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# The Ideas of Younger Generations on The Education in Jewish Folklore

Genç Kuşakların Yahudi Halk Folklorundaki Eğitime İlişkin Fikirleri

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## Abstract

This study is dedicated to the analysis of the ideas of younger generations' educating in the Jewish people's folklore. Speaking about the relevance of the subject, it should be noted that the Jewish people's folklore as a special form of transmitting social and cultural experience to new generations has a huge educational potential which should not be ignored in modern sociocultural conditions when there is a crisis of spiritual and moral life. It is the cultural and historical heritage in which people's spiritual culture is preserved that serves as a key element of the society stability. In oral folk art, the results of education are stated which is a kind of generalization of pedagogical experience. The philosophical understanding of the role and significance of folklore in the Jewish people's culture is presented as a generalized historiographical analysis on this subject. Fundamental works of such authors as: F. Brenye, F. Kandel, G. Gretz, S.M. Dubnov, A. David, A.A. Potebnya, V.I. Chicherov, V.V. Radlov, A.F. Khintibidze, V.I. Filonenko, as well as articles by such contemporary authors as: S. Moffitt, N. Abdimuratova, J. Abdimuratov, M. Galkina, A.A. Ivanov, Ya.S. Ivashchenko, E.V. Klimova and others served as the theoretical and methodological basis of this study. Proverbs, sayings, fairy tales and legends are the most capacious and informative ethnopedagogic phenomenon in Jewish people's folklore. They are filled with high moral meaning and give characterological assessments of the personality from the positions what is good and what is bad. They embody wise advice, instructions acquired as a result of life practice, observations on a person, one's habits and character, on the social relationships of people. As a result of the conducted research, the educational significance of oral folk art in Jewish ethnopedagogy is shown which extends to the entire ethnopedagogic science. The development of culture, spiritual and moral values embedded in folklore is one of the most important aspects of personality's social formation, contributes to the effective preparation of the younger generations for life.

**Keywords:** The Jewish People's Folklore, Younger Generations, Educational Potential, Spiritual Culture, Proverbs, Sayings, Legends.

## Öz

Bu çalışma, Yahudi halkının folklorunda eğitim gören genç nesillerin fikirlerinin analizine adanmıştır. Konunun öneminden bahsetmişken, Yahudi halkının folklorunun, sosyal ve kültürel deneyimi yeni nesillere aktarmanın özel bir biçimi olarak, manevi ve ahlaki yaşamın bir krizi olduğunda modern sosyokültürel koşullarda göz ardı edilmemesi gereken büyük bir eğitim potansiyeline sahip olduğu belirtilmelidir. İnsanların manevi kültürünün korunduğu kültürel ve tarihi miras, toplum istikrarının kilit bir unsuru olarak hizmet eder. Sözlü halk sanatında, pedagojik deneyimin bir tür genellemesi olan eğitimin sonuçları belirtilir. Yahudi halkının kültüründe folklorun rolü ve öneminin felsefi anlayışı, bu konuda genelleştirilmiş bir tarih yazımı analizi olarak sunulmaktadır. F. Brenye, F. Kandel, G. Gretz, S.M. Dubnov, A. David, A.A. Potebnya, V.I. Chicherov, V.V. Radlov, A.F. Khintibidze, V.I. Filonenko gibi yazarların temel eserlerinin yanı sıra çağdaş yazarların makaleleri: S. Moffitt, N. Abdimuratova, J. Abdimuratov, M. Galkina, A.A. Ivanov, Ya.S. Ivashchenko, E.V. Klimova ve diğerleri bu çalışmanın teorik ve metodolojik temeli olarak hizmet etmiştir. Atasözleri, özdeyişler, masallar ve efsaneler, Yahudi halkının folklorundaki en geniş ve bilgilendirici etnopedagojik fenomendir. Yüksek ahlaki anlamla doludurlar ve kişiliğin neyin iyi neyin kötü olduğu pozisyonlarından karakteristik değerlendirmeleri yaparlar. Bilge tavsiyelerini, yaşam pratiğinin bir sonucu olarak edinilen talimatları, bir kişi üzerindeki gözlemleri, kişinin alışkanlıklarını ve insanların sosyal ilişkileri hakkındaki karakterini somutlaştırırlar. Yapılan araştırmalar sonucunda, sözlü halk sanatının Yahudi etnopedagojisinde tüm etnopedagojik bilime uzanan eğitsel önemi gösterilmiştir. Folklorunda yer alan

kültürün, manevi ve ahlaki değerlerin gelişimi, kişiliğin sosyal oluşumunun en önemli yönlerinden biri olup, genç nesillerin hayata etkin bir şekilde hazırlanmasına katkıda bulunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yahudi Halkının Folkloru, Genç Nesiller, Eğitim Potansiyeli, Manevi Kültür, Atasözleri, Özdeyişler, Efsaneler

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The study of Jewish ethnopedagogy is impossible without referring to its origins – the monuments of people’s spiritual culture – oral folk art, folklore in which the labor and life experience of previous generations, human feelings and aspirations are concentrated. As a rule, a person perceives the world through the prism of cultural meanings transformed into personal meaning. The folklore of Jewish people traces the functional purpose of culture as a value system which protects a person from the uncertainty of one’s existence, structuring the world and determining a person’s place in this structure. It embodies people’s ideas about a perfect human being’s ideal which developed and were concretized under the influence of historical conditions. In the folklore of the Jewish people there are no clear and definite moral laws, systematized knowledge, but there is also no need to take care of strengthening the connection with life, since it, relies on universal norms of education and upbringing, represents life itself, understandable and close to a person of any nationality.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the folklore of the Jewish people in the context of pedagogical ideas focused on younger generations’ upbringing.

### 1.1. Theoretical And Methodological Basis

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is the works of such authors as: F. Brenier (1924), F. Kandel (1990) dedicated to a generalized historiographical analysis of Jewish people’s ethnocultural heritage. The studies of G. Gretz (1904-1908), S.M. Dubnov (1912) covering a huge period of Jewish people’s history from ancient (biblical) times to the XIX century inclusive allow us to consider folklore from the standpoint of direct reflection of historical events, features of the social system, culture, life of a particular time which gives folklore historical concreteness. A. David (1972) provides an opportunity to get acquainted with the historical significance of the Jewish ‘elders’ traces the system of communication with future generations.

In the works of such authors as A.A. Potebnya (1865) and V.I. Chicherov (1956), folklore is not limited to time and territorial limits because it is through folklore a person gets an idea of the main life values: family, work, respect for society, love for small and large homeland.

When studying the problem of Jewish people’s folklore, research of V.V. Radlov (1896) on the northern Turkic tribes’ folklore, A.F. Khintibidze (1951) on educational ideas in the Georgian folk epic, V.I. Filonenko (1930) on Karaite proverbs and sayings provided great assistance. The idea that folklore was originally aimed at the formation of values and ideals,

that its content is people's life, human experience sifted through a sieve of centuries, a person's spiritual world, one's thoughts, feelings, experiences – this is exactly what unites all these works.

The problem of folklore is the subject of study in the works of many modern researchers. Among them are such authors as S. Moffitt (2013), N. Abdimuratova, J. Abdimuratov (2020), M. Galkina (2021), A.A. Ivanov, Ya.S. Ivashchenko (2018), E.V. Klimova (2020), R.K. Toleubekova et al (2022), N. Nesova (2020).

Thus, according to S. Moffitt (2013), the classification of Jewish people's folklore is very diverse. It includes cognitive folklore (beliefs, customs), verbal (fairy tales, proverbs, riddles, parables, jokes, lamentations), visual (dance, art, costume, food, material culture), audio / oral folklore (music, songs). In addition, folklore, descriptions of traditions, customs and holidays which have developed during the life cycle of Jews and have become the most important indicators of their identity, can be found in rabbinic commentaries and interpretations, in novels, poetry and plays by Jewish authors.

In N. Abdimuratova and J. Abdimuratov's (2020) article, much attention is paid to the problem of forming "a spiritually rich, morally integral, harmoniously developed personality with an independent worldview and independent thinking based on the priceless heritage of people's traditions, customs and rituals" (Abdimuratova, Abdimuratov, 2020, p. 3532). The authors are convinced that in order to effectively solve this problem, it is advisable to turn to the origins of folk culture, folklore – the richest cultural and historical heritage that our previous generations have left us.

This point of view is shared by M. Galkina (2021), who notes the increased need to conserve the identity of traditional folk art, folklore and crafts by developing modern methods and tools for their inclusion in the educational process. The role of traditional culture, folklore in the context of understanding the system of values which contribute to the effective socialization of new generations, regulating their life activities, is discussed in the works of A.A. Ivanov, Ya.S. Ivashchenko (2018), E V Klimova (2020), R.K. Toleubekova et al (2022), N. Nesova (2020).

The importance of the analyzed scientific sources dedicated to the study of peoples' cultural and historical heritage, their folklore as a heritage and at the same time as modern folk art is great, since they are all the richest material which allows us to know the people's philosophy, their socio-historical experience, to join the instructive heritage of past generations.

## 2. METHODS

The research involves critical reflection and reflexivity on current practice, which gives way to new knowledge and consists of historiographical analysis of scientific sources and

synthesis of various concepts on the study problem. It allows to comprehend at the philosophical level the role and significance of folklore in Jewish people's culture, its educational value. Didactic analysis, comparison and generalization of the research problem results allow to determine the general and special in the folklore of the Jewish people and other peoples, to combine multifaceted aspects into a single integrity and on the basis of this to reveal the educational potential of the Jewish people's cultural and historical heritage, based on the sociocultural experience of past generations and universal norms of education, so necessary for new generations.

### 3. RESULTS

In the chronological period from ancient times to the present day, folklore is a link in the cultural space of centuries, contributing to people's unity, thereby ensuring the moral and ethnic continuity of generations in space and time. Reflecting all the significant aspects of human activity (human being – human being, human being – society, human being – nature), Jewish people's folklore acts as a source of pedagogical wisdom, contributes to a personality's value structure formation, one's life values, ideals, ideological, ethical, aesthetic, behavioral principles.

As V. Radlov (1896), A. Khintibidze (1951), V. Chicherov (1956) emphasize in their research, all aspects of oral folk art are educative in one way or another. The essence of folklore educational function is that it, being a means of folk pedagogy, forms the qualities of human character. Proverbs, sayings, fairy tales and legends are the most capacious and informative ethnopedagogic phenomenon in folklore. They are filled with high moral meaning and give characterological assessments of the personality from the positions what is good and what is bad.

These forms of folk art make it possible to present in a more voluminous way the centuries-old polished traditional attitude of an ethnic group to certain behavioral, social and situational aspects of everyday life. We are primarily interested in these problems from the perspective of the ideas of Jewish people's family education (Kandel, 1990).

Proverbs and sayings are a special kind of oral poetry which has absorbed the work experience of numerous generations for centuries. Through a special organization, intonation coloring, the use of specific linguistic means of expression (comparisons, epithets), they convey the attitude of the Jewish people to a particular subject or phenomenon. Proverbs and sayings, like another genre of oral folk art, in artistic images recorded the experience of a lived life in all its diversity and inconsistency (Potebnya, 1865).

Analyzing the folklore of the Jewish people, we can conclude that proverbs and sayings relate to a variety of life aspects, mainly morality, a person's position and behavior in society and family. According to V. Filonenko, "they are even more important than the prescriptions of religion" (Filonenko, 1930, p. 14 ).

Most of the small folklore forms of a moralizing nature prove the connection between people's spiritual and physical life. They contain clear traces of Christian morality. For example, the proverb: "God, who gives the day, will also give food" is essentially a periphrasis of the famous gospel saying: "Do not worry about tomorrow, it will take care of you itself".

Most of human life is occupied by work, since it is impossible to imagine any person's life without work; it is a necessary means of existence and survival. For the Jewish people, the theme of labor is reflected in the following proverbs:

"God does not send to the one who lies on the stove";

"Who lies on the stove does not get bagels";

"He who is lazy is hungry";

"Poverty and laziness are brothers";

"It's better to think about tomorrow with chowder than without it";

"As you work, so you will earn";

"Whoever has a lot of work, the day is short".

By raising their children, Jews inspire them that only by work does a person achieve well-being:

"What is easy to get is easy to lose";

"The good brought by the wind will go away in smoke".

As Nohim-Zalmanovich (2002) notes that proverbs advocate careful attitude to both one's own and someone else's good: "If you take care of someone else's, you will also get your own"; determine how a wise (intelligent) person differs from a fool: "A wise man eats to live, a fool lives to eat", "A donkey is recognized by long ears, a fool – by a long tongue", "A smart man hides one's mind, a fool shows one's stupidity".

One of the most significant sources which help to understand and unravel the various phenomena of Jewish people's spiritual culture are sayings. It is in them that wise advice and instructions are embodied which acquired as a result of life practice, observations of a person, one's habits and character, over the social relationships of people. They have absorbed people's centuries-old socio-historical and life experience. "There is no salt in rainwater, the proverb has no lies", the Jews say, emphasizing the truthfulness and educational meaning of the folk word.

Most of them contain answers to many questions related to people's religious and secular worldview, concerning occupations, everyday life, relationships in the family and with neighbors, relations to children and children to parents, educational ideal, issues of a person's moral, labor, physical education, attitude to national shrines, the surrounding world.

A red thread in proverbs and sayings is the theme of attitude to the native land, love for the motherland: "A foreign land is clay, and the motherland is gold".

The proverbs which have a long-standing origin, relate to the time when Jews, living in the countries of dispersion, in the ghetto and in the pale of settlement, were deprived of their homeland. "The people who have learned to live without their country cannot be conquered", Jews tell their children.

All oral folk art is imbued with feelings of love for the native land, respect and appreciation for the father, mother. This has found its expression in proverbs:

"God cannot be everywhere at the same time – that's why he created mothers";

"Among the standing – do not sit. Among those sitting – do not stand. Among the laughing, do not cry. And do not laugh among the sobbing";

"A good mother is a daughter's honor".

Proverbs and sayings say: "Do not be sweet – otherwise you will be eaten. Do not be bitter – otherwise you will be spat out. Change yourself first, then change others". With their meaning, they emphasize the dogmas of faith that a person's life is predetermined by fate, but a person can change life for the better or for the worse, which depends on one's inner world: "Neither music nor a word will help, there will be no peace if they do not invest their souls".

Jewish proverbs and sayings teach:

- love for a woman ("You can only throw precious stones at a woman");
- wisdom ("Thank you for the good at once, for the evil – put it off for later");
- diligence ("A cat in gloves does not catch mice");
- positive moral qualities ("Who goes straight away, one will return home and will not fall", "Who lies all day, bored, doing nothing, one does not get a bagel, but a hole from it", "Who climbed too high, can only fly down").

Proverbs and sayings express people's aspirations and thoughts, their views on many phenomena of personal and public life, they emphasize the role of the family in raising children, preparing them for life:

"A drop of love sometimes brings a sea of tears";

"A fool grows without rain";

"Never mock the Motherland, mother and wife";

"Knowledge in youth is wisdom in old age";

"The one who has one's own dignity looks less for the shortcomings of others";



“God gave a man two ears and one mouth so that one would listen more and talk less”;

“Who does not look forward, stays behind”;

“It’s better to be an hour earlier than a minute late”;

“Change yourself first, then change others”.

They have a great educational potential, they show in a negative light those unsightly, from people’s standpoint, moments which a person needs to give up. Among them, the following proverbs and sayings can be noted:

– about hypocrisy: “Do not laugh at your neighbors, trouble may come to you”;

– about greed: “There are inhumane people, though pious”;

– about gossip: “Rumours make one’s stomach swell”;

– about bragging: “Bragging, bragging – the tongue sticks to the sky”;

– about a lie: “Wherever one walks, the dirt sticks to the dirty everywhere”;

– about laziness: “I am free to talk, but I am sick at work”;

– about ignorance: “Cannot tell black from white”.

Thus, these characteristic monuments of oral folk art demonstrate the main provisions of Jewish ethnopedagogics.

One of the means of Jewish education is the Midrash, a kind of genre of didactic tales, developed by Jews who lived in Judea, Babylonia and Egypt, and reflected in the Bible. These are edifying stories with morality which people passed from mouth to mouth to support the patriotic spirit or express some philosophical thought which disturbed the peoples of the East minds (The Bible, 1904).

Like any authentic folklore, the tales are distinguished by the liveliness and drama of the action, the richness of images and intense plot, the educational orientation of the content.

The peculiarity of the Midrash is that they were created by a deeply religious people who have suffered severe trials in their history. They contain significant philosophical thoughts related to the eternal problems of life and death, suffering and happiness, God and a human being.

The content of the Midrash shows that they reflect the rules of a family life which to a certain extent are still observed today by individual representatives of Jewish families. For example, in the episode of the legend about Sarah, the ancestor of Israel generations, it is emphasized that a woman is considered the property of a man who could dispose of her at his discretion.

The relationship of a married woman with a man was considered a crime not because he was not her husband, but solely for the reason that the woman was the property of another man. A wife's main task was to give birth to children and continue the husband's family. Her strict observance of marital fidelity pursued a single goal: to ensure the legitimacy of offspring and inheritance.

The tales of Joseph (The Bible, 1904, p.43) have been widely popular since ancient times, and have entered the folklore of those peoples who found the basis for their life activity in the Bible. This is a typical folk legend, according to Jews, teaches tribal solidarity, selflessness.

Using the example of Joseph (in his youth he was an obnoxious bully, spoiled by his daddy's son, but in subsequent years, under the influence of suffering and an impenetrable longing for his native home, he changed and showed greatness of his soul [Genesis, chapter 45]), Jews brought up a sense of duty and love for family and Homeland in their children.

The story of Esau and Jacob (Yahweh severely punished the criminal Egyptians by killing their firstborn sons and firstborn animals) gives a clear idea of the significance of the firstborn sons who were the main heirs and continuers of family traditions. The death of the firstborn son was considered a greater misfortune than the death of one's younger brother.

The legislative and religious rulings collected in the Pentateuch belong to different epochs and are the result of the centuries-old evolution of ancient legal thought (The Torah, pp. 43-50).

The severity of some laws speaks of their great antiquity. These include the principle proclaimed in the Bible, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". In many cases, the death penalty is provided for by stoning, in addition, the almost servile position of women is emphasized.

One example of this barbaric strictness is the rule stating: "If an ox kills a person, and the owner of the ox knew that it was a dangerous animal, and did not prevent the murder, both the animal and its owner should be executed by stoning".

On the other hand, the Pentateuch also contains rather humane laws. This applies, first of all, to slaves and female slaves: they immediately received freedom if the owner knocked out their eye or tooth.

The laws also stood up for widows, orphans and the poor providing them with protection from insults and harassment from the rich and moneylenders, for example:

"Love your neighbor (friend) as yourself";

"Do not misjudge a stranger, an orphan; and do not take clothes from a widow as a pledge" (Deuteronomy, chapter 24, v.17);



“Forgiveness consists in the fact that every lender who has lent to one’s neighbor forgives the debt and does not collect from one’s neighbor or from one’s brother ...” (Deuteronomy, chapter 15, v.2).

An example of a protest against the prohibition of mixed marriages is the legend of Ruth (Talmud, pp. 308-312).

Another legalized custom described in the legend of Ruth is the levirate, according to which the brother of the deceased husband had to marry a childless widow. Jews and Karaites disagree with the first part of this legend because they believe that mixed marriages lead to people’s disappearance.

A typical folk figure (a desperate, bullying bully, inexhaustible in tricks, a childishly naive hero), a role model, a symbol of the struggle against foreigners, a bearer of folk traditions is Samson. Samson fought for the national existence, and thereby for the conservation of the national religion, so all his actions acquire religious meaning and significance in the eyes of Jews.

The symbol of wisdom for the Jews was the biblical king Solomon. The Bible says that Solomon composed one thousand five songs and three thousand parables which reflected his extraordinary wisdom.

According to F. Brenye’s (1924) research, Song of Songs is a collection of Israeli folk songs related to wedding ceremonies. Such songs can be found in the folklore. These songs have long been common in the Middle East and have survived to this day.

At the turn of the ‘historical’ and didactic books of the Old Testament is the Book of Tobit in which the advice to a son is clearly formulated, demonstrating the everyday wisdom of the Semitic peoples (The Bible, 1904).

The legend of Job testifies to the problem of human responsibility, the interdependence of suffering and guilt. It speaks of collective responsibility: sons must atone for the guilt of their fathers, even if they themselves are not to blame.

The main feature of Midrash pedagogy is the translation of theology into an educational dimension. As the researchers of the history of pre-Christian and early Christian education G. Gretz (1904-1908), S. Dubnov (1912) emphasize, “the religious formulas which were perceived by the community of co-religionists were somehow pedagogized since those who disseminated them proceeded from the horizons of understanding of children and, consequently, were armed with one or another pedagogical techniques. Next to or in the shadow of the Covenant, the figure of a school teacher clearly peeps through” (Dubnov, 1912, p.80). In his research, S. Dubnov cites V. Rebel’s opinion that the biblical tales represent an ideal educational sphere, because their content was, first of all, not a theological narrative, but a didactic text, an exhortatory text, an exhortatory-preaching text, a call one – that is, a teaching

one. It was precisely such tasks that Job, Tobit, and others set themselves, addressing either the people or a specific person (Dubnov, 1912).

The Midrash, as a genre of ancient Hebrew folklore, preached love for one's neighbor, human responsibility before God and people, fostered patriotism and faith in the election of the people, the need to conserve national traditions and culture, cultivated moral qualities recorded in the Covenant.

All the listed works of oral folk art: proverbs, sayings, legends – together form the basis of ethnocultural identity formation, are the focus of Jewish people's spiritual experience. As practice shows, the more significant this or that sphere of Jewish people's way of life is, the more it is reflected in folklore. The most significant are the values which characterize the social side of life, social relationships. Ethnocultural identity formation is carried out in the process of assimilation by a person of a system of values which mediates the totality of stable human connections with the surrounding world, and thus ensures one's integrity and identity.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The conducted research makes it possible to show the educational significance of oral folk art in Jewish ethnopedagogy.

Oral folk art as an ethnic value, formed in the process of historical development and manifested in the Jewish people's life, is a vital and, therefore, an objective phenomenon. The appeal to oral folk art in which people's spiritual culture, language, and faith are preserved, is quite understandable. It is people's cultural and historical heritage that serves as a key element of the society sustainability.

The folklore of the Jewish people which represents ethnic values and symbols in their statics acquires a dynamic character at the level of a particular person, refracted through the prism of individual characteristics. The development of culture, spiritual and moral values embedded in folklore is one of the most important aspects of personality's social formation.

Moral and instructive proverbs, sayings, legends of the Jewish people, being the focus of spiritual experience, contain a whole set of thoughtful recommendations, practical advice expressing the people's idea of a person, about the peculiarities of personality formation, about norms and rules of behavior in the family and society which undoubtedly contributes to the effective preparation of the younger generations for life.

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### **Ethics Committee Decisions**

Ethics committee approval is not required for this study

### **Conflict Statement**

The authors have no conflict of interest regarding the research, authorship and publication of  
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### **Publication Ethics Statement**

All the rules specified in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and  
Publication Ethics Directive" have been complied with in the whole process from the planning  
of this article to its implementation, from data collection to data analysis. None of the actions  
specified under the title of "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics",  
which is the second part of the directive, were not carried out. During the writing process of  
this research, scientific, ethical and citation rules were followed; No falsification was made on  
the collected data. This work has not been submitted for evaluation to any other academic  
publication medium.