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ENGLISH SUMMARIES

‘EL HONOR NO SE MERKA KON PARAS’: THE CONCEPT OF HONOR AND ITS MEANING AMONG OTTOMAN JEWS

By Yaron Ben-Naeh

Modern historiography attributes great importance to the inquiry into culture in the broadest sense. A perceptive investigation of daily practices and human behavior helps to reconstruct the mentality and ideals of the past. The subject of this article is the concept of honor among Jews in the urban centers of the Ottoman Empire as expressed in Jewish sources from the 16th to the early 19th centuries. As a cultural concept the meaning of honor varies with geographical and temporal boundaries, as well as social and cultural contexts.

The Iberian conception of honor as a central value which was a component of the Jewish Sephardic heritage fits well within the patriarchal and hierarchic Muslim Ottoman milieu, in which the Jews lived during this period. The desire to attain honor and the fear of its loss, dictated everyday life and social interaction. The significance ascribed to honor encouraged normative behavior, while the fear of shame was powerful enough to reduce deviant behavior. The popular perception of honor and shame was so effective that it even became an important factor in halakhic discussions involving personal social standing.

In my study, I have discerned various categories of honor: personal, family, and collective honor of the ethnic-religious group. My discussion deals with personal honor, and distinguishes between two types: The first type is linked to social standing and membership in the elite circles within the community. Wealth, pedigree, rabbinic posts, and lay leadership, granted unconditional right to honor expressed by forms of address, gestures of respect, honorary titles, privileges, etc. The second type of honor was attainable by any individual in accordance with the cultural expectations and definitions of gender and social status. Even commoners and poor people might attain this sort of honor by obeying state rules, religious

obligations, community regulations and social norms. Thus, for example, an honorable woman was expected to be a wife, fulfill her duties at home and act modestly – a basic requirement of any woman. Unlike the personal honor of the first type, the other was something one could lose in various ways – through misconduct or as a consequence of an insult. Regaining personal honor required excessive endeavor, and at times was not even possible.

In general terms, the first type of honor was sought by the wealthy who constantly wished to maintain and augment it, while those deprived of the first type for reasons of low social status, were more concerned with avoiding shame and losing face.

‘ANDE ‘STAN TODAS LAS KONSEJAS?’ / ‘WHERE ARE
ALL THE TALES?’

On the Immersion of Folktales in the Personal Narrative of a
Judeo-Spanish Storyteller of Jerusalem

By Michal Held

A group of Judeo-Spanish storytellers has been meeting in Jerusalem for the past twenty years. The members are women originating from various communities established by the descendants of Jews expelled from Spain in 1492. In these communities, which flourished in the Ottoman Empire until the early 20th century, Sephardic Jews continued to use their ethnic language and developed a rich Judeo-Spanish-Ottoman culture. The storytellers group was founded and is led by Matilda Koen-Sarano, who transcribed and published many of the folktales related by its members. These ladies – twenty, sometimes thirty, in their sixties, seventies and eighties – meet once a month to tell each other folktales in Judeo-Spanish, a Jewish language that is ceasing to exist as an everyday tool of communication.

Judeo-Spanish is mainly a Roman language with Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, Turkish and Balkan components. Originating in medieval Spain, its usage became widespread as the descendants of Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492 continued to use it in oral and written form in their newly-established communities in the Ottoman Empire and Northern Morocco. The language was given various names down the centuries, including the term ‘Ladino’, which originally referred to the Judeo-Spanish dialect used in the translation of the Bible and other sacred Jewish texts since the 16th century. This calque dialect differs from the spoken and

written language used by Sephardic Jews. The language used by the informants whose personal narratives are analyzed in this paper is thus referred to as 'Judeo-Spanish'.

The paper sets out to explore the personal narrative of the late Sol Mymaran, a central figure in the storytellers group. Skillfully interwoven into this personal narrative are thirteen folktales, and one fragment of a para-liturgical work in Ladino. The two levels of Sol's narrative – personal and ethnic – do not compete with one another but rather join to form a unified painting of a self that is defined in a historical, ethnic and imaginary realm. Thus the analysis regards Sol's personal narrative as a fusion of folkloristic materials and personal experiences that cannot and should not be regarded as separate entities, and are thus analyzed as complimentary, reflecting a multi-layered conception of self.

Moreover, the paper demonstrates the multi-layered process of the way in which the personal narrative is interpreted by its narrator, the listener / researcher and the narrator's family members. Sol's personal narrative and folktales were passed on from her to me; from me to the narrator's daughter and granddaughter; and from the two of them back to me. This ongoing exchange of narratives and interpretation is analyzed in order to demonstrate the dialogic and interactive characteristics of the personal narrative.

WAILING CULTURE: A TEST CASE OF SOCIAL CATEGORIES

By Tova Gamliel

This article examines the significance of the wailing culture of Jewish-Yemenite women in Israel in the light of the 'modern' patterns of grief with which it coexists. Scholars hold that compared to 'traditional' cultures, 'modernity' is characterized by a symbolic depletion that imposes silence in grief situations. A detailed ethnography is presented about wailing in Yemenite mourning customs and about wailing as a practice with well-defined patterns. Wailing is shown to be a specialty with characteristics that can mediate between 'modern' and 'traditional' social ideas. As the 'traditional' is assimilated into the 'modern' at the 'last moment' before this cultural phenomenon disappears, we should inquire into the psychosocial virtues of wailing women and ask whether the phenomenon should be recognized and readopted.

LAMENTATIONS OF WOMEN FROM YEMEN:
TEXT BETWEEN VOICE AND MOVEMENT

By Vered Madar

This article presents the findings of research undertaken between 1999–2002 among women from Yemen who immigrated to Israel and continue to perform lamentations for the dead.

The article defines and proves that women's lamentations belong to the genre of oral poetry, by placing the texts in the context of the study of the poetry of Yemenite women. The status of the voice is examined in these lamentations along with the various dimensions that empower the meaning of the texts and their expression. It is presented as being central to the fulfillment of the therapeutic function of the text. The article also examines the physical aspects of singing the lamentations and proposes their performance as a physical act, one that compliments other aspects of the meaning. The article presents other aspects of the significance of the text, the mediation between the living and the dead and the uniqueness of gender in its performance. Hence the suggestion of a feminine alternative to experiencing life and death, making it possible to cope with the meeting between the two. Finally, there are two examples of women's lamentations which were recorded and translated from the Yemenite language. These texts portray the main characteristics commonly repeated in the lamentations and serve as pertinent examples of the materials discussed.

THE FOLKTALE AS A REFLECTION OF SOCIAL
CHANGES: *A TALE OF TWO SISTERS*

By Ronnie Biran

This article focuses on a story in Yiddish, *A Mayse mit Tsvei Shvester un mit a Yingle* (A Story About Two Sisters and a Boy). The story is No. 13 in a collection of 38 stories, recorded by a YIVO folklore collector ('zamler'), Berl Verblunsky, during the 1920s in Poland. This collection was sent in 1928 from Vilna to the well-known folklorist Y.L. Cahan in New York, and thus survived intact, unlike many other folklore items in the pre-war YIVO archives in Vilna.

The article explores certain aspects of the story, and demonstrates it as being a delicately constructed and highly sophisticated whole (or Gestalt)

whose various parts all coordinate and constitute a coherent and well-focused total. Furthermore, the end product is neither random nor arbitrary. Rather, it stresses certain issues that were considered important in the broader social-cultural context in which the story was narrated.

The story serves as a point of intersection for different narrative traditions which share a common basis and a common organizing principle, and all contribute to the crystallization of the main theme underlying the entire story. They all deal with issues of conflict, judgment and decision-making as they are informed by values of morality and justice. All of them illuminate different points of view of the crucial dilemma facing the hero of the story: the dilemma of his identity and his religious and ethnic affiliation.

The story also constitutes a point of intersection for a number of common and well-known motives (such as ‘the father’s enigmatic will’ or ‘the establishment of a new community’), but their appearance within this story is a double-sided phenomenon, since they have all been changed and are often in direct contradiction to the original.

Each of the examined aspects of the story gives an impression of a traditional culture in a state of transition; cracks have appeared in the long-accepted tradition. Alternative possibilities are presented, and there is a clear imperative to choose between the alternatives – in other words: to judge and make decisions.

The article analyses and discusses the ways in which issues that are formulated in the story actually reflect problems that were relevant among Jews at that time and place. First and foremost is the issue of identity and decision-making in relation to adherence to Jewish religion and tradition. It is shown that the story reflects trends and processes that had begun to appear in Jewish society as far back as the 19th century, and grew significantly stronger in the period between the two World Wars.

The conclusions of the discussion are reinforced by a comparison of this story, *Tsvei Shvester*, with an earlier version – the only one that was found – *Mayse Prag* (‘The Story of Prague’), which was printed in Prague at the beginning of the 18th century. Despite the clear resemblance in content and structure, the differences between these two stories are very clear in all the aspects examined. All the issues and dilemmas present in the modern story are totally absent from the earlier one.

*KLEZMORIM ON THE ROOFS OF POLAND:
WHO ARE THEY, WHAT IS THEIR OBJECTIVE,
AND WHY NOW?*

By Rivka Parciack

In recent years, Poland witnessed the emergence of *Klezmer* bands on a broad scale which at first sight would seem to promote Jewish music. These current bearers of Jewish culture in Poland are not Jewish, nor were they in touch with Jewish tradition, or with its cultural elements.

The article does not deal with the historical and musical background of this phenomenon, but tries to explain it as a result of the friction between the lost Jewish culture and the local culture in Poland. Furthermore, it describes some of the characteristics of the bands, the way they dress, their repertoire, language, songs and the places where they give their performances. The widespread appearance of *Klezmer* bands in Poland, as well as the enthusiastic public response they arouse, is explained as a manifestation of the need and search of the Polish people for recreating its identity. This need emerged in the wake of Poland's changing social and economic-geopolitical orientation and the recent transformations and difficulties that have taken place within Polish society. In this new constellation, Poland is not only searching for ways in which to establish its cultural boundaries in order to shape the new identity, but also needs to consolidate them toward the 'other' culture. The *Klezmer* bands which represent a virtual Jewish culture – another culture, strange, far-off and exotic, but also nearby – exploit this culture, albeit with great modesty. The use of the image of Jewish culture is part of a broader process that is taking place in other areas as well, and serves as one of the beacons of the cultural boundaries shaping the national identity of modern Poland.

*THE CHASTUSHKA AS FOLK CHRONICLE:
POLITICAL FOLK SONGS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION*

By Nitsa Priluk

The Chastushka is a genre of Russian folk songs: it is short, rhymed, and easy to improvise. Its style is humoristic, satiric or epigrammatic. The article focuses on the political Chastushkas that were widespread at the time of the Russian Revolution (1917) and during the civil war. The songs

illuminate the historic transition from Tsarist to Bolshevik rule, from the first heady exaltation to the bitterness and lack of trust in the new leadership. The fierce struggles between the Reds and Whites find expression in the Chastushkas, and from the Jewish point of view we also note the existence of an anti-Semitic Chastushka.

The texts of the songs were examined according to the following strategy: mutual characteristics in the canonical political song and in the folk political song; semantic-linguistic uses and their role in the formation of the message; relationship between addresser and addressee; comparison of variations to the song; authentic testimony of contemporaries (the historian, writer, journalist), as well as the memories and personal knowledge of my father.

The political Chastushka served as an efficient channel for the transmission of ideological messages among various social classes, and poetic language was utilized to strengthen the political outlook. Analogies between nature scenes and human life are frequent. For example: "Oh apple tree/your roots are deep lengthened/and the power of the Soviets/has now been strengthened." The metaphoric style makes the song enigmatic to some extent, and introduces a fresh element into political rhetoric.

We have found that a few of the aggressive and subversive Chastushkas of revolutionary days were derived from the love songs of a young woman in the pre-revolutionary period. This means that their poetic structure is stable and better preserved than the thematics which are improvised according to the circumstances and the addressers. The power of the political Chastushka lies in its referential function that indicates danger or an event in real life experience, and less so in its fictional-aesthetic function.

THE COVERS OF THE SACRED GRAVES (*M'ylym* מעילים)
AND THE SACRED ARKS (*Prwchywt* פרוכת) AMONG
IRAQI JEWS

By Yitzhak Avishur

Ancient sacred graves existed in Iraq that were dedicated mostly to prophets and some other biblical figures.

The most significant and ancient graves were those of Ezekiel the prophet at Kifel near Hilla, of Ezra the scribe on Ili'zer near Basra, of Joshua the great priest and that of Sheik Yitzhak Gaon in Baghdad. These graves were cared for by the Jews of Iraq, who built *Yeshivot* near them,

restored them and ornamented them with embroidered cloaks made by the wives of Babylonian Jews. The sacred arks in the synagogues were also treated in the same way: they as well were covered with "פרוכיית" made of expensive embroidered cloth also sown by Jewish women. The most expensive gift a woman could give was a donation of a "פרוכית" for the sacred arks of the *Torah*, or a cover for the sacred grave ("מעיל"), or at least to volunteer to embroider them.

Jews who had immigrated from Iraq to the Far East stayed in close contact with Iraqi Jews who remained in their homeland. The Jews in the Far East supported their brethren who remained in Iraq in any way they could, including donations of "פרוכיית" for the sacred arks in the synagogues and "מעילים" for the sacred graves in Iraq.

I have found informative documents in the journals of the Iraqi Jews in India. These documents written in Iraqi Judaeo-Arabic reflect matters that were of concern to the Jews of Iraq throughout the fifty years of the appearance of these gazettes (1856–1901).

One article published on 3 February 1882 in the gazette "*Perah*" (פרה) and another published on 3 July 1896 in "מגיד מישרים" dealt with the covers of the sacred graves (in Arabic "*qaba*" "קבא" and in Hebrew "מעיל") and the "פרוכיית" of the sacred arks of the *Torah* in the synagogues. These articles contain important information about the Graves of the Sacred, about the synagogues in Iraq at the end of the 19th century, and also about the existence of many *batey midrash*.

Significant information found in these articles includes the dimensions of the sacred graves which enables us to reconstruct the graves and to study them. Those who study the material culture of the Jews in Iraq will also find great interest not only in the information dealing with measurements of the פרוכיית and the covers of the graves but also in the description of the cloths of which they were made: Satin, Joch and Kalabdun.

PROFESSIONAL STORYTELLING: TRENDS IN RESEARCH OF THE NEW ART OF STORYTELLING

By Yoel Shalom Perez

Professional storytelling in the Western world, including Israel, is a new phenomenon. Very little academic research about this subject exists. This review deals with the development of the new art of storytelling in the Western world as well as in Israel. It details the connections between this

and the traditional art of storytelling, reviews the professional literature and describes research trends.

The first section deals with research of storytelling as a traditional performance art in many parts of the world such as China, Japan, India, Turkey and African states.

The second section reviews handbooks and practical manuals that deal with the modern art of professional storytelling.

The following sections are devoted to the scientific research of this phenomenon during the past 30 years, especially in the United States, Canada and Israel as well as the activities of Israeli storytellers.

The last section describes current trends in research of the modern art of storytelling. In the end of this section the author proposes a new typological model for the analysis of the activities of storytellers.