

1. Yoself Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*

For those reared and educated in the modern West, it is often hard to grasp the fact that a concern with history, let alone the writing of history, is not an innate endowment of human civilization.....

Only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to remember felt as a religious imperative to an entire people."

2. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks on the difference between history and memory:

"There is a profound difference between history and memory. History is his story – an event that happened sometime else to someone else. Memory is my story – something that happened to me and is part of who I am. History is information. Memory, by contrast, is part of identity. I can study the history of other peoples, cultures and civilizations. They deepen my knowledge and broaden my horizons. But they do not make a claim on me. They are past as past. **Memory is the past as present**, as it lives on in me. Without memory there can be no identity."

3. Exodus 20:1-2

God spoke all these words, saying:

א. וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים
הָאֵלֶּה לְאֹמֶר:

"I am the Lord, your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

ב. אֲנִכִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ
מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים:

4. From the Siddur: The Six Remembrances

1. *The Exodus*

...in order that you remember the day you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life. *Deuteronomy 16:3.*

2. *The Revelation at Mount Sinai*

Only beware, and guard you soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen; lest they be removed from your heart all the days of your life; and make them known to your children and to your children's children. [That what you witnessed] the day you stood before YHWH your God at Chorev. *Deuteronomy 4:9-10.*

3. *The Attack of Amalek*

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way, as you came out of Egypt! How he encountered you on the way, and he cut off all the weak ones [who were straggling] behind you, when you were weary and exhausted; and he did not fear God.³ *Other commentators say that these words refer to the Jewish people, who did not fear God.* When YHWH, Your God, will relieve you from all your enemies around you, in the land which YHWH, your God, gives you as a possession to inherit; you shall eradicate the memory of Amalek from beneath the heavens. Do not forget. *Deuteronomy 25:17-19.*

4. *The Sin of the Golden Calf*

Remember, do not forget, how you provoked YHWH, Your God, in the desert. *Deuteronomy 9:7.*

5. *What Happened to Miriam*

Remember what YHWH, your God, did to Miriam on the way, when you came out of Egypt. *Deuteronomy 24:9.*

6. *The Sabbath*

Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it. *Exodus 20:8*

5. Man is Not Alone - Abraham J. Heschel

The riches of a soul are stored up in its memory. This is the test of character—not whether a man follows the daily fashion, but whether the past is alive in his present. When we want to understand ourselves, to find out what is the most precious in our lives, we search our memory. Memory is the soul's witness to the capricious mind.

Only those who are spiritually imitators, only people who are afraid to be grateful and too weak to be loyal, have nothing but the present moment. To be a noble person it is a holy joy to remember, an overwhelming thrill to be grateful; while to a person whose character is neither rich nor strong, gratitude is a most painful sensation. The secret of wisdom is never to get lost in a momentary mood or passion, never to forget friendship because of a momentary grievance, never to lose sight of the lasting values because of a transitory episode. The things which sweep through our daily life should be valued according to whether or not they enrich the inner cistern. That only is valuable in our experience which is worth remembering. Remembrance is the touchstone of all actions.

Memory is a source of faith. To have faith is to remember. Jewish faith is a recollection of that which happened to Israel in the past. The events in which the spirit of God became a reality stand before our eyes painted in colors that never fade. Much of what the Bible demands can be comprised in one word: *Remember*. "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently lest thou forget the things which thine eyes saw, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; make them known unto thy children and thy children's children" (Deuteronomy 4:9).

Jews have not preserved the ancient monuments, they have retained the ancient moments. The light kindled in their history was never extinguished. With sustaining vitality the past survives in their thoughts, hearts, rituals. Recollection is a holy act; we sanctify the present by remembering the past....

The exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem had to be constantly present in the mind of a Jew. For over eighteen centuries the people have been away from the Holy Land, and still their attachment to the Land of Israel has never been severed. The soul of the Israel has pledged: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning" (Psalms 137:5).

Not far off from our consciousness there is a slow and silent stream, a stream not of oblivion but of memory, from which souls must constantly drink before entering the realm of faith. When drinking from that stream we do not have to take a leap in order to reach the level of faith. What we must do is to be open to the stream in order to echo, in order to recall.

*Cf. Rabbi E. Azkari, *Haredim*, Venice, 11601, pp. 18b and 23b.

6. From the Passover Haggadah

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאלו הוא יצא ממצרים. שנאמר והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים. לא את אבותינו בלבד גאל הקדוש ברוך...
...

In every generation a person is obliged to imagine that he himself had come out of Egypt, as the Torah says, "You shall tell your son that day thus: "Because of this,

Hashem did [wonders] for me when I went out of Egypt [Sehmot 13:8].” Not only did the Holy One, Blessed be He, redeem our forefathers

והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו. שלא אחד בלבד עמד עלינו לבלותנו. אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לבלותנו. והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם.

This is what has stood by our fathers and us. For not only one man has attempted to destroy us; in every generation they try to destroy us, but the Holy One, Blessed be He, saves us from their grasp.

7. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks on Rosh Hashana 5776 (2015)

It’s strange, very strange. Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of the “Aseret Yemei Teshuvah,” the ten days of repentance. We reflect on the past year, recall the bad we did and the good we failed to do, apologise, confess and ask for forgiveness.

Yet there’s almost none of this on Rosh Hashanah. There is no confession... no reference to the past year, no looking back. One of the few references to the fact that we are embarking on a process of teshuvah is the “Unetaneh Tokef” prayer reminding us that today our fate is being written: who will live and who will die.

Surely the beginning of the days of repentance should begin with repentance? The answer is one of the deepest truths of Judaism. To mend the past, first you have to secure the future.

I learned this from the Holocaust survivors I came to know. They were among the most extraordinary people I’ve ever met, and I wanted to understand how they were able to survive, knowing what they knew, seeing what they saw.

What I came to realise was that many of them did not speak about those years, even to their spouses or their children, sometimes for as long as forty or fifty years. Only when they had secured the future did they allow themselves to look back at the past. Only when they had built a life did they permit themselves to remember death.

That was when I understood two strange characters in the Torah, Noah and Lot’s wife. After the flood, it seems, Noah looked back. Overwhelmed by grief he sought refuge in wine. Before the flood he was the only person in the whole of Tanakh to be called righteous, yet he ended his days drunk and dishevelled. Two of his sons were ashamed to look at him.

Lot’s wife disobeyed the angels, turned back to look at the destruction of Sodom and was turned into a pillar of salt. I think the Holocaust survivors knew that if they turned and looked back they too would be reduced to the salt of tears.

Jews survived every tragedy because they looked forward...

This one insight could transform the world. After the Holocaust, Jews didn’t sit paralysed by grief. They built the future, above all the land and state of Israel. If other nations really cared about the future instead of trying to avenge the wrongs of the past, we would have peace in some of the world’s worst conflict zones.

And so it is with us. First we have to focus on building a better future. Then and only then we can redeem the past.

8. קדם / קדימה

9. From Yitzchak Blau, "Creative Repentance: On Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's Concept of Teshuva," Tradition, Winter 1994.

(Note – Max Scheler (1874-1928) was a German philosopher)

...They view our existence as human beings just as we view objective time, like a flowing river in which no later part of the river can exert any influence on a previous part. Time, however, is not one-dimensional and one-directional as far as the human personality is concerned.

Every instant of our lives includes the past, present, and future. Of course, it is not the material reality of the past or future, but rather the memory of the former and the anticipation of the latter. Who we are, is, to some extent, determined by how we look at events in our past and what our aspirations are for the future. To be sure, from the perspective of historical reality, the past cannot be altered; yet, as far as the human personality is concerned, we can always change that part of ourselves that stands in relation to the past.

Thus, the significance of any previous act remains continuously dependent on how we relate to that act. Scheler writes that "We are not merely the disposers of our future; there is also no part of our past life which...might not be genuinely altered in its meaning and worth..." Each human life resembles a book in which the meaning of each chapter only becomes clear with the reading of the final chapter....

10. Franz Kafka - *Letter to his Father*, quoted in Zakhor, by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi

You really had brought some traces of Judaism with you from the ghetto-like village community. It was not much and it dwindled a little more in the city and during your military service; but still, the impressions and memories of your youth did just about suffice for some sort of Jewish life...Even in this there was still Judaism enough, but it was too little to be handed on to the child; it all dribbled away while you were passing it on.

11. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks - *A Nation of Storytellers*, on Ki Tavo, September 13, 2014

This entire phenomenon represents a remarkable cluster of ideas: about identity as a matter of collective memory; about the ritual retelling of the nation's story; above all about the fact that *every one of us is a guardian of that story and memory*. It is not the leader alone, or some elite, who are trained to recall the past, but every one of us. This too is an aspect of the devolution and democratization of leadership that we find throughout Judaism as a way of life. The great leaders tell the story of the group, but the greatest of leaders, Moses, taught the group to become a nation of storytellers.