The Jewish Daily Forward

Newsboys on the front steps of the Jewish Daily Forward building in Manhattan in 1913. Photograph by Lewis Hine, courtesy of the Library of Congress.
Jewish Immigration to the United States
1880-1920

- Between 1880-1920 over 2.5 million Eastern European Jews immigrated to the United States.
- They were fleeing poverty, restrictive laws, Anti-Semitism and violent attacks known as pogroms.
- Many of these immigrants referred to the United States as the “Golden Medina” (Golden Land).
By 1900, the Lower East Side was the most densely populated place on the planet!

"I looked about the narrow streets of squeezed-in stores and houses, ragged clothes, dirty bedding oozing out of the windows, ash-cans and garbage-cans cluttering the side-walks. A vague sadness pressed down my heart—the first doubt of America" - Anzia Yerzeskia
Most families lived in tenement apartments that usually consisted of three rooms and housed as many as 7-10 people.

These apartments lacked basic amenities including running water, heat, electricity and even windows.

To save money and supplement income, families would often run businesses out of their apartments and rent to boarders.
The Jewish Daily Forward

- The immigrants spoke Yiddish, a language consisting of Hebrew, German. It was the language spoken in the home and on the street.

- Founded in 1897, The Jewish Daily Forward was a socialist Yiddish language newspaper that covered politics, social justice, art and literature.

- In addition to national and international news, the paper focused heavily on the plights of immigrants, women and working class people. The paper held a pro Labor and pro Union stance.

Image of Jewish Daily Forward headline from May 18, 1903
Courtesy of Yeshiva Institute for Jewish Research
The Editor, Abraham Cahan

- Born in Lithuania in 1860, Cahan was forced to immigrate to the United States in 1882 because of his socialist political views.

- After arriving to the Lower East Side, Cahan rose up to become a prominent novelist and lecturer on the Socialist and Labor Movement.

- In 1897 he helped found *The Jewish Daily Forward* and served as the paper’s first editor. His vision was to create a Yiddish newspaper that could be read by all in the community and address the everyday problems that its immigrant readers faced.

- “It is as important to teach the reader to carry a handkerchief in his pocket as it is to teach him to carry a union card. And it's as important to respect the opinions of others as it is to have opinions of one's own.” -Abraham Cahan
Topics Covered in the Forward

A Baker Union Strike, 1910

The Rules of Baseball for the Non-Sports Fan, 1909

Rent Strike-Allerton Ave, Bronx

Max Fleischer Cartoon, Walk Sequence

Jackie Kennedy Reading the Forward
“A Bintel Brief” (A Bundle of Letters) was the *Forward’s* advice column that Abraham Cahan started in 1907.

Jewish Immigrants who were struggling with the culture of America turned to this column for advice on love, bad bosses and tensions between parents and children.

The column reflected Cahan’s vision for the paper to “interest itself in the things that the masses are interested in when they aren’t preoccupied with the daily struggle for bread.”

“A Bintel Brief” in Yiddish
In 1912 the paper moved to a brand new 10 story building at 175 East Broadway.

In addition to having the paper’s printing presses and offices, the Forward also rented out space to various union and labor organizations.

The building’s landmarked façade beards many Socialist symbols including suns, burning torches and friezes of Socialist thinkers, including Karl Marx.

Today the building has been converted into luxury condos.

The opening of the new Forward Building was front page news.