

Hannah Senesh Her Life and Diary. The First Complete Edition.
Foreword by Marge Piercy, preface by Eitan Senesh.
Jewish Lights Publishing 2004.

There is hardly a Jew alive who does not know the story of Hannah Senesh, the brave allied parachutist captured by the Nazis behind enemy lines and subsequently executed, but there are far fewer who are aware of the detail of the rest of her tragically foreshortened life, her family and other relationships, her espousal of Zionism and emigration to Israel.

This edition of Senesh's diary, complete for the first time and accompanied by a large number of hitherto unpublished letters, paints a vivid picture of a remarkable, brave and resilient young woman. Some of the diary entries are mundane, others dramatic, not least the transcript of her address in February 1939 to a meeting of the local Bible Society entitled Roots of Zionism or the Fundamentals of Zionism in which she argues the case for the philosophy and practical endeavours of Zionism with clarity and passion.

For me the most moving parts of the book were the two memoirs by Hannah's mother Catherine, the first of her childhood, the second of their meeting in Budapest after Hannah's capture and of how her mother heard about her execution. There are also two statements by fellow partisans of the facts of Hannah's mission and her death, and a selection of her poems.

This is a wonderful memoir of one of the most courageous of Jewish heroines, as well as a further reminder of the horrors of Nazism and its genocidal madness.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh