

Transcript

00:00:01 Speaker 1

Okay, hello everyone.

00:00:02 Speaker 1

Good afternoon.

00:00:03 Speaker 1

Welcome to our fifth meeting, if I remember correctly.

00:00:08 Speaker 1

We have the pleasure to have Dr.

00:00:12 Speaker 1

Stav Shufan-Biton, who is a sociologist and currently a postdoctoral fellow and visiting research fellow in the Department of SGN and Middle Eastern Studies.

00:00:25 Speaker 1

at the University of Cambridge.

00:00:28 Speaker 1

Her research interests focused on the sociology of religion, the sociology of time, and Israeli society.

00:00:35 Speaker 1

Her doctoral dissertation examined understandings of the weekend among Jews in Israel and resulted in several peer-reviewed publications, which are available online and are highly recommended.

00:00:49 Speaker 1

She currently studies experiences of sacred time among religious minorities, including Jews,

00:00:56 Speaker 1

and other groups across the UK, with support from the Algov Centre for the Study of Israel and the Jewish People.

00:01:03 Speaker 1

The floor is yours, and thank you again for coming.

00:01:06 Speaker 2

Thank you very much.

00:01:08 Speaker 2

So, to start it, I really would like to say that I'm really excited to be speaking with you today.

00:01:19 Speaker 2

and to have the chance to present a project that actually began just before six months ago.

00:01:27 Speaker 2

So over the next 45 minutes, I will describe the project, what led me to it, its main parts, and when it starts today.

00:01:38 Speaker 2

I would really welcome any comments, any questions, any notes.

00:01:42 Speaker 2

This is still very early work and I would be very glad

00:01:46 Speaker 2

to develop it further together with you in any direction.

00:01:52 Speaker 2

So I am basically a sociologist of time and perhaps more specifically of a sacred and Jewish time.

00:02:02 Speaker 2

My PhD thesis focused on the Sabbath, Shabbat among Jews in Israel.

00:02:07 Speaker 2

And when I finished the research, it became clear that one big question was still open.

00:02:14 Speaker 2

And it was what shapes the Shabbat in Israel and how much it comes from the fact that Israel is a Jewish state.

00:02:24 Speaker 2

From there I developed my post-doctoral project which looks at what happens to the Jewish weekend outside Israel.

00:02:33 Speaker 2

The project was fortunate enough to receive his funding and that's how I came here.

00:02:42 Speaker 2

Since then, the research has started to expand.

00:02:44 Speaker 2

At first, it includes three types of time outside the everyday routine, and later it goes to include not only different forms of sacred or set-apart time, but also experiences of other religious minorities who find themselves dealing with the same gap between their own sacred time and the local temporal framework.

00:03:09 Speaker 2

I'll just briefly mention that I also haven't forgotten an earlier question from my doctoral work which look at the experience of non-Jews in Israel.

00:03:20 Speaker 2

So out of all this topic, today I will focus on the sacred time of Jews outside Israel in comparison to Israel.

00:03:31 Speaker 2

And more specifically, I will look at three types of sacred time.

00:03:36 Speaker 2

among Israeli Jews in the UK.

00:03:40 Speaker 2

So the first is actually the weekend, including Saturday and Sunday, and sometimes in the experience of the participants also Friday.

00:03:50 Speaker 2

We will also look at the Jewish holidays, some of which are marked in a meaningful way, while others remain much more symbolic, or as I would describe it,

00:04:02 Speaker 2

suspended for the period in which participants are outside the Israeli context.

00:04:07 Speaker 2

And the same applies to the local holidays, some more religious, some lesser, some involving rituals that are adopted and others that pass alongside everyday life without challenging it too much.

00:04:23 Speaker 2

And across these three types of time,

00:04:28 Speaker 2

I asked three main questions.

00:04:30 Speaker 2

So it's actually what Israeli Jews actually do, how they carry out their choices and why they do so.

00:04:39 Speaker 2

And here I'm asking a question that may sound simple, but is actually central to the understanding of minorities integration of the social role of sacred time and holidays and the needs of local

00:04:55 Speaker 2

religious communities.

00:04:56 Speaker 2

And yet the Israeli case remain underexplored.

00:05:00 Speaker 2

So we have studies on Jewish holidays and non-Jewish celebration in the diaspora, especially regard Christmas.

00:05:12 Speaker 2

And we have studies on Israeli abroad and especially with the relations to the Jewish communities and to the Jewish state, to Israel, but very little on the Israeli Jewish celebration.

00:05:25 Speaker 2

in the diaspora.

00:05:27 Speaker 2

And I personally have not funded any research or study that focus exactly in this topic.

00:05:35 Speaker 2

And through this case, I hope to show how the study not only fills this gap, but also challenge and expand the existing theory in several ways.

00:05:47 Speaker 2

So what does

00:05:50 Speaker 2

the theory actually tell us about the question we are discussing here.

00:05:54 Speaker 2

So the first theoretical area we need to address is of course religion and more specifically religious experiences.

00:06:08 Speaker 2

The theory I have chosen to correspond with is in this case is what has been called in the last two or three decades lived religion.

00:06:17 Speaker 2

especially as developed by Nancy Hammerman.

00:06:21 Speaker 2

This approach shifts attention from formal institutions, doctrines, or official religious categories to the ways religion is actually experienced and practiced in everyday life.

00:06:34 Speaker 2

It allows us to look at embodied experience, personal narrative, routines, and social context.

00:06:41 Speaker 2

But at the same time, even this flexible approach usually assumes some connection to religion.

00:06:48 Speaker 2

And here is where the problem I wish to highlight arises.

00:06:53 Speaker 2

There may be forms of lived religion that produce religious experiences without any formal affiliation at all.

00:07:00 Speaker 2

Or as we will see in this case, such experiences may even emerge among people who strongly identify with another religion.

00:07:11 Speaker 2

exist in theory, however, still tend to assume that belonging, or at least willingness to belong, forms the basis of religious experiences.

00:07:22 Speaker 2

Hello.

00:07:24 Speaker 2

So the second theoretical perspective I want to discuss is the sociology of time, of course.

00:07:32 Speaker 2

I will briefly know that since the 1990s, sociology has described what is often called the temporal tone.

00:07:42 Speaker 2

This shift reflects growing recognition that looking at time can really deepen our understanding of social relation.

00:07:50 Speaker 2

So the question I want to raise is pretty simple.

00:07:53 Speaker 2

We tend to assume that time is something shared.

00:07:58 Speaker 2

We all agree that other cultures have different time celebration.

00:08:02 Speaker 2

or that different cities in the world have different hours or even different seasons.

00:08:07 Speaker 2

But do we understand the significance of differences in the passage of time within a society, even between neighbors?

00:08:16 Speaker 2

Is it holiday experiences as the same time for minorities?

00:08:23 Speaker 2

Do I and my neighbor, who is not Jewish, experience the evening of Passover, Lele said, at the same time?

00:08:30 Speaker 2

Do we all experience Sunday at the same time?

00:08:33 Speaker 2

Maybe in the same way, but not necessarily with the same meaning.

00:08:40 Speaker 2

And if not, what does it mean?

00:08:42 Speaker 2

Is this a problem or simply a cultural phenomenon that calls for a closer attention?

00:08:49 Speaker 2

Might it also reflect underlying power relation?

00:08:52 Speaker 2

So I'm not sure, but I will try to answer at the end of this.

00:08:59 Speaker 2

presentation.

00:09:01 Speaker 2

And the third and the last theoretical issue is the role of holidays in social life.

00:09:08 Speaker 2

So holidays can be seen as a window into society because they reveal cultural codes, shared norms, values, and the ways traditions are reinterpreted in their present.

00:09:22 Speaker 2

They also connect several spheres at once, the family, children, consumer culture, the state, and the ethnic belonging.

00:09:31 Speaker 2

And of course, this is where I want to raise a few challenges.

00:09:36 Speaker 2

So in one hand, we often take for granted that holidays are tied to ethnicity.

00:09:41 Speaker 2

Yet this connection is not always natural or obvious, especially when religious minorities adopt local holidays in different ways.

00:09:50 Speaker 2

On the other hand,

00:09:51 Speaker 2

Minority holidays are often maintained, even when there is a bit of friction between them and the local context, whether in terms of consumer culture or family life.

00:10:03 Speaker 2

Anyone who has tried to find Matzor or Suvgnagnot in Cambridge before Passover or Hanukkah will know exactly what I meant.

00:10:14 Speaker 2

These products are available.

00:10:16 Speaker 2

There are

00:10:18 Speaker 2

presents, and it's not just symbolic.

00:10:20 Speaker 2

There is real demand for them.

00:10:22 Speaker 2

Shops bring them, people buy them, and sometimes they even sell out earlier than expected.

00:10:30 Speaker 2

We can see something similar, for example, when large Ramadan Kareem appears in Asda or Tesco and offer special sales for the Ramadan.

00:10:43 Speaker 2

In other words, holidays connected to other ethnic and religious cultures also gain a visible presence in the consumer space and help to shape it.

00:10:52 Speaker 2

Of course, they are not rooted in the local public calendar in the same way, and they don't have the same impact as the holiday of the majority, but they are still there and their presence matters.

00:11:06 Speaker 2

These tensions really hit

00:11:10 Speaker 2

the heart of the research I am presenting today.

00:11:16 Speaker 2

So my main argument is that Israeli Jews living abroad across different levels of religious identification develop a complex relationship with sacred or set apart time.

00:11:34 Speaker 2

As a result, their holiday practices become quite varied.

00:11:39 Speaker 2

They mixed traditions, adapt them, and in doing so, reshape not only Jewish celebrations, but also the ways other civic and religion holidays are experienced.

00:11:52 Speaker 2

Methodologically, this argument is grounded in an ongoing study that is based on participants' ethnography and in-depth interviews.

00:12:04 Speaker 2

At present, I have conducted 14, not well.

00:12:08 Speaker 2

interviews and the field work is still ongoing.

00:12:12 Speaker 2

In addition, the study draws on quantitative data from the Institution for Jewish Policy Research, the JPR, which provides A broader contextual framework for understanding patterns of Jewish life.

00:12:29 Speaker 2

Of course, if you think there are additional aspects that should be clarified during the interviews, I would be very glad to hear your suggestion.

00:12:37 Speaker 2

And I should also note that all the names used in the interview has been changed.

00:12:43 Speaker 2

And another methodological point I'd like to clarify is who he's not included in this study.

00:12:50 Speaker 2

So I don't focus on ultra-orthodox, on Haredim, at least not in what I'm presenting today, since based on my experience, their holiday and Shabbatics practices

00:13:04 Speaker 2

tend to remain relatively stable across different countries.

00:13:09 Speaker 2

I also don't include mixed families while they are certainly present in the diaspora and raise very interesting questions.

00:13:18 Speaker 2

My focus here is on comparison to the Israeli case and on the ways Jews adopted non-Jewish holidays and mixed family fall out that particular comparison.

00:13:31 Speaker 2

I do not address more fluid or in-between forms of living across countries, nor do I focus on young people living in UK on their own, such as students, although both of these are important and interesting areas for future research.

00:13:50 Speaker 2

So if there are any methodological nuances I haven't addressed, I'd be happy to back to them.

00:14:01 Speaker 2

during the Q&A.

00:14:03 Speaker 2

So let me return to the three questions that guide this research, and we can now turn to the question of what Jews in Israel and the UK actually do.

00:14:21 Speaker 2

So I would like to briefly compare available data.

00:14:25 Speaker 2

And of course, this comparison has to be made carefully.

00:14:30 Speaker 2

because British Jews include many different groups, and Israeli Jews are probably only a small part of that wider category.

00:14:40 Speaker 2

Still, the comparison is useful because it helps us to see how different factors may work together and shape what happens in the public sphere.

00:14:52 Speaker 2

So in a direct comparison, both similarities and differences become apparent.

00:14:59 Speaker 2

For example, we can see how 90% of British Jews report participating in at least one Hanukkah candle lighting ceremony, while in Israel 88% identify Hanukkah as a significant holiday.

00:15:16 Speaker 2

This highlights the centrality of this festival in both contexts, especially with the parallel times to the Christmas.

00:15:26 Speaker 2

And similar patterns emerges with regard to Passover.

00:15:32 Speaker 2

84% of British Jews attend a Seder compared to 91% in Israel.

00:15:37 Speaker 2

Again, indicate strong overlap, albeit with somewhat higher participation in the Israeli case.

00:15:47 Speaker 2

And a more complex picture emerges when examining Yom Kippur.

00:15:53 Speaker 2

In UK,

00:15:56 Speaker 2

63% reporting fasting regularly, whereas in Israel only 54% fast every year.

00:16:03 Speaker 2

I found this figure somewhat surprising given how central Yom Kippur is in the public life in Israel, and yet the number of people who fast regularly isn't higher than the UK.

00:16:15 Speaker 2

One possible explanation is that in Israel Yom Kippur can be experienced as meaningful even without fasting through the public atmosphere

00:16:25 Speaker 2

and the shared collective rhythm of the day.

00:16:29 Speaker 2

This point also came up with the interview's remarks.

00:16:35 Speaker 2

In addition, 56% of the British Jews reporting lighting Shabbat candles.

00:16:42 Speaker 2

While in Israel, the figure is about 74%, even when candle lighting is not done regularly without a blessing or not in the Halakhti prescribed time.

00:16:55 Speaker 2

This is a statistic that surprised me, especially given that just over 40% of Jews in Israel identify as secular.

00:17:07 Speaker 2

And this also came up in the interviews as participants described lighting candles on Friday, even if it's not at the right time and even if it's done in more flexible ways.

00:17:22 Speaker 2

And another

00:17:23 Speaker 2

A key difference is that in Israel, both secular and religious Jews tend to see Remembers Day and Independence Day as especially significant.

00:17:32 Speaker 2

In UK, however, there is no equivalent data on the broader national Israeli days among Jewish communities.

00:17:40 Speaker 2

That said, I can say that quite a few Israeli Jewish communities in Cambridge and elsewhere in UK do mark these days, but as I mentioned, there is not official data.

00:17:52 Speaker 2

And finally, 28% of Jews in the UK report having a Christmas tree at home, a phenomenon with no real parallel in Israel, illustrating the influence of the majority culture in the diaspora context.

00:18:11 Speaker 2

So to understand what does this data mean in the local context, I want to move to the next question, to the how.

00:18:19 Speaker 2

And my argument is that this how unfolds through 4 main action modes, production, processing, import, and sometimes also suspension.

00:18:31 Speaker 2

Let us now see how this appears in the interviewees experiences.

00:18:38 Speaker 2

I will begin with the production.

00:18:45 Speaker 2

So we can start.

00:18:47 Speaker 2

From the fairly simple idea, a sense of luck when it comes to the Jewish holidays.

00:18:52 Speaker 2

This makes sense, especially when children attend public and non-Jewish schools.

00:18:57 Speaker 2

In practice, it creates a feeling that these traditions have to be actively built and maintained.

00:19:04 Speaker 2

The following quote shows this clearly.

00:19:07 Speaker 2

I will read it, but I will not read the address, I promise.

00:19:11 Speaker 2

So now it is like Leo does not really have Hanukkah.

00:19:16 Speaker 2

is weaker for him.

00:19:18 Speaker 2

He has barely celebrated it.

00:19:20 Speaker 2

At nursery, what he mostly saw was Christmas and we feel we need to build that layer for him because it is not being built there.

00:19:32 Speaker 2

So for him, the default is Christmas.

00:19:36 Speaker 2

What we see here is actually one of the most basic and expected forms of tension.

00:19:41 Speaker 2

Local holidays.

00:19:43 Speaker 2

are already present in the public sphere.

00:19:46 Speaker 2

So the question is whether to adapt them or not.

00:19:49 Speaker 2

In contrast, when it comes to Jewish holiday, there is a clear sense that they require active war, that they need to be produced and constructed.

00:20:00 Speaker 2

This is where the question of how to do this really comes into focus, and we begin to see an answer in the following quotes.

00:20:13 Speaker 2

Let's say Purim.

00:20:14 Speaker 2

When we arrived, there were only a few Israelis, maybe 10 families.

00:20:20 Speaker 2

So in the early years, we always celebrated Purim together.

00:20:24 Speaker 2

No other holidays was like that.

00:20:27 Speaker 2

Later, people left Cambridge and I did not replace them with other Israelis.

00:20:33 Speaker 2

When it ended, I felt awful.

00:20:36 Speaker 2

I have so many good memories from my poem and my daughter did not have it.

00:20:42 Speaker 2

So I tried to recreate it and organize poem parties.

00:20:46 Speaker 2

Later we even planned small performances.

00:20:50 Speaker 2

Over the years it grew into something quite big.

00:20:54 Speaker 2

So here we can see that the interview draws on a positive past experience that she wishes to preserve.

00:21:02 Speaker 2

At first she is able to maintain it, but later

00:21:05 Speaker 2

this become more difficult.

00:21:08 Speaker 2

In response, she actively constructs an alternative.

00:21:13 Speaker 2

What she creates is a Purimiada, a Purim party that also includes a children performance of Magila's story.

00:21:21 Speaker 2

It's very common in the Israeli youth movement.

00:21:25 Speaker 2

And in other words, she creates from scratch a type of event that did not exist in this context before.

00:21:32 Speaker 2

and then opens it to other members of the Israeli Jewish community.

00:21:38 Speaker 2

It's important to be clear here, local Purim celebrations already exist.

00:21:44 Speaker 2

Jews were already celebrating Purim through practices such as Mandilah reading, the Purim meal, a Mishlo Hachmanot, customs, and so on.

00:21:54 Speaker 2

So the point is not that she creates Purim itself, but that she creates an Israeli style of celebrating Purim

00:22:02 Speaker 2

which is understood as something different.

00:22:05 Speaker 2

This may also involve elements of importation, but as we will show later, when I turn to import, I believe that the transfer of rituals and practices between cultural contexts operate somewhat differently.

00:22:21 Speaker 2

And here we can see two photos that the interviewer shared with me.

00:22:26 Speaker 2

The first shows a family who chose to give

00:22:29 Speaker 2

out honey cakes in the community before Rosh Hashanah.

00:22:32 Speaker 2

The second shows an activity where people made hamantaschen for Purim.

00:22:39 Speaker 2

Both events took place in Cambridge and their aim was really to build that layer of connection to the holiday.

00:22:48 Speaker 2

We will see similar and interesting examples later as well.

00:22:55 Speaker 2

So alongside

00:22:57 Speaker 2

the protection, we can also identify what I call processing.

00:23:03 Speaker 2

Here I refer to cases where the holiday already exists in the surrounding environment and it's reshaped at the individual or family level to fit people's identities, values, needs.

00:23:17 Speaker 2

This often applies to non-Jewish holidays as reflected in the following page.

00:23:24 Speaker 2

We very quickly adopted all the customs of Halloween, including trick or treating and Christmas with its gift.

00:23:32 Speaker 2

This includes the role as Santa routine, asking Father Christmas for presents and leaving him carrots and milks and all that.

00:23:40 Speaker 2

But it stopped at the tree.

00:23:43 Speaker 2

Something made us feel there was something very anti-Jewish, even anti-Semitic about it.

00:23:50 Speaker 2

Then our daughter said she wanted a tree like all her friends.

00:23:54 Speaker 2

and we are Jewish was not a reason I could really give.

00:23:58 Speaker 2

It's just a tree in the living room.

00:24:01 Speaker 2

No Jew is hanging on it.

00:24:04 Speaker 2

Even so, I felt a kind of barrier at first.

00:24:10 Speaker 2

So we agreed to start with a small pottery.

00:24:12 Speaker 2

I was a bit anxious about what the grandparents and both sides might think.

00:24:18 Speaker 2

So in all the photos and the videos from those early Christmas, I kept trying to arrange things so that the tree will not appear in the frame.

00:24:28 Speaker 2

It felt like Basil Foly running around his guests saying, don't mention the wall.

00:24:34 Speaker 2

So here we can see a process of partial adoption.

00:24:37 Speaker 2

People adopt certain elements

00:24:39 Speaker 2

but in ways that feel right to them.

00:24:42 Speaker 2

In this case, it initially stuck at the tree, and that's something that I hear quite often.

00:24:49 Speaker 2

And then in this case, it becomes small tree, which is easier to hide in photos.

00:24:57 Speaker 2

But behind that, I have seen many different processes at work.

00:25:01 Speaker 2

Some people take part in events outside, even if they include carols or gift-givings, but choose not

00:25:11 Speaker 2

No, this is not a fire alarm.

00:25:13 Speaker 2

I'm fine.

00:25:19 Speaker 2

So, but choose not to bring the holidays into the house.

00:25:27 Speaker 2

Other decorate, but without really engaging with the holiday itself or celebrating its meal.

00:25:33 Speaker 2

Some gift

00:25:34 Speaker 2

give gifts.

00:25:35 Speaker 2

Other likes the stocking and decorate the house, but stop there and so on and so forth.

00:25:41 Speaker 2

So in other words, all of these are different processes through which people decide what feels right to them and what doesn't, each according to their own experiences and values.

00:25:56 Speaker 2

We can see this in another quote as well.

00:26:01 Speaker 2

I will not read it, but here too we see an interesting form, a conscious decision to embrace one holiday and not another.

00:26:13 Speaker 2

I am aware of the differences between Halloween and Christmas, but my focus here is on Jewish holidays more broadly.

00:26:21 Speaker 2

At the same time, we could still ask to what extent Halloween is seen as a civic holiday and whether Christmas

00:26:29 Speaker 2

in its local form is really understood as a distinctly Christian experience.

00:26:38 Speaker 2

Even though both holidays have gone through many transformations and there are ongoing questions about their meaning or at least about the meaning of their different practices.

00:26:51 Speaker 2

So in other words, even if Christmas is at its core a Christian holiday,

00:26:57 Speaker 2

Things like Christmas decoration are often important tradition and do not necessarily carry a clear religious meaning on their own.

00:27:05 Speaker 2

What matters for my argument is that this distinction become part of ongoing process of negotiation.

00:27:14 Speaker 2

In this case, there is a willingness to accept Halloween, but not Christmas, even when what is at stake is something as minimal as decoration

00:27:26 Speaker 2

rather than a full celebration.

00:27:30 Speaker 2

So here too we can see photos from the interviewees houses, doors decorated for Halloween and small and large Christmas tree.

00:27:44 Speaker 2

All of these examples come from interviewees who agreed to share with me how they process local holiday and turn the

00:27:53 Speaker 2

into a more domestic and family-based experiences.

00:27:59 Speaker 2

And a similar process takes place in what I call import.

00:28:05 Speaker 2

Here, the idea is not only to process local holidays, but also to take elements from the local culture and bring them into Jewish holidays or family practices.

00:28:19 Speaker 2

So first of all, people pick up practices from different holidays in all kinds of ways.

00:28:25 Speaker 2

It's actually very diverse.

00:28:26 Speaker 2

We can see, for example, the following quote, when the interviewee asking me whether I had already pulled a cracker.

00:28:36 Speaker 2

At this stage, to be honest, I had no idea what that even meant.

00:28:42 Speaker 2

But although the interviewee talks about lighting Hancock and then she also describes

00:28:48 Speaker 2

how we're friends for cracker, which is a really a Christmas practice.

00:28:53 Speaker 2

We see similar things in other cases as well.

00:28:56 Speaker 2

For example, we can see how Easter bunnies turn into pouring customs or Halloween decoration get hung on the pergola and looking a bit like a sukkot, even though actual sukkah don't really work in the British weather.

00:29:12 Speaker 2

And this is

00:29:15 Speaker 2

where the specific context of Cambridge become especially interesting, because it's not just about local holidays, but about a whole mix of cultures.

00:29:27 Speaker 2

So we also have things like Chinese New Year moving through the spaces and people figuring out how to relate to it, or as we can see in the next example, Thanksgiving, which isn't exactly British, but still becomes visible

00:29:45 Speaker 2

through the local multicultural setting, and it's described like this.

00:29:56 Speaker 2

And like this quote, I would add that I also heard about various non-local holidays or cultural practices that become possible, or at least presents precisely because of the acceptness of other holidays.

00:30:10 Speaker 2

I have heard, for example, about Israeli families who hang decorative

00:30:15 Speaker 2

weed on their front doors and change them according to the seasons, even though this is American tradition.

00:30:23 Speaker 2

I have also heard about families who create small rituals, such as jumping over little branches when moving into a new year, which connected to African culture.

00:30:37 Speaker 2

What we see here

00:30:39 Speaker 2

is an importation of festive events that in a context where the individual is not minority might be considered somewhat less acceptable or at least receive far less attention.

00:30:54 Speaker 2

So here we can see how the Thanksgiving evening look like.

00:31:01 Speaker 2

And the final mode of action I would like to briefly address is suspension.

00:31:09 Speaker 2

Here, the emphasis is on choosing not to do something one would like to do or believe is right, or conversely, on doing something one does not consider appropriate through the temporary suspension of positions, ideals, or values in the context of migration.

00:31:29 Speaker 2

This can be expressed in relation to the Sabbath, Shabbat.

00:31:35 Speaker 2

Interviewees describe wanting to hold a Friday night dinner or recite Kiddush, the blessing before the Friday night dinner, every week.

00:31:46 Speaker 2

But the finding this is not always possible given the density of Friday schedule here.

00:31:54 Speaker 2

This often framed as acceptable with the sense that these practices will resume open returning to Israel.

00:32:02 Speaker 2

It can also be observed among galactically observant individuals who perceive themselves as more flexible than they would be in Israel, particularly in light of the external conditions associated with living in a different country.

00:32:19 Speaker 2

This is reflect, for example, in the following quote.

00:32:23 Speaker 2

So the interview here aware that some of his behavior will not occur in Israel.

00:32:30 Speaker 2

For example,

00:32:31 Speaker 2

he will most likely be visiting people whose homes are already set up for Shabbat, with water heated in advance.

00:32:40 Speaker 2

But here, in light of the cultural and social differences, he seeks to adapt.

00:32:46 Speaker 2

Coping at home is also different compared to the possibility of sharing Shabbat with extended family, and therefore he feels it is appropriate to set some of these practices aside

00:32:59 Speaker 2

and create a better fit between his custom, his family needs, and the surrounding environment.

00:33:06 Speaker 2

This is not a rejection of values, but a temporary suspension of them in response to the experience of being distant from the majority culture.

00:33:16 Speaker 2

He did observe these practices when he was in Israel, and it's very possible that he will return to them if or when he goes back.

00:33:26 Speaker 2

But for now,

00:33:28 Speaker 2

However, they can be set aside for the sake of the overall Shabbat experiences.

00:33:37 Speaker 2

And we can see similar phenomenon in relation to Yom Kippur.

00:33:44 Speaker 2

When another interviewee described a discussion, a lively discussion that took place in an Israeli WhatsApp group about who chooses to send their children to school on Yom Kippur.

00:33:56 Speaker 2

On the one hand,

00:33:57 Speaker 2

As we know from the data, the majority of secular Israeli Jews do not fast on Yom Kippur in Israel.

00:34:03 Speaker 2

It's actually something like 23 or 24% who fast every year.

00:34:10 Speaker 2

However, this does not detract from the unique experience of the day because the entire public sphere is transformed.

00:34:17 Speaker 2

Here, by contrast, if the absence of active practice of fasting, the question is what actually remains from Yom Kippur.

00:34:27 Speaker 2

and this is how it's described in the interview.

00:34:30 Speaker 2

So in other words, the possibility of recreating a home-style Yom Kippur where one does not fast but still marks the day suddenly feels detached and ill-suited to the local context.

00:34:46 Speaker 2

As a result,

00:34:47 Speaker 2

The choice is often to suspend the holiday and to return to it in the future, whether in Israel or perhaps in more adapted form.

00:34:57 Speaker 2

At present, the holiday does not always find its place in the everyday lives of many participants.

00:35:06 Speaker 2

As we will see later, many of the decisions about celebrating Christmas or Halloween are also grounded

00:35:14 Speaker 2

in a similar suspicion of values.

00:35:18 Speaker 2

I will return to this in the next and final part of the lecture, where I turn to the question of why.

00:35:26 Speaker 2

So just quick reminder, so far I have discussed what people do, how they carry out their choices, and the final question is why they do it.

00:35:40 Speaker 2

At this stage,

00:35:42 Speaker 2

I identify three main reasons.

00:35:47 Speaker 2

So the first reason, which is particularly relevant in the current context, is the feeling of liberation.

00:35:57 Speaker 2

Quite a few interviewees, especially those who arrived in later years, say something along the lines of, we have been dealing with years that feel unreasonable

00:36:09 Speaker 2

and the children have been going through years of chaos, enough, let's enjoy whatever we can.

00:36:18 Speaker 2

And this also have a dimension that not only tied to the present moment, but connects to a broader perception that many Jewish holidays are structured

00:36:33 Speaker 2

around prohibitions and for some Jews, of course, not anyone, associated with form of hardship.

00:36:41 Speaker 2

So everyday life itself is not necessarily lived in spirit of carnival.

00:36:45 Speaker 2

So against this backdrop, why not embrace a holiday of light, of magic?

00:36:52 Speaker 2

Why not allow children to experience the joy of Christmas, of Halloween, and so on?

00:37:01 Speaker 2

And

00:37:02 Speaker 2

This logic of avoiding a hardship may not stand alone, but it may work together with a sense of temporariness, which makes these choices easier.

00:37:14 Speaker 2

This can be seen, for example, in the following quote.

00:37:22 Speaker 2

These words, I think, are also quite clear.

00:37:26 Speaker 2

I know I'm here for a limited period.

00:37:29 Speaker 2

I know this is temporary.

00:37:32 Speaker 2

There are things to gain from this culture and there will be plenty of time for Jewish culture later.

00:37:40 Speaker 2

The interviewee does not see herself here forever.

00:37:43 Speaker 2

She was already in the beginning of her thought here when we spoke, even though the original plan had been just three years.

00:37:54 Speaker 2

But still, that is the feeling.

00:37:57 Speaker 2

And this sense of temporariness sometimes appears even among those who have been here for 8, 9, or 10 years and still don't know whether this is permanent.

00:38:14 Speaker 2

The same logic emerges in relation to celebrating Halloween.

00:38:20 Speaker 2

or Christmas.

00:38:21 Speaker 2

Here the emphasis is really on the idea that there is no need to decide whether this is my holiday or whether it truly fits me.

00:38:31 Speaker 2

We celebrate it for a period of time, and later we may not, and that's it.

00:38:37 Speaker 2

There is no need to make it into something bigger than it is.

00:38:42 Speaker 2

So in other words, temporariness became a kind of liberating principle

00:38:48 Speaker 2

almost in the sense of what happens in Vegas, stay in Vegas.

00:38:53 Speaker 2

What we do or not do here does not necessarily define our long-term values.

00:38:59 Speaker 2

Deeper decisions about values can be postponed and dealt with it at home.

00:39:05 Speaker 2

I would also add that in my PhD, I saw something similar with the Shabbat that people often describe behaving differently abroad, being more flexible or stepping away from certain practices.

00:39:19 Speaker 2

And there is a similar sense here.

00:39:24 Speaker 2

And my final point concerns what I call further layer of securities.

00:39:32 Speaker 2

So in comparison to Israel, the British context sometimes creates the possibility of being secular in different ways, or being released from certain social and cultural obligations that are taken for granted in Israel.

00:39:52 Speaker 2

In Israel, interviewees sometimes describe observing

00:39:57 Speaker 2

practices even when they don't necessarily wish to, simply because of the surrounding expectation.

00:40:03 Speaker 2

This becomes particularly evident, for example, around the question of holiday evenings.

00:40:10 Speaker 2

So I have to say that I also found myself somewhat identified with this, but at the same time, quite a few interviewees described the exact

00:40:20 Speaker 2

opposite experience.

00:40:21 Speaker 2

For them, the holiday have a positive and meaningful memory, something they want to keep.

00:40:28 Speaker 2

So in these cases, we usually see either preservation of the holidays or some kind of production, as we discussed, into the local context.

00:40:41 Speaker 2

But the liberation I am describing here is about something slightly different.

00:40:47 Speaker 2

It's about the possibility of not

00:40:50 Speaker 2

marking or celebrating holidays that are not experienced as positive.

00:40:56 Speaker 2

And of course, this means different things for different people, depend on the holiday and their own personal experiences.

00:41:04 Speaker 2

And sometimes it's not only about the obligation to be part of a community or a family in Israel, but also about the opportunity to experience

00:41:19 Speaker 2

other holidays and cultures without resisting them, even though we are Jewish.

00:41:25 Speaker 2

So non-Jewish celebrations in Israel are often perceived as a focus of criticism, especially from very specific conservative or orthodox perspective.

00:41:37 Speaker 2

This perspective tend to assume that celebrating Christmas, Halloween, and even the New Year's Eve, what

00:41:45 Speaker 2

often called in Israel the Sylvester, is a form of heresy, Christian brainwashing, the beginning of assimilation, and other similar claims that I have seen in the public sphere.

00:42:01 Speaker 2

So let us look for a moment at the next quote.

00:42:07 Speaker 2

So in fact, what is being said here, also in the broader context of the conversation, is we are secular Jews

00:42:15 Speaker 2

and we allow ourselves the possibility of celebrating Halloween, Christmas, whatever we choose, celebration that in Israel might attract a great deal of criticism.

00:42:28 Speaker 2

Liberal thinking and tolerance for other religions can certainly be an integral part of this meaning of secularism.

00:42:40 Speaker 2

So to sum up,

00:42:45 Speaker 2

I would like to say a few words about what all this might teach us, both theoretically and practically.

00:42:53 Speaker 2

I'm not aware of all the answers, or at least not the complete ones, but I will try to close the circle by returning to the theoretical framework.

00:43:04 Speaker 2

So please feel free to engage with this further during the Q&A.

00:43:09 Speaker 2

So the first point relates

00:43:11 Speaker 2

to the idea of lived religion, which, as mentioned, shifts the religious experience from something institutionalized and regulated to something lived, every day, often embodied.

00:43:27 Speaker 2

One implication of this is that we can also experience holy days that are not necessarily ours, in inverted commas, of course.

00:43:38 Speaker 2

In other words, within a given space, a variety of other holidays may be present, religious or civic, and these two undergo processes of embodiment.

00:43:50 Speaker 2

They become sites of negotiation.

00:43:54 Speaker 2

In this context, it is possible to suggest an extension of the concept of cliff religion

00:44:01 Speaker 2

such that one does not have to belong to a religion in order to experience it.

00:44:08 Speaker 2

There are already many theoretical developments suggesting that one does not need to observe a religion or hold belief in order to have a religious experience, but I would like to add another layer, that religious experiences can be lived as such even when they are not tied to one's own religion.

00:44:32 Speaker 2

Once the holiday and rituals of one's original religion are no longer necessarily perceived as sacred or spiritually elevating, the differences between religious experiences may begin to narrow.

00:44:46 Speaker 2

Across different types of celebrations, whether of other temporalities or simply breaks from routines, what remains is often the enjoyment and the sense of magic without deeper meaning.

00:45:00 Speaker 2

and in this case also without the institutional meaning of the holiday.

00:45:08 Speaker 2

So in other words, Jewish holidays and civic and even in this case Christian holidays may begin to converge from both directions.

00:45:18 Speaker 2

The other holidays gain meanings because it's enjoyable and becomes part of the positive experience of place.

00:45:27 Speaker 2

While the holidays that would typically carry deeper meaning is, to some extent, stripped of its prohibitions or its deeper familial tradition, leaving it primarily as a form of enjoyment.

00:45:43 Speaker 2

Of course, this does not occur in all cases, and differences still remain, but we can nevertheless speak of a growing proximity between different types of religious experiences in shared spaces.

00:45:56 Speaker 2

to the point where one can experience a religion that is not one's own.

00:46:03 Speaker 2

And the second points return to the study of holidays.

00:46:07 Speaker 2

Here, I would argue that the possibility of participating in holidays that are not one's own is not only something that already takes place in certain contexts, but also something worth actively promoting.

00:46:24 Speaker 2

This assumes that one of the appropriate orientations towards holidays should be a positive, meaningful, magical, and shared experience orientation.

00:46:38 Speaker 2

This does not undermine the existence of other cultural differences.

00:46:44 Speaker 2

And the third point concerns the parallel existence of multiple cultural temporal frameworks within a single space.

00:46:54 Speaker 2

This is not, of course, a new idea, but we tend to think about time as something highly uniform and widely agree, and this assumption, however, need to be questioned.

00:47:06 Speaker 2

Sometimes this question carries significant implications, not only in terms of the power relation, which I indeed present, but also in relation to practical needs.

00:47:22 Speaker 2

this range from working hours and similar constraints, to consumer and economic culture, to educational framework, and to the development of inter-faith or inter-religious tolerance program.

00:47:38 Speaker 2

So I think that greater familiarity with or even partial integration of multiple calendars may significantly enhance

00:47:52 Speaker 2

awareness of differences and of the needs of others, particularly in shared space.

00:48:03 Speaker 2

And I think I will stop here.

00:48:07 Speaker 2

So thank you.

00:48:11 Speaker 2

I think it's more interesting.