

Thesis abstract in English

The thesis analyzed the general tendency of American Jews and their descendents to resist assimilation with a much higher probability than the other immigrant groups present in the United States of America. The thesis approached the problematics through sociological, psychological and religious perspectives as well as through cultural studies and literature studies. The thesis established three major aspects of Judaism, on whose basis, it explored the reasons for the notable defiance to assimilation. These three were concluded to be: religious aspect of Judaism along with the significance of family and community, and the focus on both religious and secular education rooted in Judaism. The thesis reached the conclusion that the assimilation in the Jewish community is and will remain significantly slower and the changes will occur mainly in stringency of denomination and the gradual shift towards less orthodox forms of the religious practice.

The thesis has been examined and proved based on two novels by an acclaimed orthodox Jewish writer Chaim Potok, which were selected to be *The Chosen* and *My Name is Asher Lev*. The thesis focused on the work of Chaim Potok because he is an exceptional writer appreciative of the Jewish heritage and culture and in his novels he pays tribute to Judaism, the aspects of the Jewish daily experience alongside the exceptionality of Judaism. These particular novels *The Chosen* and *My Name is Asher Lev* were selected on the basis of their concentration on the development of individuals and the struggle for self-identity. The three main characters are torn between contemporary American mainstream culture and traditional Jewish background. The characters' choices and development reveal the three main motives for resisting assimilation, as previously mentioned, while each of the novels has a somewhat different focus.

The Chosen concentrates more on the aspect of family solidarity and hierarchical and social structures in the community as well as on the significance of education, both religious

and secular, for the individuals and the community. The main characters, Danny and Reuven, were subjected to thorough analysis from the psychological, social and religious point of view. The two discussed novels focus on various aspects of the Jewish identity and each novel approaches Judaism from a different viewpoint. In the novel *My Name is Asher Lev* more attention is paid to the analysis of the process of separation, in one's activities and lifestyle choices, from the community and its effects on the individual. The reason for Asher's resistance to abandon the faith and the community were defined and examined in detail. The analysis based on the two novels proved the hypothesis and showed that the general tendency among the Jewish people is preferably to liberalize the rules of the community and the approach to religious practice rather than relinquish their roots and background found in Judaism and assimilate, since Judaism provides the followers with support system, encouragement and guidance in times of hardship and struggle.