

***Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt*, 30 January 1938: article in which the Relief Association of German Jews promotes the emigration of women¹**

More emigration of women!

The Relief Association of German Jews² provides us with the following observations:

Few issues unite all the Jews of Germany as thoroughly as the absolute necessity of increasing the extent of *emigration*. This consensus is shown not only by all the resolutions of our influential organizations and the reiterated statements of our press, but above all by the barely manageable crowds of would-be emigrants rushing to the information centres of the Relief Association and the untiring, intense work of this great organization. But while many thousands of those pressing for emigration cannot be granted any opportunity to emigrate – because they are too old, because they know no trade viable in a foreign country, or for other reasons – there is, on the other hand, another important category of persons able to emigrate, *persons whose willingness to emigrate could be increased: our girls and women*.

The vast majority of the Jewish emigrants from Germany have so far been men, whose exact number cannot be ascertained, of course, but it surely comes to many thousands. This phenomenon in itself is not unnatural. On the contrary, a surplus of men is to be noted in almost every emigration movement. After all, it is inherent in a woman's nature that she clings more tightly to her home, parents, and native country than a man does, with his adventurous spirit and longing for faraway places. This was why, in times past, during the opening up of large regions overseas, the emigrant group – particularly in view of the conditions of transport – was overwhelmingly composed of men, which even today explains in part the elevated position of women in Anglo-Saxon countries of immigration. And even though life in many countries overseas has by now become outwardly so civilized and safe that a woman can emigrate there just as easily as a man, the strong family bonds that are especially characteristic among us Jews often deter young girls and single women from emigration. On the other hand, opportunities for a Jewish woman in Germany to earn a living were also relatively good until now. While tens of thousands of Jewish men lost their jobs without any prospect of getting a new one in Germany, women were able to earn a living here relatively easily as office workers, but principally, owing to the Nuremberg Laws, as domestic workers. Thus, women frequently lacked the principal impetus for emigration: material deprivation.

Under the circumstances, it was certainly no wonder that many Jewish parents whose sons had long been living overseas sought some consolation: 'At least our girl is staying

¹ *Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt für Berlin*, 30 Jan. 1938, p. 5; also appeared in *Jüdische Rundschau*, 21 Jan. 1938, p. 4. This document has been translated from German. The newspaper *Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt*, the organ of the board of the Jewish Community of Berlin, was published from 1911 until Nov. 1938.

² The Relief Association of German Jews (Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden) was founded as a welfare organization in Berlin in 1901; in 1939 it was forcibly incorporated into the Reich Association of Jews in Germany. The Relief Association discontinued its operations in autumn 1941 following the prohibition of emigration.

here!' And the daughters felt the significance of their role as an emotional and financial prop for their aging parents and did not look for opportunities to emigrate. But because this inherently natural event occurred thousands of times in this or a similar way, there arose a *mass phenomenon* that leads to extraordinarily *grave misfortune*. For it is obvious that to the same extent that the emigration of men of marriageable age exceeds the emigration of women, the *chances of marrying* must *diminish* for the girls left behind in Germany, while on the other hand the young male immigrants in the countries overseas frequently have *no possibility of establishing a Jewish family*, because there are hardly any Jewish girls in their vicinity. If our young men emigrate to countries such as the United States, where there is a sizeable local Jewish population, they indeed have an opportunity for a Jewish marriage. However, the linguistic and cultural differences between the immigrants and the locals are often so significant that they either prevent marriage from being contracted in the first place, or burden the marriage from the outset with a set of specific problems. Far more jeopardized, however, is the situation of our single male immigrants in countries lacking significant numbers of Jews. These men are often faced with the choice of either staying single – with all the health-related consequences this entails – or marrying non-Jewish women, which usually not only results in the loss of offspring for the Jewish community, but also leads to particularly difficult marriages, indeed to marriages that are inharmonious from the outset, on account of the enormous cultural, religious, and other differences. This problem is already now perceived to be a very urgent one in many overseas countries.

What must happen now in order to remedy these shortcomings? Since an exhaustive treatment of this important subject is not possible here, it is a matter of the following principles. First, our young men who emigrate in future must realize that they would generally be wise *to commit* to a future life partner *before their relocation* to an overseas country, specifically and as a general rule by entering into marriage. If two young people go abroad together, not only will they give each other the best emotional support, but also, in a great many, perhaps most, cases, it will be *the female partner who first finds a way of earning a living*, so that the material struggle for existence, too, will be made easier rather than more difficult by marrying before emigration. Furthermore, however, the dangers that were mentioned above in greater detail will be avoided, dangers that inevitably lead to the loss of the most precious Jewish essence for the community. In this regard, the girls' approach to Judaism will be the specific determinant, since experience shows that the atmosphere in the home [and] the raising of the children depend primarily on the wife. Equally essential is a fundamental change in the attitude of Jewish parents, who thus far have all too frequently kept those daughters who could emigrate at home instead. Of course, 'the same thing isn't right for all', and there may well be instances in which it is justifiable for an adult daughter to remain at her parents' side. But anyone who is familiar with the wishes of our Jewish parents for the future of their daughters will certainly expect that purely selfish reasons will not lead them to keep the girls from emigrating, once they realize that both the job prospects and the marriage opportunities are a great deal better in the overseas countries than in Germany.

It must be emphasized, however, that not *every girl* is automatically suited for emigration. Rather, apart from a thorough education, she must also possess certain human qualities. With respect to employment, a thorough grounding in household manage-

ment is required, along with a willingness to accept a housekeeping position, at least temporarily, even if a different occupation is the goal she has in mind.

The large Jewish emigration organizations, both domestic and foreign, i.e. first and foremost the Relief Association, will in future devote special attention to the emigration of women. This means, for one thing, that the emigration counsellor should openly discuss with the young emigrant whether he should not make a commitment before relocating – with the suitable form (marriage or simply engagement) to be chosen in each case according to the country of immigration and his (and her) occupation. Furthermore, however, the Relief Association, in the closest cooperation with the League of Jewish Women,³ will try hard here to make an appropriate selection of girls who are willing to emigrate, and, together with the overseas committees and women's organizations, arrangements will be made to ensure supervision of single girls and women to the extent that the emigration counsellor dealing with Jewish parents can assume responsibility for allowing their daughter to start out alone on her journey to a faraway place. Hard workers who are willing to be integrated, who also understand the language of the country of immigration and meet all the demands that life in a faraway place makes on health and human nature, will not only blaze their own trail, but also help to create new units of Jewish life through which the foreign land can become a homeland, perhaps even for their parents, but surely for their children.

³ The League of Jewish Women (Jüdischer Frauenbund) was founded in 1904 by Bertha Pappenheim (1859–1936) and Sidonie Werner (1860–1932). It was forcibly dissolved in 1938 and re-established in 1953.