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**HEADLINE:** HADASSAH CELEBRATES 75 YEARS OF HELPING

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**BODY:**

Seventy-five years ago, **Henrietta Szold**, the first woman to enroll in the Jewish Theological Seminary, decided to transform her small New York study circle into a national organization dedicated to promoting Zionist ideals among American Jewish women and providing basic health care in Palestine. She called her association Hadassah, the Hebrew for Esther, a queen in Persia who saved the Jews from a massacre.

Since 1912 Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, has expanded dramatically, growing into a \$60 million-a-year philanthropic empire. The organization, which is celebrating its diamond jubilee this year, now supports two large hospitals, centers for refugee children, schools and a host of other projects in Israel, as well as increasing numbers of American projects.

Leaders of Hadassah, however, say that it is more than just a fund-raising instrument. "Anything you want to do, you can do under the umbrella of Hadassah," declared Ruth W. Popkin, the 18th president of the association, which has headquarters in New York. This giant sorority, which says it is America's largest women's volunteer group, is also devoted to educating its 385,000 members about Jewish culture and contemporary affairs.

Hadassah will celebrate its 75th anniversary with a Feb. 24 fete in New York and an 1,800-member "mission" to Jerusalem in March. Mrs. Popkin, noting that the organization is branching out, said it remains committed to its original goals of providing "the best health care and education for the people of Israel."

Medical Centers in Jerusalem

Hadassah is best known for its huge medical centers in Jerusalem. Ever since its nursing school was established in 1918, "Hadassah has been one of the most important volunteer organizations to contribute meaningfully to the establishment of medicine and education in Israel," said Moshe Yegar, the Israeli Consul General in New York.

Its first teaching hospital, at Mount Scopus, opened in 1939, but was destroyed after Jordan occupied East Jerusalem in 1948. After the hospital led a gypsy existence at clinics throughout the city, Hadassah dedicated a mammoth medical complex in Jerusalem's Ein Karem district in 1960.

The 4,000 doctors, nurses and other staff members at the Ein Karem center now serve a half-million patients a year, and 2,000 students attend its medical, dental and public-health schools. Important research has been done in such areas as postoperative coronary care, bone-marrow transplants, cancer and neurological diseases. A second hospital - affiliated, like the Ein Karem center, with Hebrew University - opened at Hadassah's original Mount Scopus location in 1978, 11 years after Israel reclaimed the area during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Help for Children

Children have been another major item on Hadassah's agenda since 1934, when the Youth Aliyah movement was born. This program, operated by the Jewish Agency, has helped a quarter-million refugee children settle and survive in Israel. They have included Holocaust orphans, poor Sephardic Jews and a recent wave of 2,000 refugees from the Ethiopian famine. Today some 18,500 children learn the ways of life in their new homeland and receive academic and vocational

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training in 315 youth villages, day centers and other programs.

Hadassah's leaders say its concern for the disadvantaged people of Israel has carried it deep into education. Career-oriented training is the thread linking the 17-year-old Hadassah Community College, the Seligsberg-Brandeis Comprehensive High School and Hadassah's vocational-guidance institute, all in Jerusalem.

The Jewish National Fund, which has helped turn desert into farmland, has been another beneficiary of Hadassah. The most recent project, created with the assistance of Hadassah volunteers, has been a recreational forest near the Negev desert settlement of Ofakim.

Despite the organization's often-proclaimed political neutrality, Hadassah has frequently criticized American arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Jordan and has long been active on behalf of Soviet Jews.

#### A Trip to Reykjavik

Mrs. Popkin journeyed to Reykjavik last fall to deliver the names of 11,500 refuseniks - Jews forbidden to emigrate from the Soviet Union - to the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. The very fact that Mr. Gorbachev acknowledged the existence of the refuseniks, she said, was "a big breakthrough."

Hadassah has also turned its attention to cultural, educational and consciousness-raising activities for its 1,700 American chapters. To recruit younger women, local groups have begun seminars on career and family issues, public-affairs discussions and classes to strengthen understanding of Judaism and Jewish life.

Hadassah's reputation as one of America's more culturally conscious Jewish organizations has made it attractive to many young women interested in discovering their Jewish roots. Deborah Auerbach-Reisner, a 26-year-old public-relations consultant in New York, says that - like other young members of her group-she feels that Hadassah has put her "in touch with Jewish culture and what's going on in the Jewish community."

Her group's monthly meetings include outside speakers and soft-pedaled pedagogy in the guise of learning Israeli songs and dances, staging Purim plays and eating latkes.

Although Mrs. Popkin says that Hadassah will remain "a women's Zionist organization," it has supplemented its traditional constituency in recent years. Its youth movement, Hashachar ("the dawn"), runs seven American summer camps and a work-study program in Israel. An arm for men was established in 1966 and now has grown to a membership of 20,000. A new association of "friends of Hadassah hospital" has members in 18 countries, Mrs. Popkin said, and an Israeli branch was established three years ago.