeeping allowed the men to accept the professionalization of the women as representing the feminine aspect of agriculture and even to support it. As they perceived it, the female worker with agricultural training was a pioneer operating within the framework of areas defined as feminine. As the women saw it, however, the study of agriculture in the format determined by Maisel was an entranceway into the “masculine” professional realm. The women saw in the image of the trained *halutzah* someone who had succeeded in going beyond the discriminatory gender confines and advanced her status to a more esteemed, prestigious level. This configuration made it possible for both the men’s and the women’s organizations to join the efforts toward funding agricultural training, with all components interpreting the image of the woman according to their own perception. From newspaper articles, pictures, and films, we learn how the myth of the *halutzah* working the land was formed, despite the small number of women who worked in agriculture. The creation of the legend served the Jewish women’s organizations abroad and helped them expand their membership and increase the scope of fundraising. The myth also helped recruit the men’s organizations, foremost among them the JNF, to collect money and buy land.

The second model, with the development of women’s agricultural training, was that of women’s laborers’ groups, which turned into the focal point of practical agricultural instruction for women. These groups, which came into being owing to the distress and
food shortages caused by World War I, were involved in raising vegetables, and while doing so also gave practical instruction to young women who had not yet benefited from agricultural training. The female instructors in these groups were graduates of the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, and their activity was another stage in women recognizing their ability to free themselves from dependence and the internalize instead the notion of initiated, independent feminine action. Proving the existence of feminine potential, which was expressed by these groups’ actions, led to the acceleration of women joining agricultural farms as members with equal rights.

The third model is an example of the way in which opportunities related to endeavors already in operation or in planning, such as the cooking courses and the Hostel in Tel Aviv, were exploited to add a plan for agricultural training to them, too. Maisel’s initiative to redirect the original aim of the Hostel from a residence for new immigrant women, as planned by WIZO in England, to a dormitory for young ladies acquiring agricultural training was what enabled the establishment of the Training Hostel of Domestic Economy and Agriculture. When the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir party asked Maisel to set up cooking courses and train professional cooks so as to improve the low quality of food provided by the workers’ kitchens, she took advantage of the situation and next to those kitchens she set up various branches of agriculture, such as chicken coops and bee hives, and later on also vegetable gardens that produced fresh food for the kitchens. These branches were adapted to the limitations of physical space available to the different cooking courses and kitchens. This model demonstrates Maisel’s steadfastness to the idea of educating women in the agricultural vocations and indicates the creativity with which she navigated the path toward realization of this goal.

The fourth model was the “extension service” set up at the initiative of Esther Rosov, which was characterized by the same
components on which other training for women was based. Rosov copied the idea from the United States, where she had obtained her agricultural education and had gained experience in extension service work. The initial financial assistance was granted by Henrietta Irwell, one of the WIZO leaders in England, who was also familiar with the extension service model for teaching women.

This model of activity was adapted to the conditions of Eretz Yisrael and applied successfully by Rosov and other practical instructors who were graduates of the Hostel. The project began as help for women with families who could not take part in other forms of agricultural training that were intended mainly for single women. The extension service that came to their door, through the work of itinerant female practical instructors, was a solution that helped them create a vegetable garden and at times also an auxiliary farm next to their home, making it easier to support the family. This endeavor, which began as practical instruction on how to plant and work a vegetable garden, expanded and incorporated other fields, and was also provided to institutions such as kindergartens, schools, moshavim, and kibbutzim.

The fifth model was an institution that helped to create an organization. The women laborers’ farm in Jerusalem attests to the powerful influence agricultural training in Eretz Yisrael had on the women’s organizations abroad. The Jerusalem farm, which had begun as a nursery directed by Rachel Yanait, needed a source of funding to survive, and as she looked for it, Yanait turned to a group of socialist Zionist women, members of the Poalei Zion Party in the United States. Centered on the idea of support for the women laborers’ farm in Jerusalem, these women created an organization called “Pioneer Women,” and this body, which at first sustained the Jerusalem women’s farm, later on supported the women workers’ farms of Ahdut ha-Avodah. In this case, the women’s farm created a women’s organization to back it. To be sure, the underpinning for a separate women’s endeavor to
organize themselves into a political party had matured beforehand, but without the great attraction for and identification with the women’s agricultural training project, the establishment and swift growth of this organization would not have been possible.

The identification of the women abroad with the idea of agricultural training for women grew continuously as the legend of the Jewish woman agriculturalist grew and each Jewish women’s associations, all of whom strove to focus their work more strongly, wanted to take a unique training site under their wings. So, we see the adoption of the women workers’ farm in Afula by WIZO Argentina, and the women workers’ farm in Nes Ziona by WIZO Romania. They all used sophisticated advertising-type material, from which the women gained an ever-stronger image of the young halutzah working in agriculture, respecting her profession, properly dressed, and making use of advanced agricultural equipment. In photographs produced for this material, women are seen against the background of vegetable gardens, chicken coops, barns, plantations and nurseries, wearing light-colored dresses and smiling in satisfaction from their situation. The gap between this image and the drab daily drudgery was great, but the numbers of additional members who joined the women’s organizations attests to the fact that these images were effective. The women in Eretz Yisrael worked along with the needs of the organizations, so a synergistic effect was created. Thus, the training sites in Palestine benefitted from increased financial support and the women’s organizations abroad garnered influence, power, and prestige.

The crowning glory of agricultural training for women in the 1920s was the establishment of the Young Women’s Agricultural School at Nahalal. This sixth model was the climax of cooperation between the women’s organizations and agricultural education, and when the history of its creation was examined, it was found that it had been possible to create a modern, institution on such a scale and on a European level because of a number of processes.
Experience had been accumulated in establishing institutions for agricultural training, the women’s organizations abroad were willing to fund a large project, the curriculum had become consolidated and agreed to by all the factors involved in setting it up, women’s agricultural ability had been demonstrated, leading to the JNF allotting a large plot of land, and a demand had been created for graduates of agricultural training. These processes were necessary but insufficient condition. It needed someone who would assume responsibility and undertake promotion of the project. Chana Meisel took this upon herself and achieved her goal. Her experience enabled her to get Hadassah-Canada to agree to devote itself to funding the project from its outset, and ultimately, convinced it to take the school under its exclusive patronage.

The establishment of the school at Nahalal was part of the process of settling the Jezreel Valley, and the institution’s connections with the agricultural settlements in the surrounding area played an important role professionally, economically, and socially as well with regard to security. The agricultural settlements, in turn, helped the school and contributed to its success. The sizable clamor for it graduates and increasing number of applications to study there excluded the school’s ability to accept them all. The absorption of the students was a delicate response to the demands that came from all kinds of settlements as well as different populations who wished to enroll their daughters. This huge demand showed that the school had answered a true need to realize the maximum of female potential in agriculture.

Exploiting these factors to the fullest was imperative for the survival of the Jewish agricultural farm. Had these training opportunities not been created in which women would find satisfaction, in their work, they would not have remained on the various types of agricultural settlements which they joined so too. The Jewish agricultural farm would not have been able to operate in the long run solely in single-sex groups of men. Despite the
foregoing, the organizational bodies in the Zionist movement responsible for settlement did not share this insight. Their support of women’s agricultural training was limited and occupied a low rung on their order of priorities and allotted small budgets. Moreover, when in the light of the throes of the financial crisis they were in, they found out that the women’s organizations were showing interest in agricultural education for women, the bodies organizing settlement totally withdrew their support. To be sure, a few men in key positions did understand the importance of educating the women, but they did not succeed in influencing how the funds were dispersed.

When one compares the minuscule number of women who went through agricultural training against the total number of halutzot, one might presume that the phenomenon of agricultural training for women was of marginal importance. But that was not the case. Working the land was at the heart of the Zionist vision, and graduates of the training programs played a leading role in bringing it to fruition. As a result, their endeavor had a resounding impact on Zionist circles in Eretz Yisrael and the world over. These women constituted a limited nucleus that affected its surroundings and spread agricultural knowledge to many other women. Their circles of influence continually expanded as time passed. Thus, the women’s role in stabilizing the agricultural farm was highly significant.

Great importance can also be attributed to the halutzot’s contribution to changes in the woman’s status in Eretz Yisrael. In this regard, their ambition to free themselves from the kitchen and to break through the strict conventions of “men’s roles–women’s roles” was one of the first battles in the Jewish feminist struggle in the country. Agricultural labor was not only a national-ideological aspiration but also a means for introducing feminist values that advanced the change in the standing of the women in Eretz Yisrael.

The feminine connection was, therefore, the main factor that
enabled the existence of the agricultural training project for women in the country, and it is difficult to imagine what the status of the women in agricultural settlements would have been without this education. But the training project in Eretz Yisrael—despite its uniqueness—was not only an internal Eretz Yisrael phenomenon but part of processes that the western world was undergoing, in which women and their organizations assumed responsibility and concern for their fate and, more than any other factor, watched out for the advancement of women’s interests.
Appendix 1
Concise Biographies

Abramson, Pessia (1889–1922). Immigrated to Rishon Letzion in Eretz Yisrael with her parents in 1905, joined the Womens’ Training Farm at Kinneret when it opened in 1911. In 1914 she joined the Merhavya cooperative, and a year later moved to Tel Adashim with a Ha-Shomrim group. She helped organize the workers’ kitchen in Petah Tikva and Hadera. In 1918 she moved to Yavne’el, but health problems forced her to abandon her work. With her spouse, Spector, she moved to Tiberias, where her first son was born. In 1921 her family joined kibbutz Kfar Giladi, and in 1922, after the birth of her second son she became infirm and committed suicide.

Azaryahu, Sarah (Meirov) (1873–1962). Born in Latvia, she founded the Daughters of Zion group in 1892. She joined the Zionist movement and visited Eretz Yisrael for the first time in 1897. In 1901 she married Yosef Ostrovsky (Hebraized to Azaryahu); they studied education together at the University of Berne in Switzerland. She participated in the Fifth Zionist Congress. Azaryahu taught in a girls’ school in Russia and was its principal. In 1906 she immigrated to Eretz Yisrael. In the girls’ school in Jaffa, she was the first teacher of geography and mathematics, subjects considered masculine. She fought for equal rights for women and in 1919 founded the Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Eretz Yisrael. She was elected to the first Asefat ha-Nivharim [Elected Assembly]. She dedicated her life to the advancement of women and published a number of articles, pamphlets, and two books, both in Hebrew, Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Eretz Israel and memoirs, Chapters of a Life.
Bambus Frank, Alfreda (1887–1957). Daughter of Willy Frank, one of the first Zionists in Germany. She came to Eretz Yisrael in 1906 and taught at the Laemel School before working as a governess for a Jewish family in Cairo. She left Egypt within a year and returned to Germany, where she worked as a governess and nursery school teacher. Alfreda decided to prepare herself to be an agriculture teacher and studied gardening, poultry farming, and apiculture. In 1913 she was accepted as a teacher at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret. Upon the outbreak of World War I, Bambus again returned to Germany, where towards the end of the war she established a vegetable garden worked by young Jews. In 1921 she founded a training farm for young women, which operated for three years, closing in 1924. She married a medical student, and when he graduated, he took a position as a physician in Safed on behalf of Hadassah. Her son was born in Safed. In 1930 Bambus and her family went to Berlin; she returned to Eretz Yisrael in 1937.

Baratz, Miriam (1889–1970). Immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1906 with her family and worked in a restaurant that her grandfather opened in Kfar Saba. In 1908 she moved to the Kinneret farm where she engaged in domestic work. She then went with six of her comrades to the Mitzpe farm and from there to Petah Tikva and on to the “Hadera Commune,” where she was the first woman worker in Hadera. She moved with the communal group to Deganya. In 1910, she went to Russia to visit her parents, and despite her father’s opposition she returned to Eretz Yisrael and joined Deganya. In 1912 she married Joseph Baratz. Her son, Gidon, was the first child born in Deganya. Miriam Baratz was the symbol of women’s “conquest of labor” in agriculture. She worked in the cowshed, and when she was the mother of two small children she went to Ben-Shemen to train in the handling of cows. She played
an important role in founding the women workers’ movement and was active in the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir party and afterwards in Mapai.

**Bat-Avraham Levitan, Miriam** (1908–1998). Immigrated to Eretz Yisrael at the age of four as an orphan and had to labor as a child: at age seven, she worked in Rehovot and after that as a maid in Gedera. She was shipped from one family to another until a place was finally found for her in an orphanage. When she was fourteen she was adopted by Manya Shochat and moved to Kibbutz Kfar Giladi. After three years there, she was accepted as a student at Nahalal, where she studied for two and a half years, becoming well known throughout the Jezreel Valley for her pleasant singing voice. Miriam participated in all the cultural activities in the area. Upon her return to Kfar Giladi she became responsible for the vegetable garden. In 1961 she was awarded the Labor Prize for her perseverance in her work and the development of a unique species of broccoli.

**Bat-Dori (Gutgeld), Shulamit** (1904–1985). Born in Warsaw to a wealthy, assimilated family, she was sister of Mordechai Bentov. With her brother, she organized a scouts’ group in Warsaw, which over the years turned into the Hashomer Hatzair movement. Shulamit, “Mita” as she was called, was a conscious revolutionary with a stormy nature. She immigrated to Eretz Yisrael at the age of eighteen, worked in construction as a plasterer, and tried her hand as a tractor driver. She went to Germany to study theater, and when she returned to the country and to her kibbutz, Mishmar ha-Emek, she founded the Kibbutz Theater Troupe in 1936. She wrote and directed plays and eventually became a lecturer on theater at Tel-Aviv University.

**Bluwstein, Rachel** (1890–1931). Born in Russia, she came to Eretz Yisrael in 1909 as a tourist and stayed. She was Chana
Meisel’s first student, initially in Haifa and then at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret. In 1913 Rachel went to France to study agriculture and completed her course as an agronomist. She returned to Eretz Yisrael in 1919 and joined Kevutzat Deganya. While working with orphans in Europe during World War I, she contracted tuberculosis and was forced to leave Deganya owing to her illness. She lived in Jerusalem, Safed, and Tel Aviv. It was in Tel Aviv, in a small rented room, that she wrote most of her poems, which appeared in newspapers, mainly in Davar. Many of her poems have been set to music. She is buried in the Kinneret cemetery and is known simply as Rachel.

**Bluwstein, Shoshana** (1888–1973). Came to Eretz Yisrael as a tourist with her sister Rachel (the poet) in 1909 and remained in the country. The sisters (including a third, Bat-Sheva) lived in Rehovot. In 1911 Shoshana was among the students of the first class of the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret. From Kinneret she moved with a group of graduates to Merhavya. After World War I she went to Germany to study music and, upon her return to Eretz Yisrael, taught music in a number of places. Shoshana wrote a memoir, *Alei Kinneret* [On the Shores of Kinneret], and diary jottings on her Kinneret period.

**Berlin, Leah** (1884–1963). Born in Lyady, White Russia, to an upper-middle-class family, she was active in the Zionist-Socialist Party. In that framework, she was an organizing propagandist and distributed propaganda material and weapons in Europe. Because of her political activity, she was arrested three times and spent almost three months in a Russian prison. Leah trained as a dental technician in Berlin and Kiev (1908) and studied literature at the Sorbonne in Paris (1911–1913). In 1914, after her father had become impoverished, she immigrated with him to Eretz Yisrael, where she was in contact with Aaron Aaronsohn and Rahel Yanait
Ben-Zvi at the experimental farm at Athlit. Leah was exiled to Egypt with those deported from Tel Aviv during World War I and helped organize medical care and nutrition in the refugee camps. After the war, she returned to Eretz Yisrael and managed the Ahva workshop. In 1934 she joined kibbutz Givat Brenner with her friend, the American poet Jesse Sampter, and established and directed Beit Yesha—the kibbutz movement’s first rest home. In 1952, upon the split with Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me’uhad, she moved to kibbutz Netzer Sireni, where she engaged in absorption of aliyah (new immigrants) and social work.

**Boghen, Shoshana** (1898–1918). Born in Russia, she immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1913, and lived and worked in Petah Tikva. During World War I she moved to Kinneret and was a member of Va’ad Kevutzat ha-Esrim (the Committee of the Group of Twenty). When Kevutzat ha-Esrim was dissolved, she joined the women laborers organized by Eliezer Yaffe at Mikveh Israel. During a visit to Shemen she committed suicide. Selections from her diary were published in the anthology *Divrei Po’alot* (The Female Worker Speaks). An issue of *Shdemot* (111 [1989]) was dedicated in her memory.

**Brenner, Batya** (1894–1975). Born in the Ukraine, she immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1913, joining her brother, the author Joseph Hayyim Brenner. At his suggestion she went to work in the rural area. She toiled with the women workers’ group at Ben Shemen, and after that, during World War I, with the group at Kinneret. Batya joined Gedud ha-Avodah (Labor Legion) at kibbutz Ein Harod. There she worked with poultry and took care of the incubator, the first chicken hatchery on the farm.

**Bussel, Hayuta** (1890–1975). Born in Russia to a Zionist family, she was active in a Zionist association from the age of fifteen.
At seventeen she decided, along with her boyfriend Yosef, to immigrate to Eretz Yisrael. Hayuta became a laborer in Petah Tikva, studied to be a nursery school teacher, and worked in her profession in Jaffa, Rishon Letzion, and Hadera when the “Hadera commune” took shape. Next, Hayuta joined the group that established Deganya. She studied at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, and after completing her preparation, she volunteered to help with the workers kitchen in Petah Tikva. Next she applied herself to assisting the female workers in the town of Metulla. In 1919 she gave birth to a girl and was widowed when her husband, Yosef Bussel, drowned in the Kinneret. She continued her activity in the women’s labor movement and fought for equal rights for women. Hayuta was a representative in the first Asefat ha-Nivharim and one of the main activists in Mo’etzet ha-Po’alot (Women Workers’ Council). She was one of the founders of the Kibbutz Seminar (1939–40) and published articles in Niv ha-Kevutzah and Davar.

**Chizik, Chana** (1889–1951). Born in Russia, Chana immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1906 and studied painting and tapestry weaving at the Bezalel Academy (art school) in Jerusalem. In 1908 Chana began agricultural work and was a laborer in Rishon Lezion, Petah Tikvah and Rehovot. Soon thereafter, she became a counselor at Kiryat Sefer, an institution for Kishinev orphans, at Ben Shemen. In 1910 she moved to her parents’ farm at Kinneret and studied at the Kinneret Women’s Training Farm. Chana was one of the founders of the women workers’ movement and a member of the Poalei Zion Party. In 1913 she moved from Kinneret to Merhavya and from there to Tel Adashim and Petah Tikva. When the Jews of Jaffa were expelled in 1917, she organized a group of women for cultivating vegetables in Tiberias and another group of women workers to raise vegetables in Ekron in 1918. Upon the dissolution of the women workers’ groups in 1920, she taught agriculture at
the school in Neve Zedek, and in 1921, after a bout of malaria, went to recuperate in Europe. There she studied gardening at an institution of higher learning and returned to Merhavya. In 1923 she was recruited to work on the women workers’ farm at Nahlat Yehuda, and in 1926 she was mustered again, this time to organize a group of unemployed women workers. Together with them, she founded a group of women workers in northern Tel Aviv, which became the agricultural school she directed for twenty-five years.

**Cohen, Lotte** (1893–1983). Lotte was the third women to receive a degree in architecture from the University of Berlin and apparently the first Jewish women to earn this certification. She completed her studies in 1916 and immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1921. For six years she worked with the architect Richard Kaufman, who planned Nahalal and many other settlements. Lotte won the bid for planning the agricultural school for young women at Nahalal. For forty years she worked as an independent architect in Tel Aviv and designed public buildings, neighborhoods, and homes in settlements of the Labor Settlement Movement (*hityashvut ovedet*) and in cities.

**Eder, Edith** (1887–1944), wife of David Eder, Weizmann’s replacement on the Zionist Commission. Edith became involved with Zionism at the age of forty owing to her husband’s activity. She was an educator and a psychologist, active in the Women’s Zionist Federation and in WIZO, where she was influential for many years. In WIZO she was seen as a loyal representative of women laborers.

**Fishman Maimon, Ada** (1893–1973). Born in Bessarabia, Ada was the sister of Rabbi Judah Leib Maimon and a strictly observant Jew her entire life. Ada immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1911, was a teacher in Petah Tikva, and then an agricultural
worker. In 1914, she was sent to Safed by the Teachers Center to open a girls’ school. From 1913 to 1920 she was a member of the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir Center and was one of the founders of the Women Workers’ Council and its secretary from 1921 to 1927. Ada fought unceasingly for equal rights for women in various frameworks. She toiled on the women workers’ farm in Petah Tikva, was a member of the Histadrut Executive and of the Va’ad ha-Leu’ummi (National Council), and a member of WIZO’s World Executive beginning in 1926. Ada established the women workers’ farm in Nes Ziona, which in 1930 became the agricultural school, Ayyanot. She was a member of the Mapai Center and served in the First and Second Knessets, where she continued to fight discrimination against women. She published articles in various periodicals and newspapers. Among her publications (all in Hebrew) are The Working Woman’s Movement in Eretz Yisrael—1904–1929, Ha-Halutzah (The Woman Pioneer), Ayyanot, and Le-Orekh ha-Derekh [Along the way], several of which have been translated into English.

Freiman, Lillian (1885–1940). Born in Mattawa, Ontario, Canada, Lillian took part at age seventeen in her first Canadian Zionist convention, held in 1903 in Montreal, as a representative of the Ottawa Daughters of Zion Group. From then on she attended every Canadian Zionist convention held during her lifetime. During World War I, Lillian Freiman gained experience in fundraising for the Red Cross and other charitable organizations. She was elected director of the “Helping Hand Fund” for Palestine Jews after the war, and in the three months she spent traveling throughout Canada to raise money and contributions, she succeeded in amassing the huge sum of $160,000 as well as clothing, medicines, and equipment valued at $40,000. Likewise, she established branches of Hadassah throughout Canada and was elected the first president of the organization at its founding.
convention held in Montreal in 1921, holding the position until her death in 1940. Ms. Freiman helped establish the Women’s Agricultural School at Nahalal and raised funds for purchasing land in Emek Hefer. The moshav Havatzelet Hasharon was named for her. In 1935 she was awarded the OBE (Order of the British Empire) for her volunteer activity among Jews and non-Jews.

**Gershon (de Leo), Miriam** (1891–1979). Born in Gronigen, Holland, to a wealthy Jewish family, Miriam chose to be a halutzah (pioneer) and, to that end, studied in a school for home management. In 1913 she attended the Zionist Congress in Vienna as a journalist and subsequently trained to become an agricultural worker. Miriam studied cattle care and dairy management and specialized in particular in home management and kitchen organization. In 1919 Miriam Gershon visited England to help Maisel convince the WIZO founders to support agricultural training. Miriam went on **aliyah** in 1920, worked in various kitchens, and conducted a survey for Hadassah on the situation of the kitchens in Eretz Yisrael. After marrying in Palestine and after the birth of her son in 1928, she returned to Holland, to assist haltuzim from Poland and Galicia to acquire agricultural training. With the rise of the Nazi regime, she returned to Eretz Yisrael and was one of the founders of the Dutch Immigrants Society.

**Ginossar (Ginzberg), Rosa** (1890–1979). Born in Russia in 1890, Rosa immigrated to Eretz Yisrael with her parents. In 1908 she went to France to study law. In 1917 she married Shlomo Ginzberg, the son of Ahad Ha-Am. In 1920 she worked as the WIZO secretary in London. In 1922 she returned to Eretz Yisrael to become WIZO treasurer. Ginossar was the first woman to receive a license to practice law in Palestine (1930). In 1951 she was elected chairman of the World WIZO Executive. In 1966, after the death of Rebecca Sieff, she was elected president of World
WIZO.

**Goodman, Romana** (1885–1955). Born in Poland, Romana immigrated with her family to the United States. In 1907 she married Paul Goodman, a businessman, author, and Zionist in England. The couple attended the Eighth Zionist Congress where she joined the Verband Jüdischer Frauen für Kulturarbeit in Palästina (the Organization of Jewish Women for the Advancement and Progress of Cultural Works in Palestine; Kulturverband, for short). She founded and directed the London branch of the Kulturverband, and with this function renewed the link that had been broken between the organization’s branches in England and its center in Berlin during World War I. She also revived the connections to the Kulturverband in Holland, Poland, Moscow, and Eretz Yisrael. Romana Goodman was one of the founders of WIZO and played a central role in convincing the Kulturverband’s branches in Europe to join WIZO.

**Gordon, Yael** (1879–1958). Yael immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1909 and joined her father, A. D. Gordon. She worked as a laborer at Ein Ganim and was a student at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret. Yael Gordon was one of the founders and leaders of the Women’s Labor Movement. At a conference that she convened in Merhavya in 1914, she was elected to the movement’s Central Committee. Yael Gordon was a teacher in the Merhavya cooperative and a founder of the women workers’ farm at Petah Tikva. She was a member of the secretariat of the Women Workers’ Council and a member of Kibbutz Deganya.

**Gottheil, Emma** (1862–1947). Emma was born in Beirut and immigrated to Paris with her parents at the age of twelve. She studied literature at university and had command of a number of languages. Emma married and was widowed at a young age. In
1891 she married Richard Gottheil and moved to New York, where she taught French literature at Columbia University. Emma was an official delegate to the Second Zionist Congress and was invited by Herzl to the table of the presidency to translate his statements into French, Italian, and English. In 1912, Emma Gottheil joined the nucleus of the founders of Hadassah. In 1921 she organized Keren Hayesod in America, and in 1940 she received the Cross of the French Legion of Honor for her contribution to French-American relations.

**Irwell, Henrietta** (1888–1941). Henrietta first visited Eretz Yisrael in 1913 and was among those who felt that the role of Zionist women in the Diaspora was to bring the knowledge and experience that had been accumulated in the field of social welfare to the new country. She donated money, helped operate the extension services for women, and became one of the founders of WIZO.

**Kaplan (Eshkol), Elisheva** (1900–1959). Born in Russia, Elisheva immigrated to Eretz Yisrael from Vienna in 1920, in the Third Aliyah. She was active in Ze’irei Zion abroad and in Palestine, she joined Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir. Elisheva worked as a laborer in the town of Rehovot and in Kibbutz Deganya and after two years she joined in the establishing of the women workers’ farm adjacent to the workers’ kitchen in Petah Tikva, under the direction of Chana Maisel. Elisheva Kaplan was a prominent activist on the Women Workers’ Council and was an emissary to Pioneer Women in the United States. She was a member of Kibbutz Deganya and became the second wife of Levi Eshkol.

**Katznelson Nesher, Hannah** (1898–1995). Born in Russia, Hannah immigrated to Eretz Yisrael at the age of sixteen with her older sister. She worked as an agricultural laborer in Petah Tikvah, Kinneret, and Deganya. Hannah Katznelson Nesher studied at
the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret. Upon the organization of the Group of Twenty at Kinneret, she was elected in 1916 to the group committee. In 1917, she moved to Jerusalem with her brother, Berl Katznelson, where they worked in the Vegetable Garden Group. After World War I she studied nursing at the Nursing School established by Hadassah alongside the Rothschild Hospital in Jerusalem. She was a social worker for the Jewish Women’s Federation in Jerusalem and wrote a book: *Brother and Sister* [Hebrew].

**Katznelson Shazar, Rachel** (1888–1975). Born in Russia, Rachel studied at the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin and then at the Bestuzhev Women’s University in Leningrad (today St. Petersburg) in the Literature and History Department, and at the Academy for Jewish Studies founded by Baron Ginzburg in that city. Rachel immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1912. She taught Hebrew at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, worked at Tel Adashim and with Berl Katznelson’s Vegetable Garden Group in Jerusalem, and participated in the group of women workers headed by Eliezer Yaffe at Mikveh Israel. She was elected to the Histadrut’s Culture Committee. In 1920 she married Zalman Rubashov (name later changed to Shazar, the third president of the State of Israel) and went with him to Vienna. After their return to Eretz Yisrael in 1924, she became a member of the Women Workers’ Council. Rachel edited the anthology *Divrei Po’alot*—the first Hebrew anthology by women, with contributions by sixty writers and workers. The anthology was translated into a number of languages. From 1934 on, she edited the newspaper *Devar ha-Po’elet*. She was an emissary to the United States for Pioneer Women, a delegate on the committee of the Elected Assembly and on the Education Committee of the Va’ad ha-Leu’ummi, a member of the Executive of the General Histadrut as well as a member of the Mapai Center. She was also elected to the Tel Aviv City Council. In 1947, in the
name of the women’s organizations, she appeared before the United Nations Commission on Palestine. Rachel Katznelson Shazar edited and wrote memoirs, books and articles.

**Kohut, Rebecca** (1864–1951). Born in Hungary, Rebecca was the daughter of a rabbi. At the age of three she immigrated to America with her family where she became an effective activist in different organizations and opened a girls’ school in New York. In May 1923, at a congress in Vienna attended by 200 delegates representing nineteen countries, she was elected president of the World Congress of Jewish Women. She left her mark on the Jewish community of the United States in the fields of education, social work, and Jewish women’s organizations.

**Lange Bentwich, Nita** (1884–1922). Born in England, Nita married Michael Lange in 1910 and visited Eretz Yisrael with him after their wedding. On her second visit to the country in 1912, she decided they had to settle in the town of Zichron Yaacov, and in 1913 they bought an estate of seventy dunams. Their home, called “Carmel Court,” was built by Gedalia Wilbushevitz, brother of Manya Wilbushevitz Shohat. In November 1914 she and her husband, both British citizens, were forced to leave the country and returned to Britain. There she completed her studies in agriculture at the University of Reading and continued with practical agricultural work. In 1919 she and her husband returned to Zichron Yaacov and renovated their estate. Nita planned to establish an agricultural farm for young women on part of her land and to organize the marketing of her dairy and vegetable gardens, but her health deteriorated and in 1922 she died at the age of thirty-eight. Her husband donated money to the school at Nahalal, thus perpetuating her memory.

**Lieberzohn, Tehiya** (1886–1974). Tehyia immigrated to Eretz
Yisrael in 1905 and was among the first female agricultural workers. She worked in the orchards in Petah Tikva and on farms at Kinneret, Deganya, and Yavne’el. In 1921, she was the only unmarried woman among the founders of the moshav Nahalal. For years she fought for the right of an unmarried woman to own her own farm. In 1932 after she was forced to sell her farm in Nahalal, she moved to Jerusalem where she wrote *Pirkei Hayyim* (Chapters of a Life).

**Linn, Genya (Yocheved)** (1910–1992). Born in Romania, Genya immigrated to Eretz Yisrael with her family in 1919. After having studied at Nahalal, she arrived on kibbutz Mishmar ha-Emek in 1930 and began working in poultry raising. Within a short time she was managing the poultry branch, which became economically successful and highly regarded throughout the country. In 1958, she received the Kaplan Prize in recognition of her professional achievements as well as a certificate of appreciation from the Poultry Council for thirty-eight continuous years of working for the advancement of the poultry branch in Kibbutz Mishmar ha-Emek. Genya was recognized for activity in the field’s national institutions, for her significant contribution to the entire branch, and for her connections with poultry veterinarians, members of the organization and the association. Genya was highly regarded for her assistance in the development of a vaccine against Newcastle’s Disease.

**Malkin, Sara** (1885–1949). One of the first female agricultural workers in Eretz Yisrael. She immigrated to the country in 1905, belonged to the Hadera commune, was the first woman worker on the Kinneret farm, one of the founders of Deganya, among the first students at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, and among the founders of the women workers’ movement. After WWI Sara Malkin founded and managed vegetable gardens in Jerusalem for
a year and a half in order to create employment opportunities for young women from the Old City in agriculture. She labored on women workers’ farms including coordinating the farm in Afula for fifteen years. First Halutzah in the Fields of Israel [Hebrew] was written in her memory. She is buried in the Kinneret cemetery.

**Meron, Leah** (1888–1967). Born in Russia, Leah immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1909. A student in the first class at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, Leah Meron moved from Kinneret to Ben Shemen with the first group of female laborers. There she specialized in cultivating vegetables and raising poultry. In 1914 she was elected to the Woman Workers’ Committee at the Women Workers Convention in Merhavya. During World War I Leah Meron worked on the farm at Kinneret. She was one of four female representatives of 87 delegates at the General Histadrut founding conference. At the Balfouria Conference in 1921, she was elected to the secretariat of the Women Workers’ Council, and in 1923 she founded the women workers’ farm in the Borochov neighborhood of Tel Aviv. Leah Meron was the wife of Berl Katznelson.

**Neuman, Malvina** (1888–1954). Malvina was born in the town of Rust and raised in a strictly Orthodox Jewish family in Vienna. Neuman immigrated to the Kinneret farm in 1913 and also worked at Sharona and Petah Tikva. Upon the outbreak of World War I she returned to Austria, returning to Eretz Yisrael in the 1920s where she married David Dobrinsky, one of the founders of Kfar Yehezkel. In 1927 Malvina Neuman was diagnosed with a “tumor” and traveled to Austria for treatment. The “tumor” turned out to be a pregnancy which produced a daughter Miriam. In 1929, she returned to Eretz Yisrael, first to Haifa and then to Jerusalem, where she lived out her life as a religious Jewess.
Pappenheim, Bertha (1859–1936). Bertha was born into the family of a rich Viennese Jewish merchant and studied French, Italian, and English in a Catholic school. Apparently she received religious education from a private teacher. At twenty-one, after having taken care of her dying father, Bertha Pappenheim suffered crippling psychological problems and was treated by Dr. Breuer, a friend of Sigmund Freud. She became known in Freud’s writings as the patient called Anna O. In 1889 Pappenheim moved to Frankfurt where she remained the rest of her life. As a result of her volunteer work in a kitchen that served Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, her awareness of the Jews’ dire situation grew, leading her to move from charity work to public activism. In 1902, she founded the Juedischer Frauenbund (Jewish Women’s Organization), which devoted energy to organizing orphanages, homes for unwed mothers, kitchens for Jews from eastern Europe, sewing lessons, and fighting “white slavery”, i.e. Jewish prostitution. In 1911 she visited Eretz Yisrael as part of her battle against the white slave trade. The Juedischer Frauenbund was a separate organization within the German women’s movement. Despite Pappenheim’s claim that feminism reinforced her Judaism, she frequently encountered contradictions between the two.

Pomerantz-Meltzer, Roza (1880–1934). Born in Tarnopol, Roza studied music in Vienna, Leipzig, and Paris and later became known as a writer. From her youth she was active in the Zionist Organization and was interested particularly in the Organization of the Jewish Woman in the Zionist Organization. One of the leaders of the Zionist women’s movement, she was also a founder of the Zionist Women’s Organization in Galicia. In 1919 she was elected to the Polish parliament Sejm as a member of a Zionist party; she died in Lvov in 1934.
**Rabau, Ziona** (1907–1995). Ziona was born in the Arab village Ein Sinya, in which her parents had settled upon their *aliyah* in 1906. Her mother was Gutta Shertok, a sister of the BILU member Yaakov Shertok (father of Moshe Sharett), and her father, the Polish-born Baruch Katinsky. The family first lived in Ein Sinya with two other Jewish families, those of her uncles Yaakov and Ze’ev Shertok. The economy of the town was based on agriculture, milling of flour, and raising sheep. In 1909 her family was among the founders of Tel Aviv and in World War I, they were among all the residents of Tel Aviv expelled by the Turkish. Ziona graduated from Gymnasia Herzlia, belonged to the “Battalion of the Defenders of the Hebrew Language,” and was a member of the Haganah. In 1927, under the influence of her cousin Moshe Sharett, she went to London to study education. Influenced by Chana Maisel and with financial aid from Lady Samuel (a cousin of High Commissioner Herbert Samuel), Ziona changed her course of study to economics and nutrition. She received her bachelor’s degree in economics from the University of London and worked for a year as a teacher of chemistry and home economics at the agricultural school in Nahalal. Afterward she managed WIZO’s nutritional instruction and guidance department. She was a consultant for kibbutz kitchens and helped establish the first kitchens in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces). In the course of her work she met and married Prof. Erwin Rabau, a Berlin-born gynecologist. She wrote two books: *Tel Aviv on the Dunes* and *Back to Tel Aviv*, both in Hebrew.

**Rosenfeld, Rachel** (1892–1967). Born in Russia, she immigrated with her sister as part of the Second Aliyah. Rachel worked as a seamstress and cook in the Shomrin kitchen in Hadera, but owing to the demeaning attitude toward her, she left to work in the laborers’ kitchen. Rachel studied at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret and worked at the “Migdal farm,” where she learned how
to milk from a Bedouin woman. During World War I, she helped Chana Chizik found the women workers’ group in Tiberias. Rachel joined Kibbutz Ein Harod, was one of the founders of the livestock branch, and later worked in the vineyard.

**Rosov, Esther** (1888–1970). The daughter of Sarah Miriam and Asher Rosov, an active member of Hovevei Zion in Russia, Esther immigrated to Eretz Yisrael with her large family in 1906. At age sixteen she enrolled in a teachers seminar in Belgium. Upon the conclusion of her studies, she became “stuck” in Egypt because of the outbreak of World War I. There she volunteered to help soldiers and families who had been expelled from Eretz Yisrael. In Egypt she met Yosef Trumpeldor who had returned from Gallipoli with the remnant of his soldiers of the Mule Brigade. She taught him French and became his fiancée. When the war ended, she returned to Eretz Yisrael. The scenes of destruction in the country made a deep impression upon her and led her to seek a way to contribute to the reconstruction. To achieve this end she studied agriculture and home economics at the University of California at Davis. To gain practical experience, she accompanied an extension teacher working within the framework of the Smith-Lever Law. Next she studied academic and practical home economics at Corvallis University in Oregon. Rosov returned to Palestine in 1921 and was recruited by Meisel for the teaching staff of the cooking courses in Tel Aviv. Rosov initiated agricultural extension work operated by WIZO. In 1923 she married Moshe Uzieli, chief secretary of the Jaffa–Tel Aviv Community Committee, one of the leaders of the General Zionists. They had one daughter, Miriam. In 1927 and 1935 she replaced Meisel as director of the Nahalal school, when Meisel went abroad for additional education.

**Samuel, Hadassah** (1897–1983). Hadassah was born in Jaffa to Yehuda Grasovsky (Gur), a First Aliyah linguist and writer.
She completed high school in Eretz Yisrael and studied at the University of Geneva. In 1920 she married Edwin Samuel, the son of Herbert Samuel, the first British High Commissioner. A member of the WIZO Executive in Eretz Yisrael in the 1920s, she became its chairperson in 1930, and from 1949, was secretary of World WIZO.

**Schidlowsky, Aliza** (1895–1983). Born in Russia, Aliza immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1913. She studied at the Women’s Training Farm and was active in establishing the women workers’ movement. In 1922 she joined Kibbutz Kinneret, Aliza continued her involvement with the Women Workers’ Council and went on many missions on its behalf to Europe and the United States. After the establishment of the State of Israel, she directed the Aliyah Department of the Women Workers’ Council, and from 1951 to 1970 directed the Mishan Center (for social welfare) of the General Histadrut.

**Sieff, Rebecca** (1890–1966). Born in England to the Marks family, Rebecca studied literature at the University of Manchester. Simultaneous with her Zionist activity, she agitated for women’s suffrage in England. In 1918 Rebecca served on the council of the English Zionist Federation. At her initiative, the women decided to separate themselves from the men’s organization and established the Federation of Women Zionists in Britain. Together with her future husband, Lord Israel Sieff, she met Chaim Weizmann and became part of his inner circle before World War I. In April 1920, she participated in the San Remo Conference at which international allied powers decided to include the Balfour Declaration in England’s mandate over Eretz Yisrael. That year Rebecca Sieff prompted the establishment of WIZO and was elected its president, a role she filled for over forty years. Sieff built her home in Tel Mond in 1934. She testified before UNSCOP.
(1947) as a representative of Jewish women's organizations. After the establishment of the State of Israel she immigrated and transferred WIZO's center from England to Israel. She was awarded an OBE by the British government in 1960 for her activity on behalf of society and the Zionist movement.

**Shochat (née Wilbushevitz), Manya** (1880–1961). Born in Russia, Manya was a revolutionary at a young age and in 1899 was arrested by the Okhrana, the Tsar's secret service. After her release, she established the "Jewish Independent Labor Party." Under the influence of her brother, Gedalia, she went to Eretz Yisrael in 1904 and became a Zionist. In 1905 Manya traveled to the Zionist Congress in Basel as a delegate and remained in Europe to raise money and acquire weapons for self-defense in Russia. In late 1906 she visited the United States to study various forms of communal settlement and to collect money for that type of community in Eretz Yisrael. Upon her return, she took part in the Bar Giora secret society and founded the collective at Sejera, the nucleus of the Hashomer organization. During World War I she was exiled to Turkey together with her husband, Israel Shochat. After the war she was active in the Poalei Zion party, was one of the initiators for the establishment of the Histadrut, and active in the Haganah. She was one of the leaders of Gedud haAvodah and a member of Kibbutz Kfar Giladi. Her personality and activity inspired many and several books and articles have been written about her.

**Stein, Nadia** (1891–1961). Born in Odessa, Nadia studied history and geography at the University of Vienna, and then economics and history in Zurich, receiving a doctorate in 1919. Nadia married Herbert Orenstein and worked in Vienna with Jewish refugees from the pogroms in Russia and Poland. She took part in WIZO's founding conference in 1921 in Carlsbad and helped form WIZO Romania. Nadia was active in the WIZO branches in
Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary and wrote articles for the Zionist press. She spent 1926–28 in the United States where she was active in Hadassah. In 1928 she founded the Berlin branch of WIZO. Four years later she immigrated to Eretz Yisrael and was active in WIZO’s Information and Publications Department. As a result of the mass immigration after the establishment of the State of Israel, Stein went to Sweden to study social work with a grant from WIZO. In Haifa she worked to found the first clubs for the parents of new immigrants who suffered from linguistic, cultural, and social alienation.

**Shturman (Carol), Atara** (1893–1973). Born in the Ukraine, Atara immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1907 and worked in Manya Shochat’s collective at Sejera. She joined the Hashomer organization, was one of the students in the first class at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, was one of the first women at Ein Harod and was a designer of collective education in the kibbutz. Atara Shturman was active in absorbing immigrant children and youth into kibbutzim. Her son Moshe fell in the War of Independence and her two grandsons were casualties of the War of Attrition.

**Szold, Henrietta** (1860–1945). Born in the United States, Henrietta was active among Jewish immigrants in America and was involved in the care and education of children. Henrietta studied Judaism at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and devoted herself to Zionist, cultural, and Jewish public activity. In 1907 she founded the women’s organization named Daughters of Zion, for the study of Jewish and Zionist issues. In 1909, together with her mother, she visited Eretz Yisrael for the first time, and upon her return, she traveled to Jewish communities throughout the United States on behalf of the people of Eretz Yisrael. In 1912 she founded the Hadassah Organization for practical work
to aid Zionism and became its first president. Szold organized the first Hadassah medical mission to the country (forty-four physicians and nurses who made up the nucleus of the Hadassah Medical Organization in Eretz Yisrael). In 1920 at the age of 60, she immigrated to Eretz Yisrael and personally directed Hadassah affairs. In 1927 she became the first woman to be elected to the Zionist Executive and directed its Department of Education and Health. From 1933 on, she was in charge of the endeavor to settle and absorb German immigrants in Eretz Yisrael and of Aliyat Hanoar (Youth Aliya). Kibbutz Kfar Szold is named for her.

Thon, Hanna (1886–1953). Born in Germany, Hanna graduated high school and studied sociology at universities in Berlin and Munich. Next she worked as a journalist and published articles in Yiddishe Rundschau, Der Jude, Die Welt, Haaretz, Davar, Yediot ha-Aliyyah ha-Haddashah, Ha-Ishah, and various German newspapers. As a writer for Die Welt, she spent 1911-12 in the United States, where she founded a Yiddish weekly called Nyu Yorker. In 1913 Arthur Ruppin invited her to serve as the secretary of the Palestine Office in Jaffa. Thon reached Jaffa but was forced to leave upon the outbreak of World War I. During the war she continued to participate in various Zionist activities, and even relocated to Denmark when the Zionist Executive moved there. After the war Thon moved from Denmark to England, where she took part in the founding conference of WIZO. Earlier (1914) she had been appointed to head the information bureau of the Palestine Office in Berlin. In 1920 she was elected chair of WIZO Germany, and in 1921 she immigrated to Eretz Yisrael. Hanna Thon played a key role in the Federation of Jewish Women and served as chair of the organization from 1927 to 1928. In 1926–29 she edited the journal Ha-Ishah and was elected to the executive of the German Immigrants’ Association. In 1936 she founded and taught at the Center for Social Work in Jerusalem’s Nahalat Ahim neighborhood;
she was the second wife of Yaacov Thon.

**Thon, Sarah** (1881–1920). Born in Lvov, Galicia, Sarah studied at the first gymnasium for girls in Lvov, where she was an outstanding student. The young Thon became an active Zionist and feminist owing to the strengthening of the Zionist women’s movement in her city. At age seventeen she met Yaacov Thon, her age-mate and future husband, went to Berlin by herself to acquire further education and worked in the statistics office of Nossig and Ruppin as well as in the Bureau for Jewish Statistics. In addition, Sarah gained practical experience in cottage industries in a village Oppenheimer founded in Germany. She immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1907 with her husband, Ruppin’s deputy in the Palestine Office. Sarah was the Kulturverband’s representative in Eretz Yisrael. She founded lace-making schools in Jaffa, Jerusalem, Tiberias, Ekron, and Safed and helped with the establishment of the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret. After WWI she was an energetic worker for women’s right.

**Udin, Sophie** (1896–1960). Born in the Ukraine, Sophie immigrated as a child to the United States with her socialist parents. At the age of thirteen she joined the American Poalei Zion Party, which promoted socialism, Zionism, and the battle against assimilation. She studied librarianship at Columbia University, worked in a public library in New York City, established the American Magen David organization in 1918 and was its secretary in 1918–1919. In 1921, 1925, and 1927 she made trips to Eretz Yisrael and helped establish the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem. Together with six other women belonging to the Poalei Zion Party, she established Pioneer Women, the women’s organization of Poalei Zion in the United States. In 1949 she came on *aliyah* to Israel and was appointed by David Ben-Gurion to found and manage the State Archives.
Warburg (Cohen), Anna (1864–1937). Born in Port Elizabeth, Cape Province (today, South Africa), to Gustav Gabriel Cohen and Hannah Dehan, Anna moved with her family to England in 1874 and in 1880 to Hamburg, Germany. Anna grew up in a Zionist family; her father was an importer and banker. In 1892 she married Otto Warburg, later the third president of the Zionist Federation. After her marriage she moved from Hamburg to Berlin. She had four children: Edgar (1893), Gertrude (1895), Siegmund (1896), and Gustav Otto (1900). In 1907, when the Eighth Zionist Congress convened in The Hague, the Verband Jüdischer Frauen für Kulturarbeit in Palästina (Kulturverband, for short) was founded, with Anna among its initiators. Likewise, she was active in the Jewish women's movement and in 1923 was elected head of the World Congress of Jewish Women that met in Vienna. Owing to her daughter's health problems, her attempt to join her husband, who served as the head of the Botany Department at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, did not succeed, and she had to return to Berlin. Anna died in Berlin in 1937. The ashes of Anna, Otto, and their daughter, Gertrude, were buried in the cemetery of Kibbutz Deganya.

Welt Straus, Rosa (1856–1938). Born in Bukovina, Rosa was one of the first women to graduate in medicine in Europe. After her studies, she moved to the United States, worked as an ophthalmologist in New York City, and was active in the movement for women’s suffrage. Rosa immigrated to Eretz Yisrael on the first American ship to reach the area after World War I. Within two months of her arrival in 1919, she became head of the Association of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Eretz Yisrael and served as its “foreign minister.” She participated in WIZO’s founding conference in 1920 and was a member of various international women’s organizations. Rosa Welt Straus came to
the country as a mature person with a great deal of experience, education, and international connections and she put them at the disposal of the women’s movement in the Yishuv.

**Weizmann, Vera** (1881–1966). Born in Russia, Vera studied medicine in Geneva, where she met Chaim Weizmann, her future husband, and became sympathetic to the Zionist idea. After completing her studies, she married Weizmann and moved to Manchester, England, where she gave birth to two sons. In 1913 she received her British medical license and worked as a pediatrician in a Manchester slum. In 1920, a year after her visit to Eretz Yisrael, Vera became a founder of WIZO. She was the organization’s treasurer and one of its leaders. Vera and Chaim immigrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1934, upon the foundation of the Sieff Institute (later the Weizmann Institute of Science) and spent World War II in England. Vera was active in Youth Aliyah during the war. She lost her son Michael, a pilot in the British Air Force, a casualty of World War II. After the war Vera and Chaim returned to their home in Rehovot. She wrote *The Impossible Takes Longer* (1967) about her life with the first president of Israel.

**Yaffe, Anna** (?–1938). The wife of Bezalel Yaffe, Anna was one of the first women active in WIZO in Eretz Yisrael; specifically, she was one of the first teachers and counselors at the Hostel. After her death, the Training Hostel of Domestic Economy and Agriculture was named for Anna Yaffe.

**Yanait Ben-Zvi, Rachel** (1886–1979). Born in the Ukraine, Rachel studied Hebrew in a heder (elementary religious school) and completed one year of university studies. In 1906 she participated in the founding of the Poalei Zion Party at the Poltava Conference. In 1908 she immigrated to Eretz Yisrael and became a member of Hashomer. In 1911 Rachel went to France to study agricultural
engineering at Nancy University. Upon her return to Eretz Yisrael in 1914 she worked for a time at the experimental farm at Athlit with Aaron Aaronsohn and took part in the activities of Hashomer in the Galilee. Rachel was one of the founders of the Poalei Zion Party’s organ, *Ha-Ahdut* as well as of the Hebrew Gymansium school in the Rehavia neighborhood of Jerusalem where she taught. One of the founders of the Ahdut ha-Avodah Party and the Histadrut, she was also one of the main activists in the Haganah and a founder of the Women Workers’ Council. In 1921 Rachel gathered war orphans in Jerusalem and together with them established a tree nursery that evolved into the women workers’ farm in Jerusalem and later into an agricultural school. She attended Zionist Congresses, a Socialist International Convention, and an international convention of women workers. Rachel visited the United States on behalf of the women worker’s movement; and helped organize Pioneer Women and the League of Jewish Women there. Rachel visited Syria and Lebanon and assisted in bringing young women to Eretz Yisrael from these areas for training at the educational farm and the women workers’ farms. Her son, Eli, was killed in the War of Independence. Her husband, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, was chosen as second president of the State of Israel. After his death, she established and fostered Yad Ben-Zvi, an institution in Jerusalem to promote study of the Yishuv. Rachel wrote several books and articles. In 1978 she was awarded the Israel Prize for her special contribution to society.

**Yevnin, Rosza.** Rosza studied agriculture in Berlin and in 1921 immigrated to Eretz Yisrael with her husband, Moshe Yevnin. She was a teacher of the cooking courses and coordinated the work of WIZO’s extension services’ instructors.
Appendix 2

Flow Chart of Women’s Organizations and Institutions for Agricultural Training
Appendix 3

A Day at the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret by Alfreda Bambus, 1914

“The Fifth Annual Report contains an article by Dr. Maisel-Shochat on the aims and purpose of the Women’s Training Farm.” The function of the farm is the education and training of the Jewish woman toward settlement on the land—the young women will learn the function and duties that will prepare them to work and earn their keep on agricultural farms as laborers. Similarly, each of them will stand alongside the independent farmer as a loyal wife who will be able to manage a rural household. The Training Farm as an independent entity is merely in its second year, and only in October 1913 did it manage to recruit a second teacher in addition to the director who carries a heavy workload. On the administrative side, this is a teacher of home economics as well as animal husbandry and the raising of poultry. Even though last year the young women agreed to engage in the various tasks of housework, it now will be possible to have ongoing, systematic study of home management theory along with the care of farm animals. In carrying out practical work according to theoretical instruction, the girls came to understand that they would have an important role in the future as managers of groups of workers or as wives alongside their farmer husbands as well as mothers of their children. They would allow the worker who had volunteered to engage in backbreaking physical labor for ideological reasons to return to nature. Without a diligent wife, the settler cannot insure the future of his plot of land. These girls, who in the past had found physical labor contemptuous—since they knew no other tradition—took pride in the important role assigned to the Jewish female farmer in the new settling of Eretz Yisrael. The

1 CZA A76/1, from the Sixth Annual Report of the Kulturverband.
feeling that they were taking an unforgettable part in creating the new homeland for the next generation gave the young women the ability to overcome many obstacles during their working hours and beyond. They engage in their studies with joy and persistence. The lively social life within a rich, organized daily schedule contributes to the enrichment of their emotional life. Please spend one workday with me on the Women’s Training Farm:

Ring, ring, ring: 5 a.m. The full moon is still peeping through the window. Sleepy limbs are already getting ready for action—a wide yawn, and the girl on duty jumps out of bed. She quickly puts on a dress, runs to the kitchen, lights the fire, and puts water on for tea. Then she wakes her colleagues. They air the beds and get dressed. The washroom in my room sounds like the rushing of a small, joyous stream. Everyone is awake now and you can already hear singing. At six they eat a simple meal: dry bread, olives, and tea. They make the beds. Then they go out to the field together with the director, Dr. Maisel. “Girls, where’s the breakfast?” Bruria almost forgot to bring the tomato salad. All of them are full of pride over these tomatoes, the first crop of the season! We feed ourselves now only from vegetables we have grown by ourselves! “And don’t forget to bring me 10 kilo spinach, 24 heads of lettuce, and 7 kilo beans. A bit of greens for the heifers,” I remind the girls. Now the house and the garden are empty. Only three girls remain in the house for various tasks. Girls are working in the yard and the tree nursery; one girl is taking care of the kitchen garden. The work schedule is as follows: each student works for three months in the house and kitchen, three months with the farm animals, in the tree nursery, and in the kitchen garden, and the rest of the time in the field.

A glance into the kitchen: My two cooks are preparing lunch. The third is taking care of straightening up the rooms and cleaning the lamps. They really shine! Today they are baking bread; all of us participate in this task. Afterward I run to the yard. The cows
are impatiently awaiting their send off to the pasture. “Hurry up, hurry up, wild beast,” I hear from the barn. It seems that Bilha is not getting along with the cow today. Bilha is a seventeen-year-old woman who works courageously and diligently, a daughter of settlers. The “first” cow, which really is the first of the barn’s inhabitants, is rather wild and “lacking any discipline,” like all the Arab cows. After calming words and patience on our side, as well as giving her fodder and some greens, we finally, finally manage to get ten cups of milk from her. This is an achievement for an Arab cow. But we do not want to sell her, this wild one. No other cow on the farm is as beautiful or as well built. The shine of her black coat attests to our good treatment of her. Every day we brush the cows and clean the barn well. Three cows and three calves are standing here. Next month we are getting three more cows and then the barn will be full since some of the cows are awaiting first-time calving. The heifer, Havivah, the daughter of the “first” cow, enjoys the love of all the young women on the farm.

Now, let’s go to the pasture. The heifers as well as young donkeys gaily jump about the green pasture. For here it is already spring, everything is covered with refreshing green and colorful flowers. But vegetables for feeding the cows are also available since Mrs. Maisel took care to prepare food for the cows long before the first cow was purchased. The seventy chickens get all the leftovers from the kitchen. Even the geese are let out of their pen and waddle about the yard. Now all the equipment in the yard is being cleaned. How clean and nice everything looks. Disinfection takes place every week, the walls are whitewashed, the beams and boards of the chicken coop are sanded. A veritable parlor for the chickens. All of our poultry manage to grow. Eight of our ten geese are incubating eggs. The two “widowed” ganders go about sadly. But we are happy that the number of our geese is growing. We want to increase the number of our chickens through artificial incubation.

After the work described above in the yard is done, the girls
work in the tree nursery under the guidance of Dr. Shochat. Here they raise and nurture thousand of small trees, many of them will be sold later to farmers in the nearby moshavot, with others are being planted on the farm itself.

Before I go back to the house I approach the person responsible for the kitchen garden and ask what she will be able to supply for our kitchen in the coming days. We make a weekly plan. The girls compose the menus for lunch and evening for the week. That way they learn to organize their work well. Every evening they assemble the products for the coming day. The [supply] orders from Tiberias have to be prepared in advance. Hanging in the kitchen is a board on which the girls write down the items that have been used up and what has to be ordered from Tiberias. That system teaches the girls to take responsibility for their own work. On the day they don’t bake bread, they have to prepare the dough for noodles and all kinds of baked goods. On Thursday they clean the cabinets and the windows. On Friday they cook a lot because on the Sabbath they eat only food prepared in advance. Proudly, the young women try to serve a baked item with the Sabbath meals, but since we do not yet have a European burner for baking, this is quite difficult to accomplish. To bake a portion for twenty people on an open coal fire takes a long time. So often on Thursday evening they have to work until 10 p.m.

The young women are diligent and always ready for any job. For three months they learn how to cook a simple but tasty meal for a workers’ kitchen. We stress the nutritional value of a healthy, rational kitchen. In the meantime, many girls, former students, are managing workers’ kitchens. To enrich the menus, they have begun energetically to raise various kinds of vegetables. Every month one of the students helps me with the monthly accounting. That way the girls get an idea of the planning of our household, so that they will know how to manage their own future home units. To complement the practical work, the students are given
lessons in the study of food and the nutritional value of each food. Similarly, they receive different recipes for dishes and after a few weeks the students come to know how to calculate, financially, the cost of each meal and to adjust the menu according to our general situation. During the three months of house and kitchen work, beyond the study of cooking, emphasis is placed on implementing order and cleanliness in the home out of a sense of responsibility and dedication to work.

In the meantime lunch has been prepared and the girls return from the field, shouldering their tools and holding baskets full of vegetables. Today the first shipment of vegetables is going off to Tiberias. Tomorrow crates [of produce] will be sent for sale in Haifa, Mrs. Shochat is proud!

The bell rings now. The girl on duty quickly sets the table. Washed and combed, we sit down to eat. Today there is “Primavera Soup” and spinach with egg. One girl asks, “What big eggs, are they the ones laid by our chickens?” The cook smiles and says, “These are goose eggs!” The tables are cleared, the room is swept—time for the afternoon break. Then they drink tea and go back to work. In the kitchen they wash dishes and again bake bread for dinner. We always have soup and cooked vegetables or porridge made from legumes, sometimes also an egg dish or vegetable patties. It is very difficult to prepare two cooked meals a day, lunch time and evening. Also, the second breakfast for the next day has to be readied. Only of late do we have turnips and lettuce and sometimes leben [cultured milk]. In the summer everything will certainly be easier. But then it will be necessary to preserve fruits and vegetables, and without a cellar that is difficult. In the afternoon another three girls stay in the house; they are the “washerwomen” of the week. Today, they are soaking the underwear; laundry is done almost every week, and every two weeks there is a “big” laundry. A pile of clean underwear will be distributed on Friday.
It is now 3:30 p.m., what do we have for the field workers? We still have homemade orange marmalade, so I spread it on a few slices. Look, Bilha has already shown up from the yard. We laugh. Her stomach is as precise as a clock. After she has fed the chickens and the geese, she takes the meal she deserves.

Now I go to the field because I have the pleasant task of taking care of the girls and bringing them the food. They are spread out all over the field. So I march slowly from one to the other. The women workers’ farm is cultivating 70 dunams. The field is Dr. Shochat’s main work area, and each of the girls wants to be her pupil. They learn the cultivation of various kinds of vegetables.

This year they will sell many hundreds of orange trees from the nursery. The sweet smell of the almond blossoms fills the air. The silvery leaves of the olives quiver in the air. Mrs. Shochat has planted a lovely boulevard of casuarina trees that will grow over the course of time. They will turn into large trees as will the other small trees that will cast their shadows in the coming years.

Here in Palestina the planting of trees is considered extremely important. At present, the girls are expanding the Herzl Forest by planting cypress trees; they have also planted eucalyptus trees, which are very important for drying the swamps. A large area is covered with mangelwurzel, herbage and grasses for our farm animals. Every day I am pleased to see the progress in the field. How nicely our girls learn to persist in their work and keep everything good and clean. If after two years they will take from here only devotion and diligence in work, that alone would make our great efforts worthwhile—a few hours to go until the end of the work. At sunset the girls come back to the house. But the workday is not over. They wash up and refresh themselves. In the summer it’s a dip in the Kinneret. In the farmyard, they still take care of the animals and the milking, and they put a protective covering over the tender tree seedlings. In this season, they eat dinner at seven. Afterward the girls have Hebrew lessons in
different groups. It is important for them to learn the language and have command of it. Even though Hebrew is the official spoken language, the girls still lack a profound knowledge of the tongue, and they try to make up for it. Similarly, they receive lessons in Jewish history.

Twice a week Dr. Shochat teaches cultivation of vegetables and plant physiology. There is great interest in these topics among the girls. I also give classes twice a week. One evening is devoted to teaching cooking, and the other, in particular, to taking care of sick animals. The number of classes changes depending upon the season; there are none in the summer. In the rainy season we pay attention to all kinds of repair jobs in the house and yard. The girls sew and mend clothes, and now I am teaching them to crochet. This is especially pleasurable. As soon as one project is completed, a buyer is found for it. But we do not have a great deal of time for all this, since the rainy season at Kinneret is not long.

Week after week of our organized and full lives passes quickly. The girls can spend Shabbat any way they want. Whoever feels like it can take part in a joint field trip. Longer trips are made on the holidays such as Tu b’Shevat or Purim. The landscape around Kinneret is wonderful. Everyone agrees there is nothing more beautiful. Our students are always excited anew by the view of the Kinneret panorama that changes every day, sometimes every hour. All of our girls, most of whom had lived until now in the dank, depressing small towns of Russia, feel the purifying influence of nature and its peaceful calm. At first it was difficult for them, but in the interim they have gotten used to the landscape and to rural life. They feel happy when, during hard physical labor, they lift their eyes to the snowy mountain top of Mount Hermon. Not one of them would forgo a moonlit boat ride on the Kinneret or another nighttime hike. The strenuous labor of the daytime is forgotten, and we are united with all those who are fighting the return to our ancient homeland and for the strengthening of the
Jewish woman’s status.
Appendix 4

LETTERS:
A Review of the Agricultural School for Young Women in Eretz Yisrael

Our main aspiration in Eretz Yisrael is to create a free working Hebrew Yishuv—and for the large part a Yishuv engaged in agriculture, which will strike strong roots in the soil, will be nurtured from the source, and will serve as a firm spiritual, physical, and economic basis for the entire nation. Our land is not developed: this has both a positive and a negative side—positive, because if that’s the situation, we can develop it as we wish. We can acquire it for ourselves through the force of work; we can, if we really want, become the majority; negative—the great difficulty in creating a working Yishuv, supporting itself from working the land in a place where agriculture is at its lowest level and cannot serve as an example for settlers on a site where the conditions have not been prepared and where everything has to been done while groping in the dark—to these difficult conditions there is added another problem—and it is that most of the Jewish people who immigrate here as well as the Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael are not natural-born farmers. Not only that, until now they have lived a life far removed from physical labor in general and from rural life in particular. Our young men and women come to the country with the clear recognition and good, strong will to give up their urban lives and devote themselves to rural life and a life of work, but despite their good will, despite their devotion, they fall under the heavy burden of difficult conditions, since they are ill-equipped with regard to the necessary knowledge and they lack self-preparation.

If one of the main reasons for the lack of success of agricultural work in our land is a deficiency in knowing how to work and not having prepared themselves for this endeavor—it is possible to
clear this stumbling block from our path, now full of thorns and obstacles, we need to establish agricultural schools in our country so as to provide a portion of our young generation with the opportunity to study agriculture while at the same time to prepare themselves for rural life and develop a love for and emotional connection to this life.

The school’s influence, of course, would not be immediate. But it is inevitable, and there is no doubt that by systematic work such as this we will ultimately attain the goal. All nations organically linked to their land, have blanketed their countries with a growing network of agricultural schools, so as to train increasing numbers of farmers for their work. Thanks to their knowledge, these agriculturalists will later create conditions so that the land and people's labor will provide the maximum income possible. And we, who for many generations have been far from the soil and labor, do we have another way that is closer to us?

Only a large number of diligent men and women laborers who will be bound body and soul to this work, who will know their craft well, and who will work systematically and knowledgeably will be able to develop agriculture, to raise it to the necessary level so that its workers will be able to make a decent living and to create Hebrew (i.e. Jewish) rural life. They, they are the ones who will bring about the necessary conditions in our country, so that in time it will be able to absorb and provide for all of our brethren who in their distress are knocking on its doors … only hard-working hands and enlightened minds who know how to do the job will create the new Yishuv … the worker who will be worthy of the national home to which we have aspired for two thousand years.

Even though not enough has been done in Eretz Yisrael until now for the agricultural education of the young, there are a number of beginnings: there is an agricultural school for children at Mikve Israel; and there are a few collective and individual farms
on which the young men working on them can more or less learn the job. This does not apply to young women. Unfortunately, there is not one institution in the country that is capable of teaching our young ladies about rural work nor of giving them the opportunity to learn the agriculture branches that belong to women’s realm of activity. [This is the case] even though it has been agreed that no agricultural farm will succeed without a loving female farmer who is aware of her obligations and knows how to fulfill them, working hand in hand with the male agricultural worker.

For about seven years there was a small training farm for young women at Kinneret. And despite its limited scope, its primitive living conditions, and meager, insufficient means, this farm was quite successful. Most of its students continued to work. They played, and to this day continue to play, an important, distinctive role in our agricultural life. The experience of this small farm made us realize that our young women not only can adapt themselves to all branches of an agricultural farm, but when they acquire the knowledge necessary for this type of work, they labor consciously with love and devotion and find satisfaction in this life of work and responsibility.

Two and half years ago, owing to the war, this small farm, the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret, was closed. So, there is now a great need to open agricultural educational institutions for young women, especially now, when we are trying to do so much for the Yishuv, agricultural work must be paramount. But how can we carry out this task and attain more or less satisfactory results, if we do not take care of training the woman for her role before it is too late? Hebrew rural life will not be built without the active participation of the woman, and this participation cannot be productive without advance preparation.

Beyond the needs of the Yishuv, [training] is imperative for the woman as a source for her livelihood. The woman is the weaker party in society and the struggle for her maintenance is
more difficult. This problem exists in all countries—and is even
greater in an undeveloped country such as ours. In Jerusalem and
Safed hundreds of young women are wallowing in poverty and
idleness, from which they have no way to extricate themselves.
And what about our halutzot who undoubtedly will soon burst
upon the scene in Eretz Yisrael? They will encounter starvation and
annihilation if we do not prepare them before their arrival. And
if a great deal of work preparing the soil, paving roads, draining
swamps, and so on, is found for unskilled young men lacking any
trade, I see not even one job in the country which is able to employ
a more or less respectable number of young ladies or women.

Despite the equal political rights the woman has received in
nearly every country, Zionist women feel how great inequality is in
reality, in life, especially in the struggle for existence. How much
weaker are the women and in need of help. Women must take
responsibility for training our young ladies and women so that
they will be able to fulfill their aspiration … and their justifiable
demand to be a productive element in Eretz Yisrael and to take
an active part in building the country. In this honorable work, the
woman will find the opportunity to meet both her familial and
national obligations. She will find spiritual satisfaction and the
finest bread—a direct result of physical labor. To make available
to the young women a life of labor and dignity in Eretz Yisrael,
Zionist women must spread a network of agricultural education
institutions over Eretz Yisrael that will train the woman for a life
of work and rural living in such a manner that the woman will be
able to draw her sustenance from her work or will be able to see her
husband’s farm firmly established through her assistance.

These institutions will train female agriculture workers around
whom it will be possible later to concentrate and employ new
young women (just as in the wartime the unemployed young
women gathered together and toiled with the female agriculture
workers who had come from the Women’s Training Farm at
Kinneret). These agricultural educational institutions will also be places that will deal with solutions for the questions most vital for the working woman, such as the development of professions within agricultural work that belong to the sphere of women’s work and the opening of new sources of work for the woman. This agricultural school and its students will try to develop women’s professions and to raise them to such a level that many young ladies and women will be able, through their being occupied in these farming branches, to earn a respectable income.

The first task of the Zionist women, therefore, must be—the organization, as soon as possible, of a central agricultural school for young women in Eretz Yisrael (afterward the founding of other such schools).

Signed

H. Maisel-Shochat

Jerusalem, July 11, 1920
From Maisel to the Settlement Department

Jan. 2, 1923

To the Directorate of the Settlement and Agriculture Department
Jerusalem

Dear Sirs,

I am hereby informing you that I have begun work on organizing the Agricultural School for Young Women. I have purchased a good pair of working mules with their appurtenances (cart, harnesses, and so on), I have begun to purchase from “Hiram” the needed lumber for constructing the cabins, which will serve for the needs of the location and for housing the students, who will be accepted just as soon as this apartment will be ready, and for building chicken coops for raising poultry. I have started to prepare the items needed for a tree nursery and more. All these beginnings immediately require the anticipated funds. Sowing, animal feed, worker’s wages, paying for jobs and the materials mentioned that cannot be obtained from “Hiram” for erecting the cabins and the coops, planters and other items for the nurseries, providing for the first students (about ten in number), and so on.

From the Settlement and Agriculture Department I have received in cash the sum of 150 EP, all of which was used for buying the working mules and cart. Still needed, therefore, is a sum of money for starting the work detailed above. Now, I am asking your good selves to send me as soon as possible at least 200 EP.

Sincerely yours,

Chana Maisel Shochat

P.S. Beside everything else, the school owes the moshav more than fifty EP for the parcellation and plowing of part of our land, which was done before the rains.
From Eliezer to Chana
Sunday, Jan. 28, 1923

My Dear Chana,

Do not be too sorry if the things do not proceed as they should and do not let this dampen your spirit. This will all pass and change. You really must take a break for some time from the various troubles and irritating annoyances that your work has recently been causing you. Aren’t you already an important homeowner in Nahalal? Now you have a home with a veranda and also … a loyal friend, Hanusya. You have a private corner and you can [rest], so don’t be sad my dear.

Our bungalow already has a tiled roof, all its external walls, and some of its internal walls. The carpenters only have to finish the latter to make a ceiling and to put in the doors. The large room will remain for the present without a divider. “Carmel” has promised to finish the windows early next week. Segal is going to Haifa tomorrow, and I will ask him to look into this. No floor has been made as yet, and we will use a mat. The bungalow is rather roomy and good, but it cost a lot of money. I think up to ninety lirot (Egyptian Pounds) without the floor. I have already brought in the earth.

The cabin for the school will also be ready soon. Only a few roof tiles will be missing. The entire frame, including the roof, stands ready. They have begun to prepare the external walls, and it seems that in another two-three days they will finish it.

Shlein has carried out a few jobs by using the mules: he brought wood for the cabins, filled them with earth, brought stones for the foundation of the second cabin. And today he plowed and loosened the earth. Tomorrow he will bring manure from Jabta, and after that, if it doesn’t rain, he will continue plowing.

Last week I helped him with various tasks—this week I can no longer do that, since I will be busy with the farm.
Today I began digging planting holes for the eucalyptus. I prepared 100 holes. Tomorrow I will continue working on this.

See you soon, Hanusya.
I send you warm regards and hug you with great love.

Yours,

Eliezer
From Eliezer to Chana (on her way to the 13th Zionist Congress in Carlsbad)
Nahalal Tuesday
July 24, 1923

My Dear Chana,

I am wondering and very saddened at not having received any letter from you, neither before your trip nor after it. The most recent letter I got from you was last Tuesday. In that one you asked me to arrange the bills for the trees the men of the moshav took, and also to tell the kibbutz to hold off starting the second wall until you write to Vamush. What happened next, when you set out on your journey, how you went, whether you got a good berth on the ship, your health situation and your mood—I know none of this. This lack of information is slowly making me worry about your welfare. Even without this anxiety I have an emotional need to be in contact with you through frequent letters, my dear. And this limping start scares me. Please try, Hanusya, since the continuity will be better.

To calm you down, I want to give you a short report on the situation and on what’s going on with your projects.

1. Nursery—Everything is just the same. From time to time they suffer from a lack of water. But they are managing, more or less. Yesterday, before evening a message came from Tel Shamam that the flowerpots had arrived from Ramleh, and today they began to work with them.

2. Vegetable nursery—The cabbage, cauliflower, and beets that were planted in the crates have already sprouted, and sprouted well. We have begun to make the plant beds in the spot you chose. Seeds have already been planted in two of them.

The members of kibbutz Mishmar ha-Emek prior to their settling permanently on their land worked at Nahalal and built the first structures for the school there; Vamush was the engineer who planned the second wall in defense of the moshav.
3. **Building the chicken coops**—Two of the large foundations are ready. The laying of the foundations for the smaller coops is continuing according to the plan you made. They will be the same size as the finished coop. Levin thinks—justifiably—that it would be better if all of them were the same size. In answer to my request, Levin came to the plot yesterday and, in my presence, showed the young man from the kibbutz how to do it.\(^3\) Now we can only hope that there will be no more mistakes. At present, Kraslavsky is finishing the coops at Levin’s. After the Sabbath he will turn to making the coops for the school. He gave me the list of boards needed for the frameworks of the coops and also the number of thin planks missing to finish the coop he started. About three cubic meters will be needed for the school. From the planks at hand, it will be possible to build almost all the coops (except for the roofs). For the small coop only one is missing or for half a coop. I still remember the instructions you gave me: as soon as they are constructed, we have to paint them. If they haven’t sent more lumber from Romania, I think it is worthwhile also to make the roofs immediately. The lumber needed for that is about six cubic meters. It will cost 25–30 lirot [EP]. For such a sum it is not worthwhile to wait until they ship them. You must take into consideration that what is received from “Hiram” doesn’t require cash payment.

4. **Plowing**—(a) On Tuesday, on the eve of your trip, I sent you a letter you can use for the Department of Agricultural Settlement. In that letter you ask that the department help you arrange for the plowing by pledging to pay you afterward. Three hundred dunams of regular plowing; twenty-five dunams of deep plowing. This should cost about 100 lirot [EP]. I made an effort for the letter to

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\(^3\) Members of kibbutz Mishmar ha-Emek
reach you before you left Jaffa. I do not know whether you received the letter or if you sent it to Jerusalem. It’s necessary to travel innumerable times. Therefore, I think things should be arranged as follows: the area to the west of the road should be left unplowed, as Wilkansky said, and only the deep plowing should be carried out on the lots, with the regular plowing being completed in the area to the east of the road. About 100 dunams of uncultivated and “Hasid” land remain. The plowing of these two areas could cost some fifty lirot [EP]; perhaps Koko will agree to take only part in cash and to receive the rest a few months later. (b) Kevutzat Merhavya does not want to lend the [plow] disk. They say that Wilkansky owes them a lot of money and will not return the equipment they still have from the experimental station. But if I promise to return the disk to them at the set time, they agree to lend it. I, of course, will do so. And when Shilman (the worker) finishes bringing the flowerpots from Tel Shamam, he will go to Merhavya to get the disk.

5. **Mule work**—For now there has been enough work for them. They pulled a cart of coarse sand to the barn wall for the storage shed. They brought earth and stones for the coops, soil from the forest for the nurseries, trees [for the fire] for washing undergarments, and when people bring us the disk, they will plow the overturned soil with it, and when the coops’ foundations are finished, they will bring soil and stones. We will try to make sure that the mules always have productive work. Later on, the animals can also haul the coarse sand for the homes we are thinking of building. I record the work of the mules.

6. **Erecting the barn and the wall**—The work is continuing; they have already set the iron pillars and the roof beams.

7. **Extension of the barn wall as a temporary storage shed**—
Shilman has brought one wagon of coarse sand from Haifa. The kibbutz asked him to bring no more for the present, as they can no longer deal with this job because they do not know how they will be paid for the work (it costs about 30 lirot [EP]). According to them, you were to conclude this with the Office of Public Works. The office in Haifa does not know if this payment has been arranged and is waiting for information from the Jaffa office or from Jerusalem. Because you may have arranged something with them, please let me know what to do about this.

8. Sketch of 2 lots for large houses— Marmoreck gave me the sketch and told me that Kaufmann still has to adjust it. I sent it to Miriam, right away I wrote her that she has to ask Kaufmann to take care of whatever is needed and send it to you with those leaving today or tomorrow for Carlsbad. Miriam certainly took care of this, and you will receive the sketch when you get this letter. I asked Komirnick to mark the large lots wherever markers are missing, and he promised to do so.

9. Today or tomorrow, I will take care of bills for the lumber the moshav men took. For now, I arranged the bill for Zarhi as you reminded me in your letter.

10. Water arrangements— As to the water arrangements, a question cropped up about drinking water. They examined the Madura well water and found dung bacteria. Thus, it is not fit for drinking. In the Shomron, according to the plan, the spring water is to be combined with the sewage water of […], so that it, too, will not be good for drinking. One of the meetings of the general assembly of the moshav was devoted to this issue, and they decided to arrange the Shomron water in line with Breuer’s plan and to begin to look for ways to organize special pipes for the spring water fit for drinking. In the meantime, they will have to drink
only boiled water. The water arrangement in the Shomron, therefore, is going to be taken care of right away.

With this I have finished the report. It turned out not to be short but rather too long, but I wanted you to be relaxed on your journey and not fear about what is going on here. So you must read this and then pay no more attention to these things. I would like you to inform me of two things: whether the lumber was sent from Romania, and how to arrange the payment to the kibbutz for continuing the wall for the storage shed. The other items I will try to deal with as best I can. I will send you, in addition to the list I sent to you in Jaffa, another two lists of professional books, one short and one long. The latter one contains a whole slew of popular booklets from one publisher. I have read two or three books from this publisher, and I found them very good and helpful for a popular library. Apparently, they are inexpensive. And the short list includes books that are more comprehensive, especially the books by C. Keller, J. Bezzner, and Josef Becker. It would be quite good if some branch of the Women's Association would want to buy them for the school. I would ask that you go over all three lists (of course, when you have the time) and choose the most necessary at this time, such as cultivating vegetable seeds, raising wheat [and] corn, plant diseases, green manure on clay soil. After that [I would like] booklets about how to build needed items for the home, garden, and so on out of wood. If they can be bought cheaply, it would be worthwhile for you to buy them for the school or even for us.

About myself, there's nothing to write. Only a few days have passed since we saw each other. In such a short time, big changes can't take place. I am trying to lead a normal life and hope that when you come back you will find me strong and healthy. For now I am very ill with pangs of yearning. And I fear that this disease will continue until your return …

And what's doing with you, Hanusya? How are you? How was
the journey, did you have a good place, good company, did you suffer—from seasickness? Did you meet with your brother? What I really wanted was that you should leave your worries and troubles aside for a while, that you take off the heavy hat of […] which causes you distress, and be a bit of a free person and take a clear, joyous, unhazy look at the world without your daily problems. Do this, my dear, at least for now when you are far from your place of work. And may this trip be a kind of rest at a summer home or a vacation trip. I am very happy that you will be seeing your closest relatives. There is something heartwarming in such meetings. In a short while you will be meeting with Leah, too, or perhaps you have already met. It seems that she is traveling on the same boat that the bearer of this letter is sailing on. They have given me regards from her. And Rabinowitz met her in Nazareth on her way to Jaffa to leave from there to go abroad. Please give your parents and all your relatives regards from me.

I am also sending you warm regards and hugging you with great love.

Yours,

Eliezer

For God’s sake, write me!
Eliezer to Chana
Haifa, 25 Elul 5683 (Sept. 2, 1923)

My dear Chana,

This morning the storage shed with the tools burned down. The only things remaining are the tiny incubator we received not long ago and a few small tools. I was not here for two days, I went to the moshavot to buy a mule for work, and I got back after the fire. Mrs. Levin told me the depressing news, and the only thing she was worried about was what would Miss Chana think about his. I told her that you would respond with fitting courage. Isn’t that so, Hanusya, you should try not to be too sad. There are greater misfortunes than this in the world and in everyone’s life, and we take them in stride. When Mrs. Levin told me that a tragedy had happened, I became frightened because I thought that someone had died, and when I found out what had happened I breathed a sigh of relief.

Today it was warm, the air was like a furnace, a strong eastern wind blew. Apparently some sparks flew from the furnace and set fire to the whole house. Everybody gathered quickly and prevented the fire from spreading. That’s how the storage shed went up. I informed you of this today by telegram, perhaps you should know about this while you are still abroad, and also so that this should not be an unpleasant surprise for you upon your return home. Moreover, you should not hear about this in bits and pieces. I sent the telegram addressed to you to your brother’s house in Danzig. Don’t be sad, Hanusya. Do you remember the fires in Deganya and in Merhavya? Things like this happen. Our loss here is not so great. In any event, only the loss of a bit of money. We can replace everything. Quite the contrary, we should be happy that our house and the big hut were spared. They wanted to take the things out of our house, but suddenly the wind shifted direction. So nothing of ours was touched, and I found everything the same way I left it.
When will we see each other, Hanusya? I am waiting for your letter that I hope will arrive tomorrow. I am hurrying now to the auto.

I am hugging you with great love,
   Yours,
       Eliezer
From Chana to Eliezer
May 31, 1927
London

A hearty greeting to you Eliezuess my dear,

I have sent you two postcards. I hope that you have received them. You see that I am in London, and they have welcomed me nicely, perhaps too much so, and I am always afraid when people treat me too well, for then it is difficult to respond to their requests, to what they are waiting for from you.

This morning I went with Mrs. Irwell to the Botanical Garden. This garden also has a school for young horticulturalists. It was very interesting. After that I had luncheon with Mrs. Irwell. Now I am writing from her home and in half an hour we will go to a meeting. This morning I went to the Anglo-Palestine Bank, I received money for myself and I took a check in your name. I am sending you the check with this [letter]. If you go to Paris, you will receive the money yourself, and if you have no need to go to Paris, you will be able to get the money through the post. Let me know. But don’t go to Paris on one of their holidays. Find out first, since we have forgotten that there are holidays in the world and they are apparently still celebrated.

Eliezeuss, buy yourself chocolate bonbons and fruit and keep them in the room. Whenever you need to, eat some of it. This is also good at night when you cannot sleep well. Eating good things calms the nerves and then one falls asleep, a doctor once told me, I did this and it has helped me many times.

Buy yourself a coat. It is not worth suffering from cold and rain. If you go to Paris, first write to Belinkina. She will go with you and help you shop better than me. Tonight I will write her, since I did not have a chance to say good-bye to her. Please write me, Eliezeuss, since I want to know how you are doing, how you feel about yourself. Whether you are cold, whether
you are hot, if you are very bored, if you have already made the acquaintance of the people in your pension, if you amuse yourself with the Russians, and so on and so on, all the little things interest me, that’s why I think they also interest you and I am writing to you.

I have finished the book […], a very nice book, but I am glad I have finished it, I won’t read any more novels, I will try to read things that are more beneficial, please try to get me some other books.

I will try to purchase a new copybook today, since the old one is already full. And then I will write you reports about the schools I am going to visit. Afterward we can work over the material together.

Very sincerely,

Yours Chana
From Chana to Eliezer
London 81/2 evening
June 6, 1927

My dear Eliezer,

I rested, I ate dinner in my pension for 3 shillings (it’s raining out, I did not feel like going out to look for food), I read again […], this man was wise, and he thought a lot, there is no feature of public life he didn’t deal with, he has a clear opinion on every phenomenon and every event.

Now I want to continue writing to you. A. Because I am not used to keeping quiet a lot (I haven’t seen anyone all day—the people in my pension are not for me; I do not talk to them) and writing to you is a kind of conversation with you; B. Because I want to finish and be a jour, then I will be able to write every day what I saw on that day.

Now as for Reading University … This is one of the three universities that have a special mission (Oxford, Cambridge, and Reading). They not only deal with learning but also with education, and they are of a university character.

Reading is a forty-minute train ride from London. City or town: the university on the edge of the city covers a very large area. The university has different faculties and together there are about 500, students, male and female. The Faculty of Agriculture is apparently the best in England. And this faculty, in dairy industry and horticulture, are apparently organized in a particularly good manner. The innovation of this university and this faculty is that the students also engage in actual work. They spend three days a week in the dairy or gardens or barn, or at the farm, and three days a week at the university in academic study.

The Faculty of Agriculture has two farms: one experimental and one for teaching. There is also a bit of beekeeping and poultry raising, a very well organized and very large dairy, in which they
make butter and different kinds of cheese. The cheese is made for the farmers or for owners of estates nearby who send their milk. For a set fee (I think it is a shilling for 12 gallons) the students make cheese for them. The students make the cheese themselves, they clean the vessels, and keep the cheese in their cellars. Ventilation is good. The dairy manager thinks that it is possible to make all these cheeses in Eretz Yisrael, too, and with the help of ventilation it will be possible to set up a good environment in Eretz Yisrael. The dairy is next to the university buildings as a kind of the laboratory. It has many innovations and numerous instruments and cellars. There is a motor for making ice and for producing ice cream. At the dairy, undoubtedly, one can learn the milk industry very well.

On the university’s farm for practical study, there is also a handsome barn for milking cows. The barn is organized like the milking barns in California, with of course, special rooms for keeping the milk and washing the vessels in sterilization baths, a room with a refrigerator for the milk. They pour the milk into a vessel that passes the milk through a tube via the refrigeration coils; the tube also usually passes through the refrigerator, and from the refrigerator they collect it [the milk] into special vessels for shipment.

There are cows of various English breeds, very beautiful breeds. According to the manager of the barn, stanchions are better than chains. They use only stanchions. The students do the milking themselves; there are also two milking machines with a special small motor.

For the first time in my life I have seen how to milk with a milking machine. The barn manager said that the cows adjust well to this type of milking. The feeding troughs hold only food. For drinking there are automatic receptacles.

For the first time in my life I saw a silo there. According to the manager, the hay can last in the silo for a few years. The vitality
and quality of the preserved hay is almost like that of green hay. It is possible to mix kinds of hay from grasses, for example, clover and corn, but he does not think this is good for storage in the silo... cattle, or pumpkin....

In this barn they conduct experiments with the cows, and I also think with the practical raising and caring for the cows. Like the academic side it is possible to learn a lot at this university.

In the dairy there are many female and few male students, and in the barn, just the opposite. The gardens are also arranged well. The hothouses are especially nice. Flowers and gardens and nurseries of undomesticated trees, all this is found on the farm.

The university’s complex of buildings is very large and quite beautiful. The quads are roomy. There are a few trees in them, and everything is cared for meticulously and cleanly. Most of the buildings are connected one to the other by [...] wooden columns, round tin roofs, and the floors are paved in such a way that when it rains, it is easy to move from one building to the next.

Spacious laboratories, rooms with all kinds of handicrafts, also a very large library as well as reading rooms where students work quietly, also a large hall for concerts and dance parties within the complex of university buildings.

Despite the age of those attending the university, the students live in university dormitories under supervision and they must live according to rules.

There are special residence halls for young men and for young women. The halls are arranged for great comfort. The young women [’s halls] are even nicer than those for the young men. Each one has an individual room, and of course, each hall has a reading room or a general room, its own kitchen, its own dining hall, and its own supervisor or manager. Each hall elects a committee of seven members, one of whom is the chairman. This committee has to deal with the affairs of the students and the hall. The manager of the hall discusses things only with the
chairman and demands order. By the rules, the manager does not have to attend the committee’s meetings or student assemblies. Five second-year students and two first-year are on the committee. Before they make a final decision, they elect three from the first year for the committee, so that they should be used to managing issues when the veteran members leave. Two weeks after the new students have assumed the task and they have managed to get to know each other, they select only two for the committee. The committee has to manage the hall according to the constitution that was determined by the university’s administration. The committee cannot change the constitution. If the students do not like the food or if they have any demands, they have to meet and clarify the issue. The chairman brings the decisions to the kitchen management.

The student can choose the department in which she or he wishes to study and the course he wishes to follow (a half-year, two-year, or three-year track). But after the selection is made, the student cannot change and jump from department to department or from course to course.

The male students have to be in the housing by 11:00 pm and the coeds by 10. Lights out in the rooms is at 11. Young women may not receive young men in the hall and vice versa without permission. Students may not leave Reading without permission even on a holiday or Sunday. Residence hall women as well as women for whom there is no room in one of the residence halls can take an apartment or pension only in consultation with the supervisor. Private houses are authorized. Actually this is also on behalf of the university, those too who live in private houses are under the watchful eye of the supervisor […]

When engaged in practical work, everyone has to wear a uniform.

When one enters the university grounds for a class, one must wear a special coat. This rule applies to male and female students,
and even professors. Third-year students have a special hat.

Reading is very beautiful. Very noble, educative. There is also a feeling of friendship and interest on the part of the teachers toward the students. The environs are also very beautiful but living in one of the halls is expensive and the studies are very costly. From looking at the prospectus, one sees that the right to study at Reading is only for the rich and a small number of scholarship students.

Each hall is managed on its own. At the beginning of the year, the administration of each hall presents a budget, and it must operate the entire year according to this budget. If one item costs less, the administration may not transfer money to another line. The money must go to the general fund.

If there is need for an unexpected outlay, they must turn to the General Board of the university.

That means that the large halls maintain themselves on the basis of students’ payments. Those with fewer than seventy-five students are always in arrears.

The university’s income come from student fees, interest from capital donated for this purpose by philanthropists, the general government, and the local government.

People have been most polite towards us. The chairman of the Agriculture Department gave us a few interviews [...] for the farm, and in each department we were accompanied by the head of the department. We were in the barn department during the tea-time of the personnel. They invited us to the staff Common Room and gave us tea.

The following day the same man led us to the halls, and the director himself to the Home Economics Department.

At most of the schools I have visited so far as well as in Reading, I found among the chairman and professors former students of the institution. In the halls, I encountered women who have been in charge for over twenty years. In general, I have
met among the personnel of the schools in England very beautiful women (I do
not refer to externals). I think that we have to put up an annual prize at the Nahalal
school—to send two or three students who have been at the school for three years
to study at a school abroad that prepares teachers of agricultural subjects. That is
what the governments of Egypt and India do.

I could have written more about Reading, for I find the place and people very
pleasant but it’s already late and I am tired.

I went to Reading on June 2 and returned on Saturday afternoon on June 4. On
day 4+5 I still have to give you a report.

Sincerely yours, write to me too
With great love and friendship,
I am all yours,
Chana

I always send you my letter late. That is, I write in the evening and send it the
next morning or the one after that. Now it is already June 8 and I wrote this letter
on June 6. I will send it immediately because I did not have envelopes [before] and
did not manage to buy any yesterday. I have just bought some and I will keep them
with me until I reach France.
From Chana to Eliezer
June 29, 1927
Brussels

Hearty greetings to you my dear,

I took a holiday for myself today. I did not go to the school that I thought I would, and I decided to rest. Tomorrow, I have to go to Germany. Here I saw five schools, and at the ministry, they gave me a great deal of material. I think that is enough. Aside from that, I got a bit tired. So that the visit to Germany will be productive, I must rest.

I also have written about work to do in Canada and Nahalal and thank-you notes to different people. At the moment, I am sitting in the Botanical Garden. I came here so that they could clean my room. I am staying at the St. Jean Hotel … and pay 25 francs for a teenie room. It is cold here and rains a lot. Right now the sun is shining and everything is beautiful, but I am still wearing my big coat (the winter coat which the mouse gnawed a bit). Since a slightly cold wind is blowing … I am cold here and I always go around with my coat on. I think you must buy a lightweight coat (that is, not a jacket but [something] warm). Please ask Mrs. Valensi or Mrs. Belkin in Paris. One of them will help you. Paris is cheaper than in England. There are coats with flannel linings [there are even raincoats like this]; the lining buttons onto the coat (it’s not sewn in), and you can wear it with or without the lining. I warmly recommend you have such a coat made. Without a coat it will be difficult for you, because it is cold here and you can use the coat in Eretz Yisrael, too, in the winter. You will need it here, for you did not travel to suffer. That you can do at home.

I hope that you have received the check that I sent in the same envelope together with letter by C.].? And if so, then you have money for a coat.

As soon as I got to the post office, I received your letter. You
did not mention the check for £10 … that I sent along with the letter from C.J. I hope that you received the check, too. Please let me know, because I sent the letter in haste and I am not sure that I put in everything I was supposed to.

Tomorrow morning at 6:50 I am traveling to Cologne, which is close to Düsseldorf. I will be in that area for about three days and then on to Berlin. You must tell me if you received the permit, for I have to know where to go in France and England. I must also get a new permit for England or France. Please finish the issue of your visa immediately and let me know where I must go. Your letter takes three days, so please respond quickly.

Sincerely,

Chana
From Maisel to Azaryahu
January 21, 1934

To Mr. Azaryahu
Tel Aviv

Dear Sir:

I wish to ask your indulgence for my not having answered your letter of January 8 immediately, and if my reply is still important as of today, I am answering hereby:

As you know, cooking lessons were established on 13 October 1920 in Tel Aviv by Ha-Poel ha-Tza’ir with the name “Cooking Courses.” At that time the [political] party had a kitchen on Nahalat Binyamin Street, where members and new pioneer-immigrants ate. The kitchen was seriously mismanaged, and the hygienic aspect neglected. A woman managed it on her own account, and the party’s supervision was limited only to setting the prices of the food. At that time Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir was involved in immigration, settlement, and kibbutzim in order to create opportunities just to find work. The kitchens of the kibbutzim were quite neglected, nutrition was bad, and Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir wanted to improve the situation by training a number of young women in kitchen management. They turned to me to help them organize cooking courses.

At my suggestion we obtained the kitchen which had belonged to the party, and it was put at our disposal for the cooking classes. We fired the woman and ended her running of the kitchen, made changes and improvements in the kitchen itself, and invited two professional teachers. In place of three or four young women who had previously worked in the kitchen, we hired twelve students. We set down two goals for the courses: (a) preparing sensible, inexpensive nutrition for the laborers and pioneers; (b) training

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4 Joseph Azaryahu worked in the Zionist Organization’s Education Department.
female students in management of workers’ kitchens. The courses had to pay for themselves.

For the repairs needed in the building and the arrangements related to the reorganization of the kitchen for the courses, I received an (interest-free) loan from Mr. Van Friesland, treasurer of the Zionist Executive, on the condition that we repay it in about half a year.

I dealt with the organization of this project (without payment) for two months and when it was set up, it turned out that it could not last without constant supervision. I took it upon myself to manage these courses. In half a year we repaid the loan, and the kitchen courses not only covered all of the institution’s expenses but during the three years that I ran the institution, we managed to buy furniture, kitchen utensils, and the house in which the kitchen is located. During this period, we also added the subject of home management. We recruited a teacher for this material. We rented a small apartment for the students.

After about a year had passed, we saw the need to rent a larger apartment where both the students and teachers would stay. We moved to a new building on Allenby Street (today the Balfouria Hotel). We paid high rent there—50 pounds a month, which put quite a dent in our budget. This prompted us to think about a private building for the institution, to serve as housing for the students and teachers along with an empty lot for a garden, where the learners would be able to engage in gardening during their free time as well as spend their spare time in the bosom of nature. I believe that alongside the official aim of the institution during her stay with us, we must try to bring the student closer to nature and have her enjoy it. I have begun to look for a source of funding that will enable us to make my idea a reality. I have met with WIZO, a young association. It dealt with the issue of the hostel building, that is, the Pioneer Women’s Home. Toward that end it had raised a sum of money. After lengthy negotiations and explanations about
the importance of our institution, I succeeded in having them agree to buy a plot of land on which they would construct instead of the “Hostel,” a building fit as the dormitory for our courses. Immediately after the land was acquired, we began to cultivate it together with our students under the guidance of a gardening teacher, recruited for that purpose. For practical instruction and training in gardening, we received a budget of 30 Palestine pounds a month from WIZO.

Beyond that, the courses continued to pay for themselves. We established the house, and three years to the day it was founded, the institution moved with its students and teachers to its new home, called “Hostel” in line with the proposal by WIZO, which espoused this name when raising money. At that time, we also added the vocation of raising poultry.

Upon the completion of the Hostel building, they began the construction of the agricultural school at Nahalal, and I had to leave the courses and move to Nahalal. I turned over management of the courses to the cooking teacher, Miss Miriam Gershon, who had worked on the courses from the day they opened and helped greatly in founding them and putting them on solid footing. She managed the courses for about a year, and for personal reasons had to leave… The institution continued on for some time without an official director. All of the issues, the expenses, bookkeeping, [were carried out] by one of the graduates of the institution. She received help from Anna Levin the teacher, who left the Nahalal school to do so and moved to Tel Aviv.

About half a year later (I do not remember the year), Mrs. Epstein took over management of the courses. When she began working there, no radical change took place. Gradually the classes expanded both with regard to the number of students and the subjects studied.

After I left the institution, WIZO’s participation in the budget increased since needs had grown and the income from the kitchen,
which the courses had established and maintained during the first years, had declined. Finally, WIZO bought the building that contained the kitchen from Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir, and the institution was now under the sole auspices of WIZO.
Glossary

_Ahdut ha-Avodah_, Zionist Socialist Labor Party in _Eretz Israel_, founded in 1919

_Aliyah_ (“ascent”), immigration to _Eretz Israel_

_Aliyah_, waves of immigration to Palestine/ _Eretz Israel_:

First _Aliyah_, 1882–1903, consisted of individuals and small groups mostly from Eastern Europe, but also from Yemen and other Middle Eastern and North African countries; the period of the establishment of the early _moshavot_ and semi-modern urban neighborhoods.

Second _Aliyah_, 1904–1914, consisted mainly of immigrants from Eastern Europe, which numbered about 40,000 people. 2,000 of these _olim_ were pioneers (_halutzim_) who worked as hired laborers in the _moshavot_ and in the cities. The other 38,000 were middle-class people who settled in the towns, including the new Jaffa neighborhood (later city) of Tel-Aviv.

Third _Aliyah_, 1919–1923, included many _halutzim_ from Zionist movements. Veteran immigrants of the Second _Aliyah_ and the _halutzim_ of the Third founded the _Histadrut_. More _kevutzot_ and _kibbutzim_ were established as were the first _moshavim_; more than 35,000 persons arrived during this period.

_Fourth Aliyah_, 1924–28, contained many middle-class immigrants, over half coming from Poland. Some 80 percent of this _Aliyah’s_ 67,000 _olim_ settled in cities rendering these people having the negative connotation of bourgeois. The rest were pioneers.
Fifth *Aliyah*, 1929–1939, numbered over 250,000, with a prominent role played by refugees from Nazi Germany.

Association of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in *Eretz Israel*, founded in 1919 by Sarah Thon and Sarah Azaryahu, which became a political party that ran in the 1920 elections. Later the Association of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in *Eretz Israel* united with WIZO and stood for the elections to the First *Knesset* under the name WIZO. Rachel Kagan, its *Knesset* representative, was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

*Bilu*, established in Russia in 1882, first modern movement for pioneering and agricultural settlement in the Land of Israel

Cooking Courses, classes begun in 1920 in Tel Aviv that stressed home management and cooking as well as agricultural and other training, such as raising vegetables, cleaning, bookkeeping, and more

*Davar*, newspaper of the Israel Labor Movement, founded 1925

*Devar ha-Po’elet*, founded 1934, women’s magazine of the *Histadrut*, central journal of the women’s movement

dunam, an area of 1000 square meters

*Eretz Israel*, Hebrew for Land of Israel; the official Hebrew term for the area governed by British Mandate (1922–1948)

Extension Service, a system of roving practical teachers who helped educate women, generally on farms, in modern agricultural techniques and home management skills
Federation of Hebrew Women, a women’s organization founded by Third Aliyah female immigrants to provide aid to new immigrant women and women from the Old Yishuv; it was part of the Association of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Eretz Israel (see above) which united with WIZO in the 1930’s gar’in (pl. gar’inim), “nucleus”; a group of people who train to settle together in Eretz Israel, either forming a new settlement or joining an existing one

Golah, voluntary dispersion of Jews outside of Israel

Group of Twenty, a group of twenty women workers who worked at Kinneret after Maisel left in 1917

Haganah, underground Jewish organization in Eretz Israel for armed self-defense under the British Mandate eventually becoming the basis for the formation of the Israel Defense Forces

hakhsharah, pl. hakhsharot (Heb., “preparation”), training farms in the Diaspora to prepare pioneers for agricultural settlement in Eretz Israel

halakhah, the body of rabbinic law voluntarily adopted by religious Jews

halutz (m.), halutzah (f.) [pl. halutzim (m.); halutzot (f.)], pioneers in Eretz Israel, especially in agriculture

halutziyyut, pioneering

Ha-Merkaz ha-Hakla‘i (Agriculture Center), an organization founded during the Mandate Period in Eretz Israel that constituted a joint framework for bodies belonging to the
hityashvut ovedet (see below) as well as for people involved in agricultural education

Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir (“The Young Worker”), Eretz Israel labor party, founded 1905

Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir (“The Young Worker”), the Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir movement’s first newspaper. Its first two issues appeared in 1907. A weekly appeared from 1912. The newspaper ceased publication in 1970.

“Hashomer” (“The Watchman”), association of Jewish guards in Eretz Israel, active between 1909 and 1920

Haskalah, Enlightenment, the intellectual movement that supported the dissemination of modern European culture and education among Jews, active from about 1750 to 1880

haver (m.), haferah (f.) [pl. haverim (m.); haverot (f.)], comrade; member of a group

Havurot, temporary communal groups of women workers

Hebrew [adj.], used to describe Zionist-Jewish endeavors, in contrast with the term Jew/Jewish used in the Diaspora, to represent the attempt to establish a new Eretz Israel culture; it appears in such phrases as the Hebrew University, a Hebrew state, Hebrew labor, and so on.

He-Halutz (:The Pioneer”), an umbrella organization of Zionist youth movements and federations that operated mainly in Europe and America. Founded in 1917 by Yosef Trumpeldor, it trained its members for aliyah to Eretz Israel

Histadrut (full Heb. name, Ha-Histradrut ha-Kelalit shel ha-
Ovedim ha-Ivriyyim be-Eretz Israel), Jewish Labor Federation in Palestine, founded in 1920, essentially the labor union of nearly all workers in the Yishuv and later in Israel

hityashvut ovedet, a general term for the settlements and settlement endeavors connected with the labor parties and workers’ movements in Eretz Israel

Hovevei Zion, an early Zionist movement in Russia pre-dating Herz’s formation of the Zionist movement in 1997. Hovevei Zion established Jewish settlements in Ottoman Palestine

Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) founded 1891 by Baron de Hirsch, philanthropic association to aid needy or persecuted Jews to emigrate and settle where they would be productively employed, among locations for settlement were Argentina, America, and only after de Hirsch’s death, Eretz Israel

kevutzah (pl. kevutzot), small-size voluntary collective community constituting an agricultural settlement in Eretz Israel; with growth of membership, it evolved into the kibbutz

kibbutz (pl. kibbutzim), larger-size, multi-family voluntary collective community constituting a settlement in Eretz Israel, originally based mainly on agricultural; today also engaged in various industries. See also kevutzah

halutziyyut (“pioneering”)

Kashrut, Jewish dietary laws defining what is kosher food and what is not

kibbush ha-avodah (“the conquest of labor”), preparation of Jews, spiritually and educationally, to work in all the occupations required in a national economy. The concept was linked to the
ideal of halutziyut.

*Kulturverband* (German) (“The Women’s League for Cultural Work in Palestine”), a Jewish-Zionist women’s organization founded at the Zionist Congress in The Hague in 1907; it provided aid to women and children in *Eretz Israel*.

*Mapai* (acronym of *Mifleget Po’alei Eretz Israel*); the Labor Party of Israel [previously Palestine], a Zionist-Socialist party founded 1930 through a union of *Ahdut ha-Avodah* and *Ha-Po’el ha-Tza’ir*; *Mapai* was the leading party from pre-State years until the 1970s.

*Mo’etzet ha-Po’alim*, a local labor council

*Mo’etzet ha-Po’alot*, Women Workers Council, founded in 1921 as part of the Histadrut

*moshav ovdim* (“workers’ moshav”), a smallholder’s cooperative agricultural settlement in Palestine and in Israel established on nationally owned land. This structure is based on family farms and individual working of the land. The group assumes mutual liability and aid.

*moshavah* (pl. *moshavot*), Jewish independent, smallholder’s agricultural settlement in Palestine. The earliest type of Jewish agricultural village in modern *Eretz Israel*; farming was carried out on individual farms, generally on privately owned land and could use hired labor.

*Nahalal*, the first moshav in *Eretz Israel*, founded in the *Jezreel* Valley, 1921

*oleh* (m.), *olim* (pl. m), *olah* (f.), *olot* (pl. f.), immigrant(s) to *Eretz Israel*
po'eleth, pl. po'elot, women workers

Shabbat, Sabbath, the Jewish day of rest on which traditionally no food was cooked over a fire in accordance with halacha (see above) that forbids cooking on Shabbat.

UNSCOP, United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, established in 1947 to formulate a recommendation to the United Nations about what to do with Palestine. UNSCOP proposed partition of the country.

Va'ad Leummi, the national council of the Yishuv (i.e. Jewish population) during the British Mandate period

WIZO (Women's International Zionist Organization), women's Zionist organization founded in London in July 1920

Workers' Kitchen, a restaurant especially for laborers, usually affiliated with one of the workers' parties

Women's Training Farm, a farm of women workers created for the purpose of training of women in agricultural labor

Yishuv – The entire Jewish community (“settlement”) in Palestine before 1948

Old Yishuv – The traditional, religious Jewish community in Palestine that existed before modern Zionism.
New Yishuv – The modernizing, Zionist Jewish community in Palestine (from 1882 to 1948).
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With vision, perseverance, and professional knowledge, Maisel created a vast new opportunity for women to contribute to the Zionist agricultural development of the Land of Israel.

Maisel’s projects had a formative and formidable influence on the history of the Yishuv, from the Women’s Training Farm at Kinneret (1911-1917) to the establishment of the Young Women’s Agricultural School at Nahalal (1923). This analysis of Maisel’s work is set within her biography that includes her youth in Russia, her studies in Switzerland and France, as well as her life in the Yishuv community of Segera (where men were trained in agriculture), participation in international Zionist Congresses, the establishment of a women-workers’ trade union, establishment of women’s farms, the establishment of home-economics courses and more.

Maisel was able to focus on and implement the main points of each project, involved carrying an idea through from its inception to its successful conclusion. This single mindedness contributed to the extraordinary success to projects that essentially were revolutionary.

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