

THE INTIMACY OF MEDIATION

Jewish Guides in the Contact Zone of Christian Holy Land Pilgrimage

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The contact zone between groups of Christian pilgrims touring the Holy Land and the Jewish-Israeli tour guides leading these groups can become an area of intercultural intimacy, respect and mutuality, based on a form of shared understanding, despite the cultural differences. Thus, after making sense of the piecemeal and practical notion of “shared understanding” that develops in the day-to-day interaction between the guide and the pilgrims, three practical mediation techniques that are commonly used by guides, are identified through observations and interviews with guides regarding their practical handling of cross-cultural and ethical difficulties. These techniques, channeled into guiding practices, enable guides to engage other religions while fostering relations of intimacy.

Keywords: Christianity, pilgrimage, Holy Land, tour guide, intimacy

Introduction: The Story of Ronen

Ronen is a Jewish-Israeli tour guide who has been guiding groups of pilgrims through the Holy Land for many years. One day, while heading to the airport with a group of tourists after a successful ten-day tour, the tour leader took the microphone and bore his testimony in Christ. He then asked a few tourists to do likewise. Members of this denomination normally end their testimony by saying “and I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ – Amen”. Then, the tour leader turned to Ronen and asked, over the microphone, that is, in public, that he also bear his testimony in Christ. Ronen’s first thought was that since the tour leader knew very well that Ronen was Jewish (they had been working together for more

than twenty years), he had put him on the spot. After ten days together, interacting with local service suppliers and visiting tourist attractions, Ronen could not come to see the request that he testify as a simple act of courtesy. He knew that something deeper was happening here. However, if this was not just an act of courtesy, then it is not altogether clear whether the tour leader called upon Ronen *despite* knowing that he was Jewish, or perhaps he called upon him *because* Ronen was Jewish – thus, carrying out his missionary role. As a tour guide in the Holy Land, although he does not share the pilgrims’ faith, Ronen is *de facto* taking part in their spiritual journey, informally almost serving as a “witness” as he tells the group of the events which, according to

tradition, took place at the various sites, conveying to them their Christian meaning and significance. After traveling the country/the Holy Land together, a sense of intimacy and shared understanding is created. Ronen describes his deep sense of personal uneasiness:

I felt trapped, and did not like the corner that I was led into. My reply was: "I am honored and proud to guide Christians through this land. As a Jew I will not bear testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, but I do bear testimony that this tour is spiritually significant to me." I have known this tour leader for more than twenty years, and I knew right away that it was a challenge to our relationship. (Ronen, interview, September 22, 2014)

Ronen thought that his response was appropriate and that he was successfully treading the middle ground, both distinguishing himself from their faith, yet encouraging their spiritual journey by mimicking their tropes. When Ronen says: "I bear testimony that this tour is spiritually significant to me," he affirms a shared sense of intimacy between the Jewish tour guide and the Christian pilgrims.

Following a short overview of the literature on Jewish-Israeli tour guides guiding Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land, this paper has a twofold goal. First, in a more theoretical section, we examine the shared understanding and intimate mediation between the guide and the pilgrims. Second, using interviews and observations, we answer the practical question of how this is done, thus identifying three practical mediation techniques that are commonly used by guides.

Literature on Tour Guiding in the Holy Land: Issues of Faith and Religious Identity

Many of the original sites commemorating and celebrating the life and death of Jesus in the Holy Land were destroyed after Jesus' death and subsequently destroyed and rebuilt several times; nevertheless, the shrines and churches built at these sites are tangible places through which the Christian pilgrims come to enact Jesus' life and journey. At the same time,

Jewish-Israeli tour guides, who guide the pilgrims at these sites, do not share this Christian narrative and are, one way or another, entrenched in the narrative of Israeli collective nationhood with its Jewish links to the sites and the land. Thus, the interaction between Jewish-Israeli guides and groups of Christian pilgrims touring the Holy Land, is a rich domain for the study of cross-cultural understanding.

When a Jewish-Israeli guide takes a group of Christian pilgrims to historical-religious sites in the Holy Land, he or she is not a detached professional. As expressed by Feldman (2015: 78), guides to the Holy Land play the additional spiritual role of "forming the diverse sites of the tour into a spiritual path". Hence, within the broad field of research on tour guides in general (Weiler & Black 2015; Ron, Lurie & Guter forthcoming), Jewish guides guiding Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land are a particularly interesting case. Specifically, at least two related research agendas are commonly pursued in this context: On the one hand, the interaction and shared understanding between Jewish guides and Christian pilgrims, overcoming their cultural differences, provides for a more cross-cultural context of research. On the other hand, the personal gap between the guides' identity as members of the Jewish-Israeli community and their professional role in leading the pilgrims along their spiritual journey, provides a context for a study of their professional ethics. Within the context of these two research agendas, this research presents a pragmatic and tactful understanding of the interaction between guides and pilgrims, in which the cultural differences are bypassed and the professional ethics is not principle-based.¹

Much has been written on the topic of Jewish-Israeli guides leading Christian pilgrims through the Holy Land (see detailed list of references in Ron, Lurie & Guter forthcoming). The most relevant sources for this research are Guter (2004), Feldman (2016, and in this special issue), Harani (2015) and Kaell (2010, 2014). Except for Hillary Kaell, all share the double title of academics and guides. Guter's work and Harani's work are a useful database of guides' thick descriptions of their professional niche as Jewish-Israeli guides who interact with Christians and

Christianities on a regular basis. Feldman's anthropological background and the time factor of decades of a double professional identity ("Dr. Jackie and Mr. Guide", in Feldman 2016: 144) contributed several insights regarding guides' identity and performative role; Kaell's work is different because her fieldwork as a participant observer looked at both guides and pilgrims, and observed the interactions between these two groups.

Yisca Harani, who is in charge of the guides' continuing education in Christianity at the Israel Ministry of Tourism, describes the personal difficulty tour guides face when questioned about their faith and religious identity:

Nine out of ten tour guides have been asked by tourists whether or not they are Christians and/or believers in Jesus Christ... After the sites are presented as the authentic places in which the miracles and events took place, and excerpts of the New Testament are read aloud, the listeners wonder whether they are faced with a Jew or a "believer". Tour guides faced with this question for the first time may be amazed or embarrassed, and sometimes feel distress about letting down the asker by admitting that for themselves Jesus is not their messiah or savior. (Harani 2015: 10)

On the other hand, from a cross-cultural perspective, after a Jewish tour guide is revealed as a "non-believer" in Christ, the question that arises is: "How can you read the Scriptures and *not* accept the Messiah?" This can lead to feelings of frustration among the pilgrims, who may attempt to convert the guide to Christianity, but also to feelings of frustration among guides, as their religious identity is constantly challenged (as observed earlier in the case of Ronen).

Intimacy of Mediation and Cross-cultural Understanding

The Contact Zone

The interaction between Jewish-Israeli tour guides and Christian pilgrims touring the Holy Land is an interaction between people from different cultures,

who journey together to specific physical places, where each sees the same physical sites as something exhibiting quite a different meaning and experiences the sites in a different manner. The epistemological nature of this interaction and the cross-cultural understanding it enables are the focus of this paper. More specifically, this paper articulates the epistemological nature of the cross-cultural understanding between the guides as cultural mediators, and the tourists, people from different religions and cultures. Coming from different cultures and despite their different personal religious beliefs, guides and tourists are able to share intimacy, respect and mutuality.

The term "contact zone" was coined by Mary Louise Pratt in her keynote address to the Modern Language Association. According to her, this term refers "to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt 1991: 34). She goes on to explain that the idea of the contact zone "is intended in part to contrast with ideas of [a single monolithic] community that underline much of the thinking about language, communication and culture" (ibid.: 37). Although the term was developed in other contexts of power relations, tourism scholarship then borrowed it to describe the friction area and gap between hosts and guests (Bianchi 2000; Bruner 2005: 18–19, 232; Cejas 2006; Toyota 2006; Feldman & Skinner, Introduction in this issue). However, while the contact between foreign tourists and local hosts might be limited to what Bruner called "touristic border zones", the contact between the local tour guide and the tourists is rich, multifaceted and may last for long days over the course of a week or longer. This is the relevant usage of the concept "contact zone" for the present research.

More specifically, the contact zone is the space of interaction, both professional and personal, between the Jewish tour guides and the Christian pilgrims. On a professional level, the explicit task of the Jewish tour guide is to provide the pilgrims with a par-

ticular Christian narrative regarding the holy sites, including some which, according to his or her best professional judgement, could be historically inaccurate and are not altogether supported by acceptable historical and archaeological evidence. Leading the tour group on their spiritual journey requires that the guide bypass “heretical” critical perspectives, no matter how historically accurate and true he or she believes these perspectives might be, so as not to harm their holistic and total experience. On a personal level, despite being Jewish, the tour guide is expected not only to enable, but also to more or less passively participate in, the different ceremonies and rituals, to trail along and partake in various expressive forms of behavior, that he or she not only does not share, but that might also be offensive to his or her own cultural integrity. The idea being that when partaking in certain shared actions, especially ceremonies such as prayer and singing national anthems, it does not make sense to be a passive participant.

Despite the putative cultural gap between Jewish tour guides and Christian pilgrims, the process of cultural mediation requires a kind of intimacy between the guide and the tourists. Notwithstanding the cultural differences between the guide and the pilgrims, the outcome of this interaction, when successful, is a sense of shared intimacy between guides and Christian pilgrims. That is to suggest that alongside the explicit goals of the tour (such as “seeing Jesus” or “strengthening our faith”), guiding a tour in this situation involves a form of cultural mediation between the Christian pilgrims and the Jewish tour guide, between the Christian narrative and modern-day Israel.

An intimate relationship is a close affective interpersonal relationship between people. Intimacy certainly need not be limited to sexual intimacy alone – one can speak of different types of intimacy, such as emotional intimacy, intellectual intimacy or experiential intimacy. A sense of intimacy can occur in



Ill. 1: Tour guide with a pilgrim group during bible class, led by Dr. Wayne E. Brickey, at the Mount of the Beatitudes located by the Sea of Galilee in Israel. (Photo: Amos S. Ron, 2009)

many life situations, such as at a dinner party or during an exchange of ideas. It is formed through mutual understanding and shared experience. Thus, a sense of emotional or affectionate intimacy between guides and pilgrims can develop as a result of mutual understanding, while sharing a meaningful experience. Commonly, when two or more people share an intimate moment they must be aware that the experience is significantly meaningful to the other. It is often the case with guides and pilgrims that the former serves as a mediator and appreciates that this is a significant experience for the other. In such cases, there is a shared sense of intimacy, although the experience is meaningful to one side alone. As articulated by Garlikov (1995), “intimacy is sharing in what is good and personally important to another person and having it be important to you while you are together, intimacy can be facilitated or established by caring about another person and helping bring about what is important to them”. Moreover, a shared sense of intimacy between two people can develop even when they come from very different cultural settings, that is, intercultural intimacy.

Consequently, intimacy between the tour guide and the pilgrims is especially prevalent between the guide and the tour leader who, in most cases, is also a spiritual leader (pastor, priest, etc.). Some tour leaders return periodically, sometimes twice a year or more, for twenty or thirty years, and often want to use the services of the same guide, year after year. This creates a sense of intimacy, which is quite uncommon in professional circles. For example, Amos Ron (one of the authors) guided groups led by Dr. Wayne E. Brickey, an American Christian spiritual leader (see ill. 1), between the years 1990 and 2012. During that period, Amos visited him and his family in the American West a number of times, also with members of Amos’ family, and likewise, Brickey came to Amos’ house several times, and also met Amos’ parents on a number of occasions. A few months ago, one of Brickey’s sons called Amos and said: “You know that dad is very sick [with cancer], and he asked me to call you and ask that you come over here to say goodbye.” Amos’ reply was that he would be able to come in the summer, when there is

a school break, but his son’s assertive reply was that he would not live that long. A few weeks later, Amos made the 24-hour journey, at his own expense, and spent a few days with Brickey and his family. Brickey passed away eight hours after Amos’ departure. After he passed away, one of his daughters suggested that since dad is gone, and dad saw Amos as a “brother in spirit”, we can then call Amos “uncle Amos”. Her initiative was circulated via Facebook, and minutes later, after accepting the offer, Amos became “uncle Amos”, and a member of their family.

Shared Understanding

The religious differences between tour guides and pilgrims which might perhaps exist at the level of grand theory or basic religious theology are bypassed in a piecemeal manner: unsystematically, through partial measures via shared practices, over time. Like a mosaic, these shared practices are not subservient to the grand theory, nor do they form a global coherent worldview. They are intimate points of contact where concrete shared practices allow for respect and mutuality. This notion of shared understanding, which is exhibited in Ronen’s story, stands in need of further theoretical grounding.

Returning to Ronen’s example and pushing the example a bit further, it is worth looking at Ronen’s intentions in saying that he was “honored and proud to guide Christians through this land” and how the pilgrims understood this claim. We assume that the pilgrims probably understood him to mean that he was honored to be part of their spiritual journey, bringing the written words of the Bible to life and walking together with them in the footsteps of Jesus. In contrast, Ronen said this as a professional tour guide who was proud of his expertise and honored that the group had chosen him as their guide. It was essential for him not to surrender his Jewish identity and the sense in which he differs from the group. But within this context this is not a fundamental hindrance. Ronen was aware that his words may be understood differently by pilgrims, but he deliberately utilized a strategy of creative ambiguity maintaining intimacy with the pilgrims (and the tour leader) by reaffirming the common spiritual goal of

the group, while maintaining his personal integrity in his commitment to a Jewish identity. By traveling through the Holy Land together, a sense of intimacy and shared understanding is created. As discussed, this shared understanding results in a shared group dimension. Ronen was interviewed once more (over the telephone, August 1, 2018) and sounded more relaxed about the whole issue:

When this incident took place, I was both angry and sad. Angry because he put me on the spot, and sad because I feared it was the end of our relationship. I now realize that what he had done is exactly in line with the missionary nature of this denomination, and with his sparkling personality. I understand and respect him and we have been in touch since, and I definitely did not lose him.

As Ronen's example demonstrates, managing the interaction within the contact zone between guides and pilgrims is subtle and complex. It is intricate and a gradual piece by piece process, including subtle references and gestures, making use of the rich and expressive language: the Christian pilgrims could mean one thing by "bearing testimony" and the local host could use this phrase quite differently; the pilgrims and the guide can visit a local site together, such as the Garden Tomb, have a shared understanding that it is a significant historical site, and yet experience its Christian meaning differently; thus, they express their shared sense of fellowship and spirituality.

This conception of shared understanding can be clarified in contrast with the Gadamerian notion of "fusion of horizons", which is a paradigm for shared understanding. According to Gadamer (2004), every encounter between different traditions involves a tension, similar to the tension between Jewish guides and Christian pilgrims over the meaning of the sites and the forging of an experience. According to Gadamer,

The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naïve assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out. This is

why part of the hermeneutic approach (is) to project a historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present... In the process of understanding, a real fusing of horizons occurs. (2004: 306–307)

In other words, according to Gadamer, real understanding of one tradition by the other (and vice versa) only takes place when each tradition overcomes its own biases (prejudices as prejudgments) in favor of a more comprehensive and coherent fusion of horizons. As Gadamer fleshes this out, "the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the parts and back to the whole (ibid.: 291)" – that is, the hermeneutic circle. However, within the context of the tourists' experience this is neither possible nor desirable. The guide and the tourist do not engage in a Gadamerian dialog toward mutual understanding, because neither side is really willing to challenge their own prejudices or try to reach a shared agreement in judgement. Tourists who are visitors to the local culture are not cultural immigrants and the differences between the two religions' historical narratives is not challenged. Moreover, while each tradition might provide rich and meaningful experiences for its participants and a narrative within which to understand the various physical sites, fusing them together is artificial and alien to both.

In the same vein, Bateson's ([1972]2000) notion of an overriding meta-narrative also fails to do justice to the complex notion of the shared understanding Ronen exhibits. In a case study that examines the contention points between Jewish guides and Christian pilgrims, Bajc (2006, 2007) focuses on how Christian pilgrims and Jewish guides interact, and on the framing of each cultural group's unique experience through its meta-narrative. Applying Bateson's ([1972]2000) notion of meta-narrative, she argues that while the meta-narrative of each of the two groups, the pilgrims' and the guide's, remains unchallenged, they are able to have a dialog and "negotiate specific places and narratives" during the tour (Bajc 2006: 110). Applying Bateson's concept of an unchallenged meta-narrative with sub-narratives that are open to dialog is, however, a conceptual

simplification which erects a false dualism within language and culture between the authority of the meta-narrative and the sub-narratives that are subservient to it.

As an alternative, thinkers as different and diverse as Lyotard (1984), in his criticism of modernity, or Wittgenstein (1953) proposing his notion of “language games”, profess a concept that gives preference to a plurality of small narratives over a hierarchy of narratives. Moreover, as emphasized by Wittgenstein, within this plurality of language games, meaning has to do with how the words are used (within practices and in interactions). Meaning is not permanently ascribed to words; the same word can mean different things, within different languages, and when used differently. Specifically, this is manifest by the fact that as a guide one can bypass significant theological disagreements and still grasp and relate to the joy and meaning that the pilgrims experience. In Wittgenstein’s language, these are different language games. The guide does not simply understand *the fact that they are joyful and spiritually moved*, but rather understands their emotions and what they feel. In other words, the guide does not simply understand *that so and so is the case*, in the sense of detached and abstract propositional beliefs. Rather, he or she understands their experience of meaning.² This has to do with the fact that one can react and respond to their expression of emotions in the most immediate and inter-human sense. This is a very powerful sense of shared understanding. By way of analogy, it is a very basic human trait to smile when seeing someone happy or, when seeing someone suffering, to identify by shedding a tear. In simple and concrete terms, the guide reacts to their joy and elation, and can even share their emotions without personally feeling spiritually moved, that is, without turning this understanding into propositional knowledge. Through his own experiences, the guide can share the same type of emotion, and thus makes it possible for a sense of intimacy to emerge, although he or she does not personally experience the same feelings in relation to the sites. In this immediate sense, sharing similar emotions provides a first step toward intimacy. Sharing similar emotions

in this sense is one aspect of how groups and collectives are formed (McMillan & Chavis 1986: 12).

Moreover, although under normal circumstances the Jewish tour guide and the group of pilgrims do not experience the meaning of the sites in quite the same way, this does not rule out the possibility that, depending on the broader social and ritualistic context of the visit to the various tourist sites, one can experience the same site once as sacred and once as profane. This is linked to the broader phenomenon of “seeing as” that is extensively discussed by Wittgenstein. As articulated by Wittgenstein, someone can now experience the sites (or figures) this way, and later, that way (Wittgenstein 1980: 25, 31, 66, 156). Recognizing the pilgrims’ experience of joy and elation, the guide can see in what way the sites have a special meaning to them.

The guide is a mediator between the foreign tourist and the local culture.³ As a mediator he or she has a practical – practice-based – role in making the local culture accessible enough to the tourist, so that the latter can experience it not only as a foreign and exotic form of life, but rather come to grasp what it means and how it is significant to those who partake in it. On the other hand, the tour guide has to lead the group in such a way that friction and conflict with local practices are mitigated and reduced. Groups of tourists who visit strange and exotic countries are staged in organized groups moving from site to site, and it is the local tour guides’ job to mediate and introduce the foreign tourists to the local cultural practices and symbols (Cohen 1985). This is neither theoretical nor abstract. The constant predicament of the tour guide is to straddle between the two cultures: between the guide’s own host culture and the tourists’ foreign cultural understanding. The guide must be fluent in the language of the group and present the local culture in their language; the guide must also be able to connect and relate to the groups’ specific interests and concerns. Using the terminology of Salazar based on case studies of Indonesia and Tanzania, the guide has to maneuver between his local identity, which is a form of social capital within the frame of the guided tour, and the cosmopolitan capital that he develops professionally (Salazar 2010:

78–110, 2012: 874–875). The group commonly travels (as they are staged in an environmental bubble) along a preset itinerary, usually designed around predefined tourist attractions. They have minimal unmediated face-to-face contact with the local people. The key to this mediation has to do with forging shared practices, that is, intercultural interactions, while sharing the same goal. The tourists visit local sites and attractions, purchase various services and goods from local suppliers while staying in local hotels. Intercultural interactions begin with the most mundane matters of dress code at dinner and at holy sites, tipping service providers, and what it means to show up on time and travel as a group. These intercultural interactions continue and become thicker according to the itinerary and specific tourist attractions chosen for the group, and reach their pinnacle when the local tour guide takes his or her position and stands in the midst (or in front) of the group and begins framing the stories and narratives of the various physical sites and attractions the group is visiting, to create a meaningful experience. This pinnacle experience is created through the guide's charging the sites with meanings that conform to the tourists' personal faith.

Practical Techniques for Promoting Intimacy

Following this more abstract discussion of the notion of “shared understanding” upon which intimate mediation between the guide and the pilgrims comes to exist, we now turn to some empirical data, based on interviews and observations, which is used to identify and flesh out some of the practical guiding techniques that promote intimate mediation.

Research Methodology

Methods: The research methods applied here are qualitative, and include collecting and using primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include: (a) reflexive observations (Davies 2008: 83) based on Amos Ron's, the first author's, 37-year guiding experience⁴ of Christian pilgrims from several denominations and destinations, which led him to be deeply immersed in the socio-cultural context of both the tour guide and the pilgrim; (b) in-depth

interviews with Jewish-Israeli tour guides specializing in guiding Christian pilgrims.

The secondary sources include the written works of Jewish-Israeli academic tour guides (Feldman 2016; Guter 2004; Harani 2015; Ron, Lurie & Guter forthcoming), and participant observations done by Hillary Kaell (2010). The categorization of primary and secondary sources was blurred at times, because as a tour guide himself, Amos Ron was interviewed a number of times by Guter, while he also assisted occasionally in choosing the interviewees, due to personal and professional ties with Guter.

Collecting the data: The primary data set consists of 15 informal and semi-structured interviews with licensed Jewish-Israeli tour guides who specialize in this market. The personal interviews took place over a period of 17 years, and selecting the guides was based on personal acquaintance, place of residence and random factors. Both formal and informal interviews took place at hotels (usually in the Galilee, when away from home), restaurants, and at sacred sites while the group attended mass, or was engaged in some other spiritual activity, during which the guide had time off. Formal interviews were recorded, and usually lasted longer. Informal interviews were shorter, and at times it was in a setting where other guides could overhear the conversation.

Interviewing the guides was rather easy; we found that in many cases tour guides were eager to talk about their guiding experiences, not only because they are talkers by professional definition and habit, but also because they need to share their ongoing experiences and observations with someone else.

Imitation, Distinction and Fabrication

Based on qualitative data derived from interviews and reflective observation and participant observation, it is possible to identify three strategies – imitation, distinction and fabrication – through which intimate mediation is achieved and a shared understanding is forged.

Imitation in tourism settings is often referred to as the *demonstration effect* (Burns 1999; Fisher 2004; Monterrubio & Mendoza-Ontiveros 2014), which is broadly defined as a situation in which the local

imitates the tourist in order to gain some advantage – usually monetary.

The concept of the demonstration effect in relation to tourism was probably borrowed from economics. According to Duesenberry (1949), consumption habits are often socially generated by one person seeing another person consuming the same thing, that is, by emulation, and are not linked to personal likes or dislikes. As such, when people feel pressured to alter and increase consumption habits, the demonstration effect within the context of consumption often leads to a sense of dissatisfaction with current levels and habits of consumption.

The demonstration effect is manifest in the relationship between guides and pilgrims in many subtle ways. The guide might imitate the pilgrim, to a certain degree, while at the same time strive to maintain a distinction between himself and the pilgrims, seeking to set clear boundaries for the sake of protecting his distinct identity. Jewish guides find themselves treading a thin line – on the one hand, showing respect for the pilgrims' faith and imitating their practices, lingo and expressive gestures, while on the other hand, maintaining a distinction to protect their own identity. According to Jewish tradition (Avodah Zarah 17a), for example, it is forbidden for Jews to enter churches. This is a daily problem for religiously observant tour guides, although even for secular guides, distinctions are necessary. Alon, for example, tries to hold both ends by making a rigid spatial distinction. In his words:

I simply stay outside the church building, but they don't miss much because I explain outside the church. Often they ask why I don't go in, and I explain the theology behind the prohibition. Usually they find it fascinating, so I don't feel that I compromise on the quality of my guiding. (Alon, interview, March 10, 2016)

Other guides do enter the churches, but the spatial distinction is milder and takes place inside the building. According to Feldman (2016: 132–133), the Jewish guides Gloria and Bernice take care never to speak from the ambo, the place of preaching of

priests, even in inactive churches that have long become archaeological ruins. Language can also assist in creating distinctions. Language goes both ways. If the guide imitates the pilgrims' lingo then language is a bridge between cultures, but language can create a separation if noticed. For example, Guter recounts the story of Helen, who avoids reading in public from Christian sacred scriptures:

I never read from the New Testament. I always find a volunteer to read. Nobody notices this, because I do this with other readings, as well. They don't feel that I don't read from the New Testament *as a matter of principle*. (Guter 2004: 250)

Ronen does read from the New Testament, but he is very precise with his wording:

I call him Jesus, and never Christ or Jesus Christ, because Christ means Messiah, and for us he is not the Messiah. (Interview, March 6, 2016)

So does Gloria:

I will never call him by his Hebrew name, Yeshua. Because he doesn't belong to me. Only "Jesus," never another name. (In Feldman 2016: 131–132)

Thus, these brief examples demonstrate how the techniques of imitation and distinction are applied with various degrees of prominence in tour guide practices in a manner that mediates the religious and cultural differences, enabling intimacy while nonetheless maintaining a subtle distinction: referring to him by the first name "Jesus", yet maintaining a distinction and not according him the title of "Christ"; or going with the familiar "Jesus" but maintaining the distinction that he is not "Yeshua", which in Hebrew means "the Savior". The distinction helps the guide maintain her identity, while going with the group. From the group's perspective this might vary: in some cases it might go unnoticed by them, while in other cases it takes a while until the group is aware of the guide's standing.

Another technique is fabrication, which is a well-

known aspect of guiding. Erik Cohen mentions fabrication as part of the mediatory sphere, and as a form of communication that takes place while guiding. Although in a general context fabrication is a form of lie, Cohen realized that the cause of fabrication could also be seen in the context of trying to provide a good service:

He [the guide] thus frequently finds himself treading the narrow path between refined interpretative keying and outright fabrication. (Cohen 1985: 21)

In the context of guiding Christian pilgrims, one of the most problematic situations is when a guide declares that “according to the tradition, this event happened here”. By adding these four words, the guide displaces her commitment to authenticate the site or event to “tradition”. She can create the impression that either she thinks that the event never happened at all, or that it may have happened, but perhaps not here. Some guides often use this delicate terminology, but others feel that they should not. For example,

one guide told me that with Catholic groups, he never says “according to the tradition”. Everything has to be true; all the places they visit must be authentic beyond any doubt. Otherwise, it will ruin the entire tour, and the relationship with the group and with the tour leader. (Guter 2004: 136)

Another example is provided by Hillary Kaell, who quotes a conversation between Dorothy, an American evangelical pilgrim, and Gilead, a Jewish-Israeli guide, on a tour she observed for her research:

The next morning, she [Dorothy] broached the issue ... asking Gilead, “Do Jews believe in Jesus?” His answer was abstruse: “It’s like a palm tree. The roots keep it strong – they are the same and then there are the branches – one goes one way and one goes the other way but it’s the same really.” Dorothy pressed the issue, asking him if he personally believes in Jesus. He responded: “You can’t be a

guide without developing a relationship with Jesus.” Dorothy was overjoyed ... that Gilead did indeed believe Jesus was the Messiah. Later, when I asked him about the exchange he replied..., “I’ve developed a relationship with Jesus like I’ve developed a relationship with [Roman-era historian] Flavius Josephus or any other historical character. So it’s not a lie, how she takes it is how she takes it.” (Kaell 2010: 232–233)

In this sense, he diverted the question from his personal religious convictions to his daily guiding practices and interactions as a guide leading pilgrims. For Dorothy this was sufficient in order to feel a connection with Gilead, while it enabled Gilead to maintain his personal integrity.

The guides’ flexibility in finding the most suitable narrative is not limited to the Jewish-Christian context. Other researchers point to the same phenomenon in other contexts.

This raises two separate issues that deserve further discussion: The first issue, epistemological, relates to the cross-cultural understanding between guides and pilgrims. The second issue, normative, concerns the ethical question lurking in the background, whether these techniques (specifically fabrication and imitation) are not forms of deception. That is, to ask whether these practices are morally acceptable.

Returning to Wittgenstein, these examples illustrate the sense in which cross-cultural understanding, or language in Wittgenstein’s terminology, is not just a matter of words, sentences, and syntactical structures. Rather, cross-cultural understanding of subtle meanings has to do with interactive language-games and the way language is used in social interactions. Thus, for example, reading a text inside a sacred place as opposed to reading it outside; using the limiting clause “according to tradition” in an explanation; or the complex interaction between Dorothy and Gilead – all are different language games and different ways of creating cultural understanding. The meaning of words is interwoven with actions; meaning has to do with use. Thus, the process of cross-cultural understanding is a piecemeal process

of using language in practical situations, through which understanding and trust are built. What these examples demonstrate is that intimate cross-cultural understanding is possible without agreement in either meta-narratives or a hermeneutic dialog “from the whole to the parts and back to the whole”. The guides and the pilgrims interact with one another, use language in practical situations and relate to one another in the context of the historical-religious sites.

Regarding the normative question, essentially, like a good service professional, Gilead played his part, his role, in this particular social interaction. The norms that govern one’s private life are not identical to the norms of professional life, and what being honest and truthful means in private life is not the same as in professional life. Service professionals are professionals and as such there are special responsibilities and conflicting duties they must balance. Clearly, honesty as a professional tour guide does not require that Gilead reveal to Dorothy his deepest religious feelings, as he probably should to his family. Nevertheless, assessing Gilead’s fabrication from a normative moral perspective is not a black-and-white issue and is beyond the scope of the present discussion. Such a discussion requires much more contextual information about the relationship between guides and tourists, in general, and in this situation, in particular.

Conclusions

To conclude, what has been argued can be summarized in two main points: The first issue concerns the intimate understanding between the guide and the tour group; the second has to do with understanding a foreign culture.⁵

Although tour guides are, in a sense, professionals, this paper has argued that even between professional Jewish-Israeli guides and Christian pilgrims touring through the Holy Land, there is a sense of intimacy that emerges through cultural mediation. Traveling the country together for several days, carefully communicating with one another about both the mundane and the sacred, while (at least for the pilgrims) going through powerful spiritual-religious

experiences, make this human connection possible. As with other professional occupations, there is an inherent knowledge-gap and dependence between the professional providing the service and the client, that is, between the tour guide and the group. *Prima facie*, there is potential for dispute and conflict due to the gap between Jewish guides and Christian tourists. However, despite the cultural differences between Jewish-Israeli tour guides and Christian pilgrims, intimacy is forged through imitation, distinction and fabrication.

The contact zone between Jewish-Israeli tour guides and Christian pilgrims touring the Holy Land is a place where people from two different cultures meet and interact; although they do not share the same religious beliefs and, in ordinary circumstances, might have a conflicting understanding of the historical and religious meaning of the sites they have visited, an intimate sense of shared understanding is created. Like a mosaic, shared practices, expressive gestures and language enable intimate points of contact where concrete shared practices allow for respect and mutuality. On a psychological level, tour guides are expected to recognize the spirituality, joy and elation experienced by the pilgrims, through imitation, distinction and fabrication. They should relate to this meaningful experience with respect.

In addition to the two significant points made above, this paper’s contribution to our understanding and knowledge of the tour guides should be qualified, and it is not legitimate to haphazardly expand the arguments made here to other contexts. First of all, there is a difference between a Holy Land Christian pilgrimage with a Jewish-Israeli guide and other encounters between local guides and foreign pilgrims in other geographical contexts. Our data suggests that this case is unique, partly because of the historical debate between Jews and Christians that contains a dialectic of intimacy and distinction (cf. Ron, Lurie & Guter forthcoming). In certain Christian circles, Jews are expected to accept Jesus as the one and only Messiah, and any deviation from this path can result in mutual frustration; yet it is often precisely the guide’s Judaism and relation to the

Bible and the Land that heighten the guide's authority and the group's expectation of him. Hence, the guide finds himself or herself dealing with tension management issues while guiding which are unique (Cohen 1985).

Related to this, the three techniques used by guides (imitation, distinction and fabrication) are permissible, and even desirable in the unique context presented. However, from an ethical perspective, carrying these techniques over to other contexts is questionable. Our data suggests that imitation is the most permissible, possibly because of the humorous context; distinction is acceptable, although not always appreciated; and fabrication is the least tolerated, always hidden from the tourist, because it is perhaps somewhat dishonest. Finally, questions might be raised about the tension between truthfulness and intimacy. Conflicts between truth and intimacy exist in other contexts as well, such as families and other close relations. This tension is part of the fabric of human relations and the proper path to balance this tension is intuitive, dynamic, and most likely reciprocal. Both the guide and the tourist cherish this intimacy, do not want to harm it, and hence try to find the proper path of compromise.

Notes

- 1 The notion of "principle-based approach" is common both in ethical theory in reference to familiar theories such as those by Kant and Mill, and in contrast with virtue ethics, particularism or casuistry. The notion of principle-based approach is also used in regulation, such as for example principle-based approach to environmental policy using a single-instrument for policy as opposed to consideration of particularities and circumstance.
- 2 As expressed by Wittgenstein, "there are cases in which we may call a particular experience 'noticing, seeing, conceiving that so and so is the case', before expressing it by word or gestures, and that there are other cases in which if we talk of an experience of conceiving at all, we have to apply this word to the experience of using certain words, gestures, etc." (Wittgenstein 1958: 137). In other words, there is a kind of "mental undertone" or "depth" in philosophical investigation.
- 3 In this context, see Feldman & Skinner in this special issue.
- 4 It is estimated that in the course of the given period Amos Ron guided approximately 7,000 pilgrims.

- 5 In most cases the Jewish-Israeli guides and the Christian pilgrims come from different cultural backgrounds. In this context it is important to introduce the term "intercultural communication", which has been researched in the context of tour guide performance by Scherle & Nonnenmann (2008); Trauer & Ryan (2005); Weiler & Black (2015: 64–68); Widtfeldt Megeð (2010).

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