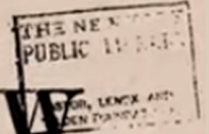


# THE AMERICAN HEBREW.



**SOURCE A** DECEMBER 2, 18812

BY EMMA LAZARUS

*In defiance of the hostile construction that may be put upon my words, I do not hesitate to say that our national defect is that we are not "tribal" enough; we have not sufficient solidarity to perceive that when the life and property of a Jew in the uttermost provinces of the Caucuses are attacked, the dignity of a Jew in free America is humiliated. We who are prosperous and independent have not sufficient homogeneity to champion on the ground of a common creed, common stock, a common history, a common heritage of misfortune, the rights of the lowest and poorest Jew-peddler who flees, for life and liberty of thought, from Slavonic mobs.*

***Until we are all free,  
we are none of us free.***

*But lest we should justify the taunts of our opponents, lest we should become "tribal" and narrow and Judaic rather than humane and cosmopolitan like the anti-Semites of Germany and Jew-baiters of Russia, we ignore and repudiate our unhappy brethren as having no part or share in their misfortunes- until the cup of anguish is held also to our own lips.*

**SOURCE B** NOVEMBER 17, 1882

BY EMMA LAZARUS

*Firmly convinced am I of the truth of the axiom that a study of Jewish history is all that is necessary to make a patriot of an intelligent Jew, I shall undertake from time to time to bring before the Jewish public such facts and critical observations gathered in the course of my studies as I think calculated to arouse a more loyal spirit and a more intelligent estimate of the duties of the hour.*

**SOURCE C** DECEMBER 9, 1887

OBITUARY BY PHILIP COWEN

*Have we tracked her to her home; have we followed her to the synagogue to spy out whether she personally observed the ceremonial laws? Nay! We are not Grand Inquisitors. ... It is enough for us and for Judaism that she did worthily and well the task allotted to her in behalf of her people and her people's faith.*

*... With the zeal and enthusiasm of a new convert, she applied herself to the study of language, history and literature of her people. She issued from her studies panoplied in the rich garb of faith in the mission of her race and the lofty possibilities that lay before it.*

## EXCERPTS FROM THE *AMERICAN HEBREW* – 1882 & 1887

### SOURCE

**Source A:** This article was written by Emma Lazarus and published in *The American Hebrew* as a part of her column on November 17th, 1882

**Source B:** This article was written by Emma Lazarus and published in *The American Hebrew* as a part of her column on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1881

**Source C:** This obituary for Emma Lazarus was written by Philip Cowen and published in the memorial issue of *The American Hebrew*, 1887

### BACKGROUND

In the late 1870s and into the 1880s, when Emma was in her late 20s and early 30s, she began to write poems and plays inspired by Jewish history and literature. Rabbi Gustav Gottheil of Temple Emanuel asked her to translate some of the great Hebrew poems written by Jews who lived in Spain in the early medieval period. Though Emma did not yet know Hebrew, these poems had been translated into German, and Emma knew German so she could translate the German translations of the Hebrew poems into English. Soon, she decided to study Hebrew and hired a tutor to help her. Emma also read Jewish history, in particular, Heinrich Graetz *A History of the Jews*. These stories made their way into her poems and plays.

Throughout this time Emma wrote about Jewish issues for the *New York Times* and *The Century*. In 1882 Philip Cowen, the editor of a Jewish weekly magazine called the *American Hebrew*, invited Emma to host a column. Her column became very popular.

What follows are some of the excerpts from her writings for various publications on Jewish issues. This also includes Philip Cowen's obituary of Emma where he speaks about her Jewish identity.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

As you read the source consider how it informs these questions:

- Emma never wrote directly about her own Jewish identity. Yet she was probably the most famous American Jew to write about Jewish issues. What do the essays and articles she wrote tell you about Emma's Jewish identity?
- What do these sources tell you about Emma's American identity?
- What, according to Emma, are the responsibilities of American Jews towards other Jews? Why?
- Philip Cowen's reminiscences of Emma's Jewish identity imply that she did not keep all the Jewish observances. In his eyes, does this make her less of a Jew? Why or why not?

### HISTORICAL NOTES

*Definitions of terms used in the source.*

**Grand Inquisitor:** In response to questions about whether Emma Lazarus observed Jewish law in her home, he remarks that he is not a "Grand Inquisitor," a reference to the Spanish Inquisition in which the Spanish wanted Jews to convert to Catholicism and would watch them, or spy on them, to ensure that they kept Catholic practices and stopped Jewish practices.

**Slavonic mobs/Jew in the uttermost provinces of the Caucasuses":** references to the pogroms and persecution faced by Jews in Russia.