

May Memory Be A Blessing



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Introduction

Remembering and forgetting are elemental, living materials of the world like sea and dry land, says the poet, Yehuda Amichai. Like water and earth, remembering and forgetting each has a place in the ecology of living, although memory is privileged over forgetting. *May memory be a blessing*, we say. We say no such thing about forgetting although we are reminded time and again by poets and sages that forgetting can also be a blessing.

The statement, *May memory be a blessing*, might be a hope, prayer, invitation, or challenge. The phrase usually follows only by a breath (or by a comma) the name of the departed: “So-and-So, may her memory be a blessing.” It is as though that phrase becomes our collective family name, says Amichai; making us kin and company in a common effort to make memory a blessing.

Remembering and keeping go hand in hand. An ancient teacher opined that Jacob remembered Joseph’s dreams by picking up a reed pen and noting the moment. *Remember the Sabbath* (Exodus 20:8) and *keep the Sabbath* (Deuteronomy 5:12) Ancient sages taught that these two commands were spoken by God in the same utterance. Both conspire to preserve the Sabbath beyond historical or scientific memory. The Sabbath Kiddush begins the day by invoking and evoking memories of the world’s creation and of the exodus from Egypt—memories carry truth, regardless of whether they carry fact.

The Hasidic master, *Sefat Emet*, reminds us that through the Sabbath we remember our way to the past, and to the future.

Memory is always changing, says Amichai. Pristine, unchanged memory, is only to be found sealed and preserved within the amber of forgetting. A memory forgotten is eternally at rest; memory renewed can redeem us from one Egypt and the next. Such memory is a source of blessing and a resource for ongoing creative living. Everyone's capacity for memory—whether whole like the second tablets from Sinai or fragmented like the first set—is a treasure to be carried in the Ark throughout the journey.

We are commanded: *You shall remember all of the journey...* (Deuteronomy 8:2). Said the *Sefat Emet*, remembering *all of the journey* means remembering more than the map which reveals only measurable distance. We have the capacity to remember the immeasurable journey in space, time, and soul—categories of spiritual existence for the *Sefat Emet* that are beyond measure. In these worlds, memory tells us that there is more truth in the journey than has ever been found. The memory that fills and overflows in this way is a blessing.

Through the story of the binding of Isaac, Amichai reflects that when someone forgets details of the journey we fill in the story as we remember it; creating new memory. Perhaps father Isaac had already forgotten some of his harrowing journey to the altar of his intended sacrifice. But his children remember, restore, and reassemble the story for him—and even more so, for themselves.

A verse from Proverbs teaches that *the memory of the righteous is a blessing* (Proverbs 10:7). But from the time of the Bible onward, Jewish discourse has never insisted on the qualifier, *righteous*. *Zichrono/ah liv'racha, may his/her memory be a blessing*, is enough. That which is remembered for the good testifies on behalf of someone's most upright qualities that can become a blessing for those who remember.

According to the Talmud and its commentators, the impulse to make memory a blessing must surely predate King Solomon and his Book of Proverbs. Indeed, they tell us, making memory a blessing was behind God's remarkable thinking-out-loud moment that we overhear regarding the fate of Sodom: *Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do... since all the nations of the world are to be blessed through him* (Genesis 18:17-18)? Abraham's memory must be a blessing, an exemplary model of behavior for future generations.

The name, Abraham, still carries blessing. The *Sefat Emet* teaches that the memory of a name celebrates the past even as the story of that name, remembered for a blessing, contributes to the future. Living up to—and into—a name inherited makes a life into a blessing enacted and extended.

Says the midrash, when someone dies, memory bridges from this world to the next. When the student teaches the teacher's Torah, the lips of that departed move in the grave, reciting the shared Torah. Living words in two living worlds make memory a blessing.

Amichai never wants us to forget the blessing of that can come from forgetting. In Israel especially, says the poet, memory can be a paralyzing and constraining burden from which one cannot escape. Perhaps the vast institutional reminders of mountains, gardens, synagogues, streets, and more, can shoulder the burden of remembering for a while, so that the poet can rest.

The paradox of remembering and forgetting appears yet again in Amichai's poetry. Sometimes memory is a blessing; sometimes it is a blessing to forget. Pristine memory can only be preserved within forgetting, the only environment within which an absolute memory is safe from change. Although, if it cannot be accessed, is the "memory" a memory, after all? The paradox upon which the poet insists appears in ancient rabbinic law: There is one commandment that can only be fulfilled by forgetting.

For two generations, says Amichai, forgetting is part of the organic material of active remembering. Forgetting shapes and prunes the tree of a life. But the third generation—critically distant from the life shaping experiences of forebears—must schematize, ritualize, and reconstruct memory, and maintain it with rigor and consistency.

When someone dies, says Amichai, the dam of a life has broken and a person's past breaks through into the future. Evidence of a life—possessions, records, documents, stories from all angles—burst through with critical power that carries mourners forward in complicated, uncontrollable, emotional, and powerful ways. The process of mourning is to make that life "one" and coherent within the lives of those who remember so that the memory—*zecher*—of the dam—*secher*—will be a blessing.

Although forgetting is part of the world's necessary living material, we still derive comfort in the claim that somewhere those forgotten things still reside. Perhaps we will one day recover them from a found photo or through a chain of stories, in the face of another, in a certain smell, melody, or sensation. Our central memorial prayer begins, "May God Remember..." God remembers all forgotten things, says one New Year prayer.

Finally, comes the voice of the Talmudic epilogue to learning, recited when we take our leave of a tractate or a theme studied thoroughly. We animate the beloved learning, declaring our commitment to remembering the text within life's context. We hope to be remembered by the text as well; our life experiences illuminate the pages of the text, even as the text helps to make sense of our lives. We pray that we will never forget our learning, nor be forgotten by it; neither in this world, nor in the world to come.

*Rabbi Steven G. Sager
Director of Sicha*

The World Is Full Of Remembering And Forgetting

העולם מלא זיכירה ושכחה
כמו ים ויבשה. לפעמים הזיכרון
היא היבשה המוצקת והקיממת
ולפעמים הזיכרון הוא הים שטבוחה הצל
כמו במבול ושהשכחה היא היבשה מצילה כמו ארט.

The world is full of remembering and forgetting
as with sea and dry land. Sometimes memory
is the dry land, firm and founded
and sometimes memory is the sea that covers everything
like the flood and forgetting is the saving dry ground like Arrarat.

Yeduda Amichai/Sager



One and Only One Door

הדלת האחת ומיחידה

היא יצאה בדלת האחת ומיחידה
שדרך יוצאים כל המתים מנו עולם.
זו אונת הדלת האחת ומיחידה
שדרך נכסים לעולם.

ושם משלחתה החדש
כמו של כלם:
זכרון להברכה.

שםה הפליא מעכשו ועד לתחית המתים:
פרידה זכרון להברכה.

She left through the one and only door
by which all the dead leave the world.
The same one and only door
by which we enter the world.

And her new family name
like everyone else:
mayhermemorybeablessing

Her full name from now until the resurrection of the dead:
Frieda mayhermemorybeablessing.

Yeduda Amichai/Sager



Keep And Remember

וַיַּקְנָאָדוּ אֶחָיו וְאָבִיו שִׁמְרָא אֶת-הַדָּבָר.

Now his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter. (Genesis 37:11)

...וְאָבִיו שִׁמְרָא אֶת-הַדָּבָר - אמר רבי לוי: נטל קולמוס וכתב באיזה יום ובאיזה שעה יבאיזה מקום.

...but his father kept the matter - Said Rabbi Levi: He [Jacob] took up a quill and noted the day, the hour, and the place. (Genesis Rabbah 84:12)



זכור את-יום השבת לקדשו.

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

שְׁמֹר אֶת-יּוֹם הַשְׁבָּת לִקְדָּשׁוֹ

Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it. (Deuteronomy 5:12)

שְׁמֹר - וּבָרָא שׁוֹנוֹת הַיָּא אָזֶם זְכָר. שְׁנֵיהֶם בְּדָבָר אֶחָד וּבְתִיבָּה אַחַת נִאָמְרוּ.

*Keep—whereas in the earlier commandments of Exodus 20 it says, *remember*. Both were spoken in one utterance and with one word. (Rashi on Deuteronomy 5:12)*

שְׁמֹר וְזְכָר בְּדָבָר אֶחָד *Keep and remember in one divine word*

הַשְׁמִיעָנוּ אֶל הַמִּזְחָד *So was the one God's command clearly heard*

L'cha Dodi, Shlomo HaLevi Alkabetz

קדוש לערב שבת Kiddush for Erev Shabbat

ויהי ערב וניהי בקר
יום השישי. ויכל השמיים והארץ וכל צבאם. ויכל אליהם ביום השביעי
 מלאכתו אשר עשה. וישובת ביום השביעי מכל מלאכתו אשר עשה. ויברך
 אליהם את יום השביעי ויקדש אותו, כי בו שבת מכל מלאכתו אשר ברא
 אליהם לעשות.

[In a whisper:] And there was evening and morning

The sixth day. The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. On the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done. (Genesis 1:31-2:3)

<p>ברוך אתה ה' אלינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הארץ. ברוך אתה ה' אלינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו ורצחה בנו ושבת קדשו באהבה וברצון הנחיינו זכרו למעשיה בראשית. כי הוא יום תחילת למקרה קדש זכר ליציאת מצרים. כי בנו בחרת ואוتنا קדש מכל העמים! ושבת קדש באהבה וברצון הנחלתנו.</p>	<p>Baruch/Overflowing are you, Adonai, our God, Sovereign of the world creator of the fruit of the vine. Baruch/Overflowing are you, Adonai, our God, Sovereign of the world who singled us out with commandments favored us and his holy Shabbat with love and favor endowed us a reminder of the acts of creation. For this day preeminent among holy seasons commemorates going forth from Egypt. You have chosen us and singled us out among all peoples! Your holy Shabbat in love and favor you have bequeathed to us. Baruch/Overflowing are you, Adonai, who makes Shabbat holy.</p>
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A Reminder Of Creation And Of Freedom

The people of Israel said: “Show us an example of the World To Come so that we will understand, as children of this world, how to live there.” God responded to this request by giving Israel the Shabbat—a taste of the World To Come within this world. For that reason, we say that Shabbat is a *zikaron l’ma-asei v’reisheet*, *a reminder of the works of creation*. At first blush, we are surprised: Why do the works of creation require a reminder? After all, we see the works of creation in the world’s daily existence! Of what must we be reminded? The explanation is that in the future, in the World To Come, Shabbat will be the only reminder of the work week.

Now, every Shabbat, we move from this world to live in that World To Come reality. We forget the work-a-day world and join ourselves to that which flows from the World To Come; a flow and takes the shape of a this-worldly day. *Remember the Sabbath day* is a remembering so deep that it is impossible to forget; a remembering that goes back to creation and also forward to the World To Come. It is a remembering that is remembered by forgetting the week that has passed. And it is a remembering not to be forgotten in the week to come. Rather, it is a remembering towards the future, towards the next taste of the World To Come. Anticipated and remembered, Shabbat draws us, even as it is drawn from the World To Come. *Zikaron l’ma-asei v’reisheet*, *a reminder of the works of creation*—Such a remembering that is also a forgetting can be nothing other than the World To Come.

The extent to which we can remember Shabbat during the week of creating, is the measure of our ability to forget the week of creating during Shabbat. And that ability to free ourselves for the Shabbat taste of the World To Come is also a *zecher li-yetziyat Mitzrayim*, *a recollection of going forth from Egypt*. (Sefat Emet on Exodus chapter 20, from January 1896 and 1897. Interpretive translations by Rabbi Steven Sager)

Who Will Remember? By What Means Do We Keep?

וְמִי יִזְכֶּר ? וּבָמָה מִשְׁמְרִים זְכָרוֹן ? בָּמָה מִשְׁמְרִים בְּכָל בָּעוֹלָם ,
 מִשְׁמְרִים בְּמֵלֵח וּבְסָכָר , בְּחָם גָּבָה וּבְהַקְפָּה עַמְקָה
 בְּאֲטִיכָה מְחַלְּתָה , בִּיּוֹשׁ וּבְחַגִּיטה .
 אָבֶל שְׁפָמוֹר הַזְּכָרוֹן הַטוֹּב בִּיוֹתָר הָוָא
 לְשִׁמְרוֹ בְּתוֹךְ הַשְׁכָחָה שֶׁאָף זְכִירָה אַחַת
 לֹא תִּכְלֶن לְעוֹלָם לְחִדּוֹר לְתוֹכָה וְלַהֲפִרְיעַ אֶת מִנוּחַת הַנֶּצֶח שֶׁל הַזְּכָרוֹן .

And who will remember? And by what means do we keep memory? How do we preserve anything in the world?

We preserve with salt and sugar, high heat and deep freeze

With vacuum seal, with drying and embalming.

But the best way of preserving memory is

To protect it within forgetting so that even a single recollection

Will be unable to penetrate and disturb the eternal rest of the memory.

Yeduda Amichai/Sager

Assembling Fragments of Memory And Meaning

And the final redemption will be when all the hidden meanings of going forth from Egypt are clarified and understood; for the redemption of that day will include all other days of redemptions. This is what is written: *In order that you remember the day of your going out of Egypt all the days of your life...All the days of your life include the days of the Messiah* (Mishnah Berachot 1:5). For remembering and recounting the Exodus brings the days of the Messiah.

At the time of going forth from Egypt God had hoped for there to be complete mending and unifying of the world—right then—as it would be in the future when, *the Lord and His name are one*. But the wicked Amalek frustrated Israel as it is written: *Amalek happened upon you along the way* [to what should have been a different end] (Deuteronomy 25:18). And, therefore, we must remember his hatred forever. Indeed, he forced upon us all the exiles. And now, we remember and tell the story of going forth from Egypt year after to arouse mending and unifying. And Amalek’s name is blotted out bit by bit. That is why we refer to the act of this night as *Seder* for we must return and reorder the story of the going forth from Egypt so that it can be mended and ordered and thereby bring about the redemption, quickly and in our day. Amen!

Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (*Sefat Emet*), April 1875



Carrying Whole Tablets And Fragments

תָנִי רַבִּי יְהוֹדָה בֶּן אַלְעָאי : **שְׁנִי אֲרוֹנוֹת הָיו מִהְלָכִין עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר - אַחַד שְׁהִתְהַנֵּה הַתּוֹרָה נִתְוַנֶּה בְּתוֹכוֹ וְאַחַד שְׁהִי שְׁבָרִי לְוַחּוֹת נִתְוַנֶּן בְּתוֹכוֹ. זֶה שְׁהִתְהַנֵּה הַתּוֹרָה נִתְוַנֶּה בְּתוֹכוֹ הִיא מִנְחָה בְּאַחֲלָמָעָד, וְזֶה שְׁהִי שְׁבָרִי לְוַחּוֹת נִתְוַנֶּן בְּתוֹכוֹ הִיא נִכְנֵס וּזְאֵם עַמָּהּ.**

Rabbi Yehudah bar Ilai taught: Two arks accompanied Israel in the wilderness- one contained the Torah, and in the other were the fragments of the tablets. The one that contained the Torah was kept in the Tent of Meeting; and the other that contained the fragments of the tablets would accompany them into battle. (Jerusalem Talmud, Shekalim 1:1)

כַּدְאָמַר לְהוּ רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֹוי לְבִנְיָה... וְהַזְּמָרוֹ בְּזָקָן שְׁשָׁבָח תַּלְמוֹידָז מִחְמָת אָוּנָסָו דָּאָמְרֵינָן : **לְוַחּוֹת וְשְׁבָרִי לְוַחּוֹת מִנוּחָות בָּאָרוֹן.**

Said Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi to his children... Be careful when it comes to an elder who has forgotten his learning because of his misfortune, for it is said: The tablets as well as the fragments of the tablets were placed into the Ark. (Berachot 8b)

Remember All Of The Journey

אֶלָּה מִסְעֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יֵצָא מִאָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם (במדבר לג:א)... בעניין המסעות שנכתבו בתורה וכתיב אֲשֶׁר יֵצָא מִאָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם. כי הנה הליכות בני ישראל באלה המסעות הינו שלא בדרך הטבע ונכתב לזכור נפלאות השיו"ת כמ"ש: *וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת-פְּלִימָה-זֶרֶךְ* אֲשֶׁר הָלַכְתָּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם זֶה אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּפִמְדָבֵר (דברים ח:ב). והוא גם כן לזכור זכות בניי כמ"ש: *חֶלְךָ וְקָרָא תָּךְ* באזני ירושלים לאמר בה אמר זכרתי לך חסד נועריך אהבת פלולתיך לכתך אחרי בפמ"בר בא"ץ לא זרועה (ירמיה ב:ב). ובאמת אין מבא ללבת באלה המיקומות רק בניי אשר יצאו מא"מ ונתעלו מדרך הטבע כמ"ש: *וְלֹא אָמַרְתָּ אֵלָה יְהוָה מִמְעָלָה אָתָנוּ מִאָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם הַמּוֹלִיךְ אָתָנוּ בְּפִמְדָבֵר בְּאָרֶץ עֲרָבָה וְשָׂוֹחֵה בְּאָרֶץ צִיָּה וְצַלְמָוֹת בְּאָרֶץ לְאַעֲבֵר בָּה אִישׁ וְלֹא יִשְׁבֵּט אָדָם שֶׁם* (ירמיה ב:ו). והשيو"ת כשברא העולם הניח מקומות אשר אין היישוב שם בדרך הטבע. וכמו כן עשה הקב"ה בזמן שיש זמנים שאין הנהגה בדרך הטבע. וכמו כן בנסיבות שיש נפשות שאין הנהוגות בדרך הטבע. ועל זה הוא עדות על השיו"ת. והדברים שיצאו מן הכלל הם להעיד על הכלל כולם. לכן, שבת סהדותא אקרי (זוהר יترو צ:א) שהנהגה בשבות לא בדרך הטבע. וכמו שיש מ"ח שבות בונה כמו מ"ח מסעות בעולם שאיןו דרך הטבע.

Regarding the journeys written in the Torah it says specifically, *who went out from the land of Egypt* (Numbers 33:1)). For these travels of the people of Israel to those places were not according to the rules of nature and it is written specifically in order to remember the wonders of the Blessed Holy One, as it is written: *You shall remember all of the journey...* (Deuteronomy 8:2). And this is also for the sake of remembering the merit of Israel, as it is written: *I remember to your benefit the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride; how you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown* (Jeremiah 2:2). And, in truth, there is no way of entering those places except for the people of Israel who left Egypt and were lifted above nature's ways, as it is written: *They never asked themselves, "Where is the Lord who lifted us above the land of Egypt; who led us through the wilderness, a land of deserts and pits; a land of drought and darkness, a land that no one has traversed and where no human being has dwelt* (Jeremiah 2:6)"? The Blessed Holy One, when He created the **world**, left certain places that would not be inhabited according to the ways of nature. Just so, the Blessed Holy One made **time** punctuated with times that would be beyond nature. Likewise, in the realm of **souls** that there are souls whose conduct would be beyond nature. And all of this as a testimony to the Blessed Holy One. And those exceptions to the rule are testimony to the rule. Just so, according to the Zohar: *Shabbat is called "Witness"* (Zohar, Yitro 90a). For Shabbat conduct is not limited to the ways of nature. And as there are forty-eight Shabbatot in the year, so are there forty-eight journeys in the world that are not constrained by nature. (Sefat Emet, Parashat Masa'ei 1889)

The Things He Had Perhaps Already Forgotten

אֶבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ לֹקֶם כֹּל שָׁנָה אֶת בְּנֵינוּ לִמְרֵה הַמּוֹרִיה
 כַּשֶּׁסֶם שֶׁאָנִי לֹקֶם אֶת יְלָדִי לְגַבּוּת הַנֶּגֶב שֶׁבָּהוּ הִיִּתָּה לִי מְלֹחָמָה.
 אֶבְרָהָם מִטְּלִיל עִם בְּנֵינוּ : כִּאֵנוֹ הַשְּׁאַרְתִּי אֶת הַעֲבָדִים
 שֶׁסֶם קָשְׁרָתִי אֶת הַמְּמֹרֵר לְעֵץ לְרַגְלֵי הַהָר,
 וַיְפַה, מִמְּשָׁה פָה, שְׁאַלְתִּי יִצְחָק בְּנֵי, חִנָּה הָאָשׁ וְהַעֲצִים
 וְאֵיהֶה הַשָּׁה לְעֹזָלה. וַקְצָת לְמַעַלָה מִזֶּה שְׁאַלְתִּי בְּפָעָם הַשְׁנִיה.
 וְכַשְׁהָגִיעוּ לִמְרוֹם הַהָר נָחוּ מַעַט וְאָכְלוּ
 וְשָׁתוּ וְהָרָאָה לְהָם אֶת הַסְּבִּך שֶׁבָוּ נָאָחָז הַאִיל בְּקָרְנוּ.
 וְכַשְׁאֶבְרָהָם מִת לְקַח יִצְחָק אֶת בְּנֵי לְאַוְתּוֹ הַמְּקוֹם.
 "פָה הַרְמִתִּי אֶת הַעֲצִים וְשֶׁם הַתְּנִשְׁפְּתִי,
 פָה שְׁאַלְתִּי וְאָבִי עָנָה לִי, אֱלֹהִים יְרָאָה לוּ
 הַשָּׁה לְעֹזָלה, וְשֶׁם כִּבְרֵי יַדְעָתִי שֶׁזֶה אָנִי."
 וְכַשְׁיִצְחָק הַתְּעוֹר יַלְדֵי הַזְּבִילו אַזְתּוֹ לְאַזְתּוֹ
 מַר הַמּוֹרִיה וְתָאָרוּ לוּ בְּמַלִּים
 אֶת כֹּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאָלָה שָׂ奥ָלִי כִּבְרֵי שְׁכָת.

Abraham, our father, takes his sons every hear to Mount Moriah
 just like I take my children to the hills of the Negev where I fought my war.
 Abraham hikes with his sons: Here is where I left the servants
 there I tied up the donkey to a tree at the base of the mountain,
 and here, right here, you, Isaac my son, asked here is the fire and the wood
 but where is the lamb for the offering. And a bit farther up from here you asked a second time.
 And when they got to the top of the mountain they rested a bit and ate
 and drank and he showed them the thicket in which the ram was caught by his horns.
 And when Abraham died, Isaac took his sons to the same place.
 "Here I picked up the wood and there I stopped for a breath,
 here I asked and my father answered me, God will provide himself
 a lamb for the offering, and there I already knew that it was me."
 And when Isaac grew blind his children brought him to the very same
 Mount Moriah and described for him in words
 all of those things that he had perhaps already forgotten.

Yehuda Amichai/Sager

Deepest Memory of Memory As A Blessing

אמר ר' ריבנא להו מרבנו דבנה מסדר אגדתא קפיה: מנא הא מילתא דאמר רבנו "זכור צדיק לברכה"? אמר ר' דהא כתיב "זכור צדיק לברכה" (משלוי י:ז). מדברי תא מנא לו? כתיב: "המיכסה אני מאברהש אשר אני עושה?". וכתיב, "אברהש כי היה לגוי גדול ועצום (בראשית יח:יז-יח)".

Said Ravina to the sage who was a librarian of ancient oral teachings for him: What is the source of this phrase that the sages employ, "May the memory of the righteous be a blessing"? The sage replied: That is a biblical verse [from the Writings, the last third of the Bible]: *May the memory of the righteous be a blessing* (Proverbs 10:7). But what is its source in the Torah, [asked Ravina]? It is [implicit in] the verse: *Shall I hide from Abraham that which I am about to do?* Which is followed by the verse: *Since Abraham is to become a great and populous nation and all the nations of the world are to bless themselves through him* (Genesis 18:18)

Yoma 38b



ונה' אמר המיכסה אני מאברהש אשר אני עושה? ואברהש כי היה לגוי גדול ועצום וברכו בו כל גוי הארץ (בראשית יח:יז-יח). מדרש אגדה: "זכור צדיק לברכה" (משלוי י:ז). הואריל והזקירו ברכו. ופשוטו של מקרה: וכי ממנה אני מעלים, והלא חביב לפני להיות לגוי עצום, לשון רש"י. והנכו, כי השים יתברך דבר בקבוד אברהש. אמר: הנה הוא עתיד להיות לגוי גדול ועצום, ויהיה זכרו בזרכו ובכל גוי הארץ לברכה; לכן לא אכשה ממנה כי יאמרו הדורות הבאים: איך בטה ממנה, או איך נתאכזר הצדיק על שכנו ההורגים עליו, ולא רחם ולא התפילה עלייהם כלל.

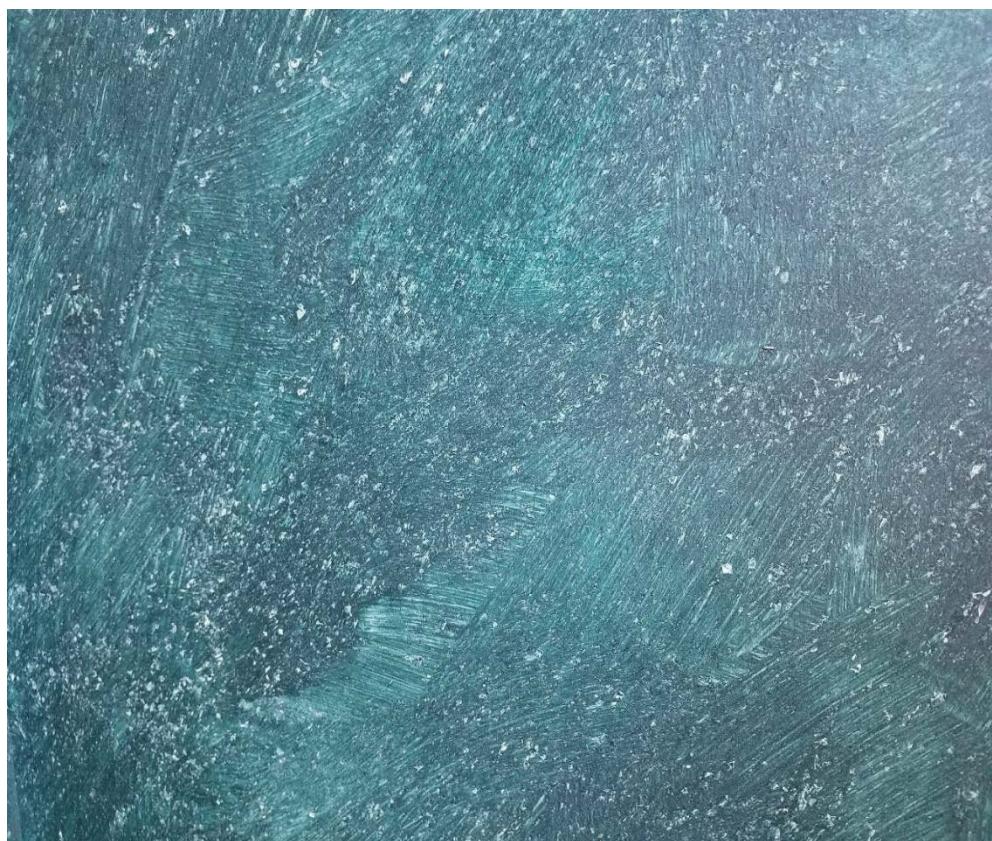
The Lord said: Shall I hide from Abraham that which I am about to do? Since Abraham is to become a great and populous nation and all the nations of the world are to bless themselves through him (Genesis 18:17-18). According to midrash: *The memory of the righteous is a blessing* (Proverbs 10:7), and in the very mentioning of Abraham's name, God blessed him. But the most straightforward understanding of the verse is: Shall I hide this from him, seeing as how he is so beloved by me as to become a great nation? This is the language of Rashi. But the correct understanding is that the blessed holy one spoke with concern for Abraham's honor; saying: Behold, he is destined to be a mighty and great nation and the memory of him will serve as a blessing to his descendants and to all the nations of the earth; therefore, I will not hide it from him lest future generations say: Is it possible that either God hid [this destruction] from him or that a person as righteous as Abraham showed such cruelty to his neighbors and neither pitied them nor prayed for them? (Ramban on Genesis 18:18)

Blessings Remembered In The Stars And In The Selves

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיִם כֹּי מָנָאָם בְּחִיָּהֶם וּבְמִיתָּתָן
לְהַוְדִיעַ חִיבְתָּן שְׁנָמְשָׁלוּ כְּכֹוכְבִּים ... וְהַנָּהָה הַשְּׁבָטִים הַם תִּקְנוּ לְעַצְמָם
וּלְדָדוֹרוֹת. וְלֹכֶן נָמְנוּ בְּמִיתָּתָן לְהַוְדִיעַ כִּי הַשְּׁאִירּוֹ בְּרָכָה. וּשְׁמוֹתֵיהֶם מַתְקָנִים
וּמַאֲרִים לְכָל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ... וּעֲלֵיהֶם נָאֵר זָכָר צָדִיק לְבָרָכָה' ... וְהַצְדִּיקִים
נְשָׁאָר מֵהֶם בְּרָכָה לְדָדוֹרוֹת ... וְעַדְיָין הַם מַאֲרִים לְכָל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

*These are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt (Exodus 1:1) Named in their lives when they came to Egypt with Jacob, and now in their deaths as their descendants leave Egypt bearing the same names; so precious that they are likened to stars. Look! The tribes are a model for themselves and for subsequent generations. And therefore, they are counted in their deaths to make known that their blessing remains. And their names form and enlighten all the people of Israel... and regarding them it is said, *may the memory of the righteous be a blessing...* and the righteous remain as a blessing for all generations... still shining and illuminating all of Israel.*

Sefat Emet (Parashat Shemot) 1896



Memory And Blessing In Two Worlds

מַאֲיָדְכֶתֶיב "אֲגִירָה בָּאֲהָלָךְ עַזְלָמִים" (תְּהִילִים סא:ה) ? וְכִי אָפָּשָׁר לוּ לְאָדָם
לְגֹור בָּשָׂנִי עַזְלָמִים ? אֶלְאֶ אמר דָּנִיד לִפְנֵי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא : רַבּוּנוּ שֶׁל עַזְלָם,
יְהִי רָצֹן שֶׁיָּאמְרוּ דָּבָר שְׁמֹועָה מִפְּנֵי בָּעָזָלָם הַזֶּה . דָּאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מִשּׁוּם רַבִּי
שְׁמֹעָוּ בָּנוּ יוֹחָנִי : כָּל תַּלְמִיד חָכָם שֶׁאָזְמָרִים דָּבָר שְׁמֹועָה מִפְּנֵי בָּעָזָלָם הַזֶּה :
שְׁפָתּוֹתָיו דָּזְבָּבָות בָּקָר . אָמַר רַבִּי יַצְחָק בָּנוּ זְעִירָה וְאַתִּימָא שְׁמֹעָוּ נְזִירָא :
מַאֲיָדְכֶתֶיב "וְחַקְדֵּשׁ קְיִינָה הַטּוֹב הַזֶּלֶךְ לְדוֹזָדִי לְמִישָׁרִים דָּזְבָּב שְׁפָתִי יְשִׁנִּים"
(שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים ז:ז).

What is the meaning of the verse, *O, that I might dwell in your tent forever/in two worlds* (Psalm 61:5)? It is this- Said David before the blessed Holy One: Master of the world, may it be your will that they say a word of teaching that came from my own mouth in this world. As Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai: Every sage whose teaching is quoted in this world, his lips move in the grave. Said Rabbi Yitzhak ben Zeira, and some say it was Shimon Nezira: What is the confirming verse? *Your mouth is like choicest wine. Let it flow to my beloved as new wine gliding over the lips of sleepers* (Song of Songs 7:10).

Yevamot 97a



[ד] אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מִשּׁוּם רַבִּי שְׁמֹעָוּ בָּנוּ יְהוֹצָדָק : כָּל מִשְׁנָאָמְרָה הַלְכָה בָּשָׁמוֹ
בָּעָזָלָם הַזֶּה , שְׁפָתּוֹתָיו דָּזְבָּבָות בָּקָר ; שְׁנָאָמַר : "דָּזְבָּב שְׁפָתִי יְשִׁנִּים" (שִׁיר
הַשִּׁירִים ז:ז).

Said Rabbi Yohanan in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak: Everyone in whose name halacha/law has been taught in this world, that person's lips move in the grave; as it is said: *Gliding over the lips of sleepers* (Song of Songs 7:10).

Sanhedrin 90b

Let Mt. Remembrance Remember

שָׁמַר הַזְּכָרוֹן יִזְכֵּר בָּמִזְמָרִי,
 זֶה מִזְמָרָדוֹ. שָׁמַגּוּ לְזֹכֶר יִזְכֵּר,
 שָׁמַרְחֹזֶב עַל שְׁם יִזְכֵּר, שָׁמַבְנֵנוּ הַיְדֹוע יִזְכֵּר,
 שָׁבֵית הַתְּפִלָּה עַל שְׁם אֱלֹהִים יִזְכֵּר,
 שָׁסְפָּר הַתּוֹרָה הַמִּתְגַּלְגֵּל יִזְכֵּר,
 שָׁהִזְכֵּר יִזְכֵּר. שָׁהִזְכְּלִים יִזְכְּרוּ,
 הַתְּכִרִיכִים הַצְּבָעָנוֹנִים שֶׁל הַחִסְטוּרִיהַ, אֲשֶׁר
 הַגּוֹפִים שְׁעַטְפּוּ הַפְּכוּ אַבָּק. שָׁהִאָבָק יִזְכֵּר.
 שָׁהִאָשָׁפָה תִּזְכֵּר בְּשָׁעָר. שָׁהִשְׁלִיחָה תִּזְכֵּר.
 שָׁחִית הַשְׁדָּה וְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם יִאָכְלּוּ וַיִּזְכְּרוּ,
 שָׁקָלִים יִזְכְּרוּ. כִּי שָׁאוֹכֵל לְנוּמָת.

Let Mt. Remembrance remember instead of me,
 that's its role. Let the memorial garden remember,
 let the street named in memory remember, let the famous building remember,
 let God's prayer house remember,
 let the rolling Torah remember,
 let the prayer for remembering remember. Let the flags remember,
 colorful shrouds of history, the
 bodies they wrapped have turned to dust. Let the dust remember.
 Let the garbage remember in the gate. Let the afterbirth remember.
 Let the animal of the field and the bird of the sky eat and remember,
 Let everyone remember. So that I can rest.

Yeduda Amichai/Sager

The Mitzvah Of Forgetting

מְעֵשָׂה בְּחִסִּיד אֶחָד שָׁשָׁחַ עֹמֶר בְּתוֹךְ שְׁדָהוֹ וְאָמַר לְבָנָו : צָא וְמַקְרִיב עַלִי פָּר לְעֹזֶלה וְפָר
 לְזָבֵחַ הַשְּׁלָמִים. אָמַר לוֹ : אָבָא ! מַה רְאִית לְשָׁמֶח בְּמִצְוָה זוּ מַכְלָמִידָה שְׁבַתּוֹרָה ? אָמַר
 לוֹ : כָּל מִצְוּות שְׁבַתּוֹרָה גַּתָּנוּ הַמְּפֻקְדָּה לְדִעָתֵינוּ, זוּ שְׁלָא לְדִעָתֵינוּ. אַלְאָהָרִי הַפְּתִיבָה
 אָוּמָר : "כִּי תִקְצַר קָצִיר בְּשָׁדָה וְשִׁכְחַת עֹמֶר בְּשָׁדָה לֹא תִשְׁׁוּב לְקַחְתָּו לְאַגָּר לִתְנַזֵּם
 וְלֹא לִמְנָה ? הַיְהָ לִמְעוֹן בְּרָכָה הִי אֱלֹהִיךְ בְּכָל מְעֵשָׂה ? זֶה קָ" (דָבָרִים כד:יט).

The story of a pious man who forgot an omer-measure of wheat in his field and said to his son: Go and sacrifice for me a bull as a whole offering and a bull as a well-being offering. His son said: Abba! what's making you celebrate this mitzvah more than any of the mitzvot in the Torah? He replied: All of the other mitzvot in the Torah the Ever-Present One gave to be carried out with specific consciousness; this one without specific consciousness. For Scripture says: *When you reap the harvest of your field and you forget an omer in the field, do not turn back to get it; it shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow—in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings* (Deuteronomy 24:19). (Tosefta Peah 3.8)

Two Generations of Forgetting Have Passed

עַכְשָׁו עָבָרוּ שְׁנַי דָּרוֹת שֶׁל שְׁכָחָה
 וְהָגַע הַדָּוֶר הַרְאָשׁוֹן שֶׁל זְכִירָה. אָוִי לְנוּ שְׁכָבָר
 הַפָּעָנוּ לְזְכִירָה כִּי הַזְּכָרוֹנוֹת הָם קָלָפָה קָשָׁה עַל לֵב רַיִק.
 עוֹד מַעַט וּבָשְׁדוֹת וּבָעֲרִים יַתְהַלְּכוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם
 וּבִידִיהם כְּמוֹ סְפִּירִי מַגְדִּירִי צְמָחִים שֶׁל אָוָהָבִי טְבֻעַ,
 עַכְשָׁו מַגְדִּירִי בְּנֵי אָדָם. וַיַּקְרָאוּ זֶה אֶל זֶה,
 הַנֵּה מִצְאָתִי, לֹא טְעִיתִי, הַנֵּה הַשִּׁימְנִים, הַנֵּה הַאֲבָעָה אַפְּנִי
 שֶׁל עַיִּינִים וִשְׁעַר, הַנֵּה הַחִיּוֹד הַיְדֹוע, זֶה רִיחָו
 וְזֶה שְׁמוֹ, זֶה יָדִיד וְזֶה יָדִיד שֶׁל יָדִיד, זֶה אֲשֶׁר
 מֵאֶז, וְזֶה דָמּוֹי אָבִי וְזֶה דָמּוֹי אָנִי וְדָמּוֹי אַתָּת,
 מַתָּי אַתָּה פּוֹרֵךְ מַתָּי אַתָּה נוֹבֵל, זֶה הַשֵּׁם
 הַמְּפֻּעָעִי, וְזֶה הַשֵּׁם הַמִּקְבֵּל בֵּין אֲוֹהָבִים וּיְדִידִים,
 וְזֶה שֵׁם בְּלִי אִישׁ וְזֶה אִישׁ שֶׁאָינְן לוֹ שֵׁם.
 וְזֶה קִיה.

Now two generations of forgetting have passed
 and the first generation of remembering has arrived. Woe to us that already
 we have arrived at remembering for memories are the hard shell of an empty heart.
 In a little while people will walk through fields and cities
 with something like nature lovers' plant guides in hand
 now person guides. And they will call to one another,
 here I found it, no mistake, here are the signs, here is the characteristic color
 of the eyes and hair, here is the well-known smile, this is its fragrance,
 and this is its name, this was a friend, friend of a friend, this a woman
 of long ago, this one is the image of my father and this the image of me and of you,
 when you will flower and when you will wilt, this is the scientific
 name, and this is the common name between lovers and friends,
 and this is a name with no person and this is a person with no name.
 And that's how it was.

Yehuda Amichai/Sager

IMAGINED MEMORY

**An imagined conversation between
Yehuda Amichai (poet) and Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi (historian)**

*Now two generations of forgetting have passed
and the first generation of remembering has arrived.*

The modern effort to reconstruct the Jewish past begins at a time that witnesses a sharp break in the continuity of Jewish living and hence also an ever-growing decay of Jewish group memory. In this sense, if for no other, history becomes what it had never been before—the faith of fallen Jews. For the first time, history, not a sacred text, becomes the arbiter of Judaism. (Based on “Two Generations of Forgetting...” by Amichai)



*Woe to us that already
we have arrived at remembering for memories are the hard shell of an empty heart.*

The break with the intimacy of the old existence has indeed occurred, but the deeper return to this intimacy has not taken place. The enthusiasm for religion and the genuineness of the old relationships has vanished, but no new enthusiasm has broken forth, no new set of relationships has been built. (Edouard Gans, 19th Jewish historian, in Yerushalmi's, Zakhor, p.86)



And that's how it was.

As a professional Jewish historian I am a new creature in Jewish history. My lineage does not extend beyond the second decade of the nineteenth century.... I live within the ironic awareness that the very mode in which I delve into the Jewish past represents a decisive break with that past. (Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Zakhor)

The Memory Of The Dam Is A Blessing

וְכָל אָדָם הוּא סָכָר בֵּין עַבְרָה לְעַתִּיד .
 בָּשָׁהוּא מֵת נִשְׁבֵּר הַסָּכָר וְהַעֲבָר מִתְפַּרְאֵץ לִתְזֵד הַעַתִּיד
 וְאֵין מִקְדָּם וְאֵין מַאֲחֵר . וְמִזְמָנוּ הוּא אֶחָד
 כְּמוֹ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, זֶמֶנָנוּ אֶחָד .
 וַיָּכֹר הַסָּכָר לְבָרֶכה .

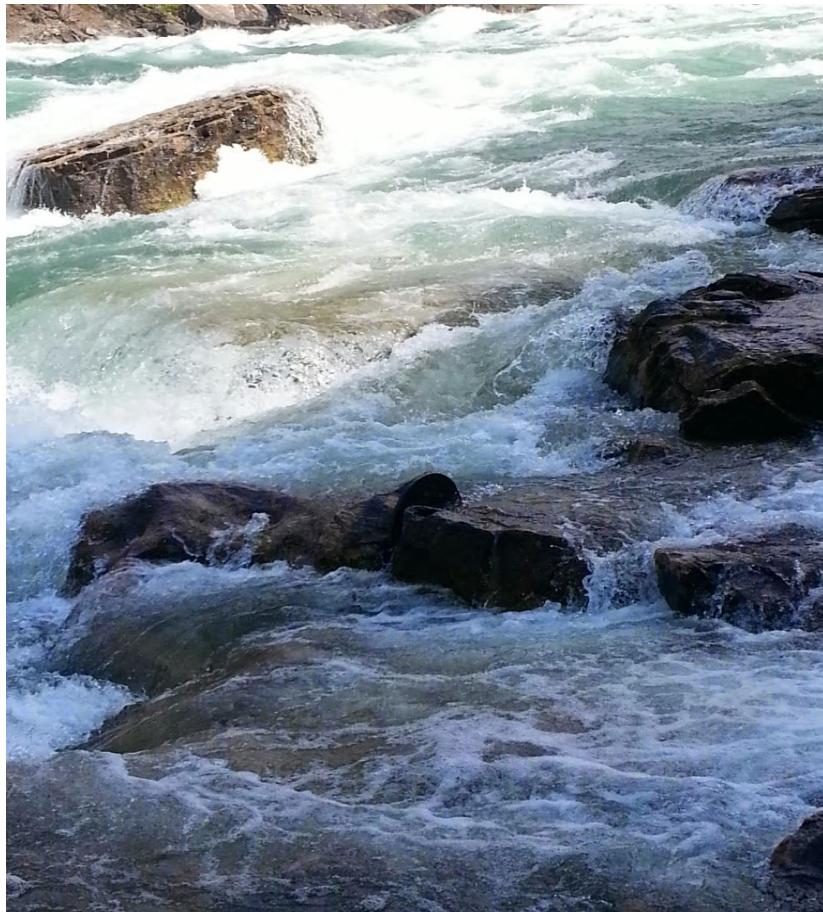
And every person is a dam between past and future.

When that one dies the dam is broken and the past breaks through into the future
 and there is no early or late. Time is one

Like our God, our time is one.

And the memory of the dam is a blessing.

Yeduda Amichai/Sager



Yizkor- May God Remember

יזכור אליהם נשמות.... שהלך לעולמו. תהי נשמתו אמורה באorz המחיים עם אברהם, יצחק, ויעקב, שרה, רבקה, רחל, ולאה, ועם שאר צדיקים וצדוקניות שבಗן עדן. אמן.

May God remember the soul of.... who has gone to its eternity. May that soul be bound up in the bond of life with the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, along with all of the other righteous men and women in the Garden of Eden, Amen.



The Student Takes Leave Of The Text: Let Us Not Forget One Another

מִזְרָן עָלֶךָ	We will return to you
וּמִזְרָךְ עָלָנוּ	And you will return to us
דְּעַפְתָּן עָלֶךָ	Our thoughts are with you
וּדְעַפְתָּךְ עָלָנוּ	And your thoughts are with us
לَا נִתְנַשֵּׁי מִמֶּךָּ	We will not forget you
וְלَا תִתְנַשֵּׁי מִמֶּנוּ	Nor will you forget us
לَا בְּעוֹלָמָה הַדִּין	Neither in this world
וְלَا בְּעוֹלָמָא דָאָתִי.	Nor in the world to come.

From the ritual of completing a portion of Talmud