

Schwester Selma

**My Life and Experiences
at "Shaare Zedek"**

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Schwester Selma has been the head nurse at Shaare Zedek Hospital since 1916.

For more than half a century this outstanding woman has set an example of love, knowledge and dedication which has shaped the nursing profession in Jerusalem and throughout Israel.

Arriving in Erez Israel when Jerusalem had neither electricity nor piped water, Schwester Selma helped build Shaare Zedek into the modern and efficient hospital it is today. She established the Shaare Zedek Nursing School and guided the institution for over twenty years.

Recognition of her services to Israel has come from President Zalman Shazar, the late Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, Teddy Kollek, Mayor of Jerusalem, the Chief Rabbis of Israel and numerous friends throughout the world, and she has been named a "Worthy of Jerusalem".

During convalescence from a cataract operation several months ago, Schwester Selma took advantage of the free time to dictate some of her recollections of the early years of Shaare Zedek under Dr. Moshe Wallach, to her friend Mrs. Trude Fraenkel.

These recollections on the following pages have been translated from German in keeping with Schwester Selma's colorful style.

From 1906 until 1916 I was a nurse at the Salomon Heine Hospital in Hamburg. (Salomon Heine was the uncle of Heinrich Heine who wrote a poem about this hospital.) The first time that Jewish nurses sat for examinations by the German authorities and received a German State Diploma was in 1913. One of my colleagues and I were the first Jewish nurses who received a State Diploma in Germany. We both passed the examinations with “very good”, and the German doctors especially praised our theoretical and practical knowledge.

In 1916, during the first world war, I left the hospital and started out on my way to the then called Palestine. I arrived in the country in December of that year.

The following events influenced my decision to come here.

Dr. Wallach went on a trip to Europe when the hospital urgently needed a head nurse. He inspected several hospitals and, among them, the Salomon Heine Hospital in Hamburg, which impressed him especially because its structure was similar to that of his own hospital.

Dr. Wallach turned to the head nurse to ask if she could spare a nurse who would be willing to serve as head nurse for him. Four nurses of the hospital had already been put at the disposal of the State. She thought that Schwester Selma might like to serve her war service in Palestine.

Dr. Wallach came to this country at the end of the 19th century, a native

of Cologne. His coming was prompted by sheer idealism and also by his religious attitude. During his first years he worked in the Old City. He was present at the receptions for Kaiser Wilhelm II and for Herzl, who were here at the same time.

In order to be able to erect a new hospital he soon travelled to Holland and Germany. He actually succeeded in getting enough money together to start the building.

The design was made by a German architect who also supervised the building activities. He stayed here for half a year. The building was completed in 1902 and the hospital was officially opened. It was the first building erected as a Jewish Hospital in accordance with all rules applying to a hospital building in Palestine.

The building was originally intended for 40 beds. The whole population was admitted; not only Jews, but Arabs and Christians, in short all inhabitants of the country. The Isolation Pavilion was built a little later. Soon the hospital gained a good name and people came not only from Jerusalem or Palestine, but even from the neighboring countries.

Dr. Wallach had a Persian Jew trained as a male nurse and he was a skillful helper. He always smelled so much of garlic that one day Dr. Wallach told him that he would have to leave the hospital if he continued to smell so much of garlic. Later on he was also trained as anesthesist. He gave anesthetics

excellently, at least as well as is done nowadays with the most modern apparatus.

The problem of nursing staff was of course extremely difficult. Very simple girls were given practical training only at the hospital. They had no prior knowledge whatsoever. The first trained nurse was a Dutch nurse, who returned to Holland after a short while because of the extremely primitive conditions at the hospital.

When, however, Zionism grew stronger in Germany, nursing staff started to apply here gradually. Although these girls were not trained, they came from a higher cultural background nevertheless. Alongside came such girls whom we could train to handle the simple auxiliary tasks.

There is no question that it was very difficult to get suitable people and to keep them, with the conditions at the hospital and the strict demands of Dr. Wallach. When once somebody suitable came who also stayed, it was like winning in a lottery.

So it came about that I started my service at the Shaare Zedek - or Wallach Hospital - at the end of December 1916, after a very difficult journey of four weeks.

Before I left on my trip the committee advised that a lady should not travel alone in these times of war. I was referred to Dr. Moses Auerbach who was in Germany just then and intended to return to Jerusalem at the same time

I had planned my return. I therefore visited him and we made arrangements to travel together. In Budapest we were joined by Rabbi Horowitz, the grandfather of Prof. Werblowsky here, who was living in Jerusalem and had his home in the “Deutschen Platz” in the old city. Dr. Auerbach had also been in Palestine for several years already. He was then the founder of all orthodox kindergartens and schools in the country. This year he celebrated his 90th birthday in Haifa.

It was not so easy to travel from Germany to Palestine in those days. First I had to have an exit permit from the military authorities in Germany, as well as an entry permit for Palestine. And thus it continued. I travelled from Berlin to Budapest. There I got on the Balkan train to Constantinople. There I met Arthur Ruppin, who, as a Zionist, had to flee, and with him some other prominent personalities who had engaged in Zionist activities. From Constantinople the journey continued over the Taurus and Amanus mountain ranges by car which was as wide as the whole mountain pass and which took us to the Hadjaz train, in Damascus. There we had to stay over for a few days until there was a train to Jerusalem. The whole trip lasted four weeks.

Dr. Wallach still received me late in the evening and he was very kind. I first asked for a cup of coffee since I was tired out from the trip. He asked me at once when I had eaten meat for the last time, because of the milk in the coffee. Since on the whole trip the war had been most noticeable, I could answer with a good conscience: “I have not eaten any meat”. When,

after a journey of four weeks, I wished to take a bath, this was arranged with greatest difficulty.

I was assigned a room in the hospital which glared with simplicity. My predecessor had been a Dutch nurse called van Geldern. She had studied German for the Wallach hospital at my hospital in Hamburg. Between her time and my arrival there had not been a head nurse for years.

Rabbi Horovits brought me from the train in a donkey wagon to the Hotel Amdursky at the Jaffa Gate. Dr. Wallach sent Mr. Porush to receive me there. He was to ask me if I wanted to sleep the first night at the hotel or preferred to come to the hospital at once. I chose to come to the hospital at once, and again I had to get on to the donkey wagon... The bed was supposed to be new, as I was assured by Inspector Jonas Marx. Nevertheless I made my acquaintance with bedbugs during that first night. There was only a small wall closet in the room, nothing for linens and no room to hang summer dresses during the winter and vice versa. So I had to pack away everything in my suitcase. An extremely colorful tablecloth covered the tiny table. Well, there is no



Schwester Selma in her room

arguing about taste!

When I opened my window in the morning I was greeted by a camel and a donkey, in truly oriental fashion.

There were of course no pavements yet anywhere, as I knew, so these animals ran along close to the houses. I had already been told in letters to bring along rubber boots, because one could get stuck in the soaked mud in the winter. Not one, but three or four pairs of rubber boots got stuck for me.

I found a rather disordered state of affairs.



Making the rounds with Dr. Wallach

During the first four weeks, when going the rounds of the beds with Dr. Wallach, and he visited every bed day and night only with me, I had a notebook in my hand and wrote everything I noticed that was not as it should be. That is

how I introduced a system into the hospital, slowly. I arranged and ordered everything in the wards according to the German system. The girls also learned how to make up a hospital bed the way I once learned to do it.

There were two epidemics right then. We were the only Jewish hospital in the new city. The old Bikur Cholim had also started building in the new city, which, however, could not be continued because of the war. Typhoid, typhus, and meningococcal meningitis, all very severe cases, were hospitalized with us. Thousands of typhoid cases were passing through our hospital, probably caused by dirt; there was hardly any water. Additionally the people suffered terribly from hunger; there was hardly anything to eat. With their lice-infested clothes the people were stuck into the bathtub, then the clothes were cut open, the patients undressed and shaved all over.

In order to protect the girls in some measure against infection, I put them into overalls such as laborers wear today, and they had to pull hoods over their heads. For this task I only had untrained personnel. From Machane Yehuda up to our hospital the patients stood crowded in line, waiting for admission.



150 beds were somehow placed, but they were insufficient. The nurses quarters were taken too and all the practical nurses had to move

to the basement. It took more than a year until the epidemics ceased. Meat and bread were especially scarce.

During the first world war Dr. Wallach went to the Turkish authorities every day, where today the Augusta Victoria Hospital is situated, to see Kemil Pascha “junior” (der Kleine) and often he was also admitted to Kemil Pascha the “Big”, in order to save the Zionists who were to be hanged by the Turks because of their Zionism. Pascha the “Big” was not always here as he lived in Turkey. Dr. Wallach himself was not a Zionist, but here it was a matter of saving human lives, and he really achieved much. He used to ascend the steep hill on foot.

In 1918 everything was already better arranged. Operations were started, Dr. Gruesendorf, a German surgeon, worked three days at the deaconesses' hospital and three days at Wallach's. Dr. Wallach introduced me when I met him for the first time. Whereupon Dr. Gruesendorf said: “Wherever did you find this recruit?” He thought I was also one of those assistant nurses.

Soon after the first world war I had opportunity to take several guests around the hospital, for which great interest always existed. Among them came Dr. Fritz Warburg of the bankers' family. He had already heard that a nurse from Hamburg worked here and was very pleased to meet me (he was from Hamburg too). Also from Hamburg came the surgeon Dr. Rosenthal from my Heine Hospital. He travelled through all of Palestine. The head

nurse of the Heine Hospital wrote to me after his return there to tell me that he said that of his whole trip through Palestine he had most liked the Wallach Hospital with Schwester Selma.

Dr. Weizmann also came to visit us one day. He allowed himself to be led through the whole hospital by me, but as he was a chemist his main interest lay in our pharmacy. Also Lady Samuel visited our hospital and I had to explain everything to her in detail.



Schwester Selma in the nursery

After the peace treaty in 1919 Dr. Gruesendorf had to flee as a German. For a while Dr. Wallach had to do emergency operations again by himself. Normally we had 40 to 50 beds, but we had a class system with regard to rooms. We had private, semi-private and public wards. We had many rich patients from families like Many, Meyuchas, Elias, Rivlin, etc., who wanted to lie in private rooms. I

was head nurse and operating room nurse. But quite often I also had to substitute as midwife. Our midwives were not living on the premises, some even lived quite far away. They were not always on the spot. Somebody had to walk to their home to call them, and they too came to the hospital

on foot. There were no buses yet in those days. One could only ride by horse and carriage and there was no money for that.

During my career as midwife I had the following experience several times: If a caesarean section had to be made on a very religious woman, the family first went to a rabbi for advice; one altogether had to get permission to be allowed to do a caesarean. If the rabbi gave this permission, the relatives then went to Rachel's tomb in Bethlehem, a long distance from Jerusalem in those days. There was a red thread there. Before one went to the tomb however, one of the family came to the hospital and measured the distance from the woman's bed to the Aron Kodesh (Holy Ark). That's how long the thread had to be. Then one brought the thread from the tomb, tied it to the foot of the woman's bed and laid it along the corridor, down the stairs up to the ark (in the hospital's synagogue). A prayer was recited while this was done. When all this had been done, the operation could be started. One was often afraid that the babies would not wait that long!!

One day before the declaration of peace (1918) the hospital was bombarded so much by the Turks that all patients had to be transferred to the basement. There was no toilet and no washing facilities there. In any case we only had cisterns and danks for the rainwater which was not clean and was only used for cleaning the floors. Everyone had a "Jarra" (an earthenware jug) with boiled water for drinking on his bedside table. That time we had to go to the basement on Shabbath of all days. How great was the joy when

on Sunday the white flag flew on top of Ezrath Nashim (the hospital for mental illnesses). At once the patients were returned to the wards.

Shortly after that, General Allenby arrived at our hospital in order to declare the peace here. Our hospital hall was the site of this historical act. He was then invited by me into the so-called (!) Salon and tea was served to him and his aide. Dr. Wallach did not speak English well and therefore the conversation was conducted in French.

Immediately after the signing of the peace treaty - now do not be too surprised - the Shaare Zedek Hospital became a democratic enclave in Palestine! A cleaning woman with the beautiful name of Dudu sturdily stood up in the hospital's main hall, proudly tapped herself on the chest and trumpeted with raised voice: "Now our time has come. The Englishmen are bringing us democracy. If you hear Dr. Wallach scream again, call me at once". And lo, it happened. He screamed once again, and dear Dudu came running, she, the cleaning woman, the leader of democracy. She went up to Dr. Wallach and said: "Why are you screaming again, who do you think you are, you "a stickele Fleisch" and I "a stickele Fleisch". You work little and earn "a sach Gelt", and we work hard and earn little. That is the only difference between us. We, "mei Leit" must scream and you must be quiet!" Everyone standing around was amazed at the courage of this woman. Only Dr. Wallach himself, to whom this was addressed, laughed aloud, laughed so heartily as I never saw him laugh before.

Yes, Dudu played an important role. Sometimes she was there till late in the evening and then it was her main occupation to collect bedbugs on a piece of paper which she presented to Dr. Wallach the next morning.

During the war we were well provided by Germany with bandages. These we dug into the ground because the Turks made inspections all over to see if nothing forbidden was to be found in the house. They would surely have taken most of the bandages away from us, had they seen them.

Slowly work became more normal, although technically everything was still very difficult. The lack of food also caused great difficulties. We had enough flour and baked our own bread.

Our personnel still consisted of untrained people from the town. Some of them were even quite interested in their work.

There was still no transportation. The transportation of patients was therefore still very complicated. If somebody had to be brought it would have to be done by stretcher. We did not have enough personnel to send along and therefore the relatives had to help or hire two porters. The statements and descriptions about the state of illness were often so inaccurate, that Dr. Wallach preferred to go to the home first to see for himself if this was a case for the hospital. In cases of severe haemorrhages I went along by day or by night with a small case that was always prepared with sterilized material. Thus we went to the Old and to the New City carrying a kerosene

stable lamp too. If transportation would have harmed the patient Dr. Wallach performed curettage. I remember very well when on a very hot Shabbat Dr. Wallach was once called to a house in the Old City. According to the description he suspected an extrauterine pregnancy. He accompanied the people to the Old City and took along all the necessary instruments. He returned walking next to the stretcher with an injection in his hand, in case the patient collapsed on the way. He had, however, sent a young man ahead so that everything could be prepared for an operation. A young Arab then conducted preparations on a "Primus" (kerosene burner).

Tracheotomies, which usually had to be done quickly, were performed by Dr. Wallach himself. He was a pioneer in this operation in Palestine.

Once Dr. Wallach was called for a Brith Mila (circumcision) during a high snowfall. Four men had to lead him by ropes so that he could walk to Meah Shearim.

Dr. Wallach did all the circumcisions himself, and kept an exact record of them. For every child he wrote down exactly the name and all dates. The population was very pleased when he was the Mohel, because he was also a doctor. I thought out many things for the circumcision, what had to be on the sterile tray which I always used to prepare. I prepared small rolls of gauze just the right size for bandaging and I also always brought dermatol powder.

About that time I told Dr. Wallach that the responsibilities were slowly getting too much for me. In the long run I could not be both operation room nurse and head nurse. I asked him to decide for which task he wanted me, and he decided that he wanted me to stay on as head nurse and asked for my consent.



The duties of a head nurse in those days were quite far-reaching. Above all she had to be ready day and night. Additionally I often had to also fill in as midwife. By the way, I also taught the midwives, who only had scant training, how to diaper and wrap up newborn babies, how to keep premature babies warm in cotton wadding. In those days we did not have incubators yet. There was also nobody employed for the housekeeping, so that I was responsible for every spiderweb on the ceiling, every drop of water, every piece of cotton on the floor. All this was included in my tasks. From 1920 until 1930 I was responsible for everything from heaven to earth. This also included the kashruth in the tea kitchens (department kitchenettes). This task was not easy for me, as it was well known how demanding and exact Dr. Wallach was in matters of religious observance at Shaare Zedek. Dr. Wallach was the only doctor in the house. He often

went to meetings of the Agudath Israel and then I was the exclusive ruler in the house. Often I had to take the initiative medically, far beyond the degree befitting my position. There was of course no telephone yet so that I could have called Dr. Wallach. Thanks to my intuition I always managed to do the right thing.

According to my contract I was entitled to a three months' trip to Germany every three years. Before undertaking my first trip I pointed out to Dr. Wallach that a second doctor was definitely needed in the house. As often happens in life, a person who is involved heart and soul in his work does not notice when he is working much too hard and is unable himself to do everything. This was so with Dr. Wallach. Naturally he opposed this idea strongly at first, and this was understandable from the human point of view. In the end, however, he allowed himself to be persuaded and a search was started. Soon afterwards a doctor from Lithuania, Dr. Shapselbaum, was found in the Jewish hospital in Berlin, who was willing to come. Later he called himself Dr. Shabbatai. After several months he commenced his work. Of course he had a difficult position with his director in the beginning. Slowly, slowly Dr. Wallach got used to his help. In the beginning Dr. Shabbatai took over the outpatient clinic, later he also made the rounds with Dr. Wallach, learned to do minor surgery such as crotchages, etc. Until he got married Dr. Shabbatai lived in the hospital for a short period of time. He became the people's doctor. Much later he also took over the isolation pavilion, when Dr. Wallach was already old.

In 1922/23 I travelled for about three months to Germany. I had a great inner struggle whether I should return. But I had forgotten to tell you that I had adopted a child in Jerusalem which had been left at the hospital by its mother. How could I desert the child Zamura! I of course returned to Shaare Zedek.

In spite of the contract which entitled me to 3 months vacation every 3 years, I only travelled one more time to Germany. In 1925/26 I travelled via Cairo to Alexandria and then by boat to Naples. From Naples I went by train to Germany. I stayed with my family in Frankfurt. On this trip I took along a foster child of Dr. Wallach. Bolissa's father came from Syria riding a camel with the sick child in his arms. The mother had died. He handed the child over for treatment at the hospital but he never came back to claim it, so Dr. Wallach adopted her. This child Bolissa was taken in by the wife of Dr. Saul, a high school teacher. She was enrolled in a Talmud Tora school and stayed there 10 years. When Hitler came to power, the family Saul moved to Frankfurt an Main. Bolissa was born in Syria and could leave Germany thanks to her passport issued by the British Mandate. She returned to Jerusalem, and I enrolled her at once at the Wizo for training as a baby nurse. After passing her examinations she was employed at the institution because she was found very reliable. Her foster parents, Dr. and Mrs. Saul, both perished under Hitler. And my good Bolissa found her death from the English bomb on Ben Yehuda Street.

Now about my second trip. I visited a former student of mine in the Eidingen

Stift in Leipzig. I had been offered the directorship of this institution but I had to refuse because of the orphan I had adopted whom I could not desert. Thus I stayed on at the Wallach Hospital in spite of all the difficult conditions. I found it especially difficult that we still had no running water but got our water still from cisterns. I stayed away from work for three months. A friend from Madrid invited me and I stayed with her for four weeks. Not only did I go sightseeing in Madrid, but I travelled all over the country and saw the impressive Sierra mountains. Over the holidays I stayed in Madrid. It was strange that one could not even get ten men together for a Minyan. We took a horse and buggy to visit the royal park. I saw the great masters in the museum del Prado - Velasquez, van Dyk, Rubens, Murillo, etc. In Toledo I admired the single remaining synagogue with all its treasures. Of course I would not miss watching a bull fight, but it shocked me terribly.

We had electric lights at Shaare Zedek before the city got any. The Salomon family from Holland donated a generator to the hospital in 1921. Dr. Wallach kept it for Shabbath and emergencies when the municipal electricity failed for some reason.

In former times the hospital was not affiliated with the Histadruth. We were not allowed to work after a certain number of hours. As I already mentioned, I only received an assistant for my work after ten years. When there was a very severe case in the hospital, we still divided the night between us after a 14 hour day, each of us watching half the night. But in the long run

this nurse could not stand up under Dr. Wallach's strict regime. When Dr. Wallach was tired he went to sleep at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and slept until about 10 o'clock at night. Then he came to the nurses' station and supervised the night help, i.e. later the nurses. He used to shout so much that first of all the patients awoke, but also the tired nurses and warders. He never ever made the rounds of the wards, either in the evening or even at night, without the head nurse. Once he found a warder sleeping on a stretcher. He took off the man's slippers and took them to his room. The warder could not understand what had happened to his shoes. He ran around all over the house barefoot and searched for them. Once Dr. Wallach started his famous nightly visits in the baby room and found the nurse on duty napping with her head on the table. Silently he left the room, got some flowers which he made into a wreath and put it on her head. He then called all the nurses together to come quietly, asking if they had ever seen a sleeping bride. This poor nurse had no baby crying in the nursery, or she would have awakened. Dr. Wallach would not let a baby cry without coming running: "Nurse, have a look what is going on! Maybe the baby is sore or thirsty, or it has a stomach ache?" We also had an elderly woman helper who did night duty. She was sitting on a chair and had fallen asleep. He took off her earrings without her noticing it. How excited this woman was when she found her earrings missing in the morning! She could not grasp the idea that there was such a thief in the house!

On the first floor there was a very tiny room which served as laboratory.

There Dr. Wallach, Dr. Shabatai and a Dr. Jermanns made the most simple lab tests. When the clinic was still in an equally tiny room, packed with people, Dr. Wallach and Dr. Shabatai used to go around constantly painting



Schwester Selma - a "young" visitor to the Geriatric Department

everybody's throat no matter what they complained about. Loads of people used to come still after sundown on saturday night to have their throats painted. Later, when Dr. Shabatai was no longer alive (he died in 1952) a patient once said: "Too bad that Dr. Shabatai is no longer alive. He was a wonderful doctor. Once I came to him

with an abdominal pain, he painted my throat and the pains went away". Friday evening before Shabbath I had much to do. When the men came home from the synagogue and everything was not prepared as it should, they used to cut off a piece of their women's earlobes. This causes a lot of bleeding, and I always had a lot of sterile bandaging prepared.

There was a sign on the wall of the clinic's waiting room telling men and women to sit separately. Nevertheless Dr. Wallach used to walk into the room several times during the morning to make sure that this instruction

was followed. Dr. Wallach once treated a hysterical woman who insisted that she had to go to one of the watering places in Germany to take the baths. This was long before the advent of Hitler. She had to present a medical certificate, however, to the travel agency. She herself could not read German. Dr. Wallach gave her the following certificate: "Mrs. X is traveling to Germany to take a vacation from her husband". The language spoken at the hospital was of course German or Yiddish. Dr. Wallach could not ever imagine that the language generally spoken would ever be Hebrew. For him this was only the holy language. He was very impressed to be a witness to the language struggle between the principal of the German school, Dr. Cohn, and Ben Yehuda. Ben Yehuda won by only one vote. Afterwards people smashed the windows of Dr. Cohn's school.

One day a woman was brought to the hospital with suspected intestinal obstruction. Her abdomen was swollen and tense. Dr. Wallach did not want to take the sole responsibility upon himself and suggested that physicians from the city be called in for a consultation. He asked the woman if she wanted Dr. Neumann or another doctor for the consultation. The woman replied: "The Almighty is my own doctor but you can call in whom you think best". An hour later the consultation took place. The doctors were all of the opinion that the only way to find out what was the trouble was by performing an operation. When the doctors left, Dr. Wallach went to the patient and told her the doctors' opinion. The woman said: "I will not undergo an operation. I am the owner of my body, not you doctors". Next

morning there was in fact an improvement in her condition and her bowels started to function normally.

In 1929 we suddenly received news one evening that a terrible massacre had broken out between the Arabs and Jews in Hebron. The Arabs had raided a Yeshiva which had mainly young American students. In spite of the barricades in Hebron in all directions, we succeeded to send a team of helpers and to pull out the injured. It was unbelievable how these people looked and how they were mutilated. Some of them were actually dismembered. The Arabs had attacked them with long knives. We and Hadassah, who had meanwhile opened a hospital, divided the wounded between us. All the specialists who were then living in the city came to our aid. By 9:30 in the evening I had everything prepared and we operated until 8 o'clock in the morning' without intermission. I had prepared everything alone with my own hands and was the only one assisting at the operations. All the doctors shook my hands to thank me. They did not know what to say to express their gratitude. The main surgeon at that time was a Dr. Geri.

In spite of his great severity and austere way of life, Dr. Wallach had a sense of humor. Since he was so demanding of himself one had to forgive him a great deal. Once a nurse did very bad work. I was always very patient and forbearing, but this time I was very angry and told her off in a slightly raised voice. At once Dr. Wallach sent me a note: Gracefully your voice was sounded, full with fury it abounded. I answered him with the following

lines: I found the example in Dr. Wallach, who is well known as a Mallach (angel). Everybody knew how he could scream. He was a stern boss. Nevertheless he often said nothing, even when he knew well that matters were not handled according to his wishes.

When Dr. Wallach employed a nurse, He first interviewed her. Above all he talked to her about Kashruth to find out if she knew everything 100%. Then he asked general questions: "What would you do if you saw some cotton lying on the floor?" "I would pick it up". "Oh no, you would walk by quickly and think: let the next one pick it up". "Do you know that you have to be home by 8 o'clock in the evening? Will you keep this rule?" "Yes, of course". "No, you will come late and climb over the wall". A woman was standing in the gate when Dr. Wallach was just about to go away. She said: "Oh, please, let me in for five minutes. I want to see my husband who was operated on yesterday. Quickly, before the crazy Wallach will come, let me through". Dr. Wallach replied: "I'll take you up, but really only for 5 minutes. I'll wait for you at the door". After five minutes he called her out. At the gate she thanked him many times and asked: "What is your name? You are such a kind person". He answered: "I am the crazy Wallach".

Dr. Fraenkel used to give music evenings for the refugee children and later also often for the nurses. Once the nurses returned home at 10:30 without having a written permission. Just then Dr. Wallach was standing at the gate and everybody expected a big row. "Where are you coming from so late at night?" he yelled at them. One of the nurses told him they had been at the

record concert at Dr. Fraenkel's. "Oh", he said, "So I'll go with Mrs. Fraenkel tomorrow night!" and he let them go. The small gate was one of his favorite spots in the evenings. He used to stand there with the gatekeeper to watch if everybody really returned on time. Every time the nurses went out, they had to have a slip of paper, even if they only went out till 8:00 p.m. A paper allowing them out after 8 was only given for special purposes. Once Dr. Wallach was on a trip for several days and I had the task of signing the papers. One nurse, to whom I also had given permission till 8 p.m. only said to me: (in Yiddish which I did not understand and had to have translated for me by another nurse) "My soul is not a dried up raisin yet."

In 1934 we founded the nursing school and home. Dr. Wallach was against the school because he thought the girls would learn too little of the practical work.

Mr. Philip Posen, father of one of the refugee children was only willing to let his daughter become



*One of the earliest nursing school graduating classes
(Schwester Selma, middle row, 3rd from left)*

a nurse if a regular nursing school was opened. His daughter had already passed an examination as social worker in England. Mr. Posen and I had to fight hard in order to reach our goal to open a nursing school, which later turned out a great blessing for the hospital. We did not want to lag behind in the education that nurses of other religions received, who also fulfill their duties with the heart.



Graduates with Schwester Selma, Dr. Wallach and Dr. Schlesinger

After the opening of the nursing school I taught the girls everything practical. They learned from me everything I had thought of after many deliberations. I still knew from my school all the things a nurse should and must know. Again and again I told them: “Those who come to us need help”. Above all they should remember and never forget that one has to try everything

when dealing with the patient to cause him as little pain as possible and to spare no effort.

The first teacher was the pediatrician Dr. Karl Meyer, who taught the nurses all the subjects and laid great stress on their learning how to deal with patients, human beings who need help.

Since we were then under the rule of the British Mandate, the British gave the examinations. They were mostly the physicians from the British Government Hospital. The nurses had to study three years. At the examinations there had to be an interpreter because the examinations were in Hebrew. The doctors were always very satisfied with the results. They were most impressed with the practical work of the nurses. They always tried to get some of our nurses to work for their hospital. The examinations were similar to those in Germany. There, too, the practical work of the girls was very much emphasized.

The bulk of the student body were German refugee children who were mature enough to take up nursing. These nurses who came to



us in the first years of the school's existence, later turned into exemplary nurses. Unfortunately our hospital was not able financially to keep a large number of them. In those years we were not yet paying according to fixed tariffs. Many went to other hospitals or into private nursing. Everybody knew, however, to value the "Wallach nurses" and they always were accepted everywhere. We also admitted new students every year.

The surgeon Dr. Nissel came to us even prior to the arrival of physicians who came to our hospital from Germany because of the conditions there. He worked not only at our hospital but was also the founder of the Magen David Adom and worked for that cause which was of great benefit not only to Jerusalem but to the whole country, especially during the years of riots and wars. On his 70th birthday he was presented with a gold medal for this service.

Gradually European doctors, mostly from Germany, started arriving, amongst them many specialists. All of them could use our hospital for their patients at any time, because it was a public hospital. For these new immigrants and their European standards our hospital was naturally considered very primitive. Food was still prepared on kerosene cookers or Primuses and heat in the winter was also provided by kerosene stoves. Surgical cases and internal medicine cases were all hospitalized on the same floor, though separately. Even maternity cases were on the same floor. The new-born nursery consisted of one large room. Only the department for infectious diseases had been separately housed in a small pavilion for some time. This

was the only isolation department in the whole country. This pavilion was founded by Dr. Roos (of Frankfurt/Main), father-in-law of Dr. Karl Meyer.

In those days the isolation department was even more primitive than the main house. The bathtub was made of tin, on wheels. It used to be filled with water that was brought in and then wheeled into the respective room. The toilets had no plumbing. Of course there was no heating system. In spite of all this I can maintain with a good conscience that we ran this department as a real isolation station even if this demanded many many efforts, which were well worth it in every respect. When food was brought over from the main building, our pots were standing in readiness. Everything was transferred and reheated on the cookers. All the dirty laundry was put into a container of lysol for 24 hours before it was sent to the laundry shed to be laundered. Visitors were not allowed into the isolation pavilion. The nurses used to lift up the children at the windows so they could wave to their families. All the nurses had to serve for one month, they were not allowed to go out visiting nor to receive visitors. They even slept in the pavilion, though not during the polio epidemics. The problem of hot water was one of the most difficult, because the water had to be heated or boiled on kerosene cookers. A great amount of physical effort went into preparing warm baths which were essential for meningitis cases.

The polio epidemic was a difficult period for us, especially servicing the iron lungs. This had to be handled with extreme accuracy. The nurse had to stand by and was not allowed to leave her post until another nurse stood

next to her to take over. Mention must be made of the dedicated devotion of Dr. Adolf Fraenkel who was at the disposal of these unfortunate patients, mostly small children, day and night. There was also the great problem of personnel. During the first years of the polio epidemic the Ministry of health did not allow young nurses to work with polio patients. Therefore Dr. Fraenkel and I had to find addresses of people somehow who could be relied upon in order to find helpers for this difficult nursing job. It can be imagined that we did not have first class personnel, so that I had to supervise these people constantly. This really was not easy for me, for I was not familiar with this kind of epidemic and this sickness.

Nevertheless I believe that we fulfilled our task satisfactorily. The personnel which had been assembled with difficulty made every effort to do their best, as they saw how much effort I put into this task. The epidemic lasted till about 1958. A few months later we had the inventor of the polio injections, Dr. Salk, as our guest. He looked at our polio ward and was astounded how so much could be done under such primitive conditions.

Gradually the 8 hour day was introduced, which we resisted as long as we could. During Dr. Wallach's time there was even a strike once. The nurses always had to work 12 hours during the night. Suddenly they demanded two hours break out of the 12 hour night. When the strike started it was, on top of everything else, shortly before Pessach and I was the only assistant to all the doctors. All the hospital's doctors tried to convince Dr. Wallach that the nurses' demand was not unjustified. The nurses had to be on night

duty for one whole month and then only got two days off duty.

One day a lady from Vienna who I had never met visited me. She had been sent to me by the Mayor of Jerusalem where she had asked for my address for the following reason: "I have been commissioned by Mrs. X. This lady's sister was killed by the Nazis. Mrs. X was married to a Christian. When her sister was being deported she thought she would stay alive because of her marriage, as was the case. Before being deported she said to her sister: "Here, take my diamond ring, and if I do not return, give it to a human being who has never married and has devoted her life to helping other people. This ring shall be a wandering ring. The person who gets it shall pass it on in the same sense".

Why did this lady send the ring to you? She had read about you several times in newspaper reports, the last one in a Vienna newspaper." With these words she took a large and valuable diamond ring out of her pocketbook and handed it over to me with her blessings.

On the day that the State of Israel was proclaimed I happened to be out of town. I was on vacation in Naharia and was just then spending 24 hours on a visit to Acco. When the radio announced the positive vote for the establishment of the State I quickly took my bag and returned to Naharia that same night, packed my suitcase and wanted to return on the first bus. At once it occurred to me that I was urgently needed; who knows what might happen. I came to Tel Aviv and was told I could not go any further.

One can imagine how excited I was. I stayed over with the daughter of Rabbi Horovitz whom I mentioned in the beginning as my fellow traveller. I went at once to all the civil and military authorities and explained what my absence from the hospital meant in this situation. Everyone understood this and promised to take me along with the first available safe transportation. I was stuck for almost three weeks. Suddenly a soldier appeared at the door and bid me to come quickly, an armored car would take me as the only civilian passenger.

Dr. Wallach worked until the age of 80. On his 75th birthday a big celebration was arranged in his honor at the Hotel "Malachi", in the presence of the Englishmen of the Health Department. Many speeches were given and his colleagues assembled a quartet to perform. Dr. Wallach himself gave his address in German. The first speaker mentioned all the accomplishments of Dr. Wallach and what he had achieved. At the end Dr. Wallach said: "The speaker could not have referred to the Dr. Wallach who is sitting here, he probably meant my predecessor". Slowly, slowly one started to think about the choice of a successor for Dr. Wallach and discussed this with him too. He always used to reply: "I wish I could be my own successor, but this can not be, of course". He then consulted the gentlemen of the Board of Directors, and finally they came to the conclusion that Dr. Falk Schlesinger would be the best person to continue the leadership of the hospital in Dr. Wallach's tradition, especially concerning the religious laws. He also was a good physician.

Dr. Wallach passed away in his 90th year. His funeral saw the widest possible attendance; half the town was there and many people poured in from all over the country. It was his last wish to be interred next to Rav Dushinsky on the hospital grounds. These grounds were not sufficiently large for the crowds who came to accompany him to his last rest. Dr. Wallach had his own Mikwe on the hospital grounds. It was his bequest that he be bathed there before the funeral, and this was done. For many years to come the hospital was called the “Wallach Hospital” and even today there are still people who call it by that name. Other older citizens cannot get used to change this.

He could look back with pride on a life of self sacrifice. How great were his achievements! Friends who knew him from the beginning of his career in Jerusalem compared him with Albert Schweitzer in Lambarone. Even if conditions and the population were not quite as primitive as in Africa, they were primitive enough. This fact, and the peculiar personality of Dr. Wallach, who always lived in a world of his own thoughts, did not make it easy for me to submit to everything in this joint task. But I must say truthfully that I have never regretted having stood steadfast through these difficult times. I feel that I have contributed to the development of this important and highly appreciated hospital in this then completely underdeveloped country.

Dr. Schlesinger, who also was very farsighted, created many useful innovations. For instance we had no elevator yet, which was very urgently needed for emergency admittances. This was installed thanks to Dr.

Schlesinger's efforts. He also did away with the kerosene cookers and installed gas. The x-ray department was modernized and new machines acquired. In order to collect funds for these innovations, Dr. Schlesinger travelled abroad 2-3 times each year. A pediatrics department was opened in the pavilion. Needless to say that water and central heating was installed. The isolation department was closed and from that time on we could no longer accept infectious diseases and there was no longer an isolation department in Jerusalem. However, since Jerusalem's population had grown so much, the one children's ward in the main building had become insufficient by far. Dr. Helene Kagan worked in this children's ward for 10 years, with unbelievable devotion. She had an unusual understanding for all the various groups of Jerusalem's population. The Jewish Agency later opened a children's department for her at the Bikur Cholim Hospital.

Dr. Shabatai had this department for a while, between Dr. Kagan and Dr. Meyer. When Dr. Freier took over the Pediatric Department and only sick children were put in the Pediatric pavilion, Dr. Meyer started treating only newborn babies in the main building, up to the time he went on pension.



On rounds with the Hospital Director

Shortly after Dr. Wallach's death the whole ground floor was set up as the Internal Medicine Department. The living quarters of Dr. Wallach and the small rooms heretofore used for clinics were all used for this department. An apartment was rented across the street from the hospital for the use of clinics for ambulant patients. In 1970 these clinics were again much too crowded.

A new laboratory was also set up on the ground floor and taken over by Dr. Czaczkes. At first she worked with one, then with two and progressively more assistants. Later several rooms were built for her laboratory in an annex to the hospital and there she is working up to this day with about 25 laboratory technicians.

A new Maternity Department was also added on, and underneath it, thanks to a large endowment, the Eye Department and clinic, which are equipped with the most modern instruments. A lady from Venezuela started a large fundraising drive, but made a condition that these funds be used exclusively for the Eye Department. Dr. Schlesinger was glad to agree. Prof. Kornblueth who unfortunately was taken from us much too soon by a fatal car accident, made the greatest efforts to set up this department as a model department. He was a well liked, conscientious and competent physician. He came to us from Hadassah. The eye department maintained the same high standards in spite of his death, since Dr. Kornblueth himself chose suitable people to be his co-workers.

There was a large terrace on the eastern side of the main building which the high commissioner Waughcote donated in honor of Dr. Wallach's 70th birthday. This terrace was made into an operation room when all the other rebuilding projects were undertaken. As the population grew, the old fashioned operation room was no longer adequate, while the newly installed one met the most modern demands.

Dr. Schlesinger did everything to advance the hospital and he really attained a great deal. All these changes and innovations took a great toll of his strength. During the last two years before his death he felt that he was not equal to the task any longer. For two years he searched for a successor. At last he found him in Prof. Maier. Ten physicians applied for the position, partly from Israel and partly from abroad. We believe that Dr. Schlesinger made the right choice. In the two years that Prof. Maier has been the hospital's Director, he already accomplished enormous things thanks to his longsightedness and energy. We wish him that he will keep this energy for many many years for the benefit of the hospital. He still has a great task before him: the new building. I am deeply convinced that he is also able to handle this task.

Because I lost my mother very early and therefore had a rather difficult youth, a strong need grew in me to give people that which I had missed so much: mother-love and love of human beings. Therefore I chose the profession of nursing.

From this story my thoughts developed about the value of a human being, about the value of a completely absorbing task, about the duties of a profession, especially mine, about the obligation to help poor, sick people.

By chance the following poem came into my hands, I read and saw, this is my motto:

**I slept and dreamt
that life was joy
I awoke and saw
that life was duty**



A gala birthday party



*Receiving the "Worthy of Jerusalem" award from President Shazar
as Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek looks on*

**I acted and behold
duty
was joy.**

(Tagore)

