CHAPTER 4
TRANSCENDING CHAOS

I

Under the impact of emancipation and modernization the Polish Jewry faced the dilemma: Whether to continue with their life of nonconformism or to undergo a change and embrace the cultural life of the majority. Singer takes up this dilemma in most of his novels but the family sagas *The Family Moskat*, *The Manor* and *The Estate* provide adequate room to deal with the social, economic, political and religious upheavals. These sagas also discuss what solutions the characters opt for while encountering chaos, and how they try to transcend it. For some of them Zionism offers a permanent solution to the problem. It can end their days of persecution, pogroms and antisemitism. Some others prefer assimilation to all other solutions available to them. A few of them take recourse to Hassidism, while some others participate in political activities connected with revolutions aiming at social justice. Singer through the devices of 'telling' and 'showing' presents these characters discussing with the protagonists the merits and demerits and elements of all the solutions available. An attempt is made in this chapter to discuss the options in detail.

One of the options is assimilation.

Assimilation is one of the options that a few characters try out. It would be interesting to know what this term exactly means. *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* defines this term as: loss of national or religious identity by absorption into the environment. Among Jews, it is applied somewhat loosely to (i) the abandonment of external 'foreign' characteristics, e.g. in clothing or speech (ii) the abandonment of all Jewish identity without (as in cases of
Assimilation is undertaken by the Jews with a hope that better job opportunities would be available and the feeling of hostility towards them would end. Through the characters of Wallenberg and Zadok, Singer presents the predicament of the assimilated Jews. Wallenberg is a rich businessman in Warsaw who enjoys good reputation among the Gentiles. Calman, the protagonist Ezriel's father-in-law, is connected with him through some business contract. During his visit to Warsaw Ezriel meets him. He is impressed by his lifestyle. Wallenberg bemoans the primitive state in which the Polish Jews live. He criticizes the Jews for clinging to their age-old beliefs and life style: "Mankind progresses, but they remain as static as the Chinese behind the Great Wall. I'm talking about the Polish Jews only ..." [The Manor, p 41]

Wallenberg finds fault with the Jews for their non-conformist attitude. He believes that they should modernise them leave their Cheders and Yeshivas and go for secular education. They should also learn the Polish language. He also holds the Jews responsible for the hostile attitude of the Gentiles towards them. He tries to explain the situation to Ezriel:

How can anyone move into someone else's home, live there in total isolation and expect not to suffer by it? When you despise your host's god as a tin image, shun his wine as forbidden, condemn his daughter as unclean, aren't you asking to be treated as an unwelcome outsider? ... [The Manor, p 41]

Wallenberg expresses his happiness over Ezriel's interest in secular books and his ability to communicate in Polish language. He encourages him to continue his efforts. He also gives him a few text books as gifts. In his views it is Hassidism that has caused the Jews a great harm. The only solution that can
bring an end to all the problems of the Jews is assimilation. He tells Ezriel: "The Jews must become one hundred per cent Polish. Otherwise they will be driven out as in the days of Pharaoh". [The Manor, p 43]

Though an assimilated one, Wallenberg has great sympathy for the Jews. His concern for them becomes apparent whenever he discusses the problems concerning the Jews. On another occasion, when Wallenberg and Ezriel meet, Wallenberg forewarns him how his being a Jew would be a hindrance in his progress in the field of studies and job as well. While discussing the issue of assimilation he admits to Ezriel that even if they learn the Polish language and change their life-style, the hostility might not end.

He ascribes the hostility to the sense of competition between the Jews and the Gentiles in which the former prove themselves better than their counterparts. Wallenberg puts it as follows:

There was a time when I believed that if the Jews were to remove their caftans and learn to speak the native language, everything would be fine. Now I see that it is not so. To the rest of the world, the modern Jew is a ruthless competitor. In two thousand years, the Jews have accumulated a reservoir of skills that no other people possess. [The Manor, p 190].

Singer shows how even after getting assimilated the Jew was treated with a feeling of resentment in times of pogroms. Wallenberg's house is attacked and his property is damaged during the anti-Jew riots. He is pained to see how the newspaper publish articles against him, tarnishing his image just because he is a convert. The conflict that Wallenberg suffers from is presented through one of his dramatic monologues: "These people praised him on face, but conspired against him behind his back ... The very same newspaper that now praised him so highly had in the past carried articles in which he had been
Zadok is another character through whom the predicament of the assimilated Jew is presented. Zadok is the son of the Rabbi Jochanon of Marshinov and the nephew of Ezriel. He is a brilliant young man with a rational attitude to life. He is drawn to secular books. He learns Greek, Latin, French, English, and Italian. Besides being interested in science, Zadok is also fond of philosophy. He discusses Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel etc in Ezriel's company. Zadok's wife, Hannah, however, is a pious Jewess. She continues to live like a Jewess though her husband has assimilated. She celebrates the Jewish festivals with the same fervour.

Zadok, like Wallenberg, wants the Jews to change, to keep pace with the changing times. He does not find anything special in Judaism. On the contrary, it appears to him that the Jewish culture had borrowed a number of things from the other cultures. During one of his debates with Ezriel, Zadok opines: "The times when we were the chosen people are over. Some of our laws are rooted somewhere in India. They have the same taboos about menstruation... Honestly Uncle Ezriel, we have nothing to be so proud of. We have even borrowed the Ten Commandments from Hammurabi." [The Estate, p 304].

For him, all the pious Jews are fanatics. He also does not appreciate Ezriel's idea of going to Palestine. He remarks: "But why go to Palestine? If you want to become a pious fanatic, you can do that right here in Warsaw..." [The Estate, p 305].

Zadok also believes that the only solution to antisemitism is assimilation. He feels the Jews should be loyal to Poland, settle down without looking forward
to creating a homeland in Palestine. He shares his views with Ezriel: "We want to be everything at once: Russians, Jews, Frenchmen, Turks. We want to be an amalgamation of all the nations. If one lives in Poland, one should be a Pole, not stand with one foot in Warsaw and the other in Jerusalem." [The Estate, p 189].

Zadok's condition is similar to that of Wallenberg's. Like him, Zadok also realizes at a later stage in his life that his assimilation has not helped him much. The Gentiles treat him with a sense of suspicion and resentment. His experience of anti-Semitic feelings impel him to return to Marshinov to meet his dying father, the Rabbi Jochanan.

Singer describes the real condition of the assimilated Jews through the characters of both Wallenberg and Zadok. Their efforts to keep themselves away from Judaism and the Jews do not help them much. However modernised the Jews are, they cannot completely sever their bonds with Jewishness. In times of crisis their sympathies are with the Jews for as Wallenberg admits to Ezriel in one of his meetings: "I'm no longer a Jew. I've been baptized. But blood is thicker than water and I can't stand seeing the Jews suffer". [The Manor, p 41].

After having considered assimilation as an alternative, Zionism is taken up for discussion. Zionism is another option for the Jews to counter the hostility and anti-Semitic feelings of the Gentiles towards them. Its roots were in the rise of nationalism all over Europe. The Jews also strongly felt that all their miseries would come to an end if they could get a separate state in which their cultural identity could be preserved. It is interesting to note that the concept of Zionism underwent a gradual change and later on became a tangible reality with many
facets. Shlomo Avineri describes the circumstances which led to its initial conception: "(Zionism) ... is not just a reaction of people to persecution. It is quest for self-determination and liberation under the modern conditions of secularization and liberalism. As such it is as much a part of the Jewish history of liberation and the quest for self-identity".

"Return to Zion" was the slogan which evoked mixed reactions. For the pious Jews, the movement was in a way, a breach of the covenant. They thought that according to the promise given by Yahweh, the messiah would come and return the Jews to their homeland. The Jews should patiently await the divine initiation. On the other hand, the modern Jews thought it was high time they took initiative and attain liberation and statehood. Gaining a statehood would not be complete till Hebrew language was given its due status. In addition to this, returning to Zion meant preserving the spiritual values which were of great value to Judaism. The enlightened Jews also thought in terms of the fulfilment of historical obligation in the form of statehood. Once it was attained, it would substantially contribute to the welfare of humanity, transcending its national boundaries.

Ahad Ha'am a zionist thinker articulates his vision of Zionism as follows:

> it seeks to return to its historic centre, in order to live there a life of natural development, to bring its powers into play in every department of human culture, to develop and perfect those national possessions which it has acquired up to now, and thus to contribute to the common stock of humanity ... it will produce men in the country who will be, able on a favourable opportunity, to establish a state which will be truly a Jewish state and not merely a state of Jews.]

Along with the political aspirations, the thinkers were also expressed their concern for the revival of Hebrew, the national language. Without having an
independent state and making the language the natural medium of the people of the state, the dream of a Jewish state could not be realized. They deeply felt that through Hebrew alone, the Jews in Diaspora could identify themselves with their roots and cultural heritage. Ben Yehuda underlined the importance of the language component to Zionism: "The Hebrew language can only live if we revive the nation and return its to fatherland. In the last analysis, this is the only way to achieve our lasting redemption, ... "

Singer, through a couple of characters, presents the idea of Zionism in the family sagas like The Family Moskat, The Manor and The Estate. In The Family Moskat, there is a reference to the arrival of messiah with whom regaining of Zion is closely connected. Between the two World wars, the Polish Jews suffer at the hands of both the Germans and the Russians. They continue to lead a religious life with a hope that the messiah will redeem them. The persecution is interpreted as the birthpangs of the advent of the messiah. It is only Shosha, Koppel's daughter, who along with her husband prepares to leave for Palestine. Shosha's husband Simon does not entertain any romantic ideas about Palestine. He is clear that he will have to struggle there in order to live. He is mentally prepared for it. He accordingly prepares his would-be-wife Shosha for the missionary work as well. He teaches her to speak Hebrew and instills in her love for Palestine. Koppel, after having returned to Warsaw from America happens to meet Shosha and comes to know about her plan to go to Palestine. The following conversation between Koppel and Shosha throws light on her determination to return:

Koppel : "And what'll you do there in Palestine ?"
Shosha : "We'll work".
Koppel : "You can work here, too".
Shosha : "But Palestine is our own country".
[The Family Moskat. p 484].
In *The Manor* and *The Estate* Singer assigns more space to the realization of Zionism. The desire to go to Palestine is clearly stated by Joziek, the son of Ezriel. Appalled by the strong wave of anti-Semitic feelings, Joziek makes up his mind to go. This event creates a serious impact on both Ezriel and his wife Shaindel. The news is a shock to Shaindel, his mother. Joziek's departure causes a traumatic effect on her. Her illness aggravates because of her separation from the son. For Ezriel, Joziek's decision is an eye-opener. It leads him to introspection that shows him a way out of his personal chaos. In his blind pursuit of modern ways, Ezriel connives at the indifference and hostility shown towards the Jews by the Gentiles. But his son takes a decision when the situation becomes unbearable. What prompts him to take such a decision is the insults that he has to put up with in the educational institution. Joziek admits to his father:

> This anti-Semitic. You'll never know, Papa, what I faced in school. I didn't say anything because it wouldn't have helped ... Everyone tormented me: the teachers, the students. A hundred, perhaps a thousand, times a day they threw my Jewishness up to me. You studied alone, at home, but I had to go to school everyday. I was beaten, too innumerable times ... We were sitting quietly at a table when two bullies started baiting us. They wanted to insult us. Finally, one of them tore off my cap and threw it on the floor. I challenged him to a duel, but he replied that he wouldn't duel with a Jew ... someone poured water into my cap. I came home without it, without my honour too. Papa, I can't stand it any more! I'd rather die. [*The Estate*, p 56].

When Ezriel asks him what he would do if someone in Palestine hit him. Joziek's reply is: "I'll strike back". [*The Estate*, p 57].

The common Jews in the nineteenth century showed keen interest in Hassidism. Since Hassidism played an important role in their lives. There were a number of courts known for their Hassidic rabbis. The Jews would visit these courts on certain festivals and participate in the religious activities. These centres provided
the Jews an opportunity to feel the sense of togetherness and rootedness. In The Manor and The Estate, the Court of Marshinov and its activities are described in great detail. Calman, the leader of the community of the Jews in Jampol, visits it in search of solace from the sense of guilt that he suffered from. After having married Clara, Calman feels that he is no longer a pious Jew and hence visits the Marshinov rabbi to rejuvenate his faith. Similarly, Ezriel takes Misha to Marshinov court to save him from the psychological harassment and insults aimed at him by his beloved from Olga's son. Ezriel himself also seeks guidance from the rabbi to his problem of loss of faith, and how to regain it.

Similarly, in The Family Moskat also, there are some characters who seek shelter at the court of the Bialodrevna. Moishe Gabriel and his son Aaron are the characters who live in the court and lead a simple life. Moishe Gabriel, the son-in-law of Meshulam Moskat and the husband of Leah, has great faith in God's words. Moishe Gabriel remains unperturbed in the face of complications that arise in his life. When Leah, seeks divorce from him, Moishe Gabriel grants it to her without making much fuss. Similarly, when his son Aaron also finds his married life dissatisfactory he seeks shelter at the court. Gina's husband, Akiba is another character given to religious activities. He cannot live a happy married life with a woman who loves a worldly professor.

Singer describes the religious activities carried out at such courts in great detail and shows how they exerted a tremendous influence on the Jews. Fascination for social and political movements in some people aiming at well-being of mankind is also interwoven in the fabric of the narratives. There are a few minor characters both male and female who actively associate themselves with Russian Revolution and later on with other ideological programmes which
generate hope in their minds. These movements and programmes expect the Jews to be activists, to move away from their cultural heritage and indulge in violence. It would amount to their carrying out the commands even if they had to openly flout the Commandments and behave like Gentiles. Singer presents them either discussing ideological matters or participating in dangerous activities. The ultimate result is either disillusionment or frustration or disorientation.

In The Manor and The Estate the characters who are drawn towards revolution are Sonya, Aaron, Mirale, Zina and Stefan Lamanski etc. Mirale, Ezriel's sister refuses to marry a Yeshiva boy. She makes it clear to her father that she would marry a youngman of her own choice. In order to become economically independent, she becomes a hair-dresser and devotes rest of the time in political activities. She is actively associated with Aaron who as her mentor prepares her for a struggle against the feudal system so that the peasants could be liberated and social justice could prevail. Though their activities are unlawful and subversive in nature they like other revolutionists stake their future to bring about a new kind of society. Both Mirale and Stefan devote themselves to these activities unmindful of the consequences. However, when there are pogroms against the Jews in Russia, Aaron's dream of social justice is shattered. Instead of staying back in Poland, Aaron decides to go away to Palestine.

Mirale as a young modern woman gives a great shock to her parents. They are disappointed in her. She, however, continues to be associated with revolutionary activities. Under a new mentor, Mirale continues her fight against the establishment. She gives birth to a child even before her marriage is solemnised. Her association with subversive activities once again send her to
Siberia. When she returns she is seriously ill and requires a constant care and long treatment. Stefan Lamanski is meanwhile, shot dead by the opponent political group considering him a provocateur. Like Mirale, Ezriel's daughter Zina is also connected with Proletariat group. She carries with her a gun and cartridges. Ezriel as a father is so preoccupied that he does not have any time for her. She also engages herself in the act of transferring weapons. Posing as a pregnant woman Zina carries on her body a few arms and ammunitions. Unfortunately while travelling on a train, she feels so thirsty that she turns restless. She crashes down on the floor of the carriage and her identity as a weapon carrier is disclosed. Ezriel is shocked when he comes to know this. He tries to meet Sasha, Calman's son to intervene and use his influence to obtain release for her. Singer, on similar lines, presents a few other minor characters in The Family Moskat who participates in subversive political activities. Abram's daughter Stepha is such one who leads a life of no restraints. She also, without Abram's knowledge associates herself with such revolutionary activities.

In order to overcome their confusing situations, these young men and women undertakes political activities, even at the cost of their lives. They are fascinated by slogans and high idealism as preached by the ideologies. But ultimately their hearts are filled with frustration and despair.

For some characters, migrating to either America or Palestine is one of the options available. There is a category of characters who puzzled by frustrating socio-economic conditions or by the feeling of hostility towards them seek asylum in America, the Golden Land. They emigrate either to better their economic prospects or to avoid the bitter feeling of anti-semitism. The family sagas have a number of such characters who escape. In The Manor and The
Estate. there are characters like Zipkin, Sabina, Sonya and in The Family Moskat Koppel, his wife Leah and her children settle down in America.

The family sagas deal with options like Zionism, Assimilation, Political revolution and emigration. They are treated as means to some end. The Jews associate themselves with one of them as a viable solution to their problems. Among these, except for Zionism, other alternatives prove to be problematic rather than solving their problems. In addition to the family sagas, there the shorter novels where in Singer's treatment of transcending chaos is different. In the family sagas, Singer highlights the socio-economic conditions that affect characters belonging to a cross section of the society, while in the shorter novels, he is more or less concerned with the predicament of the individuals. At times they are representatives of the Jewish society. In Satan in Goray, the fate of the Jews is linked up with the life of Rechele, who like the town of Goray becomes the battleground for the clashes between the Good and the Profane. As it has already been discussed how the messianic hope takes complete possession of the minds of the Jews in Goray and how under the leadership of Reb Gedaliya they indulge in all kinds of profanities in order to expedite the advent of the messiah and bring an end to their years of exile. Their hopes are betrayed when they receive the news that Sabbatai Zevi, the messiah has turned an apostate and their dream of redemption would not be fulfilled. It is interesting to note that the victory of evil over good is presented in great detail yet the purpose of the story is not to glorify the evil but to show how slowly and steadily the Good overcomes the evil. Of course, the process involves an intense sense of suffering caused by the sense of guilt and repentance. Singer handles this process of transcending chaos in a convincing manner. Reb Mordecai Joseph, the Kabbalist who was responsible for dethroning the sane Rabbi Benish Ashkenazi and bringing in the rule of
chaos through Reb Gedaliya, ironically becomes the agent of Goray's liberation from the clutches of Satan, and restoration of normalcy and sanity. Satan with all his power causes such a degradation among the Jews that they lose their Jewish identity. They reduce themselves to such a lower state that there remains little difference between the Jews and Gentiles. To the Gentiles this is something unusual. The narrator views the situation as something shocking: "God's name was everywhere desecrated. In the village the peasants already complained that the Jews had betrayed their faith and were behaving exactly like Gypsies and outlaws". [Satan in Goray, p 188].

Reb Mordecai Joseph the Kabbalist becomes the instrument to combat evil and to stall the degrading activities of Reb Gedaliya and his followers. He openly denounces Reb Gedaliya and exposes to the people his nefarious activities. Having exposed him, Reb Mordecai Joseph denounces him in the following words: "O, thou that sinnest against the God of Israel! Thou adulterer! ..." [Satan in Goray, p 181].

On another occasion, Reb Mordecai tells Reb Gedaliya in plain words: "Thou wretched man now shalt thou blind the eyes of this people no longer: For thou art a seducer and a magician and thou art the cause that the plague has been poured out on us all and that we must drink the cup of persecution to the drags..." [Satan in Goray, p 208].

Thus Reb Gedaliya's absolute supremacy is not only challenged but also rendered impotent. Reb Mordecai Joseph also becomes an agent to exorcise Satan who inhabits the body of Rechele in the form of a dybbuk, who exercises his spell over Rechele and, through Rechele, over the town of Goray needs to be broken.
Reb Mordecai performs a ritual in the prayer house and ultimately liberates both Rechele and the town of Goray from the grip of Satan simultaneously. With Rechele's death and Reb Gedaliya's escape from the jail the town of Goray limps back to normalcy and the Jews begin their life anew. The ultimate victory of Good over Evil is our indication that God's ways of dealing with human world remain mysterious. The close study of the novel reveals that the presence of the God is felt even when the presence of evil is so dominant. Edwin Gittleman in his article "Singer's Apocalyptic Town: Satan in Goray", puts forward his perceptive remarks about the presence of God:

But if God is silent in Goray, His silence becomes the sign of His presence, of his concern and of His subtle judgement on the miserable world of Goray. The prayers of Goray's devout worshippers are unintelligible to God; were it otherwise, God in Goray would be indistinguishable from Satan in Goray. The intelligence of God is incomprehensible to the inhabitants of Goray; were it otherwise God would not exist except as the Goraic Messiah - a product of defective human imagination".

Whatever chaotic conditions the Jews of Goray encounter, and the sense of utter despair that they face, the presence of Good and holiness is there that continues to resist the Evil. Though its presence is a subdued one, but it is there. This is what Singer shows through Rechele's realization. In one of his review article on Satan in Goray Shmuel Niger corroborates the view: "Nevertheless, one feels in Satan in Goray that Satan does not rule alone ... The divine presence may be in exile, but its light shines though hidden from us ... " He further adds: "Holiness it seems to Rechele in Satan, has only a face without body ... Although the body of sin, of the devil is also closer to us and better formed than the face of holiness - God's face, the divine countenance - nevertheless, this bright visage does glow for us on the far, far horizon".

Thus, the quest for redemption though remains unfulfilled, the disillusioned
Jew do ultimately experience the victory of the Good, the presence of God. The *Family Moskat*, like Satan in *Goray* portrays the pervasive and disheartening influence of Evil in the garb of anti-semitism and Holocaust. Since the novel concludes with a shocking statement: "Death is the Messiah. That's the real truth" [*The Family Moskat*, p 636]; it is considered to be a work that lacks in hope and faith. The English version of *The Family Moskat* concludes on such a note, but the Yiddish version has one more chapter wherein amidst destruction the protagonist Asa Heshel reads the Bible and a group of Jews, scores of miles away, try to cross the borders to reach the Jewish land. The Yiddish version ends with the words: "Yours is the final victory. Unto you will come the Messiah". Though one may not be guided by the concluding lines of the Yiddish version, there are even in the English version a few signs which try to dispel the darkness of despair and spread the light of hope and faith.

Critics generally describe *The Family Moskat* as a work of utter frustration and hopelessness.

Asa Heshel, who spends his life in an uncoventional manner, undergoes a change when the German planes bombard the city of Warsaw. He happens to know the news of war when he is in the mountain of Babia Gora in Zakopane. With his beloved Barbara Asa Heshel as suggested by Barbara could have easily escaped to some other country. But he decides to return to Warsaw to see the members of the family. All his life he had been indifferent to them but the crisis releases in him some energy and feeling of concern hitherto unknown to him. He undertakes an arduous journey and reaches Warsaw. His journey to Warsaw is not just a physical journey. It indicates something deeper. His desire to be with the family suggests the fascination that he has for it. A similar desire he had once expressed in the synagogue in Tareshpol Minor to return to the fold of
Judaism. It is in Warsaw amidst bombardment that Asa experiences moments of peace and solace which he had remaind beyond him all his life. The feeling he experienced in the synagogue:

He stood silent. Here in the dimness everything he had experienced in alien places seemed to be without meaning. Time had flown like an illusion. This was his true home. this was where he belonged. Here was where he would come for refuge when everything else failed. [The Family Moskat, p 253].

Even while leaving the mountain Babia Gora, unconsciously there flashes on his lips verse from the Psalms: "I will lift up mine eyes into the hills, from whence cometh my help". [The Family Moskat, p 622].

Asa's behaviour appears to Barbara extremely strange for it does not match with his behaviour of the normal days. Barbara's surprise is as follows: "Asa Heshel, the children suddenly became attached to his family ... Men were leaving their homes and following the retreating Polish army, but he, Asa Heshel, the eternal deserter, was pushing through to the half-beleagured city ... " [The Family Moskat, p 623].

When Asa and Barbara reach Warsaw, they are completely exhausted. Asa witnesses the destruction caused by the bombardment. He sleeps at Barbara's place and wakes up the next morning in a mood of joy. His joyness state of mind is described as under: "A children's joy took hold of Asa Heshel. The Sun was shining ! People were alive ! He was home !" [The Family Moskat, p 627].

Barbara is terribly upset with the destruction in the city of Warsaw. She is keen on leaving the city at the earliest. She urges Asa also to leave the city before they get trapped. The following conversation between Barbara and Asa expresses
his decision to stay back:

"We must run! While the bridge is still standing".
"Run where?"
"Towards Russia".
"My daughter is here".
"Asa Heshel we haven't minute to lose".
"I'm staying here". [The Family Moskat, p 630].

The news of Hadassah's death is a blow to him. He experiences a searing pain and a sense of emptiness. But this does not unnerve him. He visits the houses of all his relatives and friends unmindful of the bombardment and sights of destruction. Asa exhibits a tremendous amount of courage in the face of the horrors of war. Barbara when comes to know about Hadassah's death is tempted to stay with Asa in the hope that he could marry her. She again urges him to leave the city but Asa is firm in his decision. His reply is, "I'm staying". [The Family Moskat, p 635], for he prefers death to leaving the members of the family behind in Warsaw. Asa feels a sense of belongingness which he had not experienced all through his life.

There was a time when all relationship appeared to him as meaningless. Even love had appeared futile to him. But now relationship with members of his family gives meaning to his life. Though it is not explicitly said but it is hinted. It implies that Asa is gradually retreating to the fold of his people, his home, which he had forsaken years ago. For example, "and his newly sprouted beard gave him the appearance of a Chassid ..." [The Family Moskat, p 624]. Asa's decision to stay back can also be interpreted as the end of his days of exile. He has returned home and it is thus an end to his long standing self-imposed exile. Secondly, the war awakens in him the importance of belongingness. This sense of belongingness lends his life a meaning that was not there earlier. Though he does not succeed in getting satisfactory answers
to the eternal questions. Asa is partially successful in transcending the chaos in his life.

In The Magician of Lublin, Yasha Mazur, the magician, seriously attempts to find out what it is like to be a true Jew. The quest begins with an innocent question asked by Helina, Emilia's young daughter: "What's a Jew?" [The Magician of Lublin, p 150]. Yasha knows that since his parents were Jews, he could call himself a Jew. But that is not enough. Since he does not observe the rituals, or the Commandments sincerely, calling himself a Jew would amount to telling lies. Suppose he ignored the day to day rituals but followed Judaism in its essence, could he call himself a Jew? These questions trouble him. It is this sense of ambivalence that he is not sure about his position. His skepticism continues to puzzle him yet whenever he happens to enter a synagogue, he feels drawn to the Jews and experience a keen sense of belongingness. Another thing that compels him to ponder over Jewishness is Emilia's insistence on his conversion to Christianity. During the first torrential rains on his journey to Warsaw that he is compelled to enter a synagogue. He stays there for some time and feels: "He was part of this community. Its roots were his roots. He bore its mark upon his flesh ..." [The Magician of Lublin, p 58].

Yasha's second visit to the synagogue is when he enters one to escape arrest. After having attempted unsuccessfully to break open Zaruski's safe to gather money to fulfil one of the conditions to begin life anew with Emilia, Yasha enters the synagogue. Again his visit there awakens in him a sense of belongingness for the Jewish tradition. He realizes that God had played a vital role and saved him from becoming a thief: "Only now did he realize what he had attempted and how Heaven had thwarted him ..." [The Magician of Lublin, p 124]. Yasha had always craved for some miracle to take place to convince him
of God's concern for him. In one of his ardent appeals Yasha tells God: "If You want me to serve you, oh God, reveal Yourself, perform a miracle, let Your voice be heard, give some sign ..." [The Magician of Lublin, p 129].

Yasha confesses to Emilia about his attempt to steal from Zarusi's place. She is surprised to listen to him. She scolds him for his degradation: "You stem from offal and you are offal". [The Magician of Lublin, p 156]. The relationship between them comes to an abrupt end when she in unequivocal term tells Yasha: "you must go away and never return. And you must not write either. As far as I'm concerned, you are dead ... " [The Magician of Lublin. p 157].

Once again Yasha enters the synagogue. This time he resolves to live a life free of temptations and sin. This he knows would require a great amount of restraint and discipline. He, though had paid no importance to externalities like growing beard, keeping side locks and wearing skull caps, wants to have them in order to develop in him a sense of discipline which he thinks could save him from temptations. Singer uses a monologue to lay his heart bare: "He must certainly would not have been involved in all these love affairs and other escapades if had put on a fringed garment and had prayed thrice daily. A religion was like an army - to operate it required discipline ..." [The Magician of Lublin, p 163].

There are some set backs in Yasha's personal life that take place one after another. His relationship with Emilia comes to an end. Magda commits suicide and even kills the circus birds. Even Zeftel in whom he seeks some sort of permanent relationship, betrays him by sleeping with Herman, a person from Buenos Aires. All these incidents are too much for him. He realizes how low he had stooped these years and how he had dragged others as well. In one of the moods of introspections, he holds himself responsible for what he had done:
"He had reduced others to dirt and did not see - pretended not to see - how he himself kept sinking deeper in the mud ... " [The Magician of Lublin, p 126].

Overcome with a sense of guilt for the unnatural death of Magda, he decides to atone for his sins. Yasha knows well that the path of atonement would not be an easy one. He, however, takes upon himself a serious mode of penance, severing all his relationship with the world and to enter into a prison well made out of bricks where he might not come across any temptations.

Cyrena N Pondrom's analysis of Yasha's intentions suggests what he is striving for: "First and last for Yasha the fundamental values are a reverence for life and personal integrity, and the basic ethical question for him, whether he can avoid injuring others and be honest both to others and to himself ... "

The epilogue of the novel describes Yasha Mazur's transformation - from the magician he has become Reb Jacob, the Penitent. The word 'Penitent' if taken in one of its prime meanings of "one who has returned" shows how Yasha had abandoned the worldly ways and has embarked upon a different and challenging Odyssey. Though Rabbi Abraham Eiger dissuades him from taking up such an extreme course of action, Yasha remains firm. It is also explained to him that his life in prison would mean denial of Free will, but for Yasha, atonement for his sin would help him avoid further entanglements. Yasha, through his actions transcends the chaos he faces and moves closer to the traditional Jewish life which gives him mental peace and brings him closer to the almighty.

In Shosha, Aaron's problems are two-fold. On the one hand, as a writer he has to reintegrate himself with his past and create something that is a lasting one.
The second is to save himself from the increasing influence of the secular life. Singer deals with the predicament of a writer - how to transcend the limitations and create. The obligations that Aaron has to fulfil as a writer are to preserve the Jewish culture in the form of writing before it is defaced. The growing threat of anti-semitism, the growing power of the Nazis and Hitler leave no other option before him. However, it has to be fulfilled with a sense of urgency. In addition to this Aaron has to go back to his past, revive it in such a manner that it becomes relevant in the changing times. Thus, he has not only to revive the past but to modify it. For Aaron, the long-awaited break comes when he along with Betty Slonim visits Krochmalna street and other streets where, before the World War I, Jewish life in its traditional aspect could still be felt. It is just a visit through these streets, and for Aaron gradually everything becomes alive. Memories abound his mind and the past becomes alive. Aaron's memory recreates for him the faces, the smells, incidents and places like the cheders, ritual baths, prayer houses, study houses, etc. He also visits Shosha, his childhood companion. To his great surprise, Aaron finds no change in her. She has remained unaffected from the ravages of time. He feels as if he has recovered the world he had thought to be lost. Aaron finds that Shosha had neither grown nor aged, for she saw him with the same childish fascination that he remembered from the times he had told her stories.

The meeting with Shosha brings about a tremendous change in Aaron's life. Aaron, the individual and Aaron, the author. It also gives him immeasurable pleasure. In the words of Aaron: "it seemed to me that the city had changed. There was something festive and Purim like in the air ... " [Shosha, p 79].

It is Shosha that keeps Aaron bound to Warsaw, the Krochmalna street and the Jewish past. Having met her once, it becomes a religious act for him to visit
Shosha. He admits:

but the moment the clock showed one-thirty I headed for Krochmalna street. I would enter the gate of No 7 and see Shosha standing at her window watching for me - a blond girl, blue-eyed, with a short nose, thin lips, a slender neck ... She spoke the Yiddish of Krochmalna street. In her own fashion she denied death ... " [Shosha, p 87].

For Aaron, the author meeting Shosha proves to be a turning point in his life. The breakthrough he longed for comes in with the revival of his relationship with Shosha, who in the words of Asher Milbauer represents, "to the young artist the coherence and integrity of the Jewish people and their past". 

Aaron reintegrates himself with Shosha and thus finds in him a release of energy that rejuvenates his art. Going back to her living in active association with her helps him transcend the chaos, the exile that he had faced. It also invests in him a new vision that helps him in fulfilling his obligations to the milieu to which he belonged and also his inner urges as a creative artist.

Aaron, as a writer, explores the Jewish cultural tradition and decides to write about the false messiah. He wants his readers to know that Hitler was another such false messiah who would cause untold suffering and destruction through his acts. His association with Shosha lends Aaron courage and clarity of vision. His conscience is awakened. He makes up his mind not to yield to the temptations that come to him in the form of either women, visas or economic security. It dawns upon him that his salvation lies in Jewish culture and not in going away from it. A voice within him warns him: "Run! ... you'll sink into a shame from which you'll never be able to get out. They'll drag you into the abyss. It was my father's voice. In the light of dawn I saw his high brow and piercing eyes. Don't shame me, your mother and your holy ancestors". [Shosha, p 146].
Without being tempted by Betty or Sam's proposal, Aaron has a realization that, by embracing modern ways of life, he had created problems for himself. He feels a sense of repentance for what he had done. Aaron observes: "I had thrown away four thousand years of Jewishness and exchanged it for meaningless literature, Yiddishism, Feitelzohnism". [Shosha, p 232].

Aaron has his own views about God and His universe. He does not agree with Feitelzohn's views that God is sick and He is bewildered by His own creation. He suffers from amnesia and He has forgotten the purpose of His creation. Aaron through the benevolence of persons like Tekla, the maid servant retains his faith in God's mercy and goodness. Referring to Tekla, he observes: "These are the people, the ones who keeps the world going, ... an indifferent God, a mad God couldn't have created Tekla ... She wanted to give not to take ... " [Shosha, p 54].

Aaron discusses God with Shosha. He tells her about his faith in Him but adds he cannot believe that he revealed Himself to some person and He wanted people to follow the Commandments rigorously. He tells Shosha that God does not punish people like Hitler. Aaron, on the contrary, finds in the world an in built system of destruction that operates and as a result of which destruction of life goes on. Explaining this to Shosha, Aaron adds: "He does not punish anybody. He created the cat and the mouse. The cat cannot eat grass, she must eat flesh. It's not her fault that she kills mice. The mice are certainly not guilty. He created the wolves and the sheeps, the slaughterer and the chickens, the feet and the worm on they step. [Shosha, p 205].

Singer thus shows Aaron overcoming the chaos faced by him as a creative artist. In the words of Asher Milbauer,
Only when he becomes one with Shosha. Singer seems to imply, do his creative powers return to him and enable him to write a novel that miraculously integrates the finding Jewish camps, the traditional and the enlightened. Singer's intentions are clear at this point: literature and art can perform miracles where other intellectual institutions fail.11

For Herman Broder in Enemies: A Love Story, transcending chaos is rather an uphill task for his resources of life have dwindled to a large extent. The only thing that keeps him alive is the strong will to survive the state of exile. In Poland, with the help of Yadwiga, he survives the holocaust but he cannot live a normal life. Whatever the circumstances he continues to live as a ghost-writer for Rabbi Lampert. The reasons for his being a ghost-writer are made explicit: firstly he feels, by writing articles and speeches based on Judaism, he would remain close to the scriptures.

Secondly, he is endowed with a philosophical bent of mind coupled with an urge to create. Writing for the Rabbi though does not bring him any name and fame, he experiences an inner satisfaction and hence continues to be in the job. Singer shows how Herman attempts to transcend his state of exile through this creative urge. It is not something that Herman develops after his arrival in America. This is something which he had resorted to even while he was hiding himself in the hayloft in Lipsk. In the obsessive act of writing Herman's mind finds a relief. It is as under:

Just as Masha always had to hold a cigarette between her fingers, so Herman had to hold a pen or a pencil. He wrote and made notes even in the hayloft in Lipsk, whenever there was enough light coming through the cracks in the roof. He practised an ornate calligraphy, elaborating the letters with flourishes. He drew pictures of outlandish creatures with protruding ears, long beaks, and round eyes and surrounded them with trumpets, horns and adders. He even wrote in his dreams - on yellowish paper in Rashi script, a combination of a story book, cabalistic revelations and scientific discussions ... [Enemies: A Love Story, p 37].
Though there is not much discussion of Herman's writing, the way Rabbi Lampert continues to hire him implies that his writing has some strength which brings the Rabbi both money and prestige. Herman does not follow the rituals as a pious Jew would do. His relationship with God is thus not very close one. However, his behaviour with other human beings, who come in his contact, is commendable. This is something which can be seen in his relationship with Yadwiga Masha or Tamara. In spite of Masha's insistence he is not ready to divorce Yadwiga, for he knows that such an act would kill her, nor is he ready to divorce Tamara who has returned to him after undergoing unimaginable suffering at the hands of the Nazis. For Masha's sake, he is willing to marry privately so that he could offer her a kind of mental satisfaction. The same kind of compassionate behaviour is seen in his kind treatment to animals. The rat trap which Masha uses for the rats, Herman liberates them, for he sympathises with them. To some extent, Herman, though surrounded with a lot of persecution and violence, eschews it.

There are moments in his life when he realizes that he should not have forsaken the traditional life of a Jew. Becoming a modern Jew has not helped him. On the contrary, it has alienated him from his people and has caused him great frustration. There are moments when he seriously wishes to return to the fold of Judaism. He ponders over the reasons for going astray: "If a Jew departed in so much as one step from Shulchan Aruch, he found himself spiritually in the sphere of everything base - Fascism. Bolshevism, murder, adultery, drunkenness". [Enemies: A Love Story, p 135].

He takes a decision to return to his own faith without any further delay. He desires for: "to go back to the Torah, the Gemara, the Jewish books. What about his doubts? Even if one were to doubt the existence of Oxygen, one
would still have to breathe... Since he was suffocating without God and the Torah, he must serve God and study the Torah ... " [Enemies: A Love Story, p 136].

Herman seriously thinks of leaving New York so that he might not be again trapped in temptations. He thinks: "The wisest thing for him to do would be to leave New York, settle in a distant state. If not, he would always be tempted to go back to Masha ..." [Enemies: A Love Story, p 137].

However, all his decisions melt away when he finds Masha back again to New York from the Rabbi's place. He offers to help her. When Masha's mother dies, Masha loses all hopes to live and decides against going away with Herman. For Herman there is no way out except going away into a hiding. He disappears and is not traced. It gives an impression that Herman has lost all hopes and hence he must have resorted to the act of committing suicide or gone back to some place to integrate himself with Jewishness. The novel concludes on an ambivalent note yet it is not totally without some redeeming elements. Herman leaves Yadwiga only when he knows that Tamara is both mentally prepared and economically self-sufficient to support her. Against all his wishes not to bring a child into this world, he brings one which is a sign of a new hope.

This action of Herman is in keeping with the traditional Jewish family life wherein the women looked after both the business and household activities, leaving the husband to engage himself in serious activities of either writing commentaries on scriptures or ruminating over the religious books. Thus, Herman succeeds partially indicating the course of action he must have taken.
One more striking feature of transcending chaos is related to a creative act. Herman, in spite of the deception he practises against Yadwiga, the gentile wife of his, gradually turns her into a Jewish woman. He does not interfere with her faith in Judaism and also permits her to be a mother of his child. This gesture of Herman can be interpreted as a positive effort.

As seen in the previous chapter, Encountering Chaos. The Slave mainly handles the issues of exile, slavery and the real meaning of religion. Singer, it is said, shows in the most unambiguous terms how to transcend exile and thereby successfully overcome chaos. In the first section of the novel Wanda, Jacob, the protagonist comes to terms with the problem of preserving one's own identity. Surrounded by the semi-civilized pagans, the initial thing for Jacob is to maintain his Jewishness at any cost. Asher Milbauer presents very precisely the issues involved in exile and overcoming it. In his words:

The closest Singer comes to providing unambiguous and direct solutions of how to transcend exile and survive both physically and intellectually is in The Slave. In the novel, the writer defines the key elements needed to survive exile: language, intellect, tradition and art. For the Jewish people, there exists yet another ingredient, that is the return to the land of their fathers...

Singer employs all these elements successfully and convincingly. Since Jacob is surrounded by the pagans, he can communicate with them in Polish language but he cannot use Yiddish. In order to keep Yiddish alive, Jacob during his years of exile continues to use it with the cows that he grazes. He also tries to recall all those psalms, proverbs, commandments and other important things he had read as a scholar and teacher. Memory becomes his greatest ally. It brings to surface many buried things in the mind and surprises him. Jacob, in order to combat the temptation in the form of Wanda, engages him in engraving upon a rock a number of Commandments as Moses, the
Patriarch had done in ancient times. The rock with Commandments on it becomes a work of art which helps Jacob to transcend exile. The patience and seriousness that go into the making the rock a work of art are described as follows: "He had already scratched forty-three commandments and sixty-nine interdictions into the rock ... He mined within himself as men dig for treasure in the earth. It was slow work: he scratched sentences, fragments of sentences, single words into the stone ..." [The Slave, pp 43-44].

Jacob, thus finds out a solution that helps him combat his utter sense of loneliness and isolation. In an alien land, Jacob learns the importance of his own cultural heritage from which he has been separated. However, the process of learning is through suffering. This suffering so enlarges his vision that he can transcend all the barriers of nationality, religion, language. Jacob's compassion for the mankind as well as all the creature of the universe is something very vital.

The element of compassion that he experiences through a yodel reveals how sensitive as an individual he is: "From somewhere far off came a muted yodel. A cowherd was singing in the foul dampness, and his distant voice pleaded and demanded, lamented the injustice visited on all living things: Jews, gentiles, animals, even the flies and gnats crawling on the hips of the cattle. [The Slave, p 64].

The other aspect of the chaos he transcends is slavery. During his stay in the mountains, it becomes clear to Jacob that he is a victim of slavery in two ways. The first one was the slavery of the body and it was the result of external factors over which he had no control. The second type of slavery that Jacob suffers from is a subtle one. It is the self-imposed one. It is the outcome of his lust for Wanda. Everyday the passion for Wanda becomes more and more
intense. Jacob ultimately surrenders to his passion. This slavery. Jacob finds to be more puzzling and difficult to handle - to liberate himself of the self-created slavery, Jacob undertakes a risky journey to return to Wanda's village and to liberate her. The risk undertaken in the journey transforms his lust into love. The element of love makes him aware of his responsibility not only towards Wanda but also to the child in her womb. Liberty without a sense of responsibility cannot last long. Jacob has a clear vision: "The law obliged him to rescue Wanda and his child from the idolaters". [The Slave, p 117].

It is this love through which Jacob transforms Wanda, the Gentile woman, into Sarah, the Jewess. He takes upon himself to create a new being out of the Gentile woman. He, with great patience, teaches her what Jewishness means and how one can be a true Jew or Jewess. Sarah is another illustration of Jacob's artistic creation. It is the impact of love that makes it possible.

Suffering plays an important role in Wanda's life as well. Like Jacob, Wanda as Sarah has to undergo a lot of suffering both physical and spiritual. Though a Gentile woman, Sarah has to pose to be a Christian one. To do this, she assumes muteness. As Jacob in the mountains could not use his language, Sarah likewise is compelled to remain mute to hide her identity. In order to forge a new identity and to adapt herself to it is a challenging task for her. Wanda has to curb her inclinations, desires to be a Jewess. What she sacrifices is no way a mean achievement. She longs for open life of fields and pastures of her own native place.

Jacob, as a teacher of Sarah, learns some vital truths which enlarge his vision of life and religion. He now cannot confine himself to mere observance of day to day rituals as prescribed by Judaism. He, on the contrary, understands the essence
of religion and thus transcends the narrow limitations of sects and creeds. Jacob feels: "But now he at least understands his religion its essence was the relation between man and his fellows. Man's obligations towards God was easy to perform". [The Slave, p 230].

Sarah's screams and talk during the birthpangs reveal her identity. She after giving birth to a baby boy dies. Jacob is excommunicated. For marrying a Gentile woman he is taken prisoner. He is worried about the fate of his son. He wants him to be brought up in the Jewish tradition. In a flash, the real meaning of the saying in his daily prayer, "Thou hast not made me a slave" [The Slave, p 12] dawns upon him. Before this, Jacob's realisation was that in his slavery there was God's hand. The new meaning that he learns is the importance of free will. It enjoins upon him to act and not to remain in slavery. Hence, like the ancient Jews of the scriptures, Jacob's valour gets expressed in his decision: "Suddenly it occurred to Jacob that sometimes chains could be broken". [The Slave, p 233].

He breaks the chain and secures his son. Jacob's decision to go to the Holy land is one of the factors that can bring an end to his state of slavery and exile. Having attained his liberty, Jacob goes to the Holy land in the hope of redemption through the advent of messiah. Thus, these are some of the acts through which Jacob successfully transcends chaos. Like Yasha Mazur in The Magician of Lublin, Joseph Shapiro, the protagonist in The Penitent makes serious attempts to regain faith. It is also clear to him that bringing about a few superficial changes would not lead to any tangible results. A compromise here or there is not the way to be a real Jew. Hence Joseph Shapiro undertakes the arduous path of becoming a pious Jew. He finds no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews also, like the Gentiles exploit people for their
selfish ends. To get away from this situation, Joseph takes a bold decision and tries to stick to it even amidst all sorts of difficulties and temptations. He is well aware of the problems he will have to encounter: "Faith does not come by itself. You must work for it". [The Penitent, p 15].

The beginning has to be made. Joseph can very well visualise the nature of the problem and observes: "When a person makes a lot of money but lacks faith, he begins to answer himself with one things; how to squeeze in all the pleasure possible ..." [The Penitent, p 15].

The more Joseph thinks about the deception that Celia or Liza practised against him, the clearer it becomes to him that he is also equally responsible for the situation that he is in. He also realizes that he is not a saint. In Joseph's words: "I was myself a liar but hated lies and deceit of everykind. I was a lecher but I felt a revulsion against loose woman and against wantonness in general ..." [The Penitent, pp 40-41].

It is the historical consciousness of the Jews and the Covenant that makes Joseph restless. It is not just an incident of betrayal of an individual but it is the betrayal of the whole Jewish community of which he is a part. This awareness impels Joseph to bring about a basic change in his life. The sense of betrayal that Joseph suffers from is:

as if I betrayed them and the whole of Jewish history. I remembered what I had heard and read about our martyrs in Poland. how Jews had donned prayer shawls and phylacteries and gone off to the cemeteries to die martyr's death. I was descended from such Jews. I had been taught their Torah but what I had traded it all for? [The Penitent, p 27].

The vital decision Joseph takes is to go back to the Jewishness of his ancestors,
especially of his forefathers but he experiences within him a tug of war between the voice of faith and that of doubt. One pushes him towards Jewishness, the other explains to him about the futility of such a decision in absence of faith. To become a Jew, to return to Jewishness is the goal of Joseph's life. But it is still a vague thing in his mind. He continues to define it in concrete terms so that he could advance positively in that particular direction. One thing that his conscience makes clear to him is: "All other ways except extreme Jewishness must lead to the lies and lewdness you despise. If you don't believe in the Shulhan Arukh, then you must believe in evil ..." [The Penitent, p 43].

In the same mood of analysis, Joseph, in clear terms, defines the Talmud Jew and his characteristic behavior that sets him apart from the worldly Jews. The aim of his life is to emulate such Talmud Jews and become one such. Joseph observes: "The Talmud Jew doesn't kill, he doesn't take part in orgies, he doesn't carry a gun, he doesn't indulge in adultery etc ... he doesn't murder, doesn't hunt, doesn't rape, doesn't scheme to liquidate whole classes and races ... if a man is a swindler, he's not a Jew anymore. [The Penitent, pp 45-46].

The voice of doubt continues to pester him and asks him to return home. Amidst the conflicting mood, Joseph buys a ticket for Israel. On his way to Israel on the plane, Satan tempts him in the form of a young girl Priscilla. Joseph's all determination slacken and he yields to the temptation. The sense of guilt and suffering makes him restless again. Even in the modern Israel, Joseph finds no respite from the temptations. The city of Tel Aviv is full of modern Jews. He finds in the city a blind imitation of the city life in countries like USA. The Jews enjoyed decent life but lacked in true love for Judaism. His visit to Kibbutz in Tel Aviv tells him of the strong influence of communism.
over the organization wherein the rabbis are considered as reactionaries. The pious Jews have no place there. Joseph is disillusioned for he does not get what he craves for. He leaves for Jerusalem. It is in the Sandzer study house that Joseph is fully accepted. Though he is without side locks and beards, Joseph is greeted with love and respect. During his talk with Reb Haim, Joseph tells him that it was his luck that he could come there. In response to his remark, Reb Haim tells him: "The Enlightened claim that the world is chance, but a Jew who has faith knows that everything is destined ..." [The Penitent, p 120].

Gradually, Joseph arrives at the true understanding of religion. To be religious does not mean merely to perform the rituals and worship God. It means true compassion for his fellow brothers. His decision to abide by the basic values of life is a means to transcend chaos. Joseph admits:

> even if I knew there is no God or there is a God but He is on Hitler's side. I would still refuse to go along with those who agree to murder, his falseness, theft, and such. If there is no Good or if God is amoral, then I want to serve that idol who is supposed to be moral, who loves the truth, who has compassion for people and animals... [The Penitent, p 155].

Joseph as a narrator, admits to the author how he gradually regained faith through following Jewishness. He sees a close bond between the external features such as the beard, earlocks and that of the identity of a Jew. He concludes his story with the remarks that articulate his faith in almighty's wisdom: "God's mercy is often hidden, but His boundless wisdom is seen by everyone, even if they call Him nature, substance ..." [The Penitent, p 164].

Thus, Singer presents the story of Joseph who after undergoing many trials and tribulations regains his lost faith and thereby regains his identity. It is no
mean achievement for him because he enjoys mental peace and the sense of integration with rest of his people.

In the author's note, Singer presents his point of view about the element of faith in answer to the question whether he fully endorses Joseph's view. Clarifying his position Singer observes:

To me, a belief in God and a protest against the laws of life are not contradictory. There is a great element of protest in all religion. Those who dedicate their lives to serving God have often dared to question His justice and rebel against His seeming neutrality in man's struggle between Good and Evil. I feel therefore, that there is no basic difference between rebellion and prayer. [The Penitent, p 169].

Joseph thus illustrates how an individual can transcend chaos and gain understanding about the eternal problems of life. Transcending chaos is the outcome of a person's effort and the almighty's grace.

References


4. Quoted in Avineri p 87.

5. Edwin Gittleman. Singer's "Apocalyptic Town: Satan in Goray" Marcia

7. Ibid; p 79.


11. Ibid, p 86.