Over the past century, the aliyah (immigration to Israel) of American Jews has piqued the curiosity of both the residents of Israel and American Jewry. Why, it has often been asked, would one want to leave America, the land of opportunity and promise? Misconceptions and generalizations have tainted the image of American olim (immigrants). The absorbing population has often viewed them as wealthy, lacking a genuine commitment to remain, and not entirely cognizant of the challenges of life in their new homeland. While some American olim fit this description, for most the reality has been much different. A diverse population, they have chosen to relocate for a variety of reasons, with Zionist ideology as well as Jewish identification and commitment factoring into this decision. During the period covered by this study, American olim played a significant role—far beyond their actual numbers—in shaping the landscape and society of Palestine.

The purpose of this study is to understand and analyze the migration of American Jews to Palestine between the two World Wars and their contribution to the up-building of the land and its people. It follows a slightly different approach than is typically used in geographical writing. Its focus is strongly geographic in terms of migration and landscape transformation. Stories of the immigrants have been included as a humanizing factor and to supplement the quantitative information.

The research drew upon a variety of primary and secondary sources, including institutional and personal archives located in the United States, Israel, and Canada. Special attention was given to primary sources, such as correspondence and contemporary accounts in newspapers. These were combined with analysis of maps, plans, and photographs, as well as fieldwork.
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at sites connected to American Jewish settlement in Palestine. The study is augmented by tables, maps, and illustrations that provide the reader with some of the raw data used in the study.

In the introduction, general demographic information lays the foundation for what follows, first by detailing the scope and scale of the migration, and then by outlining the characteristics of the immigrants. These parameters allowed the construction of four distinct group profiles. Chapter 1 examines the environment in which the immigrants made their decisions to migrate. Chapter 2 looks into the information available to the potential immigrants which was utilized to varying degrees in their decision-making processes. Chapter 3 categorizes the motivational factors and supplements the discussion through the use of contemporary examples. Chapter 4 explores technical and political barriers to migration. Chapter 5 describes immigrants’ encounters with the new environment and then outlines the processes of selecting a location for settlement. Chapter 6 tells of the “estate” or *ahuza* societies that were founded in the decade before World War I for the purpose of establishing American Jewish colonies in Palestine; it focuses on those that continued to operate during and after the war. Chapter 7 details the activities of the Zion Commonwealth (later the American Zion Commonwealth), an organization established in 1914 to purchase and develop land in Palestine. Chapter 8 portrays private initiatives for land purchase and settlement. Chapter 9 examines American Jewish settlement on Jewish National Fund land. Chapter 10 moves to the urban landscape, describing the contributions of American companies, organizations, and individuals to the development of cities and towns, and highlighting the professional activities of American settlers. The conclusion evaluates the migrational movement as a whole, placing it within the context of other ideological emigrations from the United States and the immigration of other Diaspora communities to Palestine. Further, it assesses the contribution of American Jews to the development of Palestine between the two World Wars.

This project began as a dissertation titled “American and Canadian Jews in Eretz Israel: Settlement and Initiatives for the Development of the Landscape during the Beginning of British Rule (1917–1932).” My doctoral work was supervised by Professor Ruth Kark of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem’s Department of Geography and Professor Allon Gal of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev’s Department of History. I am greatly indebted to them for their guidance and support in this project.

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