



## Galit Hasan-Rokem, Ph.D.

Professor of Hebrew Literature and Jewish and Comparative Folklore

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Born in 1945 in Helsinki, Finland

Studied English, Hebrew Literature and Hebrew Folk Literature  
at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

FELLOWSHIP

Bundeskulturstiftung-Fellow

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### PROJECT

## Narratives of Instability and Dislocation - with Special Reference to the Mutual Formation of Judaism and Christianity from Antiquity to the Present

My project is rooted in the premise that Judaism and Christianity have been continuously formed by each other since their mutual emergence in Antiquity. Their parallel conceptualization of themselves and each other as separate entities have, however, produced various modes of imagining and expressing the instability - or the stability - of the boundaries between them, in terms of location on the one hand and identity on the other. During my stay at the Wissenschaftskolleg I shall address from this perspective two textual corpora: on the one hand, Rabbinic literature of Late Antiquity (Talmud and Midrash) and, on the other, ethnographically tinged European narratives of the nineteenth century, especially some authors in German and Swedish whose writings have been characterized as philo-semitic, such as Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (writing in German in Galicia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire) and Zacharias Topelius (writing in Swedish in Finland, then included in the Russian Empire). In addition to the attempt to illuminate the cultural interdependence and interactivity of Judaism and Christianity, the study will also address the theoretical perception of the connections between ethnography, literature, and history (following de Certeau, Greenblatt, and others) and to gear the analysis of the texts to a vision of cultural critique pertaining to present situations.

### Recommended Reading

Hasan-Rokem, Galit. *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.

-. "Ex Oriente Fluxus: The Wandering Jew - Oriental Crossings of the Paths of Europe." In *L'Orient dans l'histoire religieuse de l'Europe: L'invention*

*des origins*, edited by Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi and John Scheid, 153-164. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000 (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études. Sciences

Religieuses, vol. 110).

-. *Tales of the Neighborhood: Jewish Narrative Dialogues in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003.

# The Cultural Critique of Mobility as a Blessing and a Curse: Wanderers, Pilgrims, Tourists, Nomads, Exiles and Refugees

At first there is the business

Of standing on your feet without falling,

Strangely, on the basis of such a narrow piece of feet

Then the strange business of a suitcase,

a box with a handle in which the things for travel are carried.

On which road and which things remains a question

- but a separate question.

Hanoch Levin, "The People that Walked in Darkness"

(opening words of opening scene, translation G. Hasan-Rokem)

In today's paper I would like to analyze a particular cultural complex of signs, texts and behaviors in which the image of wandering serves powerfully and resourcefully to articulate identities and counter-identities, to define groups, and to disband them.

Methodologically, I shall point at the interconnectedness of various genres and cultural contexts, such as canonical texts, images, religious thought, literature and folklore. Theoretically, I shall ground my analysis and interpretations in cultural critique, understood as relating critically in particular to the society in which one lives and creates.

Mobility has been from Antiquity onwards a key idiom of human activity. As such it has been ambiguously and conflictingly interpreted both as a source for great blessings and as a major punishment. Historically some groups have been identified with mobility and instability more than others. I shall concentrate on the mutual shaping of the discourse of mobility on Jews and by Jews, in the Ancient world and in Europe, as well as in contemporary Middle East. Attempting to evade typological generalizations I shall refer to some specific examples in their close contexts. I am aware of the ambiguity of the title, referring as blessing and curse to mobility as well as to cultural critique. It emerged by serendipity rather than intention, and it pleases me.

Hasan-Rokem, Galit (2017)

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Hasan-Rokem, Galit (2017)

Bodies performing in ruins : the lamenting mother in Ancient Hebrew texts

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1042512906>

Hasan-Rokem, Galit (Detroit,2014)

Louis Ginzberg's legends of the Jews : ancient Jewish folk literature reconsidered

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=784598193>

Raphael Patai series in Jewish folklore and anthropology

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=784598193>

Hasan-Rokem, Galit (2012)

Material mobility versus concentric cosmology in the Sukkah : the house of the wandering jew or a ubiquitous temple?

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=725755571>

Hasan-Rokem, Galit (2006)

Rabbi Meir, the illuminated and the illuminating : interpreting experience

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1048220834>

Hasan-Rokem, Galit (2003)

Martyr vs. martyr : the sacred language of violence

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=865279586>

Hasan-Rokem, Galit (Berkeley,2003)

Tales of the neighborhood : Jewish narrative dialogues in late antiquity

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=352161647>

The Taubman lectures in Jewish studies ; 4

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=352161647>

Hasan-Rokem, Galit (Stanford, Calif.,2000)

Web of life : folklore and midrash in rabbinic literature

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=313816573>

Riṣmat ḥayim <engl.>

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