



**RELATIONSHIP TACKLED IN THE WORKS OF ISAAC  
BASHEVIS SINGER: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS  
SHORT STORY “SHORT FRIDAY”**

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**Abstract:**

There is nothing that is as pure and as pious as love. God created man, to transfer his love. There are very few writers who have propagated the love of God; Isaac Bashevis Singer is one among such writer, who has love as the epicenter of all his works. This article discusses the life of Leible and Shoshe, a poor tailor and dough kneader of a Jewish Polish town. Through “Short Friday”, Singer has very well depicted the life style of Jewish hamlet. Through Leible and Shoshe, he has produced the most beautiful aspect of man in a poetic style. Singer owes a much more credential, as a Jewish American writer, he has well comprehended the necessity of love in mankind. This article traces the Jewish lifestyle and love life of Leible and Shoshe.

**Introduction:**

Born as the second of a rabbi, Isaac Bashevis Singer possessed an innate trait for literature. His elder brother Joshua instigated his flair for literature. Joshua’s migration to America even before the outburst of war, acted as a real inspiration for Singer to prove himself as the best story-teller in an alien land. For he had only his language and his creativity as his armour. His observation of human relationship and Jewish culture created a fertile platform for him to stabilize as a good writer.

Singer’s characters always replicate the nuances of life. Life is enjoyed by them not through material benefit but through their likeness for living and their priority for family. Leible and Shoshe of “Short Friday” are such noble characters created by Singer, through whom Singer has created a world filled with love, compassion and empathy. Nothing could separate man from God’s love, if man is steadfast in his belief on God. Leible and Shoshe has presented such a belief on God, which is carried even after their death.

**Review of Literature:**

The primary tools used in this article are the comments of Anita Susan Grossman, Janet Hadda and Linda Nielson Eppich.

Singer had an innate passion for storytelling and also story listening. It is this passion that made to create some of the exemplary characters. To quote Anita Susan Grossman:

In the shorter pieces Singer has published in his last four collections in English, it is frequently impossible to say where fact leaves off and fiction begins. Many if not most of the pieces there have first-person narrators who bear a striking resemblance to Singer. Some of the narrators are deliberately fictionalized, but in other stories Singer refers to the names of his own family members or other real people he knew, and the reader must identify the speaker with Singer himself (37).

Singer has the elated skill to present his mind through the words and deeds of his characters. Whatever he has described, it is his experience that has enabled him to create such wonderful characters. Thus says Anita Susan Grossman:

Singer is playing upon the data of his experience, creating a personal mythology which he can do and redo as he pleases, much as the ancient Greeks did with their mythologies (38).

“Short Friday” is one of the classics of Singer in which he has presented two noble characters Leible and Shoshe, who stand as the perfect example of faith and love. “Short Friday” is a folk tale which narrates the events on a Sabbath day. Leible and Shoshe are dedicated and sincere Jewish couples, who perform the rites and rituals with utmost piety and sincerity. Singer has presented the fairy tale type nature in “Short Friday” Linda Nelson states:

We are too skeptical a readership to consider the fairy tale of a prince and princess who live happily-ever-after in this world. Yet Isaac Bashevis Singer expects us to accept not only this fanciful tale but one even more extravagant. The modern prose of “Short Friday” uses the poetic parallelisms of the ancient Hebrew prophets to convince us that a less-than- perfect tailor and dough-kneader miraculously appear happily-ever-aftering in Paradise. Singer does not ask if we believe in Paradise. He assumes that we do so and spends his time examining a marital relationship that survives mortality (357).

Her Singer has presented the marriage life and extended that to Paradise. Singer has tried to prove marriage and paradise are inseparable. The first four pages talk about the preparation of Sabbath. Then Singer narrates the characters of Leible and Shoshe. Shoshe could not bear a child for Leible, yet his love for her is unconditional. The story revolves on Friday “The Friday on which this story took place was the shortest Friday” (191).

Leible and Shoshe's work started late for them. "They had arisen later than usual, for they hadn't heard the roosters crow and since the windows were covered with snow and frost the day seemed as dark as night" (191). Linda thus states:

The couple's final earthly Sabbath, which falls on the shortest Friday of winter, is organized around joy within the cottage which emulates the joy of synagogue worship. The story commences with Leible and Shoshe living in Lapschitz leads to an earthly paradise on the shortest Sabbath of the year, and concludes with Shmul-Leibele and Shoshe awakening in the "true world" (362).

Leibele and Shoshe prepare themselves for Sabbath with all sincerity and pious mind. The story begins with their preparation for Sabbath. Leible and Shoshe's act indicate how sincere they are in their preparation for Sabbath. After their dinner they got to bed unknowing the fact that was the Friday that they ever see.

When they wake up from their sleep they realize that they are in some dark world. Now Leible the tailor and Shoshe the dough kneader have transformed into corpse. They realize well that they are waiting for the appearance of Angel Dumah for their judgement. It takes some time for Leible and Shoshe to realize that they are dead. But Shoshe feels happy that they are lying nearby and they are not separated even after their death, "Their brief years of turmoil and temptation had come to an end" (197).

They know the fact that they will be eaten by worms, yet there they lay contended waiting patiently for the arrival of Angel Dumah. "In the stillness they heard the flapping of wings a quiet singing. An angel of God had come to guide Shmul-Leible the tailor and his wife Shoshe, into Paradise" (197). A deep analysis of the story reveals even death could not separate their relationship.

The story revolves around Jewish culture and tradition. At any point of time Leible and Shoshe were not ready to give up their Jewish culture and identity. Frank Tuohy compares "Short Friday" with the "Three Hermits" of Tolstoy:

"Short Friday" is much more than an anecdote. In its power to it reminded me of Tolstoy's legend of the three hermits: in extreme old age, these holy men are taught the Lord's Prayer for the first time by a visiting bishop. They soon forget it and the bishop sees them following him for him to remind them, walking across the water behind his boat. A fairy tale can suspend disbelief, risk sentimentality and win through.

Thus Leible and Shoshe themselves as perfect couple by all means, even death could not separate them. They embrace death as they embraced life. It is their unity in both life and death present them as icon couple.

#### **Conclusion:**

Singer through the characters of Leible and Shoshe has presented the most unique kind of love. Marriage is a beautiful relationship through which a man and woman, belonging to different kind of life pattern meet and dwell together. It is not that easy for strangers to live together till their death. Leible and Shoshe, lived together not only through their life time, but also after their death. Usually death is considered as an end point, but in "Short Friday" death acts as threshold to enter into the life of eternity. Leible and Shoshe together enter the world of eternity, with love as their passport.

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