

When Have You Been a “Stranger?”

Jewish Immigration to the United States

Discovering
American
Jewish History
Through
Objects

01 THE JERUSALEM TALMUD

It is a joy to live in one’s own house.

שמחה לאדם בשעה שהוא דר בתוך שלו

Jerusalem Talmud, Moed Katan 2:4

02 STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love them as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:33–34

03 THE NEW COLOSSUS

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame, / With conquering limbs astride from land to land; / Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand / A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame / Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name / Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand / Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command / The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame. “Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she / With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. / Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus,” 1883

04 THE PROMISED LAND

The apex of my civic pride and personal contentment was reached on the bright September morning when I entered public school... Our going to school was the fulfilment of my father’s best promises to us... Did they [the parents] teach me from books, and tell me what to believe? I soon chose my own books, and built me a world of my own... When I discovered my own friends, and ran home with them to convert my parents to a belief in their excellence... [d]id I not become the parent and they the children, in those relations of teacher and learner?

Mary Antin, *The Promised Land*, 1912

THEM AND US 08

Once you are an immigrant, you never forget that you are one.

Jorge Ramos, Univision News Anchor, 2013

Mom and Dad had gotten their citizenships, voted, paid taxes, but America would never be their country. I knew it every time I heard one of them refer to Americans as them, and Russia and Russians as us and ours.

Lev Golinkin, *A Backpack, A Bear, and Eight Crates of Vodka*, 2014

OF THE DAWN OF FREEDOM 07

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.

W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903

100 PERCENT AMERICAN 06

No matter by what various crafts we came here, we are all now in the same boat... We must all realize that there are true Americans who did not happen to be born in our section of the country, who do not attend our place of religious worship, who are not of our racial stock, or who are not proficient in our language.

Calvin Coolidge, 1925

THE GREAT RACE 05

These immigrants adopt the language of the native American, they wear his clothes, they steal his name and they are beginning to take his women, but they seldom adopt his religion or understand his ideals.

Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 1916



“Matron America” pop-up Rosh Hashanah Greeting Card, Hebrew Publishing Company 1909
National Museum of American Jewish History, 1982.20.1
Gift of Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett

When you hear the word “stranger,” what does it make you feel?

How are Matron America and the Statue of Liberty similar and different?

What is Antin saying about the process of becoming American?

Should immigrants aspire to fully “become American?”