When the Ottoman Empire officially joined World War I on 30 October 1914, it had already ordered an end to the historic capitulations that had granted privileges to foreigners living in Ottoman lands. The end of capitulations immediately endangered the non-Ottoman Jews living in Palestine. Non-citizens would soon be forced to renounce their previous citizenships and take an oath of loyalty to the Ottoman government and likely face conscription, or leave Palestine. The community of Jews in Palestine, albeit statistically small, held enormous importance to Zionists. Since 1896, when Theodore Herzl published The Jewish State and launched the modern Zionist movement, the growing Jewish community in Palestine had taken on profound symbolic importance. Now, cut off from nearly all sources of income due to trade restrictions imposed by the Ottoman authorities, the Jewish community appeared desperately vulnerable. American Jews, alerted to the problems the Palestinian Jews faced by the ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, organized a massive relief drive in 1914 to assist Jews suffering from the effects of World War I.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee—the JDC—was formed from three different organizations, and it immediately allocated

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1 The capitulations that had been granted to foreigners living in Ottoman lands began with France in 1536 and allowed non-Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire to enjoy extraterritorial legal status, exempting them from Ottoman justice and conscription. They also protected foreigners’ property rights. By September of 1914, the “hated capitulations” had mainly been abolished, with the last draft exemptions abolished in April of 1915.
some funds to aid Jews in Palestine.² Intended to assist all Jews in belligerent hands, it had sent over $35 million of relief aid to Palestine by the war’s conclusion in 1918.³ The JDC was composed of both Zionists

² The three organizations that made up the JDC included the Central Committee for the Relief of Jews, the American Jewish Relief Committee, and People’s Relief Committee. Each group represented a different constituent among American Jews—the Central Committee for the Relief of Jews was established by the Union of Orthodox Congregations in October of 1914; the American Jewish Relief Committee was also established in 1914 and dominated by the elite leaders of the American Jewish Committee; and the socialist-oriented People’s Relief Committee was established in 1915.

³ Much has been written about the history of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which is outside the direct focus of this article. For a history of its early years, see Joseph C. Hyman, “Twenty-Five Years of American Aid to Jews Overseas: A Record of the Joint Distribution Committee,” American Jewish Yearbook 41 (1939); and Morris Engleman, Four Years of Relief and War Work by the Jews of America, 1914–1918 (New York: The Schoen Printing Company, 1918). For a comprehensive general history of the JDC, see Mark Rosen, Mission, Meaning, and Money: How the Joint Distribution Committee Became a Fundraising
and non-Zionists, who often used Zionist infrastructure and sometimes cooperated in aid distribution during the war. The enormous amount of aid ultimately strengthened, and in some cases saved, the community.\(^4\) Moreover, it reinforced Zionism’s hold on the region while simultaneously introducing a sustained American Jewish interest in the welfare of the Jews of Palestine. By the war’s end, American Jewish support for Palestinian Jews suffering from the war catalyzed a significant growing support for political Zionism among American Jews.\(^5\)

Yet, this support deserves further scrutiny, especially within the context of the Jews of Palestine and the growing tensions between Zionists and non-Zionists in the United States. World War I is generally ignored in the comprehensive studies of Jewish history, as the editors of a recent volume on the subject note. Studies of the Jewish experience in the war have tended to be “territoriality” studies.\(^6\) While this article focuses on the territory of Palestine, it intentionally widens the lens of analysis to include the Jews of the Yishuv and American Jewish leaders. Within that scope, it narrows the examination to a particular group of American Jewish leaders who were either hostile or ambivalent to, or skeptical of, political Zionism. This group, small in number yet significant in influence, has often been relegated to the dustbins of historical analysis in

\(^{4}\) See for example, Michal Ben Ya’akov, “Women and the War: The Social and Economic Impact of World War I on Jewish Women in the Traditional Holy Cities of Palestine,” in \textit{World War I and the Jews: Conflict and Transformation in Europe, the Middle East, and America}, ed. Jonathan Karp and Marsha Rozenblit (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017), 222–241. Ben Ya’akov argues that the relief aid from the JDC provided nearly the only way to prevent mass starvation during the First World War. Even so, the mortality rate among the Yishuv, particularly within the less well-connected Sephardim and Mizrachi Jewish communities, remained astonishingly high, 227.


\(^{6}\) Karp and Rozenblit, eds., \textit{World War I and the Jews}. 

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the context of the Jews of Palestine during World War I. Perhaps the obvious reason for this is that their hesitancy toward, or rejection of, political Zionism has been eclipsed by the establishment of the State of Israel and American Jewry’s overwhelming support for Zionism. This study, then, examines archival material that has been analyzed less by historians of Zionism and World War I Palestine; it intentionally does not address the well-studied Zionist perspective (including figures such as Louis D. Brandeis and Stephen S. Wise). Moreover, this article does not address divisions within the American Jewish community in the context of the rise of Zionism and the One-Hundred Percent American atmosphere of World War I, nor does it serve as a study of non-Zionist American Jewish leaders. Instead, this article specifically examines

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8 See Caitlin Carenen, “Complicating the Zionist Narrative in America: Jacob Schiff and the Struggle over Relief Aid in World War I,” American Jewish History 101, no. 4 (October 2017): 441–463. This article focuses on the conflict within American Jewish leadership over relief aid and Zionism during World War I. It looks especially at JDC leader Jacob Schiff’s reluctance to support political Zionism and his frustration with what he perceived to be the aggressiveness of the Zionist agenda in distributing relief aid, particularly in Palestine. The article also focuses on the concerns of American Jewish leaders over their perceived patriotism by non-Jews during a time of One Hundred Percent Americanism. For more scholarship on non-Zionist American Jewish leaders, see also Naomi Cohen, Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1999); Sonja P. Wentling “Herbert Hoover and American Jewish Non-Zionists, 1917–1928,” American
tension between American Zionists—notably the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs (PEC)—and non-Zionists within the JDC over the distribution of aid for the Yishuv during the war. Its purpose is to intentionally complicate a narrative about American Jewish support for the Jews in Palestine during World War I—a narrative previously claimed by Zionists. This article suggests that while Zionism was ultimately strengthened by the fundraising efforts of American Jews during World War I, tension between humanitarian relief and political Zionism did not make this a foregone conclusion for either Jews of the Yishuv or American Jews. While World War I relief efforts offered the opportunity for Zionists to tighten their hold on Palestine, clumsy relief distribution and political tension in the United States over the adoption of Zionist principles in relief aid reveal a serious lack of unity of purpose. Historian Abigail Jacobsen has accurately argued that, ultimately, relief aid efforts by American Jews to alleviate the suffering of Jews strengthened Zionism in Palestine, both during and immediately after the war. Certainly strengthening Jewish presence in Palestine


9 The Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs was started after the World Zionist headquarters in Berlin became a part of the belligerent nations of World War I. American Zionist leaders wanted to maintain the international aspect of the agency and so created the PEC, based in New York for the duration of the war. Louis D. Brandeis served as the PEC’s first President and their offices were housed in Nathan Straus’s downtown New York City office. Eliyahu Z’ev (E.Z. or E.W.) Lewin-Epstein was the PEC’s treasurer.

10 William M. Mathew, “War-Time Contingency and the Balfour Declaration of 1917: An Improbable Regression,” _Journal of Palestine Studies_ 40, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 26–42. Mathew argues that British support for the Balfour Declaration was not inevitable. This paper makes a similar argument by stressing the complicated nature and resulting tensions of Jewish relief efforts in Palestine.

11 Abigail Jacobson has written extensively about Palestine in World War I. See, for example, Jacobson, _From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule_ (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011); Jacobson, “Negotiating Ottomanism in Times of War: Jerusalem during World War I through the Eyes of a Local Muslim Resident,” _International Journal of Middle East Studies_ 40, no. 1 (February 2008): 69–88; Jacobson, “A City Living
could not but strengthen the Zionist claims to the area immediately preceding, and after, the Balfour Declaration of November 1917 that declared British support for the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish homeland. The greater the number of Jews, and the stronger their community, the more assertive Zionism’s claim to the region. But when we closely examine the efforts of American Jews to help Jews in Palestine during the war, a more complicated narrative emerges—one that reveals mismanagement, unsuccessful business ventures, infighting among the Yishuv and American Jews, and frustration from non-Zionists regarding Zionist methods.

Assisting suffering Jews during the war often stemmed from humanitarian rather than political impulses. Far from being the dominant persuasion among American Jewry, Zionism remained the choice of a minority of Jews (albeit a powerful minority). While Zionism gained a foothold in Eastern Europe after the founding of the World Zionist Organization, American Jews did not immediately embrace this secular Jewish nationalism. In fact, within the leadership of the JDC, serious divisions arose between the Zionists and non-Zionists over the methods of aid distribution. 12

While it is undeniable that American Jewish relief efforts ultimately helped the Jews of Palestine, the argument that these efforts unvaryingly strengthened Zionism belies a more complex picture. The Jews of Palestine often found themselves caught between Zionist and non-Zionist ideologies, as well as the Ashkenazim, Mizrahi and Sephardim communities. The result of these struggles delayed the support of prominent American Jewish leaders for the Zionist agenda and left an untidy legacy in its wake. One of the leaders of American Jewry and a skeptic of


12 Other factors complicated the relationship between Zionists and non-Zionists, including the push within the United States for a more democratic organization to represent the new wave of Jewish immigrants. This push for a Jewish congress challenged the existing American Jewish hierarchy, many of whom were non-Zionists. Moreover, the proposed congress included a pro-Zionist platform. The literature on this topic is extensive. See n. 7 above.
political Zionism, Jacob Schiff, of Kuhn, Loeb and Company, a prominent New York investment firm, wrote a letter in 1916 to Judah Magnes, member of the JDC and a Zionist, in which he confessed, “I am very much afraid that the Zionists themselves have, through their selfish and ill-advised course throughout [the war,] worked great harm to the cause of our people in Palestine, and perhaps also elsewhere. The future will show whether or not this fear on my part is justified.”13 Fear that the exclusionary policies of the Zionists in Palestine would damage the cause of Jewish humanitarian relief efforts worldwide and harm the creation of a cultural and spiritual center for Jews in Palestine worried many Jewish leaders and signaled tension between Jewish rights and human rights.

Relief for Jews in Palestine

The First Aliyah to Palestine, occurring between 1882 and 1903, involved mainly Eastern European Jews fleeing pogroms. Their numbers were not large and the experiment was not particularly successful, even after the great boost to the Zionist movement that came from Theodore Herzl’s publication of *The Jewish State* in 1896 and the following year’s first World Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. The Second Aliyah began in 1904 with a different kind of immigrant community—mainly socialists dedicated to establishing a homeland in Palestine rather than simply fleeing persecution in their former homelands. The immigrants of the Second Aliyah established the first kibbutz in 1909, for example. This second, more politically and militantly dedicated group of Zionists established themselves more successfully than the first group, although their numbers were still small. The eruption of World War I temporarily halted this second immigration wave, and it would not resume until the beginning of 1919 with the Third Aliyah.

Establishing the number of Jews living in Palestine at the outbreak of the war is difficult. Historian Abigail Jacobson estimates that on the eve of the war, “the population of Palestine is roughly estimated at between 689,000

13 Letter from Jacob Schiff to Judah Magnes, 23 February 1916, Jacob Schiff Papers, MS 456, box 445, folder 12, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter AJA). Louis Marshall was Magnes’ brother-in-law as he was married to Beatrice Lowenstein, the sister of Louis Marshall’s wife.
and 800,000 people.” What makes this estimate particularly vague is that, as she notes, “the Ottoman census only counted Ottoman subjects, Jews, Muslims and Christians alike, and not the foreign subjects who resided in Palestine.”14 Many Jews living in Palestine were not Ottoman subjects. Once the war began, these Jews grew increasingly vulnerable. Michal Ben Ya’akov has noted that the war situation, combined with plague, disease, locusts, the drying up of currency, and conscriptions, punished the Yishuv particularly hard, and the Sephardic and Mizrahi community most of all.15

As early as October 1914, attempts to figure out the needs of the Jewish community in Palestine revealed a dire situation—desperate need for food and money and limited means to get resources where they were most needed. On 18 August 1914, Otis Glazebrook, the American consul in Jerusalem, sent an urgent telegram to the American Embassy in Constantinople, outlining the desperate situation. Glazebrook’s cable reported that military authorities had confiscated supplies from the consular’s office, despite protests, and had stationed sixteen thousand troops in the area. This had created a “military terrorism” to which the American Jewish community needed to respond with “financial aid and food supplies.”16 The United States, through the efforts of Glazebrook and Morgenthau, was considered a non-belligerent until it joined the war against the Entente Powers in 1917 and thus was allowed to operate relief aid in Palestine; however, distributing the aid remained complicated. In examining war relief in Palestine, Jaclyn Granick has pointed out that relief aid to Palestine worked differently than relief aid to Europe. Money, food, and medicine could be sent directly to Palestine with the

14 Jacobson, From Empire to Empire, 3.
15 Ben Ya’akov notes that “Ashkenazic Jews, most of whom had European protection, were affected more than Sephardim, who were usually Ottoman subjects, but Sephardim also suffered expulsion, since many North African Jews had French or English protection, and Bukharans and others were Russian subjects.” She adds, “Although the varying definitions and categories in the sources render it difficult to consistently differentiate between subgroups of Sephardic and Oriental (Mizrachi) Jews, the Yemenite and Moroccan Jews seem to have suffered the most.” See “Women and the War,” 226–227.
16 Telegram from Otis Glazebrook to American Embassy in Constantinople, 18 August 1914, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Jerusalem, Palestine, Volume 68, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
cooperation of the U.S. Navy, the lifting of blockades by French and British governments, and the cooperation of the U.S. State Department. Money could be transferred via Constantinople and through European banks to the Zionist Anglo-Palestine bank (which was open sporadically during the war). Moreover, relief aid came from the JDC as well as individual families, whose remittances were “tracked by a system of receipts” managed by the JDC and Glazebrook. Granick argues that as a result of the myriad avenues of relief for Palestine, it developed a “hybrid relief” structure at odds with the “progressive, institutional, corporate American style” familiar to the JDC’s leadership. As the years progressed, this “hybrid method” combined with Zionist and non-Zionist tensions, complicating the relief efforts in Palestine.

As early as December 1914, the American Red Cross contacted Felix Warburg, treasurer of the newly minted American Jewish Relief Committee, to transmit an important cable. The 24 November 1914 cable declared: “Need of provisions very pressing. Many shall suffer therefrom. It is possible to ask help from America to send ship full of all sorts of provisions direct to Jaffa for distribution among needy people without distinction of religion nationality.” Clearly, the Red Cross believed that aid should be to all Palestinians, not only Jews. The JDC would challenge such an ecumenical approach as the war progressed.

By the end of 1914, rail service in Palestine proved unreliable and infrequent, and Turkish authorities, over the protests of Glazebrook and the Consulate Office in Jerusalem, routinely confiscated the already-meager existing supplies. To give members of the JDC a sense of the need and logistical obstacles they faced, Magnes asked fellow Zionist Samuel Pewsner, who had just come from Palestine, to give a report of the conditions in November 1914. Pewsner reported

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18 Letter from Red Cross Chairman George Davis to Felix Warburg, 7 December 1914, Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 40, folder 4, AJA.
19 Samuel Joseph Pewsner (1878–1930) was an engineer from Russia who settled in Haifa. He was the youngest delegate at the First Zionist Congress. See Raphael Patai, ed., Encyclopedia of Zionism and Israel (New York: Herzl Press/McGraw-Hill, 1971), 884.
The American Jewish Archives Journal

Zionism and American Jewish Relief Efforts in Palestine During World War I

To Magnes that, “Even before my leaving, the Government had forbidden the shipment of food from Galilee to Judea, first because they feared that the population would remain without foodstuffs in Galilee proper, and, second, because she was concentrating her mobilized forces in that section and wanted to have the wheat available for her forces, if necessary.”20 In fact, mobilization of material and men throughout the war would prove problematic for Ottoman military officials. Privileging wheat supplies for soldiers in a time of war, therefore, would not be surprising, but the degree of poverty that resulted from food acquisitions proved devastating to the remaining populations. Pewsner’s report noted that if whatever wheat was available was not obtained immediately, “after a short while, it will be physically impossible to obtain any more.” Moreover, other supplies—including rice, sugar, and potatoes, as well as non-food items such as medical supplies, petroleum, and currency—were desperately needed “because since the beginning of the war nothing of this nature has been imported and Palestine does not produce any of these.” Pewsner noted that it would be absolutely necessary to get money to individuals to buy whatever food was available “to sustain themselves for the next two months, if only with bread and water, so as to save them from actual starvation.” It was equally important, he noted, “to provide immediately for sending a large shipment of all kinds of provisions including flour and wheat, to Palestine in order to save 100,000 souls from starvation, after the two months’ supply will have been consumed.”21 It was clear to Pewsner, only a few months into the war, that the Jewish community in Palestine faced imminent hardship, if not ruin. Beyond observer reports, though, the letters of residents of Palestine reached their families in America with equally desperate accounts of the situation, accounts confirmed by Glazebrook himself.22

20 Letter to Judah Magnes from Samuel Pewsner, 11 December 1914, Felix Warburg Papers, MS 457, box 166, folder 9, AJA.
21 Ibid.
22 Telegram from Otis Glazebrook to embassy in Constantinople, 14 September 1914, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Jerusalem, Palestine, Volume 68, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
When Glazebrook received the first $50,000 in relief funds from the American Jewish Committee via Morgenthau, he cabled to Morgenthau that the “presumed contribution of fifty thousand dollars is for feeding the poor[.] Request your confirmation[.] Cannot imagine any other application of funds at present[.]” Glazebrook conveyed the seriousness of the situation to Morgenthau. The governor of Palestine had “announced abolition of capitulation on October first. Forty thousand Jerusalem Jews [are] in desperate conditions[.] Institutions in dire necessity some closing.” Glazebrook noted that while some flour was available to buy, most Jews had “purchased exemption” from serving in the Ottoman military and had no funds with which to buy food. Morgenthau confirmed that the money was “intended to assist colonists and families of mobilized breadwinners.” He further inquired as to the seriousness of the conditions of the poor, the closing of institutions, and food scarcity. Glazebrook’s reply in late September offered a prioritization of distribution aid. He argued for granting loans for “deserving institutions” to avoid closures and starvation, creating demand for Palestinian products to generate income for Jewish residents cut off from other markets (especially for orange production), operating soup kitchens for the poorest residents, selling food staples at cost, and finding public employment for laborers. By the end of October, the American Jewish Relief Fund had established a committee of three men in Palestine to oversee the distribution of the first $50,000 and all future distributions. The group consisted of Dr. Arthur Ruppin of Jaffa, Mr. Aaron Aaronsohn of Haifa, and Mr. Ephraim Cohn-Reiss of Jerusalem. They were supervised by Maurice Wertheim, Morgenthau’s son-in-law.

23 Telegram from Otis Glazebrook to embassy in Constantinople, 11 September 1914, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Jerusalem, Palestine, Volume 68, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
24 Telegram from Henry Morgenthau to American Consul in Jerusalem, 13 September 1914, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Jerusalem, Palestine, Volume 68, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
25 Telegram from American Consulate, Jerusalem, to American Embassy in Constantinople, 28 September 1914, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Jerusalem, Palestine, Volume 68, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
26 Arthur Ruppin (1876–1943) was a famous Zionist and organizer of agricultural settlement in Palestine who was expelled from Palestine in 1916 by Ahmed Jamal Pasha, key

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Even before the JDC had orchestrated its first fundraising campaign, individuals contacted the newly formed executive board members in an effort to get relief to family members in Palestine. For example, one woman wrote to the executive board on 10 November 1914: “Kindly let me know immediately whether I can send some money through your respective National Relief Committee to my brother, who lives in Palestine and who is under very critical circumstances. I wouldn’t have troubled you, but the Post Office wouldn’t do it for us.”

As donors sent money for relief in Palestine, getting the funds there proved complicated. American Jews who tried to use the JDC as a conduit for family members in Palestine to receive funds discovered that once Turkey joined the war, individual-to-individual payments became increasingly difficult; Glazebrook frequently served as a channel for payments from worried family members in the United States to relatives in Palestine. The JDC set up a transmission bureau in Palestine to “directly transmit moneys to their wives, parents, brothers, sisters, and other relatives,” thus allowing Glazebrook an apparatus through which to collect, solicit, and distribute funds to Jews in Palestine.

By the war’s end, the JDC had transmitted over $100,000 from private individuals through the bureau.


27 Letter to Felix Warburg from Mrs. H. Adelstein, 10 November 1914, Felix Warburg Papers, MS 457, box 165, folder 6, AJA.

28 Letter to Felix Warburg from Mr. B. Goldberger, 9 November 1914, Felix Warburg Papers, MS 457, box 165, folder 6, AJA.


30 Ibid., 227.
relatives. He often directed Americans to send their funds for relief of family members through the Central Committee for the Relief of Jews. Conversely, Albert Lucas, notable leader of the Orthodox Jewish community in New York city (and former secretary of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations in America), now acting as the executive secretary for the Central Relief Committee, consistently wrote to Glazebrook during the war to confirm relief funds sent from Americans to their families and to inquire after the well-being of others in Palestine. Lucas reminded Glazebrook to “be kind enough to advise us as promptly as possible when the payments are made to the various payees. You will appreciate that their relatives here are extremely anxious to know that their remittances have come to the hands of those for whom they are intended.” No doubt family members in the United States, receiving letters that their loved ones were starving, awaited relief of their own. Letters included pleas to fund soup kitchens in Jerusalem to alleviate the immediate needs of starving Jews. “Already these kitchens have been

31 Letter from Otis Glazebrook to Samuel Ashkenazi, 11 July 1916, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Jerusalem, Palestine, Volume 74, Part II, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

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compelled to reduce their relief to one meal a day, and unless there shall
come from America immediate help, we will be compelled, in two or
three weeks[,] to close them,” declared one Jerusalem resident.32

Lucas informed Glazebrook that the Central Committee’s offices in
New York were inundated with daily requests about the welfare of family
in Palestine. Felix Warburg, on behalf of the JDC, also requested that
Glazebrook help locate missing family members.33 Much of Glazebrook’s
consular records during the war centered on finding missing family
members, paying them sums delivered through the JDC, and account‑
ing for these payments. Sometimes the news was grim. For example, in
responding to one of Warburg’s requests for the update on a family in
Jerusalem, Glazebrook reported that “the two youngest children have
been placed in the Diskin orphanage while the oldest child Joseph,
roams around and lives as best he can.” Glazebrook encouraged Warburg
to send money from the family in the United States to support these
children.34

In an April 1916 letter to Glazebrook, despite their differing ap‑
proaches and recognizing Glazebrook’s dedication to helping Palestinian
Jews, Lucas seemed to acknowledge the enormous workload Glazebrook
faced as the consular in a belligerent region. He concluded the letter
by thanking Glazebrook for his “self‑sacrificing assistance to our poor
co‑religionists.”35 Glazebrook’s work also garnered the appreciation of
Morgenthau, whose commitment to the survival of the Jewish com‑
unity in Palestine depended, in part, on Glazebrook’s efforts to secure
the Jewish colonies and communities. After the war began, Morgenthau

32 Letter from Boris Scharz to American Jewish Relief Committee, 15 November 1914,
Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 40, folder 4, AJA.
33 Letter from Felix Warburg to Otis Glazebrook, 11 May 1916, RG 84, Records of Foreign
Service Posts, Consular Posts, Jerusalem, Palestine, Volume 74, Part II, National Archives,
College Park, Maryland.
34 Letter from Otis Glazebrook to Felix Warburg, 4 August 1916, RG 84, Records of
Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Jerusalem, Palestine, Volume 74, Part II, National
Archives, College Park, Maryland.
35 Letter from Albert Lucas to Otis Glazebrook, 21 April 1916, RG 84, Records of Foreign
Service Posts, Consular Posts, Jerusalem, Palestine, Volume 74, Part II, National Archives,
College Park, Maryland.
thanked Glazebrook for his “splendid work” on “behalf of the Jews and Jewish cause in Jerusalem.” It was clear to Morgenthau that Glazebrook was “putting [his] full heart into the work.”36 Both Glazebrook and Morgenthau worked tirelessly on behalf of the Jews in Palestine, and their motivation was clear: Their efforts did not stem from support of the Zionist agenda, but from humanitarian concern for those suffering in the region.

“The Ripe and Perfect Jaffa Orange”: Financial Support of Jewish Citrus Farmers

By November 1914, members of the American Jewish Relief Committee and the PEC had received various testimonies, through both official and unofficial channels, about the degree of hardship the Jews in Palestine faced. Relief was needed immediately, although reports about what was most needed varied. On 29 September 1914 Morgenthau telegrammed Louis Marshall of the American Jewish Relief Committee to let him know that the most immediate problems included lack of money, interrupted shipping, a lack of a market, and devastated economy that pushed the poor to the edge of starvation. He added, “Colonies not threatened with destruction. Colonists personally need little immediate assistance, their main problem find new markets.” Morgenthau proposed relief aid concentrating on “soup kitchens for the very poor; food stores selling staples at cost, loan institutions lending on security, public works where private labor impossible, and deserving institutions.” He concluded with a plea to Marshall, Jacob Schiff, and Nathan Straus (Jewish philanthropist and co-owner of the Macy’s Department store) to “raise further funds.”37 The PEC sent a copy of an equally urgent telegram to the members of the JDC in an effort to coordinate relief efforts. Consensus seemed to be that the most pressing need, in addition to food, was to establish new markets to sell Jewish products.

36 Letter from the American Embassy in Constantinople to Otis Glazebrook, 27 November 1914, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Jerusalem, Palestine, Volume 68, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
37 Telegram from Morgenthau to Louis Marshall, 29 September 1914, Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 40, folder 5, AJA.
Assisting the colonies with opening new markets became part of the relief aid to Palestine. In an 11 December 1914 letter to Magnes, Pewsner offered a plan to assist Jews in Palestine and support the Zionist endeavor simultaneously. The plan called for procuring neutral ships, which would bring relief aid into Palestine, distribute it to the needy, and then take shipments of Jaffa oranges, farmed by Zionist communities, back to New York for sale. “Whatever proceeds there are from the sale of oranges,” Pewsner wrote to Magnes, “will all go for the welfare of the Jewish planters of Palestine, which will in turn ease the situation of the general population in Palestine.” 38 In this instance, Pewsner’s Zionism via his support for the Jewish orange farmers could be interpreted as general benevolence to all Palestinians—their well-being would help to ensure the well-being of all (a theme later developed by American Zionists regarding the well-being of Palestinians living within a Jewish state). However, it is clear that Pewsner’s purpose remained primarily to assist Jews. Other Zionists were not sure that importing Jaffa oranges would offer much profit to American investors or the growers due to the condition of the fruit upon arrival and the novelty of the fruit’s origination but nonetheless urged a trial shipment, if for nothing else than as an act of charity. 39 In considering the orange proposition, Pewsner noted to fellow Zionist Maurice Wertheim, of the Palestine Loan Committee and investment banker from New York, that, “It seems to me, therefore, in view of the terrible situation now existing in Palestine and what the establishment of a market for oranges in America means to the planters of Palestine, that we ought not to shrink [from this investment], because a financial loss may be incurred, financial in the commercial sense only.” 40 In a 16 November 1914 letter to Louis Marshall, Nathan Straus explained that the likelihood of profits was so low as to not make the experiment worth his while. Yet, as the letter was about to go to post, he added a postscript that noted, “I am just informed by Mr.

38 Letter to Judah Magnes from S. Pewsner, 11 December 1914, Felix Warburg Papers, MS 457, box 166, folder 9, AJA.
39 Letter to Judah Magnes from Maurice Wertheim, 12 December 1914, Felix Warburg Papers, MS 457, box 166, folder 9, AJA.
40 Ibid.
Perlstein, Adm. Secretary of the Zion Provisional Committee, who are occupying my office, that a Mr. Pewsner of Caiffa [sic] is on his way to America bearing letters from Ambassador Morgenthau to several people in this country requesting them to assist in marketing the orange crop of Palestine.”

Straus decided to assist.

In his examination of Jewish citriculture in Palestine during the Mandate period, historian Nahum Karlinsky argued that citrus, while a symbol of early Zionism, owed its success more to private capital than collective socialist efforts of the Second Aliyah. While Karlinsky’s focus is primarily on the Mandate years, early efforts to market citrus to assist the Yishuv also fit this interpretation. It perhaps adds to the irony, in fact, that some of the financial sponsors of this venture were either indifferent or hostile to political Zionism. By the end of 1914, Zionists and non-Zionists alike moved forward a plan to bring Jaffa oranges to American markets, despite the economic risks. Such support came from the non-Zionist Schiff, whom Pewsner assured that if he offered $5,000 in unsecured loans to ship the oranges (as had, apparently, Baron Rothschild), a “sure deal goes through saving Palestine from ruin.” In reporting on the first (unsuccessful) import of oranges, E.W. Lewin-Epstein, of both the Carmel Wine Company and the PEC, and Pewsner informed their investors that “in our opinion, it would be perfectly permissible, for the first few years at least, to utilize, in behalf of the Palestinian orange industry, the strong Palestinian sentiment prevailing among our co-religionists, within reasonable limits, of course, without taking undue advantage of anyone.” One should not, they argued, cut “out entirely the important factor of sentiment.” Besides, they reassured their investors, “that the ripe and perfect Jaffa orange is superior to all others in sweetness and aroma, is a well-known fact and is admitted even

41 Letter to Louis Marshall from Nathan Straus, 16 November 1914, Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 40, folder 5, AJA.
43 “Palestinian Orange Crops,” Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 40, folder 5, AJA.
44 Telegram from Samuel Pewsner to Jacob Schiff, 7 April 1915, Jacob Schiff Papers, MS 456, box 459, folder 18, AJA.
by American authorities.” Despite the perfection of the Jaffa orange, economic losses continued. Nonetheless, investors, inspired by the need of Palestinian Jewish farmers, continued financial support. For the remainder of the war until his death in 1920, Schiff helped to manage the import of Jaffa oranges on behalf of Zionist farmers working through the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish Colonial Trust. Committed to the success of the Jewish community in Palestine, despite his skepticism of political Zionism, Schiff believed that the orange growers constituted “an industry upon which, as you know best yourself, rests to no little degree the prosperity of Palestine. It is because of this … that I have consented to contribute toward the advance to the funds necessary to finance the handling of these orange shipments when they arrive here.”

Like Glazebrook and Morgenthau’s efforts in relief aid, Schiff’s commitment stemmed from humanitarian, not Zionist impulses.

**Expulsions**

On 23 December 1914 an urgent telegram from Z.D. Levontin, who had served as the Director of the Jewish Colonial Trust in London and established the Anglo-Palestine Bank in Jaffa and Ze’ev Gluskin, founder of the Carmel Wine Co. (a company established to assist in developing the economy of the Yishuv) to Lewin-Epstein noted that the Ottoman authorities had begun expelling from Palestine Russian Jews who were not Ottoman subjects. According to the telegram, 686 men, women, and children were “expelled unexpectedly” from Jaffa and were now in a steamer headed to Alexandria, Egypt, stripped of all valuables by the military authorities before departure. “We appeal to relief fund for

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45 “Supplementary Report of the Palestine Orange Committee by E.W. Lewin-Epstein & Samuel Pewsner,” 4 March 1915, Jacob Schiff Papers, MS 456, box 459, folder 18, AJA.
46 Incorporated in London in 1899, the Jewish Colonial Trust (JCT) served as the financial core of the Zionist movement. Schiff was joined in this endeavor to assist the Palestine Orange Growers by Baron Edmund de Rothschild, Julius Rosewald, Samuel S. Fels, Adolph Lewisohn, and Daniel Guggenheim. Letter to Jacob Schiff from the law offices of Steinhardt and Goldman, 28 May 1915, Jacob Schiff Papers, MS 456, box 459, folder 18, AJA.
47 Letter from Jacob Schiff to Maurice Wertheim, 21 January 1915, Jacob Schiff Papers, MS 456, box 459, folder 18, AJA.
immediate help” Gluskin telegraphed, and asked for assistance from “high quarters” to help shield the Jews from “such atrocities.” 48 Efforts by the Zionists to aid the Russian Jewish refugees from Palestine stemmed from their concern for the treatment of their co-religionists in general, as opposed to Russian Jews specifically, and included distributing food upon arrival in Alexandria and working with the local authorities to find work for the newly expelled. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, in part prompted by the inquiries of the JDC, interceded with the Ottoman authorities on behalf of the remaining Russian Jews in Palestine. According to Bryan, the authorities promised not to expel them provided they accept Ottoman citizenship and pay the naturalization fees demanded by the government—a problem for Jewish nationalist interests in Palestine as it could complicate future citizenship should so many potential Zionists adopt Ottoman citizenship. 49 By 1915, the number of Jews expelled from Palestine who had fled to Alexandria grew to six thousand. 50

Expulsions continued as the war progressed. For the next year, the JDC and the PEC focused on helping displaced Jews through neutral third parties—including Swedish and Swiss organizations and the Red Cross—in Palestine. 51 Despite the cooperation, however, the additional expulsion of hundreds of Jews from Jaffa and Jerusalem in May 1917 created another issue of tension between the relief agencies. The JDC accused the Zionist organizations of using the expulsion to justify sending more money to bolster the Zionist agenda through support of the Zionist community; of sensationalizing the event beyond the facts (Zionists claimed over 12,000 had been expelled); and of sending

48 Telegram from Z.D. Levontin and Ze’ev Gluskin of the Carmel Wine, Co., 23 December 1914, Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 40, folder 4, AJA.
49 Letter to Louis Marshall from W.J. Bryan, 28 December 1914, Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 40, folder 4, AJA.
50 “Bulletin #1,” The American Jewish Relief Committee, February 1915, Felix Warburg Papers, MS 457, box 166, folder 27, AJA.
51 Letter to the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs from Second Assistant Secretary of State Alvey A. Alvee, 12 June 1917, Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 49, folder 8, AJA.

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funds from the JDC to Palestine without accurately accounting for those funds or reporting on conditions. Lucas sent a letter to Dr. Stephen S. Wise and Julian Mack—both leaders of the PEC—demanding such accounting and reporting. Lucas’s tone reflected his frustration. He demanded the full texts—not excerpts published in propaganda materials—of cablegrams sent from British officials in the region. In response, Jacob de Haas, secretary of the PEC (and editor of the Boston Jewish Advocate), agreed to send the copies of the full telegrams but noted that when it came to the most sensational telegram, supposedly sent by British Ambassador Cecil Spring-Rice but signed by members of the British Zionist organization, de Haas noted, “As to your argument about the Cecil Spring-Rice telegram, I really do not know what you are driving at, but will not bother you to explain.” The original manipulation of the telegram by de Haas only confirmed the suspicions of members of the JDC who already viewed the PEC’s public relations campaigns with skepticism.

While the JDC decided to send money to alleviate the real suffering caused by the expulsions, Lucas was displeased with the methods used to obtain these funds. Privately, in a letter to Schiff, Lucas articulated his accusation that Wise and the PEC misrepresented the facts to raise more money for Zionist, rather than relief, purposes. The sensational cable used to elicit funds, Lucas believed, was quite exaggerated. “The outrages are not nearly as serious, it is admitted, as they were alleged to have been, and again, may I say to you personally, I have very much mistrust in my mind over the transmission of our funds through this agency.” Yet, he concluded, the number of “nationalists” on the subcommittee who decided to send the funds meant the choice was all but inevitable.

In fact, the Zionists had already rescinded their sensational coverage of the Jaffa and Jerusalem expulsions, nearly as quickly as they had

52 Letter from Albert Lucas to Dr. Stephen S. Wise, 7 June 1917, Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 49, folder 8, AJA.
53 Letter from Jacob de Haas to Albert Lucas, 12 June 1917, Jacob Schiff Papers, MS 456, box 453, folder 12, AJA.
54 Letter from Albert Lucas to Jacob Schiff, 7 June 1917, Jacob Schiff Papers, MS 456, box 453, folder 12, AJA.
issued the original story. In an article appearing in the Zionist press, dated 31 May 1917 (less than two weeks before the sharp exchange between Lucas and de Haas), the title “Again Quiet in Palestine” sought to reassure readers that “the former rumors regarding expulsion and outrages in Palestine presumed to have been committed, were largely exaggerated…. No more than 600 Jews left Jaffa.” In fact, the article continued, “The report [that all is well in Jaffa] animates from reliable sources, and states: that the previous stories relative to the treatment of Jews were fabricated.”

The updated status report, then, reflected the Zionists’ attempts to rescind their previous sensationalist reporting albeit without directly acknowledging fault. This perhaps avoided a direct confrontation between the non-Zionists in the JDC who objected to the “misrepresentation of the facts” to “elicit funds,” and the Zionist press.

**Tension over Logistics and Distribution of Relief Aid in Palestine**

In December 1914, at the urging of many, including Secretary of State Bryan, the JDC attempted to orchestrate the shipment of goods into Palestine, as well as navigate the complicated waters of depositing funds into the hands of agencies able to distribute them effectively to the needy Jews. Throughout the war, the JDC cooperated with the State Department; yet, logistics proved difficult and required walking into ideological minefields at times. Only a month into organizing such a shipment, the logistics, and the necessity of coordinating with the Zionists, led Felix Warburg to confess to Louis Marshall: “I wish you could find some way by which I could be freed from these complicated questions in Palestine.” Often, out of necessity rather than ideological conviction, the JDC used Zionist organizations and banks to distribute

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55 “Again Quiet in Palestine,” *Warheit Extra*, 31 May 1917 (translation), Jacob Schiff Papers, MS 456, box 453, folder 12, AJA.
56 Telegram from William Jennings Bryan to Louis Marshall, 3 December 1914, Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 40, folder 5, AJA.
58 Letter to Louis Marshall from Felix Warburg, 23 December 1914, Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 40, folder 5, AJA.
funds. Since many of these had been operating in Palestine before the war, their infrastructure provided an existing conduit for relief aid.\(^{59}\) Eventually, the complications of the war necessitated that the JDC resolve officially in June 1916 to only use American organizations and individuals to donate funds and distribute aid. When the United States entered the war in April 1917, even that became deeply complicated, and it became necessary to ask neutral governments to intervene on behalf of American relief work.\(^ {60}\)

In March 1915 the first major shipment of food and supplies was sent to Palestine under the auspices of the American Jewish Relief Committee. Planning for the ship preceded its launch by many months and included the creation of a subcommittee of the American Jewish Relief Committee: the Palestine Relief Ship subcommittee, chaired by Judah Magnes. Magnes intended for the ship to be sent by Jews for Jews. In a letter to Warburg, Magnes clearly noted, “I do not think that the non-Jewish funds should be used” to secure the ship.\(^ {61}\) Jacob Schiff also emphasized that the ship was intended to carry relief to Palestinian Jews from their American co-religionists. Schiff had personally donated $25,000 toward the cost of the ship.

The USS *Vulcan* set sail with Louis Levin aboard. Levin, of the American Jewish Relief Committee, was tasked with overseeing the ship’s contents and distributing the $1.5 million and nine hundred tons of food and medicine. In a letter to Levin, Schiff instructed that the supplies “are being sent by American Jewry for the relief of our co-religionists in the Holy Land” and that Levin “make every effort to make distribution in a just and equitable manner, so that the

\(^{59}\) In a memorandum dated 14 December 1914, Felix Warburg explained that in an effort to get money to Palestine, the representative of the JDC, E.W. Lewin-Epstein, would “cable via the American Express Co. the sum of $35,000 to the Carmel Wine Co.’s agent in London who will in turn cable it to Alexandria, where it will be paid in gold to Mr. Brill who undertakes its transmission.” Felix Warburg Papers, MS 457, box 165, folder 6, AJA.

\(^{60}\) Telegram from Jacob Schiff to Frederich Solomon Van Nierop, 11 May 1917, Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 49, folder 8, AJA.

\(^{61}\) Letter from Judah Magnes to Felix Warburg, 26 February 1915, Felix Warburg Papers, MS 457, box 166, folder 27, AJA.
intention of the giver may in every way become fulfilled.” Clearly, Schiff’s emphasis on the intention of the giver indicated that the aid was intended for Jews.

When the Vulcan arrived in Jaffa in April 1915, the distribution of goods did not go as smoothly as Schiff had hoped. Writing to Magnes, Levin reported on the events surrounding the Vulcan and asked that his letter be sent to all interested parties. Right away, Levin noted that the authorities in Jaffa were unprepared to handle the shipment of goods, and Morgenthau was asked to intervene on behalf of the relief workers aboard the Vulcan. After a series of delays involving disagreements about paying duties, Levin went to Jerusalem “and put the matter before Dejmal Pasha [the Ottoman military governor of Syria], who referred us to the civil governor of Jerusalem who in turn referred us to the Mayor, with whom we were finally able to come to a conclusion.” While debating the problem of paying a duty (which the committee believed they did not have to pay), Levin informed Magnes that “the question arose as to the division of the cargo between Jewish and non-Jewish population.” Despite Schiff’s concern that the goods be distributed to Jews, Levin noted that “the instructions from Washington to the American Consul [Glazebrook] were that the supplies be distributed to the whole population without regard to race or religion, and if this were done, and the whole population of the country taken into account, there would be very little for anyone, and practically none for the Jews.” The question of percentage of goods distributed to Jews—an early concern of the Zionists especially—appeared especially problematic in light of the contradiction of the Vulcan’s purpose and the American government’s directive. Eventually, after “considerable argument and study,” Levin agreed to distribute the goods to all of Palestine based on Jerusalem’s population ration (which contained more Jews than elsewhere in Palestine), thereby allotting more for the Jews than they would have received based on strict population percentages across Palestine. While Glazebrook agreed, the Turkish authorities pointed out that the ship would be docked in

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62 Letter to Louis Levin from Jacob Schiff, 8 March 1915, Jacob Schiff Papers, MS 456, box 459, folder 18, AJA.
63 According to Levin, Jerusalem’s population was 50,000 Jews and 30,000 non-Jews.
Jaffa—a majority Muslim population—and demanded that the distribution of goods be decided based on Jaffa and Jerusalem’s population distribution. This essentially, as Levin pointed out, left the Jews with less than half of the goods. After a committee, founded exclusively for the purpose of determining the distribution of goods, could not reach an agreement, Glazebrook intervened and set the distribution ratio at 55 percent for Jews, 26 percent for “Mohamedans,” and 19 percent for Christians.

The delays continued once the ship arrived in Jaffa, once again necessitating the intervention of Morgenthau from Constantinople, while the ship languished in the port. By 12 May the last of the goods left the Vulcan. Ultimately, Jaffa and Jerusalem received 69 percent of the goods, while the “Judean colonies” elsewhere, including Judea and Samaria, received 19 percent, and other places received the remaining percentage. Clearly frustrated, Levin concluded by reassuring Magnes, “For the present we are doing our best to make a just distribution of a very difficult method of relief.”

The controversy over the distribution of relief aid did not end when the Vulcan finally left, however. Divisions within the Jewish community of Palestine, between the Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities, complicated aid distribution. Glazebrook, acting under the instructions of Morgenthau, directed funds raised for relief to the Zionist programs operating in Palestine for further distribution. Once the money made its way to Jerusalem, the question of who received funds within the Jewish community continued during the next few years. In April 1916, the Orthodox Central Committee of New York had to intervene with David Yellin, the chair of the American Jewish Relief Committee in Jerusalem, to ensure that funds were fairly distributed. “We cannot

64 Letter from Louis H. Levin to Judah Magnes, 12 May 1915, Jacob Schiff Papers, MS 456, box 441, folder 9, AJA.
65 Ibid.
66 Letter from Otis Glazebrook to Mr. Appleroeth, 4 December 1916, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Jerusalem, Palestine, Volume 74, Part II, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
67 David Yellin (1864–1941): Author and educator born and raised in Jerusalem and for
too emphatically reiterate our desire that the distribution of relief as the result of contribution from American Jewry shall be made to Jews without reservation of any kind, by reason of a fact (true or alleged), that the applicant for relief comes from any particular country, is or is not an observant Jew, is or is not a follower of Zionism, or in fact, that the applicant for the portion of the assistance that can be given from the money provided by American Jewry is anything else than a needy Jew.”  

These tensions reflect the differences that existed within the Jewish communities in Palestine. Jacobson has noted that the Sephardic community “was the dominant community among the old Yishuv in Palestine.” It consisted of members from various non-Western-European regions and was “perceived by the Ottoman authority as the sole representative of the Jewish community in Palestine,” as they held Ottoman citizenship (as opposed to Ashkenazi Jews, who retained their foreign citizenship). As mentioned above, scholarship by Michal Ben Ya’akov has highlighted the divisions within the Yishuv among Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi Jews; and when it came to the distribution of aid, often those most affected, particularly women, had little say over its distribution. In one example, a leader of the Sephardic Jewish community in Palestine sent an imploring letter to Glazebrook, asking for funds to help their community. Glazebrook had earlier requested that the community help a suffering single woman, and when the “Grand Rabbin” of the community approached the American Relief Fund for help, the Ashkenazi community—which apparently retained control of the relief fund—only offered “a quarter of a Turkish pound.” The Grand Rabbi wrote a letter to Glazebrook asking him to intervene. The state of the Sephardic community, in comparison to the Ashkenazi...
community, remained dire, he explained. “The cash of the community and the benevolent institutions are all in an incomparable penury. We cannot compare the state of the Sepharadite [sic] community to that of the Esehkenazium [sic] the only means to repair this inconvenience would be to repair with justice and impartiality the munificence of our generous coreligionists of Europe and America made in favor of the Jews of Palestine.” 71 He pointed out that relief organizations around the world had donated generously to the Ashkenazi community in Palestine, funding multiple charities and supporting their coreligionists, but except for the American donations, the Sephardic community remained unsupported. Those American donations, given through the JDC, were intended, he argued, to help all Jews, not just the Ashkenazi Jews. “The aid given to the poor Sepharadim [sic] by the American relief fund is very trifling in comparison to the number and their situation.” He argued that the Sephardic community had fewer representatives on the “executive committees” and that the Ashkenazis “preference to their coreligionists [fellow Ashkenazis]” without respecting the fact that the donors “wish all the Jews without designation of rite to be largely helped by their money.” For both groups to be helped, he proposed forming a committee that included more Sephardic leadership so that “good rules” would allow for a just distribution of funds. 72 When a distribution committee was established in 1914 in Jerusalem to disperse the aid collected by American Jews through the JDC to the Yishuv, members of the Jewish community in Jerusalem immediately protested the process by which relief aid could be obtained. In an article in the daily Hebrew language paper Hacheruth, the author claimed that the complicated process served no other purpose than “giving the ‘privileged ones’ the preference” and demanded an investigation into the committee’s actions. 73 The following month, perhaps in response to rising complaints, the

71 Letter from “Le Grand Rabbin” to Otis Glazebrook, 21 July 1916, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Jerusalem, Palestine, Volume 74, Part II, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
72 Ibid.
73 Hacheruth #33, 10 November 1914, Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, box 40, folder 5, AJA.

Zionism and American Jewish Relief Efforts in Palestine During World War I
American Jewish Relief Committee sent a telegram to Morgenthau in Constantinople, with the instructions to add additional representation in the executive committee in charge of distributing funds in “the spirit … of giving fair representation to all elements.” Yet, two years later, it is clear that the perceived discrimination had continued. Whatever the intention of the American Jewish Relief Committee had been to create an equitable executive committee, in this case, then, the distribution of relief aid remained uneven and highlighted existing tensions within the Jewish communities of Jerusalem and exacerbated them further.

Conclusion

This more complicated exploration of relief aid in Palestine calls into question the idea of a foregone conclusion of the success of the Zionist vision for Palestine and highlights the aid debate in the context of the Zionist agenda preceding and during World War I. The questions of who got aid, what kind of aid, and how, shows us American Jewry’s far-from-unified response to the Zionist agenda as well as the tension within the Jewish community of Palestine. Figures who were either non-Zionists or anti-Zionists used existing Zionist infrastructure to support and care for the Jews of Palestine during World War I. But their intentions were strictly humanitarian and were not intended to strengthen Zionism.

Certainly American Zionists made significant claims to the stabilization of the colonies in Palestine. In an article titled “Another Armenia,” originally published on 30 March 1918 in the Sunday Magazine section of the New York Herald and reprinted as a publicity bulletin by the Zionist Organization of America, author and educator Jessie E. Sampter reviewed the enormous struggles undertaken by Zionists in Palestine to survive the war and dramatically described the “plan” by the Turkish government to mete out the same fate to the Jews of Palestine as that of the Armenians. Nonetheless, the Jews had survived, due in no small part to the United States. “There was one ever present helper since the first days of the war,” Sampter wrote. “America had stood like a guardian

74 Letter to Ambassador Morgenthau from the American Jewish Relief Committee, 22 December 1914, New York, Louis Marshall Papers, MS 359, Box 40, folder 4, AJA.
angel over Palestine. Not only had American Jews sent vast sums for relief to stave off famine and the American Zionists added loans to make possible continuous employment and cultivation, but the American government, not at war with Turkey, used its influence to protect Jewish interests.” 75 Sampter heralded the British as “deliverers” who rescued the Jews of Palestine when they entered Jerusalem on 10 December 1917 and “took steps to redeem its pledge.” She concluded her article with an optimistic assessment of Palestine’s recovery under the efforts of the Zionists and British working together to rebuild the region. Sampter’s article highlights the attempt to strengthen Zionism among American Jews by remarking upon the dramatic and heroic efforts of American Jewish relief organizations to help the Jews of Palestine. Clearly, the JDC and Zionist organizations such as the PEC helped the Jews of Palestine, and that assistance strengthened the Jewish community at a crucial time. Yet, Sampter’s article closes the curtain across the tensions, distribution issues, and conflicting motivations behind that help and belies the complexity of the Zionist narrative in Palestine during World War I. Those who worried that aid to the Jews of Palestine, sometimes at the expense of non-Jews, would complicate an already-delicate ethno-religious environment would find similar arguments later echoed by those unsure of the benefits of Zionism to the indigenous population of Palestine. Like the arguments articulated by Samuel Pewsner during World War I, the arguments that improvements for the Jewish community would benefit nearby Palestinians would find a skeptical audience outside of Zionist circles. While fervently committed to aiding fellow Jews suffering from the effects of World War I in Palestine and elsewhere, non-Zionists working in relief aid worried that Zionist-only philanthropy could do great harm in its exclusionary agenda.

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