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A Note on the American-ness and Jewishness of Isaac Bashevis Singer

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Abstract: Among the Jewish American writers, Isaac Bashevis Singer has exerted a far-reaching influence on contemporary Chinese letters, but the tenuous “American-ness” in his works somewhat hinders his reception in the Chinese-speaking world. *Reaches of Heaven* is a fictional biography of the founder of the Hasidic movement that Singer wrote in his later years, which has received little attention from the Chinese and foreign researchers. A name error in the English version and the autobiographical element of the book shed a new light on his “Jewishness”: he probably shared a bond of sympathy with Elisha ben Abuya, the arch-heretic in Talmud, and regarded himself as the spiritual heir of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav.

Keywords: Isaac Bashevis Singer, Baal Shem Tov, Jewishness