
Assimilation Of Jewish German Immigrants And Their Identity

Jewish liberals and reformists in Western/Middle Europe during the 19th century were confronted with a rather significant predicament that forced them to reconcile with the stark discrepancy between emancipation and existing as a group that was at best tolerated. The sacrifice in choosing the “package” of full social and political emancipation meant giving up one’s own religious way of life as a Jew. Therefore, in order to direct their communities and congregations, they initiated programs and set forth organizations that advocated for social, economic, and cultural advancement for the Jews. When it came to manage the communities, relying simply on religious forbearance and toleration was just not going to cut it. The consequence of this resulted in another dilemma. Regardless of the hurdles, emancipation was followed by surprisingly fruitful acclimatization, economic progress, and a social assimilation of Jews. We see just how this plays out in history, especially when looking at short stories by authors such as Feilerberg’s *The Calf*, Moshe Shamir’s *Dr. Schmidt*, Bialik’s *On the Slaughter*, and Liebrecht’s *Apples from the Desert*.

By the late part of the 19th century, conversion wasn’t even a satisfactory action to conform to European lifestyle; It simply wasn’t enough to assuage the neighbors of the Jews (Reinharz 151). This was largely due in part of the antisemitism that became the norm at that time. Although the Jewish identity remained, a new German-Jewish identity started to sprout. For example, we see that the women of that time and era reinforced this “identity” through specifically with their actions within their families and communities. Whether it was observing the Jewish rituals/traditions such as Sabbath, holidays, or candle lighting, Jewish women played a significant role on their culture and religion. Strict and meticulous obedience to the ways of Judaism was vital in preserving their Jewish identity within the family home.

Additionally, it emphasizes the significance of family and community; families close to each other had strong bonds. A deep sense of community enabled them to defend and preserve their culture. In the way Jewish women reared their children through Germany, though, aspects in which Jews adapted to society can be perceived. The Jewish women of Germany encouraged their children to participate in sports, learn how to play various musical instruments, and read to them an assortment of German fairytales and stories. Regarding their take on the lifestyle the women had, they signed up for German newspapers — eventually adopting the fashion trends and news.

The Jews of France indicate that in Paula Hyman’s book *The Jews of Modern France* that Jewish assimilation into French civilization permitted them to blend into society. In reality, the word “assimilation” is based on the concept of modernity. Assimilation is believed to have reflect or embody a replacement of a French identity with a Jewish identity. As a minority group in France, the Jews had to constantly defend their legitimacy and validity. Although many would presume that assimilation has a negative connotation to it, this was not always the case. By participating in all aspects of society, such as government and education, Jews contributed to French society. Hyman helps illustrate examples of integration in French society of her novel. Along with the French State’s cooperation, Jews were able to maintain networks of cultural institutions in the framework of councils that both facilitated acculturation and enhanced Jewish

feelings of consensus. These councils aided the existence and continuation of these unique Jewish institutions. Through several philanthropic organizations, these groups offered charitable assistance to Jews. Examples of this would be a system of modern Jewish primary schools that expanded additional Jewish schooling for Jewish children who started attending public schools. Although the mass involvement by Jews at all levels of French society—politics, institutes, and professional careers—France's vast majority of Jews chose to be marry within the community and be buried according to Jewish tradition in the 19th century. This confirms and solidifies that Jews did not fully assimilate into French society as well as dissolve their institutions and way of life in France (Hyman 1775).

One of Haskalah's major tenets is that transition and changes are essential to emancipation and cultural assimilation, while Zionism is more committed to promoting Jewish nationalism. In Feilerberg's *The Calf*, the boy hears that a calf was born on the farm and is looking forward to seeing it. Unfortunately, after only a short time meeting with the animal, he soon learns that it will be killed cruelly. By targeting a child, Feilerberg uses this description. But why use a child to convey the message? As mentioned earlier, this movement's goal is to evoke a specific type of crowd with the greatest potential to impact society. Obviously, traditional ways have already been introduced to the older generation(s) and their minds are more difficult to influence. Nevertheless, the younger generation is still somewhat 'wide-eyed', challenging what they're discovering, as well as being defiant. Therefore, the most effective way to view the situation is through the lens of the child's eyes as he / she is most capable of performing the task. The Maskilim are cognizant of the fact that the stagnation of society is tradition and religion which simply hinder freedom and social development. The 'Minority Leading the Minority' is a goal that Haskalah wants to achieve. To sum it up, *The Calf* reflects the spiritual-cultural conflict between adherence to traditional Jewish life and the urge to seek for a more secular, modern, 'Western' way of life.

The Maskilim simply denigrated religion and hoped to re-create and mold it into something extraordinary. They contrived this into the term known as "The New Jew". This creation, so to speak, is quick on his feet and always has something new to bring to the table. This concept is exemplified in Shamir's *Dr. Schmidt*, where we see this unfold. Dr. Schmidt is portrayed as a man whose qualities include practicality, devotion, and astuteness. Despite this, he is a disconnected man who is absent from his family. This is a metaphor for collective vs the individual.

In Bialik's *On the Slaughter*, we come upon an inconsolable note of irony in the name of the poem. *Al Ha-sh'hitah* is the final word of the shochet, the ceremonial slaughterer, reciting the blessing. In the very start of the poem there is an implicit question: is this what God calls for, a scene of ritual martyrdom?! And those murdered, are they acquiescent animals whose necks stretch out towards the shochet's knife? This poem is a profound statement of concern about the Jews' situation. Bialik clearly condemns passivity and submissiveness against Anti-Semitic violence. To express his confusion, resentment, and cynicism towards life, Bialik's questions his struggle with the traditional dogmas of faith, all of which are laid out in this poem and poignantly depicted using the terminology of faithfulness and trust.

In Liebrecht's *Apples from the Desert*, the audience is shown how the story presents two generations of two families who have contrasting views. The mother (Victoria) has traditional views, while the daughter (Rivka) and her husband have more secular and non-religious/modern views. Dubi (the boyfriend) informs the mother that Rivka is reluctant to marry

Dubi. When Dubi continued to describe how he has an apple orchard developing in the desert, she refuses to accept the news. He affirms that apples relish the cold and that during the day they keep them covered in plastic to keep the heat out and that they open the plastic overnight and let the desert cold in. The contrasting conventional views between Rivka and her mother is guided by her affection and a symbolic reflection of their relationship is the clarification of the cycle of what the apples need to live. The love of the mother can be described as intense/tough love, and when it comes to her personal views, she can seem callous to the audience. However, the love she has for her daughter is conveyed outward.

The irony in this story is that the younger generation is guiding the older generation. The daughter does not just marry for practicality but teaches the mother about real love. Another interesting symbol is the fact that the story is mentioning the apple — which connotes the knowledge of love. It is a biblical reference to the apples that Adam and Eve eat. Victoria's rotten apple core is shown on the bus to reveal how Rivka is symbolizing how Victoria has no love, family, and relationship knowledge. Victoria learns to embrace her daughter's modern living style, seeing how it makes her satisfied to be with a guy she genuinely loves rather than just tying the knot for practicality. And hence, after finding real truth behind love, Victoria returns home. The big, plump juicy apples she is given symbolizes this 'emancipation', that contrasted with the rotten apple core she had at the very beginning when she had limited understanding of love.

There are a variety of underlying causes of Jew-hatred. Probably the most common reason is that Jews are perceived to have inordinate political power, education, wealth, interpersonal connections, and refuse to assimilate into the majority population (leaving them open to accusations of disloyalty). Jews have a central belief that they are a chosen people and this concept of 'chosen-ness' or specialness is not lost on Non-Jews who typically see it as a way of describing Non-Jews as lesser people or undesirables. This is, of course, compounded by the fact that Christianity and Islam both had to differentiate themselves from Judaism and denigrate it as a way of convincing their followers to move on from Judaism.

One of the ironies, I always thought, was that for every reason Jews are hated, Jews are also hated for the reverse reason in other times or places. In Poland in the 16th-19th centuries, Jews were hated for being poor (not wealthy). When Jews began to commonly assimilate in 19th century Germany, Jews were hated for trying to emulate their host populations. While Europeans historically argued that Jews were racially distinct from Europeans because of their Semitic ancestry, Arabs historically argued that Jews were racially distinct from Arabs because they are truly a European people. Jews have historically been hated for being too cosmopolitan and not having a true home, but because of Israel today, Jews are hated for being strongly nationalistic where Israel is concerned. ?