

Anti-Jewish Sentiment in California

1855

On March 16, 1855, a debate took place in the California state capitol at Sacramento on a bill to suppress Sunday trading in the counties of Santa Cruz and Santa Clara. By amendment, other counties also were included in the prohibition against carrying on trading on the Lord's Day. During the discussion on the proposed law, the Speaker of the House, William W. Stow, of Santa Cruz County,¹ attacked the Jews as undesirable citizens and said that he was in favor of imposing special taxes on them in order to preclude their living in the state.

The immediate occasion for Speaker Stow's anger was the refusal of one Jewish firm, in his home county, to sign a petition for Sunday closing. There were, of course, more compelling reasons that motivated Stow and others. Observant Christians wanted to stop all business activity on Sunday, even if this meant the closing of restaurants on that day. Christian merchants were fearful and envious of their Jewish competitors; the Native American or Know-Nothing agitation was sweeping the state. Apparently, Stow was in sympathy with the aims of the Know-Nothing party. The belief of Stow and of others, too, no doubt, that the Jews were aliens and foreigners is interesting in view of the fact that many of the Jewish businessmen, some of them native-born, had come to California as forty-niners. Lewis H. Pollock was a merchant in Yerba Buena in 1839, long before its name was changed to San Francisco.

The Jews were very much disturbed by Stow's attack and responded speedily and vigorously to his slanders. Isaac Leeser and

¹ William W. Stow (incorrectly spelled as Stowe in *The Occident* and *The Israelite*) was born in Binghamton, New York, in 1824 and died in San Francisco on February 11, 1895. In 1853 and 1854 he was elected to the state legislature from Santa Cruz County. (He may well have had Know-Nothing support, for he ran as an independent candidate.) He was elected Speaker of the Assembly in 1855. In his later years he was a prominent attorney in San Francisco. (Information supplied by the California State Library.)

Isaac M. Wise, two of the most distinguished rabbis in the country, answered the Californian in their journals: Leeser, in *The Occident*, and Wise, in *The Israelite*. Both these statements, with certain unimportant omissions, are reprinted below.

If Wise's English sounds rather quaint at times, let it be remembered that he had been in this country for less than a decade. But what he lacked in idiom he made up in vigor, as he lashed out at the California bigot. That was the age of rugged individualism in journalism.

The first of the articles reproduced below is reprinted from Leeser's *Occident*; the second from Wise's *Israelite*.

INTOLERANCE IN CALIFORNIA

We are deeply pained, as a faithful chronicler of passing events, to give publicity to the subjoined papers, relating to an outrage lately committed on the 16th of March, in the California Legislature, by the Speaker of the House, who, in his great zeal for the cause of his religion, slandered the Jews not only, but expressed the hope of being able, after a while, to drive them out of the state. It is a pity, indeed, that an inordinate desire to obtain respect for their peculiar opinions and their acts should have seized, of late, many leaders of popular masses in America; and it is to this we have been indebted to the severe restriction against Sunday labor, and the exceedingly rigid laws against the use of alcoholic liquors.²

Fanaticism of every kind is now the order of the day; moderate men are not heeded, but, on the contrary, are suspected by both extremes. And this strange infatuation will run riot for some time, till the utter impossibility of enforcing what were once called the "blue laws," owing to the little hold they have on the affections of the people, will compel them to be repealed, and cause the receding tide to leave the public morals in these respects far behind where their coercive and absurd enactments originally found them.

We can easily imagine that the half-educated, or those belonging to a particular class of religionists, should wish to hurry into all extravagances

² The middle of the nineteenth century was a period when prohibitionists, abolitionists, and a host of other reformers were particularly flourishing (Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought*, 2nd ed., New York, 1951, pp. 368 ff.).



Courtesy, New York Public Library

NEW YORK IN THE 1850's
When Jews entered the clothing industry
(see p. 8)



From the Levi Strauss Collection

Courtesy, Levi Strauss & Company, San Francisco

NOTICE THE SIGN ADVERTISING LEVVIS (OVERALLS)

(see p. 10)

and endeavor to enact Pharaonic laws, even against the children of Israel. It is the nature of the vulgar to hate those who differ from them; but it was not to be expected that a man who, from his position as presiding officer of a deliberative assembly, should so far forget himself as to utter sentiments so adverse to the spirit of the Constitution under which he was chosen to his position. Such a man is not deserving of being handed down to notoriety and infamy even; utter forgetfulness would be his just due. But in order to place on record the rebukes emanating from the Israelites of California, do we give place to the proceedings as they have reached us. We intended adding several comments of the press, to show how the public leaders viewed the outrage; but they have been mislaid, and we have no means of replacing them at this moment. The debate in which the Speaker gave utterance to his opinions took place on a bill to suppress Sunday trading in the counties of Santa Clara and Santa Cruz, when the presiding officer, in committee of the whole, we presume, gave utterance to his sentiments which we see reported in the *Sacramento Democratic State Journal*:

The Speaker was in favor of the bill and had no sympathy with the Jews, who ought to respect the laws and opinions of the majority. They were a class of people who only came here to make money and leave as soon as they had effected their object. They did not invest their money in the country or cities. They all intended or hoped to settle in their "New Jerusalem." He was in favor of inflicting such a tax upon them as would act as a prohibition to their residence amongst us. The Bible lay at the foundation of our institutions, and its ordinances ought to be covered and adhered to in legislating for the state.

Mr. [E. G.] Buffum [of San Francisco] contended that the bill would act more for the protection of certain merchants of Santa Cruz and Santa Clara, who found their trade interfered with, because the Jew merchants saw fit to open their shops on a Sunday. He was astonished to hear the gentleman who last spoke, and whom he had regarded as the exponent of liberal principles, express such sentiments as he had done in favor of inflicting such a tax on Jews as would amount to a prohibition of their residence amongst us. In San Francisco they had built some of the finest edifices the city could boast, and their wealth, influence, and enterprise were as conspicuous there as they were throughout the whole world.

Mr. [H. P. A.] Smith ([of] Marin [County]) did not believe in laws which were not supported by public opinion, and thought that if the House passed the bill, the finger of scorn would be pointed at it.

Our friend and correspondent, H. J. Labatt, Esq.,³ promptly replied to Mr. Stowe, in the papers of San Francisco, as follows:

THE JEWS OF SAN FRANCISCO AND MR. STOWE

Mr. Speaker Stowe: With much astonishment I perused in the Sacramento journals what purports to be a report of the proceedings of the legislature, and certain remarks of yourself and other leading men of the Lower House, relative to the Jews of this state, in the discussion of the Sunday Trading Bill. The Jews of San Francisco are in favor of a Sunday Bill.

Perhaps, sir, you are a medium, and the English House of Lords, in the migratory spirit of rappers,⁴ visited you. If so, more is the pity that they only communicated their opinions on the "Jewish Disability"⁵ feeling, and left you, tranquil in the free enjoyment of your profound ignorance and the false knowledge of facts and recreant regard of truth.

Mr. Buffum shall receive the warm gratitude of my coreligionists for the course he has taken in this matter.

Mr. Speaker, occupying the position you do as the head of the House of Representatives, you should be loath to disgrace our legislature and our state by flagrant and malicious falsehood; for to say you are ignorant of the real facts and open truths would be to insult the body which elected you their Speaker, although you are an ignorant man, nevertheless, to assert and advocate measures which are directly opposed to the wishes of your constituents.

³ Henry J. Labatt, apparently a scion of the well-known Charleston, S. C., family, was active in the communal life of San Francisco Jewry in the 1850's. By profession he was a lawyer. He was president of the Hebrew Young Men's Debating Society (*Occident*, XII [1854], 376), secretary of Congregation Emanu-El (*Occident*, XIII [1855], 467), secretary of the First Hebrew Benevolent Society (*Occident*, XIII [1855], 201), and an editor of the Anglo-Jewish periodical, *The Voice of Israel* (*Occident*, XIV [1856], 455).

He was also the author of a compendium regulating proceedings in civil cases (*Occident*, XIV [1856], 151). (On occasion he was Isaac Leeser's San Francisco correspondent for *The Occident* (*Occident*, XII [1854], 373).)

⁴ The Fox sisters and other spiritualists were at that time "communicating" with the spirit world by means of spirit-rappings (*Dictionary of American Biography* [=DAB], "Fox, Margaret").

⁵ Ever since 1830 the Jews of England had been trying, unsuccessfully, to secure complete political equality. As late as 1853, Lord John Russell's Jewish Disabilities Bill passed the House of Commons but was rejected by the House of Lords (H. S. Q. Henriques, *The Jews and the English Law*, London, 1908, p. 312).

You say, "They come here to make money, and leave as soon as this object is effected." This bears upon its face unwarrantable falsity. Are you ignorant of the number of families arriving [on] every steamer, and of the Jewish faith, to make California their home? Are you ignorant of the brick synagogues erecting in our large cities for family worship? Are you ignorant of the permanent benevolent societies, which extend the hand of charity to their bereaved brethren, and relieve the state, county, and city of taxes for almshouses, hospitals, asylums, etc.? If you are ignorant of these facts, then you are basely ignorant; if not, you have greatly misrepresented facts, and you are a disgrace to the House over which you have the dishonor to preside. You may choose between this dilemma.

You say, "They do not invest their money in the country, nor erect any fine stores." This is another equally great falsehood. Examine the tax books of any county in the state, and the names of the Jews are found thick upon their pages.

I will produce twenty names of Jewish citizens of my county who pay taxes on over two millions of property.

This fact you know, and have misrepresented to the injury of a large body of respectable citizens, or else you were grossly ignorant of important facts connected with your position as Speaker of the House, which constitutes you unworthy of your position.

Mr. Speaker, you would prohibit their residence here. How have they harmed you at all, and in what respect?

Have the Jews squatted upon your lands? If so, I have yet to learn who; the Jews are not squatters.⁶

Have they built grogshops to poison the people? Surely not; the Jews are not rum-sellers. Have they filled your jails or taxed the state with criminal trials? Surely not; they are not robbers, murderers, or leading politicians.⁷

Have their females prostituted the morals of young men? Surely not; they are noted for the virtue of their mothers and the chastity of their daughters.

⁶ California experienced many difficulties with squatters and much litigation with land titles in the 1850's (J. W. Caughy, *California*, 2nd ed., New York, 1953, pp. 306 ff.; H. H. Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, Chapter XVII).

⁷ The bracketing of politicians and robbers is probably a reference to the political boss, David C. Broderick, a former Tammany politician (*DAB*, "Broderick, David Colbreth").

Yet I claim no superiority for this unfortunate people; but I do claim, Mr. Speaker Stowe, that they are good citizens, and better than you; and that they are worthy men, and worthier than you; and that they would scorn to vilify the Gentiles as you have grossly and falsely vilified them, knowing it to be false.

Then why cry out against them? There's the rub! They are numerous, but yet of the right stripe. Unfortunately, they are too wise to be ignorant, and [to] *know nothing*⁸ of their rights. Speaker Stowe, you are right on that question. Whoever has a heart to think for himself, and a voice to speak and cry out against the evil influence of that party which would undermine all religions but that of Quaker-hanging Puritanism, must be taxed so as to prohibit their residence among your numbers

Pray, on whom will you commence? In the Supreme Court, where sits on the bench of three Judges one Jew?⁹ What tax will you place on that bench to exclude the Jew? What will you do in the halls of legislation, or public offices, the bar, and medical fraternity? Surely Jews fill or have filled these positions in our state, and without the like disgrace and profound ignorance that hovers over yourself! Every trade, profession, or employment (excepting begging, and there are no Jew beggars) has been filled honorably by Jews.

But it is not, Speaker Stowe, upon the basis of the Bible and Sunday laws. The former belongs to the Jew, and God gave it him. It is not the Christian's Bible alone, and the Bible is silent upon rest on *Sunday*. Saturday is the Sabbath of the Bible. But this question I leave to divines, as you, Speaker Stowe, in your profound ignorance and falsehood could not comprehend the argument, or would vilify the facts in the Bible scarcely less palpable than those you have denied in your statement in that House you have disgraced.

⁸ Notice the oblique reference to the Know-Nothing or Native American Party here. In 1856, this anti-foreign party won the gubernatorial election (Caughey, *California*, p. 282).

⁹ Solomon Heydenfeldt (1816-1890), a Charleston, S. C., Jew who had served as a county judge in Alabama, was elected an Associate Judge of the California State Supreme Court in 1851. He served till 1857 (Barnett A. Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina*, p. 191; *Jewish Encyclopedia* (=JE), "Heydenfeldt, Solomon"; *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* [=PAJHS], IX (1901), 50-51; X (1902), 129-36).

Henry A. Lyons, a Philadelphia Jew, was also on the Supreme Court Bench, 1849 to 1852 (PAJHS, X [1902], 132).

It is well, Speaker Stowe, you have shown the colors of your order.¹⁰ Many Jews have slumbered in ignorance of the fact that when they *know nothing* their religion and their people are in danger. It is well your ignorance has opened their eyes, and your falsehood has given them inspiration that arouses them to a knowledge of the truth.

A large and numerous body of voters of this state will remember these facts, and I trust every Jew will bear it in mind many a long day, for you cannot expel them from this state. For myself, I shall use every endeavor to keep it constantly before them.

I am yours, firm in Judaism,

HENRY J. LABATT,
151 Clay Street.

Another reply appeared in the *Sacramento Journal*, which we understand was written by a German Israelite named Sam.[uel] Wand,¹¹ who speaks some plain truth, although in homely language:

HIS HOLINESS KING STOW VS. THE JEWS OF CALIFORNIA

Having perused, in Saturday morning's *Journal*, your editorial remarks in reply to the attack of Speaker Stow against the Israelites of this state, made by him on the floor of the Assembly, on the 16th inst.[ant], I am led to believe that you will not refuse me the privilege of inserting this communication.

It appears from the report of the legislative proceedings that when the Sunday Trading Bill was under consideration, which was opposed by Hon. Messrs. Buffum and [J. S.] Watkins [of Alameda], His Holiness remarked that he was in favor of the bill, that he had no sympathy with the Jews, that they ought to respect the laws and opinions of the majority, that they only came here to make money, that they go about hawking, and stick

¹⁰ This is, apparently, a reference to the secret, nativistic order out of which the Know-Nothing Party grew. This fraternal organization was known as the Order of the Star Spangled Banner (*Dictionary of American History*, "American [or Know-Nothing] Party").

¹¹ Samuel Wand was president of the Hebrew Benevolent Association of Sacramento in 1855 (*Occident*, XIII [1855], 247). The following pronouncements of Sam Wand and of the Sacramento Jewish community have been collated with the original statements which were published in the *Sacramento Daily Union* for March 20, 1855.

their money in their pockets, and when they have enough, leave, that they do not invest their money in the country, nor erect any of the fine stores which adorn our city, that they all intend, or hope to settle in their New Jerusalem; and lastly, that he was in favor of such legislative action as would drive them all from the state.

Without dwelling in the least upon the malignity, impertinence, and ungentlemanly conduct displayed in the above remarks, I will proceed to analyze the powers of reason of this great would-be specimen of a California jurist. He says the Jews ought to respect the laws and opinions of the majority, right or wrong. This is, in his opinion, in accordance with his narrow mind and powerful reasoning. Now, with all due respect for the opinions of others, we beg to differ with this wise man of Gotham, in connecting civil with religious laws.

We do, sir, respect and yield obedience to all laws, and every legal act, but we deny most emphatically that His Holy Lordship can force us to respect the religious opinions of a majority, or any set of men, constituting a greater number than we do, simply because they are in a majority; and I need only refer to your own official acts, to falsify the position you have assumed. A majority of the people's representatives have, during this session, in their wisdom, declared that they will have no religious services in opening the session every morning, whilst the honorable Senate — decidedly the minority portion of our legislative body — have seen proper to open their session with prayer. Would you then condemn the Senate for choosing not to subscribe to your majority religious opinions, or would you consider your majority religion to be *the* religion, simply because it was the majority of that day?

And again, let us contrast this position assumed by the holy Apostle Stow with the legal opinions of the highest tribunal of State. The opinion of one, who occupies a higher position than the Titus¹² of California, in all probability, will ever attain. I refer to Chief Justice Black,¹³ of Pa., in

¹² Titus, the son of — and later the successor to — the Roman Emperor Vespasian, is the classical enemy of the Jews in the early post-biblical period, because he destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem in the year 70 C. E.

¹³ Jeremiah Sullivan Black (1810–1883) was chief justice of the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court from 1851 to 1854. Later in the decade he became attorney general in the Buchanan cabinet and, finally, secretary of state in the crucial days of Southern secession. The Californians knew him well, for as attorney general he was involved in

the case of Johns[t]on vs. The Commonwealth.¹⁴ The plaintiff in error was convicted before an alderman for violating the Lord's day, commonly called Sunday. Chief Justice Black says:

It is important that the laws which relate to this offence should be properly administered in general suspension of ordinary employment at regular recurring periods; it is universally admitted to have good effects on the physical, moral, and pecuniary condition of the people. It is for this worldly reason alone that the law of 1794¹⁵ was made. No sane man can read the Constitution, and believe that the government has a right to enforce the observance of this or any other religious duty as such. The statute is capable of being perverted by a loose construction to purposes for which it was never intended, being the only point of possible contact between the Church and State.

It is natural enough that some (such men as pious Stow, for instance), who have not fully learned the important principle of toleration, should desire to make it rule hard.

And after alluding to various denominations who observe various days in the week as their Sabbath, the Chief Justice says:

Besides all these, there is another numerous and respectable Christian sect, whose exemplary moral behaviour and devoted piety give their feelings a fair claim to be considered; their doctrine is that the fourth commandment was never changed nor repealed; they teach that Sunday is one of the six days on which they are commanded to labor and do all their work; to them the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord. The universal privilege of private judgment in this country has not only created an endless variety of opinions among Christians; but we have with us and of us still others. The Jews, for instance, whose faith on this subject is neither derived from nor in accordance with that which is taught in the New Testament. We are not to decide between these conflicting doctrines; the law protects them all, but adopts none as a favorite; it may as well attempt to make men unanimous on the duties of prayer, devout meditation, etc., as on this.

very important cases touching on California land titles (*DAB*, "Black, Jeremiah Sullivan"; H. H. Bancroft, *History of California*, VI, 573-74; Caughey, *California*, Chapter XX).

¹⁴ *Johnston v. The Commonwealth* in *Pennsylvania State Reports*, ed. by George W. Harris (Philadelphia, 1855), XXII, 102-15. Justices Black and Ellis Lewis dissented. This reporter does not, however, quote the dissenting opinions.

¹⁵ For the 1794 Pennsylvania Sunday law, see *Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (published by A. J. Dallas, Philadelphia, 1795), III, Chapter CCXXXVIII, 546.

And after further reasoning on the law and its purport, which would be too lengthy for this communication, were I to insert it entire, the Chief Justice thus concludes:

Those among us who believe that the institution of the Jewish Sabbath has been engrafted on the Christian system, and changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, have a right to propagate their doctrine, but they must do it by moral means, by appeals to reason and conscience, by their own example of an upright walk and conversation in life, and by charity to those who differ from them.

They must get their argument from revelation (if they can), not from the statute book; religious truth asks no favor except that of its natural freedom.

Associate Justice [Ellis] Lewis thus concludes: "I concur with the Chief Justice in the opinion that the judgment of the alderman ought to be reversed."

Having thus listened to the voice of wisdom from a venerable source, let us contrast it with a noisy penny whistle of our California Titus, and Constitutional expounder. He says:

I am in favor of the Sunday law, and I go in for a majority to rule in religious matters, and, whatever they hold to be good religion, the minority of the people ought to yield submission thereto, and especially the Jews. I hate them above all others, and, although I have *sworn* to support, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and of this state, which guaranties to every man the right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, yet I am in favor of making such laws as would drive the Jews all out of the state. My best legal reasons for so doing are:

1. Because they claim the privilege of going to their house of worship twenty-four hours ahead of us every week.
2. Because they come to this country for the purpose of gain only, whilst they are too ignorant to know, or too stupid to enquire, what brought me here, or what my future intentions are.
3. Because whatever they make they put into their own pockets, instead of depositing it with some pious keeper of a Savings' Bank, where, by the wise laws which I have helped to frame in days gone by, such beautiful safeguards are thrown around the people's deposits.¹⁶

¹⁶ In the spring of 1855, there was a panic in California. A number of banks closed. As

4. Because they do not possess that inventive skill of manufacturing land titles or monopolizing the soil, whereby they too could become extensive property holders.¹⁷

5. Because one individual in my county has refused to close his store on my Sunday.

6. Because they all intend either to go, or hope to go to a place called New Jerusalem, whilst I and many others as uncharitable as myself expect not to go there.

We will now leave the subject and the reader to draw his own conclusion, whether the reason[s] assigned by this modern specimen of a California tyrant are such as would justify him in driving us and our families out of the country. We have crossed the plains in '49 to settle in this wilderness, after suffering the hardships which we with many others have shared, and, after having returned to our former homes, to bring here our families and our all, should we be driven out for no other reason than here assigned? No! Such persecution would cause even the greatest tyrant of [the] Spanish Inquisition to blush, and we entertain no fear of any such abominable doctrine ever taking root in the heart of any true American.

We ask no privileges but those granted to us under that Constitution to which we have sworn and owe allegiance, or [nor do we] beg at the public crib; we do not seek to gain a livelihood by noisy pretension or claims to official patronage. We do not come here as office seekers, and none of us have ever returned home with hundreds of thousands of Uncle Sam's money, fraudulently obtained, and sufficient in amount to buy quite a number of New Jerusalems, nor have we ever been indicted for any such offence. We are not so ambitious as all that; yet we can stare our great Santa Cruz enemy in the face, and say that he has falsified our position here in regard to our pecuniary matters; for although we have derived no benefit from public offices, yet we have among us those who, by their industry, frugality, and economy, laid up as many fortunes in proportion to number as any other class of people in the state.

And as to the assertion that we are nothing but a set of hawkers, we

in most pioneer lands, banking practice was unregulated (Caughy, *California*, pp. 267-68; Bancroft, *California*, VII, 173 ff.).

¹⁷ Fraudulent claims for huge areas in California were not uncommon in the 1850's (Caughy, *California*, p. 315).

would inform his lordship that he will find us the farmer, mechanic, and tradesman, the merchant, the banker, the lawyer, and the jurist. Bankers, too, who could buy out any quantity of those pious saving institutions.¹⁸ And if all these will not satisfy his creatures, and still [they] insist upon our destruction (like Sodom of old), unless he would find more righteous among us, then we would refer him to our courts of justice and equity: he will find there Jews presiding over their deliberations — and if he will bear with us a little longer we will show him at least one-fourth of our representatives to foreign courts to be Jews;¹⁹ and some of the most influential and leading journals in America are edited and conducted by Jews.²⁰

And now we will briefly state that it is not true, as he says, that we all come here and get all we can, and then leave for New Jerusalem. It is not true that we own no property, nor build any of those fine stores and edifices which embellish our cities. But it is true that one of the largest property holders in this city was a Jew. It is also true that some of the best structures both here and in San Francisco are owned by Jews.

But whilst I thus enumerate the true position and pecuniary condition of many of our Jewish fellow citizens, as far as our knowledge extends and facts will warrant, we do not wish by any means to be understood as advocating the principle of property qualification in this land of freedom. No; on the contrary, we believe the banker and the shoemaker, the real-estate speculator and the soap boiler, the carpenter and blacksmith, are all entitled to the protection of the laws. And the only relative difference between them is, whilst the rich employ their capital, the poor employ their skill and handicraft to attain the same object and position in society. But I have merely alluded to this, because it seems to tickle our modern

¹⁸ Among the eminent bankers of California in its early days were the Seligmans and the Lazards (Lazard Frères), Benjamin Davidson (the Rothschild interests), the Glaziers, and the Wormsers (*JE*, "San Francisco").

¹⁹ The filio-pietistic Mr. Wand is bragging here. His statement is a gross exaggeration. A number of Jews at this time held minor consular posts. August Belmont, minister to the Netherlands (1853-57), was probably the only Jew then to hold an important diplomatic post (*DAB*, "Belmont, August").

²⁰ Among the journalists of this decade were Edward Morwitz (*DAB*), Mordecai Manuel Noah (died in 1851; *DAB*), Jacob Newton Cardozo (*DAB*), and Moritz Pinner (*PAJHS*, V [1897], 152-53; XVII [1909], 139-41). None of them edited a "leading journal."

Titus to talk about property and property holders; and since he has given us to understand that a part of his religion consists in admiring and worshipping fine structures and the builders thereof, we will in conclusion only say: Fear not, little man, thy kingdom is close at hand; your own dear Harry, with his bark America, the builder of some of your fine structures, has very nearly reached his New Jerusalem. He will doubtless lay out the city into lots, drive the Jew inhabitants off, and send for you to become his constitutional adviser and king of the Island — a position which must be more suited to your feelings than to be the representative of a free and enlightened country.

When you are ready to start we will cheerfully fill your wallet with all the gingerbread necessary for the journey, and as you will have plenty of leisure time, and probably many lonely hours before you reach your New Jerusalem, we will furnish you with a copy of a reply of Dr. [Benjamin] Franklin to a party of English noblemen, while a representative from this government to the Court of St. James, when they wished to compel his conformity to the established usages and the ruling influence of their adopted church. When you will have read that, we will stake all the forged warrants of a California financier that you will be a better and more liberal man than you have thus far shown yourself to be, and never again insult or abuse the unoffending, law-abiding and peaceable

JEWISH CITIZEN OF SACRAMENTO.

The Israelites of Sacramento also expressed their views in the subjoined manner:

At a meeting of the Israelites, citizens of the city of Sacramento, in the State of California, the following preambles and resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, we have all, according to the laws of the country in such cases made and provided, freely and voluntarily elected to become, and are now, citizens of the United States of America, and as such feel a deep and abiding interest in the prosperity of her liberal and free institutions and the success of her government; and,

Whereas, the Hon. Mr. Stow, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the State of California, in a speech made by him in the Assembly on the 16th instant, on a bill, familiarly called the Sunday Bill, thought proper

to characterize our people as unworthy to be recognized as citizens of the country — as being a race who did not recognize and respect the laws of the country, as men who did not do anything to promote the improvement of the country, and as feeling no interest in common with the country, and therefore ought to be legislated out of it; and,

Whereas, such remarks coming from such a source are calculated to prejudice our countrymen in the public estimation, unless properly contradicted; therefore, be it

Resolved, That whilst we entertain the highest respect for the honorable station which Mr. Stow holds in the country, to wit, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the State of California, and whilst we do not desire to cast any reflections upon that honorable body, we must say that Mr. Speaker Stow has either ignorantly or wilfully misrepresented us in his remarks, that the representations of us made by him in his speech are not only without foundation, but utterly and entirely false.

Resolved, That the above resolutions be published for ten days in the daily journals in this city.

G.[ABRIEL] HAIN[E]S, President²¹
MORRIS EINSTEIN, Sec'y.²²

Sacramento, March 18th A. D., 1855.
(*The Occident*, XIII [1855], 123-32)

* * *

The Israelite greeting, to the Hon.
Stowe, Speaker of the House of Representatives
of the State of California.

Most Illustrious, Most Enlightened, and Most Charitable Sir:

It had been our humble belief that cannibals existed no longer among men; we are always told of the progress of civilization having invited the

²¹ Gabriel Haines, one of the outstanding Jews of Sacramento, was president of the Hebrew Benevolent Society or Association in 1852 and 1855. (Information supplied by Hal Altman, of Sacramento.) The Hebrew Benevolent Association, apparently a mutual-aid society, owned a cemetery and probably conducted religious services also.

²² Morris Einstein was active in the communal life of Sacramento Jewry. He was secretary of the congregation in 1854, and was also secretary of the Hebrew Benevolent Society (*Occident*, XII [1854,] 119).

savage to sit peacefully under the shade of the trees which he plants with his own hands, and to enjoy the blessings of humanity and the protection of the law. We are also told that this is the land of the free, and the home of the brave. We were therefore not a little astonished to find . . . you assume the appearance of a Jew-eater, a cannibal in the midst of a civilized society, a monstrous son of a free mother

The Israelite comes before Your Lordship, Haman II.,²³ with the humble request not to exterminate the Jews from the land, and there can be said in their favor the following points:

1. The Jew must be, in obedience to the precepts of his religion, a republican and devout citizen. The institutions of Moses, the exhortations of the prophets, and the teachings of the ancient rabbis are not only thoroughly republican and much more liberal in certain respects than the institutions and laws of the United States, but they also enjoin the duty upon the Jew to obey the laws of the country in which he lives as a religious duty. Hence Your Gracious Lordship may please to confess that the Jew, in as far as his religion is concerned, deserves to be a citizen of the state of California.

2. May Your Excellency please to visit your gambling-houses, houses of prostitution, and your institutes of correction and punishment, and you will be surprised to find no Jews there. Among the drunkards, ruffians, assassins, thieves, and incendiaries it happens, however, that no Jew was yet found among them. The Committees of Safety [Vigilantes] have not yet complained about the Jews, and among those who were lynched, or tarred and feathered, there was again no Jew. This fact must convince Your Lordship that the Jews are citizens fully as good as you are, with the exception of being no cannibals.

3. If it would not be fashionable for officials to be very ignorant, we would be under the unpleasant obligation to express our astonishment at the ignorance of Your Eminence that the flourishing commerce, the very pride of the State of California, and the spring of life of San Francisco, Sacramento, and other cities, thanks its existence and origin to a large extent to the enterprise, ingenuity, and industry of the Jews, who not only were among the very first settlers of the cities of California, but also

²³ Haman, the villain of the Book of Esther, is the classical Judaeophobe in the Bible and in Jewish tradition.

went out to the miners with food and clothing, enabling them to pursue their labor to the best advantage. And it was by their extensive enterprise that the market of San Francisco was fairly regulated. Please, Your Highness, to confess that the Jews have added a larger share to the prosperity of California than Stowe & Co., and a vast number of the subterranean heroes [criminals] having come there from the States; hence they [the Jews] ought not be eaten right off.

4. If it gives not too much trouble to Your Majesty, please inquire, and you will find that large numbers of Jews are as long in California, and possess as much real estate as Stowe & Co. Please inquire of Messrs. Davis, Fries, Shloss Brothers, Seligman & Stettheimer, Herzog & Bach, H. Greenhoot & Co., or some other firms. They will be kind enough to inform you. Or go to Mr. Einstein in Sacramento; he can also tell you a few words on the subject which might move your heart not to eat the Jews at once. We know personally a number of California citizens of our faith who are as patriotically attached to that country as Stowe & Co., and who have made it their permanent home; nay, we have heard but a few who have thought or spoken otherwise. The most of them now in the States, who formerly were in California, go back at the first opportunity, if circumstances permit them.

5. Please, Your Holiness, to inform us, how dare a man presiding over a republican body have the insolence to propose a violation of republican laws, depriving one class of citizens of rights and privileges enjoyed by another? No chastisement is severe enough for a traitor and perjurer, and a traitor is he who is called to watch over a republican country and endeavors to undermine the rights of the citizens. And a perjurer is he who has taken the oath to support the constitution of his state and of the United States, and then attempts to violate the first and most essential principle of these constitutions: the equality of rights to all. If Mr. Stowe is not satisfied with these constitutions, let him resign his office, and accept none until he can conscientiously take the oath of allegiance to the constitution. But as long as he is an officer, we demand of him imperatively and justly to support the constitutions as he has pledged himself, and whenever he acts contrary to it, he has forfeited the respect of every honorable man.

6. We take the liberty of requesting the Hon. Speaker of the California House of Representatives to make himself ridiculous no more. The Jews

and every other intelligent citizen, both in California and in the States, could not help but laugh at the heap of nonsense which the good man talked from his chair, making a fool of himself. The Jews are alive and watching over their rights; it takes a shrewder and more influential man than Mr. Stowe to frighten them from their post. [A] hundred years ago such talk might have injured somebody, but now it is injurious only to the reputation of the speaker. Hold on, sir! There is a law in this country. Try it, if you dare, to invade the rights of one single citizen of California. Wherefore, then, talk nonsense from such a respectable place? Keep cool, sir! We stand in the midst of the nineteenth century and in a civilized and republican country; your words are dead letters.

Be calm, sir! The Jews have too many sincere friends in this country; their merits as industrious and peaceable citizens are too well acknowledged for your talk to do them harm. Keep perfectly cool, sir! The guarantee of a nation, the spirit of democracy, and the beneficial results of our cherished institutions cannot be talked away by lazy demagogues, foul politicians, disappointed office seekers or their fanatical instruments. There is no retrogression in modern civilization, hence you talk in vain. Let me assure you, sir, that your unripe remarks made every honest citizen blush, and that they are considered a disgrace on the minutes of American legislation.

If there is any republicanism in your heart, if you know how to value the honor of a republican country, then you ought to come forth as a man, and state publicly that your remarks were crude and ill-digested, made in haste, and without proper consideration (*The Israelite*, I [May 11, 1855], 345-46).