WE ARE FAMILY

THE JEWISH FAMILY AS SEEN IN PERFORMANCE MEDIA OF MUSICAL THEATER, YIDDISH THEATER, AND OPERA

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for cantorial ordination
The Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music
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Submitted: Jan 22, 2015

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Acknowledgements

Rabbi Kim Geringer--Thesis Advisor

Dr. Mark Kligman—Professor of Jewish Music Research class, who helped me attain these ideas for this thesis

Cantor Jonathan Comisar—My recital advisor, coach, and dear friend

Joyce Rosenzweig—Professor of Yiddish Art Song and pianist for my recital

Pedro D'Aquino—Professor of Musical Analysis

Ross, Abigail, and Zev Friedman—my beloved husband, daughter, and son

The Class of 2015

OPENING

The Jewish family has been a prominent archetype in many of the performance media of the 20th -century. There are countless plays and movies about the quintessential meddling Jewish mother, the shlemiel-like Jewish father who is ruled by his wife, and their neurotic son. Woody Allen has made his career out of such roles, playing characters who always believed something was medically wrong with them, and who spent much of their time going to psychoanalysis. Many popular contemporary plays and musicals center on the Jewish family: *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Rags, Children of Eden, Falsettos, and I Can Get it For You Wholesale.* Notable Yiddish theater works made famous by performers like Molly Picon such as *Mammaleh, Children Without a Home,* and *Tevye the Milkman* also portray the Jewish family. The 19th-century opera *La Juive* by Jules Halevy tells the story of a father/daughter relationship during the period leading up to the Inquisition (1414) when Jews had to face many challenges including being forced to choose conversion to Christianity or death. From the pre-WWII years through the 1960s in literature and plays by authors such as Michael Gold, Clifford Odets, Samuel Ornitz, and Dan Greenburg, the Jewish mother was portrayed as everything from a nostalgic or heroic figure to be worshipped, to a comic figure, to a figure of resentment (Bienstock 1979).

The purpose of this thesis is to explore two major areas. The first is how the Jewish family is seen through the lens of the performance media of American musical theater, Yiddish theater, and opera, and how contemporaneous other works might have influenced the portrayal of the Jewish family in these three media. The second area is an

exploration of what motivated the artists of these media to write about, and oftentimes exploit, the Jewish family in their literature. The thesis will discuss how immigration and acculturation to America, along with a strong desire for these children of immigrants to fit in, may have influenced family life in such a way that these creators dealt with some of their feelings about these matters through their art. The thesis will also discuss how and why performers of these media were drawn to this material. For example Molly Picon, one of the greatest performers of the Yiddish theater, was known as the "Yiddish Peter Pan" (Archive n.d.)--One of many male roles she was famous for. The thesis will uncover reasons as to why Picon chose to do this and how her family life might have influenced her career.

I use several sources to uncover this information including books and articles about family therapy, sources discussing conflicts between American and shtetl life, the *Tanakh*, books about portrayal of Jews in performance media, texts about individual performers, and a complete musical and sociological analysis of one of the songs sung by the leading character in Charles Strouse's musical, *Rags*. Along with the Introduction and Conclusion, there are three chapters about each of the most written about and popular elements of the Jewish family which will also serve as rubrics and sub-rubrics for the recital. In Chapter 1, *Mother-Daughter, Father-Son and Vice Versa,* I use contemporary theory by authors well-versed in family therapy to explain the Jewish family dynamic. Chapter 2, *Education and Success, Guilt and Suffering* discusses the importance of education to the Jewish family, along with how guilt and suffering—particularly by the Jewish mother— has shaped the Jewish family dynamic. Chapter 3, *Musical Renderings and Sacred Texts Featuring the Jewish Family* discusses musical portrayals of Jewish

family relationships and gives concrete examples of these relationships through the lens of various performance media. This chapter will also give accounts of how the Jewish family is seen throughout our sacred texts in stories and articles about honoring one's parents-- *כיבוד אב ואם*--along with the story of Ruth and Naomi, one of the most important mother/daughter relationship models for the Jewish family. Chapter 4 consists of a complete musical analysis of the song "Children of the Wind" from the musical *Rags* by Jewish composer Charles Strouse as well as a sociological analysis of the elements of the Jewish family found within this song.

Today, the Jewish population is between 13,500,000 and 15,500,000, a very small part of the world population.[1] Yet in spite of this small number, people continue to be entertained and fascinated by Jewish culture, particularly the family, and countless entertainment media have used their myths and stories. Various Jewish concepts and Yiddish words have become a part of the everyday vocabulary of many Americans--Jewish and non-Jewish alike--such as chicken soup, Sabbath candles, "smother love," "JAPs," (Jewish-American princes and princesses), "schlemiel"-like fathers, "mensch," and many others have made their way into the daily vocabulary of America (Bubis 1977).

In his book, *Serving the Jewish Family,* Gerald B. Bubis writes that while 32percent of all immigrants coming to America in the late 19th- and early 20th centuries went back to their countries of origin, 92percent of Jews remained in the U.S, and were younger than most immigrant groups, with one in eight being under the age of fourteen (9) (Bubis 1977). Although 25percent of these Jews were illiterate, there were still more Jews working in highly skilled occupations than any other group who immigrated to

[1] Tobin, Diane. "Be'chol Lashon | Advocating for the Growth and Diversity of the Jewish People | Home." Sitewide RSS. http://www.bechollashon.org (accessed July 16, 2014).

America at that time period. Today Jews have prospered greatly in the United States. One-fourth of the faculty members of Ivy League schools are Jews under the age of fifty. More than four out of five Jews work in white-collar professions. As of 1972, 72percent of males age 25-29 have a bachelor's degree, and 48percent have a master's degree.[2]

Victor D. Sauna writes in his article, *The Contemporary Jewish Family,* "While the Jewish community can exhibit limitless energy and heightened social consciousness, there is one area where it seems to have failed, and this is the gap in our knowledge of the modern Jew[3]" (3). Chancellor Finkelstein quoted Marshall Sklare, saying:

> There are probably a hundred people and more whose profession it is to discover all that can be known about the Jews in Jerusalem in the first century; there does not seem to be one who has the same duty for the Jews of New York in the 20th century. So it comes about that we understand Judaism in the first century better than we understand Judaism in the 20th. (Sklare, 1958)

Victor Sauna writes that while many books that have been written exclusively about the Jewish family talk about its customs and values, they have been derived primarily from religious writings. While Jews in America have been watched and observed more than any other ethnic group, there is a lack of sociological material about them that is based on real scientific data, as most of the writings about them are by philosophers, rabbis, journalists, and novelists (Bubis 1977). Books and literature, in addition to more popular performance media such as the theater, have shown many characteristics of the Eastern European Jewish family in the shtetls, including Shalom Aleichem's popular musical *Fiddler on the Roof,* and the 1952 writings of Zborwski and

[2] Contemporary data is from preliminary reports of the National Jewish Population Study. CJFWF, 1972. Data also from 1977, *Serving the Jewish Family* by Gerald B. Bubis.
[3] Article "The Contemporary Jewish Family" from the book *Serving the Jewish Family* edited by Gerald B. Bubis.

Herzog in their book *Life is With People*. All material, intellectual, and emotional rewards were attained in the Jewish home where there lived an extended family, with grandparents being an integral part of the household under the authority of mother and father. However, when these families immigrated to the United States from Eastern Europe, there arose a need for Jewish children to "make it" in the secular world. Immigration to the U.S. and Western Europe brought intermarriage which weakened the centrality of the family and made it difficult to maintain its solidarity and traditions. This secularization made it more difficult to instill the former traditional religious and cultural values that were popular in the shtetl, including pride in Judaism, adherence to a spiritual life, obedience, and respect for elders.

In his article, Sauna attempts to collect more information on the modern Jewish family from other various sources rather than relying the research and opinions of novelists, journalists, and even non-Jewish researchers (Bubis 1977). He presents empirical findings on the contemporary Jewish family in the United States from two 20th-century sources: A 1968 Study by Sidney Goldstein of Jewish families in the relatively small town of Springfield, IL,[4] and a study by Calvin Goldscheider of families in a larger city, Boston[5]. There were no studies available in New York, the city with the largest concentration of Jews. His findings were, in a nutshell, that within the smaller town two characteristics differentiated Jewish from non-Jewish families: 1) Jews tended to live as members of families rather than singles; 2) there are fewer children in Jewish families. The birthrate seemed to be declining due to a low fertility rate of 1.749 in 1957. One

[4] Goldstein, Sidney, and Calvin Goldscheider. *Jewish Americans: three generations in a Jewish community*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968.
[5] Axelrod, M. "A Community Survey for long range planning: A study of the Jewish population of greater Boston." Boston, Massachusetts, 1967.

assumption for this was that Jews have fewer children because of cultural values and minority status which make them feel insecure, thus reducing their fertility rates.[6] However, it was also noted that the even though there was a population increase during the 19th- century in Eastern Europe, this was not a specific phenomenon. Rather, it was a result of major population trends of the period.[7]

Popular culture paints the picture of the Jewish family being close-knit. Television shows of the 1990s, such as *The Nanny,* portray the closeness of mother, daughter, and grandmother, albeit in a comical manner. However, there has been very little verifiable research to prove that this is true. In fact, most of the research about this family dynamic was performed by non-Jewish researchers who had Jewish subjects in their samples.[8] Even though it is questionable whether Jewish families are tight-knit, the majority of them have parents in happy marriages. As many as 80 percent of Jewish college students said that their parents had happy marriages, while Catholic and other Protestant students reported lower happiness rates.[9] Unlike many non-Jewish families, the extended family is of extreme importance. Jews feel a strong obligation toward not only their immediate family but also to their larger extended one as well.[10] Jewish college students were much more loyal to their families than their Protestant and Catholic

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[6] Jacobs, A.T. "American Judaism, 64." *"Population explosion in reverse"*: 14-15.
[7] Engelman, Uriah Z. "Intermarriage Among Jews in Switzerland 1888-1920." *American Journal of Sociology*: 516.
[8] J. Balswick. "Are American-Jewish families closely knit: A review of the literature?" In *Jewish Social Studies*: 28, 1966, 159-167.
[9]Landis, J.T. "Religiousness, family religion and family values in Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish families." In *Marriage and Family Living* 1960, 341-347.
[10] Bressler, M. "Selected family patterns, in W.I. Thomas' unfinished study of the Bintl Brief." *American Sociological Review* 17: 563-571.

classmates, with 74 percent of Jews being highly loyal to their families compared to only 24 percent of non-Jews.[11]

In the book *America's Jews,* Marshall Sklare writes that rather than being distinct entities, the children in Jewish families are seen by their parents as extensions of themselves. For example, when the child is hurt, the parent is equally hurt and suffers just as much if not more than the child. Parents in many cases are willing to sustain injury because they believe that their children are too weak to handle it. There is great emphasis on providing sustenance and everything the child could possibly need so that he/she will be able to cope with life when grown up. Even if the child is stronger than the parent physically (for example, a 6"4 athlete vs. a meek, feeble father in a wheelchair), they are still seen as dependent. However, the children do not remain helpless, dependent extensions of their parents forever. At some point they become competent individuals in themselves, and the parent will become dependent upon the child. This is ironic: when it is time for the child to become a separate entity from his/her parents, since the child is an extension of the parent, then the parents' good reputations depend upon the success of their children. If the children are not so good, it reflects badly on the parents. If they turn out to be pillars of the community, for example, then it makes the parents look extremely good. In the Jewish family, it does not matter how successful the father is in his job or career because if his children do not turn out well, then he is considered to be an abject failure (Sklare 1971).

If the parent does not have *nachas fun kinder*, (Yiddish for pleasure from children), everything else in his life and anything else that makes her or him happy is

[11] Bressler, M. "Selected family patterns, in W.I. Thomas' unfinished study of the Bintl Brief." *American Sociological Review* 17: 563-571.

meaningless. Marshall Sklare writes that there is truly only one way to attain *nachas* and that is through one's children. Since the children have this power to give or withhold *nachas*, they actually hold all the power in the parent/child relationship. The child can literally commit their parents to live quietly in desperation. The parents are wise to this fact, however, and reduce vulnerability by continually giving the child the best of everything, including clothing, cars, education, trips, and many other things aside from the love, attention, and emotional support, which is always expected. In so doing this, the parents put themselves back in the position of power, because if a child withholds *nachas* in a situation such as this, they are seen as an ingrate by society, making the parents innocent and therefore putting the father and mother in good standing with society (Sklare 1971).

Despite these parent-child relationships of extension rather than distinction within Jewish culture, the influence of American middle class culture has caused them to become relationships of distinction rather than extension. Parents and children have become mutually independent of one another and have moved away from the Eastern European shtetl mentality to the model of the American middle class family.
Two specific elements caused this shift, the first one being the high educational level of Jews. Education promotes enlightenment with new and different ways of thinking and, in this case, it caused younger Jews to become more urbanized and sophisticated thus motivating them to push against their parents' need for *nachas*, even regarding it as a crude form of bribery. The second element that caused the shift was the attraction and understanding of Jews to modern psychology, particularly therapy. Since all psychological schools of thought stress a detaching of these parent-child relationships of

extension, psychologists and therapists are very critical of the Jewish family structure and often encourage distinction by the children (Sklare 1971).

CHAPTER 1:

MOTHER/SON, FATHER/DAUGHTER AND VICE VERSA

The Jewish Mother

In *The Authorized Daily Prayerbook,* J.H. Hertz writes that the Eastern European Jewish community was a "male-oriented culture where women were regarded as subordinate." (Hertz 1948) Women were submissive to both God and their husbands, even to the point of being second-class citizens within the family and community structure. We see this in one of the prayers of *Birchot Ha Shachar* which traditional Jewish men recite each morning (today in egalitarian congregations it is recited by all), thanking God for "not making me a woman"[12] (Hertz 1948). Today, in most egalitarian communities that prayer is replaced, and we thank God for making us Jews. In previous generations, women were expected to do things that may be unheard of to many liberal Jews including downplaying their attractiveness to other men after marriage by shaving their heads, sitting separately from the men, and immersing in a mikvah in order to become ritually fit to resume sexual relations after menstruation. According to Allison Josephs, author of the popular blog, *Jew in the City,* many Orthodox women still maintain these practices today. Dressing modestly, or *tzanua*, along with wearing a wig (or covering one's hair with a scarf or hat) after marriage creates a barrier that keeps certain parts of oneself private and off-limits for public consumption. The wig allows for a protective barrier between the woman and the rest of the world, reserving the sensual, the ability to "run one's fingers through her hair," for her husband (Josephs 2009).

[12] Excerpt from תפלת שחרית in Authorized Daily Prayerbook, published in 1948. Entire prayer is ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם שלא אשני אשה.

In Eastern Europe, there were extreme limitations placed upon women's public appearance. *Tznius* (modesty) was greatly emphasized as the ideal for women in their public lives including such behaviors as never looking men in the eye and maintaining a deferential manner. Today, Orthodox women consider the practice of *tznius* a mitzvah because they are reserving their private parts, hair, and demure looks for only their husbands' eyes, and *tznius* promotes a barrier against the outside world. With these great many constrictions on women who, in many cases were actually strong individuals, it is little wonder that Jewish mothers became dominant within their homes. The mother was the center of family life and the primary educator of her children. In addition to the domestic responsibilities of mothers of the shtetls, they had two other very important jobs: 1) helping to support their families financially, and 2) transmitting Jewish culture to the children. However, when they came to America, their children began to reject the old-world Jewish culture in favor of modern American culture, and the traditional role of the mother began to change. The children even reversed the teaching process and brought this new culture home to their parents and taught them. One example is that while in the past the parent might have spoken Yiddish in the home, the children now began answering them in English (Charlotte Baum 1977).

One of the more prominent stereotypes of the Jewish mother portrays her as being domineering, demanding, and constantly giving her children guilt while the stereotype of the Jewish daughter is the opposite, being demanding and aggressive, but on the other hand self-centered and materialistic (Schneider, 1984). These stereotypes ignore the important value of Jewish culture, which is that of the mothers' unending concern for her children and their needs at the expense of her own. According to Fredda Herz and Elliot

Rosen in their article *Jewish Families* from the book, *Ethnicity and Family Therapy,* in the 1980s, Jewish women often thought of themselves more as mothers than as wives, feeling more responsible for the educational, emotional, cultural, spiritual, and physical well-being of their children than their WASP counterparts. (F.M. Rosen 1982) They also believe that these stereotypes demonstrate a pattern common to oppressed groups at that time (the 1980s) which had experienced the most racism and prejudice: they turned against each other because they could not deal with the outside hatred of their oppressors. (F.M. Rosen 1982) Today, this is not necessarily the dominant position of Jewish women, including Orthodox Jewish women. In 1997, the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) formed in response to traditional Jewish women's desires to expand their roles outside of the home. They deal with gender issues and seek to advance social change around them within the Orthodox Jewish community. JOFA takes a closer look at Halacha and through it finds ways to give women more spiritual, ritual, political, educational, and intellectual opportunities in synagogues, houses of Jewish learning, and Jewish communal organizations. The underlying core belief is that allowing women to expand their roles outside the home and to expand the roles of women beyond that which was practiced in the shtetl will enrich the entire Jewish people (Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance 1997).

Even though the Jewish mother's role was limited in traditional society, there was also a tradition of business-savvy women who paved the way for the huge successes we see from Jewish women in the areas of business, education, and many other fields today. In the shtetl as well as in Haredi communities today, women often supported the entire family in addition to all of their other duties, because their husbands wanted to remain

highly respected and honored by their pious study and devotion to religious study. With their wives working, the husbands were free to study all day long. Thus, while traditional Jewish men were learned in Torah, Talmud, and Halacha, they were not skilled in the practical trades needed to earn a living for their families, and they lost their status when they came to the United States where they were expected be the breadwinners instead of learning texts all day. The mother once again was left to be the emotional and economic support of the family, expected to make ends meet miraculously within the family budget while continuing her constant practice of self-denial in favor of the needs of everyone else in the family (Bienstock, 1979). A mother's sacrifice for the benefit of her children was always a vital Jewish value, and sometimes mothers mediated between their husbands, whose tears she was wiping and complaints she was listening to about life in the new society, and her children who were desperately trying to find success in America. In the end, the mother put her children's needs ahead of her husband's, and adapted to the new situation. (Bienstock 1979) Often the children became resentful of their parents because of the dominance of their mothers, and the passive parenting of their fathers. Many times husbands pulled away from their wives when they felt like failures for not being able to achieve success (Bienstock 1979).

In his article, *The Changing Image of the American Jewish Mother,* Bienstock cites Franz Alexander, head of the Institute for Psychoanalysis at University of Chicago, who studied familial relationships in second-generation immigrant families. Alexander found that there was a great diminishing of the father's role as head of household during the course of the immigrant experience. The father was unable to cope with this new environment and this caused the family to transfer all of its hopes and dreams for future

welfare and success to the American-born son. Bienstock writes that these findings point to an intimate bond between economic goals and familial affections with the mother placing all of her approval upon the son who actually usurped the father's place in her affections as well as in economic importance (181). The son then faced the difficult task of living up to his mother's hopes and sacrifices in order to appease a guilty conscience that he had about his father's inability to take on this role. The son often went to desperate measures, no matter what the cost, in order to provide for the family and become successful in place of his father (Bienstock 1979).

We see a great example of this phenomenon—the son becoming successful no matter what the cost—in Jerome Weidman's 1937 novel, *I Can Get it for you Wholesale,* which he also turned into the musical that put Barbra Streisand on the map in 1962. It was about a young man, Harry Bogen, who was trying to make it big in the garment industry and would do so at all costs. Bogen's motivation to achieve such success was largely due to his lower-class upbringing and wanting to be different from his father who was considered a "flunky." Harry dedicated himself to "the best and quickest way to make money." While Harry's mother speaks respectfully of her husband, throughout the story she is seen endorsing Harry's path, even though she questions whether or not he is making it in a "nice way." (Bienstock 1979) The negative stereotype of the Jewish mother begins to be formed because in stories such as that of Harry Bogen, the mother's basic appreciation of material values and money clearly have shaped her son's values--a common theme throughout second-generation immigrant families.

During the post-war years, there was a trend that included a more skeptical view of the mother's influence on her son. Bienstock writes that this particular trend, or

treatment of the Jewish mother in artistic media, was called Freudian alarm, which was one of the three paths that she claims the Jewish mother would follow along with comic condescension and nostalgic exaltation (183-184). Samuel Ornitz, a novelist who was also learned in psychology and sociology, published the book, *Bride of the Sabbath,* in 1951. This book depicted the eroticism of the mother's attachment to her son. Set in the immigrant period, it is the story of Saul Kramer, a young boy who was so overwhelmed by affection for his mother and grandmother that he was unable to find and cope with adult love later in his life (Bienstock 1979). Saul is a son unable to sever the ties of the umbilical cord or cut the apron strings of his mother. This novel paved the way for the next decade, the 1960s, an era that brought with it the freedom for Jewish writers to write about a whole array of subject matters. Yet they still returned to the Jewish mother, mainly because they were less concerned with the mother's materialism as seen in the second immigrant period and more concerned with the mother's stunting of their sons' emotional lives.

There are other examples of neurotic characters like Saul Kramer in novels by authors Bruce Jay Friedman and Philip Roth (Bienstock 1979). Mothers were also blamed for most of their children's mistakes including the children's commitment to their American identity instead of their Jewish identity. Furthermore, the Jewish mother often found herself the focus of many a Jewish person's anger and shame for not succeeding in the task of instilling Jewish culture while at the same time helping to promote their children's success in the non-Jewish world. The Jewish mother was scapegoated and portrayed in many anti-Semitic caricatures as well as in popular books of the 1960s where she was made fun of for her constant drive, involvement in her children's lives,

and intense desire for security and success. On the other side, these same works portrayed the Jewish sons as "nice Jewish boys" trying to deal with their mother's meddling and domineering ways which resulted in self-doubt, hypochondria, and self-obsession and their inability to achieve a life of their own (Bienstock, 1979).

In a study by Maureen Davey, Linda Stone Fish, and Mihaela Robila called *Ethnic Identity and Jewish Families* (Maureen Davey 2001), parents and children of 48 Jewish families in central New York were interviewed about how the children and parents formed their Jewish identity and how that identity shaped the family dynamics. In this study, many families said that it was because of the mother's strong Jewish identity that they remained connected to their Judaism. They said that the mother took on the responsibility of perpetuating Judaism much more so than the father. A woman in one of the families was quoted as saying, "It is the mother's responsibility to educate the kids about Judaism, to pass this to the next generation" (338).

Bienstock writes that Jewish children sought success in American culture and learned to put behind them their Jewish religious traditions, beliefs, and relationships which were too large an amount of inheritance to shrug off without some degree of guilt. The children felt both the most grateful, and at the same time the most guilty towards their Jewish mothers. The children defended the heartless ways they left behind their mothers and all the values they had tried to instill in them by turning negatively on them. Because of this, writes Bienstock, the modern Jewish writer kept the negative image of the Jewish mother alive by tailoring her image in response to this contemporary desire which was to make her out to be the "monster of motherhood." In this way, the writer could appeal to both sets of readers—Jews and non-Jews—whose guilty feelings were the

same as his own, and who also found it enjoyable to poke fun at the caricature of the Jewish mother. (190) (Bienstock, 1979).

Herz and Rosen write that the Jewish mother is a widely popular topic celebrated in story and song. This is because even though in the early times of the shtetl both mother and father were addressed as "Tateh-Mammeh" ("Daddy-Mommy") in recognition of the duality of their relationship, the mother was considered mother of the entire family including the father (F. M. Rosen 1982). She constantly put her own needs aside in order to care for others in the family. She constantly sacrificed for her children, and suffered greatly when she perceived that they did not appreciate her efforts, resulting in the children being bound by feelings of guilt (F. M. Rosen 1982). Guilt is a very strong emotion that constantly plagued the consciousness of Jewish children both in the shtetl, and especially in the post-war period (Bienstock 1979). In 1982, at the time of this writing (Herz and Rosen), it was not unusual for couples to decide to have children largely to appease their mothers and so that they could carry on Judaism. This great responsibility for carrying on the culture presented serious conflicts for Jewish women; a huge part of them valued education and personal success, yet for many decades it was unacceptable for them to pursue these goals.

When researching emotional disturbances among families, the internal conflict of desire and pivotal place of the mother and wife in the Jewish family has been prominently seen in studies of families with schizophrenic children (F. M. Rosen 1982). In non-Jewish families, 50 percent of the fathers were diagnosed as emotionally disturbed or socially maladjusted, but this was completely reversed in Jewish families, where 50

percent of the mothers were diagnosed.[13] The competing values of caretaking and desire for success create constant conflict for the Jewish mother. She often expresses her frustration by saying things like, "I'm getting better and better at juggling it, but no better at balancing it" (F. M. Rosen 1982). In the shtetl, a mother's love, instead of being expressed verbally or physically, was demonstrated by constant overfeeding and worry about every single aspect of her children's welfare. Since she could not achieve her own desires, she placed all of her energies into the success of her children.

Mother/Daughter

One of the reasons Jewish mother-daughter relationships differ from that of the mother-sons is the intense desire of the mother for her daughter to find a successful husband and bear children due to the extreme importance of carrying on Jewish culture. In 1982, Herz and Rosen wrote that in Jewish culture, a young woman who decides to postpone childbearing in order to pursue a career was likely to feel extreme emotions of guilt for betraying her mother. Children have always been so central to the family system that the postponement of childbearing not only threatens the mother's potential for grandchildren, which is central to her family values, but also threatens to break the generational chain. Unlike most other cultures, the Jewish mother makes statements to her daughter like "How can you do this to me?*"* The mother in times of the shtetl was not allowed to use her intelligence and drive for any kind of personal accomplishments. As families began to immigrate to America, Jewish mothers became more and more conflicted and ambivalent in their role. Being caught between the old and new world, the

[13] Sauna, V.D. The Contemporary Jewish Family: A Review of the Social Science Literature in G. Babis (Ed.), *Serving the Jewish Family.* New York: KTAV, 1978.

mothers' role were changing. This caused great confusion for their daughters, resulting in tension and conflict; the mothers were communicating their ambivalence by placing unclear or unrealistic expectations upon their daughters in regards to the woman's role. The daughters were frustrated and rebelled, claiming that they never knew how to please their mothers, or what their mothers expected of them. This resulted in even more push back by the mother. By contrast, the expectations are much clearer in the mother-son relationship. Sons would often remark that they knew exactly what to do to please their mothers but they were just tired of doing it (F. M. Rosen 1982).

In 1984, Susan Weidman Schneider wrote in Jewish *and Female, Choices and Changes in our Lives Today* that within mother-daughter relationships, the daughter seemed distressed by her mother's self-sacrifice and manipulative power. Because the mother had no goals or drives of her own, she was not a useful role model for her daughter who, during the 1980s, was trying to achieve the professional goals equivalent to her father and brother (Schneider 1984). In spite of this fact, along with the fear that they would become like their mothers, mother/daughter relationships were, and often still are, seen as helpmate/ally relationships. This may be because in the shtetl they shared the common bond of being excluded from Jewish ritual life within the synagogue, being relegated to sit apart from men, even sometimes not being able to see services at all. They also shared the reality of their role within the home in domestic obligations in which the men, even in the same family, often had no part. Mothers who worked exclusively in the home looked to their daughters to fill the void of outside relationships and companionship that they were missing. Weidman Schneider writes that older women often refused to tell secrets to anyone, even close friends outside of the family circle, and

saved these intimate secrets for their daughters, believing that their ears were the only safe ones (Schneider 1984). Intimate relationships exist among Jewish women because they are very good at working together through the closeness of their family and extended family to make things better for the group as a whole (Schneider 1984).

Mother/Son

The relationship between the Jewish mother and her son is perhaps the most volatile of all of those in the Jewish family. The popularity of the mother within American popular culture and our media comes from her comedic roles in best-selling books and other popular performance media. Yet in most cases, her main function in the past was that of an immigrant wife and parent, and no one but her immediate family and ethnic community gave her that much attention. It was her children, her sons especially, who grew up and wrote about her, giving her these strong negative stereotypes, the jokes, and all of the drama surrounding her which has left a permanent mark on the whole of American culture (Bienstock 1979).

The image of the mother went from that of a heroic figure at the turn of the century to, as Bienstock says, a "maternal vampire" in the 1960s (Bienstock 1979). This is because of the trauma and culture shock that came with the family's adaptation to the ethnic ghettos of large cities after living in the shtetls of Eastern Europe. This move brought about major changes in the traditional Jewish domestic roles with the mother assuming a brand new prominence and leadership role within the family, and eventually her sons began to rebel against her. The reason for this, psychologists argue, is a classic behavioral pattern that is common in most cultures when adapting to a new way of life.

These great changes to the family upon arrival to America are the reasons why the mother, with her extreme self-sacrifice, constant giving of her time, energy, effort and especially love to ensure the best for her children, became the object of such disdain—so much so that the sons sought revenge by writing about her. This revolt manifested itself in literary works and eventually theatrical and musical theater works by the sons (Bienstock, 1979).

But these works did not start out vengefully. In fact, in the earliest literary works created at the onset of immigration between 1880 and 1929, the sons portrayed their mothers in a more heroic light. It was not until later on, in the 1960s, that the works became more negative towards the mother. Bienstock writes, "If the Jewish Mother as she appears in literature is less of a mirroring of reality than a selective interpretation of that reality, the writer becomes as important as the subject matter" (175). Thus, the changing role of the Jewish mother occurs because of the changing attitudes of the sons who write about her (Bienstock, 1979). In these early works, we see many examples of personal reflections of the authors' (sons) experiences as immigrants and the upheaval in their family lives. In Anzia Yezierska's semi-autobiographical work, *Bread Givers* (1925), we see the common pattern of Jewish family life at the turn of the century: the first-generation housewife alone took on the burden of the family's economic well-being along with all of the emotional, responsibilities, yet she still supported her husband's learning and gave him all of the authority at her own expense (Bienstock, 1979). In Sholem Asch's *The Mother,* which was published in 1925, Asch chronicles the way that the mother's responsibilities expanded in comparison to the Orthodox father's fall in honor and prestige. As in so many novels of this period, the father was pious and devout

which left him unable to do anything in the American labor market. Thus, all responsibility fell on the mother's savvy shoulders. Yet in this story, the father takes a job in a sweatshop even though his wife objects wholeheartedly. In Asch's novel, the wife and mother is the true center of the family with her self-denial and practical ability to make gold from nothing, giving her family the strength needed to survive (Bienstock, 1979).

In the Al Jolson Film, *The Jazz Singer* (1927), young son Jakie is torn between his dreams of show business and fulfilling his pious father's expectations for him to follow in his footsteps and become a cantor. The mother plays a key role in this story because her intense loyalty to her husband keeps her from condoning her son's choice to be a jazz singer; but since she is the "practical member of the household," she appreciates Jakie's success. At the end of the movie, Jakie decided to postpone his debut and *daven* in his dying father's place at Yom Kippur. The final segment is his showbiz debut with him singing "My Mammy" and his mother beaming from the audience, applauding and supporting his secular performance, which shows that she has actually sided with Jakie and chosen his new secular way of life over her husband's wish for him to be a cantor (Bienstock 1979).

The economic impact of the Depression in the 1930s steered the direction in which the Jewish family was headed. Spiritual and religious obligations took a backseat to the need to feed the family, and the practical values of the Jewish mother took precedence in the home. The reality of living in America, especially among these desperate conditions, was affecting all members of the family, forcing them to take on roles they had never held before. Franz Alexander studied relationships within the

second-generation immigrant families. He found that the role of the father greatly diminished, and since the father was unable to cope with the changes that resulted from coming to America, the hopes and dreams, economic aspirations, and future welfare of the family were then transferred to the son. Alexander writes that these findings point to an intimate tie between familial affections and economic goals, because the mother especially showered forcefully all of her approval on her son, as he was most likely to succeed. Thus, the son "usurps the father's place in the mother's affections as well as in economic importance and acquires an inordinate ambition" (Bienstock 1979). The son consequently felt guilty about his mother's constant sacrifices and wanted desperately to live up to her expectations. Thus, he pursued success at whatever cost.[14]

Franz Alexander hints that there is a seemingly erotic link between the mother and son which is the source of the son's aspirations and desires to succeed. We see a great example of this link in Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* (1934). In this work, the father, mother, and son relationship is Oedipal, and we see this question of mother-son eroticism throughout popular novels of the 1960s as well (Bienstock 1979). It is Oedipal because in this story, the father is not at all weak. Albert Schearl is an aggressive man who is so abusive to his only son, David, that he causes David to fear and hate him. Yet one can see in the novel that the father is only acting out of fear and disorientation of being in this new American world, behavior that was common to immigrant males at that time. By contrast, the mother and wife, Genya, is completely the opposite, making a stable oasis of

[14] Franz Alexander, *Our 'Age of Unreason: A study of the Irrational Forces in Social Life,* (rev. ed. (New York: J. B. Lippincot, 1951), p. 198. Pages 197-201 also contain pertinent insights into the immigrant family. Alexander specifically praises the accuracy of Budd Schulberg's *What Makes Sammy Run?* (1941), a novel much like *I Can Get It for You Wholesale* in its portrayal of a ruthlessly ambitious second-generation Jewish son.

love and security in the home for David. In David's mind, she has replaced his father as the head of the household. While their relationship is rich, there are psychological dangers for David as a growing boy (Bienstock 1979).

The children of immigrants were becoming fully Americanized. Even though they were first generation-American born and bred, they felt caught between the two worlds - the old world shtetl, and new America. As a result, the customs of their old world relatives felt extremely foreign to them, yet because of abuses that kept them from entering fully into mainstream American society, such as anti-Semitism, job discrimination, and college quotas, they were not fully able to become Americans. Thus they began to rebel against family and these abuses of the American system, taking their frustrations out in literary works, condemning their current Jewish family for its middle-class, materialistic and conventional aspirations. The mother became their scapegoat because she was always considered the head of the family and she was associated with their material, and not spiritual interests. She was exploited in her sons' writings as an agent of American capitalism at its gaudiest. Sadly, even though these mothers were often pioneers of the American labor movement, they soon became reactionary figures to their children because their main concern was the family's physical well-being (Bienstock 1979).

Another literary example exploiting the mother is *Jews without Money* by Michael Gold in which Gold portrays his mother as a completely selfless, faithful, strong woman towards whom he felt so much guilt that he could never escape from her strong hand. It also, however, tells of how he eventually decided not to be bound by her values of selfless devotion, martyrdom, incredibly strong love, and strict discipline. Instead, he

developed his own values and commitments such as his own intense Marxism which pushed him further away from her values. These commitments to other religions and philosophies, despite his intense and genuine love and respect for his mother, estrange him from her.

Clifford Odets wrote a play called *Awake and Sing* (1935) that deals with a young Jewish man who rebels against his family and takes a stand against the materialistic, conventional middle-class attitudes of his mother. He made his mother seem grotesque by her material and bourgeois concerns. Odets makes a caricature out of his mother, making her the sole example of all that is wrong with America and the prime example that most Jewish sons rebelled against. However, there is a hopeful conclusion to his play. Her son, Ralph, rejects her values and creates his own hope for America's future which is devoid of his mother's bourgeois American values and materialistic drive. However, other works have less positive conclusions and only show the mother as the symbol of middle class materialism with the son believing that he is transcending her in his quest for success.

Some of these writer sons did not feel successful until they attained the financial prowess and aspirations that their mothers had always wanted for them, no matter what the cost. An example of a son transcending his mother in his quest for success is depicted in *I Can Get it For You Wholesale* (1937), Josh Weidman's novel about a young man striving to make it big in the New York garment industry. The character, Harry Bogen, has huge ambitions because his father was very unsuccessful all his life and could never earn money for the family. While Harry's mother speaks positively and lovingly about her late husband, she unabashedly supports Harry's chosen path, rewarding him with food when he brings home loads of cash (Bienstock 1979). The mother's obsessive

appreciation for things that money can buy shapes her son's values in a way that later coms back to haunt her. Harry takes on the values of his mother's own materialism, leaving the mother and her needs far behind on his priority list. While Mama Bogen initially delights in Harry's expensive presents and success, there is still a large part of her which remains moral, meaning that deep down she is truly brokenhearted at the thought of her son making money in illegal, unscrupulous ways, cheating someone out of what is rightfully theirs for his own financial gain. In the end, mother begins to question Harry's scruples because while she is a firm believer in money, she also claims to believe strongly in morality. However, because her materialism has influenced her son so deeply, he has grown up to become far more materialistic than she could ever have imagined. Harry aspires to success no matter what the cost while such unscrupulous ways to attain that success might never have occurred to his mother (Bienstock 1979).

At the end of World War II, things were much different because there was a state of Israel and much less anti-Semitism in the wake of the Holocaust. Thus, America was much more accepting and open to the subject matter and works of Jewish authors than ever before. Acceptance in their own country gave the Jewish writers the freedom to be detached and less emotional. At this time, the Jewish Mother became portrayed in three ways: 1) comic condescension, 2) nostalgic exaltation, and 3) Freudian alarm. One example of comic condescension is seen in Kober's collection of *New Yorker* pieces entitled "And to You, Dear Mother." Unlike Michael Gold, Kober doesn't portray his mother in a sentimental way. Rather, he makes fun of her because his literary success has resulted in her becoming completely pretentious, demanding an expensive engagement ring for her daughter, rejecting respectable careers such as accountants, and basking in

the material possessions of her home. This comic condescension resulted in the Jewish mother as a figure of humor, being the butt of many jokes and a source for comic exploitation. Examples of nostalgic exaltation and Freudian alarm are found in the writings of Charles Angoff, who expressed a great deal of nostalgia about the Jewish immigrant past in his novel, *Journey to the Dawn* (1951). He used childhood memories to portray a glowing, loving picture of his mother and grandmother, even going so far as to portray ghetto life in a beautiful way. A more skeptical view, Freudian alarm, can be seen in Samuel Ornitz' novel *Bride of the Sabbath* (1951), which is about a young boy, Saul, who is so consumed by devotion and love to his mother and grandmother that he is later not ready for an adult love relationship with the pregnant dancer with whom he is involved. He cannot fully respond to any of these women and, when he marries the pregnant dancer, he confuses her in his dreams with his mother. Yet for Saul, it is only Orthodox Jewish women like his mother who can truly know the joys of motherhood. Thus, he is unable to cut the umbilical cord.

The 1960s and on saw the Jewish mother as an integral part of American culture in spite of the fact that many real Jewish mothers detested the ways in which the writings of popular culture caused people to see them as bossy, pushy, overbearing monster stereotypes who desperately needed to let go of their sons. During this era there was a great identity crisis because while they were now given a wide range of topics to write about, many authors still returned to the character of the Jewish mother. This identity crisis was evident in their treatment of her character, because there was a constant effort to detach themselves from the mother's strong grip, values, and expectations throughout their writings. The son-writers were still insecure and they blamed their mothers for all of

their perceived shortcomings including their minority status and quirky character traits of which they were ashamed. They turned her into a comic monster in order to squelch their guilty feelings resulting from their decision to estrange themselves from her. Yet these writings made the sons great entertainers in the public's eye (Bienstock 1979).

In portraying the Jewish mother, the modern Jewish writer son was able to work through his complex, confusing, mixed feelings about his mother while at the same time exploring a current social phenomenon. He was also able to appeal to Jewish and non-Jewish readers who shared similar guilty feelings towards their mothers and families, for this mother-son dynamic was not unique to Jewish families. For example, the Jewish mother as a negative stereotype reminds readers of other times in which the mother has been singled out as the villain within other, not specifically Jewish, elements of 20th century American life. In her study of misogyny in literature, Katherine M. Rogers writes that the idealized 19th century mother was bound to come into contrast with her opposite in the more cynical age of the 20th century, as misogyny was a basic element in the male-dominated literary field. In his book about the family unit, author Christopher Lasch pointed to the common post-WWII belief that schizophrenia was caused by the psychological dominance of the mother in the modern middle class family. He refers to this as "Momism." There was a common denominator in these works, which is a heightened awareness that the mother-figure, once held in high esteem, was now being seen as not only flawed but also damaging and dangerous. Because of this appeal to non-Jewish readers, Anti-Semitism was lessened, as non-Jewish sons often read stories about the Jewish mother and found that they could identify more easily with Jews. At the same time, readers greatly enjoyed the Jewish mother and found her an unending source of fun.

This criticism of the Jewish mother by her sons was important for the Americanization of one ethnic group, while at the same time, it was a great example of the tendency to play down the necessity and profound importance of the institution of motherhood (Bienstock 1979).

The Jewish Father

The role of the father is crucial in the Jewish family. Dr. Lawrence Fuchs, professor emeritus at Brandeis University, writes in his book, *Beyond Patriarchy: Jewish Fathers and Families,* that Judaism was the first and only ancient culture to moderate the power of male patriarchy. (Fuchs 2000). In antiquity, Jewish men forged partnerships with women in the community which allowed the Jewish men to have more rights and status than any other culture. For many years after the Babylonian exile, Jewish fathers were responsible for providing for their families under the most brutal and difficult situations of adversity. In the midst of this difficulty, the families depended upon ethical conduct, faith, hard work, learning, and family integrity all coming from the father who would pass these virtues onto his children. Strength came from righteous living and wisdom, not from physical force, and the greatest role models in Judaism have always been scholars, communal leaders, mensches, philanthropists, and other learned people as opposed to warriors or fighters (Wolfson 2004).

Among Eastern European Jewry pre- and post-WWI and II, it was the father's outside successes and public achievements that gave the family its status, while the father's role within the home was often that of an outsider. Strong, able-bodied Jewish women were often completely in charge, with their authority usurping that of the father

who was obligated to a life of prayer and study of Torah at the expense of spending time in the home. However, during the immigrant period of 1880-1929, America had little place for the Old World Talmudist. These men came with very few skills because of their constant devotion to study and lack of experience in the work force in the old country. As a result, Jewish fathers were often forced to work as peddlers or sweatshop laborers. Their self-esteem and dignity suffered tremendously. Once again, it was first up to the mothers, experts at making ends meet, to run the households (Bienstock 1979). In the ideal Eastern European Jewish household, the father would not work in most cases, and the wives not only were solely in charge of the care and rearing of all of the children, but were also expected to be the bread-winners of the family in order to support their husband's life of pious devotion. We see Tevye in the classic musical *Fiddler on the Roof* by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick lamenting about not being rich enough to just sit in the synagogue all day studying Torah. However, very few men achieved this goal and even those who did could be scorned as "drains upon the family and community" by Yiddish writers such as Isaac Bashevis Singer (McGoldrick 1982). Most men of the shtetl shared this longing. When the Eastern Europeans came to America, they saw a devaluation of the husband/father in the home because it was the mother's domain, and she was the main authority figure. The father often had little to no authority or relationship with his children because the mother took care of everything from teaching to loving, to discipline, to feeding. However, outside the home the father was still the one to bring status and honor to the family, as the Jewish community continued to celebrate only his achievements and successes (McGoldrick 1982).

Today, however, feminism has had a huge impact on this model. Many women today work and have careers and are no longer dependent upon their husbands to bring status to the family because they have taken on that challenge themselves. In other cases, fathers achieve huge success, but with that success comes feeling unappreciated at home or ignored by his family if the wife has completely taken over family decision-making. These things can greatly affect the father's self-esteem, even after achieving his highest goals (F. M. Rosen 1982). However, according to Rabbi Harold Kushner in *Jewish Fathers a Legacy of Love*, the experience of becoming a father can say so much to a man about what it means to be a man and, for that matter, what it means to be a human being (Wolfson 2004). This very critical role of the father in Jewish family life has been grossly underestimated. Many Jewish fathers have helped the family life become more stable. Some of the most famous Jewish fathers who have contributed to major fields include Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss), Dr. Jonas Salk, George Gershwin, Chaim Potok, Hank Greenberg, Steven Spielberg, Felix Frankfurter, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Ben Shahn, Robert Oppenheimer, Admiral Hyman Rickover, and the Marx Brothers, just to name a few (Wolfson 2004).

Financial support, success and public status of Jewish men has always been valued by society. However, such achievement comes at the cost of the wife's and children's happiness at not having a husband/father who is "present" in their lives. It is very common for Jewish men to describe themselves in the family as powerless because of their powerful wives and demanding children. At the same time, they may also acknowledge that their wives make their successes possible. While, feminism has helped many fathers to find their more nurturing side, it has also made it much more difficult for

them to balance their professional lives with their family lives (Wolfson 2004). The contemporary Jewish father of today faces many challenges in rearing his children. There are many issues, including balancing career and family responsibilities, assimilation, intermarriage, single parenting, gender-identity issues, raising children with special needs, divorce and custody issues, step-parenting, discipline, ethnic identity, and religious. It is a relatively new experience in Jewish history to foster children's Jewish identities in a free society like America. However, since Jews have survived millennia of far greater obstacles, it is highly likely that they will be able to successfully pass on our legacy of Judaism with energy, creativity, humor, and constantly renewed hope (Wolfson 2004).

Fathers and Daughters

Jewish daughters greatly need their mensch-like Jewish fathers. They need them for love and support, to assure them that they are lovable, to be a force of unconditional and nonjudgmental love in their lives, and to give them confidence to go out into a world. (Wolfson 2004). Unlike the image of the Jewish mother in American culture, there is no corresponding stereotype of the Jewish father. There was, however, a stereotype, short-lived and not as well-known, of the father being the nice guy "schlemiel," who was well-meaning but a bit incompetent in the real world. This image passed after World War II and the passing on of the immigrant generation. We often think of the father in terms of the things that he is *not*, such as selfish with his children. While it remains popular belief that Jewish fathers sacrifice for their children, there are true stories of Jewish fathers in which the opposite is the case. Aniza Yezierska's painful 1925 autobiography *Bread*

Givers--A Struggle Between a Father of the Old World and a Daughter of the New is about a father who eats the food his starving daughters are longing for right in front of them, and who also takes the entire front room of their home for his books while his family lives crowded together in the back of the apartment, as he cares more for study than for the well-being of his daughters. Patriarchy by nature gives the father control over the daughters, as in Biblical times daughters were sold into marriage by their fathers. This archaic practice has evolved into the current practice of the father "giving away" his daughter at her wedding, the popular custom among non-Jews (Schneider1984).

After World War II, when material success became much more easily attainable in America, the Jewish father's distance from his children increased. He was no longer sitting in a synagogue praying all day or studying sacred texts, nor was he coming home for the family meals each day. Instead he completely took himself out of his home life by working hard, playing hard, and having lots of "male bonding" time. Sociologist Rela Geffen Monson writes: "Thus, the father who was concerned with kashrut in the home, the quality and quantity of Jewish learning of his children and in their emotional, ethical and intellectual grown as Jews, was replaced by one who provided the money so that secondary institutions and surrogate teachers and models could do this job for him, under the direction and coordination of the mother" (283). In assimilated, non-Orthodox Jewish households, one single trait that resonated in almost all of them was the desire of the father for his daughter to reflect his success. Thus the notion of the "JAP" (Jewish American Princess) came into being. The images of the JAP soon began to appear in many American arenas, including advertising. One example is a poster of a young

woman sporting diamond stud earrings which were a gift from Daddy for quitting smoking, while holding a cigarette in one hand and saying, “Don’t tell Daddy.”

Daughters were sometimes even given cosmetic surgery to fix things such as a large nose or crooked teeth, all of which are a reflection on the wealth and success of her father as he has made her his ornament of success. There is the question as to why it is that even in the popular image of the Jewish daughter having her Daddy “wrapped around her finger,” able to get anything she wants, she finds it necessary to resort to scheming and manipulation rather than stating her needs calmly and precisely in a more direct way. Contrary to popular wisdom, it is the father--and not the mother--who is responsible for the indulged-princess image. However, fathers without sons value their daughters’ academic achievements much more. In fact, studies of high achieving women show that such women almost always come from families without sons. These women often learned business skills from their fathers, even sometimes taking over the family business. Schneider writes that, hopefully, with the dawn of feminism, the daughter’s career achievements will become the ornaments of success for her father (Schneider 1984).

Molly Picon was a vaudeville and eventually Yiddish theater and film actress who made her first stage debut in 1919 at age 5. She is an example of a woman who was pained by her father, having had no relationship with him because he abandoned her and her mother. The pain of this greatly affected her life and professional choices, despite her success. Later in this thesis we will learn more about her life, career, and contributions to Yiddish theater. She became known as the “Jewish Peter Pan” after performing a male role of a Yeshiva boy in the play *Yonkele* (L. Perl n.d.). She is quoted as saying, “Perhaps if I had been Louis Picon’s son I would have had a classical education and been a scholar.

Instead, as the wardrobe mistress's daughter, I got a love of the stage because there I could make believe I was all the things I never could be in real life" (Archive n.d.).

Perhaps it was the experience of having a father who abandoned her and expressed outward disappointment at her being born a girl that gave her a desire to play boys. She could at least pretend to be the boy that her father really wanted. Molly Picon's story, even with its outcome of such positive influence on the Jewish world, reminds us yet again of just how important the role of father is in the life of his daughter, fostering her independence, confidence, and ability to believe that she is lovable, in spite of others in the world who will tell her otherwise (Lila Perl 1990).

Fathers and Sons

Jewish sons also need their fathers to teach them how to avoid typical American stereotypes of "manliness" and instead learn to be mensches. They need their fathers to show them a more humane way of being "manly" in this word where too many people are always ready to resort to violence. Even though Judaism draws a sharp distinction between religious roles of women and men, traditionally it has actually guided men to let the feminine sides into their souls. While some non-Jewish fathers tell their sons to "be a man," Jewish fathers are more likely to tell their sons to "be a mensch." In Yiddish, the Jewish father is almost always associated with the word "mensch," a German word meaning "man" which became a Yiddish term for a "good man." Today, the term also refers to females as well. The first mensch we usually meet in our lives is our father. (Wolfson 2004).

CHAPTER 2

EDUCATION AND SUCCESS, GUILT AND SUFERING

Education and Success

According to Zbrowski and Herzog in *Life is With People*, an anthropological survey of the shtetl Jews of pre- and post-WW I and WW II, a man's obligation to study Torah began shortly after birth. He was carried out of the comfort of his mother's arms, wrapped in a tallit, into the cheder, a Jewish religious school where boys went to learn Torah as early as infanthood. As heartbroken as the mother was at having her child taken away from her at such a young age, she never opposed the commandment to teach Torah to her son (Herzog 1952). The first things he learned in the cheder were the Hebrew letters for God-שדי, and truth-אמת. To stimulate the love of learning, candies and coins were thrown over the pages of the books. The father sat with his son the first day, and after, his son was taken away with five or six other boys, wailing loudly, to their melamed (teacher) who was paid a small fee for his daily lessons. A melamed was not a desired position, because teaching little children was the profession of someone who had failed at everything else he had attempted, and these types of people were often angry and miserable about their positions in life. From this young, tender age, boys were taught that no matter what the circumstance, even if they were beaten senseless by the frustrated melamed, the teacher was always right. Reasons for these "beatings" were failure to do homework, not knowing enough, or any other thing the boys might have done to anger

the melamed. There was no support for the child at home—the melamed was always right.

Despite this bleak picture, it was not all misery for the boys in the cheder. They sometimes had a great deal of fun. The boys were left alone for one whole hour while the melamed went to ma'ariv to pray, and they huddled together delightfully, sharing leftovers from their lunches. Often they just sat in peaceful silence and shared stories of Talmudic folklore. For the less fortunate boys, who were either orphans or had parents who refused to pay for the cheder, there was the Talmud Toyreh, which in the shtetl was looked upon with great disdain. The study was undesirable from the viewpoint of the shtetl (Herzog 1952) as its curriculum was only the most basic rudimentary Hebrew and religious studies, with poor quality of teaching. Children were clothed and fed and often housed at the expense of the community. The Talmud Toyreh boys always deeply felt the disdain of their position and this often led to fights between them and the cheder boys.

At age five or six, the boy was celebrated with a huge party because he was now considered ready to study the Pentateuch, or Chumash. This was a celebration for the men, and the mother and her friends only enjoyed it from a distance. At age ten or eleven, the boy began Talmudic studies, which eventually displayed his ability to problem-solve, and to remember extensive things within the texts. If he was successful in this phase, according to the teacher and another erudite scholar, he then entered the highest level of study—the Yeshiva, where he was allowed to spend his time studying the aspect of Jewish religion that interested him most i.e., Kabbalah, laws and ethics, or philosophy (Herzog 1952). To be a melamed of a yeshiva was a more highly respected position than one of a cheder. It was a more expensive school and was supported by the community.

Those who were not learned enough to make it into yeshiva would go into the Beit Midrash where they were taught by a layperson who was teaching in order to fulfill a mitzvah. One group of students within the Beit Midrash were men supported by their fathers-in-law who paid for their study while their wives were out working to support the family. During a man's middle age, however, he was required to spend part of his time earning a living for the family. After retirement, the devout man returned to his original practice of devoting all of his waking hours to prayer and study. This program of "book learning" had been for centuries the pattern of life for young boys from the "cheder to the grave" according to Zbrowski and Herzog (104). It remained intact as the dominant force of the culture for decades, despite the Enlightenment and influences from the outside world (Herzog 1952).

Marshall Sklare wrote in *America's Jews* that the goal of the Jewish family was to move to the middle class American family model, and that the Jewish family living in America would eventually resemble this American family model, just by virtue of the influence of American culture all around them. The reason for this change from its pre-immigration model came from two specific sources, the first being the high educational level of Jews. This often resulted in an urban sophistication that did not value traditional family relationships and was very much at odds with the parents' constant need for *nachas*. As the children became more urbanely sophisticated, nachas lessened because the children became more independent, and no longer had the same traditional family values and relationships as they had in the shtetl. It was not that nachas and sophistication were incompatible; rather, nachas became less important to the children as they became more sophisticated (Sklare 1971).

The second source that changed older family patterns was the attraction that Jews had towards modern psychology and therapy. All schools of thought in psychology and psychotherapy emphasized that dependence (whether on the part of parents or children) needed to slow down or stop. This is why the attraction to psychology was critical to the structure of the changing Jewish family model. But whatever new elements of American culture and relationships may have formed, the Jewish family has remained remarkably cohesive, especially considering the potential for estrangement among its members. Sklare claims that social mobility was the most obvious risk factor for estrangement. He believes that there is no doubt that social mobility made the relationships between the first and second generation very complicated and that as of the book's publication year of 1971, even though this complication of the generations may not have been as big a threat to the family, there was still the problem of intra-generational estrangement. This was because members of the same family might have had different rates of mobility, which may have caused siblings to become estranged or may have caused complications in the relationships between the cousins. In short, Sklare believes that while social mobility put strains on the Jewish family, the Jewish family nonetheless remained surprisingly close despite possible disruptive effects that social mobility could have.

Educational mobility was also a related source of family estrangement. Jews were, and still are, among the best-educated members of the American population despite their recent arrival in the United States (as of the book's publication year, 1971). This was still the case in 2007, with 35 percent of Jews holding graduate degrees, compared to only 10 percent of non-Jews who hold such degrees. There are huge educational contrasts between generations. For example, a grandmother who lacked a grammar school

education may now have a child who possesses a bachelor's, master's, or even doctorate degree from a major university. It was even more common for the second-generation parents with merely grammar or high school educations to have highly educated children with bachelors' degrees and beyond. This educational mobility often led to family conflict because the grandparents and parents were not used to having children who possessed different goals than they did. Parents often felt insecure with the degree of knowledge and sophistication that their children possessed. However, no matter how painful or how much this educational mobility conflict caused, it never completely severed the strong relationships between the generations (Sklare 1971).

In his book, *America is Different, the Search for Jewish Identity,* Stuart E. Rosenberg shows the significance of education among the Jewish family, proving that it is of much greater importance than in Protestant families. As of the year of the book's publication, 1963, 61 percent of the heads of households of Jewish families were high school graduates, while 22 percent were college graduates. Only 39 percent of Protestant heads of households were high school graduates, with a mere 8 percent being college graduates. In Catholic families, 38 percent graduated from high school with only 7 percent holding college degrees. According to more recent figures from Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, in an article titled *A Portrait of Jewish Americans* dated Oct. 1, 2013, 58 percent of Jews are now college graduates and 28 percent hold post graduate degrees (Center 2013). In contrast, from 1995-2004, 30 percent of Jews held Bachelors' degrees, 35 percent held post-graduate and beyond while only 17 percent of non-Jews held Bachelors' degrees and 10 percent held post-graduate degrees (Mazur 2007). These figures did a great deal to explain why Jews, despite their minority status in

America, have had so much success in the intellectual and scientific advancement of the nation. It also shows the group pride that Jews take in the values of learning and education. For example, the Jewish Dr. Albert Abraham Michelson earned the very first Nobel Prize for advancement in physics in 1907. Since that time, over 40 Jews in various countries have won the Nobel Prize, seven of them Americans—this was in the year of the book's publication, 1963. Today, the numbers are far greater. As many as 23 percent of all individual recipients worldwide between 1901 and 2013 were Jewish, and 37 percent of them were US recipients (JINFO.org 2002-2014). In other scientific fields, many American Jewish scholars have been influential, or even became household names, in America, including Dr. Charles P. Steinmetz of General Electric, Dr. Abraham Flexner, founder and creator of modern American medical school education, Dr. Albert Einstein, scholar of physics and founder of General Relativity, and Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, creator of the greatest school of theoretical physics ever known to the United States in the graduate program at Berkeley. Through this establishment, he engendered opportunities for scientists in America that previously did not exist. (Rosenberg 1963).

Because education was portable, it was regarded among the highest of Jewish values. The reason for this was because there was no Jewish homeland until Israel came to be in 1948. Jews were forced to be mobile. Education was something that could never be left behind nor be taken away from them. Even in the concentration camps when everything else was taken from them, no one could take away a Jew's education or dreams. It is so vitally important that it cannot be over-emphasized. It is also difficult to over-emphasize just how vitally important a characteristic success is to the Jewish family.

Jokes about "my daughter/son the doctor" were jokes that used to (and often still do) characterize the stereotypical status-seeking Jewish family. They were and still are direct reflections of the central Jewish family values of education and professional achievement. In order to understand the Jewish family, it is necessary to understand the role success plays in the family systems (F. M. Rosen, Jewish Families 1982). Learning was honored in the shtetl of Eastern Europe and it gave a person prestige, status, and honor among the community (Herzog 1952). Measuring success according to standards set by the non-Jewish society was not considered normal among Eastern European Jews living in America. When they first came to America, they did not care about becoming successful in the gentile community because they, as Jews, were foreigners to American culture. However, the mainstream definition of success began to change over the past 60 years as American society became more open to Jews, and suddenly Eastern European Jews became more able to achieve prosperity (Neuser, 1972).

The 1970s was an era of high pressure for Jewish children to achieve great success and high status in society. The status of a son, particularly if they achieved a degree in medicine, was a direct reflection on the family. For daughters at that time, status was not reflected so much by their individual achievement, but rather by their ability to secure a marriage to a doctor or lawyer. The 1970s were also a time when the status of Jewish women was changing. Two articles were published that pioneered feminist analysis of Jewish life. Trude-Weiss Rosmarin criticized the position of women in Jewish law in her article, "The Un-freedom of Jewish Women," and this appeared in the *Jewish Spectator*. Months afterward, Rachel Adler, who was Orthodox at that time, published *Davka,* a countercultural journal which gave a brutally honest indictment of the

status of women in Jewish tradition. Adler's piece was particularly influential for young women active in the Jewish counterculture of the time (Hyman 2009). Intellectual academic achievement, social and personal status, and money were the measures of success. In 1963 (and today), all children in Jewish families are expected to go to college, at least in the undergraduate level, if not graduate school and beyond (Rosenberg 1963). When this does not happen, parents often feel that they failed and send the family into therapy (Rosenberg 1963).

Even though attitudes about money have produced many stereotypes, it would be a mistake to try and downplay the importance of financial success in the Jewish family. Jews tended to gravitate towards professions in which money was handled directly as a result of their being shut out of other professions. Medieval European Christians were forbidden to lend money. Such an occupation was considered to be "dirty," because all Christians at that time were called to adopt values such as vows of poverty. Therefore, Jews were their moneylenders[15]. However, rich and poor Jews were still subject to anti-Semitism, so helping the Christians in this way by handling this profession that Christians could not did not guarantee safety for Jews. Material possessions that could be liquidated quickly became of utmost value for Jews during that period, such as money, jewelry, and other moveable objects because they could quickly be gathered up and taken when they had to move.

Jews have been able to succeed in American society more than ever before, and conflicts have arisen because they are often torn between the value of success and the value of family (Zimring 1980). In previous decades, Jews were only permitted success

[15] Marcus, J.R. *The Jew in the Medieval World.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1960. Tuchman, B. *A Distant Mirror.* New York: Knopf, 1978.

within a certain sphere because of discrimination and this allowed them to maintain close family ties. However, in current society it is often necessary to sacrifice family commitments in favor of work commitments and this creates great conflict which then can lead to a great deal of stress, particularly for Jewish men, as they were originally the ones expected to succeed. Today, the landscape is much different. “Traditional” families, meaning one-income families with stay-at-home mothers and working fathers, constitute merely 7 percent of the population (Bureau 2007). Another common issue for family members is that the measure and standards of success are often so high that they are impossible to meet. This often leads to sibling rivalry and great competition which can cause rifts between family members and can inhibit their intimacy. Often family members tear each other down in order to bolster their own self-esteem, and this becomes a vicious cycle (F. M. Rosen, Jewish Famlies 1982).

Perhaps the greatest example in the contemporary arts of the value of success, financial success in particular, can be seen in the hit musical *Fiddler on the Roof.* Tevye, a Jewish milkman, lives in a little Russian town of Anatevka in 1905 and tells the audience about the customs in their small shtetl, proclaiming, "Life here is as precarious as a fiddler on the roof.” Yet somehow, through their traditions, the villagers endure. In the beginning of the show, Tevye is making his daily milk deliveries around town and is musing about what it would be like to be a rich man. He even prays to God asking to become rich, saying to God, “What would be the harm?” He says that he would not have to work hard, could build a big home for his family, describing in detail what this home would look like. If he were rich, he says that he would fill his yard with all sorts of farm animals, which in reality he does not have the money to buy, and that they would squawk

loudly for the entire town to hear, signaling his success. His suffering at this lowly profession is clear, and we see that he misses the Talmudic times when men would sit in synagogue and pray all day. Perhaps he was also lamenting the fact that he may not have been one of the men eligible for such high-level study (Festival 2013).

The Importance of Philanthropy and Tzedakah

American Jews have always been known for being leaders in the field of philanthropy (Grayzel 1960). Many of the victims of Bernard Madoff were Jewish charitable institutions that had entrusted their funds to him because he was a member of the extended Jewish family. Jews feel a longing to be philanthropic because of the strong ideal of *Tikkun Olam*, or "repairing the world," which means to make the world a better place. Helping someone less fortunate is one way to fulfill this mitzvah of *Tikkun Olam*. *Tzedakah* is encouraged even among the youngest Jews learning their Hebrew letters in elementary Hebrew school. Many Jewish families begin their Shabbat dinners by passing around the *Tzedakah* box. It would be difficult for the State of Israel to exist if not for the financial support of the United States. Many scholars explore the reasons why charity is so important within the Jewish family. We often hear throughout Jewish folklore, popular culture of today, and even within idle conversation among Jews and non-Jews alike that all Jews look out for one another as fellow members of the "tribe." Since the dawn of Americanization of Jewish immigrants in the mid-19th century, Jews have felt the obligation to "take care of their own." Susan Weidman Schneider writes in *Jewish and Female, Choices and Changes in Our Lives Today*, that "All Jews are perceived as extended family" (255) (Schneider 1984). She writes that a successful New York editor

was once questioned as to why he chose to work in a Jewish institution. His reply was, "It's Mishpacha (family)" (255). Simply stated, this means that our own family interactions and expectations with our blood families greatly influence and color the relationships we have with all other Jews (Schneider 1984). A Jewish person is considered not only to be vaguely connected with all other Jews, but also to be a member of the extended family of all Jews. Jewish tradition reinforces the power of this principle by stating that even Jews-by-choice are also a part of that ancestry and family. Sages have said that upon conversion, once the new Jew has discarded his/her Gentile ancestry, they are reborn into Jewish peoplehood and immediately are part of the larger extended family (Sklare, America's Jews 1971). This devotion to charity also moves beyond Jewish peoplehood. Jews have been among the greatest supporters of many organizations in the fields of civil rights, the anti-war movement, and the American labor movements, just to name a few. Contemporary Jews do not stand alone as islands functioning on their own in this world. Without the aid of other Jews, immigration to the United States and the strength of our peoplehood would not have been possible.

Long before Eastern European Jews began immigrating to the United States, American Jews had established a whole network of charitable institutions such as the Order of B'nai Birth, and the Young Men's Hebrew Association Charity. These organizations developed in place of the progressive disappearance of the important bond of religion, which took a backseat to the ideals of the newly Americanized Jew who valued success and education over religion. We can see this in the way that the charities developed. From the middle ages, charities were established exclusively in the synagogue and ensured that the needs of the poor would be met. In the 20th century, these groups

moved out of the synagogue and became societies existing within communities in large cities like New York. Their members pooled their resources to provide benefits such as cemetery rights, insurance, free loans, and sick pay (everyculture.com 2014). The increase of immigration among Jews resulted in a mass expansion of the Jewish population, magnifying older problems and also creating new ones. More hospitals and orphanages had to be built, homeless people had to be housed, and direct financial support was needed for families at risk of breaking up due to lack of money or other reasons. The American Jewish community wisely assessed that they could confront these problems head on by developing a successful philanthropic system. They developed a system that made them leaders in the entire field of philanthropy (Grayzel 1960).

Guilt and Suffering

The anti-Semitic stereotyping of Jewish women as Yiddisha Mamas or Princesses are actually opposite sides of the same coin according to Susan Weidman Schneider (1984) in her book *Jewish and Female, Choices and Changes in our Lives Today*. The image of the mother who sacrifices everything and denies her own needs in order to be involved intrusively in the needs of her children is a sharp contrast to the selfish, self-absorbed, demanding, Jewish American Princess daughter who refuses to submit to male authority and is too consumed with her own life to be sympathetic to others (Schneider 1984). A classic Jewish mother stereotype joke that pokes fun at her self-inflicted suffering is “How many Jewish mothers does it take to change a light bulb?” None. “That's okay, I'll just sit here in the dark” (268). American Jewish thinking and writing has created the myth of the Jewish mother, in addition to the idea of this jump

into success, which has allowed women the luxury of being “overinvolved” in their children's lives. Many of the realities of this stereotype were always there, including the self-sacrifice of the mother who did not eat in order to feed her children, or the mother's concern for her children during sieges, famines, and pogroms. However, it becomes comical when the mother exhibits the same behavior in these more relaxed circumstances of American society today, and thus, jokes like the light bulb joke are created. The time has now come for society to move past these stereotypes, to realize that they were first created out of real needs of Jews, and to instead look at the realities of Jewish family life for women in the present day (Schneider 1984). While these stereotypes may have been reflective of realities in the Jewish family dynamics, they are simply that - stereotypes. Particularly since the feminist movement, when many Jewish mothers have careers and goals of their own, there are many Jewish mothers who do not exhibit any of these behaviors on a regular basis. Also, this “Jewish mother” stereotype is not exclusive to the Jewish family. The ever-present meddling mother figure can be seen in non-Jewish families too, where the mother may choose to stay home and have the career of homemaker, with her world centered around her children, rather than focusing her energies on work outside of the home.

CHAPTER 3: MUSICAL RENDERINGS AND SACRED TEXTS FEATURING THE JEWISH FAMILY

Musical Renderings

In his book, *Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish,* composer Jack Gottlieb gives a story about a young wife's tale entitled "Love Me to a Yiddisha Melody." This was originally a Yiddish song entitled "Der rebe's nigle" and was later adapted to become the famous tune "Love me to a Yiddisha Melody." In it, we see a stereotypical description of the Jewish mother, a bossy, "ball buster." This is useful information because it gives us a strong description of how the Jewish mother is depicted in Jewish theatre. The stereotype was used so frequently and was so successful that it became a stereotype of Jewish mothers for decades to come (Gottlieb 2004).

In the book, *Passport to Jewish Music,* Irene Heskes writes of the founder of Yiddish music, Avram Goldfaden, who was born in Russia in 1840 and became a Jewish poet, playwright, stage director, stage actor, and founder of a Yiddish-language theater troupe in Romania (1876). He died in New York City in 1908. During his grammar school years, he attended the Zhitomir Institute, a worldly rabbinic academy in Ukraine, where the teachers were advocates of the 19th century Jewish modernist movement, *Haskalah* (Enlightenment). This allowed him to gain a great appreciation for the arts by exposure to Yiddish and Hebrew literature in addition to the liturgical chants he was studying. He had no formal training, but he did have a good ear and was able to surround himself with people who possessed the musical skills that he was lacking, and were willing to reproduce his music. While attending rabbinic academy, he had a life changing

experience when playing the title role in *Serkele*. He was also the director, stage manager, property man, and improviser of scenery and costumes in this production--all of which were rare experiences to have for Yiddish boys at that time (Sandrow 1977).

He dedicated most of his works to his father and mother, claiming that they had done so much for him, and that, because he had no money, he could do little for them other than write them something. He gave them a gift of ideas (Heskes 1994). He writes in his memoirs that in 1876, upon moving to Romania, he had the idea to combine his songs, sung by singer-jesters in coffee houses and wine cellars, with spoken words. He was not known for writing material of great literary value, and was often criticized for this. Instead, as he claimed in his autobiography, he "gave his people what they wanted" which was a good laugh. He claimed that his audiences, at least in the early years, "could not have absorbed any more sophisticated material than he gave them: a song, a slap-stick, a quarrel, a kiss, a jig," and that when he tried to offer them high drama, they resented him for it. He had to come down from his high art sensibility after having studied Shakespeare, Moliere, and operas of Halevy and Meyerbeer, in addition to Torah and rabbinic texts. To do so, he used simple themes sometimes absent of lyrics, instead including "tra-la-la" and other comic elements (Heskes 1994). What they wanted most of all was to forget their troubles (Sandrow 1977). The Yiddish theater, modern in its times in 1876, was born during Sukkot-Simchat Torah. The first presentation was at Shimon Marek's *Pomel Verda* (Green Tree) wine garden in Iasi, Romania.

Being familiar with Western history and literature, he shared the *Haskalah* conviction that Yiddish culture had to develop its own secular aesthetic (Sandrow 1977), especially in light of the low spiritual state which his people were living in because they

were without a homeland and were constantly being displaced. Goldfaden felt that they needed to have a means by which to understand their traditions, with historic pieces that could help them learn about their backgrounds (Heskes 1994). He believed that having the stage at his disposal gave him a sense of social responsibility. Avram wanted his theater productions to be an education for the audiences who did not have the opportunity to study in their youth. He wanted to give them the education that they never had, allowing them to see pictures which he would "draw them of life" and to see them as mirrors of their own lives, taking lessons which would help them to improve relationships with their families and even with their Christian neighbors (Sandrow 1977). From here, the concept of the theater as school was born, presenting educational opportunities for the audiences by giving them human role models and lessons in ethics (Heskes 1994). Goldfaden started the tradition of the "curtain speeches, in which he would come out, formally dressed, to explain the plot of the play to the audience. This was one of the legacies that he left to Yiddish theater. (Sandrow 1977).

Many of Goldfaden's works were about the Jewish family, with plots exposing some of the most dysfunctional essences of them, and these were often used as some of the greatest teaching moments for his audiences. One of his most famous works was *The Grandmother and the Granddaughter; or Basye the Do-Gooder.* It is about a girl whose grandmother is forcing her into an unhappy marriage match with a *Chassid* in order to join their family with a prestigious family. In her rebellion, the granddaughter runs away and marries a *maskil*, who was an identifier for individual ideas for the *Haskala* (Enlightenment) movement. The *maskil*'s goal was to reeducate Jews so that they could fit into modern society—completely opposite of the ideals of the *Chassid* her

grandmother wanted for her. In the end, the grandmother is sick and is left completely alone to die. She hears a voice that promises that she will see a vision of her granddaughter, happy with her new husband, just before she dies. The vision appears in eerie green lights, and she repents as she is dying (Sandrow 1977).

In 1909, the CCAR published an article about Goldfaden in its annual report, expressing admiration for his great work, and condolences to his widow. Many of the stock characters that he created such as the witch and the gossip/busybody have moved into the theater as we know it today. His contributions for women were significant. He was the first Yiddish composer/director to provide opportunities for women to perform on the Yiddish stage, and he even created female roles that honored women and highlighted their important roles in our Judaic and Biblical history (Heskes 1994).

A natural born performer, Molly Picon began her performing career in the Yiddish theater out of necessity to support herself and her mother after her father, a vagabond, eventually left Molly and her mother after becoming bored with his job. It was during WWI that Molly had her first successes as an entertainer. After leaving high school in her second year, she took a job with a vaudeville company and sent money home to her mother, a seamstress in the Yiddish theater. During an outbreak of influenza and a visit to the Grand Opera House in Boston, Molly met the director of the Yiddish theater Jacob Kalich (whom she later married), who changed her life by bringing her into his Yiddish theater company and writing new plays for her to appear in. Kalisch made Molly the "Sweetheart of Second Avenue" and helped catapult her to fame. At this time, Second Avenue was the Broadway of Yiddish Theater. Founded by Avram Goldfaden, Yiddish theater was very popular at the turn of the century with many Jewish immigrants

because they needed it as a release from their difficult daily jobs. Picon began making Yiddish films such as *Yiddle with his Fiddle* and later, *Mamale,* soon making her way to Broadway with the first Yiddish musical to play there, *Oy Is Dus a Leben,* her life story. The theater in which it was played was later renamed in her honor. Wanting to bring the gift of laughter to the displaced persons post-Holocaust, she was among the first entertainers post-war to visit the camps, orphanages, and hospitals in places of battle. After the Yiddish theater began to die out during the 1950s with the onset of the television age, Molly starred in *Milk and Honey* (1961) set in Israel, transforming Molly's once great concern about the future of the Jewish people to a great hope (L. Perl n.d.).

In 1970, Molly played the infamous matchmaker in the movie version of *Fiddler on the Roof* on location in Yugoslavia, with Yonkel (the nickname for her husband Jacob Kalich) playing a small role of a teacher. In addition, she continued making more movies and television appearances. Her heart, however, was in on-stage performing. After the death of her beloved Yonkel (Jacob Kalich), she found solace in writing her biography. In 1980 she was invited to perform a one-woman show in Yiddish at Queens College at the Sholem Alechem Festival of the Jewish Arts. Soon after, she retired (L. &. Perl 1990). According to the Jewish Women's Archive article *Women of Valor,* Molly Picon helped keep Yiddish culture alive with her engaging personality and riveting performances. She brought Yiddish culture out of the shtetl and into mainstream American culture. For many years, she struggled to be taken seriously as an actress and an independent woman, in spite of the fact that during her peak years she played assertive characters onstage. In the end, she became an icon and role model for second generation American Jews,

because she helped her audiences to embrace their immigrant past while still creating new American identities (Archive January).

Early musical comedy performers like Eddie Cantor and Willie Howard, as well as writers such as George and Ira Gershwin, changed ethnic stage stereotypes into an entirely radical modern theatrical mode. *The Jazz Singer*, a play by Samuel Raphelson written in 1925, shows a great example of the conventional performance practices against which comedy artists like the Gershwins and Eddie Cantor were reacting. This play, like the 1927 movie *The Jazz Singer,* focuses on the protagonist's struggle to define himself. Jakie Rabinowitz, a cantor's son living on the Lower East Side, is expected to join the family business. He decides to leave his father's Old World oppressiveness and becomes a blackface performer, changing his name to Jack Robin, with a trademark "cry" in his voice. He is called upon to replace his ailing father on Yom Kippur just as he is on the brink of getting his biggest break in vaudeville. He is faced with the difficult decision of having to choose between his shot at stardom and fulfilling his father's dying wish. During his struggle, he applies blackface and rehearses his show, but at the end of his rehearsal he decides to fill in for his father. The play and movie end differently, with the play's ending with the producers of the vaudeville show hearing his chanting on Yom Kippur and expressing their hope that, with his incredible voice and talent, he will return to vaudeville. The movie gives more closure, with Jakie appearing in a theater sometime after Yom Kippur singing "My Mammy" with his devoted mother in the audience.

A word about blackface. Critics who wrote about *The Jazz Singer* had different opinions as to why it was used. Many believed that it served as an agent of assimilation. Some wrote about the play as a tale of assimilation, with blackface being the element that

allowed Jewish performers to transform themselves into modern American performers. Others claim that it allowed Jewish performers to express solidarity with another racially oppressed American group. Yet others believed that it served as a mask to hide Jewishness or to prove that Jews were really white Americans. Critics have used the *Jazz Singer* to explore the nature of Jewish blackface entertainment, mistakenly claiming that these performances are essentially all the same. Andrea Most claims that these critics are missing a crucial aspect in the practice of using blackface because one must look carefully at the assumption that it is specifically blackface, rather than the theater in general, which is the impetus for assimilation in *The Jazz Singer*.

In the play and the film, putting on the blackface brings on Jakie's identity crisis. This causes him to reflect on his own racial background and ultimately fulfill his father's dying wish: to chant the Kol Nidre service at the expense of his big break. He sees this as his own racial destiny. Jakie/Jack must reconcile his Old World Jewish family with his cantor father and five generations of great cantors, and his New World theatrical family with his producer, Harry Lee, who plays a paternal role when he confronts Jack about his decision to sing the Kol Nidre service. He even compares the two "fathers" when Harry asks Jack to try explaining to his real father why he cannot go home to sing the service, saying to Harry, "He couldn't understand any more than you can understand" (33) and "My father's religion is a stone wall, and so is your business" (35) (Most 2004). As Harry continues to persuade Jack, Jack soon discovers that he cannot win no matter which choice he makes-- that he will be murdering either his metaphorical or actual father (Most 2004).

Even though the theatrical family is an adoptive one, in the end both have a biological claim on Jack. He is torn between both families, wishing to please both of them, which would mean fulfilling both parts of his destiny. This situation causes him great turmoil. He confides in Mary, his founder and love interest, that he often argues with God for giving him this split personality - half cantor, half bum. (Most 2004). Half of him has this strong desire to follow in his father's footsteps, and the other half, equally as strong, desires life on the stage, which he himself considers the life of a bum, thus creating more internal conflict. The last scene of the play is a struggle between his founder and manager Mary (also love interest), who has become the "mother" figure in his adoptive family, producer and "father figure" Harry, and his natural mother as to whether Jack/Jakie is being completely true to himself by granting his father's wish. Jakie admits to his mother that he has no idea what the words of the Kol Nidre prayer are about, and that he doesn't really want to come home and do the service. However, when he hears of his father's death, he has a fast change of heart saying, "He (his father) told me God would punish me! I thought I could get away from cantors! Well, God showed me…mama! I'm going with you! I'm going to the synagogue! I'm your son. I'm the son of my father. Mama, I'm a cantor, see? I'm Cantor Rabinowitz! God's going to hear me sing Kol Nidre tonight!" (36) (Most 2004). When Mary listens to his singing of the Kol Nidre service through the window, she hears the same elements and colors with which he sang earlier that afternoon in one of the songs of his vaudeville act, "My Mammy." She claimed then and there from hearing his singing at Kol Nidre that "it" (vaudeville) was in his blood and that he would have to come back.

Significantly however, throughout his entire conflict, Jack never once questions or doubts the fact that the theater is a fundamental part of his biological makeup. He claims that just as he has the Jewishness of the cantorate in his blood, so too exists Vaudeville. Jack eventually realizes that it is impossible to separate the two sides of himself. The blackface is his way into the theater world. However, his vaudeville performance is only successful when inspired by the penetrating emotions of his Old World Jewish/Hebrew side. These Jewish and theatrical identities are racial in nature, existing powerfully within him. He uses blackface as a tool to embrace and recognize the racially driven desires within him - the desire to fulfill his father's dying wish, and to fulfill his dream of Vaudeville. It is only when he is effectively able to marry them by way of a jazz song or cantorial recitative that Jack/Jakie can achieve the powerful theatrical side of himself of which he dreams (Most 2004).

Honoring Parents, Education and Success as seen in Sacred Texts

The Israelite family in the earliest stages of its history was patriarchal, based upon information that we can see in genealogical and narrative sources. The Hebrew term "*kibbud av v-em*," meaning "honoring of father and mother" is important within the Bible because according to Exodus 20:12, the reward for keeping this commandment is the "lengthening of thy days … Upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Society 1985). The rabbis stressed the importance of this commandment, claiming that one who abided by it would be rewarded both in this world and in the next world (Pe'ah 1:1). According to the *Mechilta,* **"**If you honor [your parents], the amount of days in which you will live will be lengthened, not shortened." The words of the Torah are written

briefly; they are explained by deriving the negative from the affirmative and the affirmative from the negative. The rabbis viewed the honoring of one's parents as a reflection of a person's godliness, even equating this honor for parents equal to the honor which one must have for God (Ex. 20:12; Prov. 3:9) as *"there are three partners in man, the Holy One blessed be He, the father, and the mother, God declares, 'I ascribe merit to them as though I had dwelt among them and they had honored Me'* (Kid. 30b).

The rabbis also believed that a child intuitively honors his or her mother more than his or her father because of the tenderness that the mother displays towards the child, therefore making it easier for the child to have more respect for the mother. The Pentateuch, however, teaches the opposite: that the honor of the father must come before that of the mother (Ex. 20:12). In addition, since a child fears its father more than its mother, the same principle applies (Lev. 19:3, Kid. 30b-31a). Rashi says that the interpretation "every man shall fear his father and mother" is the verse's simple meaning. Its Midrashic explanation, however, [is as follows]: Since the verse literally means, "Every man shall fear…," we know only [that this law applies to] a man. In addition, when Scripture says, תִּירָ֖וּ [you shall fear, using the plural form], two are included [in the verse, namely, men and women]. There is a bit of confusion, because the verse says, "Every man…." This is because a man has the ability to fulfill this [commandment without restriction, since he is independent and thus obliged to fear his parents], whereas a woman is obliged to fulfill it [sometimes] under the authority of others, namely her husband. — [Kid. 30b; Torat Kohanim 19:3]

In Biblical times, when the parents were in need it became the responsibility of the son to fulfill the commandment to help them by providing basic needs of food,

shelter, clothing, and helping them during their old age. Today the onus would also apply to the daughter as well. When the Torah tells us to "fear our parents," it is saying that the son must never contradict them in public or ridicule them, nor "stand or sit in their usual place" (Kid. 31b; Rashi ad loc). One year after his father's death, the son prays that "his memory be for a blessing, for the life of the world to come" (Kid. 31b). In the case of care for the aged, the Torah is very clear on its stance that the elderly were highly respected and accorded a central position in family life (Lev. 19:3, 32). This concept was linked with the biblical notion of having fear and honor and at the same time obedience to father and mother (*kibbud av va-em*, cf. Lev 19:3, 32). In the ancient society of Israel, a child who behaved insolently against the aged (Isa. 3:5, 47:6) was cause for the city to go into a state of anarchy. However, the Talmud also admits the difficulties of earning a living in old age: "Every profession in the world is of help to a man only in his youth, but in his old age he is exposed to hunger" (Kid. 82b). Respect was of little assistance to the aged during this time of transformation of the society, and there were no efforts to put laws in place to protect the aged. If the aged were not living among family, they were treated as paupers and were forced to live off *Tzedakah*.

The Sephardi community eventually founded a home for the aged in Amsterdam in 1749.[16] More and more homes for the aged were founded in the 18th and 19th centuries

[16] From *Encyclopedia Judaica*, article by Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson. Sources: L. Lowe, *Die Lebensalter in der juedischen Literatur* (1875), 253-75; J. Preuss, *Biblisch-talmudische Medizin* (1911), 515; H. Rolleston, *Aspects of Age, Life and Disease* (1928), 31-34; G. Weil, *Maimonides ueber die Lebensdauer* (1953); Plessner, in: *Jerusalem Post* (Jan. 9, 2953), Leibowitz, in: *Journal of the History of Medicine,* 18 (1963); idem, *Al Orah ha-Hayyim le-ha-Rambam* (1953); Habermann, in: *Haaretz* (Jan. 16, 1953); idem (ed.), *Kitvei R. Avraham Epstein, 2* (1957), 34-37; I. Bergman, *Ha-Zedakah be-Yisrael* (1944); Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, Inc., N.Y., *Administration of Homes for the Aged* (1951); idem, *Council Reports* (1949-); Central Atlantic Regional Conference on Services to the Aged, *Disturbed and Disturbing Aged Person* (1955); Symposium on Research and Welfare Policies for the Elderly (Jerusalem, November 1968), *Family Life, Social Relationships, and the Need for the Aged* (1968); Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, *Special Publication No. 199* (1966); AJYB, 57 (1956), 3-98 passim.

with the breakup of the traditional family. Prior to their arrival in America, families living in the old country were able to manage financially because they owned their homes and had gardens to provide food for their entire families including their aged relatives living with them. The aged who were too sick to work became a burden to the families and were then sent away to homes for the Jewish aged. It was, however, extremely difficult for both the elderly parents and their children to send away their aged loved ones. It caused much conflict and division among family members, including husbands and wives, sisters and brothers, and even friends. Families who had to send their aged away were often seen by society as "heartless opportunists" and the children suffered every bit as much as the parents. The guilt of this decision haunted them to their graves, in spite of the fact that they had no choice but to do so because of the economic conditions (Charlotte Baum 1977).

Rabbis disagreed on whether or not the father was to reimburse the son for monetary expenses accrued in fulfilling the fifth commandment (providing for them in their need). One opinion was that the father must reimburse the son for all that he spent, but not for the loss of the son's time. Another opinion was that providing for his parents according to the fifth commandment would always be at the son's personal expense, because the son was obligated to use his own money to provide for his parents if they were ever impoverished (Kid. 32a; Sh. Ar., YD 240:5), and must do so with a good attitude. If these mitzvot were performed begrudgingly, the son could lose his portion in the world to come. In another case, a son might ask his father to do difficult work, such as grinding flour at a mill (Kid. 32a; TJ Kid. 1:7, 61b). In this situation, a father could renounce his honor due him (as the father of the son) and just do this grinding job for his

son, thereby relieving the son of his responsibilities (Kid 32a). If the son asked in a loving, respectful manner to be relieved of duties (which would be taken over by the father), then this was acceptable for fulfilling this commandment (Montefiore 1974).

In Megillat Ruth, which is one of the five scrolls incorporated into the Hagiographa of the Hebrew Bible, we see perhaps the most important mother/daughter relationship, that of daughter-in-law, Ruth and mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth was the wife of one of Naomi and Elimelech's two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. While they were migrating to Moab due to famine, Elimelech and the two sons perished, leaving the two Moabite wives, Ruth and Orpah, to travel alone with Naomi. Naomi, however, decided to return to Beth-Lehem in the land of Judah. Her two daughters-in-law desperately wanted to move there with her, but she demanded that they remain in their homeland. Naomi even went so far as to scold the women, believing that they were looking for her to bear more sons for them to one day marry despite the fact that she was too old to do so (Ruth 1: 11-13). The girls wept at Naomi's insistence, and Orpah eventually obeyed and turned back to her people and land in Moab. Ruth, however, clung to her mother-in-law, promising to follow her wherever she went, live wherever she lived, and make Naomi's people her people and Naomi's God—Adonai Eloheinu—her God (Ruth 1:16-17). This is perhaps the story of the first גרות, or conversion to Judaism, and it is a very powerful one, because it is Ruth's marriage to Boaz which created the lineage of King David, and it is through David that the lineage of the Messiah rests.[17]

[17] Excerpt from *Encyclopedia Judaica* written and comprised by literary staff. Sources: H. Gunkel, *Reden und Aufsaetze* (1913), 65-92; H.H. Rowley, in: HTR, 40 (1947), 7-99; J. L. Myers, *The Linguistic and Literary Form of the Book of Ruth* (1955); S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (1956), 453-6; O. Lorentz, in: CBQ, 22 (1960), 391-9; M. Weinfeld, in: *Ture Yeshurun* (1966), 10-15; H.L. Ginsberg, *The Five Megilloth and the Book of Jonah* (1969). In the Aggadah: Ginzberg; Legends, index.

Throughout our sacred texts we see examples of the great influence that the father has over his children. In the Talmud, it says that "a father has the following obligations towards his son—to circumcise him, to redeem him if he is a firstborn (pidyon ha ben), to teach him Torah, to find him a wife, and to teach him a craft or trade. Some also say that the father must teach the son how to swim (Babylonian Talmud, Kid. 29a). We see the most popular examples of Jewish fathers within the texts of our Torah, particularly in Abraham. He was the first character in our Torah to experience the vision of God, Who then made a covenant with Abraham. Abraham and his wife Sarah wished to bear children, but this did not happen until they were nearly 100 years old. Abraham did, however, have a son before Isaac named Ishmael (ancestor of the Arabs) with Hagar, Sarah's concubine. God told Abraham to listen to his wife's wishes, however, and exile Hagar and Ishmael into the desert, even though it pained Abraham greatly to do so, as he loved Ishmael. Abraham's only consolation was that God had promised that Ishmael would be the father to a great nation.

In Genesis 22, we see God putting Abraham to the ultimate test with the *Akeidah*. God demands that Abraham take his beloved son Isaac to sacrifice him. As Abraham ties Isaac to an altar and brings up the knife to kill him, an angel steps in, speaking from heaven and commanding him to stop at once, and then informs Abraham that he has passed God's test. At Abraham's death, Isaac and Ishmael finally come together to bury their father. This story often causes a great deal of emotion and turmoil among its readers because its biggest problem is the question of what kind of father would obey some strange voice that only he could hear, commanding him to kill his only beloved child. While very troublesome for parents, the Torah time and again shows Abraham as a

mensch, a righteous man, peaceful, follower and lover of God in every part of his being. This story, as difficult as it may be, allows us to see these Biblical characters as flawed human beings, just as we are (and more so sometimes), and that being a parent requires us to have faith, especially when faced with difficult choices (Wolfson 2004).

Within the texts of our Talmud, we see many instances of children who committed great self-sacrifice in order to fulfill this commandment to honor one's parents. We learn in Kiddushin 31a that the son of Netina of Ashkelon Dama was a heathen and needed a key that was lying under his sleeping father's pillow in order to conclude a transaction that would have resulted in 600,000 gold coins. However, he refused to awaken his father in order to get it for fear of breaking the commandment. Rabbi Tarfon gave so much honor to his mother that whenever she wanted to get into her high bed, he would bend down and let her step on him so that she could reach it. Anytime Rabbi Joseph heard his mother approaching, he rose as if approaching the *Shekinah* (Kid. 31 a-b) (Abrahams 1932)**.**

With the Babylonian exile and Hellenistic times came the teaching of Torah as the major form of education. The task of teaching Torah to all Jews was placed on the prophet Ezra (Ezra 7:25) after he returned from the Babylonian exile. Under his guidance, Torah became the ultimate basis of individual and community life. The quality of popular knowledge was raised and the study of Torah intensified with a program of mass education (Deut. 31: 12-13; II Chron. 17: 7-9). *Mevinim* were recognized instructors assigned to teach publicly. (Hebrew words need to be italicized.)The Torah was often read aloud and interpreted (Neh. 8:7-8) and this started the public reading of Torah, which later became connected with the liturgy of the synagogue and ascribed to Ezra (BK

82a). There were many arguments about the stipulations and rules according to the Torah and what was happening during that time period in everyday life and, thus, *Midrash* was created (Dan. 9:23-27; Neh. 8:13-15). During the Hellenistic Period, schools for public instruction of Torah were established (Eccl. 12:9). Ben Sira was a late third century scholar who introduced tuition-free education (51:28-30). An informal study session often took place at the home of a student (Avot 1:4). Toward the end of the second century B.C.E., Simeon ben Shetah established the first system of public education supported by the community. The biblical *hakham*, or wise man, had become the new intellectual model that paved the way for the rabbinic talmid *hakham*, or scholar[18] (Abramovitch n.d.).

During the Biblical period, the family home, or *beit av,* was the basic unit that educated the youth. There was little economic diversity and there were also other clans with people who specialized as scribes. These scribes joined the groups of shepherds and farmers when the need for them to become educated arose (I Chron. 2:55). It was during this period that the character of the Israelite nation was shaped. The centralized monarchy of the Kingdom of David, along with urbanization that was also going on at the time (similar to that of the early Jewish immigrants in the U.S.), had a direct effect on all aspects of education. Religious ideals of the covenant were taught to the people of the Temple by people who were recognized in the priesthood.

[18] *From Encyclopedia Judaica*

CHAPTER 4

A MUSICAL ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN OF THE WIND FROM THE MUSICAL *RAGS*

Rags is a musical that premiered on Broadway on August 21, 1986 with music by Charles Strouse, book by Joseph Stein, and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz. It tells the stories of several Russian Jewish immigrants and their hopes and dreams for a new and better life in America as they arrive in Ellis Island and make a life for themselves on the Lower East Side. The leading character, Rebecca Hershkowitz, has fled Russia with her young son David in search of her husband Nathan, who had come to America years before. When they arrive to Ellis Island in Act I, they are treated like "Greenhorns," and with no relative to claim them, are in danger of deportation. A man named Avram, who they had befriended on the boat to New York along with his daughter Bella, agrees to claim Rebecca as his niece and persuades his brother, who owns a tenement building on the Lower East Side of NYC, to allow them to stay temporarily. Shortly after their arrival to the tenement, Rebecca laments the fact that she is unable to give her son a stable home and life and sings "Children of the Wind." The show contains many political overtones, and later tells the story of the Triangle Shirtwaist tragedy. The character Bella and her best friend, whose father had saved them from deportation, jumped to their deaths after the building caught on fire due to unsafe conditions. As a result, the leading character Rebecca rallies the workers to strike against the unsafe working conditions.

The following musical analysis will illustrate examples of Jewish music which Charles Strouse wrote instinctively. In an interview with the composer, he is a self-

identified ethnic, non-practicing Jew, and his writing contains elements of music from our liturgy which were not learned or studied, rather instinctual. The listener can also hear nusach from Sh'losh Regalim, as well as modal passages which punctuate the story with their tonality, allowing the listener to get an idea of the story by simply hearing the music.

Rags is a musical which tells the stories of several Russian Jewish immigrants and their hopes and dreams for a new and better life in America as they arrive in Ellis Island, and make a life for themselves on the Lower East Side. The leading character, Rebecca Hershkowitz fled Russia with her young son David in search of her husband Nathan who had come to America years before. When they arrive to Ellis Island in Act I, they are treated like "Greenhorns, and with no relative to claim them, are in danger of deportation. A man named Avram whom they had befriended on the boat along with his daughter Bella agrees to claim Rebecca as his niece and persuades his brother who owns a tenement building on the Lower East Side of New York allow them to stay temporarily. Shortly after their arrival at the tenement, Rebecca laments the fact that she is unable to give her son a stable home and life and sings "Children of the Wind." The show contains many political overtones, and later, tells the story of the Triangle Shirtwaist tragedy. One of the leading characters and her best friend, Bella, whose father saved them from deportation, jumped to her death after the building caught fire due to unsafe conditions. As a result, Rebecca rallies the workers into a strike against the unsafe working conditions.

"Children of the Wind" begins in the key of "e" minor with a 3 bar introduction on a tremolo B natural (the V of e). The third and final bar of the intro contains a fermata.

In musical theatre, the music is the secondary medium, coming second to the story line, and often, only occurs when the drama is so intense that words alone cannot express the emotion of the character. It is a "spilling over" of the cup of emotion. Thus, this fermata represents the emotions being filled to the brim of Rebecca's overflowing cup, and when the vocal line comes in, her emotions come to the surface. After the short 3 bar intro, there is an A section in "e" minor with a plagal cadence underneath the B natural tremolo from the introduction. The first half of the A section contains four or six phrases of varying lengths with a frequent changes in time signature depicting the drama of the text.

In phrase 1 of the A section, the chords are moving from i-v-i-v for the first measure of the first 4 bar phrase, i-v-iv-v in the second measure, and concluding with i-iv-v-i in the last measure and a half. The time signature varies throughout the measures, which greatly paints the words of the text. For example, in the first measure, we are in ¾ time with a highly syncopated rhythm of quarter, 2 eighths, then 2 tied syncopated 8ths which occur on the "and" of beat 2 going into beat 3, and in this bar Rebecca is talking about hiding, which indicates her urgency of her and her son David's situation, having just sailed from Ellis Island to America in search of safety. They are currently staying in a Lower East Side tenement with someone they just met who pretended to be their relative in order to save them from deportation. It seems fitting that on the word "hiding" there would be the urgency of syncopation. The second bar of phrase 1 changes to 4/4 time with basic quarter notes, and the text talks about wheat fields. The simple quarter notes indicate the simplicity of these wheat fields in contrast to the hiding, as if it somehow felt safe to Rebecca in some strange way. In the next bar, we go back to ¾ time with the same syncopated rhythm on the word "Cossacks" which leads us into a rather

emotional word—"screams." Again, the syncopation and minor key alludes to the fact that the character is in emotional distress without even putting words with the music.

Phrase 2 of the A section begins with the same syncopation in the vocal line, still with the tremolo B natural tremolo accompanied by chordal movement within the bass clef. The first word of the first bar of this phrase is "flames," followed by the syncopation in the vocal line and a 5/4 bar measure in the second measure of the phrase. The word "hillside" begins this 5/4 measure on two quarter notes, one for each syllable, with eighth notes on the words "blood is" followed by 2 quarter notes depicting the urgency and emotion of the text "blood is in the streams." The next measure is back to ¾ time on the word "streams." There is a marking indication for non *trem* and the B natural tremolo has stopped and we are now solidly on a dotted half note D minor chord which serves as the iv/iv. Strouse gives the listener the feeling of going to G major, a minor 3rd above, but the chords do not indicate such. It reminded me a bit of Sh'losh Regalim nusach, where some of the prayers such as V'Hasienu begin in g minor then move and stay for a bit on the major 3rd. However, the chordal writing does not allow for this to fully happen; therefore it remains in "e" minor.

Phrase 3 hovers in the minor iv of "e" minor, indicating Rebecca's disturbance, and we see this in the text: "All the world is burning; that's the way that it seems." The first bar again has the same pattern of quarter, then 2 eighths with syncopation on the "and" of 2 going into the next measure which contains no syncopation, still remaining in ¾ time. The tremolo B natural comes back in the right hand on the 3rd and 4th beats of the last measure of phrase 3. The vocal line seems to indicate that the harmony in this last measure should be on the iv rather than the tonic for 2 reasons: 1) it is not the end of the

thought or idea, 2) the "G" of the vocal line on the word "seems gives us the feeling of unsettlement. The voice does not sound as if it is cadencing in the tonic because of the 3rd tone of the chord being there. Perhaps this was the composer's exact intention. After all, Rebecca is feeling extremely unsettled being in America—a completely foreign land, looking for her husband who arrived there before she and her son, having to pretend that she is a complete stranger's relative. Given these circumstances, the harmonization is perfect.

Phrase 4 of this A section begins with the same ¾ time bar, exactly the same rhythmically and note-wise as the first bars of phrases 1 and 2. Bar 2 of phrase 4 moves back to the usual pattern of 4/4 on the 2nd bar of the phrase. It is unusual in that it cadences on the V/III of its e minor key. The vocal line moving down the scale from "G," "F#," "E" and "D" which also paints the text of Rebecca's pain at her son's having been hurt. It is interesting that it lands on this major VII of "D" major, because she is worried about her son. Maybe Strouse does this to show the tenderness of the mother/son relationship. The second bar also ends with a big pause or caesura after this second bar, indicating Rebecca's waiting to see if her son is alright. The third bar of phrase 4 goes back to the ¾ time signature and changes harmony in the right hand of the piano, moving from the "B" natural tremolo to homophonic chordal harmonies with the vocal line. The fourth bar of the phrase again changes to 4/4 time, interestingly cadencing on the VI of "e" minor ("C" major). In these 2 bars Rebecca is saying, "Show me where they hurt you darling," and the word "you" indicating David moves up a perfect fourth from F#, which was "you" in the 2nd measure, to now B in the 4th measure. This last 4/4 measure again

has a caesura, or pause indicated by railroad tracks, as was the case beforehand on the 2nd measure of the phrase.

There are two phrases of two bars each, one phrase being "David did they hurt you" is the first and "Ev'ry night it fills my dreams" is the second. These are different from the other phrases because, while keeping the same rhythmic syncopated values of the vocal line at the beginning, the second phrase becomes 5/4 time. The harmony is also unusual in that it moves from III6 to VI to VII to VII^6 cadencing on i in the second measure of the phrase. The words of the first measure are "Every night it fills my dreams." This unusual chord pattern is depicting the unusual nature of dreams coupled with trauma she and her son faced in leaving Russia and immigrating to Ellis Island. The harmony moves with homophonic chords in the right hand piano accompaniment, homophonic with the voice, even with the top note of the chord of the right hand the same as the vocal line. The left hand bass clef is in octaves moving homophonically with the right hand and voice. The cadence does not occur in the 5/4 bar at all (the first bar of the phrase), rather, occurs from the outset of the second measure of this phrase. This second measure moves back to 4/4 time with the tonic of "e" minor being sustained in the bass clef left hand of the piano as well as on a single e one octave above the top note of the bass clef in the right hand treble clef. Underneath it also in the right hand treble clef ~~are~~ is a succession of the returning "B" natural tremolo in different form. This time~~,~~ it is a quarter followed by several eighth notes. In the last bar of phrase 5, phrase 6 begins on the beats "and-four-and," with the right hand of the piano playing in unison to the vocal line on the words "I see us."

Phrase 6 begins the second part of the A section, which we will call A2. The texture changes from the thickness or denseness of the chords in the bass to a much more thin texture in the bass. Again, the B natural takes its place back in the bass clef, this time with 8^{th} notes moving successfully throughout the entire phrase. The phrases are significantly longer this time, more than doubling, moving from 3 bar phrases of the first part of the A section to 6-7 bar phrases within the second part of the A section. This A2 section is completely defined by its text, as Rebecca talks about running through the forest, running from their lives in Russia, and running to their new lives in America. The texture thins out and loses it weight in order to allow for the running feeling. In bar one of phrase 6, we have the familiar syncopated rhythms in both the voice and right hand of the piano. The harmonic structure is very interesting, because the thinness of the texture with the B natural successively moving in eighth notes causes the harmony to be a slight bit unstable, with the chords not being in the standard root position, rather in second inversion because of this B natural in the bass. The second bar of the phrase is the same 4/4 time signature as its predecessors with quarter notes in the vocal line and treble clef line. The right hand of the piano is playing intervals of 3rds moving from minor, to one single note which is unison with the vocal note, to major to major, moving down then up step-wise. The third bar of the phrase comes back to ¾ time with the familiar syncopation in the vocal line. The right hand of the piano emulates this as well, only chordally. The fourth bar of the phrase is the cadence on $i^{6/4}$, the familiar harmonic language of the phrase. The fifth bar has the same notes in the vocal line as the first bar of the phrase, along with almost the same harmonic structure, except that the v which is the last chord of the measure is a very unusual v^7 perhaps indicating hope of coming to America, as the

text says, “sneaking past the border.” The sixth bar of the phrase goes back to 5/4 time, exactly the same notes as the 2nd bar of phrase 2 which we saw previously. Harmony remains within the tension of the $i^{6/4}$, with the familiar “B” natural taking on this eighth note form from the previous tremolo. It seems that the “B” natural is an underlying note throughout most of the song, similar to the sustained “B” natural in Ravel’s *Kaddish*. The cadence occurs in bar 7 of the phrase on the word “snow,” and time signature moves back to ¾. The B natural in the bass moves down a step to “a” natural, with the harmony being a iv/iv.

Phrase 7 is another 7 bar phrase with harmony resolving from the previous iv/iv in the last bar cadence of phrase 6 to land on the iv of the first bar of phrase 7. This first bar begins with the typical syncopation, indicating uneasiness. Bass clef remains on “A” but moves homophonically in rhythm with the voice and right hand of the piano. Accompaniment once again thickens and becomes chordal. We have unusual movement of iv-i-iv within the first measure of the phrase moving directly to VI^7 to VII in the second bar of the phrase. The bass of this measure is in octaves this time, with a 4 note C7 chord in the right hand first beat. In the third bar of the phrase we have a very similar pattern of the piano accompaniment, but this time the harmony shifts. It goes from Major 4th to major 7th chords in the previous measure to minor v to major VII in this measure. Again, this is indicative of the text which makes this movement on the word “haystacks” in the previous measure and on “roots” in this measure. Rebecca talks of sleeping under haystacks in the previous measure, then eating roots where they grow in this one, the latter, being the more unpleasant, thus the use of the minor v. The cadence occurs in the 4th bar of the phrase on the tonic (i) of e minor with our familiar “B” natural 8th note

pattern returning, this time in the treble clef with a sustained "e" octave in the bass clef. Time signature remains in ¾ time throughout the first 5 bars of phrase 7.

Phrase 8 is a parallel of what we saw back in phrase 4 with the ¾ bar for the first bar moving to 4/4 for the second and the caesuras, or pauses at the ends of the 4/4 bars. The first bar of phrase 8 has the return of the "B" natural moving in 8th notes painting the text of "begging on the pier at Danzig." This "B" natural in the bass causes the familiar unstable harmonization of the $i^{6/4}$ –v- $i^{6/4}$-v. In the second bar of the phrase (4/4 time) we have a caesura at the end of the bar with a cadence in $V^{6/4}$ with the repeat of the descending quarter notes which we saw in bar 2 of phrase 4, only rather than ending on a "D" major chord (VII), we end on "B" minor ($v^{6/4}$). The next 2 bars, bars 3 and 4 of the phrase are exactly the same only with different lyrics and this time, a the tonic of e being held in an octave pedal tone in the bass clef sustaining throughout these 2 measures until beat 4 of the 4th bar, ending on VI. Phrase 9 is very similar to phrase 5 with its 2 bar phrases beginning with 5/4 time signature in the first bar moving to 4/4. There is unusual harmonization in the first bar, moving from iii^6 to VI to VII to VI^6 to VII^6 and cadencing on the tonic of e minor in the 2nd and last bar of the phrase.

The next section, the B section, is basically the chorus or refrain, giving the main idea of the song. It begins in "G" major, whereas previously `it was in the relative of "e" minor. In phrase 1 of this section, we are in 4/4 time, and the harmonization begin with the tonic then move to the tonic in first inversion for the second half of the first bar. The bass accompaniment in the piano consists of simple octaves either in half notes or dotted quarter-eighth-half, which give the piano a percussive feel, and also thicken out the texture of the accompaniment. The right hand has successive 8th notes with the familiar

syncopation which occurred in the vocal line in the first section. The vocal line is a simple, singable, memorable melody beginning with a doted half note going to quarter in the first bar, then in bar to changes to a dotted quarter followed by an 8^{th} note passing tone leading to half note for the last 2 beats of bar 2. It is interesting that the bass line of the piano accompaniment imitates the vocal line rhythmically and somewhat note-wise. Strouse uses interesting harmonic structures by adding 2 chords within basic chords such as IV^2 for cadential elaboration and also suspensions and we see this kind of harmonic progression throughout the first phrase. In fact, the 4^{th} and last bar of the phrase ends on an imperfect authentic cadence which is resolved in the fourth beat of the bar. Instead of using the regular V, it is a Vsus.

Phrase 2 varies harmonically slightly in that instead of going from I to I^6 we already begin with I^6 and move instead to the passing harmony This could be because of the more emotional nature of the text, that being, "pieces of the heart" in this phrase as opposed to the previous statement of "children of the wind." In bar 2 of the phrase we see another instance of the $V7^2$ going to Vsus with the same octaves in the bass line. In the first bar, the top note of the treble clef imitates the vocal line with the 8^{th} note passing tone we saw previously in bar 2 of phrase 1. Underneath the imitation of the melody, the lower voices of treble clef provide harmony and "mini-accompaniment" for the imitated vocal line. Treble clef in bar 2 goes back to the familiar 8^{th} notes with major 3rds accompaniment we saw previously.

The rhythm and notes of the first 2 bars of phrase 3 resemble that of phrase 1. Bars 3 and 4 of this phrase follow harmonization which we saw in previous phrases, with cadential elaboration by using a IV^9 chord in the 2^{nd} bar of the phrase and passing to

Vsus, both of which are used for cadential elaboration. We see again in the first bar the passing tone in the bass clef occurring on the "and" of the second beat moving us to I6 and then immediately following it, a I^7 chord. It is interesting because this rhythmic structure occurs first in the bass, then is imitated by the vocal line in this phrase, whereas we saw previously in phrase 1 that it was the other way around—the pattern occurred first in the vocal line, then was imitated within the bass clef of the piano part. Bar 3 begins with a rest in the vocal line, with the line coming in on the second beat. The harmonization is similar to what we saw in the previous phrase with the cadential elaboration, finally ending the phrase on the tonic to end the thought. The last two bars of the phrase provide an interlude with major sixths in the treble clef right hand accompaniment for beats 2, 3, and 4 of each measure. We still remain in "G" major to end the phrase but ends the section on the dominant, giving it the feel of an imperfect authentic cadence.

The next section, C is a bridge consisting of three phrases of 4-6 bars each, similar to that of the refrain (B section). Throughout the accompaniment of this section, in the right hand we have the same major 6^{th} intervals, with the top note of right hand imitating the vocal line one octave above, and the bottom note of right hand providing the intervals of 6^{th} in quarter notes. Harmonic structure is the similar. We see the familiar iii^7 and phrase 1 ends as has been typically the case of these 2 sections, on the dominantV^7, making it a half-cadence. In phrase 2 of this section, the harmonies change dramatically, moving to ii and iv/ii in the first bar of the phrase, then remaining in a minor for the second bar and ending in a plagal cadence. The last bar of the phrase is a 2/4 bar, shortening the phrase. This shortening is painting the text of the children who Rebecca

hopes to have running through her kitchen—children who she prays and hopes will not have to be children running and fighting for their lives as she has always done. Phrase 3 immediately goes back to 4/4 time. It begins in the V of V in "G" major. The secondary dominant of V/V is used in this phrase.

The next section is a return of the B section, or refrain with its 4 bar phrases and familiar harmonic structure which is frequent use of 2 chords (as in IV^2) as cadential elongation. There is also frequent use of the 9th (as in I^9). It is still in 4/4, and uses the same rhythmic structure as previously in the bass and treble clefs of the piano part. Phrase 1 ends with the familiar Vsus which is resolved on the 4th beat. Phrase 2 has an unusual beginning harmonically in that it starts on iii7 and moves through the typical cycle used in this song of Vsus, I^6, IVsus ending the second to last bar with I9 which was one of Strouse's trademark harmonies throughout the refrain. The last bar of the section ends harmonically with a secondary dominant V^7/V within the key of "B" major. It is interesting that this B natural was a pedal tone used throughout the beginning of the piece within different forms, such as in tremolo, in 8th notes, and sustained. Now, at the climax of the piece, Strouse modulates from "G" major to "B" major, the biggest harmonic shift of the piece. He does this by writing an augmented 6th interval in the vocal line, punctuating the text "we will make our way." The augmented 6th interval is from "B" to the "C#" below it, and the vocal line holds the "C#" on the word "way" which is the secondary dominant of "B" major, and then the next chord resolves to the dominant of "B" major, moving from "F#sus" and resolving to the dominant of "F#." This is possibly to reflect that previous "B" pedal tone. Perhaps he does this in order to indicate hope for Rebecca—hope that in emigrating to this brand new unfamiliar land, taking enormous

risks to ensure their survival, and in doing so, she and her family and the next generations will be able to solidify roots so that they no longer have to be running from something and living as "children of the wind."

In phrase 4, the phrase begins with dense chords of 4 notes with harmonization of I^9 moving to $I^{9/6}$ underneath it. In bar 2, there is an 8^{th} note phrase moving step wise in a progression of M2nd-M3rd-M2nd-P4 in the top note of the treble clef in the piano accompaniment which modulates the piece to "Eb" major. Underneath this is a "Bb" octave in bass clef with chords in treble which indicate a V7 of the major III of "B" major. The last 2 bars of the phrase are in "Eb" major with the thick chords of 4 notes in the treble clef underneath non-traditional harmonies of I^9, I^6, and $I^{4/2}$. The end of phrase 4 even cadences on the very non-traditional harmony of $IV^{6/5/3}$.

The 5^{th} and final phrase of the piece contains a great deal of non-traditional harmonies and even some chords which we have not seen previously. The first bar of the phrase begins on the vi, repeating the vi on the second beat, then moves to $vi^{4/2}$. In the second bar we see a *molto rall*. With the vocal line climaxing with the text "children of" followed by a caesura. The harmony in the second measure continues to create tension, with its movement from IV^9-Vsus-$I^{6/4}$-Vsus, finally resolving on I^9 in the next bar. The harmonic tension appears to be releasing itself in the last few bars within the treble clef chords, as the progression is the basic V-I except that the chords are in first and second inversions. The progression of the chords and their resolution are reflective of the resolution of the character Rebecca. Previously, the cadences occurred on instable harmonies such as Vsus, or even in secondary dominants. As the piece draws to a close, it is firmly in the tonic. Finally, the piece resolves and ends firmly on the tonic of "E flat"

and to solidify this, Strouse has simplified it greatly by just writing 4 octaves in the bass clef and making it an accented 8th note.

There are many elements throughout this piece which portray the emotional contents of this Jewish family. Fast-moving rhythms and frequent use of tremolo are used indicate the emotions of fear and anticipation which the characters are feeling due about coming to the new land of America. The tumultuousness of the tonality, the elements of our Jewish musical language and other phrases which are reminiscent of cantillation, modes, and nusach always coming back to the home key of "G" major is reminiscent of the fact that the immigrants are coming home to America.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the sources presented that the history of the Jewish family has proven itself to be immensely dynamic and dramatic, filled with stories that even the greatest storytellers with the most vivid imaginations could not create. The many facets and extremes within the Jewish family dynamic have given it a permanent place in the most popular performance media in America today. The second and third generation children of immigrants, particularly sons, often felt great frustration with their parents, particularly their mothers. This is reflected in their literary works of the past and present, and has carried over to the popular performance medium of American musical theater, Yiddish theater, and some operas.

The Jewish family has such popularity in these three performance media because of the great transition which Jews faced as immigrants at the turn of the century upon coming to America, thus causing the frustration of the children. These Jews were caught between the old and new worlds, and the family balance was thrown completely off kilter. It was no longer feasible for the husband/father to live the pious life of study to which he was accustomed in the old country. He was forced to go out and find a way to make a living for his family, often in blue collar jobs for which he had no training or trade. He was often unsuccessful, and unable to make ends meet because he did not know how to do anything except study. This left the mother to bear the primary responsibility for not only running the households, but also to make a living while at the same time trying to give emotional support to her failing husband. The fathers' despair and confusion often caused him to abandon the family in many ways. This had a huge impact

on the children, and they looked for ways in which to reconcile and work through their pain. Many Jewish artists chose to do this through their performance media.

Despite the fact that Jews were (and still are today) an extremely small demographic in the world, they were among the most educated and greatest achievers within the immigrant population at the turn of the century. This fact gave them great visibility, resulting in a fascination with their family dynamic, language, and culture within American society. It remains with us, now showing itself in our most popular entertainment media of today.

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