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‘From That Hour the Doom was Sealed’: On Class Reversals in the ‘Legends of Destruction’

Haim Weiss

In tractate Gittin of the Babylonian Talmud, as well as in Midrash Lamentations Rabbah, there appears a well-known series of stories known as the ‘Legends of Destruction’. In these stories, the sages process the trauma of the destruction, the mass of killing and the enormous difficulties that followed. The article seeks to offer a new reading of the last story in the series, ‘שוליא דנגרי’ [the carpenter’s apprentice]. In my reading, I emphasize the analogy, familiar from rabbinic literature, between the destruction of the Temple and the destruction of the home and private space. The story reveals the elite’s anxiety about class reversals and the theological and political ramifications of these changes.

‘Rabbi Hanina and the Frog’: An Ancient Ashkenazi Story Adapted for Children by Asher Barash

Vered Tohar

This article treats a children’s story, ‘Rabbi Hanina and the Frog’, which was adapted by Asher Barash and published in his 1947 anthology of stories: *Hanaʿal Haqetana* [The Little Shoe], which contains adaptations of medieval Jewish tales. The article begins with early versions of the story, starting with ms. Oxford-Bodleian Or. 135, and goes on to the modern version of Berdyczewski. After describing the changes in the story over time, the article examines the way Barash made this Ashkenazi medieval text accessible to young Israeli readers, as a conscious cultural effort to restore forgotten tales to the repertoire of Hebrew literature, especially children’s literature.

'Take the Illness and Give the Medicine': Removal by Salt – Traditional Women's Healing Practice on a Socio-Cultural Borderline

Lital Lieberman-Avital

This paper presents an ethno-narrative discussion of the practice of 'removal by salt'. This is a traditional women's practice brought to Israel by Maghrebi Jewish immigrants in the second half of the twentieth century, remaining there to this day. The first part of the paper describes the practice and analyzes its components and versions: the simple and the complex. The second part is a narrative and multi-contextual discussion of the practice. At the heart of this discussion is the magical-verbal component of the practice, testifying to the way the different socio-cultural contexts of the Maghreb and Israel shaped, and still shapes, the practice. More importantly, it seems that this component and the healers' attitude towards it are a mirror of women's life experiences on a social and cultural borderline.

Wonders and Sorceries in Yeruham: A Magical-Political *Rashomon*

Yuval Harari

In 1997 the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* published a brief report about a magic plate that had been discovered in the local cemetery of Yeruham. Nissim Avisrur, the father of Moti Avisrur, then head of the local council, was accused of placing it there. This episode followed earlier rumors about Nissim's magical practices and accusations that he was spreading 'magical terror' in the town in support of his son. During my fieldwork in Yeruham I found that, whereas political candidates ostensibly competed on issues of employment, garbage collection, education, and development, raging beneath the surface were suspicions of nefarious sorcery centered on 'Rabbi' Nissim Avisrur, 'the Sorcerer' of Yeruham. The article focuses on these suspicions and on the figure of Nissim Avisrur as reflected in local stories about him.

Welcoming the Sabbath in the Kibbutzim: Secular Religiosity

Dalia Marx

Kibbutz culture was one of resistance to classical European Judaism and a commitment to create a New Jew in his historic homeland. The kibbutz members left behind traditional religious and liturgical culture and experimented in creating a comprehensive society, encompassing all aspects of the economic, social and cultural life of its members. Albeit secular, even atheist, kibbutzim produced some of the more creative expressions of Israeli spirituality, and these remain influential in Israeli culture to this day.

This essay examines the ceremonies designed to welcome the Sabbath, celebrated before Friday night-dinner in the communal dining halls on kibbutzim. This and other ceremonies demonstrate a pronounced longing for the sublime and the transcendent beyond the mundane, and employ ancient symbols in a critical and selective manner. The essay explores the discussions, and often intense arguments, that accompanied the creation and contents of these ceremonies, including the lighting of Sabbath candles and special secular liturgies that were composed for this practice. The essay further discusses the emergence of the ceremonies to welcome the Sabbath in their historic context and their later gradual disappearance or alteration due to the privatization of most of the kibbutzim.

Narration Surfing: Folklore Published on the Internet and its Analysis

Narmina Abdulaev

In recent years, online folklore has attracted the interest of researchers from various disciplines. This is evidenced by the number of terms offered in the research field: netlore, digital folklore, interlore, cyberlore, computerlore. However, in most cases, no distinction is made between folklore published on static sites (which have features of interactivity and the site owner or administrator adds material) and dynamic sites (where there is interactivity between user-creators and user-responders), and no attention is paid to the place and reaction of surfers. Nor is there uniformity in the analysis of the works published on the Internet.

This study is pioneering for two reasons. First, it offers a term ‘narration surfing’, which encompasses the entire virtual narrative event as a single unit, involving a user–creators (authors), user–responders (commenters), a message (story/joke) and narrative circumstances. Second, the study offers a new method for the analysis the virtual narrative events. As an illustrative case study, it discusses selected stories about Nasreddin that were published on the Internet in Russian.

‘Hitler-pants’ Parodies: Folklore in Israel’s Virtual Sphere

Shany Kotler-Fux

The Internet has become a fertile and fascinating ground for folklore researchers. One of the prominent features of online communication is the spread of ‘memes’, a fashionable term that refers to activities, concepts, catchphrases, pieces of media, etc. This article focuses on ‘Hitler rants’, a meme that is widespread throughout the Western world and appears in many languages, including Hebrew. The essay explores Internet memes as a novel folklore genre, combining tradition and innovation, and then discusses the distinct Israeli oicotype of ‘Hitler rants’ in Hebrew. I argue that there is an essential difference between the way this meme has been naturalized in Israeli culture and its appearance in other cultures. This difference derives mainly from Hitler’s attitude to the Jews, as well as the involvement of political culture and current events in private and public agendas. The local spectacle of ‘Hitler rants’ in Israel and in Hebrew has, most importantly, become a whole greater than the sum of its parts.