

"Looking Back" reprints articles about events or issues in the past which have a renewed significance in our day.

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Do Jewish Women Make the Best Wives?

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The Jewish woman today is the last of the Western women to pass through the transition from a state in which she was generally restricted to the task of ministering to her husband's needs in the home and attending to her numerous children, to a state in which she has few children and is free to do more or less as she pleases.

And she is finding the readjustment painful.

One of the reasons that the Jewish woman is finding it so difficult to adjust herself to a new environment in which the feminine life and the family are not the only consideration, is due to one of the individual differences of Jewish women.

A trait which is more forceful in Jewish women than in women of other races, is what the Germans call *familiensinn*, a family sense. This strong family consciousness, this love and



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feeling of obligation toward the family, is present in every female, animal or human, but it is much more developed in the Jewish woman than in women of other races.

The Jewish woman, without even a business or career to occupy her, came to lean entirely on her family, expressing herself through her family. Her chief outlet for expressing herself was her children. The Orthodox father and husband was undemonstrative. Sex love was considered a sin.

Although I know many Jews will object to these statements, they are nevertheless true. My own father and mother were happily married and lived so until their death. Yet I can never remember my father's saying anything endearing to my mother.

Again, Jewish women are more emotional than women of other Western races. This is due in part to their Semitic, oriental heritage and in part to the behavior through the centuries of the Jew in assert-



SIGMUND FREUD, ABRAHAM BRILL, 1897 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

ing himself individually lest he, as a member of a minority group, be completely annihilated by hostile dominant groups. No matter how blond or Nordic appearing the Jewish woman, I can always sense her

Jewishness in her emotional expression.

As to whether the Jewish woman makes a better wife and mate than the non-Jew — yes, she probably does, because she is more steady emotionally in the give-and-take relationship of marriage.

This is due to her training in the past. She learned to accept fate, to adjust and adapt herself to conditions. For centuries, she was not consulted in the selection of her betrothed. Usually she had never seen her husband before she confronted him at the altar. The whole affair had been previously arranged through a "schadchen."

Jewish women are reputedly less passionate than the

women of other races. This is really not so, although by training in the past they are more repressed sexually.

A sense of shame in regard to sex has been inculcated in them by their oriental background. Their husbands would have been shocked by any strong demonstration of passion, for sex love was held to be a sin.

Up until recently, Jewish women were very rigid in their moral behavior. In Europe, where I spent my youth up until the age of 14, I heard only one case of a Jewish girl giving birth to an illegitimate child. What condemnation and opprobrium were heaped on the girl!

Some Jewish girls, in an attempt to overcome this inherent repression, go to the other extreme; they become *ausgelassen* — over free. Particularly those who have most recently broken away from the bonds of the Orthodox beliefs, often resort to the extreme in an attempt to assert their freedom.

Withal, the modern Jewish woman is indeed hard hit by our modern civilization. The man can still go to his desk and sit before it all day, but the woman unless she desires a business career, must adjust herself to the new leisure and freedom which she has.

It will require a few more generations until she has adapted herself successfully. □

American psychiatrist A. A. Brill (1874-1948), who was Jewish, introduced Sigmund Freud to the English-speaking world through the translations of his works.