

High Hopes

*And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.*

William Shakespeare A Midsummer Night's Dream

Norman Bentwich was born on February 28, 1883 his parents' second child, and until the age of nineteen their only son, in a lengthening series of daughters. It was a position that brought special status and special responsibilities. Cookie called him "Master Important." He grew up in a prospering household. His mother was an everflowing spring of nurturing care-- for her husband, their children, the household, and indeed any person with whom she came in contact; his father was full of zeal to reform the world. Norman himself was a sensitive boy, attached to the family, and also observant; by the time he was ten, he was aware of his mother's tendency to work too hard.

The Boy's education was of special concern to his father. Only the best would do. Solomon Schechter himself was engaged to teach Norman the first elements of Jewish learning, -- the Hebrew alphabet, the prayer book and the Hebrew Bible. Schechter had genius not only as a scholar, but as a teacher. Norman adored him and absorbed his devotion to prophetic ideals of justice and mercy. (77 Years p6)

At the age of twelve, Norman entered St Paul's Day School where he studied Greek and Latin, wrote much Greek and Latin verse, and won school prizes in a way that reminded his grandmother Bentwich of the "dear old days" when his father was a boy. At home he continued his Jewish education and his music. Every morning before he left for school, his mother was up to hear his violin practice. In 1899 his father swept him along to the Third Zionist Congress in Basel. In 1901 Norman went up to Trinity College at Cambridge University, hoping to be Schechter's disciple (Schechter was Reader in Rabbinics there). In the spring of 1902 Shechter moved to New York to take on the presidency of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Norman kept an abiding interest in the development of Judaism during the Hellenistic period.. He studied classics and wrote a thesis on the "Platonism of Philo." He entertained hopes of a fellowship at Trinity that would lead to an academic career at Cambridge. He also took part in the musical life at Cambridge, and spoke at the Union, since "the itch to speak prevailed over the shyness to get on my legs."

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In his fifth year, "being doubtful, with reason, of election to the fellowship," Norman started legal studies and won a scholarship in International Law. Failing to get the fellowship, he continued to study international law for one term, while at the same time reading for the Bar as a student at Lincoln's Inn. He was called to the bar in 1908.

For a few years after leaving Cambridge Norman drifted without clear direction, although with lots of activity. He practiced in Chancery Courts for four years, although not very busy with briefs. He wrote a book on The Law of Private Property in War. He engaged in social work and lived for a time at Toynbee Hall, a university man's residential settlement in the heart of the Jewish area. He spoke as a young Liberal in the general elections of 1905. In 1907 Norman served as delegate to the Zionist Congress at the Hague (he was re-elected annually as delegate until 1912). Spurred by Schechter he wrote three books published by the Jewish Publication Society of America: Philo, a study of the mystic philosopher of Alexandria (1907) Josephus on "the renegade historian" (1908), and Hellenism, one of a series on 'Movements in Judaism,' published by the Jewish Publication Society (1919),

When Achad Ha'am moved to London from Odessa, Norman Bentwich and his father spent many Friday evenings listening to him teach. Achad Ha'am believed that the essential purpose of the return to Zion was the regeneration of Judaism and Jewish culture; his teaching attracted many idealists, including Chaim Weizmann, who often came down from Manchester to join the Friday evening group.

In 1908 Norman, then a young barrister with few briefs, went with five friends to tour Palestine. They started, as was customary, in Egypt, and then went on to Judea and Jerusalem. In Jericho, they saw palm gardens that showed what could be done if the waters of the Jordan were used for irrigation. At the pool of Elisha, they met a group of German archaeologists, among them a Jewish scientist who amazed the English party by speaking Hebrew as if it were his mother tongue! They visited Jaffa, then the center of Zionist activity. While there Norman drove out with an English Zionist to the sand hills to the north to choose a site for the Hebrew gymnasium. In those days the hotel Bella Vista stood alone by the sea at the edge of the dunes; Tel Aviv was not even a name Continuing on their tour, Norman and his friends rode on horseback up the coastal plain from Jaffa to Haifa and Galilee. They visited Jewish villages where Jewish farmers acted as overseers for Arabs who did most of the rough work (in those days every village included an Arab quarter, or had an Arab village attached to it). They saw wine

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cellars that employed Jewish workers. Norman was entranced. He wrote: "We saw the country and the sight could not fail to excite the call of the blood."

Back in England, Norman told an interviewer for the Jewish Chronicle that in his opinion English Jews could not be entirely English in thought, and that it was a good thing that they had preserved their otherness. His opinions, though shared by some Jewish students at Oxford and by leading historical thinkers, were anathema to the established leaders of Anglo Jewry. An impressive set of names signed a letter to the Jewish Chronicle saying that Norman's statements were dangerous to Jewish status, likely to alienate British Jews from other citizens, and tended to demolish the arguments by which Parliament was induced to remove Jewish disabilities. Norman, following Ahad HaAm, called such views "slavery in freedom."

Apart from Zionism Norman dabbled in English politics. In 1910 he got as far as being adopted as a Liberal candidate for a doubtful constituency --and lost the election. In 1911 he looked somewhat enviously at his sister Nita and her husband who, having toured Palestine on their honeymoon, had made up their minds to live there. That year after a second visit to Palestine, Norman decided that "in no country could a Jew achieve as much for his people as in Palestine. I would come out there, and leave the futility of talking and writing about it in England."

Through a friend in the Foreign Office he applied for an English consular or judicial post in the Middle East, and learned that it would be easier to get a legal appointment in the Government of Egypt. He wrote "this was the traditional route by which our Hebrew ancestors came to the Promised land, and I thought it might serve me." A British judicial adviser in Egypt saw him in London and recommended him for a post as inspector in the Egyptian Native Courts.

He started work at the Egyptian Ministry of Justice in the fall of 1912. His mother was sad to see him leave England, but his father rejoiced. Herbert wrote home to Susannah from the Hotel St Regis in New York, December 11, 1912: "My own darling Chichy: Your recital of the grand doings with our dear Boy and of all the marks of the affection and regard which he received made me feel very much at home with you all; and his heartfelt acknowledgments to you and separately to myself touched me deeply. He will fill his place in the world wherever that may be, and my trust in God's Providence is my best comfort for our temporary pangs of parting, which will be healed as we look for his early return to our Home circle."

In Cairo, Norman studied Arabic, and also studied to pass the examinations, given in

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Paris, for a French Licence en Droit. He worked his way through the Egyptian legal codes with the help of a Copt teacher. One of his duties was to edit the Official Bulletin that contained Law Reports of the Native Courts in Arabic and in English. In this he was helped by William Obeid Makram, a young Copt who had recently returned from Oxford after taking a First Class in the School of Jurisprudence. When Norman and James Baxter, a young Scottish recruit to the service, entertained Makram in their rooms, they heard adverse comment from their British colleagues. At that time no Egyptian could be a member of the Turf Club and the Sports Club in Gezira, where the British community gathered. The social segregation was bitterly resented by the Egyptians, particularly by those who had enjoyed more friendly relationships at an English university. Makram, who began as an Anglophile, became during World War I the henchman of Saad Zaglul, the national champion of Egypt's independence. Norman's own Zionist conviction led him to sympathize with Egyptian national aspirations. His experience in Egypt convinced him that in some ways he was a stranger to the English administrative class.

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Where Norman was special, being the only boy, Rosalind Nita, born just fourteen months later, grew up as her father's favorite, her brother's companion, and the idolized leader of her younger sisters. She was always called "Nita," the name of Garibaldi's mother, and seemed to combine her mother's grounded sense of immediate realities with the adventurous brio of Garibaldi. Part of her charm was a light touch with family and household matters, which she handled with the seriousness of a child at play. At the age of sixteen, spending a summer holiday with six younger sisters, her grandmother, and Cookie on a farm in Norfolk, she wrote to her parents, who were about to leave on a tour with Lillian and Norman (the two oldest children):

Dearest Mama, Papa, Lillian & Norman,

Here I am under the appellation of mistress, but Cook goes by the name of master and quite fulfills that office. When I got home last night I told Grandma that Nellie [the horse that pulled the carriage] was restless and so I had to leave you at the station. She was pitying you at having a journey of three hours before you; I wonder what she would have said if she had known the truth. I sat down to chat but was soon reminded that I had to tell Cook what was for supper thereby fulfilling my office. Cookie is capital; why last night she had repapered all the shelves in the kitchen and put the silver and things in order, and I helped her take the useful things from the pantry into the kitchen so that we have everything we want in the kitchen. Naturally before she went to bed she had all the breakfast things laid, and I was going to say the bread and butter cut, only she remembered your order Mama and was good and kept it.

All went well this morning. Everybody slept well and I actually woke up at seven o'clock owing to the weight of my responsibilities and there being no feather bed. I think seven o'clock a very tolerable time for the country. I picked some watercress for breakfast and then after a short practise went out marketing. This was my great test; I remembered everything but had no idea of the price of vinegar. Mr. Puxley, who saw I suppose that I was a novice and charged me too much to Cookie's idea, for when I got home and told her she was in a fit and was hopeless at my ever being a market woman, and I think she gave me up; but she was a little more reconciled when I told her I should speak to Mr. Puxley about it, So far for my housekeeping.

The weather is heavenly today, not too hot and not too cold, with a nice sun and blue sky. We all bathed and enjoyed except Thelma, who did not like it much. [Thelma was then five years old.]

With love and kisses (mind and kiss one another), hoping you will have a lovely journey I remain

Your unbusinesslike daughter
NITA

Papa's Pet
Mama's Love
Normie's Schnussels
Lillian's darling
sends a kiss to each of you.

Three years later a similar happiness breathes in a letter from Carmelcourt, where Nita

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was staying for a few days with Carmel (age four), Joseph, (aged seventeen months), Pompom, who took care of the little ones, and Mr. and Mrs. Kilby to take care of meals and household chores. At that point Nita having graduated from South Hampstead High School, was preparing to apply for admission to colleges at Oxford and at Cambridge.

Dearest mother,

Another most enjoyable day has passed and I feel I should like to scratch the Higher Certificate and become a rurite for the rest of my days. Pompom was not far wrong when she declared this a Paradise. The weather has been sunny and hot with a gentle breeze, a quite blue sky; the bath this morning was delightful in spite of the distance to the sea, and Babs has been a love all day....I think I should be contented looking into his sky blue eyes the whole day long. We picked some strawberries just about ten minutes before eating them for tea. I am afraid there will not be enough to bring home this time, but I will make it up with roses and flowers.Pompom and Carmel, who is not very brave except out of water, also bathed this morning, while I took care of baby and learnt history, but even if lessons don't go so well as at home, I am sure I will do better in the exam by this change. I feel as well as can be though a bit stiff from swimming, and Mrs Kilby says I look the picture of health.

In the event Nita passed the Higher Certificate, and was admitted to Girton College as a student of history. In her two years there she took an active part in the music of the college and she was a visible member of the Jewish community, walking two miles every Shabbat to attend services at the Cambridge synagogue. She also studied history seriously. But something in the life and buildings of Girton did not suit her temperament. In the spring of 1905, at the end of her second year, she wrote to her father "about my work. As far as hours go the result is satisfactory, but as far as knowledge which is the chief thing, it is sad to think how little one can get into one's brain in a long time. Somehow the more one reads the less events stick to one's memory....But one thing we do learn is how little we know and how much there is that we shall never know.... Now one thing more. Please do not expect me to come out well in my Mays, because I am afraid I will only disappoint you....cramming does not agree with the present state of my brain; but what I can do this week I will, as I don't want to fail if I can help it. Now I must to bed. A loving kiss from NITA"

In "the Mays," Nita did well enough to complete the first part of her tripos in history with honors. However, in the fall of that year she returned home without completing the work for her degree. Herbert Bentwich considered Nita's university studies all very well, but he was sure that his daughters' chief roles in life were to marry, and to take care of family. When Lillian, the oldest daughter, married Israel Friedlander in September 1905 and moved to

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America, Nita was brought home to help with the family. Susannah, and Nita may have had other views about the role of women, but they acquiesced in Herbert's judgment, the more easily as Nita was not enchanted with college studies.

Back in London, Nita lived at The Holm with her parents, her eight younger siblings, and the social obligations of a young, single, Anglo-Jewish woman. She was, on the evidence of her letters, reasonably happy, but as time went on, progressively less so. In July, 1906 she wrote from Carmelcourt to her mother in London that she felt like a regular head cook and bottlewasher and thought of applying for a situation as Mother's Help and Nursery governess; "highest references, experienced with children of all ages from 7 days upwards, or rather from seventy years downwards, pretty fair needlewoman, willing to make herself useful, musical, good traveller, good fancy cook; it reads well, doesn't it? Won't you have me? But I'm afraid I should be a worn out wreck at the end of a month."

Fifteen months later Nita crossed the Atlantic to help Lilian. On board ship, away from the family, she came to a new understanding of herself. She wrote to Margery: "There is a vast greatness in the sea and a feeling unthought of, magnetic comes on one; a religious awe and one sees one's self on one's own true insignificance. It was great and it was horrible and I wept and felt better, and I think I may be a better woman for it, but the dread of the sea is a true thing, and even if it lasts but an hour it is an hour to live."

In the same letter she mentioned a young woman who had fallen in love with her, "too much devotion palls on me frightfully, I want someone now who will give me a dressing down for my cussedness and teach me, to look up to, instead of kneeling at my feet and doing my bidding no matter how silly or capricious." She also wrote to her father about a man who wanted to marry her. Though he was socially appropriate and "a very good man," she was not interested. "I do not think he has much soul --not the deepness or perhaps the bitterness I want."

In London, after her trip, Nita resumed social life with decreasing enthusiasm. Her younger sister, Hebe (age 14), looking at Nita and Budge as they left for a dance, thought Budge looked so lovely, so dainty and fresh that "coming out" was just the right expression for her --like a lily bud "coming out," not quite open. On the other hand Nita, while also beautiful in her Redfern pink satin, brought to mind a full blown rose which was enjoying occasional rays of sunshine which brightened its days."

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Wedding Picture: September 27, 1910, in the garden of 58 Avenue Road

Standing: unidentified Seated, (l-r) Thelma, Nita, Michael, Hebe

On the ground: Carmel, Iris Solomon, boy cousin.

Michael Lange, one of the friends who had gone with Norman to visit Palestine, was a wealthy bachelor, known to be scrupulously ethical, deeply religious, and quite eccentric. Tall, loose limbed, bearded, he had been, like Norman, a student of Solomon Schechter at Cambridge. Qualified as a barrister, he maintained chambers, but had little practice. He once stood, unsuccessfully, for Parliament. His chief occupation was to lead the "Pi-Society," a group of young Jewish men including Norman Bentwich, who met regularly to discuss aspects of Jewish life, particularly practical questions of Jewish education.

Margery wrote of him: "When I first knew him he seemed to me to have a genius for prayer....It was our delight, as children, when he was asked to say grace. Whether he shortened it as the spirit moved him, or said every word of its verbose tautology, it was the same. He clothed

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the old familiar words with new meaning, and the reality of God, and the unreality of everything else, were made manifest to us in the meek beauty of his face, and the tone of his voice on such occasions.”

Susannah had a less romantic view. In the summer of 1907, writing to Margery and Nita in Germany, Susannah described for them a Shabbos afternoon at which some “old fogies,” including Lange and Hyamson, competed over who should ingratiate themselves the most with the kiddies. Both told fairy tales and both gave piggy backs and both seemed particularly lively. Lange told Susannah that Hyamson had much improved and was getting rid of his funereal moods, like himself, (which Susannah heard as a mild way of flattering himself). She added that Lange won Cook's heart by being a child with the children at tea.

Some time that year Michael proposed marriage to Nita, and she turned him down. Perhaps she thought him too self-absorbed, too indecisive, too irritating with his unexpected deep drawn sighs and his abrupt shifts in conversation. With enough money to choose his way of life Michael was strict in religious observance, both with regard to ritual and with regard to ethical behavior; and he worried constantly about what he should do.

However, in the spring of 1910, when Michael turned up unexpectedly in Birchington and proposed to Nita again, she accepted him. He seemed to her at once more resigned and less anxious. His more serious, confident bearing made such an impression on her that she no longer considered other suitors.

Nita herself had changed. During their engagement she wrote to Michael from Birchington: "it was on a steamer that I first felt the right proportion of things, that I first really feared God...and knew that to fear God is the first step to loving him -- the miles and miles of sea and firmament, and we just a few mites in it...I wonder if it was there that I first loved you unconsciously. I know that the journey to America changed me in one day: about one fourth from land I felt the garb of a child fall from me, and, I believe, I arose a woman, and I know I yearned then for someone who understood to come and guide me."

Nita, in her new love of Michael, delighted in his honesty, insight, and generosity of spirit. She also enjoyed his occasional blunt and abrupt speech, as when a friend of Nita's invited them to her house on Shabat, and added that she hoped Mr Lange would not be offended if some of her guests smoked. She was startled to hear him answer fiercely: "Ah well, we all go to hell our own way, don't we?"

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Nita and Michael were married, on September 27, 1910, in the garden of the Holm. Their honeymoon began with two days in Folkestone "to recuperate from the handshakes of the day." Then they traveled through France, Switzerland and Italy.

They spent eight weeks in Palestine, looking at the country with a view to settling there. Their stay in the colony of Zichron Jacob was particularly pleasant. There they boarded at the Graff hotel. They made an expedition on horseback to Ceasarea with a party got together by Schechters (including Solomon Schechter's nieces Leah and Zipporah). They became friendly with Dr Hillel Joffe and his wife and children, and with the Levita family who were building a farm nearby at Bat Shlomo. They met Aaron Aronson, a brilliant young botanist who was setting up an agricultural research center near Athlit. Altogether the settlement Zikhron Ya'akov appealed to Nita. She liked to see the farmer carts full of Jewish children "tidy and neat" of the land. She felt that in Zikhron there was more love of the land than in other colonies, that the people in Zikhron were proud of being there, and the feeling of "Galut" [exile] had left them.

On November 2, Nita's diary recorded a crucial encounter in Jerusalem:

A beautiful day. Michael, Yehuda (Kaminitz's head man), and I started off on donkeys at 8.30 with an Arab boy to drive them on to Emmaus -2 1/2 hour trip in the hills to the West. It was lovely being out in the country again.- Here is such a feeling of expanse and possession out among the Jerusalem hills. At Emmaus we went to the German Hospice, kept by a Father Muller a charming man, enthusiastic, practical, sympathetic, and of fine bearing; real hearty German type, -fair curly hair and fair long beard, sparkling light blue eyes, healthy and robust.-He lived an open air life gardening and meditating- he has done wonders with his place. Eight years ago it was a barren hill as its neighbors, now it is a wooded garden with vegetables, and fruit terraces. He only has cistern water, but he uses the soil to its full extent and with care it seems to yield to the work of man. The whole formation of the Mts around Jerusalem is limestone, between rich red clay soil. Under the blocks of limestone is again rich soil, and there is soil between many of the crevasses. Thus while it is unproductive of springs it is able to keep the roots fresh during the summer, as the sun cannot penetrate the rock. Father Muller says too that in many places underneath the surface soil is wonderfully rich "earth" which is the soil of the ancient Hebrews and also that in olden days many of these mountains were wooded heights cultivated by the richer Jews - many roots of trees having been found and the way the land runs in terraces speaks to there being an earlier cultivation. All the land has to be worked in terraces to prevent the rain sweeping the surface soil away - the terraces are made of the limestone between the soil....There is fine view of the Mediterranean with Ramleh, Lydda and Joppa in the way.

Writing home, Nita added, "He made me feel quite enthusiastic, and I am inclined to buy a mountain, and try my luck. "

Back in London, Nita and Michael astonished the family by saying that they intended to

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leave England "as soon as practicable," to settle in Palestine for good, probably in a colony. They would make Palestine their home, and live there under their own vine and fig tree." The important thing," said Michael, "is to go in and do it. Show 'em that English Jews can live in a Palestine colony." And Nita added "Live beautifully."

For the time being, Michael's mother being incurably ill, they leased a house in London in St. John's Wood, near the Bentwich home, and together they furnished it with handsome pieces, "always with an eye on Palestine, thinking how jolly everything would look out there." (Pieces of that furniture, beautifully restored after years in Margery's and Budge's huts, now adorn the homes of Israeli relatives, and I have strips of embroidery from the borders of Nita's curtains.)

During those months they traveled freely. They visited the Hague, where Michael had relatives; they toured the Lake District to see the country. Margery pictured Michael most typically wearing his well-worn overcoats, lugging his substantial kit-bags off a taxi, returning with Nita weather-beaten and full of vim from some expedition. "They seemed to be perpetually en route; it suited both their natures."

They built a little Succah on the balcony outside Michael's study. When a Palestine Bazaar was organized (by the Anglo-Jewish Association and the Zionist Organization together, in aid of the Evelina de Rothschild School, and the Hilfsverein school in Jerusalem), they produced a play of "Joseph and His Brethren." Michael wrote the Hebrew text, and taught the young actors (sons of friends and family), their parts; Nita supervised stage management and costumes. The use of Hebrew as a living language, with the Sephardi pronunciation was then a novelty. It made the Bible live and strengthened their dreams of life in Palestine.

In the fall of 1912 Nita and Michael went back to Palestine to buy land on which to settle. (Michael's mother had died the preceding spring). They spent weeks visiting several colonies. At the end of November, while staying at an Arab village in Galilee, Nita wrote "people are much the same, whether they are Jew, Christian, Arab, or even Turk.... We are beginning to feel that our real work is beginning. It will be a great day when we are all here, for more and more do I feel that one day we shall all be on the Land."

In February 1913, Michael wrote to Herbert Bentwich: "We have determined to settle in

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Zichron. It is the most central of the colonies, has beautiful scenery, will have cooling breezes should we be there in summer, and has some nice inhabitants." The Langes set their hearts on a site on a rocky hillock above the village overlooking the coast from Caesarea to Haifa, and the range of the Carmel, the mountains of Galilee, and the Plain of Sharon. They asked Dr Joffe to negotiate with the owner, Tamches, on their behalf.

At first Tamches refused, saying he would not sell the site for love or money, not if you filled all his lap with gold. But just as they were in the final stages of negotiating with someone else for their second choice of site, the head of the town council came running to say that Tamches had changed his mind.

Nita speculated: "It was a matter of public feeling that we should get what we wanted. They [the town council] have an idea that if we settle, our friends will want to settle too. Everybody well-to-do, except the Levitas, have always gone to Rechovot and Petach Tikvah. Why should not this be a Rechovot? Would not the Council wax rich with well-paid taxes? Would not these people make roads for themselves that others can use? Even the Council perhaps counts on chickens before they are hatched. But I believe our first love is coming to us."

Michael wrote to Herbert Bentwich: "After the lengthy proceedings we have been used to, the affair went very fast. On Sunday at 10 it was told me he would sell; same day at 7:30 the price was virtually agreed; Monday evening form of contract settled with all conditions and boundaries....The price is of course high --much beyond the value for agriculture or plantation; but I am quite willing to spend the sum involved for the beautiful position. I am so proud to be the owner of a piece of ground in the Holy Land."

Nita wrote: "The chickens got hatched the very next day. Michael is just like a baby since, and it is lovely to see him so happy. We have procured the highest part. There are already on the land several olive and carob trees -Johannesbrotbaum- a thick leaved tree which in a way replaces the oak. These six are beautifully dotted over the piece of land so that every hundred paces one can find shade. Behind what we call the building site there is a piece of fifteen dunams (three acres) rich land for vegetables, fine fruit etc, and a few scattered pieces of arable land on the north of the site."

Before returning to England to settle their affairs, Nita and Michael consulted with local experts and contractors. They set plans for a road from the town to their site, and for a two-room

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house to be built in their absence. Nita made scale drawings of the proposed rooms, as a guide for deciding on what furniture to take, and where to place it. They planned to bring from England "some bits of parquet flooring." In England, over the summer, Michael transferred the lease on their house to the Bentwich family, and Nita shopped the sales for pots, pans, towels, and linens and arranged for the shipping of the furniture they would take out.

In October they were back in Zikhron, staying at the hotel Graff. The house was outwardly finished but not yet ready for furnishing. The land, which looked nice but not exactly as they had imagined it, had to be prepared for planting.

After a week in Zikhron, Nita was in the thick of planning. There was much to be done at the same time; the land to be cleared of stones; holes that had been made in making the road to be filled up; kitchen garden land prepared; land manured for an early crop of hay; plans to be made for a garden. Two weeks later they had agreed on the scope of the buildings, and on the layout of the estate in general. Nita began to get the hang of agricultural details, which she found very interesting; a kitchen garden laid out, an acre or so planted with olives, and that part of the land which was not otherwise occupied, sown with barley. Later they planned to plant more olive and ornamental trees along the road. Michael confessed: "I myself have not got the hang of things agricultural, but I am keen on the house, and take inevitable delays philosophically. We are proceeding to construct the courtyard wall two metres high and about 35 or 40 metres square. In the summer we will build stables."

In November Norman took a week off from his job in Cairo to visit Palestine for the third time, and spent three happy days with Nita and Michael in Zichron Jacob. The garden was then in its infancy, but Nita was carrying out her plan to set aside one part for an English flower garden, and to leave the other with the less ordered beauty of an Oriental orchard. They were very happy with their neighbors, particularly the Joffes and the Levitas, who became intimate friends. Nita and Michael were already at home everywhere with the people; and while, in Norman's phrase "her carelessness of the exactitudes made it difficult for Nita ever to speak Hebrew or Arabic with any accuracy, she could always say what she wanted." They had a metalled road built from the last house of the village to their place. They began by building a little house, intended then to be a workman's house, which would be replaced by a larger residence for themselves.

For Norman, the Lange's home symbolized "the genuine return, the transformation and

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purgation of the Jewish exile." His sense of new possibilities for Jewish life was further strengthened when he drove from Zichron to Jaffa with Manya Schochat, who struck him as a new type of Jewish woman. Manya wore her hair short, like a boy; she could ride and shoot; she could speak Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian and Arabic, and get on with old Jews, and young Jews, and Arab women.

In Tel Aviv, then a garden suburb of Jaffa, Norman spent a night with Arthur Ruppin. Ruppin brought out his telescope and directed it at the moon, which was then in its first quarter. The naked eye saw a thin crescent of gold, but through the telescope Norman could see the whole orb standing out in a white light from the sky. Looking down on Tel Aviv, which was more beautiful at night than by day, the sight of the moon seemed to him symbolic of Jewish life in Palestine. "What was visible to the naked eye was a thin crescent of gold, but looking with discernment, you could see the beginning of the illumination of the whole."

In December the rains came. Nita wrote: "I have never known a Palestine rain last so long. the fields are flooded. I have never seen a land for such sudden changes. The next day one forgets entirely about the cold and storm, and only blesses it for having brought forth the seeds and freshness." And ten days later, "the moon is showing its shy face for the first time this month, and so we know that the first great rain is over and we have a full week of work to look forward to and more holes to make that will take to their hearts little trees that will give their fruits in the future." (This to the family in England; to Norman she wrote that the rains were drenching the buildings, and she was not sure about staying in the house over the winter.)

Besides the prospects in planting, Nita enjoyed the rituals of pay-days: "It is great fun pay-day Friday. Everything more or less has to be paid in bishliks (1/2d), and metalliks (6d) [dimes and quarters??]. Michael can hardly carry the bag for the 6d are big copper coins. We do the 1/2d up in packets of twenty, and give one to each workman with his appointed number of sixpences. K. has a list ready, calls out the names and the sum, and it's like a distribution of prizes, each one comes up as his or her name is called to take the prize."

There were other hazards of life in Zikhron. One day, about five in the afternoon, three Arabs and a captain on horseback held up Dr. Joffe, who was traveling home from Athlit with a young girl and his Arab boy coachman. Dr Joffe tried to fight them off, and received a blow on the head, which made him unconscious for a time. The girl, thinking him dead, took flight, and

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was pursued by the Arabs who attempted to force her. A wagon with a colonist's son just behind was powerless to help. After taking everyone's belongings, the Arabs let them pass on (perhaps because they heard the approach of another carriage). This next carriage contained an Arab coachman and three unarmed men. The brigands shot the coachman in the hand because he attempted to drive on, and beat him for his money. Two passengers gave up all they had, but the other dropped his purse under the carriage to recover later.

Two weeks later Nita reported a follow-up. One of the occupants of the second carriage was a rich Arab of Beirut, an agronome, coming to study at Aaron Aaronson's experimental station at Athlit. The government took Dr Joffe's complaint seriously, (probably because of the young Arab from Beirut, who was influential with the Vali). The head of the gendarmes of Haifa and the head of the gendarmes of Jerusalem took up their headquarters in Zichron for a week. Twenty (some said fifty) gendarmes scoured the villages; 168 Arabs were taken prisoner and taken to Haifa. The chief robber (it was thought), was shot because he would not surrender without a fight; and two of the others were thought to be among the 168! Nita concludes "when Turkey does begin to clean its house it does a Pesach cleaning, and I think a baby now could go harmlessly around anywhere without being attacked."

By the beginning of February the tree holes were "getting along at a fine rate." The olive holes were at least a metre deep, as "old Aronson recommended" and since most were hewn out of stone it was heavy work. 6 to 8 Arabs regularly on the job could hardly make one hole a day." The 'estate' swarmed with workmen, and the land was covered with little hillocks for the future fruit trees. Among the workers were eight Yemenite women and two boys, moving earth back and forth, as well as five Arabs hacking up one field and five Jews another. It all looked untidy, with piles of stones in front of the house (rock hewn up to be replaced by earth later). Built on the rockiest part so as to have a good foundation, space for a small garden area near the house was being hewn out of the rock, and it was too expensive to hew out much.

In the middle of February they celebrated the fifteenth of Shevat, the New Year of the trees. All the school came and each two children (there were 200 of them) planted a cypress tree. Nita wrote: "We had a frantic rush for we had arranged the ceremony for the afternoon, and then, at 8.30 in the morning, up comes a deputation of the teachers to say that their barometer, the Arabic master, was sure it would rain in the afternoon. As we saw a few clouds we were persuaded, and ran hither and thither to fetch our dishes, our cakes, and biscuits and our baskets,

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and our oranges and sweets, and marked out the lines for the different classes, and put in each hole a tree. And, wonder of wonders, it was all ready by 10 o'clock. So the children planted their trees and then made a circle around our Karub (carob) tree and ate until it was time to go home for lunch. Then in the afternoon we replanted their trees that they might grow, (only tell it not in Gath) and the Joffe's and the Levitas and we planted a little avenue of pepper trees and then all had tea together under the blooming almond trees. And it never rained all day and was the most beautiful afternoon."

Three weeks later Nita felt "so excited I can hardly write." The pianola was being played for the first time; the Levitas and the Joffes were visiting and since they had not heard good music for three years, they couldn't tear themselves away, Nita wrote: "It's good being home, and home really feels home. It's lovely having one's possessions around one and now the rush of preparation is over we can begin to enjoy them. The two rooms are even nicer than they were in Cavendish Road." The sense of the Lange home as an English home transplanted, comes through as the impression of many visitors.

Norman, at his post in Egypt, was struck by the contrast between the Lange's direct action, and his own dawdling progress. Nita acted on her conviction that the kind of Zionism that must lie at the root of any progress was the settlement of Jews on the land, not to propagate any theory, but simply from love of the land and to make the land fruitful. She set about planting a home in the Yishuv, convinced that the important thing was not to move other people, but to give herself to the work. Norman wrote, "We shared the ideal [of living in Palestine], and we shared in great part the resolution to make Palestine our home; but she and Michael went without any misgiving, and without any hesitating reflection... while I hovered about on the portal of Palestine, to prepare and make ready."

In February Margery and 'Budge spent two weeks with Norman in Cairo. Margery gave a successful concert there, thanks in great part to the efforts of Jack Mosseri, a prominent member of the Jewish community in Egypt, who saw to the arrangements, and made sure of a good audience. In March Margery and Budge visited Nita. Margery found Palestine "the greatest and loveliest surprise I ever had in my life." The ground was a carpet of cyclamen, anemones, and daisies. Nita went about in a flame coloured sweater and large flap hat with a red scarf round it, "looking like a Greek turned Arab. She rode horses, astride and without

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stirrups. One day the party made an expedition to Merchavja, all the party in a diligence from Afulleh, except Nita who rode Mr. Blumenfeld's white horse and galloped along in front like a sort of outrider."

Two weeks later Margery wrote to Norman again: "It is as if you walked into a Chelsea house in the middle of a country of Corots and Gainsboroughs, and a real Birchington sea and breeze on the other side. You will hardly believe it when you see it yourself; it is ever so much nicer than her 21 Cavendish was, and I can't think how she did it all by herself, with all the difficulties and stupidities, and none of the conveniences that one has to put up with here. The kitchen garden too is almost as productive as the Mosseri's, and quite as well kept. Michael is as proud as punch and works in the kitchen garden with enjoyment. He is besides a most excellent and kind master of all his people as you would expect; but it's Nita who sets 'em all to work and looks after everything like a commander-in-chief with the eye of a hawk, just like Mother must have been at her age.

During the next months Nita and Michael continued work on the estate. They extended the road to their house. They were preparing to build the stables. On June 14 Nita wrote: "The stones are already being delivered on our land and four of the queerest Jewish stone masons have arrived on the scene and are awaiting orders. They are...said to have just arrived from Hungary, have very big girl's hats, two of them with "Peoth" under them; one of them, the biggest calves I have ever seen, and seen to advantage when the trousers are turned up and the tights below alone visible." By the middle of the summer the Langes were employing more than forty workers, (about ten Jewish workmen on the court; and on the building Yemenites, Sephardi, Hungarians, Galicians and a Jewish Arab, to say nothing of two or three "heisige" and "a young relation of Krupik from America." Besides these there were 10 Arab women, and 3 or 4 Arab men levelling the court and bringing earth for the foundation. They were employing all the Yemenite women available.

Nita lost herself in work. She found her vocation in daily tasks and in human contacts as they presented themselves. She was proud of her vegetables, particularly the tomatoes. Though they sold at 1d a pound, "I can't get over my Englishism of thinking it is an accomplishment to have one's own, straight from the garden." However, when the price went down to a farthing a pound (1/4d) she decided to make the next batch into tomato sauce for the

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winter.

Michael, although he entered happily into building and planting, was not satisfied by it; nor would he take part in the public and political life of the village. The most Nita could persuade him to do was to join the Va'ad Hamishpot --an arbitration court to decide disputes between colonists. In which connection he said . "Ein emesser Vort geht nie verloren" [A true word is never lost].

Michael believed in the importance of Jewish settlement in the land as a prelude further spiritual development. In "Why I live in Palestine," published in The New Palestine (1916?) Michael wrote:

From the little hill upon which I have built my home I see daily the long range of Carmel on the point whereof tradition places the site of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. and a not unlikely spot it is.... On favorable days I can see Tabor...the life of the Arabs around me resembles much the life of Bible times. Of course natural surroundings and historical associations cease after a time to excite the strong conscious feelings which they do when first seen. But they are always, as it were in the background of our mind, and this, and the fact that I am living among my own people, makes life ten times more interesting to me than it is in England with all its material wealth.... I am living amid the circumstances which make for the development of what is termed Jewish culture, viz. separateness and freedom. I know well that we Jews to progress must be open to the ideas of all civilized nations...But we must be open to accept or reject these foreign ideas freely...Now I do not think much will happen in our time . The settlement is too new, the elements too heterogeneous. And God forbid I should deny the possibility of progress in the great centres of Jewish dispersion. But I do hope, though proof I cannot give, that in Palestine it may please God again to cause to arise --probably not in my lifetime-- a new spiritual development, useful to the Jews and the world, and I am happy in working to build the economic basis on which this must rest.

Nita had other hopes. In The Zionist Review (October 1918), she wrote an article that focused on the position of women. The present population was diverse. It included: Bokharan and Persian Jewesses, who, though unveiled, were assimilated to the natives of the land they lived in for centuries; women from a small ghettos whose activities did not spread beyond the portals of their homes; the colonist's widow who could legally vote in the council by right of owning land, but delegated the honour to her son while she cooked the Shabbos Lockshen; the new arrivals who hoped to realize in Palestine the emancipation of which they had only dreamed in Europe.

Looking ahead, Nita emphasized schooling. In the Jewish settlements boys and girls attended school together, and there was a fairly uniform system of instruction in Hebrew that had a strong nationalizing effect. In the towns the girls had a better opportunity for modern

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elementary education than the boys. The rabbis, thinking that a modern education would lead the children away from Judaism, excommunicated parents who sent their children there. But they were not as strict against the daughters as against the sons. Under different names the girls were enrolled in modern schools and the matter was winked at. At the secondary level coeducational schools were financed and staffed from Russia, and most of the students came from Russia or were of Russian parentage. In Palestine the Russians hoped to give their children the education that before the revolution was so often barred to them in Russia.

Nita concluded: "There is, I think, no doubt that in Palestine women will in the future have equal opportunities of learning with the men. The attainment of knowledge is a very precious birthright of the Jews, and gradually even the ultra-orthodox Jew will allow his girl to go and study where she has a conceded right to study." She was ultimately hopeful even of religious equality. Though "women's religious equality is chiefly discussed by those who have separated themselves from the outward forms of religion, and to whom therefore we cannot look for spiritual guidance....Still in the colonies [the Jewish settlements]... there is growing up amongst the younger generation a real and healthy equality of sex....If there is not at present any deep religious feeling, there is a natural observance of the main practices of Judaism. The wood is there and at the right time the fire will kindle it....There will arise the new Jewish woman -- a woman feeling she has an equal part to play in the economic and spiritual development of our new-old land."