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History and Space Metaphors: Contested Memories in Israeli Popular Culture

The study of space metaphors offers an interesting venue to explore the cultural construction of space as a symbolic landscape that connects historical memory with the present and projects a certain vision of the future. The paper focuses on select space metaphors that convey Jews' perception of their national space and their symbolic place within the Middle East. The paper argues that although space metaphors are figures of speech, they offer important insights into the physical construction of space and have a direct bearing on the understanding of the present. Drawing on educational and literary texts, public discourse, and visual images such as posters and cartoons, the paper addresses the ways in which these space metaphors are imbued with historical meanings that are contested within a politically divided society. Applied to a shifting political reality following the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 and yet again, in the post-1967 era, these space metaphors construct continuities and discontinuities between the past and the present and their interpretation informs the understanding of the future trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Yael Zerubavel is professor of Jewish Studies and History and the director of the Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life at Rutgers University. She is a scholar of memory studies with an expertise in modern Israeli society and culture. Her work explores collective memory and identity, national myths, the transformation of traditions, war and trauma, and the cultural perceptions of space. Her work addresses the impact of nationalism, secularization, immigration and dislocation, the Holocaust, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the reshaping of Jewish memory in Israel. Her award-winning book, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1995) and numerous articles focus on the cultural construction of Israeli national myths and the politics of commemoration, drawing on historical sources, Hebrew literature, educational materials, popular and folkloric forms, as well as in-depth interviews. She continues to explore attitudes towards death, sacrifice, and bereavement, and her article in the Spring/Summer 2014 issue of *History & Memory* explores the concept of numerical commemoration. She is currently completing a book entitled *Desert in the Promised Land: Nationalism, Politics, and Symbolic Landscapes* and is also engaged in another book project on the study of the contemporary representations of Antiquity and the changing role of the Bible in contemporary Israeli culture.