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Jewish Identity in American Fiction

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**JEWISH IDENTITY IN AMERICAN
FICTION**

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**JEWISH IDENTITY IN AMERICAN
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**ŽIDOVSKÁ IDENTITA V AMERICKÉ
LITERATUŘE**

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Abstract:

The work focuses on Jewish identity in the USA. Problems connected with immigration as well as further lives of immigrants in the USA are presented on the examples of two Jewish characters – David Levinsky and Morris Bober from novels *The Rise of David Levinsky* by Abraham Cahan and *The Assistant* by Bernard Malamud, respectively. Attention is paid to their level of assimilation, changes in hierarchy of values together with their approach to the traditional life style of Jewish people.

Abstrakt:

Práce se zaměřuje na otázku židovské identity v USA. Na příkladu dvou židovských postav Davida Levinského a Morrise Bobera z románů *Vzestup Davida Levinského* od Abrahama Cahana a *Příručí* od Bernarda Malamud jsou prezentovány problémy spojené s imigrací, společně s dalším životem postav v novém prostředí. Pozornost je věnována především asimilaci, změnám hodnot a přístupu k tradičnímu životnímu stylu Židů.

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1 Introduction

The USA is a specific country in terms of its multiculturalism. There are many various ethnic groups living in the USA and there is a continuous process of influencing each other. In such a society it is difficult to maintain traditional identity of a certain ethnic group. Nevertheless, the Jews represent a significant ethnic group which had influenced American public life and history of this country and at the same time, Jewish identity survived the influence of other ethnic groups. Needless to say, there were also important changes in the lifestyle of Jewish people, too.

The aim of the paper is to give a picture of Jewish immigrants in the USA and their identity – both, Jewish and Americanized ones. The paper is based on the analysis of two novels and mainly of the leading characters.

The first part of this paper concentrates on the immigration issues and the perception of the immigrants in the USA generally. There is also classification of the immigration from different points of view. The purpose of this section is to illustrate the environment into which the Jewish immigrants arrived.

The main body of the work is aimed at Jewish immigration. The pieces of cultural background information are combined with particular examples from chosen literary works in order to provide a picture of Jewish life and Jewish identity in the USA.

Jewish identity and its changes due to various living conditions and different environment were topics of many Jewish writers. Abraham Cahan and Bernard Malamud were writers who dealt with this topic, too. Both of them were Jews and both of them created Jewish characters in their works. We chose two novels with Jewish heroes – *The Rise of David Levinsky* and *The Assistant* on which we want to analyze Jewish identity

of the main characters – David Levinsky and Morris Bober and their understanding of being a Jew.

This paper is aimed at showing different approaches to a man's Jewishness in American society. Giving examples from both chosen novels we want to illustrate important stages of immigrants' experience and its impact on the identity of a particular person. The most important features such as hopes and visions about the USA, the feelings of newcomers, changes in their everyday lives and gradual understanding or misunderstanding of the American way of life, and a question of assimilation are given in order to show Jewish identity in American society and its rise or decline.

In particular, the identity of the first generation of Jewish immigrants is the main point we would like to concentrate on. When using the term "the first generation of immigrants" we understand the people who came to the USA as immigrants from any country all over the world. The other term used in this work "the second generation of immigrants" refers to the people born in the USA whose parents were immigrants.

The first mentioned novel *The Rise of David Levinsky* by Abraham Cahan was written in 1917. It gives a detailed picture of immigration in the 1880s and later. The other novel by Bernard Malamud was published in 1957 and deals with a character who lives in the USA almost his whole life. Although the reader is not given any precise information about time setting, we can suppose that the author writes about the first half of the twentieth century.

Both heroes, David Levinsky and Morris Bober, are of Jewish origin and both belong to the first generation of immigrants. But these two facts are the only similarities between them. With the first hero – David we are shown around the first experiences of immigration. A complete greenhorn and his transformation into Jewish American - it is the core of the whole novel. While with the hero of Malamud's novel, we can see the result of more than twenty years in the USA and the final impact on a Jewish person.

Moreover, *The Assistant* introduces a relationship between two generations of immigrants. Bober's daughter, Helen is the personification of hopes and attitudes of the second generation of Jewish immigration. Furthermore, we can find many interesting features while observing other characters in both mentioned novels. There are other immigrants, other Jews living in the USA. *The Rise of David Levinsky* provides us with a picture of a clash and a pursuit between two generations of Jewish immigrants and their different perception of the life in the USA. Studying the setting in both novels we are given an illustration of change in values, habits and living conditions of the Jewish Americans.

2 Reasons to Come to America

One of the most important principles for the American people is the fact that all people are equal and that the equality can not be touched by anyone. Especially, freedom of religion and speech were the first two areas which Americans insisted on in the Declaration of Independence. Later, all the politicians and all the governments were aiming at broadening liberties in other spheres such as social or economic ones. As a result, the land was proud to offer equal opportunities to all people. This was the main reason why many people looked at America with hope in their hearts.

In Hartz's opinion, American community can be labelled as a liberal one (Hartz, 3). As America was originally a land where people tried to find liberty, the newcomers did not have to face American unwillingness to give liberty to any immigrant. That is why the USA became a destination for many people lacking freedom or opportunity to earn money. This land seemed to be fair to anyone. All people, except the Indian Americans, were originally 'immigrants' in the land. The only difference between them was the length of their stay there.

Probably, the most attractive feature of the USA was the fact that the people were not afraid that they would have to face any kind of oppression here. The idea of an ideal country was often supported by experience of friends or relatives who had tried their luck in the new world before. They were able to live a good life, not suffer from hunger. In addition, some of them could financially support their families in their home country.

There were several reasons for coming to the new land – the most important of all were freedom and money. "The United States" - it was almost a symbol for Jewish people who suffered from pogroms and persecution in their homelands. But not only Jews were attracted to try their fortune in the USA.

Many people decided to go to a completely new land and wanted to start a new life because of economic situation in their country. People from many countries all over the world arrived in the USA with a dream of earning money and becoming rich. Takaki lists all the most important reasons. Around 1850, the Chinese revolution led to a great flow of immigrants. This was the only chance to find work for Chinese people and the wages were incomparable with those in China. (Takaki, 191 - 193) For some people the land was the main reason for coming. A vast area of soil which was available at a reasonable price was drawing many people's attention to the New Land. One of the temporary but important reasons for trying luck in the States was the gold rush. Especially, people from Asia wanted to earn money in California. (Takaki, 12)

The tradition of liberal country and democratic system were the far most important for all immigrants. In other words, America offered a second chance to all people. Even though, the immigrants worked under inconvenient conditions and had a poor accommodation, still they were free and they had possibility to try their luck. Of course, sometimes they did not succeed for the first time.

Hold fast, this is most necessary in America. Forget your past, your customs, and your ideals. Select a goal and pursue it with all your might. No matter what happens to you, hold on. You will experience a bad time but sooner or later you will achieve your goal. (Smith, 258)

3 Restrictions against Immigration

America was a popular destination for many immigrants, a new tendency to prevent such huge immigration started to occur. “Congress has the power to decide which aliens shall be admitted to the United States and under what condition.” (Burns, 147)

The Americans were afraid of habits, religion and cheap labour which were connected with immigration. Smith comments the movement which occurred against immigration. Groups of people started to protest against immigration. These people pointed out the origin of the Americans and said that the most important is to be born in America. Their name was related to their words – they were called nativists. (Smith, 297) They protested against the immigrants who were Catholics – namely, Irish and German. The nativists feared that with growing number of Catholics in the USA Vatican would be interested in controlling their free land. In the end, nativists did not succeed in their campaigns. In Smiths words, the dissolution of the organization prevents them from being able to influence passing law against immigrants (Smiths, 297).

However, the fear of enormous immigration grew. According to Burns, firstly, certain groups were stopped from entering the country. By 1875 a term ‘undesirable’ was used to characterize some would-be immigrants who were not allowed to enter the USA. (Burns, 147) Newly arrived immigrants represented very cheap labour. That is why the new law - *Chinese Exclusion Act* was passed in order to stop immigration of cheap labour pouring from China. This happened in 1882. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/immigration_to_the_United_States)

Smith lists the following restrictions. A set of restrictive laws occurred within several years. These laws were aimed against lunatic or illiterate people. A huge immigration wave before and during the First World War led to *The Immigration Act* of 1924. This act set a limited number of immigrants who could be admitted; restrictions were aimed especially at the eastern European nations. (Smith, 297)

Furthermore, some nations were favoured in entering the States. Among these nations were Scandinavians or British. They were in favour because they were usually educated and knew the official language. Generally, it was easier for them to find a job, start living and assimilate.

This state of things was not changed until 1965 when a new law was passed. This time, it was more liberal as the quotas were higher. Furthermore, relatives, skilled people or political refugees were preferred in entering the USA. This law was amended several times. Each time, there was a tendency to make entering easier for disadvantaged groups (because of their religion, race or political opinion).

President Lyndon Johnson said about the law in 1965: It does repair a very deep and painful flaw in the fabric of American justice. It corrects a cruel and enduring wrong in the conduct of the American nation. (Smith, 297)

4 Classification of Immigration

4.1 Classification According to Time

As said above, immigrants came from all over the world. They can be divided by various factors. We can speak about immigration from the point of view of time. There were several huge waves in which immigrants poured into the USA. But in fact, immigrants were coming to the USA continuously. Looking as far back as 1600s, we can speak about British immigration. But in these days, these people are called colonists, not immigrants. According to Lew Smiths, this immigration was slow but steady (Smiths, 294). The second group of people coming to the New Land in the same period was formed by Africans who were forced to become slaves of the colonists.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, there was another wave of immigration. This was a time of industrial and agricultural revolution in Europe as well as in America. As a result of these processes, people who had small businesses had to face bankrupts. Many workers lost their jobs, as the manual work was replaced by mass production in the factories. They hoped to find a job in the new land. Moreover, Ireland passed a hard period, as the potato crop failed. Many people starved to death. Immigration was seen as a chance to survive. For those who worked in agriculture, there was opportunity to buy a piece of land and lead the same way of living as they were used to in their homes.

One invention and its development persuaded many people who still doubted – steamship.

Sailing across the Atlantic was dangerous. The journey took three months, time sufficient for the spread of disease in cramped, crowded holds. A steamship, however, made the trip in ten days. The development of steamships not only reduced the danger of illness, but also the price of the journey. (Smith, 294-295)

In the second half of the nineteenth century immigrants from southern and eastern Europe became the leading group in immigration. After the death of Alexander II, the Russian Jews were massacred. There

were several so called pogroms in which many Jewish people lost their lives. Nothing could have stopped them from leaving the country. America promised them religious freedom. It represented their vision of a better life. That is why, Jewish immigration is mentioned here. Jews represented the largest group of newcomers of the above-mentioned period.

4.2 Classification According to Nation

Another classification can take nationality, or in some cases, place of origin as a distinctive feature. Listing major nationalities we will keep chronological order.

African Americans have been the leading minority throughout American history. They were brought as early as in the seventeenth century. They were arriving continuously until the end of the nineteenth century. African immigration was not voluntary. In particular, it was a slave business that has brought them to the New Land. The immigrants were predominantly young men. The reason is clear. They were settled mainly in the South, in rural areas. They worked as plantation workers and servants.

The following significant group of newcomers was created by Asian nations. They had to cross the Pacific. That is why they settled mainly on the west coast. Their most common destination was California. The first of the Asian nations to come were the Chinese. They had mainly political and economic reasons. The land – under British rule – was in war, devastated by the Opium wars or by numerous rebellions. The Chinese wanted to escape the unsettled place. America was idealized and they believed in rich country which could give them job and opportunity to earn enough to support their relatives. Their stays were usually temporary. The occupations which they could get were limited due to their education. The majority of them was unskilled or illiterate. As they came in great numbers, soon anti-Asian feeling among Americans aroused. In the end, these feelings led to *Chinese Exclusion Act* of 1882. This law restricted immigration on the basis of nationality of the immigrants.

The Chinese arrived first, and what happened to them influenced the reception of the Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, and Asian Indians as well as the Southeast Asian refugees like the Vietnamese and the Hmong. (Takaki, 7)

Hispanic immigration represents a different kind. People from Mexico or Latin America were in a different situation. In 1840s many Mexican citizens became American citizens. It was a consequence of the American expansion in westward direction which ended in American – Mexican war. Its goal was the annexation of California. Similar situation occurred again. Now, Texas was the objective. As a result of all these struggles, the American - Mexican border was moved in favour of the USA. Many Mexican people stayed at homes but suddenly, they lived in the area of a different country. Soon, they had to change their lifestyle. Due to American influence, they continued to work in agriculture but many of them became ordinary labourers constructing railroads or working in mines. As the construction of railroad moved to different locations, these people moved, too. As a result, they had spread all over the country. In contrast with other immigrants, they were not easily assimilated. Because of the fact that their homeland was near, they insisted on their culture and language. In comparison with other nations they influenced their new land much more significantly.

Nevertheless, the Chicano experience has been unique, for most of them have lived close to their homeland – a proximity that has helped reinforce their language, identity, and culture. (Takaki, 8)

But the highest number of immigrants is connected with Europe. First of the Europeans to come were the British. Their destination was not only the USA but states of the British dominion (Canada, Australia). The British came in many waves; in fact we can say that they were arriving continuously. In particular, we can speak about a big wave in the first half of the nineteenth century. “Between 1820 and 1860, 5 million emigrated. Most were from northern and western Europe, and of these, 750,000 were from Great Britain.” (Smith, 294)

Speaking about European nations, the Irish created a large immigration group. They were pushed to leave their beloved country because of a great famine that had been caused by the fail of potato crop. These people did not see any other chance but to go to America in order to save their lives. They felt that their poverty was a result of the British rule. Takaki points out that the people leaving the country were predominantly labourers, not much skilled. Many of them found work with the construction of the railroads. (Takaki, 139 – 145)

The German flow to the States was constant. They came with the first settlers in the seventeenth century and they arrivals continued. There was another huge wave of German immigration, and especially German Jewish immigration in the nineteenth century. Among their reasons was a desire to be free and freely express their religious belief. Moreover, these people had to face anti-Semitism. Due to anti-Semitic restrictions many people had no other choice than to emigrate. “Sometimes even previously wealthy families that had had a business failure or bankruptcy found themselves forced to go to America.” (Kaplan, 101)

An available land for agriculture also attracted them. The Germans settled even in urban areas. They were skilled craftsmen and a lot of factories were started by the German immigrants.

German Americans were employed in many urban craft trades, especially baking, carpentry, and the needle trades. Many German Americans worked in factories founded by the new generation of German American industrialists, such as John Bausch and Henry Lomb, who created the first American optical company; Steinway, Knabe and Schnabel (pianos); Rockefeller (petroleum); Studebaker and Chrysler (cars); H.J. Heinz (food); and Frederick Weyerhaeuser (lumber). (<http://memory.loc.gov>)

It is essential to point out the needle trades here. The German Americans were skilled traders and soon they established numerous garment factories. The German immigrants were in favour because they had emigrated sooner than Jewish people, who were also very good at needle crafts. They had had some capital to start the business. Later, many Jewish immigrants found their jobs in these factories.

The above mentioned nationalities created the largest groups of immigrants coming to the USA. There were many other immigrants from other countries. But one large group cannot be listed in such a classification. This group was formed by the Jewish immigrants.

5 Jewish Immigration

5.1 Countries of origin

Jewish people coming to the USA were mainly from Russia, Austria, Romania, Hungary, England and Germany. Generally, we can speak about three main areas where the Jews came from – i.e. Russia, Poland and Eastern Europe. Jewish people were predominantly driven to emigrate by the feeling of oppression in their home countries. The other reason for leaving home was a great poverty. The Jews decided to move in different periods. They came in so called colonial period (Daniels, 223) – in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The Jews came from the continent and immigrated via colonies in the Caribbean (Daniels, 99).

The following wave of Jewish immigration started in the first half of the nineteenth century. According to Daniels, the German Jews came in order to avoid extra taxation and discriminatory legislation. They were, for example, limited in choice of place to live, and in marriages (Daniels, 156).

But the greatest number of the Jewish immigrants began to settle in the USA in the second half of the nineteenth century and especially in the first years of the following century. These people were mainly from Eastern Europe and from Russia. In these countries, there were also certain limitations concerning living and working conditions. Takaki summarizes all the disadvantages they had to face in their home country. The Jews had to live in special areas – Pales or shtetls. They were not allowed to move to different places. Moreover, it was impossible for them to own a piece of land. They could not work in agriculture. As a result, they mainly lived in urban areas. Unfortunately, many of them were living on merchandising and peddling. Due to limitations in mobility, there was a great competition among them. It was very difficult to yield sufficient amount of money for the whole family. Furthermore, another limitation was imposed on the Jewish people in this area. They were not allowed to enter certain schools.

All these restrictions together with organized pogroms led to a huge immigration at the beginning of the century (Takaki, 277-279).

In 1905 the outbreak of Russo-Japanese War, the abortive revolution of that year plus a series of pogroms caused Jewish immigration from Russia to peak in 1906 at perhaps 150,000 persons. (Daniels, 224)

The same reasons led David to the USA. As an orphan without any relatives he had no ties to Russia. In fact, he was disgusted by the society and the Gentiles who had killed his mother in one of their usual attacks. The vision of living in America was attractive for him. He had read many letters from his neighbours' relatives already living in the United States. He knew life would not be easy there but he could not help himself. He was fascinated by the idea of living there.

The United States lured me not merely as a land of milk and honey, but also, and perhaps chiefly, as one of mystery, or fantastic experiences, of marvellous transformations. To leave my native place and to seek my fortune in that distant, weird world seemed to be just the kind of sensational adventure my heart was hankering for. (Cahan, 22)

Bober's reason for leaving Russia was the same. His country could not offer him pleasant future, therefore he took his chance. His family was poor and their friend had already emigrated. "They were poor and there were pogroms. [...] A landsman, a friend of his [Bober's] father, had sent money for his passage." (Malamud, 66) Soon, Morris Bober became one of the crowd of young single immigrants in the USA.

5.2 Chain immigration

With the beginning of the twentieth century, Jewish immigration can be described as chain immigration. It means that it was the man who had come first to the new land and only after some time his family, relatives or friends followed him. The first people to try immigration were chiefly young men. Daniels adds statistics, "as is usually true of emigrants

they were young, with some seven out of ten between the ages of fourteen and forty” (Daniels, 225).

Their followers usually settled in the same area. In addition, there is a special term for the people from the same town in their home country – landsleit. The Jews chose mainly urban areas for their homes. The towns in the Northeast and Midwest were the places they decided to stay in, namely New York, Boston, Baltimore or Philadelphia. According to Johnson, in one period, Cincinnati had the second largest community of the Jewish immigrants (Johnson, 352). But the highest concentration of the Jewish immigrants was in New York. Living in big urban areas was a result of their living habits in their homeland. They were not used to working in agriculture and that is why towns were their destinations. However, there are also numerous examples of immigration of the whole family. It was a typical feature of the earlier German immigration.

While much German Jewish immigration was of families, sometimes very large families, such as the first American Guggenheims who came with an even dozen children, perhaps more often there was chain migration. (Daniels, 156)

There is another interesting feature about the Jewish immigration. According to Daniels forty-five per cent of the immigrants were women. There is only one country, Ireland, which had a higher rate of female immigrants: fifty-five per cent (Daniels, 225). From these figures we can read another typical feature of the Jewish immigration - the higher number of females to enter the land, the lower rate of return to their home country. If people came to the new land only in order to earn money, they were predominantly single young men. But if a woman immigrated to the land, she usually would go there to join her partner or family. Therefore, it was more likely that they would not return. “There is a general consensus among scholars that about one Jewish immigrant in twenty returned to Europe, and some of those were sure to emigrate again later.” (Daniels, 225) It is obvious that the Jewish immigrants went to America with a clear idea that the New Land would become their new home for the rest of their lives.

5.3 Leaving Home Country and Arrival in America

The Jewish immigrants and all immigrants generally went to the USA with a hope to have a better life there. They wanted better living conditions not only for themselves but mainly for their children, for further generation. They were sure that the USA – a free land – could give them equal opportunities for self realization. The American society has the basis in commercial sphere, in entrepreneurship. All people have equal rights to try their luck in any sphere of entrepreneurial activity. And it is only up to them how hard they will try to reach a certain success. Needless to say, the majority of immigrants to America believed in the American dream – in possibility to live a good life, to be successful in work, to have a family and to be able to support it.

Jewish immigrants came to the new land with many hopes. They were supported by the letters which had arrived from their friends. Sometimes, people thought the USA was a land where they would receive everything very easily. “Letters full of wonders from emigrants already there went the rounds of eager readers and listeners until they were worn to shreds in the process.” (Cahan, 22)

However, a decision to go to America was just a beginning of saving money for the transportation. “The amount that was necessary to take me to America loomed staggeringly large. Where was it to come from?” (Cahan, 23)

Although Russia has access to the sea, many immigrants had to go through the whole Europe to board a ship in one of the German harbours. There were several reasons for leaving from Germany. Daniels points out the fact, that the voyage from Odessa was much more expensive than from Hamburg or Bremen, and secondly, many of the Russian Jews left the country illegally and wanted to avoid unpleasant passport control. (Daniels, 225)

Overcoming all these difficulties, many Jews succeeded in boarding the ships to the New Land. As the voyage was long, the

passengers had much time for thinking about their prospects. Often, their feelings were mixed. “Who can depict the feeling of desolation, homesickness, uncertainty, and anxiety with which an emigrant makes his first voyage across the ocean?” (Cahan, 30) Even the unpleasant crossing of the Atlantic Ocean could not spoil immigrants’ feelings of amazement when they reached the shore. “When the ship reached Sandy Hook I was literally overcome with the beauty of the landscape.” (Cahan, 30) The new land promised them new opportunities. With no former experience with this country, their hopes were enormous. Everything seemed wonderful. “The immigrant’s arrival in his new home is like a second birth to him.” (Cahan, 30)

The following steps of all Jewish emigrants led to the immigration office. Suddenly, the pleasant feelings were replaced by fear and uncertainty as the manners of immigration officers were not pleasant. “These unfriendly voices flavoured all America with a spirit of icy inhospitality that sent a chill through my very soul.” (Cahan, 31) Leaving the ship and entering the new world, David loses the shelter and the only place of safety – his home for several days – the ship. On the one hand, he was happy to be in a free land full of opportunities for him. On the other hand, he understood that the new land with all strange people around him would be difficult to adapt to and to find his own way there. He did not think about losing his traditional way of life, but soon he discovered that a change was needed.

5.4 Housing

But the worst and most difficult was still to come. The immigrants had to find a job and a place to stay. As many of them did not have any relatives in the country they were happy to stay in the boarding houses for immigrants. But the conditions were really poor there. There were also houses with apartments but they were available only for those with some money.

The five- and six-story walk-up tenements, often without hot water and with only one toilet on a floor, were divided into three- and four-room apartments that were dark and often served as workplace as well as living quarters for families with four or more children and boarders as well. (Daniels, 226)

The immigrants had tendency to look for the people who had immigrated before them. The Jewish immigrants flocked together in New York's Lower East Side living together with their landsleit. The area was overcrowded by the Jewish immigrants. According to the Library of Congress, by the year 1900, the district was packed with more than 700 people per acre, making it the most crowded neighbourhood on the planet (<http://memory.loc.gov>). The Lower East Side was something like a Jewish dominion. The notice boards and signs were in Yiddish and English, sometimes even in Russian. People on the streets used their mother tongue – Yiddish. There were synagogues where the Talmudists said their prayers and read books. Women in their apartments prepared typical Jewish meals. On the one hand, many things did not differ from the ordinary life of the Jews in Eastern Europe or Russia. On the other hand, the Jews started to adapt to different conditions of the American life.

The Jewish families lived mainly in rented apartments. The father had a job; his wife usually stayed at home, looking after the children. The income of the family could have been raised by having boarders. They paid for meal and they had a place to sleep in the family's apartment. Being a boarder was suitable for single men without family or with a family in his home land. This type of accommodation was quite cheap. Though, it had several disadvantages. Boarders hardly ever had their own room in the flat. They slept in the kitchen or sometimes with the family in the bedroom. The apartments were not very well equipped. They were dark, shabby as the tenants did not possess enough money for repairs or reconstructions.

David had experienced living in many different places – usually as a boarder. Listing all the places he had lived we can see his climbing and falling a social ladder. “My second lodgings were an exact copy of my

first, a lounge in a kitchen serving me as a bed.” (Cahan, 38) Then, losing his job, he had experienced a hard period. “I slept in the cheapest lodging-houses on the Bowery and not infrequently in some express-wagon.” (Cahan, 48) His following accommodation was much better. He had his own room – not luxurious but only for himself. “I now lived in a misshapen attic room which I rented of an Irish family in what was then a Gentile neighbourhood.” (Cahan, 56) With changing his work he decided to move near to his workplace and at the same time, to save money for his studies.

In the heart of Jewish neighbourhood I found an attic for half of what I was paying the Irish family. Moreover, it was a neighbourhood where everything was cheaper than in any other part of New York. (Cahan, 61)

After living here for a certain period, he made friends with Max’s family. As the family rented a fine new apartment with all possible equipment – dumb-waiter, enamelled bath tube, electric and gas light, and electric door bell, David got his own comfortable room. “It was by far the brightest, airiest, best-furnished, and neatest room that I had ever had all to myself.” (Cahan, 88) Skipping several years, David was rich enough to afford having his own office which was used as his bedroom during the high seasons (Cahan, 119).

Looking at the rise of his accommodation, we can make a parallel with his social status which led to the change of his identity. Beginnings were hard, but if a person does not lose patience, and does not lose his/her job, he/she can be given reward in form of better living conditions, or in any other form. In addition, David’s last mentioned place for sleeping was at his work. This fact reflects the change in his life. As the work and earning money fill the most important part of a person’s life, there is not time for other things – nor for a family life. His traditional Jewish identity was changed into American pattern for which material issues are more important than living in accordance with the Jewish tradition.

With the example of Morris Bober’s accommodation, we learn only about one place to live. Nevertheless, the description of his house can give

us an idea of typical housing habits of a shopkeeper. The houses were used for living and working together. The shop was on the ground floor and the flat for the owner was on the first floor. Usually, there were also flats for tenants or single rooms for rent. Bober's house was of this type. In David's neighbourhood, we can find such houses, too. One of the places David used to live was the following.

The house was rickety, two-storey frame structure, the smallest and oldest-looking on the block. Its ground floor was used as a tailoring shop by the landlord himself. (Cahan, 62)

With the rise of the Jews from the poorest immigrants into the middle-class members their housing habits changed. Takaki calls this a second wave of Jewish migration (Takaki, 309). Moving from the Lower East Side, the Jewish American people found their new and better houses in various neighbourhoods. They started to buy houses in Harlem, Brooklyn or Bronx. Takaki comments this, "while it was not like the movement out of Egypt or Russia, another exodus has begun" (Takaki, 309). These areas were less crowded, reflected higher social status of people living there, and moreover they did not have the label of "immigrants' neighbourhood".

In spite of living in such a neighbourhood, Bober's wife was not satisfied, "she had waked that morning resenting the grocer for having dragged her, so many years ago, out of a Jewish neighbourhood into this" (Malamud, 10). Her desire to live in a Jewish neighbourhood reflects her need to go back to the traditional Jewish life and to respect traditional Jewish values. She did not like the idea of having the American identity, she longed for the Jewish one.

5.5 Assimilation

A typical feature of Jewish immigrants was their passion to become a part of the society, not to stay aside. As a result, these immigrants were eager to assimilate. "Jewish immigrants said to themselves, 'Don't be a greenhorn.'" (Takaki, 298). They were different

because of their language, dress, thinking, religion and their habits. They did not like being called strangers, greenhorns; they wanted to be on a comparable level with the Americans. Therefore they tried hard to assimilate in all above mentioned spheres.

As I went along I heard it again and again. Some of the passers-by would call me “greenhorn” in a tone of blighting gaiety, but these were an exception. For the most part it was “green one” and in a spirit of sympathetic interest. It hurt me all the same. [...] “Poor fellow! he is a green one,” these people seemed to say. “We are not, of course. We are Americanized.” (Cahan, 33)

The Jewish immigrants to America were mainly poor people but with a certain skill or education. According to Takaki, in comparison with the other immigrants the Jews represented a group of literate people who wanted to improve their skills (Takaki, 282). As they came to settle there, not only to earn money, they soon started to feel that they had to adopt different values to survive in a different environment.

First, they started with easily transformable things – with clothes, and appearance. Later, maybe unconsciously, they altered their hierarchy of values. In other words, they tried hard to get rid of looking and behaving in a Jewish way. Their objective was to become American. By transforming they hoped to achieve two things – to avoid discrimination they had experienced in their home country. The second reason was to be able to live in a different world. As was already mentioned, they came chiefly from Eastern Europe, where they lived off the main stream. They were at the periphery of the society. Moving to a dynamically developing country, they had to face new technologies and different civilization. The only way to overcome it was to customize to the new conditions.

5.5.1 Appearance

The first thing they had to change was their appearance. The typical Jewish side locks, yarmulkes, clothes – all these things made the Jews different and easily recognisable. With their typical appearance they had a stigma of being immigrants, not assimilated or greenhorns. Sooner

or later, they gave up their clothing habits. They shaved, wore neutral clothes and replaced yarmulkes by hats.

David tired of being called a greenhorn on his every step was happy to change his look. Thanks to help of a rich man, he was transformed into an American looking person. He was taken to a barber shop, then to the clothes shop and the change was ready. To his surprise, he was contented with his new look. He had never thought that any change was needed, but after it, he felt better in the new environment.

“Give him a hair-cut and a bath,” he said to the proprietor. “Cut off his side-locks while you are at it. One may go without them and yet be a good Jew.” [...] It as though the hair cut and the American clothes had changed my identity. (Cahan, 36)

The other step was shaving. The Jewish men were not used to shaving. They wore long beards. In America, the fashion was different. Needless to say, there were many Jews who refused to shave or to change their appearance at all. However, mainly younger immigrants did not have any problems in changing their look.

The very clothes I wore and the very food I ate had a fatal effect on my religious habits. A whole book can be written on the influence of a starched collar and a necktie on a man who was brought up as I was. It was inevitable that, sooner or later, I should let a barber shave my sprouting beard. (Cahan, 39)

But not only physical appearance was important. Being a Jew meant to have Jewish gestures, and different table manners. These signs were not easily changeable. It took much more time to get rid of them and to study the American pattern. David faced several embarrassing situations caused by his unawareness. One of them happened in a fine restaurant, “I am afraid you’ll have to tell me what to do, Mr. Eaton. [...] I have never been in such a fine restaurant in my life. I am scared to death, Mr. Eaton.”(Cahan, 90)

5.5.2 Names

The Jews were even willing to change their names to suit the American pattern. In Takaki’s words, “Russian –ski or –vitch were

dropped, and names like Levinsky became Levin” (Takaki, 299). The Jewish first names underwent transformation, too. David’s friend Max called his wife Dvorah or Dora. She preferred the latter one, because it sounded more American. Moreover, she went further; her daughter’s name was too ordinary. That is why a new one appeared.

Lucy is not a usual name on the East Side. It was, in fact, the principal of the school who had recommended it, at Dora’s solicitation. The little girl had hitherto been called Lizzie, the commonplace East Side version of Leah, the Hebrew name. Dora never liked it. It did not sound American enough, for there were Lizzies or Lizas in Europe, too. Any “greenhorn” might bear such a name. So she called on Lizzie’s principal and asked her to suggest some “nicer name” for her daughter. “I want a real American one,” she said. (Cahan, 85)

Unfortunately, there was another reason for changing family name. In spite of the fact that America was a land of freedom, there were anti-Semitic feelings among the American born people. Johnson adds that there were efforts to exclude Jewish visitors from certain hotels, clubs or other cultural institutions (Johnson, 355). One of the waves of nativist movement resulted into *The Immigration Act* of 1924. As a side effect of this movement and arousing feeling of anti-Semitism, limited number, so called *numerus clausus* (Johnson, 355), for the Jewish students in Harvard were set. Due to these restrictions some Jewish inhabitants decided to Americanize their names hoping that their Jewish origin would not be recognisable.

5.5.3 Women and their American born children

Mainly married women - mothers contributed to Americanization. Many of them decided to stay at home with their children and took care of them. In fact, it was a traditional family pattern in the Jewish environment. Single women were used to working, their income was important for the family budget.

The majority of these single girls worked in the garment industry. Generally, they worked for several years to earn enough for their dowry and then they started a family. There was a great number of the first

generation immigrants among single women. They had been sent by their families in advance, and sometimes it was the girl who earned money for her parents' voyage to the New Land. David met such girls in one of the factories he used to work for. He comments on one of them.

She was known to have a snug little account in a savings-bank. It was for a marriage portion she was saving [...] From time to time she would give some of her money to a needy relative. (Cahan, 52)

Another example of a single working woman can be taken from Malamud's novel. Helen, Bober's daughter, gave up her plans to study in order to support her family. She had a steady job in a factory and gave almost all her money to the family, leaving a small amount for her needs.

Since, though, the situation was better, Morris told Helen that he wanted her to keep more of her hard-earned twenty-five dollars; he said she must now keep fifteen, and if business stayed as it was maybe he would not need her assistance any more. She hoped so. (Malamud, 83)

But since a woman had married, she stayed at home and did her main duty – to give all care and love to the children in order to bring them up into good Jews and to run the house. Takaki comments on this fact, “the Jewish wife was expected to be *baleboste*, an “owner of the home,” taking care of domestic responsibilities such as preparing meals and paying bills” (Takaki, 302). In fact, a marriage stopped her working activities outside the house.

In Eastern Europe, Jewish women were seen as subordinates to their husbands. Haumann explains that the woman's role was much more practical than the traditional role of a man. The men were supposed to spend their time in the synagogues praying and educating themselves. While the woman had to take care of the whole household, at the same time look after the children and in addition, to be able to provide money and food for the whole family (Haumann, 127).

The American wives had the habit of staying at home, not going to work, which was similar to the Jewish tradition. Here, the reason was different; it was the husband's role to earn enough for the family. Wife at

home symbolized that the family was well-off enough that she did not have to go to work. Soon, the difference between the Jewish wives and the American wives for staying at home disappeared creating a vision that the Jewish families had the same habit for the same reason. This was one of the steps in climbing the social ladder. Poor Jewish families were settling and assimilating quickly and their transformation into middle-class families was soon visible.

Mainly thanks to women's support, the second generation of immigrants – American born - was ready to survive in American setting because they had been trained for that. One of the means of supporting the children was enabling them to study. The new generation of Jews learned English, attended schools or various courses to be able to get a better job and then to stand higher in the social hierarchy. In particular, it was thanks to mothers, who had enough time for the family and prepared the children for living in the land of freedom. As a result, the following generations were more capable of living in America. Many of the second generation of the Jewish immigrants got an academic degree. "Children became professionals." (Takaki, 304)

An example of relationship between mother and her child, where education is important can be found in Cahan's novel. Here, David's friend and later his lover Dora belonged to the first generation of immigrants. Her daughter Lucy was American born. Her mother, uneducated woman, even envied and was jealous of her daughter's education. She made her daughter stay at home teaching her what had been done at school, competing in spelling with her, reading lines from the school reader.

Dora's ambition to learn to read and spell English was a passion, and the little girl played a more important part in the efforts she made in this direction than Dora was willing to admit. (Cahan, 88)

Moreover, Dora was proud that her daughter - a child from a quite poor family with no high social status would have the opportunity to get education which would not be possible for such people in her home land.

Only rich people had possibility to provide education for their children. “She was getting education, her child just like the daughter of the landlord of the house in Russia in which Dora had grown up.” (Cahan, 85)

The new way of bringing up the second generation of Jewish immigrants led to extension of their possibilities in the USA but it also led to the loss of traditional Jewish family life. As a result, there was a danger of alienation between parents and children. Ulmanová adds, “the childhood of those Jews born to immigrant parents was certainly full of different tensions and mixed feelings” (Ulmanová, 259). The clash between two generations was caused by different living conditions in two completely different societies. The second generation of immigrants wanted to live American life, which meant to break from the traditional family values. Ulmanová touches this point:

[...] due to completely different conditions and, consequently, completely different degrees of assimilation, one faces an enormous split between the generations – the fathers no longer understand their sons, and vice versa. (Ulmanová, 260)

5.5.4 Religion

Some Jewish immigrants coming to the States were orthodox, but the main part of the immigrants consisted of the ordinary Jews with their religious habits, but soon these were adjusted to the American environment.

There were synagogues established by the first Jews arriving to America. At first people kept their habit to go to the synagogues often. But as work is the most important value in the USA, many of them preferred earning money to spending time in prayers. “I scarcely ever visited the synagogue of the Sons of Antomir these days,” comments David, former scholar for whom it was a daily routine to spend several hour there (Cahan, 84).

David left his home as a person who strongly believed in God, he spoke to Him, he spent much time praying. At the beginning of his life in the New Land he kept his old traditions – visiting synagogues often,

praying, and behaving in accordance with his religion. But as his stay was longer his attitude started to change. It almost seemed that he did not take his teacher's words too much to his heart, "do not forget that there is a God in heaven in America as well as here" (Cahan, 29). These words were the last his Russian teacher told him before David's departure.

One of the most typical examples connected with religious habits – Sabbath can give us the idea of assimilation among the Jewish immigrants and their integration into the American society. According to tradition, all Jews celebrate the Sabbath every week. To keep the tradition means not to do anything on Saturdays. Everything has to be done on Friday, having the whole Saturday for worshipping. Even Bober, a good Jew, stuck to the tradition and his shop was open till late evening on Fridays; on Saturdays the shop was closed. Later, he gave up the habit and made Saturday normal working day. His assistant wondered that Bober had not kept traditional Jewish way of life.

First think, you don't go to the synagogue – not that I have ever seen. You don't keep your kitchen kosher and you don't eat kosher. You don't even wear one of those little black hats like this tailor I knew in South Chicago. He prayed three times a day. I even hear the Mrs say you kept the store open on Jewish holidays, it makes no difference if she yells her head off. (Malamud, 99)

The diversion from religious habits and values had impact on identifying someone a Jew. David's decision not to follow his Jewishness was deliberate. As an orphan, he did not have the family background which would have supported his Jewish identity. He chose to try the American way of life. Bober's choice was different. Even though he did not keep all the traditions, his identity was not changed. He remained a Jew and he did not think about any other possibility. Bober represents the group of Jewish immigrants who agreed to the assimilation but only partially; they refused total assimilation which would have led to the complete loss of their Jewish identity.

5.5.5 Change of Values

Adapting to the new environment the Jewish immigrants had to change their way of life and mainly their hierarchy of values. The reason is that the USA values money and economic success. The Jewish tradition is different; according to the Jews, most valuable is education and the status of a man as an educated person. Such a man is respected and people look up to him and ask for his advice.

David Levinsky understood the need in changing his values and soon, he changed his plans in order to become successful in the American society. In Russia he belonged to the scholars; he was a Talmudist. He spent all his time in prayers; he read books or had never-ending discussions with other scholars. From letters he knew that a man had to work hard in America to survive. A scholar was not a profession which would help him to survive, “I was constantly seeking information about the country and the opportunities it held out to a man of my type” (Cahan, 23).

He came to New York with ambitions to continue his studies, with strong belief in God and with a desire not to lose his faith. In other words, he did not take into account the possibility to change his identity in the new world. On his departure, all his friends warned him of the danger America symbolized. “‘To America’, he said. ‘Lord of the World! But one becomes a Gentile there.’” (Cahan, 22) But he sacrificed his dream of high education to his work. He regretted giving up his dream but he hoped to have another chance for educating himself while developing his business. Even though he was a busy manufacturer, he tried to find time for his self study. He kept a notebook with slang expressions. They were difficult for him but he wanted to sound American that is why he noted down all interesting phrases he had come across.

Moreover, he read a lot. He started reading English books in order to learn language, later we can see a change connected with his reading – he read to get new information from sociology, or to learn new theories. Therefore his interest in Darwin and Spencer arose. These two scientists

and their ideas were important for Levinsky because he applied their theories on himself. The survival of the fittest became leading concept in his life in America. He knew that he must be the fittest to be able to live in and to be a part of the American society. Agreeing to the theory of the fittest meant denying his Jewish identity.

In contrast with Levinsky, who was flexible in assimilation, Bober stayed with his old and traditional values. There were more important things than only earning money in his life – his honesty. Bober believed that being unhappy and unsuccessful was his predestination. What is more, he was sure that staying a real Jew meant to have the same fate as he had. In contrast with him, there was his neighbour, Julius Karp, who was also a Jew. They started their lives in America with the same possibilities. But Karp gave up his traditional Jewish values and took American ones instead, leaving his Jewish identity aside. That enabled him to become rich. He was ready to cheat; he managed to take his chance not thinking if it was in accordance with his religion. He was violating the Law which was holy for Bober. “What I worry is to follow the Jewish Law.” (Malamud, 99) It was not important for Bober to eat kosher food; what was essential was to stay good and honest to people. This meant to keep the Law and to be a good Jew. However, these qualities were not sustainable for those who wanted to fit the American society.

Looking at the change of values it is important to mention the traditional status of woman in a family. Thanks to assimilation, women’s role changed significantly. In particular, there was a traditional approach to marriages. A single woman had to obey her parents’ decision who to marry. The deal between two families was made without taking the matter of love between the couple into consideration whereas the American society did not have such a scheme. The women from the first generation of immigrants had experienced such dealing about their marriages. Therefore they did not want to let this happen to their daughters, too. Dora dreamt of her daughter’s future, “she shall marry the loved one of her heart; she shall not be buried alive as her mother was” (Cahan, 105).

5.5.6 Education

The Jews hoped to start a new and better life in the USA. But they were limited by their education. Most of them had only poor knowledge of English. On the one hand, many of them had only a bit of education which was not efficient for getting a well paid job. On the other hand, Jews were well-known for their willingness to improve their weaknesses concerning education. Daniels adds, “the enthusiasm with which most Jews participated in American education is one of the hallmarks of American Jewish history” (Daniels, 229). However, this fact is valid only for the first generation of immigrants. The following generation, which grew up in the New Land, got different education and became literate and skilled for various professions.

Education was seen as a symbol of a better life. Educated people were admired by those with poor education. Many of the first generation immigrants wanted to get education if not for themselves then at least for their children. They put much of their earnings into special accounts which were opened for this reason. People with better education, with better knowledge of English and with non-Yiddish accent were most likely to get a well paid job or simply to be recognized as non-greenhorns to the land. With the leading character of Cahan’s novel *The Rise of David Levinsky*, it is very true. He came as a literate person, a Talmudist, but he felt to be a stranger to a new land. Firstly, his appearance was really Jewish. Furthermore, he knew some English expressions which were used even in his homeland, but it was not enough to survive in the USA. Therefore, one of his objectives was to learn English as well that it would not be easy to recognize his origin. That is why he enrolled in a public evening school. Soon he became the best student in the class. His teacher liked him and David was full of enthusiasm and eagerness to learn the language.

Yet, I would hang on his lips, striving to memorize every English word I could catch and watching intently, not only his enunciation, but also his gestures, manners, and mannerisms, and accepting it all as part and parcel of the American way of speaking.” (Cahan, 43)

David understood the importance of using the official language of his new home country. English was only the means in his further plans. He decided to get education. His whole hard work was dedicated to his dream. He wanted to save enough money to study at a high school and then he wanted to try the entrance examination for the university studies, “the image of the cloak-operator reading books and laying money for a college education haunted me” (Cahan, 51).

The education symbolized a possibility to change an immigrant’s status in the society. With better knowledge of English and with a particular skill or specialization it was easier to start living in different, non-immigrant environment.

Unfortunately, some people did not have time for schools, because they worked whole days to support their families and to enable education for their children. It was the reason why Morris did not succeed in being a wealthy grocer. “Without education you are lost. [...] Don’t do what I did.” (Malamud, 68)

To sum up, education was seen as an important part of a man’s life. In fact, education was a means in gaining a better position in the society. It was important for orthodox Jews as well as for those who adopted American values.

5.5.7 Leisure Time

The Jews were spread in the USA. However, they had tendency to meet. That is why they lived in the same neighbourhoods together with their landsleit. “The Jews began to establish organizations and create community.” (Takaki, 285) The existence of the community was important in terms of supporting Jewish identity. But there were drawbacks, too. Being a part of the Jewish community meant to stand aside from the American one; in other words, to be different.

They founded synagogues for the people from their old home. There were Jewish theatres that performed plays in Yiddish for those who had not learned English. There were also famous actors and actresses who

were admired by their audience. Going to the theatre belonged to a favourite way of spending free time.

Jack Mindels was a devotee of Madam Klesmer, the leading Jewish actress of that period, which, by the way, was practically opening chapter in the interesting history of the Yiddish stage in America. (Cahan, 54)

In ordinary days Jewish immigrants spent their leisure time in parks. Going to park was popular among both poor people and rich ones, who could parade there their wealth in showing their clothing or demonstrating higher manners. As the Jewish quarters were crowded even the parks were full of people.

The benches in the little park were for the most part occupied by housewives or servant girls who sat gossiping in front of baby-carriages, amid the noise of romping children. Here and there an elderly man sat smoking his pipe broodingly. (Cahan, 104)

Jewish people soon took over the American pattern for spending free time. As their wealth grew, they could afford to have a holiday and to show off. One of the most favourite destinations were the Catskill Mountains. People spent their weekends or holidays there. The holidaymakers were from the middle class. Their financial situation was good enough to afford such a holiday. They belonged to the people who were ready to give up traditional Jewish way of life and to replace it by the American pattern. Cahan depicts this new habit, too.

The bulk of the boarders at the Rigi Kulm was made up of [...] people who had blossomed out into nabobs in the course of the last few years. The crowd was ablaze with diamonds, painted cheeks, and bright-colored silks. It was a babel of blatant self-consciousness, a miniature of the parvenu smugglers that had spread like wild-fire over the country after a period of need and low spirits. (Cahan, 141)

The unpleasant description of the visitors expresses the change of many Jewish immigrants. As they settled in the USA, and established a good business there, their traditional values and life style were replaced by the American values and habits. Their Jewish identity was denied. They did not like to have any signs of their Jewishness.

But there were still poor people or newly arrived immigrants who did not belong to the middle class. These people were likely to keep their traditions together with a typical life of Jews. These people were blue-collar workers from numerous factories; or they were simply poor. Their leisure time was devoted to family, religion, and in the evenings some of them attended various courses or went to the library. Despite living in a new environment they still kept their traditional approach to their identity. They were Jews and they were not ashamed to express it. We can take the character of Helen, Bober's daughter, as an example. She was American with Jewish parents. She bore all typical features of the second generation of immigrants. Although she longed for education, better housing and she could imagine marrying a goy – not a Jew, she did not deny her Jewish origin and Jewish identity. In fact, she was proud to be a Jewess:

Although she had only loosely been brought up a Jewish she felt loyal to the Jews, [...] loved them as a people; thought with pride of herself as one of them. (Malamud, 105)

David Levinsky was a complete opposite. His image and desire were to be American having American values. Unfortunately, his choice led him to the crisis of identity. He understood that he was neither American nor Jewish. He became alienated. Strout summarizes Levinsky's life:

Levinsky achieves his economic triumphs in the New York ready-made clothing industry at the price of feeling alienated from his Russian-Jewish identity as a Talmudic student; and as an atheistic believer in Herber Spencer's Darwinism, he keeps in touch with the memory of his earlier Talmudic self only by giving money to a synagogue and making the intellectual effort to tell his story in such full detail. (Strout, 60)

5.6 Typical Jobs

5.6.1 Peddling

One of the most typical activities of the Jewish immigrant was peddling. This kind of work was brought from their home countries. The business was done by men, who did not possess much money. It was not

difficult to start such a way of living. A man needed a basket or a push-cart, some goods – usually of not high quality or with a shade of exoticness. Most often these people sold small looking glasses, shoe laces, collars, buttons, handkerchiefs or other accessories and notions. Others offered grocery products or even services. Peddling was so popular because it provided some kind of freedom in comparison with other jobs in factories or in shops.

As a boy, always running in the muddy, rutted streets of the village, or across the fields, or bathing with the other boys in the river; but as a man, in America, he rarely saw the sky. In the earlier days when he drew a horse and wagon, yes, but not since his first store. In a store you are entombed. (Malamud, 9)

It was also possible for those who had just arrived into the USA. With a little or almost no money, one could start this business. As Takaki says, “the Jewish peddler soon became a figure of Jewish American folklore” (Takaki, 286). A peddler could make his/her fortune and sometimes, peddling was just a starting point for having a small shop. That is why there was a great competition among peddlers and a man had to have a sort of sense of trade. Then he was able to sell enough goods to have money for his living. Cahan expresses the same idea.

I rented a push-cart and tried to sell remnants of dress-goods, linen, oil-cloth. This turned out somewhat better than basket peddling; but I was one of the common herd in this branch of the business as well. (Cahan, 37)

Even though peddling could bring only a small sum of money, it was still more than people were used to getting in their homeland for the same job. However, the negative was the fact that they had to wander long hours, sometimes as many as sixteen hours a day to earn a couple of dollars.

5.6.2 Retail shop

The following step in a man’s career in business sphere was to rent a shop. Daniels gives basic facts about retail sector. There was a great number of retailers. They usually stayed in their neighbourhood and their

customers were also immigrants from the same quarter. (Daniels, 227) The Jewish shop-keepers specialized in having grocery shops, liquor shops or delicatessen. They cooperated with the Jewish suppliers who brought them goods directly to their shops.

Some of these shops were prosperous; some did not succeed in tough competition. In Malamud's novel, we can find examples of both – profitable and loss making stores. Unfortunately, Bober's shop falls into to the second group.

When he had first bought the grocery it was all right for the neighbourhood; it had got worse as the neighbourhood had. Yet even a year ago, staying open seven days a week, sixteen hours a day, he could still eke out a living. What kind of living? – a living; you lived. Now, though he toiled the same hard hours, he was close to bankruptcy his patience torn. (Malamud, 13)

After reading some parts of Malamud's novel, the reader may not be surprised to find out that Bober's shop is not prosperous. The description of an old shabby and dark place does not seem to be attractive for any customer. The never-ending hesitation what to do and how to change the state of things leads to the loss of clients, and decline of the shop together with its owner.

The other group is represented by another Jewish shopkeeper - Julius Karp. From Bober's point of view, this man can be successful in any business he decides to start. He is, in contrast with Morris, lucky. Karp has a shop with liquors and he owns several houses. This character is an excellent example of economic success. Karp simply adopted American manners and they brought him reward.

5.6.3 Garment industry

Many Jewish immigrants found their jobs in the garment industry. There were several reasons for that. Firstly, the garment industry was expanding at that time. Takaki explains the reasons. New machines were used in order to speed up the production of clothes. Among them, there were sewing machines by Singer, machines for making holes, cutting knives, which allowed cutting more items at the same time. (Takaki, 288)

Moreover, original hand-made clothes were too expensive and the production was limited. In order to meet the market's demand the garment industry had to reform the system of production. Small tailor business started to transform into manufacturing factory. "Between 1880 and 1890, the number of men's clothing factories doubled from 736 to 1,554, and women's cloak factories tripled from 236 to 740." (Takaki, 288)

Such a factory had many advantages. The most important was the fact that the production was much faster and cheaper. The workers did not have to be skilled tailors to be able to work in the garment industry because of the fact that the tailoring of a piece of garment was divided into several steps. Even an unskilled worker could learn to work with a machine and after a short training and with a supervision of the foreman he was able to perform his/her step in the production. There were many specialized jobs in this field.

According to historian Susan A. Glen there were jobs such as sleeve making, body makers, closers, sleeve setters, shirt makers, belt makers, joiners (join skirt and waist) hemstitchers, tuckers, hemmers, lace runners, trimmers, binders, buttonhole makers, buttonhole markers, button setters, collar makers, cuff makers, collar setters, machine embroiderers. (Takaki, 290-291)

David was of those who were not trained for tailoring. His first steps in the garment industry were connected with working under the operator, who was skilled in the craft. However, operators were still less than real tailors. The operators' jobs were easier and they were paid less; while the tailors worked on more complicated designs and their wages were higher. Moreover, working in garment industry meant to work really hard for several months and to save money for the time when the business was idle. The garment trade was based on seasons.

All the work of the year is crowded into two short seasons of three and two months, respectively, during which one is to earn enough to last him twelve months (only sample-makers, high-grade tailors like Gileston, were kept busy throughout the year). (Cahan, 51)

Both, Takaki and Daniels agree that the working conditions of the Jewish immigrants in those factories were not satisfactory. People worked

in a hurry, under continuous stress and observation of the foremen. There was only little space for each employee. The workrooms were hot without sufficient airing. The workers wages were based on the task system. This system led to high speed of work because the more pieces were finished the higher wage was given to the worker. High speed was advantageous for the owners of the company, not for the employees. Working under stress and at a high speed caused many injuries. (Takaki, 290, Daniels, 227)

The working conditions as well as the pay of the workers were poor. A single worker could not do anything about his/her wage. Moreover, these people were lucky to have a job. In order to improve their situation, they had the only possibility. They started to form unions under which protection they had better status and they were ready to dictate their conditions to the employees. On the other side, there were the manufacturers, owners of the companies who believed in their superiority in this situation. Smith speaks about this point, “those who owned factories and railroads believed that only they had the right to determine the wages” (Smith, 274). As a result, many violent situations and strikes occurred.

David experienced strike many times. First, he was a blue-collar worker and the union was pushing him not to go to work, not to be a traitor. In fact, he was not interested in being in the union. Apart from this, he was happy to have a job and to make a slight growth in his career. He became an inside man which meant that he was skilled enough to work on his own, without supervision.

A new kind of Public Opinion had suddenly sprung up among the cloak-makers; a man who did not belong to the union was a traitor, worse than an apostate, worse than the worst of criminals. (Cahan, 60)

Furthermore, when he became a successful manufacturer, he developed a complex system of cheating the union. Officially, he was a part of the union. But he was pretending to keep the union’s rules. His system was one of many means by which he gained his wealth. Of course, such a way of leading a business was not in accordance with the Jewish

Law, which orthodox Jews or Bober obeyed. This was a way only Americanized people were ready to use.

The results of the strikes were not always successful in terms of gaining the goals of the strike. But we can see a positive effect of these movements. The workers, and of course, the Jewish workers, too were united and they did not stand in the society as immigrants with no rights. In particular, they started to behave in the American way. They were fighting for their rights like ordinary American citizens.

6 Conclusion

The Jewish immigrants chose the USA as their second home for many reasons. The strongest advantage was the American dream about which they knew from letters supporting them to leave their poor home land. The American dream represented all things the Jews could only dream of in their home country. In Burns' words, the USA offered them, "peace, prosperity, personal ownership of property, personal liberty, and the overriding belief that one is free to achieve any goal, to accumulate material wealth, to live in any life style" (Burns, 447). Such a land was incomparably better than the land they came from.

The first generation of Jewish immigrants was the most important and influential for most Jews living in the USA. The first generation with their typical jobs, housing habits and family values set the standard for following generations and enabled to improve living conditions of this ethnic group. The Jews came to the New Land as settlers and wanted to fulfil their American dream there. Thanks to hard work and enthusiasm to find there a new home they have succeeded.

Their power was in their strong desire to find a new home in the USA. Moreover, there was another fact speaking for them. The enormous number of immigrants influenced the American society even though many of the newcomers were ready to assimilate, to take up the American habits and values. With the transformation from poor homeless immigrants to middle class American citizens the Jews have been influenced by the American society and at the same time, the American society has been changed thanks to them.

On the one hand, there were numerous examples of assimilation and adopting American values. Here, the traditional Jewish identity was weakened in favour of the stronger, American one. This fact can be supported by Biale's comment.

[...] the more the Jews succeeded in entering American society, the less they may identify with collective Jewish issues and the less

they may be inclined to use their position to further specifically Jewish interests. (Biale, 183)

On the other hand, the Jewish immigrants came to America with habits and opinions which had an impact on the American society. As the Jewish immigrants became successful, they were more visible. Thanks to their wealth and social status, they were able to influence the public and political life of their new country. They faced out discrimination and anti-Semitic feelings but they fought against these signs and they were successful.

The character of David Levinsky brings both, examples of assimilation and changes in values that suits American needs and a desire to go back to traditional Jewish life which David had lived in Antomir, Russia. The development of David's character goes from traditional picture of a Talmudist, changes into a successful businessman with American appearance and behaviour. And finally, he finds out that only the return to traditions and to his Jewishness can bring him satisfaction and peace to his soul.

The other character – Morris Bober is a different example. He decides to remain a good Jew, keeping all his traditions. He can not see any other way of living even though his approach means that he can not be successful in American environment. His honest, pure characteristic features do not allow him to gain wealth. Moreover, his tragic fate is taken over by his assistant - his follower. Frank Alpine's transformation into a Jew expresses Malamud's vision that any person, having certain values and suffering in the world due to having such features can be a Jew.

Resumé

Práce se zaměřuje na otázku židovské identity v USA. Nejdříve jsou podhalena fakta související s imigrací do USA. Práce uvádí důvody, proč se daná země stala oblíbenou destinací mnoha emigrantů. Je zde nastíněn rovněž postoj americké společnosti vůči otázkám spojeným s imigrací. Velké imigrační vlny do USA způsobily nevoli amerických občanů, která vyústila v řadu opatření omezujících příliv dalších imigrantů do země.

Vzhledem k faktu, že jsou Spojené státy americké multikulturní zemí, je jasné, že se jednotlivá etnika podílela na formování americké společnosti a zároveň byly tyto menšiny nuceny přizpůsobit se novým podmínkám. Proto je část práce věnována též klasifikaci imigrace, která má přinést obraz země, do které se Židé rozhodli uchýlit. Imigrace bývá klasicky členěna dle časového hlediska, která tato práce také přináší. Další možností je rozdělení imigrace dle národnosti. V tomto oddělení jsou uváděny nejvýznamnější národnostní skupiny, které měly výrazný vliv na formování americké společnosti.

Samostatnou kapitolu a zároveň jádro celé práce tvoří židovská imigrace. Ta nemůže být zařazena do klasického rozdělení dle země původu imigrantů, neboť Židé neměli vlastní území a žili na území různých států. Oblasti, ze kterých imigrovali byly Rusko, Rakousko, Maďarsko, Německo a Polsko. Práce se zaměřuje na imigraci v druhé polovině 19. století, kdy se Židé snažili uprchnout před pogromy, které na nich a jejich majetku byly páčány především v Rusku.

Práce je postavena na kombinaci faktů získaných se sekundární literatury a analýzy dvou románů, respektive postav a jejich zkušeností s imigrací a životem v jiné společnosti, než ve které se narodily. Jedná se o romány dvou židovských spisovatelů, Abrahama Cahana a Bernarda Malamuda a jejich románů *Vzestup Davida Levinského* a *Příručí*.

Obě hlavní postavy jsou specifické v tom, jak se staví k vlastnímu židovství. Jejich postoje jsou odlišné v tom, jak se hrdinové rozhodli

vypořádat se se svým původem. David Levinsky reprezentuje skupinu lidí, kteří se dokázali vzdát svého tradičního života, žebříčku hodnot a nakonec se odklonili i od své víry. Důvodem bylo to, že si uvědomili, že nemohou žít v americké společnosti svým starým tradičním způsobem a zároveň být schopni vybudovat si nový život, splnit si svůj americký sen – být svobodní, úspěšní a mít možnost seberealizace. Tento odklon od židovské identity ale vede u Davida ke krizi. Sám si uvědomuje, že není ani Židem, ani nepatří k americké společnosti. Jeho odcizení a adaptace na americké prostředí mu sice přinesly pracovní úspěch, ale cítí se sám. Nemá zázemí ani rodinu, do které by patřil. Tak se ve svých čtyřiceti letech pokouší navázat styky s židovským prostředím, snaží se získat zpět pocit sounáležitosti.

Druhým hrdinou je naopak muž, který si svého židovství váží a vzdát se ho nechce. Americká společnost je pro něj jen okolím, které ho sice ovlivňuje v mnoha směrech, ale přesto se snaží dodržet židovský zákon a nezměnit to hlavní, co ho činí Židem. Jeho postoj sice vede k tragédii, ale on si sebe váží. Jeho identita nebyla změněna je kvůli světským věcem, jakými jsou majetek a úspěch.

Židovská identita je tvořena a formována především tradičním způsobem života, hodnotami, které Židé vyznávají, spolu s dalšími faktory, které činí Žida odlišným od jiných etnik. Tato práce se snaží zachytit, jak se Židé vyrovnali se svými tradičními postoji, jakou míru asimilace byly ochotni podstoupit. Dotýkáme se tak otázek vzhledu, změny jmen, tradičního postavení žen v rodině a jejich vliv na další generaci. Zmíněna je i otázka náboženství a různého přístupu ke ctění Judaismu v nové zemi. Důležitou otázkou je změna hodnot. Americká společnost uznává jiné hodnoty než jsou tradiční židovské. Jedinou společnou významnou shodu v prioritách představuje vzdělání, kterému je věnován samostatný oddíl.

Spolu s delším pobytem Židů v USA je viditelný jejich pokrok a míra přízpůsobivosti. Tím, že byly schopni asimilace, se mnozí z nich stali úspěšnými a tudíž i viditelnými. Židé se posunuli z nejnižší sociální třídy

do střední třídy. Jejich vzestup je ovšem provázen i změnou hodnot a to ne vždy k lepšímu. Jejich postoje se odrážejí i ve stylu trávení volného času a tomu, jaká zaměstnání tradičně zastávají.

Závěrem lze tedy říci, že obě cesty – Davidova i Morrisova měly své kladné i záporné stránky. Úplná asimilace ani striktní dodržování tradičních postojů nemůže přinést pocit spokojenosti a možnosti žít v novém prostředí. Jedině kombinací obou přístupů je možné vyrovnat se s obojím – svým židovstvím a novým domovem – Amerikou.

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Vedoucí práce	Mgr. Šárka Bubíková, Ph.D.
Anotace	Práce se zaměřuje na otázku židovské identity a problematiku imigrace v USA. Na příkladech židovských postav z románů <i>Vzestup Davida Levinského</i> od Abrahama Cahana a <i>Příručí</i> od Bernarda Malamuda jsou prezentovány znaky židovské identity, asimilace, adaptace na nové prostředí.
Klíčová slova	Jewish literature, American Jew, Jewish identity, Jewish immigration, assimilation