

## **Jewish Values**

The manner in which a person conducts himself or herself inside the society as one relates to one's fellow men and to the social structure is in large part determined by the social order in which an individual grows up. Each country has its particular and differing character which is different from the other countries in the world. This is, in great part, due to the internal unwritten social values that each particular society esteems.

Judaism, like the above mentioned national social values, also has its particular values that it requires from its adherents. But, Jewish values are not merely aspects that a particular Jew values, rather they are the values that are at the very heart of Judaism and whose roots can be traced back to traditional Jewish texts and law. According to the Talmud, God offered the Torah to all the nations of earth and the Jews were the only ones who accepted it. Due to this acceptance of the Torah, they have a special status in the eyes of God but they lose the special status when they abandon the Torah. Further more, the blessing that they received from God by accepting the Torah comes with a high price. Jews have a greater responsibility than non-Jews. While the non-Jews are only obligated to obey the seven commandments given to Noah, Jews are responsible for fulfilling the

613 mitzvots in the Torah. So, the Jewish values, be it social, cultural or religious, stem mainly from the Torah.

The key Jewish values that play a very important part in the life of Jews are Peace, Tolerance, and Faith, the feeling of being 'Chosen', Perseverance, a closely knit family and Education. One of the most pervasive elements of Richler's fiction—as subject matter, theme, moral and milieu is Jewishness. Another important concern of his fiction is satire; he is interested in criticizing the things he believed in or he is attached to – the liberal values, Jews and Canada. To Richler, a writer's work is "fundamentally a moral one". As a serious writer he works "within a moral tradition" (*Eleven Canadian Novelists: Interviewed by Graeme Gibson*). As a moralist he works not only on values in his novels, but also the loss of values.

One of the most exalted ideals of Judaism is striving for peace that comes from the exercise of kindness, tolerance and acceptance. Each of the three biblical patriarchs is regarded as the exemplar of a particular trait. Abraham is remembered above all for his acts of love and kindness. Isaac's trait is self-sacrifice; Jacob is the paradigm of Scholarliness and all the three for 'perseverance'. "One who is merciless towards his fellow creatures is no descendant of our father Abraham" says Jewish Scriptures. Their tradition teaches that kindness is what life requires of them.

In the first novel, *The Acrobats*, Chaim, the old man, is the personification of peace and kindness. He teaches the value of reconciliation, tolerance and love for mankind to Andre, the gentile protagonist. When Andre decides to enter into a fight with Col. Roger Kraus, an ex-Nazi, to overcome his hatred for him, Chaim shows Andre the other ways to get rid of his hatred; and of becoming a better human being. He teaches Andre how to live through acceptance of oneself and of others. Chaim tells Andre that before Christ, there were two great teachers among the Jews: Hillel and Shamaï. Hillel was compounded of love and Shamaï only of Justice. In one of his stories about the Jewish sages and *rabbis*, Chaim tells Andre that Shamaï refused to accept a gentile tailor for his disciple who wished to become a Jew "On one foot", whereas Hillel agreed to teach him to be a Jew in one sitting. He said, "Do unto your neighbour as you would like your neighbour to do unto you; and you shall be a Jew"(137). Chaim is a living example of this precept of Hillel. He views life as a process whereby one transcends himself through caring and helping others. In spite the set backs, disappointments and personal loss, the extent of compassion and tolerance Chaim displays towards his fellowmen (both Jews and gentiles) is unbelievably amazing.

Chaim in Hebrew means "life". Even when his life is in danger, he helps Toni to raise her baby. There is a strong element of Jung in

the relationship between Chaim and Toni. Earlier he helped Andre and Toni to get married before moving to Paris. Here Richler's Chaim resembles Hemingway's strong woman character Pilar in *For Whom The Bell Tolls*. Pilar acts as a Iberian Earth Mother to Maria and helps Maria and Jordan in understanding each other better. Both the novels are set in Spain and both the heroes wander restlessly.

Chaim plays the role of a father, adviser and friend to Andre and Toni. Not only that, he is also capable of feeling compassionate towards Fraulien Kraus, who had worked in extermination camps during the war. She comes to 'Mocombo' to meet Chaim and seeks his help; to stop her brother Col. Kraus from entering into the club, for she fears that he'll develop an affair with Toni, the dancer in 'Mocombo'. Chaim was empathetic and ready to help her. "He realized what it must have cost her in pride to ask a favour of a Jew" (TA 17). Knowing very well Fraulein Kraus worked for Hitler, he disclaims any prejudice for her, instead he thinks, "who am I to judge". Even after Col. Kraus murders Andre, Chaim does not carry any feelings of revenge.

In all the above aspects, Chaim demonstrates entirely a different approach to the world from that of Blumberg, father of Andre's girl friend Ida. They both represent the polarities in the teachings of Hillel and Shamai. While Chaim considers Andre as his own son, and offers love, hope and sympathy, Blumberg makes Andre feel guilty and

literally drives him out of Canada. Just as God made Cain wander with the sign of sin on his forehead, Andre wanders with the guilt of sinning Ida. Blumberg refused to see Andre as a human, instead he saw him as a representative of the gentile society who is present everywhere in the world to eliminate Jews. Chaim's values transcend the boundaries of race and religion whereas Blumberg divides the world between the gentile oppressors and the Jewish oppressed.

Another character who is a foil to Chaim in respect of values is Melech Adler in *Son of a Smaller Hero*. To him, Judaism is just a bundle of codes. He does not follow the spirit of the religion. His religiosity is not even valued by his own children. Noah, after the bitter incident at the coal yard realized that his grand father had no real values of life. Melech is shown, in a way, a degenerate representative of the institution of religions values. But Jacob Goldenberg valued the spirit of the religion. Despite being a Talmud Torah teacher and a *Chassid* he is a liberal Jew who acts on the principles of Hillel. He cannot be false, dishonest and hypocritical. He believes that religion is meant to develop tolerance, acceptance and humanness in man.

While Chaim and Goldenberg practise the ideals of the uniqueness of human life, Karp realizes that such ideals are obsolete in the world. Initially in *A choice of Enemies*, Karp the concentration camp survivor took care of Norman Price, the gentile protagonist during

his bouts of amnesia. He is not only a hospital orderly but also a Jew, who is friendly, loving and caring towards Norman. He tells Norman, “you’re my old friend, Norman, you are the only person I care about” (CE 172). Karp is capable of even identifying Norman’s unconscious wishes and desires, and takes all efforts to materialize Norman’s desires. But all he got back was not worth his deeds. Norman failed to value Karp for his care and kindness. Karp feels rejected and this feeling got intensified when Norman failed to show friendliness after his return from Spain. Norman’s hatred for Karp is manifested in a brutal way when Karp suggested using Nicky’s (Norman’s brother murdered by Ernst) death to get rid of Ernst and win Sally back. Karp only wanted to fulfill the unconscious desire of Norman but Norman slapped him hard and said, “The best ones were killed, Karp. Only the conniving, evil ones like you survived” (CE 173).

The traumatizing experience of the concentration camp along with the humiliation and shattered hope distorts Karp’s moral vision of the world. Unlike Chaim, Karp could not hope for a better world. So Karp starts to play an evil and cunning game to take revenge on Norman.

Jewish values of acceptance and Tolerance emphasize the ideal, “Do not ill-treat a stranger or oppress him, for you were the strangers in the land of Egypt”. Referring to this commandment, many

*rabbis* observe that one cannot ignore a command that is repeated thirty six times in their books. It further says that the Jews were exiled in order to know what it feels like to be an exile. The value of tolerance and a sense of justice towards the strangers is one of the core values of Judaic principle. Karp followed this truly till he realized that his Jewish values are not appreciated. The irony is Karp respected Norman, whereas Norman wanted to be among Winkleman's circle that neither respected nor trusted him. They accused him to be an informer. Winkleman group stands antithesis to the above commandment. They, being strangers in the foreign land, do not entertain strangers in their group. They behave rudely with Norman for having brought Ernst to the party. Ernst is ill-treated on the basis of his political past.

Similarly, Hyman and Shalinsky in *Cocksure* play the opposite role of Chaim and Goldenberg. Hyman's hatred and intolerance towards Mortimer and Shalinsky's accusation of Mortimer that he is a Jew, who denies his heritage, make Mortimer literally run for peace and physical safety. When Jews like Shalinsky, Hyman and Karp do not follow the spirit of Judaic values, gentiles like Pauline and her father, Senator Stephen Andrew Hornby in *Joshua Then and Now* realize the essence of Jewish values. They believe in the idea that Jews are known for their morals and values. When Joshua meets the senator to

speak about his marriage with Pauline, he discloses the fact that his father had once been to prison, to which senator sends a shock asking, "Please don't take offense. But the Jews are usually such a law-abiding people" (JTN 156). In the same novel Joshua insists Pauline to attend a dinner hosted by his cousin Sheldon. When Joshua was young he was humiliated by Sheldon's family for his father was a poor Jew. Now that he wanted to show off Sheldon that he has got a rich beautiful gentile wife. When Pauline sensed a kind of vengeance in Joshua's motive to attend the dinner, she tells, "Vengeance is the lord's, not yours, Joshua"(341). She repeats the words of Torah to remind Joshua of his values and dignity. Jews were expected to maintain a higher level of moral purity. Their self-control and spirituality would be more severely tested than other men's. More is expected of Jews. When they fail to live up the higher standards set for them, the disappointment is all the more greater.

But, Judaism certainly believes that no group or race of men is inherently less intelligent or capable than others. All members of mankind are considered children of God and all therefore have the opportunity to follow basic god-given precepts to enhance their existence. Judaism accords great respect to righteous gentiles. At the same time, the Torah refers to the Jews as the chosen people, the '*Mamleches Kohanim*' (nation of holy priests). It says, Jews have a

special innate potential for holiness. They must keep certain laws and avoid certain acts that gentiles need not worry about.

According to Hertzberg, in his book *Jews*, a definable Jewish character began with Abraham some 4000 years ago. The Jewish character according to the authors consists of three prime concepts; the Jew as the “chosen”, the outsider and the factious. Regardless of whether Jews identified themselves through their religion or attempted to assimilate into the majority culture, these characteristics have defined Jews as different. Probably no concept has done more harm to Jews than has the idea of Jews as a chosen people.

In the hands of anti-Semites, the chosenness was interpreted to mean that Jews were bent on world domination. However, the idea of Jews as a chosen people is the central affirmation of the Jewish religion. Among older Jews, the belief holds that God entered into a covenant with the Jewish people, whereby they would follow his commandments, and in return His people would multiply and prosper. Whereas for some, this was translated into the full-time study of Torah, performance of mitzvot, for others, the concept of chosenness meant that Jews were ordained to become a model for the redemption of humanity.

As generations passed, the yoke of the concept “Chosen” was interpreted according to their convenience. In the novels of Richler,

many characters agree to the concept of being “chosen”, but for different reasons. The elder generation felt that they were chosen to suffer for the redemption of mankind. In Judaism, meaningful suffering is considered as a virtue. Chaim’s act of lending his passport to a boy who was in search of his sister and his non-reactive response to Col. Kraus’ act of making Chaim close down ‘Mocombo’ and run out of Spain are touchstones to Chaim’s agreement on the values of Tolerance and Suffering. He had suffered for others and is ready to suffer for others without holding the grudge that he is destined to suffer because he believed in the concept that their god will bless him with a better life after suffering. After 200 years of enslavement under king Pharaoh, God saved the Jews and in honour of that event they have the holiday of Passover. Centuries later Jews suffered at the hands of Haman, God saved them and in honour of that they have the festival of *Purim*—a festival of feast, singing and dancing. Then came Greeks who tried to oppress the Jews and they have *Chanukah* marking that occasion. They suffered under Hitler enduring that suffering as a Virtue and they believed that when God saves them from Hitler, there’ll be much rejoicing, because Hitler hated them more than any of their enemies. The more they suffer the more good they get out of it.

Whereas Panofsky, in *Son of a Smaller Hero*, is one of the elderly Jews who feels that they were chosen only to suffer. He tells

Melech Adler, “Chosen. You tell me what for we were chosen? Soap? Furnaces” (SOSH 77). He feels Jews have been subjected to every anguish and torment known to mankind. They have suffered more ordeals than any other people on the face of the planet. But Melech Adler is of a different view. Both Samuel Panofsky and Melech Adler suffered. But there was a fundamental disagreement between Adler and Panofsky. Adler has the conventional Jewish view that they are chosen—unique, and even the *Shoah* is unique. It is limited to the Jewish victims of the Nazis and a fulfillment of the Jews as traditional role as God’s people. He says, “What is written is written. We are the chosen people” (SOSH 77). But the modern Jews, like Noah, with liberal values reject this view and see the *Shoah* as more tragic example of man’s inhumanity to man in which both murderers and victims are ordinary human beings in an extraordinary situation.

Some totally misapprehend the concept of ‘Suffering as a Virtue’. Richler satirizes them for personalizing the venerable value. Leah, Noah’s mother, a well brought up daughter of a *Chassid*, sympathizes with her own plight and suffers, thinking that it is a virtue. Her marriage with Wolf was a mismatch she could not digest. She doesn’t come out of that life but has her own complaints. Later, she invests her hope on Noah, which also fails. So, her suffering continues. She tells Noah, “I’ve suffered so much Noah” (SOSH 92).

Being a daughter of *Chassid*, she thinks she keeps the value of 'Suffering'. She is willing to suffer; in fact she surrendered to suffering – but not a meaningful suffering. She does not realize the fact that she suffers for personal reasons, instead, she gives her suffering a religious colour. Richler very subtly satirizes the character of Leah, because she is a specimen of the kind who takes the value in its debased form.

In the same novel, when Wolf Adler dies, he is proclaimed a good Jew because he suffered. He is declared a hero for dying ostensibly in an attempt to rescue the embodiment of the law from the flames of a burning building. "WOLF ADLER DIED FOR TORAH" (SOSH 138). The fact that Wolf died not for his faith but for money is not known to many. Even had they known it, such a truth must be suppressed in order to avoid contributing to social stereotypes of the "bad Jew". Richler finds these cultural manifestations of Jewish paranoia distasteful in the Montreal Community, and consequently his portrayal of the mentality of his ghetto Jews is heavily ironic.

Carlos, in *Joshua Then and Now*, suffers a life of *marrano* in Spain. Not only Carlos, there is a group of Jews in Spain, who suffer willingly for the sake of religion. Carlos thinks all his sufferings, his efforts to reach his homeland, will become meaningful if he successfully lands in Israel. For the expatriates of McCarthy witch hunt

in *A Choice of Enemies*, their life in exile—their suffering has a meaning because they refused to betray their comrades in the U.S. They chose to suffer than to betray. Ida (TA) and Melech (SOSH) are willing to relinquish their love affairs with the gentiles for the sake of their families. They choose to suffer personally than to hurt the families. Ida abruptly ends her affair with Andre telling him that she could not afford to betray her aged parents. Melech's love affair with a gentile woman is still fresh in his memories. He still possesses the photograph that they have taken together. But for him, to have married her would have been a betrayal to his family and tradition. He chose to suffer for the sake of the family. Similarly in *St. Urbain's Horseman*, Jake would have easily got the case dismissed against him at Old Bailey, had he been willing to tell the truth about Hary to the Court. It was Hary who engaged a German girl at Jake's residence, under the guise of Jake. Hary had used Jake's visiting card to fetch the girl home. But when the case was reported to the Court as an act of sodomy, Jake was willing to undergo the trial instead of disclosing the truth about Hary. This quality of choosing to suffer than to betray their community is predominant among the Jews—be it at social or personal level.

But for a few, the concept of being chosen meant nothing more than 'cultural pride'. Many sociologists say that this predicament had brought their destiny. In *The Incomparable Atuk*, Rory's father Mr.

Panofsky says that Jews are different from other people and that one protestant is so like another that their children are interchangeable. He is not only proud but reveals his hatred for the *goyim* telling that they have a complexion which they inherited down to generation of ignorance and bad diet. He comments on their food habits, drinking and consuming pork. He tells: "You put me in a room full of Strangers and I'll pick out the *goyim* for you". He adds that the gentiles are unexcelled in some fields where brawn not brain is the rule. "Knowledge is not natural to the *goy's* condition" (ICA 129).

Rory, Panofsky's son is not arrogant as his father in his ideologies but he is also proud of the uniqueness of his culture and people. Driven by the desire to marry Rory's sister, Atuk learns Yiddish. He further clarifies Rory that he had turned against his religion at an early age. He makes it clear to Rory that he has prepared himself to get married to Goldie, the Jewess. But Rory, being proud, rejects him telling, "Of course, of course. But there's more to a people's tradition than religion" (ICA 114). Rory's feeling that Jews are unique people and an Eskimo cannot so easily get one with them makes Atuk furious that drives him to boast equally of his race and land.

Similarly, Shalinsky in *Cocksure* displays his racial pride when he tells Mortimer Griffin, "Isn't it a proven fact, Griffin that most of the world's great men are Jews" (CS 155). He lists out all famous Jewish

personalities known for their popularity and intelligence. He says that the two greatest influences on the twentieth century, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud are Jews. He speaks of Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, the beautiful women who were Jews by choice. He further adds that the Jews are popular in every field. He tells that, behind the discovery of America there was a Jewish financier. He lists out Kafka, Proust, Pasternak, Herman Wouk and Trotsky. But when Griffin mentioned Tolstoy, much as to say Tolstoy was not a Jew, Shalinsky closed down the discussion telling, "It's the exception that makes the rule" (CS 156). Shalinsky doubted Mortimer for a Jew because he was extraordinarily brilliant. Even Star maker tells Mortimer that the contribution of Jews to the society is un proportionate. "Jews, on the other hand, tend to be influential beyond their numbers in certain selected spheres. Say Philosophy, Medical Science, banking, the arts . . . and well obviously Hollywood, the Cinema arts . . ." (CS 136). Shalinsky in his argument with Mortimer does not reveal love or emotional attachment to Jewish heritage. In fact, his ruthless treatment of Mortimer exhibits his exploitation of his Jewish identity and values.

Whereas, Chaim (*The Acrobats*) in his argument with Andre exhibits his love for his heritage and values. He does not take pride for he says pride will get people nowhere. He says Moses couldn't get

to the Promised Land because he was proud. When Andre says “nothing is Good”, Chaim says:

Man is good. He made God. Christ was good too . . .  
But Christ was proud and that’s why he was crucified . . .  
Judas was good too . . . Jesus kept saying over and over  
again to Judas I’m the son of God and very holy, God will  
never let me die . . . And Judas said . . . everybody is  
son of God and we all die and return to Him. No, Jesus  
said I’m special. Nobody is special before God, Judas  
said. Not even you . . . (TA 81).

Through this story Chaim tries to convince Andre that Judaism is morally superior to Christianity. Chaim argues that Christianity failed to save the world because Christ considered himself as God. In contrast, Judaism accepts each man with his own imperfection. He gives an objective view of the religions, but also tells one need not feel proud for the same.

Judaism teaches that perseverance is the key to spiritual success. Indeed, it is the gate way to holiness. The Jewish patriarchs would never have succeeded in founding monotheism and the Jewish people, had it not been for their extraordinary perseverance. Tradition records that Abraham withstood ten major trials: twice he suffered exile; twice his wife Sarah was abducted; the binding of Issac; the

sending away of his son Ishmael; the war with the four kinds; the prophetic vision of his descendants' enslavement and exile; Nimrod's attempt to murder him; and the danger of undergoing circumcision at an advanced age.

History records that Jews have lived through Crusades, Spanish inquisitions, blood libels, pogroms, persecutions, mass murders and gassings. These were the trials that would have broken the spirit of most people. But the Jews never gave up. On the contrary, they understood that all their troubles were heaven sent and that they were designed to strengthen them. Perseverance has been a built-in feature and the bedrock of Jewish tradition. The history of the Jewish people itself is a record of awesome perseverance. Perseverance is anchored in hope and faith. The word "faith" is an English word. In Hebrew, however, the word usually meant to represent is *emunah*. The root of the word *emunah* is *umanut* which means craft—a skill or set of techniques that are studied and perfected over time. It is not something that one is either born with or not. Belief is a process and the end-product of that process, that craft, is one's own spiritual self.

On analyzing the Jews in Richler's novels one can understand that they have developed the consummate skill of living with uncertainty and insecurity. To be in a difficult situation and make the best of it and to see God in the midst of uncertainty and chaos is a

quintessential Jewish trait which alters was identified not as a religious trait but as a trait of the Jewish race. Whether religious or not, whether traditional, or orthodox or liberal, Richler's Jews display the enduring quality of perseverance.

Ephraim in *Solomon Gursky Was Here* and Chaim in *The Acrobats*, withstood many hardships in their lives; crossed every hurdle not just accumulating memories but experienced life and learnt to survive in the unfriendly world. They both were driven from continent to continent—the more they suffered the more they were fortified. Chaim says the world is full of tough guys. But he had learnt to live in the tough world with a tender heart. He used to say it is necessary to believe in something. Chaim was able to overcome his difficulties because he believed in God whereas Ephraim believed in himself.

Chaim, during his salad days, ran away from home to New York and joined a Yiddish comedy troupe as a singer of hymns. Later, left the troupe and wandered like a tramp in the American wilderness. He tried his hands on sales, dish washing and other odd jobs but could not save money. He didn't leave America until the death of Rebecca, his girl friend with whom he worked in a shop. After so many years in America, the rootless Chaim went back to Europe. Then he escaped the pogroms and wandered through the cold desert land along with the people mourning for their loved ones. He had remained in Barcelona

for sometime working as an interpreter in a hotel and then a smuggler. After that he moved to Valencia and purchased the 'Mocambo' club. Even in Valencia he could not lead a peaceful life. The local authorities started to investigate on Chaim's forged passport. So Chaim, towards the end of the novel flees Spain to start afresh in Paris. He knew he is destined to run places but he lived the moment with ease because he believes that his faith will get him what he desired ultimately. During the days of hardship what made Chaim run is his faith in men and life. He tells Andre, "I have faith in men. I would rather act on that faith than be miserable and without it like you" (TA 141), which drives home the point that Chaim, like the Jewish patriarchs, succeeds with extraordinary perseverance.

Ephraim, the grandfather of Solomon Gursky, is several times convicted, once sentenced to Coldbath fields, once to Newgate and finally transported to Van Dieman's Land. Ephraim's parents who had come from Russia to Liverpool worked in a Synagogue. Not going to school Ephraim gave "early evidence of a daring and wicked disposition". Weary of the floggings he endured at the hands of his cruel step-mother, Ephraim ran away from home at the age of twelve. After he had run away, his first job was in cold mines in Durham. Only 13 years old, he worked deep underground. The area he had to work was only three feet high and wide. His days in the coal fields

were too cruel. He supplemented this job by delivering newspapers. That's how he met Mr. Nicholson from whom Ephraim learnt Latin and penmanship. But Nicholas' wife's ill treatment brought out the worst in Ephraim. He fled to London with the silver candlesticks he had stolen from Mr. Nicholson, for which he was sentenced to six months hard labour in Coldbath.

After this, Ephraim became hard at heart and tried his hands at almost all the notorious professions for survival. He made a daring escape when sentenced to Newgate. His acquaintances in Old Bailey prison equipped him with further skills of forgery and minting coins. He managed to board *Erebus* forging a reference letter. He travelled with the Franklin Expedition team to the polar seas; never missed the lectures of the surgeon on the ship, which later helped him to survive in the arctic. Only Ephraim and his friend Izzy managed to survive when the ship broke. Using his nefarious skills he became the head of the Eskimos.

Ephraim, among all the characters of Richler, performed the 'best' during his worst times. Had he taken the right path, none of Richler's character could have surpassed him in his perseverance. Being young, driven away from home he easily sent his roots wherever he stood and uprooted himself to another soil for his benefits. Mr. Nicholson was true when he told the court, in the silver candle stick

case, “Had Ephraim Gursky, a most promising student, not been falsely accused in the first place and wrongly incarcerated in Coldbath fields at such a tender age, it is possible his life would have taken a more commendable direction” (SGWH 428). But still Ephraim had the talent to change situations to his favour. The basic instinct to survive against odds—in fact heavy odds portray Ephraim stronger than most other characters of Richler.

Solomon a better version of his grandfather Ephraim learnt to drive the sledge, build igloo, harness the dogs, read the stars, and studying Latin. He was taught to protect himself from the animals out in the Arctic, to handle a rifle and hunt caribou, to fix the bones and joints and of course some synagogue songs and religion—above all he learnt the art of perseverance from his zeyda. He slowly started to admire his zeyda. But when Ephraim subtly hints at Bernard as a man-eating wolf to Solomon, his innocent mind could not apprehend the ambiguity in the language of Ephraim.

But later Solomon became the brain behind the Gursky Empire—he started to use what he had learnt. The family held nine hotels and two mail order houses. When the Gurskys were struck with blows in business, like the income tax and the importation of intoxicating liquors, Solomon handled the problem with ease. He, like Hemingway’s heroes, displayed ‘grace under pressure’. He did not

choose vulgar ways like Bernard to tackle situations; he had panache in handling tough times. His urge to prove to the mainstream society that the Gurskys can emerge from nothing, came true when the Canadian government had to make laws solely to curtail Gurskys' business activities. Solomon's brain and money had more power to bend the laws. Against all odds he established the Gursky Empire, but couldn't withstand his brother's design to kill him in a plane crash.

The other characters who persevered to prove themselves are Duddy, Barney Larkin and Joshua. Land is everything for Duddy. He runs in pursuit of land. It gives him a sense of security and a feeling of success. His hardships to achieve his goal are tremendous and as a budding teenager, Duddy takes up several jobs to save money to purchase the land around the lake at Laurentians. His experience and acquaintance makes him hard and insensitive to people. He had to outwork Boy Wonder to win his dream. The purchase of land in pieces and his style of living is a typical example for his toughness—he couldn't even walk, he could only run. He worked as an apprentice, learnt business, drove taxi, imported pin ball machines from the U.S., tried directing films and did whatever possible on earth. His overwork made him weary and he appeared to be in thirties even in his late teens. Nothing stopped him. Only his grand father's words reverberated in his ears and that made him run and finally got what he

wanted. The perseverance he shows in achieving his goal raises everyone's eyebrows.

Barney Larkin, same as Duddy, showed perseverance in becoming someone in the American business world. To start with, he was a Salesman—he carried children's toys, flashlights, washable playing cards, combination cigarette-lighter pens, household gadgets and luminous paints. Then he worked in short-order joints in Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Jersey. Having gained experience he started his first restaurant—a real restaurant, not like Joints, which later expended into a chain of Restaurants. He strived hard to remain on top of the business. Unlike Duddy, who had no emotional ties with Yvette, who helped him in acquiring the land, Barney married Jessie, a simple church going *shiksha*, who had helped him when he started his first restaurant.

Henry Gursky and Rory peel display pride over the perseverance of the Jews. An RCMP Corporal was surprised to see Henry in Yellowknife. He told Henry that he never expected to find a Jew in such a rough country, because it was a well known fact that Jews who immigrated to Canada in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not risk the Arctic Circle, but tended to settle in cities where there was the most opportunity for trade, and advancement. Henry replied, "We are an astonishing people, Dandelions, my father used to say. Dig us out

here and riding the wind and the rain we take root there” (SGWH 95). So also Rory to Atuk in *The Acrobats*, says, “Look at the Hebrews. We took a desert and made a garden out of it” (ICA 114).

Moses, Joshua and Jake fall in the category of artists—Moses and Joshua being writers, Jake is a film director. These three men show awesome perseverance in carving a niche for themselves in the respective fields. Moses, in the pursuit of becoming a successful writer, traces Solomon’s life history. He takes efforts to bring to the world the history of Gursky Empire that runs for two centuries starting with Ephraim to Issac (Solomon’s grandson). Despite many hurdles, threatenings from Gursky family, physical, emotional and financial setbacks, Moses was determined to take the place his father yearned for, in the literary world. So is Joshua. But Jake, like the biblical Jacob, suffers from jealous and envy. Jake stood the trial against him at Old Bailey court to prove himself clean. His friendship with Hary Stein leads him to face accusation for the alleged rape of a German girl. Finally the court declared him not guilty. Just as how God blessed the Jewish patriarchs after a series of trial, Jake was also blessed with so many things: the renewal of his friendship with Louis, his old friend and script writer; Lou Kaplan came with an offer to direct a movie from him, a reconciliation with life and himself, and a timely financial support from Duddy and other Jews from Canada.

A closely knit family is one of the Jewish values that is given importance and carried out throughout the generations. Judaism, like Hinduism, gives special emphasis to the family. Family tradition, motherhood, fatherhood, brotherhood, gain more respect in the world of Jews. In *The Acrobats*, Barney Larkin, a crass American businessman prizes everything and values nothing. But as far as his family is concerned, he is a typical Jew who is very particular that his family should be intact. He expects every member of the family to show love and care for each other. Being a gentile, his wife Jessie does not attach much importance to the family as he does. He does everything to retain her, in fact, he spends a lot on her and her brother and that of course kept Jessie from going away from Barney. She is too modern for him and spares very little time for Barney and children. He knew that Jessie is not faithful to him. He complains to Derek about Jessie, "Well I was brought up to believe that you married a woman and she was yours and she loved you, like my parents, but I found out different. Why do guys always fool around with each other's wives? I respect other people's property . . ." (TA 160). He did not want to break up the tie because of his two children. Barney tells Andre "How can I leave her, we've got two kids" (TA 158). Barney was brought up in a family that respects the family relationships and bonds that had tied them together throughout the Diaspora.

On the contrary, Chaim lost his family in the Diaspora. He struggled hard to get her sister married; He spent all his money in his sister's marriage and in purchasing a land for his parents. His steadfast belief is that supporting the family is the prime duty of a son. Chaim, who is now alone, missed the warmth of a family, and thinks he should have a family. He longs to have a daughter. He tells Barney, ". . . Kids to comfort me and spend my money when I'm too old myself" (TA 138). Another Jewish character in the novel, Ida, also attaches importance to her family. She refused Andre on the grounds that she did not want to hurt her family. But one can see that the gentile characters in the novel are all from the broken families or have no family at all.

Col. Roger Kraus lives with his sister Fraulein Kraus in Spain. They have no family. Fraulein's fear of emotional insecurity makes her prevent Kraus' relationship with Toni. Kraus also doesn't empathize with Fraulein's loneliness. Once she even attempted suicide for lack of emotional ties. Even Toni is shown as living alone. Only her affair with Andre makes her life meaningful. Andre having come from a broken family realizes the value of being with a family. He reflects Chaim's idea when he tells Toni, "A man should have a home and a family for without it he is a tramp". Unfortunately Andre didn't live to fulfill his own expectation.

*Son of a Smaller Hero*, opens with the family patriarch and Noah's grandfather calling for a family meeting. He insists on the familial bonds and religious rules of the Adler family. The children and grandchildren must attend the weekly meeting as it gives a kind of pride to Melech that the family still respects the tradition of coming together. His wife Jenny takes the occasion as an opportunity to cook elaborately for the family. But Noah, Melech's favourite, is absent in the meeting. This absence signals Noah's revolt against the conventional restraints of narrowly defined family structures. But the death of his father brings him back to his family, and into various possibilities of life that his various uncles represent. He quits his relationship with Miriam for the sake of his family, his mother. He realized that though he distanced himself from the family, his roots are there. The closely knit family binds Noah than his ties with the gentile world. Whereas, ironically, Miriam dared to quit her secured married life for the sake of Noah.

Indeed much of the novel is structured around the relationship between the Zeyda and the grandson. Noah's admiration for his Zeyda turns into disgust when Noah finds out the dishonest business deal of his Zeyda, Melech. They couldn't bridge the gulf between them till the end of the novel. Towards the end Noah leaves for England. Before going he turns to his old Zeyda, for benediction. His departure is not

an attempt to escape; it is an attempt to resolve the dualities and discrepancies impinging on his life. *Son of a Smaller Hero* is not so much a novel of leaving home as of adjusting to what is left of home within the protagonist as he matures.

There are also other novels in which the grandfather-grandson relationships gain importance. The bond between Simcha Kravitz and Duddy in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, between Ephraim and Solomon in *Solomon Gursky was Here* prove that Richler had woven the novels with the intricate family relationship. In *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, the Zeyda is a hero to Duddy. Simcha is the only soul who cares Duddy and so whatever his zeyda said he took it to heart. Duddy's feeling for family is consistent throughout the whole of the book. His efforts to save Lennie from a problem and bringing back Auntie Ida when Uncle Benjy was in deathbed are obvious examples. In spite of Benjy's ill-treatment, he listens to his words, "you've got to love them. Duddel . . . they are the family, remember, and to see only their faults (like I did) is to look at them like a stranger" (ADK 278). Duddy feels a deep instinctive responsibility for his uncle. He seizes the doctor and shouts, "Don't let him die. He's my uncle" (ADK 243).

Duddy's unthinking commitment to family is brought out when he meets Hugh Thomas Calder to help his brother Lennie come out of his problem. Calder, a gentile business man and Duddy have opposite

attitudes to family. Calder is without family feelings. He is a widower and enjoyed living alone. He doesn't care much for his only daughter Sandra. So, Calder is fascinated by Duddy who sees himself responsible for his brother. Calder asks him, "Are you very fond of your brother". "He is my brother," Duddy said, annoyed, "you know" (ADK 196). Also when compared to Yvette, Duddy is emotionally opposite. Yvette abandons her family for Duddy. Whereas Duddy abandons quickly Yvette for his selfishness, giving no thinking of the help she had extended to Duddy in his pursuit for the land. He cannot abandon his family for anything. Duddy is not ruled by mere 'fondness'. There is a primitive power that stands beyond mere fondness. It is through this sense that Duddy is entangled.

Similarly, in *A Choice of Enemies*, the Jewish expatriates in London live with their families. Whereas the gentiles like Norman, Sally and Ernst rely on each other only as friends. In *The Incomparable Atuk*, Rory gives importance to the familial values. He remains true to his wife. When his wife is pregnant, his determination to remain faithful grows stronger. The family is mutually binding that he could run to his father and brother at times of trouble for support.

Similarly, the bond between the father and son is emphasized in the novels like *St. Urbain's Horseman*, *Joshua Then and Now* and *Barney's Version*. The protagonists of these novels, struggle alone to

establish themselves in the tumultuous society. The fathers' role in their sons' lives is negligible. But still the fathers are respected. Jake feels that a father is always a father, because it is from his father he had learnt that a man's attitude to life is very important. Joshua also experiences the same. Though not taken care much in the childhood days, Joshua's father's life teaches Joshua the lesson, how to live. He sets his own code of honour and conduct. But Reuben's faith in the concept of family brings him back to Joshua. However, the mother abandons the family. But Joshua and Pauline's marriage stands against the fractured and ruined marriages of their parents. Both the grand fathers support the family emotionally. In the end, Joshua concludes that beyond the disorders of human society, with its deals, betrayals, revolutions and hypocrisies, only one's family can be worthy of loyalty. In *Barney's Version*, Barney and his father are more like friends—a change in the relationships, one can analyze, between the fathers-sons in Richler's first novel and his last novel. It was more rigid in the earlier novels; whereas in the later novels like *Joshua Then and Now* and *Barney's Version*, they have an easy approach towards each other. Barney's father Izzy did not force the values of a strong family into him and that's perhaps one of the reasons why Barney was a failure in respect of his family.

In *St. Urbain's Horseman*, Jake not only takes care of his mother but also comforts Joey's mother who waits for Joey's return. But Joey, on the contrary followed his father's footsteps of deserting his family. Joey had a younger sister and brother. He did not bind himself within the circle of a family. He lived with two women through whom he had children but never visited them again. Jake, with all his admiration for Joey and his natural inclination towards Joey's family felt responsible for the horseman's family. Similarly, Ephraim, in *Solomon Gursky was Here*, wandered like Joey but took care of his wife and child. His care extended to the welfare of his grandchildren. Having emerged from a strong and a closely knit family, Solomon took care of the whole family. The unity among the family is one of their strengths in their public life. Ironically, to save the Gursky Empire, Bernard was ready to 'sacrifice' Solomon. Bernard stands as an explicit example for the degradation of family values. Boggie in *CockSure*, can also be lined up with Bernard. His callousness for family values is displayed well when he profanely illustrates his family in his first book. He drives his close friend Mortimer crazy. He betrays him by entering into an extra marital affair with Mortimer's wife.

The bond between the *zeydas* and grandsons, fathers and sons, the faith and trust between the husbands and wives, the help extended by the uncles and brothers prove that the family values are centrality to

the lives of Jews. Despite a few characters who wanted to breach the familial ties, the novels run along the line of closely knit families.

Striving for scholarship has been highly praised by the Jews. The Torah does refer to the Jewish people as “a wise nation”. The Jews value intelligence as a truism. Those who remain faithful to the Jewish religious tradition pray for wisdom and consider the intellectually demanding study of the Torah, a high and holy calling. And even the Jews who turn to other disciplines seek to exercise more their grey matter rather than their biceps. During the Roman conquest of the Holy land, the foremost *rabbi*, *Rabbi Yochanan ben Sakkui*, chose a different way to win the Romans. He requested the Romans to permit the establishment of a *yeshiva*, a religious school at Yavneh. It was this religious school and education that helped the Jews to perpetuate. For thousands of years they have been having a love affair with learning and striving to grow.

Jewish accomplishments in academic endeavours, the sciences and the arts have been remarkable, especially in the light of the proportionally small size of the Jewish people. Starting from Jesus of Nazareth to Michael Dell (Dell Computers) the most outstanding personalities in the versatile fields are of Jewish faith. Albert Einstein, the most influential scientist of all time, Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, Karl Marx, Jonas Salk, Aaron Beik who founded

'Cognitive Therapy' are some of the Jews whose intellectual output has enriched the whole humanity. Apart from the above, the famous financiers in the business world are Jews. They include Ralph Lauren (polo), Levis Strauss (Levi's Jeans), Sergey Brin (Google), Larry Ellison (Oracle), Irv Robins (Baskins & Robbins). The Jews also dominate the media world. Wolf Blitzer (CNN), Barbara Walters (ABC News), Max Frankel (New York Times) and Eugens Meyer (Washington Post) are Jews. In explaining the unusually high level of Jewish achievements in the world, Mark Twain wrote the following about Jews in the article "Jewish Mystique":

If the Statistics are right, the Jews, constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard. . . His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, arts, music, finance, medicine and obtuse learning are also very out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. . . .

The elderly Jews in the earlier novels and few other Jews of Richler showed love for learning the Torah. Their honorifics customarily ran not to words like 'genius' or 'brilliant' but to ones like 'righteous' and 'God fearing'. The modern Jews included brilliance and intelligence as

values. While some Jews in Richler's novels cherished religious education, there are others who treat education and scholarliness as values. They used it as a weapon to fight all kinds of discrimination against them. Throughout the history, Judaism had survived countless incidents of unspeakable prejudice and harassment. But there is one thing Jews can't survive no matter how hard they may try is ignorance. Jews like Chaim and Melech longed for religious education. Melech, being a son of a scribe wanted to become a *Rabbi*. But owing to unforeseen circumstances he had to run to Canada for life. In Canada, he gives up religious education and turns to business to make money in order to find some prestige in the changing world. His unfulfilled desire to become a rabbi gets compromised when Jacob Goldenberg gives his daughter Leah, in marriage to Melech Adler's first born son Wolf. Melech was happy that Goldenberg is a Talmud Torah teacher and a *Chassid*. Goldenbergs were well known in the ghetto. Everybody had read his poems written in Yiddish. Melech was satisfied with the match of Wolf and Leah. He agreed to the proposal mainly because Goldenberg had religious education.

Like Melech Adler, Chaim also wanted to become a *rabbi*, but couldn't become one because he was wandering through the continents. Even though Chaim couldn't become a *rabbi*, he practised Torah with the spirit. He understands Andre's predicament using the

teachings of the Jewish sage Hillel. Chaim attempts to help Andre, to resolve his neurotic preoccupations with himself by using the teachings of Maimonides, a great Jewish theologian. He disagrees with Andre that there is more evil than good in the world. He calls Andre's "melancholy" as a form of proud self-inflation, which sets him apart from the rest of human kind. He teaches him the purpose of life and insists that faith in the world created by God will lighten his problems. He is more like a spiritual guide to Andre. He further adds that there is no single path to salvation. Salvation is personal. Chaim fulfills his desire to become a religious scholar by being one, practicing the values and imparting it in the true sense.

Also Carlos, a Spanish Jew, in *Joshua Then and Now*, longs to learn Hebrew to realize the value of Torah. Unable to live a life of a Jew in Spain, Carlos wish to learn Hebrew to become a religious scholar could only lead him to troubles. In spite of that he learns Hebrew on his own, with a help of a dictionary. He tells Joshua that some Spanish names of the cities and villages were derived from the Hebrew. "It was our people who gave Toledo its name, *Toledoth*, which means 'city of generations' in Hebrew". He also traces his origins back to ten tribes. Joshua could understand Carlos' longing for learning when Carlos says "how I wish if someone can teach me the Torah with its spirit" (JTN 114).

Also Henry Gursky in *Solomon Gursky was Here*, becomes the real religious head of the Eskimos in Yellowknife unlike his great grand father Ephraim Gursky. Henry's natural inclination towards his language and religion made him learn and practise the same. He got into Brooklyn *Yeshiva* where he religiously followed the rules of the school. He flew far north when a band of Eskimos starved to death in their process of observing their tribal rites. That was when he settled in Yellowknife to impart the tribes the religious values. He also liked his son Issac to continue the tradition of joining the *Yeshiva*.

But Ephraim's knowledge of religion was used only to exploit the people of the Arctic. He is portrayed as one of the false religious men who thrives on the ignorance of the people. One could sense the satire of Richler when Ephraim tells the Eskimos, "I've come to save you", when he himself was running continents to save his life. But no one can deny the scholarliness of Ephraim. He can speak more than four languages and is a voracious reader. Solomon was taken aback by the astounding quality of his reading. He spares time for reading and inculcates in Solomon the habit of reading and venturing out for experiencing the world.

Among the modern Jews, the religious education was not given much importance. Instead, becoming a *rabbi* was taken as a 'good profession'. Reuben Shapiro in *Joshua Then and Now* wanted to

become a *rabbi* just as he tried his hands at various professions. His religiosity is satirized. Rather Richler uses Reuben as a mouth piece to ridicule the shallowness of the religious values people hold in the busy world. Reuben tells Joshua:

These are the days of Awe. Tomorrow is Rosh Hashonna, our New Year, and like a week later its' Yom Kippur, when if you shit on anybody during the year you got a legal right to repent. And God forgives you (JTN 76).

But he used to carry Bible wherever he travels. He reads Bible not that he valued its teachings but found it interesting. He became a fighter because he had no proper education.

On the other hand, Joshua, being a mediocre strives hard to become a writer. He rejects the idea that the art of writing is an innate gift. He develops the skill of writing. The Talmud, also, did not generally stress inherent abilities – mental or otherwise – but rather the choice to utilize whatever blessing they have. Joshua, teaching himself Pitman's shorthand, began to attend a number of McGill lectures on Spanish language course, and history of Iberia. McGill was an incredible dream to him. He educated himself on prose style and studied till, "the print danced before his eyes". Finally he got an opening to prove himself a writer. To Joshua, his hardship to

scholarliness is one of the ways through which he can achieve social emancipation.

Few others who educate themselves without the aid of others are Noah in *Son of a Smaller Hero* and Duddy in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. In *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, Duddy's brother Lennie is a medical student who is sponsored by his uncle Benjy. The whole family adores Lennie for his intelligence. Uncle Benjy whenever comes home, brings a surprise for Lennie, and not for Duddy. Duddy was sidelined for he was a little rascal who discontinued school. After realizing this, Duddy started to educate himself to reach the pinnacle in the business world. He did four or five things at a time and always kept himself busy and engaged. He could recollect various methods of communication and enrich his vocabulary even while making love to Yvette. Noah, in *Son of a Smaller Hero* caught hold of Theo to propel his desire for education.

In Richler's novels, directors like Jake, Duddy, Sonny and other expatriate writers flourish. This is a proof to the fact that there are many Jews whose talent light up the Hollywood industry. Harrison Ford, George Burns, Sandra Bullock, Woody Allen, Paul Newman, Dustin Hoffman, Michael Douglas, Ben Kingsley, Jerry Lewis, Steven Spielberg, Oliver Stone, Aaron Spelling are all Jewish. As a matter of fact Hollywood itself was founded by a Jew. To make her son one of

the intellectuals, Jake's mother, unlike other mothers of St. Urbain Street, drilled into him the books that'll influence him to become a man of brains. She says, "There's nothing like a University education" (SUHM 103). But Jake's father corrects her telling, "It's not what you know, it's who you know" (104) is important. Knowing Jake's desire to become a director, he says, "You don't just decide I-want-to-be-in-the movies. You have to be discovered" (102).

Just as Jake's mother, Jenny, in *St. Urbain's Horseman*, drills into Arty her brother the importance of being educated. She swore that Arty would study at McGill, even if she had to overwork. For St. Urbain Jews, graduation at McGill is a symbol of dignity. It is not just education that they need, education from McGill's means more to them; a kind of social acceptance and respect.

Barney, in *Barney's Version*, in the process of educating himself, gets the help of Boogie. Boogie introduced him to the world of books and writers. He threw the window of knowledge open to Barney. Barney respects Boogie for that and his admiration for Boogie's intelligence lasts till the end of the novel despite Boogie's cynicism. Barney could not hold back his love for learning after the vistas are open to him. Almost all of Richler's creations attach themselves with the mass-media and naturally they value skill and intelligence. Barney, Boogie, Joshua, Moses, Shalinsky are writers and Jake,

Duddy, Ziggy, Sonny are directors. Unlike Barney, Boogie is very meticulously educated not only to meet the demands of the world but to stand a class apart. Apart from the general education, he was expected to learn how to ride, shoot, sail and play tennis. He took elocution lessons to get rid of his cockney accent. He learnt Hebrew and Latin with the help of a *rabbi*, once in a week in a synagogue. He took Russian language classes from a white Russian watchmaker who he had befriended. Boogie asks, "How can anybody go through life, not being able to read Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov in the Original" (BV 10).

Scholarliness, intelligence, skill and love for education form one of the *leitmotifs* in the novels of Richler. "Education was one of the principal reasons why the early Christians hated the Jews and the early Muslims respected them . . . . The very words for algebra, magazines and medicines all came from Arab scholars who worked in close harmony with Jews, particularly in Spain" ( *The Secret War Against the Jews* 19-21). Even Muhammad admired Jews for their scholarliness. He admired them so much that he wanted to make Jerusalem the center of his religion.