

Life in the United States 1878–1881, According to *Ha-Zefirah*

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Cover page of *Ha-Zefirah*, 2 March (14 New Style) 1881
(Courtesy Klau Library)

By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Jewish journalism was well on the way to being an indispensable medium for connecting Jews locally, nationally, and internationally. Papers in Hebrew and Yiddish, as well as in vernacular languages and Ladino, informed readers about unprecedented opportunities and dangers for the Jewish people throughout the diaspora, and they did so against a background of contemporary affairs and in the new vocabulary and discourse of modernized forms of Jewish identity.¹ Among the most prominent of these periodicals was *Ha-Zefirah* of Warsaw.²

Chaim Zelig Slonimsky founded *Ha-Zefirah* in 1862 in

Warsaw as a Hebrew weekly in the spirit of the moderate Haskalah. In 1886 it became a daily under the editorship of Nahum Sokolow, who enlarged its coverage significantly. It gradually became one of the main Hebrew newspapers in Russia, and writings by numerous distinguished authors appeared in it. After initial hesitation, Sokolow turned it into an eloquent voice for the early Hibbat Zion (Love of Zion) movement and, later, modern Zionism. It was closed down by the Russian government in 1906, revived in 1910, suspended during World War I, and published off-and-on in Poland between 1917 and 1931.³

We will examine its coverage of the United States for four years—1878 through 1881—as America began to loom prominently in the awareness of East European Jewry. *Ha-Zefirah* projected an attractive, dynamic, and intriguing picture of the New World at a time when German Jewish trans-Atlantic migration had passed its zenith and mass emigration from East European lands was just getting underway. The pull and push behind the Jewish exodus from Russia were symptoms of the onset of a critical shift in Jewish social geography. *Ha-Zefirah* conveyed both vectors—and contributed to them.

To be sure, transmitting information about the United States was a tangential aspect of *Ha-Zefirah*'s mission. *Ha-Zefirah* was intended to be an up-to-date European journal conveying modern scientific and technological information to an audience of largely traditional religiosity. Its content was rather eclectic; a halakhic discussion in Rashi script might be followed by geometrical puzzles, portraits of notable Jewish personages, and reports on political affairs. An example of the last: The Russo-Turkish war was drawing to a close at the beginning of 1878; issues of the paper that year contained articles on the Congress of Berlin in which the European powers decided how to resolve the “Eastern [i.e., Balkan] Question.” The diplomats agreed to recognize the independence of Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania from Ottoman rule. In this connection, guarantees of Jewish rights in Romania were of concern to the editors of *Ha-Zefirah* because of that government's refusal to carry out previous promises regarding its Jews.

The paper also noted various international crises in Afghanistan and North Africa and surveyed the political situation in major European capitals. In 1879, the emergence of openly anti-Jewish sentiments among educated circles in Germany captured *Ha-Zefirah*'s attention. The writers commented on essays by Heinrich von Treitschke, the hyper-nationalist historian of the newly unified Reich, that were blatantly critical of the Jews; and on demagogic speeches of Adolph Stöcker, the notorious Protestant chaplain of the kaiser.

Inasmuch as Warsaw and the Polish areas around it were part of the tsarist empire, Russian affairs were of paramount concern. After several unsuccessful attempts had been made on the life of Alexander II in 1880, he was assassinated in 1881 by a group from Narodnaya Volya (the People's Will), the extremist branch of the revolutionary underground. The consequences were a turning point in Russian Jewish (and Russian) history. Ascending to power after the Crimean War, Alexander II had gradually introduced a series of “Great Reforms” (e.g., the emancipation of the serfs, some local self-government, and a drastically shortened military service). Consideration of capping them with something like a Russian parliament was scotched by his successor, Alexander III.

On the whole, Russian Jews had viewed Alexander II favorably, because the limited relaxation of Jewish residence restrictions included in the Great Reforms were hopefully seen as foreshadowing their eventual emancipation

(such as had finally been achieved in Germany after decades of struggle). In the late 1870s, hopeful of the broader integration of Russian and Polish Jews into civil society, *Ha-Zefirah* expressed devotion to the Russian government and to the tsar. (Indeed, it had to, to escape censorship.) The paper mourned the tsar's death with a black-bordered front page and castigated the assassins.

The *Narodnaya Volya* included Gesya Gelfman, a young woman from a Jewish family, which enabled antisemites to blame the murder on “the Jews.” As Alexander III ascended the throne, pogroms broke out mainly in the Ukrainian region and a few in the north. (For many years, Russian Jewish historians following in the footsteps of Simon Dubnow held government officials responsible for instigating the pogroms, but recent studies tend to interpret the outbursts as spontaneous attacks symptomatic of social dislocation in a rapidly changing Russian economy.⁴) Throughout the late spring and summer of 1881, “storms in the south”—code for the pogroms—dominated the pages of *Ha-Zefirah*. In the fall Alexander III appointed committees “to study the Jewish question.” Despite forlorn hopes that the government's investigatory committees would support greater rights for Jews in the Russian Empire, the editors sensed dark times ahead. The “temporary May Laws” issued in 1882 imposed severe educational quotas on Russian Jewish youth, who were beginning to apply to the universities in large numbers, and drastically limited residence rights even within the Pale of Settlement. A notable change in the climate of Jewish opinion ensued, as evidenced by the surging popularity among the *maskilim* (proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment) of Jewish cultural nationalism in the form of the nascent Hibbat Zion movement.

Until then, *Ha-Zefirah's* cultural program was that of the moderate Russian Haskalah: rationalistic but not at all antireligious. The paper advocated a modern education for Jews in the Western mode, such as widespread dissemination of scientific, geographical, and historical knowledge. This secular orientation led the editors to include extensive articles on recent inventions and discoveries, accounts by travelers on their experiences of distant lands, and depictions of natural wonders. To a great extent these were general in content (that is, not particularly oriented toward Jewish matters); many were probably translated from European journals. However, as report after report of arson, looting, and murder in the Jewish communities of the southwest of the Russian Empire came in during 1881, the entertaining features and the optimistic, curious, eclectic spirit were eclipsed by an intense preoccupation with these ominous events.

The material about America culled from the pages of *Ha-Zefirah* and summarized here reflect three overlapping perspectives: what the journal's correspondents in America chose to report, what the editors in Warsaw may have asked them to relate and then chose to print, and what the readers possibly gleaned. In the issues this essay covers, references to America were found in news articles and editorials, telegraphic reports, items culled from the European press,

personal advertisements, occasional letters from readers, and a few substantial articles on developments in this relatively new area of the diaspora. The details conveyed are less important than the overall image of the vitality of American life and the opportunities it offered Jews.

Among the American correspondents were three who wrote feature stories: Abraham Abba Rakovsky, Mr. Widwar of Indiana, and the most prominent, Judah David Eisenstein of New York.⁵

Coming across in the pages of *Ha-Zefirah* is a picture of the United States as a land of clever inventiveness as well as economic dynamism and natural beauty. *Ha-Zefirah* reported the invention of a “wireless telegraph,” a hearing aid, a “topophone” for collecting sounds at a distance,⁶ the electric light, a railroad train powered by sails, an electric shock punishment for criminals, central heating for a whole city, a technique for manufacturing woodlike material from pressed straw, water-proof cloth for a floating lifejacket, new kinds of butter churns, sewing machines, fly swatters, printing presses, and an alarm clock operated from the local telegraph office for workers and hotel guests.⁷ An American printer suggests books with green rather than black ink as easier on the eyes. A New Jersey man uses incubators to raise a thousand chickens daily (he claimed to have sold 250,000 a year in New York). An entire hotel was moved several yards back from the road without disturbing the guests; a newspaper was published on a Mississippi riverboat. An adventurous American made stilts on which he was said to have crossed the English Channel in eight hours.⁸ The paper reprinted articles on a “city” built in three days and a sunken ship located by magnets.⁹ The correspondents reported admiringly on awards to Thomas A. Edison.¹⁰ *Ha-Zefirah* was not unappreciative of entrepreneurship, either: Eisenstein reported on a doctor who fasted for forty days, making a nice profit from selling tickets of admittance, photographs, and testimonials.¹¹

As for natural marvels, we read of the discovery of huge cave systems in Virginia and Kentucky and a petrified forest in Wyoming. There are descriptions of the giant sequoias of California, the freezing of Niagara Falls, eclipses and comets, devastating storms and heat waves, a sinking town in Nevada.¹² A canal is proposed between the Pacific Ocean and Death Valley.¹³ On a considerably smaller scale are a bottle of “singing sands” and a baby girl with a tail.¹⁴ Readers are informed of America’s wonderfully fruitful soil, enormous harvests, fabulously successful businessmen—but also of yellow fever in the South (and efforts by northern Jews to rescue their coreligionists).¹⁵

A series of articles by Rakovsky commenced at the harbor of New York City and moved to the city’s suburbs after which Rakovsky took a boat up the Erie Canal to upper New York State, travelled south to Philadelphia, east to the coastal towns of New Jersey, and then onward to the West. In Leadville, Colorado, the readers heard that, amid wild parties and duels, Mexican, European, Negro, and Indian prospectors lived together, ruled only by their

passion for gold. Eggs in Leadville cost fifty cents each. Rakovsky then promised readers descriptions of the Pacific Coast, but he abruptly disappeared from the pages of the paper without delivering on that promise.¹⁶

Quite in contrast with the detailed treatment of European affairs are the fragmentary accounts of political and social developments in the United States during these years. We learn of wars with the Indians and attempts to civilize them, of Chinese immigration and attempts to curb it.¹⁷ After the election and subsequent shooting of President James A. Garfield in 1881 we follow his prolonged, unsuccessful attempt to recover.¹⁸ As East European Jewish immigration to America picked up, Eisenstein offered a series intended for the prospective newcomer.¹⁹ While reporting on general American matters that abut Jewish interests, he occasionally calls attention to current events such as a disagreement between the United States and England over fishing rights off the coast of Newfoundland, the cool reception ex-President Grant received in Ireland because of his “no popery” stand, and a speech by President Rutherford B. Hayes predicting a reduced national debt and a business boom, despite (Eisenstein notes) a decline in workingmen’s wages during the preceding years.²⁰

Ha-Zefirah provides limited information on the distinctive branch of the Jewish people taking shape in America by writing about meetings, lectures, and balls; the establishment of new organizations and institutions; and fundraising for hospitals, nurseries, schools, Hebrew societies, YMHAs, orphanages, old folks’ homes, and overseas relief for Jews and non-Jews.²¹ Eisenstein calls attention to New York cultural events of interest to Jews, such as a play about a Jewish merchant and a performance by “the divine” French actress Sarah Bernhardt.²²

It must have been clear to some of the readers of *Ha-Zefirah* that this was to be a voluntary Jewish community different from the Old World pattern—especially the Jewry of East Europe—with respect to its political status, social involvement, and religiosity. American Jews were said to be gratified by their reception in American public life. Articles report the pride engendered by the election of Jews to public office and the appointment of a few Jews to the bench and even the diplomatic corps.²³ Non-Jewish officials praise the progress made by Jews in the United States and express concern about the welfare of Jews in other countries, such as Romania and Morocco.²⁴ The governor of Pennsylvania apologizes for an overly blatant Christian Thanksgiving Day proclamation.²⁵ Christian ministers criticize German antisemitic accusations.²⁶ On the other hand, there were reports signaling an upsurge of discrimination against Jews in hotels and resorts²⁷—and of some American Jews criticizing their backward East European brethren.²⁸

The new American Judaism makes an appearance from time to time in pieces by Eisenstein and Widwar, who were bemused by changes being introduced into synagogues. Unmoved by the rhetoric of Reform rabbis, they were

mystified why American Jews wanted revised prayer books and modifications in Shabbat practice.²⁹ Eisenstein dismisses Felix Adler's Ethical Culture together with various, to him, outré religious positions.³⁰ By contrast, signs of Orthodox vitality are commended: Talmud classes, a *Shomrei Shabbat* Society, a proposal to import a chief rabbi for New York.³¹ Referring caustically to a B'nai B'rith group that accepted uncircumcised men, Eisenstein calls them "B'nai Brith without a *brith*." He notes that a Purim Ball was postponed in Houston until after Passover because of Lent: "Why not because of the *sefirah*?"³² Nevertheless, the meetings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, still positioning itself as a broad-based organization, are described in some detail and rather appreciatively.³³

Ha-Zefirah's editorial policy, derived from the Haskalah, approved of Jewish agriculturalism, favoring Jewish settlements in Palestine such as those envisioned by the Hibbat Zion (decades later the paper would champion Zionism). A hot issue was whether Jews should be encouraged to create their own settlements in America. Most reports, with the notable exception of Eisenstein's, anticipated a flood of sturdy Jewish pioneers tilling the American prairie in agricultural villages to be established for them.³⁴

An (apocryphal?) anecdote from Prairie Township, Pennsylvania, sounds a humorous note. A certain Mr. Guttman visited the home of a rich property owner, reporting that he had dreamed of a treasure buried under a certain tree. Behold, exactly at that place they found \$50,000 in gold. As they were about to part, Guttman asked for cash because his share of the gold was too heavy for his backpack, and the property owner obliged. The gold, however, turned out to be false; "[H]is whereabouts are not known." An old confidence game.³⁵

In contrast, among advertisements of booksellers and *etrog* importers are sad notices asking for the addresses of lost brothers and fathers and *agunot* (deserted wives) pleading for information from husbands who, years earlier, had departed alone for America.³⁶ In 1880, a plea was published supposedly from a wife left behind in Europe by a certain Mr. Slotsky in Altoona, Pennsylvania. The editor of *Ha-Zefirah*, together with Eisenstein, the B'nai B'rith lodge in Altoona, and the synagogue, all rose up in defense of Slotsky, whose name was cleared. Henceforth the signature of a rabbi was to be required in every letter of this kind.³⁷

In 1879 an advertisement in Yiddish (not Hebrew) appeared on the last page of about half of the issues of the paper: "North German Lloyd—Cheap and Comfortable Steamship Accommodations—from Bremen to America."³⁸ After the pogroms of 1881, which began in southern Russia and spread north and west in the fall, the spectacle of tens, hundreds, and then thousands of Jews fleeing to the New World takes center stage in the journal.³⁹

Here is a report from *Ha-Zefirah* 12 May 1881 (Western style, 24 May)⁴⁰:

On the 1st (13th) of May there broke out a disturbance in Alexandrovsk, Yekaterinoslav Province. Workers on the railroad fell upon the Jews, plundered them, and smote them greatly. They were assisted by local peasants. Eight hours the upheaval ensued, until after midnight the army arrived and put down the disturbance.

On the 2nd of May disturbances broke out in Lozova and Nikolaev. In both these places the plunderers did not do much evil because armed forces came in time and restored order. Not so was it in the city of Smiela in the Province of Kiev.... On the day of disturbances near the railway line in Zmerinsk the Jews' lives were at stake. In the city of Konotop all the houses and shops near the railway line were destroyed. On the 7th (19th) of May came a report from Simferopol that the fire became inflamed also in the towns of the Crimea. In Berdyansk and Orekhov the disturbances broke out in a terrible manner and the [government] minister of the district hastened there at the head of an army battalion. The end of the matter is still not known. The inhabitants of the villages abandoned their homes and gathered in the towns and cities of Kremenchug, Poltava, and Yekaterinoslav, which became besieged.

In the rural towns in Kherson Province, German and Bulgarian colonists awoke and chose armed men to guard our brethren of the House of Israel in their places. In Warsaw the last ten days passed quietly and safely; there are no outbreaks in the streets of Warsaw.⁴¹

Brody was a key railroad junction in Austrian Galicia, an important gateway between southern Russia and Austria-Hungary. There, thousands of cold, hungry, and destitute Jews jammed the streets outside the house of the agent of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. The agent rushed back and forth from Brody to Paris, trying to send groups to the United States, sustain refugees with shelter, bread, and tea, and warn off the thousands more he heard were preparing to come.⁴² In the fall and winter of 1881, *Ha-Zefirah* contained news about boatloads of Jews bound for European ports. The great East European Jewish immigration to America was under way. American Jewish reception committees and funds were mobilized—and overwhelmed.

For Russian Jewish readers of *Ha-Zefirah* at the beginning of 1878, America was a marvelous land far across the Atlantic Ocean. Still in 1881 there were *maskilim* who hoped that Alexander III would free them of civil disabilities. But the train station of Brody, packed with desperate Jews, was a sign of growing disillusion on all levels of Jewish society. In New York harbor, kindly committees waited to receive the “small, selected, well-trained handfuls of Eastern European Jewish farmers-to-be.” Between 1881 and 1914, for about two million East European Jews, that distant land of curious wonders and intriguing opportunities would become their home.

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Notes

¹This paper is based on research done for Jacob Rader Marcus almost a half century ago. I am grateful for the staff of the American Jewish Archives for locating my paper in Dr. Marcus's files. There are other such (unpublished) papers in the American Jewish Archives written under the auspices of Dr. Marcus. Using this material is, I feel, doubly appropriate because Naomi W. Cohen frequently assigned her students to write research papers on similar runs of issues in a Jewish periodical.

Journalism plays an increasingly important role in modern history, especially in Jewish history: "The circuits of information upon which human societies are constructed came more and more to rely upon this simple, mechanically produced article which, once it existed, became inseparable from the business of government and economics. The newspaper depends upon its own special lines of communication, inward and outward, bringing information to it and taking the printed copies to its reader." Anthony Smith, *The Newspaper: An International History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 15. Around the year 1880 the importance of newspapers took a great leap forward, ushering in a "golden age of journalism" with tremendous implications for public opinion. *Ibid.*, 143. The importance of the new Jewish press is mentioned in Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772–1881*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 107–111. Important is Bartal's Hebrew article, "Heavenly America: the USA as an Ideal Model for Nineteenth-Century East European Jews," in *Following Columbus: America, 1492–1992*, ed. Miriam Eliav-Felton (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 1996), 511–522.

On the Jewish dimensions of this subject see the suggestive essay by Oren Soffer, "Paper Territory: Early Hebrew Journalism and Its Political Roles," *Journalism History* (Spring 2004): 31–39; Soffer, "The Case of the Hebrew Press: From the Traditional Model of Discourse to the Modern Model," *Written Communication* 21, no. 2 (April 2004): 141–170, especially 156–161 and n. 13; and Soffer, "Anti-Semitism, Statistics, and Scientization of Hebrew Political Discourse: The Case Study of *Ha-Zefirah*," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, and Society* 10 (Winter 2004): 55–79.

²Usually translated "The Dawn," a favorite name for Jewish periodicals of this period, *Ha-Zefirah* might more aptly be rendered "The Clarion." Slonimsky founded it to convey to religious Jews scientific knowledge and news about recent inventions. Some of the most important *maskilim* wrote for the paper in its early years. When Slonimsky briefly became head of the Zhitomir rabbinic school in 1874–1875, the paper suspended publication for six months; it was issued for a short time in Berlin, until Slonimsky received permission to publish it again in Warsaw beginning in September 1875. Incidentally, the philosopher Henry Slonimsky, dean of the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in New York, was Slonimsky's grandson. Yehuda Slutsky, "Slonimski, Hayyim Selig" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd edition, 18, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 679.

On the paper, see Getzel Kressel, "Ha-Zefirah," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 8, 495; Avner Holtzman, "Ha-Tsefirah" in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* 2, ed. Gershon David Hundert (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 1909–1910. Also "Newspapers and Periodicals," in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2, 1264–1265.

There is a growing scholarly literature on the nineteenth-century Hebrew press. See Soffer's articles listed above in n. 1. Also Soffer, *There is No Place for Pilpul! Hazefirah Journal and the Modernization of Sociopolitical Discourse* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik Press, 2007); and his "'Hazefirah' Journal: The Modernization of the Political–Social Discourse in the Hebrew Language," doctoral dissertation (The Hebrew University, 2002).

Mainly on its later iteration: Eizik Remba, “The Hebrew Press in Poland between Two World Wars,” in *The Jewish Press that Was: Accounts, Evaluations, and Memories of Jewish Papers in pre-Holocaust Europe*, ed. Aryeh Bar (Tel Aviv: World Federation of Jewish Journalists, 1980), 153–157.

³My friend Abba Tor recalls that in 1931 his father brought with him from Poland to Palestine bound volumes of *Ha-Zefirah*.

⁴Michael Stanislawski, “Russia,” in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* 1, 1610.

⁵The three main American correspondents were the following: Mr. Widwar of Evanston, Indiana, where the first Jewish family had settled in 1837 (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1st edition, 8 [New York: Macmillan, 1972], 1361); Widwar may have been Rabbi Henry Vidaver, who immigrated to the United States in 1868. He was a noted Hebraist and served as rabbi in Philadelphia and New York. Or Widwar may have been his brother Rabbi Falk Vidaver, who served as a rabbi in San Francisco and New York (Falk Vidaver’s obituary in *The New York Times* on 6 October 1909 reported that “he ranked among the Hebraic scholars of the age”). Abraham Abba Rakovsky may have been the Hebrew writer A.A. Rakovsky, who translated several books into Hebrew, including Benjamin Disraeli’s novel, *The Wondrous Tale of David Alroy* (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1st edition, 5, 432). The third was the best known. Judah David Eisenstein (1854–1956) immigrated to the United States in 1872 and became a successful businessman and a prolific Hebrew author and anthologizer. See the article on him by Abraham Meir Haberman in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd edition, 6, 273. Eisenstein was the grandfather of Ira Eisenstein, the son-in-law of Mordecai M. Kaplan and the first president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. Kaplan mentions Eisenstein in his diaries: *Communings of the Spirit: The Journals of Mordecai M. Kaplan, Volume 1, 1914–1934*, ed. Mel Scult (Detroit: Wayne State University Press and The Reconstructionist Press, 2001), 422, 453. Kaplan emphasizes Eisenstein’s Orthodoxy. See also Ira Eisenstein, *Reconstructing Judaism: An Autobiography* (Philadelphia: Reconstructionist Press, 1986) and Lloyd P. Gartner, “From New York to Miedzyrzec: Immigrant Letters to Judah David Eisenstein, 1878–1886,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 52 (1962–1963): 234–243.

⁶The topophone was “a double ear-trumpet for estimating the direction from which sounds proceed, especially for the use of navigation.” *Webster’s New International Dictionary, Second Edition Unabridged* (Springfield, MA: C. and G. Merriam, Co., 1949), 2670.

⁷Invention of the telephone and a new printing press: *Ha-Zefirah* 5, no. 7 (1878): 55 (future references in *Ha-Zefirah* will follow this model, although abbreviated); 5, no. 8 (1878): 63. A train powered by sail: 5, no. 32 (1878): 255. The electric light: 5, no. 45 (1878): 356. Shocked criminals: 5, no. 51 (1878): 407. For *Ha-Zefirah*’s reporters (as for every other generation) the future was not predicable: Heating an entire city: 6, no. 3 (1879): 23; 6, no. 5 (1879): 35. A wireless telegraph: 6, no. 22 (1879): 175. Hearing aids: 6, no. 47 (1879): 375. The aforementioned topophone: 7, no. 18 (1880): 143. Plywood from straw: 7, no. 18 (1880): 144. Floating cloth: 7, no. 30 (1880): 239. Butter churner, sewing machine, and fly swatter 8, no. 3 (1881): 23. Alarm clock via telegraph: 8, no. 5 (1881): 39.

⁸Books printed using green ink: 7, no. 18 (1880): 144. Production-line poultry: 7, no. 28 (1880): 223. Moving a hotel: 8, no. 48 (1881): 383. A newspaper edited and published on a Mississippi riverboat: 8, no. 42 (1881): 335. Sea stilts: 6, no. 2 (1879): 14.

⁹The town built in three days and the ship located by an electromagnet: 8, no. 41 (1881): 326–327.

¹⁰News about Edison: 5, no. 22 (1878): 175; 5, no. 27 (1878): 215.

¹¹The doctor’s fast: 7, no. 33 (1880): 262; 7, no. 34 (1880): 271. The physician, Dr. Menner, supposedly made \$137,640 this way. By the way, the first installment includes mention of the arrival in New York of Cleopatra’s needle (now in Central Park) from Egypt.

¹²An eclipse of the sun: 5, no. 30 (1878): 239. Comets spotted: 8, no. 29 (1881): 231. A destructive storm in Texas: 7, no. 33 (1880): 263. A heat wave and resulting deaths in Chicago: 5, no. 30 (1878): 239. A Nevada town sinks into the ground: 5, no. 32 (1878): 255. Other atmospheric anomalies: 8, no. 41 (1880): 326–327.

¹³Chains of caves in Virginia: 5, no. 45 (1878): 356; Mammoth Caverns in Kentucky: 6, no. 3 (1879): 23. Giant trees, pieces of which were transported to San Francisco and elsewhere: 6, no. 1 (1879): 7; no. 19 (1879):151; no. 34 (1879): 272. Petrified wood found near Yellowstone: 6, no. 19 (1879): 151. The proposed canal: 6, no. 34 (1879): 271. Niagara Falls freezes over: 6, no. 5 (1879): 39.

¹⁴Singing sands: 5, no. 50 (1878): 399. The “en-tailed” baby girl: 6, no. 43 (1879): 344.

¹⁵Marvelous harvests: 5, no. 51 (1878): 403. Wealthy merchants: 7, no. 28 (1880): 223; no. 33 (1880): 262. Yellow fever and its abatement: 5, no. 37 (1878): 292; no. 40 (1878): 316; no. 45 (1878): 356. The plague in Memphis: 5, no. 44 (1878): 351, 356.

¹⁶“Knowledge of the World and Nature: Eastern North America, First of a Series,” an article on the “growth, wealth, and greatness of North America, a haven for many people”: 7, no. 26 (1880): 205. On arriving in New York City: 7, no. 27 (1880): 213. The “happy city” of Brooklyn, as well as Jersey City and Hoboken, all teeming with activity, business, and noise: 7, no. 28 (1880): 222–223. New York City railroads built in the air to carry men to work; traffic on the rivers: 7, no. 29 (1880): 230. The Erie Canal to Buffalo and Syracuse; Niagara Falls; the prosperous countryside between New York and Philadelphia: 7, no. 32 (1880): 253. Philadelphia is quieter and calmer than New York: 7, no. 35 (1880): 278–279. Resort towns on the New Jersey shore and the coal and oil deposits of Pennsylvania: 7, no. 39 (1880): 311.

In this issue Mr. Rakovsky, who signs his name for the first time, tells of his plan to travel to California and Washington to convey the immensity of this great land. He tells readers that thirty years previously people went to California to find gold, which has now been discovered in Colorado. The author’s trip there: 7, no. 44 (1880): 351. Evening sounds of the prairie as heard on the train to Denver; one-year-old Leadville already has 40,000 inhabitants: 7, no. 45 (1880): 359.

¹⁷Indian wars: 6, no. 9 (1879): 70; progress in settling them on farms: 7, no. 50 (1880): 397–398. Chinese immigration, including a Jew: 5, no. 54 (1878): 267; 6, no. 12 (1879): 92–93.

¹⁸On Garfield: 7, no. 48 (1880): 381–382; 8, no. 26 (1881): 202–203; no. 27 (1881): 210; no. 29 (1881): 230; no. 33 (1881): 263.

¹⁹Reception at the port, opportunities for work in the West and South: 8, no. 46 (1881): 363–364. Impact of the invention of the steamship: 8, no. 49 (1881): 388–389. Relief funds collected for Russian Jewish immigrants: 8, no. 50 (1881): 397.

²⁰U.S. disagreements with England over fishing rights: 5, no. 48 (1878): 381. Grant visits Ireland: 6, no. 5 (1879): 35. Hayes on the economic situation: 5, no. 39 (1878): 309.

²¹For example, 5, no. 30 (1878): 236–237, no. 34 (1878): 276; 6, no. 41 (1879): 324, no. 12 (1879): 92; no. 20 (1879):156; no. 27 (1879): 213; 7, no. 2 (1880): 12; no. 12 (1880): 92; no. 26 (1880): 125; no. 24 (1880):189; 8, no. 33 (1881): 263.

²²“Sam’l of Posen, The Commercial Drummer,” a play about a successful Jewish merchant: 8, no. 27 (1881): 214. Review of Sarah Bernhardt in New York: 7, no. 48 (1881): 381. The following year Bernhardt is said to have promised to donate 50,000 francs of her earnings on a forthcoming Russian tour to help Russian Jews leave: 8, no. 43 (1881): 340.

²³A Jewish coroner and a New York State legislative representative: 5, no. 48 (1878): 381. Benjamin Jonas becomes senator for Louisiana: 6, no. 12 (1879): 93. Various Jews elected to public office in New York: 6, no. 46 (1879): 365; “Mr. Meyer S. Isaacs is appointed judge in the Marine Court”: 7, no. 48 (1880): 381–382. Two American Jewish consuls in Germany: 8, no. 11 (1881): 87. Simon Wolf, “a member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, has been chosen U.S. representative to Egypt”: 8, no. 27 (1881): 214. “Simon Wolf, the U. S. representative to Mexico, is welcomed by the Mexican Jewish community”: 8, no. 46 (1881): 366–337; Esther I. Panitz, *Simon Wolf: Private Conscience and Public Image* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1987).

²⁴The “Lord Mayor” of New York comments on the small percent of Jewish criminals: 5, no. 30 (1878): 238. Jews petition the secretary of state to instruct the U.S. representative in Morocco

to defend the Jewish community there: 6, no. 5 (1879): 35. The president of the UAHC protests to the State Department on sending a U.S. representative to Romania before it carries out its agreements on Jewish rights, and the diplomat is ordered to return to Vienna: 6, no. 46 (1879): 365. Because U.S.-Russian trade talks were about to commence, President Chester A. Arthur is reviewing the difficult situation of American Jews traveling in Russia: 8, no. 47 (1881): 371.

²⁵When Jews protested, he apologized for a prayer asking God an increase of “Christian wealth”: 7, no. 48 (1880): 381–382.

²⁶Christian preachers “of the stature of Henry Ward Beecher” criticized the Germans of anti-Jewish prejudice: 8, no. 7 (1880): 51.

²⁷In a notorious incident, often singled out as the inception of the surge of social antisemitism in Gilded Age America, Henry Hilton refused admission of the prominent banker Joseph Seligman to the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga Springs because he was Jewish: 5, no. 28 (1878): 226. Eisenstein reported that in 1879 a donation by Hilton to Jewish charities was turned down: 6, no. 1 (1879): 5. The announcement that “Manhattan River,” a summer resort, wanted to refuse Jews triggered protests in newspapers and churches: 6, no. 33 (1879): 258. A hotel in Staten Island refused to admit the Christian wife of a Jewish physician: 7, no. 24 (1880): 189. Eisenstein mentions a bill introduced in the Albany legislature to prohibit discrimination against Jews in hotels: 8, no. 27 (1881): 214.

²⁸The B'nai B'rith in Chicago refused to admit a chapter of Jews of Russian and Polish origin: 7, no. 33 (1879): 262; 8, no. 7 (1881): 51 and again in no. 10 (1881): 75.

²⁹Retired Rabbi Samuel Adler was censured by his congregation for allowing his daughter to marry during the Ten Days of Repentance: 5, no. 41 (1878): 323–324. Congregation Shearith Israel celebrated its 150th anniversary: 7, no. 16 (1880): 125. Congregation Shaarei Tefilot [*sic*] requested reforms in the ritual; the rabbi refused; a compromise was arranged: 6, no. 1 (1879): 4–5. Someone in Chicago wrote that the members of the synagogue work on the Sabbath while the rabbi preached “to three men and seven young girls.”

The daughter of a Reform rabbi in Cincinnati married a Christian and her father blessed them. The allusion was to Helen Wise, a daughter of Isaac Mayer Wise, whose elopement with James Molony “was causing great scandal in Cincinnati’s Jewish community.” The incident is mentioned in *My Life and the New York Times: The Memoirs of Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger*, as written by Susan W. Dryfoos (New York: Times Books, 1987), 13. (Iphigene Sulzberger’s mother was another of Isaac Mayer Wise’s daughters.)

Jews are deserting Hebrew, the Sabbath, and religion, 5, no. 40 (1878): 316. “In Europe the rabbi leads the congregation; in the United State the congregation leads the rabbi”: 6, no. 23 (1879): 200. Eisenstein reports (and rejects) a suggestion to move Sabbath observance to Sunday: 6, no. 31 (1879): 242–244. Dr. Gottheil of the Reformers wants to compose yet another new prayer book: 6, no. 41 (1879): 324. The picture given by the correspondents about American Judaism is not completely negative: “Jews in America are beginning to appreciate their old traditions, even though they recast them in new forms”: 8, no. 47 (1881): 373. “The Orthodox and their leaders still follow the Torah”: 6, no. 22 (1879): 173.

³⁰He categorized the newly formed Ethical Culture Society together with Humanists, Spiritualists, and Robert Ingersoll’s agnosticism: 6, no. 20 (1879): 156.

³¹A synagogue of Polish Jews initiates Talmud classes: 6, no. 5 (1879): 35–36. The creation of a *Shomrei Shabbat* association: 7, no. 3 (1880): 12; no. 16 (1880): 138. Plans to appoint someone from Europe as chief rabbi of New York and of the United States: 6, no. 33 (1879): 258. The proposed candidate was the noted Talmud scholar and Bible commentator Rabbi Meir Leibish ben Yechiel Michel Weiser (1809–1879), known by the acronym Malbim; see Abraham J. Karp, “New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 44, no. 3 (March 1955): 129–199, especially 130–135.

³²Uncircumcised Jews: 7, no. 12 (1880): 92. A gentile about to convert to marry a Jewish girl remarks to the *mohel* that he doubts if the operation will make him a better human being: 7, no. 2 (1880): 12. The Purim ball postponed because of Lent: 7, no. 24 (1880): 189.

³³Meetings of the UAHC: 5, no. 7 (1878): 53; 6, no. 31 (1879): 242–244, including a plan to build a rabbinic school (the future Hebrew Union College) in Cincinnati.

³⁴Eisenstein opined that the attempt to found Jewish agricultural colonies in America would not succeed because in the United States merchants are more honored and necessary than farmers: 6, no. 24 (1879): 188. A subsequent issue contains a long footnote by the editor of *Ha-Zefirah* that Jews should be encouraged to farm: 6, no. 31 (1879): 243. The following year there is a report that “many Jews in North America plan to name Jewish agricultural settlements after R. Isaac [that is, Adolphe] Crémieux”: 7, no. 25 (1880): 199. Adolphe Crémieux was a prominent French liberal and the head of the Consistoire Central des Israélites de France. In 1881, money is being raised to settle Russian Jews on farms in the United States: 8, no. 29 (1881): 252.

³⁵Gold scam: 5, no. 7 (1878): 53; 6, no. 31 (1879): 242–244.

³⁶An *agunah* asks for news about her husband in America, who has not written her in three years: 5, no. 50 (1878): 400. She repeats her request in 6, no. 17 (1879): 136; no. 18 (1879): 144; and no. 19 (1879): 152. Another *agunah* notifies Jews in New York that her husband took her money and jewels when he left for America and refuses to support his two children: 8, no. 11 (1881): 87. A third *agunah* asks about her husband, who left for America two years previously: 8, no. 41 (1881): 328. A fourth *agunah* advertises for her husband, who left for America five years ago: 8, no. 49 (1881): 392.

³⁷Husband cleared and rabbi’s signature on future letters required: 7, no. 37 (1880): 296; no. 38 (1880): 304; no. 42 (1880): 336; no. 44 (1880): 351–352.

³⁸The advertisement appears in the following issues in 6 (1878): no. 11: 88; no. 14: 112; no. 15: 120; no. 16: 128; no. 17: 136; no. 18: 144; no. 119: 52; no. 20: 160; no. 21: 168; no. 22: 176; no. 25: 200; no. 27: 218; no. 28: 224; no. 29: 232; no. 30: 240; no. 31: 348; no. 32: 256; no. 33: 264; no. 34: 272; and no. 35: 280.

³⁹In immigration statistics for the United States for the year: 7, no. 46 (1880): 367. On the pogroms of 1881–1882, the “storms in the south,” and their impact on Jewish emigration, see Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772–1881*, ch. 13, esp. 150–151.

⁴⁰At this point the Russian calendar was almost two weeks behind the western one because the Russian Orthodox Church rejected the changes introduced under the auspices of the pope.

⁴¹This report is reproduced at http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/colonies_of_ukraine/from_the_hebrew_press_1958.htm. The passage, along with other citations from *Ha-Zefirah* and other Hebrew newspapers of the time, was translated by Chaim Freedman.

⁴²For reports from Berlin, Antwerp, Hamburg, Odessa, and especially Brody, see 8 (1881): no. 23: 183; no. 34: 271; no. 35: 276; no. 35: 277–278; no. 36: 283; no. 37: 290; no. 39: 306–307; no. 39: 311; no. 40: 317; no. 41: 324; no. 42: 333; no. 43: 340; no. 43: 343; no. 44: 347; no. 45: 355; no. 48: 380; no. 49: 391. The people pouring into Brody are described as destitute; the city government was said to have tried to seal the border to prevent more from arriving. As noted earlier, the flood of prospective arrivals prompted Eisenstein to write an extensive series for the immigrant in 8 (1881): no. 46: 363–364; no. 48: 381; no. 49: 388–389; no. 50: 397.