

Feminist Discourse in Women's Yiddish Press in Poland

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Abstract

On the example of the women's magazines in Yiddish "Yidishe Froyenvelt" (1902-1903), "Di Froy" (Vilnius 1925-1933), "Froyen-Shtim" (Warsaw 1925) and "Di Froyen-Velt" (New York 1913) this article presents:

- how feminist postulates are connected with questions of Jewish identity in a religious and political context
- how the model image of a modern Jewish woman is presented
- what the main spheres of feminist interests presented in the magazines are (a struggle for equal rights within the Jewish community as well as other social spheres, searching for and presenting outstanding women in the Jewish and world history, descriptions of women's professional activities, psychological analysis of a woman's nature, establishing ties and a feeling of solidarity between women's movements of other nations)
- how the traditional women's roles are presented (mother, wife, housewife)
- what degree of women's participation in the edition of these periodicals is (a list of articles' authoresses and literature works appearing on columns of the periodicals)
- whether and how a feminist discourse affects a language structure of the periodicals

Comparing magazines from the beginning of the 20th century and the latter part of 1920s the article answers the question what direction did Jewish feminism evolve to and what content rose or fell in importance.

Zusammenfassung

Am Beispiel der jiddischsprachigen Frauenmagazine „Yidishe Froyenvelt“ (1902-1903), „Di Froy“ (Vilnius 1925-1933), „Froyen-Shtim“ (Warschau 1925) und „Di Froyen-Velt“ (New York 1913) wird in diesem Artikel dargestellt:

- wie feministische Postulate mit Fragen der jüdischen Identität in einem religiösen und politischen Kontext verbunden sind
- wie das Rollenverständnis einer modernen jüdischen Frau dargestellt wird
- welche Hauptgebiete feministischen Interesses in den Magazinen präsentiert werden (der Kampf für gleiche Rechte innerhalb der jüdischen Gemeinschaft ebenso wie andere soziale Bereiche, die Suche danach und die Darstellung herausragender Frauen in der Jüdischen und Weltgeschichte, die Beschreibung von weiblicher Erwerbstätigkeit, psychologische Analyse der weiblichen Natur, der Aufbau von Verbindungen zu und das Gefühl von Solidarität zwischen Frauenbewegungen in anderen Ländern)

- wie die traditionellen Frauenbilder dargestellt werden (Mutter, Ehefrau, Hausfrau)
- wie hoch der weibliche Arbeitsanteil in der Herausgabe dieser Periodika ist (eine Liste von Autorinnen und literarischen Arbeiten, die als Kolumnen in diesen Periodika erschienen)
- ob und wie ein feministischer Diskurs eine Sprachstruktur dieser Periodika beeinflusst

Anhand des Vergleichs von Magazinen, die Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts oder in den 1920er Jahren erschienen sind, werden im Artikel folgende Fragen beantwortet: Welche Richtung haben jüdische Feministinnen eingeschlagen und welche Inhalte sind wichtig bzw. unwichtig geworden?

Introduction

The range of problems connected with the women's Yiddish press has not yet been the subject of academic research reflected in publications.¹ The search for information concerning the women's Yiddish press is hindered by the fact that generally only single volumes of magazines have remained and often the period of issuing of a given title cannot be stated. The fact, that those magazines have not been collected, stored and preserved is of considerable significance and is a part of history of the forgotten heritage of women's writing, which functioned outside of the canon and which was forced into oblivion.

As far as the so-called *froyen frage* (the women's issue) is concerned, it is worth posing questions as to how this topic was presented in the Yiddish press of the early 20th century, and what transformations took place in the 1920s. These questions shall be answered by this comparative analysis of four partly preserved magazines. My analysis will focus specifically on examining the following issues: the magazine's editors and their co-operators; the magazine's addressee; the magazine's objectives and how they are accomplished; what model of a woman the magazine presents; the woman's role and position in the society; whether the discourse of the battle of the sexes occurs in the magazine, and, if it does, what arguments and strategies are employed within

1 *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 18 – the collection of essays devoted to the study of Jewish women's experiences in Eastern Europe includes Ellen Kellman's article, in which the author mentions the Yiddish magazine for women *Di Froy*. However, instead of discussing its content, she focuses only on the prose published in this periodical; See Kellman, Ellen. "Feminism and Fiction: Khane Blankshteyn's Role in Interwar Vilna." *Polin* vol. 18, Oxford, 2005, pp. 221-241. *Polin*, vol. 18 also included an article devoted to the Jewish weekly magazine *Ewa*, published in Polish between 1928 and 1933; See Plach, Eva, "Feminism and Nationalism on the Pages of *Ewa: Tygodnik*" (1928-1933), pp. 241-263.

this discourse; whether the discourse is politically influenced or not; and to what extent Jewish national identity and possibly the religious aspect, determine gender regarded as the cultural construct.

Beginnings: The World of Jewish Women or the World of Women in the Jewish Way?

As far as it is known, at the preliminary stage of research concerning this issue, the oldest preserved women magazine, which is not housekeeping oriented, but is said to promote the modern model of the Jewish woman, is the pro-Zionist weekly magazine – *Di Yidische Froyenwelt* (The Jewish World of Women) that was published in Krakow in 1902.



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In an extensive introductory article in the first issue of the magazine, the editors inform the readers about its profile, emphasizing the fact that its main interest is going to concern the woman in the Jewish household, the economic position of Jewish women, the world of women at work, and their situation in different countries. A considerable focus is placed on the pedagogical aspect, especially on preserving children's Jewish identity. In order to perform a didactical role, the periodical publishes articles concerning Jewish history and to educate women – scientific pieces about the humankind and nature. In order to raise the readers' self-esteem, they make use of biographies of the renowned women. In the periodical, there is also a place for fiction, most of all, for Yiddish prose, and even translations from Hebrew.

In the leading article presenting the periodical's profile it is emphasized that *Di Yidishe Frøyenvelt* is not going to be a typical housekeeping magazine (such a type of a magazine was well-known to female readers), but that it shall be “the first magazine among us, Jews, representing the business of a Jewish woman,”² aimed at women of all social classes.

The periodical's objectives are accomplished in the subsequent issue. It is indeed a periodical for and about women but it was created without them. The periodical edited by Mordekhai Spektor³ and Chaim Dov Hurvic⁴, consists of texts written mainly by men. Following the division of traditional roles, women

2 “*Di Yidishe Frøyenvelt*”, *Di Yidishe Frøyenvelt*, 13 June, 1902, No. 1, p. 1.

3 Mordekhai Spektor (1858-1925) – Realistic prose-writer, publicist, and folklorist born in a Hassidic family in Ukraine. He received a traditional education and was an advocate of Haskalah. He lived in Kiev, Odessa, St. Petersburg, and since 1887 in Warsaw; made a great contribution to the development of the Jewish press. He was an editor of *Der Hoyz-Frøynd*, *Varshaver Yidisher Kalendar*; a co-editor of *Di Yontev Blettek*; a collaborator on *Der Yud*; an editor of Vilnius periodical *Tsayt*; later an editor of Warsaw *Fraytug* and *Untser Leb*n. Together with Isaac Leib Peretz (1852-1915), he was arrested and taken into custody for revolutionary activities. Spektor wrote realistic sketches and short stories. One of his works was e.g. “Baal Shem Tov” (1895) introducing Hassidic folk motives. His first wife was a Jewish writer Izabella (alias Belli Fridberg 1863-1938). She wrote in Yiddish and Russian, and her short stories depicted, among other topics, the experiences of highly educated young women from the Jewish community. During the WWI Spektor resided in Odessa, but in 1921, he emigrated to New York where his collaboration with *Yidisher Togblat* took place.

4 Chaim Dov Hurvic (1865-1927) – Hebrew and Yiddish writer and publicist born in Belarus. After receiving a traditional education, he studied philosophy and social sciences. In 1901, he was awarded a doctoral degree in economic policy by the University of Berlin. After graduation he settled in Warsaw, but, afterwards, he also lived in Minsk, Vilnius and Moscow. He collaborated on *Di Yontev Blettek* (edited by Peretz), Warsaw *Haynt* and *Moment*, and Moscow *Der Emes*; he co-edited *Frøynd* and Krakow *Di Yidishe Folks Tsaytung*, as well as the Minsk periodical *Farm Folk*. He died in Moscow.

could only write on topics connected with children and clothes, while *serious* introductory articles concerning tradition, knowledge, psychology or history are written in regard to men's authority.

This magazine, undoubtedly, aims toward shaping the modern Jewish woman, but the model that is popularized, is mainly a man's ideal of a woman. In the first issue, the traditional model of women's life led in the peace and quiet of the household – so recommended to women by the rabbis – is regarded with despise and treated as a thing of the past. However, it is difficult to avoid the impression that, in fact, it is still considered as the truly desired one by the majority of the male authors. It is so, in spite of the fact that due to the cultural and civilization changes, this traditional model is often no longer possible to achieve. As the change of women's position in society is inevitable, it is thus necessary to try to direct them in a proper way – such an objective seems to be pursued by the editors of *Di Yidishe Froymvelt*. It is essential, then, to educate women, to develop their cognitive abilities, mostly in order to enable them to run the household and bring up children in the proper way, adequately to modern times. It is important to guard women's Jewishness, as they would be the persons of key importance in developing an identity of the young generation. The authors of the articles often speak from the mentoring position, as people familiar not only with the Jewish law and general knowledge about the world but also familiar with women's psyche.

Sholem Aleichem reproaches the editors for this male character of the magazine designed for women, when asked to write something for the new periodical. The text is characterized by irony and lightness typical of his style. In a piece titled “*Premie*” (The Prize) he writes:

פֿרויען וועלט ווו מיר מאַנסבליט וועלן אַרבעטן, שרייבן, פֿאַר אונדזער ווייבער, פֿאַר
אונדזער שוועסטער און פֿאַר אונדזער טעכטער. אַ גדולה אויף אונדז! איך וואָלט אַ בעלן
געווען אויף אַ פֿרויען וועלט נאָר אויף איין אַנדער פֿרויען וועלט, אויף אַ פֿרויען וועלט
פֿון פֿרויען, אַ פֿרויען וועלט ווו דאָרטן זאָלן אַרבעטן אונדזערע ווייבער, אונדזערע
שוועסטער, אונדזערע טעכטער. אַט וואָס פֿאַר אַ פֿרויען וועלט איך מײן!
פֿאַראַן רוסיש, פֿראַנצעזישע, איינגעלשע, פֿילישע פֿרויען וואָס שרייבן, אַרבעטן
פֿאַר זייערע שוועסטער און וואָס האָבן זיך דורך דעם געקויפט אַ נאָמען
אויף דער וועלט און אַ שיינעם נאָמען. אַ סך האָבן מיר יידישע פֿרויען וואָס זאָלן
שרייבן, אַרבעטן פֿאַר זייערע שוועסטער?
אמת, פֿאַראַן ביי אונדז זייער טאַלאַנטפֿאַלע יידישע פֿרויען, וואָס אַרבעטן נאָר ניט
ביי אונדז, וואָס שרייבן נאָר נישט אין אונדזער יידישע שפּראַך און נישט פֿון אונדזער

יידיש לעבן,
 ווי אזוי זינגט דאָרטן די שיינע שולמית אין שיר השרים:
 מע האָט מיך געשטעלט
 איך זאָל היטן די גערטנער
 מיין אייגענעם גאָרטן
 האָב איך ניט געהיט
 נאָר אונדזער גאָרטן, אונדזער אייגענער גאָרטן שטייט פאַרלאָזט, פאַרוואַקסן

“*The world of women* is where we, the male sex, will work, write for our wives, sisters and daughters. A gdule af undz! (A blessing on us!) I am interested in *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, but a totally different one, a womanly *world of women*, in which our wives, our sisters and our daughters should work. This is the *world of women* that I am thinking about! There are, however, Russian, German, French, British and Polish women who write for their sisters and get a worldwide recognition for their work. How many Jewish women who work and write for their sisters do we have? It is true that there are many talented Jewish women who work and write, but not for us, not in our Yiddish language, and not about our Jewish life. According to the beautiful verses of the Song of Songs: ‘They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept,’ only our garden, only our own vineyard is abandoned and overgrown with weeds.”⁵

The text of Sholem Aleichem employing the rhetoric of feminist discourse (e.g. the expression ‘sisters’) is also ironic in its message about the potential female readers of *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*. After the already cited introduction, the author of *Tevye der milkbiger* (Tevye the Milkman) – Sholem Aleichem, encourages women to create artistic work. He announces the literary competition for the best modern novel written in Yiddish by a Jewish woman or the most interesting historical work written in Hebrew, telling the story of the greatest Jewish women. All these topics sound very serious: Sholem Aleichem defines the submission deadline; the number of copies to be sent etc. Finally, the most important matter is mentioned – the matter of the prize. He is deliberating what can be offered. Money? Diamonds? No, it will not be interesting for every female reader. Ultimately, he follows the form and the style of matrimonial press offers presenting his friend:

5 Sholem Aleichem, “*Premie*” (The Prize), *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, 8 July, 1902, No. 2, p. 2. All translations from Yiddish by Joanna Lisek.

ער איז דאָקטער מעדיצין, דאָקטער פּילאָזאָפּיע, אינזשענער און יוריסט, גוט געבוי ,
 הויכע וואוכע, דאָס פנים ווייס ווי געפאלענער שניי, שוואַרצע אויגן, שוואַרצע האָר ,
 זינגט און שפּילט וואָלין און קלאַוויר, בעזיצט עטליכע שפּראַך, שרייבט אויסגעצייכענע
 אין עטלעכע זשורנאַלען, שטיל ווי אַ טויב, שפּילט אין שאַך, טאַנצט ווי אַ מיידל, פּאַרט
 רייטענדיק אויפן פּערד און אויפן וועלאָסיפּעד, האָט נישט איין אַרעמען קרוב אין דער
 משפּחה, אַ גרויסער פּילאַנטראָפּ, איין אמתיער בעל צדקה, אַ הייסער ייד ,
 אַ פייערדיקער נאַציאָנאַליסט, אַ ברענענדיקער ציוניסט, אַ גרויסער גביר, האָט אייגענע
 הייזער אין אַלע גרעסערע שטעט און א סך געלט אין אַלע ביינק

“Medical and Philosophy Doctor, engineer, lawyer, well-built, tall, complexion as white as snow, black eyes, he sings, plays the violin and clavichord, speaks a few foreign languages, Talmud-scholar, outstanding orator, press articles’ author, as silent as a pigeon, plays chess, dances well, good at horse riding and cycling, has no poor relatives, philanthropist, eager nationalist, a good Jew, a great Zionist, owns his own house in a big city and has an account in every single bank, – that’s my friend – a candidate for a husband to the woman who wins a writing contest.”⁶

This humoristic image, criticizing the highly exaggerated and often mutually exclusive women’s expectations towards men, is commented on by the author with a sincere call:

מיינע ליבע פרויען! אויב דאָס וועט אייך אויך ניט נעמען ווייס איך שוין ניט וואָס עס
 וועל אייך נעמען !

“My beloved women! If you are not interested in this – I don’t really know what you may fancy!”⁷

In order to strengthen the women’s national sense of belonging, the periodical grants special significance to the presentation of Jewish tradition and its codifiers, that is, Talmudists and rabbis, in a positive way, as those who favour women. They are also supposed to present the Jewish culture as the one culture that, in its own special way, often contrary to other nations – respects women’s rights. Thus, although the rabbis recommended that women should lead “a calm life at home,”⁸ in the article “*Familië*” (Family), presenting a family life as most proper and compliant with human nature, we read: “We are grate-

6 *Ibidem*, p. 5.

7 *Ibidem*, p. 5.

8 “*Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*,” (The Jewish World of Women) *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, 13 June, 1902, No. 1, p. 1.

ful to the rabbis for a restriction, that a man can only have one wife,"⁹ because thanks to that "the modern family life is so beautiful and simple".¹⁰ In the series of texts "On the Position of the Jewish Woman in the Old Times"¹¹ the author, Shloyme Berman, enumerates all the benefits of legal regulations towards women that were introduced in the Talmud. He discusses legal measures guaranteed to women in case of divorce. Among others Berman quotes recommendations of Rabbi Akiva given to a man who desired a divorce, "You can even sell the hair from your head so as to give your wife back her ketubah to the last penny."¹² He cites statements expressed in the Talmud which confirm paying respect to women's desires, for example the opinion of Rabbi Yose ben Halafta: "If a husband does not allow his wife pleasures, for example, if he forbids her to wear jewellery, he is obliged to give her a *get*."¹³ In the proper way he also justifies the restrictions which the Talmud introduces against women, for example depriving women the possibility of being a judge or a court witness is justified by the fact that women are simply too good by nature and are too sensitive and merciful. The fact that Eliezer forbids educating women is explained by the reason that he used to have an educated but a very bad wife etc. He finally reaches a conclusion asserting that "We have shown that Jewish sages cared for women much more than all the other nations. ... If nowadays life were led in compliance with the rules of the Talmud, Jewish wives would lead a pure and happy life."¹⁴ It obviously suggests that all women's frustrations connected with the family life stem from the departure from tradition. Moreover, the thesis of this article, displaying women's position in Judaism from an almost idyllic view, perversely ignores completely evident and really serious marginalization of women in the public forms of worship and the series of legal regulations degrading their position in Judaism.¹⁵

9 A. Zaks, "Di famile fun fartsaytn biz baynt," (The Family from the Old Time till Now), *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, 19 November, 1902, p. 1.

10 *Ibidem*, p. 1.

11 Shloyme Berman, "Di lage fun der yidisber froy in der alter tsayt" (Position of the Jewish Woman in the Old Times), *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, vols. 15-19.

12 Shoyme Berman, "Di lage..." *op. cit.*, No. 18 (lack of the dated front page), p. 3.

13 *Ibidem*, p. 3.

14 Shloyme Berman, "Di lage..." *op. cit.*, No. 19 (lack of the dated front page), p. 8.

15 E.g. excluding women from the privilege of studying the Holy Books, making circumcision of male genitalia the symbol of Jewry, and taboos concerning menstrual blood and others; See Deborah F. Sawyer: *Kobiety i religie w początkach naszej ery (Women and Religions at the Beginning of Our Era)*, Wrocław, 1999, Chapter 2: "Women in Judaism and Christianity" (Kobiety w judaiz-

This male voice concerning women is not always unanimous. The article of N. Tsherniak under the perverse title “Women’s Egoism”¹⁶ is an excellent example of radicalism in the magazine. The article refers to the images of women’s happiness different from the Talmud. The author does not make any references to the Jewish sages, but only to “certain learned people,” and cites the opinion that “at the beginning of humanity women were strong and free, dominating even the men.”¹⁷ Without justifying whether it is true or not, the author concludes that “The golden age in the history of women swiftly passed away and women for generations had to work for their husbands and masters.”¹⁸ Tsherniak asserts, though, that women’s rights are still restricted because the door to their education is almost entirely closed and it is men that are most likely to get jobs. The author writes that “We, men, keep the women in semi-slavery and we still want to believe that they are more liberated and happier than us, but isn’t it just our great hypocrisy?”¹⁹ He also asserts that men are afraid of allowing women access to education, although in consequence, it could benefit them, because women – locked in a household – wage a war with a society hostile to them and pull the men away from engaging in the life of their community or in the social life in general. Left without the possibility of participation in public life, the woman will always perceive the matters beyond the family or household as alien to her and not worth an effort. Therefore, a husband engaging in the national and social matters constantly hears, “*Tsu vos darfst du zikh mishn nisht in dayne gesheftn?*” (Why are you concerned with someone else’s business?).²⁰ This is why introducing women into public life in a way that is close and significant to them is in men’s own interest and shall certainly bring social and national benefits.

The reason for girls’ education is presented in the article “Emigration and the Jewish Woman”²¹: the number of young Jewish women who emigrate to other, most often better developed countries, increases. Their situation in

mie i chrześcijaństwie); David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America*, New York, 1992.

16 N. Tsherniak, “*Froyen egoizm*,” (Women’s Egoism), *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, 1 September, 1902, No. 10, pp. 1-3.

17 *Ibidem*, p. 1.

18 *Ibidem*.

19 *Ibidem*.

20 *Ibidem*, p. 2.

21 “*Di emigratsyon un di yidishe froy*” (Emigration and the Jewish Woman), *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, 10 September, 1902, No. 11, pp. 1-3.

those countries becomes especially difficult, since as illiterate women they are often forced to take up poor jobs, they are not able to find proper employment, and due to their lack of education they are commonly abused in a dishonest way.

A different, unfortunately anonymous, article,²² written in a similar mood, discusses the matter typical for the early feminist discourse rhetoric that associates the issue of women's rights with the problem of children's rights. It is noted here that children's situation gets worse along with women's degradation. Moreover, in the case of women dominated by men, their natural tenderness and love towards children is often inhibited and suppressed. The emotional sphere is also subordinated to the power of the husband and father. Men prefer a harsh upbringing, treating the free expression of feelings as a symptom of weakness. They sometimes are even able to behave cruelly towards children, which forces mothers to protect children against their own fathers.

An important voice, which in a specific way belongs to the feminist discourse rhetoric, can be found in a text devoted to the working women.²³ What is emphasized here is the fact that Jewish women have always actively participated in trade, craft and factory work – much more than women of other nations – and attention is drawn to women's unjust and much lower salaries. Importantly, it is also emphasized here that working women include not only women who deal with trade, craft or have jobs in factories, but every single woman taking care of the household and children who does the same things which are done for money: washing, ironing, cooking, sewing etc. and who does not even receive a good word in return. The conclusion of this text, employing the feminist rhetoric, is quite perverse: the significance of housework cannot be underestimated but the situation when the woman leaves the home and children for almost a whole day in order to earn money, should be perceived as the last resort, as it is always harmful to the family.

A clearly antifeminist view is, however, presented in the articles of David Frishmann²⁴ published in *Di Yidische Froyenvelt*. In the series of articles titled

22 "Dos amolike kind" (An Early child), *Di Yidische Froyenvelt*, No. 11, pp. 5-6.

23 "Di yidische arbeterin" (The Jewish Female Worker), *Di Yidische Froyenvelt*, 1 October, 1902, No. 14, pp. 1-3.

24 David Frishmann (1860-1922) – Born in a wealthy Hassidic family in Zgierz, well-known writer, author of articles, translator, theatre and literary critic writing in Hebrew and Yiddish; editor of the magazines: *Ha-Dor*, *Ha-Boker*, and *Ha-Tekufa*.

“Woman: A Bit of Woman’s Psychology”²⁵ the author asserts that, although women do suffer, they make a great mistake in thinking that men are in a better situation. Following this faulty train of thought, women try to be equal to men, which is completely impossible, since women are totally different from men and they play different roles. These deceptive expectations lead to a situation when women’s position can only be described as “*nisht abin nisht aber*”²⁶ meaning “not here and not there.” Women deprive themselves of the previous position and do not find a new one. Frishmann even says that the modern woman is “*narish-klug*”²⁷ – stupidly wise, and having lost respect for men, she also loses respect for herself.

Women’s voices, expressing clear criticism towards men can also be found in the literary section of *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*. A story by Feyga Foner²⁸ titled *A vayber bunt* (A Women’s Revolt)²⁹ may serve as a good example. The plot of the story takes place in the times of King Salomon and presents the revolt against a monarch taking too many wives,³⁰ what is more – non-Jewish wives. Another example is the piece titled *A briv tsum man* (A Letter to the Husband),³¹ signed only with a first name – Rokhl. The story’s protagonist is a woman with a child who has been cheated on and left by her unfaithful husband. The power over her is again taken over by her father who imposes his will and does not take into account the heroine’s emotions. All in all, it seems that in this women’s magazine from the beginning of the 20th century, women articulate their disagreement against the subordination of wives and daughters to the men’s will; however, not yet directly, but rather chiefly through fiction.

25 David Frishmann: “*Di froy: A bisl froyen-psikbologie*” (A Woman: A Bit of Women’s Psychology), *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, 16 July, 1902, No. 3, pp. 1-5.

26 *Ibidem*, p. 2.

27 *Ibidem*.

28 Sheyna (Sara) Feyga Foner (1854-1910) – a woman writer writing her works in Hebrew and in Yiddish, working for many years in Bialystok, Grodno and Lodz as a private teacher of both these languages. Later, she lived in New York and Chicago, where she died. In Yiddish she published *Eyne troyerike libe* (Such a Sad Love), Lodz 1889, *Di keyld fun a farreter* (Traitor’s Dress), Warsaw 1892, and many others. At the end of the 19th century she published many anonymous works.

29 Sara Feyga Foner, “*A vayber-bunt: A mayse vos hot pasirt in Shloyme haMeylekh tsaytn*” (Women’s Revolt: A Story That Happened in the Times of King Salomon), *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, lack of a date front page, No. 23, pp. 5-6.

30 According to the Bible, King Salomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, I King. 11:3.

31 Rokhl: “*A briv tsum man*” (A Letter to a Husband), *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, No. 23, p. 6.

The selection of articles analyzed here shows that inconsistencies and contradictions in the attitude towards the women's issue in *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt* are mainly caused by the discrepancy between the modern model of womanhood and the traditional world of Jewish values, obviously difficult to solve at that time. Serious concerns are caused by the idea of change in the Jewish family model, which would be the consequence of resignation from the well-established position of women in such a community.

Family – regarded as a sequence of generations – is the basic social unit for Jews and family bonds are of prime importance. It is even said that family has been the source of their strength for centuries. The necessity of facing new social, moral and economic challenges stands in opposition to their internal attachment to the often idealized, well-established model of the Jewish household and family.³² The concern for the family's persistence as the cradle of revival and the guarantee of the national identity preservation is even more strengthened by the pro-Zionist profile of the magazine.

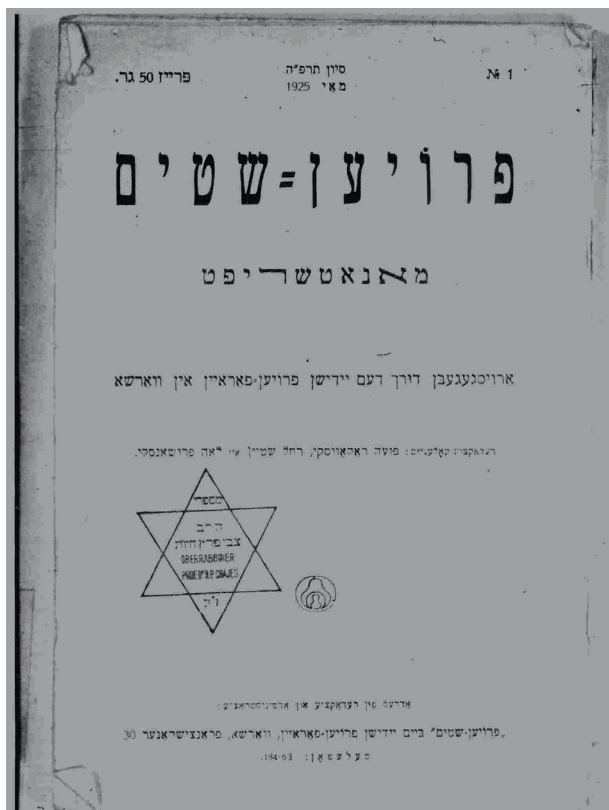
Twenty Years Later: the Women's Voice

In the profile of the women's magazines published twenty years later significant changes can be found. It is the time of the strengthened position of Jewish women's organizations, which was significantly influenced by getting the right to vote by the Jewish as well as by the Polish women.³³ It was not only the right to take part in the elections to parliament and city councils, but also the possibility to offer female candidates. Women representing Jewish female organizations were admitted to the Sejm (Lower House of Parliament) and to the city councils in the election of 1922. Now women's demand to take part in the election to kehillah's authorities became the main objective to fight for.³⁴

32 Perfect example of such an idealization is the book written by Israel Abrahams, *Życie codzienne Żydów w średniowieczu* (Jews' Everyday Life in the Middle Ages), transl. Barbara Gadowska, Warsaw 1996, chapters: 7 "Monogamia i dom" (Monogamy and House) and 8 "Życie rodzinne" (Family Life).

33 Compare M. Sliwa, "Udział kobiet w wyborach i ich działalność parlamentarna," (Women's Participation In the Election and Their Parliamentary Activity) in: A. Żarnowska and A. Szwarc: *Kobieta i kultura życia codziennego*, (Woman and the Culture of Everyday Life), Warsaw 1997.

34 In Vilnius and Białystok women had such a right, but it was not obtained in Warsaw.



The monthly magazine of a pro-Zionist profile – *Froyen Sbtim* (Women's Voice), which began to be published in 1925 in Warsaw, is edited only by women – Zionist activists³⁵ and, at the same time, the leaders of Jewish Feminist Movement in Poland (the board of editors consisted of Pua Rakovski,³⁶

35 About the role of women in the Zionist movement see Mendelsohn, E., *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915-1926*, New York 1981, pp. 339-341.

36 Pua Rakovski (1865-1955) – Leader of the Jewish feminist movement in Poland, Zionist activist, eminent educator, writer, translator, born in rabbinical family. She received a comprehensive education (initially she learned with other children, but soon began to take private lessons, passed state accredited exams, and became a licensed teacher); well-read in traditional Jewish texts, as well as in world literature. She played a key role as a fighter for women's rights to education and politics. She spoke Russian, Polish, German, Yiddish, and Hebrew. She studied Hebrew, and from 1891 she was running Yehudia – the first Hebrew school for young girls in

Rokhl Shteyn,³⁷ and Lea Proshanski³⁸) and is designed to be the women's speaking platform.

Although the structure of the periodical is basically similar to *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, its objectives and content are definitely different. The ideas of the so-called first feminist wave finally find their expression, especially the demand of equal rights. The leading article presenting the magazine's profile states that "In the modern form of life the woman has to play the same role and make the same contribution as the man."³⁹ As opposed to the magazine published in 1902, in which the exceptionally good position of a woman in the traditional Jewish society is emphasized, here we find the opinion that it is the woman's position which is especially unfavourable. It is said that "the position of a Jewish woman is still in the dead end".⁴⁰ There were complaints that "the doors of the Jewish press are still strongly shut for us, women!"⁴¹ The purpose of *Froyen Shtim* is to change such a situation so as to enable women's voice to be heard. This monthly magazine aims at awakening the Jewish women's keen interest in the world around them, and, similarly to *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, at developing their cognitive abilities for themselves, in order to make them realize that they have to be responsible for their own lives.

Warsaw. Then, she established her own junior high school for girls. She was an advocate of the revolutionary movement and she was also connected with Zionist leftist organizations. Since the early period of her Zionist activity she attempted to lead to the formation of independent women's organizations. In the 1920s, Rakovski was the leader of Yidisher Froyen-Farband in Poyln (Jewish Women's Organization in Poland). Although her first attempt of settling down in Erets-Israel resulted with the return to Warsaw, during the next visit in 1935, Rakovski decided to move there permanently. In her publications, she focused mainly on the women's issue: *Yidishe froy, Farvos darfn mir a spetsyale froyen-organizatsye* (The Jewish Woman; Why Do We Need Independent Women's Organisations), Warsaw 1918; *Di moderne froyen-bavegung* (Modern Women's Movement), Warsaw 1928. In her highly unique work *Zikbroynes fun a yidisber revolyu-yonerin* (Memoirs of the Jewish Revolutionist) (published in 1954 in Buenos-Aires), Rakovski – in a wide social, cultural and political context – presents her own difficult struggle for gaining education, professional independence and personal freedom.

37 Rokhl Shteyn (?-1942) – Jewish feminist, Zionist activist, member of Warsaw City Council striving for state support for Jewish social institutions, defender of children's rights, one of the founders of Yidisher Froyen-Farband in Poyln (Jewish Women's Organization in Poland). She committed suicide in the Warsaw Ghetto during the mass liquidations.

38 Lea Proshanski – collaborated with Pua Rakovski in the school for girls. She provided financial support and managed the school's budget. Proshanski was one of the most active feminists striving for establishing an independent Zionist organization in Poland.

39 "Tsu undzer lezer" (To Our Reader), *Froyen shtim*, May 1925, No. 1, p. 3.

40 *Ibidem*.

41 *Ibidem*, p. 4.

In the magazine discussed earlier rabbis are presented as people particularly worried about women's matters. *Froyen Shtim* treats this subject differently. In the second issue we find the article "*Vegn farlozene froyen. Dos veygesbray fun di agunes*"⁴² (About the Deserted Women: The Lament of Agunahs) which explores the horrible situation of the Jewish agunah, who, excluded from the society, is deprived of the possibility of living a normal life, and often becomes a prostitute. The author of the text, Lea Proshanski emphasizes the fact that the circumstances of becoming an agunah have changed. At that time the situation was often that, a husband emigrated and, in the new country, married a new wife, and there was no news of him afterwards. The author accuses rabbis for being blind to a socially harmful act of becoming an agunah. Lea Proshanski appeals to them for changing the legislation concerning this issue. She employs the strategy of a rabbinic discourse – validating her reasoning with numerous quotations from Torah and the Talmud, making references to the tradition from the times of Talmud, whose authors understood the need of adjusting the law to the changing conditions of life. She also uses the Zionist arguments, stating that, if we are willing to build the new Jewish society, we have to build it on the foundation of good, adequate and logic law.

In *Froyen Shtim* we may also find bitter disputes, containing serious accusations against the male sex. A text of Shoshana Diment can serve as a good example. It is a sharp retort to the Jewish poets'⁴³ speeches against women, mainly to Moshe Broderzon, who accused modern representatives of female sex of vanity, fussiness and materialism.

Shoshana Diment does not contradict the fact that women are very often just like in the description of Broderzon, but she also claims, that it is just the consequence of how males have perceived and treated women for centuries. The woman was, at first, completely subordinated to her father, then to her husband, and, in a way, has been shaped according to their desires, and she walks today "half-naked, made-up with her hair dyed" because it can elevate her in the eyes of men. Being mainly the object of men's desire, she concentrates on caring for her physical appearance. Treated as an object she lost her subjectivity. First, men despise women's personality and mainly look for their bodies, and then, at the time of breakdown of the old value systems, when

42 Lea Proshanski, "*Vegn farlozene froyen: Dos veygesbray fun di agunes*" (About the Deserted Women: Lament of Agunahs), *Froyen Shtim*, August 1925, No. 2, pp. 10-14.

43 Shoshana Diment, "A tshuve her Broderzon un andere" (In Response to Mr. Broderzon and Others), *Froyen Shtim*, May 1925, No. 1, pp. 24-25.

men find nothing in women except for their body, they complain that their female companions are not brotherly souls. Diment validates her reasoning with the arguments of national content, known to us from *Di Yidishe Froyenwelt* and concludes her text with the diagnosis, that the mutual alienation of the sexes exerts the negative influence on children, which, in turn, has an impact on the condition of the whole nation, as it is weakened by this division.

Froyen Shtim features not only disputes with the male poetry Parnassus, but also attempts to promote women artists. In contrast to *Di Yidishe Froyenwelt*, well-known literary authors, who could give the high rank and dignity to the magazine, are not invited to cooperation. The magazine's policy is to present women's works in the field of visual arts (e.g. Regina Mundlak offers her paintings and graphics to be published in *Froyen Shtim*) and literature (e.g. publication of poems by Miriam Ulinover⁴⁴ and stories of Roza Yakubovitch⁴⁵). In the process of works' selection the determining factor is not only the sex of the author, but also the subject matter, therefore, the most commonly chosen works concerned the girls' and women's range of problems.

Concerns about the new Jewish identity in its formative years are a very important aspect of a feminist discourse in *Froyen Shtim*. In the text by Pua Rakowski "*Der Kampf far froy-vol-recht in Erets Izrael*"⁴⁶ (The Fight for the Women's Right to Vote in Erets Israel) the problem of fighting for women's

44 Miriam Ulinover (1890-1944) – Yiddish poet born and residing in Lodz. She received traditional education, collaborated among others with *Gezangen, Lodzher Togblat*, and *Lodzher Folksblat*. After publishing her first collection *Mayn bobes oytser* (My Grandmother's Treasury), Warsaw 1922, she became a renowned writer. The publication of her second collection *Shabes* was hindered by the outbreak of WWII. She died in Auschwitz. Her creativity employs folk motives and songs, and the content of her works "is connected with the phenomenon imbued with a romantic aura – the cult of Jewish women in Poland" (*Polski słownik jidajstyczny*, vol. 2. Warsaw 2003. p. 758).

45 Roza Yakubovitch (1889-1942) – Yiddish writer and publicist born near Plock. Her father was a rabbi in Siedlce and Będzin. Yakubovitch was educated in Russian, Polish, and Jewish schools, resided in Kalisz, made her debut in *Roman Caytung* (No. 16, Warsaw 1908) and collaborated with Yiddish press published in Warsaw, Lodz, and Kalisz, for example with *Haynt, Ringen, Varsbaver Almanach, Undzer Tribune, Lodzher Togblat, Der Yidisher Zburnalst, Literatur*. In 1924 she published in Warsaw a volume of poetry *Mayne gezangen* (My Singing) which contained, inter alia, poems based on the biblical motives of women, and poems depicting patriarchal order of Jewish society in Poland. She was planning to publish another collection containing poems written between 1924 and 1939, but her work was lost during the war. During the German occupation, for a short period she lived with Miriam Ulinover in Lodz. Then, she left for Warsaw, where she finally died in the Ghetto.

46 Pua Rakowski, "*Der Kampf far froy-vol-recht in Erets Izrael*" (Fight for Women's Suffrage in Erets Israel), *Froyen Shtim*, August 1925, No. 2, pp. 4-7.

suffrage in Palestine is presented as a national problem of great importance, and not as something trivial which can be avoided by shrugging one's shoulders or smiling indulgently. Women work in the land of Israel for "the country of our hopes, our common future,"⁴⁷ arm in arm with men, and their suffrage ought to be obvious as a basic human right in the modern political system. Rakovski notices that establishing respectful and fair legal position of women in Israel is particularly important, especially taking into account the fact that women have always been the most susceptible to the processes of assimilation, which, in turn, causes the situation that their energy contributes to the wealth of other nations, weakening the Jewish nation as the result.⁴⁸

Froyen Shtim represents a very clearly defined discourse, deeply set in the rhetoric of feminist and national fight. The magazine's publishers, caring for its radical, progressive and politically-embedded image, avoid the so-called women's columns like fashion, housekeeping advising, recipes, or columns where readers could ask for advice about love dilemmas for example. The austere character of the periodical is highlighted by lack of decorative graphic elements on the front page or in the headings.

Just a Woman

A different attitude towards such issues is represented by Khana Blankshteyn⁴⁹ who edited the weekly magazine *Di Froy* (Woman). Its publication began in

47 *Ibidem*, p. 6.

48 See P. E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women*, Seattle, 1995.

49 Khana Blankshteyn (early 1860s-1939) – Yiddish writer born in Vilnius, one of the leaders of the Jewish Women's Movement. Her father, Abraham Shur, was a timber supplier for the Russian railway, which made him a prominent property owner. Khana was raised by the German and French governesses, educated abroad in expensive schools for young women, spoke four languages. She got married at the age of seventeen, but, after a short time, she divorced and married her second husband, a diamond merchant from Kiev – Blankshteyn. Afterwards, she divorced once again, and returned to Vilnius with her two children. During the WWI she worked as a nurse in the Russian army. During the Russian revolution in 1917 she was an activist in the movement of national socialists. Studying sociology in Kiev, she came into contact with Kiev circle of Jewish intellectuals, and joined the Folksists. In the early 1920s, in abject poverty, she left the USSR and returned to Vilnius, where she made a living by giving private lessons and also took lessons of Yiddish. She ran for the Polish parliament on behalf of the Folks Partay (Folk Party), she started to collaborate with *Vilner Tog* and with *Tsayt*. She was one of the founders of Yidisher Froyen-Farband and the leader of the organization Froyen-Shuts (Women's Guard). In 1939, shortly before death, she published in Vilnius the collection of short stories *Noveles* (Short Stories).



1925,⁵⁰ similarly to *Froyen Shtim*, but since it was issued in Vilnius, Warsaw, Lodz, and Krakow, it had a wider range than *Froyen Shtim*. The co-operators of Khana Blankshteyn's magazine were mostly women, but articles and works written by men can also be found.

Di Froy declares on its front page to be a weekly magazine protecting the Jewish woman and her business.⁵¹ In the leading article⁵² that explores the periodical's profile, some problems known to the reader from *Di Yidische Froyenvelt*

50 See Ellen Kellman, *op. cit.*

51 The full title *Di Froy: Vokhnschrift Gevidmet di Interesn un Shuts fun der Yidisher Froy*.

52 *Undzer oyfgabe* (Our task), *Di Froy*, Vilnius, Warsaw, Lodz, Lvov 8 April, 1925, pp. 1-4.

return. The author admits that women already came out of their “*heyim-geto*,”⁵³ which limited their activities to the well-known four “k’s”: “*kinder, kikh, kleyder un kirke*”⁵⁴ (children, kitchen, clothes and church). But they still had to struggle doubly: as women, representatives of an underprivileged sex and as Jews, members of a persecuted and oppressed nation. As if it was not enough, there is still another difficulty, already known to us from *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*: Jewish women have to face their inner struggle. On the one hand, they are attracted by the modern model of equal rights, but on the other hand, they wish to preserve the traditional Jewish house full of love and care. Is it possible to do both and not to suffer? This question is to be answered by the magazine *Di Froy*, which aims at presenting the role of a woman in many different spheres, in the field of economy, politics, culture, literature, music, sport, but also at showing women who face problems of children’s upbringing, hygiene, beauty, fashion and love.

The magazine is interested not only in creating a certain model of womanhood, as is the case of *Froyen Shtim*, but in real women and all those things which are, and not only should be, important for them. The weekly magazine *Di Froy* also has a different layout, which includes numerous illustrations, women’s photographs, clothes designs etc.

In the magazine the situation of women is described as very difficult, but typically feminist matters, such as women’s suffrage, are given less attention than in *Froyen Shtim*. Despite that, much concern is raised by the increasing suicidal death toll among Jewish women and the problem of Jewish prostitutes, whose number, according to *Di Froy*, permanently grows. Such a problem results from the fact that pimps and women traffickers very easily take advantage of the unfavourable position of Jewish women.⁵⁵

Blankshteyn’s periodical clearly defines its aim as the protection of the Jewish women’s morality, similarly to *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt*, and puts an emphasis on the promotion of marital fidelity. It bases its argumentation on the question of health and hygiene.⁵⁶ It is compliant not only with the objectives of Froyen-Shuts organization, ran by Blankshteyn, but also with the campaign of a wider range that aims at counteracting prostitution and human trafficking, conducted

53 *Ibidem*, p. 1.

54 *Ibidem*, p. 1.

55 Compare Dr Volkova Basie Lakerman, “*Undzer lage*” (Our Position), *Di Froy*, No. 1, pp. 3-6.

56 See Dr Volkova, “*Di higiene fun kbasene-hobn*” (The Hygiene of Marriage), *Di Froy*, No 1, pp. 5-10.

by Polish authorities, supported by Poaley Tsiyon, Bund and Jewish feminist associations.⁵⁷ In their newspaper, editors of *Di Froy* enter a dispute with Filip Lekler, who, in a journal *Mercury*, provocatively proves that immoral women are much happier than the moral ones, who spend their whole lives sticking to their rules and values. Lekler claims that immorality in case of women is usually connected with high life expectations, ambitions and courage to fulfil them.⁵⁸ Z. Hilerson writes in response that joy of bringing up children, who, afterwards, keep the memory of their mother, is “a million times sweeter and more precious than beautiful clothes and the moments of wild pleasure of an immoral woman.”⁵⁹ In this case we may observe the specific combination of the feminist purpose to limit women’s abuse and their status of objects in the machine of prostitution, with the conservative perception of women as faithful wives and mothers.

A highly traditional message of this article stands in opposition with the French novel, translated into Yiddish, telling a story of a modern woman. The first part of the novel, whose motto says that “Nature does not know what sin is, it was created by culture,”⁶⁰ is published on the same page as the abovementioned dispute. The novel by Viktor Margueritte, *Le Compagnon*, which is published under the significant title *Di fraye froy* (*A Free Woman*) in *Di Froy* starts with a vivid description of a naked woman, taking a bath in cold water and the sensual image of the drops of water rolling down on the athletic body of a female protagonist – Anika. *Di fraye froy* is a novel about the relation between a woman and a man, but its content is definitely different from typical love stories. Most of such novels finish with the act of marriage with a partner from the proper social environment and with an adequate level of education. The case of *Di fraye froy* is different. Here, the approach to feminine choices is radically feminist. Blankshteyn’s decision to serialize this very novel shows her in-

57 In the period between the 1870s and WWI, prostitution among the Ashkenazi Jews was a common phenomenon. They dominated in the sphere of legalized prostitution, as well as in the sexual underworld of Central and Eastern Europe. It was mainly due to such processes as urbanization, industrialization, pauperization, secularization of Jewish society, mass emigration from Europe (concerning mainly men), and migrations from rural to urban areas. See Bristow, Edward J., *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight Against White Slavery 1870-1939*, New York, 1983.

58 See Z. Hilerson, “Zaynen unmoralisbe froyen glikleker vi moralisbe?” (Are Immoral Women Happier Than Those Who Are Moral), *Di Froy*, 1 May, 1925, No. 2, pp. 27-30.

59 *Ibidem*, p. 30.

60 Viktor Margerit, “*Di fraye froy*” (A Free Woman), *Di Froy*, No. 2, p. 3.

tention of introducing changes in the perception of the roles of the sexes by the Eastern European Jews.⁶¹

The section *Fun gor der velt* (From All Over the World) contains information regarding the situation of women and of women's movements in different parts of the world. Reports from countries like England, Japan and America⁶² about the women's fight for their rights shape the general opinion about the universal dimension of their goals, which are aimed at women, and are realized by the women's organizations, and also strengthen the idea of a common interest, global bond and solidarity among women.

One of the strategies of changing the typical image of the female sex, employed by most magazines, is to publish articles presenting the figures of women of merit who contributed much to history, literature, science or religion. Although *Di Frøy* presents, for example, female scientists, (the series of articles devoted to Maria Curie-Sklodovska),⁶³ still in one of the articles "*Der nervn-dokter vegn der frøy*"⁶⁴ (A Psychologist about a Woman), doctor Virshubski asserts that intelligence of girls develops much more slowly than that of boys.' It is not a result of the anatomic differences in the structure of the brain, but rather lack of exercise. Just like the fingers of a pianist who does not practice stiffen, in the same way the female brain that has not been exercised for centuries, works more slowly. This shows how antifeminist arguments are employed for the purposes of feminist propaganda, such as, for example, the necessity of educating girls. Such a contradictory discourse of a moderately feminist character is typical for the whole magazine.

Conclusions concerning the profile of the magazine *Di Frøy* can also be drawn on the basis of editors' response to the readers' correspondence. In one of the issues we come across a question "How to avoid pregnancy?" The editorial staff state that they cannot answer, and advise that if a woman lives with her husband but does not love him she should patiently wait until love comes,⁶⁵ although it is known that feminist movements criticized marriages en-

61 Ellen Kellman, *Feminism*, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

62 It is worth mentioning that the photograph of Hada Sharau Pasha – the leader of women's movement in Egypt – was published on the front page of the first issue of *Di Frøy*.

63 Khana Blankshteyn, "*Di frøy in der visnschaff*" (Women in the World of Science), *Di Frøy* 8 May 1925, No. 3.

64 A. Virshubski, "*Der nervn-dokter vegn der frøy*" (A Psychologist about a Woman), *Di Frøy* 28 May, 1925, No. 4, pp. 1-4.

65 Compare "*Briv-keastn*," *Di Frøy*, No. 2, pp. 38-39.

tered into and continued without mutual emotional attachment as immoral.⁶⁶ We may come to conclusion, that unlike the Jewish magazine for women written in Polish, *Eva*,⁶⁷ which represents more modern views, *Di Froy* avoids the topic of birth regulation, often eagerly discussed by feminist societies. In different pieces of advice the magazine avoids radical solutions, as if it is not truly believed that some situations are worth taking the risk for women or girls, so it promotes a passive attitude.

Promoting a kind of a synthesis of modernity and traditional values, the weekly magazine *Di Froy* tries to be an attractive periodical, reaching masses of women. That is the reason why political, social and moral views are expressed very moderately and a discourse concerning the battle of the sexes appears there only incidentally. Therefore, it is a less radical magazine than *Froyen Shtime*, and it presents a less clearly defined political profile, but is much closely related to the prestigious women's magazine *Di Froyen Velt* published since 1913 in New York, which might have probably served as an example for *Di Froy*.

Di Froyen Velt, edited by Mordekhai Leib Mansky⁶⁸ and Aron Grayzel,⁶⁹ according to a front page declaration,⁷⁰ is a monthly magazine aimed at protecting the business of a Jewish woman in a Jewish house. The introductory article⁷¹ states much more convincingly than in European magazines that women's entrance into the public sphere is an already accomplished fact. One of the reasons for change is that the men's world has already noticed its own bankruptcy and has turned to women. The perception of women has thus changed, but still the objective is to change the way women perceive themselves. The position of women is presented here as untypical, because it has

66 See Mirosława Czarnańska, *Wieszczki: Rekonstrukcja kobiecej genealogii w historii niemieckiej literatury kobiecej od połowy XIX do końca XX wieku*, (Prophetesses: Reconstruction of Women's Genealogy in the History of German Women's Literature from the Mid 19th to the Late 20th Century) Wrocław, 2004, pp. 66-67.

67 See Ewa Plach, *op. cit.*

68 Mordekhai Leib Mansky (1872-?) – Yiddish writer and publicist born in Belarus. He received traditional education, and worked as a Hebrew Teacher in Warsaw. From 1903 he resided in America and wrote minor prose works. His first publication was in *Forverts* in 1904. Between 1910 and 1912 he edited and published *Nyuyorker Vokshenblat*, and co-edited *Di Froyen Velt*.

69 Itshak Aron Grayzel (1874-1914) – Zionist activist and editor born in Minsk. From 1903 he resided in New York, and from 1910 in Philadelphia. He owned an important Jewish printing house.

70 *Di Froyen-Velt: A froyen zhumal gevodmet der idisher beyim un familie* (A Woman's World: A Journal for Women, Devoted to the Jewish Home and Family).

71 "Di Froyen-Velt," *Di Froyen-Velt*, New York, April, 1913, vol. 1, No. 1. pp. 1-5.

changed in most cases, within one generation, while in other societies it was a process that involved at least a few generations. In case of Jewish women, emancipation took place as a sudden radical change, very often by departure from the traditional Shtetl (a local Jewish community) and emigration to America, where, except for civilizational shock, women also experienced the clash with modern models of male and female social roles.

Other problems associated with this situation are the questions of national identity preservation (a problem already known from women's press in Poland) and the great challenge that Jewish mothers have to face – how to bring up the young generation in a modern way, but not let the children get alienated from their parents. It is also noticed that even in the kitchen Jewish women have more problems than others. If they want to stick to the Jewish rules of kosher cuisine, they cannot use any non-Jewish cookery books. Will they, then, be able to serve the dishes of modern but Jewish cuisine?

One of the aspects mentioned in *Di Froyen Velt* that is not tackled by the magazines analyzed earlier in this paper is women's attitude towards their own bodies. The problem is that Jewish women are said to fall behind women of other nations in that matter. In many Jewish families women's body is considered as a taboo and Jewish women are too ashamed to even talk about it. *Di Froyen Velt* is to solve all these sensitive issues.

Di Froyen Velt is addressed mainly to married women, who work and run the family household at the same time. A series of articles presents the process of birth of the new woman, starting from the French Revolution.⁷² Reports on the work of suffrage movement activists are systematically published. Much attention is also devoted to the economic situation of working Jewish women, who are called to unite and establish their own unions, which would fight for their rights. Much attention is paid to caring for the physical appearance and the body as well as the new fashion trends. It must be highlighted, though, that this field has also been the place of promoting some ideas, like the ideal of a modern female model of beauty, characterized mainly by health, naturalness, comfort, and one's own individual style. Women are encouraged to stop adjusting their physical appearance to men's taste. The unquestioned following of the new fashion trends is condemned, and wearing wigs, very fashionable at

72 Itskhak Krim, "Di geburt fun der nayer froy" (The Birth of a New Woman), *Di Froyen-Velt*, vol. 1, No. 4, New York, July, 1913, p. 11.

the time, is severely criticized.⁷³ It is emphasized that for Jewish women wigs are the symbol of backwardness and religious fanaticism. According to the editors, wearing somebody's dead hair as a decoration is inaeesthetic. They underline that wearing a wig is unhealthy, unnatural and unsightly.

Conclusion

Yiddish women's press provides the reader with interesting material concerning social, moral, economic, and political transformations that took place in the Jewish community at the beginning of the 20th century. An overview of women's magazines, although they are only partially preserved, gives us an idea of the character of their discourse that shows a wide range of presented opinions.

A concern for the preservation of a Jewish identity seems to be a permanent element of women's Yiddish press. The clash between the issue of a Jewish identity or regarded as a new, Zionist identity, with the problems of a new awareness of women is a very interesting subject for an analysis.

The most consistent concepts of Jewish womanhood are presented in *Di Froyen Velt* and in *Froyen Shtime*. In *Di Yidishe Froyenvelt* and *Di Froy* the blade of the discourse of the battle of the sexes is blunt, undoubtedly because of the concerns about the loss of family bonds, and the strong belief in the power of the traditional Jewish household, and its significance to the process of the national identity development. It seems that those magazines would like to see Jewish females as a combination of a modern, educated woman, aware of her rights and value, with the so-called *yidishe mame*, traditionally regarded as the guardian of the domestic peace and joy. As far as the matters connected with self-fulfilment, education, preparation for future employment and protection of the legal status of women do not raise any controversy and are compliant with the common ideas of women's movements, the rules of a new morality promoted by feminism do not find its followers in the Yiddish women's press. Although we may encounter the voices pleading for changes in legal procedures of divorce, the marriage still remains the only legally accepted form of sexual activity and cannot be the subject of discussion.

73 "Der paruk amol un baynt" (The Wig – Once and Now), *Di Froyen-Velt*, vol. 1, No. 7, New York, November, 1913, pp. 3-4.

A combination of the fight for national freedom with the fight for women's equality and liberty is typical for the women's press in Yiddish presented in this paper. Men's participation in the process of the development of the new model of womanhood in the formative years of Yiddish press, and the imitation of a male discourse in the radical feminist magazines published in the 1920s are also very interesting phenomena. Certain contradictions and cracks in the profile of the analyzed magazines are the evidence for the expansion of the areas in which Jewish women had to find their place and role at the beginning of the 20th century.