

JEWISH WOMEN IN THE  
WRITINGS OF SHOLOM ALBICHER

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SPONSORING COMMITTEE:

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Professor C. Churgin, Sponsor

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Professor N. Goldberg, Sponsor

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Jewish Pale could be written solely on the basis of the stories and sketches of Sholom Aleichem and "it would be as reliable a scientific document as any factual study; more so, indeed for we should get, in addition to the material of a straightforward social inquiry, the intangible spirit which informs the material and gives it its living significance".  
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Our purpose is to focus on one aspect of Eastern European life, the world of the women, as reflected in the writings of Sholom Aleichem. Although the man was dominant in this world and Sholom Aleichem concentrated on the man, he presented a rich and varied portrait of the women. He described the traditional woman in the shtetl and in the city, the new generation woman as artist, student, revolutionary, the nouveau riche and the poverty stricken. The dominant picture, however, is the woman in her family roles as wife, mother and daughter.

The women will be studied in a framework of the three primary worlds that Sholom Aleichem depicts, the shtetl, the shtetl in transition and the open society.

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## PREFACE

More and more, literature has become an accepted source of historical understanding.<sup>1</sup> There is a growing recognition that the formal documents do not always yield the truth as well as a portrait by an artist writing about his own era.

There are various descriptions of the shtetl, the traditional Jewish townlet;<sup>2</sup> some are idealizations and some are criticisms. Rarely has anyone attempted to study Jewish life in Eastern Europe on the basis of the masters of Yiddish and Hebrew literature.

One of the authors most likely to offer an illuminating picture of shtetl life is Sholom Aleichem. He is acclaimed by all as the portrait painter of life at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th.<sup>3</sup> Others depicted the same milieu but Sholom Aleichem was the one with whom the readers identified and accepted as interpreter of their way of life.<sup>4</sup> Both Mendele and Peretz wrote at approximately the same time and very often described a similar environment. However, their works do not truly reflect the life of the Jews of their times. Influenced by the Haskalah approach, Mendele and Peretz used literature as a means to educate the masses and therefore we find that Mendele's satirization and Peretz's tendency to idealize do not present a wholly accurate picture.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Sholom Aleichem, although tinged with the Haskalah approach in his earlier works, later developed into the supreme artist and "succeeded... in expressing the innermost essence of the Jewish way of life..."<sup>6</sup> In fact, a Middletown of the Russian

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The author said: Among the various types that are living in our street, the Jews' Street, you find all kinds of singular people whose numbers are diminishing. Any person that portrays one Jewish soul gives pleasure to his generation; whosoever creates a monument for those types that are disappearing, it is as if he upheld a whole world, a world that is slowly being destroyed. These people stand before you and demand immortalization: "Portray us, write about us in a book, so that the generations to come will know." And from these types I have in mind to present for the reader a complete gallery.

Sholom Aleichem (Solomon Rabinowitz)

Short Introduction to "Beyn Adam Lehavero," Yamim Touim,

Vol. 10 of Kitve Sholom Aleichem, p. 41.

1. INTRODUCTION



## LIFE OF SHOLOM ALEICHEM

Solomon Rabinowitz, or Sholom Aleichem as he was known later in his life was born March 3, 1859 in Pereyslav. <sup>(Re 8(a))</sup> Soon after his birth the family moved to Voronka (the Kasrilevke of Sholom Aleichem) and it was there that he spent his boyhood years. He received a traditional Jewish education at the cheder and a secular education at the gymnasium.

Sholom was the third child in a large family. His father was both a maskil and a devout Jew and showed a particular warmth for Sholom and an appreciation of his talents. Sholom described his mother as a very busy woman, somewhat sterner than most mothers in discipline, but still tender and loving at other times.

Sholom's mother died shortly after his Bar-Mitzvah and his father brought a step-mother from Berdichev, an event that reoccurs frequently in Sholom Aleichem stories. It was from this step-mother that he learned the rich Yiddish curse. At the time, he composed a lexicon of her curses which he later used to great advantage in his stories.

Through his step-mother's harsh treatment he learned what it meant to be an orphan and perhaps his great sympathy for orphans stemmed from his experiences. An orphan in many cases was sent to live temporarily with family until the new step-mother was brought home and this afforded Sholom Aleichem the opportunity to observe his grandmother and grandfather as well as his Aunt Hodel and Uncle Nissel. It would seem that both women, who were strong-minded and managers of the household, served as prototypes for the portrayal of his domineering wives.

After Sholom graduated the country school with distinction he was engaged by a rich landowner, Elimclech Loyev, as tutor for his daughter. He fell in love with his pupil and the three years that he spent at the home of the Loyevs were the happiest in his life. <sup>13</sup> It is likely that he writes with such tenderness and poignancy in his Chapters from the Song of Songs and his other youthful love stories because of his own experiences.

When Mr. Loyev found out about the romance, young Sholom was summarily dismissed. He spent the next few years as crown Rabbi in Luben in the government of Poltava.

The Loyevs later relented and Sholom married Olga Loyev in 1883. That same year he published his first Yiddish story, Two Stones, in the Yiddishe Folks-blatt. Two years later when his father-in-law died Sholom administered the large estate. He became active in commerce and involved in speculation on the stock market in Kiev (the Yehupetz of <sup>14</sup> Sholom Aleichem)

The publication of the Knife in 1887 launched Sholom Aleichem's career as a Yiddish writer. He received favorable comment from S. Dubnov and he was inspired to continue. He had written before, but his early works described the middle-class bourgeois and he had suppressed his flair for humor. From then on, however, he began to portray the inhabitants of Kasrilevke, the poor, yet optimistic Jews who carried on a unique existence and his humor flowed naturally.

The great sums of money at his disposal gave Sholom Aleichem the opportunity to publish a Yiddish literary yearbook, Die Yiddishe Folksbibliotek in 1888. Unfortunately, this venture ended in 1890, when Sholom Aleichem met financial disaster on the stock exchange. His

experiences inspired Menachem Mendel, one of Sholom Aleichem's classic characterizations.

Tevyeh, one of the most beloved portraits in Yiddish literature, was created in 1894 and was developed throughout the rest of Sholom Aleichem's career.

The last two decades of Sholom Aleichem's life were marked by a feverish literary activity. By 1901 he had devoted himself entirely to literature and had tried all forms of expression; novels, short stories, sketches, feuilletons, and plays. He achieved his greatest fame in the genre of the short story and particularly the monologue. His style had matured and his later works reflected by and large a greater craftsmanship than his earlier productions.

Both for purposes of earning a living and for health reasons, Sholom Aleichem traveled a great deal and reached such places as Italy, Denmark, Switzerland, England, Germany and finally the United States. In his travels he met many people and his impressions of people and places were reflected in various stories, the most prominent of which was Mottel, Pessi the Cantor's son, where the trip to America and life in America were described.

America, the destination of many of Kasrilevskites, was the final stop for Sholom Aleichem. He died on May 2, 1916, mourned by Jews all over the world.

All through his life, Sholom Aleichem's source of happiness and  
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solace was his family. He loved his wife dearly and had the tenderest  
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relationship with his children, particularly with his daughters.

His adult family life, however, was not reflected in his writings. The typical wife in Sholom Aleichem was not Olga, but rather his mother,

grandmother and aunt. The mutual love and respect between the author and his wife were not characteristic of the marriages he described. The daughters of Tevye were not his own even if the warmth and understanding in Tevye may have been influenced by Sholom Rabinowitz the father. He described a rich panorama of the world around him rather than his own private contemporary world.

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#### WORLDS OF SHOLOM ALEICHEM

Sholom Aleichem developed as a writer at a time that marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. While pogroms of the 1880's considerably weakened the influence of the Enlightenment, the rise of Zionism, Jewish revolutionary socialism, mass migrations to the United States augured a new epoch. The turbulent era nurtured various factions and ideas but concentrated primarily on interests of the masses. Yiddish and Hebrew literature flourished in the period and reflected a decrease in the tendency to negate the Jewish mode of life and a growing effort to explore the people's ways, to depict them and interpret them artistically. "Discovery of the people's values rather than revelation of its faults became the goal."

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No one was more characteristic of this trend than Sholom Aleichem. The author felt that the people "must know what forces it possesses in its midst, what remarkable people wander among it." He therefore devoted a great deal of attention to simple, unpretentious people. But Sholom Aleichem's pen captured the complete Jewish scene and therefore the underworld, the rogues, informers and thieves also appeared in his works. His world ranged from shtetl to town and city and included all segments of Jewish society, rich, poor, old and young, maid and mistress, religious and non-observant, educated

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and ignorant, assimilated and thoroughly Jewish.

Not only did Sholom Aleichem describe all types of people but he also chronicled for posterity the complete rhythm of Jewish life: birth and death, childhood and old age, feasting and fasting, holidays and weekdays, synagogue, home and marketplace.<sup>20</sup>

From this broad spectrum of people, places and events, three worlds are discernible.

### Shtetl

Kasrilevke, the name of the most popular shtetl described, was a composite picture of traditional Jewish life in the small townlets or villages of the Ukraine. This was a thoroughly religious, other-worldly oriented, Yiddish-speaking community far from the influences of the outside world.

Stuck away in a corner of the world, isolated from the surrounding country, the town stands, orphaned, dreaming, bewitched, immersed in itself and remote from the noise and bustle the confusion and tumult and greed, which men have created about them and have dignified with high-sounding names like Culture, Progress, Civilization.<sup>21</sup>

There was almost an idyllic peace that reigned in Kasrilevke, despite the poverty and squalor that were rampant. The people existed on the barest subsistence level.<sup>22</sup> They suffered from legal restrictions on residential and occupational rights besides social ostracism and discriminatory taxation. Yet, the inhabitants did not despair. The Kasrilik, "is a man who had not allowed poverty to degrade him. He laughs at it. He is poor but cheerful."<sup>23</sup> The little people of Kasrilevke, as Sholom Aleichem lovingly called them, accepted their fate yet never gave up hope that something better would fall their way.<sup>24</sup>

### Shtetl in Transition

The shtetl could not forever remain completely isolated and

currents of the Haskalah, the Jewish renaissance of the 19th century, modernization and Russification penetrated the citadel. There was a shift of emphasis and interests. Zionism, Socialism, careerism, secular education, the lure of the large cities, all made an impact on the shtetl. The changes created a new group which Maurice Samuel calls, "Kasrilevke in transition."<sup>25</sup>

It was a Yiddish-speaking class, still bound to the tradition, but already in contact with provincial modernity. The curious position which these Jews occupied may best be described as that of immigrants in the land of their birth. They spoke the language poorly; they were second class citizens; their children were drifting away from them; and the spiritual life was rooted in a world which, though it had been on Russian soil for centuries, was understood by none but themselves.

These men and women were the children of Kasrilevky already middle-aged; the grandchildren were destined for revolution, or America, or Palestine.<sup>26</sup>

### Open Society

These grandchildren formed the third part of the world of Sholom Aleichem. This was the new generation that received a secular education at the Russian schools, became interested in this-worldliness and joined the movements of the time, socialism and Zionism.

### Core of the Worlds

These worlds were not separate entities nor did they necessarily reflect different periods. Three generations lived very often at the same time and in the same place and the encounter of one world with another is a popular theme in Sholom Aleichem.

The delineation of each of the worlds, however, is unequal in treatment. Kasrilevke in transition and the new generation were not as

frequently described as Kasrilevke. The author was not as sympathetic or as understanding of the people of these worlds.

His most successful characterizations and most enduring types were derived from the shtetl. "It was in the little places, the townlets and villages which were the stronghold of old Jewish ways, the isolated medieval Yiddish speaking communities that Sholom Aleichem's heart

remained".<sup>27</sup> The simple, poor, semi-literate masses, sustained by "bitachon", had the greatest appeal for the humanist. "Kasrilevky the townlet of the tiny folk, was the core of his world".<sup>28</sup>

#### SHOLOM ALEICHEM'S APPROACH

Sholom Aleichem viewed his men and women with the "kindly smile of the humorist rather than the sullen scowl of the reprover".<sup>29</sup> His purpose was not to change the existing situation, but merely to reflect it. He was essentially a realist who portrayed Jewish life as it was. The peculiar life of the Jews in the shtetl engendered certain characteristics and traits which were often the cause of incongruous actions and therefore created humorous situations.

The author perceived the comedy of life, yet he did not fail to encompass the tragedies of life as well. Often, heartrending incidents peered through his humor. "Sholom Aleichem was known for exactly this interweaving of the comical and sorrowful - a combination which gave rise to much of the pathos found so abundantly in his work".<sup>30</sup>

If, on the surface, Sholom Aleichem's humor was light and carefree, there was a deeper, more serious aspect to it. His approach reflected a basic element in the Jewish consciousness, the ability to surmount the grimmest tragedy through laughter.

Humor, in this light, however, was reserved by and large, for the men, especially for Tevye. Nearly all the women in Sholom Aleichem appear in a comical light because of their particular functions and traits. They were by and large practical, realistic women who served as an antithesis to the world of the men. Their narrow and confined world did not allow them to rise above the situation and reflect on their lives. Their main concern revolved around the "cabbage borscht".

Similarly, the women appeared somewhat comical in the children's world, where this time she served as antithesis to the ebullience of the youth. The children were imaginative and exuberant. The mothers, in contrast, seemed to a large extent, pathetic. They were busy, devoted women who lacked an understanding of the children and therefore were cut off from their world.

Although Sholom Aleichem was wont to see the humorist aspect of the situation, he did not sacrifice realism for effect. His works faithfully mirrored the society of the time. If the woman appeared comical or tragic or pathetic, then it was a reflection of her image at that period. The economic, social and political conditions that produced a unique shtetl society altered the thinking and approach of the Eastern European Jews. This, in turn, effected the position of the Jewish woman. The picture, therefore, that emerged from the works of Sholom Aleichem, reflected the change.



## THE JEWISH WOMAN: HISTORICAL VIEW

The position of woman and the attitude towards her in the shtetl was different from her status in earlier Jewish history.

### Biblical Period

The Bible regards the man and woman as one unit. "Male and female<sup>31</sup> he created them, and blessed them and called their name Adam." They had<sup>32</sup> equality in importance and rights. The fundamental distinction between them was in their different duties which were accorded to them on the<sup>33</sup> basis of their individual physiological and psychological make up.

The woman was assigned the task of help meet.<sup>34</sup> This was not to indicate that she was on a lower level than her husband, but rather this was her special task. Together, they enjoined to carry out the mission assigned to them: "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and<sup>35</sup> subdue it".

Nowhere is there clearer evidence for the high regard in which the<sup>36</sup> average housewife and mother was held than in the chapter of Proverbs. The woman of valor was loyal and devoted to her family and home, and shared in her husband's endeavors. She was mature, wise, pious and generous.

The Bible related instances that indicated how the woman took her place beside her husband. The episodes concerning Sarah, Rebekkah, Rachel, Hannah, revealed the decisive factor the woman was in the life of the<sup>37</sup> family, and consequently in the destiny of Israel.

### Talmudic Period

The Talmud, a compendium of many views and attitudes, reflects different opinions of women. However, on the whole, one finds a realistic appraisal of their virtues and failings. A woman was known for her low quality and fondness for gossip, her jealousy, curiosity, haughtiness, talebearing and gadding about.

On the other hand, she was seen as having more intuition than a man. She was modest, merciful and industrious. The Talmud recognized the value of a wife and therefore instructed the man to treat his wife with the utmost care and listen to her.

The Talmud clearly set forth the legal obligations of husband and wife. The man was responsible for food and shelter and woman was responsible for her husband and home. The Talmud did not look with favor upon a wife supporting her husband.

### Middle Ages

During the middle ages the ideal of Jewish married life was transformed into reality. Persecuted and insecure from without, the home was the refuge and pillar of Jewish life. The husband and wife were partners in survival and accomplishment. The man was the provider and the woman cared for her home. The woman in Western Europe was often a partner in her husband's business, but she did not earn the livelihood while her husband sat and studied as was the case in Eastern Europe at the end of the Middle Ages.

The memoirs of Glueckel of Hamelin give us an insight into the life of the average family during the later Middle Ages. Glueckel, married at a young age, was a true companion and helpmate to her husband. He was very

energetic in business, she tells us, and "he took advice from no one but me, and did nothing until we had talked it over together".<sup>47</sup> Their life together was difficult but they shared the hardships and joy and drew on each other for support. They had a tender and warm relationship.

Glueckel ran the household and directed the education and marriages of her children, but she never was her husband's boss.

She was an intelligent and pious person and "she revealed a fair knowledge and good understanding of Jewish religion and history".<sup>48</sup>

Glueckel was truly a woman of valor.

### Eastern Europe in the 19th Century

Two centuries later the picture of the Jewish woman was quite different. Life in the East European shtetl brought about changes in married life. Throughout the generations and particularly during this period the ideal of Torah learning was held in highest esteem. The unstable economy and political conditions and the impossibility of earning a livelihood induced the male to turn to study as a full-time vocation.

The wife, in many cases was left to provide for the family. She considered this a fair exchange because she saw her share in heaven dependent upon her husband's learning. The more that she contributed to allowing him to study the greater her share.<sup>49</sup> The wife became the one who dealt with realities of life while the ideal man "did not know one coin from another", he was so involved in spiritual matters.

In addition, there was a change in the attitude toward women in general. Hasidism had a profound effect in this area.

The spiritual revolution in Hasidism penetrated the depths of the erotic life. The diligence with which religious devotion was practiced, diminished erotic tension. Although Hasidism did not bring about a movement of celibacy, there was a clearly discernable tendency to

depreciate erotic life, as well as to lower the status of women. The Hasidic congregation was a man's world; in it, there was no place for women, as there was in the family.<sup>50</sup>

The woman "was regarded as a sort of inferior being, a part taken from his (the man's) rib, a creature, liable to arouse his passions, with the result that the delimiting lines were drawn too sharply. . . Going beyond the Halachic requirements women were consistently excluded from all study of the Torah."<sup>51</sup>

The reversal of roles and the change in attitude gave the woman an anomalous status. Officially, from the point of view of the male, she was subordinate and inferior. Ideally, she was perceived as "clean, patient, hard-working and silent, submissive to God and to her husband, devoted to her children."<sup>52</sup> Yet in reality, she was far more dominant:

She was the wife who ordered the functioning of the household and provided the setting in which each member performed his part. She was the mother, key figure in the family constellation. Moreover, the more completely her husband fulfilled the ideal picture of the man as scholar, the more essential was the wife as realist and mediator between his ivory tower and the hurly-burly of everyday life.<sup>53</sup>

II. WOMEN OF KASRILEVKE

## INTRODUCTION

The most prominent woman in the works of Sholom Aleichem was the woman of the shtetl. A woman, in the traditional Jewish townlet implied a married woman (or formerly married, i.e. widowed or divorced) "There was no idea in the shtetl of the female as an individuality who might develop along her own lines." <sup>54</sup> The woman achieved status and recognition only in terms of her family role as wife, mother. The daughter was only the potential wife and mother. Sholom Aleichem described these women, their traits, their relationship with other family members and to the extent that it was evident, their thoughts and feelings.

## TRAITS

The wives and mothers of the shtetl, although varying in type, shared many traits. To be sure, they did not exhibit identical behaviour and not every woman possessed all the characteristics mentioned, yet they evidenced a constellation of traits that identified them as women of Kasrilevke.

Sholom Aleichem portrayed, as he did with most of his characters, both aspects of the women's personalities, their weaknesses and their strengths. They were talkative, superstitious, realistic, quarrelsome, yet they were simple, pious, honest and loyal.

Weaknesses

Talkativeness was a trait of all Sholom Aleichem characters. Sholom Aleichem, in fact, employs the monologue to give vent to his and their loquaciousness. Talkativeness was a trait of the ghetto, the inability to act was replaced by the steady stream of words. The men talked a great deal, however, it was they who ascribed the trait to the women. Tevye says, "If words could fill stomachs; my old woman, God bless her, would be supporting us and half the world besides." The women introjected this attitude. The geese-woman apologized for straying from the topic and commented again and again "you know what they say, a woman was made with nine measures of talk."

Gossip, a by-product of this talkativeness was characteristic of the women. Shaine Shaindl's letters to her husband, filled with stories and anecdotes about the entire shtetl community were an example of gossip, par excellence.

Not only are the women known to be talkative, but they have the reputation for being argumentative and illogical as well. Gnessi argues, "I gave you back a good pot," later she says "when I took the pot it was cracked," and finally, "I never took a pot from you at all."

Cursing was the woman's domain. "Are you crazy?" she asks. Are you insane, or out of your head or just delirious... and she lets me have it - all the curses she knows - as only a woman can.

Maurice Samuel tells us that cursing was a pastime and form of self-expression rather than an implement of war. The women did not have the man's learning nor the many prayers and other religious duties to serve them as an escape and in a sense the curse served as a substitute.

On the other hand, it was a commentary on the world in which she could not always act, but "with tongue and blazing eyes, she implacably

judged."

The woman's relationship with the people closest to her was of an explosive nature. This was particularly true in regard to her friends.

She made friends easily, but constantly bickered with them and yet never retained anger for long. "Everyday her mother cursed her neighbors. The next day she made up with them." They quarreled and cursed each other again and made up again." The women were jealous of each other, cursed one another and yet bore each other no deep malice or hate. Shaine Shaindl cursed Yentl because of a rumor her friend spread about her, yet she said upon her death, "What difference to me if she lived long and didn't leave seven orphans, and so I went to her funeral and cried a lot."

"Despite a surface appearance of competition, striving and feuding there are deep bonds of affinity and a profound sense of mutual responsibility among Kasrilevke's Jews." This was particularly true of the women. They lived like one large family, and as it was only natural under such circumstances, they gossiped and quarreled, yet without venom. In time of need they laid the quarrels aside and joined together. This was poignantly described in the story Birth, where a young woman, whose husband ran off to America was in the throes of childbirth and all the women living together in the house forgot their arguments with each other and all contributed and rallied their husbands to participate in the celebration of the child's bris.

The woman's main interest was to clothe and feed her family so that she appeared very concerned with money. Some men in fact saw her as greedy. One husband said "To a woman with woman's brains it is possible for a man to be happy only when he has made some money. Why does it happen that women are so much more greedy than men? Who earns the money we or they?"



The concern with the realities of life forced these women into a position where money was the all important commodity. Bracha, Mottel's sister-in-law, treated her husband with respect only when he earned some money. In some cases this concern took abnormal proportions. Freydl, a girl who came from a poverty-stricken home, married Stempenyu for his earning power and began to hoard the money he brought home.

Superstition, not as widespread among Jews as among their gentile neighbours, was far more prevalent among the women than the men. The gese-woman advised not to come near any geese after the new moon because they would be ruined. One was not supposed to cage the geese during the day, but if one had to do it she was supposed to pinch herself and say three times, "I hope you get as fat as me."

Dreams were very real to the women. Sholom Aleichem's mother related a dream that she interpreted as a prediction of her death and was terrified. Tevye capitalizing on his wife's beliefs, successfully used a dream that he made up about relatives from the other world to influence Golde. Dreams were an extension of reality and had to be dealt with accordingly. One woman advised her friend to spit three times after dreaming, to ward off the evil eye.

### Strengths

Although the realistic, and overreactive behaviour of the Jewish woman stood out in the works of Sholom Aleichem, her other qualities, simplicity, loyalty, sincerity and piety were not disregarded.

Tevye described his wife, "She was a plain woman, without learning, without pretensions, but extremely pious." She may have cursed her husband and bossed him, but she was intensely devoted to him. When she

was dying and the great mysterious moment was at hand, Golde's concern was,

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"Tevye, who will cook supper for you?"

Shaine Shaindl, with all her tirades against her husband, still missed him and wished he would return to her. When he finally did come home, she greeted him with curses. However, he knew, that she was pleased

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because she withdrew to one side to cry.

There was more to the woman than was evident at the first glance.

Sarah Bracha also was typical of this type.

In appearance, she was a tall and angular woman with large work-roughened hands, put one in mind of a worked-out cavalry horse. But the more Rapalesco came to know her, the more he appreciated her sincerity and innate good nature. She was a woman without pretense or humbug.<sup>79</sup>

Piety was such a natural part of life among the Kasrilevke women that it was rarely described. It was only mentioned as part of a general characterization, as for example, "She was a simple and honest and pious Jewish woman."<sup>80</sup>

The piety was primarily evident in the strict adherence to the law<sup>81</sup> and the unquestioning belief in God's will, and a great deal of praying. Sometimes religion was not a result of personal involvement but rather an outgrowth of the atmosphere. Eve's faith reflected this simplicity and naivete. She was listening to Reb Jozifl's prayer, the prayer of a truly pious person. "She did not know exactly what he said, but listening to him was sheer delight. Each word touched her heart and bathed all her limbs with joy."<sup>82</sup>

One of the most characteristic features of the Kasrilevke woman was her rootedness. A pillar of the traditional way of life, she was completely unaffected by the changes around her. The woman was immersed in mundane affairs and never reflected on her life from an objective perspective.

The Jewish woman did not view herself as an individual. She had no sense of herself. Instead, she expressed a headlong devotion to her home and her religion and never veered from her appointed role as wife and mother.

## WIVES

### Role

The woman was the child-bearer and manager of the domestic affairs. She was responsible for the children, their discipline, education and marriage. She helped earn the livelihood and in many cases was the sole provider. <sup>83</sup> The author provided an interesting aside about the "working-woman."

The world is debating the question of whether or not the woman should work, or just stay at home. In *Mazepevka*, they are laughing because long ago the Jewish woman entered the world of business just like the man and her job as the balabusta, the homemaker, has not suffered. <sup>84</sup>

The women assumed the economic burden as if it were simply a part of their marital responsibility. Certain women achieved great renown for their accomplishments, the task of homemaker and provider.

One wife, whose husband sat in the House of Study, ran the entire household and supported her family by operating a tavern. She was considered smart, pretty and a good mother. The townspeople thought of her as outstanding, in fact, the equivalent of three men. <sup>85</sup>

Another woman, according to the description of her son-in-law, "was the real head of the family, you can really say she wore the pants. She managed all the affairs herself, picked out the husbands for her daughters herself, and herself arranged the entire match." <sup>86</sup> In this case she even <sup>87</sup> examined the fellow in the Torah.

Types of Wives

Three main types of wives were discernible in the shtetl of Sholom Aleichem, the domineering "manaish" woman, the simple, realistic woman and the classic, submissive Jewish woman. These types were not all clear cut. There was overlapping and sharing of many traits, but for the purpose of clarity we will discuss them separately.

The most popular characterizations were the first two. The latter was more typical of Peretz, but the first two caught the eye and heart of Sholom Aleichem, the humorist.

Domineering Wife

The domineering woman was a type who assumed the masculine role in her family. She generally was the one who earned the living. Her husband was a weakling, a shlimazel. He was over-shadowed by her to such an extent that he was known by his wife's name. Zlateh's Levi<sup>88</sup> or Baruch Hersh Leah Dvosi's<sup>89</sup> or Psesi's Alter<sup>90</sup> were such husbands.

This type of man would sit and study while the wife earned the livelihood. One wife tells us about her husband. "He was never a bread winner... All he did was sit and study. He sat over his holy books all day long and I did the work."<sup>91</sup> At most, the husbands were dragged out of the house of study once a year at the annual fair to serve as watchmen for thieves at their wives' stalls.<sup>92</sup>

Some husbands were actually incapable of earning a livelihood, and in order to provide for the necessities of life, Yoshe Heshel's wife and daughters had learned to make shirts.<sup>93</sup>

Even if the husband worked, the women took an active role in their husband's affairs.

Whenever money was involved Gittel took care of it. The work it-

self, the labor that earned their bread was done by Chlavya ... but when the work was finished it was Gittel who delivered it and collected the money.<sup>94</sup>

The man's domain was the House of Study, the woman's the home. Although the woman took no part in the man's world, the man was part of the woman's. The husband was a member of the household, and in that respect he was like one of the children and was treated accordingly. She bossed and cursed him into submission. In the Enchanted Tailor we have a description of this type.

Ever since the day of their wedding she had taken him in hand and never loosed her hold. She was the head of her household and her husband had the greatest respect for her. She had only to open her mouth and he trembled. In the Tailor's Chapel it was said openly that Shimen-Eli may have patched the pants, but his wife wore them. ... Further, she plagued her husband constantly to get a goat ... .. And later ... Once more she instructed her husband how to approach the melamed, how to feel him out, and how to close the deal.<sup>95</sup>

Possibly the prototype for this kind of woman came from Sholom Aleichem's memories of his aunt and uncle.

But Uncle Nissel, a mighty figure to the villagers, was far from a mighty figure to his wife. No great man is! Auntie Nodel was a small dark woman, but what fear she inspired in her huge husband -

It was odd to see... Uncle Nissel, so respected by the authorities.. protect himself from a pillow thrown at his head ... His "little" wife liked to sweep him with her broom, particularly on holidays and preferably right in front of everyone.<sup>96</sup>

Other husbands lived under similar circumstances. "Just a look from Blumeh Zlateh terrified Nechemyeh. He understood her every gesture."<sup>97</sup>

Tevye, though not afraid of his wife, still could not announce his wishes, but had to use a ruse to convince his wife to let his daughter Zeitl marry her tailor.

The women had very definite opinions about the functioning of their household and imposed their will on their husbands. Although her informal status accorded her control in these areas, the formal status of the male as head of the family conferred on him the theoretical right to make

decisions and the actual right to implement them. It was the wife, however, who decided what was to be done. The husband merely served as the figurehead.

"You do as I tell you" Golde commended. Teyve related, "Well once  
98  
in awhile you have to obey your wife. So I let her talk me into it."

Another wife told her husband how to run his business. "When a woman  
99  
puts her foot down she wins," her husband commented. Another husband lamented;

Well, it's no use trying to argue with your wife! If you talk about one thing, she switches to something else; if you say one word to her, she'll give you back a dozen; if you don't answer her, she'll burst into tears; or else - begging your pardon - she simply passes out. Then it's all up with you! In short, I lost out; she had it all her own way. For it's no use talking, if she had her mind on something, she just won't take no for an answer!100

Quarreling between husband and wife was an ever present reality.

One man asked his friend, "Why are you raising your voice at him, are you  
101  
his wife that you can curse him?" Another husband said, "So we argue  
102  
the way a husband and wife behave." Esther, in Stories for Children, commented naively, "I don't know how it is with other parents, but my  
103  
parents are always arguing."

104

There were wives that were not above slapping their husbands.

There was no corresponding example of husbands raising a hand to their wives. As a matter of fact, when it was suggested to Uncle Nissel that he  
105  
strike his wife his reaction was "God forbid".

Sholom Aleichem told about husbands that were miserable because of their wives. In analyzing why Koppel was so melancholy, Sholom Aleichem commented, "Perhaps because God has blessed him with such a terror of a wife, aside from the fact that she makes life miserable for him, she never stops talking."<sup>106</sup>

Referring to his wife, one husband confided, "No one knows what is buried deep in my heart. . . It is more than twenty years that I suffer Gahinom. . . No rachmannus. . . Not once in that time did I hear a good word. . ." His friend added, "I know I have <sup>the</sup> some trouble, the same plague. ." 107

In the story Gynnasium, the husband nearly went out of his mind because of his wife's insistence and perseverance in attempting to register her son in a gynnasium. Throughout the story he pointed out his misery that he suffered at the hands of <sup>his</sup> wife and at the end asked helplessly: 108  
 "Can you tell me, please, who ever invented a wife?"

Husband's attitude to demeaning wife.- Although the husbands were unhappy, they never turned to another woman for solace. Marital infidelity was comparatively unknown in Eastern Europe. 109

One Husband said:

Here in Kasrilevke it has never yet happened that husbands and wives should start exchanging each other. It is possible that there are husbands among us who would not object to this but they know their wives and they know what they would get from them. 110

This statement probably did not represent a realistic wish, however it reflected a certain dissatisfaction with the wives. Still the husbands accepted the situation.

Divorce rarely came up among the characters of Sholem Aleichen as a solution for an unhappy marriage. 111 If anything, there was flight to America. In one case, Shaina Shaindl told her husband that Moshe David tried to get rid of his wife and so he started traveling to America. His wife ran after him and caught him at the border. She put up such a commotion that he returned with her to Kasrilevke. 112 Other husbands made it and left their wives agnot.

This was not the usual case. By and large, the men did not leave their wives and the question arises as to why they tolerated their difficult

marital situation.

Many men accepted their fate because they believed that God in his wisdom ordained whatever came to pass.

Shimen Eli the "bewitched tailor" had accepted his lot i.e. his domineering wife. He, like Tevye, found support for his attitude in traditional sources. "A wife. . . must be obeyed. That's an old law. It's  
114  
in the Talmud."

In a very humorous parody of Lech Lecha, Shimen Eli described himself:

I was a one time free soul, a fine young man with a starched shirt and shiny boots. . . What more did I need. But the Lord said unto me, get thee out of thy country, crawl, Shimen Eli into thy sack. Marry Tzippa-Beila-Keiza, beget children, suffer all thy days and thy years. For what art thou but a tailor?<sup>115</sup>

Beneath the humor lurked a certain sadness. This, however, was not a tragic unhappiness because it was accepted as fate. Passivity and acceptance born of faith in a Divine will was the pattern in this community.  
116

The man had other approaches as well. He could consider himself superior to the woman and therefore superior to the situation. Shimen Eli was determined to tell his wife off, however he kept his temper (out of fear of his wife) yet, he explained it. "A woman remains a woman. . . what can  
117  
you expect from her? Let it go."

Besides, the woman was supposed to be talkative, silly and overreactive. The men felt themselves above such behaviour. "We are discussing  
118  
important matters and she comes barging in with her cabbage borscht."

Tevye noted that the woman was supposed to be soft, a weakling, and Tevye continuously reminded himself he was not a woman, and that he could



restrain himself. Tavye repeatedly commented, "Did you think I would  
 let a woman tell me what to do? You want me to live by womanish brains." 120  
 Ironically, though, he did follow Golde's advice.

No matter how much the men deprecated the women (not to her face -  
 of course), they felt a grudging respect for her. They realized her capa-  
 bilities in dealing with the everyday realities and depended on her and  
 therefore tolerated her outbursts.

Sholom Aleichem related in his autobiography that his Uncle Nissel,  
 a respected man in the community, who was in terror of his wife, would lock  
 himself in a hall with his friends and have a drinking party. He would  
 suffer from his wife afterward but he felt it was worth it. 121 Sholom  
 Aleichem continued;

All the more curious was that Uncle Nissel would undertake nothing  
 without first consulting Aunt Hodel. He regarded her as a woman of  
 brains, he depended on her. He realized she was hot tempered and when  
 he could he would pacify her with pearls and her character changed  
 completely. 122

Some husbands rebelled, if only in small ways. Sholom Aleichem's  
 grandfather stubbornly entered the accounts in his own way and not the way  
 grandmother Gittel wanted because who ever heard of a bedridden cripple  
 ordering her husband about and calling him "old fool" in the presence of  
 his grandchildren." 123 He considered himself a somebody. "He sat studying  
 the Torah, fasted Monday and Thursday. . . and Grandmother Gittel had the  
 temerity to scold him." 124

If the man was studying he was following an accepted ideal and he  
 considered himself worthy of merit, even if his wife helped support him.  
 After all, from his point of view study was far more important than the  
 mundane matter of a livelihood.

If the woman was rooted in tradition, so was the man. Some men  
 may have been unhappy, but they did not seek change. In one way or another,

the men found a way to live with their wives.

Wife's attitude to husband .- The men were not the only ones who were displeased. Through the complaints of the women one can detect an undercurrent of dissatisfaction. The fact that they were the providers and decision makers undermined the marital balance. The women were not satisfied with incompetent husbands. When one husband told his wife, "woe betide the man if he has to submit to a woman's judgment," she answered him: "Woe betide the woman who has the kind of husband she has to pass judgment on."  
125

In the clever interchange lies the crux of the conflict between the husband and the wife. The man was unfortunate because he was helplessly dominated, and the woman was unhappy because she had the type of husband who relinquished his male role.

It was accepted among the shtetl community that the ideal man was the Torah scholar. The woman, however, who accepted this ideal and encouraged it in her sons still saw the main function of her husband as provider. Unless he was an outstanding scholar, there was little respect for the man who spent his day in the house of study and did not provide for the family.  
126  
All knowledge was naught if the husband brought home no food and did not compensate with fame. Shimen Eli's wife wanted to send him to buy a goat. He quoted from the traditional sources: "You tell him goats and he tells you scriptures. . . He feeds me scriptures, my feeder, my blessed schlimazel. I wouldn't give one decent dairy borscht for all your learning."  
127

Two excellent monologues, Geese and The Little Pot, further reveal the woman's attitude. In Geese the wife talked about her livelihood, but

in the process of womanly talkativeness, she poured out her life history.

At one point she described her husband,

No greater bungler than Nachman Bar. Ever since I've known him he hasn't earned two broken kopeks. Then what's he good for? He's a scholar and a distant relative of a rich man. What do I get out of it? Heartache. . . Believe me, I know how to respect a man of learning, a man who sits and studies Torah, despite the fact that he doesn't so much as put his finger into cold water. You think he's lazy? He'd do anything, poor fellow - but there's nothing to do. So he sits and studies. Let him keep studying. Why should he work if I can take care of everything myself? I can manage, if not to cover expenses, then at least not to go begging. I do everything myself. Shop, keep house, cook, put up the potatoes, dress the kids, and what's most important - send them off to Hebrew school.<sup>128</sup>

Although tacitly agreeing with the ideal of learning, she recognized his preoccupation with study as a flight from the workaday world. Her superiority in the practical realm of life, which he evaded allowed her to dominate him.

In The Little Pot another woman told how she managed to bring up her son despite hardship.

A man, if he was in my place, would never have lived through it all. I don't want to embarrass you (speaking to the Rabbi), but there are men who are a thousand times worse than women. Let anything happen to them and they think the world is coming to an end.<sup>129</sup>

The woman complained a great deal yet she was never deeply frustrated. She was too busy to think of an alternative.

On the other hand, a certain amount of the complaining did not reflect a serious dissatisfaction. Complaining was only a part of working hard and almost a boasting, "see how much I can do." The woman derived her satisfaction from surmounting the difficulties and being able to solve  
130  
life's problems.

Realistic Wife

Whenever the woman in Sholom Aleichem was not playing the male role,

she played the part of the antithesis to the man. The man in Sholom Aleichem was the thinker, the dreamer, the philosopher; the woman, his Sancho Panza, was the sober, practical realist. The man's idealism was positive and expansive. The woman's realism was passive and merely served as a foil. Golde (Tevye Stories), Bathsheva (Golddiggers) and Eti Meni (The Great Winning) were typical of this type woman, but the trait was most evident in Shaine Shaindl where the husband was most characteristically the luftmensch. Menachem Mendel was full of hopes and dreams. He was the impractical, undiscouragesble optimist. Failure followed upon failure yet Menachem Mendel continued to seek new ways to make a fortune. Shaine Shaindl could not understand his grand schemes. "Transactions. . . enterprises. . . Can you imagine Jews trading in scraps of paper? Why you write sheer gibberish."

132

She was interested only in a small steady income from a traditional means of earning a living. "A Jew must toil and suffer to earn a livelihood for his wife." Shaine Shaindl criticized his exploits, which she invariably did not understand, "What's assuring people's deaths?" Or, "Little fools, leave off your windfalls and miraculous stories. shares --- mares, dividens --- shmivdents. Why, the thing isn't worth a pinch of snuff! You simply can't get rich on air." If only he would provide something tangible. "It's high time we got something real from you, not just on paper, as mother puts it, "One bite is worth ten smells. . .". . . In a business like yours, if you don't grab when you can you get nothing." She begged him to come home and she added, "Bring some material and glass-ware for the house."

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The Jewish woman did not have the power of creative imagination of the man. She was the symbol of immediacy and practicality. She never reached out towards the tree of knowledge, Jewish or secular, which planted

great dreams in the hearts of men. She was always close to the tree of life which she herself planted in the shtetl. The woman was the symbol of the practical Jewish sense. Menachem Mendel represented the wanderings and changes in Jewish life, the joy of life and faith in the future. Shaine Shaindl represented the practical aspect, the striving for any immediate small profit. <sup>138</sup> Trunk offered one reason for this woman's realism.

She was not in primary contact with the hostile objective world. Her abode was within the Jewish home and not in the open street where the man had to gain his subsistence out of thin air. She did not need to be endowed by nature with a rich compensating phantasy to lend her wings with which to rise out of groundless reality. . . . For this reason the Jewish woman in her kitchen retained a greater sense of practicality and a more sober control over the strange imaginings with which her husband and provider set out to conquer the world.<sup>139</sup>

Another element in the woman's realism was her spiritual lack of development.

The social lack of appreciation of the Jewish masculine community for the woman and the inferior position of the woman in general did not allow her to participate in the idealistic, abstract excursions into historic Jewish life. They did not entrust the burden of the large collective fate to this weak, backward woman, the narische yiddine.<sup>140</sup>

Since she wasn't permitted to involve herself in decisions of consequence, her character did not develop the gestalt to the full historic concern and cosmos of the men. It was the man, not the woman, <sup>141</sup> who had to create the idealistic Jewish life.

The man's concern's were the worldly or other-worldly. He had a comparatively broad perspective on life. The woman's world was narrow and confined. She could not and did not want to see beyond her own four walls. Shaine Shaindl said, "My parents lived in Kasrilevke and didn't see Odessa and I'll do the same."<sup>142</sup> Characteristically, the men on the way to the New world, discussed America, making a living, Columbus, evil edicts and pogroms. The women talked mostly about homey affairs, food dishes, blankets, socks,

pillowcases, bed-sheets.

The daily life of Eastern European woman, filled with onerous drudgeries capped with grievous social restraints, was not conducive to the development of a spiritual life. Years of intellectual stagnation created the narrow-minded mentality of the Jewish woman.

#### Classic Wife

Among the various types of women who lived in the shtetl, one finds what is commonly thought of as the traditional woman. This woman did not make frequent appearances in Sholom Aleichem's world yet his gallery did include her.

The term traditional woman connoted the woman who was pious, quiet, submissive and who in some cases had a tender relationship with her husband. She had no complaints and accepted her situation willingly.

One picture of the classic Jewish wife was Laibele's mother delineated in the novel, Wandering Stars.

In the least conspicuous place at the table sat his wife Boilka, a frail little woman, silent and unobtrusive. . . How did this tiny crumb of a woman bring forth such a boisterous brood? and yet, as is often the case, this tiny woman carried on her frail shoulders the burden of the entire household. She was everywhere at once and her heart ached for everyone. Long ago she had given up her position of honor to the aged grandmother. She seemed to have no wants or desires of her own. Her whole life was bound up in her children.<sup>145</sup>

"There are many wives," related Sholom Aleichem, "that do not think for themselves. . . they think only what the husbands want, what the husband commands." Miriam Chaya was one of these wives, who had "derech eretz" in front of her husband, not out of love, but out of fear. . .<sup>146</sup>

"She considered her husband the greatest in the world. His word was law."<sup>147</sup>

Others did not fear their husbands. Passeever eve, after the seder, when the "King" had fallen asleep at the table, the "Queen" came over to him

and lightly touched the edge of the sleeve of his kittel and with modesty and gentleness woke him to prepare for bed. <sup>148</sup>

It seemed that the world of the impersonal was pervaded by a quarrelsome atmosphere, but a shyness, a naivete was evident in a personal men-women relationship. In Home for Passover, Fischel, away most of the year, was met by his wife Bathsheva who became red as fire and "asked him quickly without looking him in the eye, "How are you Fischel." <sup>149</sup>

Sholom aleichem did not elaborate on a description of a warm, tender relationship between the husband and his wife. He sufficed with noting that certain couples lived very happily together such as "Adam and Eve, the bath-keepers, who were the happiest couple on earth." <sup>150</sup>

In just a few words, in the short description "the saintly Frume-Tema, who had tended Reb Jozifl like a mother," <sup>151</sup> Sholom Aleichem hinted at the simple, idyllic relationship of the Rabbi and his wife.

There were wives who provided a peaceful atmosphere even though the husband earned little. "All the time Zelda was alive Shmulek knew no sorrow. She was a pious, simple, good natured and pleasant woman." <sup>152</sup>

There was no blissful reverie on the part of either husband or wife about their life together. However, Sholom Aleichem did give a simple appraisal by Leah, the Cantor's wife.

Leah, the Cantor's wife, was not unduly upset about their small income and thought very highly of her husband. She was proud of his renown in Hohenesti as a cantor and his other accomplishments, teaching and penmanship. He taught youngsters from the best homes in town. Sometimes, even with all his various incomes, there was not enough to provide for the Sabbath, but "Never mind, they hadn't starved yet." <sup>153</sup>

Summary

When one considers the relationship between the husband and wife in the shtetl, one cannot escape the fact that there was conflict. There was a clash between two worlds, the practical realistic world of the wife and the idealistic impractical world of the husband. The woman was a busy and energetic person. She was constantly in motion attending to her duties and she never stopped to reflect. The husband, generally a shlimazel, was constantly thinking, dreaming, commenting. They spoke to each other, yet each spoke on a different level. Hence, the comedy.

It is curious that this situation that would have led to a divorce in our day and age, did not lead to separation in the shtetl. Personal incompatibility was not a reason for divorce according to Jewish law and the possibility, did not occur to the inhabitants of Kasrilevke. According to their scale of values, a man loved his wife or at least was bound to her because the act of marriage itself sanctified their union. . .

Husband and wife were united by tradition. They lived in the same environment and shared a common heritage. There was a solid base to their marriage.

Even though the wife may have nagged and harassed her husband, she was devoted to him. Despite her shrewish tirades, she prepared his meals, fixed his clothes and catered to his unspoken wishes. No doubt Sholom Aleichem meant to convey this by saying, "No matter how much she may be criticized by cynics, no matter how much the humorists may joke about her, a wife is still a wife."<sup>154</sup>



## MOTHERS

Introduction

The Jewish mothers of Eastern Europe occupied a very special place in Jewish life.

Traditionally, these mothers, the Yiddishe mamehs, were seen

as

active, responsible, stable, expressive and verbal women for whom nachas fun die kinder represented the highest form of self-fulfillment and achievement for a woman. They perceived the child as a fragile creature whose body and spirit needed to be carefully and assiduously nurtured and protected not only in infancy but throughout childhood and adolescence. They went to inordinate trouble and expense to provide their children with the "best and freshest" food, the best medical care, and the warmest clothing, at considerable sacrifice of other needs and wants.<sup>155</sup>

Sholom Aleichem presented this traditional image of the Jewish mothers, yet he revealed other aspects of them as well,

The mother was responsible for all the child's needs, which meant she clothed and fed him, arranged for his education and saw him through the "crisis rites," Bar Mitzvah and marriage. In addition, the mother was the effective disciplinarian. The father represented discipline, however, the mother, in many cases, was the one to enforce the standards and values of the man's world.<sup>156</sup>

In autobiographies of shtetl life there was a tendency to idealize the mother of childhood and to forget the unpleasant moments. Sholom Aleichem, however, presented a more realistic picture in that

he portrayed both aspects of the shtetl mothers, the love and devotion on the one hand and the disciplining on the other hand.

### Devotion of the Mothers

Frequently, the mothers in Sholom Aleichem were widows, and it was they who were particularly devoted to their children. They were usually poor, hardworking women whose only interest in life was to provide the best for their children. In fact, one young woman, widowed at twenty-three, and left with a two-year-old child, did not re-marry because she did not want her child to be brought up under another man's authority. <sup>157</sup>

Most mothers wanted their children to study and become Torah scholars and there was no effort spared to send the child to <sup>158</sup> chedar. Reuvele's mother, "a poor careworn widow, worked her fingers to the bone to be able to pay <sup>159</sup> the ruble for his studies at the Tal-mud Torah." Another widow had only enough money for rent and tuition. Her only desire in life was that her son should learn Torah and <sup>160</sup> light her life.

No sacrifice was too great for the children. In one story a doctor prescribed good food for the patient provided the mother could manage it. "Provided, he says.....As if there was anything in <sup>161</sup> the world I couldn't manage for my David's sake." She gave him a feast and left bread and onion for herself....."And I swear by all that is holy, that I get more enjoyment and satisfaction out of that <sup>162</sup> onion.....because I remember that my Davidl.....had some chicken soup."

Gittel told a typical story of a mother's devotion to her child. She sent her son to school with the hope that he would become a scholar. Unsuccessful in this endeavor, she apprenticed him to a series of artisans to learn a trade. Each time the boy failed, Gittel invariably blamed the master. As if the difficulty of finding a good instructor for her son was not sufficient trouble, Gittel was plagued with the army. Her child was taken into the army instead of the son of the town's rich man. Gittel was indignant at the injustice, and was so concerned for the welfare of her one and only orphaned son that she went before the District Governor to plead her case and then knocked at the doors of the Defense Minister and Minister of the Interior in Petersburg. She even reached the Holy Synod and began coming to the Duma. Her singlemindedness was particularly engaging when, during Purishkevitch's speech demanding expulsion of the Jews from Russia because of their dodging the army, Gittel screams out in a voice heard from one end of the Duma to the other, "And my son Moshe, what about him?"

163

The mothers went to great lengths to secure the happiness of their children. Reizl wanted very much to go the theatre and

Leah racked her brains for a way. Let the gossips wag their tongues, let them say that she spoiled her only child, raised her on sweets and confections. Reizl must go to the theatre.....Where her child was concerned..... she was willing to swallow her pride."<sup>164</sup>

Another case of a determined mother went from city to city and school to school and struggled with the quota, the principals, and her husband in order to obtain a higher education for her son. When she finally did enter him into a school and the boy consequently joined the other students in a strike, she was not at all upset. Her son wanted an education. She secured it for him. When the son saw fit to join in the spirit of the times, she was on his side.  
165

#### Mothers as Disciplinarians

Devotion to one's child did not conflict with disciplining.

He that spareth the rod hateth his son;           166  
But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

A cardinal principle in Jewish education, this theory was well accepted in the shtetl and was carried out by many women.

In his autobiography, Sholom Aleichem related that the maid was so devoted to her mistress that she took pains to bring up the children to be good, pious and devout in the eyes of God and man by whipping them black and blue and underrationing their food.  
167

Little egos were not pampered and children were slapped and cursed as a matter of course. In The Little Pot the woman said: "You can silence a child, you smack it or pinch it or shake it - it's only a child....."  
168 Sholom Aleichem's mother had slapped her children plenty, and her attitude was "children shouldn't be greedy!".....Children shouldn't get into people's way!"  
169

Children were loved but they were nuisances. "Childhood was a disorder which time and discipline cured. The discipline was not scientific; it was a random result of pressures." Although the Yiddishe

maneh was known for es es mein kind, in poverty stricken Kasrilevke some mothers cursed their children, "You want to eat? May you eat worms!" One mother, whose children woke up crying, "Mama I'm hungry," had to tell them, "Get back to sleep, you little devils. Who's heard of eating in the middle of the night? Back to sleep!" She's unhappy to speak this way. "You feel sorry for them, you understand and you practically go out of your mind."

The mother loved her children and she was only pouring out the bitterness in her heart in the only way she knew.

Generally the mother was stern in her approach to the child as befit the serious and difficult life that prevailed in the shtetl, but her attitude changed when the child was ill or hurt.

"A child received as many spankings, pokes and slaps as he could absorb. But let him fall ill and the mother did not leave his bedside. A mother's lot! And no sooner was the child well enough to leave his bed than, off to cheder, you rascal, off to cheder."

In times of crisis the mother displayed an unusual complex of emotions.

Yente was typical in her reaction to her son's accident.

You had it coming - may lightening strike me! Serves you right-- plagues upon me! Don't go creeping where you don't belong -- oh, woe is me!

So said Ruvale's mother, Yente the gossip, weeping and wringing her hands as she applied cold compresses to his split lip. Then leaving no stone unturned, she ran to Minya the barber surgeon's wife.

Shaine Shaindi told a story of a mother who tried to quiet her

screaming child with a few whacks. That didn't help so she gave him a Kocheh. When she thought he swallowed it she became inordinately solicitous.

176

Mary Holmes offered an explanation of this phenomenon of inconsistency in the temperament of the women.

It is very likely due to the accumulation of pent up emotions, which would be the natural outcome of their oppressions and be more intense for the women-folk who have not had the consoling and counter-acting influences of Talmudic study.<sup>177</sup>

### Mothers in the Eyes of the Children

The mothers, in many cases, were presented uniquely. Their personalities were described through the particular perspective of the children, who were so masterfully portrayed by the author. The world of the children was bright and expansive. It abounded in a love of life and nature. The mother in Sholom Aleichem seemed as anti-thesis to this world. She was the busy, overworked woman who was concerned with the tangibles of existence. The picture of the mother that emerged was a devoted woman who loved her children but who by and large lacked the sympathy for and understanding of the dreams and wishes of the child.

Mottel's mother, who was such a worrier, was especially comical in contrast to Mottel, the dreamer.

I'm standing near a window what I see I'm sure you never have seen. Past me there fly houses, mileposts, streets, people, woods, fields. . . I can't describe all of it. Mother is afraid I'll fall out of the window. Every other minute she shouts; "Mottel, Mottel".. what does she want now? She wants me to have a bite to eat.<sup>178</sup>

Mottel reported that he wanted to go to the frontier with his sister-in-law. But "mother wont let me leave her for a minute. She's afraid I'll be kidnapped."

179

In the Ruined Passover one happy youngster related that he burst

into the house a few days before Passover with the gleeful cry "Mother, I'm free." He continued;

I announce to my mother this good piece of news, for from now on we would be free from our studies. "May you live to announce better news!" that's how my mother answers me, as she is busy and occupied with holiday preparations.<sup>180</sup>

This was not an isolated instance. In the same story the parents outfitted their son for Passover in their taste without consulting the child. The child tried to make a request of his mother but received a reply, "Will you shut up? Did you see a boy like that, mixing in wherever grown ups are talking."<sup>181</sup> The boy was mortified in front of his friends because his clothes were old fashioned and when he was supposed to ask the four questions at the seder, he burst into tears. His mother then said to him "Is that your thanks for the new clothes we made for you for the holiday."<sup>182</sup>

It was seemingly beyond the comprehension of the adult world that the child thought, felt and had ideas and wants of his own. In the eyes of the adults this was not allowed until the child became an adult, if even then. In another poignant vignette, a boy was thinking about a poor unfortunate girl that died and tears began to fall. His mother saw and laughed -- probably the maror got into his eyes. "Wipe your tears silly boy and blow your nose."<sup>183</sup> It was inconceivable that this silly boy could be emotionally touched.

The approach of the mother was particularly evident in contrast with the father. When the father brought home greens for Shavuos the children were overjoyed while the mother was upset because it only gave the children something new to mess with. "That's how their mother takes it, as she goes on with her work, always burdened, just the opposite of their father."<sup>184</sup> Every day the children saw the same thing;

Their jolly father who cut the cardboard, pasted boxes and sang songs and their over-worked, exhausted mother who cooked and baked and

swept and scrubbed and was never finished.

The children felt that their father was so good to them. Their mother always wanted them to sit quietly and sedately. Their mother forgot that young heads worked all the time, that young spirits tore themselves toward the outdoors, the light.<sup>185</sup>

### Familial Relationships

One trend that emerged from the author's family stories was the difference in relationship of each parent respectively to the daughter and son. Studies of familial relationships in the Eastern European Jewish culture indicated a closeness between mother and son and between father and daughter,<sup>186</sup> and this was evident in the works of Sholom Aleichem.

It was well known that the mother was especially devoted to her son. The mother could achieve glory through the achievements of her son and she urged him to learn Torah, to be a good Jew and to become an outstanding scholar.<sup>187</sup>

If the boy was not destined for scholarship the mother prodded him to other avenues of success.<sup>188</sup>

The son had to have the very best. One mother who was stern with the husband and stingy with the tutor lavished all the delicacies on her son. She was constantly sending him sweets while he was in his room presumably studying.<sup>189</sup>

One son wanted to help his mother with her work. She wouldn't hear of it. All she wanted was "that he should eat and drink and be well."<sup>190</sup>

Although Sholom Aleichem portrayed the exceeding concern of the mother for the son, there was little description of the son's reaction.

In one instance there was mention of the son's attachment. "And Leibl was sorely troubled. Not only would he become a full-fledged thief, he would wound his mother". . . .<sup>191</sup>



But, still Reizl was not stopped with consideration of his mother's feelings. Moritz was. In love with Faibele, he left her at his mother's insistence, or more because of his mother's tears. Later he suffered. He realized his own weakness, but his mother had succeeded in establishing such unbreakable bonds between herself and her son that he was helpless.

Sometimes a mother's devotion was a double-edged sword.

Sholom Aleichem presented a fuller portrait of the daughter's attitude to her father, particularly in contrast to the mother.

Reizl, on the eve of her flight from home, thought of her father and mother:

She savored the sweetness of knowing something the mother had no inkling of. Shalom Meyer had been right when he said, "She has no business locking you up in the house. . . trailing after you every step, not allowing you to raise your head. "Sit there." "Do this." "Don't do that". . . Are you her slave?" Well, it would serve her mother right. Tomorrow morning when she got up and found that the bird had flown from the cage, then she would be sorry. . . .

Reizl's heart ached only for her father. He deserved no blame for this. He had loved her. How close they had been to each other. Who would play dreidl on Hanukah with him". .193

The Teyve stories in particular reflected an understanding between father and daughter. Reizl came to plead with her father to allow her to marry Mottel. She didn't come to Golde for she knew that Golde would not listen to the plea of love while the problem of food and shelter was uppermost in her mind.

Chava, torn by the conflict of marrying a Gentile for love, or remaining with the family, thought to herself, "How can she cut herself off from the family, from her father who loves her."<sup>194</sup> Didn't her mother love her too?

In one short scene of farewell the daughter after her marriage bade farewell to her mother and then tearfully parted from her father.

It was harder for her to leave her father than her mother.

The father was indulgent and undemanding with the daughter. She was the only one, beside his wife, in whose company he could relax and remain alone. There was no real intimacy, but there was a unique affection and comradeship.

196

On the other hand, the mother was strict and demanding with her daughter. She supervised the daily duties of her daughter and this was not conducive for the development of an easy-going relationship.

197

### Summary

Two aspects of the mothers in Sholom Aleichem were dominant, devotion and distance. The women's unremitting solicitude about every aspect of the child's welfare, their heroic and self-sacrificing actions indicated the extent of their dedication.

On the other hand, their function of disciplinarian and their preoccupation with realistic and practical concerns created a distance between them and their child. There was no "understanding" between mother and child as we know it today. Love was taken for granted and it wasn't considered necessary to strive for a closeness.

Sometimes, the mothers in Sholom Aleichem seemed harsh because of their lack of insight but, in most cases, they appeared comical. Their inordinate and excessive concern was amusing. Yet, what was perceived as single-mindedness was, on a different level, only an expression of the heartfelt earnestness of mothers who cared for their children and whose whole life was bound up in them.

If the author presented the humorous features of the mothers' behaviour, then he never failed to reveal their underlying sincerity. The mothers were comical but they were also endearing.

## DAUGHTERS

### Introduction

There are almost no stories in the works of Shalom Aleichem dealing with the childhood of the little girl. There are, however, many tales about boys and girls, and the young women of the shtetl.

### Girl

The birth of the girl in the shtetl was usually greeted with less joy than that of the boy. There were various reasons for this. Socially, the view that the woman was inferior colored the attitude of Eastern European Jewry. From a religious standpoint, the man was superior because he was able to perform more commandments. Economically, the birth of a daughter presented the problem of a dowry. 198

From the day of her birth until the daughter became engaged, the girl had no other function than to, "sit at home, eat and wait to grow up." 199 But in the meantime she had to help cook, bake, take care of the smaller children and help with the business. 200

The girls didn't go to cheder as did the boys. It was not considered necessary for a girl to have a formal education. She learned the religious duties and homemaking skills from her mother and that was sufficient preparation for her future life. However, many girls of better families 201 who did not have to help in the house, were taught reading and writing.

If Rochele was taught to read and write, it was because her family did not want her to sit at home with nothing to do. 202

Education was the man's sphere and one mother was opposed to her daughter's receiving an education because "it would make her too much like

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a man." If a child displayed particular intelligence people regretted the fact that she was a girl because "had she been a male, she would have

204

really accomplished something."

### Romance

The separation of the sexes in shtetl life was begun at an early age.

The boys were taken away from childhood games and were sent to the cheder.

205

Cheder boys, were not supposed to talk to girls. The girls were not

supposed to mix with the boys either. Reisl's mother wouldn't let her

daughter go near any of the pupils in her husband's cheder. "A girl, she

would say, has no business with boys. For a girl is a girl and boys are boys." 206

In contrast to the cheder boys, students of the country schools were permitted to talk to the girls, providing the girls came from good families. The girls did not object to this. "Relations between the young people at that time, however, were too innocent to be termed flirtatious." 207

Although the adult world frowned upon fraternization among the boys and girls, it nonetheless took place. The opportunities, however, were limited and only under special circumstances did relationships develop. The children either grew up in the same household, were next-door neighbors or met through the cheder.

Lily and Shimek, relatives who grew up in the same household, spent a great deal of free time together. He told her about the biblical and talmudic heroes and she listened raptly. Lily, who did not have the advantage of his education, was enthralled by the stories. They brightened her dull world. When he thought about her, King Solomon's Shulamite sprang to his mind. Reality and fantasy blended in the child's imagination into one

magnificent Song of Songs.

Jossele, an orphan was consoled by Esther, his next door neighbor. He spent all his free time in her house. He shared his troubles with her and she listened sympathetically. As poor, unfortunate children, they were allowed to share a childhood.

The boys caught a glimpse of girls at the cheder if the Rebbi had daughters. The classroom was also the Rebbi's living room where his family congregated, although the girls were kept out of sight as much as possible. It was at cheder that Leibl was attracted to Reizl and Mordecai to his Rebbi's daughter. The Yiddish theater gave Leibl the opportunity to talk to Reizl, but Mordecai had to use his ingenuity to succeed in spending time with Esther. On the Sabbath he would come to visit the Rebbi when he knew all were asleep.

Most of the stories that dealt with boys and girls described the beginnings of young love. Sholom Aleichem, the poet of childhood, painted a portrait of innocence and naivete, even of spontaneity with the opposite sex that was absent from the adult world.

Mettel made friends with a girl who had glaucoma and unfortunately could not come to America. He tried to comfort her and told her that he would send her a ticket to the United States. He related, "She falls on my neck and kisses me. I kiss her too."

As much as Leah tried to keep her daughter away from boys, circumstances brought Reizl and Leibl together, alone and both of them were so excited with sharing their secret hopes and dreams that they didn't realize what they were doing. "Leibl wasn't sure how it came about, but they found themselves sitting on the stoop. . . their hands clasped together.

Even so, the values and restrictions of the adult world did have an effect on the relationship and typically it was the girl, the "little mother" who mirrored the standard.

Once, when left in the house alone, the two children sat huddled in a corner. Shimek was telling Lily stories. He recounted,

She moved quite close to me. Her hand clasped in mine.  
 Suddenly she snatches her hand away.  
 "What is it?" I ask surprised.  
 "We musn't do it," she says.  
 "Musn't do what?"  
 "Hold hands like this."  
 "Why not? Who told you we musn't?"  
 "Nobody. I know it myself."  
 "But we aren't strangers. Aren't we brother and sister." 214

As a matter of fact, they weren't brother and sister, but rather uncle and niece, (although approximately the same age) and therefore possible marriage partners and intuitively the girl realized this and expressed the parental attitude.

This approach was more pronounced as the children grew older and assimilated the attitudes of the adult world. Esther and Jossele were very close in their childhood, however, when they became aware of each other as prospective mates, embarrassment crept into their relationship and they no longer spoke freely with each other. 215

Even if the boys and girls did have a chance to develop a close relationship, as soon as they reached the marriageable age, the parents took a hand in the matter and married off the children to their own satisfaction. Mordecai and Esther were in love with one another but when their love was exposed, they were promptly wedded to other mates. 216 Love was not a consideration yet in the shtetl. One couple who fell in love waited patiently and was lucky enough to have the shadchun pair them off. 217 This was an exception, however, and not the rule.

Young love, to the extent that it existed, did not reach fulfillment in Kasrilevke of this period. Sholom Aleichem did not dwell on the tragedy of the lives thus affected but merely indicated the unfortunate outcome in a few masterful strokes.

And what happened to the Shulanite of my Song of Songs romance?..  
 How did it end? Don't press me to tell you the end of my romance. 218  
 An ending, even the very best, always contains a note of sadness..

The author, however, related endings of their romances. Esther  
 cried a great deal at her marriage and a year later she died. One assumes  
 219  
 it was from a broken heart.

In Gayya Etel's case no assumption was needed for Sholom Aleichem  
 220  
 stated explicitly that she died of a broken heart shortly after her marriage.  
 She was an orphan, in love with her cousin, but was wedded by her uncle and  
 aunt to a man lacking in principle and character. At her wedding she was  
 extremely distracted, but no one took notice of her.

It was evident her heart was full of emotion. Who can tell what  
 her real feelings were? The heart of a Jewish woman is a secret. It  
 is a box to which no one has a key. No one may see into it. And according  
 to the traditions which are so strongly adhered to in the villages and  
 towns of the Russian Pale it is neither seemly nor desirable that any  
 man should concern himself with the heart of a woman. It is as if she had  
 no heart, secrets buried in it. 221

This was a reflection of the times and to a certain extent the  
 222  
Maskalah attitude depicted the woman as the silent sufferer.

It was only in the early part of Sholom Aleichem's career that he  
 presented this approach. His poem, Die Yiddishe Tochter, lamented Rochele's  
 hidden sorrows; the fact that "no one wanted to hear her complaints or  
 223  
 feelings." She was married according to her parents' wishes not to her  
 224  
 own. She knew something was missing but she was not strong enough to rebel.

Later, however, Sholom Aleichem left this simplistic attitude and  
 began to explore the heart of the Jewish woman. He found the key and  
 unlocked her thoughts and feelings.

### Young Women

Many of the young women that Sholom Aleichem described were ideal  
 personalities. Esther was pretty, bright, sweet, gentle and extremely

experience. This young woman waited at home while her childhood sweetheart went off into the world. When she gave up hope that he would return to her, she let herself become engaged. This news stirred the young man into the recognition that he loved Lily. Alas, when he returned home, Lily tearfully rejected him. In this case, it was not only the religious bond that stood in her way because that still could have been broken. Lily was proud. She had written to him and he hadn't answered. Besides, he had gone out in the world. She felt too much beneath him. She preferred to bury her own disappointment and unhappiness under facade of joy at the prospect of her forthcoming marriage.

229

In both stories the young women never openly declared their love for the respective sweethearts. Their love was pure and innocent and undemanding. Both men were in love in their childhood, but neither retained the loyalty to the unspoken emotions that ran deeply in the women. The men went out into the world. The women remained in the small Jewish townlet. The men were touched by the forces around them and the ties to home were loosened. The women nurtured their love and kept it alive, it was their sole existence. But their love was destined to remain self-contained. They were too modest to summon their sweethearts and the men forgot until too late.

The young women were strong and their strength of character gave them the ability to endure.

Rochele, the heroine in *Stempnyu*, was also challenged by the magnetism of love. A young married woman, she was the typical Yiddishe tochter, pious, loyal and modest. However, there was an added quality that was not found in other Sholom Aleichem women, the ability to reflect on her life, to stand aside and assume objectivity to her surroundings. The typical Sholom Aleichem women were involved in everyday living and their



reflections were merely lamentations or evocations of the past. Rochele, though, viewed herself and her environment and began to ask, "Who am I, what am I, what is my place?" For the first time in her life she noticed the *kleine menshelach mit kleine hasogos*, the little people with narrow-minded conceptions, at home and in the marketplace. The author unfolded Rochele's awareness and consequent distaste for the life around her.

Rochele was different. She did not have the simple-mindedness of her mother-in-law, the yiddine, nor of her contemporaries who seemed perfectly content. She had a somewhat contemplative nature. However, it was principally circumstance that allowed her leisure time to think. She had nothing to do and no one to speak to. She lived with her in-laws and was free from all responsibility (she did not yet have any children). Further, the whole family catered to her smallest wish. She was married a year and in that time her husband never really spoke to her. It wasn't becoming for a man of his standing to sit at home and talk to his wife.

Stempenyu's appearance brought forth the forces of uncertainty and void to the surface. Stempenyu, an attractive youthful musician, showed an interest in Rochele and she couldn't help being drawn to him. He created a turmoil in her heart. Her feelings for him somehow signified liberation. She had a desire, that she would not even admit to herself, to see him, to be near him. Yet, she never forgot her place. She was a married woman, a kosher Jewish daughter.

The Yiddishe tochter who was drawn to love, to a wider and more meaningful horizon, did not in the end yield to temptation. She did not break with tradition. After an encounter with Stempenyu, she was so shaken by his embrace that she fled from him as if from a plague and ran home. She poured her heart out to her husband and luckily he responded both to her as a person and to her demand that they leave the shtetl.

Rochele remained a Yiddishe tochter, a virtuous young Jewish woman, but did not remain a typical shtetl type. She wanted the freedom that shtetl life did not offer. She went to the city with her spouse and developed an independent life. Her husband became self-supporting and she gave birth to a baby. Her life began to take on meaning.

231

Rochele was one of the first young women of the shtetl who began to ask questions that ultimately led others away from Jewish life. She, however, found self-expression within the traditional Jewish framework in the role of wife and mother.

### Summary

The young women of the shtetl were religious, devoted and modest. Contrary to both their mothers and later their sisters who left the shtetl, they were passive. Many of their sisters rejected a traditional approach and struck out in different directions. These young women, with steadfast faith, followed in the time-honored path of the Jewish woman. They were, however, by no means docile. They were challenged, but they were firm in their convictions. In contrast to their male counterparts, they were nurtured by an inner strength and a sense of responsibility and commitment.

232

Sholom Aleichem, who set out to write truly Jewish love stories, succeeded in portraying heroines in the finest Jewish tradition.

III. WOMEN OF KASHLEVKE: TYPES

## INTRODUCTION

The picture of the women in Kasrilevke would not be complete without a discussion of those types that stood on the fringe of shtetl society.

In the open world, society was in flux and no group was especially distinguishable, but in the shtetl life was carefully structured, those few who did not fit into the mold, were recognized by their difference.

In a shtetl that revolved around family life the orphans, servants and single women, were lonely outsiders; in a society where poverty reigned, the nouveau riche stood out. In a community which was by and large religious, the "enlightened" were heretical.

## ORPHAN

Sholom Aleichem had a great deal of sympathy for all the poor and hapless people but his heart went out to the orphan, particularly the unfortunate orphan.

233

Since there was no official orphanage in the shtetl, the Jewish community saw to it that the orphan was placed in a home usually of a relative. Not always was this arrangement successful. It often happened that the girl was not integrated into the family but was relegated to the position of a servant. In the home of a step-mother or aunt she was often ill-treated and later married off thoughtlessly.

One father related that against his better judgment he had decided to seek a match for his daughter.

She was still young, poor child, but her step-mother kept nagging me. She wanted her out of the house. And what could I do? I asked

what good it would do her. Who would help her cook and bake and scrub the smaller children's heads and whom would she be able to curse and pull around by the hair?<sup>234</sup>

This was not unusual treatment as was evident from one uncle's comment in regard to his orphaned niece:

With any other uncle a child like that would have grown up in the kitchen and been a help to the household -- heating up the samosar, running errands and the like. But at my place, you understand, she was regarded as one of the family, and was treated as well as my wife when it came to clothes, shoes and food. I can't express it any better than to say she was one of us.<sup>235</sup>

Reyzl was lucky but others in her situation were at a disadvantage.

In another instance, an uncle took his orphaned niece into his home together with her inheritance. He took the inheritance for himself and then married her off to a scoundrel. Chaya Stel's misery was unbearable. Not only had she been mistreated by her aunt, but her one source of happiness, her cousin, with whom she was in love, had been denied to her.  
236  
She was not considered good enough to be married to him.

There were orphans, however, that were more fortunate. Those who lost only their father and who were left with a mother were generally over  
237  
protected. Even certain substitute parents provided a warm and pleasant home for the child. Lily, the orphan in Chapters from the Song of Songs,  
238  
was treated like a daughter. Even so, Lily was not completely happy.

"Her eyes were always pensive, always troubled. A deep sorrow lay in them."<sup>239</sup>

Sholom Aleichem, with a great deal of empathy and insight, conveyed the heartbreak of the child left alone.

#### SERVANT

An orphan without relatives and without money often became a maid. The young girls would work in order to support themselves and earn sufficient funds for a dowry.

They earned little enough. "Black Nechama earned four and a half

rubles a season and was provided with shoes and dress, shoes too big and a  
 240  
 dress with patches." Red Nechama earned six rubles without clothes or  
 shoes, so she went barefoot. She was saving for a new dress and shoes to  
 241  
 impress Koppel the shoemaker who was courting her.

The young women, alone and unprotected, fell prey to unprincipled  
 men. One servant girl who was engaged to a man in another town saved all  
 her earnings for him. Her whole happiness was centered around him. In the  
 242  
 end, he took her money and ran off with another woman.

Sholom Aleichem mentioned that "it never happened that children  
 were born out of wedlock in Kasrilevke, however, if it did, it happened to  
 a servant girl or unfortunate girl led astray by accident. It was no fault  
 of her own but rather she was a victim of another's lust."  
 243

The young and pretty servants in one household were thusly misled.  
 244  
 The son liked good-looking girls and he had a reputation for ruining them.

If there were servants who were taken advantage of, there were  
 others who encouraged advances. There was generally greater freedom among  
 servants than among the people who considered themselves upper-class. In  
 one story which took place in a shtetl, there was open flirting among the  
 younger servants. One of the fellows serenaded the young servant and kissed  
 245  
 her. She didn't object.

A permissive atmosphere, even though it existed somewhat in the  
 richer homes, was not characteristic of the shtetl. The servant girl, as  
 a matter of fact, led a very confined life and this increased her difficulty.  
 She was alone, penniless, unmarried and her prospects of marriage were bleak.  
 There was little she could do to change her situation.

#### SINGLE GIRL

A servant was similar to other unmarried girls in her inability to

alter her circumstances. A single girl was generally at the mercy of her parents in securing a match. She was closed in her father's house and had to be carefully watched and protected from any kind of aspersions on her reputation. <sup>246</sup> Some girls were never even allowed out unchaperoned. <sup>247</sup>

The young ladies simply sat home and waited to be wedded. An old maid was a particularly tragic figure in the shtetl. A single girl had no status. She was under enormous pressure, social and emotional, to marry

If for some reason a girl was not promptly married off, her unhappiness took different forms. In one case a mother made nasty comments about a prospective groom thereby ruining the shidduch and "poor Nechama-Braindl sat in her father's house mourning." <sup>248</sup>

Two sisters, Pesha and Masha, "not young, not pretty, not especially bright, and not especially learned" <sup>249</sup> were always angry and upset and fought bitterly with each other at home. Sholom Aleichem commented: "It could be because they were both too grown up. . . both farzeshnekh, without bridegrooms." <sup>250</sup> Each thought the other responsible for the other's bad luck. <sup>251</sup>

These sisters acted out their frustration. Schprintze retreated to her own world. She turned to the popular Yiddish fiction of the time to fill her empty days and became immersed in dreams and fairytales. <sup>252</sup> She thought of herself as "Bertha" who was sitting and waiting for a Prince to deliver her. <sup>253</sup>

There was little that escaped the discerning eye and heart of Sholom Aleichem. He recognized that sexual deprivation was at the root of Faige's problem. Faige, a young maidservant, was overly familiar with the boys of the village. She kissed them and squeezed them and crushed them to her breast. <sup>254</sup> She was later caught with a Gentile in the home in which she was employed. Her problem was recognized and she was immediately

married off. Consequently she became one of the most pious women in the shtetl.  
255 This incident comes nowhere close to Isaac Bashevis Singer's description of the urges and needs of the men and women of the shtetl, but in his own inimitable manner Sholom Aleichem hinted at the forces lurking behind the facade.

#### NEW RICH

When one calls to mind the nouveau riche in Sholom Aleichem, the images that spring to mind are women. These women were jealous, petty and vain. Sholom Aleichem, with little sympathy and sometimes broad caricature, provided a complete portrait of these "former residents of Kasrilevke  
256 divested of their geniality." These women, anxious to gain prestige, concerned themselves with visits to famous doctors for their imaginary ills and with summer vacations.

One husband related that on a trip with his wife, she met a friend who was only too glad to recount symptoms of her malady. His wife suddenly developed the same condition and he had to take her abroad to search for a  
257 cure.

Renting a summer villa had special prestige value.

"God willing, where do you plan to go this summer, if all goes well, Sore-Broche, honey."

"If all goes well, God willing. . . I plan to rent a room at Mottel the Swine's in Israel. And you Khane Mirel, live and be well and where do you plan to go. . . if all is all right, God willing?"

"If God grants health, I too plan to go to Israel, Sore-Broche honey and stay at Mair the drunk's."

That's how two Kasrilevke housewives converse as they tap their double chins, one more stuck up than the other. You'd think they were highfalutin Yehupitz matrons who have everything under the sun and haven't a care in the world besides a summer villa.  
258

On the other hand, there were women who did not adjust completely to the new found money. Shimele Soroker became intoxicated with his supposed winnings and filled the house with new furniture and servants. He was free



with the money and gladly responded to requests for donations with an open hand. His wife, who maintained the frugal mentality, objected to his generosity and tried to convince him to give much less or not at all.

Rosa Spivak's mother, given all the comforts by her daughter could not adjust to the new riches. She felt burdened with a whole house and estate that her daughter bought for her. She didn't know what to do with  
259  
all the rooms.

Money did not drastically change the lives of these women. A core of provinciality always remained.

#### "ENLIGHTENED"

The women in Sholem Aleichem were typically religious, yet, with the shtetl world disintegrating, the "enlightened" and "assimilated" types sprang into existence. The change was marked not only by external manifestations but also by a different way of life.

"Vaiel Ramshevitch was a free soul. His wife, Chayela, imitating him threw away the wig. . . sprinkled powder over her face and spent all  
260  
her time with a gay young crowd, laughing and making merry. . . "

Miriam Baila who also decided to display her own hair, sat up nights  
261  
with the fellows playing cards.

Cards became almost a craze with some people and there was a group which played nightly. The hostess who loved to play cards was particularly  
262  
adept at the game and she out-did all the men.

The "enlightened" women had not as yet reached the stage of positive  
263  
expression, but their behaviour was symptomatic of rejection of the old ways.

#### SUMMARY

It takes many people to form a world. No matter the size of the

little Jewish town, it was a microcosm that contained a variety of personalities. If the dominant type of woman in the shtetl was the wife and mother, Sholom Aleichem still did not neglect to bring to life the other feminine members of society that completed the portrait of the shtetl community.

IV. WOMEN OF KASHLEVKE IN TRANSITION

## INTRODUCTION

The traditional shtetl woman's position in the family was secure. She was the de facto head of the household and everyone accepted her authority. The situation, however, changed when the new currents of the period began to infiltrate the Jewish townlet. They affected her husband and children. Thus, her position in the family underwent a considerable change. She no longer remained a mighty person but instead became a marginal figure.

The woman of Kasrilevke in transition was a traditionally-oriented person whose basic outlook and approach was one with the Kasrilevke of old. The woman in her kitchen was no different whether she was in the shtetl, or in the city. She retained her same set of values and mode of living. But her family was different and she couldn't keep up with the changes.

Her husband, generally a successful businessman, assumed the position as head of the household and imposed his authority on his wife and children. His success raised his position in the family and consequently lowered his wife's place. The woman was no longer the matriarch; the man recaptured the role of patriarch.

His spiritual orientation also changed. He may have been observant but he was no longer other-worldly oriented. He was concerned with this world and primarily with his business affairs.

Even children had interests outside the home. Earlier, the focal point of the child's life was home, where both son and daughter received religious training aimed at enabling them to establish their own homes. In

the next generation, the children received a secular education or were exposed to secular currents and this lured them away from home and turned them towards all kinds of new and revolutionary movements. The women had little or no understanding of the new movements and new times, but they felt the effect. Some women suffered silently, some cried out, all were by and large helpless to stem the tide.

## WIFE

If in Kasrilevke of old, the wife treated the husband with contempt, the situation was reversed in Kasrilevke in transition. When Shivka made a suggestion to her husband, he retorted abruptly, "Where are your brains?"<sup>264</sup> Later, when he reconsidered and followed her advice, she reminded him that it was her suggestion that prompted him to action. He didn't admit it but rather answered, "So if you said it, so what?"<sup>265</sup>

In a later scene, when soldiers came to their house in the middle of the night to imprison their daughter, Shivka, awakened by the noise and frightened, asked her husband what happened, he deprecatingly dismissed her with his hand, "Go away, go away."<sup>266</sup>

Another husband was not afraid to treat his wife with disrespect. "Quiet, animal," Meir commanded his wife.<sup>267</sup>

It is interesting, however, that although the husbands, outwardly discounted their wives, they still considered their advice. When Shivka suggested that her husband meet their daughter at the railroad station, he immediately rejected the suggestion. After considering it, however, he followed the advice.<sup>268</sup> Similarly, when Shivka suggested that it was time to think of a match for their daughter, Tamara, he originally refused to listen and then upon reflection, agreed.<sup>269</sup> It was as if the wife was not capable of valuable ideas and when she did propose something, her thinking

was automatically rejected. However, in his thoughts the husband had  
 270  
 greater respect for his wife than he would admit verbally. But this did  
 not help the woman. His comments, and his lack of consideration hurt her.  
 Meir did not treat his wife any better and Malka cried out against his  
 treatment. "What kind of a mother-image can I project? You yourself  
 271  
 taught the children not to respect me."

## MOTHER

Not only were the fathers to blame but the secular education had  
 made an impact on the children. Their education made them aware of their  
 own individuality. They became involved in their own concerns and were  
 indifferent to family interests. When Sarah complained, Betty, her  
 daughter, commented, with her head in her book, "Who are you talking to ~~mummy~~,  
 272  
 yourself?" Further, when Sarah lamented that no one helped her with house-  
 hold duties, her daughter glibly suggested, "Why don't you hire a maid,  
 273  
~~mummy~~?" On the other hand, the children became "wise" enough to know  
 their own minds. The mother could no longer tell them what to do. She  
 seemed totally unrelated to their new world.

In two instances, the husbands, coming home from work, asked their  
 respective wives the whereabouts of the children and both received the same  
 answer, "How should I know?" "But you're the mother," both fathers replied.  
 274  
 "So, if I am the mother, what does that mean?" Shivka answered. Malka  
 retorted, "You ask what kind of mother I am, they listen to me like to a  
 276  
 dog from the biggest to the littlest." The once powerful mother was  
 ineffectual.

Not only had the mother lost control over the children, but she was  
 intimidated by them.

Nachas. I have? Oi Vai Vai, what Nachas! The oldest daughter is a

divorcee, the boys don't want to get married... The younger ones are studying and go to socialist clubs... I am afraid for them. They speak words that you can die from them. When he her husband is at home there is derech eretz... When he goes for one day, they turn the house upside down... and you try to say a word and you're not sure of your life. Everyone does what he wants... An upside down world. Parents are afraid of their children.<sup>277</sup>

Sarah mirrored a similar attitude when she instructed her husband on his way to remonstrate with his daughter. "Try it the gentle way David, please, not in anger. With modern children you dursn't do it any other way."<sup>278</sup>

No matter the difficulty with her children the mother could not keep from trying to defend them. The very same Malka who felt that her children did not respect her, tried to protect them from the anger of their father.<sup>279</sup>

When he yelled at them, she called for quiet and sent the children out of the room.<sup>280</sup> At another time when the father requested the children to write a letter to the landowner for him, all found excuses to evade the task. The mother, in order to avoid the father's wrath, with her pitiful knowledge but full heart, offered to write the letter.<sup>281</sup>

Still, the mother's selfless devotion did have an effect on the semi-estranged children. In a moving and poignant vignette, Sholom Aleichem depicted Tamara's reunion with her mother after the former's return from Petersburg. Shivka fell on her daughter's shoulders and poured out her bitter heart full of loneliness and suffering caused by her husband. Tamara was moved with pity. She wanted to comfort her mother but she couldn't. The socialist from the big city, from the university, felt herself cut off and far removed from her mother. She didn't agree with her mother's attitude that all was in the hands of God. She wanted to tell her that she, Shivka, had her fate in her hands, but Tamara felt her mother would not understand and therefore she remained silent. At least, she conceded to wear a fancy dress in honor of the Passover holiday even though it was against her principles.<sup>282</sup> Tamara did it to please her mother. She

was distant from her mother, but loved her nonetheless.

Sholom Aleichem did not describe any abuse or harsh words directed at the mother. If the children had an argument, it was with the father, the symbol of authority. The mother was no longer effective as a dominant influence on the lives of her children, but, she was not unloved.

#### FAMILY DISINTEGRATION

The mother, a family-centered person, suffered most when she felt her family disperse. She wanted the child married and close to the home, while the child was drawn away from the home.

283  
Golde, a woman tied to her roots, was indignant when it was suggested that she go to Odessa. "What do I want with Odessa?" she said. "Neither my ancestors were ever there, nor will my children ever go there, not as long as I live and my feet carry me."

284  
But, Golde was wrong. Every one of Golde's daughters was touched by the new currents and each left the place of her birth and went her own way. Not one followed in her mother's footsteps.

Tevye commented about Golde and their children after her death. "They caused her enough suffering in this world, perhaps even brought on her untimely death. She couldn't bear it any longer, seeing them scatter and disappear, the way they did, some one way, some another". . .

285  
The children left home and primarily the mother was pained. Malka was especially bitter. "Today's children are not children, mothers are not mothers, everyone does as he pleases, scattered and dispersed over the seven seas."

286  
The scattering was not necessarily physical. Even at home each one was preoccupied with interests outside of home. Sarah complained,



Everyone in the house is so dizzy. He is always on the exchange, scheming little deals. This one goes to high school, reading books. The other goes to school, doing his homework. And poor me must be on my feet, day and night, what with one thing and another, here and there, for this one, for that one.<sup>287</sup>

#### SUMMARY

The women of Kasrilevke in transition, whether portrayed tragically in a dramatic novel or play, or dealt with lightly in a comedy, reflected the same problem, that of the disintegration of the family and the decline of the position of the wife and mother. The women according to the husbands and children, were supposed to "look, listen and keep quiet."<sup>288</sup> This was nearly impossible for the women who were hardly a step from old Kasrilevke. Financial success had forced them to leave Kasrilevke and they suffered in the new and strange environment.

Sholom Aleichev the humorist, saw the comic aspects of these women thrust into a life that they did not understand, but more so, he expressed their heartbreak. He did not deal with solutions to the manifold problems that arose, but rather as a humanist, he depicted the reactions and emotions of those concerned.

V. WOMEN OF THE OPEN SOCIETY

## INTRODUCTION

The world of the new generation was a far more complex world than that of the mothers. The older women shared a common, nearly homogeneous, environment and emerged with similar traits. Their world was small and their concerns were limited.

The younger people, however, were exposed to many storms. Political, economic and social upheavals in Russia and other parts of Europe in the latter 19th century made a strong impression on the young people. Romantic love, secular education, Socialism and Zionism, became exalted ideals. They were drawn to and influenced by the stimulating ideas. The new orientation created changes in institutions and changes in personal values. Some were slightly touched; others were totally encompassed. All reflected the impact of modern life.

Sholom Aleichem's portrayal of the younger generation revolved mainly around the young women of marriageable age. He briefly sketched the sons who left home and broke with the traditions of their fathers but he paid more attention to the interests of the young women. Thus he described the revolution in the lives of the young people exposed to secular education and the changes in the conventions of courtship and marriage.

## EDUCATION

The second half of the 19th century saw a marked change in the education of young Jewish girls. The shift in the intellectual climate and the availability of educational opportunities gave rise to a generation of

women with secular knowledge. With the growth of the middle class and the spread of the ideal of assimilation and Russification among the newly enlightened Jews, many young people sought an education. On the other hand, the opposition of the broad Jewish masses to Russian schools, dictated by the fear of Russification and alienation from religious traditions was much less stringent in regard to women. <sup>290</sup> Therefore, when under Alex II, in 1864, Jews were admitted to Russian schools on equal terms with other nationalities, <sup>291</sup> more and more Jewish girls were sent to Russian schools.

When quotas were introduced, the Jewish population founded private schools of various types, including gymnasiums for women. <sup>292</sup> The "reformed cheder" was a great innovation in Jewish education for girls. These co-educational schools provided the girls both with Jewish and secular knowledge. <sup>293</sup> ledge.

The education of women had come a long way from the learning of reading and writing in the shtetl and Sholom Aleichem recorded the various trends and their effects on the young women and their families.

There were young women in Sholom Aleichem who attended Russian schools and thus <sup>294</sup> Masha in the shtetl and <sup>295</sup> Betty in the city received their education. Many parents, principally of the upper class, took tutors for their children. <sup>296</sup> Tamara was educated this way. Even Tevye had a tutor for his daughters, although he hadn't actually sought one.

The nouveau riche, in particular, were concerned with giving their children the very best and the very latest and therefore they provided them with lessons in all the fashionable subjects. For the first time in this community's history, Jewish girls learned to sing, dance, play the piano and speak French.

Sholom Aleichem took special notice of these new pursuits. At first

playing the piano was such an unusual phenomenon that whoever knew how to  
 297  
 play was accorded special privileges in the family. However, later it  
 became very popular and every cultured girl learned at least how to play the  
 piano. "Rosa received a proper education as befits an intellectual home. . .  
 298  
 She had the best teachers. . . played the piano. . . learned to dance."  
 299  
 Reizl, "enlightened and educated; spoke French and played the piano."  
 Another young lady was "cultured to the point of danger." She also spoke  
 300  
 French and was an accomplished pianist.

If many young women received a formal secular education, others read  
 on their own. Thus Hodel and Chava who received a smattering of education  
 301  
 from young Bertchek, read a great deal. Hodel simply "devoured books."  
 One young woman commented: "Even in Jampoly. . . everyone has a Russian  
 education. We didn't go to school, but you won't find a girl that didn't  
 302  
 read Zola or Pushkin or Gorky."

In one way or another, the children learned and were influenced.  
 The turbulent era offered many forms of expression and Sholom Aleichem  
 described the various paths that the young women followed. Taibele was  
 enlightened; Masha became a revolutionary; Tamara a socialist; Betty a  
 nationalist; Esterel an egotist;

### Taibele

Taibele, was taught the ideas of the Enlightenment, by Feldman, her  
 guardian. It was evident that she was a good pupil. After Taibele was  
 jilted by her sweetheart, she left the shtetl and wrote in her letter of  
 farewell:

I am on my way. . . I didn't have to escape, I am free and no one can  
 interfere with my freedom. . . . To commit suicide is stupid; Only a  
 person who doesn't know why he loves in this world or an egoist who,  
 when things go wrong, gets angry, shoots himself. I know I am a mensh,

(even if a woman) I can express myself in other ways than love. . . . I feel in myself a tremendous power to get something greater, and more important and necessary for the world and I am sure I will succeed because I want it. . . 303

Taibele was heartbroken, but she did not despair. She was a determined young woman. She did not resign herself to an unhappy fate as other girls in the shtetl did under similar circumstances. Her education armed her with the belief that she could find other means of self-expression.

Sholom Aleichem commented at the end of the novel: "And Taibele what happened to her? We ask our readers not to worry about her. She and those like her do not get lost in the world." 304

We do not know what Taibele chose to accomplish, the author did not tell us. But historically we do know that many young women of the period, very much like Taibele, devoted themselves to utopian causes.

### Masha

Masha was such a person. Sholom Aleichem gave a full description of her dedication to the ideal of social justice.

Masha had studied in a Russian school and continued her studies at the University in Petersburg. In Russia, at the turn of the century, it was just one short step from the student to the revolutionary. The students were the first to become inspired with the new ideas and had the youth and fervor to transform ideas into action.

Masha was inspired. In Petersburg she wrote a new constitution. She organized a ~~commune~~ and began to preach among the workers. She prophesized a new world where there would be no more poverty, illness and difference between classes. The people loved her and all were willing to follow her in "fire and water to the end of the earth." 305 Masha was totally involved in the cause of the revolution. She had no interest in a personal

life, in men, or a career but, only in a new way of life for the people.

When she was imprisoned, she hung herself, as an act of protest.

### Tamara

Masha was not interested in Jewish life either. Her friend, Tamara, likewise was not concerned with the Jewish problem. Infected with socialist theory by her tutor, she was interested in a universal solution to inequality. However, the disappointment and disillusionment with the 1905 revolution, which brought many Jews to their senses, affected Tamara. Pogroms and the cry of, "To Hell with constitution! Death the Jews!" <sup>306</sup> made Tamara realize that the liberal attitude did not include the Jews and that a solution to the Jewish question was perhaps, of prime consideration. Tamara, who had <sup>307</sup> started out as a confirmed socialist, slowly turned toward Zionism.

### Betty

Betty, on the other hand, was a convinced nationalist to begin with. Although she was a product of a Russian municipal high school, she was still aware and proud of her Jewish heritage. At a gathering of friends one young man mentioned that he thought Jewishness was dispensable when it stood in the way of a career. Betty in no uncertain terms answered him:

Betty: "For the sake of some nonsense, did you say?  
To renounce one's own people for the sake of a career.  
You call it nonsense? To deny everything that a person holds dear and near; one's father and mother, one's race, one's ancient people, you call this nonsense?  
I just can't understand how a person possessing the least drop of self-respect can escape in these bitter times from the weak to the strong, from the persecuted to the persecutors, from the tortured, to the torturers.  
A person doing this ugly thing for the sake of his own little interests is more than a coward, a renegade, a traitor."

Ivanov: "If he falls in love with the girl and the girl falls in love with him, she takes on his religion."

Betty: "Then she is a traitor."<sup>308</sup>

Education and city life did not alienate all youngsters.

### Esteral

Spoiled daughters of the new rich were concerned only with themselves and led gay, carefree lives. Sholom Aleichem gave a masterful description of a product of this background.

Our heroine, Sore-Moyshe-Purim's daughter, was truly a charming young lady who finished four terms of high school, read Artsibashev, spoke Russian and not a word of Yiddish, mind you, and never so much as lifted a finger; God forbid. . . Esteral would be dressed in the latest fashions, outfitted like a bride, read Artsibashev, danced the foxtrot, the tango, and other modern dance steps. Not to mention Russian! With her Russian, she drove all the Kasrilyvke boys out of their minds and led them by their noses.<sup>309</sup>

The education of this daughter focused on externals and did not include a even minimal concern for those who lavished care on her.

The mother was weighed down with the packages from head to toe. The girl was outfitted in a parasol, a little hat and blue gloves. The red-faced, sunburned mother was completely in a dither, perspiring, and disheveled. She didn't know if she was coming or going. The daughter a smartly dressed young miss, walked with tiny, mincing steps. Her lacquered pumps had heels so high it was a wonder that she kept her balance.<sup>310</sup>

Sholom Aleichem gave a serious description of those girls inspired with ideals, but he had no sympathy for those who were involved only with themselves.

### Parents and Education

The parents, who thought they were doing the best for their children, did not understand the potency of the education. Tevye valued learning and was unaware that it could lead his daughters astray. Certainly, Masha's father, a pious Jew, had no inkling of the influence on his daughter. On the contrary, he was proud of her achievements. It was the only bright spot in his world of privation and indigence. Even Itzik, who feared hiring an



enlightened Jewish tutor because of the possible effects on his daughter,  
 310b  
 did not realize that the non-Jewish teacher did greater harm. The new rich  
 gave their children all the trimmings of an education to keep in fashion.  
 They pampered them and catered to their smallest wish-and made no demands.  
 Rich or poor, the parents unknowingly, fostered the alienation of their  
 310c  
 children.

The discussion between the generations, however, did not concentrate  
 on the ideational conflict. Even if some young woman were involved in  
 movements, more were just students and of marriageable age. The conflict  
 between the generations centered around the question of marriage. Parents,  
 motivated by a Kasrilevke view, wanted their children to marry as soon as  
 they came of age. Education, as far as they were concerned, was a pleasant  
 preoccupation until a husband was found. However, the young woman took their  
 studies seriously and saw education as a value in itself, as a necessary  
 part of their life.

When Sarah hinted about a marriage between her daughter and the  
 boarder at their house, Betty impatiently answered, "Mama, I've told you so  
 many times that I don't even want you to talk to me about such things! It  
 hasn't reached that stage. Leave me alone. Let me first get through with  
 311  
 school." Chana, in Scattered and Dispersed, felt the same way. Her  
 parents tried to arrange a match for her, but she cancelled the plans. Chana  
 did not like the young fellow proposed; besides, she wanted to go to the  
 312  
 University in Berne, to continue her studies.

Parents could not understand how school could be so important. But  
 the young women, who, for the first time in generations, were exposed to  
 worldly affairs were determined to take part in the life around them.

## LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Most girls were interested in marriage, and for that matter so was Sholom Aleichem. The author presented a complete record of the transition from one approach to marriage to another.

Marriage in the shtetl was motivated by a religious duty and arranged by the parents with the help of the shadchan. "The parents were given the power to make the match because the parties themselves were young, inexperienced in life and did not know their own minds." <sup>313</sup> However, when the idea of romantic love spread in the Jewish society, the traditional approach was shaken, children came into conflict with their parents, and changes took place.

The prime function of marriage, according to the older generation, was to produce children. The new generation had other ideas. In one case a father tried to convince his son to divorce his wife because she was barren. The son protested because he claimed he and his wife were in love with one another. The father exclaimed, "Now what do you think of that smart boy?" <sup>314</sup> I tell him children and he answers me love." The parents did not wish to recognize romantic impulses as a consideration in marriage.

Parents valued family reputation, piety, philanthropy, size of dowry and excellence in Talmudic study as factors determining a marriage. The mothers, in general, were concerned with the child's physical well-being. The young people, however, were mainly prompted by love.

Each of Teyve's daughters symbolized the new trend which was characterized by personal choice.

Zeitl was the first who married for love. She rejected her parents' choice, the rich butcher, in favor of the impoverished tailor whom she loved. She remained a part of the shtetl, and did not make a complete break with the old ways. Her action, however, was symptomatic of a new way.

This approach penetrated Kasrilevke and Shaine Shaindl related: One young fellow entered a store and placed a ring on the young lady's finger

and recited the traditional marriage formula. The family went to <sup>the</sup> Rabbi to demand a divorce. The young woman dissented because she said she was in love with the boy.

Shaine Shaindl commented at the end of the story. "What do you say to that chutzpa?" Menachem Mendel was not surprised, "Why in Yehupetz it's an every day occurrence. Love always precedes marriage."

But it wasn't always so. One woman, lamenting the situation, said: "And do you think our way was the way of these free girls? In our days we didn't know love nor desire. A husband was brought from afar and we were satisfied."

If in Zeitl's case Mottel came to ask for her hand in marriage, Hodel, the second daughter, and Pertzhek, her choice, appeared before Tevye and announced their engagement. Formalities were dispensed with. The young people decided for themselves. A parent lamenting the new situation commented, "Times have changed, now one must speak to children first and even don't have to speak to them, they see each other first."

Where did they see each other? If in traditional Kasrilevke the boys and girls might have eyed each other surreptitiously from a distance, from across the street on a Sabbath walk, then, in new Kasrilevke, the Boiberik forest was the setting for couples meeting and courting. One father commented: "I think the Boiberik forest outdoes the most famous matchmaker in the world."

Hodel and Pertzhek did not meet in the forest but they used it to good advantage. Tevye met them as they emerged from the woods holding hands.

Engagement practices also underwent changes. In old Kasrilevke the boy came to his future in-laws on a holiday such as Passover and would only then catch a glimpse of his intended. The couple might see each other for

the first time at t'naim and then each would be in a separate room with people all around. During the betrothal period the couples would write to each other, via a scribe, flowery letters spiced with biblical phrases.

In Kasrilevke in transition, Hodel and Pertchek announced their plans for marriage and the ceremony of t'naim was eliminated. Leah, in Wondering Stars, was much chagrined that the ceremony was dispensed with when her daughter decided to be engaged. Rosa explained that it wasn't necessary once two people declared they were betrothed.

Chava, the third daughter also followed her heart and alas, she was led astray. She fell in love with a Gentile and converted. Chava was torn by a terrible conflict: "How could she cut herself off from her family and live in sin the rest of her life." She didn't leave home because she rebelled against her religion or her family. She was drawn by the light of love. Chava's convictions were not as firm as those of Esther and Rochele.

However, with the decline of the power of Jewish values to govern behaviour and the concurrent rise of romantic love as an ideal, it was not uncommon for girls to fall in love with a Gentile and Sholom Aleichem related a few such stories.

There was another aspect to love in the shtetl. Spurned love was the theme of the story about Schprintz, Fevye's fourth daughter. She fell in love with a rich man and was rejected by the family. Broken-hearted, she committed suicide by throwing herself in the river. In other cases of unrequited love the girls took poison.

Suicide, especially by poison, was very fashionable in the general culture and the girls whose roots in the Jewish environment were weakened, assimilated the new ideas wholeheartedly. They retained the traits of loyalty

and devotion, characteristic of the Jewish woman but they acted according to "Gentile" behaviour.

Only one daughter did not marry for love. It would seem that Beilke was motivated by her mother's considerations. She married a wealthy husband, however, she acted more out of concern for her family than for herself. She was too much in touch with the times not to feel that she was missing a great deal. Still she realized that her money could help her sister and her father and therefore she made the sacrifice. 332

Love was not necessarily the only factor that influenced the young people. The sophisticated new rich, for whom Sholom Aleichem had little sympathy, sought young men with education and position. One Yehupetz daughter, who spoke French, played the piano and embroidered wanted a doctor. 333  
In Tomashev there were five prospective brides, all wanted either doctors or lawyers with a practice in Yehupetz. 334 One father had three daughters and all wanted "enlightened" young men. 335 These young women who thought themselves to be educated wanted husbands that they felt would suit their social level. 335a

No matter what the considerations of the younger people in choosing a partner, it was obvious to them that they, and not their parents, would decide on the groom.

Vera, upon hearing that her parents were meeting with a matchmaker to decide on a mate for her, was indignant. Characteristically she answered: "What do you mean choosing a husband for me? When it comes to choosing a husband, I can speak for myself!" 336

Betty in her comment to her mother summed up the attitude of the younger generation:

Ma I don't want to quarrel with you. I just want to ask a favor, don't interfere in my affairs. 337 I am no longer a little girl. I can take care of my own business.

The approach of the young women was far different than their mothers. They felt themselves more equipped to handle their own problems. They were past the stage when they would put their life solely in the hands of their parents.

#### REIZL: THE MODERN YOUNG JEWISH WOMAN

Most of the descriptions of the young women revolved around the conflict between the generations. Sholom Aleichem's modern generation was still young, at the crossroads of their lives and had not yet fully developed their potential.

Reizl, of Wandering Stars, however, did make her mark in the world. Sholom Aleichem presented a case study of a type found among Jewish society of the period. He portrayed a modern Jewess who became world famous yet remained faithful to her heritage.

Reizl was nearly typical Yiddishe tochter while still in the shtetl. An only child, she was pampered by her parents, yet she was strictly supervised in all religious and moral areas by her mother. She led a normal sheltered life, characteristic of the shtetl, that is, until the Yiddish theatre came to town.

That the Yiddish theatre should have made such impression on Reizl was not hard to believe. She was young. She had an artistic nature. The glitter and glamour of the theatre as compared to the squalor and poverty of the shtetl which she had not noticed before, overwhelmed her. A new world opened up. She did not have sufficient indoctrination of the Yiddishe tochter. Besides, shtetl life had not the same hold on its inhabitants as it did in the earlier period.

In a different scene one aspect of Reizl's personality was revealed.

When one of the entrepreneurs of the theatre, hearing her sing, saw her through the window and spoke to her, "she was less disturbed by the man's knowing her and his coarse compliments which she barely understood, than by the fear her mother might find her sitting half-naked in the window talking to a strange man." Reizl was more concerned with parental displeasure than her own sense of propriety.

In the theatre, sitting next to Leibl, although both were embarrassed to speak to each other, they held hands and neither had any compunctions.

Dazzled by the entertainment world, Reizl was completely carried away. When the opportunity arose, she ran away from home with the Yiddish theatre. Once she made her break in this manner, Reizl left behind the shtetl way of life. Even so, her Jewishness was deeply rooted and she did not cut herself off from her people and traditions.

She spent her youth in a worldly atmosphere and was distant from her people, until once, Edmond, a young composer and pianist whom she idolized, offered her a contract in the grand opera with the provision that she change her religion. Rosa, as she was then called, was aghast. "For the first time in many years, she remembered her origins. How could she have forgotten that she belonged to the wandering folk blessed with the name Jew."

Not only did she refuse, but she herself returned home. She visited her parents in Nolonesti and provided for all their needs. "She had tried to deny her parents. Now there was no sacrifice she wouldn't make for them."

When her father died, she went into full mourning. She sat shiva in the traditional manner and refused to perform several nights in a row, disregarding the protestations of her friends.

During the holidays she went to the synagogue to say the memorial

prayer for her father, even though her agent tried to keep her away. She did not feel the necessity of keeping her distance from the Jews in order to maintain her position even though her agent felt that was necessary.

Later, she brought her mother to America and arranged for her comfort and her religious life. Reizl was not observant, but she did not deprecate tradition.

Despite the fact that Rosa was a renowned singer and a famous person of the show business world, she did not behave in a promiscuous manner that was typical of the theatrical world. She was not a bohemian. She retained a love for <sup>343</sup>Leibl that was reminiscent of the loyal Jewish woman. She had a memory, a promise, and a love that did not fade.

Rosa, was no longer a typical Yiddishe tochter in the traditional sense, but neither was she divorced from her former way of life. She was a positive, modern Jewess.

#### SUMMARY

The new life had produced a generation of Jews, one step from the shtetl, searching for self-expression. The young women, who had led a sheltered life in the Jewish townlet, quickly expanded their horizons and integrated themselves in the interests and concerns of a new era. Sholom Aleichem did not portray the issues and the inner probings of the young people. This was left for later Yiddish writers but he ably presented the trends characteristic of the period.



VI. CONCLUSION

This work has attempted to portray the Jewish woman of Eastern Europe during the past century. We have dealt with the woman's daily life, habits, attitudes, and the scale of values which directed her aspirations.

How do we appraise the life of these Jewish women? By what measures do we evaluate their culture? Jews generally do not measure a society in terms of its contribution to the technical or material progress of general civilization, but rather by the refinement of the spiritual life developed by the people. The pattern of life was always more significant than the pattern of art.

From time immemorial the Jewish woman retained an honored place in Jewish life. She was always recognized as the core of the family and a prime factor in instilling the values and traditions of Judaism in the home.

Fate had decreed that the shtetl, where Jewish life reached its greatest intensity, the status of the Jewish woman was both enhanced and diminished.

The passivity of the husband in the certain areas that were characteristic of the male domain left a void which the woman was forced, against her will, to fill. Her functions expanded and she became a key personage. On the other hand, she also became domineering and sometimes harsh.

In many cases the woman merited the epithet, "Woman of Valor." However, her very position and the appalling economic, social and political conditions took their toll on the character of the Jewish woman.

Almost totally uneducated and burdened with daily drudgeries,

they developed a narrowed and confined outlook. Provinciality dominated their view. Maturity and wisdom receded to the background. Typical of the poor, they revealed signs of quarrelsomeness, gossiping and talkativeness.

The picture that emerged from the works of Sholom Aleichem was not that of a quiet, submissive saint, but rather an active, bustling devoted woman.

Sholom Aleichem, in his tales, showed how this woman, whose function it was to transmit the tradition to her children, was unsuccessful many times.

The author chronicles from its beginning the losing battle of the older generation to pass on to the youth their way of life.

The younger generation, when confronted with the new mode of living, rejected the life of their mothers.

In the past, the young women were taught all they had to know at home. The mothers served as models and the daughters learned by example. But later, the young people, who received no formal Jewish education, were easily attracted to secular life and thought. They began to realize that all their mothers could offer them were the three K's. Kiche, Kinder and Kirche (kitchen, children and religion). The economic, social and political transformations of Eastern Europe offered manifold forms of individual expression. The young people may have been drawn to their mothers by bonds of love, but they no longer felt themselves willing to follow in their footsteps.

The latter part of the 19th century marked a turning point in the history of the Jewish women. The young women began to leave the traditional mold and in turn involve themselves in the ideals of modern

society. Sholom Aleichem pointed out the various paths that the young woman followed in the march toward a new way of life.

One might think that the worlds of the two generations of women were diametrically opposed. The mother was a pillar of traditional way of life. The daughter was a pioneer of a new society. Still, the basic natures of both generations remained similar. Both showed a headlong devotion to a cause. The mothers were unswerving in their dedication to their homes and families, just as many of their daughters devoted themselves to the ideals current at the time.

With the emergence of the new currents symbolized by the younger generation, the shtetl declined and disintegrated. The final blow was dealt by World War II, and this society vanished.

However, the spirit of the shtetl is still alive. It has been said "The dead live within us."

It is not hard to identify today many of the types that Sholom Aleichem described. Times have changed and circumstances have altered, but the inner life, developed by the traditional Jewish woman, did not intrinsically change. Trends that were discernible in Sholom Aleichem's writings still are in evidence in our contemporary society. Somewhere in the spirit of the Jewish woman today, there is a link with bygone generations.

The author wrote: "These types are disappearing from our world." His whole purpose was to eternalize them in literature. Sholom Aleichem prophesied the end, but was it really so?



## NOTES

1. Bernard Weinryb: "One of the theories about the value of fiction as an historical source maintains that literature reflects society which may go back to Plato's concept of imitation in The Republic." Bernard D. Weinryb, "Preface," In the Mirror of Literature, William Glicksman (New York: Living Books, 1966), p. 10.
2. See: Irving Howe and Eleizer Greenberg, A Treasury of Yiddish Stories (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1953), pp. 28-71.
3. For example: Isaac D. Berkowitz, Harishonim Kivnei Adam (5 vols.; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1938), II, 254-255. Louis Palstein "Sholom Aleichem," Great Jewish Personalities in Modern Times, ed. Simon Koveck (Wash., D.C.: Bnai Brith Department of Adult Jewish Education, 1960), p. 225. S. Nigur Samuel Charney, Sholom Aleichem: Lyunim Beyizirokav (Tel-Aviv: Hakibutz Hamauchad, 1960), p. 24. Meyer Waxman, History of Jewish Literature (5 vols.; New York: Yoseloff, 1960), IV, 511.
4. Don Meron, "Hamiyve Hapenimi Shel Ma'aseh Nisim," Ha'aretz (Tel Aviv), March 6, 1959, p. 12.
5. See: Abraham A. Roback, "The Humor of Sholom Aleichem," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, ed. Meloch Grafstein (New York: Jewish Observer, 1948), p. 20. S. Nigur Samuel Charney, "Sholom Aleichem Mirrored in Teyve," p. 17.
6. S. Nigur Samuel Charney, "The Gift of Sholom Aleichem," Commentary, II (August, 1946), p. 118.
7. Maurice Samuel, The World of Sholom Aleichem, (New York: Schocken, 1965 1943), pp. 6-7.
8. He first used the name Sholom Aleichem when he published his second feuilleton in Yiddish, "The Elections." Getzel Kressel, Sholom Aleichem, Chayav Vayezireto (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1959), p. 23.
9. Sholom Aleichem, Solomon Rabinowitz, The Great Fair, trans. Tamara Kahana (New York: Noonday Press, 1955), pp. 5, 170. Biographical information concerning Sholom Aleichem's life is taken from: Ibid; Berkowitz, Harishonim. . . ; "Sholom Aleichem," Leksikan fun der Yidisher Literature, Presse un Filoge, ed. Zalmen Reyzen (4 vols.; Vilna, 1929), IV, 673-736.
10. The Great Fair, p. 10.
11. Shaine Shaindl commented: "After 30 days of mourning for their wives, the men run off to Berdichev to bring step mothers for their children." Sholom Aleichem Solomon Rabinowitz, Menachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve Sholom

Aleichen trans. Isaac Dov Berkowitz (15 vols.; Tel Aviv: Dvir 1954-1957), p. 115.

12. See also: Jossele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 64.

13. Faistein, op. cit., p. 230.

14. Asher Beilin, Sholom Aleichem (Merhaviah: Sifriat Poalim, 1959), p. 29.

15. Berkowitz, p. 252.

16. Ibid., I, 127.

17. This seems to be evident from the description of Sholom Aleichem's life given by Berkowitz.

18. S. Nigzer Samuel Charney, "Yiddish Literature in the Past Two Hundred Years," Jewish People Past and Present (2 vols.; New York: Jewish Encyclopedic Handbooks, 1952), III, 185.

19. Yiddishe Folks-bibliotek II, p. 308, cited by S. Nigzer, p. 186.

20. Curt Leviant, "Introduction," Old Country Tales, trans. Curt Leviant (New York: Putnam, 1956), p. 17.

21. "The Town of the Little People," The Old Country trans. Julius and Frances Rutwin (New York: Crown, 1946), p. 1.

22. A Russian scholar, B. Milutin, found already in 1849 that only 3% of the Jews possessed any capital at all while the rest led a miserable existence. "It has been estimated that in many communities up to 40% of the entire Jewish population consisted of families of so called Luftmenchen, that is persons without any particular skills, capital, or specific occupations. These breadwinners of large families had to rely on occasional chores entrusted to them by relatives and friends; their income was unstable and as a rule, quite inadequate." Salo Baron, The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. 114.

23. "The Town of the Little People," p. 1.

24. Katz pointed out that Hasidism was largely responsible for this mentality. He said that "the rationalistic cause in daily conduct gave way to the passive expectation of a miraculous occurrence. . ." Jacob Katz, Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), p. 244.

25. Samuel, p. 265.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., p. 24.

28. Ibid.

29. S. Nigler Samuel Charney, "Sholom Aleichem Mirrored in Teyve" Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 170.
30. Abraham A. Roback, "The Humor of Sholom Aleichem," ibid., p. 21.
31. Gen. 5: 2.
32. See: Baba Kamma 15a; Kiddushin 35a.
33. Kiddushin 29a. Since the woman was burdened with numerous household duties, she was exempted from those religious obligations for the performance of commandments for which a definite time was set.
34. Gen. 2: 18.
35. Gen. 1: 28.
36. Chap. 31.
37. See: Gen. 21: 9, 27; Samuel I 25: 18, Samuel II 20: 17, Kings II 4: 8.
38. Kiddushin 49b.
39. Midrash Genesis 18: 2, 45: 5.
40. Niddah 45b.
41. See: Midrash Rabbah 9: 8, Jerusalem Talmud, Ketuboth 5: 6. Megillah 14a.
42. Baba Mezi'ah 59a; Sanhedrin 109b, Midrash Rabbah 18.
43. Erubin 100b.
44. Pesachim 50b.
45. During the early middle ages, Abraham noted that the man was held in contempt if the wife supported him. It was as if she were playing the man. Israel Abraham, Jewish Life in the Middle Ages (London: Edward Goldstone, 1932), p. 172.
46. It may be thought that she was above average because of her display of knowledge, however, there is no doubt that there were other women like her.
47. Gluckel of Hameln, The Life of Gluckel of Hameln trans. Nath-Bion Abrahams (New York: Yoseloff, 1962), p. 42.
48. Trude Weiss Rosmarin, Jewish Women Through the Ages (New York: Jewish Book Club, 1940), p. 80.
49. The source of this view came from the Talmud: Taanit 25a, Yebamoth 62b.
50. Jacob Katz, p. 243.
51. Ari Wohlgenuth, "The Jewish woman in Eastern Europe," Jewish Library,



- 3rd series ed. Lec Jung (New York: Jewish Library Publishing Co., 1934), p. 410.
52. Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, Life is With People: The Little-Town of Eastern Europe (New York: International University Press, 1952), p. 130.
53. Ibid., p. 131.
54. Bertha Pappenheim, "The Jewish Woman in Religious Life," The Jewish Review, III (January, 1913), p. 403.
55. Victor Erlich, "A Note on the Monologue as a Literary Form: Sholom Aleichem's Monologn - a test case," For Max Weinreich on his Seventieth Birthday: Studies in Jewish Languages, Literature and Society (London: Mouton and Co., 1964), p. 48.
56. "The Miracle of Teyve," cited in Samuel, p. 10.
57. "Geese," Stories and Satires, trans. Curt Leinart (New York: Yoseloff, 1959), pp. 118, 119, 121, 122, 125, 128.
58. "The Pot," Bewitched Tailor, trans. Bernard Isaacs (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.), p. 130. See Also: Hotel. . ., p. 126; "Hotel," Inside Kasrilevke, trans. Curt Leinart (New York: Schocken, c1948), p. 31. "Two Shalachmonas," Teyve's Daughters.
59. "Teyve Wins a Fortune," The Old Country, op. cit., p. 37.
60. Samuel, p. 199.
61. Alfred Kazin, "Sholom Aleichem: The Old Country," Contemporaries (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1924), p. 175.
62. See: "Birth," Stories and Satires, p. 115.
63. "Littlest of Kings," Teyve's Daughters trans. Frances Butwin (New York: Crown, 1949), p. 122.
64. Wandering Star trans. Frances Butwin (New York: Crown, 1952), p. 3.
65. "Bewitched Tailor," Bewitched Tailor, p. 87.
66. Menachen Mendel, vol. 13 of Fitve. . ., p. 60.
67. Solomon Liptzin, "Kasrilevke Evaluated," Sholom Aleichem A Source Book for Programming, ed. Philip Goodman (New York: National Jewish Welfare Board, 1966), p. 43.
68. "Birth," Stories and Satires, p. 112. See also description of Yentl: "Geese," Stories and Satires, p. 119.
69. "Eternal Life," Old Country, p. 167.

70. Sholom Aleichem Solomon Rabinowitz Adventures of Mottel the Cantor's Son trans. Tamara Kahana (New York: Collier, 1961 c1953), p. 64.
71. Stempenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., p. 96.
72. "Geese," Stories and Satires, p. 119. See Also: "Bewitched Tailor," Bewitched Tailor, p. 104.
73. The Great Fair, p. 167. See Also: Ibid., pp. 195-196.
74. "Modern Children," Tevye's Daughters, pp. 36-37.
75. Wandering Star, p. 43.
76. "Tevye Goes to Palestine," Tevye's Daughters, p. 204.
77. "Tevye goes to Palestine," Tevye's Daughters, p. 204.
78. "In Waste," The Old Country, pp. 152-153.
79. Wandering Star, p. 75.
80. Sholom Aleichem Solomon Rabinowitz "Sender Blank," Yiddishe Romanen, vol. 11 of Alle Verk fun Sholom Aleichem (28 vols.; New York: Sholom Aleichem Folksfund Oisgabeh, 1919-1920), p. 31. See Also: Jossele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 24.
81. The Great Fair, pp. 45, 168-169.
82. "Great Panic of the Little People," Old Country Tales, p. 127.
83. The women worked in various types of occupations although primarily they were in business for themselves selling either products or their own home-made goods. We find a seller of apples, ("Transportation," Inside Kasrilevke, p. 19), of socks, ("Hotels," Ibid., p. 36.), of poultry, ("The Little Pot," Tevye's Daughters, p. 180), second-hand goods, ("The Littlest of Kings," Ibid., p. 122), of geese and goose fat, ("Geese," Stories and Satires, pp. 116-128), of homemade candles, ("The Little Pot," Tevye's Daughters, p. 180), of home-made candy, ("Tavi Zahav," Yamim Tovim vol. 10 of Kitve. . ., p. 112), of hardware (Jossele Nightingale, vol 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 21.)
- As the woman's department was the household she was also a cook, ("Restaurants," Inside Kasrilevke, p. 45), a tavern-keeper ("Bewitched Tailor," Bewitched Tailor, p. 102.)
- The women were also healers ("The Littlest of Kings," Tevye's Daughters, p. 122) and later in the new generation became midwives ("Sasim Usemachim," Yamim Tovim, vol. 10 of Kitve. . ., p. 81.)
- We also find a woman serving as a Shamas' assistant ("The Littlest of Kings," Tevye's Daughters, p. 123) usurer (Stempenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., p. 110).
- Whatever their pursuit, the women were known to excell in their business acumen. "Zletch the hardware woman was known to be one of the industrious storekeepers." (Jossele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p.21). Freydl, the wife of Stempenyu started with nothing and built up a tremendous

business. Sholom Aleichem told us that she showed a great deal of talent ability in business. (Steppenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., p. 110).

The work that the women did accorded them no status and even if the women did well in business, they were not given credit for their labor as women. If they did well it was because the woman had a man's brain. Hodel the tavern keeper was a successful business woman and was described as a widow "with a man's head on her shoulders." ("Bewitched Tailor," Bewitched Tailor, p. 102.)

84. Jossee Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 27.
85. Ibid., p. 145.
86. "Eternal Life," Old Country, p. 158. On the other hand, there were men who were women who were not self-sufficient. One man related: "I handled the widows affairs otherwise she would have gone to ruin." ("Three Widows," Bewitched Tailor, p. 33. He arranged for children's education, marriage, doctors, money, clothing. Ibid., p. 41). The interesting part here was that the man was a friend of the family and not the husband.
87. Ibid.
88. Jossee Nightingale, vol 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 280.
89. "The Bubble Busts," Tevye's Daughters, p. 113.
90. Jossee Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 145.
91. "The Little Pot," Tevye's Daughters, p. 180.
92. Jossee Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 35.
93. Quoted in: Charles A. Madison "Sholom Aleichem" Poet Lore XXXIII (1933) p. 569.
94. "Two Dead Men," The Old Country, p. 51. Even if the husband was the provider there were wives who were "ladies with keys." One wife kept all food and valuables under lock and key. ("My First Love Affair," Bewitched Tailor, p. 11.) Sholom Aleichem's grandmother also sat with the cash box under her pillow. (The Great Fair, p. 197.)
95. "The Enchanted Tailor," ibid., p. 98.
96. The Great Fair, p. 66.
97. "Menachen Mendel," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 171. See also: "Ha'otzor," Komediot, vol. 11 of Kitve. . ., p. 17.
98. "Modern Children," The Old Country, p. 219.
99. "Seventy Five Thousand," Stories and Satires, p. 243.
100. "College," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, pp. 137-138.

101. "Ha'otzar," Komediot, vol. 11 of Kitve. . ., p. 19.
102. "Matamim Shel Halav" Medabrim Ba'adam, vol. 6 of Kitve. . ., p. 93.
103. "Esther," Maasiot Lelde Israel vol. 9 of Kitve. . . p. 229. For other examples of quarreling see: "The Purim Feast," Tevye's Daughters p. 241; "The Hot Springs," Stories and Satires, p. 364; "She Must Marry a Doctor," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 234.
104. "Der Get," Dramatishe Schriften, vol. 4 of Kitve. . ., p. 28. Thanks to his wife, one husband's arm was full of black and blue. Menachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve. . ., pl 142.
105. The Great Fair, p. 66.
106. "The Merrymakers," Tevye's Daughters, p. 166. See Also: "Taibele," Yugnt Bouranen vol. 11 of Alle Verk. . ., pp. 24-25.
107. "Der Get," Dramatishe Schriften, vol. 4 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 26.
108. "College," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 141.
109. Israel Cohen, Jewish Life in Modern Times (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1914), p. 90.
110. "The Inheritors," The Old Country, p. 11.
111. Nathan Goldberg's findings indicate that the divorce rate among the Jews in the Pale of Settlement was not negligible (Nathan Goldberg, "The Jewish Attitude Toward Divorce," p. 6. Mimeographed ) He also says that there was a larger percentage of divorces among the women than the men. (Ibid.) It is more common to find in Sholom Aleichem types like: "Ziril the divorcee" ("Taibele," Yugnt Romanen, vol. 20 of Alle Verk. . .) and "Bertha the Divorcee" (Kinder Shpiel, "Ibid.") There is no corresponding mention of male types that are divorced.
112. Menachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve. . ., p. 139.
113. "Sasim U'semachim," Yamim Tovim vol. 10 of Kitve. . ., p. 77.
114. "Enchanted Tailor," The Old Country, p. 102
115. Ibid., p. 109.
116. Samuel, pp. 43-45.
117. "Enchanted Tailor," The Old Country, p. 124.
118. "Chana," Tevye's Daughters, p. 97. Tevye, in another instance said: "That's a woman for you. No wonder King Solomon traveled the world over and didn't find a female with an ounce of brains in her head." ("The Bubble Bursts," Tevye's Daughters, p. 8.) See also: Jossele Nightingale vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 22.)
119. "Chana," Tevye's Daughters, p. 103. See also: Ibid., p. 106.

120. Ibid., p. 102.
121. The Great Fair, p. 66.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid., p. 198.
124. Ibid.
125. "College," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 137.
126. Samuel, pp. 158-159
127. "The Bewitched Tailor," The Bewitched Tailor, p. 68. See also: ibid., p. 70.
128. "Geese," Stories and Satires, pp. 119-120.
129. "The Little Pot," Tevye's Daughters, p. 184.
130. Kaplan says: "Actually, there was no role conflict in the shtetl family. Their culture solved this problem. The husband believed that he was the authority in the family, but the wife knew she was - this was the secret of their successful marriage and family relationship." (Benjamin Kaplan, The Jew and his Family, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967 pp. 114-115) To a certain extent this may be true, but on the basis of our findings, this seems to be an oversimplification.
131. Yehiel Y. Trunk, Sholom Aleichem: Zayn Vezen un Zayne Verk, (Warsaw: Kultur League, 1937) p. 292.
132. "Menachem Mendel," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 165.
133. Ibid., p. 171.
134. "Agents: A one Act Play," Stories and Satires, p. 277.
135. "Menachem Mendel," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 165.
136. Ibid., p. 168. Shaine Shaindl's mother is another realistic woman. "If Shaine Shaindl is instinctively practical as a result of her lack of imagination, the mother. . . is practical as a result of much experience and observation. She is a round minded woman of the world. An untutored Jewess, she utters truths born of generations of hard experience. Her practicality has crystallized into superior reason." (Yehiel Y. Trunk, "Menachem Mendel of Kasrilevke," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 29.) The Sholom Aleichem women rarely displayed the qualities of wisdom and maturity. This was the only characterization of a sagacious, almost philosophic woman.
137. Menachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve. . ., p. 29.
138. Fishel Lachover, Reshouim Vachoronim (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1934-1935) pp. 120-127. One of the most popular manifestations of the women's realism

was in regard to a daughter's marriage. Poverty, illness and struggle have been their lot. They wanted something better for their daughters. That is why Golde wanted Laizer-Wolf, a wealthy man for Tzeitl. Teyve, also would have preferred a rich husband but has listened to the desires of the heart. Similarly, Sarah told her husband: "He has a rich grandmother, a millionairess. . ." and he answered: "You see, with me this is the least." ("It's hard to be a Jew," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 251.) See also: Esther's mother's considerations concerning the marriage of her daughter: Jossele Nightingale vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., pp. 168, 220-221, 226.

139. Trunk, "Menachem Mendel of Kasrilevke," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 29.

140. Trunk, Sholom Aleichem: Zayn Vezn. . ., p. 334.

141. Ibid., p. 335. There was no "communication" between husband and wife as we know it today. One husband said: "If we're alone and have run out of talk (what do husband and wife have to talk about anyway) she asks me why I am so quiet, why don't I say something?" ("To the Hot Springs," Stories and Satires, p. 356.) Golde says to Teyve: "And if I do tell you something do you listen to me? If a person says anything to you, you answer him with a quotation..." "Chava," Teyve's Daughters, p. 101.

142. Menachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve. . ., pp. 28-29. Golde expresses a similar idea. See below, p. 66. Leah rejected her daughter's invitation to come to America because she thought: "What would I see there that I haven't seen already?" (Wandering Stars, p. 257.)

143. Mottel. . ., p. 142.

144. Wohlgemuth, p. 408.

145. Wandering Stars, p. 47.

146. "Sender Blank," Yiddische Romanen, vol. 11 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 34.

147. Ibid., p. 31.

148. "Pirke Shir Hashiirim," Yamin Tovim, vol. 10 of Kitve. . ., p. 262.

149. "Home for Passover," Old Country Tales, p. 76.

150. "The Great Panic of the Little People," The Old Country Tales, p. 129.

151. Ibid., p. 122.

152. Jossele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 24.

153. Wandering Stars, p. 4.

154. "Two Dead Men," The Old Country, p. 62.

155. Zena Smith Bleu, "In Defence of the Jewish Mother," Midstream. XIII (February, 1967), pp. 42-49.

156. The mother, at home with the child, was more likely to discipline the youngster. She either spanked the child or complained about him to the Rabbi. She criticized the father for not disciplining the child ("Phlishtim," Ma'asiot Leyalde Israel, vol. 9 of Kitve. . ., p. 114) However, there were fathers who took a hand in the discipline of the children. One father commented about his wife: "She curses, pinches, rips chunks of flesh out of them, but what good is it. She is a mother, after all. A mother's no father you know. A father grabs hold of a kid and beats the hell out of him. ("At the Doctors," Stories and Satires, p. 178). See also: Wandering Star, p. 38.

157. "Taibele," Yugnt Romanen, vol. 20 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 15. Even though the mother was known to be unconditionally devoted, there were exceptions. One widow gave her young daughter, aged seven, to her brother-in-law so that she could go abroad to remarry. ("Asur Lehiyot Tov," Ma'aseh She'eyn Lo Sof, vol. 15 of Kitva. . ., p. 136). Similarly, Lily was left with her grandparents when her widowed mother remarried and moved to a distant place. ("A Page from the Song of Songs," The Old Country, p. 42.)

158. Zborowski and Herzog, p. 87.

159. "Methuseleh," The Bewitched Tailor, p. 166.

160. "Hasevivon," Adam Uchama, vol. 8 of Kitve. . ., p. 118. See also: "The Ruined Passover", Stories and Satires, p. 287.

161. "The Little Pot," Tevye's Daughters, p. 186.

162. Ibid., p. 187.

163. "Gitl Purishkevitch," Monologen, vol. 21 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 233.

164. Wandering Star, p. 14.

165. "College," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 137.

166. Proverbs, 13: 24. When children were orphans there was a greater sympathy for them and discipline was negligible. As it is written: "Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child" (Exodus 22: 21). Mottel related: "Mother reminds Eli that I mustn't be beaten because I am an orphan" (Mottel..., p. 35).

167. The Great Fair, p. 11.

168. "The Little Pot," Tevye's Daughters, p. 183. See also: "The Purim Feast," Tevye's Daughters, p. 239; "Hanukkah Money," Old Country, p. 193-194.

169. The Great Fair, p. 170.

170. Samuel, p. 296.

171. "The Enchanted Tailor," Old Country Tales, p. 99.

172. "Geese," Stories and Satires, p. 121. See also: "An Easy Fast," Ibid., p. 173.
173. "Geese," Stories and Satires, p. 121.
174. The Great Fair, pp. 10-11.
175. "Methuseleh," Old Country Tales, p. 94.
176. "Menachem Mendel," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 165.
177. Mary R. Holmes, "A Gentile Reads Sholom Aleichem," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 40.
178. Mottel. . ., p. 82.
179. Ibid., p. 83.
180. "The Ruined Passover," Stories and Satires, p. 293.
181. Ibid., p. 288.
182. Ibid., p. 287.
183. "Za'ar Ba'ale Hayim," Adam Ubehama, vol. 8 of Kitve. . ., p. 92.
184. "Three Little Heads," The Old Country, p. 335.
185. Ibid., p. 330. See also: "Galut Erev Pesach," Ma'asiot Leylde Israel, vol. 9 of Kitve. . ., p. 169-170. One mother, however, did show a certain understanding of children. Mottel was reprimanded by his mother and brother for drawing pictures, but Pessie laughed. She said: "Children like to fool around, but that's no reason to eat one's heart out." Mottel. . ., p. 118.  
By and large, though, the children did receive rather harsh treatment. It is interesting to note, however, that they were not adversely affected. Sholom Aleichem did not describe any emotionally stunted or twisted children. The children knew they were nuisances and accepted the fact that they were disciplined. They knew that they were loved and they did not resent their mothers.
186. Ruth Landes and Mark Zborowski, "Hypothesis Concerning the Eastern European Jewish Family," Psychiatry, (1950) XIII, 447-464.
187. Zborowski and Herzog, p. 87.
188. See above pp. 35-37.
189. "My First Love Affair," The Bewitched Tailor, p. 110.
190. "The Little Pot," The Bewitched Tailor, p. 124.
191. Wandering Star, p. 58.
192. "Zaibele," Yugnt Romanen, vol. 20 of Alle Verk. . ., pp. 45-54.



193. Wandering Star, p. 54.
194. "Toviz Nacholev," Machzot, vol. 12 of Kitve. . ., p. 120.
195. "Nistalku," Adam Ubehama, vol. 8 of Kitve. . ., p. 65.
196. Landes and Zborowski, p. 456.
197. According to Landes and Zborowski: The relationship between the mother and daughter contains more rivalry and hostility than the other couplings. (Mother-son, father-daughter) The mother, jealous of her status as the key personage in the family, attempts to keep her unmarried daughter as a junior female until she marries and achieves independent status. Ibid. The mother-daughter relationship was not fully explored in Sholom Aleichem and one does not find support for these comments in his writings.
198. Cohen, p. 46.
199. "Gaese," Stories and Satires, p. 125.
200. Jossele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., pp. 30-31.
201. Stempenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., p. 38. Even Esther learned even though she came from a poor family because her father wanted her to have an education. Jossele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 29.
202. Ibid., p. 52.
203. Jossele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 29.
204. Stempenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., p. 38.
205. The Great Fair, p. 289.
206. Wandering Star, p. 16.
207. The Great Fair, p. 289.
208. "A Page from the Song of Songs," The Old Country, pp. 43-45, 47, 50. For another example of youngsters who grew up in the same house and fell in love see: "Kinder Shpiel," Yugnt Romanen, vol. 20 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 104.
209. Jossele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 82.
210. "Esther," Ma'asiot Leyalda Israel, vol. 9 of Kitve. . ., pp. 227.
211. Ibid.
212. Mottel. . ., p. 133.
213. Wandering Star, p. 51.
214. "Another Page from the Song of Songs," Tevye's Daughters, p. 48.

215. Jossele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 84.
216. "Esther," Ma'asiot Leyalde Israel, vol. 9 of Kitve. . ., p. 234.
217. "Hatuna," Katrielim, vol. 5 of Kitve. . ., pp. 33-34.
218. "Final Pages from the Song of Songs," Old Country Tales, p. 48.
219. "Esther," Ma'asiot Leyalde Israel, vol. 9 of Kitve. . ., p. 234.
220. Stempenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., p. 97.
221. Stempenyu, trans. Hannah Berman (London: Methuen Co., 1913), p. 97.
222. For example; Y. L. Gordon in his songs, Micah J. BinGorion in his stories. See also: Hava Shapiro, "Dnut Haisha Besifratenu," Hatekufa, (1930), XXVI-XXVII, p. 626.
223. "Die Yiddische Tochter," Yiddische Volksblatt, 1884, no. 42. Cited in Nachum Oyslender "Der Yunger Sholom Aleichem un Zeyn Roman Stempenyu," Schriften fun der Katedre far Yidisher Kultur bay der Alukrainesher Vissheflicher Akademie, Literarische un Filologische Sektsyes (Kiev: 1928), p. 45.
224. Ibid.
225. Jossele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., pp. 31-32.
226. "A Page from the Song of Songs," The Old Country, pp. 42-50.
227. Stempenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., pp. 51-52.
228. The story of Esther is taken from Jossele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve....
229. The story of Lily is taken from "Final Pages from the Song of Songs," Old Country Tales.
230. Stempenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., p. 51.
231. The story of Rochele is taken from Stempenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . .
232. Sholom Aleichem wrote in the introduction to Stempenyu: "I saw how different a Jewish novel has to be from other novels, because Jewish life is different and the circumstances under which a Jew loves are different from those which confront the non-Jews. Not only that, but the Jewish people is unique in its character and spirit, in its customs and traditions... and this uniqueness must appear in a Jewish love story, if the story is to be taken from life... It is my purpose to put before the readers a true Jewish novel." ("Lechvod Savi, Rabbi Mendele Mocher Seforim," Stempenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., pp. 9-10.)
233. There was mention of a woman who took into her home young orphan girls. "Taibele," Yugnt Romanen, vol. 20 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 27.

234. "The Convoy," The Old Country, pp. 288-289.
235. "It Doesn't Pay to Do Favors," Old Country Tales, p. 181.
236. Stempenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., p. 55. The idea that an orphan is not good enough for a shidduch appears in "It Doesn't Pay to Do Favors," Old Country Tales, pp. 183-189.
237. For example: Mottel in Mottel. . .
238. "Another Page from the Song of Songs," Tevye's Daughters, p. 46. For a fuller description see: "Pirke Shir HaShirim," Yamim Tovim, vol. 10 of Kitve. . ., p. 223.
239. Ibid. p. 227.
240. "Two Shalachuones," Tevye's Daughters, p. 193.
241. Ibid., p. 194.
242. Joscele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . ., p. 114. A similar occurrence happened to Bertha. She was not a servant, but a rather rich orphan. She fell in love with a man and married him. It turned out that he was a charlatan and he ran away with her money. ("Kinder Shpiel," Yugnt Romanen, vol. 20 of Alle Verk. . ., pp. 124-127.)
243. "The Inheritors," The Old Country, p. 11.
244. "Anashim," Machazot, vol. 12 of Kitve. . ., p. 195.
245. "Hazel Tov," Komediot, vol. 11 of Kitve. . ., pp. 245, 253.
246. Stempenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., p. 30.
247. The Great Fair, p. 20.
248. Menachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve. . ., p. 80.
249. "Kinder Shpiel," Yugnt Romanen, vol. 20 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 147.
250. Ibid.
251. Ibid.
252. The Yiddish fiction that many girls turned to was comprised of romances and legends of a non-Jewish character written by Shomer (Nachum Mayer Sheikowitz) and Isaac M. Dik. It was this kind of literature Sholom Aleichem wanted to combat. The author wrote "Shomer's Mishpat," 1888 which strongly criticized Shomer.
253. Menachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve. . ., p. 117.
254. The Great Fair, pp. 54-55.

255. Ibid., p. 59.
256. Madison, p. 572.
257. "A Home Away From Home," Stories and Satires, p. 330.
258. "Summer Romances," Ibid., p. 71. For fuller description of the Nouveau riche see: "Summer Romances" (Ibid., pp. 63-108), "A Home Away From Home" (Ibid., pp. 308-349) and "To the Hot Springs" (Ibid., pp. 350-378.)
- 258a. "Amcha," Komediot, vol. 11 of Kitve. . ., p. 170.
259. Wandering Star, p. 314.
260. "Onards," The Old Country, p. 415.
261. Manachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve. . ., p. 85.
262. "Onards," The Old Country, p. 415.
263. Other family relationship not mentioned in this work were the grandmother, mother-in-law and sister. The first two were variations of wives and mothers and the last was not a fully developed characterization in Sholom Aleichem's writings.  
Other types that Sholom Aleichem mentioned were: divorcees, widows, step-mothers, second wives, but again they are variations of the wives and mothers.
264. In Shturm, vol. 7 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 103.
265. Ibid., p. 104.
266. Ibid., p. 172.
267. "Zuzzeit un Zushprait," Dramatische Shriften, vol. 4 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 56.
268. In Shturm, vol. 7 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 103.
269. Ibid., p. 32.
270. Ibid., p. 27.
271. "Zuzzeit un Zushprait," Dramatische Shriften, vol. 4 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 82.
272. "It's Hard to be a Jew," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 239.
273. Ibid.
274. "Zuzzeit un Zushprait," Dramatische Shriften, vol. 4 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 82. In Shturm, vol. 7 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 151.
275. Ibid.

276. "Zuzait un Zushprait," Dramatische Schriften, vol. 4 of Alle Verk. . . ., p. 82.
277. Ibid., pp. 75-76.
278. "It's Hard to be a Jew," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 251.
279. "Zuzait un Zushprait," Dramatische Schriften, vol. 4 of Alle Verk. . . ., p. 48.
280. Ibid.
281. Ibid., p. 53.
282. In Shturm, vol. 7 of Alle Verk. . . ., p. 119.
283. See Shivka's thoughts: In Shturm, vol. 7 of Alle Verk. . . ., p. 20.
284. "Tevye Wins a Fortune," The Old Country, pp. 39-40.
285. "Tevye Goes to Palestine," Tevye's Daughters, p. 204.
286. "Zuzait un Zushprait," Dramatische Schriften, vol. 4 of Alle Verk. . . ., p. 57.
287. "It's Hard to be a Jew," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 239.
288. Ibid., p. 251.
289. See for example: "The Lottery Ticket," The Old Country, pp. 347-370.
290. Ilya Trotsky, "Jews in Russian Schools," Russian Jewry, 1860-1917, ed. Jacob Frankin et al. (New York: Yoseloff, 1966), p. 414.
291. Mark Aldanov, "Russian Jews of the 1870's and 1880's," Ibid., p. 12.
292. Trotsky, p. 414.
293. Zvi Scharfstein, Toldot Hachinuch B'israel Badorot Ha'achronim (3 vols; New York: Ogen, 1945), I, p. 369. The only mention of this type of schooling was in: "My First Love Affair," Bewitched Tailor, p. 18.
294. In Shturm.
295. "It's Hard to be a Jew."
296. In Shturm.
297. Perela was a case in point. See: Josiele Nightingale, vol. 14 of Kitve. . . ., p. 11.
298. "Three Widows," Bewitched Tailor, p. 33.
299. Menachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve. . . ., p. 121. This young lady may

have reminiscent of Sholom Aleichen's first love. See: The Great Fair, p. 161.

300. "Progress in Kasrilevke," Stories and Satires, p. 32.
301. "Hodel," Tevye's Daughters, p. 54.
302. Menachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve. . ., p. 170.
303. "Taibele," Yugnt Romanen, vol. 20 of Alle Verk. . ., pp. 55-56.
304. Ibid., p. 57.
305. In Shturm, vol. 7 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 46.
306. Ibid., p. 211.
307. The story of Tamara from In Shturm, Ibid.
308. "It's Hard to be a Jew," Sholom Aleichen Panorama, pp. 255-256.
309. "Summer Romances," Stories and Satires, pp. 79-80.
310. Ibid., p. 72.
- 310a. In Shturm, vol. 7 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 29.
- 310b. Ibid., pp. 44-46.
- 310c. For a description of the naive attitude of parents toward the education of their children see: "A Daughter's Grave," The Old Country, p. 409; "Hodel," Tevye's Daughters, p. 54.
311. "It's Hard to be a Jew," Sholom Aleichen Panorama, p. 251.
312. "Zuzzeit un Zushprait," Dramatische Schriften, vol 4 of Alle Verk. . ., p. 90.
313. Katz, p. 313.
314. "Joys of Parenthood," Tevye's Daughters, p. 110.
315. Menachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve. . ., p. 90.
316. Ibid.
317. Ibid., p. 92.
318. "Ancha," Komediot, vol. 11.
319. "Asur Lehiyot Tov," Maase She'ein Lo Sof, vol. 15 of Kitve. . ., p. 138.
320. Stempenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., p. 78.

321. "A Home Away from Home," Stories and Satires, p. 321.
322. "Hodel," Tevye's Daughters, p. 60.
323. Kidaltah V'Kidashtah Ma'asiot Leyalde Israel, vol. 9 of Kitve. . ., p. 245.
324. Stampenyu, vol. 13 of Kitve. . ., p. 60.
325. Ibid., See also: "My First Love Affair," Stories and Satires, p. 135ff.
326. "Hodel," Tevye's Daughters, p. 61.
327. Wandering Stars, pp. 260-261.
328. "Tovia Hachelev," Mekazot, vol. 12 of Kitve. . ., p. 120.
329. See above: pp. 49-52.
330. "The Luckiest Man in Kodno," Bewitched Tailor, p. 150.
- 330a. "Schprintze," Tevye's Daughters, p. 160.
331. "A Daughter's Grave," The Old Country, p. 409; "The Luckiest Man in Kodno," Bewitched Tailor, p. 150.
332. "Tevye goes to Palestine," Tevye's Daughters, pp. 209, 220-221.
333. "In Haste," The Old Country, pp. 147-148.
334. Menachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve. . ., p. 161.
335. Ibid., p. 159.
- 335a. There were young women who received a more advanced education than young men and they had difficulty finding mates. See: Menachem Mendel, vol. 3 of Kitve. . ., p. 170; Ibid., p. 121.
336. "She must Marry a Doctor," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 234. See also: "Ha'otzar," Komediot, vol. 11 of Kitve. . ., p. 45, 52.
337. "It's Hard to be a Jew," Sholom Aleichem Panorama, p. 251.
338. Wandering Stars, p. 21.
339. Ibid., p. 7.
340. Ibid., p. 242.
341. Ibid., p. 237.
342. Ibid., p. 245.
343. Her childhood sweetheart. See above, p. 46.

## GLOSSARY

- Agunot - Deserted wives.  
balabusta - Housewife.  
Bar-Mitzvah - A religious ceremony by which a male Jew at the age of thirteen becomes a formal member of the community.  
bitachon - Faith.  
borscht - A beet or cabbage soup.  
bris - The act and the ceremony of circumcision.  
cheder - Old style orthodox Hebrew school.  
chutzpa - Nerve.  
derech-eretz - Good manners.  
dreidl - A top.  
es es mein kind - Eat eat my child.  
farsehsehne - Old maids.  
Gehinom - Hell.  
gestalt - Outlook.  
Halacha - Law of the Talmud.  
Hanukkah - The Festival of Lights.  
Hasidism - A religious movement founded by Israel Baal Shem Tov in the 17th century.  
Haskalah - Enlightenment.  
kittel - White garment worn on festive occasion.  
kopek - Small copper coin.  
kosher - Ritually fit to use.  
luftmensch - A man without a steady occupation, who makes a living from undefinable sources.  
maror - Bitter herb.  
Melamed - Teacher, usually elementary teacher.  
mensh - Human being.  
nachas fun die kinder - Pleasure or joy from children.  
narishe - Silly.  
rachmanus - Mercy.  
Rebbi - Teacher.  
ruble - Russian money.  
seder - The home service performed on the first two nights of Passover.  
shadchan - A matchmaker.  
Shevuos - Pentecost.  
shidduch - Match.  
shiva - Seven days of intensive mourning after the death of a close relative.  
shlimazel - One who has perpetual bad luck.  
shtetl - Jewish townlet.  
Talmud - The Corpus Juris of the Jews.  
Talmud Torah - Hebrew school for children.  
Torah - "Doctrine" or "Law".  
t'naim - Betrothal ceremony.  
yichus - Pedigree.  
yiddine - Jewish woman - connotes silly Jewess.  
yiddishe tochter - Jewish daughter.  
zaddik - a pious Jew.



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