



OXFORD JOURNALS
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The Baale Boste Reconsidered: The Life of Mathilde Roth Schechter (M. R. S.)

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Source: *Modern Judaism*, Feb., 1987, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Feb., 1987), pp. 1-27

Published by: Oxford University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1396441>

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**THE BAALE BOSTE RECONSIDERED:
THE LIFE OF
MATHILDE ROTH SCHECHTER (M.R.S.)**

Most people who are obscure deserve to remain so. The case is different, however, for men and for women. Men ordinarily live their lives in the public sphere and so there are records which allow us to reconstruct the lives of even quite insignificant men. With women who marry and have families, the task of reconstruction is much more difficult because most of their energy is in the private sphere. The woman who is married to a famous man is doubly difficult to know. Her energy is often not public and her husband obscures her both in her lifetime and afterward. She often builds a life rather than an empire, which means, of course, that we need to judge the matter of significance differently than we would in the case of a man. Whatever standards of judgment we use, Mathilde Roth Schechter is a person worth knowing. She has now been almost completely forgotten and is remembered only insofar as the Jewish Theological Seminary has a dormitory named after her, and, in addition, she is recognized and hailed as the founder of the Women's League of the United Synagogues of America.

Mathilde Schechter does not fall neatly into the already existing categories of American Jewish women. She is not the single woman (spinster!) who has the time to develop her creative talents and to devote herself fully to organizations and causes—such as Henrietta Szold or Emma Lazarus. Nor is she exactly similar to other women of her era—the married organization women who built national structures for Jewish women. She is a public figure, but the home is much more her metier than the meeting hall. She has been portrayed as a Baale Boste and she is that, but as we shall see, she also translated Heine into English and Zangwill into German. She was a finely cultured woman who was easily conversant with the major literary and philosophical figures of her day. She wrote elegant prose and it may be that the highly praised English style of her husband owed much to the advice and editing of Mathilde Schechter.

Knowing Mrs. Schechter will help us to understand other women like her from this period. She will also certainly aid us in understanding

her very famous husband. Solomon Schechter, the world-class scholar, the discoverer of the Geniza in Cairo, the President of the Jewish Theological Seminary, has been all but lost to us as a person. In trying to resurrect Mathilde Schechter, we shall per force have much to say about Solomon, the man and the husband—perhaps also about the scholar, but all from Mathilde's vantage point.

Mathilde's devotion to her mate was so clear and long-lasting that to some of their close friends she was perceived only in relationship to him. Louis Marshall, the Chairman of the Seminary Board for so many years, wrote to the Schechter's son after Mathilde died: "She was so identified in my mind with your father, that I could not think of them separately."¹ Joseph Jacobs, a long-time friend of the Schechters both in England and America, saw Mathilde Schechter only as an adjunct to her husband and compared her to a tugboat. Using the metaphor of great men as sailing ships, he wrote of Solomon Schechter, "great men often resemble the entry of a noble (sailing) ship into a harbor . . . which seems to move without sails but is really propelled forward by a humble, but necessary, tug, represented in the domestic sphere by the faithful and continuous care of the true wife."² Jacobs certainly admired Mathilde Schechter and his use of such a degrading metaphor illustrates the difficulty of understanding Mathilde Schechter as a person in her own right.

Even though Mathilde Roth Schechter (M.R.S.) had a strong sense of her role as a wife, she was not completely absorbed in it. When Hannah Marx, the wife of Alexander Marx, the great historian and librarian at the Seminary wrote the following, she may have been thinking more of herself than of Mathilde: "Mathilde Roth knew that she would have to subordinate her deep interests in art and literature to the life-interests of her scholar-husband, that she could not live her own life as she had planned it, but would have to live in the shadow of a genius."³

The truth is that Mathilde Schechter had always lived in the shadow of geniuses, and she thrived in this atmosphere. She was born in 1857 in Guttentag, a small town in Silesia which was near Liblinitz. She so identified with Breslau where she grew up that she rarely mentioned the city of her birth.⁴ Breslau was the home of the Jewish Theological Seminary established by Zacharias Frankel after which the New York institution patterned itself. Abraham Geiger, the noted Reform rabbi and scholar, lived here, as did a number of well-known Orthodox scholars. The Jewish Theological Seminary was established three years before Mathilde was born and was thus a thriving institution by the time she came to live in this very exciting Jewish community.

Mathilde was apparently orphaned at a rather young age. Hannah Marx relates the story that Herr Roth, Mathilde's father, was conducting high holiday services in the house of a friend when he collapsed and died.⁵ Mathilde's father was a merchant who bought and sold grain. She

was brought up by her older brother, Siegismund, to whom she was deeply attached. Alexander Marx maintained that “the most intimate relationship of her life was that existing between her and her brother, who tried to take the place of her father and upon whom she could always count.”⁶

Mathilde received her elementary education in the Jewish orphan home in Breslau and then went on to the municipal high school for girls. She eventually became a teacher and specialized in languages and literature. In 1885 she turned up in London living in the house of Michael Friedlander (1833-1910), the head of Jews College. How she got there is not clear, but it certainly shows us that she was a woman of initiative and daring who did not want to play out her life as a teacher of young girls in some provincial German town. In her memoirs,⁷ she tells us that she came to London to study at Queens College London and “. . . to read in the treasures of the British Museum, the National Gallery, and the endless private collections.” Her particular scholarly interests lay in literature and the history of art.

She was only in London a few weeks when she met Solomon Schechter in the library of Jews College. Schechter at this point was relatively unknown. He was approximately thirty-seven years old and had published virtually nothing. After having studied in Vienna and Berlin he came to England in order to have access to the great collections of Hebrew manuscripts at the British Museum in London and at the Bodleian Library of Oxford. He was also the tutor of Claude Montefiore, who was responsible for his coming to England.

They were quickly drawn to each other and spent much time in the bookstores and cafes around London. At one point Mathilde was invited to take a position in Berlin as a Department Head in a girls school. Schechter was upset that she had not consulted him, which perhaps was somewhat premature on his part. “I resented the impertinence” she wrote many years later. Mathilde Roth was obviously an independent woman.

They were married in June 1887 in the house where Dickens once lived. Heinrich Gratz, Moses Gaster and other scholar friends were present. The wedding was performed by the Chief Rabbi. Her brother, Siegismund, came from Breslau to help make arrangements. He helped to furnish their house and gave Schechter “a Vienna rocking chair” which the great scholar prized very highly until the end of his days. Mathilde returned to Breslau to get her trousseau and to help Siegismund choose the furniture that he would send to England. Schechter’s mother also contributed to the newlyweds. She had a very colorful Roumanian national costume made for her new daughter-in-law. Mathilde was always very proud of the dress and won prizes with it at fancy dress balls where she wore it as a costume.⁸

The Schechter house very quickly became the center of the young

intellectual Jewish elite in London. Mathilde's hospitality was legion from the very beginning of their marriage. Perhaps it was no accident that she was born in the town of Guttentag.⁹ She kept an open house in London which means that she was ready to have guests at any time. Her reputation for hospitality continued in Cambridge and later in America. She reminds us at this point of the great female salonists Rahel Varnhagen and Henrietta Herz with the primary difference being that she had a strong Jewish identity and contributed significantly to the Jewish community.

Mathilde herself gives us a vivid description of their small community during the London period, which she describes as the happiest in Schechter's life. "The scholars and literary men came and went as they pleased, and all day long the hall door was never locked. They came to breakfast, lunch, dinner, or tea or at least for a cup of our famous coffee. They were satisfied with anything. They helped to clear away and wash dishes. If some of the young men of Fleet Street passed by late at night and saw a light still burning in the study, they would come up and get some supper, and perhaps stay overnight, and rush off after breakfast in the morning. There was no ceremony; all was given and received in a joyous and friendly spirit." It is quite obvious from this description written many years later (1917 or so) that the intellectual and communal life of their circle represented not only a memory of a particular phase for Mathilde Schechter, but an ideal as well.

They were all young, the members of the Schechter circle, and they were destined to make a considerable impact on Jewish life generally and on scholarship in particular. The key members of their circle were Israel Zangwill, the novelist and writer (1864-1926), Israel Abrahams, a scholar in the field of Medieval Jewish history (1858-1924), Lucien Wolf, the journalist and historian of the Anglo-Jewish community (1857-1930), Moses Gaster, whom we have mentioned above and Joseph Jacobs (1854-1916), a writer and scholar born in Australia who eventually became one of the editors of the Jewish Encyclopedia and a teacher of Rhetoric and English Literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. The circle had existed before the Schechters arrived. Jacobs writing in 1915 helps us to understand the impact of Solomon Schechter upon the group. "It is impossible to convey any adequate idea of the genial radiance and élan of Schechter's personality at this period. At the height of his physical and mental rigor, appreciated for the first time at his true value, surrounded by an ever-increasing circle of admiring friends, he burst upon us as a blazing comet in the intellectual sky. There used to be a gathering of friends in London who called themselves 'the wandering Jews,' partly because they used to wander for their meetings, from house to house, and partly because they claimed the right to wander from the subject of discussion of each meeting. Into this circle Schechter burst like

an exploding bomb and would tear down the often rationalist and cynical comments that flourished there with his mixture of enthusiasm and indignation. I can see him in my mind's eye, at the height of a debate, rising from his chair, perhaps kicking it down, and pacing up and down the room, like a wounded lion, roaring retorts at Zangwill or Wolfe, while Asher Myers (the editor of the London *Jewish Chronicle*) as moderator, would attempt to calm the storm."

Schechter served the group as a great resource person. All the members of the circle used him freely and acknowledge their indebtedness to him in the books they wrote later in their lives. The fertilization, of course, went both ways. In preparing his text of the *Midrash Ha-Gadol* (an early collection of homilies on the Pentateuch), Schechter came across many interesting stories which he shared with his friends. Jacobs pointed out to him that in one case the story was parallel to one of Grimm's fairytales and induced Schechter to publish it because the story might be of interest to students of folklore.¹⁰

At this early stage in their marriage, the Schechters sometimes had financial problems. Solomon could have written popular articles for the press which might have paid well. Rather than take him away from his scholarly pursuits, however, Mathilde decided to work. She arranged classes in German Literature and the History of Art which met at people's houses. The classes were mainly for young girls and young married women. She also took on some private pupils in German, including the Countess of Selkirk, a Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Victoria. She was about to arrange a reading circle for German literature and songs among the young ladies of the "British aristocracy" when this project was interrupted by the move to Cambridge where Solomon had secured a position. For a time after they moved, Mathilde commuted to London one day a week to meet with her classes in German Literature and the History of Art.

The Schechters also began to have a family at this point. Their first daughter, Ruth, was born in August 1888 and Frank was born in June 1890, on the very day that Solomon received notice of his Cambridge appointment.

Although Mathilde was sad in leaving her London friends, the Schechters quickly adjusted to Cambridge, met new people and made new friends. She became acquainted with many of the wives of the Cambridge dons whom she would meet at the Botanical Gardens which were near the Schechters' house. Mrs. Schechter, while aware of the women's movement of this period, was not involved in it. She comments on one of her newly found acquaintances, "She was friendly to us from the first and used to exclaim laughingly that she and I were the only women she knew who had not got a mission."

The Schechters, of course, kept in touch with their London circle, and Israel Zangwill, who visited often, was a favorite of Mrs. Schechter.

“He came frequently for weekends,” she later wrote, “or for longer when he was tired and wanted special quiet to collect his thoughts on some new theme.” She thought him very talented but was somewhat critical of the way he presented women. “In Zangwill’s earlier novels, the women are not well drawn; later when he went out socially a great deal and saw and learned more of them, they became more natural.” She was also critical of the way in which he presented Orthodox women. “In *The Melting Pot*, he causes an old Orthodox Jewess to dance with her maid on Purim, a thing which would never happen. Again he makes a Jewish woman, who comes to see the Rabbi, put up her feet on a chair—a freedom in which no women would indulge in the presence of a Rav.” When Zangwill came to the Schechters in Cambridge, he frequently spent time with the Schechter children, Ruth and Frank. He used their conversation as a basis for some of the child characters in his novels.

The Schechter house in Cambridge naturally became a meeting place as it had in London. Not only their London friends came, but Jewish students from the area heard about the Schechters and sought them out. Charles Hoffman, a Seminary graduate in later years who visited the Schechters in Cambridge at this time put it this way: “The student body of the university who were interested in Jewish studies were here received. Sometimes even classes would be held in Dr. Schechter’s study on the second floor front. In the Schechter home regularly on Sabbath afternoon some of the Jewish students would assemble for tea and for talk. It was here that Mrs. Schechter shone as the gracious hostess, cheering and heartening both the young men and sometimes also the young women who repaired there from their several colleges. It became as it were, a second home for them, where the Jewish influences, from which they were largely separated, could be retained.”

Mathilde naturally made friends among the students who came to the house and kept up with them after they left the university. She seems to have been especially interested in the budding young writers and artists. One young man communicated regularly with her, sharing all the details of the London literary scene and writing excitedly when he had a short story or article accepted for publication. He deeply appreciated Mathilde’s interest in his work and at one point told her that in London he had developed “. . . one or two friends like yourself who make my task the lighter and give me the heart to go on.”¹¹

Mathilde Schechter presents us in her memoir with some finely honed portraits of the great scholars she met at Cambridge and tells us of their relationship to her husband. The most moving account is of James Frazer, the author of the *Golden Bough*. Frazer “. . . stands out as the greatest scholar of Ethnology in England—perhaps in the world. There was almost no period of acquaintanceship, but a very real and immediate love and friendship between Dr. Schechter and ‘the great recluse of

Trinity.' Following the Cambridge custom, by which everybody gives up the hours from two to four in the afternoon to some exercise or other instead of to work, they would go for long walks together twice a week, and then would take tea either at Trinity College or at our house. They would discuss together the progress of their work, although they were pursuing such widely different interests."

"He was most distressed at Schechter's leaving Cambridge, and tried to the last to prevent his going, and when he had gone he kept up a cordial correspondence with him, and sent him every new edition of his publications . . . when Schechter fell seriously ill after his return from the Geniza, Cairo, he was ordered to winter in the desert, away from all MSS and books. Frazer, in a wonderfully sweet letter offered to pay expenses. Fortunately Schechter recovered, without having to go abroad. At Schechter's death, in 1915, among a flood of friends' condolences, there was no letter like that of Frazer. Their long friendship for each other was verily like that of David and Jonathan."¹²

Solomon Schechter's life at this point was devoted to his research and his teaching.

Schechter's first major publication appeared in 1887 in the year that he married Mathilde. It is important to recall that although Schechter was greatly admired by his friends, he was virtually unknown in the scholarly world because he had published only a few reviews and some minor articles. In 1887 he came out with a critical edition of the famous rabbinic work, "The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan," and in the next few years published essays on the Gaon of Vilna and on "Women in the Temple and Synagogue."¹³

In the early nineties Schechter became interested in a problem which was to eventually take him to Cairo and to the famous Geniza. One of the Books of the Apocrypha, *Ecclesiasticus*, written by Jesus Ben Sirach (about 200 B.C.), only existed in a Greek form. There was an argument among scholars as to whether the original was the Greek version at hand or whether the Greek was a translation. Schechter was sure there was a Hebrew original which would, if discovered, aid enormously in deciphering certain difficult passages of the work. The book which is akin to the *Book of Proverbs* is extremely important in understanding the late Second Temple Period and the foundations of Christianity. The story of the discovery of the first Hebrew fragment of the original book has been told before¹⁴ but never with the drama and immediacy we get in Mathilde's account. There were two women, twin sisters, who lived in Cambridge, were very wealthy and were well-known for their interest in ancient manuscripts. They frequently travelled to the Middle East in search of literary treasures. Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson were friends of the Schechters and lived in a grand old house called Castle Brae. Mathilde tells the story: "In 1895, when we went to Castle Brae to say goodbye to

them on the eve of one of their trips, they asked us if there was anything which they might bring back as a gift to us. Dr. Schechter replied that if they could buy Hebrew MSS. in any little antiquity shops, they should do so. On their return a few months later, they accordingly brought a small box full of MSS. with them as a gift. While still at their house, Dr. Schechter glanced rapidly through the manuscripts, then quickly put them all back, all except one very small torn page, which he retained, saying, 'May I really have this? It looks interesting to me.' The ladies smiled and assured him that he was welcome to it. He left almost immediately, telling me to wait for him at home, as he had to go to the university library. An hour or so later he arrived in a very excited mood, and very pale. His first words were, 'Wife, as long as the Bible lives, my name shall not die! This small torn scrap is a page of the Hebrew original of Ben Sira, which belongs to the Apocrypha of the Bible. I have been to the library to verify my suspicion. Now telegraph to Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson to come here immediately.' Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson were almost more excited than Dr. Schechter . . . the first article about this page of the lost Hebrew original was written by Dr. Schechter for the *Expositor*, and made a tremendous impression among scholars and laymen."¹⁵

Schechter was fairly obsessed with the Ben Sirah problem during these years. He theorized that since the fragment of the Hebrew Ben Sirah had come from Cairo, that there might be more fragments available there. He had heard of a large cache of medieval manuscripts in a store-room (Geniza) of a Cairo synagogue and was determined to investigate. He received money from the university and set out in December of 1896 for Egypt. He knew that Saadya Gaon had lived in Egypt at one point, and that this important tenth century Jewish philosopher had quoted Ben Sirah, presumably from a Hebrew version.¹⁶

We should certainly emphasize at this point that Mathilde identified strongly with her husband's scholarly interests and supported his many trips abroad. It was no small matter for her to be alone with young children for many months at a time while her husband travelled to beautiful and exotic places on scholarly treasure hunts. In Mathilde's memoir written after Solomon's death there is not the least trace of unhappiness with her husband's travelling or envy at his opportunities. As Henrietta Szold put it writing about Mathilde in 1924: "Behind the smile and behind the tears and behind the comprehending sympathy which they betokened, lay romantic vision. She loved the romance of life. Because the romance of scholarship thrilled her, she could let her husband go from her with smiling encouragement for months of labor in the Genizah at Cairo."

Schechter's journey to Cairo turned out to be of enormous importance because he discovered a horde of valuable manuscripts which, to this

day, have not yielded up their full story. Again he wrote frequently to Mathilde about what was happening. Following is one of the many letters he sent off to Mathilde at this time. These letters put us in direct touch with the great scholarly drama of the Genizah Project. Schechter wrote Mathilde almost daily when he was away and these letters indicate clearly that he shared his scholarly passions with her and that his discoveries were her joys. In December 1896 he wrote, "Dear Mathilde: I have just come back from the Geniza where I have been working since early this morning and I am half dead. I brought home two large sacks of manuscript fragments among which is much valuable material. I need at least another week for this Geniza since the work proceeds very slowly. I must bathe continuously. You have no idea of the dirt of the Geniza (Genizah-schmutz). Love and kisses for you and the children. Your Solomon. Dear Mathilde, Be good and send me six copies of my *Abboth de R. Nathan*." ¹⁷

Mathilde, during these years, did a bit of travelling also. When Solomon came back from Cairo, for example, in the spring of 1897, she met him in Paris where they spent two weeks together. "Schechter said he had worked hard enough all those months to deserve this second honeymoon."

Mathilde's main concern at this time was, of course, her three young children. Yet she always found time for her other interests. She kept up her study of German literature and was particularly drawn to the great poet, Heinrich Heine. She was fond of saying that ". . . it was worth learning German (just) to read Heine in the original." Mathilde shared this love of Heine with her close friend, Mary Kingsley, who was the daughter of Charles Kingsley, the Cambridge historian. Mary Kingsley's mother was an invalid, and Mary, who was studying medicine, took care of her for many years. She was a good friend of both the Schechters, and apparently she and Mathilde spent much time together. One of their projects was to translate Heine from German into English. They had completed a great deal of his work and classified his writings according to subjects. When an English translation of Heine appeared they dropped their project. The casual nature of Mathilde's comments on the project are really quite amazing. As she put it, ". . . when Leland issued his English translation, we concluded that our work was unnecessary, and gave it up." ¹⁸

In addition to her translations of Heine, Mathilde Schechter also translated some of Israel Zangwill's work into German. She was quite proud of her ability and at one point wrote to Zangwill, "I am sure to put love into the translation of your work and I think that my German style is decently good to satisfy your publisher . . . Your English is difficult but beautiful. The translators abroad do not know the writer and the English spirit as I do." Mathilde did indeed know Zangwill well and their correspondence continued over more than twenty years. Mathilde's letters

are warm and charming and show her not only as clever but as well conversant with a wide range of literary figures both in German and in English. She also encouraged Zangwill to translate and adapt some of the popular German dramas of the time for the English stage.¹⁹

Besides her translations, Mathilde was also engaged in other literary endeavors. In addition to the memoirs which were written later (1917-1919) after Solomon died, she also tried her hand at writing a novel. The novel, which exists only in a very fragmentary form, is more important for what it reveals about Mathilde than for its literary merit. There apparently is no Jewish content here but rather a romantic story set in a university town. One of the principle characters seems to be a classics scholar named Dr. Wynford who was working on a new scholarly edition of Strabo. His wife was very beautiful, and at times he was worried about losing her: “. . . men seemed very much attracted by her, but she seemed so irregularly free from flirtation, so devoted a wife and mother that he knew he was quite safe.” The truth of the matter is that he was not absolutely safe, for Mathilde presents us with a lovely scene where a young man named Herman tries to seduce Mrs. Wynford but is not successful.

There is another scene in the opening chapter which takes place at a dance, and it is interesting to note that Mathilde's women are quite well educated people.

“. . . you are standing in the draught here; won't you take my place? Do,” said Mrs. Wynford turning to Miss Gower, a Newham lecturer of great learning. Miss Gower protested, but Mrs. Wynford put her gently into her own deep chair by the fireplace, and added with a pretty gesture at the stylish dress of her friend: “Of course, Nietzsche maintains that a woman never catches cold when she is aware that she is looking well and pretty.”²⁰

Mathilde's projects included not only creative efforts of her own but an ongoing and extensive involvement in editing the scholarly projects of others. There was, for example, a scholar of Icelandic songs and sagas named Eriker Magnusson who was a regular visitor to the Schechter home. He was always a welcomed guest, “His unflinching humor, his happy laugh, his poetry and his Icelandic songs, and above all his wonderful knowledge and interest[ing] interpretations of Icelandic saga made him a most interesting companion,” wrote Mathilde. She praises him highly but does not tell us in her memoir that he regularly submitted his poetic translations to her for criticism and editing. Sometimes the poetry needed more than one revision. His letters indicate that Mathilde must have done much work on his English: e.g., “I send you an attempted revise of the first draft, for you to again to criticize,” he once wrote to her.

Mathilde's most important and extensive editing was done on the work of her husband. Solomon was in his most productive period during the Cambridge years, and Mathilde played a significant part in this pro-

ductivity. First of all, she served him as a secretary. Solomon Schechter's letters to Mathilde are in his own hand but the rest of his voluminous correspondence is either typed or written by Mathilde. It is also quite clear that she heavily edited both his letters and his scholarly writings.

Solomon Schechter's ability with the English language has been praised over and over by many people. He writes in a clear and lucid prose which is all the more striking because he seemed to acquire it so quickly. As Schechter's three volumes of *Studies in Judaism* indicate, he was a master of the short "popular-scholarly" essay. These short pieces, whether they be on the discovery of the Geniza itself, or on "the child in Jewish Literature," are not only well grounded in the sources but very engagingly presented.²¹ Schechter's first volume of essays, many of which had been published previously, came out in 1896. It would seem that Mathilde had a major part in editing Schechter's work and making it presentable. What I mean to say is that Schechter's English style at this time was not good. The only place where we see this is in his letters to Mathilde, because everything else that he wrote was edited by her. As we mentioned above, Schechter's letters are a mixture of German and English, sometimes within the same sentence. Schechter obviously felt more comfortable in German than he did in his newly acquired second language. More importantly, the English that appears in these early letters is crude and ungrammatical. We might reasonably conclude that at least at this stage of his career, much of Schechter's felicitous prose was due to Mathilde. Perhaps we should also note that Mathilde's own writing, as we shall show later, exhibits a fine sense of style and is quite eloquent.²²

It has often been noted that Schechter's coming to America was a turning point in the history of American Jewry. The Jewish Theological Seminary, which was destined to become so central an institution in American life, was small and struggling in the 1890's. In 1897 Sabato Morais, the founding father of the institution, died, leaving a school that was troubled on many levels. It was hurting for money and needed an infusion of new blood. The backers had thought about Schechter rather early-on, first as a member of the faculty and then as the head of the institution. Schechter for his part was attracted by the Seminary and by America. It would have allowed him to work within a Jewish context, which he seemed to miss. On the other hand, America was sorely lacking in the kind of intellectual and cultural resources that Schechter had become used to in England. He also wanted to be sure that he was coming to a viable institution and that he would be secure financially if he brought his family to America. Getting the necessary funds was not easy. It was clear that Schechter's coming would have been a boon to all sections of the community, and even Jewish leaders outside the Seminary orbit were concerned about the lack of financial backing for the venture.

In 1901, for example, a year after Isaac M. Wise, the President of Hebrew Union College, died and a year or so before Kaufman Kohler himself became President of H.U.C., he wrote to Schechter, “. . . let me express my deep regret that we are today as far as ever from seeing our hope of having you come to America realized. Our millionaires have money for big hospitals that cost immense sums to build and to maintain . . . but Jewish learning does not appeal to them.”²³ When Kohler wrote this, he was not aware that the situation was coming to a climax. A group of Jews, including Jacob Schiff, the great philanthropist, Louis Marshall, the lawyer and the Guggenheims were getting together a fund which would refinance the Seminary and create a new institution. By the fall of 1901 everything was in place, and Schechter finally made his decision to come to the United States the next spring.

Schechter's leaving was felt as a tremendous loss for the Anglo-Jewish community. Throughout the nineties he had spoken often at the Jews College in London and published regularly in the *London Jewish Chronicle*. He was widely known and revered. As one admirer put it, “For Judaism in this country [England] Schechter's presence is absolutely essential. He has gathered around him men . . . [who] are willing and anxious to work in the community for the cause of a sound, healthy and robust religion.” His friends and admirers gave him a big farewell party, with the list of luminaries headed by the Chief Rabbi Herman Adler. Mathilde, of course, had mixed feelings as she had when they left London to go to Cambridge. Their leaving from the train station was noted by one observer, “The distinguished scholar who was in the pink of health looked a striking figure with his usual great sombrero covering his leonine head and a long flowing fur-lined overcoat. Mrs. Schechter was visibly moved by the thought of leaving behind her a host of beloved friends and going to a strange world and made no attempt to conceal her tears.”²⁴

The Schechters' first year in New York (1902) was one of transition. The old Seminary building was located on Lexington Avenue and 58th Street opposite Bloomingdales. Jacob Schiff, the great philanthropist, had purchased a piece of land in Morningside Heights and donated the building which he constructed to the new Seminary. Schiff had not consulted anyone when he made the choice of the lot on 123rd Street off Broadway, and as it turned out, the choice was a poor one. Even though there was a Jewish community in nearby Harlem, the real center of Jewish life was downtown. The Seminary suffered considerably during the Schechter era because of its isolation in the “countrified” atmosphere of Morningside Heights.

In the summer of 1903 Solomon travelled to England and the continent in search of new faculty. He hired Israel Friedlander, a young Bible scholar and Alexander Marx, an historian and bibliophile who also

became the Seminary's librarian. Writing to Mathilde early in the trip he noted enthusiastically, "I have engaged the two young men we wanted for the Seminary. I am sure they are a great acquisition for the cause of learning in our country." We should note here that Mathilde Schechter played a significant part in the process of faculty selection particularly with respect to Marx. Writing many years later Marx himself said, "By the way, I may mention that it was she [M.R.S.] who advised Doctor Schechter when he went to Germany in order to select the faculty for the Seminary, to look up a young man who had visited them in Cambridge a few years before and thus in a way she is responsible for my coming to this country."²⁵

Mathilde Schechter again helped to make the Schechter household a center for the Seminary family and for many others as well. She was a hostess in the finest tradition and made everyone, no matter how diverse, feel at home. As Jacob Kohn, a well-known Rabbi and a Seminary graduate during the Schechter era, said, ". . . the Schechter house, especially on a Sabbath afternoon, was the meeting place of men and women of all social strata and varied spiritual interests . . . [Mathilde Schechter] had a faculty for gathering about her people not usually at home in drawing rooms. There was always a group of the unhappy or the lonely or those whom the world at large might regard as odd." The Schechters not only accepted the old and interesting but also the well-known. As Mathilde herself said, "The most distinguished men of all countries have been entertained in our home and I am still in touch with them . . ." She confirmed what so many other people felt when she said a bit immodestly but with much truth ". . . Schechter brought them and I kept them . . . who could withstand his marvelous magnetism? . . . His personality was remarkable."²⁶

Perhaps the most moving description of the significance of the Schechter household as a "Salon" was written by Henrietta Szold after Mathilde died. Miss Szold and Mrs. Schechter were good friends, both having come to New York in 1902. In a letter to Frank Schechter in 1924, Miss Szold wrote, ". . . these are the things [i.e., family] that counted with her [Mathilde Schechter]. With us something else counts—the memory of those full, vivid days, when she and your father and your house were a stimulating, creative center, in whose genial warmth we—so many, many of us—basked and were transformed."²⁷

Mathilde's talent as a hostess was also important to the rabbinical students at the Seminary. As part of their course of study, each student was required to give a Sabbath sermon in the Seminary synagogue before the faculty and students. Such an ordeal would obviously strike terror in the heart of even the most confident of the budding young rabbis. But in addition to the sermon there was another phase to the ordeal which was

not so clearly known. On the Sabbath afternoon of the day of the sermon it was the custom for the student to go over to the Schechter's house. Rabbi Jacob Kohn, in a memorial service for Mathilde Schechter, recalled this experience: "Often there were distinguished guests at table, to make the young man more embarrassingly self-conscious than he would otherwise be and yet that Sabbath visit to the Schechter home soon became the compensating feature of an otherwise trying day, the anticipation of which steeled him to brave even the darts of professorial criticism. Mrs. Schechter with that kindness and understanding which were hers, soon made even the most awkward young man at home. She could draw him out and make him express himself—to restore to him his self-respect. She knew exactly how he felt and under the penetration of her sympathy, constraint soon vanished."²⁸

One of the most consistent visitors to the Schechter household was Miss Szold. She had come to New York with her mother after her father, Rabbi Benjamin Szold, had died. She enrolled at the Seminary in order to gain the background to edit her father's papers. She was listed at the Seminary as the first female rabbinical student although everyone knew that she would not graduate or receive ordination. She attended classes faithfully from 1903 to 1906, and played an important role in the Seminary family—teaching Friedlander and Marx English, translating and editing for all the professors and even doing the index for Solomon Schechter's *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, which was published in 1909.

Throughout these years Miss Szold's consuming interest (passion) was the brilliant young talmudist and Seminary Professor Louis Ginzberg. The story of her love for Ginzberg, of her devotion to him and of her work on his monumental study *The Legends of the Jews* is well-known. Her disappointment, or one might say deep depression after five years of close (intimate?) friendship when he became engaged to another woman are also well-known. In the fall of 1908, when Henrietta found out that Ginzberg was engaged to another woman, she was shattered. At any rate we should perhaps mention at this point that Miss Szold was thirteen years older than Ginzberg. She ran to her close friends among the Seminary family for solace and for explanations. The Schechters, and especially Mathilde, were very important to her. They did everything they could to comfort her and made it clear that they blamed Ginzberg for leading her on without apparently having the intention of marrying her. Although they never said anything to Ginzberg directly, the whole situation had a deep affect on Solomon and his estimation of Ginzberg's character. Ginzberg's rejection of Henrietta Szold cost him more than he ever knew. In her diary Henrietta says she heard ". . . that he [Schechter] says that if he [Ginzberg] had married me, the successorship to the presidency of the Seminary would have been settled so far as he [Schechter] was concerned—he as my husband would have been his choice. But not

as things are now. With me he would have trusted him fully. Without me and after his treatment of me he trusts him not at all. Momma said the same—not only has he lost you, he has lost the presidency of the Seminary, she said that first night when I spoke to her.”²⁹

Mathilde loved her husband very much and enjoyed the recognition he received. She also enjoyed their family life together. Being a mother was as important and fulfilling for her as being a wife. The Schechter children were an interesting group. Frank Schechter lived out his life as a lawyer in New York City. He was perceived as “. . . a man of great charm, ability and rectitude.” Ruth Schechter, the older daughter, married Morris Alexander and settled in the Union of South Africa. Alexander was the first Jew in the Parliament there and Ruth herself was a staunch advocate of the rights of women and a foe of apartheid. Amy, the younger daughter, made quite a name for herself as a political radical and helped to organize textile mills in the South. She also wrote for a number of radical publications.³⁰

In New York Mathilde seemed to blossom and have time for everything. Beside her family she became involved in numerous interesting projects. One involved Jewish music. She sang well and was interested in the history of Jewish music as well as its performance. She did everything she could to encourage singing in the synagogue. “The professional choir is a mistake,” she said, “unless it is there to lead the congregation’s singing . . . In prayer the human soul remains untouched unless it sings its own joy and sorrow . . . no one can write our love letters neither can anyone do our praying or sing our hymns for us.” She organized a society for ancient Hebrew melodies and also published a hymn book for congregations.³¹

During this period Mathilde Schechter also became involved in an exciting experiment in elementary Jewish education and helped to forge a new and interesting direction for the education of young women. Needless to say, young girls were excluded from elementary Jewish education in *chedorim* (single class orthodox schools) and yeshivas on the Lower East Side. Congregational schools, however, such as the one at Sheerith Israel admitted females, but a number of independent afternoon religious schools (*Talmud Torahs*) did not. There were, of course, a great many Sunday Schools run by less observant Jews which also educated young women. When the Bureau of Jewish Education was established under Samson Benderly (1910) it inaugurated a campaign to expand religious education for women on the elementary and high school levels.

The Columbia Street Religious and Technical School for Girls, which Mathilde Schechter founded, was a novel adventure in that it taught vocational subjects which would help girls to get jobs or to acquire the skills they would need as wives and mothers, and it also taught Jewish subjects. The Hebrew Technical School for Girls, established in 1880,

was under Jewish auspices but taught no courses in Jewish subjects. The Columbia Street School was located on the Lower East Side so as to be immediately accessible to the masses of immigrant Jews. The industrial work at the school consisted of mending, making over garments, making new clothing and millinery. At its height in 1909, there were about 800 young girls a week attending the school in three different shifts. Mathilde Schechter was head of the religious activities of the school as well as being its founder.³²

Mathilde found enough time not only for such educational projects as the Columbia Street School but also for her own education and growth. For example, she was part of a Zionist study circle which eventually became the nucleus for the Hadassah Women's Zionist Organization. During the first decade after Herzl, there were many women who were drawn to the Zionist cause. With the help of Rabbi Judah Magnes one group of women in 1907 organized themselves into a Zionist study circle. Among others, the group included Beatrice Lowenstein (later wife of Judah Magnes), Eva Magnes (Judah Magnes' sister), Mrs. Richard Gottheil, Henrietta Szold and Mathilde R. Schechter. The group met regularly to study the important Zionist tracts and discuss Zionist ideology. They read Moses Hess' *Rome and Jerusalem*, Pinsker's *Auto Emancipation*, *The Jewish State* by Herzl and *Essays* by Ahad Ha'Am. The group lasted for a number of years and although it was defunct by the time the Hadassah was organized in 1912, it afforded an opportunity for the intellectual elite of New York Jewish women to meet and talk on a regular basis.³³

The founding of Hadassah in which Mathilde was also involved may be traced back to 1909. In that year Henrietta Szold journeyed to the Holy Land. She later wrote to Mathilde, "It was a stirring experience I underwent there, from the first moment, on a Friday afternoon when I rode up to the Mount of Olives and descended to the Wailing Wall, until the last twelve days later, when we left the city . . ." Miss Szold was not only moved by the beauty and holiness of the place but she was shocked by the conditions which she found. There were four hospitals in Jerusalem under different Jewish auspices, but there was no maternity ward, and infant mortality was 13%.

The idea for a Women's Zionist Organization took a few years to germinate, and in the early months of 1912 Henrietta Szold, together with her Zionist friends, formed a group of the "Daughters of Zion" which eventually became the Hadassah Women's Organization. Mathilde Schechter was involved from the beginning and was an active member of the first Board of the new organization. After a constitutional meeting at Temple Emanu-El the first board meeting took place at the Schechter home. Mathilde worked hard for a year or so with the new group but then she took sick and she was drawn away from continuing deep involve-

ment with Hadassah. She continued, of course, to hold dear the goals of Hadassah and remained close friends with Henrietta to the end of her days.³⁴

Solomon Schechter was a strong man but he never really recovered from the “Genizaschmutz” which affected his health generally. He also suffered from rheumatism. In his later years it became difficult for him to write and Mathilde, as his amanuensis became all the more important. On one Friday afternoon in November 1915 he was teaching a class at the Seminary when he took sick. He asked his friend and colleague, Alexander Marx, to take him home. Mathilde was there and she tells us what happened. “. . . he wanted Amy (his daughter) to choose a book for him because she would be sure to get the right one. And so with Scott’s ‘Antiquary’ in one hand and a cigarette in the other, he went to sleep.” It was 3:00 P.M. that afternoon that Schechter died . . . the funeral on Sunday morning was a very large gathering with some 1500 people attending, and as Mordecai Kaplan noted in his diary that day, “. . . the crowd of people that had gathered, though large, was by no means commensurate with the significance of Dr. Schechter to Judaism.”³⁵

The next five years until the time that Mathilde herself became quite ill were very productive for her—perhaps the most productive of her life. She was also very much alone with her husband dead, her son off to war, her daughter Ruth in South Africa and approaching the age of sixty she had less of a family than ever before. Nonetheless she managed to marshal her resources in new and creative directions. When her son Frank returned from the war she and Frank and Alexander Marx worked on editing the third volume of Schechter’s *Studies in Judaism*.³⁶ She also produced a manuscript which we have entitled, “the London-Cambridge Fragments.” In addition, she worked on two major projects which most fully expressed her commitments to women, to the Conservative Movement and to the Jewish people. She established the Women’s League of the United Synagogue and inaugurated its first major project which was the founding of a Students House to serve as a residence and meeting place for Jewish students in the Seminary-Columbia area.

Perhaps more than anything else, the establishment of the Women’s League was a way of Mathilde paying tribute to her husband. Solomon Schechter saw the United Synagogue as the crowning achievement of his career at the Seminary. It was meant to be the vehicle through which “Traditional” Judaism in America would be saved. Schechter was well aware of the differences among non-Reform Jews but felt that “all synagogues should be able to cooperate whether they style themselves Conservative or Orthodox.” Organized in 1913 with some twenty synagogues as charter members, it virtually marked the beginning of the Conservative Movement as a separate denomination, even though Schechter and Adler

did not quite see it this way at the time. The goal of the new organization as stated in the Preamble to its constitution was: "The advancement of the cause of Judaism in America and the maintenance of Jewish tradition in its historical continuity . . ." In Schechter's first speech to the group he talked of the great influence of women with regard to religious education and consequently of the importance of the education of women: ". . . the religious education of women is sometimes so woefully neglected in many older congregations. It is through them that we reach the children in a country like America, where the husbands are busy all week . . . I would even suggest that the Union (i.e., United Synagogue) assign a certain portion of its work to women, and give them a regular share in its activities." Schechter died in the midst of his work and was never able to create a women's organization connected to the Seminary. This effort fell to Mathilde Schechter and as Louis Ginzberg put it, ". . . God has given Mrs. Schechter the strength to become the master builder of this noble edifice."³⁷

American-Jewish women, of course, had already organized themselves before the Women's League came along. The National Council of Jewish Women, which was organized in 1893, for example, was primarily devoted to education and philanthropy. The Hadassah, on the other hand, had Palestine as its main focus and from its very inception emphasized medical aid to the Yishuv through its Visiting Nurse Program. During the war the Hadassah expanded these medical activities and also became active in raising money for the relief of beleaguered Jews abroad.³⁸

At the organizing meeting of the Women's League in January 1918, Mathilde Schechter stressed that the League would not duplicate the work of these already existing women's organizations. It would be ". . . a women's organization for Jewish work of a unique character—not for altruistic spirituality and uplift, but before all for the saving of our own souls and of those who came after." In other words, the purpose of the Women's League was to educate its members as Jewish women, to raise the level of their knowledge and sophistication so that they could become more effective Jews and would be better able to serve themselves and the Jewish community. "We wish to serve the cause of Judaism," she said, "by strengthening the bond of unity among Jewish women and by learning to appreciate everything fine in Jewish life and literature."³⁹

The United Synagogue was an organization of organizations with the congregations as its members. The Women's league was, of course, not a congregation and was yet a constituent member of the United Synagogue. Mathilde Schechter was apparently concerned at this early point about the autonomy of the fledgling women's organization. At the annual meeting in June 1919 she raised the point in a statement from the floor: "I have been delegated by the Convention of the Women's League to ask the question whether our organization is to be swallowed into the United

Synagogue entirely or in what way we are to work together." The question was, of course, an important one and the president, Rabbi Elias Solomon, tried to reassure the women although he could not resist making a joke about the problem. "There is no question just now of a merger," he said, "or trying to swallow up the ladies,—sweet as they are. You need not worry about the United Synagogue going more than half way to meet the ladies' request."⁴⁰

Perhaps the most important achievement of the League during the presidency of Mathilde Schechter was the Student House. During this period, students at the Seminary lived with local families or wherever they could find housing in the neighborhood. The story circulated, according to Mrs. Alexander Marx, that a rabbinical student died during an operation because he was "overworked and under-nourished." There were many who felt the need for appropriate living accommodations but Mathilde did something about it. She first approached Louis Brush a very wealthy unmarried man in his sixties whom Jacob Schiff had described as a "bit miserly and somewhat of a crank." She prevailed upon him to help finance a house which would be used by all Jewish students in the neighborhood who wanted to live in a Jewish atmosphere. Brush not only gave her money to help get the Student House established, but also promised to leave money in his will for the construction of a dormitory for the Seminary. Mathilde approached the Seminary Board with the idea but was politely turned down even though the Board recognized the need and "sympathized with the purposes back of it." Despite this action by the Board, Messrs. Marshall, Schiff and Strook and later Felix Warburg, expressed their willingness as individuals to contribute \$250. a year for two years toward the House. Mathilde took the money and proceeded with the project.⁴¹

A house was rented on 117th Street next to the Maison Français of Columbia University and opened in the Fall of 1918. No sooner had it commenced operation that it became apparent that the House was needed to serve the larger ends of the war effort. Mathilde contacted the Jewish Welfare Board which accepted the idea that the House be used as a canteen for the Students Army Training Corps at Columbia as well as for Jewish students in the area. In Mathilde's words: "In a short time the House was put into shape for the purpose of meeting, dining, resting, reading. But long before we were ready, without announcements, without putting up notices or posters in the colleges, the men flocked in. The rumors of excellent meals at moderate prices, of a homey place and kind cheerful women, a house without red tape, where the men could be happy after their own fashion, spread like wildfire, so that we soon had what the English college man calls a 'squash' which means filling your rooms with three hundred men where there is barely room for one

hundred. Whenever the rooms were crowded, the soldiers and sailors were content to sit on the staircase of the House from top to bottom, sometimes waiting an hour till their turn came (to eat).⁴²

The concept of the Student House was perhaps Mathilde's most unique achievement. It was a true expression of her values as a care-taking person and as a Jewish woman. In the words of one Rabbi-scholar friend, "She was the soul of hospitality. She was so true and genuine, a real '*em b'Yisroel*' (mother in Israel)." Mathilde as the quintessential care-taking woman had thus not only expressed herself in creating a home which became a center of Jewish life in the New York community, but also succeeded in bringing these talents to bear on the needs of young college people everywhere. In addition, she not only lived the role of caretaker but spoke about it too. In talking to one group of women in 1907 or so, she expressed her conviction about the divine quality of mother-love. "Help our children to their Jewish inheritance—pure and sweet and unalloyed and you will give them the finest gift of your love for them—a love so great and self-abnegating that it is only to be found with God—and sometimes with mothers." At the same time Mathilde was well aware that women are more than mothers and to lose themselves completely in this role alone would be too self-denying. On Mother's Day in 1919 she was invited by Mordecai Kaplan, the Rabbi of the Jewish Center on West 86th Street in Manhattan, to speak on the matter of motherhood. While she stressed the "absolute unselfishness and utter forgiveness of mother-love," she also stressed the needs of mothers to retain a sense of themselves apart from this role. "Some of us Jewish mothers are too good mothers, devoting ourselves too exclusively to our children's needs. When our children leave us and our hands become empty and our hearts ache, we desire to return to ourselves and we find that we have given out and given out till we have no more self to give." She went on to stress that mothers must develop themselves in "secular and religious matters" while the children are young so that later ". . . we can find some niche for ourselves where we can be of use in spite of the years and the crown of grey hair."⁴³

The theme of self-enhancement is found in everything Mathilde wrote about women. She was concerned because so many women spent their time in the pursuit of luxuries and fineries. The Jewish community at this time was not only plagued by the adjustment problems of the recent immigrants but also threatened by the materialism of those who had already been here a while and had achieved some degree of wealth and status. She hoped that the Women's League would ". . . help Jewish women to . . . stop [their] disintegration, to dispel the encyclopedic ignorance [and] to save our own souls and those who come after." Saving Jewish women or lifting them to a higher level meant making them aware of the richness of the tradition and especially of the contributions of women through women's literature.

In her first speech to the newly organized Women's League, Mathilde emphasized the significance of women's literature (Tehinnos) in the following way: "The mothers of Israel having suffered in the fiery furnace throughout the centuries, have evolved beautiful women's prayers for all of a woman's woes. The 'Techinah' of our grandmothers in its genuine tenderness and delicate intimacy, is a great comfort. We possess a wealth of women's literature awaiting to be rediscovered and to be made accessible to us. Dr. Schechter held its literary and religious value very high and collected it lovingly for years from every Jewish bookseller of note, all over Europe. He hoped that the one womanly woman of sufficient scholarly and literary attainments, to unearth these treasures and make them accessible to the women of today, might spare some time from her work in other fields to accomplish this splendid task. Would that we could persuade Henrietta Szold to do this important work for Jewish womanhood."⁴⁴

Mathilde Schechter took sick in 1920 and had to withdraw from public life. She was fortunate in having a devoted son, who by all reports, took very good care of her. In August of 1924 at the age of sixty-seven, she died.

CONCLUSION

Mathilde Schechter lived in an age when domesticity was the ideal for women, Jewish and otherwise. She was a fine wife and a good mother but she was also a multi-faceted individual who was creative both in her home and in the public arena. As an organization person, she developed herself fully, in line with the traditional women's roles of the times and yet stretching them in new and creative ways.

Mathilde has been called a "Baale Boste," which she is, but she gives the concept a whole new dimension and meaning. She is the care-taking woman par excellence but she is also a writer, a translator, an editor, a salonist, a supporter of women's rights, the originator of a new and innovative school for young women and the founder of one of the largest Jewish women's organizations in the United States.

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NOTES

I wish to thank the following people for their help: Lillie Kahan of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Adina Eshel of the Central Zionist Archives, Leone

Twentymen Jones of the University of Capetown, Lawrence Geller of the Hadassah Archives and Abraham Peck of the American Jewish Archives. I would also like to thank the members of the Schechter family, particularly Raphael Levy.

1. Louis Marshall to Frank Schechter, September 5, 1925, Schechter Papers, Jewish Theological Seminary. (J.T.S.)

2. Joseph Jacobs, "Solomon Schechter as Scholar and as a Man, *American Hebrew*, Vol. 98, No. 3 (November 26, 1915), p. 60.

3. Hannah Marx, "An Appreciation of Mathilde Schechter," *Women's League Outlook*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (December, 1938), p. 5. Reprinted separately by Women's League of the United Synagogue.

4. All the brief biographies of M.R.S. mentioned Breslau as the city of her birth. Her school documents, which are found among the Schechter papers (J.T.S.), clearly indicate that she was born in the village of Guttentag, which was in the district of Lublinitz. She is also erroneously listed as being born in 1859.

5. Hannah Marx, "An Appreciation," 1938.

6. Alexander Marx, "The Life of Mathilde Schechter," in *Services in Memory of Mrs. Solomon Schechter—Founder of the Women's League of the United Synagogue of America. Held under the auspices of the New York City Branch at Temple Anshe Hessed—Seventh Avenue at 114th Street, New York City, Thursday Evening, November 13, 1924*, p. 23.

7. The material on her years in London and Cambridge is based on her memoirs, which are among the Schechter papers. The memoir was written after Schechter died, between 1916 and 1919, and the pagination is extremely confused. Consequently I have not cited page numbers. The material below is drawn from these memoir fragments unless otherwise noted. I shall call the memoir "London-Cambridge Fragments" since most of it deals with this period. We also should note that most of it deals with Solomon and not with Mathilde.

8. The wedding dress, in Charlotte Schechter Levy, "Solomon Schechter—Roumanian Notes," 1935, p. 15. This memoir is a typescript of an interview with the niece of Solomon Schechter. Charlotte Schechter Levy was the daughter of Shalom Schechter. She was born in July 1883. The material in this memoir was dictated by her and written up by her daughter. Solomon visited his family in 1896 and mentions "dass Charlotte das kind . . ." who we assume is the author of the Notes, Solomon Schechter to Mathilde Schechter, September 13, 1896. This letter and the Roumanian Notes are in the Schechter Archives.

9. Her school records in the Schechter Papers give us her place of birth.

10. For Jacobs' account of the wanderers see Joseph Jacobs, "Solomon Schechter as Scholar and as a Man," *American Hebrew* Vol. 98, No. 3 (November 26, 1915), p. 60. See also Bentwich, *Schechter*, Chapter III passim for a description of the wanderers and citations from the members of the circle, acknowledging Schechter's help. The article on the Grimm parallel is mentioned in Adolph S. Oko, *Solomon Schechter—a Bibliography* (Cambridge, 1938), p. 13. It is entitled, "Rabbinic Parellel to a Story of Grimm" and appeared in *Folk-Lore*, Vol. 1 (1890), pp. 277-278.

11. Remark on not having a mission and on Zangwill, M. Schechter, "London-Cambridge Fragments;" statement on students' visiting on Sabbath afternoon, Charles I. Hoffman, "Mrs. Schechter as Helpmeet" *United Synagogue Recorder*, Vol. IV, No. 4 (October, 1924), p. 7; the Letter from a writer, "one or two friends,"

A. Kinross to Mathilde R. Schechter, October 9, 1895, The Schechter papers.

12. Mathilde Schechter, *London-Cambridge Fragments*.

13. Solomon Schechter, *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan* (London, 1887), XXXVI, 176 pp. See also Solomon Schechter, "Rabbi Elijah Wilna Gaon" *London Jewish Chronicle* (1890), 12 pp. Also Schechter, "Women in Temple and Synagogue" which later appeared in his *Studies in Judaism Series, First Series* (Philadelphia, 1986), chapter 13.

14. See Cyrus Adler, "Solomon Schechter, A Biographical Sketch," *American Jewish Year Book 5677—September 28, 1916 to September 16, 1917*, ed. by Cyrus Adler (Philadelphia, 1917), pp. 25-67.

15. M. Schechter, *Fragments*.

16. Solomon Schechter, "A Hoard of Hebrew Manuscripts I & II," *Studies in Judaism, Second Series* (Philadelphia, 1908), pp. 1-31.

17. The letter from Cairo, Solomon Schechter to Mathilde Schechter, December 29, 1896, in the Schechter Papers at the J.T.S. Henrietta's remarks on Mathilde as a romantic, Henrietta Szold, "The Lineaments of Mathilde Roth Schechter," *United Synagogue Recorder*, Vol. V, No. 1 (January, 1925), p. 10.

18. London Cambridge Fragments, See *The Works of Heinrich Heine* translated by Charles Godfrey Leland, T. Brooksbank, and Margaret Armour (London, 1892-1905) (12 volumes).

19. Mathilde Schechter's remark encouraging Zangwill to translate German dramas in M.R.S. to Israel Zangwill Oct. 14, 1894 and her remarks about her own translations M.R.S. to Israel Zangwill Nov. 30, 1899. These letters are part of some forty letters found in the Zangwill papers in the Central Zionist archives in Jerusalem. My thanks to Miss Adina Eshel of the Zionist archives for her help.

20. The novel, *Fragments*, are in Mathilde's own hand. There are chapter headings and what look to be pieces of a first draft for the first chapter. There is no way of dating the material. It is found in the Schechter Papers at the J.T.S. Some of the chapter headings:

1. A Children's Dance
2. Five O'Clock Tea
3. Union Debate
4. In the Botannical Gardens
5. A Newhan College

Mathilde was apparently not bothered by Nietzsche's habit of putting women down.

21. See, for example, Solomon Schechter, *Studies in Judaism, First Series*. Regarding Mathilde as editor, there are letters from Solomon to such people as Louis Marshall that exist in rough draft in Mathilde's hand where the corrections are also in her hand. The description of Magnusson, the Icelandic scholar, comes from "The London-Cambridge Fragments," the quotation "I send you . . ." from a letter, Eriker Magnusson to Mathilde Schechter, N.D., Schechter Papers.

22. After Solomon Schechter died, his son Frank went to England and collected material on his father. Some of this was published in an article entitled "Schechteriana." The following piece, relevant to our point about Mathilde's contribution, is found among the Schechter Papers. Claude Montefiore told Frank that Schechter's first articles in English were translated from the German. Regarding Schechter's writing at this time Montefiore told Frank Schechter that ". . . after he and other friends worked hard at a proper English translation, (of Schechter's

first English article), it proved, from the stylistic point of view, to be very poor, even in English. The second article that S. published in English was also translated from the German, but the third, which Mr. Montefiore believes to be the essay on the Chassidim—he wrote in English—not translated, and it was written with a mastery of the English language and a fine feeling for English style.” “Schechter Anecdotes Gathered by Frank Schechter in England.” Schechter Papers, J.T.S., Oko in his bibliography of Schechter tells us that this paper on Chassidim, which later appeared in the *Studies in Judaism* First Series, first appeared in the London Jewish Chronicle in 1887, the year that Solomon and Mathilde were married. (Oko, *Schechter Bibliography*. Item 17a) Schechter’s papers contain the rough draft of articles which are in Mathilde Schechter’s handwriting with corrections also in her handwriting.

23. Kohler’s remark in a letter from Kaufman Kohler to Solomon Schechter, May 27, 1901. Schechter Papers, J.T.S. On Schechter’s coming, see Karp, “Schechter Comes to America,” *passim*. For the old Seminary, see Jeffrey Gurock, “Resisters and Accommodators” Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America 1886-1983,” *American Jewish Archives*, Vol. XXXV, No. 2 (November, 1983), pp. 100-108. See also in this same volume which deals with the Rabbinate in America, the essay by Abraham J. Karp, “The Conservative Rabbi—Dissatisfied But Not Unhappy,” pp. 188-263. For Schechter’s attitude during the negotiations, see Meir Ben Horin, “Solomon Schechter to Judge Mayer Sulzberger, Part I. Letters from the Pre-Seminary Period (1895-1901).” *Jewish Social Studies*, Volume XXV, No. 4 (October, 1963), pp. 249-286. The best general history of the religious denominations in America is the recent work, Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism—the Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective* (San Francisco, 1984).

24. An admirer’s comment, “For Judaism . . .” in a letter from Alfred Eukholz to Mathilde R. Schechter, December 15, 1901, Schechter Papers. Schechter’s departure noted in an article in *Jewish Exponent* (April 25, 1902). Regarding the hat mentioned in this article in *The Exponent*, Mathilde later wrote, “His hat was rather a well-known feature at Cambridge. Once in Professor Haddon’s drawing room the congregations minister, Dr. Forsythe, entered the room, and looking about, said, “Where is Dr. Schechter? Is he upstairs in the study?” “How do you know he is here?” I asked. “Why,” he replied, “You can’t mistake his hat on the hall stand. Since Professor Bensly’s death, his is the worst hat in the University.” Mathilde Schechter, “Cambridge Fragments.”

25. “A great acquisition” in letter from Solomon Schechter to Mathilde Schechter, July 14, 1903, Schechter Papers J.T.S. Marx’ statement in Alexander Marx, “The Life of Mathilde R. Schechter,” *Services in Memory of Mrs. Solomon Schechter—Founder of the Women’s League of the United Synagogue of America—Held under the auspices of the New York City Branch at Temple Anshe Chesed—Seventh Avenue at 114th Street, Thursday evening, November 13, 1924, New York*.

26. Rabbi Kohn’s remark in Jacob Kohn, “The Beauty of Mrs. Schechter’s Character,” *United Synagogue Recorder*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (October 1924). “The most interesting men . . .” in an anonymous article quoting Mathilde Schechter under the section entitled, “The Women’s Field” *United Synagogue Recorder*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (October 1924).

27. Miss Szold's characterization of the Schechter household in a letter from Henrietta Szold to Frank Schechter, August 31, 1924. Schechter Papers.

28. Jacob Kohn in *Services in Honor of Mrs. Solomon Schechter . . . November 13, 1924*, p. 35.

29. The fullest account of Henrietta Szold and the Seminary is found in Irving Fineman, *Woman of Valor—The Life of Henrietta Szold 1860-1945* (New York, 1961). Miss Szold's statement regarding Ginzberg and the presidency of the Seminary is found in her diary.

30. The quotation on Frank Schechter's character is from Eli Ginzberg, "The Seminary Family: A View From my Parents' Home" in *Perspectives on Jews and Judaism—Essays in Honor of Wolfe Kelman*, ed. by Arthur A. Chiel (New York, 1978), p. 121. Other facts on Frank Schechter from his obituary, *New York Times*, September 27, 1937. Regarding Ruth, see Irving Fineman, Henrietta Szold, p. 255, where he notes the opposition of Solomon Schechter to his daughter's politics but because Fineman gives no sources in his biography, the reference cannot be checked.

On Ruth Schechter's husband, see his second wife's biography, Enid Alexander, *Morris Alexander—A Biography* (Capetown and Johannesburg, 1950). The biography describes M. Alexander as a progressive because he supported the rights of "coloureds," i.e., those of mixed blood but he favored equality only for "All civilized men" (p. 62), i.e., not for Blacks. Material on Amy Schechter is from the Schechter family.

31. Announcement of the Society for ancient Hebrew Melodies in the Schechter Papers. Announcement of Mathilde Schechter's Hymnal in *American Hebrew*, Vol. 84, No. 11 (January 15, 1909), p. 291. The Hymnal also described in *American Hebrew*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (November 5, 1909), p. 7. The book itself: *Kol Reena—Hebrew Hymnal For School and Home* edited by Lewis M. Isaacs and Mathilde S. Schechter (New York, 1910).

32. For a general survey of Jewish Education at this time, see Alexander Dushkin, *Jewish Education in New York City* (New York, 1918). See also *The Jewish Communal Register of New York City, 1917-1918*, Second Edition, New York: The Kehillah of New York City, 1918. Educational Agencies pp. 348 ff. In the Period before 1910 and the Bureau, the Downtown Talmud Torah (Houston Street) and the Uptown Talmud Torah (111th Street) did not admit girls. The Machziekei Talmud Torah of East Broadway did. The Bureau established classes for girls at the two talmud torahs, and at other locations throughout the city.

There is very little solid information about the school. Many people credit Mathilde with establishing the school but we do not know when or under what conditions it began. Dushkin, in his *Jewish Education*, (p. 45) mentions it as a spin-off of Congregation Sheerith Israel. There is a brief notice on the school in *American Hebrew*, Vol. 84, No. 4 (November 26, 1909), p. 101 from which the figures as to number of students are drawn.

33. "Recollections of Lotta Levensohn," Hadassah Archives. These recollections of the origins of Hadassah were recorded in 1967, some sixty years after the events transpired.

34. "A Stirring Experience" in a letter from Henrietta Szold to Mathilde Schechter, December 13, 1909, Henrietta Szold Papers, Schlesinger Library,

Radcliff College. For details of her trip to Palestine, see Irving Fineman, *Henrietta Szold*, pp. 213 ff. Lotta Levensohn, *op. cit.*, on the origins of Hadassah see Alice Seligsberg, "Chronicle of Hadassah: 1912-1914 Part I," in Hadassah Archives. My thanks to Dr. Geller of the Hadassah Archives for his help. We also have evidence for Mathilde's illness from her daughter Ruth, who was visiting her mother at this time from South Africa. See letter from Ruth Schechter Alexander to Morris Alexander April 16, 1913, Morris Alexander Papers, University of Capetown, Capetown South Africa.

35. The facts regarding Schechter's death and the statement by Kaplan are taken from the Journal of Mordecai Kaplan, November 21, 1915. Story about Amy from Mathilde Schechter, *Fragments*. Rheumatism is mentioned by Schechter in letter to H. Szold, January 10, 1911. The letter is in "Nine Letters from Solomon Schechter to Henrietta Szold," ed. by Arbaham E. Millgram and Emma G. Ehrlich, *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Winter, 1979), p. 37.

36. See Solomon Schechter, *Studies in Judaism—Third Series* (Philadelphia, 1924). The point about Mathilde Schechter's isolation was made in a letter to me from Raphael Levy.

37. For the Preamble to the United Synagogue Constitution, see *Annual Report of the United Synagogue*, 1913, p. 9. Schechter's speech in the same report, pp. 19 ff. For Ginzberg's remark, see *The Sixth Annual Report of the United Synagogue*, p. 22.

38. On the National Council of Jewish Women, see Monroe Campbell, *The First Fifty Years—A History of the National Council of Jewish Women* (New York, 1943). For Hadassah, see D.N. Miller, *A History of Hadassah, 1912-1935*. Ph.D. Thesis (Ann Arbor, 1968).

39. Mathilde Schechter, "A Task for Jewish Women," *The American Jewish Chronicle* (February 1, 1918). Reprinted by the Women's League. This address was delivered by Mrs. Schechter at the United Synagogue on January 21, 1918.

40. *The United Synagogue of America and Women's League Annual Reports 1919 and 1920* (New York, 5680-1920), p. 52.

41. For Jacob Schiff's remark on Brush, see letter from Jacob Schiff to Mathilde Schechter, October 5, 1916, Schechter Papers. Mathilde approaching Louis Brush from Hannah Marx, "An Appreciation of Mathilde Schechter," *Women's League Outlook*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (December, 1938). Reprinted separately by Women's League. Brush died on November 7, 1926 and in his will left money for indigent rabbinical students and for the Seminary dormitory which he stipulated "is to be constructed in severe colonial style," [*United Synagogue Recorder*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (January, 1927)]. Brush's bequest became the cornerstone of a campaign which together with the Schiff bequest for a library and Israel Unterberg's donation for the Teacher's Institute, resulted in the new Seminary building being erected in 1929. The Board's refusal to take responsibility for the Student House, Cyrus Adler to Mathilde Schechter, May 20, 1918, Solomon Schechter Papers. The Brush bequest was the largest the Seminary had received to that date and amounted to \$1,467,113, a considerable sum in 1926. The sum is mentioned in *American Jewish Yearbook*, Vol. 30 (1928-29), ed. by Harry Schneiderman, (Philadelphia, 1929), p. 75. See also *New York Times*, March 3, 1927, p. 14.

42. Mrs. Solomon Schechter, *The Students House* (New York, 1918), p. 10. This pamphlet was one of the first published by the Women's League. For facts on programs at the Student House, see Rabbi Louis M. Levitsky, "Five Years at the

Students House," *United Synagogue Recorder*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January, 1925), pp. 8-9; See also "A New Canteen at Columbia," *American Hebrew*, Vol. 103, No. 24 (October 18, 1918), p. 617. Mathilde also discussed the Student House in her address to the Women's League in June 1919, *United Synagogue Annual Report 1919 and 1920*, pp. 103 ff.

43. "Help our children . . ." in an unpublished speech by Mathilde Schechter, "Talks to Mothers" n.d. (1905 or so), Schechter Papers. Mathilde quoted the Mother's Day speech at the Center when she spoke that June to the annual convention. See *United Synagogue of America and Women's League, Annual Reports 1919 and 1920*, p. 109.

44. "to dispel encyclopedic ignorance" in Mathilde Schechter, "The Aims and Ideals of the Women's League," 1918. This was a speech that Mathilde delivered in May of that year. A typescript is found at the archives of the Women's League. Mathilde's remarks on the Tehinnah literature are from, "A Task for Jewish Women," published separately by Women's League, it was delivered at the United Synagogue on January 21, 1918 and first appeared in the *American Jewish Chronicle* on February 1, 1918.