

REBEKAH HYNEMAN'S "THE LOST DIAMOND" – TOWARDS JEWS' AND GENTILES' MUTUAL EXCHANGE

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Title: "Rebekah Hyneman's "The Lost Diamond" – Towards Jews' and Gentiles' Mutual Exchange"

Abstract: In addition to presenting personal contemplations on various topics, Rebekah Hyneman's prose and poetry has broader political and social agendas, namely bridging the gap between Jews and Gentiles. Hyneman felt that the Gentiles' lack of knowledge of Jewish traditions leads to estrangement between Jews and non-Jews. Nineteenth-century Jewish female writers, a religious and cultural minority within a minority (women writers in patriarchal society), have been misrepresented by their contemporaries. Modern critics have failed as well to relate to their distinctive contribution as Jews, and thus are held responsible for minimizing these writers' contribution to the nineteenth-century general effort.

Rebekah Hyneman's "The Lost Diamond" (1862) is a case in point of a Jewish female writer who constructs multiple identities in her factual life, prose and poetry, none of which necessarily contradicts the other. Hyneman was at once a convert to Judaism and an opponent of intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles, a zealous American patriot, but one of the earliest Zionists, advocating the Jewish people's return to Jerusalem. She was a Jewish writer and poet, a "Mother in Israel," as I would like to call her, who concerned herself with Jewish traditions, and forced conversion to Christianity, and a writer who addressed the general public, especially female readership. Though far from being a feminist, one of Hyneman's major efforts was dedicated to the creation of a female "sweet communion," a sort of spiritual union of all women, that is, both Jewish and Gentiles.

Keywords: *Judaism; Jews'-Gentiles' rapport; early Zionism;*

Rebekah Hyneman was born in Pennsylvania in 1816 to Abraham Gumpertz, a Jewish-German storekeeper, and a Christian mother. Hyneman converted to Judaism in 1845, and shortly after her conversion her poetry and prose began to appear regularly in the press. In 1853 she published a collection of more than eighty poems, entitled *The Leper and Other Poems*. She also contributed secular poetry, short stories, novellas and serial novels to *The Masonic Mirror and Keystone*.

In spite of Hyneman's important literary contributions to both the Jewish and general readership her work has almost been totally neglected in the last one hundred and fifty years.

Rebekah Hyneman's short story "The Lost Diamond" is to be read through

the same sense of reciprocity between Jews and Christians the authoress personally believed in and practiced in her private life. The Jewish family's, the Malchoirs', attachment to Judaism and their full adherence to the rules and customs of their adoptive land, America, is an example of by and large peaceful coexistence, though at times, the Jews come under a certain pressure to convert. While Lichtenstein reads "The Lost Diamond" as a clichéd story with a "traditional fairy tale ending" ("Hurst" 27), aimed at circumventing the potentially divisive controversy of intermarriage ("Hurst" 30), I suggest that Hyneman's agenda included much more perceptive considerations. Moreover, when saying that the tale's goal was an attempt to reconcile "the personal conflict Hyneman experienced as the daughter of a Jewish father and a non Jewish mother" (Lichtenstein, "Hurst" 30), Lichtenstein fails to appreciate the major themes the tale is concerned with – those of the relationships between Gentiles and Jews, the glorification of the Jewish family and its traditional values and customs, the patriarchal structure of the Jewish family, the firm persistence of the Jewish family to fully observe the Jewish tradition, in spite of external pressures, etc. Moreover, she overlooks the contemporary historical and societal contexts which are strongly at play in the course of the story.

"The Lost Diamond," besides being a moralistic and educational tale whose target is to bring the Jewish youth closer to their traditional lore, also offers a perceptive study of Hyneman's contemporary society. The tale illuminates such issues as the treatment of the poor by the rich, the continuous, though unsuccessful, attempts to convert the Jews to Christianity, Jews' estrangement from their religion, and so forth. The added value of the tale is less in its moralistic preaching or the glorification of the "pride, family cohesiveness, honesty and unswerving devotion of Jews" (Lichtenstein, "Hurst" 31), but more in Hyneman's attempt at revealing the interconnectedness between the Jews and the Gentiles and her insights vis-à-vis broader contemporary social and cultural concerns. Moreover, Hyneman's tale does not only place the Jewish woman at the center of the Jewish microcosm – the Jewish home – but also empowers her, in spite of her modesty and meekness, to act in the outer sphere, as the family's breadwinner. Hyneman herself, though a keen supporter of the *True Womanhood* doctrine, which rests on domestic values, was obliged to perform in the public sphere. As a widow, she had to support her two babies, writing for journals and periodicals. As a writer, her involvement in the public sphere entailed, rather than merely an extension of her religious duties, a larger political and societal participation, though Hyneman is very careful not to put forward a clear feminist stance.

"The Lost Diamond" is a story of a Jewish-American family, the Malchoirs, father mother and six children. The father, Daniel, "once a man of wealth and influence" (Hyneman, "Lost" 551), loses his fortune due to his partner's dishonesty. One misfortune follows another; the father is hurt in an accident and the youngest daughter, Miriam, becomes an invalid at the age of three. The father fails to procure a job, and as a consequence, the family moves to the dreariest and poorest neighborhood in town. The mother, Deborah, and the two eldest daughters, Anna

and Esther, help to sustain the family by labeling and gluing boxes. The women's scarce earnings do not suffice, however, to feed the family and buy medicines for the little invalid. The proud father, nonetheless, declines getting help from former friends and acquaintances. The family's poor dwelling in the shabby neighborhood does not help either, as people belonging to the higher social classes refuse to employ the daughters and the eldest son, the fifteen-year old Simeon, because, as Simeon says: "they think we are all thieves and pickpockets" (Hyneman, "Lost" 553). In spite of the family's economic hardships, the mother refuses to part with Simeon, who feels that he has no choice but getting an employment as a sailor. The mother's greatest concern is that while in sea, Simeon will forsake the Jewish religion:

It would separate our little household, and he would be obliged to desecrate his Sabbaths and holy days, and eat forbidden food... we will toil and live sparingly, and have faith, and it may be that our Father will one day visit us with mercy; but let us not forsake our religion (Hyneman, "Lost" 553).

The cold and unwelcoming Christian society that judges people by the neighborhood they come from is juxtaposed with the warm, kind and caring Jewish family. The Jewish mother, similarly to Hyneman, is the heart of the household; she toils hard for the wellbeing of the family. In spite of the family's scant resources, the children are always well tended to, the mother is always attentive to their needs, and the house is meticulously clean, so that the reunion of the Jewish family at the Sabbath table compensates for the house's shabbiness and the scarcity of food:

... the room wore a holiday look, for it was Sabbath. The table was spread for the evening meal, frugal enough, it is true, but Deborah revered her religion too much to let the Sabbath pass without some delicacy, however trifling, although obliged to exercise the closest economy to obtain it. The coarse cloth upon the table was spotlessly clean, and the little Sabbath lamp, an heirloom in the family, glittered like gold. The room had been cleaned of all traces of everyday labor, and all the family were dressed in the best clothes their scanty wardrobe could supply. (Hyneman, "Lost" 121)

The Jewish mother is the queen of her house; she is the personification of the perfect Jewish woman, whom King Solomon called "Eshet Hail" (a Woman of Valor) (Proverbs, 31, 10-31). She is what Diane Lichtenstein calls – the model for the "Mother in Israel" (*Writing*, 24). Lichtenstein views the "Mother in Israel" as the projection of "The American Middle class idea," which "manifested itself in True Woman" (*Writing* 23). She argues that although Jewish women could seldom be distinguished from their non-Jewish contemporaries in terms of the conformity to the nineteenth-century cult of domesticity and to the conventional Victorian values, Jewish women's compliance with two patriarchal systems at the same time – the Jewish and the Gentile one – exerted a strong pressure of being a model figure – a model wife and a model mother.

While the Christian woman was expected to be a good housewife, a

caring wife and a devoted mother, the Jewish woman's role of "Mother in Israel" obliged her, in addition to her wifely and domestic duties, to care for the preservation of her family's and community's religious and spiritual values. Paula Hyman contends that the Jewish woman was "responsible for the moral development of the family, being endowed with an exceptional capacity for moral persuasion" (Hyman, *Other Half* 109). Moreover, Jewish mothers were on guard lest their children "take as a spouse someone who might not live up to the religious standards in which they had themselves been raised" (Snyder 26).

It should be also noted that many Jews, especially those who used to be peddlers, found it difficult, or at times pointless, to strictly observe the Jewish tradition. Most American-Jews became rather flexible about Jewish practice. Some found nothing wrong in changing some parts of tradition under new circumstances (Diner, 28). The Jewish woman's task then, according to Hyneman, was to preserve the Jewish religious rituals. Right after her conversion, Hyneman felt an urgent need to be an active member of the Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel congregation, whose chazzan was Isaac Leeser, the editor of the national Jewish monthly, *The Occident and American-Jewish Advocate* from 1843 to 1868. Leeser, fearing the increasing dominance of the Christian Missionaries, founded several educational and charitable projects to thwart the latter's activities.¹ Isaac Mayer Wise, another prominent Jewish leader and the editor of *The Israelite*, felt that "one of the reasons for publishing his newspaper... was to counteract the abusive Jewish stereotypes that appeared in novels and newspapers" (Rockaway, Gutfeld 369). It is interesting to note that many Americans have never encountered a Jew. Consequently, their judgments of Jews stemmed more from Christian teachings, literary sources, and folk wisdom than from personal interactions (Dinnerstein 7). One of Hyneman's goals was to portray Jews as righteous, honorable and law-abiding citizens.

While Rebecca Gratz, Hyneman's contemporary, an active member of Mikveh Israel and the founder of the first Jewish Sunday school in 1838 in Philadelphia, believed in educational and social activities as ways to counteract Jewish estrangement from religion and the aggressive effort of missionaries to convert Jews, Hyneman mainly contributed to the Jewish community by writing poetry and fiction whose aim was to lure Jews back to their faith. Although several influential Jewish women, including Rebecca Gratz, "felt it improper for a 'lady's' name to appear in print" (Ashton, *Gratz* 189), Leeser encouraged women to write, especially, pious tales and poems.

¹ Leeser supported Gratz's Hebrew Sunday School, edited the national Jewish monthly, *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* from 1843 to 1868, and launched the Hebrew Education Society (1848), a Hebrew day school which merged with Gratz College in 1928. He founded Maimonide College, one of the first schools for advanced training in Judaism in America in (1867-1873), translated the Pentateuch into English (1845), launched the first Jewish Publication Society of America (1845), worked for the success of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, the first national Jewish defense organization (1859), and published an assortment of English language materials of Jewish culture (Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America*, 2).

Deborah Malchoir, in addition to her daily duties as the family breadwinner and a model housewife, serves as the Jewish house's moral and educational stronghold. She educates the children in the spirit of Judaism; she guides them in their choices; she protects them from the dangers of the outside world, such as forsaking Judaism and converting. Protecting the family's interests is her sole goal; her personal needs are never under consideration. The Jewish woman, influenced by the cult of "True Womanhood" and the Victorian ideals of domesticity, practiced by her Gentile neighbors, took these values even further. The Jewish home is the only protected space; there, the Jewish man and children could not only enjoy the familial bliss and warmth, but also study the Judaic laws: "The education of children was a paramount consideration. This applied to daughters as well as sons... Though excluded from the intense study of Torah and Talmud, Jewish girls were expected to have 'a clear understanding' of the fundamental tenets of Judaism and their duties within it" (Snyder 27). Alice Hyneman-Rhine views the Jewish home as safe haven: "To the Jew," she says, "more than to the man of any other race is home a sanctuary, an asylum, the one place on earth where, if anywhere, happiness is for him attainable" ("Race Prejudice" 530).

Though the narrator at times suggests that Deborah is unhappy about her husband's bitter and impatient moods and his occasional harshness toward the younger children, Deborah never voices her discontentment. It is her task to create a harmonious and amiable atmosphere. The narrator is certainly fond of Deborah's gentle and forgiving nature, though there is a sense that Daniel's exacting nature should be accounted for. The narrator seems to be somewhat uncomfortable with Daniel's strictness; nevertheless, he or she, similarly to Deborah, places the Jewish principle of "Shlom-Bait" (peace at home) above all other considerations. The Jewish wife will do anything, including reaching almost total self-effacement, in order to protect the family. Daniel should be excused, although the narrator implies that Deborah and the children do occasionally suffer due to his "irritability."

Mr. Malchoir was not an unkind husband or father, as his hasty expressions might lead one to suppose. On the contrary, his very irritability was caused by witnessing the privations and struggles of his little family. During the years of his affluence he had been a fond, affectionate husband, gentle and generous, and when his misfortunes overtook him, and soured his temper, Deborah did not forget it. Ever patient and unrepining, she tried, by every means in her power, to lighten the load which pressed so heavily on her husband." (Hyneman, "Lost" 121)

Daniel is pitied because he is unable to calmly witness the suffering of his family. Deborah, the model wife, mother and the family's breadwinner is not pitied; she is admired and glorified. The implications are that, on the one hand, the woman's lot is to suffer silently, if she wants to safeguard her home and family, while the man is allowed to express his anger and gloom, sometimes even fiercely, and be pardoned. On the other hand, the narrator seems to praise the woman for combining endless patience, strength of character and determination with great

gentleness and kindness. Deborah's thoughtfulness and compassion make her highly spirited and hearty. Daniel is unable to reach such moral stature; instead, he frantically roams the town's streets looking for occupation or angrily responds to his little boys' mischievous play. The young twins Levy and Seth are reluctant to turn to the father, as "for past experience taught him [Seth] to expect no favor from his father, who generally ended their [Seth's and Levy's] childish disputes in a summary manner" (Hyneman, "Lost" 554). Consequently, Deborah acts as both mother and father.

While Daniel's pride, firm perseverance, and his defiance of the family's friends' attempts to provide the family with some help, are emphasized - "Daniel Melchoir was a proud man, proud and sensitive" (Hyneman, "Lost" 551) - Deborah is expected to give up any sense of pride and composedly comply with the uneven moods of her husband.

Deborah's elder daughters Esther and Anna are educated in the same line of feminine meek submission to the family's needs and silent obedience to the father's wishes. The Jewish woman, explains Lichtenstein "did not enjoy many rights under Jewish law, a woman without a father or a husband was almost invisible" (*Writing*, 25). Here Lichtenstein resorts to generalizations, since she neglects the central roles prominent single Jewish nineteenth-century women played within the cultural spheres of Jewish communities. Dianne Ashton demonstrates how several nineteenth-century Jewish women, who remained unmarried (including Rebecca Gratz, Emily and Ellen Phillips and others), engaged in significant benevolent activity while maintaining firm commitments to Judaism and defending it against the Evangelists (Souls, 35).

Ironically, it is the little invalid, the youngest daughter Miriam, rather than the mother or the teenage sisters, who is granted the right, probably due to her young age or feeble condition, to voice her opinions in a quite audacious way. When Daniel's former boss' wife, the Gentile Mrs. Cargill comes to visit the Jewish family, it is Miriam, who boldly says, after the guest leaves, "I don't like her...why could not she look for Esther" (Hyneman, "Lost" 73). Esther, who left the house on an errand, several days prior to Mrs. Cargill's visit, did not return home. The distressed family, in spite of their non-relenting efforts, failed to find the lost girl. Miriam daringly criticizes the rich guest, who pays a charitable visit, hoping at the same time to convert the little invalid to Christianity, for not spending some of her money on Esther's detection. Like her biblical namesake - Miriam - whose name in Hebrew means rebellion (*meri*), the little girl rebels against the familial and the socially accepted codes of quiet modesty. Miriam demands the rich lady's active involvement.

In addition, the little Miriam refuses to comply with the rich lady's attempts to convert her. No toys, sweets or books, no promises of helping her older siblings find an honorable occupation can bribe the little girl. While the oldest sister, Anna, timidly defends the rich visitor, the infant Miriam, neither affected by the family's long years of humility, nor instructed along the lines of submissiveness, resolutely

defies Mrs. Cargill's false beneficence; "If she really likes us," says Miriam, "why does she not try to find Esther, when she knows we all want to see her so much" (Hyneman, "Lost" 74). The little Miriam seems to be the family's speaker; her ingenuity, frankness and bravery make her well respected and listened to by all family members.

This episode and a later one, in which the reader meets the injured Esther, recovering from an accident in the house of her patroness, Mrs. Eldridge, a devout Christian old lady, are among the tale's most illuminating scenes. In both, Hyneman juxtaposes the openheartedness, gentleness and honesty of the Jewish family, especially that of Jewish women, with the manipulative and deceitful behavior of the two Christian women – Mrs. Cargill and Mrs. Eldridge. These women's sole target is to convert the Jewish girls to Christianity, and every possible scheme is legitimate in achieving their goal. Diane Lichtenstein mistakenly views "The Lost Diamond" as Hyneman's attempt at "molding ideals of Jewish womanhood into American forms," which she believes originated in the writer's "confusion... about her own status" (Lichtenstein, "Hurst" 30). She claims that as Hyneman's mother was a Christian, while her father a Jew, Hyneman felt perplexed about her identity. Such an explanation is too simplistic, however, as it does not take into account larger cultural and sociological contexts at the heart of Hyneman's work, neither does it address the psychological aspects related to conversion. Lewis Rambo, a psychologist, asserts that "converts are passionate. They are, in many cases, arrogant. They have the truth. They know exactly what should be done, or should not be done. Therefore, the issue of conversion is a very controversial topic." He adds that "when people become converts,... the way in which they interpret life – their rhetoric – changes" (Rambo, n.p), which may account for Hyneman's passionate writing and her fervent enthusiasm to defend Jew and Judaism against Christian missionaries' schemes. Moreover, as no letters, diaries or any other personal records have as yet been discovered, it would be mere speculation to claim that Hyneman suffered from any sort of identity crisis. Her conversion to Judaism, active involvement in Philadelphia's Jewish community life and her long term literary career as a writer of prose and poetry on Jewish topics attest otherwise.

One of the major goals of Hyneman's tale is to address the urgent issue of the forced conversion of Jews by Christians. Similarly to her contemporary Jewish-British writer, Grace Aguilar, whose work Hyneman earnestly admired,² Hyneman seems to be deeply concerned by the expanding popularity of the various

² On November 8, 1847, right after hearing about Grace Aguilar's untimely death, Hyneman wrote a poem entitled "To the Memory of the Lamented Grace Aguilar." In this beautiful poem, Hyneman expresses her admiration of the dead writer and poet. In stanza VII, Hyneman says:

Thou wert a stranger unto us; thy name
Alone was wafted o'er the Atlantic wave,
But true hearts mourn'd thy loss when tidings came
That thou wert in the cold and silent grave,

Ay, true hearts grieved for thee. Hyneman, Rebekah. *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, Vol. V (9), December 1847.

American Societies for the conversion of Jews. "The Lost Diamond" is aimed at revealing the dangers Jews, and especially young and poor Jewish girls are exposed to, mostly when vulnerable and unprotected, at the hands of such organizations.

Abraham J. Karp notes that from the beginning of the Jewish settlement in America "there was the conviction that Jewish interests coincided with American well-being... later [it was] explicitly argued" (Karp, "Jewish Perceptions" 8). George Washington, in his famous letter of 1790, addressed to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, promised the American Jews that "the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection, should demean themselves as good citizens." Nevertheless, in practice, several states disregarded Washington's dictum and ignored that of the Declaration of Independence which promised that "all men are created equal." The state of Maryland, for example, guaranteed religious liberty to "all persons professing the Christian religion" (Karp, "Jewish Perceptions" 8). According to Hassia R Diner, "Jews understood clearly that their neighbors ... perceived Protestantism, particularly its evangelical iteration, to be synonymous with American culture. Jews, like Catholics, suffered constantly from being the focus of intense missionary activity" (Diner 58). Several missionary groups, such as The Female Society of Boston and Vicinity for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, The American Society for Evangelizing the Jews, and others, were established in the 1810s and 1820s. Such groups, similarly to their British counterparts, against which Grace Aguilar's campaign was directed, aimed at converting Jewish youth, mainly in schools and orphanages, and older people in charity homes and hospital wards.

In "The Lost Diamond" Hyneman records two such attempts at converting the youngest Melchoir's girls, Miriam and Esther. While Mrs. Cargill's effort at converting Miriam was at once rejected by the little girl, Mrs. Eldridge's coercion was of a much more persistent nature. As soon as Esther wakes up in Mrs. Eldridge's house, (after being unconscious for several days), she finds at her side the lady's clergyman. In spite of the man's "unusually open and benign countenance," Esther feels "ill at ease, and was relieved when she saw him rise from his seat, thinking he was about to leave. Not so; it was to kneel beside her, and in his low, rich, musical voice offer up a prayer for her recovery and conversion" (Hyneman, "Lost" 118). Esther, educated according to the Jewish religion, is greatly perplexed at the clergyman denouncing the tradition she had fervently cherished, "but being a mere child and having learned to reverence age, she could offer no opposition, to his sweeping denunciation, but listened in fear and silence" (Hyneman, "Lost" 118). Mrs. Eldridge and the clergymen take advantage of Esther's meek and submissive character, her feeble health and the family's financial hardships. Esther, a young, frail and helpless girl, removed from her family, is the ultimate target for conversion. Mrs. Eldridge, taken by Esther's placidness, is willing to adopt the girl and provide all her needs, once she is converted, while the clergyman feels that it is

his duty to grant her moral and spiritual consolation. Hyneman, though certainly displeased by the conversionists' manipulative scheme, does not portray them as entirely wicked. There is a feeling that Hyneman is very careful at diplomatically maintaining decent relationship between Jews and their Gentile neighbors, trying to preserve "the thin line walked by Jews... between acceptance and discrimination" (Diner 59). The clergyman has an open face and a rich voice; the lady treats Esther with kindness and attention. Nevertheless, Hyneman definitely disapproves of their plot, especially, as it is directed at a helpless victim.

A convert herself, Hyneman evidently believes that one's conversion should derive from absolute convictions and true beliefs. In 1845 Hyneman was admitted as a convert to Judaism by the Congregation Mikvah Israel Philadelphia. Isaac Leser, E. Israel, Moses Abrahams and J. L. Hackenburg authorized her conversion. The excerpt below, which summarizes the committee's minutes of the conversion procedure, is a telling document, describing at once the thoroughness of the conversion process and its liberality. The committee is determined to make sure that a convert approaches his or her conversion wholeheartedly, with no exertion of pressure of any sort, and out of love and respect for the Jewish tradition:

Mrs. Hyneman having been requested to attend the committee and being asked what motive induced her to make the above application, she stated that it always had been her desire to become a member of the congregation of Israel, and that no interested motives prompt her to take this step, and that she had always been instructed in the Jewish religion by her father, Abraham Gumpertz. She was admonished that at present she was not bound by the precepts of the Law, and that the moment she embraced the religion she was bound to conform strictly to all the duties and ceremonies of the Jewish religion. To this she replied, that it always had been her sincere wish to have the privilege of being a member of the congregation of Israel, and that as far as is in her power she would educate and bring up her children in the Jewish faith. ("Rebekah Hyneman's Conversion to Judaism")

Hyneman's noninterventionist conversion is entirely at odds with the intolerant attempts at converting the Jewish girls. The tolerant Jewish institutions are also juxtaposed with the bigoted Christian ones. The gentle Esther would have probably succumbed to the conversionists' pressure, had not the young Miriam been at her side. When comparing the two sisters, Hyneman emphasizes Miriam's moral strength and extraordinary good judgment:

With Miriam the case was different [than with Esther]. Although the youngest of the family, her bodily infirmity had made her prematurely wise, and she had often been permitted to take part in family councils which some of the older ones had been excluded. She had learned to think, and although a gentle, affectionate nature, she possessed firmness and strength of intellect rarely found in one so young (Hyneman, "Lost" 118-19).

Miriam bravely moves towards the clergyman and reproaches him for making her very angry as he "spoke against the Jews, and we are Jews" (Hyneman, "Lost"

119). Next, the little girl persuasively defends the spiritual glow of Judaism, and insists on the clergyman's going away, which eventually leads to her removal from her sister's bedside. Esther, probably affected by Miriam's firmness and zeal to protect Judaism, regains some strength and declines conversion. Nevertheless, she goes through harsh emotional torments, as her mind is entirely devoted to the prospective wellbeing of her family. She knows that her conversion will compensate them and will secure "every luxury" her invalid sister might need. However, inspired "by a higher Power" (Hyneman, "Lost" 119), Esther withstands the conversionists' domination and confides in Dr. Lascelle (without knowing that he himself is a Jew). The doctor is pleasantly amazed at his frail patient's sudden determination, when defending the religion of her (and his) ancestors. "I know I am an ignorant girl," Esther says, "I can find no words to talk to them when they assail my religion, but I feel that I could die for it" (Hyneman, "Lost" 120). The doctor supports her decision.

Esther's avowal turns out to be a decisive moment in her and in the doctor's lives. The meek Esther learns to be more assertive when protecting her beliefs; the doctor, who was born of Jewish parents, but reared by non-Jews, returns to his ancestors' religion. Hyneman explains at length the circumstances which led him to abandon his faith. The doctor, she comments, "became very negligent in the observance of his religious duties. He was allowed to mingle freely in Christian society, and finally became half ashamed of a religion so much ridiculed by his young companions" (Hyneman, "Lost" 170).

Hyneman, thus, implies that the Christian society in America is often hostile to Jews. Jews are expected to either convert or veil their faith. In order to advance professionally and socially, a Jew was often compelled to renounce his religion. Mr. Malchoir, his son and daughters found it difficult to find employment because Jews, especially those living in the shabbiest part of town, were thought of being criminals. A Jewish doctor would have also been treated with suspicion and partiality. Mrs. Eldridge denies the doctor's future services after he criticizes her for practicing "Christian charity" (Hyneman, "Lost" 120) towards Esther, even before the lady finds out that he is a Jew. The doctor is accused of dragging Esther "to earth," while the conversionists were "training her for heaven" (Hyneman, "Lost" 120). The deep-seated prejudiced view of Jewish greediness and materialism is emerging as well. The "down to earth" Shylock-like image of the Jew's lack of spirituality and morality continues to haunt the Jews, even in seemingly liberal America.

Ironically, the Christians' means of winning the Jews' hearts and converting them to Christianity include money-oriented compensation, rather than spiritual consolation. These same Christians, who accuse the Jews of earthly existence, while priding themselves for their elevated spirituality, offer the Jewish girls sweets, toys and help in finding employment (Mrs. Cargill) or a monthly stipend, luxurious furnishings and beautiful clothes (Mrs. Eldridge), if converted.

The doctor, who was first impressed by Esther's truthfulness and gentleness,

becomes closely attached to the little wise Miriam: "Doctor Lascelle took quite a fancy for Miriam, and often visited her coming and going in his abrupt, unceremonious way, whenever he felt inclined to, and she, in turn, seemed very fond of him" (Hyneman, "Lost" 164). Miriam and the doctor are kindred spirits, and without her suspecting his Jewishness, Miriam actually makes him a part of the Malchoir family. The doctor feels great pleasure to "sit listening to her fresh, untutored observations, which often startled him by their originality and depth" (Hyneman, "Lost" 164), but as time went on, his visits took a different angle. While spending so much time with the little Miriam, he is falling in love with her oldest sister, Anna. The doctor also learns to appreciate the beautiful rituals of the Jewish religion and the warmth of the Jewish home. Consequently, the doctor reveals his Jewish origins and marries Anna. In tandem, a rich relative of the Malchoirs, who visits the family by coincidence, falls in love with Esther and proposes to her.

The story has a happy ending as the two Jewish girls are to be married to respectful and capable Jewish men. The parents are delighted, Daniel Malchoir finds an occupation and the little Miriam's health is almost fully restored. The narrator implies that the Jewish women, employing their moral strength, religious piety, familial devotion, motherly and sisterly dedication, wisdom and tact, succeed in preserving the family and in reeducating the Jewish men. Daniel Malchoir recovers his spirit; Doctor Lascelle reconciles himself with God. When addressing his future wife, Anna, the doctor confesses that:

You have brought my heart back to its original faith ... could not, looking upon your fortitude, your affection, and cheerfulness even under trials and tribulations, remain insensible to the cause which enabled you to be what you were... and all the beauties of our sacred religion, which, in my sinfulness of heart, I had laid aside came back to me, and led me, I humbly trust, to make my peace with God. (Hyneman, "Lost" 170)

The story's happy ending, while closely epitomizing the mid-nineteenth century sentimental literary genre, does not mar the tale's significance in terms of its multifaceted depiction of the mid-nineteenth-century American Jewry. The story's added value is not predominantly in the moralistic message it conveys, that of the unswerving preservation of the Jewish tradition and rituals, but in the socio-historical context the reader gains insight to, when reading the story. It is mainly a tale which empowers Jewish women in their familial, educational and social roles. It is also a story that depicts the relationship between Jews and Gentiles and which closely "reflects a convergence of American and Jewish gender roles." (Lichtenstein, *Writing* 66)

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