

Women and Femininity in Jewish Folk Narratives

Professor Haya Bar-Itzhak

Course Description

In this course we will examine the concept of women and femininity in Jewish folk narratives. We will uncover women archetypes in Jewish myths starting with Eve (Hava) and Lilith in the Hebrew Bible until contemporary Jewish culture. There will be discussions on the portrait of women in Jewish Legends of Demons, Sacred Legends, Novellas and Jewish Wonder tales. Encompassed in our discussions will be issues relating to the wise women, the trickster women, the brave women, the mother, relationship among women and interrelationship between men and women.

Course Requirements:

There is no prerequisite for the course. All the required readings are in English. The classes will consist of lectures and discussions, and the weekly reading assignments. During the course students will make a class presentation (40%). At the end of the semester students shall prepare a term paper (60%).

Absences will negatively impact your grade. You should not miss class unless you have an emergency or a disease.

Bibliography

Books

- Ansky, S., 1992, *The Dybbuk and Other Writings*. David G. Roskies, editor; Golda Werman, translator. New York: Schocken.
- Bar-Itzhak, Haya and Aliza Shenhar, 1993, *Jewish Moroccan Folk Narratives from Israel*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Bar-Itzhak, Haya, 2001, *Jewish Poland – Legends of Origin, Ethnopoetics and Legendary Chronicles*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Bar-Itzhak, Haya, 2005, *Israeli Folk Narratives: Settlement, Immigration, Ethnicity*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Biale, Rachel, 1984, *Women and Jewish Law*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Bin Gorion [Berdyczewski], Micha Joseph, 1990, *Mimekor Yisrael: Classical Jewish Folktales*. Abridged and Annotated Edition. Emanuel bin Gorion, ed. I. M. Lask, trans. Prepared by Dan Ben-Amos Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Dundes, Alan, (ed.), 1982, *Cinderella - A Folklore Casebook*, New York & London, Garland Publishing Inc.
- Ginzberg, Louis, 1909-1939, *The Legends of the Jews*. 7 vols. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Myerhoff, Barbara, 1980, *Number Our Days*, A Touchstone Book, New York.

Starr Sered, Susan, 1992, *Women As Ritual Experts*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Patai, Raphael, 1990, *The Hebrew Goddess*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press.

Weinreich, Beatrice, ed., 1988, *Yiddish Folktales*, New York: Pantheon and Yivo.

Yassif, Eli, 1986, *An Annotated Bibliography of Jewish Folklore*. New York: Garland.

Yassif, Eli, 1999, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Articles

Bar-Itzhak, Haya, 1993, "Jewish Moroccan Cinderella in Israeli Context," *Journal of Folklore Research*, 30, 2/3, 93-125.

Bar-Itzhak, Haya, 2009, "The Legend of the Jewish Holy Virgin: A Folkloristic Perspective", *Journal of Folklore Research*, 46, 3, 269-291.

Bar-Itzhak, Haya, 2009, "Women in Holocaust – A Folkloristic Perspective", *Fabula* 50, 1/2, 67-78.

Bar-Itzhak, Haya, 2012, "Women and Blood Libel", *Western Folklore*, 71.3/4, , 279-290.

Ben-Amos, Dan, 1971, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context", *Journal of American Folklore*, 84, 3-15.

Bilu Y. & G. Hasan-Rokem, 1989, "Cinderella and Saint - The life History of a Jewish Moroccan Female Healer in Israel", *Journal of the Psychoanalytical Study of Society* XIV, 227-260.

Dan, Ilana, 1977, "The Innocent Persecuted Heroine: An Attempt to a Model for the Surface Level of the Narrative Structure of the Female Fairy Tale", in *Patterns in Oral Literature*, Jason H. & D. Segal (eds.), The Hague-Paris, 13-30.

Davies, Christie, 1990, "An Explanation of Jewish Jokes about Jewish Women". *Humor* 3-4:363-378.

Jason, Heda, 1984, "The Fairy Tale of the Active Heroine - An Outline for Discussion" in *Le Conte - Pourquoi? Comment?* Calame-Griaule G. & V. Gorog-Kardy (eds.), Paris.

Niditch, Susan, 1991, "Portrayals of Women in the Hebrew Bible", in Judith R. Baskin (ed.), *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 25-42.

Olrik, Axel, 1965, "Epic Laws" in *The Study of Folklore*, Alan Dundes (ed.), Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall.

Rapoport-Albert, Ada, 1988, "On Women in Hasidism, S. A. Horodecky and the Maid of Ludmir Tradition," in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*. Ada Rapoport-albert and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds. London: Peter Halban, 495-525.

Romney Wegner, Judith, 1991, "The Image and Status of Women in Classical Rabbinic Judaism", in Judith R. Baskin (ed.), *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 68-93.

Shenhar, Aliza, 1987, "The Women with the Animal Face", in her *Jewish and Israeli Folklore*, South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 6-29.

Shenhar, Aliza, 1987, "The Maiden Without Hands' Folktale", in her *Jewish and Israeli Folklore*, South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 47-68.

Schedule of Classes

We 9/3 Folk Narratives – Introduction
Reading: Olrik 1965.

We 9/10 Introduction to Jewish Folk Narratives
Reading: Yassif 1999, VII-XVII; 1-7.

We 9/17 Jewish Myth About Women
Reading: "Lilith", "Why Do Man Have an Adams Apple in their Troat"

We 9/24 Women and Religion – The Jewish Holy Virgin
Reading: Rapoport-Albert 1988; Bar-Itzhak 2009; Starr-Sered 1992.

We 10/1 Women and Community – Esther & Estherke
Reading: "The Book of Esther; Bar-Itzhak 2001, 113-132.

We 10/8 Women in Times of Persecution – The Brave Heroine
Reading: "The Hetman and the Damsel"; Bar-Itzhak 2001, 150-154.

We 10/29 Women and Demons
Reading: "Women and Demons"

We 11/19 Women in Wonder Tales – The Jewish Cinderella
Reading: Dundes 1982; Bar-Itzhak 1993; Bilu & Hassan-Rokem 1989.

We 11/26 Women Tricksters in Jewish Novellas
Reading: Bar-Itzhak & Shenhar 1993, 129-144.

We 3/12 Women as Suffering Heroines; Men, Women and Social Order.
Reading: Shenhar 1987, 47-68; Bar-Itzhak & Shenhar 1993, 26-39.

Changes in Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change.