

The Yiddish Stage in its Psychological and Juristic Aspects

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By

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Both authors have equal contribution

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“People say that fairy tales can put you to sleep and I say
that through fairy tales, people can be awakened.”

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, *Chayei Moharan*, 25

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INTRODUCTION

METHODOLOGY, LAW, PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THEATRE

Menahem Gnessin, one of the three founders of the Habima National Theatre in Tel Aviv, Israel, defined the purpose of the theatre as part of an artistic conception that pushes one to think. To his understanding, Western theatre in general, and Jewish artistic theatre in particular, should not be used as mere entertainment performances, but as places that evoke critical thought, observing and illuminating the life of the viewer and his culture.

The new Jewish theatre's goal is to find such subjects (themes) so that the viewer goes home after the play and cannot rest or be still until he revisits them again and again to find the solution [...] this is the first sign that the play provided no rest for the viewer [...] the current theatre demonstrates and hints in some harsh and conspicuous way, and the audience heads home and knows no rest for days and months until he decides to ponder the subject and its format. The theatre pushes him to think.¹

This concept of the new Jewish theatre is motivated by a broader and more basic concept according to which the role of art is to arouse the viewer and to test his beliefs and opinions. The creator writes from his heart and the work reflects his world, thoughts and experiences. Sometimes, the creator in general, and the writer in particular, are not aware of all the layers in their creation and the role of the researcher is to discover these layers.

* Our thanks go to the Habima National Theatre, actor Mike Burstyn, actress Lea Koenig, actress Dalia Friedland, photographer Yechiam Gal, Shoval Films, and other photographers who contributed the images from the plays.

¹ [Society of Writers and Hebrew Literature], *Mishpat haDybbuk*: A Stenographic Protocol of the Public Court Sessions on the Beit Ha'am Square in Tel Aviv on the 24th of Sivan and 4th of Tammuz 5686 (Tel Aviv: The Department of Fine Literature and Criticism of the Society of Writers and Hebrew Literature, 1926), 92–93.

The Theatrical Text Embodied in the Play

A play is considered a literary text and an in-depth look at it reveals that it is not a complete literary text, but a missing text, and as defined by Prof. Eli Rozik, a defective text.²

This definition stems from the fact that this is not the final text. The final text of the play is not transcribed, but is said orally on stage. The text spoken in the show is the complete and final text. Although all of the verbal text said on the stage is written in the script, at the same time, other elements of expression are missing in the text such as intonation, facial expression, body language and especially, the mental structure of the character in general, and the emotional state when saying the text in particular.

The lack of non-verbal expressions in the play is what allows for different interpretations of the text, as well as different and varied readings. Different interpretations of the text are transmitted through the change in the non-verbal elements and are the decisive factor in determining the final meaning of those words. Although the director's instructions in the text can fill some of the space, they are usually limited in scope and cannot be in place of the guiding hand of the director.

At the same time, occasionally interpretations are incorrect for the text and the viewer feels, depending on the degree of his sensitivity, the forgery presented to him on stage.

To identify the exact emotional state of the characters and to create whole and round characters with many layers and deep psychological characteristics, it is understandable and necessary to analyse the character design as they appear in the text through a psychoanalytic perspective. Such an observation of how the characters are shaped allows for a deeper look both at the characters in the play and, more importantly, at the playwright's inner world, his conscious and unconscious world, and the critique he has overtly or covertly inserted into the text.

In this respect, the play is similar to the legal text and the legal debate before the judge. The judge, who receives a statement of claim or indictment and a statement of defence must "read between the lines" to deduce the emotional state of the criminal/s before him, the motives for the actions, etc. and thus arrive at an investigation of the truth and an understanding of the factual reality.

Similarly, the director and the actor are required to decipher the text to reveal the truth that lies at the heart of the event, which they are required to

² Elyahu Rozik, *Fundamentals of Analyzing a Play* (Tel Aviv: Or Am with Tel Aviv University, 1993), 19–24.

create for life on stage. The purpose of a story is not only to evoke the imagination but also to describe the present, or what it deserves to be. A good interpretation of a story is not necessarily a topical interpretation, but it should be a relevant interpretation. This is the role of art.

The importance of the “law and literature” field of research is not in doubt. In her book, *Law and Literature*, Prof. Shulamit Almog describes the importance of this field of interdisciplinary research as the “genesis of hope, driven by the imagination”, as she understands it, through the study of law and literature (literature alongside law, in her definition). To reach concrete truth and justice in a reality that does not allow a person to grasp the whole, and to always look for the complex, dynamic and changing balance between law, human needs and human limitations.³

According to the perception of the president of the Supreme Court of Israel (retired), Prof. Aharon Barak, the legal system should be viewed as a complete system, which governs all human life from the moment of birth and even after death. In his own words:

Law governs all areas of life. All human behaviour is subject to a legal norm. Even when a certain type of activity—such as friendships or subjective thoughts—is governed by the autonomy of the private will, this autonomy exists because it is recognised by the law [...] Wherever there are living human beings, there is a law. There are no areas of life that are outside the law.⁴

On the other hand, the vice president of the Supreme Court (retired), Prof. Menachem Alon, believes that there is no place for treating the legal system as a weakness in every area of human life. Alon believes that the point of contention between him and Barak lies in the differences in their perception of the role of the legal system and the role of the judge:

In my opinion, not everything is justiciable, and even when the issue is justiciable, the court must exercise judicial restraint. Barak argues that the whole world is law. He has no legal vacuum and in his opinion, every action we take has a legal aspect. This perception is suitable for religious thought and not for legal thought [...] According to Barak, the legal system has a religious character, which includes the entire being of man. That is why

³ ³ Shulamit Almog, *Law and Literature* (Jerusalem: Nevo Publishing, 2000), 17. For more information on the field of research in law and literature, see this book, especially the introduction, 11–28. (Hebrew)

⁴ Aharon Barak, “On a Worldview Regarding Law and Judgment and Judicial Activism”, *Iyunay Mishpat*, Vol. 17 (1992), 477.

Barak speaks of the “legal universe” [...] It is a philosophical concept and not a legal one?⁵

The literary work challenges the notion that the whole country is a trial. The sentence was written mostly entirely by the jurist, who is captivated by legal conceptions and worldviews that are well rooted in the legal discourse. The literary work that examines legal, social, cultural and other issues is written from an external point of view, from different value worldviews and from different conceptions. It even uses a different discourse to describe similar cases.

This allows critical thinking both towards the legal discourse and towards the cultural phenomenon in which the text deals. The importance of the nature of this critique increases even more when it comes to a theatrical text, since its literary and psychological analysis allows a fertile and different cushion from the legal text to look at the human psyche and cultural phenomena shaped in the text.⁶

In Barak’s conception, which advocates the totality of law, according to which the whole law dominates all areas of a person’s life, organises them and arranges them, the weak point of the law is revealed. Legal thought finds it difficult to reveal complex processes in the human psyche, thus the factual and emotional realities remain hidden.

We propose a doctrine of integration of fields of knowledge for a broader and more in-depth look at human situations in general and legal situations in particular. We believe that the human situation cannot be fully understood (including the legal situation) without introspective and interdisciplinary observation, which complements other faces and hidden voices that the law is unable to reveal.

In other words, psychological research does not only come to the aid of the jurist in order to understand the factual reality and the hidden forces that drive it. This is the essence! Without understanding the situation with psychological tools, it is very difficult to assume that a sufficiently well-founded legal conclusion can be reached; human complexity cannot be observed and understood without introspective observation.

⁵ Nomi Levitsky, *Your Honor—Aharon Barak: Biography* (Jerusalem: Keta Publishing, 2001), 232–233.

⁶ For more information, see Almog, *Law and Literature*, 20, where it describes how literature enables the establishment of the power of law and the construction of the collective recognition of its vitality. Literature creates, for its understanding, the legal ethos and documents and influences it. Sometimes literature glorifies the sentence and sometimes it criticises it, thus revealing its human element.

Truth and Emotion

Wilfred Bion refers to the development of the complexity of human thinking. At a later stage of his psychoanalytic work, he became aware of the limitations of the scientific point of view.⁷ Bion develops the idea that there is a psychic reality, which is unknown. These are emotional, inner and infinite dimensions within us, mysterious and usually inaccessible dimensions, which become accessible only when we are in a state of “without memory and without passion”.

In his search for truth and in his recognition that there is indeed a psychic reality within the subject, which is unknown, Bion questions concepts from the fields of mysticism, philosophy and aesthetics in order to deepen our understanding of this psychic reality. He uses visual images to draw our attention “to what is beyond our immediate perception and understanding”. Bion directs us to the “beyond” emotional worlds, which exist and are present, but usually, the person is not in contact with them, sometimes due to the fear of meeting the “beyond”, the real emotion. Precisely this hidden world, which is not known, is a kind of inner truth, which intimidates us and even frightens us.

Bion puts emotional truth in a very central place for the possibility of human development. Without it, there is no growth and no development. Emotional truth is what nourishes the mind. Deep interpretation (as in the way of classical psychoanalysis) with specific content is no longer the preferred goal of the analytical process. The preferred destination, in his opinion, is an encounter with emotional truth and experience at a given moment.

He emphasises that the meaning of an encounter with such a truth is an unconscious process, which is constantly evolving and forming, similar to pregnancy. Moreover, Bion and Meltzer believe that the psychoanalyst should bring the individual into contact with his inner world as it is, including the hard and foreign parts to it.⁸ They believe in the potential and infinite ability of the subject to evolve, to know and to carry his own truth, especially the encounter with the unknown emotional truth.

The important dimension in the truth-seeking process is this, which takes place between the therapist and the patient (as well as between the judge and the parties and between the director and the actors). The birth of

⁷ Wilfred R. Bion, *Learning from Experience* (London: Maresfield Library, 1962); Bion, *Second Thoughts: Selected Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (London: Karnac Books, 1984), Chap. 9.

⁸ Joan Symington and Neville Symington, *The Clinical Thinking of Wilfred Bion* (Hove: Routledge, 1996).

meaning occurs between them, that is, between the representations of the internalised objects of all these. The inner world is the source of the development of emotional meaning and for that, an interactive process is needed that is based on “mother–baby relationships”. In the processes between mother and baby, there is both the soothing or mediating dimension, but also a dimension of detoxification⁹ or emotional flooding that overwhelms the baby until the interaction between them becomes part of the baby’s internalised abilities.

The discovery of the inner meaning is a touch of the “O” as defined by Bion, meaning that it is a moment of elusive and deep emotional truth, which enables growth and development, and thus is equivalent to a moment of creation. The touch of the “O” is, in fact, the touch of the most subjective, meaningful and profound human truth. Without understanding reality in this way, it is not possible to discover the truth and it is not possible at all to understand the hidden motives that activate human beings, motives that are not even known to man himself.

Such exposure is necessary, both when we try to understand a legal situation and the internal spiritual motives that motivate it in order to reach a just and true legal result—and when we try to decipher characters written in a play or story and thus create them on stage. In other words, to our understanding, psychological analysis for the sake of understanding law, literature and theatre not only enriches understanding, but is also necessary and inseparable.

Observing the Human Being

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, as part of his worldview, invites the learner to introspection. He explains the verse, “Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee” (Psalm 27: 8), in that the word of God and His expectations of me are within me: Rabbi Nachman invites man to introspection within the heart in order to find the word of God.¹⁰ He believes that the system of laws and behaviours of man should be found within his heart. He also deals with the importance of the literary work for understanding the human psyche,¹¹ for shaping behaviour and for developing critical thinking.

In Rabbi Nachman’s understanding, the role of the story is not to silence critical thinking and the tormented soul, but to awaken them. Literary

⁹ Bion refers to the term “detoxification” in this context as a situation in which the mother performs the bride, transforming and giving meaning to the incomprehensible, meaningless experiences that threaten the infant’s immature self.

¹⁰ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, *Likutei Moharan* (Modi’in Illit: 2006), 138.

¹¹ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, *Chayei Moharan*, (Jerusalem: 1976), 25.

works, and certainly theatrical works, teach us to introspect. Psychological analysis of literary and theatrical work, like an in-depth analysis of the legal situation, allows for inner introspection and the understanding of man's soul from a perspective of the totality of mankind's experience.

In this book, we have chosen to analyse six plays originally written in Yiddish, which deal with Jewish issues. The choice of these plays was actually made out of a number of considerations. First, it is a matter of choosing these plays because of their literary importance, because of their success on stage and because of their relevance even many years after they were written.¹²

Literarily, it is a complex but coherent story in which there is a proper balance between all its parts in terms of emotional intensities, pathos and the creation of conflict in which complexity and detachment leading to catharsis are invited. Also, in these plays, the characters are shaped as mostly round characters, sophisticated and with a psychological volume.

After selecting the plays, it became clear that they also reflect the range of the most prominent and important Yiddish playwrights. These are playwrights who have left their mark on Jewish theatre: the father of Jewish theatre, Abraham Goldfaden; the most prolific playwright, Jacob Gordin; the classicist, Sholem Aleichem; the important playwright, S. An-Sky and William Segal, representative of the musicals of the New York Yiddish Theatre. This also reveals the various genres that have taken the stage in the Jewish theatre in Yiddish. In addition, plays dealing with Jewish issues and legal questions were selected.

The characters in these plays are designed as Jewish characters rooted in a Jewish cultural space. Therefore, in this book, the legal issues will be analysed in light of Jewish law from the point of view that if they were real characters and not the product of the playwrights' imaginations, Jewish law was probably the legal system they would turn to.¹³

¹² In the historical review of the stage and cinematic performances of each play in this book, we will not refer to all the stage and cinematic performances of the play, since it is not possible to detail that many. We will only refer to certain performances due to their historical importance in theatrical and cinematic historiography in Yiddish and Hebrew culture.

¹³ The book incorporates many photos from plays from Israel and abroad. The authors made a great effort to find the photographers who took the photos and give them credit, but some of the photos are almost a hundred years old or more and the photographer's name could not always be found. The order of the authors in the book is determined by alphabetical order and their contribution is equal.

CHAPTER ONE

“HERE, AT HOME, AM I THE DECISION- MAKER?” THE LAW OF FORCED MARRIAGE BY THE PARENT IN LIGHT OF FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES. A FEMINIST READING OF THE PLAY, *TWO KUNI LEMEL*

Introduction

The play, *Two Kuni Lemel*, is an audience favourite in Yiddish and Hebrew theatre. The play received most of its publicity following the release of the 1966 film, *Two Kuni Lemel* or *The Flying Matchmaker*. The film, directed by Israel Becker, starred actor, Mike Burstyn, in a double role. The Hebrew-dialogue film was the fourth best-selling film in Israel.¹

Although the film is based on Goldfaden's play, it uses a new musical score written by Moshe Sachar, who also translated the play into Hebrew in 1959 for the Do Re Me Theatre; in this production, the actor, Yaakov Bodo, played Kuni Lemel. Songs that Sachar wrote for the play include “He Will Be My Husband” and “They Say That I am Not Me”.² These songs, written by Sachar in Hebrew and Yiddish, as well as Sachar's screenplay, have become an integral part of it and no theatre production stages the original play without Sachar's additions. As such, we will also refer here to Goldfaden's play combined with Sachar's version.

The play deals with the conflict faced by a young couple in love, Carolina (Chaya) and Max. The two are not allowed to fulfil their love and marry due to cultural and religious constraints, which require the parents to

¹ Frank Bren and Amy Kronish, *World Cinema: Israel* (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1996), 246; Nurith Gertz, *A Story from the Movies: Israeli Stories and their Adaptations for Cinema*, (Tel Aviv: Open University, 1993), 55.

² Abraham Goldfaden, *Two Kuni Lemel: A Musical Play, Hebrew Version and Songs*, “Introduction” (Tel Aviv: Yaron Golan Publishing, 1994).

choose their spouses. The parents' motivation is based on various considerations, with pedigree being the most important; love is not taken into account.

Rabbi Pinchasl, Carolina's father, is unwilling to hear about the possibility that his daughter will marry Max and not the *Hasid*, Kuni Lemel, whom he prefers because of his pedigree. He is close to forcing his daughter to do as he wishes, and to that end, he uses various means.

The question asked is regarding the position of Jewish law. Is the father allowed to force his daughter to agree to the groom he suggests for her—in other words, “pressure her until she says she wants to”? Can the daughter be forced to marry a husband she is not interested in? If the answer is no, it is necessary to find out why Goldfaden chose to shape the father figure to such an extent that he wants to force his daughter to accept his offer of a match even at the cost of a quarrel with his wife who opposes the match.

What are the psychological motives underlying the cultural environment in which the characters operate? Where does the conflict take place between the position of Rabbi Pinchasl and the position of Rebecca, his wife, as Goldfaden chose to shape them in the play?

Play Summary

Rabbi Pinchasl, a wealthy and affluent man, is interested in finding a suitable match for his only daughter, Chayaleh (Chaya). He believes that a devout *Hasid* is the right one for his daughter. Rabbi Kalman the matchmaker, proposes to Rabbi Pinchasl to take Kuni Lemel (Yiddish: Kuni: a simpleton, a naïve person), the stepson of Shulemonie, the breadwinner of the city of Shachrayevka. Although Kuni is a devout *Hasid*, he is also blind in one eye, lame, naïve, childish and has a stutter. Chaya (who calls herself Carolina) refuses to hear about her father's choice of a match because she is in love with Max, a handsome, educated teacher, the son of Shulemonie's brother, an educated doctor.

She meets her beloved Max and tells him about the match that her father is planning for her. Max, realising that this is none other than his step-cousin, Kuni Lemel, decides to dress up as his cousin and go to Rabbi Kalman, the matchmaker's house as Carolina's groom. Libella, the matchmaker's daughter, welcomes him and Max flirts with her as Kuni Lemel, perhaps in the expectation that eventually, the real Kuni Lemel will marry her, and thus the poor matchmaker's daughter will also win a match.

Rebecca, Rabbi Pinchasl's wife, refuses to marry her daughter to Kuni Lemel and demands that Carolina marry only her heart's desire. Meanwhile, the real Kuni Lemel arrives at the house of Rabbi Pinchasl. Carolina,

convinced that this is Max in disguise, informs her parents that this is the man she wants to marry. Kuni Lemel is startled by Carolina, who tries to kiss him, and in his attempt to escape, he encounters Max disguised as himself. Max manages to confuse his cousin, the real Kuni Lemel, about his identity and convinces Kuni Lemel to return to Shachrayevka to bring proof that he is the real Kuni Lemel and not Max. Kuni Lemel travels home to get the proof.

Meanwhile, the disguised Max fools Rabbi Pinchasl and makes him believe that Kuni Lemel is a hidden *Tzaddik* (a righteous Jew) capable of speaking with the souls of the dead without stuttering. Upset by the incident, Rabbi Pinchasl swears to Max with a handshake that he will give him his daughter for a wife. Max’s fellow students enter the room disguised as ghosts and confirm that Kuni Lemel–Max is the right match for Carolina.

While writing the *tnoyim* (the marriage terms) with Kuni Lemel–Max, the real Kuni Lemel enters accompanied by Rabbi Kalman, the matchmaker, and his daughter, Libella. Each of the Kuni Lemels claims to be the true Kuni Lemel. Only when Kuni Lemel’s stepfather, Shulemonie, arrives is the complication resolved. Shulemonie realises that Max, his nephew, is dressed up as Kuni Lemel. He convinces Rabbi Pinchasl to allow Carolina to marry Max and Max, in turn, says he’ll give Libella half of his dowry if she agrees to marry Kuni Lemel.

In the final scene, the students expel the *Hasidim* and Max claims that the real lineage is the one who acquires education. The play ends with singing and dancing as the two couples marry.

Play Background

The play is a comedy of errors, based on a well-known motif in classical and modern plays, the motif of the exchange of identities between two similar ones. This motif exists in *Comedy of Errors* by William Shakespeare and is drawn from the Roman comedy, *The Brothers Menaechmus*, by Plautus, about the mistaken identity of two identical twins of the same name.

In addition, Goldfaden uses a central theme of the Enlightenment—the younger generation’s success in finding love in the face of the inflexibility and even ignorance of their more traditional parents’ generation. The enlightened and educated mock the ignorant *Hasid* (ignorant in the eyes of the educated).

The play combines favourite songs, dances, love, laughter and tears, which contributed to its great success among the same audiences who loved Goldfaden’s previous plays.

Abraham Goldfaden—Author of the Play

The play was written by Abraham Goldfaden (1840–1908. Yiddish: Avrum Goldnfoden, which, in Yiddish, means “golden string”). Goldfaden is considered the father of Yiddish theatre and one of the founders of the new Jewish culture in the nineteenth century. In almost all of his work, the educational elements and themes that Goldfaden believed in can be identified. At the same time, it seems that his character, perhaps more than any other character among the literary figures of the Enlightenment, is controversial regarding the degree of quality of his work. Itzik Manger called Goldfaden “one of the geniuses of theatre among the Jews and perhaps not only among the Jews”. Sholem Aleichem called him “the great national poet who has many talents”. On the other hand, David Pinsky called him “a joker in the form of a playwright, the father of the *Schund* in theatre”.³

Goldfaden was born to an educated father, a watchmaker by profession, and a mother from a *Hasidic* family. These two opposing ideologies influenced him from childhood. His father drew him into Hebrew and the Enlightenment’s way of thinking (Enlightenment: *Haskalah* in Hebrew), which he believed in, while his maternal grandfather used to take him to the *Hasidic shtibl* (a small house used for communal Jewish prayer), where he absorbed *Hasidism*.⁴

The influence of the idea of the Enlightenment that Goldfaden absorbed and which he chose as his ideological outlook can be identified in his plays, which deal with the life of the Jewish *shtetl* (small Jewish village in Eastern Europe). The plays follow an anti-traditional line of education, similar to the literature of nineteenth century Jewish education.⁵

³ *Schund*: Spoiled art for the masses, cheap entertainment with no artistic value. For more information, see Reuven Goldberg, “Introduction” in *Goldfaden, Poems and Plays* (Jerusalem: 1970), 7–57; Nokhem Oyslender and Uri Finkel, *Goldfaden: Materialn far a Biografie* (“Goldfaden: Materials for a Biography”), (Minsk: Institute of Belarusian Culture, 1926), 140; Shmuel Rozshansky, “Abraham Goldfaden: A Never-ending Well of Play, Song and Jewish Sentiments”, *Abraham Goldfaden, Selected Writings*, S. Rozshansky (editor), Buenos Aires: Joseph Lifshitz, 2014: 23–31.

⁴ Rozshansky, “Biographical Traits”, *Abraham Goldfaden, Selected Writings*, Abraham Goldfaden: A Never-ending Well of Play, Song and Jewish Sentiments (Buenos Aires: Joseph Lifshitz, 1964), 8.

⁵ Chone Shmeruk, *Yiddish Literature: Chapters in its History* (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Enterprises, 1978), 234–260; Ze’ev Goldberg, “The Drama, *Two Kuni Lemel*, by Abraham Goldfaden.” *Massad* 5, 1961.

One of the central motifs in Enlightenment literature is the critique against arranged marriages and a focus on marriage for love.⁶ This motif is repeated quite a bit in Goldfaden's plays, starting with his play, *The Grandmother and the Granddaughter*, first performed in 1877, in which an orphaned granddaughter escapes from her grandmother's house with an educated teacher and is unwilling to marry the pious groom her grandmother designates. The same is true of the theme of the play, *Schmendrik*, from that year, in which an educated bride wants to marry the man she loves. Even in his most famous play, *The Witch* (1876), Marcus and Mirele, a young, educated couple, defeat Mirele's stepmother, Batya, and the witch, Bobba Yachna, represents the old and degenerated world.

This same representation is in the play, *Two Kuni Lemel*, which was originally called *The Fanatic or the Two Kuni Lemel*. This duplicate title was very popular among Yiddish playwrights at the time, but it was soon abandoned, probably due to the success of the play, and was called *Two Kuni Lemel*.⁷ From the name of the play, one can recognise the author's negative attitude towards the character of Rabbi Pinchasl, whose name corresponds, of course, with the biblical zealot, Pinchas, who in his zealotry and in the name of God, kills Zimri, son of Salu, president of the tribe of Simeon, and Cozbi, daughter of Zur, the Midianite, during a sexual encounter between the two that was forbidden by God.⁸

On the other hand, one can recognise the degree of empathy and compassion that the author has for the character of Chaya/Carolina. On her way out to the garden, a way that symbolically expresses the way out of the dark world of tradition and *Hasidism* into the light of the Enlightenment, she sings about being born to a fanatical father and living in the dark until she went out to the sweet garden and smelled the sweet scent of Enlightenment. She refers to "Enlightenment" as "sweet and fresh air", but she was told that it was not for her.⁹

⁶ This is clearly the case with Mendele Mocher Sforim in *The Fathers and the Sons* and *Fishke the Lame*; Sholem Aleichem in *Tevye the Dairyman* (see Dan Miron, "Epilogue", 203); and S. An-Sky in *The Dybbuk—Between Two Worlds*. See further information in Chap. 4.

⁷ The double title appears in the first edition of the play as printed in Warsaw in 1887. In the edition printed in New York, probably in 1893, there is an illustrated title page with the caption, *Di Zwei Koni Lemel*, and on the next page, there is a title page with the details of the publication, *Two Kuni Lemel*. See Goldberg, "Introduction", 23.

⁸ *Book of Numbers*, 25:1–15; Goldberg, "Introduction", in *Goldfaden, Poems and Plays*, 26.

⁹ Goldfaden, *Two Kuni Lemel*, 12.

Her name, Carolina, also expresses the same perception and longing for the wider world and education. Her original name was Chaya, but she chooses to call herself Carolina, a foreign name that connects to the general culture and disconnects from the traditional world in which she was born and raised. It is interesting that her name, which expresses life (in Hebrew), does not give her vitality, since vitality, according to her, cannot dwell in her *Hasidic* home, but only when she enters the world of education.

Goldfaden's plays serve as a tool for spreading his educated conceptions, which negate the old-fashioned and degenerate the traditional world in his experience. He does not hide these views in his plays, and puts them at the forefront of his drama. It should be noted that at the end of his life, Goldfaden changed his attitude to religion and tradition. He also changed his attitude to education, as appears in his essay, "A Generation Goes and a Generation Comes", where he advocated religious and traditional education for the preservation of the nation. It seems that he believed in combining the values of education with the values of religion and Jewish nationalism with the goal of raising educated Jews (and not educated, assimilated Jews or uneducated Jews).¹⁰

Analysing Goldfaden's plays while comparing them to contemporary European plays may, in our view, present an ill-considered picture. For example, in relation to the play, *A Doll's House*, by Henrik Ibsen, which was written in the same period as *Two Kuni Lemel*. Both plays deal with the desire to change the power dynamics between different social groups such as men and women. But Ibsen's plays are more complex, round and more complete than Goldfaden's plays.

In Goldfaden, most of the characters are stereotypically drawn. The educated figures are considered the sons of light, they are all beautiful and flawless, while the *Hasidic* figures, who represent the older generation, are distorted and one-dimensional.¹¹ It should be remembered, however, that Goldfaden's plays were the beginnings of professional Yiddish theatre and were a kind of prototype for the playwrights who came after him and who built on his plays, benefitting from the path he paved for them. Nor can the audience who came to Ibsen's theatre be compared to those who came to Goldfaden's theatre, neither the cultural environment nor the sociological environment in which he operated.

¹⁰ For more on Goldfaden and his views, see Zeev Goldberg, "'A Generation Comes and a Generation Goes—Abraham Goldfaden's Views of Jewish Education'". *Hagut: Studies in Jewish Educational Thought* 9 (2010): 245–259.

¹¹ For an analysis of the one-dimensionality of the characters in the play, *Two Kuni Lemel*, see Goldberg, "Introduction", in *Goldfaden, Poems and Plays*, 26–29.

Goldfaden’s plays may be considered “primitive” for the modern reader, but their importance is in the breakthrough of modern Jewish theatre that has operated and continues to operate in Eastern Europe, America and Israel in Yiddish, English and Hebrew.

“Force Her Until She Says ‘I Want To’?”

Hence the legal question: Rabbi Pinchasl is interested in forcing Chaya/Carolina to marry Kuni Lemel, even though she is interested in Max. In light of the position of Jewish law, is he allowed to do so?

The *Babylonian Talmud* examines the possibility of marrying a woman out of necessity.¹² According to the *Mishnah* in tractate *Kiddushin* (a, a) there are three ways in which marriage can be created: either by handing the woman a coin or object of nominal value (today the custom is to use a golden ring); by handing her a marriage contract or through consummation (sexual intercourse) in which the couple has a marital relationship.¹³ The language of the *Mishnah*, “The woman is bought in three ways”, led the *Babylonian Talmud* to wonder whether it is possible to sanctify a woman against her will, since the *Mishnah* took the passive practice of “bought”, meaning that the active party or actor in the act of marriage is the husband, who buys the wife.

However, the Talmud rejects this understanding, stating that the reason for the actual “purchase” is to express the fact that the marriage contract between a man and a woman where they mutually promise to marry each other) is valid only if the woman has agreed to the marriage (*Kiddushin*, II: 2).

If the *Mishnah* says “a buyer”, which means the man buys, we might be mistaken and think that the man is performing the act of consecration without any need for the woman’s consent. So the *Mishnah* said: ‘The woman is bought only with her consent. In other words, the woman’s consent to marry is an integral part of the act of consecration. The Rambam has also stated that in order to conduct marriage, a woman’s consent must be given.¹⁴ And this *halachah* (Jewish law) was, in fact, also stated in the *Shulchan Aruch*, “The woman is not sanctified without her will.”¹⁵

¹² *Babylonian Talmud*, “Kiddushin”, B:2.

¹³ See *Babylonian Talmud*, “Yevamot”, 50:a, regarding Sages’ opposition to marriage via sexual intercourse.

¹⁴ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, “Halachot Ishut”, D:a.

¹⁵ Rabbi Joseph Karo, *Shulchan Aruch*, “Even Ha’ezer”, 52:a; It should be noted that even in the consecration ceremony under the canopy, the consent of the woman is expressed in receiving the ring from the groom, who offers her marriage by saying,

The position of Jewish law, then, is that a woman cannot be forced to marry a man against her will, and if they do so, the marriage is invalid. The need for this consent stems from the fact that the woman, as an independent personality, must voluntarily accept the change in her personal status.¹⁶

In the play, Rabbi Pinchasl is interested in marrying his daughter to Kuni Lemel, but she is interested in Max. Her disagreement does not bother Rabbi Pinchasl and he is convinced that he will have the upper hand:

If only I could marry her to one of our own, a kosher guy! But what do you do when she wants “Treifniak”?¹⁷ Anyway, what she wants, doesn’t bother me. After all, I am the father.¹⁸

On the other hand, his wife, Rebecca, is interested in the groom of her daughter’s choice:

Rebecca: [...] I will find a groom for her that she will like and not the one you have chosen.

Pinchasl: Rebecca, here at home, I am the decision-maker!

Rebecca: Who told you that?

Pinchasl: I decided that I am the decision-maker.

Rebecca: In your dreams, at night!

Pinchasl: I know you are stubborn, but this time, I will not give up.

Rebecca: I will not give up! (Leaves).¹⁹

In light of the above, Hebrew law does not allow Rabbi Pinchasl to force his daughter to marry Kuni Lemel. If so, what are the reasons why Rabbi Pinchasl allows himself to do so? Why did Goldfaden shape both parents in

“Behold, you are consecrated to me with this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel.”

¹⁶ This idea has been practised since the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, when Eliezer (the slave of Abraham) wants to take Rebecca with him so she could marry Isaac. Her family members respond, “Let’s call the young woman and ask her.” (*Genesis* 24: 57) Although this is a case from before the giving of the Torah and it is possible that it concerns the marriage of a minor (from age twelve) for which there are special laws, she would still have the right to refuse the marriage in the end. In other words, even in the marriage of a minor, it is necessary to verify her consent. In fact, it is forbidden for a father to approve his daughter’s marriage until she is old enough to choose for herself who she wishes to marry.” (*Babylonian Talmud*, “Kiddushin”, 41: a)

¹⁷ *Treifniak* comes from the combination of the word *treif* and a Slavic suffix. The word means that the guy is “not kosher” because he is educated and does not deserve to be a groom to Pinchasl’s daughter.

¹⁸ Goldfaden, *Two Kuni Lemel*, 9–10. Our own emphasis.

¹⁹ Goldfaden, 13.

this way? In order to answer the questions, we will try to understand what is going on in the minds of the characters as Goldfaden chose to depict them.

The Psychological Motives that Trigger the Characters

In her article on psychoanalysis and feminism, Nancy Chodorow argues that understanding social and cultural processes requires psychoanalytic observation. This is because of the need to look at introverted relationships and unconscious processes.²⁰ The play is about the parents’ attempt to achieve the best for their daughter, but the inner starting point is very different between the two parents. In order to understand the conflict between the parents in the play, we believe that the nature of motherhood and fatherhood must be understood from a psychoanalytic–feminist perspective.

Mothers and Motherhood

Mothers stem from the very fact that a woman has given birth to a baby from her physiological, mental and biological relationship with a man. Motherhood, on the other hand, is an acquired, evolving trait. The traits expected of the mother are an emotional attitude towards others regardless of biological motherhood, traits such as empathy, closeness, compassion and more.

Jessica Benjamin was among the first to talk about the mother figure as a subject.²¹ Benjamin presents, for the first time, a very different position from the orthodox psychoanalytic conception of the development of boys and girls on their way to finding their separation from their mothers.²²

Anat Pelgi-Hecker talks about the efforts of feminist analysts to examine the normal development of a maternal subject. She asks if feminist psychoanalysis can be believed at all. According to her, the possibility of conceptualising motherhood depends not necessarily on the choice between

²⁰ Nancy Chodorow, “Feminism and Difference: Gender, Relations and Differences in Psychoanalytic Perspective.” *Socialist Review*. Vol. 9, No. 4 (1979): 51–70.

²¹ Is as a person separated from her mother, meaning that her self–realisation is not solely related to the realisation of her motherhood.

²² Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

the female voice and the maternal voice, but rather on the combination of the two.²³

While the first waves of feminism saw high moral sensitivity as part of the traits that characterise women, motherhood speaks of acquired and developing traits that are derivatives of the coveted bond between a mother and her children, but can exist in those who have never given birth, including in men. The “power of love” is essential to the life of human society and does not have to be realised only by women. Traits such as empathy, concern, closeness and compassion are not only feminine traits; femininity and masculinity can equally exist in every person.

Carol Gilligan deals with female morality. She believes that maternal functions such as caring for others, which exist in women, are an inherent part of their moral judgment. When the socio-moral perception does not recognise these functions as legitimate, women’s judgment becomes problematic. Women who wish, in parallel with the fulfilment of maternal functions, to exercise both themselves (the realisation of natural data and talents) and their self-rights (the realisation of inner truth and authentic needs) will encounter an internal conflict arising voluntarily as opposed to the socio-cultural perception in their environment.

This is true, of course, of a society that is unwilling to acknowledge the uniqueness and unique worldview of women. Gilligan argues that when relationships are enslaved to rules and rules are enslaved to universal principles of justice, many women will experience internal conflict. Our ability as a society to recognise the motherhood or fatherhood of the father is central to achieving parental equality. If we recognise that the father also has the ability to enjoy motherhood, then we mark his ability to pass on to his children not only the authority for separation and difference, but also the unity and identification (the feminine qualities).²⁴

Nancy Chodorow distinguishes between the female self in some relationships and the male self, based on separation. The female identity is an identity that develops continuously from childhood to femininity with the mother being a constant form of identification for the girl. The masculine identity, on the other hand, develops through distinction: the boy’s natural and initial identification with his mother evokes in him the recognition that he is different, hence his difficulty in creating a stable masculine identity.

²³ Anat Palgi-Hecker, *From E-mahut to Imahut: A Feminist Psychoanalytic Search for the Mother as a Subject*, (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2005), 302–310.

²⁴ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

Thus female motherhood, Chodorow argues, evokes a defensive masculine identity and an ideology of masculine superiority as universal compensation. She monitors the girl's gender development while emphasising her closeness to her mother. This is different from the child, who can be loved by the mother, but at the same time, must also be detached from her. The girl's “penis jealousy” in relation to her father, claims Chodorow, is therefore not the same jealousy—as Freud understood—jealousy due to lack, but the girl's jealousy of the boy's freedom and choice to live separately from his mother.²⁵

Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis

Both feminism and psychoanalysis are attempts to reclaim the repressed and muted voices to open discourse, to give it words, to call it by name, and invite it into the spoken language. There are psychoanalysts who identify the “unknown” with the feminine. It is an attempt to look for places without identity within an entirely masculine culture, to name places where the culture represses women's voices, and to draw conclusions from there.

Another feminist psychoanalytic experience communicates with the potential to produce a subject that culture has not yet produced. It is the attempt to identify the potential that exists in a place without identity as a feminine and maternal place. In orthodox psychoanalytic conceptions, development always stems from a sense of lack. This perception runs naturally through all of these theories. The girl is missing something and her passion and impulses are due to deprivation. The above feminist conceptions challenge these conceptions.

²⁵ Nancy Chodorow, *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond*, (Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1994). Penis envy: A psychoanalytic concept that refers to a stage in a girl's development, according to Freud's psychosexual model, during which girls feel anxious when they come to the realisation that they do not have a penis like boys. Freud believes that this understanding leads to many changes in the behaviour of girls that lead to the development of a female gender identity. It should be noted that Chodorow sanctifies female subjectivity and not just motherhood as the realisation of femininity, in contrast to Freud who sees the realisation of femininity in motherhood. In the play, Carolina fights for her female subjectivity in her desire to marry Max, the one she loves.

From the General to the Specific

The play was first printed in 1887 in Warsaw²⁶ and was probably written between 1880–1878. This period is at the heart of the period of Jewish education (Enlightenment Period).

The literature of Hebrew and Yiddish education (and Goldfaden is, as mentioned, first and foremost, educated) is pure male literature. It was written mostly by men, the majority of its readers were men (at least until the seventies of the nineteenth century) and it was written in Hebrew, the language of study of the canonical texts, a male yeshiva language. The characteristics of the descriptions of women in this androcentric literature are exacerbated, due to its gender, social and cultural characteristics.

The play, *Two Kuni Lemel*, although written in Yiddish, meets the characteristics of the Hebrew Enlightenment literature in light of the author's educated ideology. The "masculinity" of the writers and readers of the Enlightenment literature caused excessive extremism in the depictions of women and the emphasis on masculine bias in their depictions of women. The descriptions of women through hostile and blatant satirical criticism on the one hand, and unrealistically exaggeration of the ideal protagonist on the other.²⁷

Simone de Beauvoir defines the woman in this literature as "The other".²⁸ To our understanding, defining a woman as "other" is a subtle way of saying "inferior", "less equal", "slightly opinionated". At the same time, from the 1860s onwards, one can identify an influence of the spirits of the Russian social revolution on educational literature. An influence that contributed to the shaping of the figure of women as equal to men in society. A woman who is not submissive or exploited.²⁹ Russian radical ideology influenced not only the description of women in literature itself, but also the social reality of this period.³⁰ The radicals proposed a political solution to the problem of oppression of women. They argued that the problem of oppression of women should be linked to the problem of oppression of all

²⁶ Goldfaden, *Two Kuni Lemel*, Introduction.

²⁷ On the characteristics of this male literature, see Tova Cohen, *One is Loved and One is Hated: Between Reality and Fiction in the Descriptions of Women in the Literature of the Haskalah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002), 13–17.

²⁸ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (French: *Le Deuxième Sexe*), H.M. Parshley (Trans.), (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 22.

²⁹ Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism, 1860–1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

³⁰ Cohen, *One is Loved and One is Hated*, 35–36.