

Galveston and Palestine: Immigration and Ideology in the Early Twentieth Century

Gur Alroey

Introduction

The mass Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe, lasting from the 1870s to the mid-1920s, brought about a genuine change in Jewish life. Some 2.5 million Jews left their countries of origin during this period. The peak years of Jewish emigration were from 1899 to 1914, when 1.7 million Jews emigrated — about 70 percent of those who left during the aforementioned period. Almost half of these Jews migrated between 1904 and 1908. The vast majority went to the United States; others debarked in Argentina, Canada, Palestine, South Africa, and Australia. Thus, the story of this Jewish migration takes place between the turn of the century and World War I.

The emigration of hundreds of thousands of East European Jews emptied the shtetls of their Jewish inhabitants and, consequently, elicited growing interest in migration westward. At the height of this mass migration, the phenomenon commanded public attention among the eastern Jewish society and elicited a broad, in-depth debate revolving around two main questions: whether to emigrate and where to go. One may say without a trace of exaggeration that virtually everyone in Eastern European Jewish society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries wrestled with at least one of these questions in one way or another.

The answers of hundreds of thousands of Jewish migrants to each of the questions produced, within just five decades, one of the most important and quietest revolutions in Jewish history. It was a revolution because the decision to emigrate engendered a fundamental, radical change in all Jewish ways of life; it was quiet because its instigators were ordinary East European Jews who, by making a subjective decision that was multiplied hundreds of thousands of times over, altered their own fate and that of the entire Jewish people.

Furthermore, unlike bloody revolutions led by people who sweep the masses in their wake, this silent revolution was not prompted by leaders of a migrants' "camp" who blazed the trail for others. In our case, it was the individual migrants who spearheaded and ultimately carried out this historic act of mass Jewish migration.

However, various organizations and individuals made several attempts to alter the dynamics of the migration during the period of mass emigration from Eastern Europe, redirecting it from the cities on the American East Coast to other countries overseas. The most salient attempt was that of the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA), founded by Baron Maurice de Hirsch in 1891.¹ Under ICA auspices East European Jews were sent to Argentina in an orderly, organized fashion, beginning in the 1890s. Although the Zionist movement also attempted to channel Jewish migration, it never sent organized settlement groups to Palestine in an orderly manner. For the most part, Zionist migrants were associated with local initiatives and groupings in Eastern Europe that had the blessing of the local and general Zionist leadership. Nevertheless, the speeches and writings of Zionist leaders across the spectrum of their movement show — as explained below — that attempts were made to deliver a selective immigrant population to Palestine, one capable of building the land and settling in it. The Galveston Plan was another attempt of the Jewish Territorialism Organization (ITO) and the Jewish banker Jacob Schiff to intervene in the course of Jewish migration. Its main idea was to divert the flow of Jewish immigration from the poor, congested cities of the American East Coast to sparsely populated towns in the western United States, via the port of Galveston, Texas.²

Most Jewish migrants were not involved in any of the three initiatives, which collectively had a minimal effect on the total migration. Only a small minority chose to migrate under the auspices of the three organizations. This article will focus on this small group and make a comparison between those who came to Palestine and



Jacob Schiff
(Courtesy American
Jewish Archives)

those who landed in Galveston's port at the beginning of twentieth century. Thus, the aim of this paper is threefold: first, a focus on the migration policies which characterize the immigrants to Palestine and Galveston; second, an exploration of the demographic composition of the Jewish immigrants who debarked in Galveston between 1907 and 1914 compared to the composition of immigration to Palestine during the same years; third, since both cases — the Zionist and the “Galvestonian” — involved attempts to deliver a productive population of immigrants capable of self-sufficiency to the destination countries, a determination about which of the two was more successful. Before making this comparison, however, an examination of the migration policies of each movement as they took shape during the mass-migration period in the early twentieth century is prudent.

Shaping the Immigration Policy: Galveston

The Galveston Plan was the product of a convergence of interests between the president of the ITO, Israel Zangwill, who at the time was pursuing diplomatic contacts with various countries for the purchase of a piece of land, and the Jewish banker Jacob Schiff, who was gravely concerned by the concentration of Jewish immigrants in New York.³

Since the early nineteenth century, New York had been attracting a diverse population from all over the world due to its economic advantages and potential. The city had become a modern Tower of Babel, with millions of people of different nationalities intermingling and coexisting on an island no larger than 57 square kilometers. East European Jews started coming in large numbers in the 1870s, fleeing economic hardship and political persecution in their countries of origin. Their population in the city climbed from year to year — from sixty-thousand in 1880 to six hundred and seventy-two thousand in 1905, and approximately 1.3 million around the time of World War I (estimates). The vast majority of the immigrants lived on the Lower East Side



Israel Zangwill
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

of Manhattan, an area that soon became poverty stricken, congested, and crime ridden.⁴

The fears from the poor living conditions of Jewish immigrants and the concern that the U.S. government was going to close the gates brought several prominent American Jews, including Jacob Schiff, to try to solve the distress of the Jews on the East Coast. The Industrial Removal Office (IRO) was founded in January 1901 with the aim of reducing the number of immigrants in New York and the other large cities on the East Coast by sending them to inland towns, where jobs were more plentiful and varied.⁵ By 1905 some forty thousand Jews had left New York with the help of the IRO and at its expense. Then, however, the huge wave of immigration of the early twentieth century began, bringing hundreds of thousands Jews to the United States, the vast majority of whom settled in New York.

As living conditions for Jewish immigrants on the East Coast deteriorated, Schiff reached the conclusion that the diversion of immigration to inland towns in the American West should take place in the immigrants' countries of origin, i.e., before they reached New York. On this point there was agreement between Zangwill, who was searching for land for Jewish settlement, and Schiff. Both men were aware of the Jews' plight. Zangwill was alert to the economic hardship and persecution in Eastern Europe; Schiff knew about the poverty and unbearable living conditions that beset Jewish immigrants in the East Coast American cities. The bleak situation led Zangwill and Schiff to cooperate in a venture that lasted until the outbreak of World War I.

Nevertheless, in spite of the cooperation between



Rabbi Cohen of Galveston meets with new immigrants.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

Zangwill and Schiff, each saw completely different purposes for the Galveston Plan. For Schiff, the Galveston Plan was only philanthropy assistance to the East European immigrant Jews in the United States. For the president of the territorialist organization, the immigration to Galveston was much more than that. As a former Zionist and one of Herzl's closest associates, Zangwill understood the potential of this plan — to create an autonomous territory for the Jewish people in the West. In 1910 Zangwill explained the importance of this plan:

Every Galveston emigrant therefore will have the *mitzvah* not only of preventing the closing of our present land of refuge but of opening up new places of refuge to our brethren. Every man who sails to Galveston and settles successfully in the town indicated by our committee is adding to its Jewish population and paving the way for those who will follow him. In this way a home will be ready for our people in case of new historic calamities in the lands of our Goluth ... Only a land already half developed like Western America, holds the possibility of receiving and supporting vast numbers of immigrants, and provides by the ever-increasing development of its railway, towns and agriculture, sufficiently profitable opportunities for industry and investment.⁶

The purpose of the Galveston Plan, in Zangwill's view, was to establish a home for the Jewish people in the American West. The first to come would pave the way for their successors, and by settling in this undeveloped area they would establish a refuge for their persecuted brethren.

To carry out the Galveston Plan, three information bureaus were established: one in Kiev, in charge of recruiting emigrants and sending them to the port of departure; a second in Bremen, Germany (the port of departure for Galveston), for which the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden (Relief Organization of German Jews), under the supervision of Dr. Paul Nathan, was responsible; and the third at Galveston port itself, in charge of dispersing newcomers to other locations.⁷ Each bureau handled one phase of the program and Zangwill, from his residence in London, along with Schiff in the United States, supervised the process as a whole. Zangwill described the emigration process as unprecedented in Jewish history; it began, he said, “in countries in which Jews were persecuted, continued in Germany under the auspices

of the Hilfsverein, and ended in Galveston and the other cities in the western United States.”⁸

Only the bureau in Kiev was under the direct supervision of the ITO. The other offices reported to their immediate supervisors — the Bremen bureau to Paul Nathan and the Galveston bureau to Jacob Schiff. The Kiev bureau (the Jewish Emigration Company) was headed by its president, Max Mandelstamm, and its secretary, David Jochelmann. They had agents — nearly one hundred in 1912 — throughout the Pale of Settlement. The main job of this bureau was to recruit emigrants who were deemed suitable, i.e., capable of integrating into western American towns with relative ease. Consequently, fairly stringent acceptance standards were set:

The emigrant must not be over 40 years of age. If married, the emigrant, his wife and children must be strong and healthy, and able to satisfy all the requirements of the Immigration Laws of the U.S.A. The emigrant must pay his own fare from Bremen to Galveston which is 41 dollars. The emigrant must be ... a strong labourer [...]. The intending emigrant should clearly understand that economic conditions everywhere in the United States are such that strict Sabbath observance is exceedingly difficult, in many cases almost impossible.⁹

Women were not allowed to immigrate on their own: “No unmarried female or child of either sex under the age of sixteen who is unaccompanied by a parent or married relative will be admitted.” Married women who wished to immigrate had to prove that “they are travelling at the invitation of their husbands who are already settled in America.”¹⁰

After the admission requirements were determined, the ITO information bureau in Kiev started carrying out the plan. Its agents fanned out in the Pale of Settlement to persuade potential emigrants that west was better than east. Recruiting them was extremely difficult. Nevertheless, within about seven years, the ITO managed to enlist eight thousand people and send them to the port of Galveston, Texas.

Shaping the Immigration Policy: Palestine

The Zionist movement’s policy about the quality of immigrants needed to settle Palestine was no different from that phrased by the authors of the Galveston Plan. In the early 1880s, the leader of the Hibbat Tsiyyon movement, Moshe Leib Lilienblum, stated, “If we are

encouraging [Jews] to settle [Palestine], we have only the rich in mind, those who can buy estates for themselves and prepare all the equipment they need at their own expense. There is no place for the poor in Palestine.”¹¹ When the influx of immigrants to Palestine increased at the beginning of the twentieth century, the leaders of the Yishuv (the organized Jewish community of the pre-state of Israel) stepped up their efforts to lure productive immigrants who would be able to support themselves.

The personalities who had the greatest influence on migration to Palestine were Menahem Sheinkin and Arthur Ruppin. Sheinkin was a representative of the Odessa Committee of Hibbat Tsiyyon in Palestine and the head of the information bureau for Jewish migrants in Palestine that had been established in 1905.¹² Ruppin headed the Palestine Office of the Zionist Organization and was an agent of the Organization in Palestine starting in 1908. In this capacity, Ruppin answered the queries of potential immigrants who expressed their interest in immigrating to Palestine and advised them about whether they should make the move or stay in Eastern Europe for the time being. Sheinkin and Ruppin did not coordinate their efforts, and relations between them were sometimes strained.¹³ Both agreed, however, that in the first stage the immigrants who should come to Palestine were those with means. Only such immigrants could establish a broad economic infrastructure that would facilitate the absorption of the poor and lower-middle-class immigrants who would follow. This policy was predicated on the realization that Palestine was too poor to absorb destitute immigrants.¹⁴ Palestine, they said, was not a country of refuge for persecuted Jews and could not receive unfit immigrants. Accordingly, the natural destination of Jewish migrants, they claimed, should be not Palestine but the United States.¹⁵

As soon as it was established in 1905, the information bureau in Jaffa began to place advertisements urging only immigrants of means to come to Palestine:

The current situation in [Palestine] is such that new immigrants without means have no hope of getting by. The other type of person, who can come without asking any prior questions, is one who has wealth, great or even small. For them, conditions in Palestine are excellent, even if they are not expert in any particular occupation.

The well-off can establish themselves nicely in both towns and colonies.... The more moneyed people come to [Palestine], the broader a base for labor there will be for the many laborers who are already here.... The current situation requires a larger influx of people with means than of those who lack means, and it allows the affluent to find a broad base for various business enterprises, all of which prove fruitful for their owners.¹⁶

Reports in the contemporaneous press are not the only source of information about the Zionist movement's immigration policy. Each year the information bureau in Jaffa and the Palestine Office received thousands of letters from potential immigrants to Palestine. Sheinkin's and Ruppin's replies to these inquiries give evidence of their efforts to thwart indiscriminate mass immigration. Several examples follow:

Dear Mr. S. Weisfeld: In response to your letter, we write the following: a young man with a wife, a child, and little money cannot come to Palestine and accomplish anything with 200 silver rubles. He will not be able to sustain his family on the daily wage of a worker in a moshava [farming village] (50 kopeks per day). With felicitations from Zion, M. Sheinkin.¹⁷

"Expert blacksmiths and makers of horseshoes," Arthur Ruppin wrote in response to one of the many inquiries that he received, "may find work that will support them. Thus, we tend to reply to unmarried blacksmiths that they can come: they are not burdened with a family and can move from place to place in search of work until they actually find it. However, we cannot answer in the affirmative to heads of household who have to start making a living at once."¹⁸ In response to an inquiry from Abraham Persov of Chernigov province, who wished to find a teaching position in Palestine, Ruppin wrote, "The work is irregular and since you have a household, it is difficult to hope that you will be able to make a decent living."¹⁹

Analysis of Sheinkin and Ruppin's replies shows that 61 percent of inquiries were turned down categorically with a recommendation not to come to Palestine. Some 18 percent of correspondents were advised to come, check out the country, and then decide. Only 21 percent were told explicitly that they should come and settle. Examining the correspondence between the inquirer's wealth and the information

bureau's reply, we find that the wealthier the inquirers were, the lower the percent of rejections.²⁰

The policy of preferring immigrants who could support themselves respectably remained in effect until World War I. In 1913, Sheinkin and Ruppin still adhered to the view that Palestine needed healthy immigrants who could afford to establish themselves. If other types of immigrants were to come, the entire Zionist enterprise would be in jeopardy. All of us, said Sheinkin, have one ambition, intention, and goal:

To build up and improve [the country] by bringing in a larger number of healthy, solid elements who can afford to establish themselves, make a living, and generate life. We also know, by the same token, that the Yishuv and our work in general will be in great danger if undesirable elements, i.e., those who cannot possibly make do here, come here to settle on the basis of our advice and instruction. When they return to their countries of origin, they will be able to destroy in a moment everything that we can build over much time. It is easier, of course, to destroy than to build and rebuild.²¹

In view of the similarity between the two immigration policies and the attempts by Israel Zangwill and Zionist movement leaders to attract productive immigrants to each of the destinations — the American West and Palestine — we must compare the Zionist movement to the Territorialist movement, which as stated, was in charge of recruiting emigrants and sending them to Galveston port. Since the two movements were coterminous, operated in the same countries of origin, and wished to attract affluent emigrants, it is appropriate to examine which of them performed its mission more successfully.

The Demographic Composition of the Immigrants to Galveston and Palestine

The following demographic analysis of immigrants who reached the United States under the Galveston Plan and Palestine under the auspices of the Zionist movement is based mainly on the files of the ITO information bureaus and the Zionist movement at the Central Zionist Archives in Israel. In the case of immigration to Galveston, the ITO division of the Zionist Archives has a catalogue with the names of some five thousand Jewish immigrants who debarked at Galveston port from 1910 to 1914. The catalogue shows the exact number of

emigrants who reached the United States as part of this plan and their gender, age, family status, number of children (if any), occupation, town of origin, and intended town of destination.²² The catalogue has no data on the first years of immigration to Galveston (1907–1909). In 1910, however, the ITO released statistics about this immigration in its initial years.²³ In the same year, demographer and economist Jacob Lestchinsky published a comprehensive statistical article about Jewish immigration to Galveston.²⁴ The combination of official ITO data, Lestchinsky’s article, and the database of Galveston immigrants that was generated from the catalogue provides a credible rendering of the demographic complexion of Jewish immigration to Galveston from 1907 to 1914.

The Odessa Committee information bureau, seated in Odessa, and the official journal of the Zionist Organization, *Ha-'Olam* released statistical data on immigration to Palestine.²⁵ In the 1905–1914 period, clerks at the information bureau registered almost all emigrants who departed for Palestine from the port of Odessa. The published statistical data tell us about the socio-demographic composition of Jewish immigrants to Palestine in the early twentieth century, much as the catalogue informs us about the composition of immigration to Galveston.

Table 1. *Immigration to Galveston and Palestine in the Early Twentieth Century*²⁶

Year	Number of Immigrants to Galveston	Immigration to Palestine from Odessa Port
1905	—	1,230
1906	—	3,450
1907	—	1,750
1908	—	2,097
1907-1909	2,349	2,459
1910	466	1,979
1911	370	2,326
1912	514	2,430
1913	2,664	3,050
1914	995	2,182
Total	7,358	Total 22,953

From the beginning of the twentieth century until the outbreak of World War I, three times as many Jews moved to Palestine as to Galveston. It should be borne in mind, however, that the Galveston Plan did not become operational until 1907 and the available data about immigration to Palestine cover the previous two years. However, even excluding the years 1905–1906, there was more immigration to Palestine than to Galveston. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the differences in the number of emigrants, there is a perceptible correspondence in 1911–1914 in the increase or decrease in immigration to each destination. In both cases, 1913 was a year of relatively large-scale immigration.

Table 2. *Immigrants to Galveston, Palestine, and Ellis Island, by Gender*

	Galveston	Pct	Palestine	Pct.	Ellis Island	Pct.
Men	5,925	77	13,805	60	832,000	55
Women	1,748	23	9,148	40	654,000	45
Total	7,673	100	22,953	100	1,486,000	100

The ratio of men to women among those who sailed to Galveston port with facilitation by the ITO between 1907 and 1914 was 77:23, on average. Women accounted for almost twice the share of immigrants to Palestine. When comparing immigration to Galveston and to Palestine and Ellis Island, it becomes clear that the demographic makeup of immigrants to Palestine most strongly resembles that of Jewish immigrants to Ellis Island.²⁷ The differences in the distribution of immigrants by gender indicate that hardly any families with children reached Galveston, whereas immigration to Palestine and Ellis Island was largely a family affair. Table 3, which describes the distribution of immigrants by age cohorts, supports this claim.

Table 3. *Immigrants to Galveston, Palestine, and Ellis Island, by Age*

	Galveston	Pct.	Palestine	Pct.	Ellis Island	Pct.
Up to 14-15	993	14	5,422	25	362,000	24
14-15 to 44-50	5,866	80	11,588	53	1,037,000	70
44-50+	493	6	4,644	22	87,000	6
Total	7,352	100	21,654	100	1,486,000	100

The data in Table 3 reinforce the assertion that Jewish immigration to Galveston was chiefly an endeavor for young people in their physical prime. Unlike immigrants to Palestine and Ellis Island, only 14 percent of immigrants to Galveston were children up to age fourteen. Such a small proportion of children indicates that immigration to Galveston was not undertaken within a family framework. By analyzing the 14–44 age cohort of immigrants to Galveston, we find that 20 percent of members of the cohort were aged 15–19, 40 percent were in their twenties (20–29), and 20 percent were aged 30–39. Only 6 percent of immigrants who reached Galveston port were more than forty-four years of age.

The percent of children among immigrants to New York and Palestine was much higher. About one-fourth of these immigrants were children up to 14–15 years of age. If we assume that members of this age group arrived with family members, it's possible to state that immigration to Palestine and Ellis Island was foremost a family enterprise. Much like the data in Table 2, Table 3 indicates that characteristics of immigration to Palestine more strongly resembled those of general Jewish immigration to the United States than to Galveston. The significant difference between Palestine and the American destinations was in the population of older immigrants, those over the age of forty-four. The share of the “elderly,” as defined, was four times greater among immigrants to Palestine than among immigrants to Galveston and Ellis Island. The main reason is that Palestine attracted a population of immigrants who wished only to die and be buried in the Holy Land. Furthermore, people in this age group regarded the United States as a country that would subject Jewish immigrants to cultural decline and Palestine as a place where they might more easily practice the Jewish faith.²⁸ Thus, half of the immigrants to Palestine were children or the “elderly.”

Table 4: *Immigrants to Galveston, by Occupation (4,029)*²⁹

Occupation: men	Galveston	Pct.	Palestine	Pct.
Artisans	2,658	82	3,567	7
Merchants	475	14	2,977	35
Liberal professions	120	4	1,579	18
Total	3,253	100	8,123	100
Occupation: women	Galveston	Pct.	Palestine	Pct.
Seamstresses	302	38	—	—
Misc. crafts	100	12	—	—
No occupation	374	48	—	—
Total	776	100	—	—

Table 4 shows that the large majority of male “Galvestonian” immigrants were artisans. Within this group most of the artisans were, in declining order, cobblers, tailors, carpenters, and metalworkers. About 15 percent were merchants and only 3 percent practiced liberal professions. Among women immigrants who reached Galveston, the picture was slightly different. About half of adult women immigrants had no occupation; most were married and had reached the U.S. with their husbands or joined their husbands in one of the Western American towns. About 40 percent of the women were seamstresses; the rest practiced miscellaneous crafts. The occupational distribution of immigrants to Palestine was totally different. Some 47 percent of men were artisans, laborers, and farm workers. The available data does not allow historians to isolate the population of artisans and compare it with that of artisans who reached Galveston, but obviously the share of such people among immigrants to Palestine was much lower. The proportion of liberal professionals who reached Palestine was five times greater and that of petty merchants was two and a half times greater. The statistics from the Odessa information bureau do not allow for inference of anything about the composition of women immigrants who, as stated, accounted for an estimated 40 percent of the total immigrant population.

The Failed Galveston Plan

Although the Zionist movement and the originators of the Galveston Plan pursued similar policies in regard to the desired type of emigrant, the emigrants who reached Palestine did not resemble those who reached Galveston. The flow of migration to Palestine in the early twentieth century did not correspond to the Zionist immigration policy. The main reason was that Ruppin and Sheinkin were neither authorized nor able to determine who would pass through the portals of Palestine. Their entreaties to applicants to weigh their decision to move to Palestine were no more than recommendations; immigrants rushed to Palestine as soon as their lives in Russia were imperiled.

Many articles in the contemporaneous press, as well as letters by Sheinkin to the heads of the Zionist Organization, described newly landed immigrants with great concern and in bleak colors. “The Russian ships have begun to arrive in succession as before, now that the seamen’s strike in Odessa has ended,” the newspaper *Ha-Zeman* reported:

New immigrants are arriving, many from the provinces of Poland.... Poverty among the immigrants has risen greatly, children have eye diseases, and the [immigrants] have no source of support and assistance. The past two months in particular, those of late summer, are the most difficult for new people with families. A soup kitchen for impoverished migrants opened up this week. It is able to serve meals to fifty immigrants for the time being.³⁰

Sheinkin wrote the following to Otto Warburg, a member of the small executive council of the Zionist Organization:

Until you directors make an effort to attract several millions in capital to Palestine, we will remain nil. Our positions will not be strengthened by means of the poor who are coming to Palestine on their own. On the contrary, I must state that such immigration is subjecting us to greater and greater disgrace in the eyes of officials and ordinary people with each passing day. They observe bitterly poor people, dejected and ragged, clutching bundles of rags, the dregs of the nation who are unfit to bring benefit to the country, and are getting accustomed to making light of our dignity. Unless affluent, dignified, well-dressed, and attractive people also begin to come, the name “Jew” in the port jargon will become synonymous for the weak, the poor, the lowly, and the contemptuous, and this view will pass from there to the rest of the

people. This is the naked truth that I must bring to your attention due to my position at the information bureau, and I can present you with reports like these each and every week. Everything is standing still. Nothing is changing and [nothing] will change until moneyed [people] come to Palestine.³¹

Thus, the immigrant population that reached Palestine in the early twentieth century was totally different from the image of those young people who came to build the country and to be built by it. In the Galveston case, by contrast, the ITO seems to have managed to apply its selective policy. Therefore, the immigrants to Galveston were of higher quality than the “dejected,” “bitterly poor” and “ragged ... dregs of the nation” who landed in Palestine in the early twentieth century. They were certainly cut of better cloth than those who reached New York during those years.³² In view of Sheinkin’s and Ruppin’s derogatory references to the immigrants who reached Palestine, and even though fewer emigrants were sent to Galveston than came to Palestine, it seems very likely that both would have preferred the quality of the Galveston emigrants to the quantity of those drawn to Palestine.

The ITO’s struggle with the Zionist movement, however, concerned more than the recruitment of better and more productive emigrants. Its tough terms of acceptance were meant to assure the immigrants’ full integration in the American West. The struggle was mainly ideological. In contrast to the Zionist movement, the Jewish Territorial Organization was altogether unwilling to place the entire fate of the Jewish people in a single piece of territory that might well never be acquired. In his many speeches, Zangwill frequently noted, “The most important matter, under present circumstances, is the saving and revivifying of our people and our culture, and that the land exists for people and not the people for a land.”³³

It is in view of this attitude and Zangwill’s ceaseless attempts to look for a piece of land for the Jewish people that his enlistment in Jacob Schiff’s initiative should be considered. For the president of the territorialist organization, immigration to Galveston was much more than philanthropic assistance for East European Jews. As a former Zionist and one of Herzl’s closest associates, Zangwill understood the intrinsic potential of this plan. Here, however, in contrast to

his behavior in regard to other territorialist initiatives that he had promoted, Zangwill abstained from stating his goals explicitly. American immigration law barred immigrants who belonged to ideological and, a *fortiori*, national movements. Any utterance of a national nature would suspend a cloud over the Galveston Plan, subject it to unneeded difficulties, and might even endanger it. However, one could not expect the president of the ITO to abandon his national ideas and promote an immigration scheme that aimed only to ease the suffering of the immigrant population in the cities on the East Coast. Israel Zangwill, unlike Jacob Schiff, regarded immigration to the American West as an opportunity to establish a present and future home for wandering Jews.

The Galveston scheme, to Zangwill, was not intended to ease the suffering of Jewish immigrants in Manhattan. Thus, we may understand why the composition of the Galveston emigrants was totally different from that of immigrants who reached Ellis Island. The purpose of sending young and able-bodied immigrants to the American West was to fulfill Zangwill's covert aspirations and not to solve the congestion and housing shortages that typified the cities of the East Coast. The problem in New York was not childless young people in their twenties and thirties, but families who, burdened with child-raising responsibilities, had little chance of finding a respectable source of livelihood.

From this perspective, examination of Jacob Schiff's approach to the national ideas of the president of the Jewish Territorial Organization is of particular interest. A few months before the Galveston Plan was launched, Schiff correctly understood Zangwill's hidden intentions and his desire to exploit the immigration to Galveston in order to promote his own national objectives. "I am very clear in my mind," Schiff wrote to Judge Saltzberger in December 1906, "that when immigrants arrive here, they must cease to be under the protectorate of the ITO or any other society or individual."³⁴ Schiff needed Zangwill solely for the recruitment of immigrants in Eastern Europe and their dispatch to the West Coast. Nothing more. The power of the absorber, in Schiff's understanding, was far greater than that of the sender. Consequently, he perceived no cause for concern.

And, indeed, Schiff's prediction was fully realized. As soon as the Galveston immigrants dispersed to various cities in the western United States, Schiff's people made every effort to integrate them into the local communities. This concept was clearly articulated by Jacob Billikopf, who absorbed some of the Galveston immigrants in Kansas City:

The process of Americanizing, of normalizing the Jewish immigrant begins when he embarks for America. The moment that immigrant enters our night schools, and acquires the rudiment of the English language; the moment he acquires a little competence; the moment he sends his children to school; the moment his boys go to the high school or university, which privileges were denied him and his children in his own country ... that moment all his radicalism evaporates and he becomes a full-fledged and law-abiding member of the community.³⁵

The difference between migration to Galveston and to Palestine, if so, should be sought not in demographic composition or the immigration policies alone, but also in the dynamic that developed between the host society and the recently landed immigrants, who were eager to integrate. Here lies the main difference between the Galveston emigrants and those who reached Palestine in the early twentieth century. In the Galveston Plan — as viewed by Israel Zangwill — it was not enough to create cities of refuge for persecuted Jews in the American West. In addition to the idea, a large measure of territorialist action in the intended country was needed. No such action took place in the western U.S., but a national endeavor of this type did occur in Palestine. A small minority, unrepresentative of the totality of Jewish migrants to Palestine, embarked on far-reaching settlement. Public and cultural activity began immediately upon its arrival. Thousands of Jews were drawn into the wake of this small movement, moved to Palestine, and subscribed to the Zionist idea. The Galveston immigrants, in contrast, who had come under the auspices of the territorialist movement, not only abstained from “spiritual” territorialist efforts in the towns of the American West, but were, in many cases, estranged from the territorialist idea. ITO did not establish branches in these immigrants' places of settlement and no real effort was made even to prepare the area for the absorption of the masses that were supposed to arrive. The territorialist idea expired as soon as the immigrants reached the United States.

It is in this respect that migration to Palestine differed from migration to other destinations and, particularly, to Galveston. In immigration countries other than Palestine, newly landed Jews spared no effort to integrate into the surrounding society, to do well economically, and to become equally empowered citizens. In Palestine, by contrast, immigrants were exposed not only to natural immigrant aspirations but also to the national idea, which started out as the “possession” of a small group but was gradually imparted to immigrants and their offspring during the period of their immigration and, especially, in the years that followed.

Conclusion

Jewish immigration between 1870 and 1914 transformed the condition of the Jewish people unrecognizably. New Jewish collectives took shape and gathered strength during this time; others began to decline in size and importance. The most conspicuous and important of the Jewish collectives that developed as a result of the mass Jewish immigration — to this day — are American and Israeli Jewry. Although both communities grew and developed as a consequence of the absorption of immigrants who came from the same countries of origin during the same period, two diametrically opposed historiographies evolved.

The historiography of the new Yishuv in Palestine and Jewish immigration to Palestine emphasized the dissimilarity and uniqueness of this migration relative to Jewish migration at large. It also credited the Zionist ideology with doing much to inspire this immigration. The point of departure of this differentiation is “quality, not quantity.” The fact that fewer migrants chose Palestine than America alludes to the unique and exceptional nature of this migration.

The historiography of Jewish migration to the United States also stresses the uniqueness of the Jewish case but contrasts this migration to non-Jewish migrant groups who came to the United States at the same time. Unlike non-Jewish immigrants who reached the U.S. unaccompanied in order to make money and return to their countries of origin, most Jews came with their families and intended to settle in America permanently. One consequence of this behavior was a higher re-emigration rate among non-Jewish immigrants than among Jewish

immigrants. The historical research that deals with Jewish migration to the United States, however, hardly gives thought to differences among Jewish migrants who came from the same countries of origin but went to different destination countries.³⁶

This article compares the difference between two small emigrant groups that reached different destination countries under the auspices of specific ideas. The comparison shows that Jewish migration to Palestine was less qualitative than Jewish migration to Galveston. Half of the immigrants in the former group were elderly and children, and Sheinkin's and Ruppin's descriptions of the immigrant population show great dissatisfaction with the "human material" that washed ashore in Palestine. For Israel Zangwill, the Galveston Plan was not an alternative to diplomatic negotiations, and Jewish settlement in the American West was not a surrogate for the autonomous territory that he sought. However, in view of the diplomatic difficulties and the persecutions of Jews, Zangwill sought, by arranging Jewish emigration to the American West, a way to solve the Jewish problem in Eastern Europe, if only temporarily and partly. The Galveston Plan was for the ITO what the Uganda scheme was for the Zionist movement — a provisional emergency shelter. For the territorialists, it was a scheme with limited national aims that dovetailed with the plans of the ITO. To fulfill it Zangwill searched for an emigrant population that could develop and build the American West.

Gur Alroey is a lecturer in the department of the Land of Israel Studies at Haifa University, Israel. He has published several works on aspects of the mass Jewish migration period. He is the author of "Bureaucracy, Agents, and Swindlers: The Hardships of Jewish Emigration from the Pale of Settlement in the Early 20th Century," in Studies in Contemporary Jewry vol XIX (2003); and "Journey to Early Twentieth-century Palestine as a Jewish Immigrant Experience," Jewish Social Studies 9 (2003).

Notes

¹ On Jewish immigration to Argentina, see H. Avni, *Argentine: The Promised Land* (Jerusalem, 1973).

² On the Galveston Plan, see Bernard Marinbach, *Galveston: Ellis Island of the West* (New York, 1982). Also see Gary Dean Best, "Jacob H. Schiff's Galveston Movement: An Experiment in Immigrant Deflection, 1907-1914," *American Jewish Archives*, XXX, no. 1 (April, 1978): 43-79.

³ Bernard Marinbach, *Galveston: Ellis Island of the West* (New York, 1982), 9.

⁴ On the growth of the New York Jewish population, see *The Jewish Communal Register of New York City 1917-1918* (New York, 1918), 89-90. Much has been written about the Jews' living conditions in New York. For example: M. Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews 1870-1914* (Cambridge, 1962); I. Howe and K. Libo, *How We Lived, 1880-1930* (New York, 1979); I. Howe, *The World of Our Fathers*, (New York, 1976); J. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (New York, 1890); C. Bernheimer, ed., *The Russian Jew in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1905). See also A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehilla Experiment 1908-1922* (New York, 1970).

⁵ In regard to the IRO, see R. Rockaway, *Words of the Uprooted: Jewish Immigration in Early Twentieth Century America* (New York, 1998), and R. Rockaway, *Mehagrim, Poalim, Ve-gangsterim*, (Tel Aviv, 1990). Also see David M. Bressler, *The Removal Work, Including Galveston*, (St. Louis, 1910).

⁶ I. Zangwill, "Preface to the Emigration Pamphlet" (1910), Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA) A36, file 95b, 3-4.

⁷ CZA, A36, file 95b, 1.

⁸ I. Zangwill, *Land of Refuge*, ITO Pamphlets no. 2, (London, 1907), 20.

⁹ CZA, A36, file 95b.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Moshe Leib Lilienblum, "Derekh la-avor golim," in *Ketavim otobiografi'im*, vol. 3, (Jerusalem, 1970), (Hebrew), 14.

¹² On Sheinkin's information bureau in Jaffa, see M. Shilo, "The Information Bureau of Menahem Sheinkin in Jaffa during the Second Aliya Period," XVII *Zionism* (1993), (Hebrew), 39-70.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 58-61.

¹⁴ M. Shilo, "Changing Attitudes in the Zionist Movement towards Immigration to Eretz Israel," *Cathedra* 46 (December, 1987): (Hebrew), 109-22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁶ "Yediot Me-Erets Yisrael," *Ha-yom*, No. 89 (November 16, 1906): 2.

¹⁷ M. Sheinkin to S. Weisfeld, April 18, 1907, Labor Movement Archives IV-114-118, file 2.

¹⁸ Arthur Ruppin to agent of Palestine Land Development Company in Vilna, January 20, 1914, CZA, L2, file 133L.

¹⁹ Arthur Ruppin to Abraham Persov, June 29, 1914, CZA, L2, file 138.

²⁰ G. Alroey, *“Immigrants:” The Jewish Immigration to Palestine in the Early Twentieth Century*, (Jerusalem, 2003) (Hebrew), 75.

²¹ Menahem Sheinkin in lecture on Jan. 5, 1913, CZA, A24, file 52.

²² I wish to thank Metvei Beinenson, who helped me build the database of immigrants to the United States under the Galveston Plan. The database is part of a larger database on Jewish emigration from 1870 to 1924, developed at the Department of Land of Israel Studies of the University of Haifa, with funding from the Israel Science Foundation. For more about the demographic composition of Galveston’s immigrants, see *American Jewish Archives* (AJA), Henry Cohen Papers, box 1, folder 4. See <http://mjmd.haifa.ac.il>.

²³ *Vas hot tunz gegeben di Galveston emigratsie* (What the emigration to Galveston has done for us), (Warsaw, 1910).

²⁴ Jacob Lestschinsky, “Die Auswanderung der Juden nach Galveston,” *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden*, (December, 1910), Heft 12, 177–84.

²⁵ The tables relating to emigration from the Odessa port to Palestine appeared in the following additions of *Ha-Olam*: no. 17, May 12, 1910, 14–15; no. 5, February 15, 1911, 17–18; no. 15, May 6, 1913, 9–10, and no. 9, March 19, 1914, 15. In 1910, *Ha-Olam* released data for the years 1905–1909 for the first time. From 1910 on data were published for the years 1910, 1911, 1912, and 1913. *Ha-Olam* did not release statistics for 1914. They may be culled from the lists of the Odessa information bureau in Ussishkin’s personal archives, A24, file 54/2, in the Central Zionist Archives. These lists, unlike those in *Ha-Olam*, give information only about the immigrants’ distribution by gender and age. More than ten thousand immigrants came to Palestine from the Trieste port from 1905 to 1914.

²⁶ Precise figures on immigration in 1907, 1908, and 1909 are lacking. Jacob Lestschinsky, in his article about immigration to Galveston, states that two thousand three hundred and nine immigrants reached Galveston between 1907 and 1909. See Jacob Lestschinsky, “Die Auswanderung der Juden nach Galveston,” 178.

²⁷ On the composition of Jewish immigration to Ellis Island, see Liebman Hersch, “International Migration of the Jews,” in Walter Eillcox, ed., *Internal Migrations*, (New York, 1931), 471–520.

²⁸ For the views of East European rabbis about the United States and Palestine, see Kimmy Caplan, *Orthodoxy in the New World: Immigrant Rabbis and Preaching in America (1881–1924)*, (Jerusalem, 2002), (Hebrew), 181–253.

²⁹ Table 4 does not include children up to age sixteen, nearly all of whom reached the United States with family members and without occupations.

³⁰ Ben Horin, “Letter from Palestine,” *Ha-zeman* 22, no. 166, August 13, 1906.

³¹ Menahem Sheinkin to Otto Warburg (1908?), CZA, A24, File 52.

³² *Ibid.*, 5.

³³ “Our Aims and Objects,” CZA, A36, file 8.

³⁴ *American Jewish Archives*, Jacob Schiff Papers, microfilm 692.

³⁵ *American Jewish Archives*, Jacob Schiff Papers, microfilm 678.

³⁶ See, for example, Ellen Eisenberg, “Argentine and American Jewry: A Case for Contrasting Immigrant Origins,” *American Jewish Archives*, XLVII, no. 1 (1995):1–16.