

# MEDIATION AS A PRACTICE OF IDENTITY

## Jewish-Israeli Immigrant Guides in the Christian Holy Land

*Jackie Feldman, Ben Gurion University of the Negev*

The performances of the Holy Land for Christian pilgrims by Jewish-Israeli immigrant guides are an expression of belonging to place and history. Through auto-ethnography of my guiding performance and career path interviews with other immigrant guides, I illustrate how scriptural knowledge, mastery of Hebrew, and the invention of “biblical” rites of hospitality mediate between Christian pilgrims and the land, as well as between Christians and Jews. These performances not only make pilgrims co-producers of the tour; they also assert guides’ claims to nativity. I then compare the performances of such guides with Alaskan cruise guides. I show how the submission or resistance to the commodifying tourist gaze varies under different gazes, different power conditions, and given other “native” practices of asserting identity and belonging.

*Keywords:* tour guide, identity, performance, Holy Land, Judaism

### **Introduction: Tour Guides as Mediators of Experience**

The introduction to this special issue outlines several of the mediatory functions of tour guides. Earlier tourism research stated that “the principle expectation of mass tourists from Professional Guides is that they provide information and interpretation” (Cohen 1985: 20). Weiler and Black (2015: 364) suggest, however, that in the twenty-first century, “to satisfy tourists in search of personalized experiences, guides... need to actively engage tourists in the co-creation of their own guided tour experiences”. For them, the contemporary tourist is increasingly in search of multi-sensory participation, and emotional access to and empathy with the past or present host communities (ibid.: 366). In their view, guides are not so much mediators of *knowledge* as media-

tors of *experience*. In the case of Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, the transmission of empathy and understanding through the selection of and emotive reading of appropriate biblical passages (often in concert with members of the group), the use of appropriate feeling tones and the performance of mini-rituals and gestures of respect have always been more valued than encyclopaedic information. The knowledge pilgrims request most is knowledge that augments their faith experience (Guter & Feldman 2006: 88–90). In Evangelical language, the “head” of the guide is a tool for reaching the “heart”.

Insofar as the guide is expected to be a mediator of empathy and experience (rather than just information), the role strains of guiding and of shifting from on-stage to off-stage life intensify. Guides may have to perform emotional work (Hochschild 1983) in or-

der to maintain both their competent guide persona and their private integrity. The challenges of such emotional work are compounded when the guide is expected to represent the toured nation or culture. Thus, the guide's body, accent and cultural competence in routine interactions may be examined by the group, and their accordance with visitors' pre-image of the country or people may be a condition for granting him "storytelling rights" (Katriel 1997: 73–102).

There has been some study of the ways that guides and other tourist workers work under a variety of commodifying or essentializing tourist gazes (Crang 1997; introduction and Picard, this issue). There has also been sufficient documentation of successful, unsuccessful and desirable guiding performances (especially in "best practice" recommendations of manuals for tour guides [Pond 2003; cf. Wynn 2011]). Far less has been written on the ways guides shift between their on-stage and off-stage lives (Bunten 2008, 2015; Scherle & Nonnenmann 2008; Feldman 2016: 1–16, 143–154; Widfeldt Meged 2017).

In her study of native guides at Sitka who work with passengers of Alaskan cruise ships, Alexis Bunten (2008, 2015) demonstrated how guides negotiate the tourist gaze to their advantage through the development of a commodified persona: "a set of beliefs and practices in which an individual chooses to construct a marketable identity product while striving to avoid alienating him- or herself" (Bunten 2008: 380). In most of the literature to date, "local tour guides are key actors in the process of localizing – folklorising, ethnicising, and exoticising – a destination" (Salazar 2005: 629). Such guides reproduce the exoticising gaze: "images and discourses [which] often propagate historically inherited stereotypes that are based on myths and fantasies related to nature, the noble savage, art, individual freedom and self-realisation, equality and paradise" (Salazar & Graburn 2014: 212). In the case of Jewish-Israeli guides of Christian pilgrims, however, the primary means of earning confidence and achieving rapport is through the use of a text shared by pilgrims and guides – the Bible. Moreover, in the case of immi-

grant guides the performance of biblical Jewishness under the Christian pilgrim gaze may affirm his or her Israeli belonging and nativity as depicted in the Zionist understanding.

As I understand it, identity is not an essence, but a project of self-formation developed through contact with the other (Ren 2010). By documenting several performative practices of Jewish-Israeli pilgrim guides, and by comparing them with Bunten's case, I will show how different guiding performances develop in response to significantly different tourist gazes, power structures, and appropriating practices; these performances are not only a way to please the client, but a means of developing guides' own sense of identity. Thus, not only do guides mediate tourists' relation to the land and its people, but tourists may mediate guides' relationships to the land and its people.<sup>1</sup>

This article provides a brief auto-ethnographic sketch of my entry into guiding<sup>2</sup> and then focuses on several *shtick* – formalized, often comic routines employed by guides, often to introduce tourists to a new site or programme – which become part of guides' fixed repertoire. Two of the three examples of *shtick* discussed in this article were developed for groups that I guided over the course of a 30-year career. I have guided several hundred tours over three decades, taking notes on many of them. Although I stopped guiding intensively in 2000, when I entered academia, I continue to guide several groups a year and maintain contact with other tour guides, including new guides I meet as I participate and sometimes teach in refresher courses. Other *shtick* mentioned here (like those performed by "Roberto") were obtained from open-ended interviews with 30 guides, which research assistants and I interviewed and recorded at several intervals in 2002–2004, 2010 and 2015. The materials served as part of a larger project, which I recently published as a book (Feldman 2016). Although tourism has increased several-fold over the past two decades, the requests, itineraries and expectations of most pilgrim groups have changed little. Although there are important differences between Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant pilgrim groups, as well as between parties of differ-

ent nationalities, the sample brought here includes American, British, German and Italian groups, both Protestant and Catholic.

### **The Holy Land Tour and the Guide's Role in it**

Most pilgrims of Holy Land tour groups come on 8–12-day tours focused on biblical sites, along with their pastor or priest; they usually belong to a single town, parish or church. The groups' itineraries focus on sites of significance to Christian faith and history, and are frequently advertised as "walking in the footsteps of Jesus". Groups regularly conduct Christian worship, read Bible passages, and sing hymns in the course of their visit. Local travel agents assign a single tour guide to accompany the pilgrims throughout the course of their trip. The guide may be Israeli, Palestinian or a foreign Catholic religious; Jewish, Christian or Muslim. Except for the religious, who are licensed by church authorities, all other guides must follow a two-year Israeli government sponsored training course,<sup>3</sup> and pass a series of exams. Although both men and women attend the course, men tend to continue to guide for longer periods of time, probably as a result of the difficulties of combining guiding and child-raising. The guide is often the only local person pilgrims converse with in the course of their visit. In this article, I restrict my analysis to the Jewish-Israeli case, and as the examples I bring are from my own experience and that of "Roberto", I refer to guides using the masculine pronoun.

As opposed to the group's spiritual leader (priest or pastor) who accompanies them from the home country, the guide is marked as "local", and is often introduced as such by the leader to the group. Not only does the guide reside in the toured destination country, but he is "entrusted with the public relations mission to encapsulate the essence of place... and to be a window onto a site, region, or even country" (Salazar 2005: 629). Pilgrims often depend upon their guides' historical and geographical knowledge to provide material and "scientific" proofs for their Christian faith, whose roots and traces pilgrims seek in the land.

The guide spends 8–10 hours a day performing

in places he does not usually inhabit, often speaking another language. Mostly independent freelance workers, tour guides tend to see themselves as competent cosmopolitans (Scherle & Nonnenmann 2008), skillful self-actualizers in a competitive market (Widtfeldt Meged 2017). Guides avoid commitments to the rhythms and obligations of daily life (parent-teacher meetings, holidays, birthdays, scheduled classes, etc.). They lose track of the day of the week, the month and season of the year, as they wake in yet another anonymous hotel. Often, their work takes them away, physically and mentally, from their families for days or even weeks at a time. Most guides acknowledge the blurring of work and leisure (Widtfeldt Meged 2017) and the difficulty in readjustment from work to home life, which creates considerable strains in many guides' families.<sup>4</sup> Some become "serial" guides, taking one consecutive group after another, in part, so as not to face the gap between their "star" status on the road – as expert, ambassador and exemplary Jew and Israeli – and their "normal" status in the family.

### **Zionism, Israeli Nativity and the Pilgrim Guide**

Zionism as an ideological assertion and Zionism as a tried sense of belonging to place and community are two very different things. (Katriel 1997: 9)

The Christian pilgrim gaze and the authenticating practices of Jewish-Israeli guides are both tied to the Bible and to Zionism. The Christian pilgrim gaze on Israel is one that seeks a sacred Centre rather than an exotic Other (Cohen 1979). Holy Land pilgrimage seeks to bring biblical events to life by providing geographical and multi-sensory anchors for biblical events. Already in the sixth century (Limor 1996), Jews had become seen as witnesses and authenticators of Christian sites and truths, in spite of their refusal to recognize Jesus as Messiah. Jews were seen as people of the Book, as bearers of the longest memory and as older natives of the land, who possess geographical and scriptural knowledge.<sup>5</sup> The Christian pilgrim gaze may seek to appropriate the guide as "one of us" – either through fostering of a rhetoric

of “Judeo-Christian tradition”, or by seeing the Israeli Jew as Biblical Hebrew or as promising but “incomplete” Christian to be missionized. The latter is particularly true in the case of Evangelicals, as I have described elsewhere (Feldman 2016: 6).

From the guide’s perspective, especially in the case of Jewish guides who are immigrants from elsewhere, the text often mediates connection to the land. The Zionist reading of the Bible – as a national history book, source of heritage and justification of the claim to the land – is promoted by political discourse, Israeli formal education, hiking practices (Selwyn 1995: Almog 2000: 160–184) and the training course for tour guides. These discourses and practices depict Israeli nativity as an act of *recovery* of biblical roots detached at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple and the beginning of exile (Zerubavel 1995). This rhetoric is particularly attractive to Jewish guides who immigrated to Israel from the West, many of whom came to the country for Zionist reasons. Thus, there is a common ground between the pilgrims’ quest to make the Bible real, confirm their faith, walk in the footsteps of Jesus, the prophets and ancestors, and the immigrant guide’s quest to become an Israeli native. Viewing, walking and reading is an attempt to infuse the “little place” of everyday life with passion of the “big place” of Jewish and cosmic history (Gurevitch 1997), an effort which may have served, consciously or unconsciously, to motivate the immigrants to seek work as guides for foreign pilgrims or tourists.

A large portion, perhaps half, of active licensed Israeli tour guides are immigrants from other countries. Undoubtedly, their command of the tourists’ language is one reason for this predominance. I suggest, however, that there are psycho-social reasons as well. The immigrant sees much of Israeli culture and everyday life as not taken-for-granted, and this offers the guide a bifurcated perspective on Israeli culture and society, which facilitates translation of culture into terms familiar to the tourists. By presenting the land, Judaism, sacred texts, and themselves to foreign Christian pilgrims, Jewish-Israeli tour guides both affirm and interrogate their relations to Israeli belonging in new ways. For guides

who are not native-born, their Jewish and Zionist commitments and imaginings are a major part of what brought them to Israel and how they explain their belonging to the place, the land and the state. Their profession as guide is not just an expression of that status, but an aid in the process of becoming native, as I will now describe.

### **Migrant on the Margins: Becoming a Native through Guiding**

At age 22, I emigrated from Manhattan to Jerusalem. When, before I left New York, I told my friends I had decided to come on *aliya* to Israel, I spoke of leaving the moribund swamp of America to live where the Jewish future would be made. The Orthodox Judaism I grew up with was the Judaism of interiors. Jews were inside – in the homes, schools, synagogues; *goyim* – Gentiles – were on the streets, in the street. My grandmother would remind me, “Don’t park your car on the wrong side of Broadway . . . Always carry a quarter for the muggers . . . Come home right after school and study for your exams . . . if not, you’ll grow up to be a *sheigitz*<sup>6</sup> [non-Jewish man]!”

While I was certainly influenced by the safety and freedom of movement I experienced on my summer visits to Israel, I had also been impressed by the writings of Zionist thinker Ahad Ha’am. According to Ahad Ha’am, only Israel could become a centre for spiritual renewal for the Jewish world, because Judaism could only thrive as a viable modern culture under physical and political conditions that granted it a measure of autonomy. In exile, he wrote, the practice of Judaism could not be sheltered from the power of the omnipresent othering Gentile gaze. Hence, Judaism in exile would either fashion itself as a walled enclave or accommodate itself to the Gentile gaze and assimilate (Zipperstein 1992). In the State of Israel, Judaism could have the space of a majority culture and renew itself without regard for the disciplining Gentile gaze.

The Land of Israel that attracted me was a land of open spaces without danger, a land of being in the majority. As a new immigrant from a religious background, I imagined the land itself as overlaid with biblical significance, material evidence of Jewish

history, yet not constrained by Orthodox Jewish law. It was a place where one didn't need to be religious to be Jewish. The Jewish year-cycle was manifest in everyday movement in the public square and the marketplace. The street was Jewish in name and in population and – at least in Tel Aviv – it had sand that got into your sandals, and it ended at the beach. And it was far away from my Orthodox home.

The Israel I found when I moved there was not the Israel of my dreams. I spent hours waiting in the wrong lines in banks, post offices, government ministries; I lacked *protekcja*, the connections that might ease my way through bureaucracies. Though I spoke Hebrew well, for years merchants and people on the street would address me in English. The wide-open Jewish country fragmented into territories of Arabs and Jews, Palestinians and Israelis, Orthodox and secular, Mizrachim and Ashkenazim. If in New York I was a Jew, in Israel I became an American, or most bizarrely, an “Anglo-Saxon”.

The tour guide course I entered a year after my arrival was, for me, an initiation into Israeli-ness. Besides academic study, the course involved over 75 full-day hikes through the country. Hiking was an integral part of Israeli *sabra* (i.e., native) culture (Almog 2000: 160–184), and *yediat ha'aretz*, knowledge of the land practices, widely diffused through Israeli culture, are at the core of tour guide training. Zionism promoted a “direct and working partnership both with the land and with the landscape as a whole, in order to express a human nature that had become cramped and partial in the ghetto. Secondly, there was the comparable notion of cognitively associating land, landscape and the ‘nature’ therein with the resurgent nation” (Selwyn 1995: 117). The links made between the land and the biblical text resounded with my New York yeshiva day school education. Hiking uniquely tied the desire for physicality and open space with a familiar Jewish grounding. It linked the small place of mountains and valleys with the “big place” of historical Israel (Gurevitch 1997). It took Judaism out of the classroom and into the valleys and fields in ways that made sense to me.

By being the guide to the Land of Israel I could overcome the cognitive dissonances of my own *aliya*

to Israel by missionizing, bringing the outside world into accord with one's own beliefs. In this case, it was the belief and practice of preaching Israel as the “big place” of Jewish/biblical history and destiny, rather than the “little place” of local daily life. By “making souls” for the land, showing how a geographic understanding of the land and a knowledge of Jewish history could enrich pilgrims' own faith and their link to Israel, I could acquire a role as an exemplary Israeli that was denied me as a new immigrant in Israeli society. At the same time, my work for Palestinian tour agencies and with Palestinian drivers enlarged my understanding of the political contexts I was working and living in, and made me aware of alternative narratives, other claims to the land.

The “big place” of the Land of Israel attracted me, while the small place of everyday life was often alienating. So, my turn to tour guiding was a way of being in Israel without being with Israelis, being home while spending my time away from home, walking and explaining the mythical landscapes while avoiding some of the frictions of daily life. The enthusiasm displayed by pilgrims in many of the sites and vistas of the land (and my assigned task of arousing it) also recharged the emotional connection to the land that had originally brought me to Jerusalem, but that weakened with time and routine. And, of course, it provided me with a livelihood that enabled me to build a home and a family in Israel. What's more, it endowed me with an honorary status – as Israeli, knowledgeable Jew, and for some Evangelicals agent of the divine plan. As several pilgrims asked me in the later days of their voyage, “Don't you feel privileged to come back home?” In part thanks to the pilgrims, I did.

### **Who Belongs to the Land? Co-producing Empathy and Authority through Welcoming Rites**

One of the ways guides establish authority as natives in guided tours is through giving and teaching greetings in the local language.<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew language and selective Bible readings perform similarly in the case of Holy Land pilgrimages. The following is a *shtick* – a ritualized greeting ceremony that became

a standard part of my guiding repertoire, at least for Evangelicals:<sup>8</sup>

A group from California arrives at Ben Gurion Airport after nearly 24 hours in transit. After the driver has loaded the luggage onto the tour bus, and I have counted passengers, the pastor requests the microphone for a word of prayer: “We *just* want to thank you, Lord, for safely bringing us to this special place. Bless our guide and driver as they take us through Your home. Continue to protect us and guide us, in the wonderful name of Jesus, *Amen*.” The pastor hands me the microphone, as the bus pulls out of the parking lot.

I turn to face the group and begin:

Shalom, everyone and welcome to Israel. My name is Jackie, and I’ll be your guide to Israel for the next ten days. Our driver’s name is Muhammad, and he’ll be driving us through the Land of the Bible.

Now your pastor, Reverend Jones [nodding and winking at him], tells me that you know your Bible. How many of you brought your Bibles with you?

[Most of the hands go up. Some: “I left it in my luggage.”]

Good! Now I’m going to start off with a little quiz. Just to make sure you really know your Bible – okay? [waving my Bible at them] Now, I’m gonna mention some names, and if any of you recognize any of them, just raise your hand, okay?

[I open the Bible and read from the text of the Book of Numbers, Chapter 13]:

*Shammua ben Zaccur*. [no hands]

*Igal ben Yosef*. Anyone here know Yigal? [no hands]

*Ge’uel ben Maki*. [no hands]

*Nah’-bi ben Voph-si*. [no hands]

I read through ten names, emphasizing the Hebrew pronunciation of each.

*Calev ben Yefuneh*. [a few hands go up]

*Joshua, the son of Nun* [Anglicized pronunciation – all the hands go up]

Whew, I was getting worried! Well, the first ten names I read were those of the bad spies. Those are the ones that came back and said, “Israel! Dangerous place! You don’t wanna go there!” [pause, some laughter] Bet some of your friends told you that before you left, right? [murmur of assent] Well, forget about them – just like the ten spies – we forgot about them. But the other two, Caleb and Joshua – they said, “Don’t worry, just put your faith in the Lord and He’ll see us through.” *They’re* the ones we remember.

We’re here in God’s hands, and we’re here in the hands of our excellent driver Muhammad, and I’m looking forward to a wonderful and uplifting experience over the next ten days with you. Welcome to Israel. [pause]

We’re now travelling through *Emek Hasharon* – the Sharon Plain, and in 45 minutes we’ll be at our hotel in Netanya. I’ll have maps for all of you tomorrow.

Taking a cue from the tropes of the pastor’s opening prayer, the guide enlists the group’s participation in a dialogue whose form, he assumes, will be familiar to them.<sup>9</sup> He builds on assumed visitors’ preconceptions of the land (dangerous and Oriental), Protestant practices and implicit theological understandings (Bible reading, the Jew as native and authoritative Old Testament witness), Protestant tropes of faith (“just put your faith in the Lord”), popular U.S. culture (quiz programmes), the use of enthusiastic feeling-tones (“Whew! I was getting worried!” [Fine & Speer 1985]), as well as strategic shifts in pronouns (from *you* to *we* – Katriel 1997: 73–102).<sup>10</sup> By introducing himself, the tour, and the

land through this dialogue, the guide seeks to position his performing voice as the voice of the land. The act of reading the Bible while pronouncing the Hebrew names is self-referential and self-authorizing (Crapanzano 2017), as the biblical passages, their reading out loud and the call-and-response mode of interaction are already familiar sources of authority for the pilgrims. The guide claims a preacher-like authority by demonstrating a familiarity with the biblical details that the Christian lay believers do not possess – a familiarity that derives from the guide's position as native and as Hebrew speaker. The guide's mention of the group's preacher and his nod and wink to him is a subtle way of acknowledging that it is the preacher who is responsible for the group's relation to the Bible, and that the guide will not impinge on his territory. By affirming the authority of the Bible, the guide attempts to win over the group's confidence in him, while revealing the true Land as the one inhabited by biblical and mod-

ern Israel. The fragility of the affirmation – this is certainly not the only legitimate interpretation of the Bible – is deflected by the pilgrims' investment in making their trip rewarding; this investment calls for a suspension of scepticism and distance (Crapanzano 2017).

The dialogue uses the biblical story to cosmicize Ben Gurion Airport (a modern Israeli site) as the gateway to the Biblical Promised Land. It is as Israeli local expert that he asserts his position as witness to biblical truth. Assuming this position, the guide welcomes and praises the participants' decision to tour Israel not as a vacation option but as an expression of religious faith. By singling out the participants who brought their Bibles on board, and by calling the travellers "the good spies", he lauds their decision to overcome security concerns and fly to Israel as an act of trust in God. In choosing the obscure names of the Bible, and pronouncing them in ways that increase their foreignness, the guide makes the



Ill. 1: By strategically using large maps as well as the Bible, the guide demonstrates his familiarity with the biblical and current landscape of the Holy Land and acquires authority. (Photo: Jackie Feldman)

pilgrims aware of their relative ignorance of the Hebrew Bible. In mentioning Caleb (but pronounced as “Kalev”) next-to-last, the guide assumes that some will recognize the name through the “veil” of the Hebrew pronunciation. The final name, with Anglicized pronunciation – Joshua, the son of Nun – is recognized by all, as the guide assumes it will be. The guide has positioned himself as teacher, by gradually lifting the veil of ignorance, bringing the group to greater biblical knowledge. By raising their hands to “volunteer” to identify (and identify with) Caleb and Joshua, and laughing in appreciation of the point afterwards, the pilgrims provide bodily assent to this role and assume a part in the co-production of the tour (Weiler & Black 2015). At the same time, the joking tone and the reference to the tour bus and

its Muslim driver as divine instruments – but not grounded in scriptural reference – mark a hierarchy between the Jewish-Israeli guide and the Palestinian Arab driver.

Yet the performance also involves a measure of self-essentialization: the names of the spies or the biblical passage are not familiar or important to most Israelis. The guide essentializes himself by assenting to assume the position of “true Biblical Hebrew”, as the sign of his nativity and belonging – as an Old Testament Israelite as depicted in the Protestant imagination. This performance traces a pattern that the guide will then be expected to repeat throughout the course of the tour. In my own guiding, it made me play down my distance from the Orthodox understandings of Scriptural authority that I grew up with, and delay voicing my objection to the interpretation of current political events as manifestations of biblical (often apocalyptic) prophecy (common among Evangelicals) until a later point in the tour, when I felt I had acquired enough trust to voice unpopular views.<sup>11</sup>

### **Feeding the Multitudes – Scripturalized Hospitality in the Homeland of Jesus and Abraham**

Besides greetings and teaching words in the native language, guides may display their hospitality by offering food. Candeia and da Col (2012: S9) note that “food itself [is]... a prime manipulating substance designed to lure and establish a pivotal asymmetry between hosts and guests”. By distributing food to pilgrims in ritualized or scripturalized contexts, guides assert themselves as hosts – not only personally, but as members of the hosting country and nation – Israel. The following two examples will illustrate this:<sup>12</sup>

Roberto, a licensed tour guide and Italian Jewish immigrant to Israel interviewed in 2010, recounts his motivations and his guiding practices for Italian Catholics:

From the outset, I felt that my home was more in Jerusalem than in Italy... My father was a Christian and my mother was Jewish, so I lived in the



Ill. 2: Evangelical pilgrims follow the guides' citation of scripture in their Bibles. The guides' ability to quote the Bible and link it to the scenery grants him authority as biblical native. (Photo: Jackie Feldman)



Christian world my entire life... Whoever grew up as I did, in an Italian village with few Jews, and went to mass to pray... Whoever grew up that way has a special understanding of things. He knows what the Christian has in his head...

Until thirty years ago, the Vatican prohibited the study of Judaism and the Hebrew Bible. The Italian Christians date back 2000 years and don't know who Jesus was. What a Jew is. The common people don't link up to the intellectual theories. So, when they arrive here (in Israel), we construct their knowledge in their language and in their mentality, and that's a great accomplishment [...]

Some of them can't stop bragging about how proud they are of their country, of Italian food; the group is really a branch of Italy. So, I prepare them a picnic on the Mount of Beatitudes where you see the entire lake. People get high from that. I prepare them sandwiches and fruit... After I've led them to understand the story from the territory, then, when I read to them from the Hebrew Bible, they react with "wow!"...

I chose Judaism and it's the best thing I've done in my life and I have no regrets and not a shadow of a doubt. I chose and I'm at peace so I can live with others and have no reason to fear. Many Italian guides don't go into churches, and in their position they transmit that they don't want "to get dirty". I go inside, and provide the complimentary Jewish part to the priest's words – all if the priest agrees, of course... Every Christian is also a Jew; he just doesn't know it. But when he gets here, he discovers that...

On the one hand, this reflects the Zionist thinking of Ahad Ha'am (see p. 44): as Israeli, in the landscape of Israel, Roberto is empowered to instruct Italian Catholics in ways he could not in his Italian hometown. As he remarks elsewhere: "no Jewish community in Europe can be an educational force towards the Gentiles... They don't want to disturb their lives, they just want to be obedient to the authorities;

they're still searching for themselves..." As Israeli, he can enter a local church in Israel, not as the child of an insignificant minority, but as "elder brother" to instruct Italian Christians about the Jewish Jesus and the Hebrew Bible: "every Christian is also a Jew, but he doesn't know that".

In response to the pilgrims' Italian patriotism, Roberto shows them that as Christians, their deeper roots are in Israel, where Jesus lived as a Jew. He offers the group bread and fruit at the Mount of Beatitudes, overlooking the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes. By offering them hospitality there, he positions himself as host and native, as proprietor of the symbolic landscape of the Sea of Galilee. As a member of the family of Jesus the Jew, he invites the Gentile Christians into his home. As Herzfeld (1987: 76) writes, hospitality creates an "essential homology between several levels of collective identity – village, ethnic group, district, nation. What goes for the family home also goes... for the national territory." As a Jew, Israel is Roberto's home and they are his guests.

Roberto adds:

the success of tourism is, on a certain level, the success of the State... It is our future. It will determine if we will have a state or not. Since 1948, we are constantly on display, and the number of tourists is half the number of citizens. The tourists' impression is part of our struggle to be a cultured, righteous and accepted country.

In the guiding encounter, Christians serve as representatives of a global gaze, possessors of a shared corpus of Scripture, and as a community that historically claimed the heritage of the Bible, while humiliating "Israel according to the flesh". By reading to and feeding his Italian Christian guests, Roberto can re-enact his life-choices through guiding, reassure himself of the correctness of his choice to be Jewish and make Israel his home, and even serve as an ambassador for his chosen homeland.

A second example of marking belonging and ownership through food rituals is the welcoming ceremony to Jerusalem held at the Mount Scopus out-

look. Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, the tour guide often introduces the city by performing a ritualized welcome including bread, salt and wine. While this is a recently invented ceremony, apparently popularized by Jewish tour groups some time after the Six Day War in 1967,<sup>13</sup> its similarity to both the Christian communion and Jewish Sabbath blessings give it a veneer of antiquity. The rite varies from one guide to another, and the following is a description of a typical performance, as I might do as guide for my pilgrim groups.

Upon the group's arrival in Jerusalem, usually just before sunset, I would drive up to the panoramic platform on Mount Scopus. I then set up two small loaves of bread covered with a napkin, a packet of salt and a cup of wine or grape juice atop the low retaining wall of the panorama platform. Placing a yarmulke on my head, I would read the passage from Genesis, concluding with Melchizedek's reception of Abraham, following Abraham's victory over the Kings of the North:

When he returned from defeating Chedorlaomer and the kings with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh, which is the Valley of the King. And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him, saying, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your foes into your hand." And [Abram] gave him a tenth of everything. (Genesis 14: 17–20, JPS translation)

Following the reading of the Genesis passage, I would read one of the pilgrim psalms (Songs of Ascent), most frequently Psalm 122(121): "*Samah'ti be'omrim li beit Adonai nelekh*. I was glad when they said to me, let us go up to the house of the Lord. My feet were standing within your gates, Jerusalem..." I would then prompt visitors to sing or hum the final verses of the psalm, using a Hassidic melody I had taught them: "because of my brothers and friends, I will say, I will say, peace be with you. For the sake of the house of the Lord, I will seek your good" (Psalm

122(121): 8–9). I would sing the last refrain in the Hebrew original and then recite the Hebrew blessings over the bread and wine and the *Shehecheyanu* blessing in Hebrew and English: "blessed art thou, God, our Lord, king of the universe, who has kept us alive, and sustained us and brought us to this day". Sometimes, the blessings were followed with a passage read by the pastor, describing Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Subsequently, I would break the bread, dip the pieces in salt and distribute them among the members of the group. I would pour the wine/grape juice into small individual cups for the pilgrims to drink and conclude: "welcome to the Holy City of Jerusalem".

This ceremony, as a perceived re-enactment of the original welcome in Genesis 14, positions the guide as native host and ritual expert (like Melchizedek, the priest of God and King of [Jeru-]Salem) and the pilgrims as honoured guests to the city (like Abraham). The recital of the biblical passage, and the Hebrew pronunciation of the difficult names of the kings in Genesis 14: 8–9 acknowledges the guide's familiarity with the Bible. The sharing of bread, wine and word/quotes from the Bible signals a shared spiritual descent from Abraham (and perhaps Melchizedek, linked with Jesus in the New Testament – Hebrews 6–7) and a shared sacred book. The prominence of the Hebrew language and Jewish customs (covering one's head before the prayer, covering the bread, blessing the wine first and bread second, using two loaves as in the Sabbath ceremony) marks it as authentically Jewish. The breaking of bread and pouring out of wine by the Jewish guide is part of the guide's claim to belonging and possession. The Jewish-Israeli guide enacts the King of Salem, and the Christians are honoured guests in his home. The perceived Jewish authenticity of the ceremony and its resemblance to Christian practices has made the ritual popular as a rite of passage of entering Jerusalem. It is often requested by returning Christian groups and is sometimes explicitly mentioned in printed tour itineraries.

The ritual seduces the pilgrims with its inclusiveness and familiarity (it's like Communion), but it is not quite Christian. It reaffirms Judaism (including

latter-day Jewish customs) as the basis of Christianity and as the native religion of the city, ostensibly dating back to Abraham.<sup>14</sup> As the guide Roberto said, “every Christian is also a Jew, he just doesn’t know it. But when he gets here, he discovers that.” If the ceremony is immediately followed by the identification of the major sites of the city, its function as rite of passage, and the status of the guide as autochthonous native and ritual mediator are reaffirmed.

### **Between Sitka and Zion: Hospitality, the Commodified Persona and Becoming Native**

What can the Israeli case teach us about tour guides’ mediatory role and its influence on their identities and senses of belonging? In her article (Bunten 2008) and subsequent book *So, how long have you been native?* (Bunten 2015), Alexis Bunten studies how native guides in Sitka, Alaska, working under the gaze of white American cruise tourists construct a “commodified persona”: “a set of beliefs and practices in which an individual chooses to construct a marketable identity product while striving to avoid alienating him- or herself” (Bunten 2008: 381). She describes the guides as sophisticated culture brokers who create a “commodified persona” for guiding work which they can put to rest when they leave the work frame. The native tour guides, she argues, develop this commodified persona in order “to gain control over the product of his labour, namely, himself” (ibid.: 385). In their one- to two-hour long presentations, guides are expected to “present a simplified version of the self that conforms to (popular) Western concepts of the Other” (ibid.: 386). These include identifying themselves by Tlingit names and clan affiliations, and teaching groups several Tlingit greetings and words and identifying flora and fauna by their Tlingit names and stories. Native culture is sanitized, eliminating much of modern reality as well as mention of many of the effects of colonization. Guides are expected to portray themselves as close to nature, and not mention their higher education degrees, if they possess them. They should personalise their stories for a variety of publics, even if the autobiographical mode preferred by many American tourists runs contrary to Tlingit norms.

While those too attached to those norms may find themselves unable to function in the tour context, most come up with creative responses to the tourist gaze, including covert forms of resistance, especially through humour. If they succeed, she claims, their performances can generate heightened awareness of authenticity and tradition.

I find the “commodified persona” to be a useful concept in understanding how tourism can *both* create pressures on tourism workers to conform to visitors’ expectations and gazes, *and* become a resource in strengthening ethnic or national identity. If successfully maintained, the marketing of national identity may lead not necessarily to self-parody but (as in the case of commercialized performances of ethnicity) to “(re)fashion identity, to (re)animate cultural subjectivity, to (re)charge collective self-awareness, to forge new patterns of sociality, all within the marketplace” (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009: 26). It may even temporarily reverse the historical power relations between the West and the toured country (as in Greece – Herzfeld 1987: 86).

Why, then, does the Alaskan cruise guide seem to be able to compartmentalize his “commodified persona” and restrict it to the tour frame more easily than the Israeli pilgrim guide? I offer three reasons for this difference: (1) the duration of the tour, (2) the nature of the visitor gaze on the culture represented by the guide, and (3) the ways the host culture defines “being native”.

1. The Alaskan cruise tourists hop off the cruise ship for a one-day tour of the island. The actual tour may last no longer than an hour or two. There is little time for developing an intensive relationship, and the guide has less responsibility in caring for his tourists. Another day, another tour group. The Israeli guide usually accompanies his pilgrims for over a week, caters to their material needs, illnesses and preferences, and attempts to cultivate the affection of the group in order to receive future requests for work from pastors and priests who may return year after year.

2. In Alaskan tours, as in much cultural tourism, otherness or making-other plays a constitutive role in the performative making of the nation (Mitchell

2001: 215) – and the tour group. However, as Noel Salazar (2017: 704) writes, “(tourism) imaginaries often shrewdly exaggerate the power of difference while neglecting and obfuscating the power of commonality”. In the guiding of Holy Land pilgrimage, the fostering of common ground is the basis for creating difference that will be valued. The duration and (often) intensiveness of the encounter,<sup>15</sup> and the search of pilgrims for commonality with the Jewish-Israeli guide (rather than distancing exoticism), increase pressures on guides to conform to Christian pilgrim imaginaries of Judaism, imaginaries which are partially shared. This makes the compartmentalization of the commodified persona in the workplace more difficult to maintain. Even the most adroit performers experience “leakage” between the public persona of the guide in the tour frame and the stories they tell themselves in private life, as in Roberto’s biographical story of Jewish-Christian relations.

3. Zali Gurevich suggests that the Zionist relation to the land is based on biblical paradigms: “The book that tells the place’s story... also resists the place as a totality that harmonizes the relation between humans and their immediate earthly abode. In Judaic thought, the place is human but its meaning is taken from the voice that is out of place and defies place-ness” (Gurevich 1997: 213). This textual mediation of belonging is evoked every time the guide reads from “his” Bible at a tour site. It makes the Israeli guide’s approach familiar to foreign Christians. This is particularly true for immigrant guides, whose motivation to come to the land is often founded in a Zionist vision of becoming native, of returning from diaspora/exile to a place anchored in the Jewish – and Christian – Bible. The Bible becomes part of the historical claim to belonging to the nation and the land. The dominance of recovered roots in Zionist national identity, and the sharing with pilgrims of an attachment to a common Scripture (even if in different ways and with different degrees of commitment<sup>16</sup>), make the performance for visitors “stickier” than it is for Alaskan native guides of cruise ships. Their sense of everyday belonging has very little to do with hunting seals or collecting shellfish.

Given the nature of the pilgrim gaze and the construction of Zionist belonging, the pilgrim guide who acts more pious, more honest, or more respectful of his pilgrims’ beliefs than he feels in private, offstage life is not necessarily “selling out”. As Schieffelin noted, “performances, whether ritual or dramatic, create and make present realities vivid enough to beguile, amuse or terrify. And through these presences, they alter moods, social relations, bodily dispositions and states of mind” (Schieffelin 2003: 195). The religious language itself and its aural resonance (Stromberg 2009) may have transformative potentials. To encourage faith among the pilgrims the guide need not playact. Rather, he allows himself to be caught up in the performance, and his scepticism is suspended. In that sense, the ritualized performance not only reflects faith but also generates it.

### **Conclusion – Tourists as Mediators of Guide Experience?**

In many contexts, we are witnessing a shift in the role of the tour guide from that of communicator of information to that of mediator or broker of experience (Weiler & Black 2005). As brokers of experience, guides are expected to create meaningful, interactive, affective experience for tourists (ibid.). This will demand more emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) of tour guides and increase the role strains on them. If tourists are content with the depiction of an exoticized, essentialized past (cf. Bunten 2015) and the frame of the tour is sufficiently restricted in its duration and in its depiction of the exotic, guides may succeed in developing a commodified on-stage persona that supplies tourist demand without “selling out”. However, as the example of the Israeli immigrant pilgrim guide illustrates, if the story expected by the tourists and the guide’s own story overlap, the frames may blur.

Insofar as we are performative beings (and tour guides certainly are!), what happens inside the tourist/pilgrim frame may affect the guide’s larger life. Like Arlie Hochschild demonstrated,

the reactions of others to our gestures may help define what we really come to feel. . . . We, in turn,

may internalise their imputation and thus define our inchoate feeling. The social interaction of gestures may thus not only express our feelings but define them as well (Hochschild 1983: 213).

Thus, the native guide may not only serve as a mediator between the tourist and the land or local culture; in some cases, the tourist may be a mediator between the guide and the land. The public performance of the land and culture for others positions the guide as a true native. And if we understand identity not as an essence but as a project, it may actually help make him one.

## Notes

- 1 Research for this article was made possible by a grant from the Israel Science Foundation (13/07), and from support during spring 2017 as an Israel Institute fellow at Universiteit van Antwerpen.
- 2 For an insightful discussion on the anthropologist as tour guide, see Bruner (2004: 1–10).
- 3 The Palestinian Authority also conducts guide courses and licensing exams in the Palestinian Territories, but very few Palestinian guides have permission to guide in Israel or in East Jerusalem, where the majority of pilgrim sites are located.
- 4 For similar observations on air hostesses, see Hochschild (1983). For a perspective application to tour guides, see Widtfeldt Meged (2017).
- 5 They may also be seen as Christ-killers, money changers in the Temple, treacherous Judases, and conspirators to dominate the world. Such views rarely come to the fore, but if they do, they demand other strategies on the part of guides.
- 6 The Yiddish words *sheigitz/shiksa* referring to non-Jewish men/women, from the Hebrew root *sheketz*, an object of disgust. Both have connotations of animality and sexuality.
- 7 This is common in many guided tours. Alexis Bunten (2008: 387) mentions how the Native American guides she studied greeted visitors in the local language and mentioned their Tlingit names at the opening of the tour – even if the guides actually belonged to another tribe!
- 8 The story appears in a slightly different version in Feldman (2007: 357–359). As oral performances, the details change from one retelling to another, while maintaining the same basic structure.
- 9 In a lunchtime conversation with another guide who studied in the guide course with me, he mentioned his use of the story of the spies as a welcoming dialogue at

the airport. I then adopted it, adding my own intonations, verses and skills.

- 10 “The use of the first person plural often signals their self-inclusion in a wider, more encompassing group of like-minded people” (Katriel 1997: 78).
- 11 For another case of the conflict of guides’ performance of belonging and its conflict with one’s own off-stage practice, this time through Jewish ritual at the Western Wall, see Feldman (2016: 6–7).
- 12 Roberto’s account is based on the transcript of an interview conducted by my research assistant Smadar Farkash, whereas the description of the Mount Scopus ceremony is based on my own past and (occasionally) present practice with pilgrim groups.
- 13 I have so far been unable to trace its origins, though it has been suggested that it is a post-Six Day War inversion of a traditional mourning ceremony (Elchanan Reiner, oral communication). The ceremony has become a standard part of Jewish tour groups’ itineraries, especially Reform and Conservative ones.
- 14 I surmise that the rite has increased in popularity as many Christian groups have adopted Jewish rituals as a marker of their authenticity (Dulin 2015).
- 15 “The deeper the experience sought by the tourist, the more strongly will he tend to embrace this ‘Other’ and turn it into his ‘elective Center’” (Cohen 1988: 376).
- 16 Thus, Melchizedek is part of the Jewish Bible, but that text is read and valued differently by Christians who read the Old Testament through the New.

## References

- Almog, Oz 2000: *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Bruner, Edward 2004: *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bunten, Alexis 2008: Sharing Culture or Selling Out? Developing the Commodified Persona in the Heritage Industry. *American Ethnologist* 35:3, 380–395.
- Bunten, Alexis 2015: *So, How Long Have You Been Native? Life as an Alaska Native Tour Guide*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.
- Candea, Matei & Giovanni da Col 2012: The Return to Hospitality. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.), S1–S19.
- Cohen, Erik 1979: A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences. *Sociology* 13, 179–202.
- Cohen, Erik 1985: The Tourist Guide – The Origins, Structure and Dynamics of a Role. *Annals of Tourism Research* 12:1, 5–29.
- Cohen, Erik 1988: Authenticity and Commodization in Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 15, 371–386.
- Comaroff, John L. & Jean Comaroff 2009: *Ethnicity, Inc.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Crang, Philip 1997: Performing the Tourist Product. In:

- Chris Rojek & John Urry (eds.), *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*. New York: Routledge, pp. 137–154.
- Crapanzano, Vincent 2017: Textual Self-Authorization. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 23, 175–188.
- Dulin, John 2015: Reversing Rupture: Evangelicals' Practice of Jewish Rituals and Processes of Protestant Inclusion. *Anthropological Quarterly* 88:3, 601–634.
- Feldman, Jackie 2007: Constructing a Shared Bible Land: Jewish-Israeli Guiding Performances for Protestant Pilgrims. *American Ethnologist* 48:2, 348–372.
- Feldman, Jackie 2016: *A Jewish Guide in the Holy Land: How Christian Pilgrims Made Me Israeli*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.
- Fine, Elizabeth C. & Jean Haskell Speer 1985: Tour Guide Performances as Sight Sacralization. *Annals of Tourism Research* 12, 73–95.
- Gurevitch, Zali 1997: The Double Site of Israel. In: Eyal Ben-Ari & Yoram Bilu (eds.), *Grasping Land: Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience*. Albany: SUNY Press, pp. 203–216.
- Guter, Yael & Jackie Feldman 2006: Holy Land Pilgrimage as a Site of Inter-Religious Encounter. *Studia Hebraica* 6, 87–94.
- Herzfeld, Michael 1987: "As in Your Own House": Hospitality, Ethnography, and the Stereotype of Mediterranean Society. In: D. Gilmore (ed.), *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*. Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association, pp. 75–89.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell 1983: *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Katriel, Tamar 1997: *Performing the Past: A Study of Israeli Settlement Museums*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Limor, Ora 1996: Christian Sacred Space and the Jew. In: Jeremy Cohen (ed.), *Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter-Studien Series, 11, pp. 55–77.
- Mitchell, Timothy 2001: Making the Nation: The Politics of Heritage in Egypt. In: Nezar AlSayyad (ed.), *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage: Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism*. London: Routledge, pp. 212–239.
- Pond, Kathleen 1992: *The Professional Guide: Dynamics of Tour Guiding*. New York: Wiley.
- Ren, Carina 2010: Beyond Hosts and Guests: Translating the Concept of Cultural Misconception. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research* 4:4, 287–298.
- Salazar, Noel 2005: Tourism and Glocalization: "Local" Tour Guiding. *Annals of Tourism Research* 32:3, 628–646.
- Salazar, Noel 2013: Seduction: Learning the Trade of Tourist Enticement. In: David Picard & Michael A. Di Giovine (eds.), *Tourism and the Power of Otherness: Seductions of Difference*. Bristol: Channel View Press, pp. 110–123.
- Salazar, Noel 2017: The Unbearable Lightness of Tourism ... as Violence: An Afterword. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 25:5, 703–709.
- Salazar, Noel & Nelson Graburn 2014: *Tourism Imaginaries: Anthropological Approaches*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- Scherle, Nicolai & Almut Nonnenmann 2008: Swimming in Cultural Flows: Conceptualising Tour Guides as Intercultural Mediators and Cosmopolitans. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 6:2, 120–137.
- Schieffelin, Edward 2003: Problematizing Performance. In: Felicia Hughes-Freeland (ed.), *Ritual, Performance, Media*. New York: Routledge, pp. 194–206.
- Selwyn, Tom 1995: Landscapes of Liberation and Imprisonment: Towards an Anthropology of the Israeli Landscape. In: Eric Hirsch & Michael O'Hanlon (eds.), *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 114–134.
- Stromberg, Peter 2009: *Caught in Play: How Entertainment Works on You*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Weiler, Betty & Rosemary Black 2015: The Changing Face of the Tour Guide: One-way Communicator to Choreographer to Co-creator of the Tourist Experience. *Tourism Recreation Research* 40:3, 364–378.
- Widtfeldt Meged, Jane 2017: Guides Crafting Meaning in a Flexible Working Life. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 17:4, 374–387, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2017.1330845>.
- Wynn, Jonathan R. 2011: *The Tour Guide: Walking and Talking New York*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Zerubavel, Yael 1995: *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Zipperstein, Steven 1992: Ahad Ha'am and the Politics of Assimilation. In: *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 344–365.

Jackie Feldman is a professor of anthropology at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, head of the Rabb Center for Holocaust Studies, and visiting lecturer at University of Tübingen. His research areas are pilgrimage and tourism, collective memory, museum studies and Holocaust commemoration. His most recent book is *A Jewish Guide in the Holy Land: How Christian Pilgrims Made Me Israeli* (Bloomington University of Indiana Press, 2016).  
(jfeldman@bgu.ac.il)