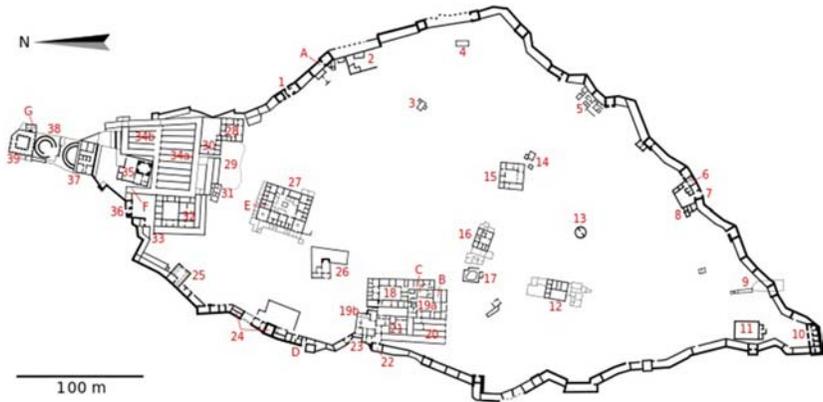

A Path to Masada

*Guided by a Listening Eye*ⁱ

ABSTRACT This essay, based on six months of participant observation fieldwork at Masada National Park, offers an experimental tour of the site. The main text is an amalgamation of Youth Israel Experience Tours while the footnotes serve as a dialectical response, commenting on and critiquing the tour structure and post-tourist practice. This essay suggests that the meaning and significance of place, particularly while on tour, is found in the relationship between tourists more so than in the mythical stories told about the site. **KEYWORDS** Masada; Tourism; Post-tourism; Participant observation; Israel



Map of Masada by Wikipedia user Kordas (2009) (CC BY-SA 3.0).

i. Miles Richardson asks us to approach sites with a listening eye, a directive to focus on the compelling moments and images of the present. Richardson encourages us to use these moments and images to inform our reading of the social, cultural, and historical forces that brought us as researchers to the site in the first place.

Just as the process of site sacralization (MacCannell) compels us to see tourist sites as culturally and/or historically significant, the social interactions at the site continue to shape the site's significance. Following Christopher Tilley, we can look at a tourist

Departures in Critical Qualitative Research, Vol. 7, Number 1, pp. 53–67. ISSN 2333-9489, electronic ISSN 2333-9497. © 2018 by the Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Request permission to photocopy or reproduce article content at the University of California Press's Reprints and Permissions web page, <http://www.ucpress.edu/journals.php?p=reprints>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/dcqr.2018.7.1.53>.

Welcome to Masada. Rather than a “one-size fits all” approach to self-guided tours, this pamphlet provides the tourist a truly unique option: to experience Masada as though you are part of a Jewish Youth Experience tour.² Perhaps you missed the age window to take such a tour. Maybe the general idea of the tour is appealing, but you want a little more freedom to do as you please. Or maybe you are not Jewish but still want to try a Birthright experience. If so, then this is the tour for you. Since you have already chosen to visit Masada, this pamphlet works under the assumption that you recognize the site as socially, culturally, and/or historically significant. Rather than an in-depth explanation of how the site is significant, this tour provides a lens for you to engage the site in the touristic mode of a college-aged Jewish tourist looking to explore Israel.¹³ We call

space “as a medium rather than a container for action. . . space is socially produced, and different societies, groups, and individuals act out their lives in different spaces” (10). Tilley goes on to argue that there is “no clear-cut methodology” to studying space. Rather, researchers must engage in “a continuous dialectic between ideas and empirical data” (11). Returning to Richardson, I am reminded that the empirical data collected by the ethnographer was collected subjectively—by my own listening eye. The conversation between the main text and these footnotes places the ethnographic voice at the forefront, interpreting social interactions at the site. The framing of empirical data as guided experiences allows me to discuss the ideas that arose from my own ethnographic witnessing at the site. The main text draws heavily from recorded fieldnotes, with liberty taken to fit the constraints of an academic journal.

ii. Before tourists leave for a tour they learn things that they are supposed to do and if they do not do those things, they must be prepared to explain why to those who know of the site. A person on an Israel Experience tour will be expected to have a different experience from someone on a family tour. This is one of the reasons we take photographs while traveling. John Urry and Jonas Larson point out that photography is “the most important technology for developing and extending the tourist gaze” (155), as the photograph reminds the viewer what the tour is supposed to be about. Furthermore, photos can be an instructive tool, letting people know possible ways of viewing the site. But photographs are not the only way to fulfill the expectations of being on tour. Showing someone that they witnessed a site can be achieved in ways that work against dominant modes of viewing. The graffiti in the Southern Water Cistern [9], for example, can act as placeholders where tourists can return and mark their own history at the site.

Part of taking on the role of tourist is determining where to go, what to see, and how to see it. Julia D. Harrison shows that tourists are often spurred to take a trip as they recount memories from a previous trip (5). This suggests that just as we tell stories to organize the past, we also tell stories to plan for the future. Harrison notes that the tourists she interviewed wanted their trips to be a learning experience and enjoyable (9).

this tour the **College Experience**. It combines the sun, sea, and sex tourism that 20-somethings love,⁴ with just enough history thrown in to convince their parents that they learned something.ⁱⁱⁱ⁵

What dictates their choice of trip, though, is hard to determine, especially as tourist destinations may “fall in and out of favor” (13).

Additionally, Valene L. Smith’s identification of the modes of tourist engagement and Erik H. Cohen’s types of tourist engagement frame the tour as an attempt to gain a type of experience. As much as tourists might be compelled to travel through sociocultural forces (MacCannell, *The Tourist* 39–47), their own experiences and desires shape how they come to, and then experience the site. Broad categories of tour types (e.g., “mass tourism”) can offer insight into what drives the industry as a whole. Focusing on these categories, however, can make it easy to ignore the nuances of individual experience. For instance, Jude, a tourist from New Zealand, came to Masada because he had a fourth-grade teacher who taught the story of Masada as part of a history class. Ya’el left her life in the United States to join the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), and now leads new IDF recruits on trips to Masada. Margo, a South African tourist, was compelled by the beauty of the site to ask those around her to join her in saying a prayer. The nuances that bring a person to a site in the first place invariably affect the way the tourist will behave at the site.

The tour presented in this essay is an iteration of actions witnessed while conducting fieldwork at Masada National Park in Israel during the summers of 2010 and 2011. Generally speaking, tourists followed some type of path at the site—the self-guided path, one determined by a hired guide, or one of their own choosing. Tilley explains that “a path brings forth possibilities for repeated actions within prescribed confines” (30). The structuring of the main text of this essay serves as an example of one type of path I witnessed while conducting fieldwork. That said, paths are regularly strayed from, physically and mentally. So what is seen and done at any given point along the path can push the confines of the path. In reading human actions, Paul Ricoeur argues that “in the same way a text is detached from its author, an action is detached from its agent and develops consequences of its own” (100). By focusing on the action at the site, the path, and hence the site itself, is changed. Ricoeur explains that an action “makes its ‘mark’ when it contributes to the emergence of such patterns which become the *documents* of human action” (101 original emphasis). When we visit a tourist site, we hope to come back changed by the experience. We engage in actions—photography, travel, group activities—so these actions will leave a mark. As such the tourist experience can be construed like a text. As Ricoeur explains, a text “is not a mere sequence of sentences, all on equal footing and separately understandable. A text is a whole, a totality” (106). Seeing action as text, reading as the work is being authored, is the act of looking with a listening eye.

iii. The most common tours at Masada are the Birthright tours that send young Jewish tourists on 10-day trips to Israel. The goal of the trip, as both Shaul Kelner (68) and Cohen (26, 85) make clear, is to connect young Jews with Israel and their Jewish heritage. While the tours are meant to be educational, organizers and guides have to

THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

If you're having the college experience, you might be tired, and possibly a little hungover.^{iv} And that's cool, but I want you to remember that the story of Masada, the story of a small band of Jews defying the Roman empire is, in all actuality, the story of what it means to be a young Jew today. Two thousand years ago, when the Romans tried to tell Jews how to act and who to worship, the Jews at Masada stood their ground and said "no way!" They spent years fighting the Romans and eventually, rather than give up what it means to be a Jew, they banded together at the top of Masada and took their own lives. These Jews are your legacy.

1. THE SNAKE PATH GATE

Despite easier routes to the top, we're going to take the snake path up. It's the original path, so it's a more authentic experience. The snake path is a 30–90 minute hike, depending on the heat and your fitness level. We're hiking up at 4:30 in the morning to get to the top by sunrise. Far from a quiet, contemplative journey, though, we're going to have a boisterously good time, singing, screaming, and joking with other tourists all the way up. If you did happen to have a little too much to drink last night and you feel yourself getting sick, try your best to puke on the side of the path, rather than in the middle of it. If you feel too light-headed to continue, a guide will be by shortly to help escort you back down to the visitor center.

strike a delicate balance between the desires of the tourists with their own ideological goals. Jonathan R. Wynn explains that guides will often take what they love about a site and try to use that love to foster deep connections to the site for their group through personal narrative, unique historical perspectives, connecting to their specific tour group, and drawing attention to the aesthetic elements of the site (28–29).

iv. A Google search for "birthright sex" yields a number of informative articles ranging from "how-to," to ethical concerns. In fact, Israeli soldiers join the tour to create a *mifgash*, a cultural encounter between Israeli and non-Israeli Jews. As Aurora, a Birthright participant said, "right from the start, the biggest question is who's gonna hook up with a soldier." Kelner points out that the highly sexualized atmosphere of the Birthright tour undermines the purpose of the *mifgash* by fetishizing both groups (139). In other words, Birthright tourists may not be in the mindset of an explorer seeking out a life-changing experience. Often, they are just looking for a change. This is typical of what some tourist scholars have begun to refer to as the "post-tourist" (on "the post-tourist gaze," see Urry and Larson 20; on "the questioning gaze," see Bruner). For many post-tourists, the structure of the tour itself encourages a freedom of movement and action that, though unbecoming and possibly culturally insensitive, is expected and embraced in the context of the tour.

14. MOSAIC WORKSHOP

Pass through the entryway and head towards the center of the mountain, Masada's highest point. From this spot you can see just about the entire mountain. Shortly before sunrise, a quick glance from this point reveals a veritable swarm of tourists. And like a swarm, though it's difficult to tell how the groups are choosing their paths, each group is clearly on a path, and all paths head towards the northeastern ramparts. Join the throngs and once at the ramparts you'll witness the majesty of the first rays of the sun breaking over the Jordanian mountains and the Dead Sea. At some point, interrupting the breathtaking vista, some tourist will belt out the introduction of the song "The Circle of Life" from the movie *The Lion King*. Before the singing starts, though, there will be a few gasps and then, for a moment, the mountain will be silent.^{v7}



The tourist swarm. Image courtesy of the author.

v. The Birthright groups tend to arrive first thing in the morning and this is where each guide's staging of the site really begins. Most take their group to a specific spot to watch the sunrise and begin the tour there. When asked, the majority of guides explain that their tour is structured so they can tell the story of Masada in the most effective way. What "effective" means varies from guide to guide, determined by the particular guide's strengths, desires, and perceptions they have of their groups (see Wynn 28–29;

37. UPPER TERRACE

Walk past the guide wearing sunglasses and a toga made out of a bedsheet, carrying a bottle of wine, and pretending to be a drunken Herod, and head to the back of the terrace that overlooks the northern end of the mountain. This is a great spot for taking pictures. Since the cell reception is pretty good up here, you can Instagram the whole trip. You will notice other people taking pictures as well. You might question if this is what you should be doing. It's nice to be able to have access to all this digital technology but you might wonder if you're missing out on what you're supposed to be seeing by creating images to help you remember. What if you end up never really looking at the desert until you get to your computer and admire the pictures you took?^{vi8}

There is a good chance that your expectations won't be met. The desert will never speak to you as you hoped it would. It will sound and look different. Less magnificent here, more magnificent there. So stop looking for what you're supposed to be looking for, and just look. And even if your pictures can't capture the moment as you hope to capture it, they will capture something.

9. SOUTHERN WATER CISTERN

This is one of the great cisterns used to store water at Masada. You will notice the graffiti covering the walls: the address of an Austrian couple who visited in

Fine and Speer). Of note is that the path varies little and most guides follow what amounts to a memorized script, both in terms of the stories and anecdotes they tell and the places they visit. Variation comes primarily from the actions of the tourists in each group and the reactions tourists have to seeing the site and/or other tourists at the site for the first time. At any point along the guide's path an individual tourist might encounter something that changes the tour, the meaning they get from the tour, and their experience as a tourist.

vi. The question of what a tourist should be doing at any given point of the tour is a significant one. As noted earlier, tourists are taught how to look, and what to look for. While photography can affirm that they saw and did what they came to see and do, it can also be a subversive way for tourists to enact what Bruner refers to as a "questioning gaze," an expression of "doubts about the credibility, authenticity and accuracy of what is presented to them in the tourist production" (95). In other words, viewing the site itself as constructed and their role as tourist as a performance, tourists may at times feel more or less comfortable playing with that role. While some might argue that a specific site demands a certain decorum, many post-tourists, who freely change their tourist role (see Feifer 85), may quickly shift from being engaged by a tour guide's history lesson to taking a goofy picture with friends.

the early 1990s, “David was here 1987. . . and 1995,” “JerUSAlem!”^{vii} You might look at the writing on the wall and think: “What assholes would try to ruin a site like this!” At some sites, when people write on the walls, a partition is made so people can’t do that anymore. For whatever reason, they don’t do that here, so the choice is yours.



Southern water cistern. Image courtesy of the author.

vii. The Cistern is a mural of names and images; a site in its own right. As guides focus on the earliest graffiti left by Jewish youth groups in the 1940s, and while tourists spend time reading what others have written and take the time to write their own names, the story of Masada gets rewritten. Here, tourists enter into the narrative, just like those who excavated the site, the explorers in the nineteenth century, the Byzantine monks before them, and the Sicarii, Romans, and Hasmonians before them. Creating their own graffiti and reading the graffiti left by others places tourists in between the corporeal world of the physical tourist site and the imaginative world of those who came to this space before them. As Michael S. Bowman suggests, following Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt and Michael Haldrup, the mix of the corporeal and the imaginative gives tourists an experience of a “‘fantastic realism’—a haunting—where objects and spaces and images and stories. . . lose their aura and become *traces*, in Benjamin’s sense, allowing visitors to be at once possessed by the site and to take possession of it” (210 original emphasis). The Cistern is no longer a part of Masada. It is at the site, but it belongs to the tourists, an attraction in and of itself.

12. SMALL PALACE

There's not much to see here, but if you head 20 meters or so southeast, you'll get to the *Beit Midrash*, the "house of study." Stick around long enough, and you'll catch a glimpse of Rabbi Menachem performing a *Bnei Mitzvah* ceremony. Traditionally, the ceremony involves the *Bnei Mitzvah* (the boys and/or girls going through the ritual) reading from the Torah, leading the service, and offering some words of wisdom for the congregation. While some *Bnei Mitzvahs* study for a few months, most spend a year or more in preparation. Once they complete the ceremony, the *Bnei Mitzvah* are considered to be adults and, hence, contributing members to their community.



Masada *Bar Mitzvah*. Image courtesy of the author.

Really, you don't have to spend that much time to become a full-fledged member of the tribe, lineage notwithstanding. As long as your mother is Jewish, a couple of prayers and a vow is all that's required. And if you were to visit on a Birthright trip, part of the package is a *Bnei Mitzvah* ceremony thrown in for free! Even if you are by yourself, the Rabbi conducting the ceremony will, at the very least, let you watch. These rituals are not for everyone, though. Because

Masada isn't a particularly religious site, and because *Bnei Mitzvahs* typically take months of preparation, some tourists will look down on those going through the "Birthright *Bnei Mitzvah*" as an inauthentic experience.^{viii10}

2. REBEL DWELLINGS

A while back there were three tourists spending the night on the mountain. One decided to relieve himself off the side of the mountain. As he climbed atop the Rebel Dwellings, the desert wind swept him over the side and to his death.

In the early morning you might be compelled to climb these walls in order to get a good view of the sunrise. There are about 50 people who work at Masada, including office staff, workers at the entrances to both sides of the mountain, workers at the visitor center, and workers at the top of the mountain. The primary responsibility of those who work at the top is *not* to stop tourists from doing stupid things. But, early in the morning, if you just can't seem to help yourself, some of these workers will break off from what they're doing and chastise you for putting your life at risk.

viii. While watching these ceremonies, I thought a lot about my own *Bar Mitzvah* and the time and energy that went into it. A traditional *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony occurs when participants are 12 or 13 years old. The *Bnei Mitzvahs* will study with a rabbi for months, learning about Jewish traditions, rituals, and values. They will learn to read the Hebrew bible and the accompanying cantillation. During the ritual, the *Bnei Mitzvah* will conduct the prayer service, chant a portion of the bible, and offer an exegesis on the portion they read. Completion of the ritual marks the passage of the child into adulthood and membership in the Jewish community, with all the rights and responsibilities therein. Technically, as noted in the main text, there is no symbolic difference between a more traditional ceremony and the ones Rabbi Menachem conducts. According to rabbinic law, once the ritual is fulfilled, even in a very rudimentary fashion, the participant is considered a contributing member of the Jewish community. What a person gains by going through a ritual like this is up to the person performing the ritual. The significance lies not in the act, but in the meaning they choose to ascribe to the act.

For tourists engaging in a Birthright *Bnei Mitzvah* ceremony, there is a double sense of what Ning Wang calls "existential authenticity. . . an *existential state of Being* activated by certain tourist activities" (359 original emphasis). As Wang argues, it is up to the tourist to determine for themselves if an experience is or is not authentic. He suggests that tourists seek out experiences and objects that help them find their authentic selves (360). As short as these ceremonies are, should a particular tourist feel an authenticity of both the site and the ceremony, I imagine their connection to the site would be significant.

24. COLUMBARIUM

While the doves once housed here are long gone, there are still plenty of critters around. Of all the animals roaming the top of the mountain, the cats get the biggest draw. It doesn't matter what a guide is saying or how he's dressed [37], once a cat shows up all attention shifts to the feline. If you sit at the Snake Path Gate [1] for a while, you're bound to hear a parent ask their child what they liked most. There's a good chance that the child will exclaim, "The cat!"^{ix}

19. RESIDENTIAL AREA

While the mosaics here are definitely from Roman times, their stories are just as much from the near past. Look down at the mosaics and imagine yourself as a young, idealistic Jew in the 1970s. Thousands of Jews just like you traveled here to be a part of the excavation, and though most of the work was moving rocks from one area to another, every now and then you might get a chance to dig. Imagine uncovering this truly remarkable mosaic. Imagine the story you would have to tell to your children.

32. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

This is a great place to get some shade, use the washroom, fill up your canteen, and mingle with other tourists. Stay here long enough and you might hear a religious group leader explain to his group what a *mikveh* (ritual bath) is and how he had to go into a *mikveh* before his wedding night so he would be pure when he touched his wife for the first time.^x You might see three young adults with their sketchpads out, talking about how this might be "it." This might be the moment that they look back on as *the* defining moment of their artistic expression. The desert, the fortress, and the Dead Sea may be themes these young artists return to throughout their lives. Masada is a good place to think about what you are doing with your life. Consider the Sicarii and their willingness to die for what they believed in. What would you be willing to die for?

ix. As much as we focus on the strange and the new in a foreign space, we are equally enthralled by the familiar within the new landscape. As tourists arrive at the Jerusalem central bus station for the first time, for instance, they tend to take pictures of מִקְדָּוֹנִי'ס, the kosher McDonald's. The familiar in a strange place is just as picture-worthy as the strange.

x. The first time an orthodox Jewish couple touch each other is when they meet under the wedding canopy.

5. REBEL DWELLINGS

Herod probably never imagined that the casemate walls, used to protect his fortress, would one day be turned into living quarters. It would be like people deciding that instead of living in their homes in Israel, to live in tents in the middle of Rothschild Boulevard in downtown Tel-Aviv. For that matter, the Sicarii would never have imagined us coming up here to look at where they lived.^{xi11}

23A. THE ROMAN RAMP

If you look at the Roman Ramp closely you will find the original wood used to build the ramp 2,000 years ago. A cynic may scoff at this, saying slivers of wood and pottery shards were probably placed there to make the site seem more authentic. Regardless, there is wood poking out of the ramp and there are pieces of pottery scattered here and there, particularly on the southern side of the mountain. Does it really matter if the pieces are thousands of years old?

34. STOREROOMS

Once, a child walked up to a pillar near the storeroom wall and ran his hand over a chiseled letter. He looked to his guide and declared, "It's the letter *shin*!" The guide exclaimed, "Yes! You see, 2,000 years later and we can read and understand the past!"

Close to the pillar, archaeologists once found a few date seeds. In 2005, after being carbon-dated to Herodian times, the seeds were taken to the Arava

xi. While some guides are keen to suggest the Sicarii simply wanted to live their lives in solitude at Masada, their performances suggest otherwise. Even while sequestered at Masada they continued to call attention to themselves through public acts of violence. Bruce Hoffman rightly designates the group as the first terrorist organization, noting that their public assassinations and raids "were designed to have psychological repercussions far beyond the immediate victim(s) of the terrorist attack and thereby. . . send a powerful message to a wider, watching target audience" (83). But violence was not their only mode of symbolic action. The Sicarii built on top of Roman mosaics and converted Roman structures for their own use, while ensuring that the original intent of the structures was still recognizable. While we see their terrorist tactics in use today (e.g., the public assassination of Yitzhak Rabin by Yigal Amir and the assassination of Anwar Sadat by members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad), we also see their everyday life performances, altering the luxuries of their oppressors for mundane use, as part of a tradition of performances of resistance (e.g., the domestication of public spaces during the 2011 Israeli Housing Protests and the Occupy Wall street protests).

Institute for Environmental Studies at Kibbutz Ketura.^{xii12} The seeds were fertilized, one sprouted, and it is now a 3-foot tall Jordan date palm. Although the palm became extinct around 150 CE, scientists gave the species new life. Through words and scientific progress, the past can be resurrected and given new life!

33. GATE

When President George W. Bush visited Masada, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert tried to get Bush to drink from a jug. The real use of the jug is to pour water on a display that demonstrates how flood waters reach the top of Masada. One version of the story says that Bush was about to drink but Olmert stopped him at the last minute, laughing, calling Bush an idiot. Another version says that Bush felt uncomfortable drinking the water and opted to hug the Prime Minister instead. Whatever the case, the jug is meant to pour water on the display, and not meant for drinking. But it's possible that you might not realize this if you just happen upon the display. When you visit a site like Masada, you want to be wowed. You want to have an experience that will be memorable and what better way to have a memorable experience than to engage in some sort of ritual? You might do something at the site that isn't meant to be done, or you might take a picture of something that looks important but is really just another rock, but sometimes it's okay to make your own meaning from the site. Sometimes it's not. Sometimes it upsets or makes fun of the culture that you are visiting. You should probably do some research about the culture, and instead of just jumping right into something, ask someone who's familiar with local customs first.^{xiii13}

xii. A *kibbutz* is a communal habitat, traditionally focused on agrarian life, though many have adopted manufacturing and industry as their primary source of finance (*Kibbutz Industries Association*). Some, like Kibbutz Ketura maintain an agricultural/environmental focus.

xiii. There are pictures of Bush and Olmert at Masada, and guides and site staff recounted similar stories of the president to those recounted in the main text. The trope of the bungling, fanny-pack wearing American tourist can be seen in these stories, and though amusing, the negative effects of such touristic performances cannot be overstated. What can be seen from the tourist's perspective as exploring or learning about a different culture can be seen as exploitative and destructive by host cultures. In his review of Dennis O'Rourke's documentary film, *Cannibal Tours*, MacCannell argues that the tourist, in her desire to know a culture through photographs, the purchase of souvenirs, and the participation in (often staged) rituals, participates in the cannibalization of that culture ("Cannibal Tours" 15). The desire to not be seen as this type of tourist may have contributed to the rise of the post-tourist (see Feifer 85; Urry

13. COLUMBARIUM

The doves once kept at Masada were used for food, but since there are no doves left, we have to rely on the McDonald's in the food court at the visitor center. While there are no doves, you will have noticed that the site is overrun with Tristram's Starlings, scavenger birds that will eat just about anything. These birds are so brazen they will steal food from your hands. It wasn't always that way, though. Tristram's Starlings are desert birds that live close to major cities. Even though Masada isn't a city, tourists discard enough scraps to leave these birds fat and happy.^{xiv}¹⁴ Please, just make sure to throw your trash in the proper place. ■

and Larsen 155), a mode of tourism that has, at points, proven equally problematic. Many of the tourists I spoke with on the Birthright tours leaned towards embracing the role of the "spectatorial" post-tourist described by Urry and Larsen. Such tourists focus on the fabrication of touristic experiences and, hence, approach the tour ironically. For these tourists, the tour is not about the search for authenticity, since they hold the view that most culture has been cannibalized. Rather, they enjoy the tour as a show, a performance of a culture that does not exist. In other words, even if the culture visited believes in its own authenticity, the spectatorial post-tourist greets the claim of authenticity with an ironic laugh.

Contrasted with tourists at Masada who maintain the hope of finding a feeling of authenticity, the spectatorial post-tourist might seem to be causing a sort of existential damage to the site. Indeed, accidentally stepping in a puddle of vomit while climbing up the mountain or having the silence of a beautiful sunrise broken by the belting out of a pop-song can damage the experience of a site. That said, there is a reason Birthright tours follow the path laid out in the main text. Returning to the Small Palace [12] and the *Bnei Mitzvah* ceremonies, I recall a group with more spectatorial post-tourists than most. During the ceremony most were chatting, cracking jokes, or sleeping. In the middle of the ceremony a tourist walked by and muttered something in Spanish to the group. Two members of the tour group yelled at the tourist in Spanish and a heated argument ensued. When the tourist finally left, a general dis-ease spread through the group. It was explained that the tourist passing by had called the Birthright group "idiots" for "participating in a fake ceremony." Once the ceremony was allowed to continue, the tone shifted significantly. The once passive group was actively participating. After the *Bnei Mitzvahs* had been confirmed, the celebratory singing and dancing was joyous and raucous.

In an effort to not be seen as one type of tourist, tourists may plan their performance of their tourist self. It is when the surprising encounter with the Other throws off the performance that a space is created where their non-tourist self (i.e., who they are when they are not on tour) and their tourist self can clash.

xiv. Tourists change the landscape. Over the last 10 years there have been an average of 550,000 visitors to Masada each year, with that number being significantly larger in recent years (835,837 in 2011, according to Israeli Parks Authority). These same people visit

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neighboring sites like the Dead Sea and the Ein Gedi nature reserve. The popularity of the Dead Sea region goes beyond visitors to Israel. The sea is mined for its minerals that are used by spas and for its potash that is used in fertilizers. The water level of the sea is dropping about one meter per year, and while a number of projects have been proposed to revitalize the sea, nothing solid has been put in place at this time. However, while environmentalists worry that it will be gone by the year 2050, Yoseph Yechieli et al. argue that over time, the Dead Sea will lose up to 150 meters more before finding a new equilibrium. It will continue to shrink until it reaches about two-thirds its current size within the next 400 years (757).

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