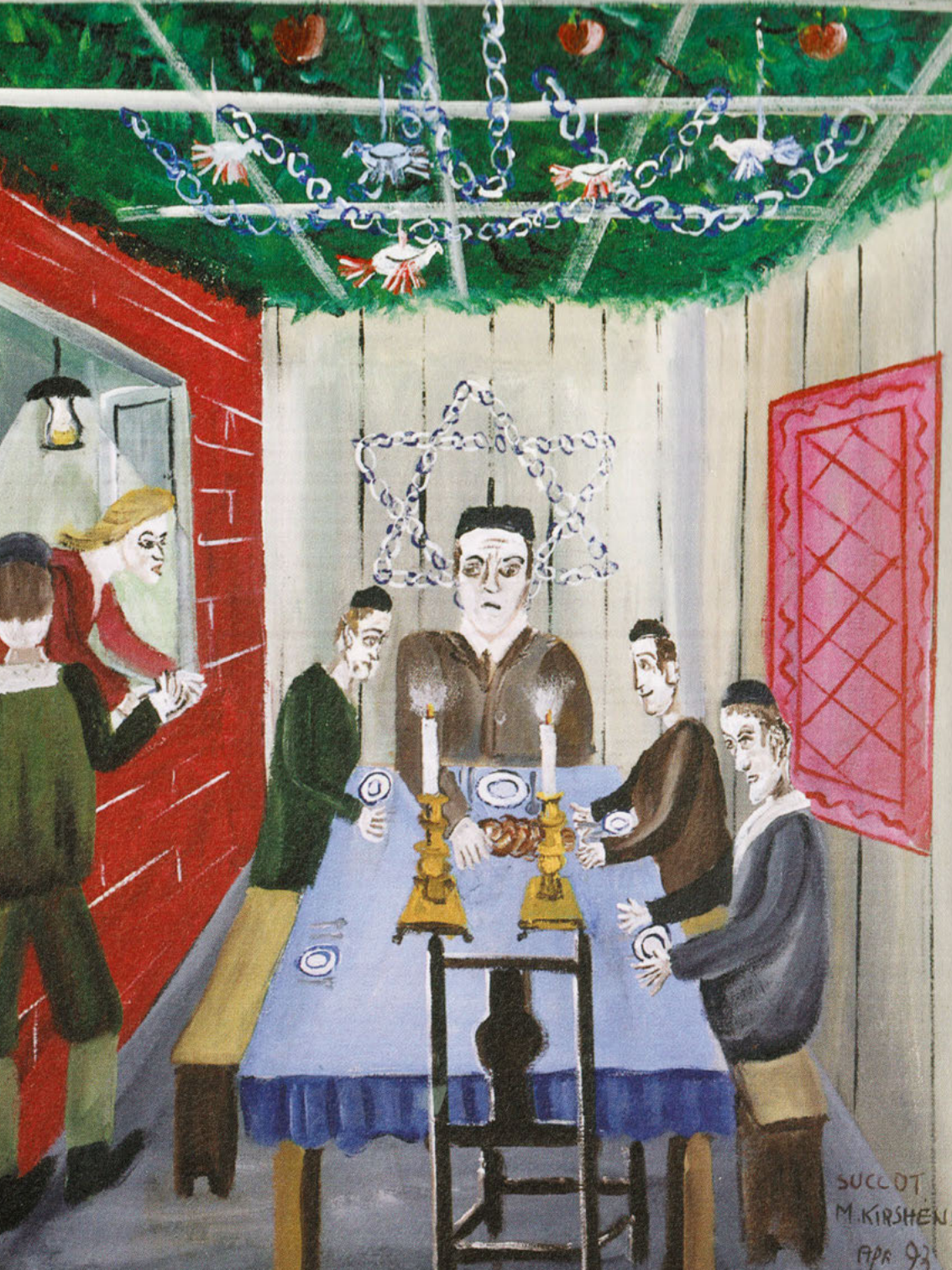
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The Wandering Jew's Home and a Temple Everywhere[1]

Galit Hasan-Rokem

In memoriam

Joseph and Margit Hoffman

Who loved Jerusalem and art

The commandment "You shall sit in booths" was originally stipulated as memory-work for the desert wanderings in the legendary (or mythological) past of the Israelites in the Sinai. These wanderings are an elaborate expression for what anthropologists (following Victor Turner) have named liminality or a transitional stage. Indeed, the forty years of desert wandering were a prolonged entrance into the Promised Land. The annual dislocation of the Jews' domicile into temporary structures for a week's time thus cyclically projects liminality to the life of the community and of individuals in a regular ritual.

Alongside the dominant association of liminal itinerancy, the Sukkah booths and festival have also been linked to the pastoral and agricultural stability and regularity of life in Ancient Israel. This is evident in the

[1] This essay was originally delivered as the Annual Lecture in Memory of Margit and Joseph Hoffmann at the 27th Inter-University Folklore Conference at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2008, titled The Wandering Jew's Home and a Ubiquitous Temple (in Hebrew). Cf. also: "Material Mobility vs. Concentric Cosmology in the Sukkah – The House of the Wandering Jew or a Ubiquitous Temple", in *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality*, eds. Birgit Mayer and Dick Boumann (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 153-179; the Hebrew original of the present text in: The Ethnographic Department of the Museum of the Contemporary, eds. Sala-Manca (Lea Mauas, Diego Rotman) (Jerusalem: 2017), 136-150.

◂ Sukkot, Opatów (Apt), Poland, 1920s, as remembered and painted by Mayer Kirshenblatt.

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references in the Hebrew Bible to temporary structures where peasants and winegrowers stayed overnight in the high season, such as "like a shelter (the Hebrew original: sukkah) in the vineyard, like a hut in a cucumber field".[2] Others have suggested that the booths reminisce the temporary housing of the pilgrims who arrived in Jerusalem on the three great festivals of pilgrimage: Pessah (Passover), Shavu'ot (Pentecost) and Sukkoth (Feast of the Booths). The variation between the agricultural booths and the booths of pilgrims illuminates the inbuilt tension between the unambiguously sacred center in Jerusalem to where the pilgrims flock, and the Sukkah as the concrete mode of celebrating the feast anywhere. It is this inherent ambivalence of the Sukkah and the customs and texts pertaining to it, in relationship to the sacred centrality of Jerusalem, that interests me here rather than a detailed account the commandments regulating the ways in which a Sukkah should be built or of the history of actual Sukkah building. I want to briefly discuss how the Sukkah emerges as a multivalent cultural sign encoding some of the values, dreams and anxieties that Jewish culture has harbored regarding the dynamics of wandering and settling.

In Hebrew culture and in Jewish culture in general the sentience of diasporic wandering and of sedentary life have always existed in parallel. This double consciousness was not created by the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, neither by the Babylonians in 586 BCE nor by the Romans in 70 CE, as we can learn from the many passages in the Hebrew Bible where God threatens to exile Israel from its land as the primary punishment for not complying to all His commandments,[3] and also in the words of the prophets, representing the word of God. Moreover the Bible takes note of the shorter absences of the patriarchs from the Promised Land: Abraham in Egypt, Isaac and Jacob in Mesopotamia and finally Joseph, his father and brethren

[2] Isaiah 1:8

[3] This is evident in Deuteronomy chapter 32.

in Egypt with all the sixty *ribbo* Israelites in Egypt. There is also the massive exiling of the king and people of the Northern kingdom by the Assyrians and the king and people of the Southern kingdom by the Babylonians. The conflicting consciousness of exile and rootedness created, on one hand, a world view predicated on a clear distinction between center and periphery: a universe produced by a "big bang" centrifugally sending its – human – fragments to dispersion. On the other hand, the same culture produced numerous texts, customs and objects that dynamically deconstructed any kind of cemented concepts of center and periphery. These multi-directional spirals of thought and travel prompted continuous negotiations of the Jews' image of themselves and others' image of them, often viewing the center as a positive point of stability, while exactly its stability was questioned by many Jewish cultural texts and practices. These generalizations are based on my continuous research of the European traditions of the Wandering Jew.

The legend grew out of various seeds of the late antiquity and medieval periods that crystallized in the popular culture of the Reformation, expedited by the new means of communication of printed books and booklets. It tells about a Jew named Ahasverus[4] who wandered the world since the Crucifixion and is not able to find rest. This restless wandering serves as Ahasverus' punishment, since he forbade Jesus, on his way to Golgotha, from resting the heavy cross against the wall of his workshop.

The initial function of the Wandering Jew legend was to blame the Jews and thereby justify their discrimination and persecution, and this understanding underwent many versatile transformations in European culture. From Romanticism onward, the figure was adopted as a creative model for dynamic adaptation to new contexts – a quality that modernity considered both as one of its main advantages and an essential component

[4] This name choice is odd, since no living Jew has carried the name as far as we know.

of its self-consciousness. And indeed, instead of continuing to serve apocalyptic and eschatological ideas, the modern figure of the Wandering Jew, strongly associated with cyclicality and endlessness, defied linear models of history. Contrary to the 1914 prediction of socialist thinker Karl Kautsky, the Wandering Jew did not die, neither was he buried, and unlike the vision of a number of Zionist thinkers and historians that related to him, he did not settle peacefully in his homeland.

The narrative of the Wandering Jew begins with an individual being ousted from a center – Jerusalem – to what initially seems as a periphery. Yet he gradually appears in important European municipal centers where he proclaims the apocryphal elaboration on the Gospel, echoing the distant city of Jerusalem, that has now become peripheral. The Wandering Jew in general disrupts linear models of history that set a positive goal at the end. The Sukkah, on the other hand, subverts clear dichotomies between center and periphery.

One of the Sukkah's decentralizing effects appears through the process of cultural adaptation that folklorists have termed the creation of ecotypes ("oikotypes") Ecotypes are shaped according to the various cultural and natural environments in which they land while they circulate. They accommodate cultural products to the local materials of each place, the varieties of wood, straw mats and textiles and to the styles of periods and regions. The Sukkah constructs ideas and images about mobility among Jews in a versatile medium of communication and creativity stimulated by the ecotypical variation.

The defining features of the Sukkah are the impermanence of the structure, especially of the roof that is supposed to be made from natural, preferably growing materials like tree branches, but disconnected from their roots and stems. The interior decoration of the Sukkah enables continuous

innovations that may borrow little or much from the environment's natural resources and typical crafts.

During folkloristic fieldwork on Jerusalem's folk culture supported by the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C., we collected considerable amounts of verbal and visual material on Sukkot, now archived at the Folklore Research Center of the Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. From this data, we were able to learn much about the specific features of Jerusalem Sukkot. The interviewees proposed that Jerusalemite Sukkot were simpler and built of more modest materials, for instance using simple white textiles instead of the embroidered or multicolored ones that are often found elsewhere. In addition to the poverty of the builders, this was perhaps to highlight the alleged sacred purity of the city. If you encounter black or blue draperies in Jerusalem, said the interviewees, those Sukkahs' builders are probably originally from elsewhere or they have another reason for their divergence. The local variations of the styles of Sukkahs are thus confirmed by specific internal differences in addition to the ecotypical variation mentioned above. The interviewees did not agree among themselves what was preferable for the Sukkah roof: a modest, leafless "*glatt shakh*" basically made of twigs, or a "*live shakh*" as described by an interviewee who preferred a green roof.

The Sukkah is used for the meals during the entire week of the holiday. Depending on the local custom, weather, and the relationship with non-Jewish neighbors, the structure may also be used for sleep. After a week, the structure is dismantled, though many pieces are saved year-to-year, although this action contradicts the idea of transience that is the Sukkah's central message in the biblical commandment. The contradiction reaches a certain peak in the branding "eternal Sukkah" of an assemblable version by an Israeli business venture, for what in the USA is sold under the less presumptuous moniker "Sukkah kit".

The cultural association of eternity and cosmology is also conveyed by the temporal structure of the holiday, celebrated for seven (some places eight) days. The seven days evoke the seven days of creation, including God's day of rest. Building the Sukkah thus emulates the divine act of creation, an *imitatio dei* of sorts, in building an alternative reality where the Sukkah takes the place of the home. This is what enables the erecting of an axis mundi, a cosmic axis connecting heaven and earth, anywhere – consequently weakening the idea of one stable center – Jerusalem – of the world. In other words, a cosmic axis is created wherever a Sukkah is built. This axis is reinforced by the parallel effect of two heavenly bodies that appear during the holiday: the full moon of the month of Tishrei (the first night of Sukkoth)[5] also present on the first nights of a number of other Jewish holidays, such as Passover, and especially the stars that are supposed to be visible through the branches of the *shakh* roof, indicating its temporary character.

The parallel of Passover and the feast of Booths, Sukkot, at the opposite poles of the year cycle – spring and fall – emphasizes the structured framing of sacred time. The two seven-day holidays also bear a strong relationship to the mythical age of Exodus and the desert wandering of the Israelites, combined with the echoes of Creation mentioned above. The fact that, in two periods, two months had the initial position in the Hebrew calendar – first Nissan (the month of Pessah) then Tishrei (the month of Sukkoth) – further destabilizes the claim for universality and permanence of the Hebrew calendar's supposedly cosmological status, and undoes the genealogy of the calendar from Creation. The two interconnected holidays refer to yet another construction of the sacred year cycle, namely the three *regalim*, the biblical festivals of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, completed by Shavuot that

[5] The full moon is also visible on the first nights of Pesssah, Purim, and on Tu Bi-Shvat and Tu Be-Av.

Figure 1


Das Laubhüttenfest.
Nach dem Original-Gemälde von Prof. M. Oppenheim
Karte aus dem Tomor-Kalender der Sana-Gesellschaft m.b.H. Cleve

is unlike the other two full-moon festivals, celebrated on the night of an almost-half-moon.

Classical Rabbinic literature, the Mishna and the Tosefta, and the Talmuds in their wake, devoted meticulous attention to the material aspects of the Sukkah: its height, length, width and other dimensions, as well as the adequate materials for its construction. Another aspect that is amply discussed in those sources are the practices and customs related to the sukkah's use. A central theme running through Jeffrey Rubenstein's history of ancient Sukkoth celebration is the triple tension and dialectic between the Sukkah as a commemoration of the desert wandering, as an extension to the Temple worship[6], and as the association to the non-concentric practices of fruit pickers and harvesters who periodically lived in huts.

In Rabbinic literature, these three aspects are intertwined into a braid of presence and absence. The direct communication with the divine through the axis mundi to supplicate for resources of fertility and rain, is lost by the destruction of the Temple. The other absence is the ensuing inability to fulfill the commandments related to habitation on the holy soil of the Promised Land, even there but all the more in other countries. The powerful presence embodied in the Sukkah is the certainty and constancy of a wandering lifestyle, often conceptualized as the punishment following upon the warnings of the prophets, further reinforced by the pressures enacted by Christian environments that encumber the narrative of exile with their particular theological explanations. This strongly links the Sukkah with the above-mentioned themes of the Wandering Jew tradition.

The constant presence of itinerancy in Jewish culture reinforces the

[6] On one hand this extension to the Temple worship emphasizes the concentricity of sacred space and on the other hand, it emphasizes the symbolical and metaphorical aspects of God's dwelling place.

powers of adaptation to ever new milieus, sometimes even interpreted as a universal mission of spreading the Torah or particular Jewish values. The different etiologies, or explanations of the origin of the festival of Sukkoth, engage spiritual and material aspects in varied proportions, however always including both. In the absence of the concentric power of the Temple's axis mundi, the cultural practice and the material sign of the Sukkah produce an alternative, decentered cosmology in which the axis mundi rises each time anew from the depth of the Sukkah to the height of the stars and the moon. Indeed, the rule that the stars should be seen through the *shakh* roof is a minority view in the earlier Tannaitic literature, but is consistently transmitted in both Talmuds and steadfastly practiced until these days.

A brief discussion of a tale from Rabbinic sources shows how the Sukkah served as a cultural mechanism to regulate relations between classes and construct boundaries between genders and age groups. I shall demonstrate with a Rabbinic tale about a prominent and royal Sukkah how this ritual artifact, the Sukkah, contributes to our understanding of the basic tension between wandering and sedentary life as the generative and creative nucleus of the complex of cultural signs generally related to the Sukkah. In this tale, the motif of conversion corresponds with the restlessness of the desert wandering in the wake of the Exodus, and in particular with the collective conversion of hearts of the Israelites at Mt Sinai.

I shall demonstrate this with a text from the beginning of Mishna Sukkah, chapter 1, Mishna 1:

> A Sukkah that is higher than twenty *amah* (a measure of length) is prohibited; Rabbi Judah permits; and one that is not the height of ten *tefah* (a shorter measure of length) and does not have three partitions and where the sun is more plentiful that shade, is prohibited.

The opening passage of the parallel chapter of the Tannaitic Tosefta Sukkah

is quite similar: "A Sukkah that is higher than twenty *amah* is prohibited; and Rabbi Judah permits."[7] The Tosefta then cuts short on the instructional aspect continued in the Mishna, and inserts a historical narrative, in a way typical for the Tosefta as Judith Hauptman has suggested:

> Rabbi Judah said: A case (*ma'aseh*) concerning the Sukkah of Heleni that was higher than twenty *amah* and the elders were going in and out of it and nobody said anything. They [the sages] told him: It is because she was a woman and a woman is not obliged to perform the Sukkah. He [Rabbi Judah] told them [the sages]: However she had seven sons who were learned [literally: disciples of the sages] and all of them were staying inside it.[8]

The Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds continue to elaborate on Heleni's Sukkah, and they also comment on the distribution of learning in the family:

> A Sukkah that is higher than twenty *amah* – is prohibited, and Rabbi Judah permits up to forty and fifty *amah*. Rabbi Judah said: A case [*ma'aseh*] of Queen Heleni in Lod, her Sukkah was higher than twenty *amah*, and the elders went in an out there, and did not tell her anything. They [the sages] told him: Is that proof? She was a woman and exempt from [the commandment of] Sukkah. He told them: However she had seven sons. Moreover: All of her acts were in accordance with the opinion of the Sages.[9]

Following this, another discussion presents earlier Rabbis' views regarding the size of the Sukkah and its internal division into rooms. The discussion is

[7] Tosefta 1,1.

[8] Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah: A New Approach to Ancient Jewish Texts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

[9] Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sukkah 2b.

interspersed with fascinating insights about queens in general and Queen Heleni in particular: "She did nothing without consulting the sages"; "A queen sits in a Sukkah the partitions of which do not reach the *shakh* roof for the sake of ventilation"; "Does a queen sit in a small Sukkah?"; "Is it the custom of a queen to sit in a Sukkah made of many small rooms?"; and finally, commending her high moral values and deeds, the following exchange staged as a Tannaitic debate:

> Sages suggested: Her sons were sitting in a permitted and luxurious Sukkah, and she was sitting in a small room in the same Sukkah because of her modesty, and that is why the sages did not say anything to her. But Rabbi Judah suggested that although her sons were sitting in the same space, they did not say anything to her.[10]

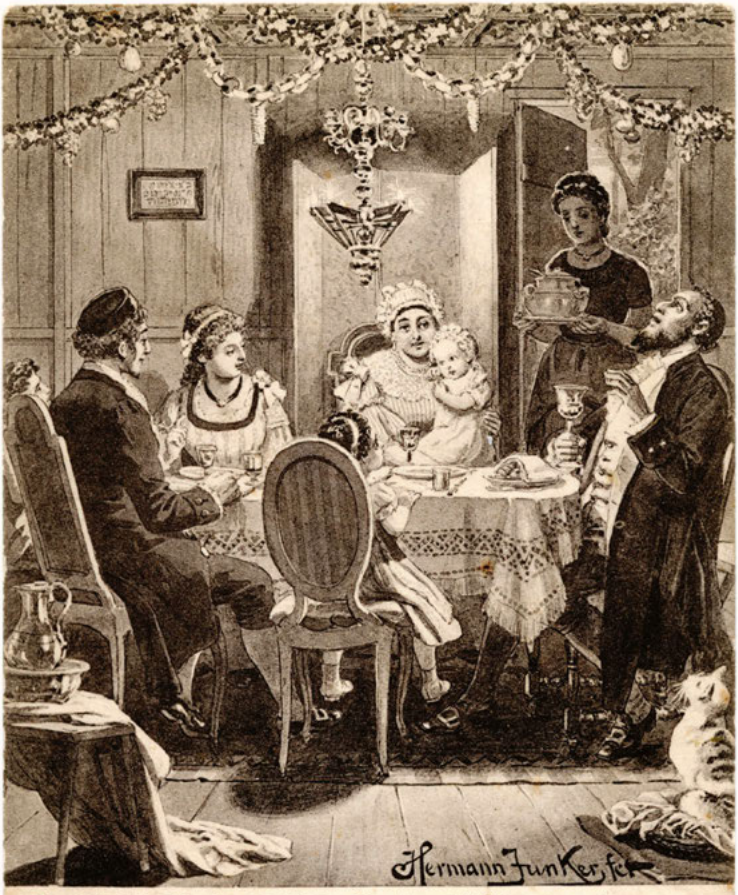
The relationship between Queen Heleni and her sons is reflected in the Rabbis' imaginary ruling regarding Heleni/Helene, Queen of Adiabene, a kingdom in northern Iraq or rather Kurdistan of today. She converted to Judaism in the first century CE, with her sons but without her husband. Her main acts are recounted by Flavius Josephus partly in his *Jewish Antiquities* and also in his *Jewish War*. She visited Jerusalem and built a monumental necropolis which can still be seen, and is still called the Tombs of the Kings.[11] The few references in Rabbinic literature to her and her sons, Izates and especially Monbazus, focus on their piety and their generous gifts, mostly of gold, to the Temple of Jerusalem.

I have shown in earlier work that the inter-cultural and inter-religious narrative dialogue here addresses known narratives about another Queen

[10] Ibid.

[11] The site has mistakenly been regarded in the popular mind as the tomb of the Hasmonean kings of Judea, in the second and first century BC.

Figure 2



Laubhüttenfest Mahl in der Laubhütte

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Helena,[12] whose acts are not very different from those of the Talmudic Heleni of Adiabene, namely Queen Helena the mother of Constantine the Great who lived in the 4th century.[13] Both came on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, both contributed to its sanctuaries, both built or initiated monumental building in the city, both converted, one to Judaism while the other to Christianity, and the sons of both achieved great military victories by miracles as a result of their conversion.

There is a clear dialogue between the sources of Helena mother of Constantine (Eusebius, Gelasius, Theodoret and others) later named St Helena, and the Rabbinic sources (Genesis Rabbah and the Babylonian Talmud) about Heleni of Adiabene. The Rabbis and other Jews living in fourth century Palestine could hardly have missed the rumors about the advent of the Emperor's mother in the Holy Land and particularly in the Holy City, where she revealed the True Cross and built the earliest phase of the Martyrion church (later called the Holy Sepulcher), both which solidified her everlasting changes to the City.[14] The books of Flavius

[12] I have introduced the concept of narrative dialogues encompassing multiple modes of verbal, especially narrative exchanges between groups of different identities, especially religious. These exchanges transmit narratives between groups, and are not necessarily polemical or confrontational, but may be so: G. Hasan-Rokem, "Narratives in Dialogue; a Folk Literary Perspective on Inter-Religious Contacts in the Holy Land in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity", in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land,* eds. A. Kofsky and G. Stroumsa (Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem 1998), 109-130; eadem, *Tales of the Neighborhood: Jewish Narrative Dialogues in Late Antiquity*. The Taubman Lectures on Jewish Civilization. (University of California Press, Berkeley 2003).

[13] G. Hasan-Rokem, "Polymorphic Helena – Toledot Yeshu as a Palimpsest of Religious Narratives and Identities," in *Toledot Yeshu ("The Life Story of Jesus") Revisited: A Princeton Conference*, ed. Peter Schäfer, Michael Meerson, and Yaacov Deutsch (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 247-282.

[14] Among the many works on Helena the mother of Constantine, see e.g.: Jan Willem Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and her Finding of the True Cross* (Leiden & New York: Brill Publishers, 1992).

Josephus were in the libraries of the historians of early Christianity and the Empire who described Helena's journey. Thus, they likely also had access to Josephus' accounts of the Queen of Adiabene. The peak dialogic moment may be the tale of finding the True Cross, as Queen Helena learns about the location of the Cross from a Jerusalemite Jew. This episode reinforces the idea that the Jews are the keepers of the original divine revelation and also the experts on the sites of the Holy Land, even those relating to Christian traditions. Contemporary traditions, and especially the instituting of a special Jerusalem-based holiday (the Encaenia) to commemorate the inauguration of the church on the site of the finding of the True Cross,[15] also conduct a dialogue with the tale of Heleni of Adiabene, indeed with her Sukkah. Eusebius in his "Life of Constantine" mentions September 13, year 335, as the date of the original Encaenia which was the eve of Yom Kippur– that is four days before Sukkoth. Another description of the festival has come down in the itinerary of the Holy Land pilgrimage of Egeria: a woman from South Western Europe, who made her journey towards the end of the fourth century. Egeria mentions the festival – an eight-day long pilgrimage, as some Sukkoth traditions – as one in a triad including Encaenia, Epiphany and Easter, in a possible parallel to the three Jewish festivals of pilgrimage.[16]

The narrative dialogue regarding the festival seems to have been transposed into the local Jerusalemite Christian practice in Jewish and Christian cooperation. The Encaenia was associated with the inauguration of Salomon's Temple that occurred on Sukkoth.[17] In parallel, Sukkoth and Hanukkah

[15] Joshua Schwartz, "The Encaenia of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, The Temple of Solomon and the Jews," *Theologische Zeitschrift*, 43 (1987): 265-281.

[16] Ora Limor, "Reading Sacred Space: Egeria, Paula, and the Christian Holy Land," in *De Sion Exibit Lex et Verbum Domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy, and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, ed. Yitzhak Hen (Turnhout, 2001): 1–15.

[17] 1 Kings 8:2.

were internally correlated in Jewish traditions, e.g. in 2 Maccabees, further inspiring the Christian festival of Encaenia with motifs known from both. This may also have inspired the Jewish versions of Heleni of Adiabene stories to include motifs from the tales on Helena Augusta – the title bestowed on her by her son – thus her donations to the Temple abounded in Byzantine opulence and her Sukkah gained imperial size. In both cases the conversion involves the undertaking of fulfilling the commands, of the newly acquired religion – in Heleni's case most extremely leading to her staunch support of her sons' circumcision.[18] The sacred center of the Temple is even more explicitly inscribed in the various Talmudic passages on Queen Heleni's and her son Monbazus' lavish golden gifts to the Jerusalem sanctuary. These gifts perhaps echo the style of Byzantine churches both in Jerusalem and Constantinople, which were initially meant to emulate the magnificence of Salomon's Temple as described in the eighth chapter of 2 Kings. Finally, the de-centralizing effect of the Sukkah gains additional weight by the fact that Queen Heleni's Sukkah did not stand in Jerusalem, but rather in the town of Lod, a city in which rabbinic activity flourished much later than any possible dating of the Queen of Adiabene's actual lifetime and therefore also past her visit to Palestine. It is however significant for the choice of Lod as the site of Heleni's Sukkah, that in the Byzantine period Lod may have actually been a more significant site for interactions between Jews and Christians (both constructive and conflictual) than Jerusalem.[19] The Sukkah itself, as a transitory habitat housing the queen, is perhaps the most obvious de-centralizing aspect of the tale about a person who actually commissioned the construction of eternal abodes of stone in Jerusalem for her and her family.

[18] Genesis Rabbah.

[19] Joshua Schwartz, "Lod of the Yavne Period: How a City was Cheated Out of Its Period", in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: The Interbellum 70-132*, eds. Joshua Schwartz and Peter J. Tomson (Leiden: Brill 2018), 71-89.

The story suggests some additional elements of de-centralization:

1. Through discussion of Adiabene, the story demonstrates the emergence of Jewish communities that consist of a country's native inhabitants, and are in a distance from the supposed place of origin of the Jews. Thus Adiabene, by definition, does not describe Jews as exiles from Jerusalem.

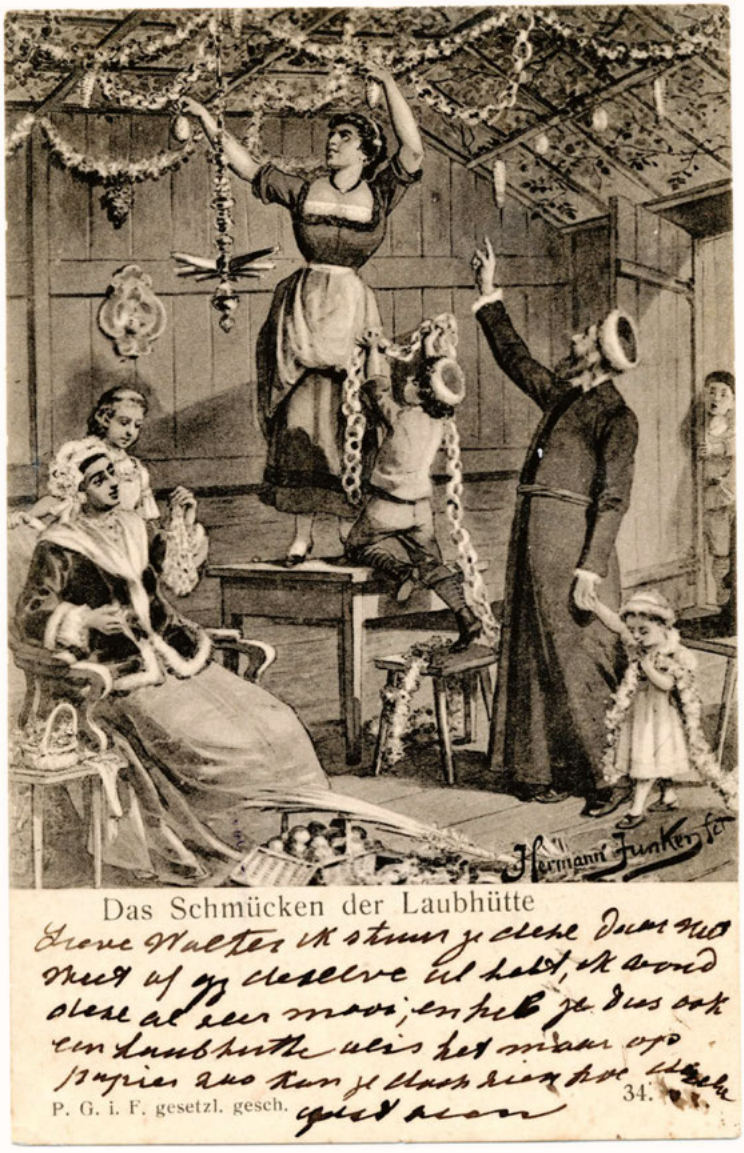
2. The story illustrates the possibility of Jewish sovereignty outside the land of Israel.

3. It examines the potential of the Sukkah's cultural capacity to destabilize historical models predicated on a centralizing cosmology and to shake the general idea of a religious center in geographical.

The theoretical concept that strongly lends itself to the analysis of the Sukkah is thus Michel Foucault's rather famous heterotopia. Unlike utopia (a term that denotes the realization of an ideal in a non-space), heterotopias (meaning multiple places at once) function as reverse mirrors of culturally significant social conditions. Various utopian ideas and heterotopic practices and discourses are encoded in many of the complex cultural aspects of the combination of Sukkah and Jerusalem. At a Sukkoth reception, about ten years ago a former Mayor of Jerusalem hosted pilgrims of other religions at the site of Jewish sovereignty. This meeting recalled the universalistic utopia of Isaiah chapter 1, yet this event contrasts the city's reality, where there are considerable inequalities between the native inhabitants of the city, based on differences of religion and nationality.

In recent years, Jerusalem mayors have expressed their centralizing and nationalist aspirations by having the public municipal Sukkah erected at the Mamluk-Ottoman structure popularly called "David's Tower." The choice of this location perhaps intends to commemorate the grandeur of

Figure 3


Hermann Junker fec.
Das Schmücken der Laubhütte
P. G. i. F. gesetzl. gesch.
34.

the past Israelite kingdom. On Sukkoth 2004, a Sukkah of light, was placed in another site, next to the city hall on the Safra Square.[20] This placement produced a different embodiment of spiritual utopias, which was partly rooted in diverse Jewish traditions.

In the context of the "Liminal spaces" event, the Sala-Manca group created a heterotopic and critical Sukkah that they titled "Eternal Tabernacle." The Sukkah was made of draperies decorated with copies of the images that covered the Separation Wall (alias Security Fence) between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. That wall was built by the Ackerstein construction company and commissioned by the Ministry of Defense. The images covering the wall were likely meant to camouflage the oppressive and discriminatory nature of the edifice.

Albeit encompassing utopian aspects, the Sukkah may reveal very different sides from early periods, especially in the construction of boundaries between those inside and those outside one's group. According to the Mishna of Tractate Sukkah, chapter 2, paragraph 8:

> Women and slaves and minors are exempted from Sukkah practice. A minor who is not dependent on his mother is obliged to practice Sukkah. The case of Shamai the Elder who gave birth and he diminished the roof [of the house] and covered the bed [with shakh] for the sake of the minor.

In modern culture, postcards are particularly heterotopic spaces, marking the lines of the wanderings of both senders and addressees. The heyday of the production and the use of postcards coincided with great emigrations of, especially but not only, Jewish populations from East Europe to the Western hemisphere. Judaica postcards thus constitute a rich archive of Jewish

[20] See https://jr.co.il/jerusalem/jer0669.htm

wandering and travel at the beginning of the twentieth century, as they reflect their heterotopic and deterritorialized facets. The Joseph and Margit Hoffman Judaica Postcard Collection at the Folklore Research Center of the Mandel Institute, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem includes a beautiful postcard. The German text discloses that it is a printed version of a painting by (Professor) Moritz Daniel Oppenheimer, and indeed a woman and a minor – mentioned in the Mishna text quoted above – are visible in it. But there are also women seated inside the Sukkah, and even a cat is there. The woman outside the Sukkah seems initially of unclear identity, but by comparison with other similar postcards she may be a servant and perhaps not Jewish (see Figure 1).[21] In another postcard,[22] a woman in a similar position and dress, is on her way into the Sukkah carrying the soup bowl, therefore she is positioned as moving into the Sukkah as we view her from the inside (See Figure 2). In yet another one,[23] she stands on top of a table, fulfilling the commandment of "Noy Sukkah" – extensive decoration – for the Jewish family (see Figure 3). The class and gender differences are reinforced in many other postcards showing the exclusively male tasks related to Sukkoth.[24] The continuing creativity of migrating Jewish painters

[21] "Sukkoth" according to a painting by Moritz Oppenheimer (1800-1882). Having been printed by Sana Gesellschaft in Germany in ca. 1904, this particular postcard was sent in 1913. The Joseph and Margit Hoffmann Judaica Postcard Collection, the Folklore Research Center, the Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (hereafter JPC), marked in the catalogue as hof9-0021.

[22] "Meal in the Booth of Leaves" Hermann Junker (1838-1899), printed at the end of the nineteenth century by the P.G.I.F. company in Germany. JPC catalogue number hof9-0062.

[23] "Adorning the Sukkah" by Hermann Junker (1838-1899), printed at the end of the nineteenth century by the P.G.I.F. company in Germany. JPC catalogue number hof9-0061.

[24] "The Jew with the Palm Leaves" by Alphonse Lévy (1843-1918). The postcard was apparently printed in 1903 by the ND Phot (Neurdein Frères) company in France. JPC catalogue number hof9-0098.

Figure 4

employing images of Sukkah is also expressed in a Sukkoth meal painting by a Jewish immigrant from Opatów (Yiddish: Apt), Poland, who immigrated to Montreal, Canada.[25]

Judith Sherman, a survivor of Ravensbrück, the largest concentration camp for women under the Nazi rule, shared a postcard with me that illustrates an especially deep insight on the ephemerality of homes, from a very different sphere of experience than the Sukkah elaborated on the

[25] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *The Called Me Mayer July: Painted memories of a Jewish Childhood*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press 2007, in which the author recorded her interviews with her painter father. The painting is reprinted with the author's permission.

discussion above. On the fiftieth anniversary of the camp's liberation, Sherman traveled to participate in the ceremony. She sent herself a postcard on which she wrote: "I sent this postcard to myself – I shall be at home to receive it!" (see Figure 4).[26]

Contemplating on this paradoxical subject position, sending a postcard home to oneself, precipitated by the extreme experience of the concentration camp, I shall conclude the main line of argument of this essay: The Sukkah symbolically embodies both the home of the Wandering Jew and a Temple erected everywhere. On one hand, the Sukkah evokes a stable image of a world in which there is a clear center, Jerusalem with its past and potential temples, a cosmology revolving around an axis mundi connecting heaven and earth and enabling communication between humans and the divine.

At the same time, as the home of the eternal wanderer, the Sukkah emerges as temporary, portable, adapted to new climates and environments. It is also associated with the cultural mobility of conversion as in the case of Queen Heleni, as well as the nation shaping desert wanderings of the biblical Israelites. The Sukkah as the condensed, multivalent figure of the heterotopia, everywhere turned into nowhere opens a double exposure – portrait as well as mirror image – bringing together a central tension generally in all human cultures, however especially associated with Jews from antiquity to our own time: the inherent lurking homelessness of the human condition.

[26] The postcard is also reprinted in Judith Sherman, *Say the Name: A Survivor's Tale in Prose and Poetry* (2005), telling the tale of a journey from a Czech town, through the harrowing time of the extermination of Europe's Jews, until she builds her home in the United States, and her children build their own homes in Israel. The signed postcard is reprinted with the author's permission.