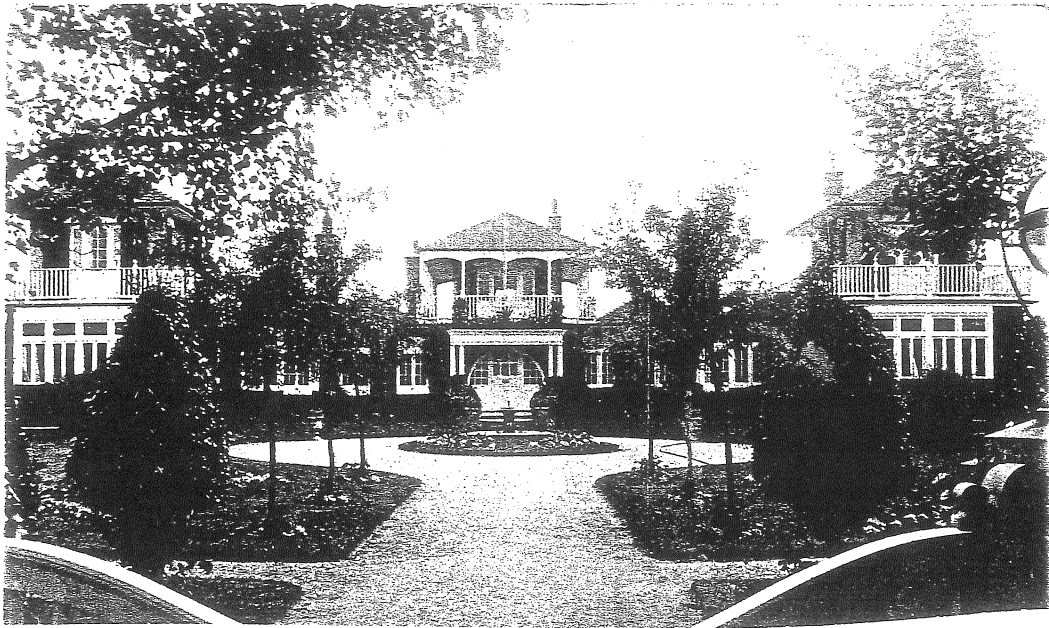


# DREAMS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

A Memoir of the Bentwich Family .... 1880-1922



Carmelcourt, Birchington -on -Sea, Kent

Hadassah F. Davis

## Land of Dreams

On holiday with Susannah in Italy, Herbert sent the children:

### PAPA'S ALPHABET, 1893

A Stands for ALL of you  
B BENTWICHES seven  
C CHILDREN of brightness  
D DEAR gifts from Heaven  
E for old ENGLAND  
F FREE and so fair to us  
G GIRT in her white cliffs  
H HOMELAND so glorious  
I Stands for ITALY  
J JOY breathes from her shores  
K KINDHEARTED her people  
L LETTING her stores  
M for MAGNIFICENCE  
N NO words can express  
O OLD and new mingled  
P PICTURES, PALACES, dress  
Q for a QUERY  
R RAISED now in our minds  
S SAY, children, what is it  
T THAT these two lands binds  
U for the UNIVERSE  
V VAST and ne'er ending  
W WHICH love can still span for us  
XYZ Yes. this is their blending.



Spring 1890

:Susannah with Budge(12 mos)and Margery(3 yrs) in a pram and Dorothy( 4 years) standing behind.

Susannah's ability to keep Herbert happy looks particularly impressive when we realize that Herbert always needed to be right, had great difficulty seeing the other side of a question, and was easily angry when crossed. Like George Bernard Shaw -his exact contemporary- . Herbert Bentwich believed the world should be made better (pf 20=21.); and some arrogant righteousness went with the territory . Bentwich took pride in being English. He also believed that Jewish religion embodied high morality. In a report acknowledging that his effort to establish a Jewish Middle Class School in North London had failed for lack of public support, he wrote: "Through many ages Judaism has been the means of conveying all that is best in morals and religion...(and therefore) it is our clear duty to communicate to posterity the privileges we have received.'

## Land of Dreams

In this land of dreams the children , though aware of the separate values of their father and their mother felt no conflict. The enforced silence of their instruments on the Sabbath made a welcome break Lillian , when she was ten years old, wrote: “ Dear Papa, I will always try and get my Hebrew known for you, as I know that is a thing that makes you pleased, and for you , dear Mama, my music.”



**“The First Squad” 1892**

Norman(9) , Lillian(10) , Nita (6)

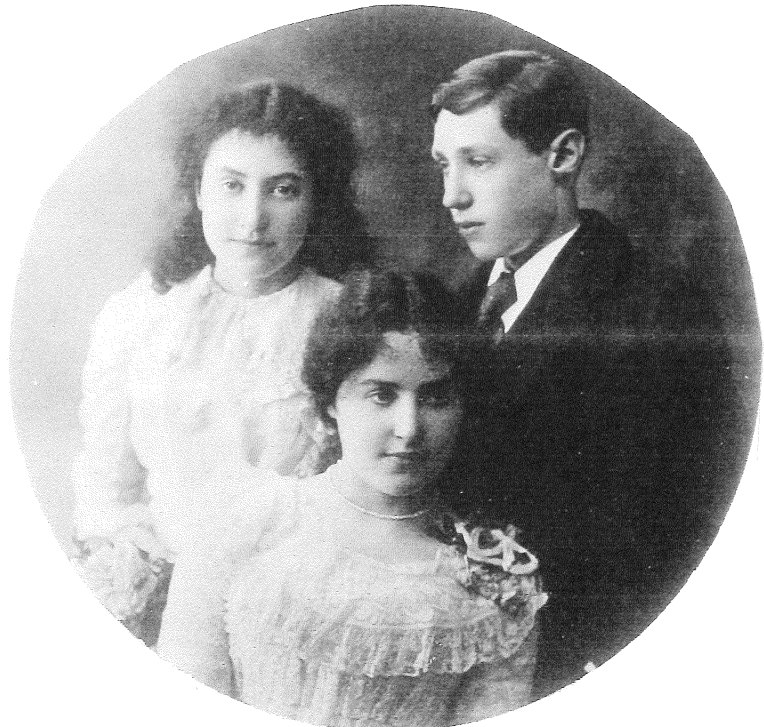
## The Holm

bosom to cry it out on, when I'd been scolded downstairs for some disturbing inquisitiveness." Pompon took her for walks to Regent's Park where they fed the ducks; she taught her to string beads and hem handkerchiefs; she arranged dolls' tea parties with Jose; she put "Surprises" under the pillow each Saturday morning --ribboned packages that held a few chocolates or pieces of dried fruit.)

In Carmel's view of downstairs, Cookie controlled the kitchen and the domestic staff in absolute dictatorship on behalf of the "Master." "[While] French or German governesses ruled upstairs, there was spiritual warfare between upper and nether regions and we learned the arts of diplomatic negotiation very early." Where "Mother" was remote, and the staff were to be manipulated, "Father" was a dragon., -- especially on Sunday morning Hebrew lessons. Carmel wrote: "After learning to read [Hebrew] there were parts of the morning and Sabbath prayers that we were expected to learn by heart.....When there was a tune I usually got enough of the rhythm to give the effect of knowing....[But my] confusion of the blessings for various occasions would so exasperate Father that invariably I would be sent upstairs in tears."

A few years later Carmel's view of the drawing room changed. The drawing room was across the hall from the dining room, and having the width of the house, led out to the garden at the piano end. "In the evenings between tea and supper when Mother could be persuaded to play for us we'd roll up the heavy felt carpet, and with her direction dance Minuets and Habaneras and ballets of Chopin valeses." Carmel adored the older sisters. She would watch, unseen, through an open doorway as, before going out, they put on last touches in front of mirror-fronted closets that held ball dresses and drawers of artificial flowers, and laces and ribbons scented with old perfumes. They seemed to her "more beautiful than any Renoir or Gainsborough titled lady."

Nita, Lilian, Norman 1899





gusty side. Herbert Bentwich, with his cape and pilgrim staff, walking ahead of a train of children who trailed behind him, remained for decades a legendary figure in Birchington; the children changed into grandchildren, but the main figure remained - bearded, lusty, doggedly ploughing his way against the wind.

Margery wrote of the hopes for Carmelcourt. "It was to give us all health, to be a gathering place for our friends, and the Bentwich manor." Some hopes were realized. Family letters refer to "Dr. Birchington" 's healing effects on body and spirit. There were lively house parties in the winter and spring holidays. Susannah's sister Lily had a house nearby and a few years later her brother, S. J. Solomon, ("Uncle Toddy" ) built a house and studio on the cliffs. . Musicians and Zionists spent time at Carmelcourt and left refreshed. Hans Herzl, ( Theodor Herzl's son) wrote in the Visitor's Book: " How splendid! a Jewish colony on English soil."

Nonetheless, the ideal of Bentwich settlement in Palestine remained; and in the course of years moved, step by step, towards realization.



The consecration of "Carmelcourt" May 11, 1901

## Music

Margery's lighthearted flirting with Auer contrasts with the feelings expressed in a letter to her father: "How grateful I am to you and Mother for giving me all my heart's desire I cannot express; when I think of all your blessings, and all I can offer you in return is my music. But I am writing this letter especially to thank you for giving me something much more precious; the real Jewish education and upbringing. I know now that of all the blessings in the world this is the most precious, rare, and enviable. At home I didn't feel it so much, but in this land [Germany] where the atheism is something appalling, my religion is like an oasis in the desert, Just like that...And I give you my promise that I will carry on what you have done, not out of dutifulness to you but from absolute conviction and love for Judaism for its own sake."

### Eisenach 1906

Auer's niece, Kathleen Parfit, Margery Bentwich

Seated: Leopold Auer, Mrs Parfit



# Miss Margery Bentwich,

❖ Solo Violinist. ❖

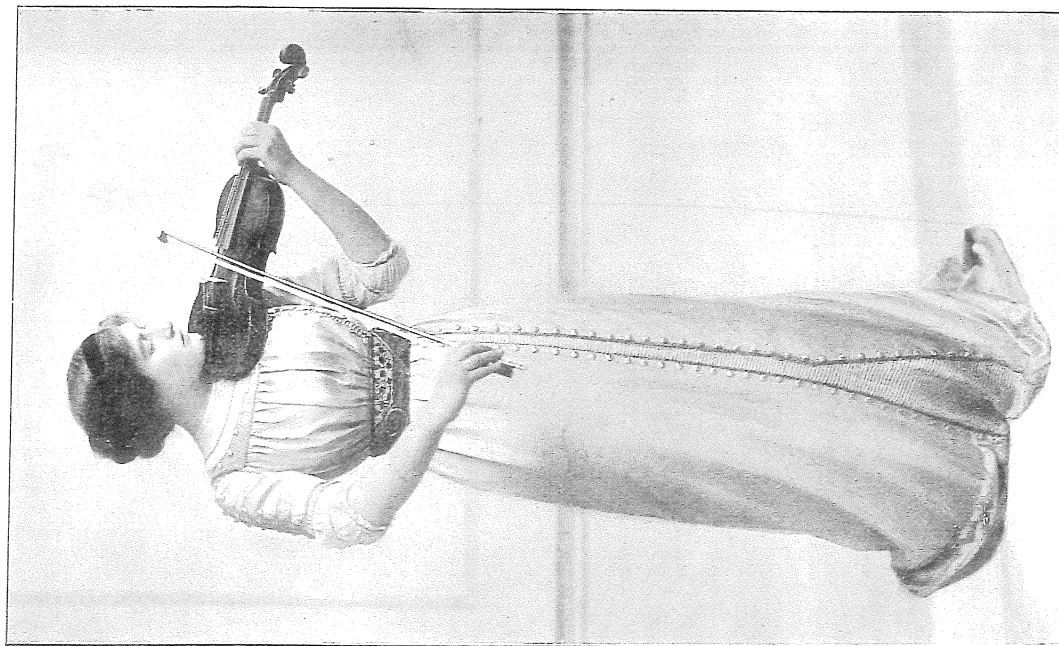


Photo by Elliott & Fry.

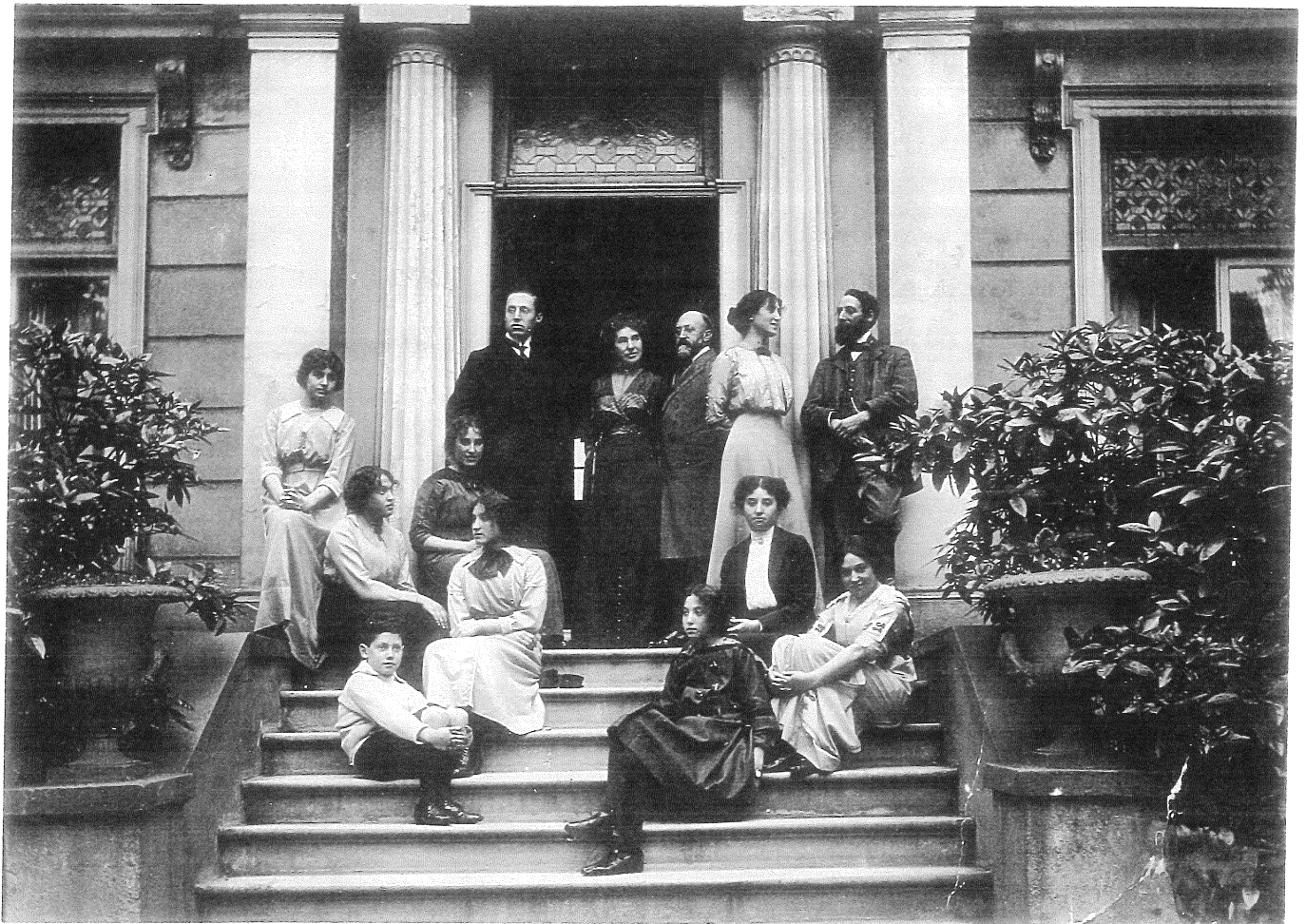
Some Press Notices.

Concert Direction E. L. ROBINSON,  
7 Wigmore Street, W.

Telephone 783 P.O. Mayfair.  
Telegrams—"Musilichor, Westo, London."



THELMA BENTWICH.



**The Bentwich family at 58 Avenue Road, September 1913**  
Clockwise from upper left: Margery, Norman, Susannah, Herbert, Nita Michael;  
Dorothy, Naomi, Carmel; Jose, Thelma, Hebe , Budge

When Herbert Bentwich returned from the Maccabean pilgrimage ready to move the family to Palestine, Susannah had no intention of leaving England. Realizing that Herbert's energies needed a new focus, she encouraged him to pursue a long cherished dream of becoming a barrister and thereby possibly appointed a judge. When he was learning law, Herbert Bentwich studied to be a solicitor because his parents needed support, and qualifying as a barrister was a more expensive process and less certain source of income, than qualifying as a solicitor.

For twenty years Bentwich's practice had provided a comfortable life for Susannah and the children. Nevertheless his ambition to be appointed a judge stayed at the back of his mind,

## High Hopes



**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



## World War I

Once released from the hospital, Michael was stationed in Winchester, where he served out the rest of his enlistment. Nita took rooms nearby. While they were there, she made their rooms a home. A letter written years later by a fellow soldier sheds light on a corner of their life during those months. "It was the privilege, and a highly valued one, of a few Jewish soldiers, at that time stationed in Winchester, to know Mrs. Lange during the time that she was there, together with Mr. Lange, who though over military age, was voluntarily serving with the Middlesex Regiment. It was a source of great comfort to us to be able to look to her as a friend in those days, and to be invited to spend our Friday evenings under her hospitable roof was a joy indeed."



**Nita as a farmworker, 1917**



## World War I

different classes and communities, including the Christian and the Moslem. Weizmann made the only speech, proclaiming that learning was the Jewish dreadnought and that in the University the wandering soul of Israel would reach its haven ( 77p54-55). Seven years later, at the opening of the University Mrs Weizmann, sitting next to Lord Allenby at dinner, was moved to ask him "Did you think my husband completely harebrained when he asked your permission to lay the foundation stones in 1918?" He replied, "When I think back to that day --as I often do-- I come to the conclusion that that short ceremony inspired my army and gave it confidence in the future."



**Planning the Hebrew University (1919?)**

**l-r** Norman Bentwich, Judah Magnes, Menachem Mendel Ussisskin, Chaim Nachman Bialik

Michael, left alone with the estate, considered making it an Agricultural School for girls as a continuation of Nita's interests. The Bentwiches prevailed on him to keep it, and he agreed to maintain it, if Lilian would use the house as her permanent residence. Lilian, who had been in England, made up her mind to go and carry out Nita's work in her own house and garden. It seemed to her God's will that she and the children should be planted in Palestine. She cited the verse of Amos: "I will plant them upon their land and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land."



**The Friedlander family 1921**  
**Ben Zion, Joy, Lilian, Daniel, Carmel, Judy**

## Epilogue

*Saltatha said "My father, you have spoken well; you have told me that Heaven is very beautiful; tell me now one thing more. Is it more beautiful than the country of the musk-ox in summer, when sometimes the mist blows over the lakes, and sometimes the water is blue, and the loons cry very often?"*

Warburton Pike, The Barren Ground of Northern Canada,



**The Lange House 1922**

What is real ? "This stone," said Dr. Johnson , as he kicked it.

In Johnson's terms the Lange estate is a plot of land on a hill near the town of Zikhron Ya'akov. But when my mother spoke of "Zikhron Ya'akov," more familiarly "Zikhron," she conjured up a castle inhabited by the spirit of her sister Nita , where Friedlanders, Yellins and Bentwiches gathered to consecrate weddings, or celebrate Seders. "Zikhron" could also be a bone of contention. When letters came telling of dubious decisions or quarrels, Carmel would cry out "How foolish!" "How selfish!" "Not at all what Nita and Michael intended!"

In the early spring of 1970, Phil and I went up to "Zikhron" with our younger sons to spend Shabat with my aunts Margery and Budge, then in their eighties. We found, to my