

**Anti-Semitic Cartoon:**  
**“A Hint to the Hebrews,” *Puck*, May 1881**

<b>TYPE:</b>	Cartoon	<b>TOPICS:</b>	Anti-Semitism
<b>TIME:</b>	1850-1899		Immigration
<b>LEVEL:</b>	Middle School and above		



**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

By the 1870s, some of the Germanic-speaking Jews who had immigrated to the United States prior to the Civil War had achieved financial success in America. Despite their economic gains, however, many found the doors of America’s elite shut to them, as reflected in this cartoon. The most infamous case of anti-Semitism occurred when the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga Springs, New York, refused to admit banker Joseph Seligman. Judge Henry Hilton, the hotel’s owner, explained that he had no objection to the Sephardic elite, who had lived in America since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and whom he believed to be the refined, “true Hebrews.” By contrast, Hilton claimed, the German immigrant “Seligman” Jews were dirty and greedy, and thus unfit for society.

In Europe, too, anti-Jewish sentiment was common in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Along with the economic changes wrought by rapid industrialization, this anti-Semitism helped to spur the migration of Jews from Eastern Europe to America. The arrival of over 2 million Jews between 1880 and 1920 only increased the exclusionary sentiment of many native-born Americans in the social arena. It also increased the tensions between the increasingly established German

Jews and the Eastern European newcomers. Politically and economically, however, many of these new arrivals found success and acceptance in this country, as did members of the established Jewish community.

For more on the anti-Semitism of this time, see <http://www.jwa.org/exhibits/wov/lazarus>.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What traits of the Jews does this cartoon emphasize? Caricaturize?
2. How do the figures on the island differ from those on the shore?
3. How has the cartoonist taken a “normal” scene and distorted it to convey his point?
4. Is the cartoonist opposed to or supportive of the anti-Semitism of his time?
5. Could this cartoon be published today? Why or why not?