
Guiding Settler Jerusalem

Voice and the Transpositions of History in Religious Zionist Pilgrimage

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■ **ABSTRACT:** This article examines how Elad, a religious Zionist settler group, attempts to reanimate biblical tales by transposing biblical text as part of tours for Jewish visitors to the City of David archaeological site in East Jerusalem. Since the early 1990s, Elad has created controversy by settling in the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan, provoking criticism from Israeli archaeologists and peace activists. In an effort to avoid ‘politics’ during tours, the group emphasizes a now globalized historicist reading of the Bible, an interpretation popularized by archaeology over the last century and a half. The article considers how transposition from this historicist reading into the here and now is a rhetorical device used to create a biblical realism that does not yet exist in the contested landscape. However, rather than producing an erasure of the Palestinian presence, and in contradiction to the professed desire to refrain from politics, I show that the very communicative situation and multiple framings for producing this biblical realism inevitably remind visitors of the contemporary context.

■ **KEYWORDS:** Bible, Elad, pilgrimage, politics, realism, settlers, Jerusalem

In December 1998, a Religious Zionist rabbi, Yehuda Maly, gave a tour to a group of guides associated with an East Jerusalem non-profit settler organization, Elad (an abbreviation for *el ir david*, ‘toward the City of David’).¹ Elad is active in a Palestinian neighborhood called Silwan, which it wants to populate with Jewish residents. Rabbi Maly is not only an instructor but also a senior member of Elad as well as a resident in one of the settlement houses. Rabbi Maly’s tour was part of a training program for Elad’s guides, and it emphasized the biblical story of the prophet Jeremiah. In fact, Maly told the story in a pit that, he claimed, had once been identified by an early biblical archaeologist as a “royal cistern.”² This pit is found in an area of East Jerusalem that many believe could be where the biblical King David’s palace once stood. At the time, Elad’s guides were fond of entering the pit to tell the story of Jeremiah. They would often explain the archaeological evidence for associating the area with a water supply for the biblical palace, and then they liked to suggest—usually framed with some scientific uncertainty—that perhaps this was the pit into which, in biblical times, Jeremiah had been thrown. As told in the Book of Jeremiah (especially Chapter 38), Jeremiah was famously punished for warning King Zedekiah



and his officers that their warmongering and sinful behavior would lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and of the First Temple.

Rabbi Maly's rendition of the Jeremiah story was well-known among Elad guides, all of whom recommended that I tour with him.³ I was not able to, but I did obtain a copy of a recording of his training tour for the guides. At the end of the tour, Rabbi Maly discussed his techniques and took questions from the guides. Efrat, one of the young women doing her national service with Elad's City of David Visitors Center, explained to Rabbi Maly what impressed her about his rendition: his ability to make a link between the material remains he described on the tour and several contemporary emblems, like the Declaration of Independence. As she put it:

Something that I really enjoyed was ... the link [*hakishur*]. I always had it, but I didn't make [that link] through the Declaration of Independence, through all kinds of human things. That Jeremiah isn't an angel, to say that he's a human being and that he acts, and that he has all kinds of things. That's an incredible thing. Because it doesn't leave them as names in the Bible ... It also reminds me of something Davidele [David Be'eri, Elad's founder and director] said. I'm not sure it's really relevant, but he said that the moment that you see one flag in the City of David, that's exactly what turns the City of David from a museum to truth [*mimuze'on le'emet*].

The question of linkage or connection (*xibur*) was a constant struggle for Elad's guides. They wanted their Jewish visitors to become pilgrims, enacting the past and future of the nation by sensing a link to both the City of David archaeological site and the settlers themselves. For Be'eri and the young Efrat, seeing Israeli flags on settlement residences in Silwan meant that the Palestinian neighborhood was becoming the Jewish City of David again. However, as the guides discussed at length in the recorded session with Rabbi Maly, they often feel that the political criticism of Elad's actions interferes with the representation of past, present, and future that they seek to display through their performances. Efrat found Rabbi Maly's rendition compelling because he had brought the figure of Jeremiah alive in ways that made the prophet relevant for settlement and contemporary public debates. Elad believes that such techniques will convince Jews to support it. Its members are almost entirely concerned with guiding Jews in the City of David site, stating that Jews are their 'target audience' and that they are not concerned with how Christians might use the site. For Elad and its guides, promoting a pilgrimage for Jews involves creating a biblical aesthetic or realism through performances that not only reanimate the canonical stories of national history but also impart a realism that connects those events to the contemporary world in ways that—to supporters—seem to deflect political criticism.

These settlers then feed off, and seek to extend, a particular Israeli historical imagination by having Jews visit the City of David site. Simon Coleman (2002) has called for the study of pilgrimage to move beyond the debates between Victor and Edith Turner's (1978) stress on community and anti-structure and the critique by John Eade and Michael Sallnow (1991), and to consider related themes, such as history and memory. Holy Land pilgrimage today is permeated with references to biblical narratives as historical events—a rereading (or re-entextualization) of the Bible achieved through a century and a half of producing archaeological evidence. Elsewhere, I call this a 'historicist' reading of the Bible (Paz 2012). Here, I am concentrating on how such pilgrimage is constituted by a historical imagination shaped in crucial ways through rhetorical technique.

The historical pasts that Rabbi Maly and other Elad guides attempt to animate and integrate come from biblical stories, Zionist histories of settlement and statehood, and Elad's own activities in Silwan. Writing about Protestant tours in Israel, Jackie Feldman (2007: 351) has neatly summarized how the complex constitution of a tour can help to overcome a political struggle that is very apparent to many visitors: "The Jewish Israeli guides and Protestant pastors who lead biblical tours

become coproducers of a mutually satisfying performance that transforms the often-contested terrain of Israel-Palestine into Bible Land. Through listening to guides' narrations of biblical sites as they view them and move through them, visitors are constituted as pilgrims and assert a claim to the landscape, and the guide is granted place-making authority as 'native' and professional."

In other words, narrations not only of the site but also of the biblical stories that are identified as pertaining to the site are an integral aspect of creating pilgrims out of visitors. The question Feldman points to is, how does the act of relating a biblical story turn contested terrain into 'Bible Land'? How can a tourist come to ignore the political struggle, which in places like Silwan is almost impossible to miss even for casual visitors? Moreover, if the ideological center of the tours involves visiting places of biblical significance, why is it that other more recent occurrences and periods are also discussed? Certainly, there are many answers to these questions, as the other articles in this special section show. However, I find that one crucial rhetorical aspect requires more analysis, especially if we are to understand how the biblical narrative can be presented as history and how this historical period is related to others, including the future. Here I focus on a rhetorical technique that has come to be called 'transposition' (after Bühler 1990), which is at the base of how gifted guides like Rabbi Maly, within the space-time created by the tour, recreate the biblical text as historical and yet relevant to contemporary debates.

Transposition is a general term for framing part of an interaction as a distinct text (Shoaps 1999). Direct and indirect quotation is the most obvious example. Like all transposition, it involves treating part of the ongoing discourse as already cohered as a text, known to specialists as discourse that is 'entextualized' (see Bauman and Briggs 1990; Silverstein and Urban 1996). There are many devices used to achieve transposition that often work (or are 'laminated') together, including linguistic forms to frame report speech, changed prosody, distinct registers or styles of speech, terms that invoke recognizable events or people, as well as gesture and the like. Importantly, transpositions involve a shift in the perspective of the participants in an interaction, so that the speech, thoughts, or more generally point of view of invoked participants can be represented (Hanks 1990: 192–229). For this reason, transposition not only relies "heavily on ... schematic socio-cultural knowledge [and] also contingent facts of biography" (Haviland 1996: 272), but also produces an evaluative point of view (Shoaps 1999: 403).⁴

Transposition occurs when a guide or religious leader quotes verbatim from the authorized version of the Bible—especially reading from pages in its instantiation as a text artifact, that is, a bound or digital book—or paraphrases it more loosely or simply mentions aspects of a well-known story. It is through these transposing techniques that the biblical text is made concrete on tours and is manifested as an authoritative text that can be related to a distinct ontic realm of biblical occurrences. At the same time, as a result of two centuries of geographic and archaeological study, transposition in contemporary pilgrimage of the Holy Land underwrites the historicism of the biblical text, enabling the occurrences to be periodized along a historical timeline.

The transpositions sought by Elad and exemplified in training sessions like Rabbi Maly's do not simply erase the Palestinian presence and the opposition of some Israelis to the Silwan settlement, but compartmentalize them as phenomena that can be overcome. Scholarship on Zionism, archaeology and geographic remapping, as well as on tourism and pilgrimage to the Holy Land, emphasizes the multiple points of erasure of Palestinian presence or analyzes the separation that the visitors themselves seek to achieve between their spiritual journey and the politics of occupation and resistance (see Abu El-Haj 2001; Feldman 2007; Stein 2008; Swedenburg 1995: chap. 2; and the articles in this section). On the one hand, the issue of erasure or depoliticization in archaeological and pilgrimage practice is absolutely true: the settler guides prefer to speak about the past when on tour rather than the controversies that Elad sets off. On the other hand, the settlers are Religious Zionists who seek a closer alignment of past and present (Aran 1991;

Feige 2009; Lustick 1988). Ironically, owing to this, the Palestinian presence returns and is subtly highlighted as a constant target for future action. This temporal relation is another result of how Elad seeks to produce pilgrimages: the rhetorical performance addresses visitors and their guide as actors in the divine plan of history that continues to unfold in the here and now.

This article is based on fieldwork that took place over a period of several months in 1998–1999, during which I observed Elad’s tours of the City of David site for Israelis, conducted almost exclusively in Hebrew, as well as training sessions for its guides. I also went on numerous other tours for Israelis and Christian visitors of the City of David site, including some directed by the Israeli army. For reasons of space, however, I will concentrate here mostly on Rabbi Maly’s training tour and on discussions about his techniques with the other Elad guides. Rabbi Maly’s reflections give insight into how Elad sees its touring venture as a means both to expand its settlement and to quell controversy. Furthermore, the techniques and many of the specific formulations that Rabbi Maly demonstrated on his tour have been integrated into the regular itinerary of Elad tours.

The City of David as Practice of Past and Present

In today’s touristic landscape of Jerusalem, the term ‘City of David’ is used to refer to remains identified by a series of biblical archaeologists as the site where—according to the biblical narrative—King David captured a Jebusite town and unified the Twelve Tribes of Israel some 3,000 years ago. This narrative is interpreted in contemporary Israel as an account of the founding of the first Jewish state, with Jerusalem as its eternal capital. The site in question has been heavily excavated over the last 150 years by a number of important biblical archaeologists, and the excavations continue today as intensively as ever, especially where settlers have gained control of plots of land. Furthermore, the site has drawn millions of dollars in public and private funding to prepare it for tours, with more development on the way. The identification of these remains with the biblical term ‘City of David’ is widely accepted by nearly all pilgrimage tours to Jerusalem, whether Christian or Jewish, even as different groups engage and use the site for distinct religious and ritual purposes.

On the one hand, the City of David’s archaeological remains are found in Silwan, an impoverished, densely populated Palestinian neighborhood just south of the Dung Gate of Jerusalem’s Old City. It is part of East Jerusalem, the area that was held by Jordan between the Wars of 1948 and 1967. In 1967, East Jerusalem, including the Old City, was captured by Israel and subsequently annexed (in contravention to most interpretations of international law). Official Israeli policy now considers this area as part of reunited Jerusalem, the capital city. Of course, this policy has been actively opposed by Palestinians. For example, due to its Palestinian residents, and especially its youth, Silwan gained a reputation during the First Intifada (ca. 1987–1991) as a leading area of resistance to Jewish-Israeli occupation (Dumper 1997; Yas 2000).

On the other hand, access to much of the archaeological remains and the operation of the Visitors Center have been ceded by a number of state bureaucracies to Elad and its well-funded and highly motivated settlers. Elad sees its mission as settling Jews in East Jerusalem, and it is opposed to any peace treaty that would relinquish East Jerusalem to a future Palestinian state. Since the late 1980s, Elad has come to appropriate—mostly through manipulating the colonial Absentee Landlord Law early on, and more recently through controversial purchases—several dozen residences in Silwan, to which they have brought in sympathetic families.

Both Elad’s control of the archaeological site for touring and its role in expropriating territory and resettling Jewish families are highly controversial in Israeli public arenas as well as in

transnational ones. Elsewhere (Paz 2012; see also Bein 2010), I have sketched out the history of Elad's settlement and explained that the settlers began to give tours as a direct response to the criticism they received from mainstream Israeli archaeologists, politicians, and other public figures—criticism that continues unabated to this day. Palestinian groups and their international supporters have also protested against the settlement. Elad opened its Visitors Center for the City of David in 1996 as part of an effort to oppose the Oslo Accords of the mid-1990s and the suggestion that East Jerusalem might become the capital of an emergent Palestinian state. The Visitors Center is now the main gateway for tours of the archaeological remains and currently receives some 400,000 people a year, including a large number of Israeli school and army tours (Ofra 2011). Elad's control of access to the archaeological remains has led to more criticism and even petitions to the High Court of Justice from opponents who see it as the state ceding public resources to a private and controversial party.

Elad's settlement, then, combines promoting tours to archaeological remains with attempts to gain territory from Palestinian residents. A visual sketch of Silwan today gives a sense of the conflict played out over land. Figure 1 shows the Wadi Hilweh area, with the Old City Walls, the (black-domed) Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the (golden) Dome of the Rock in the background. In part owing to the fact that planning and infrastructure have long been neglected, the housing stock looks irregular, and there are piles of garbage on the hillside—all of which are read by Elad as obstacles to developing the City of David. The settler residences, current excavations, and tourist sites of archaeological remains form a patchwork between the houses of Palestinians.⁵

Figure 1: The Wadi Hilweh Area of Silwan



Source: Used with permission of Emek Shaveh, <http://www.alt-arch.org>

Although not apparent in figure 1, there are a series of booths with armed guards who serve the settlers, accompanying them when they move between houses or other nearby destinations. Figure 2 shows one of the more prominent rooftop guardhouses and the Israeli flag that dots every settlement residence. Returning to Efrat's comments above, it is with these flags that Efrat, in quoting David Be'eri, saw the truth of biblical pilgrimage represented in the landscape. This realism, however, is not limited to the flag and to the redesign of Silwan's landscape. For Efrat and others, the narrative performance is equally important.

Figure 2: Elad Rooftop Guardhouse with Israeli Flag



Source: Photograph by author

Transposing the Past into the Present

The historicist reading of the Bible that is currently integrated into many Holy Land pilgrimages means that the events described are treated not only as having occurred but as being related, one to the other, in terms of sequence. The historicist reading is also spatialized through the identification of material remains as historical evidence.

Elad's tours are typical in that they use the historical periodization of the biblical narrative that has been established through archaeology. What makes these tours unique is how they position Elad as part of that historical timeline of events. The history is presented with a cyclical temporality: periods of national presence followed by periods of national exile. Nationalist historiographies stretch the 'nation' as a protagonist far back into documented time and

indefinitely into the future. As Benedict Anderson (1991: 11–12) put it: “If nation-states are widely conceded to be ‘new’ and ‘historical,’ the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future.” In this vein, Elad maintains the Zionist historiography, which conceives of the Bible as a testament to the ancient past of the Jewish nation. What is not in the consensus is how Elad’s settlement makes an appearance as an extension of this national history. For example, in a typical instantiation of the historicist reading of the Bible, here is an English-language timeline (using Ir David for the City of David) found in one of Elad’s brochures from 2009:

Jewish Continuity in IR DAVID

- 1000 BCE King David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites and established the City as the eternal Jewish capital.
- 586 BCE The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the First Temple, exiling the Jewish people from the Land of Israel.
- 516 BCE The Jewish people returned to Jerusalem under Persian rule and established the Second Temple.
- 70 CE The Roman Empire destroyed the Second Temple and Jerusalem, thus ending the thousand-year-long Jewish presence in Ir David begun by King David.
- 1873 CE The Meyuchas family, one of the first Jewish families to leave the walls of the Old City, built their home in Ir David.
- 1910 CE Encouraged by archaeological discoveries in the City of David and by an *aliyah* of 120 Jewish families from Yemen, Baron Edmund de Rothschild purchased much of the area of the City of David.
- 1986 CE The Ir David Foundation was formed and the process of returning Jewish life to the City of David began.
- Today Ir David is a thriving Jewish Community and a top destination for hundreds of thousands of annual visitors who come to behold the majesty of Ancient Jerusalem.

Much could be said about such a chronicle, but for present purposes I focus on the form of the assumed ‘continuity’ of the nation, which can be stretched out and displayed as a historical timeline. Both explicit and implicit in this timeline is a periodization that connects biblical archaeological periods with Zionist settlement, as is typical for this nationalist historicity (see Abu El-Haj 2001; Zerubavel 1995): the First Temple period (represented as 1000–586 BC), the Second Temple period (represented as 516 BCE–70 CD), and the First Zionist Settlement period (in Ottoman Palestine, represented as 1873–1910). Furthermore, each period ends with an exile until the next return. What makes Elad’s claims different from any other touring organization with which I did fieldwork is that they have added a new period: the Elad Settlement period in Silwan, represented as 1986 up to the present. This period expresses Elad’s claim that their settlement is another ‘return’ from exile. According to this view, Elad represents the Jewish nation as a whole, whom it then welcomes as visitors.

Transforming the contested terrain of Silwan into the City of David involves transpositions that allude to this nationalist historiography. When guides tell or mention biblical narratives on tour, they transport visitors back and forth along this timeline, never pausing to consider details that interrupt the idea of continuous Jewish presence. Here it is useful to use some rough characterizations of transpositions, derived from Karl Bühler (1990) and elaborated by William Hanks (1990). Using Bühler’s general rubrics, Hanks (*ibid.*: 217–223) notes that transposing during an

interaction can occur by placing the participants in the field that is not corporeally present, for example, when a narrator casts herself into an event that happened in a different place in the past (a type that Bühler calls ‘Muhammad goes to the mountain’). Then there is transposing whereby people or things are brought from the non-present event into the present context, for example, when a narrator uses the narrative present for a past event to heighten the drama, as if she can see what happened unfolding before her eyes (a type that Bühler calls ‘the mountain comes to Muhammad’).⁶ These rubrics are general and do not exclude each other during the course of a single narration.

On any given tour, the guide or visitors may go back and forth between these types of transpositions and even complicate the distinction between them. However, to achieve the realism that Rabbi Maly is known for, Elad guides largely use the second type (‘bringing the mountain to Muhammad’). They attempt to recreate for visitors the events in front of them, using the identified material remains as a transhistorical index of the biblical occurrences. Such rhetorical practices narrow the possibility of discussing historical contingencies and discontinuities and re-enforce nationalist notions of historical causality. The visitor is invited to see a continuous Jewish presence that marks the truth of the place. The pilgrimage that Elad would have its Jewish visitors experience involves a biblical realist varnish that congeals over the rough ‘politics’ of Silwan’s contested landscape. I will turn now to discussing how Rabbi Maly instructed the guides to deal with politics and then go through his rendition of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah the Prophet, Peace Activist

Given the constant criticism of its settlement and Visitors Center, Elad and its guides are, not surprisingly, sensitive to what they see as the ‘politics’ that might erupt during their tours. ‘Politics’ here means dealing with contemporary issues surrounding the status of East Jerusalem and the expropriation of property. The partial past they narrate is not considered ‘politics.’ Neither is speaking of the City of David as an existing Jewish neighborhood (as opposed to a colonial enterprise). During my fieldwork, Elad guides were instructed to avoid talking about this kind of politics on tours, and for the most part they did so. However, in something unique to its tours of the City of David site, Elad’s settlement was also included as part of the tour: guides usually stopped in the courtyard of a settler house to describe the present. Further, the tour always included going by guardhouses and Palestinian homes, both of which contrasted in distinct ways with the biblical aesthetic in the built environment that is most commonly associated with the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City (see Abu El-Haj 1998; Nitzan-Shiftan 2005). This constant contradiction—avoiding explicit ‘politics’ and yet displaying the conflict so apparent to many visitors (cf. Feldman 2007: 362–364)—was supposed to be mitigated by the ‘link’ or ‘connection’ created by the guide’s rendition. As suggested by Efrat’s earlier commentary, when successful, this link is achieved through a realism that makes biblical figures feel contemporary and ‘human,’ like the settler guide. It is to this end that the rhetorical practices of temporal transposition are used and become effective for an audience member like Efrat.

During a brief preface to his training tour, Rabbi Maly described the ‘meta-purpose’ (*mataratal*) of any tour to the City of David site as stirring empathy and self-identification in the audience. Rather than having the visitors feel that they ‘belong’ to the site, that it is ‘theirs,’ he would want them to sense that “‘It’s connected to me, it’s something that speaks to me, it’s something that I am connected to [*mexubar elav*]. It is something that I connect to [*mitxaber elav*], in fact, via all kinds of capillaries and arteries and veins,’ et cetera, et cetera.” He thus established the criterion by which guides are meant to evaluate their effectiveness: did the audience feel a

connection? Certainly, guides constantly asked themselves this and questioned whether their own performance adequately represented their inner truth. Rabbi Maly believes that the empathy built between guides and visitors, as well as the empathy for biblical characters (like Jeremiah), is what can break down resistance to Elad's settlement.

During the discussion after his demonstration, Rabbi Maly was asked a lot about dealing with politics on tour. The first question was how a guide should interact with visitors who "express a lot of antagonism" because of the political situation. The guide was concerned because he believes that speaking about politics with visitors destroys the "realistic" impression that guides try to impart about the site. Rabbi Maly replied that, first of all, they should never discuss politics on the tour and that he never does. Instead, he explained, whenever he has a group of unsympathetic journalists or activists, as when he guided a group from the anti-settlement organization Peace Now, he makes sure to emphasize Jeremiah's message that 'not every problem is solved by the sword'. This slogan, Rabbi Maly said, represents what the journalists or Peace Now advocates believe, and so it surprised them to hear this from a settler. As he put it: "By means of Jeremiah, I broke the stereotypes about me in their eyes." In other words, he wanted the guides to produce the biblical narratives in such a way that any political antagonist would feel that opposing the settlers would contradict her/his own values. To see how Rabbi Maly tried to achieve this, I will now turn to a more detailed analysis of the rhetorical techniques he demonstrated for the guides.

From Mounds of Garbage to Jeremiah, the Human Being

Perhaps surprisingly, Rabbi Maly formally started his tour for Elad guides by pointing out the non-biblical aspects of the Silwan landscape, the "mounds of garbage" that can be found everywhere—a fact that the settlers associate with Palestinians. This reference goes against the idea that Holy Land tourism erases the Palestinian presence completely: perhaps in Silwan it is not possible. Elad's guides often had to deal with visitors noticing garbage rather than the desired material of the biblical landscape and had to find ways to overcome this. But rather than avoiding the topic of garbage, Rabbi Maly enveloped his portrayal of the prophet Jeremiah (from the First Temple period) with the story of Elad rediscovering the pit (from the Elad Settlement period), which meant actually drawing attention to the issue. Rabbi Maly explained that the pit was rediscovered when Elad settlers decided to clean a parcel of land, which led them to finding several artifacts and then to the opening of the pit.

Rabbi Maly's frame—Elad's rediscovery of the pit—was also a chance to model for the guides the excitement of clearing the area and descending into the pit. To complete his story, before entering the pit, he said: "To empathize or experience what we went through, imagine yourselves, each on your own, going down the rope, with a flashlight between your teeth, and somehow getting into this pit. Let's go in." With these lines, Rabbi Maly completed his narrative segment from the mounds of garbage to the rediscovery of the pit to entering it for the first time, inviting the guides to be pilgrims recreating the story of Elad. He transposed the narrated events of rediscovery into the current interaction with the guides ('bringing the mountain to Muhammad'). In these final lines, he even forwent using the past or narrative present and told the episode of rappelling into the pit framed by the directive to "imagine yourselves" entering it. As Amira Mittermaier (2011) has discussed more generally, such modes of imagination are not opposed to material reality but rather help to complement what is taken as reality and even bring that reality into being. In this case, the exhortation to imagine themselves in the place of biblical figures, archaeologists, or settlers was constantly used by Rabbi Maly and other Elad guides to constitute visitors as pilgrims with the desired empathy.

The transpositions become more complex with biblical stories, since here the interactional practice of voicing the biblical text becomes a key component. Indeed, this practice re-entextualizes the Bible in two intersecting ways. First, the verses are spoken (or paraphrased or at least discussed in biblical Hebrew) at the sites where the events are assumed to have taken place and where archaeologically defined historical material is discussed and presumed to be historical evidence for the Bible's veracity. This lends a distinct sheen of scientific realism to the verses. Second, the use of archaic Hebrew register associated with the Bible is almost always followed by reformulations of the story in contemporary Hebrew—a rhetorical technique that helps to reinforce the modern relevance of the biblical message.

With the Elad rediscovery story in place, Rabbi Maly continued seamlessly to present his rendition of Jeremiah, from which I will quote at length. This excerpt begins after everyone has climbed down an iron ladder and Rabbi Maly is trying to draw the group around him in the dim light. I have provided a basic segmentation (§) of the excerpt for ease of reference and will analyze the segments in turn:

§1: Come over here now. I want to describe for you this place. Not so much to explain to you all the details from a scientific perspective. I want to tell you, as a personal experience, what really happened to me when I arrived at this place. Look, most of the time I'm a Bible teacher, and so there's a lot of things that I see through the perspective of the Bible. And when I came down here and connected all the things, for me, it was a shock. To this day, it's a shock. And when I say Temple Mount, Temple, Ophel, palaces (maybe) of David and Solomon—maybe—and when I see written on Macalister's map "royal cistern," then in my head I'm reminded suddenly of verses from Jeremiah: chapter 7, chapter 26, chapter 36, chapter 37, chapter 38. And the verses are here made flesh [*mekabelim or vegidim*] when you find yourself in this place—one of the most dramatic and the most important stories in the history of the Jewish people.

In this first segment, Rabbi Maly maintains the transposition with which he started his tour, namely, the act of rediscovery. The rediscovery is now reformulated as an act of personal realization ("a shock"). He even explicitly states to the guides that he will not give a lot of scientific, archaeological information—a decision that produced some debate in the final discussion between him and the guides. Then he narrates the whole segment as a person who is standing in the pit, just like the guides, oriented to the sacred geography of Jerusalem, which is what brings scripture to mind. As will become more evident below, the phrase "this place" (*hamakom haze*) plays a continuing role in suturing Rabbi Maly and his audience of guides to the cosmic space-time where (maybe) Jeremiah once stood. In short, his personal realization as a Jew and a pilgrim is possible only after moving past the mounds of garbage, descending into the unknown world of the pit, and remembering scripture while looking around.

Then Rabbi Maly begins to shift to the perspective of Jeremiah, which is partially achieved by voicing the biblical text with its archaic register of Hebrew and then reformulating it in a contemporary register. Throughout the analysis below, I have further indented the voicing of the biblical text to suggest how Maly kept those segments separate by loosely 'quoting' the authorized version:⁷

§2: Look, Jeremiah prophesizes during a period of three kings ... At the beginning of his spiritual journey [*darko hanevu'it*], Jeremiah stands at the gates of the king's house (maybe where we entered the City of David, if here stood the palaces of David and Solomon), stands before the people, stands and cries out before the king and the princes:

§3: Will ye steal murder and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and offer unto other gods, and come and stand before Me in this place and say: "We are delivered"?

§4: If you think that you can keep a kingdom when its moral basis is corrupt, you're wrong. And the worse part (and this is something that is relevant not only to the period of Jeremiah, but to every period) is the warped religious worldview, which believes that through external texts, that through doing mitzvahs without any moral depth—without any moral content—you can get by.

In §2, Rabbi Maly gives a bit of background to periodize Jeremiah (mostly omitted here), but then he launches into the action by matching Jeremiah's movements with the route the group had taken. It is in the contrasting register of §3 (see Agha 2005) and then the reformulation of §3 as §4 that a different dimension of transposition into the present occurs. The wording of §3 is recognizably like the authorized version of Jeremiah 7:9–10, although not verbatim. Equally importantly, Rabbi Maly uses the archaic Hebrew register of the Bible. The biblical text is thus invoked and maintained as distinct on tour, a transposition from the past into the present that, in this case, represents the First Temple period of Jeremiah in the place where the prophet (perhaps) walked. When Rabbi Maly reformulates his representation of the verse in §4, he brings the distant perspective of the biblical past into the present, signaled poetically by the shift from archaic to contemporary Hebrew. This transposition is reinforced by shifting from an outside, third-person perspective of Jeremiah in §2 to Jeremiah's own perspective by using the second-person perspective across both §3 and §4.

Much more could be said about the theological position that Rabbi Maly sketches out in his exegesis in §4, but I would like to draw attention to how he intensifies the interpenetration of biblical and contemporary Hebrew to the point that very little register contrast remains across segments §7 and §9 (both loose approximations of the authorized version) and the reported speech in §8. I have provided the Hebrew formulations in square brackets for the relevant parts to help see the formal similarity. Rabbi Maly continues:

- §5: Will ye steal murder and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and offer unto other gods, and come and stand before Me in this place and say: "We are delivered"?
- §6: You think that this Temple, which stands 150, 200 meters from here, is an automatic insurance card? Here in chapter 7, Jeremiah says for the first time that terrible sentence:
- §7: Will not this house be like Shiloh [*halo keshilo iye habayit haze*]?⁸
- §8: And for the first time since the Temple was built, a prophet arises in Israel and says the explicit words: "This house will be destroyed [*habayit haze yexarev*]."
- §9: This house will be like Shiloh [*keshilo iye habayit haze*].
- §10: And then the princes and priests grab him and try him. They demand permission from the king to kill him.

This segmentation helps to illustrate the rapid textual juxtaposition between voicing the biblical Jeremiah (§§5, 7, 9) and the contemporary Hebrew reformulations (§§6 and 8). This poetics invites the visitors to hear Jeremiah as a prophet for today's issues, with Rabbi Maly playing the role of Jeremiah. Interestingly, the formulations in §§7 and 9 are not found in the authorized version of Jeremiah, although they may loosely allude to Jeremiah 7:14 and 26:6. The register and textual structure that Rabbi Maly uses are sufficient to set these segments apart, although they begin to sound similar to the prophet's reported formulation in §8: "This house will be destroyed." This repetition of message in different form is also the climax of this excerpt, where Jeremiah foresees the destruction of the First Temple and thus, according to nationalist historiography, the first exile. Finally, Rabbi Maly continues the emphatic repetition of "this place,"

which appears in §5, and reappears as “this Temple” in §6, and “this house” in §§7 through 9. This poetic structure maintains the importance, established in §1, of hearing the rendition in the actual place where (maybe) Jeremiah stood.⁹

These techniques are recycled as Rabbi Maly continues his rendition. In what was standard for Elad tours at the time, he is principally interested in chapter 38, where Jeremiah warns Zedekiah, the last king of the First Temple period, not to wage war on the Babylonians. The angry princes take Jeremiah and throw him into a *bor* (pit, maybe cistern, see verse 6), from which he is rescued by another of the king’s officials (see verses 7–13). As part of this rendition, Rabbi Maly continually uses ‘the mountain comes to Muhammad’ types of transposition, and often exhorts the guides to “imagine” themselves, for example, watching the captive Jeremiah sinking into the mud. In these sequences, Rabbi Maly asks a number of what he calls “practical questions” to spur the guides’ imagination in this respect: Why does the biblical narrative mention that Jeremiah was lowered down by ropes? How deep into the mud did the prophet sink? Why did it take 30 men to pull him out? Finally, throughout, Rabbi Maly continues to connect such imagining to the initial tale of rediscovering the pit by narrating—as above—his own internal reflections as he entered the pit.

It is at the end of this rendition that Rabbi Maly relates his mode of storytelling to the production of Jeremiah as an ordinary human being. Using transposition and commenting on the lessons learned from reading Jeremiah, he states:

If you want to connect here to this event try to imagine yourselves sitting in that period, you make camp, and you watch Jeremiah here, how he rises centimeter by centimeter. I see through my eyes how he gets to there [pointing], one kilo pieces, two kilo pieces, ten kilo pieces of mud that are falling. I want to imagine for you his mood. His desolation. Because Jeremiah in the Book of Jeremiah is represented as a human being:

I sat alone because of Thy hand for Thou hast filled me with indignation. [cf. Jeremiah 15:17]

Righteous Thou be Lord yet will I reason with Thee, wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? [cf. Jeremiah 12:1]

He hurts, he cries out, he’s a human being. I want you to understand that. The prophet is a human, like me, like you, plus.

Once again, Rabbi Maly transposes Jeremiah into the space of the pit, describing the pieces of mud that fall off him as he rises. With that image in place, Rabbi Maly next uses a similar textual transposition as that discussed earlier, first voicing two biblical verses and then describing their import (“he hurts, he cries out”). Afterward, Rabbi Maly articulates the upshot of his rendition: he has turned Jeremiah into a completely contemporary figure, one with whom guides and future visitors can more easily empathize.

Conclusion

As the other articles in this collection discuss, the contemporary politics of Israel and Palestine always flares up on pilgrimages to the Holy Land. In the case that Anne Meneley (this volume) discusses, politics can initiate travel that produces ‘accidental pilgrims’. I would argue that this happens not simply because of the ways that the conflict appears to visitors. It also happens because, even in Holy Land travel that is ideologically oriented toward seeing a distant past,

the tour must bring to life and make evident biblical events in the contemporary moment. This is a basic temporal contradiction that arises from the communicative situation of taking tours to sites where biblical events supposedly happened.¹⁰ The tour involves transposing those past events into the present space-time as a means of experiencing the pilgrimage. Thus, tours not only erase large chunks of past presence by ignoring events associated with the national history of Palestinians, but also frame as an experience of the biblical past what is actually a very ahistorical and contemporary projection. Ironically, such techniques implicitly and explicitly draw attention to present people and built environments and their organization across space. For example, when Rabbi Maly frames his rendition of Jeremiah by mentioning the mounds of garbage, he draws attention to the Palestinian presence in highly racializing terms and also varnishes it. His rhetoric produces a thick layer of biblical realism, inviting his audience to ignore the Palestinian presence or to imagine a time after it. Yet his rhetorical practice produces a contradiction: despite instructing Elad guides not to talk politics on tour, he actually includes the present in ways that make it difficult for visitors to see past the politics.

The problem, then, for guides is always one of how to create space-time frames that can temporarily overcome these signs of contemporary political struggle. To be sure, this is another way of stating some of the debate about pilgrimage between the Turners and Eade and Sallnow. In my contribution, I have argued that much of the temporal contradiction between communicating about the past on tour and making historical claims is negotiated through the rhetorical techniques that allow biblical stories to be transposed into the present—all the while taking the material remains as an index of a periodized and yet unchanging place. Likewise, I show that turning the terrain into ‘Bible Land’ is accompanied by the inclusion of other historical periods, for example, the Elad Settlement period. The overlaying and lamination of these rhetorical techniques help to produce the narrow version of history mentioned so often by scholars of nationalism, an essence telescoped backward in time that can be represented as a timeline of ‘continuity’—in this case, Jewish national continuity.

This sign of continuity achieved on tour is a realist aesthetic, a kind of semi-opaque varnish that coats the contemporary Palestinian presence in ways that both mute it and signal that it is an obstacle. In one tour with two modern Orthodox religious families, who came during Passover in 1999, this contradiction became explicit. These families were heavily invested in this national historical pilgrimage. The mother of one of the families asked why I was recording the tour, and when I told her I was studying the transmission of history at the City of David site, she responded that I should always study with the Bible in my hand. During a description of some of the new excavations, this mother and another visitor were surprised to hear that only half of a First Temple period reservoir had been excavated. “Wait,” asked the mother, “when will they continue to excavate?” Ofra, the guide, answered carefully: “There’s Arabs’ land there. It’s impossible to continue [excavating] there.” Ofra then attempted to continue with her description of the new findings and to use the reservoir as a means to demonstrate for the group how the biblical dwellers got their water. The mother interrupted, outraged: “But don’t they [the Palestinian residents] want to know what’s there?” Ofra paused, clearly trying to avoid discussing ‘politics.’ “It’s their house,” she said finally.

Even in the midst of recounting the biblical past, Elad’s guides make apparent the present, especially when it does not accord with their desires for the future. Rabbi Maly and others from Elad constantly claim that they do not want to discuss politics when producing a pilgrimage experience for Jewish visitors. Yet, in a very basic way, they perceive the pilgrimages that they offer to be a success if they make the contemporary politics of Palestinian dispossession resurface, varnished over by biblical realism.

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■ NOTES

1. Elad now appears to prefer Ir David Foundation as its English name.
2. I could not find any reference to an early archaeologist who used the term ‘royal cistern’ for this pit. Archaeologists who work with Elad do not accept the possibility that the pit is from the same period as Jeremiah.
3. Indeed, Rabbi Maly, an instructor of Judaism at the Religious Zionist Jerusalem College, seems to have gained wider fame for his Jeremiah interpretation. In July 2012, he spoke on “The Prophet Jeremiah Facing Our Contemporaries” at the Begin Heritage Center in Jerusalem.
4. For the purposes of this article, I will not go into the dense modes of transcript analysis found in more specialized writing.
5. An excellent aerial view of this patchwork is available through the website of the Wadi Hilweh Information Center, which organizes opposition to Elad’s incursions. The map can be found at http://silwanic.net/?page_id=110.
6. There is a third type of transposition that Bühler (1990: 152) believes is intermediate between the other two. It involves pointing to or invoking an absent referent as if it were in the immediate perceptual field. Hanks (1990: 218–221) does not think of this type as intermediate, stating that it is widely used in the Yucatan region of Mexico.
7. Rabbi Maly is quoting the verses from memory and, save for short omitted sections, generally follows the script of Jeremiah 7:9–10. Here and throughout, I am adapting the 1917 English-language version of the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) to provide a rendition of his biblical voice, which helps maintain some sense of the archaic register used.
8. Here Rabbi Maly is even more loosely paraphrasing, since there is no verse in the authorized version using this grammatical construction. Jeremiah 7:14 seems to be closest, reading in the JPS version: “[T]herefore will I do unto the house . . . as I have done to Shiloh” (cf. also Jeremiah 7:12 and 26:6.)
9. My analysis of the poetic structures of Rabbi Maly’s rendition owes much to Michael Silverstein’s (1993) elaboration of ‘implicit metapragmatics,’ which builds on earlier insights from Roman Jakobson.
10. This is the communicative aspect, I would argue, of the contradictions engendered by producing historicist knowledge, which Stephan Palmié (2014) has been plumbing.

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