

Shalom Ashbel

Spring of Wonder

Yemenite Folktales

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*Dedicated to my friend and comrade Ahmad Massarwa,
The best and the most generous of mankind,
With a heartfelt prayer for Rim's
full and quick recovery.*



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Thanks

Jwould like to thank my daughter, Zehorit Ashbel Heilicher, my “first reader,” for her comments and sensible insights. My gratitude especially for her final edit of the English version.

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A heartfelt thank you to my wife Ora, for the support and encouragement she has granted me throughout our lives.



Introduction

The fairytale “Spring of Wonder,” the first in this book, is one of the folk tales I had heard as a child in Yemen, stories that were rich with the vitality of the spoken word. I heard most of them from my mother, others on special occasions, mostly on days of mourning. Not once have I heard the same version of a story from different storytellers. Muslim and Jew alike, each of them kept the plot frame, but left his or hers imprint on the details. During my childhood and youth, I had the privilege of hearing fascinating fairytales from captivating oral storytellers. One of the greatest storytellers I met was Abraham Samina (may his memory be a blessing), who lived and died in the Givat Olga neighborhood, in western Hadera. Sadly, upon his passing, many unique stories that I had hoped to preserve perished. My mother (may her memory be a blessing) was an exceptional storyteller. She lived the story, acted it and mimicked

the heroes: their voices, their speech and their actions. “Spring of Wonder” is the first of four stories I remember well that I heard from her. These stories, as I understand and know, express all of the artistic characteristics and elements that the classical folk story entails.

