

Фьялкова, Лариса *Коли гори сходяться: нарис українсько-ізраїльських фольклорних взаємин* [Fialkova, Larisa. *When Mountains Meet: A Study of Ukrainian-Israeli Folklore Connections*]. Kyiv: IMFE (Institute of Folk Art, Folklore, and Ethnology, Ukrainian Academy of Sciences), 2007. 175 pp. ISBN: 978-966-02-4631-7

What happens when a group of people leave a homeland that has been theirs for generations and move to a new home? Does their folklore change or does it merely die out as people adapt to the new environment? Does folklore help prepare people for the trauma of relocation? Does it help them adjust to their new home? These and other questions are the subject of the growing field of Diaspora studies, one to which Fialkova has made a number of contributions. Her latest work, published in Ukrainian, focuses on the many people from Ukraine who moved to Israel when such relocation became possible.

After a brief introduction which tells about the study of Ukrainian-Jewish folklore in Israel, Fialkova turns to the folklore itself. The first section deals with the image of Jerusalem in Ukrainian folklore. Using classic nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sources such as Kolessa, Hnatiuk, and Chubyns'kyi, Fialkova shows that a positive image of Jerusalem has existed in Ukrainian folklore for a long time. Jerusalem is "a sacred place in a sacred time," a model of sanctity, so that even Kyiv is referred to a "Jerusalem on earth." Did the positive image of Jerusalem beckon Ukrainian Jews to Israel? Did it make the adjustment easier? Fialkova does not really answer these questions, though her placing the Jerusalem chapter at the beginning of her book implies that the answer would be affirmative. Additionally, her thorough examination of the Ukrainian material gives a solid foundation for further research.

There are three chapters in the next section and, in the first, Fialkova takes a Ukrainian folk hero, a Robin Hood figure named Oleksa Dovbush and examines Jewish versions of legends about him. In many senses, the Ukrainian Jews have made Dovbush their own. Legends about Dovbush's infancy show how his family was cared for by a rabbi and reinterpret his name in terms of Hebrew etymology to mean "hairy one," a bear's son type of hero. Most important are stories about the adult Dovbush and his relationship to a Jewish religious figure and folk hero Bal-Shem-Tov. In the legends, the two recognize each other's powers, Bal-Shem-Tov acknowledging the strength and courage of the Ukrainian and Dovbush perceiving the Jew's spiritual might. It is Bal-Shem-Tov's

ability to make mountains come together so that he can walk across them which yields the title of this book.

Legends about treasure hidden in the catacombs under Odessa are the subject matter of the next chapter. Fialkova was fortunate to accidentally encounter a spelunker who was an excellent story teller. She recorded his stories about the catacombs beneath Odessa and many other stories about caving in Ukraine. The stories themselves are wonderful. An especially intriguing narrative claims that one of the treasures hidden under Odessa was a miniature solid gold replica of the Titanic, given to one of the residents in gratitude for his help. Fialkova fleshes out the oral versions she collected by giving parallel narratives from other sources and analyzing the material. One is tempted to expand on her analysis and to say that the narratives are expressions of nostalgia for a homeland that is now buried by distance. This homeland, like the treasures sighted in caves, is something that one hopes to find again, but cannot.

While the catacombs chapter may picture Ukraine as a very attractive land, the Chernobyl one does the opposite. Fialkova gives us an abundance of dark Chernobyl humor, some rhymed and some in prose, much of it from oral sources. Interestingly, many of the fears expressed in Chernobyl jokes have to do with male reproductive capacity. It is as if the Chernobyl jokes mark Ukraine as a land without a future, one that must be left behind if future generations are to live and prosper, or even be created in the first place.

The last section of the book, called "The formation of a new Ukrainian Diaspora in Israel," pays a great deal of attention to language issues and does not have that much to do with folklore. The Ukrainian language is not surviving well in Israel. A Ukrainian Diaspora thrives, however. In this Diaspora, expressions of Ukrainian heritage take the form of material culture, including dolls and embroidered towels, some with combined Jewish-Ukrainian motifs and some with strictly Ukrainian ones. All of these are illustrated with pictures. Ukrainian heritage is expressed in social and cultural activities and Fialkova details all of these. While this section may not focus on folklore, it helps us understand identity issues among the Ukrainians now living in Israel. As such, it also helps us make sense of the folklore.

Fialkova's work offers both the folklore itself and the tools for analysis. Her greatest virtue, I believe, is her familiarity with both East European and North American approaches to folklore. This allows her to focus on genres that most East European scholars would ignore, such as

personal narratives and jokes. And it also prompts her to collect and publish a number of folklore texts, something that tends not to be done in the politics- and theory-preoccupied West. Fialkova's book is a fun read, recommended to anyone with a knowledge of Ukrainian and Russian.

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