The Lives of Jessie Sampter

SARAH IMHOFF

Queer, Disabled, Zionist

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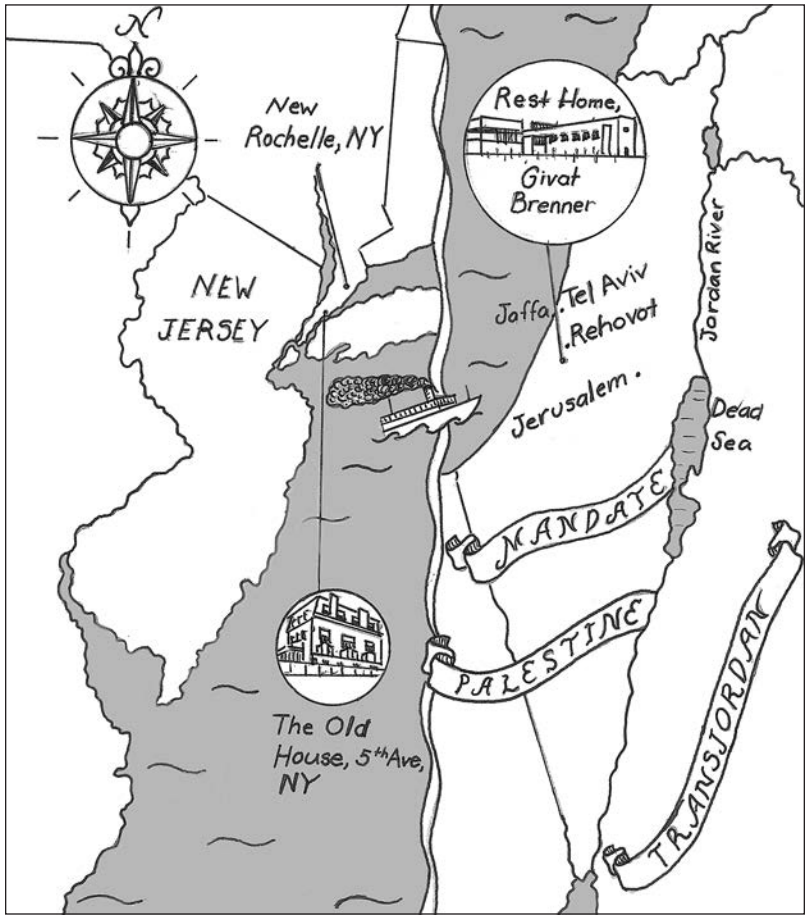

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Sarah Imhoff

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Cover art: Jessie Sampter at Kibbutz Givat Brenner, 1930s. Courtesy of Givat Brenner Archives, Yesha Sampter papers.

Contents

Acknowledgments

I have been living with Jessie Sampter for so long that sometimes I wonder if my colleagues and friends feel as though she lives with them too. Winnifred Sullivan would ask me, "How's Jessie?" She's still captivating, Winni.

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about Jessie Sampter, and I wondered how I could better answer their questions in the book.

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Introduction

I first met Jessie Sampter in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem. It was cold, and I was fidgeting to keep warm, alternating between sitting on my hands and using them to turn the yellowed, flaking papers. I was looking for early twentieth-century American Zionists, and since Sampter had authored the ninety-five-page *A Course in Zionism*, a primer for understanding support for a Jewish state in Palestine, I requested some of the folders cataloged under her name. I knew that Hadassah, the women's Zionist organization, had published and promoted the first edition in 1915. In 1920 it published Sampter's expanded version, then called *A Guide to Zionism*, and in 1933 a new version called *Modern Palestine: A Symposium*, which tipped the scales at 411 pages and included a foreword by Albert Einstein. I knew that Hadassah approved of her work, even though the books were never great commercial successes.[1] Jessie Sampter, I figured as I wished for my body to warm up, would be a good example of a typical American Zionist.

She turned out to be anything but.

I don't remember thinking about the cold after that first folder in the archive. But I do remember thinking again and again about Jessie's body. Sometimes it felt so present to me, even though all I had were pieces of paper and a few photographs.

As I spent more time with Sampter—with her unpublished autobiographies, with her drafts of later-published poems and essays, with her letters to friends and family, with her published books and poetry—I came to realize that Sampter's own life and body hardly matched typical Zionist ideals: while Zionism celebrated strong and healthy bodies, Sampter spoke

of herself as "crippled" from polio and plagued by weakness and sickness her whole life; while Zionism applauded reproductive women's bodies, Sampter never married or bore children. In fact, she wrote of homoerotic longings and had same-sex relationships we would consider queer.

Sampter was also quite complex in other ways, I came to see. In late 1918 she sat with several friends and used a Ouija board to ask her dead mother: Did she approve of Jessie's recent return to Judaism? And how did she feel about Jessie's embrace of Zionism and plan to move to Palestine? These were pressing questions for the thirty-five-year-old. And the more I read about Sampter's life, the more questions I asked myself. The traditional 613 Jewish commandments prohibit trying to contact the dead (no. 64, according to the medieval rabbi Maimonides) and divination (no. 62). So how did Sampter understand Judaism? And the nature of the world and the afterlife? She seemed to be full of paradoxes.

These questions drew me in. I wanted to know more about her ever-developing inner life. I saw her not only as a writer but also as a lover of children, a conflicted pacifist, an adoptive mother, an advocate for the disabled, and an Orientalist who became too comfortable pushing Arabs to the margins of society in Palestine. She also became a puzzle: How did a queer, disabled woman become a voice of American Zionism? And how should I write about the life and embodied experiences of this woman who defied social norms and confounded available categories of sexuality? The more I turned to her, the more she turned me to bigger questions. She became a way for me to think about the relationship between an embodied life and a body of thought—and a way for me to quietly theorize how those two things are entwined in wonderful and complex ways.

To Write Her Life

Why write a life at all? I am an academic, after all, and we generally leave the writing of presidential biographies and celebrity lives to more popular writers. Academic historians can be dubious of biography as a genre. To many, it seems small, amateurish, insufficiently analytic, unworthy. To others, it smacks of the kind of "great man" histories that paint the world as a place where events are driven by a tiny elite, as if the course of history could always be understood by looking closely enough into the lives of these few, usually white, men. Biography rarely serves as a way to rethink the well-trodden paths of established methods.

And yet here I am, writing a book that centers on a single person from the past. It is not primarily because I think Sampter has been neglected, though I do think that is true. During her life she was extremely well connected, and her work was read in both the United States and Palestine. Yet understanding Sampter will not make us see the causes of World War I differently, will not radically change our perspective on the British Empire's dealings in the Middle East, and will not force us to rewrite the history of poetry. I do not think that Sampter transformed the world by the sheer force of her intellect or actions, and so this is not a biography in the "great man" style that claims that its subject is important for making sense of a larger historical narrative. My point is in some ways much smaller and in other ways much bigger: analyzing her life illuminates a sometimes invisible aspect of the human condition—that our embodied selves do not always neatly line up with our religious or political ideals. My point is also a theoretical one, though it lurks beneath the text more often than on its surface: bodies, senses, and feelings are important sources of knowledge.

Maybe this isn't a biography, then. Historian Jill Lepore differentiates between the foundational assumptions and goals of two genres of writing: "If biography is largely founded on a belief in the singularity and significance of an individual's contribution to history, microhistory is founded upon almost the opposite assumption: however singular a person's life may be, the value of examining it lies in how it serves as an allegory for the culture as a whole."[2] Sampter offers this opportunity: her distinctive embodied experience points to the far wider cultural phenomenon of the complex relationship between the body and religious thought. Writing a microhistory about Sampter means staking a theoretical claim that embodiment is a critical piece of even the most intellectual lives. And yet this book is still life-writing, and I identify it with this etymological sense of *biography*. The relationship to biology resonates with attention to physical bodies and embodiment, even as what it means to write a body into textual existence has never been as clear as what it means to write a philosophical analysis or a history. I have come to think of this book as belonging to a slightly off-kilter genre: weird biography.

I wrote this weird biography about Sampter because I am fascinated by her—and also because I believe that historians and other scholars should think more and better about embodiment, and one of the best ways to do this is through a single person. A single body. Of course, even a single body implicates other bodies: familial bodies, social bodies, and the body politic all make significant appearances here. Still, Sampter's body, with all its relationships

and permeability and vulnerability, remains the center for my thinking about bodies more generally. When I call for greater attention to embodiment, I think I can best show its importance through one life rather than through the data of many bodies. My first book was largely about American Jewish men and their bodies and why the construction of those gendered bodies matters to our histories of religion, politics, and gender. Though the many men in those pages could illuminate general historical trends, they could not provide the same insight that this intimate look at one woman can: to show us how the body is ever present and fundamentally intertwined with the mind, the soul, religion, politics, and ideology.

An Embodied Method

Many academic books include a self-disclosure: the writers share with their readers that they write "as a middle-class white woman who grew up in upstate New York," "as a gay Black man," or "as an Indian who came to the United States as a child."[3] What is the meaning of these proclamations? Well, if we've learned anything from both physics and literature, it must be that an observer is never outside the system she observes. A chronicler is never objective. These writers seek to acknowledge that for their readers: I am a particular person with a particular identity, and so this book is particular to me.

How would you read this book differently if I told you I was a middle-class white woman? How do you determine which attributes are the ones that matter for understanding the me in this book? Some are clearly germane. For instance, my name and my American accent helped me gain access to materials and forge relationships at the kibbutz that I might not have been able to if I had an obviously Muslim name or an Egyptian passport, say.

And it's true. I *am* a middle-class white woman. I also grow echinacea and roses, I hike, I write sitting cross-legged on the couch, my knee doesn't hurt anymore where I tore my ACL, I scuba dive, I dream of being a migrating whale shark or a tiny cleaner shrimp, I will stop in my tracks to watch a red-tailed hawk fly overhead, I love an afternoon nap, I don't eat meat, I still feel it in the pit of my stomach when I think about holding the lifeless body of my first dog, I can't reach high places but I can do pull-ups, I want to be a runner but I am so. darned. slow. Maybe those are the things you need to know to understand the me in this book. Maybe not.

There are other things you'll find, too, interspersed with my accounts of Jessie Sampter. They are integral parts of my method—an embodied

method in which I seek different kinds of knowledge. Not just what she wrote, or what philosophy or history means. That, too, of course. In my research for this book, I explored not only texts and material objects—the things scholars usually interpret through reading and seeing—but also what we apprehend by other senses and feelings: what the air feels like on a hot July day on the top of the hill at the kibbutz, the sting when the soft flesh of my forearm is snagged by a rose thorn while I prune, the taste of fresh dates, the joy of creation when a seed sprouts, and the frustration when leg muscles have nothing left to give. Each of these is its own kind of knowledge.

Take a familiar example about riding a bike: although you could read how-to manuals, learn how the gears work, feel all the parts of a bicycle, and watch all the videos you wanted, you would still know something *more* by learning to ride the bicycle. After riding the bike, you could tell about the feeling of balance, the way something just "clicks" when the bike gets to a certain speed, the contraction of certain muscles, the extra oomph needed to get up a steep hill, and the compelling mix of nervousness, joy, and accomplishment during the first successful ride. (The phrase "It's like riding a bike" partakes in this same shared sense that physical memories can stick with us in ways that differ from cognitive memories.) Some philosophers have explained the difference between "knowing that" and "knowing how." The embodied knowledge in this book includes some "knowing how" and also goes beyond it to include sensations and perceptions. These sensations, perceptions, and physical knowledge matter for the way a person sees the world—in Sampter's case, how she thinks about the relationship of nature and God, how she thinks about the social roles people with disabilities should play, and why she thinks Palestine is a homeland for her people.

I sought all of these kinds of knowledge. And I did so because I learned from it: I saw new things, I asked new questions, and I understood more. This method was the right one for this book. I am convinced that experiential knowledge shapes how we can understand Sampter, her world, and our world. It might not be the right approach for every book, and it certainly has its limitations. I'm quite critical of the idea that you can, for example, wear a blindfold for an hour or two and thereby know what life is like for a person who is blind. In many ways, this is a new approach in religious studies scholarship, but it is hardly sui generis. I have learned from the methods of other scholars who have insisted on going beyond textual and visual evidence, including focusing on bodily senses, affect, and materiality.[4]

Yet the search for embodied knowledge also reminds me of all the things I can't know: I can't smell the streets of Jerusalem in 1919, I can't hear the

sound of Jessie's voice, I don't know what it's like to wake up wondering if I will be able to get out of bed or walk beyond the kitchen, and I certainly can't feel the physical pains of polio. I can't experience the past firsthand. And I can't live in someone else's mind and body. But that's not new; that's the challenge for all scholars who write about the past, or about anyone other than themselves, really. I want to get a little closer. And bringing my readers a little closer, strangely, sometimes means bringing them closer to me.

I think that, for all humanistic writers, careful attention to embodiment should be the rule and not the exception. The mind is inherently embodied. As the philosophers George Lakoff and Mark Johnson remind us, contra to Western philosophical assumptions that mind and body are fundamentally different and separate, human thought actually "arises from the nature of our brains, bodies, and bodily experience."[5] Brain science has shown that the neural and cognitive mechanisms that we need to move our bodies are the same ones that we need to think, conceptualize, and reason. The things that make movement possible also make metaphors possible.

It's not just that having a body is necessary for thinking and reasoning—though of course it is—it's also that the material of the body shapes these thought processes. Lakoff and Johnson write, "The very structure of reason itself comes from the details of our embodiment."[6] I propose to take them seriously. By telling Jessie Sampter's life as stories about the body and the mind—and insisting that we cannot tell those stories separately—we see a life more clearly. We do not, of course, see her brain's synapses at work, but we see the profound integration of body and mind. My hope is that my readers, and especially scholars who write about people we call *thinkers*, recognize that this profound integration is not distinctive to Sampter. Having a body is a universal human experience, even though the particulars of that experience are different for each person. Bodies *are* how we experience the world, whether through eyes or fingertips or other senses, as well as shaping how we experience the world, such as through our physical capacities, race, or gender.

Studying the ways minds and bodies work also means seeing that they work imperfectly. Philosopher Jacqueline Rose summarizes the work of trans theorist Susan Stryker: "There is no body without debilitation and pain. We are all made up of endlessly permuting bits and pieces which sometimes do, mostly do not, align with each other."[7] This book, then, is about Sampter, but it's also about the human condition—the condition of having a mind and a body and the condition of imperfection, internal conflict, and debilitation.

Shortly after she moved to Palestine, Sampter momentarily fantasized about being a mind but not a body: "Escape from the body, its pains, shames, and humors, prompted at times a curious disgust of the human life that at other times I idealized. Were not secretion, defecation and even eating revolting as well as troublesome? Were we not physically as noisome as the spider or caterpillar one squashes against the wall?" Yet the flesh, even with its disgust-inducing processes and properties, could not be jettisoned. Despite the appeal of getting rid of the yuckiness of a body, Sampter dismissed the very possibility of a disembodied person. That would be no person at all. She then turned her musings toward having a body without imperfection: "Then I romanced myself into a magic life, in which I would neither eat, drink, sleep, throw off waste, tire nor grow old. I should have golden-red hair and violet-blue eyes and be beautiful; or only be as I was without defect, with unfilled teeth and no deformity. I should go about the world, immortally young, incessantly active, working for the benefit of mankind."[8] But she quickly dismissed this as well. Her mind and her body were one. To think otherwise was to get lost in a reverie.

Even stripped down to a handful of facts, Sampter's life was remarkable. Born in New York in 1883, she developed an early interest in religious topics and the craft of writing, both nurtured by her beloved father, Rudolph. When she was twelve, she contracted polio, a poorly understood disease at the time. For the rest of her life, she would live with scoliosis, deformed hands and wrists, weakness, and later what we now call post-polio syndrome.

As she grew to be an adult, her interest in religion deepened, and she published two philosophical books, *The Seekers* and *The Great Adventurer*. Her own seeking brought her to Judaism and Zionism. She joined Hadassah, the American women's Zionist organization, ran their educational department, and wrote *A Course in Zionism*. During World War I, she wrote two more books, the prose-poetry *Sefer ha-Goyim* (*The Book of Nations*) and the poetry collection *The Coming of Peace*.

She settled in Palestine on September 22, 1919. She went as an unmarried woman with no family there but with the blessing of the Zionist Organization of America. In the beginning, she lived in Jerusalem with Leah Berlin, a Russian Zionist who quickly became a central fixture in her life. She later moved to Rehovot, at that time a small town outside of Tel Aviv, where she had a house built for herself and Tamar, the Yemenite Jewish toddler she adopted in 1926. She published essays, poetry, and books—everything

from children's fiction to political essays about life in Palestine. Though she visited the United States in 1925 and 1930, she would never again call anywhere but Palestine home.[9] Then, in the winter of 1933–34, she and Leah moved to Kibbutz Givat Brenner, where she used her inheritance to establish a vegetarian rest home for workers. When Tamar wasn't at boarding school in Tel Aviv, she, too, called the kibbutz home. By the end of her life, Sampter had published eleven books, dozens and dozens of poems, and hundreds of articles, including pieces in English and Hebrew. In 1938 Sampter left her room at Givat Brenner to get treatment for an illness and died at the Hadassah hospital.

But lives are about more than a chronicle of events. Sampter not only wrote and participated in political movements but also thought, felt, loved, hurt, despaired, and mourned. How, as a woman living a century later, do I know what I know about Jessie Sampter? Can I ever know what she thought and felt? Not fully, of course. But I have spent a lot of time with Sampter's words, photographs, reading materials, and other things from the world around her. I have read all of the books she wrote, published and unpublished, in all of their editions. She wrote to her sister, Elvie Wachenheim, at least once a week from when she moved to Palestine in 1919 until she died in 1938. These letters were often six or eight pages long, and rarely fewer than four. She praised her niece Jessie (her namesake) when she became one of the first woman airplane pilots in the United States, shared intimate details of her life in Palestine, and declared the errors of the British Empire in its handling of political violence. She wrote to colleagues and friends, including Henrietta Szold, Mordecai Kaplan, and dozens of others. "Letters are the hub of life," she once declared.[10] More than a thousand of her letters survive, and I have read them all (unless I haven't—there could always be one or two or seventeen in another archive or in a trunk in someone's attic). I have read her essays, poems, and articles that were published in the *Palestine Post*, the *Maccabaean*, the Hebrew-language *Davar*, and more than a dozen other newspapers and magazines. I have also studied many of those articles and poems in their infancy since Sampter saved her marked and edited drafts. She was the animating personality behind her kibbutz newsletter and frequently wrote about her reactions and political ideals, discussing everything from day-to-day kibbutz life to world politics in both English and Hebrew. Rarely, such as when she wrote to Albert Einstein, she used German. I read those letters too.

"PS. It seems probable that letters are still being censored," she wrote to her sister in May 1920.[11] The immediate context was the riots earlier that

spring, and yet the letter suggests something more fundamental: Sampter's own writing is only part of the story. Although her own voice is central to this book, it is also crucial to listen to other voices around her, and so these stories also rely on the letters and publications of her friends, associates, family, and even intellectual opponents. To see her lives more clearly, I also read what she read: everything from Sigmund Freud to Benedict de Spinoza to the books that inspired *Lawrence of Arabia* to the *Nation* and the monthly magazine *Asia*.

I also pursued other ways of knowing: not only reading but also *doing*. I spent time at her kibbutz, met its schoolchildren, saw some of its agricultural work, and talked to its aging members. As much as I could, I did what she did and used the stuff that she used: I grew nasturtiums, roses, zinnias, and one (very sad) citrus tree. I tried my hand at paper-cut silhouettes. I looked at old ads for Bayer's Compral, and I even tried to get a tube of Kondon's Cattarhal Jelly—not the other brand, as she frequently reminded her sister in her letters requesting the medicinal gel. (No luck.)

These physical bits and pieces, the smell of the roses, the feel of a new Burpee catalog, the natural landscapes, and the built environments shaped her life profoundly. They affected not only her moods but also her religious philosophy and her Zionism.

This method of attending to the body, even when it is not on the surface of the narrative, is part of the critique disability studies makes: it is a privilege to be able to ignore your body, a privilege to pretend that your autonomous thoughts and carefully planned actions are where the real (historical and philosophical) action is at. It is also at least partly an illusion. Nancy Eiesland's groundbreaking book *The Disabled God* puts it this way: "An accessible theological method necessitates that the body be represented as flesh and blood, bones and braces, and not simply the rationalized realm of activity."[12] That method of knowing through the body is reflected in Eiesland's own autobiographical writing, as well as others'. She explains, "Unwilling and unable to take our bodies for granted, we attend to the kinesis of knowledge."[13] And scholars should too. This book shows a woman with a sophisticated set of philosophical ideas that were shaped by her embodied experience as well as her intellect—and also shows the friction among her political, intellectual, and embodied experiences. In writing this way, I also suggest that others' lives, whether they are disabled or not, are more strongly shaped by embodied experiences than historians or scholars of religious thought often presume.

So if I am going to describe what I did in terms of growing nasturtiums, feeling the sun and the hot wind at Kibbutz Givat Brenner, and cutting

silhouettes out of paper, it also makes sense to describe what I read. Scholars may take for granted reading as a way of knowing, but I am interested in making it strange again, in a way. Why is it obvious, I ask myself, that a scholar should read everything someone wrote while it is not obvious that they might stand in their house, grow the plants they grew, play the instrument they played, practice their trade, or listen to the sounds of their typewriter?

I cannot say that I always know Sampter's thoughts and feelings, but after years of reading and doing, I know a lot about her. So when I write that Hyman Segal's *The Book of Pain-Struggle, Called: The Prophecy of Fulfillment* resonated with Sampter because of the way it suggested a Zionism in which pain was central, I am not claiming to know all the inner workings of her mind, but I think I do know some. I have in mind two of her books, two letters, two unpublished autobiographies, and three unpublished essays, as well as knowledge of an array of other visions of Zionism of the time. So, while thoughts and emotions may not always be empirically verifiable, the moments where I talk about Sampter's thoughts or feelings are not merely imaginative reconstructions or projections born of overidentification with my subject. In sketching Sampter's inner life, where I can, I have tried never to go beyond reasonable induction based on the sources I have.

How should I tell the story of these facts and feelings? Pursuing these kinds of knowledge also meant that I saw her life and thought from many angles. Sometimes I write about her as *Jessie*, in particular when I discuss her personal and familial relationships. Other times I call her *Sampter*, emphasizing her public and intellectual roles. She was, of course, always both. But I hope that moving between the two can remind us of the fundamentally inseparable nature of a human life. A recent novel's narrator, herself a life-writer, asks, "What if, for once in history, a woman's story could be untethered from what we need it to be in order to feel better about ourselves?"[14] The narrator tells the story of Joan—a postapocalyptic Joan of Arc figure—through a futuristic form of body art akin to tattooing or branding. In a profound act of acknowledging the centrality of the body, she makes the contours of her own body into an artistic rendering of Joan's life. She proclaims, "I will write it. I will tell the truth."[15]

I cannot claim to have told Jessie Sampter's truth in its entirety; that is an impossible task. Nor do I want to paint her as some sort of radical saint. But I can say that Sampter's story here is not meant as an inspirational story tethered to us feeling better about ourselves.[16] At many moments, a sensitive reader might feel it borders on indictment of others ("How could

a society treat disabled people that way?") and of Sampter herself ("How can she say that about Arabs?"). Her stories are not, in the end, redemptive. Nor are they cautionary tales or the bearers of moral messages. They are stories of a life.

I am writing these stories in a style uncommon for academics—and, so, uncommon for me. But I have come to see accessibility as a feminist value, not only in physical spaces but also in intellectual ones like this book. Historically, women have been excluded from some conversations because they had been excluded from the kinds of learning that would prepare them to appear as experts there. For example, when women could not get PhDs, they would not be hired as professors. Closer to Jewish tradition, women could not be Talmud scholars until they were allowed to learn the language and discursive style of the Talmud. (Even now, if you happened on an academic conversation among English-speaking Talmud scholars, you would likely find yourself at sea unless you, too, had had a very specific education.) The exclusion wasn't because some official had proclaimed that no woman could become a Talmud scholar, though there are religious traditions that consider it vulgar; rather, rabbinical schools and other experts weren't training women in ways that allowed them that kind of access to the text. The point is that even in the absence of formal exclusion, people have used arcane, technical, or dense language in ways that exclude others from the conversation.

Sometimes scholars do this, and sometimes for good reason. Like baseball fans, communities of scholars have a specialized vocabulary, which might appear as jargon to outsiders. This jargon often refers to a concept whose complexities are well known by the community; a word functions as a shorthand. (Think of "on base plus slugging." If you're a baseball fan, its meaning is self-evident, and you wouldn't think twice using it in conversation with a fellow fan because it's much shorter than describing the whole concept. If you're not a fan, its meaning is lost on you until you get someone to explain it.) If theoretical physicists had to use small, accessible words to describe all of their research to one another, every paper would be six times as long and full of caveats and distinctions—all of which had been worked through before. Humanistic scholarship also has these specialized words. They help us point to concepts without having to rehearse all of the caveats and complexities; they help us think theoretically and discuss exciting new research. Sometimes, too, scholars who want to critique a system find that the best way is to reject the terms of that system. Judith Butler, a frequent target of attacks on "academic writing," argues that it is

a scholar's job to "provoke new ways of looking at a familiar world," and that often means questioning "common sense."[17] In short, sometimes complex language is best to show complexity, especially where we might have missed it otherwise.

Yet I have forgone almost all specialized academic vocabulary here, though many times it would have been easier to use it. It doesn't mean that there isn't theory here or that this book makes no academic claims. It does. But they aren't easy: they are about ways of knowing, about the complexity of understanding another person, about the ways religion, politics, and the body are never fully separable. Those are hard ideas, and I am not convinced that dense prose is the best way to investigate them. Instead, I'm doing it through the story of a woman. And I hope that opening the door with accessible writing allows more readers into those deeper questions.

Finding women. Making a woman's story accessible, not just to a specialized audience. These are not always easy tasks.

Archives have been predominantly male spaces.[18] The items in archives tend to document the deeds and ideas of those in power, who have largely been men, as well as being oriented toward politics, war, and national movements, spheres often seen as male. Women do appear in archives but sometimes only in relation to men. When I wanted to find out about Julia Dushkin, Sampter's friend and fellow Zionist, I had to go to the Archive for the History of the Jewish People and look at her husband's file. People had saved a few of her papers, mostly ones that related to her husband and some others that related to her philanthropy, and then other people had cataloged those papers under "Alexander Dushkin." Sampter's papers are cataloged under her own name, for the most part. She had no husband whose archives could swallow her own.

Sometimes Jessie's stories contain elements that are not altogether flattering. "The woolen stockings you sent me are a disappointment," she wrote to her sister, Elvie.[19] I laughed when I read this: how entitled she was! Her sister had sent a lovely gift across the ocean at no mean expense, and Jessie didn't have a single nice word to say about it. After she arrived in Palestine, her very first letter to her sister, brother-in-law, and their kids began with a sentence thanking them for letters. The next sentence read, "But even then I was disappointed to find only two from you, dated August 25 and 29, and what bothered me was that there was no copy of the one I received in London. I wish you would number your letters, as I do."[20] Jessie stopped

numbering her letters just a few months later. Half a year later, she wrote to her sister, "This is my very busy week for I am moving! I meant to send you a long typewritten letter today, but Leah Berlin came in to help me with my packing—or rather, to do it for me—and I am snatching a moment to scribble, in between directing her."[21] Anyone who has helped a friend move knows that the work is draining, and to have your friend sit and "direct" you cannot have been easy. What a trooper Leah must have been to pack for Jessie and to take her orders. Jessie's letter expressed no gratitude; she merely presented her own task as direction and Leah's as labor. And, no, in case you are wondering: the letter wasn't a tongue-in-cheek description shared between knowing sisters. She rarely wrote anything tongue-in-cheek.

Jessie was a serious woman. She could be demanding, and she had a limited sense of humor. Her cousin wrote to her, "Everyone thinks you are either wonderful or crazy."[22] It was true. Some people also found her difficult. Friends and kibbutz members would often comment about how she and Leah were a bit of an odd couple—the well-heeled, sensitive, entitled New Yorker and the strong and practical Russian. I'm not sure the comparison was always a complimentary one for Jessie.

Sampter was also morally serious and contemplative, and yet despite her deep humanism, she said and did morally unacceptable things. When her cat gave birth to kittens, she drowned them. In early twentieth-century Palestine, this was just what you did with unwanted kittens. But the act is still reprehensible. Sampter also sometimes expressed racism against Arabs and wrestled with what roles she thought they could play in society. Like drowning the kittens, this discriminatory move was typical—in fact, when it came to Arabs, Sampter was better than many of her peers—but typicality does not excuse racism. I will not write these off by saying that Sampter was merely a product of her environment in these respects. She bucked trends in many other circumstances, and so she could have acted differently in these situations. I still see her agency in deciding to drown kittens and exclude Arabs. Her story, then, is not a story of a woman beyond ethical reproach.

Jessie Sampter never became a major Zionist communal leader, nor did her writings enter the canon of Zionist, much less Jewish, philosophy. Her writing about Zionism and Judaism is consistently smart but garnered few followers. I find her poetry interesting because of its political aims, but some of it tends toward the formulaic. Aesthetically, some of it is mediocre. Her correspondents and friends included people well known to history: Mary Antin became famous for her immigrant memoir *The Promised Land*, Henrietta Szold ran Hadassah with seemingly infinite energy, Mordecai Kaplan

founded the Reconstructionist movement in Judaism, Louis Brandeis was the first Jew appointed to the US Supreme Court, and Albert Einstein, well, we all know his name. Though she had quite a few famous friends, Sampter herself never became a celebrity. She was neither extraordinarily powerful in her time nor terribly influential after it.

And so it is not my intention here to praise a lost poetic genius, to show ways she profoundly influenced American Judaism, or to hold her up as a saint. Yet I think we would gain something by considering her part of the canon of Jewish thought. And more broadly, writing her life with unflinching attention to embodiment offers us a model of how we can understand religious philosophy and philosophers: not just as fine intellects but as people with inextricably linked bodies and minds. While her life as a queer, disabled Zionist is distinctive—dare I say unique?—it helps us understand something that is shared across humanity.

Far from fame or saintliness, then, it is Sampter's imperfections and incongruities that animate much of this book, and they are a crucial part of what makes her human. I spent a lot of time with Sampter, and I want to root for her (however strange that may be to say about a long-dead woman), but that doesn't mean writing a hagiography. This book is a story about a flawed human with an imperfect body because that is the life she lived. It is the kind of life we all live.

An Unexpected Zionist

The most visible incongruity in Sampter's life was the coexistence of her Zionism with her queerness and disability. Today, if people call themselves Zionists, they mean that they support the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. They might have a variety of reasons for this support: they might see a need for a Jewish safe haven, they might believe that only within a Jewish state can Jews truly achieve self-determination, or they might have Jewish or Christian theological reasons for wanting to support Jewish settlement in the Holy Land. They might celebrate the leadership of the Likud Party, or they might be critical of Israel's treatment of Palestinians; they might support a single state or want, as the saying goes, a "two-state solution"; but in general they support some version of a Jewish state located in and around Jerusalem.

But before the State of Israel was founded in 1948, the options for self-identified Zionists were far broader. Some wanted a Jewish state, and some of those insisted that the Jewish state be in Palestine, whereas others would

have been content with a Jewish state located almost anywhere. Others, sometimes called cultural Zionists, were far more invested in Jewish settlement in Palestine as a spiritual and cultural center of Jewish life. They saw a return to the land, the resurgence of the Hebrew language, and greater connection to Judaism as the center of the Zionist project. For example, Ahad Ha'am (literally, "one of the people," the pen name of Asher Ginsburg) wrote essays denouncing the spiritless Zionism of Theodor Herzl and the rush to colonize Palestine "for the Jews" instead of "for Judaism."[23] Cultural Zionists like Ahad Ha'am were often far less interested in pursuing the politics of state creation and inevitable conflicts with both Arabs and colonial powers. Practical Zionists focused on infrastructure, immigration, and settlement. For them, getting Jews to settle on the land and create community there was always the first priority, and other elements like spirituality and culture could follow. Religious Zionists saw the land of Israel as the true home of Jews and so took it as a religious commandment for Jews to settle there.[24] There were yet more: revisionist Zionists, labor Zionists, and various combinations of these groups.

Most Jews, however, were not Zionists at the beginning of the twentieth century. Some were agnostic about the project (non-Zionists), and others voiced their opposition (anti-Zionists), but the majority did not embrace the Zionist cause until later in the century. In the United States, when the future Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis famously said, "To be good Americans, we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews, we must become Zionists," many of his fellow American Jews disagreed.[25] The anti-Zionist rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise spoke for most Reform Jews when, three decades earlier, he said, "The idea of the Jews returning to Palestine is no part of our creed. We rather believe it is God's will that the habitable world become one holy land and the human family one chosen people."[26] Many acculturated Jews also worried that Zionism would trigger accusations of "dual loyalty" from their fellow Americans. Yet by World War I, the Zionist movement was growing slowly, and, perhaps more important, opposition to it was waning. The Federation of American Zionists grew from about 3,800 dues-paying members in 1898 to almost 150,000 in 1918.[27]

In almost all of its guises, Zionism celebrated the able male body and its potential to reclaim the land of Palestine for the Jewish people.[28] Its most vocal proponents saw weak Jewish bodies as the result of living in exile. Returning to work the land would transform these bodies from their fallen state into proper, healthy, strong Jewish bodies. Or, alternatively, the regeneration of Jewish bodies would enable Zionist national goals.[29] Whichever

way the causation went, Zionists saw strong bodies and nation building as intimately connected. *The Guide to Hashomer Leaders*, an eastern European publication for young Zionist leaders, cajoled its audience: we must once again be "whole and healthy men, and whole and healthy Jews."[30] Disabled bodies were nowhere to be seen, except as the negative image to be overcome. Doctor Binyamini, a physician at the first Hebrew school in Tel Aviv, wrote in 1928, "Zionism was accepted only by compatible men and women who were whole-bodied and physically fit. . . . Our people are currently experiencing a natural process of selection."[31] It wasn't true that only healthy or strong people accepted Zionism, but that didn't stop Binyamini from promoting the idea that there was something physically superior about Zionists. Building on the idea of a chosen people, sociologist Meira Weiss calls this whole, able male Jewish body "the chosen body"—a set of ideals that continue to reverberate in the present-day State of Israel.[32]

These idealized strong bodies were also male bodies. Max Nordau, cofounder with Theodor Herzl of the World Zionist Organization, championed what he called "Muscle Jewry." He promoted the establishment of Jewish gymnasiums and sporting clubs; he celebrated the founding of social organizations named after the Maccabees and Bar Kokhba, interpreted as the manly warriors of Jewish history; he declared, "Let us take up our oldest traditions; let us once more become deep-chested, sturdy, sharp-eyed men."[33] These images and ideals extended throughout the Zionist movement. The images in the *Maccabaean*, the American Zionist monthly magazine, were almost always of men or landscapes. Weak yeshiva students with poor posture would be replaced with suntanned young men who could be farmers and fighters.[34] As Daniel Boyarin has quipped, Zionism was, for Herzl and Freud, "a return to Phallustine."[35]

This masculine ideology did not mean that only men were Zionists: both men and women participated in Zionist writing, propaganda, organizing, fundraising, immigration, and settlement. Yet men were more visible both at the time and to later historians. Arthur Hertzberg's classic anthology *The Zionist Idea* collects the writings of thirty-seven important Zionists writing from the mid-nineteenth century to the founding of the State of Israel. All thirty-seven are men. From the United States to eastern Europe, many Zionists held up male thinkers and leaders while also emphasizing the healthy male body as the ideal.[36]

This male-centered story partly results from the fact that relatively few women wrote publicly about Zionist thought. But this scarcity is no accident. Women were actively excluded from the ranks of influencers by

Zionist men. The Federation of American Zionists (FAZ) wanted Hadassah to function as a place for middle-class women to fundraise, not to think or work independently. Historian Mary McCune writes, "Much of the FAZ leadership considered Hadassah a collection agency, a philanthropy, or, worst of all, an insignificant charity, despite the fact that raising funds and distributing them was precisely the role the men had planned for a national women's Zionist organization."[37] Henrietta Szold registered her frustration with this contradiction: "There has been constant criticism because [Hadassah] was not political enough, or because it was too political[;] either it didn't think or it thought too independently." It seemed that the FAZ wanted women "recruits" and their fundraising abilities but "not their minds," she reflected.[38] When historians write about Zionism, however, they need not follow suit. Even if there were fewer women writers, there were some, such as Sampter and her colleagues and friends Henrietta Szold, Lotta Levensohn, and Irma Levy Lindheim. Even if they weren't as widely read as the men, they surely contributed to Zionist discourse and education.

To include some of these women in the canon of Jewish thought, we might have to broaden our ideas of what counts as a thinker—perhaps by including what they wrote in letters, newsletters, or other Hadassah documents and not just books or essays on political ideas. We might even consider positions worked out together, such as the pacifism and politics in Szold and Sampter's correspondence. That Sampter was a woman made her look different from the most familiar Zionist thinkers, but that same fact could make Zionism look different to us.

In other ways, too, Sampter differed from the ideal Zionist. In Palestine many Zionists held ideals of collective living, especially in agriculturally based communities, and these social arrangements clearly valued able-bodied people. The kibbutz, kvutza, and moshav each represented communal ideals of working and living together. Originally, *kvutza* denoted a smaller settlement dedicated to farming, while a kibbutz was often a larger collective settlement that branched out from agriculture to include additional modes of production. Sampter wrote to her sister, "The difference between a kibbutz and a kvutza is that of an organization and its branches. . . . Givat Brenner [where she lived] is a kvutza or group of the kibbutz hameuhad [the United Kibbutz association]."[39] In practice, the labels were flexible, and in time many kvutzot eventually renamed themselves as kibbutzim. Moshavim had a similar ideology of communal living but usually included individual land allotments. All three, however, symbolized

the Zionist ideals of the strong working body "making the desert bloom," as the saying went.

In addition to able male bodies and agricultural production, Zionism also promoted Jewish reproduction. "In fulfilling her duty and privilege as a Hebrew mother cherishing the young generation and educating them . . . the Hebrew woman and mother continues the great tradition of the Israeli heroine," as Israeli Knesset proceedings would put it in the early years of the state.[40] Although this trend would become much more visible as the years went on—today we can see the pronatalist policies of the State of Israel as its descendants—the idea that Jewish women should populate Palestine by giving birth to baby Jews existed even in the early twentieth century.[41] Sampter, of course, did not.

Nor did Sampter's Zionism fit easily within the parameters of typical Zionist women's work. Maxa Nordau, Max Nordau's daughter, wrote, "Far from politics, they [the women workers of Palestine] accomplish their real feminine duty by helping the unhappy, the needy, the abandoned, and the children."[42] Nordau was typical in her gendered outlook. Hadassah, the women's Zionist organization, also pursued projects related to motherhood, infants, and early education. Sampter's friend and Hadassah's leader, Henrietta Szold, wrote, "Let us devote ourselves to motherhood work. Our first aim was 'The Healing Daughter of our People,' let our second aim be to make our land 'The Joyful Mother of Children.'"[43] Its social programs matched her rhetoric. For instance, Hadassah created Tipat Halav (A Drop of Milk) to teach mothers preventative medicine for keeping babies healthy. Later it became involved in other "women's work": school lunches, nutritive shopping, and table manners for youngsters. A Hadassah newsletter printed a letter from a Haifa Public Schools official: "Scores of girls—perhaps for the first time in their lives—saw a clean and dainty Jewish kitchen, food tasty and nourishing because it was prepared according to the rules of dietetics, and a table prettily set, all at a low cost."[44]

Scholars often discuss political and theological thought as if the authors had no bodies—or, indeed, sometimes as if people were nothing more than brains and autonomous wills. But Sampter's story refuses this kind of oversight. Moreover, paying attention to women—and especially to a disabled woman—is crucial to a fuller understanding of Zionism in particular. This is especially important because such a significant part of Zionist ideology is focused on the body. But if the vast majority of our histories of Zionism focus on men, how will we know about women's bodies and about women's experiences with the embodied norms promoted by Zionism? Many histo-

ries deal with *Muskeljudentum* (muscular Judaism), which focused largely though not exclusively on men, and little of that literature tells us about the embodied experiences of Zionists themselves. Some of it tells us such things as who took up gymnastics, but it rarely reflects on how the people who did experienced their bodies. Even less does it consider the embodied experiences of the Zionists who could not participate in that physical culture.

Sampter's body was not productive (in the sense of working the land), nor was it reproductive (in the sense of producing Jewish children). She didn't even dedicate most of her time to helping mothers and children and working on health issues, as many Hadassah nurses did, though she did take an active interest in the education of Yemenite Jews in Palestine. Sampter's embodied Zionism, then, was a queer one: it did not follow the gender norms prescribed for either the ideal (male) Zionist builder of the nation or the female Zionist nurturer of the nation.

On the Strange Time of This Book

Biography typically begins with a birth and unfolds chronologically. It tells the story of a person, offering a coherent narrative of her life—or more likely his life, since more than 70 percent of recent English-language biographies are about men.[45] As historian Ann Little explains, these narratives are often about "a heroic individual who bends history to his will," marching forward through time.[46] But who among us has a life that follows a single thread?

Writing Sampter's life retrospectively is inevitable; after all, she is dead. I knew the end before I began: I knew she would die in Palestine, a member of a kibbutz, and the parent of a Yemenite Jewish girl. The ability to see the many parts of a life simultaneously is part of the historian's curse. We can see sequence, but it is easy to mistake sequence for causation; knowing later events always colors how we see earlier events. But this simultaneous view can also be a blessing. Biographical writing still tends to be faithful to chronology, but it need not be. Is the best way to tell a life necessarily in a linear order, attending only to the passage of time as marked by the calendar? What if the person lived her life otherwise? What if time hurried and slowed, doubled back on itself, looped and leaped? What if, instead of clocks and calendars, we took cues from the way a body might experience or feel time?

Time, in this book, is less a time*line* than time loops and squiggles. It goes slowly and then quickly. This book marks time by matters of the

human body and not necessarily matters of the celestial bodies. Some of these markers, for Sampter, are before, after, and during illnesses: the disease of polio and then post-polio syndrome, which made polio again present and in that way was far more circular than its epithet *post* would lead us to believe; the missed time in hospital beds but also the rich, slow, artistically and intellectually generative time in those same beds.

Theorists of disability and queer theorists have argued that thinking more flexibly about time can help us think better about embodiment. Jack Halberstam discusses "queer time," a way of experiencing time that is not strictly structured by normative families and reproduction, and so its visions of the relationship of past and present to future can be radically different.[47] Queer time has "the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space."[48] José Esteban Muñoz writes, "Queerness should and could be about a desire for another way of being in both the world and time."[49] This queerness need not be limited to gay men and lesbians. "Queer refers to nonnormative logics and organization of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time," Halberstam explains, and so queer time can help us understand all sorts of social and embodied difference.[50]

If queer time is one alternative framework for understanding the time of our lives, then *crip time*—a phrase in which some disabled communities reclaim a short version of *crippled*—is another. Some scholars write about crip time by observing or assuming its existence without defining it; others talk about it in multiple ways.[51] But even when the term is not defined, the general sense is that crip time is extra time—it takes longer to get somewhere if one has a slower gait, if one has to search for an accessible entrance, if one depends on an attendant who is also running late, if one needs additional time to write an exam or read material. As Julia Watts Belser explains, "As a disabled person I spend a lot of time waiting for other people too: waiting for the bus, waiting for the wheelchair man, waiting for appointments, waiting for bureaucracy, just waiting."[52]

Other scholars suggest crip time is about being outside of time or excluded from it. Petra Kuppers calls these times of slowness, these moments of pain or immobility that overwhelm the possibility of "normal" physical activity, "moments out of time."[53] Joshua St. Pierre does something similar in his discussion of people who stutter: "The noninstrumental(izable) 'speaking speech' of the stutterer is cast out of time."[54] These metaphors of exclusion from time are fascinating and poetic, but in my view they miss the mark. Perhaps time haunts these moments of pain, immobility,

or stuttering. Perhaps it's *extra*-present. But these moments are not "out of time"—not for a disabled person, nor for the others with them.

What if crip time were more than extra time waiting for elevators, extra time for completing a college exam, "lost" time because of pain, or the time it takes for a stutterer to express himself in words? Paying attention to the abilities and disabilities of our bodies might lead us to think about time differently. When a boy with trachoma complained in the doctor's office, "It's terrible to wait so long! It's awf'ly annoying!" Jessie Sampter said to him that she found waiting interesting. There was "much to hear and see."[55] Belser explains her own experience: "The question of how you wait is something that I've come to understand differently in part from my religious practice. . . . What I *can* do sometimes is to transform the way I am experiencing the waiting."[56] But what might this transformed experience look like? Theorist Alison Kafer suggests one model: using the corporate idea of flex time as a reference point, she tells her readers, "Crip time is flex time not just expanded but exploded." She writes, "Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds."[57] But even in Kafer's description, time always moves forward, sometimes faster, sometimes slower, often with different attitudes and perceptions about the past and the future. Time seems to have only one direction.

Sampter's stories can push this idea of crip time further: it's not just a speeding up and a slowing down—though it is certainly those things. It's not just an adjustment of how we think about the past and the future, though it is that too. It is expanding these notions to see how time moves in many directions. In this vision, time is neither one-dimensional nor unidirectional but can move in several dimensions and directions. Here I think about crip time as something other than a one-way progression: the past intrudes into the present, the future shapes the present, and some moments cluster together while others recede. This view of crip time is not as radical as it may seem; in fact, it resonates with much of the language we use when we talk about recurring illness and pain. *Recurrence*, *relapse*, *remission*—these words suggest a return, even circularity, in the experiences of a body.

Crip time also reflects the way a researcher sees a life. Although this nonlinear, nonuniform time may seem odd to readers, it's far closer to the way historians and biographers encounter materials from the past. Biographers often take materials and construct a linear model. But that's not how they find materials. And, as Jessie Sampter has showed me, it's not the way their subjects always experienced life. Even the cohabitation of

her written materials collapses time: the dozens of boxes at the Central Zionist Archives refuse to heed chronology. Here is a brief and incomplete overview, just to give a sense of what you might experience if you went to look: a collection of essays from different years comes first, then an autobiographical novel from the 1930s, then more essays and clippings, then an autobiography from 1921, then Sampter's obituaries and others' reflections on her life, printed in 1938 and 1939, and later the letters she wrote her sister from 1919 until the end of her life.

Even these letters and essays themselves are shot through with recollections of her past selves. The first draft of "The Speaking Heart," for instance, first identified all the characters by their proper names. Later, Sampter took a black pen to the typewritten pages, crossed out these names, and replaced them with pseudonyms. Mary Antin became Sarah. For Josephine Lazarus: "I shall call her Judith."[58] She also changed, deleted, and added to the prose. Her neat handwriting would appear on each page, adjusting the precise way she told the story of her life. Later she added partial typewritten pages, neatly trimmed to the size of the text, never a whole page where six inches of paper were sufficient. And then another layer of sparse editing, this time in blue pen. Occasionally a new section was pasted over previous writing. Even published writings were not sacred: she sometimes scribbled deletions, additions, and adjustments on magazine and newspaper clippings of her articles and poems.[59] Writing a life was always also rewriting it. Each piece existed as a product of multiple times in her life.

Crip time, if we think about it hard enough, also informs the way we all live our lives. Time spent in pain seems to take forever. Sickness throws us back to childhood days of being cared for—or throws us forward into old age when we may require that care again. Even positive experiences of the body can bend time: most of us know how the smell of a certain food can bring childhood rushing back. The expectation of future things can overwhelm our present. The past recurs, the future intrudes, time slows, it speeds up, it circles back or jumps forward.

When I say that all people might see crip time in their own lives, I don't mean to say that everyone is disabled. But I am implying that disability is not some *thing* experienced by a separate group of people who are essentially different from a normal "us."

The way I write about disability frames it not as a given fact in the world but rather as an experience created through the built environment, relationships, and social norms. (Chapter 2 discusses the models for thinking about disability more fully.) Sidewalks without curb cuts or fire alarms

without visual signals create a disability for wheelchair users or Deaf people. Moreover, what we think of as a disability is culturally conditioned. For example, why is someone who uses a hearing aid often categorized as disabled when someone who uses eyeglasses isn't? Many people with disabilities affirm this social model and declare that there is nothing lesser about their lives and bodies—that they wouldn't change them if they could. Yet this does not apply to everyone with a disability, especially for those who consider chronic pain to be a disability. It is much harder to argue that physical pain is fully socially constructed, though it is surely exacerbated or eased by built environments and social norms. And people with chronic pain are far less likely to say that they wouldn't change their disability if they could. Sampter's life has both of these elements—a disability that is shaped by the world around her, as well as chronic pain. Each also shaped her sense of time.

I think of noncrip time as "regular" time: regularized, regulated, rule bound. Yes, there are good arguments for regular time. It is good to have a shared knowledge of when class begins. It is generally helpful if airplanes leave on time. But regular time often does not match our life experiences. Was time moving regularly the night your daughter was born? How does time move when you hear a song your mother loved? What is time like when you have insomnia? The philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote that the body "secretes time."[60] Time is not some wholly objective feature of the world—something we might learn from Einstein's theory of relativity or our own embodied sense of time's movement. Our bodies are not so regular, and so the time of our lives is not so regular either.

Unlike a traditional biography, this book does not begin at the beginning of Sampter's life, and it ends long after her death. In fact, it begins several times and suggests that any ending is not really the end. Sampter dies at the end of chapter 2 and again at the beginning of chapter 5. Her stories, here in this book, entwine and loop back on themselves, thwarting any expectations that lives follow a single, chronological path.

Chapter 1 tells Jessie Sampter's story as a story about religion. It considers Sampter's early years of religious experimentation and interest in theology, including her most significant early book, *The Seekers*. It contextualizes Sampter as part of a vibrant landscape of American religion and challenges the idea that people had one single religious identity to the exclusion of all others. People drew on many kinds of metaphysics as well

as ritual but did not think of themselves as engaging in a shallow "cafeteria approach" to religion.

Then the second chapter begins again. It tells Sampter's story as a story about disability, beginning with her childhood polio and moving to her adult body and body of thought. It bridges Sampter's years in the United States with those in Palestine and explores the relationship between Sampter's Zionism and her bodily experiences. She was, in her own eyes, both "a cripple" and a pioneer. She was a Zionist who could neither provide productive labor nor reproduce. Although the chapter is at times chronological, it also makes two intertwining moves: the first part uses disability studies to illuminate Sampter's story, and the second part shows how her story can speak back to disability studies.

The third chapter presents Sampter's life as a story about queer kinship and queer desire. Though she certainly wouldn't have used the term *queer* to describe herself, and it is an anachronism, the current theoretical concept of queerness helps interpret Sampter's embodied experience in a way that is both legible and relevant for our understanding of history. Like other women of her time, she left little direct evidence of her sexual practices, so we must remain agnostic about what happened when she and Leah Berlin lived together and shared a bed. Yet queerness is a helpful category precisely because it is not strictly limited to sexual practices but rather encompasses desire, gender, relation, and kinship.

The fourth chapter tells Sampter's story as a story about politics and theology. It explores what seem like a series of paradoxes: How could she simultaneously advocate for both nationalism and internationalism? How could she be a pacifist and support Jewish armed defense in Palestine? How could Zionism and democracy go together? And how could she make sense of the gendered ideals of her political movement and the reality of inequality?

The final chapter thinks about Sampter's various afterlives and considers the way things after her death shaped her life. Here time often runs backward: it intervenes in moments, it shapes narratives, and it makes a life, even though that life was over. Or was it? From her childhood, Sampter pondered human immortality, and she always held that human minds and bodies do not live on in any material sense. But she toyed with the idea that something of the spirit could be reborn. In her 1910 book, she wrote, "I, for one, believed, yes, knew, that I had been forever, that I was not 'made' in these few years. . . . If we believe in the vast Self of life, and if we are a part of that awakening Self, how can we die?"[61] That final chapter consid-

ers Sampter's various rebirths: as a suffering saint of labor Zionism (in the years following her death), as a children's poet and songwriter for Reform Jews in the United States (in the 1950s), and as a quotable philosopher appearing in Weight Watchers inspirational books, on websites, and on a road sign in India (in the 1990s); and as a figure who grew to be part of my own life.[62]

This book highlights what scholars already know but the form of our work does not always acknowledge: the worldview of the scholar shapes the data she interprets, and there is never only one true story. Sampter's stories refuse the idea that life-writing should be a single coherent whole or a continuous narrative and instead insists that this life—like all lives—has many threads, stops and starts, contradictions, and loops and should be written that way. Yet the book also shows how these stories intertwine: Sampter did not experience her disability as separate from her queerness or her religion, and so we, too, should see them as intertwined. To do so illuminates how Sampter's Zionism was a crip Zionism and, to a lesser extent, a queer one.

Notes

Introduction

1 In 1918 Henrietta Szold lamented that only three hundred copies of *A Course in Zionism* had been sold. Henrietta Szold to Jessie Sampter, April 18, 1918, box 30, folder 1, RG13 Executive Function Records, Henrietta Szold: Correspondence subseries: Associates and Friends, Hadassah Archives, American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), New York.

2 Lepore, "Historians Who Love," 133.

3 These are made-up examples, so as not to single out particular writers. Many books never return to that scene of self-disclosure; it appears in the introduction, never to be heard from again. They seem to assume that the relationship between the author and the work is either self-evident and so requires no explanation or unknowable and so makes explanation impossible.

4 I include just a few scholarly inspirations here. On bodily senses, see Neis, *Sense of Sight*; Nabhan-Warren, "Embodied Research and Writing"; and Weiner, *Religion Out Loud*. On affect, see Schaefer, *Religious Affects*; and Thandeka, *Learning to Be White*. For widely read authors on materiality, see Morgan, "Materiality"; and Keane, "Materiality of Religion." A brief but suggestive discussion also appears in Stewart Diakité and Hucks, "Africana Religious Studies."

5 Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 1.

6 Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 3.

7 Jacqueline Rose, "Who Do You Think You Are?," *London Review of Books*, May 5, 2016, http://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n09/jacqueline-rose/who-do-you-think-you-are.

8 Sampter, "Speaking Heart," 92a, May 25, 1921, Jessie Sampter Papers (A219), Central Zionist Archives (CZA), Jerusalem, Israel. (The "Speaking Heart" manuscript spans A219\11 and A219\12.)

9 She landed in the United States on November 3, 1925. Her arrival made the *Bnai Brith Messenger*, November 27, 1925, 3.

10 Sampter, "In the Beginning," 139. A219\3, CZA.
11 Jessie Sampter to Elvie Wachenheim (henceforth JS to EW), May 24, 1920, A219, CZA. All citations of correspondence between Jessie and Elvie are from A219, CZA.
12 Eiesland, *Disabled God*, 22.
13 Eiesland, *Disabled God*, 31.
14 Yuknavitch, *Book of Joan*, 101.
15 Yuknavitch, *Book of Joan*, 101.
16 For more on the tendency to view those with disabilities as "inspirations," see Stella Young, "We're Not Here for Your Inspiration," *The Drum*, *ABC News*, July 3, 2012, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-07-03/young-inspiration-porn/4107006.
17 Judith Butler, "A 'Bad Writer' Bites Back," *New York Times*, March 20, 1999.
18 For more on gender in the archive, see Scott, *Feminism and History*; Smith, *Gender of History*; and Lerner, "Women's History Sources."
19 JS to EW, January 23, 1930.
20 JS to EW, Edgar Wachenheim, and "kiddies," October 1, 1919.
21 JS to EW, March 12, 1920.
22 Sampter, "Speaking Heart," 247.
23 See, for example, Ahad Ha'am, "An Open Letter to My Brethren in the Spirit," 1891, Jewish Virtual Library, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/quot-an-open-letter-to-my-bretheren-in-the-spirit-quot-ahad-ha-am.
24 Urofsky, *American Zionism*, 344, 40.
25 Quoted in de Haas, *Louis Dembitz Brandeis*, 163.
26 Isaac Mayer Wise, editorial, *American Israelite*, July 4, 1882.
27 N. Cohen, "*Maccabaean*'s Message," 163; and the cover image of *Maccabaean* 32, no. 5 (May 1919).
28 Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 273–74; and Imhoff, *Masculinity*, 181–82.
29 Both of these lines of thinking about Jewish bodies and the Zionist project can be seen in Nordau, "Physical Intellectual and Economical Amelioration." This article, in particular the discussion of a statistical survey of the Jews, is one example of how some Zionists attempted to apply the era's ideals of "scientific rationality" to their national mission. This discourse did not originate in Zionism but rather was part of a wider context in the fin de siècle in which many scholars believed science proved empirical truths about races and nations.
30 Quoted in Margalit, "Social and Intellectual Origins," 153.
31 Quoted in Weiss, *Chosen Body*, 2.
32 Weiss, *Chosen Body*.
33 Nordau, "Muscular Judaism," 435.
34 Shapira, *ha-Halikha 'al kav ha-ofek*, 28.
35 Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 222.
36 On the United States, see Imhoff, *Masculinity*, 180–98. On Europe, see Presner, *Muscular Judaism*; and Stanislawski, *Zionism*, 93–96, 107–8.
37 McCune, *Whole Wide World*, 38.

38 Quoted in McCune, *Whole Wide World*, 39. *Proceedings and Speeches at the 14th Convention*, p. 4, RG 3, box 6, folder 2, Hadassah Archives, AJHS.
39 JS to EW, November 7, 1933.
40 Divrei HaKnesset, 9:2004, quoted in Berkovitch, "Motherhood," 611.
41 Rosenberg-Friedman, "David Ben-Gurion"; and Presner, "Clear Heads."
42 Maxa Nordau, "Pioneer Types: The Women Workers of Palestine," *New Palestine*, October 15, 1926, 203, quoted in Simmons, "Playgrounds and Penny Lunches," 285.
43 Szold, "Palestine Realities: A Letter from Palestine to Hadassah," *New Palestine*, March 10, 1922, 147.
44 Z. Carmi, "Penny Lunches in Palestine: Letter Sent to Miss Sophia Berger by Z. Carmi of the Public Schools of Haifa," *Hadassah Newsletter*, November–December 1927, 9, quoted in Simmons, "Playgrounds and Penny Lunches," 278.
45 Andrew Kahn and Rebecca Onion, "Is History Written about Men, by Men?," *Slate*, January 6, 2016, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2016/01/popular_history_why_are_so_many_history_books_about_men_by_men.html.
46 Little, *Many Captivities*, 9.
47 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 3. On the flexibility of time, see also Edelman, *No Future*; and Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.
48 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 3.
49 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 96.
50 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 7. Jasbir Puar has also considered time in relation to queerness in *Terrorist Assemblages*, xxv–xxx.
51 Zola, "Language of Disability"; and Gill, "Disability Culture." Also, Ellen Samuels frames it six different ways in "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time."
52 Belser, interviewed in "Crip Time: Finding Your Own Rhythm," *Guide Gods Digital Collection*, accessed September 15, 2019, http://www.clairecunningham.co.uk/guide-gods-digital-collection/beautiful-disabilities/.
53 Kuppers, "Crip Time," 29.
54 St. Pierre, "Distending Straight-Masculine Time," 56. St. Pierre defines *straight-masculine time* as follows: "This judgment of his temporality as abnormal or deficient is structured by what I term the straight-masculine time order: a future-directed linearity abstracted from the flux of bodily time," 50.
55 Sampter, "Three Hours," 10.
56 Belser, interviewed in "Crip Time."
57 Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 27.
58 Sampter, "Speaking Heart," 76.
59 See, for example, some of the things in A219\5, CZA.
60 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 249.
61 Sampter, *Seekers*, 79.
62 Margaret Doniger to Rose Jacobs, January 25, 1939, F32\39\1, "Hadassah: Jessie Sampter Material."