

Historical Memory- Jewish Peoplehood

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What is a memory?

- a. the power or process of reproducing or recalling what has been learned and retained especially through associative mechanisms- *The Old man is suffering from a memory "lost"*
- b. the store of things learned and retained from an organism's activity or experience as evidenced by modification of structure or behavior or by recall and recognition- *My first memory is from the age of 3*
- c. to commemorate. Preserve from extinction or oblivion- *to commemorate one's name.*

The commandment to remember?

"In every generation one must look upon himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt." (Pesachim 116b)

"But take heed to thyself, and [i] keep thy soul diligently, that thou forget not the things which thine eyes have seen, and that they depart not out of thine heart, all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deuteronomy 4, 9)

The Vow/ Avraham Shlonsky

By the eyes that witnessed bereavement
and burdened my bowed heart with cries,
By the compassion that taught me forgiveness
Until days came that prohibited pardon,
I contracted the vow to remember all,
To remember - and nothing forget.

A burden?

Let the mountain remember instead of me/ Yehuda Amichai

Let the mountain remember instead of me, that's his job.
Let the garden "in memory of" remember,
Let the street "named after" remember,
Let the known building remember,
Let the house of worship based on G-d name- remember,
Let the rolling Torah book remember,
Let the "Yizkor" remember,
Let the flags remember the colored historical shroud which wrapped the bodies that turned into dust- remember
Let the dust remember.
Let the garbage remember.
Let the placenta remember.
Let the animals at the fields and the birds in the sky eat and remember.
Let them all remember- so I could rest.

The necessity of forgetting/Yehuda Elkana

"...I see no greater threat to the future of the State of Israel than the fact that the holocaust has systematically and forcefully penetrated the consciousness of the Israeli public, even that large segment that did not experience the Holocaust, as well as the generation what was born and grew up here. For the first time I understand the seriousness of what we were doing when, decade after decade, we sent every Israeli child on repeated visits to "Yad Vashem". What did we want those tender youths to do with the experience? We declaimed, insensitively and harshly, and without explanation: "Remember!" "Zechor!" To what purpose? What is the child supposed to do with these memories? Many of the pictures of those horrors are apt to be interpreted as a call to hate. "Zechor!" can easily be understood as a call for continuing and blind hatred."

Remember and Moving on?

After the Temple was destroyed, Pharisees populated the land of Israel and wouldn't eat meat or drink wine.

Rabbi Joshua asked them: Sons, for what reason won't you eat meat?

- Told him: shall we eat the meat which was sacrificed as part of worshiping at the temple and now no more?
- Told them: for what reason won't you drink wine?
- Told him: shall we drink the wine which was sacrificed as part of worshiping at the temple and now no more?
- Told them: So let us also not eat figs and grapes which was part of worshiping at the Temple on Shavuot, let us not eat bread or drink water which was used for worshiping on Sukkot.
- They silenced
- Told them: we can't "not mourn", since what happened is terrible. But we can't "over-mourn" and act in a way that not everyone can follow. Our wise men said- if you paint your house, leave an unpainted spot to remember the destruction of the Temple. When you eat your meal, leave some aside. When a woman wears her jewelry she should leave some aside. For it is known to all- "if I forget thee oh Jerusalem, may I forget my right arm"

Berl Katzenelson/ Collected Works.

Man is endowed with two faculties: memory and forgetting. We cannot live without both. Were only memory to exist, then we would be crushed beneath its burden and would become slaves to our memories, to our ancestry. Our physiognomy would then be a mere copy of preceding generations. And were we ruled entirely by forgetting, what place would there be for culture, science, self-consciousness, and spiritual life? But had humanity not preserved the memory of its great achievements, noble aspirations, periods of bloom, heroic efforts, and strivings for liberation, then no revolutionary movement would have been possible. The human race would have stagnated in eternal poverty, ignorance, and slavery.

A creative and renewed generation should not throw its generation's heritage to the garbage. It needs to check and examine, to bring some things closer, and move others away, to reveal the forgotten and to take out the rust, and bring back old traditions that can feed the renewed generational spirit.

The Declaration of Independence

Eretz Israel [Hebrew: The Land of Israel] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here, their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here, they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here, they wrote and gave the Bible to the world. Exiled from their land, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and for the restoration in it of their national freedom.

Impelled by this historic association, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in masses. Pioneers, *ma'pilim* [Hebrew: immigrants coming to Eretz-Israel in defiance of restrictive legislation] and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture. Loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, they brought the blessing of progress to all inhabitants of the country.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open to the immigration of Jews and for the Ingathering of the Exiles from all countries of their dispersion; will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions;