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### The land of milk and honey: Biblical foods, heritage and Holy Land tourism

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## The land of milk and honey: Biblical foods, heritage and Holy Land tourism

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This paper discusses the importance of Biblical food as heritage cuisine for religious tourists in the Holy Land. Based on empirical evidence and case material from sites in Israel, the study describes the role of Biblical gastronomy in the religious tourism landscape of Jerusalem and examines the dynamics of experience, cost and authenticity of Last Supper re-enactments for Christian tourists in Israel. Biblical food is an important theme for religious tourism in the Holy Land, and it is becoming more influential in creating spiritual and authentic religious heritage experiences for Christian pilgrims.

**Keywords:** heritage foodways; cuisine; Holy Land; Last Supper; authenticity; Biblical food; tourism landscape; tourismscape; foodscape; spiritual edutainment

### Introduction

The first author of this paper worked as a tour guide in Israel for approximately 30 years, with an emphasis on guiding Christian pilgrims from English-speaking countries. Such a long period enables one to get a sense of historical perspective and observe changes. Many of the observed changes are obvious, such as those deriving from technological and geopolitical developments. One of the less-obvious changes is the commodification of traditional foods in general and Biblical food in particular.

Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land<sup>1</sup> have always been interested in local traditional foods and have asked questions such as ‘what did Jesus eat?’, but the local tourism industry had very few and limited answers. For example, most guide books of the 1980s and 1990s did not refer to historical food at all, and the few that did were very superficial, providing little information beyond photographs of ka’aks (Arab bagels) in the Old City of Jerusalem (Levi, 1989), Bedouins drinking coffee, or St Peter’s Fish by the Sea of Galilee (Mann, 1988). However, the situation is changing.

While it differs between denominations, it appears that fewer people are attending church regularly in the developed world and identifying less often with any formal religious affiliation (Norris & Inglehart, 2011). Those who do attend church regularly, however, appear in most cases to be highly motivated, deeply spiritual and increasingly interested

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in visiting Christian sites in the Holy Land. This has resulted directly in Christian travel to Israel growing during times of peace and remaining steady during times of conflict (Collins-Kreiner, Kliot, Mansfeld, & Sagi, 2006).

Along with this growing interest in undertaking pilgrimages to Israel is an apparent mounting fascination with the everyday life of Jesus and the early Christians. This manifests in part by tourists' curiosity about ancient Biblical food and their desire to partake of authentic New Testament-era meals. Part of what drives this fascination is the emergence of books and websites since the mid-1990s that have encouraged people to eat healthier Mediterranean diets, prepare Biblical gastronomy at home and even partake of Biblical cuisine during trips to the Holy Land (Flegal & Stickler, 2009; Morse, 1998; Swenson, 2008). Despite its earlier lack of interest, Israel's tourism sector has nowadays adapted to this emerging fascination with Biblical cuisine. In response, a few visitor establishments have started serving Biblical meals, and several souvenir shops are selling books with appealing titles such as *Food at the time of the Bible: From Adam's apple to the Last Supper* (Feinberg-Vamosh, 2004). Similarly, representations of Biblical cuisine have appeared more prominently in the tourism landscapes of Jerusalem and other parts of Israel also as an important part of the pilgrimage experience by reinforcing the scriptural association with food.

This paper examines Biblical food as heritage cuisine for Christian tourists in Israel. It identifies nine relationships between gastronomy and religious tourism, two of which are the focus of the paper. This study notes the growing prevalence of ancient fare in the tourist landscapes of Jerusalem and other locations in the country. It first highlights heritage cuisines, including Biblical gastronomy, then describes the food-based religious tourism landscape and illustrates empirical evidence of the importance of authentic ancient comestibles from tourist establishments that reconstruct the Last Supper and serve food which would have been eaten in New Testament times.

### **Heritage cuisines, Biblical food and religious tourism in Israel**

Food is an important ingredient of heritage tourism. Timothy and Ron (2013, p. 275) note that,

Food, cuisine and culinary traditions are among the most foundational elements of culture. While there is a long tradition of identifying many places with their traditional foods, cuisine is becoming an ever more important part of the contemporary cultural heritage of regions and countries.

Not only does food complement other elements of the cultural environment, cuisine and foodways are themselves an important part of heritage as they reflect cultural norms and values, the physical realities of geography and place, involve inter-generational bequeathing, and they leave an imprint on other elements of human heritage (e.g. religion, language, politics and power, agricultural landscapes and family relations) (Timothy, 2011).

Heritage consists of both tangibles (e.g. buildings and artifacts) and intangibles (e.g. music and ethics). Food as an element of heritage is fundamentally different from other heritage examples in a number of ways. First, it is multi-sensory, and its consumption calls for the use of all five senses. Culture-consuming tourists not only can see, smell and taste it, but it can also be touched and heard, at least in its preparation. Second, given its multi-sensory condition, it is both tangible and intangible. Third, heritage tourists can be directly exposed to the preparation process, and may even be an active participant at

times. Finally, heritage tourists can take it home by purchasing prepared food, ingredients or copying recipes for future use at home. In this way, heritage is transported, distributed and perpetuated, literally and figuratively.

Native foods and their endemic ingredients, as well as the peasant or colonial origins of many popular foods today, contribute a great deal to the identity-making of nations and people. Traditional cuisines can help preserve identities among diasporic groups and strengthen national solidarity (Chuang, 2009; Cusack, 2000; Pilcher, 1996; Timothy & Ron, 2013). From a place promotion perspective, heritage cuisines can also help 'brand' destinations, particularly those locales, whose foods are well-known abroad and whose tourism product is at least somewhat intertwined with their traditional gastronomy (Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Hall, 2006; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007; du Rand & Heath, 2006).

The commodification of historic cuisines and foodways occurs along culinary routes (Richards, 2012), during food festivals (Hall & Sharples, 2008; Rusher, 2003), at ethnic restaurants (Germann Molz, 2004; Suen, 2007), in locations that evolve around a particular food (Alebaki & Iakovidou, 2011; Hall, Sharples, Cambourne, & Macionis, 2000; Jolliffe, 2007, 2010), via food-related souvenirs (Swanson & Timothy, 2012; Timothy, 2005), and in other food-related experiences. In the realm of religious tourism and pilgrimage, food is playing an ever more integral part of the experience (Fernandes, Pimenta, Gonçalves, & Rachão, 2012).

One important discussion point in essentially all forms of heritage tourism, including religious tourism and heritage cuisines, is the notion of authenticity. Stebbins (1996) suggested that heritage tourists may be serious or casual cultural consumers on opposite ends of a spectrum with varying degrees of interest in between. Serious cultural tourists are those who deliberately seek out heritage places and events, and these are an important part of their leisure pursuits. Casual heritage consumers, on the other hand, are those who happen to stumble onto cultural sites, such as museums or archaeological sites, and decide to pay a visit as an afterthought.

In most cases, religious tourists resemble Stebbins' serious cultural tourists. Their primary goal is to undertake a pilgrimage, grow spiritually and build a relationship with the divine. For most, their journey is sacred and very serious as they visit holy heritage locales and have inspiring religious-cultural experiences. Unlike most post-tourists, who care little whether or not their experiences are authentic (Ritzer & Liska, 1997; Urry, 1995), to pilgrims, authentic experiences are enormously important (Belhassen, Caton, & Stewart, 2008; Cohen, 1979). To walk literally where Jesus walked, or to eat the food he ate, are powerful motives for Christians to travel to Israel. Thus, the more objectively authentic an experience can be for Christian pilgrims, the closer they feel to Jesus and the more faith-promoting their experience will be. Authentic Biblical food is an important part of this experience for many pilgrims.

There are several relationships between heritage foods and religious tourism, a few of which have been identified in the tourism and pilgrimage literature (Nolan, 2010; Shinde, 2011; Toomey, 1984; Weidenfeld & Ron, 2008) (Figure 1). First, in some religions, food is provided as an offering to deity. These gastronomical sacrifices appease gods and goddesses, manifest devotion, and can help in securing divine blessings. Second, in some religious traditions, food is donated by worshippers to the less-fortunate in the society they are visiting. Alms-giving in the form of food is a common activity while on pilgrimage in many parts of the world. Third, several faith groups have dietary restrictions that must be taken into account when they travel. Anyone wishing to cater to the lucrative Jewish or Muslim travel markets ought to be aware of these religionists' dietary allowances. The fourth relationship involves the consumption of required victuals during pilgrimage, such

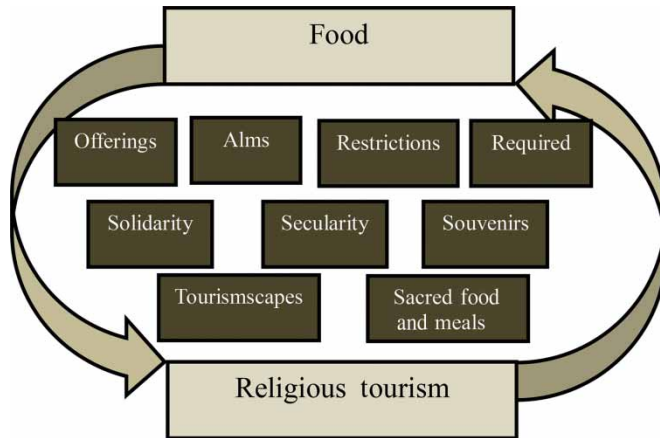


Figure 1. Relationships between religious tourism and food.

as holy sacraments or communions, which might involve eating wafers, bread or fruit, and drinking wine or water. Similarly, there may be some faiths that restrict what can be consumed during official pilgrimages. The fifth relationship is the role of food in creating a sense of solidarity among members of a religious tour group. Whether or not the food is religious in nature, the socialization process involved in dining together can help build common faith and testimony. Sixth, extreme food enthusiasts traveling to sample the fare of the world have been compared by some observers to secular pilgrims, just like people journeying to pay homage at the gravesite of a famous celebrity or undertaking a quest for some other votive reason. The seventh relationship is food-related souvenirs. While food is a common souvenir taken away from the destination by many tourists, in the pilgrimage setting it can become more meaningful if it is indigenous to the sacred destination or has a religious connotation. Biblical herbs from the Holy Land are a good example. The eighth relationship is visual imagery and other cuisine-related manifestations (e.g. signs, souvenirs depicting food and advertised events) in the tourism landscape (tourismscape) that create a sacred foodscape, which may enhance the visitors' experience. Finally, consuming foods that are related to deity, sacred events or holy places can enhance a spiritual traveler's experience considerably. Consuming sacred cuisine may be a way of getting closer to God, becoming spiritually edified, and solidifying faith through spiritual experiences, or exhibiting devotion. These last two types are of most concern in this paper.

### ***Biblical food and tourism***

Israel is one of the foremost faith-based tourist destinations in the world, with almost 3.4 million tourists, including day visitors, arriving in 2011. While most arrivals are non-Jewish (76%), and although only 28% defined their visit as a pilgrimage, approximately one half of Israel's tourists visit sacred heritage sites, including the Via Dolorosa and the Western Wall in Jerusalem (Romano & Ostrovsky, 2012). The Holy Land is perceived as sacred to all three monotheistic faiths (i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and is home to sacred sites for other groups as well (e.g. Druze and Baha'i) (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2006; Collins-Kreiner & Gatrell, 2006). There are only a few other places on earth that can compete with the characteristics and challenges of multi-faith sacred site operations and management the way Israel does (Olsen & Ron, in press).

The basic tourism product for Christian visitors to Israel is sometimes known as the 'In the Footsteps of Jesus' tour (Ron & Timothy, forthcoming) and consists of a basic sacred itinerary that has hardly changed since the Byzantine period (Ron, 2009, p. 291). Although the land is deemed sacred by all Christians, there are denominational variations in itineraries and practices that have been analyzed by a growing number of researchers (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2006; Fleischer, 2000; Ron, 2009; Ron & Timothy, forthcoming). As noted above, immersion into Biblical foods and Last Supper re-enactments are becoming a more prevalent and important part of the pilgrimage tourism product of Israel for most Christians, including their tour packages, and Biblical food elements are becoming a more prominent part of the religious tourism landscape. Tourism landscapes are defined as special landscapes that are created as tourism acts as an agent of change in the physical development and layout of places. Many destinations are well known for their touristified landscapes, where tourism modifies the human environment and 'provides an impetus and economic rationale for preserving valued features' (Wall, 1998, p. 51).

The Bible has hundreds of references to food, meals and drink. The book of Exodus even describes the Promised Land using food and drink-related metaphors: 'a land flowing with milk and honey' (Exod. 3, verse 8). Some of the most memorable stories in the Bible for Jews and Christians have something to do with food: The Garden of Eden, Abraham hosting the angels, the provision of Manna and quails to the children of Israel, Jesus turning water to wine, Jesus feeding the 5000 with loaves and fishes, the Last Supper and many more. These scriptural references to food have been adopted by the tourism sector and have become important factors in modifying the cultural landscapes of Israel.

The literature on food in the Bible is plentiful, ranging from popular recipe books (Chifolo & Hesse, 2006; Morse, 1998; Swenson, 2008) to academic research texts (Macdonald, 2008b). Some of the literature emphasizes the healthy Mediterranean dietary practices (Halliday & Wardell Halliday, 2007; Macdonald, 2008b), whereas others emphasize the spiritual and religious heritage context (Cunha, Cabral-Cardoso, & Clegg, 2008; Macdonald, 2008a).

In a tourist destination like Israel, the academic links between the Bible and tourism are numerous, and can be found in studies on tour itineraries (Feldman, 2007, 2011), guiding narratives (Bowman, 1992; Feldman, 2007), archaeological sites (Rowan & Baram, 2004), museums (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998) and many more. The links between Biblical food and tourism are numerous as well, but generally speaking they are found more often in the practices of the tourism industry, rather than in academic literature. To the best of our knowledge, the only academic sources that discuss this nexus are Ron (2010), Ron and Feldman (2009) and Shoval (2000). All three sources elaborate on ancient foods at the *Biblical Resources Museum*, the *Cardo Culinaria Restaurant*, and the *Nazareth Village* and hint at the notion of edutainment.

Edutainment is a hybrid term describing an activity that is both educational and entertaining. Dictionaries define it as 'entertainment that educates' or 'education that both informs and entertains' (Heldrich, 2011, p. 5). In the context of tourism and leisure, the term is relevant for museums, themed environments and even storytelling on guided tours (Heldrich, 2011; Hertzman, 2006; Hertzman, Anderson, & Rowley, 2008; Lepouras & Vassilakis, 2004; Moss, 2009).

Morpeth (2009) identifies a sub-type of edutainment, which he refers to as spiritual edutainment. According to Morpeth (2009, p. 323),

spiritual edutainment is designed to inform audiences about aspects of spirituality and religion. This can also be in the form of a reenactment of a recorded historic event that has spiritual or



religious connotations, so that the watching audience learn (sic) ‘what actually happened’, this often takes place at religious sites in the form of guided tours, where the tour guide also becomes a ‘storyteller’.

Religious tourists in the Holy Land eat many different foods with Biblical roots and scriptural connotations, and these are an important part of the pilgrimage experience. This occurs at restaurants, Bible-themed attractions, and at archaeological sites. One of the most interesting settings for pilgrims to consume foods of the Bible is commodified ‘Last Supper’ meals, which are offered by a few service providers in Israel and are good examples of spiritual edutainment.

### Methods

Several methods were used to collect information for this study. As noted early in the paper, the first author spent three decades as a tour guide for Christians in Israel, which opened his eyes to many evolving elements of pilgrimage tourism. Many visits to themed religious attractions, participation in Last Supper meals, and countless interviews with religious food-oriented service providers from the 1990s until present resulted in a great deal of understanding about the dynamics of Biblical cuisine.

In addition, both authors participated in systematic inventories of Biblical foodscapes in the entire Old City of Jerusalem and in the Galilee region in 2008, 2010 and 2012. Visual and physical manifestations of ancient Israeli and Biblical cuisines were photographed, noted and recorded. Based on a team consensus approach, the contents of the culinary symbolisms identified in this field work was assessed, and five categories of Biblical cuisine-based landscape elements were identified. Finally, in-depth interviews by both authors were conducted between 2010 and 2012 with several key players in establishments that provide Biblical meals and in other themed attractions that have connections with ancient, traditional foods. All of these data sources are instrumental in providing information for this study.

### Biblical cuisine in the Israeli touristscape and the Last Supper reconstructed

The five categories of Biblical cuisine landscapes identified in this research are obedience to the word and will of God, the Holy Land as the Promised Land, ministry and miracles of Jesus, the crucifixion of Christ and the spirit of the Holy Land.

Several food-related examples can be found in Israel related to the ancient Hebrews’ obedience to the laws of God. Primary among these are bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah celebratory centers, which offer mitzvah services to Jews from Israel and the diaspora. It is a common desire among Jews in North America and Europe to have their mitzvahs in the Holy Land (Cohen Ioannides & Ioannides, 2006). Food, often traditional fare of the region – much derived from Old Testament times, is a major focus of these important celebrations. From the perspective of Christians, however, there are some key players in Israel who offer Passover meals to Christian visitors who desire to become immersed in Jewish tradition and Old Testament heritage. Some of these are even offered overseas in various congregations by Israeli Passover experts.

According to the Bible, the land of Israel was the Promised Land, gifted to the Israelites by God. This is a foundational part of Christian theology, and this perspective is reinforced among Christian tourists who visit the Holy Land. The foodscapes of Jerusalem reiterate this in a number of ways. One of the most prominent is the use of ‘Land of Milk and

Honey' on signs, in shops and on souvenirs (Figure 2), and the prolific use of the word 'holy' in descriptions of food and drink throughout the country.

The ministry of Jesus Christ and the miracles associated with it are the third important part of the heritage foodscapes of Israel. There is a strong propensity for food products to feature prominently in places where certain food-related events took place in the New Testament. For example, at the site believed to be where Jesus turned water to wine, wine is the dominant souvenir. Shops are filled with wine bottles, clay wine pots, and pictures of grapes, vineyards and Jesus performing the miracle abound. Similarly, near the Sea of Galilee, Christian pilgrims frequently dine on St Peter's Fish, a type of tilapia caught from this sacred water body and associated with several miracles that Jesus performed. Menus in the Galilee and throughout the country are adorned with St Peter's Fish, one of the main dishes on nearly every menu.

Last Supper re-enactments are the primary indicator of the passion of the Christ and his sacrifice (crucifixion and resurrection), which Christians believe brings salvation to true believers. The Last Supper preceded Jesus' death and was one of the defining moments of the end of his ministry wherein he served his disciples and instructed them on how to lead the people following his departure. There are a few tourism establishments that offer these commodified meal experiences, some of which will be discussed in more detail later.

The spirit of the Holy Land is the final category. It is the least religious of the foodscape types identified and essentially includes the edible landscapes that illustrate Israel as the Holy Land and help build solidarity among Christian tourists with the State of Israel. Among many others, these include traditional Jewish food (e.g. grilled meat and



Figure 2. Part of the Biblical foodscapes of Jerusalem (Photo: Dallen J. Timothy).



unleavened bread), meal depictions/displays (e.g. scale models), souvenirs that depict Israeli food (e.g. postcards and place mats), and traditional Middle Eastern herbs and spices (e.g. sumac, cumin, anise, frankincense and myrrh). These exist in shops, restaurants, street vendors, museums and themed villages and on street signs.

All of these roles of foods in the Biblical travel experience help create an overall ambience and tourist landscape that is quite unique to the Holy Land. There are doubtfully any other destinations that are so well defined by their domination of scriptural food.

### ***Staging the Last Supper***

Until a few years ago, there were at least two places in Israel that served re-enacted Last Supper meals to tour groups: The Biblical Resources Museum in Jerusalem and Yad Hashmona Biblical Village near Jerusalem. The Biblical Resources Museum is a Bible-based theme site that was described, analyzed and interpreted by Ron (2010), and Ron and Feldman (2009). This Christian attraction was founded by J. W. Fleming, a scriptural scholar and educator. During their visit, participants encountered several staged Biblical scenes, including a threshing floor, a sheepfold, a watchtower, a quarry, a goat's hair tent, a water well, a wine press, an olive press and a crucifixion site decked with Roman-style crosses. Two highlights of the attraction were a replica of Jesus' tomb and a Last Supper re-enactment as an optional service (Ron & Feldman, 2009, p. 210). Owing to security concerns in Israel, however, the site was relocated to La Grange, Georgia, USA, in 2006, where staged Last Suppers are set for groups of primarily Evangelical Christians who can visit the 'Holy Land' by proxy through this experience. The Yad Hashmona Biblical Village was constructed in 2000. Between 2008 and 2010, the village staged Last Supper meals for groups of Christian pilgrims, but the service has ceased because it was not cost-effective, and maintaining an authentic aura was extremely difficult.

Both places fall under the category of Christian-themed sites (Feldman & Ron, 2011; Ron, 2009, 2010; Ron & Feldman, 2009), which aim to represent the life and death of Jesus. These types of Christian-themed environments are found in North and South America, Europe and Israel, and they represent a type of imaginary landscape that attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The staged Last Supper is an example of an active theming that requires multi-sensory participation.

The Last Supper, as described in the New Testament, is one of the most important events commemorated by Christians (Schreiner & Crawford, 2010) and is symbolically reconstructed on a daily basis by millions of believers who take communion or holy sacrament. Based on the New Testament, it is commonly assumed that the Last Supper was a Passover meal, but there is no scholarly consensus on this issue (Farner, 1985; Routledge, 2002; Smith, 1991). Participation in staged Last Supper events can also be regarded as a type of Christ-like activity, an ideal that has been an important element of Christian theology, ethics and spirituality (Dunning, 2010). But such participation is also a form of performance, which according to Edensor (2001), together with staging, is fundamental to tourism.

The following account is based upon the first author's observations and notes from the 1990s at the Biblical Resources Museum. The utilized space was actually an Arab stone building dating back to the early twentieth century. Inside, the place was arranged according to the common house outlay during the Roman period. The most important architectural element was the three-sided stone table, known as the triclinium. Originally, the triclinium was very low, and people would recline around it to eat, but to serve modern tourists the table was made higher, for participants to eat while seated on stools. Clay pots and olive

oil lamps added to the ambience and sense of authenticity, but at the same time plastic plates were a reminder that this meal was staged (Figure 3).

Food ingredients were basic and included fruits, dates, nuts, pita bread and a stew. Food was not the only thing served; so was history and scriptural knowledge. While the food was on the table, the local guide ('meal facilitator' in their words) shared with the group the likely seating arrangement at the Last Supper and elaborated with more information regarding the typical Jewish diet during the Roman era. According to observations and discussions, all participants enjoyed the meal and the physical and spiritual nourishment it offered.

Issues of authenticity are crucial in making such culinary and spiritual experiences. Both sites visited, observed and interviewed were aware of the importance of authenticity for the Christian customers, and both claimed to have provided authentic events. The Yad Hashmona Biblical meal was conducted by Tova Dickstein, an Israeli Jewish woman who is considered an authority on Jewish culinaria during the Second Temple and Talmudic periods (Dickstein, 2011). In a deep and insightful interview with the authors, she criticized the various competitors (in Israel and abroad) that produced staged Last Suppers, because of their relatively low degree of authenticity. According to her,

they provided bread and chicken soup and other stuff that they never ate then. In those days they had lamb. The animals were sacrificed near the temple and they gave the priests what their share was and they ate the rest. *This is the Passover meal.* (emphasis original)

The authenticity elements that Yad Hashmona tried to emphasize in its Last Supper offering were broken down and analyzed to the following ingredients: physical setting, dress, dishes, language, content and performance (e.g. guide washing hands of the guests, serving four



Figure 3. Biblical resources museum (Photo: Amos Ron).

cups of wine). In this sense, then, efforts were made to create an objectively authentic experience through genuine articles (Figure 4). For the visitors themselves, it is likely a more subjectively authentic experience they were seeking through spiritual experiences. According to Dickstein, the groups (usually American Evangelicals) loved the event, but the project ended after a couple of years, mainly because of logistics and finances. The project was not self-supporting or self-service oriented. Delivering the most authentic Last Supper possible required a lot of human resources; preparing the food was laborious. There was also a conflict between authenticity and the logistics of operating the event. According to Dickstein, 'You can't do both properly ... *Authenticity is expensive to produce* (emphasis original). You have to compete with agents, hotels ... in actual fact the bottom line is the operational aspect'.

The Yad Hashmona purchased handmade, earthenware dishes – a special type of pottery that looked authentic to the New Testament period. No plastic dishes were used. 'Special table cloths, the clothing, the triclinium, you have to rearrange everything because ordinarily it is a hotel dining hall. All the fabrics must be dry cleaned; you also need a certificate from the ministry of health'. Yad Hashmona wanted to be different from other Last Supper providers, but arranging the place, lighting the candles, turning off the power and other chores demanded considerable human resources. '*Going back in time costs a fortune*' (emphasis original). The tour operators were believed to be concerned mainly with the price, not the degree of authenticity of the meals or the setting. For Dickstein, 'living with Jesus was OK for me, but losing the authenticity was not'. She tried offering authentic meals in three different places, but because creating authentic Last Suppers was expensive, she was unable to remain in business.



Figure 4. Yad Hashmona Biblical garden (Photo: Eli Avdat).

If you serve bread and turkey that got here from America for a Last Supper . . . the word Pesach [Passover] means lamb, so how can you serve turkey at a meal like that? We started lowering costs on the food, and the product got worse and worse. Chicken was no good either, although they ate chicken then. Bring pigeons at least! (Dickstein, personal communication, September 19, 2012)

If profit was the only motive, the event would likely still be functioning, but the director was unwilling to compromise authenticity for profit.

## **Conclusion**

There are clear and unmistakable relationships between heritage cuisines and religious tourism. Foods of the Old and New Testaments are of increasing importance to Christian tourists from two broad perspectives. First, ancient foods from the time of Jesus are utilized by catering services, tour operators and attraction managers in Israel to create a tourism landscape of food that unmistakably contributes to the sacred visual and sensory ambience of the country. Second, religious meals, in particular, staged Last Suppers, are an important part of the spiritual pilgrim experience in Israel. Biblical meal providers have had difficulty succeeding in Israel owing to geopolitical constraints, but more importantly, because providing the most genuine experiences, which pilgrims desire, costs a lot of money. For many tour operators, concerns about the cost of authentic Last Supper meals outweigh the potential experiential benefits for the pilgrims themselves. This has created conditions where either inauthentic events are offered, or the most authentic ones have gone out of business.

Since ancient days, the Bible has provided an impetus for Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land. It still lies at the core of millions of trips taken to Israel each year as people seek closer connections to deity. The Biblical sites and sounds of the Holy Land have long provided the backdrop for the success of one of the most important pilgrimage destinations in the world. Besides the sites and sounds, Biblical cuisine is actively commodified through religious tourism. The foodscapes of the Old and New Testaments, and the re-enacted Last Supper meals, which commemorate the life and death of Jesus, in effect have created a heritage cuisine 'brand' that increases the appeal of Israel as a destination and contributes to authentic and edutaining experiences for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land.

## **Note**

1. The Holy Land and Israel are not synonymous. Holy Land refers geographically to sites located in Israel, Palestine and Jordan, and corresponds mainly to the time of Jesus and the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) (Ron, 2009, p. 291).

## **Notes on contributors**

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