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# A City Living through Crisis: Jerusalem during World War I

ABIGAIL JACOBSON\*

**ABSTRACT** *This article aims to contribute to the literature on World War I in Palestine while studying the experience of the inhabitants of Jerusalem during the war. By focusing on a city and its residents, this article offers an analysis of the war from a dimension and lens yet to be explored in the history of Palestine. More specifically, the article will use relief networks in order to analyze not only the ways people experienced the war, but also as a way of exposing inter-communal dynamics between the different communities living in this mixed urban center.*

The surrender of Jerusalem to the British forces on December 9, 1917 ended a period of great despair in the history of Jerusalem and of Palestine in general, which was caused by World War I. The war is remembered, by locals and historians, as a dark period in the history of Palestine, a period during which people starved to death, were forced to migrate from their homes and lost control over their lives and destiny. However, the study of World War I in Palestine has traditionally focused on the political and military aspects of the war, as well as on the role of foreign powers in developments in the region and their support for the local population. Analyzing the experience of the local population in Palestine during this period, the main focus in most of the existing scholarship was on the Jewish population and the various ways it dealt with the war crisis.<sup>1</sup> The existing literature on the war is somewhat limited in scope, and does not treat the war as a formative event that affected the lives of many Palestinians, Jews and Arabs alike.

The treatment of World War I in Palestine is consistent with what Steven Heydemann points out to in the introduction to his edited volume *War, Institutions and Social Change in the Middle East*. The study of war in the Middle East has been shaped mainly by diplomatic and military historians, claims Heydemann, and not by social historians or anthropologists. Studies on the war have not paid due attention to the ways by which states and societies in the Middle East have been

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, on the Jewish community during the war: Mordechai Eliav (ed.) *Ba-Matzor uba-Matzok: Eretz Israel Be-Milhemet ha-'Olam ha-Rishona* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Institute, 1991); Nathan Efrati, *Mi-Mashber le-Tikva: Ha-Yishuv ha-Yehudi be-Eretz Israel be-Milhemet ha-'Olam ha-Rishona* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi Institute, 1991). On the Arab population in Palestine during the war see: 'Umar al-Salih al-Barghuthi and Khalil Tawtah, *Ta'rikh Filastin* (Jerusalem: Matba'at Bayt al-Maqdis, 1923); 'Adel Manna', *Ta'rikh Filastin fi Awakhir al-'ahd al-'Uthmani, 1700–1918* (Beirut: Institute of Palestinian Studies, 1999); Bahjat Sabri, *Filastin Hilala al-Harb al-'Alamiyya al-Ula wa-ma Ba'adha 1914–1920* (Jerusalem: Jamiyat al-Dirasat al-'Arabiyya, 1982). On the military aspect of the war see: Yigal Sheffy, *British Military Intelligence in the Palestinian Campaign 1914–1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1998).

shaped and reshaped by their exposure to, and participation in, war-making and war preparation, and did not examine wars as processes of social change, he argues.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike in the research on the Middle East, the study of the effects that wars (mainly the two world wars) had on other societies has gone through a major historiographical development in the last few decades. In the course of this process, the understanding of how wars impacted states, societies and individuals has been transformed.<sup>3</sup> One of the scholars who led this change in the field of 'war studies' was Arthur Marwick, who carefully studied the relations between war and social change. Defining what he means by social change in relation to wars, Marwick focused on several areas of change, among them changes in social geography and social structure.<sup>4</sup> Other scholars have followed some of these criteria while looking into the effects of war on gender relations, changes in class structures, changes in labor force, effect of diseases and famine on the population in war areas, as well as on questions of migration and immigration of populations.<sup>5</sup>

Added to this body of scholarly work on wars as processes of social change is the growing literature on the histories of communities, and specifically of cities and their residents, in wartimes. In their seminal volume, *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914–1919* (and the recently published second volume), Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert suggest that social historians should focus on cities (mainly capital cities) as the 'nerve centers' of the war. This focus, they claim, will contribute to the understanding of both urban and national history of a collective. While comparing the experiences of the war in London, Paris and Berlin, they are attempting to go beyond the writing of *national* histories of war, and to write an urban history of *societies* at war. They examine questions of social marginality and hierarchy during the war, the impact of war on various social groups, and the ways by which societies at war cope with the post-war trauma.<sup>6</sup> The nature of citizenship, and the ways it played out in relief and support networks in the city, can serve as a catalyst for comparing the efficacy or limitations of the war effort among the allied forces and Germany, claim Winter and Robert.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, as they demonstrate in their discussion, cities can serve as metropolitan centers and imperial meeting grounds, and hence bring together nation and empire.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Steven Heydemann, 'Introduction: War, Institutions and Social Change in the Middle East', in Steven Heydemann (ed.) *War, Institutions and Social Change in the Middle East* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 1–2. An important book that did follow the lines that Heydemann suggests is Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), especially part I.

<sup>3</sup> On the changes in the historiography of total wars see: Ian F.W. Beckett, 'Total War', in Arthur Marwick, Clive Emsley and Wendy Simpson (eds.) *Total War and Historical Change: Europe 1914–1955* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001), pp. 24–28.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Marwick, 'Introduction', in Arthur Marwick (ed.) *Total War and Social Change* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. xiv.

<sup>5</sup> For some recent examples of such analysis in relation to World War I and its effects in Europe, see Ian F.W. Beckett, *The Great War 1914–1918* (England: Pearson Education Limited, 2001); Neil M. Heyman, *Daily Life During World War I* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002); Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon, The First World War Experienced* (London: Pen & Sword Books, 1996); Peter Liddle, John Bourne and Ian Whitehead (eds.) *The Great War 1914–1917: The People's Experience* (London: Harper Collins, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Jay Winter and Jean Louis Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914–1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 3–24, 527–554. See also *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914–1919: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Winter and Robert, Vol. 1, pp. 10–13.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 549.

Following some of the guidelines of these scholars, this paper will focus on the experience of Jerusalem and its residents during World War I, between the years 1914 and 1917, at a time of an acute crisis. In this conflict, Jerusalem can be defined as the 'home front', as it served only as a rear base for the Ottoman army during most of the war, until the British troops reached the city in 1917. However, as research on the European experience of World War I clearly demonstrates, in many cases, the war came directly home, even though it really took place elsewhere, and involved civilians in ways that were not previously found.<sup>9</sup> As this paper demonstrates, the war created a major crisis in Jerusalem (as in many other places in Palestine) and posed its inhabitants with various challenges. However, as will be discussed in length below, it also created some opportunities for inter-communal cooperation.

In an attempt to capture the experience of Jerusalem and its inhabitants during the war, I will follow the ways by which some of the city's communities dealt with the crisis caused by the war, and examine the effects of the war on inter-communal dynamics in the city. I will first analyze the immediate implications that the Ottoman participation in the war had on the residents of Jerusalem, and will then focus specifically on support and relief organizations that operated in the city during this time of crisis.<sup>10</sup> By analyzing the support and relief networks that functioned in the city, I will try and identify the forces which gained power and influence following the socio-economic crisis, and look at the role that the Ottoman representatives played in the city. As Winter and Robert argue, the case of Jerusalem shows that this city too served as a junction for the empire and the local society, as well as a meeting point for civilians, soldiers and governmental officials during and following the war. It hence constituted a borderline between ethnicities, nationalities, cultures and periods.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it can serve as a good case-study for examining relations among the inhabitants of the city, as well as between them and the imperial power which controlled the city.

As this paper will demonstrate, the arrival of Cemal Paşa, the commander of the Fourth Army, to the city in 1915, was a turning point in the way the city and its inhabitants dealt with the war crisis. Moreover, I will argue that throughout the war the Zionist movement, which was not as strongly established in Jerusalem at that time, gained power and support among the Jewish community, a process which paved the way for its central and influential role in future political developments in Palestine. This was a result of the independent network of relief and support that the Jewish community had, thanks to the Zionists' efforts and the massive aid provided by the Jewish American community. Through its relief efforts the Zionist organization was able to unite groups around it and by this to create a wider base of support among the Jewish community in

<sup>9</sup> See on this for example: Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 11–49, 245. See also on works that focus on the home front and the questions they are engaged with, in Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 152–172.

<sup>10</sup> In her important article about the famine in Greater Syria, Linda Schatkowski Schilcher uses the famine as a micro case to discuss similar issues. Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, 'The Famine of 1915–1918 in Greater Syria', in John P. Spagnolo (ed.) *Problems of the Modern Middle East in Historical Perspective: Essays in Honour of Albert Hourani* (Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1992), pp. 229–258.

<sup>11</sup> I borrow this from Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman and Bruce Masters (eds.) *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 14.

Jerusalem and Palestine, and to act, at times, as a quasi-state. This paper will also highlight the importance and centrality of the American support at this crucial time. This was the first instance in which the Jewish American community was involved in actual support in this country, an involvement that will continue for many years to come.

### Joining the War: The Economic Crisis and the Civil Society

The Ottoman Empire joined the war officially on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary on October 30, 1914. On November 7, 1914, the Ottomans declared the war as a *Jihad*, a holy war. Ottoman involvement in the war, however, started even earlier. On August 2 the empire signed a secret treaty of alliance with the Germans for reciprocal military support against Russia. That very same day general mobilization was announced, first in Anatolia and later throughout the empire.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, even in the period of neutrality the war was already felt in Jerusalem, as well as in the rest of Palestine.

One of the immediate results of the outbreak of the war in Europe was the economic crisis and the effects of the uncertainty of the situation on the financial markets. As early as August 1914, the banks stopped providing credit and stopped selling gold. On August 6, 1914, the foreign banks in Jerusalem, including the Ottoman Bank, Credit Lyonnais, Anglo-Palestine Company,<sup>13</sup> the German Palestine Bank and the Commercial Bank of Palestine, published ads in the Sephardi Jerusalemite paper *ha-Herut*, the only newspaper that was functioning regularly, in which they tried to calm down the worried customers, who witnessed the rapid economic deterioration in Europe. The ads stated that ‘there is nothing to worry about, and we have to wait patiently for the gold that was already ordered and will soon arrive in our city’.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the foreign banks were closed in August and the only bank that continued to operate on an irregular basis was the Anglo-Palestine Company, despite the fact that it was under British protection, and thanks to some diplomatic efforts of the American ambassador in Turkey, Henry Morgenthau. It also managed to partially support the Jewish community in Palestine by providing it with paper money and credit. As will be discussed later, the American involvement in the continuation of the bank’s operations is very important, and reflects the growing American involvement in Palestine in general, and with the Jewish community in particular. The support of this institution, I claim, was one of the factors that helped the Jewish community throughout the crisis, and can serve as one possible explanation for the difference in the ways the Jewish and Arab communities dealt with the economic crisis of the time.<sup>15</sup>

Together with the foreign banks, other institutions closed down as well, including schools, relief institutions and trade houses. In October the foreign postal services stopped working, including the Austrian, German, French and British offices. The only postal service that continued operating was the Ottoman one.

<sup>12</sup> Sheffy, *British Military Intelligence*, pp. 34–36.

<sup>13</sup> A Zionist bank that was established in London in 1902, and served under the protection of England. The bank was the main financial institution of the Zionist movement in Palestine.

<sup>14</sup> *Ha-Herut* (6 August 1914), p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> See also on the Anglo-Palestine Company in Mordechai Ben-Hillel Hacoen, *Milhemet ha-‘Amim: Yoman* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi Institute, 1981), pp. 2–5, 22. See more on the role of the Anglo-Palestine Company and the American involvement in it below.



One of the outcomes was the almost complete halt in the delivery of foreign newspapers and any piece of news from outside of Palestine. It created a feeling of almost complete isolation from the outside world.<sup>16</sup> This feeling of isolation was also amplified when foreign ships stopped arriving to Palestinian harbors.

What added to the feeling of isolation, not only from the world but also among the inhabitants of the country themselves, was the closing down of most of the Palestinian newspapers, both in Hebrew and in Arabic, by the Ottoman authorities. The newspapers were all closed in 1914–1915, at different times, and on the basis of different reasons given by the government. The Arabic newspaper *al-Karmil*, for example, was shut down in December 1914, and its editor, Najib Nassar, was arrested. This, according to the Ottoman authorities, was due to the anti-Ottoman and Arab nationalistic views that the newspaper expressed. Hebrew newspapers, such as *ha-Ahdut* and *ha-Po'el ha-Tza'ir*, were accused of Zionist propaganda and of publishing anti-Ottoman articles, and were shut down as well, *ha-Ahdut* in December 1914 and *ha-Po'el ha-Tza'ir* in November 1915.<sup>17</sup> The only Hebrew newspaper that continued functioning until 1917 was *ha-Herut*, the newspaper affiliated with the Sephardi community in Jerusalem. The newspaper continued operating until 1917, when its editor, Haim Ben-'Attar, was arrested by the Ottomans and later passed away.<sup>18</sup> It is described as the only source of information that the Jewish community had about the outside world.<sup>19</sup> It seems that despite the blockade some newspapers in Arabic did find their way to Palestine and were read by people.<sup>20</sup>

The sea blockade had yet another grave consequence. Palestine, which grew cotton, grain and citrus, used to export its surplus overseas, and relied on imports to meet its food needs. When the sea blockade started, all supply lines were cut. Soon after the Ottoman government entered the war, flour prices began to climb.<sup>21</sup> The stocks of grain that were on hand supported people for only a short period of time, after which the famine started to be felt throughout Palestine and Greater Syria, mainly in the cities. According to Justin McCarthy, the overall population of

<sup>16</sup> Avraham Elmaliach, *Eretz Israel Ve-Suriyah Biymey Milhemet Ha-Olam* (Jerusalem: Ha-Solel, 1928), Vol. 1, pp. 118–119, 131; Bertha Spafford Vester, *Our Jerusalem: an American Family in the Holy City, 1881–1949* (Jerusalem: Ariel, 1992), pp. 193–194.

<sup>17</sup> Zvi Shiloni, 'The Crisis of World War I and its Effects on the Urban Environment in Jerusalem and its Jewish Community' (Master's Thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 119–121 [Hebrew].

<sup>18</sup> See on Ben-'Attar and *ha-Herut* in Yitzhak Betzalel, 'Al Yihudo shel 'ha-Herut' ve-'al Haim Ben-'Attar ke-'Orcho', *Pe'amim*, 40 (1989), pp. 121–147.

<sup>19</sup> Ben Hillel Hacohen, *Milhemet ha-'Amim*, p. 243. Some short-term Hebrew publications replaced the major newspapers in different periods, such as *Ben Hametzarim*. However, these publications appeared very irregularly and did not serve as a full replacement for a daily newspaper. Regarding *ha-Herut*, it is also important to remember that the newspaper was censored by the government. The censorship is maybe what led to the patriotic and loyal Ottoman tone that the newspaper took during the war, although before the war the manifestations of loyalty to the empire were very prominent as well.

<sup>20</sup> On September 30, 1914 Khalil al-Sakakini mentions the lack of newspapers in the city and says that people read only Telegraphs, because most newspapers were closed and the Egyptian newspapers were confiscated by the authorities. See Akram Musallam (ed.) *Yawmiyat Khalil al-Sakakini, al-kitab al-Thani: Al-Nahda al-Orthodoksiya, al-Harb al-'Uthma, al-Nafi fi Dimashq* (Jerusalem and Ramallah: Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center and the Institute of Jerusalem Studies, 2004), p. 97.

<sup>21</sup> One can learn about the steep increase in prices from a report published by Otis Glazebrook, the American consul in Jerusalem, on 3 November 1915. This report sums up the economic situation in the district of Jerusalem following the sea blockade, the famine and the locusts. Glazebrook provided a list of articles and demonstrated the increase in their prices. For example, the price of rice increased in 598% from 1914 to 1915, the price of sugar increased in 858% and the price of potatoes in 427%. See: Otis Glazebrook to the State Department, *Increase in Cost of Living Caused by War*, 3 November 1915; Consular correspondence, American consulate in Jerusalem, Record Group 84, Vol. 72; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (NACP).

Palestine declined by over 6% during the war years, as a result of famine, disease, war casualties and deportations.<sup>22</sup> The harvests during the war were poor, and, to add even more trouble, in 1915 Palestine started suffering from locusts, which caused great damage to what was left of the crops. The famine and locusts both created a challenge for the relief efforts in Jerusalem and elsewhere, as will be discussed below.<sup>23</sup>

On October 1, 1914, a month before officially joining the war, the Ottoman government announced the cancellation of the *capitulations*, the privileges that foreign subjects enjoyed in the Ottoman Empire which allowed them to reside and trade in the Ottoman lands. In a special announcement published in the local press, the government declared that:

The *Imtiyazat* [privileges] harm the progress of the state financially, because the foreign subjects do not pay taxes, and create great losses for the government that needs to take loans . . . Our royal government also declares that while canceling[sic] these privileges it does not have any false intention [*Kavana Zara*, in the Hebrew translation] towards any government. The Ottoman government is willing to have any commercial contact with all governments according to the Empire's laws.<sup>24</sup>

Soon after this announcement, the Ottoman authorities tried to reassure foreign citizens that they could remain in their places and should not leave, and that the empire, which would now become their sponsor, would do its best to protect their security and treat them well. The cancellation of the privileges was a positive thing, claimed representatives of the government, because finally there would be full equality between all subjects of the empire, and all people would be living under the same legal system.<sup>25</sup>

These attempts to create confidence in the empire among foreign subjects were not surprising. Despite these attempts, soon after this announcement various countries recommended their citizens and representatives in Palestine to leave the country. The British consul in Jerusalem, for example, left the city even before the empire officially entered the war. The American consul, Dr Otis Glazebrook, who stayed in the city throughout most of the war, became the representative of British interests in the country, and kept the belongings of some British subjects who left. The Spanish consul stayed in the city during the war as well. Most of the other foreign consuls, apart from the Russian one, were deported in November 1914, and there was much speculation about whether the government would indeed deport foreign citizens in Palestine.<sup>26</sup>

The Sephardi journalist Avraham Elmaliach<sup>27</sup> discussed at length the meaning of the cancellation of the privileges, while voicing a very strong criticism towards

<sup>22</sup> McCarthy argues that the total population of Palestine declines from 798,389 people in 1914 to 748,128 in 1918, after the war was over. Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 26.

<sup>23</sup> See more on the effects and consequences famine in Schatkowski Schilcher, 'The Famine of 1915–1918', and Rashid Khalidi, 'The Arab Experience of the War', in Cecil and Liddle, *Facing Armageddon*, pp. 642–655.

<sup>24</sup> As published in *Ha-Herut* (9 September 1914).

<sup>25</sup> An interview with the director of the security department in the Ottoman administration to a Turkish newspaper, appeared in *Ha-Herut* (28 September 1914), p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Ben Hillel Hacohen, *Milhemet ha-'Amim*, pp. 32–37. The voluntary or forced departure of foreign citizens led to the closure of many foreign institutions in the city, including schools. Some of these schools fed their students, and their closure left many children in the streets.

<sup>27</sup> Avraham Elmaliach was born in Jerusalem in 1885 to a Maghrebi family. He wrote in several newspapers and edited the Sephardi newspaper *ha-Herut* at various periods. His several volume book, *Eretz Israel ve-Suriyah bi-Yemey Milhemet ha-'Olam*, published in Hebrew in 1928, is an important source for the study of the war in Palestine.

the Ottoman Empire and its rule in the country. By freeing itself from foreign financial and legal guardianship, the Ottoman Empire could be independent of foreign influence, he wrote. Theoretically, this meant that there would be one legal system, according to the notions of the 1908 revolution. According to Elmaliach, this was not the case. He distinguished between Zionist Jews, carrying foreign citizenship, and indigenous Jews, who were born in Palestine. The foreign Jews received the cancellation of capitulations with great enthusiasm, and looked forward to adopting Ottoman citizenship and starting a new era in the relations between Turkey and the Jews in Palestine. They were hoping that the Jewish *yishuv* would gain strength and continue to grow following this development. However, these people were naïve, he claimed. Only the ‘people of the country’, who were born in Palestine and witnessed the ways in which the government functioned, knew that the cancellation of the Capitulations meant the beginning of destruction. They felt the level of insecurity, witnessed the corruption and stagnation of the government, and the cruelty of its officials. If the Jews managed to develop their community before the war, built settlements, schools, public institutions, it was all thanks to the help of foreign consuls and the protection of the capitulations.<sup>28</sup>

The significance of Elmaliach’s argument is in what he views as the impact of the cancellation of the privileges on different groups of Jews and their respective identities. The distinction he made between Jews holding foreign citizenship and local Jews who held Ottoman citizenship, the latter being more realistic about the government and its functioning, is very clear, and reflects an important distinction in citizenship at this period. However, it seems that his voice is unique among the Sephardi community in Palestine, which in general expressed loyalty to the empire and continued preaching and encouraging the Jews who were foreign subjects to adopt Ottoman citizenship and become Ottoman.

### **Dealing with the Crisis: Communal versus Inter-Communal Relief Efforts**

The ways in which the support networks and relief organizations operated in Jerusalem can serve as a way to examine communal and inter-communal dynamics and power relations in the city. The quick reaction of the Zionist institutions, their organized self-support network, as well as the support that they received from America, highlight the lack of similar organizations among other communities in the city. The Jewish relief and support organizations received much attention in the scholarship about World War I, both because of the richness and availability of sources, but also because they were indeed more prominent and noticeable. It is much more difficult to assess the other communal solidarity networks throughout the war period. Here I will try to explore the ways in which the Jewish community dealt with the crisis, and will then move to other support networks, both municipal-led and governmental-led initiatives as well as private ones. I will analyze the special role American representatives and the Jewish American community played in the relief efforts during this period and will examine the motivations that guided the American consuls in Jerusalem and Istanbul in carrying out this role.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Elmaliach, *Erez Israel ve-Suriyah*, pp. 157–161.

<sup>29</sup> As mentioned above, the American consul, Dr Otis Glazebrook, was one of the only foreign representatives that remained in the city during most of the war, which enabled him to play quite an important role during this time of crisis.



*Jewish-Led Relief and Support Efforts*

The relief and support efforts in Jerusalem very much reflect the internal conflicts within the Jewish community living in the city. This community was composed of Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews from the *old yishuv*, as well as of a relatively small community of the *new yishuv*, which was affiliated with the Zionist office in Jaffa and with Zionist organizations abroad.<sup>30</sup> The Sephardi elite tended to support the Zionist establishment, who managed to control most of the economic support to the city and to organize the main relief efforts. The Ashkenazi Jews from the *old yishuv* tried to continue supporting their community in the traditional ways of donations, *Halukah*, basing the support on a religious basis.<sup>31</sup>

In the first stage of the war the Jewish community in Jerusalem organized independently and supported itself, without outside help. Between the years 1915 and 1917 the Jewish American community started sending money and food supplies to Palestine. During this period the support efforts were organized mainly by the *new yishuv* and were focused on distributing and handling the American support. In the last stages of the war, after the USA entered the war, and when Otis Glazebrook, the American Consul, left the city, the support efforts became less organized.<sup>32</sup>

The institution that was established in Jerusalem in the very first stages of the war, following the growing famine, was the Tea and Bread Houses. Those institutions, in which Jewish people could receive tea and bread free of charge on a daily basis, grew rapidly, and eventually started serving hot meals. It was reported that around 300–400 people used the services of these houses each day.<sup>33</sup> Following these institutions a ‘Sustenance Committee’ was established in Jerusalem, which was responsible for collecting food and money contributions for the Tea and Bread Houses. Its founders were members of the *new yishuv* and young members of the Sephardi community.<sup>34</sup>

The first institution that was supposed to unite all Jews living in Jerusalem was the ‘Jerusalem Merchants Association’, established in August 1914. The main

<sup>30</sup> The *old Yishuv* refers to the Jewish community living in Palestine before the beginning of Zionist immigration in 1882. Starting in 1882, Jewish immigrants, who were mainly driven by Zionist motivations, started arriving to Palestine. The second wave of immigration between 1904 and 1914 was very ideological in nature, and consisted in many of the main Zionist leaders of the time. According to Yehoshua Ben Arie, the Jewish population in 1914 consisted of 25,000 Sephardi and Oriental Jews (55.5%) and around 20,000 Ashkenazi Jews (44.5%). According to the 1916 census of the Zionist movement, the number of Jews in Jerusalem reached 26,000. See Zvi Shiloni, ‘Ha-Dildul ba-Uchliya ha-Yehudit be-Yerushalayim bi-Tkufat Milhemet ha-‘Olam ha-Rishona’, in Yehoshua Ben Arie, Yossi Ben Arzi and Haim Goren (eds.) *Mehkarim Be-Geografyah Historit-Yishuvit shel Eretz-Israel* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Institute, 1987), p. 129; ‘Uziel Schmelz, *Uchliyat Yerushalayim: Tmurot ba-‘Et ha-Hadasha* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 1988), p. 21. McCarthy mentions this census of Jews, which was carried out by the Zionist office, as well. The census arrived at a figure of 56,000 Jews in Palestine during the war. McCarthy wonders how accurate a census carried out by a minority community could be, but also mentions that, because later statistics published by the Jewish Agency were remarkably accurate, there is a reason to rely on this census as well. McCarthy, *Population*, p. 24. The distinction between the ‘old Yishuv’ and the ‘new Yishuv’ may be contested. See for example: Israel Bartal, ‘*Yishuv Yashan*’ ve-‘*Yishuv Hadash*’ – ha-Dimuy ve-ha-Metziut’, *Cathedra*, 2 (November 1972), pp. 3–19.

<sup>31</sup> *Halukah* (‘distribution’) is the system of donations that Ashkenazi Jews from the old Jewish community received from abroad. The system was criticized both by the Sephardi Jews and the new Zionist immigrants who perceived it as a sign of unproductiveness. See Zvi Shiloni, ‘Tmurot ba-Hanhaga ha-Yehudit Be-Yerushalayim bi-Tkufat Milhemet ha-‘Olam ha-Rishona’, *Cathedra*, 35 (April 1985), pp. 59–91.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88–89.

<sup>33</sup> *Ha-Herut* (6 September 1914).

<sup>34</sup> Elmaliah, *Eretz Israel ve-Suriyah*, pp. 123–124; Shiloni, ‘*Tmurot*’, pp. 64–66.

founders were David Yellin, Albert 'Antebi,<sup>35</sup> Yosef Eliachar and Yehezkel Blum, all leaders in the local Jewish community. It was supposed to cooperate with the Anglo-Palestine Company in an attempt to receive credit and checks from it, help support the Jewish community, buy cheap food products, give loans to merchants and workers, and help people search for working places. The idea behind the association was to create as many jobs as possible and try to develop a more productive atmosphere among the Jews. The association was composed of the elite members among the Sephardi community and the Zionist circles in Jerusalem.<sup>36</sup>

The Merchants Association was dissolved after a short time and was re-established under new management, this time with the blessing of the *Majlis 'Umumi* in Jerusalem<sup>37</sup> and with a mixed management of representatives of the city's institutions. The association's goal was to provide food and support for *all* residents of Jerusalem, regardless of religious faith, with the support of the government.<sup>38</sup>

### *Anglo-Palestine Company*

The role that the Anglo-Palestine Company played throughout the war is important, both because it greatly supported the Zionist efforts of relief and because it reflected the growing involvement and interests of the USA in Palestine. In a period of economic crisis and high inflation, when all other banks were closed, the credit that the Jewish community received from the Anglo-Palestine Company gave it a significant advantage over the other communities in Palestine.

The Anglo-Palestine Company was established under British protection in 1903 by a group of Zionist activists, headed by David Levontin, and opened its first branch in Jaffa. By 1915 the company had eight branches, including one branch in Beirut (which was closed in the 1930s) and 45 cooperatives. The Anglo-Palestine Company became the main financial institution for the Jewish colonization work in Palestine. It provided credit and financial assistance to the Jewish colonies and to various associations and businesses, in an effort to economically support the Jewish community in Palestine and enhance Zionist work in the country.<sup>39</sup>

Shortly after the beginning of the war, the bank started issuing bank notes, as a consequence of the shortage of gold in the country. These checks were used as paper money, circulated similarly to the Ottoman bank notes, and enabled some trade and exchange of goods to continue, despite the economic hardships. In order to provide currency, the bank issued registered checks, which would be paid back after their due date.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> On Albert 'Antebi see footnote 66 below.

<sup>36</sup> Efrati, *Mi-Mashber le-Tikva*, p. 54; On the Merchants Association, see also in Central Zionist Archive (CZA) A153/144/2.

<sup>37</sup> The *Majlis 'Umumi* was the general council of Jerusalem, which was established in 1913. It was formed by representatives of the various parts of the *sanjaq* of Jerusalem, and its main function was to meet once a year in order to decide on a budget for it.

<sup>38</sup> *Ha-Herut* (18 January 1916).

<sup>39</sup> Robert Lansing to Nathan Straus, 25 January 25 1915; 867.4016/27 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M353, roll 43); Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs in Turkey 1910–1929, Record Group 59; National Archives College Park (NACP). See more on the history of the Anglo-Palestine Company in: *A Story of a Bank: 75th Anniversary to Bank Leumi Le-Israel, 1902–1977* (Tel Aviv: Ahdut Publishing, 1977); *A Contribution to a Cohen: a Collection in Honor of Zalman David HaCohen Levontin on the Occasion of the End of his Work as the General Director of The Anglo-Palestine Bank in Eretz Israel* (Tel Aviv: 1926).

<sup>40</sup> An interview with David Levontin, CZA A34/112.

As mentioned above, the Anglo-Palestine Company was one of the foreign banks that were shut down by the Ottoman authorities at the beginning of the war. In January 1915 the military authorities in Jerusalem ordered all people who held in their possession registered checks to present them to the local authorities. According to the instructions, the government's treasury would confiscate money from the bank's branches, and the company would be liquidated within 10 days under the control of governmental officials. Branches would be closed, and offices evacuated.<sup>41</sup> However, the bank's directors got ready ahead of time and made sure that most of the cash and checks would not be found in the bank's offices.<sup>42</sup>

What also assisted the Anglo-Palestine Company was the pressure that the American consuls in Palestine and Istanbul put on the Ottoman authorities, due to large deposits of American money in the bank, made mainly to Jewish-led relief organizations in Palestine.<sup>43</sup> The American support and pressure, together with the acts taken by the bank's administrators, enabled the bank to continue its operations undercover throughout most of the war, and to provide financial support and assistance to the Jewish community. The American support reflects the deeper involvement that the United States had in Palestine, which was expressed not only in relation to the Anglo-Palestine Company, but mainly in its significant involvement in relief efforts.

### *American-led Support*

When investigating the American support efforts during the war years, it is important to distinguish between two kinds of involvement, the first initiated by the Jewish American community and the 'Joint Distribution Committee', and the other organized by the American Colony in Jerusalem. However, both kinds of involvement signal, I claim, a new kind of international involvement in Palestine, and maybe even a new kind of Orientalism, 'American Orientalism', that played out in the form of support efforts and aid organizations.<sup>44</sup>

The Jewish American community, led by the 'Joint Distribution Committee', organized one of the most substantial support operations in Palestine, with the shipment of both food products and money to the country.<sup>45</sup> The most important food delivery, 900 tons of food, arrived in April 1915 with the ship *Voulcan*. The process of distribution of the American support highlights again the great tension

<sup>41</sup> Telegram sent by the American ambassador in London to the Secretary of State, 27 January 1915; 867.4016/35 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M353, roll 43); Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs in Turkey 1910–1929, Record Group 59; NACP.

<sup>42</sup> *A Story of a Bank*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>43</sup> This interest is indeed reflected in the numerous correspondences between the American consulates in Istanbul, Jerusalem, and the State Department in Washington, which can be found in the records of the American consulate in Jerusalem, Record Group 84, Volumes 67–89; NACP.

<sup>44</sup> On 'American Orientalism' and American welfare politics see: Abigail Jacobson, 'American "Welfare Politics": Americans in Jerusalem during World War I', unpublished paper, presented in *America in the Mediterranean* Workshop, Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, December 11, 2008.

<sup>45</sup> The 'Joint Distribution Committee' was an umbrella organization that united in it various Jewish American independent support groups, such as the 'American Jewish Relief Committee for the Sufferers of the War', and the 'Provisional Committee for General Zionist Affairs'. These organizations united into one umbrella organization at the end of 1915, and led the support effort of the American Jewish community to Palestine. See on this in Shiloni, *The Crisis of World War I*, pp. 45–50. Another important relief organization, which was established by the Anglican bishop of Jerusalem, Bishop Rennie MacInnes, was the 'Syria and Palestine relief Fund', which operated mainly following the war. See more on this organization in Lambeth Palace Library (LPL), MS. 2611–2613. The activities of this organization are beyond the scope of this paper.

that existed between different political factions and power groups within the Jewish community in Palestine, which wanted to win as much influence over the shipment and its distribution as possible.

The *Voulcan* shipment involved some negotiations regarding its distribution among the cities and settlements in Palestine. Overall, 55% of its products were handed to the Jewish community, which distributed most of them to Jerusalem (60%), and the rest to different cities and settlements. The Muslims in Palestine received 26% of the products, and the Christians 19%. The Muslims and Christians used the products to support their communities in Jerusalem and Jaffa.<sup>46</sup>

The American consul Dr Glazebrook was personally involved in the distribution of food among all communities in Palestine. Each community had its own distribution committee, and Dr Glazebrook received reports on their decisions and the people appointed to serve in them.<sup>47</sup> The distribution of food among the Jewish community in Jerusalem was organized by a committee that was composed of Dr Glazebrook himself, David Yellin and Dr Yizhak Levi. This committee, '*Va'ad ha-Makolet*' (the Food Committee), which was elected after many disputes, organized lists of people and organizations that were in need of the support, regardless of their affiliation to religious institutions. Among the Jewish community in Jerusalem, 23,000 people and 35 institutions enjoyed the American support from this ship.<sup>48</sup> However, the Food Committee was also criticized for not distributing the food fairly, and for selling wheat and sugar at higher prices than their prices before the war.<sup>49</sup> The American Jewish community also delivered \$50,000, most of which was distributed in Jerusalem.<sup>50</sup>

The decision regarding the distribution of support indeed brings to light the fractions within the Jewish community and the power struggles among mainly the *old yishuv* and the *new yishuv*. The idea behind the *Voulcan* relief is clear from the following lines, included in a letter that consul Glazebrook sent to David Yellin regarding the distribution of the aid:

It is not like *Halukah*<sup>51</sup>... It is an emergency fund and would be administered independent of creed, race or nationality. Neither precedence nor prejudices will interfere with carrying out the wishes of the donors.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Elmaliach, *Eretz Israel ve-Suriyah*, 192–196; See also Otis Glazebrook to American consular agent in Jaffa, 21 June 1915; Consular Correspondence, American Consulate, Jerusalem, Volume 72, Record Group 84; NACP. Attached to this letter is a list of products and their distribution among Muslims, Jews and Christians in Jaffa and Jerusalem. Among the products that were distributed are the following: flour, rice, sugar, barley, onions, potatoes, beans, coffee and salt.

<sup>47</sup> See for example letters from the consular agent in Jaffa, in which he reports to Dr Glazebrook on the meeting of the Muslim and Christian distribution committee, which met in Jaffa. Hussein al-Husseini, the mayor of Jerusalem, was reported to be a member of this committee. Consular agent in Jaffa to Dr Glazebrook, 17 May 1915 and 20 May 1915; Consular correspondence, American Consulate, Jerusalem; Vol. 72, Record Group 84; NACP.

<sup>48</sup> Elmaliach, *Eretz Israel ve-Suriyah*, pp. 192–196.

<sup>49</sup> For example: CZA A153/144/2.

<sup>50</sup> Food and medical supplies were sent to Palestine by American ships until early 1917. It is estimated that from December 1914 a total of \$1,746,486 was sent to Palestine. See on this in Charles D. Smith, 'Historiographies of World War I and the Emergence of the Contemporary Middle East' (paper presented at the workshop 'Twentieth Century Historians and Historiography of the Middle East', Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, May 23–26, 2002), p. 22 fn. 37.

<sup>51</sup> See footnote 32 above.

<sup>52</sup> Dr Otis Glazebrook to David Yellin, 19 May 1915; Consular Correspondence, American Consulate, Jerusalem, Volume 72, Record Group 84; NACP.

The *Voulcan* shipment provides an example of both a communal solidarity, but also of a more collective sense of solidarity. It also shows the deep American involvement and investment in Palestine and the power and influence of the Jewish American community, which collected the aid. Regarding the issue of American involvement, Rashid Khalidi claims that at this period the USA did not have significant interests in the Middle East in general, and in Palestine specifically, beyond modest cultural, educational and missionary concerns.<sup>53</sup> However, as the above cases of support demonstrate, I argue that at least during the war period the USA, and specifically parts of the Jewish American community, played a major role in aiding the local population, and mainly the Jewish *yishuv*. The American relief efforts were organized with the encouragement and help of the American consuls in Jerusalem and Constantinople.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, personal connections between high-ranking American Jews and the US government helped in promoting the Zionist case as well. Judge Louis Brandeis, for example, used his personal friendship with President Wilson to encourage him to support the Jewish *Yishuv* during the war.<sup>55</sup>

The case of the distribution of relief had another long-term effect. Throughout this period, the Zionist activists in Palestine managed to gather the support and cooperation of other groups within the Jewish community, such as the representatives of the Sephardi community, in the relief distribution efforts to the Jewish community. By doing this, the Zionist organization gained more power and influence among the Jewish community, as well as in the eyes of the local and foreign authorities, and enabled it, at times, to play a role of a quasi-state. This contributed to its growing strength in Palestine and abroad, which would be clearly demonstrated with the issuance of the 1917 Balfour Declaration.

The American involvement in support and relief efforts in Jerusalem (and Palestine) did not end with the support offered by the American Jewish community. The American Colony in Jerusalem, established as a cooperative Christian community in the city in 1881, was engaged in various philanthropic and charitable activities during the war years, and aided the local population of all communities. During the war, the American Colony enjoyed a special status *vis-à-vis* the Ottoman authorities in Jerusalem, especially before the US joined the war. Its members were able in many cases to use their connections with the local authorities, and within the leadership of the various communities, to support their charity work. Among other institutions, it operated a clinic, two hospitals (which worked in conjunction with the Red Crescent Society), and a vast feeding project. The soup kitchens, operated by the American Colony, fed up to 2,500 men, women and children of all communities, who received a dish of soup daily.

<sup>53</sup> Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), pp. 118–119.

<sup>54</sup> The USA was also involved in the post-war negotiations regarding the future of Palestine, with the King-Crane Commission that was sent to Palestine and Syria in 1919.

<sup>55</sup> Samir Seikaly, 'Unequal Fortunes: The Arabs of Palestine and the Jews during World War I', in Wadad al-Qadi (ed.) *Studia Arabica et Islamica* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981), pp. 399–406. On the history of the American Colony see, for example: Yaakov Ariel and Ruth Kark, 'Messianism, Holiness, Charisma and Community: The American-Swedish Colony in Jerusalem, 1881–1933', *Church History*, 65 (December 1996), pp. 641–658; Jonathan Broder, 'A Family, a Colony, a Life of Good Works in the Holy City', *Smithsonian*, 27(12) (March 1997), pp. 120–135; Milette Shamir, 'Our Jerusalem: Americans in the Holy Land and Protestant Narratives of National Entitlement', *American Quarterly*, 55(1) (March 2003).



One of the well-known soup kitchens was the *Khaskie Sultan* kitchen, which the colony operated as well.<sup>56</sup> The colony received special donations from individuals and organizations in the US, which supported the operation of handicrafts and sewing schools, as well as a lace industry, which employed women and girls, who were among the main victims of the war. Many women, for example, were forced to become prostitutes in order to support their families, and some even sold their babies in order to get bread for their families. The purpose of these schools, then, was to provide some employment for women and girls, and help them increase their family's income.

### *Governmental and Municipal-based Support Efforts*

On August 18, 1914, before the Ottoman Empire officially entered the war, the Jerusalem municipality held a special meeting to which it invited representatives of the various communities in the city. The purpose of the special session was to discuss the crisis that the city faced following the outbreak of the war, and to consider ways to assist the city residents. Zeki Bey, the military commander of Jerusalem, was the main speaker. He called for all the residents of the city to unite, regardless of nationality and religious beliefs, in order to cope with the crisis that the city was facing. At the end of the meeting the participants decided to address all communities and ask for lists of poor people, so that the municipality could help them as much as possible.<sup>57</sup> On November 10, 1914, Zeki Bey addressed the Arab notables in Jaffa with a similar message. Internal peace and cooperation among the communities is one of the main conditions for victory over the external enemy, he said.<sup>58</sup>

Zeki Bey was the military commander of Jerusalem, and also, when the war broke out, its civil ruler. He served in his position until mid-1915, when Cemal Paşa removed him and replaced him by Midhat Bey. Zeki Bey was one of the people active in the governmental-based relief efforts for the residents of Jerusalem. Different writers describe him as being highly appreciated by Oriental Christians and Jews, who felt secured under his protection. He did not make any attempt to incline the population on one side or the other, and was popular among the consuls serving in Jerusalem as well. He helped Jews who escaped from Jaffa and took refuge in Jerusalem, and also facilitated the departure of the expelled religious orders when those were compelled to leave by the Ottoman authorities.<sup>59</sup>

Another person active in the collective relief efforts was the mayor Hussein al-Husseini, who was also involved in various organizations and efforts to ease the crisis on the city's inhabitants. Those efforts were organized by both the municipality and private initiatives of local residents, as well as by Ottoman officials, such as Zeki Bey and later Rüşen Bey. The main challenges that these initiatives faced was how to cope with the famine that was spreading in the city,

<sup>56</sup> On the history of this institution see Amy Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence: an Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002). On the American Colony operations during the war see: 'War Time Aid', container I:3, American Colony in Jerusalem Collection, Manuscript Division-Library of Congress; Vester, *Our Jerusalem*, pp. 201–202.

<sup>57</sup> *Ha-Herut* (19 August 1914).

<sup>58</sup> Ben Hillel Hacohen, *Milhemet ha-'Amim*, p. 29.

<sup>59</sup> Shiloni, *The Crisis of World War I*, pp. 14–17; Hemda Ben Yehuda, Kemper Fullerton, Edgar J. Banks (eds.) *Jerusalem: Its Redemption and Future. The Great Drama of Deliverance Described by Eyewitnesses* (New York: The Christian Herald, 1918), pp. 18–19, 23, 28, 72–73. According to Ben Yehuda's description, the only ones who did not favor Zaki Bey were the Germans, who criticized his way of life. It seems that Zaki Bey was quite a colorful figure.

how to fight the locust plague that attacked Jerusalem in 1915, and the organization of wheat deliveries from Jordan (see below).

The emphasis that Zeki Bey placed on inter-communal cooperation in Jerusalem during this time of crisis is manifested again in a joint meeting of Jewish and Muslim residents of Jerusalem that took place on November 24, 1914, in the Hebrew Teachers' College in the city. The meeting was organized as a result of cooperation between the Ottomanization Committee among the Jews, and Zeki Bey, who sought to promote closer relations and cooperation between Jews and Muslims in Palestine. The meeting was devoted in part to the issue of Ottomanization, the adoption of Ottoman citizenship among those holding foreign citizenship. The importance of the meeting, as it was reported, was that it was the first time in which Jews and Muslims officially met in order to discuss the relations between them and the Ottoman government. Jews from all factions in Jerusalem, some Jewish representatives from Jaffa and some settlements, as well as Muslim notables all attended the meeting. Among the speakers were the Jewish representatives Eliezer Ben Yehuda and David Yellin, as well as Saleh abd al-Latif al-Husseini and Sheik abd al-Qadir al-Muthafer. Hussein al-Husseini, who could not attend the meeting, sent a note and apologized for his absence, greeted the participants and wished good luck to this initiative.

The chair, Eliezer Ben Yehuda, opened the meeting saying that this gathering, taking place in the midst of the horrors of war, was extremely important for the country and its residents. The meeting symbolized the realization of the Muslims regarding the importance of cooperation and of building closer relations between Jews and Muslims in Palestine. The Jews, claimed Ben Yehuda, have always realized the importance of such cooperation, and viewed themselves as united with the Muslims as Ottoman citizens. Now, he continued, the notables among the Muslims approached us [the Jews] saying that they have objected to Jews who held foreign citizenship, and that the only way of getting closer is if all Jews adopt Ottoman citizenship. Building closer ties and cooperation between Jews and Muslims is necessary for our common good, as well as for the country and the empire, concluded Ben Yehuda.<sup>60</sup>

The next speaker was Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Muthafer, who declared that he was speaking on behalf of many of his Muslim brethren. He spoke in favor of Ottomanization of Jews, and for the study of Arabic and Turkish in all Jewish schools, and highlighted the importance of joint communal efforts in this time of crisis:

Through these languages Jews and Muslims would be able to come together and unite. Muslims would benefit from the Jews, and Jews would find good neighbors in the Muslims. There is no extremism in Islam as there is in Christianity. Islam respects all other religions. This meeting should create unity [ . . . ] We have a common destiny. If the enemy would claim our [Muslims] property, he would claim yours [Jewish] as well. The same way we would protect our [property] and yours, you would protect yours and ours.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Elmaliach, *Eretz Israel ve-Suriyah*, Vol. 2, pp. 64–65.

<sup>61</sup> *Ha-Herut* (27 November 1914). Abd al-Kadir al-Muthafer is also mentioned in Khalil al-Sakakini's diaries, as one of the speakers in a pro-Ottoman demonstration against the Entente powers. The demonstration, in which Muslims, Christians and Jews participated, took place in November 1914, started in the al-Aqsa mosque, and continued to *Bab al-Khalil* (Jaffa Gate). He is reported to be the *mufti* of the 4th army brigade, commanded by Cemal Paşa. Khalil al Sakakini, *Kazeh Ani, Rabotai: Me-yomano Shel Khalil Sakakini*, trans. From Arabic Gideon Shilo (Jerusalem: Keter, 1990), p. 60 (18 November 1914). In the 1920s, on the other hand, al-Muthafer is mentioned as one of the leaders of *al-Jami'yah al-Fidai'yah*, a Palestinian organization that operated against the British mandate in Jerusalem and Jaffa. See Hillel Cohen, *Tzva ha-Tz'alim: Mashtapim Palestininim be-Sherut ha-Ziyonut 1917–1948* (Jerusalem: 'Ivrit Publishing, 2004), p. 38.

The two next speakers were Muhammad Saleh Abd al-Latif al-Husseini and David Yellin, the important Jewish community leader and educator. The latter addressed the audience in Arabic. While summarizing the importance of the meeting, Abraham Elmaliach wrote:

It was the first time that the two peoples gathered to discuss their relationship . . . Not less important was the educational value of the meeting for the Jews. Tens of years they have been living in Eretz Israel without realizing that there is another people living with them . . . The Jews did not feel it and avoided the outside environment, not only because they [the Jews] focused on their self-development, but because the people of the book disregarded the people of the field and the desert.<sup>62</sup>

Interestingly, what Elmaliach is really saying here is that it was exactly the emergency state of affairs that Jerusalemites experienced, the state of war and crisis, which enabled such an inter-communal cooperation to potentially take place. The meeting, for him, signified a moment in which issues that have never been discussed before were brought upfront.

And indeed, the meeting was supposed to be the first in a series of meetings among Jews and Muslims, to look into all the issues which need to be discussed. However, shortly after this meeting Cemal Paşa, the Ottoman commander of the Fourth army, arrived in Palestine to command the Ottoman fighting in the Egyptian front. Among other things he removed Zeki Bey from his post as the commander of Jerusalem. Zeki Bey was removed probably because of his popularity and good reputation among the local population in the city, which Cemal Paşa may have perceived as a threat against his own power and influence. Another possible reason for his removal was the general anti-national policy that Cemal Paşa began to implement in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon.<sup>63</sup> As part of this policy Cemal Paşa intensified Ottoman activities against Arab nationalists, as well as against Zionists, and the idea of creating cooperation between Jews and Muslims was discarded.

The meeting and the statements made in it are meaningful even though it had no continuation. Clearly, a major part of it was dedicated to the issue of Ottomanization, to the importance of loyalty to the empire, and to the benefits that Ottoman citizenship carried. It took place in a period during which Jews holding Ottoman citizenship called on foreign citizens to waive their foreign citizenship for an Ottoman one. Shortly after this meeting took place, the Ottoman government began expelling citizens of foreign countries from Palestine. Moreover, the composition of the meeting and the clear statement that its objective was to reach an understanding between Jews and Muslims, are significant as well. The Sephardi community in Jerusalem saw the Muslims as possible partners for the Jews in their effort of cooperating and reaching an understanding between them for the benefit of Palestine and of the Ottoman Empire. The speeches in this meeting serve as an example of this attempt to create a Muslim–Jewish front against the Christians, whom the Sephardi viewed as ‘inciters’. Interestingly, as is seen above, at least one Muslim speaker cooperated with this attempt while highlighting the advantages of Islam in contrast to Christianity.

Another interesting attempt of Jewish–Arab cooperation in a joint organization was the Red Crescent Society (*Cemiyet Hilal-i Ahmer*). The Jerusalem branch of the Red Crescent Society was established at the beginning of 1915. Founded in

<sup>62</sup> Elmaliach, *Eretz Israel ve-Suriyah*, Vol. 2, p. 66.

<sup>63</sup> Shiloni, *The Crisis of World War I*, p. 15.

1877, the center of the society was in Istanbul, with branches all around the empire. Its aim was to treat the sick and wounded and to relieve the suffering of people in times of war. The Red Crescent Society was composed of Ottoman men and women, the latter indeed playing an important role in it.<sup>64</sup> Wasif Jawhariyeh<sup>65</sup> briefly discussed the society in his memoir, and it is mentioned in passing in other sources as well. The honorary president of the society was the mayor, Hussein al-Husseini; his deputy was Albert 'Antebi.<sup>66</sup> The members of the organizing committee were, among others, Yizhak Eliachar, a Sephardi Jew from the famous and influential Eliachar family, and Salim al-Khoury. Interestingly, Jawhariyeh paid much attention to the fund-raising parties held by the Red Crescent Society, probably because he played the 'oud in some of them.<sup>67</sup>

According to Avraham Elmaliach, the Red Crescent Society was established on the initiative of Zeki Bey, and was composed of physicians and nurses from Jerusalem who were trained in the care of the wounded during the war, as well as the civil population which was exposed to diseases resulting from the war. Elmaliach focuses on the training of Jewish nurses who would work for the society and says that the number of trainees was more than 100.<sup>68</sup>

### *The Locusts and the Famine*

One challenge among many that the municipality of Jerusalem faced during the war years was the locust plague that attacked the city in the spring of 1915. The locusts were not a direct result of the war, but they created more hardship for the city's residents, and also destroyed trees that managed to survive the dry summer of 1914 and had not been used by the Ottoman army for fuel and heating. The locust plague began in Egypt already in the summer of 1914 and spread to Palestine. Wasif Jawhariyeh recalled sitting on the stairs of the municipality,

<sup>64</sup> See information on the Red Crescent Society in a booklet that specifies the structure of the organization, published in Istanbul in 1911: *Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti: Nizamnameh Asası*, in: Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı DH.ID 132/11 (40–25) (BBA). *Ha-Herut* in an article from 21 December 1914, mentions that there was also a sub-organization of the Red Crescent Society, called 'The Hebrew Ottoman Red Crescent Society', in which Jewish physicians served in various positions to assist people. See *ha-Herut* (21 December 1914), p. 1. On the history of the Red Crescent Society and the role it served within the imperial context see John Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 138–147, and Nadir Özbek, 'The Politics of Poor Relief in the Late Ottoman Empire 1876–1914', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 21 (Fall 1991), pp. 1–33.

<sup>65</sup> Wasif Jawhariyeh was a composer, an 'oud musician, and a historian, who was born in Jerusalem in 1897 and died in Beirut in 1973. His memoirs, edited by Salim Tamari and Issam Nassar, serve as an excellent and unique source about life in Jerusalem during the last years of Ottoman rule in the city. See Salim Tamari and Issam Nassar (eds.) *Al-Quds Al-'Uthmaniyya Fi Mudhakarāt al-Jawhariyeh* (Jerusalem: Institute of Jerusalem Studies, 2003).

<sup>66</sup> Albert 'Antebi was born in Damascus. He was one of the most important activists among the Jewish community in the late Ottoman period and served, among other jobs, as the director of the Alliance Israelite School in Jerusalem until 1914. His main influence resulted from his position as the representative of the Jewish Colonization Association in Jerusalem. He was very well connected among the Ottoman authorities, foreign consuls and the Zionist administration in the country, and was involved also in land purchases from Arabs for the Jewish community. Despite being also a mediator between the local authorities and the Jewish community in Palestine, he was critical of political Zionism, and managed to create some strong enemies in certain Zionist circles. Before the war he declared that he was not a Zionist and that political Zionism was a destructive force for the Jewish *yishuv* in the country. He believed in enhancing Jewish settlement in Palestine under the auspices of the Ottoman Empire. He also called for cooperation with the moderate forces among the Arab community in the country. See more on 'Antebi in Michael Laskier, 'Avraham Albert 'Antebi: Prakim be-Po'alo Bishnot 1897–1914', *Pe'anim*, 21 (1984), pp. 50–81.

<sup>67</sup> Tamari and Nassar, *Al-Quds Al-'Uthmaniyya*, pp. 200–201.

<sup>68</sup> Elmaliach, *Eretz Israel ve-Suriyah*, Vol. 2, p. 69. Christian nurses were trained in the missionary-led schools.

raising his head up, and not seeing the sky and the sun, which were covered with locusts. The locusts also flew into houses and destroyed whatever they could find.<sup>69</sup>

When the locusts arrived in Jerusalem, the municipality organized a special committee whose role was to coordinate the city's struggle against them. The government issued an edict ordering residents of Jerusalem between the ages 19 and 60 to collect locust eggs for 10 days and to bring them to police stations, where the eggs would be set on fire. Those who failed to collect the eggs were required to pay a fee of half a Turkish lira. Many of the residents of Jerusalem took part in this collective effort to fight the locusts. Schools were closed and their students were called to join the effort as well. Each school was assigned an area where its students had to collect the locusts.<sup>70</sup> Avraham Elmaliach claims that more than 1,500 people joined in the fight against the locusts, and that within three days 90,000 kilo of locusts were collected in Jerusalem alone.<sup>71</sup> The municipality managed to get organized and to engage as many people as possible in the battle against the locusts. This was a collective effort of all the residents of Jerusalem, and seemed to have united the people against one clear target.

However, it appears that the most acute hardship the residents of Jerusalem and Palestine faced during the war years was the famine, and especially the shortage of wheat. As mentioned above, shortly after the war broke out, famine started hitting the people of Greater Syria and Palestine, and especially the residents of the cities. When flour and wheat became hard to find, merchants took advantage of the situation and raised prices.<sup>72</sup>

Linda Schatkowski Schilcher reports on two important steps taken by Cemal Paşa when he arrived to Damascus in 1915 and faced the famine. The first was to ban grain exports from the inland provinces of Aleppo and Damascus to the coast, because of his fear that grain moving to the coastal regions would not be marketed there but exported to enemy fleets that would offer good prices for the grain. The second step, which was also relevant to Palestine, was ordering the collection of the annual agricultural tithes not in money but in kind. Policemen were sent to 'purchase' the grain at government-fixed prices, which were much lower than the prices in the free market. Producers started hiding their harvests, and even those who were still able to plant lost any incentive to do so, because of the expected confiscation of the harvest by the government. The market was open to grain speculators on the one hand, and to private grain entrepreneurs on the other hand, the latter serving as the solely-authorized purchasing agents. In Jerusalem, the 'Antebi family is mentioned as such an agent.<sup>73</sup>

In Jerusalem, as well as in other provinces in Greater Syria, the Ottoman authorities formed a grain syndicate, which was in charge of selling grain at fixed prices. The grain syndicate was supposed to purchase grain in Karak, East Jordan, and deliver it to Jerusalem. Various public figures in Jerusalem served as members

<sup>69</sup> Tamari and Nassar, *al-Quds al-Uthmaniyya*, p. 190.

<sup>70</sup> See on the collective effort to fight the locust plague: *Ibid*; John Whiting, 'Jerusalem's Locust Plague: Being a Description of the Recent Locust Influx into Palestine and Comparing them with Ancient Locust Invasions as Narrated in the Old World's History Book, the Bible', *National Geographic Magazine*, 28(6) (1915), pp. 511–550; Ya'akov Yehoshua, *Yerushalayim Tmol Shilshom* (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1977), Vol. 3, pp. 44–45; Elmaliach, *Eretz Israel ve-Suriyah*, Vol. 2, pp. 139–144.

<sup>71</sup> Elmaliach, *Eretz Israel ve-Suriyah*, Vol. 2, p. 142.

<sup>72</sup> Ya'akov Yehoshua recalls that a kilo of flour cost 7 Kirsh, and sugar cost 12 Kirsh.

<sup>73</sup> Schatkowski Schilcher, *The Famine of 1915–1918*, pp. 236–239.



in the grain syndicate, among them the mayor, Ertuğrul ('Aref?) Şaker Bey (who replaced Hussein al-Husseini after the latter was fired by Cemal Paşa), the Jewish Sephardi banker Haim Valero and his deputy, Hussein al-Husseini, and Ali Jarallah who was a member of the administrative council, *Majlis Idara*.<sup>74</sup> The centrality of the districts of Karak and al-Salt as the main grain providers of Jerusalem represents the regional geographical changes that took place following the war. If, before the war, Jerusalem was dependent upon both an internal supply from Eastern Jordan and an external supply from the sea, when the war broke out and the sea was cut off, only the land remained open as a venue of imports.<sup>75</sup>

In his memoir, Wasif Jawhariyeh provides some more details about the government's initiatives of importing grain from Karak and al-Salt. Jawhariyeh reports that Rüşhen Bey, the military commander of Jerusalem, while realizing the suffering of people in the city, approached Hussein al-Husseini with an offer to import wheat from Eastern Jordan to Palestine. Rüşhen Bey made this offer to al-Husseini because of the latter's high popularity among city's inhabitants. Jawhariyeh describes at length several trips in which he joined al-Husseini to Karak in order to arrange the import of wheat to Palestine. Because there was no bridge across the Jordan River, the wheat had to be transported via the Dead Sea. To facilitate this, al-Husseini became the contractor of a port that was built on the west bank of the Dead Sea. Jawhariyeh does not refer to this project as being part of the activities of the Grain Syndicate in Jerusalem. However, it seems that it was part of this initiative, at least to judge from the involvement of Hussein al-Husseini in it.<sup>76</sup>

However, these governmental and private initiatives did not seem to significantly ease the suffering of people in Jerusalem, if one can judge from personal testimonies. The situation in Jerusalem remained difficult despite these attempts to help and ease the crisis.

## Conclusion

In this paper I attempted to capture the experience of World War I in Jerusalem and examine the ways the city and its diverse population confronted this acute crisis. By examining the war from the lens of a city and its residents, I am inspired by works that analyze the way 'ordinary people' in the 'home front', not necessarily soldiers, have experienced and lived through the war. Here, I looked into the challenges that the city and its residents were facing, and examined the different support networks, both communal and inter-communal, that functioned and operated throughout the war. Indeed, the war affected people in different ways. Socio-economic status, citizenship (Ottoman or foreign) and affiliation to different groups and organizations, were only few of the factors that influenced the way individuals and groups experienced the war. However, in general the war had a profound impact, not only on Jerusalem or Palestine, but also on the entire

<sup>74</sup> *Ha-Herut* (3 December 1916). In an article published in *Ha-Herut* on 26 October 1916, it is mentioned that 25,000 kilo of grain were brought to Jerusalem every day from Karak and Salt in Jordan. The grain was distributed to the residents of Jerusalem by the municipality. *Ha-Herut* (26 October 1916), p. 4. Indeed, Jordan seems to be the major source of grain supply to Palestine. Shortly after the British captured Jerusalem, they report that there is a serious shortage of supply in Jerusalem, since Jordan is in Ottoman (enemy) hands and grain cannot be delivered. See a British report regarding the supplies for Jerusalem, 15 December 1917, National Archives, Public Records Office (PRO), FO 141/746/4.

<sup>75</sup> Ronald Storrs, *Orientalisms* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1937), p. 297.

<sup>76</sup> Tamari and Nassar, *al-Quds al-'Uthmaniyya*, pp. 201–203, 214–216, 227–230.

region. It is worth highlighting some of those effects, as well as the main points that came out of the analysis above.

The first point to emphasize is the function and influence of support networks. Those existed in Jerusalem, both on the communal level (mainly among the Jewish community) and the inter-communal level of the municipality and government. These support networks are very significant when we look at the ways in which Jerusalem functioned, the internal struggles within its communities, and the relations between the residents of the city and the Ottoman authorities. I claim that the ways these networks functioned are indicative of future political developments, both within the local arena of the city, but also in the larger context of Palestine, as explained below.

Examining the communal support networks, it is clear that the Jewish community was well organized and managed to arrange various means of support relatively quickly. However, when examining this process of communal support more closely, the picture becomes more complicated. The process of relief and support networks involved in it many negotiations and internal struggles, and brought to the fore tensions that existed before but surfaced at this time of crisis. These tensions found expression both among the *old yishuv* versus the *new yishuv*, each of which represented different perceptions and visions towards future life in Palestine, and also in personal struggles among people within the same sub-community. Dealing with the crisis also created alliances between the Zionist circles in Jerusalem, a relatively small group of people at the time, and the Sephardi elite in the city. Looking at the large picture, it is clear that the Zionist-Sephardi alliance was more successful than the *old yishuv's* initiatives. It is interesting to see how the Zionist-Sephardi circles, who preached self-reliance, were heavily assisted by external help, mainly from the Jewish American community. This is important to note when remembering the *new yishuv's* criticism towards the *old yishuv* regarding its reliance on donations from abroad, the *halukah* money. At this time of crisis, the Zionists did the same thing.

Indeed, it seems that this Zionist-Sephardi alliance created an alternative support network that replaced the Ottoman one, under the lead of the Zionist movement. However, in terms of affiliation to the Ottoman Empire as a uniting collective, it appears that, despite the crisis, the Sephardi elite in Jerusalem still viewed itself as loyal Ottoman subjects until a relatively late stage of the war. Despite the fact that they cooperated with the Zionist administration in relief efforts in the city, the Sephardim also maintained their unique identity in which Ottomanism and Zionism were intertwined.

Regardless of these internal tensions and fractions, I argue that the ability of the Jewish community to organized itself, whether by its own independent initiatives or with external support and resources, is indicative of processes that took place in Palestine not too many years later. The challenge of the war years was a difficult one, but together with the hardships that the war imposed it also strengthened the local Zionist foundation, and allowed it to create alliances of new sorts. As I have mentioned above, parts of the Zionists' success was due to the activities and help that they received from the Anglo-Palestine Bank, which continued to operate throughout long periods in the war, when other banks had long closed. A large part of the success was due to the external resources that the Jews received from foreign powers, mainly from the USA. It is thus suggested that the Zionist movement's activities during the war paved the way for the role it would play in future political

developments in the country. The first such dramatic development was, of course, the Balfour Declaration. The various means of American support, as mentioned earlier, are also important, and signal the first massive relief offered to Palestine.

As for city and governmental organized support networks, here the most important point to highlight is the role of specific figures within the Ottoman administration of the city in assisting the communities and the city to deal with the crisis. Such figures were Zeki Bey, the military commander of Jerusalem, as well as the mayor, Hussein al-Husseini. Interestingly, they were all removed by Cemal Paşa. Hussein al-Husseini was removed around June 1915 and was replaced by a Turk called Ertuğrul ('Aref?) Şaker Bey. The reason for his removal was possibly his membership in the Husseini family, and maybe his support of Arab nationalism. It is interesting to note that in 1914 Hussein al Husseini received a promotion from *Rutban* to *Nişan* (military ranks), as a sign of appreciation for fulfilling both his civil duty as the mayor of Jerusalem and his military duties at times of war.<sup>77</sup> These documents indicate that al-Husseini was not removed from his post as mayor due to poor functioning as a civil servant but for other reasons. Hussein Al-Husseini continued to be involved in various projects and eventually, when the British entered the city, he was the one who presented the city's surrender pact, while symbolically representing the city. It is not quite clear then what was his formal position between 1915 and 1917.<sup>78</sup>

Zeki Bey, who served as the military commander of Jerusalem under Cemal Paşa, was removed from his post, probably following the popularity he gained among the city's inhabitants, and maybe also following German pressure on Cemal Paşa. According to one version, Zeki Bey later returned to Jerusalem as a civilian. When the British entered Jerusalem they arrested Zeki Bey and sent him to a prison in Cairo. The Palestinian Jews staying in Alexandria as refugees helped to have him released from prison.<sup>79</sup> Zeki Bey was interested in creating better understanding and cooperation between the various communities living in Jerusalem, and was respected by the residents of the city.<sup>80</sup>

By replacing these civil and military servants, Cemal Paşa opened a new era in the way the residents of the city felt towards the Ottoman Empire. His entry into Jerusalem, and the enhanced pressure he put on the city's residents, had a major influence on the way people started viewing their location within the Ottoman collective and their allegiances to it. The way the Ottoman authorities dealt with the crisis seems to have been dependent on individual officials and the trust that they won among the city's residents. Indeed, the popularity they gained among the local Jerusalemites of all creeds, which may have posed a threat to Cemal Paşa, may have been one of the main reasons for their removal from their positions. The replacement of these figures, coupled with the harsh treatment by Cemal Paşa and the regional and political developments, brought the end of the Ottoman era closer in people's minds.

<sup>77</sup> See, for example: BBA DH.KMS 25/45 #2; DH.KMS 27/48.

<sup>78</sup> Tamari and Nassar, *al-Quds al-'Uthmaniyya*, p. 198.

<sup>79</sup> Ben Yehuda, *Jerusalem: Its Redemption and Future*, pp. 32, 54. On 24 December 1914 Khalil al-Sakakini wrote in his diary that Zaki Bey was removed from his post, and that it is not clear whether he was fired or retired. According to Sakakini, some people thought that the reason for his removal was his shameless behavior with women, or that he did not like the Germans. See Musallam, *Yawmiyat Khalil Sakakini, Volume Two*, p. 142. The date mentioned by Sakakini differs from all other sources, which claim that Zaki Bey was removed from his post in 1915.

<sup>80</sup> Elmaliach, *Eretz Israel ve-Suriyah*, pp. 80–81.