**HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION**
**NEW YORK SCHOOL**

**FINAL THESIS APPROVAL FORM**

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**TITLE:** Memory + Monument

Wendy Zierler — Thurs Feb 16, 2006
**SIGNATURE OF ADVISOR(S)** **Date**

Dvora Lynch — 2/16/06
**SIGNATURE OF REGISTRAR** **Date**

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2005

# MEMORY AND MONUMENTS

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinical Program
New York, New York

February 27, 2006
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Rabbinic Thesis: One page summary

As a multi-vocal text, the Tanakh offers diverse and in some cases contradictory insights on the nature, function, and imperative of memory; and yet, there are times when memory is refined, when its form is assigned boundaries and its function is clear: for example, in the construction of monuments. A monument is a tangible attempt to concretize memory for the purpose of commemoration. Monuments give form to people's most valued concepts, hopes, and expectations in a way that allows for physical interaction. The monument, with its intrinsic framework for holding memory and facilitating memorialization, serves as an excellent resource for the study of memory. This thesis will explore the topic of memory in the Hebrew Bible and in contemporary Jewish society with the goal of exploring how memory is understood, practiced, and facilitated by stone monuments.

**Chapter 1,** therefore, presents memory as a covenantal language shared between human beings and God. The practice of memory is aided by various mnemonic devices that employ time (e.g. holidays) and space (e.g. *mezuzah*) to signify concepts such as the Sinaitic covenant, God's commandments, or Creation. These memory-aids are the precursors for the use of stone as a way to concretize memory.

**Chapter 2** is a close reading of texts from the Tanakh that involve stone as a marker for memory. Most of the examples of stone monuments are erected during cultic ceremonies involving the presence of God, sacrifices, vows/oaths, and a formal account of witnessing. Still, there are other examples of stones used as boundary markers, gravestones, and war monuments that have different memorial objectives.

**Chapter 3** reflects on the intersection of memory and monument in the modern day Jewish community with the Holocaust at the center of the memorial effort. Just as our biblical ancestors set up stones to facilitate the practice of memory, modern day artists and architects rely on monuments to help memorialize the Holocaust. Six different exhibits of memory are presented for the sake of analysis and comparison: two from Israel, two from Germany, and two from the United States. In each pair, one represents a traditional form of memorialization while the second provides an example of a counter-monument, a form that challenges ideas of time, space and content. How has the process of memorialization for the Jewish community changed from the days of our biblical ancestors? What is the content we are choosing to preserve? Who makes the decisions regarding when, where, how and for whom monuments are built? Finally, how does one find an appropriate image/form to represent an ineffable experience?

Number of chapters: Introduction, Chapters 1-3, Conclusion
Contribution: Exploration of stone monuments in Tanakh and Holocaust monuments
Goal: How is memory concretized through stone?
Division: Memory in the Tanakh, Stone monuments in Tanakh, Holocaust monuments
Materials: Tanakh, Holocaust Memorials

Dara Frimmer
Rabbinic Thesis: One page summary

**Title**: Memory and Monuments

**Contribution**: An exploration of memory and memorialization through biblical narrative and Holocaust monuments

**Goal of the Thesis**: This thesis will explore the topic of memory in the Hebrew Bible and in contemporary Jewish society (through Holocaust monuments) with the goal of exploring how memory is understood, practiced, and facilitated by stone monuments.

**Number of Chapters:**

- Chapter 1: Memory in the Tanakh
- Chapter 2: Biblical Examples of Stone Monuments
- Chapter 3: Holocaust Memorials

**Materials**: Tanakh, Holocaust Memorials

*Acknowledgements:*

Thank you to Dr. Wendy Zierler for her help in completing this project.

Thank you to Aaron Dorfman for his copy editing and insightful feedback.

Thank you to Stephanie Kolin for her sense of humor and support.

## Introduction

"Memory is among the most fragile and capricious of our faculties," writes Yosef Yerushalmi, and yet "the Hebrew Bible seems to have no hesitations in commanding [it]."[1] Memory is an enduring theme throughout the text, forming the language of commitment between the people and God, shaping the identity of the tradition, and guiding its trajectory. While the Tanakh does not offer a systematic account of memory, "there surely is remembering," writes Allen Verhey; and the act of remembering is "constitutive of identity and community and determinative for character and conduct."[2] We are what we remember.

As a multi-vocal text, the Tanakh offers diverse and in some cases contradictory insights on the nature, function, and imperative of memory[3]; and yet, there are times when memory is refined, when its form is assigned boundaries and its function is clear: for example, in the construction of monuments. A monument is a tangible attempt to concretize memory for the purpose of commemoration. Monuments give form to people's most valued concepts, hopes, and expectations in a way that allows for physical interaction. The monument, with its intrinsic framework for holding memory and facilitating memorialization, serves as an excellent resource for the study of memory.

This thesis will explore the topic of memory in the Hebrew Bible and in contemporary Jewish society with the goal of exploring how memory is understood, practiced, and facilitated by stone monuments.

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[1] Yosef H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken, 1989), 5.

[2] Allen Verhey, "Memory," n.p., *The Anchor Bible* on CD-ROM

[3] Comments by Dr. Wendy Zierler on an earlier draft.

In order to address the topic of memory in the Tanakh, it is important to understand the nature of the text. What do we see when we read the Bible? It is clear that the Bible is not a precise historical record, neither is it a collection of mythological tales. It speaks with a strict juridical tone, and yet it is filled with poetry. It is an anthology that occasionally asserts a claim of solo authorship. It is a struggle to categorize this work. The variety of material contained within the Tanakh forces a multi-disciplinary approach to research. For every scholarly attempt to find answers, the questions of purpose and methodology are recast: What is the goal of studying the Hebrew Bible? What value or perspective do different academic disciplines bring to bear on the research? How will the research be evaluated?

One popular approach, credited to Maurice Halbwachs, is the study of the Bible as collective memory. While the subject of memory has long been addressed by biblical scholarship, it is only in the last century that the intersection of history, sociology, and memory has produced a new method of studying the Tanakh. In the words of Mark Smith, "collective memory represents the collective pool of memory shared by individuals, and it consists further of memory passed down to subsequent generations."[4] According to this theory, the Tanakh is a record of memories shared by a group of people and preserved as an inheritance for future generations.

Halbwachs highlighted three points that are particularly useful for biblical scholarship: a) the tension between memory and history; b) the importance of physical

[4] Mark Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 127.

locations; and c) the social power derived from the control of memory.[5] Instead of searching the Hebrew Bible for historical accuracy (a goal not necessarily intended by th biblical authors), it is far better to delve into the forces that shaped these memories, encouraging the preservation of some and the destruction or forgetting of others. This type of study would look at the structure of society: Who exerts power? What are their political, economic or theological agendas? Why have certain holy sites been chosen ove others?

Ronald Hendel chooses the term, "*Mnemohistory*" to explain his study of the Bible as cultural memory. Quoting Jan Assman, Hendel writes, "Unlike history proper, *mnemohistory* is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered."[6] Because memories are not stable, changing subtly over time as the rememberer changes,[7] it is more useful to study the method of memory and its output rather than the verity of the memory itself. Hendel is especially sensitive to the influence of the present on the past. Contemporary issues and desires are projected back into the texts and "history" is revealed as a reflection of our needs, hopes and fears. "Memory is always selective," writes Hendel, "and it is organized and embroidered according to the desires of the present (i.e. the present situation of the memorious agent)."[8] Again, the goal is not the historical accuracy, but the method of transmission. What can we learn about ancient Israel through an examination of their mnemonic-aids, their ritualized acts of commemoration, and their language of remembrance?

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[5] Ibid, 127. "Memory is what a culture collectively carries forward about its past, while history involves a critical assessment of the past."

[6] Ronald Hendel, *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory, and History in the Hebrew Bible,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 58.

[7] Ibid, 31.

[8] Ibid, 71.

Mark Smith presents yet another approach using memory as a focal point for bible study. He suggests that the text presents "foundational narratives about Israel's identity as it was being discussed and debated."[9] While there are some truths to be found within the account, the real data is to be found in the larger experience that includes the incident, the recording, and the eventual transmission. "Any description of the biblical past," writes Smith, "operates at three levels: the events themselves and their larger cultural context in the past; the texts that describe and interpret those events and that context...and the modern historical inquiry that attempts to sort through the texts and other evidence in order to get at that past."[10] There is no absolute past to re-discover or recover in the chapters of the Tanakh; there are only remnants of people's experiences, filtered and processed and re-drawn by the shifting perspectives of subsequent generations.

A critical goal of biblical scholarship, therefore, is to understand that: "how the Israelites remembered and passed on their stories expressed as much about themselves as the events they attempted to relate."[11] For example, there is a deliberate pedagogical voice that often informs the foundational narratives of the Israelites. As a result, the descriptive language of Israel's successes and failures can be read more accurately as prescriptive language telling Israel how she should be acting. It is now clear that the biblical authors valued a certain ethos of behavior and used the language of memory to instill such practices in future generations.

All three scholars acknowledge the complexity of biblical scholarship and the overwhelming desire to know the "truth." Though their methods differ slightly, they all

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[9] Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel*, 13.

[10] Ibid, 14.

[11] Ibid, 15.

identify memory as a key to understanding more about the biblical world. In effect, memory, its complex nature spilling into many different areas of scholarship, becomes the keystone of interdisciplinary research.

Paul Bradshaw presents a framework for exploring the topic of memory by asking three central questions: Who is doing the remembering? What is remembered? What is being done in the act of remembrance?[12] **Chapter 1**, therefore, presents memory as a covenantal language shared between human beings and God. This is the language that enables the two parties to share a committed relationship. Memory is the means by which Israel requests God's protection and it is the legal language by which God holds the people accountable. Memory has the capacity to summon God. The practice of memory is aided by various mnemonic devices that employ time (e.g. holidays) and space (e.g. *mezuzah*) to signify concepts such as the Sinaitic covenant, God's commandments, or Creation. These memory-aids are the precursors for the use of stone as a way to concretize memory.

**Chapter 2** is a close reading of texts from the Tanakh that involve stone as a marker for memory. Most of the examples of stone monuments are erected during cultic ceremonies involving the presence of God, sacrifices, vows/oaths, and a formal account of witnessing. Still, there are other examples of stones used as boundary markers, gravestones, and war monuments that have different memorial objectives. Finally, stones are employed by Israel's neighbors in the Ancient Near East (ANE), a practice that generates concern for some of the biblical authors who fear the Israelite attraction to idol

[12] Paul Bradshaw, "Anamnesis in Modern Eucharistic Debate," in *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism* (ed. Michael Signer. Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 2001), 74.

worship. Given its widespread use, how does the stone change from an ordinary element on the geological landscape into a symbolic pillar and a record of sacred events? What is the purpose of these monuments in the eyes of our ancestors? What is the significance of the materials and design?

**Chapter 3** reflects on the intersection of memory and monument in the modern day Jewish community with the Holocaust at the center of the memorial effort. The Holocaust has been described as "an unprecedented catastrophe of inconceivable proportions,"[13] defying description and comparison. It is here that the performance of memory is tested: How can such an event ever be recorded? What mnemonic devices might be employed? What are the repercussions of a failed attempt to remember such trauma? In spite of this semantic challenge, significant attempts have been made to remember, particularly through the preservation of survivor narratives, the integration of the Holocaust into Jewish practice and identity, and the construction of monuments.

Survivor narratives are some of the most powerful memories we have in our communities, and yet, they are also some of the most vulnerable. Lawrence Langer, who writes on the subject of Holocaust testimonies, notes that all too often, survivor testimonies are manipulated to fit a pre-determined narrative structure that will be acceptable to the listening audience. The stories are often so traumatic and so unresolved that they cause a reaction from the listener to clean them up, erasing factual discrepancies and creating moral endings that are satisfying for a contemporary audience. Much of this effort is driven by a teleological concern for integration: how will this event affect the

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[13] Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz, "Introduction" in *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*. (eds. Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 3.

story we are trying to tell about our lives? Pierre Nora writes that, "in effect, it is the way in which a society, nation, group or family envisages its future that traditionally determines what it needed to remember of the past to prepare that future."[14] How can one hope for a safe, peaceful future if humanity bears the scar of such trauma and pain? Thus the effort is made to rewrite the testimonies.

In order to remember the Holocaust appropriately, Langer argues that it is our responsibility as listeners and receivers of the tradition to preserve the stories as they are not to beautify or rationalize them. He asks us to hold the tension of an unresolved narrative, "to share this dissonance with a perception built from the ruins of mutilation [knowing that] these testimonies bear witness to the simultaneous destruction and survival of European Jewry.[15] It is by listening to their words that we will approach the most authentic practice of memory, an effort clearly supported by The Righteous Persons Foundation, Yad Vashem, and other such organizations.

As another effort to preserve memory, Irving Greenberg argues for the integration of the Holocaust into the actions and beliefs of the Jewish community. In Greenberg's opinion, the nature of events that took place so profoundly challenged the Sinaitic covenant and the alleged relationship of love and responsibility between God and Israel, that the Holocaust must be seen as another moment of revelation. Just as we retell the story of our Exodus so that we preserve and teach the lessons of justice and freedom, we must do the same for the Holocaust through a process of reenactment: "I would suggest, then," writes Greenberg, "that in the decades and centuries to come, Jews and others who

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[14] Online: http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2002-04-19-nora-en.html

[15] Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 38.

seek to orient themselves by the Holocaust will unfold another sacral round...that this pain will be incorporated in the round of life we regret; yet we may hope that it will not destroy hope but rather strengthen responsibility, will, and faith."[16] We must revisit and reenact the stories in order to embrace the values and lessons drawn out of the experience. Such values include the infinite worth of a human being and our obligation to create a world in which a child can grow up into an image of God. Similar to Langer, the key is to share an experience of pain to the extent that "human beings are so attached to each other...that never again will a Holocaust be possible."[17] Thus, for Greenberg, memory is best done through reenactment which serves as a pedagogical tool for ethics and values, as well as a social contract between members of the community.

One final approach is the use of the monument. Just as our biblical ancestors set up stones to facilitate the practice of memory, modern day artists and architects rely on monuments to help memorialize the Holocaust. The monument continues to act as an effective marker of memory with its enduring form, and yet, its function has been expanded. Whereas our ancestors used stone primarily in cultic contexts, and rarely revisited the sites, today's monuments are almost entirely secular and built for repeated visitation and reflection. There is a strong pedagogical tone that demands, quite explicitly, the transformation of the visitor into an activist for justice. The cry of "never again," is answered, in part, through the creation of a monument. So long as this stone remains, we will not forget the stories, the lives, nor the lessons learned. In this case, the biblical examples of "monument as memory-vault" are recast in contemporary molds.

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[16] Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire," in *A Holocaust Reader: Responses to Nazi Extermination* (ed. Michael L. Morgan, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 113.

[17] Ibid, 113.

Six different exhibits of memory are presented for the sake of analysis and comparison: two from Israel, two from Germany, and two from the United States. In each pair, one represents a traditional form of memorialization while the second provides an example of a counter-monument, a form that challenges ideas of time, space and content. How has the process of memorialization for the Jewish community changed from the days of our biblical ancestors? What is the content we are choosing to preserve? Who makes the decisions regarding when, where, how and for whom monuments are built? Finally, how does one find an appropriate image/form to represent an ineffable experience?

## Chapter 1: Memory in the Tanakh

We begin by attempting to sketch out an understanding of the variety of ways in which memory functions in the Tanakh. The Hebrew root, *z-k-r*, is primarily defined as "to remember," but its usage is far more complex. According to Brevard Childs, the etymology of Hebrew root *z-k-r* is unknown. "The root is cognate with a common Semitic root appearing in Akkadian, Arabic, Ethiopic, Aramaic, and occurs in a Canaanite gloss of the Amarna letters,"[18] but still, no consensus has been reached on a definition. This leaves open the possibility for a wide range of interpretations in Hebrew scripture.

For the biblical authors, God and humans remember in a variety of ways with an equally diverse set of results. To remember means to pay attention and to take action; it implies accountability; it has juridical connotations and appears in the legal language of accusation and defense; and it is a tool of invocation and reaffirmation. Despite the myriad uses, the language and practice of memory by God looks remarkably similar to the language and practice of memory by human beings. In other words, there is one system of remembrance in which both sides participate.

This unified system may be the result of the shared covenant that unites God and Israel. This contract which binds them with certain rules regarding the treatment of the other presents memory as a covenantal language. This language of remembrance facilitates an acceptable public conversation by which the participants can a) hold one another accountable, b) reaffirm their commitment to one another, and c) support one

[18] Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (London: SCM, 1962), 9.

another in times of need. According to Adrian Leveen, "memory becomes the essential ingredient in ensuring God's relationship in perpetuity to the people Israel."[19]

The first section of this chapter will explore the use of memory from both sides of the covenantal relationship: how the people remember God, and how God remembers the people. The second section will explore biblical techniques and practices that facilitate memory: those that use time (holidays) and those that use space and form (*tzitzit, tefillin*, and *mezuzah*).[20]

## Section 1

### *The People Remember God*

In the world of the Bible, the people's act of remembering God is understood to be a sign of active, committed participation in the covenant. That covenant is central to the Israelite religion, and, therefore, central to the biblical narrative. In the following examples, memory is used intentionally as a means to strengthen and maintain Israel's identity as a covenantal partner with God.

In Deuteronomy 7, as the people are preparing to enter the Promised Land, a palpable fear is present in the camp. The Israelites are certain to be met with resistance

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[19] Adriane B. Leveen. "Variations on a Theme: Differing Conceptions of Memory in the Book of Numbers," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 27:2 (2002): 211

[20] Abraham Joshua Heschel celebrates the Jewish tradition's effort to create "a palace in time," (using Shabbat as the prime example) and warns his readers to stay away from seeking God in physical space, "within particular localities like mountains, forests, trees or stones." [Abraham J. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, (Canada: HarperCollinsCanadaLtd, 1951), 4.] That being said, the Jewish tradition has used sacred space to facilitate relationships with God since its inception. Moreover, contemporary Jewish practice continues to use ritual props, such as stones, as well as sacred space to perform a wide range of commandments. The split, therefore, between time and space is not absolute, to which Heschel responds: "This then is the answer...not to flee from the realm of space; to work with things of space but to be in love with eternity."(Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 48.)

from the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, seven larger and more powerful nations. Their fear could paralyze them, rendering them incapable of conquering the land. Thus, Moses employs the use of memory in order to embolden his troops.

Deuteronomy 7:17-19 (JPS, 1985[21])

(יז) כִּי תֹאמַר בִּלְבָבֶךָ רַבִּים הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה מִמֶּנִּי אֵיכָה אוּכַל לְהוֹרִישָׁם׃
(יח) לֹא תִירָא מֵהֶם זָכֹר תִּזְכֹּר אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְפַרְעֹה וּלְכָל מִצְרָיִם׃
(יט) הַמַּסֹּת הַגְּדֹלֹת אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ וְהָאֹתֹת וְהַמֹּפְתִים וְהַיָּד הַחֲזָקָה וְהַזְּרֹעַ הַנְּטוּיָה
אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִאֲךָ יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ כֵּן יַעֲשֶׂה יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְכָל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה יָרֵא מִפְּנֵיהֶם׃

17 Should you say to yourselves, "These nations are more numerous than we; how can we dispossess them?" 18 You need have no fear of them. You have but to bear in mind[22] what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and all the Egyptians: 19 the wondrous acts that you saw with your own eyes, the signs and the portents, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God liberated you. Thus will the LORD your God do to all the peoples you now fear.

According to this text, the recollection of God will stabilize Israel's fear, allowing the people to proceed. But the act of remembering is far more nuanced. The alleviation of Israel's fear is the result of a very specific memory of God. Moses does not refer to the God of Creation or to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Rather, it is God as a source of power and salvation whom he invokes. As a result, the Israelites remember that YHWH is an intercessory God who is successful and powerful when fighting Israel's enemies, as seen by the miracles performed in Egypt. The use of this memory is thematically appropriate: God will defeat Israel's enemies in Canaan just as God defeated Israel's enemies in Egypt, perhaps even using the same techniques and style.

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[21] All English translations, unless otherwise noted are taken from *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985.)

[22] The grammatical construct of the infinitive absolute followed by the imperfect should render a more emphatic translation, e.g. You will surely remember.

This is also the God that liberated Israel in order to bring them to Sinai and into the covenant as full participants. It is because of this very covenant that God continues to have a relationship with people. Furthermore, the provisions laid out in the *brit* suggest that the people can anticipate a strong defense against enemies and the rightful inheritance of the Promised Land. While it is not explicit, this ritual of recollection is only effective because of the pre-established covenantal system and its rules. Were there no covenant, there would be no promise of protection and therefore, no feeling of security. Therefore, the ideal outcome of recollection (in the minds of the biblical authors) includes both a memory of God as Protector AND as Covenant Partner. The two memories should be inseparable.

While the moment of official, legal contracting between God and Israel was at Mt. Sinai, in verses 18-19 Moses draws on the memory of God's miracles as the locus of strength that will empower the people. As mentioned earlier, it is an appropriate theme to revisit on the brink of battle with Israel's enemies, and yet, there is something unique about the miracles which perhaps further support their invocation. The biblical author makes a special effort to mention that each person saw, with his/her own eyes, the miracles performed. Witnessing (though the common Hebrew term for witness is not used) is a tool for reinforcement: Israel should take comfort in this memory because each person was physically present to see the miracles occur. They saw God's power first-hand. They know the extent of God's power. If they can remember this moment, they will be strengthened.

The Torah may be suggesting that memories witnessed first-hand produce qualitatively different experiences than hearing or reading about the event. This creates a

dilemma for future generations who are asked to remember events that they could not possibly have witnessed first-hand (e.g. remembering the Exodus). The Tanakh also privileges sacred space, constantly turning pieces of land, mountains and rocks into holy ground. Yet, with every step closer to Canaan, the people move farther away from the site of God's miracles. With every passing day, the generation that left Egypt grows older and a new generation who does not know the power and presence of YHWH begins to fill the camp. In spite of the distance in time and space, the relationship between God and Israel, and between Israel and her past, remains strong. In large measure, this is due to the performance of memory.

As discussed, when the people recall God's miracles, they also recall and reaffirm God's eternal commitment to protect and care for Israel. In a poetic twist, the foundation of this faith consists of a covenant that is inherently ungrounded. Sacred space is valued, but it is not required to access God's protection. According to the text, the people need only remember the miracles of YHWH from wherever they are and they will be protected.

Of course, Israel does not get any rewards or benefits if God's commandments are abandoned, forgotten, or blatantly violated. Remembrance of God and the Sinaitic covenant also means full participation in the covenant (i.e. performance of the commandments). Accordingly, the failure to remember God is equated with the failure to perform God's commandments:

> Deuteronomy 8:11
> הִשָּׁמֶר לְךָ פֶּן תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְבִלְתִּי שְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְחֻקֹּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם׃
>
> "Take care lest you forget the LORD your God and fail to keep His commandments, His rules, and His laws, which I enjoin upon you today."

The covenant system is surprisingly simple: If Israel follows the commandments then YHWH is obligated to bless and protect the nation. If Israel violates the commandments, then YHWH is justified in doling out punishments up to and including complete annihilation:

> Deuteronomy 8:19-20
> (יט) וְהָיָה אִם שָׁכֹחַ תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהָלַכְתָּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וַעֲבַדְתָּם
> וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לָהֶם הַעִדֹתִי בָכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי אָבֹד תֹּאבֵדוּן:
> (כ) כַּגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר יְקֹוָק מַאֲבִיד מִפְּנֵיכֶם כֵּן תֹּאבֵדוּן עֵקֶב לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּן בְּקוֹל יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:
>
> 19 "If you do forget the LORD your God and follow other gods to serve them or bow down to them, I warn you this day that you shall certainly perish; 20 like the nations that the LORD will cause to perish before you, so shall you perish -- because you did not heed the LORD your God."

According to Brevard Childs, "Forgetting is not a psychological act of having a thought pass from one's consciousness, but an outward act of worshipping other gods, of forsaking someone, of not keeping the commandments."[23] In contrast, remembering is the outward act of worshipping YHWH and keeping the *mitzvot*. To remember is to become a full participant in the partnership and a full beneficiary of its blessings. It is also to be held responsible for its rules and obligations. Therefore, memory, according to the biblical authors, is closely related to responsibility.

### *God Remembers People*

As mentioned earlier, there is one system of memory in which both God and the people participate. This system is part of the covenantal relationship and therefore, in keeping with the expectations of a serious agreement, memory relies on the qualities of

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[23] Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, 18. To make this claim is to assert that forgetting can never be an innocent or absent-minded act; to forget is to intentionally practice disloyalty and to express contempt.

mutuality and reciprocity. And so, the ideal interchange between the people and God is the remembrance of one by the other: If the people remember God – if they obey God's commandments – then God will remember the people and reward them appropriately.

**Memory as Attention and Action**

One example of God's memory is visible in the attention given to barren women. The biblical passage uses the root *z-k-r* to describe God's reaction to Rachel:

Genesis 30:22

וַיִּזְכֹּ֥ר אֱלֹהִ֖ים אֶת רָחֵ֑ל וַיִּשְׁמַ֤ע אֵלֶ֙יהָ֙ אֱלֹהִ֔ים וַיִּפְתַּ֖ח אֶת רַחְמָֽהּ׃

Now God remembered Rachel; God heeded her and opened her womb.

In this case, to remember is to pay attention and to respond with action. God hears Rachel's lament and responds: she is no longer barren. In a very similar scene, God also visits Sarah, though the verb used is *p-k-d*, to visit or take note of, and not *z-k-r*, to remember:

Genesis 21:1

וַיקֹ֥ק פָּקַ֖ד אֶת שָׂרָ֑ה כַּאֲשֶׁ֣ר אָמָ֔ר וַיַּ֥עַשׂ יְקֹוָ֖ק לְשָׂרָ֕ה כַּאֲשֶׁ֥ר דִּבֵּֽר׃

The LORD took note of Sarah as He had promised, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken.

For God, to take note of someone is also to remember them. The terms appear to be interchangeable. The relationship between *z-k-r* and *p-k-d* is further illustrated in the book of Exodus

Exodus 2:24

וַיִּשְׁמַ֤ע אֱלֹהִים֙ אֶת נַאֲקָתָ֔ם וַיִּזְכֹּ֥ר אֱלֹהִ֖ים אֶת בְּרִיתֹ֑ו אֶת אַבְרָהָ֕ם אֶת יִצְחָ֖ק וְאֶת יַעֲקֹֽב׃

God heard their moaning, and God remembered (*z-k-r*) His covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

Once again, God's act of remembering (*z-k-r*) is a process by which God pays attention to a painful cry and responds with steps to alleviate suffering. Yet, during God's selection of Moses as leader, God uses the verb *p-k-d* to restate the sequence of events that led up to this point:

> Exodus 3:16
> לֵךְ וְאָסַפְתָּ אֶת זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם נִרְאָה אֵלַי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר פָּקֹד פָּקַדְתִּי אֶתְכֶם וְאֵת הֶעָשׂוּי לָכֶם בְּמִצְרָיִם:
>
> Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them: the LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me and said, 'I have taken note of you (*p-k-d*) and of what is being done to you in Egypt.'

Memory continues to imply attention and action, this time invoking the names of the patriarchs and the promise made to them by God. It seems that God's responsibility for remembering (protecting and caring for) people is rooted in the original promises God made to the patriarchs. It is therefore in the best interests of those who claim to be the patriarchs' descendants to remind God of this agreement that they inherited.

Out of this unique arrangement, arose a plea for *z'chut avot* (the merit of the fathers) by which people asked to be rewarded or forgiven based on God's relationship with the patriarchs who possessed an overwhelming supply of merit.[24] In Ex 32, in the wake of the Golden Calf, Moses pleads on behalf of the people, "Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, how You swore to them by Your Self and said to them: I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and I will give to

[24] Larry Hoffman writes that *z'chut avot* is a "compromise doctrinal measure halfway between pure grace and pure works." We do not merit the attention, and thus, we rely on God's grace. On the other hand, our ancestors stored up merit that has been gifted to us an inheritance. [Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Does God Remember?" in *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism* (ed. Michael Signer. Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 2001), 50.]

your offspring this whole land of which I spoke, to possess forever." And the LORD renounced the punishment He had planned to bring upon His people. (Exodus 32:13-14) Moses requests that God remember the promise made to the patriarchs that has not yet been fulfilled; and God agrees to be held accountable and withholds punishment. As Moses begins his descent, Decalogue in hand, it as though the covenantal promise made to the patriarchs is transferred into the stone tablets which hold the new covenant made with the entire nation of Israel.

**Memory as Accounting and Judgment**

God's memory is not limited to acts of compassion. In many instances, God's acts of remembrance carry a *forensic overtone*[25] the result of which is often severe punishment and reprimand. In these examples, the language of remembrance appears crafted for a legal setting such as a courthouse or a public forum intended for discussion/debate. According to H.J. Boecker, "*zakhar le* is a technical term which bears a specific juridical meaning: to credit to one's account,"[26] a phrase which Nehemiah employs as he offers evidence of his righteous behavior to God.[27]

Nehemiah 5:19

זָכְרָה לִּי אֱלֹהַי לְטוֹבָה כֹּל אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי עַל הָעָם הַזֶּה׃

O my God, remember to my credit all that I have done for this people.

The plea to God presupposes a system in which human beings are able to present evidence to be judged by God, after which a decision will be rendered regarding reward

[25] Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel,* 32.

[26] Ibid., 32.

[27] Nehemiah 5:15 "The former governors who preceded me laid heavy burdens on the people, and took from them for bread and wine more than forty shekels of silver. Their servants also tyrannized over the people. But I, out of the fear of God, did not do so."

and punishment. The imagery of court allows the people some theurgic power; they can highlight acts of righteousness, like Nehemiah, and they can plead for leniency like the psalmist who asks God not to remember the people's transgressions:

Psalm 79:8

אַל תִּזְכָּר לָנוּ עֲוֹנֹת רִאשֹׁנִים מַהֵר יְקַדְּמוּנוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ כִּי דַלּוֹנוּ מְאֹד׃

Do not hold our former iniquities against us; let Your compassion come swiftly toward us, for we have sunk very low.

For the poet, the assault on Israel by her enemies is a direct result of God's displeasure with the people. If only God would "forget" her sins, the suffering would end. Thus, Israel pleads for mercy using the accepted language of appeal: Do not remember! (Do not pay attention!)

Another juridical example is the use of *z-k-r* to accuse a person of sin. Elijah is sent by God to Zarephath of Sidon, to a widow's home, where he can lodge for a period of time. With the help of God, a blessing of abundance graces her house and there is a constant source of wheat and oil to feed the family. Yet, the blessing appears to fade as her son falls ill and languishes on the boundary between life and death. The woman confronts her prophetic house-guest:

1 Kings 17:18

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל אֵלִיָּהוּ מַה לִּי וְלָךְ אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים בָּאתָ אֵלַי לְהַזְכִּיר אֶת עֲוֹנִי וּלְהָמִית אֶת בְּנִי׃

What harm have I done you, O man of God, that you should come here to recall my sin and cause the death of my son?

The language of remembrance serves as the language of judgment.[28] The widow's accusation presumes the same causal relationship between events as the psalmist: sin

leads to punishment, in this case tragic illness and perhaps death; and suffering implies the presence of sin. The widow expects that Elijah has arrived to publicly accuse her and to name her transgressions aloud. The result of such an announcement would then seal the divine judgment and the child would die.

The spoken language of remembrance is a powerful tool. According to this narrative, words have the capacity to destroy a life. Certainly, with this idea in mind, it is easier to understand the gravity of taking/breaking vows as documented throughout the Tanakh.[29] One need only look to the beginning verses of Genesis to see its origin: with the first utterances of creation that lead to immediate action, words are forever assigned the potential to cause great transformation.

### *Memory and Naming*

Additionally, the potency of language is demonstrated through the invocation of God's name by pairing *z-k-r* (most often in the *hifil* form) and *shem* = name.[30] This ritual act can be performed by Israel for the sake of YHWH,[31] as well as for foreign gods. This expression of memory is also a way for God to announce God's appearance at a cultic site:

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[28] In another example, the language of memory and judgment are bound together, as seen in Isaiah 43:26, "Help me remember," says God. "Let us join in argument. Tell your version, that you may be vindicated."

הַזְכִּירֵנִי נִשְׁפְּטָה יָחַד סַפֵּר אַתָּה לְמַעַן תִּצְדָּק׃

[29] See Numbers 30 for more details on vows.

[30] According to Brevard Childs, the ritual of naming gods is a basic form of Semitic worship. [Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel,* 12.]

[31] Isaiah 48:1 "Listen to this, O House of Jacob, Who bear the name Israel And have issued from the waters of Judah, Who swear by the name of the LORD And invoke the God of Israel -- Though not in truth and sincerity."

שִׁמְעוּ זֹאת בֵּית יַעֲקֹב הַנִּקְרָאִים בְּשֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִמֵּי יְהוּדָה יָצָאוּ הַנִּשְׁבָּעִים בְּשֵׁם יְקֹוָק וּבֵאלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יַזְכִּירוּ לֹא בֶאֱמֶת וְלֹא בִצְדָקָה׃

Exodus 23:13

וּבְכֹל אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם תִּשָּׁמֵרוּ וְשֵׁם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לֹא תַזְכִּירוּ לֹא יִשָּׁמַע עַל פִּיךָ׃

Be on guard concerning all that I have told you. Make no mention of the names of other gods; they shall not be heard on your lips.

Exodus 20:24

מִזְבַּח אֲדָמָה תַּעֲשֶׂה לִּי וְזָבַחְתָּ עָלָיו אֶת עֹלֹתֶיךָ וְאֶת שְׁלָמֶיךָ אֶת צֹאנְךָ וְאֶת בְּקָרֶךָ בְּכָל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַזְכִּיר אֶת שְׁמִי אָבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ וּבֵרַכְתִּיךָ׃

Make for Me an altar of earth and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your sacrifices of well-being, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come to you and bless you.

In the first example, the people must guard their language carefully. Even a whispered name, if it can be heard on one's lips, has the potential to invoke a deity. Not surprisingly, the Israelites are forbidden to use this technique with the names of other (foreign) gods lest they participate in idol worship.

In the second example, the text could have selected any number of verbs to describe God's appearance, but it chose the phrase "where I cause my name to be mentioned." (Exodus 20:24) This may reflect a desire to form an actual group of loyalists who will be responsible for mentioning God's name at a centralized spot; but there is also something unique about God's choice to invoke Godself, perhaps "showing the ancient tendency within Yahwism to check the magical usage of the name within the cult."[32] In other words, this is a practice best kept out of the hands of people. Israel will be asked to build altars and to offer sacrifices, but it is God who will choose the appropriate time to appear and to distribute blessings.

[32] Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, 13.

Whether performed by God or Israel, the *remembrance of God's name* is a sacred act that summons forth God's presence.[33] And yet, in spite of its significance, mentioning God's name aloud is not a permanent memorial. It is an attempt to set up sacred space using language, but it has no lasting effects. Frustration with such impermanence would certainly support any effort to set up a more enduring record to mark the sites where God was summoned.

**Zecher**

In five cases, *zecher* is interchangeable with *shem*[34] establishing a connection between one's name and one's memory.

Exodus 3:15

וַיֹּ֣אמֶר עוֹד֩ אֱלֹהִ֨ים אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֜ה כֹּ֣ה תֹאמַ֗ר אֶל־בְּנֵ֤י יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ יְקֹוָ֣ק אֱלֹהֵ֣י אֲבֹתֵיכֶ֔ם אֱלֹהֵ֥י
אַבְרָהָ֛ם אֱלֹהֵ֥י יִצְחָ֖ק וֵאלֹהֵ֣י יַעֲקֹ֑ב שְׁלָחַ֨נִי אֲלֵיכֶ֜ם זֶ֤ה שְׁמִי֙ לְעֹלָ֔ם וְזֶ֥ה זִכְרִ֖י לְדֹ֥ר דֹּֽר׃

And God said further to Moses, "Thus shall you speak to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you: This shall be My name forever, This My appellation for all eternity.

A person's name, for all intents and purposes, is a monument to the individual. The name signifies a life. It is a symbolic expression of a person's essence. Therefore, the destruction of one's name is synonymous with annihilation, as seen through the treatment of Amalek. "If a name cannot be uttered," writes Childs, "it is soon forgotten."[35]

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[33] This may be one of the supporting reasons why we are prohibited from using God's name in vain. See Exodus 20:7, "You shall not swear falsely by the name of the LORD your God; for the LORD will not clear one who swears falsely by His name." (See also Deuteronomy 5:11.)

לֹא תִשָּׂא֙ אֶת־שֵׁם֙ יְקֹוָ֣ק אֱלֹהֶ֔יךָ לַשָּׁ֑וְא כִּ֣י לֹא־יְנַקֶּ֤ה יְקֹוָק֙ אֵ֣ת אֲשֶׁר־יִשָּׂ֣א אֶת־שְׁמ֔וֹ לַשָּׁ֖וְא׃

[34] Exodus 3:15, Isaiah 26:8, Psalm 135:13, Job 18:17, Proverbs 10:7.

[35] Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel,* 71. (See also Jeremiah 11:19, Job 18:17)

**Amalek**

In addition to the value placed on the preservation of memory, the Bible also commands the ritual eradication of memory, as in the case of Amalek, the paradigmatic enemy of Israel. The story of Amalek's infamous attack is told twice, once in Exodus and once in Deuteronomy. Both times, the instructions are clear: Blot out the memory of Amalek.

Exodus 17:14

וַיֹּ֨אמֶר יְקֹוָ֜ק אֶל מֹשֶׁ֗ה כְּתֹ֤ב זֹאת֙ זִכָּר֣וֹן בַּסֵּ֔פֶר וְשִׂ֖ים בְּאָזְנֵ֣י יְהוֹשֻׁ֑עַ כִּ֚י מָחֹ֣ה אֶמְחֶ֔ה אֶת זֵ֖כֶר עֲמָלֵ֥ק מִתַּ֖חַת הַשָּׁמָֽיִם׃

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Inscribe this in a document as a reminder, and read it aloud to Joshua: I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven!"

Ironically, Moses must write down Amalek's name in order to issue the decree that his memory will be erased. Memory is concretized in writing only to be ritually erased over and over again. This is the key for the biblical authors: to erase or to forget a name is to take away a person's life. When God does not remember Israel they are vulnerable to attack by their enemies.[36] To be remembered is to be blessed. To be forgotten is to be forsaken.[37] Whether performed by God or by people, forgetting is an intentional act.

Joseph asks Pharaoh's butler/wine steward to prompt Pharaoh's memory so that action might be taken to free an innocent man from jail:

Genesis 40:14

כִּי֩ אִם זְכַרְתַּ֨נִי אִתְּךָ֜ כַּאֲשֶׁ֣ר יִיטַ֣ב לָךְ֮ וְעָשִׂ֣יתָ נָּא֒ עִמָּדִי֙ חָ֔סֶד וְהִזְכַּרְתַּ֥נִי אֶל פַּרְעֹ֖ה וְהוֹצֵאתַ֥נִי מִן הַבַּ֖יִת הַזֶּֽה׃

[36] Psalm 42:10 "I say to God, my rock, "Why have You forgotten me, why must I walk in gloom, oppressed by my enemy?""

[37] Isaiah 49:14 "Zion says, "The LORD has forsaken me, My Lord has forgotten me.""

> But think of me when all is well with you again, and do me the kindness of mentioning me to Pharaoh, so as to free me from this place.

The use of memory is critical to Joseph's plea and the preservation of his life. If the wine steward remembers, Joseph may be freed. He may resume his life. On the other hand, if he is forgotten, he may remain invisible to his family and to society until the day of his death. Therefore, keep me in your mind, says Joseph to the butler. Do not let the memory of me fade away for it is your memory that keeps me alive.[38]

**Section 2**

***Memory and Time: Holiday celebrations***

Ritual is a powerful tool for preservation and (re)creation. Its success is in large measure due to its steady, unchanging nature. Rituals have a set routine, often with a logical and conditional order to the events. There are scripts that preserve sacred words. There are props that have been recast in the same form for generations. Much of ritual's traditional power derives from its repetition and predictability.

Yet, rituals are not without some creativity and originality. Though from the outside they appear uniform and unchanging, inside, the individual can choose to infuse a vast supply of original thought, personal creativity, and spiritual expression into an otherwise structured ritual. As a result, rituals allow for the fusion of private innovation and public tradition. Arnold Eisen writes that "Every ritual exploits the power of that

[38] To ask someone to remember or to recall implies a fading memory that is rejuvenated and brought back to life. (Comments by Dr. Wendy Zierler on an earlier draft.)

combination between a given script for enactment and the intention of individual performances."[39]

According to anthropologist Barbara Meyeroff, ritual is a vessel into which anything can be poured. It is an "order-endowing device" whose characteristics of "precision, accuracy, predictability, formality and repetition...suggest that its contents – whatever they may be – are enduring and orderly. By virtue of these traits, ritual always delivers a message about continuity."[40] The actions performed today are the same as those performed in the past, and the same as those that will be performed in the future. Ritual joins an individual to a greater population of performers who have followed the same steps, spoken the same words, and used the same symbols to achieve a certain goal.

This is why ritual is an excellent tool for facilitating memory: it is a technique that incorporates the past and the present, the community and the individual, tradition and innovation. The structure supports the physical and cognitive re-enactment of experiences that may be thousands of years old while making space for the unique experience/perspective of the individual.

The biblical authors present two kinds of ritual that facilitate memory: the first set, the celebration of Shabbat and Passover, primarily uses *time* as a vessel; the second set, *mezuzah*, *tefillin* and *tzitzit*, use *space*. Stones are also an example of creating ritual space, a practice that will be explored thoroughly in Chapter 2. These stone monuments point to a specific event worthy of memorialization, and, at the same time, they serve as a

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[39] Arnold M. Eisen, *Taking Hold of Torah*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 82.

[40] Barbara Meyerhoff, *Number Our Days*. (New York: Touchstone, 1978), 86.

repository for those very same memories. In contrast, *tefillin*, *tzitzit*, and *mezuzah*,[41] all spatial mnemonic devices, are used to teach and enforce God's commandments, but they are not used as memory-banks in the same way.[42] These three devices are more focused on marking sacred space: the *mezuzah* marks the entrance to a home (the site of one's family); *tefillin* marks one's arm and head (the site of physical strength/action and of intellect/understanding); and, *tzitzit* mark the borders of one's clothing (the boundaries of the individual).

***Time*: Shabbat**

Shabbat (from the root *sh-b-t*, meaning to cease, desist, or rest) is an excellent example of how time is used to facilitate memory. Every week, Shabbat is set aside as sacred time during which we change our behaviors (we stop all forms of work) as well as our language (our liturgy is restructured to reflect the holiday). Our lives are transformed with a strong focus on resting in order that we remember two sets of memories that shape our identity as Jews. First, we rest because God rested after 6 days of Creation; therefore, Shabbat is a memorial to the process of Creation, as it says in the Kiddush, *zikaron l'ma-aseh bereishit*. Second, we rest because God took us out of Egypt, liberating us from slavery. The Kiddush also mentions Shabbat as a *zecher l'tziat mitzrayim*, a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt.

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[41] The rabbis understood these three rituals as a unit: Eliezer b. Jacob stated, "Whosoever has the *tefillin* on his head, the *tefillin* on his arm, the *zizit* on his garment and the *mezuzah* on his doorpost is fortified against sinning." (BT, Menachot 43b)

[42] Though it may appear that t*efillin* and *mezuzah* do act as vaults in that they both preserve pieces of parchment with God's words inscribed upon, their function is still different than stone monuments. The *tefillin* boxes and *mezuzah* cover are closer in function to the Ark that protected the stone tablets than a *matzevah*.

According to the documentary hypothesis, the conflicting memories can be attributed to two different schools of thought: the Priestly class used Creation; the Deuteronomist preferred Exodus. And yet there was space for both sources in the final copy of the Torah – an indication more so of the capacity for memory and ritual to hold multiple meanings than of a particularly expansive editing process.

***Time*: Passover**

More so than other holidays, Passover uses ritual, specifically, the *seder* (the highly structured holiday meal) in order to remember the Exodus from Egypt. The *haggadah* (from the root meaning *n-g-d* to tell) is our sacred script that retells the story every year; the foods serve as our props (salt water = tears, *charoset* = mortar for bricks) so that we ingest the details as much as we process them cognitively; the *seder* participants cannot help but become actors in the recreation or actualization of the historic event.[43] While ritual props are involved, thereby implying the use of space, it is the time set aside by the holiday that provides the principal conduit for memory.

Passover helps us to feel, sense, and understand the experiences of our ancestors. Our acts of imitation produce a feeling of connection with the past. We observe our celebration in the month of *Nisan*, the month of redemption; we offer a Passover sacrifice (symbolized by the shank-bone on the *seder* plate), as was done before our ancestors left Egypt; and we refrain from eating anything leavened for seven days, in memory of our hurried departure. Though we were not there ourselves, we feel closer to the event thanks

[43] "Actualization occurs when the worshipper experiences an identification with the original events. This happens when he is transported back to the original events. He bridges the gap of historical time and participates in the original history."(Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, 82) Recreation implies bringing the historic event to the present day.

to our rituals. The covenant, established long ago, still requires participation; and the act of remembrance, as expressed through ritual, continues to reaffirm the people's commitment to God and the tradition.

### *Material Memory: Tefillin, Tzitzit, and Mezuzah*

#### Mezuzah

The *mezuzah* takes its name from the biblical term for doorpost: *mezuzah*[44]. Only twice in the Tanakh does God command words to be written on the doorposts of one's house and also upon one's gates. Both times, this commandment for inscription follows the instructions (as we understand them today) for wrapping *tefillin* around one's hand and head.

Deuteronomy 6:8-9

(ח) וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל יָדֶךָ וְהָיוּ לְטֹטָפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ:
(ט) וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוּזֹת בֵּיתֶךָ וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ:

8 Bind them as a sign (*ot*) on your hand and let them serve as a symbol (*totafot*) on your forehead; 9 inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 11:18-21

(יח) וְשַׂמְתֶּם אֶת דְּבָרַי אֵלֶּה עַל לְבַבְכֶם וְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם וּקְשַׁרְתֶּם אֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל יֶדְכֶם וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטָפֹת בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם:
(יט) וְלִמַּדְתֶּם אֹתָם אֶת בְּנֵיכֶם לְדַבֵּר בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתֶךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמֶךָ:
(כ) וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתֶךָ וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ:
(כא) לְמַעַן יִרְבּוּ יְמֵיכֶם וִימֵי בְנֵיכֶם עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְקֹוָק לַאֲבֹתֵיכֶם לָתֵת לָהֶם כִּימֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל הָאָרֶץ:

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[44] The etymology of *mezuzah* is obscure; it has been suggested that it is derived from the Assyrian *manzazu* (meaning: dwelling place) but this is by no means certain.

"The Samaritans make their *mezuzot* out of large stones and attach them to the lintel of the main door of their houses or place them near the doorway. They carve on them the Ten Commandments or the "ten categories by which the world was created." Sometimes they use abbreviations and initial letters of the ten or single verses in praise of God. Mezuzah stones of this sort are found in Israel dating from the early Arab and perhaps even Byzantine era." [Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, "Mezuzah," n.p., *Encyclopedia Judaica* on CD-ROM. Version 1.0. 1997.]

> 18 Therefore impress these My words upon your very heart: bind them as a sign (*ot*) on your hand and let them serve as a symbol (*totafot*) on your forehead, 19 and teach them to your children -- reciting them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up; 20 and inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates – 21 to the end that you and your children may endure, in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to assign to them, as long as there is a heaven over the earth.

In both examples, the ritual of *mezuzah* cannot be understood in isolation: in order to know what writing we are expected to inscribe, we must connect the ritual to the preceding verses that discuss God's commandments. In order to understand its function, we must read the commandment alongside of the instructions for *tefillin*. *Tefillin* and *mezuzah* are linked by their common goal: to remind Israel of her obligation to perform all of God's commandments at all times and in all spaces.

The relationship between memory and action is illustrated again in Deuteronomy 11 as the text explains the future consequences of one's daily ritual practices. The term *lema-an*, meaning "for the sake of, on account of, or, in order that," is employed to express this idea;[45] it is a term that illustrates a cause and effect relationship between the ritual object and the individual. Inscribe words on your doorposts (cause) so that you and your children will live a long time (effect). But it is not the writing alone that yields reward – the intention is for people to remember and observe God's commandments. The *mezuzah* and *tefillin* are ritual props: when you see them and touch them, or bind them to your body, you are reminded of God's words as well as your covenantal responsibilities.

[45] Joshua also uses the expression *lema-an* as he sets up his stones expressing a pedagogic element of memory – see Joshua 4:24.

**Tefillin**

There are 4 citations in the Bible, two in the book of Exodus and two in the book of Deuteronomy (as listed above), which mention the combination of signs on one's hand and between one's eyes.[46] Though these signs are clearly mnemonic devices, the use of *z-k-r* appears only once, as the noun *zikaron*, a memorial, in Exodus 13:9.

Exodus 13:9

וְהָיָה לְךָ לְאוֹת עַל יָדֶךָ וּלְזִכָּרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת יְקֹוָק בְּפִיךָ כִּי בְיָד חֲזָקָה הוֹצִאֲךָ יְקֹוָק מִמִּצְרָיִם׃

And this shall serve you as a sign (*ot*) on your hand and as a reminder (*zikaron*) on your forehead -- in order that the Teaching of the LORD may be in your mouth -- that with a mighty hand the LORD freed you from Egypt.

Exodus 13:16

וְהָיָה לְאוֹת עַל יָדְכָה וּלְטוֹטָפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ כִּי בְחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ יְקֹוָק מִמִּצְרָיִם׃

And so it shall be as a sign (*ot*) upon your hand and as a symbol (*totafot*) on your forehead that with a mighty hand the LORD freed us from Egypt.

*Zikaron* is replaced in the other three examples with the term *totafot*, a mysterious word translated as bands in English,[47] phylacteries by the Greeks who misunderstood them as amulets, and *tefillin* by the rabbis who perhaps saw a connection to the root for prayer, *p-l-l*, or the root *p-l-h* meaning to separate or distinguish. The multi-vocal language of remembrance may indicate the biblical authors' preference to describe their mnemonic devices with symbolic as well as descriptive terms, e.g. *ot*/sign, *zikaron*/memorial, *totafot*/bands.

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[46] Exodus 13:9, 16; Deuteronomy 6:8, 11:18 (see above for full text)

[47] BDB, "*Totafot*,": "This injunction for perpetual remembrance was taken literally by later Jews, and hence the custom of wearing phylacteries." [Francis Brown and S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, eds. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 378]

In the excerpts from the book of Exodus, the explicit goal of wearing signs, memorials and bands is to remember God's role in liberating Israel from slavery. In the book of Deuteronomy, the focus is centered on the acquisition and inheritance of the Promised Land. In one case, *tefillin* seem to be a reminder of bondage and perhaps even a vestige of Egyptian amulet-jewelry.[48] In the other, *tefillin* are associated with the commandments that bind (*k-sh-r*) the people to God, so that when they enter the land they do not act in inappropriate ways (e.g. idol worship).

**Tzitzit**

Only one passage in the Torah (Num 15:38-40) discusses the ritual of wearing fringes, *tzitzit,*[49] on the corners of one's garments and attaching a cord of blue at each end.[50] Just like *tefillin* and *mezuzah*, this mnemonic device reinforces proper behavior by reminding people of God's commandments: remembrance leads to performance, performance leads to holiness.

Numbers 15:38-40

(לח) דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וְעָשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִת עַל כַּנְפֵי בִגְדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וְנָתְנוּ
עַל צִיצִת הַכָּנָף פְּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת:
(לט) וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִת וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹת יְקֹוָק וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא
תָתֻרוּ אַחֲרֵי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם:
(מ) לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתָי וִהְיִיתֶם קְדֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם:
(מא) אֲנִי יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים אֲנִי
יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

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[48] For more information on the etymology of *totafot*, including a theory of their Egyptian origin, see Herbert Rand's article, "The Etymology of Totafot," in *Judaism*, Spring 1993.

[49] BDB, "*Tzitzit,*": "The origin of the root is dubious, perhaps related to an Arabic word meaning hair on forehead as seen in Ezekiel 8:3 (Francis Brown and S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, eds. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 851)

[50] Deuteronomy 22:12 mentions the ritual, but uses the term *g'delim*, meaning tassels.

> 38 Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. 39 That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the LORD and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. 40 Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God.

The fringes are a tactile, visible memory-key, primarily intended to conjure up the memory of commandments that specifically prohibit Israel from following the ways of her neighbors. Yet, the blue fringe is also a reminder of the sky (God's abode), and it is the color of the throne of glory.[51] Gematria, another mnemonic device that focuses on numbers and patters, helps people to remember the commandments by counting the number of times the *tzitzit* are knotted and wrapped and calculating the numerical value of the word *tzitzit*. Added together, you reach 613, the number of God's commandments.

***Zikaron***[52]

The Tanakh uses the term *zikaron* to describe objects that act as pointers and/or signifiers. When Shabbat is described as a *zikaron l'ma-aseh bereishit*, it means that one of Shabbat's main functions is to point to the act of creation. Cultic objects like the Priest's onyx stones[53] or trumpets,[54] both labeled as *zikaron*, are not the items to be

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[51] See Babylonian Talmud, Menachot 43b

[52] The Aramaic equivalent, *dakhran/dikhron*, meaning memorandum or record, appears three times in the Tanakh: Twice in Ezra 4:15, "so that you may search the records of your fathers and find in the records and know that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and states. Sedition has been rife in it from early times; on that account this city was destroyed," and also in Ezra 6:2, "But it was in the citadel of Ecbatana, in the province of Media, that a scroll was found in which the following was written: Memorandum."

[53] Exodus 28:12 "attach the two stones to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, as stones for remembrance (*zikaron*) of the Israelite people, whose names Aaron shall carry upon his two shoulder-pieces for remembrance before the LORD." (See also Exodus 39:7)

remembered; rather the *zikaron* points to a concept or an event that should be recalled. They are symbols used to represent an idea. They are indicators of a memory far more significant than their own existence.

Adrian Leveen's article "Memory in the book of Numbers" shows how the blasts of the *hatzotzra*, a special kind of trumpet[55] functioning as a *zikaron*, are employed to stabilize and control the Israelite community by directing their attention toward a specific set of memories.

Numbers 10:8-10

(ח) וּבְנֵי אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים יִתְקְעוּ בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם:
(ט) וְכִי תָבֹאוּ מִלְחָמָה בְּאַרְצְכֶם עַל הַצַּר הַצֹּרֵר אֶתְכֶם וַהֲרַעֹתֶם בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת וְנִזְכַּרְתֶּם לִפְנֵי
יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְנוֹשַׁעְתֶּם מֵאֹיְבֵיכֶם:
(י) וּבְיוֹם שִׂמְחַתְכֶם וּבְמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם וּבְרָאשֵׁי חָדְשֵׁיכֶם וּתְקַעְתֶּם בַּחֲצֹצְרֹת עַל עֹלֹתֵיכֶם וְעַל
זִבְחֵי שַׁלְמֵיכֶם וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לְזִכָּרוֹן לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲנִי יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

8 The trumpets shall be blown by Aaron's sons, the priests; they shall be for you an institution for all time throughout the ages. 9 When you are at war in your land against an aggressor who attacks you, you shall sound short blasts on the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the LORD your God and be delivered from your enemies. 10 And on your joyous occasions -- your fixed festivals and new moon days -- you shall sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and your sacrifices of well-being. They shall be a reminder (*zikaron*) of you before your God: I, the LORD, am your God.

Similar to the excerpt presented from Deuteronomy 7, the pre-war ritual is intended to trigger the people's memory concerning God's past acts of salvation. If they are able to reconnect with God and reaffirm the covenant, they will feel empowered knowing God as Covenantal Partner will protect them. Yet, the use of the *hatzotzrot* to facilitate this

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[54] Numbers 10:10, Leviticus 23:24

[55] BDB, "*Hatzotzra*,": "The *hatzotzra* is a long, straight, slender metal tube, with flaring end; distinguished thus from the *shofar* which was originally a ram's horn, and probably always retained the horn-shape." (Francis Brown and S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, eds. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 348)

process of recollection is a new component to the story. The biblical authors may be able to use memory as a tool more effectively with the assistance of this mnemonic-device.

In effect, the *zikaron* helps the leadership of Israel (in this case the priests) to manipulate memory and control the people. This ritual reifies certain social and theological premises. The *hatzotzrot* blasts create "social cohesion," and at the same time, they establish a "clear hierarchy of authority,"[56] dispelling any hopes of egalitarianism within the camp. The text is quite clear that it will be the priests, Aaron and his sons, who blow the trumpets and thereby control the ritual of recollection. The priests are also teaching an important theological tenet: the ritual of memory is intended to "strengthen the relationship between God and the people by providing a mnemonic device for God to remember Divine obligation."[57] Theurgic power is an incredible asset that is, for now, localized in the hands of the priestly caste.

This is a powerful idea: YHWH is a god who can be reminded of obligations and be moved to action by the people's behavior (i.e. blowing the *hatzotzrot*). The *zikaron* simultaneously reminds both partners of their responsibilities in the sacred covenant: "The memorials as cultic objects serve to ensure Israel's relation to God's order by reminding both God and Israel: Yahweh is reminded of his purpose with Israel and his memory is equivalent to his action. Israel is reminded of the eternal order and she again relates herself to it by cultic participation."[58] These memory-aids lay the foundation for stone as a way to concretize memory.

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[56] Adriane B. Leveen, "Falling in the Wilderness: Death Reports in the Book of Numbers." *Prooftexts* 22 (2002), 210-11.

[57] Leveen, "Memory in Numbers," 210-11.

[58] Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, 68.

## Chapter 2: Biblical Examples of Stone Monuments

Within the framework of memory tools laid out in the first chapter, stone monuments play a specific role. Stone is an everyday feature of the natural world, and is ubiquitous in ANE culture. Its versatility is unparalleled. Archeological evidence shows the widespread use of stones as monuments, cultic fixtures, and boundary markers, found in different patterns and arrangements (e.g. *menhirs*, tall, upright monumental stones; *cromlechs*, circles of standing stones; *dolmens*, table stones or large, flat unhewn stones resting horizontally on upright ones; and *cairns*, heaps of stones[59]). The Tanakh preserves records of stones as the building blocks of homes as well as of altars and temples. They can be left in their raw, unhewn state, or they can be finely polished, and shaped. A stone is a weapon – David uses one to kill Goliath – and it is a tool for commerce, a system of weights and measurements.[60]

Stones have an interesting relationship with humans: whereas humans live a relatively short life, stones operate on geological time.[61] While they may weather, their decomposition takes a very long time – far longer than a human lifetime. Despite man's efforts to control the natural world by manipulating its resources (e.g. hewn stone edifices intended to serve human need/desire), stone will outlast each and every generation. Stones exemplify the qualities of longevity if not eternality, power and stability – attributes also associated with God. Hence, there is a strong connection between stone and cultic worship/ritual.

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[59] Carl-Martin Edsman "Stones," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 50.

[60] Leviticus 19:36 "You shall have an honest balance, honest weights (*avnei-tzedek*), an honest ephah, and an honest hin. I the LORD am your God who freed you from the land of Egypt."

[61] Comments by Dr. Wendy Zierler on an earlier draft.

In addition to their symbolic value, stones also provide a different tactic for addressing memory. Most of the biblical memory-tools addressed in Part 1 trigger a cognitive or experiential response: you hear the blast of the trumpet and you think of God; you look at your fringes and you remember God's commandments. In contrast, the formation of a stone monument creates a physical presence that projects the quality of preservation and continuation, due in large part to the nature of the stone. The stone is rooted and solid. The stone is not yet a portable mnemonic device that can be attached to clothing or affixed to one's body. The stone monument, unlike fringes or trumpet blasts, invites the visitor to transfer a significant amount of memory into a material object in an exchange that is similar to depositing money in a vault. Instead of the individual, it is the stone that bears the weight of responsibility to protect and preserve the memory. The stone monument, therefore, has two goals: first, to mark a sacred moment, and second, to hold/preserve that memory over time.

**Matzevah**

A *matzevah*, from the root *natzav*, meaning to stand or to erect, is a stone pillar set up by human beings for multiple uses. It can be used in a cultic ceremony; it can witness a sacred moment between man and God; it can mark a sacred agreement between human beings; it can indicate the site of a grave; it can be used as a public monument or a personal memorial. There are a few select places where *matzevah* has a special meaning

such as stump,[62] outpost[63], and house;[64] all three examples use the *shoresh natzav* to describe an object that is rooted in the ground in a stable, unyielding way.

The following section explores three *matzevot* ritually erected by Jacob. Jacob is the only person in the Tanakh who is permitted to use the *matzevah* in a variety of ways without incurring the accusation of idolatry, a concern that will be examined at the end of this chapter. These three rituals share common elements in part because they are performed by the same man, and, in part, because they mimic a pattern of Israelite rituals involving stones and monuments as documented in the Hebrew Bible. Each ceremony includes the presence of God or God's name, spoken declarations (treaty stipulations, oaths, vows), and an official naming of the site. Though the rituals may seem impromptu, there is nothing casual about the performance: each step is highly choreographed and highly symbolic with goals of marking time and space in the present as well as for the future.

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[62] Isaiah 6:13 "But while a tenth part yet remains in it, it shall repent. It shall be ravaged like the terebinth and the oak, of which *stumps* are left even when they are felled: its *stump* shall be a holy seed."
וְעוֹד בָּהּ עֲשִׂרִיָּה וְשָׁבָה וְהָיְתָה לְבָעֵר כָּאֵלָה וְכָאַלּוֹן אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁלֶּכֶת מַצֶּבֶת בָּם זֶרַע ק֥וֹדֶשׁ מַצַּבְתָּהּ׃

[63] 1 Samuel 14:12 "The men of the outpost shouted to Jonathan and his arms-bearer, "Come up to us, and we'll teach you a lesson." Then Jonathan said to his arms-bearer, "Follow me, for the LORD will deliver them into the hands of Israel.""
וַיַּעֲנוּ אַנְשֵׁי הַמַּצָּבָה אֶת יוֹנָתָן וְאֶת נֹשֵׂא כֵלָיו וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֲלוּ אֵלֵינוּ וְנוֹדִיעָה אֶתְכֶם דָּבָר וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹנָתָן אֶל נֹשֵׂא כֵלָיו עֲלֵה אַחֲרַי כִּי נְתָנָם יְקֹוָק בְּיַד יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

[64] Zechariah 9:8 "And I will encamp in My House against armies, against any that come and go, and no oppressor shall ever overrun them again; for I have now taken note with My own eyes."
וְחָנִיתִי לְבֵיתִי מִצָּבָא מֵעֹבֵר וּמֵשָׁב וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר עֲלֵיהֶם עוֹד נֹגֵשׂ כִּי עַתָּה רָאִיתִי בְעֵינָי׃

**Genesis 28**

His first and perhaps most significant *matzevah* is a personal monument, set up in honor of his first encounter with YHWH, the God of his father and grandfather.

Genesis 28:10-22

(י) וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב מִבְּאֵר שָׁבַע וַיֵּלֶךְ חָרָנָה:
(יא) וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם כִּי בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וַיִּקַּח מַאַבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם וַיָּשֶׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב בַּמָּקוֹם הַהוּא:
(יב) וַיַּחֲלֹם וְהִנֵּה סֻלָּם מֻצָּב אַרְצָה וְרֹאשׁוֹ מַגִּיעַ הַשָּׁמָיְמָה וְהִנֵּה מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים וְיֹרְדִים בּוֹ:
(יג) וְהִנֵּה יְקֹוָק נִצָּב עָלָיו וַיֹּאמַר אֲנִי יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ וֵאלֹהֵי יִצְחָק הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה שֹׁכֵב עָלֶיהָ לְךָ אֶתְּנֶנָּה וּלְזַרְעֶךָ:
(יד) וְהָיָה זַרְעֲךָ כַּעֲפַר הָאָרֶץ וּפָרַצְתָּ יָמָּה וָקֵדְמָה וְצָפֹנָה וָנֶגְבָּה וְנִבְרְכוּ בְךָ כֹּל מִשְׁפְּחֹת הָאֲדָמָה וּבְזַרְעֶךָ:
(טו) וְהִנֵּה אָנֹכִי עִמָּךְ וּשְׁמַרְתִּיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ וַהֲשִׁבֹתִיךָ אֶל הָאֲדָמָה הַזֹּאת כִּי לֹא אֶעֶזָבְךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם עָשִׂיתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי לָךְ:
(טז) וַיִּיקַץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְּׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן יֵשׁ יְקֹוָק בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאָנֹכִי לֹא יָדָעְתִּי:
(יז) וַיִּירָא וַיֹּאמֶר מַה נּוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם בֵּית אֱלֹהִים וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמָיִם:
(יח) וַיַּשְׁכֵּם יַעֲקֹב בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקַּח אֶת הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַיָּשֶׂם אֹתָהּ מַצֵּבָה וַיִּצֹק שֶׁמֶן עַל רֹאשָׁהּ:
(יט) וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא בֵּית אֵל וְאוּלָם לוּז שֵׁם הָעִיר לָרִאשֹׁנָה:
(כ) וַיִּדַּר יַעֲקֹב נֶדֶר לֵאמֹר אִם יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי וּשְׁמָרַנִי בַּדֶּרֶךְ הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ וְנָתַן לִי לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וּבֶגֶד לִלְבֹּשׁ:
(כא) וְשַׁבְתִּי בְשָׁלוֹם אֶל בֵּית אָבִי וְהָיָה יְקֹוָק לִי לֵאלֹהִים:
(כב) וְהָאֶבֶן הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר שַׂמְתִּי מַצֵּבָה יִהְיֶה בֵּית אֱלֹהִים וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּן לִי עַשֵּׂר אֲעַשְּׂרֶנּוּ לָךְ:

10 Jacob left Beer-sheba, and set out for Haran. 11 He came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night, for the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of that place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place.12 He had a dream; a stairway was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and angels of God were going up and down on it. 13 And the LORD was standing beside him and He said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac: the ground on which you are lying I will assign to you and to your offspring. 14 Your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your descendants. 15 Remember, I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." 16 Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is

present in this place, and I did not know it!" 17 Shaken, he said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven." 18 Early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. 19 He named that site Bethel; but previously the name of the city had been Luz. 20 Jacob then made a vow, saying, "If God remains with me, if He protects me on this journey that I am making, and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear, 21 and if I return safe to my father's house -- the LORD shall be my God. 22 And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, shall be God's abode; and of all that You give me, I will set aside a tithe for You."

The climax of this scene is expressed in verses 16-17: Jacob witnesses God's presence in a place he considered barren and mundane. In response to the revelation, Jacob begins to transform the *makom* ritually into sacred space. First, he uses ritual language to name the site: *This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven.* (Gen 28:17) Jacob's words could be a spontaneous expression, or they might be part of a thoughtful declaration that transforms *hol* into *kadosh*, the mundane into the sacred.

Next, Jacob takes the stone-pillow from under his head and sets it up as a *matzevah*. Playing on the root *natzav*, Jacob is perhaps using the stone pillar to recreate the ladder that was "*mootzav artzah*," set on the ground. If he can set up a conduit by which heaven and earth would be (re)connected, then God might once again stand beside him, *v'hinei YHWH nitzav alav.*[65] The pillar serves multiple purposes throughout the ritual: it is a connector, it is a marker, and with the anointing of oil, it is transformed from a simple rock into a sacred monument. The stone becomes a witness to Jacob's interaction with God: to the dream and the accompanying divine promises.

[65] The Tower of Babel was understood to be a means of connecting heaven and earth, just like a mountain: "Rooted in the earth, with its head lost in the clouds, it was taken to be the meeting point of heaven and earth and, as such, the natural arena of divine activity." Nahum Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 82.

In addition to the physical installation, Jacob continues to use language to mark sacred space. He renames the site of revelation, Bethel, God's House.[66] He also utters a vow of loyalty and tithing to God. (vs. 22) In the ANE, the *matzevah* marks a site for business as well, making the use of oil cultic as well as commercial. According to Nahum Sarna, "There is widespread evidence from the ancient Near East for the use of oil in international treaty relationship and in effectuating business contracts,"[67] and Jacob's erection of the *matzevah* thus becomes a contract with God entailing protection, food, clothing, and safety in return for devotion, "housing", and tithing.

Jacob's final words of this ritual include the vow and a declaration that "this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, shall be God's abode." (vs. 22) What does it mean for Jacob to call this *matzevah* "*beit elohim*" two times? Certainly, the *matzevah* marks a site as a place of revelation, a place where humans interact with the Divine. It is holy ground. The House of God is a metaphor, then, for this space where God might be "found." As seen from Jacob's ritual actions, the space itself is not ontologically holy. It becomes so because God first appears there, and then because Jacob dedicates it as such. Sacred space is a partnership between humans and God. It is only when God appears and people witness that the ineffable experience can become concretized in time and space.

The final step of this partnership unrecognized by the text is the preservation of the story in oral and written culture: now there is a permanent record (similar to the stone) of why this space called Bethel is considered holy. As will be discussed later on, the memory of Jacob's encounter encourages the use of Bethel as a site for future

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[66] God eventually uses this particular site name as a means of identification in Genesis 31:13, "I am the God of Beth-el, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now, arise and leave this land and return to your native land."

[67] Sarna, *TheJPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 200.

encounters between man and God (e.g. used as a cultic site, literally *God's abode*, by the Northern Kingdom under King Jeroboam). Were one to look at the series of events in a linear form, Jacob's *matzevah* evolves from a personal monument, dedicated to his private experience, into a public sign-post pointing towards communal sacred space. His story provides an etiology for all future claims, explaining, retrospectively, how an accepted holy site came to have this status.

**Genesis 35**

In Genesis 35, God and Jacob return to their sacred space for a shared ritual of re-naming: Jacob builds an altar and re-consecrates the space *El Beth-El* (the God of Bethel)[68]; and God blesses Jacob and renames him Israel. Their exchange highlights the qualities of mutuality and reciprocity expected as part of the covenantal relationship. While it is possible that Chapter 35 is another version of the story told in Chapter 28 (many of the elements are the same: a vision of God, a promise made, a *matzevah* set up and anointed with oil, and a renaming of the site Bethel), there are some differences. Perhaps this is a rededication of the original pillar; perhaps this is the erection of a new one.[69]

Genesis 35:6-20

(ו) וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב לוּזָה אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן הִוא בֵּית אֵל הוּא וְכָל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר עִמּוֹ׃
(ז) וַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא לַמָּקוֹם אֵל בֵּית אֵל כִּי שָׁם נִגְלוּ אֵלָיו הָאֱלֹהִים בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אָחִיו׃

[68] Another altar bearing a similar name-structure is *El-elohe-yisrael*, meaning El, God of Israel, in Genesis 33:20. This altar is particularly important because it is set up using the verb *natzav*, a term never used for building altars. What's more, no sacrifices are performed on what is ostensibly a stone monument. "Unlike the other patriarchal altars, this one neither responds to a theophany nor is used for worship," writes Sarna. Instead it celebrates Jacob's "safe arrival home after a prolonged absence filled with ever-present peril and recurring crises and commemorating the change of name from Jacob to Israel." Ibid, 232

[69] Ibid, 242

(ח) וַתָּמָת דְּבֹרָה מֵינֶקֶת רִבְקָה וַתִּקָּבֵר מִתַּחַת לְבֵית אֵל תַּחַת הָאַלּוֹן וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ אַלּוֹן בָּכוּת:
(ט) וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶל יַעֲקֹב עוֹד בְּבֹאוֹ מִפַּדַּן אֲרָם וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתוֹ:
(י) וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֱלֹהִים שִׁמְךָ יַעֲקֹב לֹא יִקָּרֵא שִׁמְךָ עוֹד יַעֲקֹב כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיֶה שְׁמֶךָ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:
(יא) וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֱלֹהִים אֲנִי אֵל שַׁדַּי פְּרֵה וּרְבֵה גּוֹי וּקְהַל גּוֹיִם יִהְיֶה מִמֶּךָּ וּמְלָכִים מֵחֲלָצֶיךָ יֵצֵאוּ:
(יב) וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם וּלְיִצְחָק לְךָ אֶתְּנֶנָּה וּלְזַרְעֲךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ אֶתֵּן אֶת הָאָרֶץ:
(יג) וַיַּעַל מֵעָלָיו אֱלֹהִים בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אִתּוֹ:
(יד) וַיַּצֵּב יַעֲקֹב מַצֵּבָה בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אִתּוֹ מַצֶּבֶת אֶבֶן וַיַּסֵּךְ עָלֶיהָ נֶסֶךְ וַיִּצֹק עָלֶיהָ שָׁמֶן:
(טו) וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶת שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אִתּוֹ שָׁם אֱלֹהִים בֵּית אֵל:
(טז) וַיִּסְעוּ מִבֵּית אֵל וַיְהִי עוֹד כִּבְרַת הָאָרֶץ לָבוֹא אֶפְרָתָה וַתֵּלֶד רָחֵל וַתְּקַשׁ בְּלִדְתָּהּ:
(יז) וַיְהִי בְּהַקְשֹׁתָהּ בְּלִדְתָּהּ וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמְיַלֶּדֶת אַל תִּירְאִי כִּי גַם זֶה לָךְ בֵּן:
(יח) וַיְהִי בְּצֵאת נַפְשָׁהּ כִּי מָתָה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶּן אוֹנִי וְאָבִיו קָרָא לוֹ בִנְיָמִין:
(יט) וַתָּמָת רָחֵל וַתִּקָּבֵר בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרָתָה הִוא בֵּית לָחֶם:
(כ) וַיַּצֵּב יַעֲקֹב מַצֵּבָה עַל קְבֻרָתָהּ הִוא מַצֶּבֶת קְבֶרֶת רָחֵל עַד הַיּוֹם:

6 Thus Jacob came to Luz -- that is, Bethel -- in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. 7 There he built an altar and named the site El-bethel, for it was there that God had revealed Himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother. 8 Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and was buried under the oak below Bethel; so it was named Allon-bacuth.[70] 9 God appeared again to Jacob on his arrival from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. 10 God said to him, "You whose name is Jacob, You shall be called Jacob no more, But Israel shall be your name." Thus He named him Israel. 11 And God said to him, "I am El Shaddai. Be fertile and increase; A nation, yea an assembly of nations, Shall descend from you. Kings shall issue from your loins. 12 The land that I assigned to Abraham and Isaac I assign to you; And to your offspring to come Will I assign the land." 13 God parted from him at the spot where He had spoken to him; 14 and Jacob set up a pillar at the site where He had spoken to him, a pillar of stone, and he offered a libation on it and poured oil upon it. 15 Jacob gave the site, where God had spoken to him, the name of Bethel. 16 They set out from Bethel; but when they were still some distance short of Ephrath, Rachel was in childbirth, and she had hard labor. 17 When her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, "Have no fear, for it is another boy for you." 18 But as she breathed her last -- for she was dying -- she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. 19 Thus Rachel died. She was buried on the road to Ephrath -- now Bethlehem. 20

[70] According to Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, the Israelites believed that burial under a tree would perpetuate the memory of the deceased because the tree was associated with immortality as indicated by the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. Thus, we see that Deborah, Rachel's nurse is buried under an oak in Genesis 35:8 [Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead.* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), 1992, 115.

> Over her grave Jacob set up a pillar; it is the pillar at Rachel's grave to this day.

One key difference is the use of libation in addition to the oil. (vs. 14) According to Nahum Sarna, Jacob has made a decision to rehabilitate the original stela, which is now invested with new meaning.[71] It appears that *matzevot* can absorb new intentions through re-consecration rituals. This may help us understand more about the recycling of sacred space. If a site, previously marked as sacred space has fallen into disrepair or disuse, it is possible to re-invoke the sacred with the same materials or new elements. Holiness can be rekindled with the proper words and actions.

Genesis 35 lays the groundwork for an example of re-consecrating space *that was set apart by one's ancestors.* While first associated with Jacob and his dream, Bethel reappears as the site of a sanctuary for the Northern Kingdom under the rule of Jeroboam I.[72] His bold move to establish sacred space outside of Jerusalem, in order to dissuade people from making pilgrimages outside of his territory, required more than just power and finances. It required location. Thus, Jeroboam built another monument, this one in the form of a Temple, on the site of Jacob's encounter with God.

The re-consecration of Bethel points to the value of memory for maintaining or creating sacred space. If the memory of Jacob's encounter at Bethel had been lost, if it was no longer part of the communal narrative, there would be no reason for Jeroboam to use the site. In this case, the power of Bethel rests on the consistent preservation of Jacob's story. Stories, like stone monuments, have a longer lifespan than human beings;

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[71] Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary*: Genesis, 242.

[72] 1 Kings 12:26, 28a, 29, "Jeroboam said to himself, "Now the kingdom may well return to the House of David...So the king took counsel and made two golden calves...He set up one in Bethel and placed the other in Dan."

thus, they have the capacity to mark space over many generations, or at least appear as if they have done so.

Yet, memory is also easily manipulated and abused. Jacob's story might have fallen into disuse (or it may have never existed until this point!) and Jeroboam resurrected not only the memory of Jacob's encounter, but also championed its centrality to the tradition in order to justify his political objectives.

The Tanakh is not as forthcoming with details concerning the acquisition of space previously dedicated by those *outside of the Israelite cult*. For example, Bethel, a Canaanite and Israelite town, is recognized as a holy site for both groups. It is possible that there were other stories about Bethel from outside the Israelite tradition that encouraged the use of Bethel as sacred space. For example, Beth-El was also known as the "house of the Canaanite God El."[73]

Jacob's language also seems to indicate a shared vocabulary of cultic terms among groups in the ANE. According to Sarna's research, "an 8th century BCE Aramaic treaty inscription from Sfire terms each upright stone on which the treaty is inscribed a *ntsb'* (the Aramaic cognate of *matzevah*) and designates these identical stones "abode of the gods" (bty lhy') when they serve as witnesses to the treaty." Moreover, it appears that there is a subcategory of *matzevot* titled "*Beit Elohim*," a special type of stone that "symbolizes the divine presence that monitors the fulfillment or infraction of the terms of a treaty or vow."[74]

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[73] Michael Avi-Yonah, "Bet-El," n.p., *Encyclopedia Judaica* on CD-ROM. Version 1.0. 1997.

[74] Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary*: Genesis, 201. "Later on, Hellenistic writers would use the term "bethels" (*baituloi*) to indicate "sacred stones supposedly possessed of divine or demonic powers."

The biblical authors reveal none of this information pointing to syncretism, choosing instead to tell their stories of sacred stones in a way that sets them apart from their neighbors. Jacob's first encounter with God in Genesis 28 is a completely original and spontaneous experience. Rather than re-establishing sacred space, Jacob stumbles accidentally onto the *makom*. His *matzevah* is impromptu and unprecedented – it was his pillow from the previous night. There is no indication that Bethel has ever been named a holy site; Jacob has no idea that God might appear. Using familiar symbols and vocabulary, but a carefully distinguished narrative, Jacob (inspired by YHWH) seizes sacred ground for himself and the tradition that follows. Monuments, as will be shown, are also a way to stake out territory.

**Genesis 31**

In Genesis 31, Jacob again uses a *matzevah* to witness and commemorate an experience worthy of remembrance. This time, it is a sacred agreement between him and his father-in-law, Laban, concerning the two topics of ultimate importance: progeny and land.[75] Jacob will protect Laban's daughters and honor them by not taking other wives; and neither Laban nor Jacob will cross into the other's land with hostile intent.

Jacob has endured much as a tenant in Laban's house.[76] Now, it is time for him to leave Laban's family and to begin his own journey as a patriarch. But before he can do this, reparations must be made for the losses and gains he and Laban have experienced

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[75] God's promise to the patriarch's focuses primarily on the blessings of children and land. See Gen 13:14-17, Gen 17:7-8 (Abraham), Gen 26:3-4 (Isaac), Gen 28:13-14 and Gen 35:11-12 (Jacob).

[76] Genesis 31:6-7 "As you know, I have served your father with all my might; but your father has cheated me, changing my wages time and again. God, however, would not let him do me harm."

together. With both tribes listening, the men air their grievances and make their case. Jacob cites his 20 years of labor, his integrity as a shepherd, his commitment to the work, and his decision to remain despite Laban's trickery and deception. (Gen 31:38-42) In response, Laban points out that everything Jacob has – his wife, his children and his flocks – all came from him. Jacob would be nothing were it not for Laban's hospitality over the past twenty years. (Gen 31:43)

At this point in the narrative, no further evidence is submitted from either side. Laban suggests they make a *brit,* a covenant that will address past wrongs and will set the terms for future interactions.

Genesis 31:44-54

(מה) וְיַקְהֵ֥ם יַעֲקֹ֖ב אָבֶ֑ן וַיְרִימֻ֖הָ מַצֵּבָֽה׃
(מו) וַיֹּ֥אמֶר יַעֲקֹ֖ב לְאֶחָ֑יו לִקְט֣וּ אֲבָנִ֔ים וַיִּקְח֥וּ אֲבָנִ֖ים וַיַּֽעֲשׂ֣וּ גָ֑ל וַיֹּ֣אכְל֔וּ שָׁ֖ם עַל־הַגָּֽל׃
(מז) וַיִּקְרָ֥א לוֹ֙ לָבָ֔ן יְגַ֥ר שָׂהֲדוּתָ֖א וְיַעֲקֹ֥ב קָרָ֖א לוֹ֥ גַּלְעֵֽד׃
(מח) וַיֹּ֣אמֶר לָבָ֗ן הַגַּ֨ל הַזֶּ֤ה עֵד֙ בֵּינִ֣י וּבֵינְךָ֔ הַיּ֖וֹם עַל־כֵּ֣ן קָרָ֣א שְׁמ֑וֹ גַּלְעֵֽד׃
(מט) וְהַמִּצְפָּ֗ה אֲשֶׁ֤ר אָמַר֙ יִצֶ֣ף יְקֹוָ֔ק בֵּינִ֖י וּבֵינֶ֑ךָ כִּ֥י נִסָּתֵ֖ר אִ֥ישׁ מֵרֵעֵֽהוּ׃
(נ) אִם־תְּעַנֶּ֣ה אֶת־בְּנֹתַ֔י וְאִם־תִּקַּ֥ח נָשִׁ֖ים עַל־בְּנֹתָ֑י אֵ֣ין אִ֔ישׁ עִמָּ֖נוּ רְאֵ֣ה אֱלֹהִ֔ים עֵ֖ד בֵּינִ֥י וּבֵינֶֽךָ׃
(נא) וַיֹּ֣אמֶר לָבָ֔ן לְיַעֲקֹ֖ב הִנֵּ֣ה הַגַּ֣ל הַזֶּ֔ה וְהִנֵּ֥ה הַמַּצֵּבָ֖ה אֲשֶׁ֣ר יָרִ֑יתִי בֵּינִ֖י וּבֵינֶֽךָ׃
(נב) עֵד֩ הַגַּ֨ל הַזֶּ֜ה וְעֵדָ֣ה הַמַּצֵּבָ֗ה אִם־אֲנִי֙ לֹֽא־אֶעֱבֹ֣ר אֵלֶ֔יךָ אֶת־הַגַּ֥ל הַזֶּ֖ה וְאִם־אַתָּ֣ה לֹֽא־תַעֲבֹ֣ר אֵלַ֔י אֶת־הַגַּ֥ל הַזֶּ֖ה וְאֶת־הַמַּצֵּבָ֥ה הַזֹּ֖את לְרָעָֽה׃
(נג) אֱלֹהֵ֣י אַבְרָהָ֗ם וֵאלֹהֵי֙ נָח֣וֹר יִשְׁפְּט֣וּ בֵינֵ֔ינוּ אֱלֹהֵ֖י אֲבִיהֶ֑ם וַיִּשָּׁבַ֥ע יַעֲקֹ֖ב בְּפַ֥חַד אָבִ֖יו יִצְחָֽק׃
(נד) וַיִּזְבַּ֥ח יַעֲקֹ֖ב זֶ֣בַח בָּהָ֑ר וַיִּקְרָ֥א לְאֶחָ֖יו לֶאֱכָ֣ל לָ֑חֶם וַיֹּֽאכְל֥וּ לֶ֖חֶם וַיָּלִ֥ינוּ בָהָֽר׃

44 Come, then, let us make a pact, you and I, that there may be a witness between you and me." 45 Thereupon Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. 46 And Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." So they took stones and made a mound; and they partook of a meal there by the mound. 47 Laban named it Yegar-sahadutha, but Jacob named it Gal-ed. 48 And Laban declared, "This mound is a witness between you and me this day." That is why it was named Gal-ed; 49 And it was called Mizpah, because he said, "May the LORD watch between you and me, when we are out of sight of each other. 50 If you ill-treat my daughters or take other wives besides my daughters -- though no one else be about, remember, God Himself will be witness between you and me." 51 And Laban said to Jacob, "Here is this mound and here the pillar which I have set up between you and me: 52 this mound shall be witness and this

> pillar shall be witness that I am not to cross to you past this mound, and that you are not to cross to me past this mound and this pillar, with hostile intent. 53 May the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor" -- their ancestral deities -- "judge between us." And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. 54 Jacob then offered up a sacrifice on the Height, and invited his kinsmen to partake of the meal. After the meal, they spent the night on the Height.

Jacob initiates the building process setting up a *matzevah* and instructing his kinsmen to gather stones to assemble into a mound. A ritual meal is then consumed next to the pile of stones. The delegation of this task to Jacob's kinsmen may imply that this small pile of stones was more functional and less ceremonial – perhaps it was a makeshift table to hold the food for the meal. On the other hand, even if it is a table, it also serves an important ritual function in the scene; the pile of stones is called on twice as a witness in the agreement between the clans: once to witness the pact and once to witness the boundary.[77]

In the first example (vs. 48), the stone-heap serves as a witness to the pact and its participants. As Laban speaks aloud "this mound is a witness," and points to the pile of stones, the simple stones are transformed into symbolic witnesses and the scene is transformed from a casual exchange into an official negotiation. In contrast to past conversations between these two men, this time, there will be no opportunity for misinterpretation or manipulation. The language of accountability, exemplified by the word witness, resonates throughout their dialogue.

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[77] People are not the only witnesses in the Tanakh. Stones, poems, God, and the moon also serve as witnesses. A witness, therefore, seems to be a technical name for something that offers proof of an event, whether it is a written record, a human being or a piece of nature. For this particular text in which stones are called on to witness a treaty between men/clans, Nahum Sarna offers a less traditional reading of the term *'ed*: "If one were to read the Hebrew *'ed*, not as 'witness' but from an original Aramaic *'d*, meaning 'treaty, agreement' especially one secured with an oath," the stones are simply ritual markers of a business agreement. (Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 221)

As we have seen, *matzevah* ceremonies often include a process of (re)naming a sacred site. To officially bind themselves to the terms of the agreement, both men offer their signature, as it were, by naming the monument "witness-heap": Laban in Aramaic, *Yegar-sahadutha*, and Jacob in Hebrew, *Gal-ed*. If the *brit* is to be upheld over time, it is important for future generations to know the etiology of the agreement (the narrative), to affirm the story's authenticity, and to honor the boundaries established. The two languages testify to the presence of both groups. Of course, another way to understand the ritual is to categorize the story as a later development, projected back into Israelite history in order to explain the situational reality of the biblical authors (i.e.. the site is known by two names)

In either case, the practice of naming continues to be a descriptive and prescriptive exercise. When Jacob names Bethel, it is in honor of his epiphany and in the hope that God might reside in a place called God's home. Naming children marks the circumstances at the moment of their birth and it sets up a prediction for the extent of their life.[78] So, too, with our text from Genesis 31: the names describe the immediacy of the ritual scene with the intention of marking that space and its significance for years to come.

In the second example (vs. 52), the pile is called on to witness the land that has now been divided between Jacob and Laban. In fact, Laban declares that both the stone

[78] In some cases, the name sets up a life direction: Jacob becomes Israel and his descendents are gifted an inheritance of wrestling. In other cases, the name is a hope for the future as see in Genesis 29:32, "Leah conceived and bore a son, and named him Reuben; for she declared, "It means: 'The LORD has seen my affliction'; it also means: 'Now my husband will love me.'"

pillar and the pile of stones are witnesses to their agreement.[79] At this point, the stones are transformed. Now, they are not only witnesses and commemorative markers, they are also boundary markers.

In vs. 49, the site is also named *Mizpah,*[80] from the root *tzafah*, meaning to look out or watch over. It is possible that this site name is descriptive of the spot chosen: it is an overlook or promontory adding further symbolic significance to the scene.[81] Certainly, this name reaffirms God's presence as witness, guardian, and enforcer of the treaty. The stones are thus used as a physical representation of God's presence. With God's help, they "watch over" the participants' actions, they mark sacred space, and they demarcate the limits of one's territory.[82]

While YHWH does not appear in this scene with the same force as in Genesis 28 and 35, YHWH is called upon to enforce the terms. Furthermore, the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor (Laban's father) are included in what seems to be a *beit-din* of divine witnesses. The *matzevah* continues to show its versatility: it not only holds two

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[79] This may offer further evidence of multiple narrative traditions. One story told of a pile of stones and the other of a *matzevah*. Instead of excising one, both symbolic stone markers were kept and declared to be witnesses to the agreement.

[80] *Mizpah* returns as a notable location 39 times in the Tanakh, most importantly as a site for public gathering (Judges 20:1), as a seat of judgment for Samuel (1 Samuel 7:16), and for the ordination of Saul as king (1 Samuel 10:17-25). Later on in this section, it will be revisited as a site for a war memorial.

[81] The biblical authors may also have been seeking a theological/traditional explanation for the topography. Why an overlook? Because it symbolizes God's eternal watch over Israel. (Comments by Dr. Wendy Zierler on an earlier draft.)

[82] The importance of maintaining boundaries is further emphasized in Deuteronomy 19:14, "You shall not move your countryman's landmarks, set up by previous generations, in the property that will be allotted to you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess"; also in Deuteronomy 27:17, "Cursed be he who moves his fellow countryman's landmark..."

names, it can also accommodate the presence of multiple deities. Each national god is summoned to protect the boundaries of the participant.

***Moses***

Another distinctive use of stone-as-monument in the Tanakh involves erecting a set of twelve stones as part of a cultic ritual – a pattern used by Moses, Joshua and Elijah. Sometimes these monuments will be called *matzevot*, and other times, *avanim* (plural form of rock/stone). The change in vocabulary may point to a parallel tradition of labeling monuments according to their building material, i.e. rock. Or, as will be explained in greater detail at the end of this unit, the word *matzevah* became a pejorative term due to its association with idol worship and could no longer be used in relationship to YHWH. Whether as a *matzevah* or an *even*, the intent of the monument remains the same: to witness, to commemorate, to point to a memory or a set of memories, to create an opportunity for vows, oaths and covenantal agreements. One significant difference will be introduction of writing onto these steles.

**Exodus 24**

Stone continues to serve as a focal point for Israelite ceremonies as demonstrated by Moses as he prepares the people to accept God's covenant. This time, the monument is an installation of twelve stones which helps to announce and confirm the covenant at the heart of the biblical narrative. Reminiscent of Jacob's vow in Genesis 28, the ceremony formalizes the terms of the agreement and then concretizes the moment as well as the commandments in stone.

At the same time, Moses is also preparing himself to receive a set of stone tablets, "a tangible, permanent symbol of the covenant"[83]: the Decalogue. Thus, the following section highlights Moses' ritual preparation as he incorporates three separate forms of stone: the altar, the twelve stones (one for each tribe), and the stone tablets.

Exodus 24:1-12

(א) וְאֶל מֹשֶׁה אָמַר עֲלֵה אֶל יְקֹוָק אַתָּה וְאַהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא וְשִׁבְעִים מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם מֵרָחֹק:
(ב) וְנִגַּשׁ מֹשֶׁה לְבַדּוֹ אֶל יְקֹוָק וְהֵם לֹא יִגָּשׁוּ וְהָעָם לֹא יַעֲלוּ עִמּוֹ:
(ג) וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וַיְסַפֵּר לָעָם אֵת כָּל דִּבְרֵי יְקֹוָק וְאֵת כָּל הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וַיַּעַן כָּל הָעָם קוֹל אֶחָד
וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְקֹוָק נַעֲשֶׂה:
(ד) וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֵת כָּל דִּבְרֵי יְקֹוָק וַיַּשְׁכֵּם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּחַ תַּחַת הָהָר וּשְׁתֵּים עֶשְׂרֵה
מַצֵּבָה לִשְׁנֵים עָשָׂר שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
(ה) וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת נַעֲרֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת וַיִּזְבְּחוּ זְבָחִים שְׁלָמִים לַיקֹוָק פָּרִים:
(ו) וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה חֲצִי הַדָּם וַיָּשֶׂם בָּאַגָּנֹת וַחֲצִי הַדָּם זָרַק עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:
(ז) וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְקֹוָק נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע:
(ח) וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת הַדָּם וַיִּזְרֹק עַל הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה דַם הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת יְקֹוָק עִמָּכֶם
עַל כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה:
(ט) וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא וְשִׁבְעִים מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
(י) וַיִּרְאוּ אֵת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְתַחַת רַגְלָיו כְּמַעֲשֵׂה לִבְנַת הַסַּפִּיר וּכְעֶצֶם הַשָּׁמַיִם לָטֹהַר:
(יא) וְאֶל אֲצִילֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא שָׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיֶּחֱזוּ אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ:
(יב) וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹוָק אֶל מֹשֶׁה עֲלֵה אֵלַי הָהָרָה וְהֱיֵה שָׁם וְאֶתְּנָה לְךָ אֶת לֻחֹת הָאֶבֶן וְהַתּוֹרָה
וְהַמִּצְוָה אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתִּי לְהוֹרֹתָם:

1 Then He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel, and bow low from afar. 2 Moses alone shall come near the LORD; but the others shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him." 3 Moses went and repeated to the people all the commands of the LORD and all the rules; and all the people answered with one voice, saying, "All the things that the LORD has commanded we will do!" 4 Moses then wrote down all the commands of the LORD. Early in the morning, he set up an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He designated some young men among the Israelites, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed bulls as offerings of well-being to the LORD. 6 Moses took one part of the blood and put it in basins, and the other part of the blood he dashed against the altar. 7 Then he took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will faithfully do!" 8 Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that

[83] Nahum Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus.* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society: 1991) 150

> the LORD now makes with you concerning all these commands." 9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel ascended; 10 and they saw the God of Israel: under His feet there was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity. 11 Yet He did not raise His hand against the leaders of the Israelites; they beheld God, and they ate and drank. 12 The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and wait there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the teachings and commandments which I have inscribed to instruct them."

Some of the ritual elements involving stone monuments are familiar, e.g. the deliberate use of language to establish covenants and to consecrate time and space. Moses repeats the commandments, announcing the terms of the agreement for all to hear. While it is unclear which commandments are spoken aloud, the fact that "terms" are uttered as part of a public recitation echoes the ritual conversation that took place between Jacob and Laban. In response to Moses, the people also declare their "terms" aloud; they agree to support the covenant. Their vow, another example of legally binding language uttered aloud is a foundational step of the ceremony. Additionally, like Jacob and Laban, Moses and the elders share a meal in the presence of God.[84]

Moses then performs two distinctive actions: he writes down all the words of God (*divrei Adonai*[85]) and then, early in the morning, he builds an altar of stone and he sets up twelve *matzevot*. (Ex 24:4) The stones are a familiar step; the writing is not. The two actions appear to be separate based on the insertion of the phrase "early in the morning." Yet, they may be intricately linked. Upon what surface did Moses write the words of

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[84] Certainly Exodus 24 is more descriptive of God's presence, but the text of Genesis 31 does call on the gods of Abraham and Nahor to witness the ceremony. Therefore, the gods are present at the meal of Jacob and Laban as well. Exodus 24 is pushing the image much farther perhaps emphasizing the importance of this particular covenant.

[85] This writing will later be called "sefer ha-brit" but it does not specify how it is created. Literally, it is the covenant translated or transformed into a letter or a book.

God? Since it was not unusual in the ANE to write on stones,[86] and since Moses directly commands transcription onto stone in Deuteronomy 27, one could infer that God's words were written on the stones used to construct the altar or the *matzevah* the next day. Thematically, it makes sense to incorporate the writing into the ritual that affirms the covenant between Israel and God. This time, it is not just a verbal agreement, but a written contract, as well.

It is the writing on stone that makes this scene distinctive. Even though "the commitment to writing was an essential part of the ratification process of treaties in the ANE,"[87] this is the first instance of writing we've seen as part of an Israelite covenantal ceremony. The blood-splattering is also a new element. While Jacob's *matzevot* were anointed with oil and libation, Moses' altar is splashed with blood. Moreover, with the second public reading of the commandments (vs. 7), and the second ritual acceptance of the terms (vs. 7), Moses splashes blood on the people as well.

According to the text, the twelve *matzevot* represent the twelve tribes. One might expect that the blood should be splashed on the *matzevot* as emblematic participants; but this time, the people are named as witnesses to the covenant. This is not a symbolic role as previously served by inanimate stones. As embodied witnesses, their mortality/vitality exposed through the splattering of blood, they are bound to the covenant and obligated to fulfill the commandments.

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[86] Monumental inscriptions found in the surrounding cultures in the ANE can be classified into four types: those that highlight a king's achievements in battle (e.g. the Merenptah stele, 1230 BCE and the Mesha Stele, 9th c BCE), votive inscriptions, funerary inscriptions, and border markers. [Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, "Writing," n.p., Encyclopedia Judaica on CD-ROM, Version 1.0. 1997.]

[87] Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, 151.

Exodus 24 is bookend-ed by two sets of stones: the twelve *matzevot* (and an altar) at the beginning of the chapter, and, at the end, a set of stone tablets called *luchot ha-even* with teachings and commandments inscribed by the finger of God (*b'etzbah elohim*).[88] Both sets of stones are written records of the covenant between God and Israel; and like the stones of Gal-ed, they create boundaries according to the laws that now govern the speech and behavior of the Israelites.

Yet, there is a significant symbolic difference between stones erected by human beings for human purposes, and stones inscribed by God and given to humans with Divine intent. The twelve *matzevot* are stationary while the tablets will be carried by the people as they continue their journey through the desert. The *matzevot* were constructed for a one-time, public ceremony, set up and inscribed by Moses. The tablets were given exclusively to Moses in a private encounter and written by God to be preserved in the Temple for future use. The tablets are the first portable *matzevah* that no longer has to be *mootzav artzah*, rooted in the ground.

**Deuteronomy 27**

As Moses reaches the end of his recitation of God's commandments, he prescribes a series of rituals that the Israelites must perform upon entering the Promised Land. The ceremonies include setting up stones and inscribing the words of the Torah upon them, building an altar and offering sacrifices, and reciting God's punishments aloud for the people to witness and affirm. All of these rites, according to Tigay, are

[88] In addition to Exodus 31:18 see also Deuteronomy 9:10 "And the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone *inscribed by the finger of God*, with the exact words that the LORD had addressed to you on the mountain out of the fire on the day of the Assembly."

intended "to inaugurate Israel's life in the promised land with acts that dramatically express the message that its life must be based on obedience to God's Instruction."[89]

Deuteronomy 27:1-10

(א) וַיְצַו מֹשֶׁה וְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הָעָם לֵאמֹר שָׁמֹר אֶת כָּל הַמִּצְוָה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם:

(ב) וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר תַּעַבְרוּ אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ וַהֲקֵמֹתָ לְךָ אֲבָנִים גְּדֹלוֹת וְשַׂדְתָּ אֹתָם בַּשִּׂיד:

(ג) וְכָתַבְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶן אֶת כָּל דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת בְּעָבְרֶךָ לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר תָּבֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ אֶרֶץ זָבַת חָלָב וּדְבַשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֶיךָ לָךְ:

(ד) וְהָיָה בְּעָבְרְכֶם אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן תָּקִימוּ אֶת הָאֲבָנִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּהַר עֵיבָל וְשַׂדְתָּ אוֹתָם בַּשִּׂיד:

(ה) וּבָנִיתָ שָּׁם מִזְבַּח לַיקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִזְבַּח אֲבָנִים לֹא תָנִיף עֲלֵיהֶם בַּרְזֶל:

(ו) אַבְנֵים שְׁלֵמוֹת תִּבְנֶה אֶת מִזְבַּח יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהַעֲלִיתָ עָלָיו עוֹלֹת לַיקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

(ז) וְזָבַחְתָּ שְׁלָמִים וְאָכַלְתָּ שָּׁם וְשָׂמַחְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

(ח) וְכָתַבְתָּ עַל הָאֲבָנִים אֵת כָּל דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת בַּאֵר הֵיטֵב:

(ט) וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הַסֵּכֶת וּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה נִהְיֵיתָ לְעָם לַיקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

(י) וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹל יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת מִצְוֹתָו וְאֶת חֻקָּיו אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם:

1 Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying: Observe all the Instruction that I enjoin upon you this day. 2 As soon as you have crossed the Jordan into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones. Coat them with plaster 3 and inscribe upon them all the words of this Teaching. When you cross over to enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you -- 4 upon crossing the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, about which I charge you this day, on Mount Ebal, and coat them with plaster. 5 There, too, you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. Do not wield an iron tool over them; 6 you must build the altar of the LORD your God of unhewn stones. You shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God, 7 and you shall sacrifice there offerings of well-being and eat them, rejoicing before the LORD your God. 8 And on those stones you shall inscribe every word of this Teaching most distinctly. 9 Moses and the levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying: Silence! Hear, O Israel! Today you have become the people of the LORD your God: 10 Heed the LORD your God and observe His commandments and His laws, which I enjoin upon you this day.

[89] Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 247

At this point, it is not unusual to see the combined use of stones, covenant, altars, utterances, sacrifices and a ritual meal comprising an Israelite ritual. Nevertheless there are two unique features of this ceremony to be noted. First, the stones are to be white-washed with plaster, and second, words of the Torah are to be inscribed upon them. In his commentary to Deuteronomy, Tigay notes that the plaster may have been used to highlight the writing: if the inscriptions were cut deep enough into the stone, the black writing would stand out even bolder on a white surface. It's also possible that words were written lightly on the surface of the plaster, in which case a single rainfall would have washed them away. Paradoxically, the ceremony of inscription suggests the possibility of both a monument that will eternally preserve God's words, and a temporary prop for use at a one-time ceremony.[90] Still, the instructions require clarification: What parts of the Torah are to be written? How big are the stones? Have they been smoothed over in order to be more useful as slates for writing? Moreover, how does writing change the nature of an Israelite ritual with stone?

Because there are so few instances of stone inscriptions in the Torah, and one of the primary examples is the Decalogue, it is possible that the meaning of Deuteronomy 27:3, "and inscribe upon them all the words of this Teaching," is a commandment to re-inscribe the Ten Commandments once again on a new set of stones. This, after all, would be the established pattern of God's words on stone. What's more, the Israelites carried the Decalogue with them and could easily replicate the writing with the original model they preserved. And still, just as likely, is the possibility of a one-time ritual of inscribing an

[90] Ibid, 248.

entire book – the commandments in total. Archeological evidence has shown steles of varying sizes with inscriptions of varying lengths which could support either theory.

In addition to the lack of clarity over what to inscribe, there is also some confusion over where to set up the stones. According to the text, Joshua is ordered to set up the stones in two locations: "As soon as you have crossed over," (vs. 2) meaning on the banks of the Jordan River, and "on Mt. Ebal," (vs. 4) just north of Shechem. Based on the first few verses of this chapter, the ceremony was intended for Gilgal, the location reached immediately after crossing the Jordan. This would be a logical choice. Here, in this first camp, "several momentous firsts occurred"[91] imparting to this space ritual and historic significance (e.g. Joshua circumcised all the men, resuming a ritual that had been abandoned for years; the people celebrated Passover for the first time; the manna ceased and the people ate local produce; and Joshua launched his first military campaign). Gilgal was also significant in the days of Samuel and Saul as the site of Saul's inauguration and it served as popular sanctuary for the northern kingdom of Israel in the 8th century. These stories preserved Gilgal as sacred ground over many generations.

Yet, in Deuteronomy 27:4, we see the site change to Mt. Ebal near Shechem, an ancient Canaanite and Israelite city situated between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. Shechem was also a symbolic location, "not the least because it was the first place in the promised land where Abraham built an altar to God."[92] The site is known and used by several of our forefathers including Jacob who returns to Shechem where he buys land,[93] his sons, Simeon and Levi, who destroy the city following the rape of their sister Dinah, and

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[91] Ibid, 487.

[92] Ibid, 487.

[93] Genesis 33:18 "Jacob arrived safe in the city of Shechem which is in the land of Canaan -- having come thus from Paddan-aram -- and he encamped before the city."

finally, Joseph who was later buried in the plot of land purchased by Jacob.[94] Shechem is therefore, also a sacred site, making it equally appropriate for cultic/ritual use.

This locational challenge may be evidence of two separate narratives, intertwined in the final editing of the Tanakh. Both traditions were preserved in the same vein as Jacob and Laban's names for their shared pile of stones. The confusion may also indicate more than one ceremony to mark the historic entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land. According to Tigay, "It seems that momentous events were felt to require various ceremonies to express their significance, that there were different traditions about what was required, that those variations required editorial skill to harmonize them, and that continuing reflection in the light of later experience attracted revision of earlier writings about them."[95]

***Joshua***

**Joshua 4**

Moses' commands are carried out by his successor, Joshua, not just once, but several times throughout the book of Joshua:

Joshua 4:1-9

(א) וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר תַּמּוּ כָל הַגּוֹי לַעֲבוֹר אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיי אָמַר יְקֽוָק אֶל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ לֵאמֹר׃
(ב) קְחוּ לָכֶם מִן הָעָם שְׁנֵים עָשָׂר אֲנָשִׁים אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶחָד מִשָּׁבֶט׃
(ג) וְצַוּוּ אוֹתָם לֵאמֹר שְׂאוּ לָכֶם מִזֶּה מִתּוֹךְ הַיַּרְדֵּן מִמַּצַּב רַגְלֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים הָכִין שְׁתֵּים עֶשְׂרֵה אֲבָנִים וְהַעֲבַרְתֶּם אוֹתָם עִמָּכֶם וְהִנַּחְתֶּם אוֹתָם בַּמָּלוֹן אֲשֶׁר תָּלִינוּ בוֹ הַלָּיְלָה׃
(ד) וַיִּקְרָא יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל שְׁנֵים הָעָשָׂר אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הֵכִין מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶחָד מִשָּׁבֶט׃
(ה) וַיי אָמַר לָהֶם יְהוֹשֻׁעַ עִבְרוּ לִפְנֵי אֲרוֹן יְקֽוָק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֶל תּוֹךְ הַיַּרְדֵּן וְהָרִימוּ לָכֶם אִישׁ אֶבֶן אַחַת עַל שִׁכְמוֹ לְמִסְפַּר שִׁבְטֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

[94] Joshua 24:32 "The bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought for a hundred kesitahs from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, and which had become a heritage of the Josephites."

[95] Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy*, 489.

(ו) לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה זֹּאת אוֹת בְּקִרְבְּכֶם כִּי יִשְׁאָלוּן בְּנֵיכֶם מָחָר לֵאמֹר מָה הָאֲבָנִים הָאֵלֶּה לָכֶם:
(ז) וַאֲמַרְתֶּם לָהֶם אֲשֶׁר נִכְרְתוּ מֵימֵי הַיַּרְדֵּן מִפְּנֵי אֲרוֹן בְּרִית יְקֹוָק בְּעָבְרוֹ בַּיַּרְדֵּן נִכְרְתוּ מֵי הַיַּרְדֵּן וְהָיוּ הָאֲבָנִים הָאֵלֶּה לְזִכָּרוֹן לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד עוֹלָם:
(ח) וַיַּעֲשׂוּ כֵן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וַיִּשְׂאוּ שְׁתֵּי עֶשְׂרֵה אֲבָנִים מִתּוֹךְ הַיַּרְדֵּן כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְקֹוָק אֶל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ לְמִסְפַּר שִׁבְטֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעַבְרוּם עִמָּם אֶל הַמָּלוֹן וַיַּנִּחוּם שָׁם:
(ט) וּשְׁתֵּים עֶשְׂרֵה אֲבָנִים הֵקִים יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַיַּרְדֵּן תַּחַת מַצַּב רַגְלֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים נֹשְׂאֵי אֲרוֹן הַבְּרִית וַיִּהְיוּ שָׁם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

1 When the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, 2 "Select twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, 3 and instruct them as follows: Pick up twelve stones from the spot exactly in the middle of the Jordan, where the priests' feet are standing; take them along with you and deposit them in the place where you will spend the night." 4 Joshua summoned the twelve men whom he had designated among the Israelites, one from each tribe; 5 and Joshua said to them, "Walk up to the Ark of the LORD your God, in the middle of the Jordan, and each of you lift a stone onto his shoulder -- corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel. 6 This shall serve as a symbol among you: in time to come, when your children ask, 'What is the meaning of these stones for you?' 7 you shall tell them, 'The waters of the Jordan were cut off because of the Ark of the LORD's Covenant; when it passed through the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' And so these stones shall serve the people of Israel as a memorial for all time." 8 The Israelites did as Joshua ordered. They picked up twelve stones, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel, from the middle of the Jordan -- as the LORD had charged Joshua -- and they took them along with them to their night encampment and deposited them there. 9 Joshua also set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the spot where the feet of the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant had stood; and they have remained there to this day.

The ritual finally enacted by Joshua is far more nuanced than Moses' account at the end of Deuteronomy. First, though there is evidence of Joshua using a written record of Moses' instructions in Joshua 8, for now, it is God who directs Joshua through the proper ritual actions. Second, there is a focus on the priests and the Ark of the Covenant, specifically, in their relationship to the waters of the Jordan.[96] As their feet touch the river, the water gathers into a single heap and dry land appears; and the generation of

[96] The use of the ark in warfare is possibly employed here as the people take their first steps towards conquering the Promised Land. As expected, the ark accompanies them to battle.

people who had only heard of the miracle from their parents witnesses a second parting of the waters.[97] The goal seems to be the recreation of a sacred moment in time. It is the hope of the biblical authors that "in the cultic action the reenactment would precede and thus motivate the reaffirmation of the ethical guidelines."[98] The Israelites are attempting to access the sacred memory of their ancestors as they crossed from slavery into freedom. And so, on the border of the Promised Land, the children of slaves experience their own parting of the waters and their own moment of revelation as God's commandments are once again inscribed into stone.

Meanwhile, the priests and the Ark remain in the middle of the Jordan riverbed as the people cross over. According to God's word, Joshua then orders twelve men, one from each tribe, to pick up twelve stones from the center of the riverbed. The number twelve returns as a theme for this one time to represent the totality of the Israelite nation: one man for one tribe. As the men lift the stones onto their shoulders, they bear the full weight of the covenant, literally and symbolically. There is a symbolic transfer from the Ten Commandments engraved in stone, held in the Ark, to the unhewn rocks culled from the site.

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[97] The comparison to the Sea of Reeds is explicit in Joshua 4:23, "For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you crossed, just as the LORD your God did to the Sea of Reeds, which He dried up before us until we crossed."

Additionally, the word waters is mentioned ten times in chapters 3 and 4, drawing on the parallel usage in Exodus, "Then Moses held out his arm over the sea and the LORD drove back the sea with a strong east wind all that night, and turned the sea into dry ground. The waters were split, and the Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left." (Exodus 14:21-22) Instances of nhr, "river," are almost completely lost. [Robert G. Boling, and G. Ernest Wright. *The Anchor Bible: Joshua.* Volume 6. New York: Doubleday, 1982), 164]

[98] Ibid, 168.

A third difference between the text of Deuteronomy and Joshua is the overly pedagogic role of the stones, as indicated by verses 6 and 7: This shall serve as a symbol (*ot*)[99] among you: in time to come, when your children ask, 'What is the meaning of these stones for you?' you shall tell them, 'The waters of the Jordan were cut off because of the Ark of the LORD's Covenant; when it passed through the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' And so these stones shall serve the people of Israel as a memorial (*zikaron*), for all time."[100] Like the trumpet blasts, also called a *zikaron*, the stones will remind the Israelites of their eternal covenant with God, and God will remember the promises exchanged with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The stones are therefore useful as a human endeavor to remember and teach, as well as a Divine effort to remind and be remembered.

In addition to the twelve stones collected by the tribal representatives, Joshua also sets up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the very spot where the previous twelve had been collected. According to the text, these stones have remained there *to this very day*. Once again, the stone communicates a quality of eternality, in this case, assuring future generations that the boundary marker stones are still in place. Moreover,

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[99] "The word for 'sign' is not used here in the sense that it has when it is paired with another wonder-word (*mofiim*)... here, rather, the word refers to a physical reminder, a longstanding visual aid to historical memory." Ibid, 173.

[100] The ritual of children asking and parents responding or teaching is connected to the ritual of the Paschal sacrifice, "And when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this rite?'" (Exodus 12:26); the acceptance of the covenant, "When, in time to come, your children ask you, "What mean the decrees, laws, and rules that the LORD our God has enjoined upon you?" You shall say to your children, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the LORD freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand" (Deuteronomy 6:20-21); and finally, the language is echoed in the Shema, "and teach them to your children, reciting them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 11:19)

these stones may symbolically represent the stone tablets held in the Ark over that very spot. There is an exchange of one set of stones for the other.

**Joshua 8**

Following the events of chapter 4 there are two more instances of stone-building rituals in the book of Joshua. In chapter 8, on Mt. Ebal, Joshua conducts a ceremony to help Israel "reaffirm her commitment to the covenant with God in a public ceremony,"[101] as per Moses' instruction in Deuteronomy 27. An altar is built, the commandments are inscribed once again into stone, sacrifices are made, and the words of God are read aloud.

Joshua 8:30-35

ל) אָז יִבְנֶה יְהוֹשֻׁעַ מִזְבֵּחַ לַיקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַר עֵיבָל:
(לא) כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְקֹוָק אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּכָּתוּב בְּסֵפֶר תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה מִזְבַּח אֲבָנִים שְׁלֵמוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא הֵנִיף עֲלֵיהֶן בַּרְזֶל וַיַּעֲלוּ עָלָיו עֹלוֹת לַיקֹוָק וַיִּזְבְּחוּ שְׁלָמִים:
(לב) וַיִּכְתֹּב שָׁם עַל הָאֲבָנִים אֵת מִשְׁנֵה תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר כָּתַב לִפְנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
(לג) וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל וּזְקֵנָיו וְשֹׁטְרִים וְשֹׁפְטָיו עֹמְדִים מִזֶּה וּמִזֶּה לָאָרוֹן נֶגֶד הַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם נֹשְׂאֵי אֲרוֹן בְּרִית יְקֹוָק כַּגֵּר כָּאֶזְרָח חֶצְיוֹ אֶל מוּל הַר גְּרִזִים וְהַחֶצְיוֹ אֶל מוּל הַר עֵיבָל כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְקֹוָק לְבָרֵךְ אֶת הָעָם יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּרִאשֹׁנָה:
(לד) וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן קָרָא אֶת כָּל דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַבְּרָכָה וְהַקְּלָלָה כְּכֹל הַכָּתוּב בְּסֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה:
(לה) לֹא הָיָה דָבָר מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר לֹא קָרָא יְהוֹשֻׁעַ נֶגֶד כָּל קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַטַּף וְהַגֵּר הַהֹלֵךְ בְּקִרְבָּם:

30 At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal, 31 as Moses, the servant of the LORD, had commanded the Israelites -- as is written in the Book of the Teaching of Moses -- an altar of unhewn stone upon which no iron had been wielded. They offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and brought sacrifices of well-being. 32 And there, on the stones, he inscribed a copy of the Teaching that Moses had written for the Israelites. 33 All Israel -- stranger and citizen alike -- with their elders, officials, and magistrates, stood on either side of the Ark, facing the levitical priests who carried the Ark of the LORD's Covenant. Half of them faced Mount Gerizim and half of them faced Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded them of old, in order to bless the people of Israel. 34 After that, he read all the words of the Teaching, the blessing and the curse, just as is written in the Book of the Teaching. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua failed to read in the presence of the entire assembly of Israel,

[101] Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy*, 116.

including the women and children and the strangers who accompanied them.

While this ritual is clearly another derivative of the instructions received from Moses, the performance is quite different from the other examples in the book of Joshua. There are neither pillars nor plaster – only an altar. God's presence is limited to the inscription of God's words and then their reading aloud. The performance of the blessing and curses, not mentioned in Joshua 4, is revised to just blessing (vs. 33), with a reading of the full tradition (including the curses) soon after (vs. 34).[102]

This emendation seems strange considering this text is particularly explicit about the link between Moses and Joshua: Joshua is acting in accordance with a written manual called *b'sefer torat Moshe* the Book of the Teaching of Moses, and he is writing from a source known as *mishneh torat Moshe*, a Copy of the Teaching of Moses. For the author of this section, it is imperative to solidify the relationship between Joshua and Moses. Though anointed by Moses to be the next leader, ritual ceremonies that create a direct line back to Moses strengthen Joshua's leadership, reaffirming his authority to direct the people.

In this example, ritual is deliberately used to transfer power from one leader to the next. The stones, which continue to symbolize eternality, testify as witnesses from the time of Moses up until the time of Joshua. They do not need to be the same stones touched by Moses – the familiar material is enough to draw the parallel. By inscribing the words of the covenant onto the stone, the stones become a written testament to the *shalshelet ha-kabbalah*, the chain of tradition that validates Joshua's leadership. At the

[102] Based on the unusual structure of the blessings-and-curses ritual in Deut 27, Tigay suggests that the words are better understood as oaths rather than curses. Ibid, 252.

same time, they serve as the conduit not between man and God, as with Jacob, but between Moses and Joshua.

**Joshua 24**

The final example integrates themes from past stone-rituals to create a final ceremony before Joshua's death. Before his death, Joshua gathers all of the people together at Shechem and selectively narrates the history of the people in relation to their God. Beginning with Terach and his idol worship and ending with a present-day charge to worship only YHWH. He compels the people to enthusiastically pledge their loyalty to YHWH before setting up a great stone before them.

Joshua 24:22-33

(כב) וַיֹּ֨אמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁ֜עַ אֶל הָעָ֗ם עֵדִ֤ים אַתֶּם֙ בָּכֶ֔ם כִּ֥י אַתֶּ֖ם בְּחַרְתֶּ֣ם לָכֶ֑ם אֶת יְקֹוָ֕ק לַעֲבֹ֥ד אוֹת֖וֹ
וַיֹּ֥אמְרוּ עֵדִֽים׃
(כג) וְעַתָּ֗ה הָסִ֙ירוּ֙ אֶת אֱלֹהֵ֣י הַנֵּכָ֔ר אֲשֶׁ֖ר בְּקִרְבְּכֶ֑ם וְהַטּ֥וּ אֶת לְבַבְכֶ֖ם אֶל יְקֹוָ֥ק אֱלֹהֵ֖י יִשְׂרָאֵֽל׃
(כד) וַיֹּ֥אמְרוּ הָעָ֖ם אֶל יְהוֹשֻׁ֑עַ אֶת יְקֹוָ֤ק אֱלֹהֵ֙ינוּ֙ נַעֲבֹ֔ד וּבְקוֹלֹ֖ו נִשְׁמָֽע׃
(כה) וַיִּכְרֹ֥ת יְהוֹשֻׁ֛עַ בְּרִ֥ית לָעָ֖ם בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֑וּא וַיָּ֣שֶׂם לֹ֔ו חֹ֖ק וּמִשְׁפָּ֥ט בִּשְׁכֶֽם׃
(כו) וַיִּכְתֹּ֥ב יְהוֹשֻׁ֛עַ אֶת הַדְּבָרִ֥ים הָאֵ֖לֶּה בְּסֵ֣פֶר תּוֹרַ֣ת אֱלֹהִ֑ים וַיִּקַּ֞ח אֶ֣בֶן גְּדוֹלָ֗ה וַיְקִימֶ֤הָ שָׁם֙
תַּ֣חַת הָאַלָּ֔ה אֲשֶׁ֖ר בְּמִקְדַּ֣שׁ יְקֹוָֽק׃
(כז) וַיֹּ֥אמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁ֖עַ אֶל כָּל הָעָ֑ם הִנֵּ֨ה הָאֶ֤בֶן הַזֹּאת֙ תִּֽהְיֶ֣ה בָּ֔נוּ לְעֵדָ֔ה כִּ֥י הִ֖יא שָׁמְעָ֣ה אֵ֔ת כָּל
אִמְרֵ֥י יְקֹוָ֖ק אֲשֶׁ֣ר דִּבֶּ֣ר עִמָּ֑נוּ וְהָיְתָ֨ה בָכֶ֤ם לְעֵדָה֙ פֶּן תְּכַחֲשׁ֣וּן בֵּאלֹהֵיכֶֽם׃
(כח) וַיְשַׁלַּ֥ח יְהוֹשֻׁ֖עַ אֶת הָעָ֑ם אִ֚ישׁ לְנַחֲלָתֹֽו׃

(לב) וְאֶת עַצְמוֹת֙ יוֹסֵ֣ף אֲשֶׁ֣ר הֶעֱל֔וּ בְּנֵ֥י יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל מִמִּצְרַ֑יִם קָבְר֤וּ בִשְׁכֶם֙ בְּחֶלְקַ֣ת הַשָּׂדֶ֔ה אֲשֶׁר
קָנָ֥ה יַעֲקֹ֛ב מֵאֵ֥ת בְּנֵי־חֲמֹ֥ור אֲבִֽי שְׁכֶ֖ם בְּמֵאָ֣ה קְשִׂיטָ֑ה וַיִּהְי֥וּ לִבְנֵי־יֹוסֵ֖ף לְנַחֲלָֽה׃

22 Thereupon Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have by your own act chosen to serve the LORD." "Yes, we are!" they responded. 23 "Then put away the alien gods that you have among you and direct your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." 24 And the people declared to Joshua, "We will serve none but the LORD our God, and we will obey none but Him." 25 On that day at Shechem, Joshua made a covenant for the people and he made a fixed rule for them. 26 Joshua recorded all this in a book of divine instruction. He took a great stone and set it up at the foot of the oak in the sacred precinct of the LORD; 27 and Joshua said to all the people, "See, this very stone shall be a witness against us, for it heard all the words that the LORD spoke to us;

it shall be a witness against you, lest you break faith with your God." 28 Joshua then dismissed the people to their allotted portions.

32 The bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought for a hundred kesitahs from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, and which had become a heritage of the Josephites.

As in Exodus 24, there seems to be an abundance of ritual witnesses: not only are the people witnesses, but the stone is also called on as a witness. The mortality of man is resolved by the enduring nature of stone. The stone witness also reinforces the eternality of the covenant: from one generation to the next, the covenant remains valid and binding. Though they may balk at the responsibilities, the covenant is not reevaluated with every new generation that comes to power or maturity. The *brit* between God and Israel, like the stone, outlasts humanity and this is part of its core strength.

One interesting addition to this ceremony is the death of Joshua and the burial of Joseph's bones in Shechem. Joshua is buried on his own property, but Joseph is buried at the site of the ritual. As shown, stone monuments and markers have the potential to hold multiple meanings throughout a single ceremony. The stone witness of Joshua 24 may also be a grave stone marker for Joseph who was brought up with great effort from Egypt.

The narrative told by Joshua focuses on the descent into slavery and the Exodus from Egypt, and it concludes in the land with hopes for a new life, in fulfillment of a destiny promised generations earlier. Yet, a new life does not dismiss the past experiences. Rather, the history and memories of the people are brought into the land, along with Joseph's bones, a physical remnant of a man who last lived in Canaan – the land to which they have finally returned. Bones are also a kind of human stone; they are

the part of us that endures past decomposition.[103] They, too, can serve as witnesses to past events and the journey taken.

***Elijah***

Elijah, like Moses, also uses the symbol of twelve stones to "mark the participation of *all Israel*"[104] in his ceremonial stand-off with the prophets of Ba'al:

1 Kings 18:30-32

(ל) וַיֹּ֤אמֶר אֵלִיָּהוּ֙ לְכָל הָעָ֔ם גְּשׁוּ אֵלַ֖י וַיִּגְּשׁ֣וּ כָל הָעָ֑ם אֵלָיו֙ וַיְרַפֵּ֣א אֶת מִזְבַּ֣ח יְקֹוָ֔ק הֲהָרֻֽס׃
(לא) וַיִּקַּ֣ח אֵלִיָּהוּ֮ שְׁתֵּים עֶשְׂרֵה֒ אֲבָנִים֙ כְּמִסְפַּ֣ר שִׁבְטֵ֣י בְנֵי יַעֲקֹ֔ב אֲשֶׁ֥ר הָיָ֛ה דְּבַר יְקֹוָ֥ק אֵלָ֖יו לֵאמֹ֑ר יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל יִהְיֶ֥ה שְׁמֶֽךָ׃
(לב) וַיִּבְנֶ֤ה אֶת הָאֲבָנִים֙ מִזְבֵּ֣חַ בְּשֵׁ֔ם יְקֹוָ֑ק וַיַּ֣עַשׂ תְּעָלָ֗ה כְּבֵית֙ סָאתַ֣יִם זָ֔רַע סָבִ֖יב לַמִּזְבֵּֽחַ׃

30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come closer to me"; and all the people came closer to him. He repaired the damaged altar of the LORD. 31 Then Elijah took twelve stones, corresponding to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob -- to whom the word of the LORD had come: "Israel shall be your name"[105] -- 32 and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. Around the altar he made a trench large enough for two seahs of seed.

Though the word witness is not used, it is clear that the twelve stones are symbolic of the participation of the Israelites, who begin to re-affirm their commitment as they draw in closer to the prophet. The stones, perhaps the symbolic signature of support from each tribe, are used to build the altar upon which YHWH's power will once again be proven and by which the prophets of Baal will be defeated.

There is a strong thematic connection between Elijah and Moses.[106] Both Mt. Carmel and Mt. Sinai are sites of revelation and of the people's subsequent commitment to a covenant with God. The twelve stones and altar building ritual are reminiscent of

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[103] Comments by Dr. Wendy Zierler on an earlier draft.

[104] Mordechai Cogan, *The Anchor Bible: 1 Kings*, (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 442.

[105] From Genesis 35:10

[106] Both men have encounters with God at Horeb: Ex 3:1 and 1 Ki 19:8.

Moses and his pre-covenant work in Exodus 24, and certainly of Moses' successor Joshua and his work in Canaan. Just as Joshua used Moses' ritual to channel power into his position as leader, so too with Elijah: the ritual identifies him as a spiritual successor, granting him legitimacy as a prophet and leader. In this case, God's help in "winning" the battle against the prophets of Baal also strengthens Elijah's position.

***Gravestones***

Another type of stone as monument is the gravestone. While most death notices in the Tanakh do not include details of burial, according to Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, traditional Israelite burial practice required a *kever*, a grave (Gen 23:4). Not surprisingly, the method of burial varies based on social class: Royalty builds sepulchers hewn into rock cliffs[107] while common folks are buried in pit graves. The *matzevah* is mentioned as burial marker exclusively for "righteous individuals (e.g. Rachel) and men without offspring (e.g. Absalom)."[108]

While many gravestones in the ANE include inscriptions warning off tomb-raiders with the threat of gods delivering curses on behalf of the deceased,[109] the stones of

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[107] See 2 Kings 23:16, "Josiah turned and saw the graves that were there on the hill; and he had the bones taken out of the graves and burned on the altar..."

[108] Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, 113.

[109] A stone tablet from the Neo-Assyrian Period, 1000 BCE - 612 BCE, was found in Nimrud marking the tomb of Queen Yaba, the wife of Tiglath-Pileser III, who ruled 744 to 727 BC. The tablet curses anyone who disturbs her tomb: *By command of the great gods of the underworld, mortal destiny caught up with Queen Yaba in death, and she traveled the path of her ancestors. Whoever in time to come, whether a queen who sits on the throne, or a lady of the palace who is a favorite concubine of the king, removes me from my tomb, or place anyone else with me, or lays hand on my jewelry with evil intent, or breaks open the seal of this tomb, let his spirit wander in thirst in the open countryside. Below, in the Netherworld, let him not receive any libation of pure water, beer, wine, or flour as an offering! May the great gods of the underworld impose*

Rachel and Absalom contain no writing, nor any mention of God. Furthermore, neither is set up with the traditional ritual elements seen throughout this section. There is no invocation of God, no oil/libation/blood, no vows or promises, no sacrifices. While Israelite tradition adopts the practice of remembering the dead, the texts do not expand on the use of elaborate stone markers, indicating a lack of interest in documentation, or a lack of practice.

**Rachel's Stone**

One *matzevah*-gravestone belongs to Rachel who dies on the way to Efrat (see earlier citation for full text/context of Gen 35:19-20). Her death is sudden; her burial is immediate. There is no time, or perhaps no ability, to bring her to the *Cave of Machpela* to be buried with the other Patriarchs and Matriarchs.[110] Her tragic death after childbirth inspires Jacob to erect a stone monument in her honor. The text seems to imply that had Jacob not chosen to mark the spot, it would have been lost forever. Instead, because of the *matzevah*, the site is still associated with Rachel *ad hayom*, to this day.

Again, the phrase *ad hayom* (see Joshua 4:9), suggests two distinct possibilities: the stone marker successfully functions as an everlasting sign; or, this verse is a retrospective explanation for an already existent shrine called *Kever Rachel* which is set apart from the traditional burial site, the Cave of *Machpela*.

Brian Schmidt, in his article "Memory as Immortality," suggests that the Israelites learned to honor their dead by borrowing commemorative practices from their Ugarit

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*on his corpse and spirit, restlessness for all eternity.* (For more information, http://www.archaeology.co.uk/cwa/issues/cwa11/cwa11.htm)

[110] See Genesis 49:29-31

neighbors. The Ugaritians developed a way to avoid the fate of *eternal anonymity*[111] by encouraging the living to remember the dead through various rituals, one of which was the installation of a gravestone. In doing this, they also created another system of validating identity and ownership. Schmidt writes, "In addition to sustaining the memory of the deceased in the minds of the living...these rituals or commemoration cults, when performed publicly and on family property, could legitimize the living's claim to birthright and land ownership."[112]

It is not only the stone that marks ownership, but also the story of how the stone was set. The stone physically marks a boundary, but it can easily be moved or lost. It is the story that serves as an eternal witness and deed of inheritance. In a way, we own what we can remember and what is remembered by others.[113] Therefore, when a story is preserved (e.g. Rachel's grave on the way to Efrat) memory can be employed to access the narrative qua property rights. "Rachel was buried on the road to Ephrath...now Bethlehem" (Genesis 35:19), an idea that is reiterated in 1 Samuel 10:2, "When you leave me today, you will meet two men near the tomb of Rachel in the territory of Benjamin." Should there be any doubt, the narrative and the stone marker testify to an Israelite claim on land in this specific territory that continues to be valid up to the present day, *ad hayom*.

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[111] "What the ancient Israelite did fear was the dreaded "death after death," the possibility that the memory of his name and the recollection of his deeds accomplished while living might be forever forgotten by his descendants, his community, or, in the case of the royalty, even his nation." [Brian B. Schmidt, "*Memory as Immortality: Countering the Dreaded 'Death after Death' in Ancient Israelite Society*," Judaism in Late Antiquity, ed. Neusner and Peck (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 99]

[112] Ibid, 94

[113] Comments by Dr. Wendy Zierler on an earlier draft.

*To this day*, the site of her grave, known as *Kever Rachel*, has been preserved by political and theological motivations. It is a protected site of the Israeli government,[114] and it is a pilgrimage site for elderly Orthodox women who ask for blessings, from health to fertility, on behalf of their children and grandchildren. Susan Sered, an anthropologist who studied elderly, Jewish women in Israel notes that "the women believe that by touching or kissing the tomb one can have some type of physical contact with the person inside the tomb."[115] The physicality of the stone facilitates a stronger connection between the living and the dead, perhaps offering a stronger feeling of efficacy as the women plead to their ancestors. Caring for the tombstones becomes sacred work for these women. They protect the stone monument through maintenance (pruning, weeding, general upkeep) and their continued interaction as seen through their regular visitations. Hence, memory is preserved because of a partnership between the ever-lasting stones and the frail, but determined visitors. The Tanakh affords Rachel her own *matzevah*; but it is thanks to the elderly women of Sered's study, that she continues to hold such a prominent role in Jewish practice today.

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[114] In February 2003, the Government of Israel issued confiscation orders for land in Bethlehem to build a barrier and military positions around Rachel's Tomb (a shrine holy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims). This barrier would leave the shrine on the "Israeli" side of the separation barrier. By the end of 2004, the Government of Israel had walled off and fortified the Rachel's Tomb area, and often restricted access to the site, only allowing Jewish visitors regular, unimpeded access and requiring prior coordination by other worshippers. In previous years, Jewish tourists visiting the shrine occasionally had been harassed by Palestinians, but Israel's closure of the area and associated land expropriations impede Muslim/Christian access to the site. Israeli settlers have obtained ownership of some of the land and properties around the tomb through a disputed land deal. (http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51601.htm)

[115] Susan Starr Sered, *Women as Ritual Experts: The Religious Lives of Elderly Jewish Women in Jerusalem*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 21.

**Absalom's Stone – Yad Avshalom**

The second significant gravestone belongs to Absalom. His monument is called *Yad Avshalom*, revealing yet another biblical expression for monument. *Yad*, with its literal meaning of hand, often refers to the power or authority of God, individual leaders (royal, military, spiritual), tribes, or countries:

> Genesis 41:35
> וְיִקְבְּצוּ אֶת כָּל אֹכֶל הַשָּׁנִים הַטֹּבֹת הַבָּאֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְיִצְבְּרוּ בָר תַּחַת יַד פַּרְעֹה אֹכֶל בֶּעָרִים וְשָׁמָרוּ:
>
> Let all the food of these good years that are coming be gathered, and let the grain be collected under Pharaoh's authority (*yad-par'oh*) as food to be stored in the cities.
>
> Isaiah 37:27
> וְיֹשְׁבֵיהֶן קִצְרֵי יָד חַתּוּ וָבֹשׁוּ הָיוּ עֵשֶׂב שָׂדֶה וְיֶרֶק דֶּשֶׁא חָצִיר גַּגּוֹת וּשְׁדֵמָה לִפְנֵי קָמָה:
>
> Their inhabitants are helpless (*kitzray-yad*, literally short of hand, lacking in power), dismayed and shamed. They were but grass of the field and green herbage; grass of the roof that is blasted before the east wind.

When a stone-marker is called *yad* it exposes the power one can exert through the use of monuments: the power to exert control or influence by preserving a story or memory (e.g. Judah and Laban); the power to outlive generations of human beings (e.g. Bethel); the power to represent myriad meanings. *Yad* is also used as a directional term indicating location as in, *al-yad*, and meaning "next to" or "alongside of":

> Exodus 2:5
> וַתֵּרֶד בַּת פַּרְעֹה לִרְחֹץ עַל הַיְאֹר וְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ הֹלְכֹת עַל יַד הַיְאֹר וַתַּרְא אֶת הַתֵּבָה בְּתוֹךְ הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת אֲמָתָהּ וַתִּקָּחֶהָ:
>
> The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile, while her maidens walked along (*al-yad*) the Nile. She spied the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to fetch it.

*Yad* is an instrument of indication just like the stone monuments and the memory-devices. Just as the stone points to something that should be remembered, so the hand,

with its fingers, literally points to an object, singling it out for special attention. Yet it is not the hand that we notice, but rather the object towards which the hand extends. This is the role of the monument: it is an indicator of something beyond itself.

*Yad* is also employed as a synecdoche, a figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole: in this case, *yad* represents the totality of a human being (e.g. pledging oneself[116] or reaching one's limit[117]). Again, the pattern is for *yad* to refer to something outside of its physical and linguistic/definitional limits.

The closest parallel to *Yad Avshalom* is Isaiah's promise of a *Yad v'Shem* for the *sarisim*, the eunuchs who observe the Sabbath.

Isaiah 56:5
וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם בְּבֵיתִי וּבְחוֹמֹתַי יָד וָשֵׁם טוֹב מִבָּנִים וּמִבָּנוֹת שֵׁם עוֹלָם אֶתֵּן לוֹ אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכָּרֵת׃

> I will give them, in My House and within My walls – a monument and a name better than sons or daughters. I will give them an everlasting name which shall not perish.

In this verse, *yad* is a signifier for God's commitment and love for the eunuchs. The reward for following God's commandments is an everlasting name, which is better translated as a reward of eternal life. Gravestones are the concretized efforts to be remembered after death, thereby proving that you have received this great reward of eternal life.

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[116] Leviticus 5:21 "When a person sins and commits a trespass against the LORD by dealing deceitfully with his fellow in the matter of a deposit or a pledge, or through robbery, or by defrauding his fellow..."
נֶפֶשׁ כִּי תֶחֱטָא וּמָעֲלָה מַעַל בַּיקֹנָק וְכִחֵשׁ בַּעֲמִיתוֹ בְּפִקָּדוֹן אוֹ בִתְשׂוּמֶת יָד אוֹ בְגָזֵל אוֹ עָשַׁק אֶת עֲמִיתוֹ׃

[117] Leviticus 27:8 "But if one cannot afford the equivalent, he shall be presented before the priest, and the priest shall assess him; the priest shall assess him according to what the vower can afford."
וְאִם מָךְ הוּא מֵעֶרְכֶּךָ וְהֶעֱמִידוֹ לִפְנֵי הַכֹּהֵן וְהֶעֱרִיךְ אֹתוֹ הַכֹּהֵן עַל פִּי אֲשֶׁר תַּשִּׂיג יַד הַנֹּדֵר יַעֲרִיכֶנּוּ הַכֹּהֵן׃

This is Absalom's hope. In his own words, Absalom says "I have no son to keep my name alive." Therefore, he builds a monument to himself so that his "name" – we intuit this to mean his life, his words and his deeds – will be kept alive after his death.[118] The stone may serve as a surrogate son who will carry on the family name, but, it seems more likely that the monument is intended to celebrate his life.

The story of Absalom is a complicated one. He is a member of the royal family, certain to be remembered after his death by the happenstance of birth, yet, he is convinced that his name will not be kept alive without a monument. He claims to have no children, yet we read in 2 Samuel 14:27, "Absalom had three sons and a daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a beautiful woman"; and also in 2 Chronicles, we learn that Absalom had a daughter named Maacah[119] who married her cousin Rehoboam and became the mother of the heir-apparent Abijah.[120]

Yet, a closer examination of his life may reveal the true nature of his fear. Absalom flees his father's house after killing his half-brother Amnon, avenging the rape of his sister Tamar. (The same name as his alleged daughter!) Though he later returns to seek forgiveness, it is a short-term reconciliation. Absalom revolts against his father, David, in 979 BCE, and forces David to flee with his men to Trans-Jordan. Absalom is

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[118] The connection between memory and life shapes the relationship between God and Israel, as well as one person to another. Even after death, it is possible to live on. If Absalom is forgotten, then his life is truly over.

[119] 2 Chronicles 11:21-22 "And Rehoboam loved Maacah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines - for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines, and begot twenty and eight sons and threescore daughters. And Rehoboam appointed Abijah the son of Maacah to be chief, even the prince among his brethren; for he was minded to make him king."

[120] 2 Chronicles 11:20 "He then took Maacah daughter of Absalom; she bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith."

eventually killed when he becomes vulnerable to attack, entangled in a tree branch by his hair.[121]

2 Samuel 18 is the story of Absalom's death which includes David's order to seize his son, Joab's decision to kill Absalom, and the report of his death to his father, the king. In the midst of this drama, the text mentions his monument.

2 Samuel 18:17-18

(יז) וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת אַבְשָׁלוֹם וַיַּשְׁלִיכוּ אֹתוֹ בַּיַּעַר אֶל הַפַּחַת הַגְּדוֹל וַיַּצִּבוּ עָלָיו גַּל אֲבָנִים גָּדוֹל
מְאֹד וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל נָסוּ אִישׁ <לאהלו> לְאׇהָלָיו:
(יח) וְאַבְשָׁלוֹם לָקַח וַיִּצֶּב לוֹ <בחייו> בְּחַיָּיו אֶת מַצֶּבֶת אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵמֶק הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אָמַר אֵין לִי בֵּן
בַּעֲבוּר הַזְכִּיר שְׁמִי וַיִּקְרָא לַמַּצֶּבֶת עַל שְׁמוֹ וַיִּקָּרֵא לָהּ יַד אַבְשָׁלוֹם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

> 17 They took Absalom and flung him into a large pit in the forest, and they piled up a very great heap of stones over it. Then all the Israelites fled to their homes.18 Now Absalom, in his lifetime, had taken the pillar which is in the Valley of the King and set it up for himself; for he said, "I have no son to keep my name alive." He had named the pillar after himself, and it has been called Absalom's Monument to this day.

The verse describing Absalom's monument seems misplaced. It is a break in the narrative voice; it resurrects Absalom for a brief moment to allow him his final words.

The verse may be an afterthought; a gravestone thematically linked to a ritual of burial by stone-piling. Or, perhaps it is a remnant of a larger tale: Absalom knew that his decision to rebel against his father could lead him to victory as easily as it could lead him to expulsion. If he failed, he would be excised from the royal family and remembered only as a traitor. His monument was his safety-net against the complete destruction of his life. It is also true that Absalom had a loyal following[122] and so it is possible that the verse, like the monument, is a testament left by those who wanted to remember him.

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[121] While the Torah text reads "by his head", rabbinic *midrash* understand this to mean, by his hair. (See BT, Sotah 9b-10b for various references)

[122] 2 Sam 15:10-12 "But Absalom sent agents to all the tribes of Israel to say, "When you hear the blast of the horn, announce that Absalom has become king in

Today, *Kever Rachel* and *Yad Avshalom* are tourist sites in Israel. "*Yad Avshalom*" sits in the Kidron Valley in Jerusalem, supposedly marking the site of Absalom's grave. One of several sepulchral monuments which date from the Second Temple and Roman periods, its connection with Absalom does not predate the 16th century.[123] According to Jewish folk saying and Palestinian legends, Absalom serves as the model of punishment for children who disrespect their parents. One report from 1666 documents a ritual of throwing stones at the monument "stressing the end of wicked children who did not revere their parents."[124] Archeologists are certain the monument was built in the Hellenistic period, yet it has been declared a holy site as if Absalom had built it himself. Monuments continue to be sites of great potential power, preserved even for disgraced princes. With the capacity to serve many roles, the monument not only testifies to the story of Absalom, but also to the Kingdom of David which serves the larger theological-political goals of various interest groups in and out of Israel. The monument signifies Absalom's Tomb, and, at the same time it is a signifier of the historical truth of the Hebrew Bible.

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Hebron." Two hundred men of Jerusalem accompanied Absalom; they were invited and went in good faith, suspecting nothing. Absalom also sent to fetch Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his town, Giloh, when the sacrifices were to be offered. The conspiracy gained strength, and the people supported Absalom in increasing numbers."

[123] Editorial Staff Encyclopedia Judaica, "Absalom," n.p., *Encyclopedia Judaica* on CD-ROM, Version 1.0. 1997.

[124] Ibid.

***War Memorials/Victory Steles***

According to archeological remnants left in the ANE,[125] it would not be unusual for a member of the royal family to erect a stele either to document a victory in battle or to honor royalty. Saul erects a monument for himself in honor of his victory over Amalek:

> 1 Samuel 15:12
> וַיַּשְׁכֵּם שְׁמוּאֵל לִקְרַאת שָׁאוּל בַּבֹּ֑קֶר וַיֻּגַּד לִשְׁמוּאֵל לֵאמֹ֣ר בָּא שָׁאוּל הַכַּרְמֶלָה וְהִנֵּה מַצִּיב לוֹ
> יָ֔ד וַיִּסֹּ֖ב וַיַּעֲבֹ֣ר וַיֵּרֶ֔ד הַגִּלְגָּֽל׃
>
> Early in the morning Samuel went to meet Saul. Samuel was told, "Saul went to Carmel, where he erected a monument for himself; then he left and went on down to Gilgal."

He uses the verb *n-tz-v* to set up his monument, and, like Absalom, refers to it as a *yad.*[126] Yet, there is another more profound similarity: at this point in the narrative, Saul has disobeyed God's commandment and may sense a threat to his life and/or a challenge to his position as King. Therefore, sensing an uncertain future, he sets up a monument for himself like Abasalom so that his life might be remembered.

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[125] The Moabite/Mesha Stone is considered to be one of the most important inscriptions from the ANE. The date of the stone is roughly fixed by the reference to Mesha, king of Moab (see 2 Kings 3:4), after 849 BC. However, since the contents of the stela point to a date towards the end of the king's reign, it seems probable that it should be placed between 840 and 820. An excerpt from the stone reads as follows: *I (am) Mesha, son of Chemosh...the king of Moab, the Dibonite. My father (had) reigned over Moab thirty years, and I reigned after my father – (who) made this high-place for Chemosh in Qarhoh...because he saved me from all the kings, and caused me to triumph over all my adversaries. As for Omri, king of Israel, he humbled Moab many years, (lit. days), for Chemosh was angry at his land. And his son followed him, and he also said, "I will humble Moab!" In my time he spoke (thus), but I have triumphed over him and over his house, while Israel hath perished for ever!* [James B. Pritchard, ed. *The Ancient Near East: Volume 1, An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 209.]

[126] The phrase *n-tz-v yad* is also found in 1 Chronicles 18:3, "David defeated Hadadezer, king of Zobah-hamath, who was on his way to set up his monument at the Euphrates River."

Jacob also exhibits anxiety in the hours before he sets up his *matzevah*; he has fled from the wrath of his brother Esau and faces an uncertain future. The stone monument, like the trumpet blasts (see Chapter 1) provides a necessary dose of strength/emotional empowerment during times of duress. The very nature of the stone – solid, enduring, strong – helps to embolden the anxious builders.

Samuel also sets up a war-monument called *Eben-Ezer* after a successful battle against the Philistines:

1 Samuel 7:11-14

(יא) וַיֵּצְאוּ אַנְשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הַמִּצְפָּה וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אֶת פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיַּכּוּם עַד מִתַּחַת לְבֵית כָּר:
(יב) וַיִּקַּח שְׁמוּאֵל אֶבֶן אַחַת וַיָּשֶׂם בֵּין הַמִּצְפָּה וּבֵין הַשֵּׁן וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמָהּ אֶבֶן הָעֶזֶר וַיֹּאמֶר עַד הֵנָּה עֲזָרָנוּ יְקֹוָק:
(יג) וַיִּכָּנְעוּ הַפְּלִשְׁתִּים וְלֹא יָסְפוּ עוֹד לָבוֹא בִּגְבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתְּהִי יַד יְקֹוָק בַּפְּלִשְׁתִּים כֹּל יְמֵי שְׁמוּאֵל:
(יד) וַתָּשֹׁבְנָה הֶעָרִים אֲשֶׁר לָקְחוּ פְלִשְׁתִּים מֵאֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעֶקְרוֹן וְעַד גַּת וְאֶת גְּבוּלָן הִצִּיל יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיְהִי שָׁלוֹם בֵּין יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵין הָאֱמֹרִי:

> 11 The men of Israel sallied out of Miz-pah and pursued the Philistines, striking them down to a point below Beth-car.12 Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Eben-ezer: "For up to now," he said, "the LORD has helped us." 13 The Philistines were humbled and did not invade the territory of Israel again; and the hand of the LORD was set against the Philistines as long as Samuel lived. 14 The towns which the Philistines had taken from Israel, from Ekron to Gath, were restored to Israel; Israel recovered all her territory from the Philistines. There was also peace between Israel and the Amorites.

Once again, the process of erecting a stone monument involves the presence of God, a ritual of naming, and the marking off space. Samuel dedicates *Eben-ezer* (stone of help) in honor of God's help, expressed through *yad-Adonai*, God's hand/power. In addition to documenting a war victory and lauding God's central role in the battle, the stone is also employed as a boundary marker. Right after it is set-up, the text reveals that the Philistines did not invade Israelite territory and there is documentation of returned land. What had been taken in war is marked, perhaps renamed, and now designated by a stone-

marker to clarify ownership.[127] The name *Mizpah* (overlook) also appears, as seen in Genesis 31 signaling a preference for performing rituals in a geographic location that communicates symbolic meaning: an overlook, mountain top, or summit/High Place.

In contrast to the war monuments of victory, Isaiah has a vision of a pillar to YHWH on the border of Egypt and Israel that uses images of peace and unification.

Isaiah 19:19-25

(יט) בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה מִזְבֵּחַ לַיקֹוָק בְּתוֹךְ אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם וּמַצֵּבָה אֵצֶל גְּבוּלָהּ לַיקֹוָק:
(כ) וְהָיָה לְאוֹת וּלְעֵד לַיקֹוָק צְבָאוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם כִּי יִצְעֲקוּ אֶל יְקֹוָק מִפְּנֵי לֹחֲצִים וְיִשְׁלַח לָהֶם מוֹשִׁיעַ וְרָב וְהִצִּילֵם:
(כא) וְנוֹדַע יְקֹוָק לְמִצְרַיִם וְיָדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת יְקֹוָק בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וְעָבְדוּ זֶבַח וּמִנְחָה וְנָדְרוּ נֶדֶר לַיקֹוָק וְשִׁלַּמוּ:
(כב) וְנָגַף יְקֹוָק אֶת מִצְרַיִם נָגֹף וְרָפוֹא וְשָׁבוּ עַד יְקֹוָק וְנֶעְתַּר לָהֶם וּרְפָאֵם:
(כג) בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא תִּהְיֶה מְסִלָּה מִמִּצְרַיִם אַשּׁוּרָה וּבָא אַשּׁוּר בְּמִצְרַיִם וּמִצְרַיִם בְּאַשּׁוּר וְעָבְדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת אַשּׁוּר:
(כד) בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלִישִׁיָּה לְמִצְרַיִם וּלְאַשּׁוּר בְּרָכָה בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ:
(כה) אֲשֶׁר בֵּרְכוֹ יְקֹוָק צְבָאוֹת לֵאמֹר בָּרוּךְ עַמִּי מִצְרַיִם וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי אַשּׁוּר וְנַחֲלָתִי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

19 In that day, there shall be an altar to the LORD inside the land of Egypt and a pillar to the LORD at its border. 20 They shall serve as a symbol and reminder of the LORD of Hosts in the land of Egypt, so that when the Egyptians cry out to the LORD against oppressors, He will send them a savior and champion to deliver them. 21 For the LORD will make Himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians shall acknowledge the LORD in that day, and they shall serve Him with sacrifice and oblation and shall make vows to the LORD and fulfill them. 22 The LORD will first afflict and then heal the Egyptians; when they turn back to the LORD, He will respond to their entreaties and heal them. 23 In that day, there shall be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians shall join with the Egyptians and Egyptians with the Assyrians, and then the Egyptians together with the Assyrians shall serve the LORD. 24 In that day, Israel shall be a third partner with Egypt and Assyria as a blessing on earth; 25 for the LORD of Hosts will bless them, saying, "Blessed be My people Egypt, My handiwork Assyria, and My very own Israel.

Unlike Jeremiah who envisions God smashing Egyptian obelisks and burning temples,[128] Isaiah's vision is one of peace and unification between Israel's fiercest enemies. The

[127] The site is mentioned first in 1 Samuel 4:1 when the Israelites march out to battle against the Philistines and camp near *Eben-ezer*.

monument to be erected will symbolize YHWH's presence to the Egyptians, and eventually to the Assyrians. Israel's enemies will see the *matzevah* in the same light as the Israelites: the stone represents the eternal presence and promise of YHWH's partnership with the people. Isaiah's *matzevah* is no longer a boundary stone separating competing empires; now, it is a symbolic marker of unification. With the universal acceptance of YHWH as the sole God, all of the land is considered as one territory. Jonathan Sacks, in the name of Michael Fishbane, points out that "Israel's unique deliverance, the exodus, is now to be repeated for its erstwhile enemies." Its most precious memory is shared with enemies for the sake of peace.[129]

***Avodah Zarah: Other People's Stones***

While Isaiah's pillar of peace and unity inspires hope for positive relations between groups in the ANE, in fact, most of the interactions described by the biblical authors are not so affable. The tension between Israel and her neighbors is especially apparent in the strict laws against *avodah zarah*, the worship of foreign gods. The *matzevah*, employed by an esteemed patriarch and the central leadership of Israel, is also a cultic tool used by various groups in the ANE.

In fact, most of the biblical examples of *matzevot* refer to those belonging to the surrounding nations (e.g. Canaanites, Egyptians), to be used in their particular worship ceremonies. While at one point in time the Israelites may have been permitted to set-up the *matzevah* as part of their religious life, the reign of King Josiah in the 7th century BCE

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[128] Jeremiah 43:13 "He shall smash the obelisks of the Temple of the Sun which is in the land of Egypt, and he shall burn down the temples of the gods of Egypt."

[129] Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, (London: Continuum, 2002), 204.

(as represented by the writing of the Deuteronomistic historian) led to a transformation of the cult that demanded complete loyalty to YHWH, a close adherence to the Davidic covenant, the centralization of religion at the Temple in Jerusalem and a life focused on Torah. [130] Out of these changes developed a complete ban on foreign worship and, as a result, the *matzevah* was officially outlawed.

The biblical interdiction against *matzevot* is particularly forceful; not only is the law directed against Israelite-usage, but even the neighbors' cultic pillars must be torn down. The edicts against *matzevot* are often paired with a similar prohibition against *asherot*, "a wooden pole or tree that is part of the cultic furniture of the local shrines in Israel."[131] Even though Abraham plants a tamarisk tree and calls on YHWH as part of his ritual with Abimelech (Gen 21:32-33) and Jacob erects *matzevot* throughout the book of Genesis, both the *matzevot* and the *asherot* are prohibited to the Israelites.[132]

Deuteronomy 12:1-6

(א) אֵלֶּה הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּן לַעֲשׂוֹת בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֶיךָ לְךָ
לְרִשְׁתָּהּ כָּל הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם חַיִּים עַל הָאֲדָמָה:
(ב) אַבֵּד תְּאַבְּדוּן אֶת כָּל הַמְּקֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ שָׁם הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יֹרְשִׁים אֹתָם אֶת
אֱלֹהֵיהֶם עַל הֶהָרִים הָרָמִים וְעַל הַגְּבָעוֹת וְתַחַת כָּל עֵץ רַעֲנָן:
(ג) וְנִתַּצְתֶּם אֶת מִזְבְּחֹתָם וְשִׁבַּרְתֶּם אֶת מַצֵּבֹתָם וַאֲשֵׁרֵיהֶם תִּשְׂרְפוּן בָּאֵשׁ וּפְסִילֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם
תְּגַדֵּעוּן וְאִבַּדְתֶּם אֶת שְׁמָם מִן הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא:

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[130] Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987), 135.

Moreover, Marc Smith writes, "All in all, early Israel enjoyed a wide variety of religious practices as well as a range (perhaps not a great one) of various deities, which in the later perspective of Deuteronomy and other biblical works were viewed as idolatrous; premonarchic Israel, however, knew nothing of this religious standard." (Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel*, 25.)

[131] Hendel, *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory, and History in the Hebrew Bible*, 16-17.

[132] 24 out of 40 biblical references to the destruction of *asherot* occur in a single source – the Deuteronomistic History. "One of its chief concerns is cultic purity, a strictly monolotrous Yahwism, and it therefore regards the presence of the *asherah* as evidence of apostasy." [Wyatt, N. "Asherah," *DDD*, 102.]

(ד) לֹא תַעֲשׂוּן כֵּן לַיקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:
(ה) כִּי אִם אֶל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִכָּל שִׁבְטֵיכֶם לָשׂוּם אֶת שְׁמוֹ שָׁם לְשִׁכְנוֹ תִדְרְשׁוּ וּבָאתָ שָׁמָּה:
(ו) וַהֲבֵאתֶם שָׁמָּה עֹלֹתֵיכֶם וְזִבְחֵיכֶם וְאֵת מַעְשְׂרֹתֵיכֶם וְאֵת תְּרוּמַת יֶדְכֶם וְנִדְרֵיכֶם וְנִדְבֹתֵיכֶם וּבְכֹרֹת בְּקַרְכֶם וְצֹאנְכֶם:

1 These are the laws and rules that you must carefully observe in the land that the LORD, God of your fathers, is giving you to possess, as long as you live on earth. 2 You must destroy all the sites at which the nations you are to dispossess worshiped their gods, whether on lofty mountains and on hills or under any luxuriant tree. 3 Tear down their altars, smash their pillars, put their sacred posts to the fire, and cut down the images of their gods, obliterating their name from that site. 4 Do not worship the LORD your God in like manner, 5 but look only to the site that the LORD your God will choose amidst all your tribes as His habitation, to establish His name there. There you are to go, 6 and there you are to bring your burnt offerings and other sacrifices, your tithes and contributions, your votive and freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks.

According to Jon Levenson, these laws of exclusivity demanded by YHWH "bespeak a worldview incompatible with the free and easy attitude to divinity and cult that obtained generally in the rest of the ancient Near East."[133] The presence of such strong language begs the question of why: why is it necessary to wipe out the *matzevot*? Other actions and objects are forbidden and/or prohibited in the Tanakh (e.g. certain foods under the system of *kashrut*), yet they are not commanded to be destroyed. The answer is revealed, in part, through the use of the verb *a-b-d*, to perish or to exterminate, as seen in Deuteronomy 12:2. The use of *a-b-d* is found in several other places in the Tanakh, almost always defining the fate of an individual or a group that has chosen to disobey a cardinal rule (e.g. working on the Day of Atonement[134] or rebelling against the leadership of

[133] Jon Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*, (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 65.

[134] Leviticus 23:30 "and whoever does any work throughout that day, I will cause that person to perish from among his people."

Moses[135]). It also is used to describe the fate of Amalek, the supreme enemy of Israel (see below), as well as the elimination of royal-political competition both in and out of the immediate family.[136]

Numbers 24:20

וַיַּרְא אֶת עֲמָלֵק וַיִּשָּׂא מְשָׁלוֹ וַיֹּ֣אמֶר רֵאשִׁית גּוֹיִם עֲמָלֵק וְאַחֲרִיתוֹ עֲדֵי אֹ֖בַד׃

He saw Amalek and, taking up his theme, he said: A leading nation is Amalek; but its fate is to perish forever.

In all of these cases, the verb is joined to a scene of iniquity, disloyalty, insurrection, and deceit. The punishment for such crimes is extermination. Thus, when *a-b-d* appears in relationship to idol worship, it is clear that idol worship is considered a violation akin to rebellion or breaking a cardinal rule of the tradition.[137]

The Deuteronomist view of idolatry is nothing short of adultery. An act of idol worship is a deliberate betrayal of YHWH, who is often portrayed as a jealous husband and cuckold. The *brit* between God and Israel is understood to be their marriage contract, which Israel violates again and again. Yet, YHWH is also portrayed as a Divine Ruler and King. Therefore, when Israel worships foreign gods she is withdrawing her support from YHWH's kingdom, rebelling against the Sovereign, and joining forces with the

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[135] Numbers 16:33 "They went down alive into Sheol, with all that belonged to them; the earth closed over them and they vanished from the midst of the congregation."

[136] 2 Kings 11:1 "When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, learned that her son was dead, she promptly killed off all who were of royal stock."

[137] In fact, there are four instances in which extreme emphasis is placed on the verb *a-b-d* through the grammatical construct of the infinitive absolute followed by the imperfect. For example: (Deuteronomy 8:19) If you do forget the LORD your God and follow other gods to serve them or bow down to them, I warn you this day that you shall certainly perish. (Also: Deuteronomy 4:26 and Deuteronomy 30:18) Three times, it is used in the *qal* form, and it is God who will destroy the Israelites for their idolatrous actions. Only in Deuteronomy 12:2 is the more forceful, causative verb form of *piel* used. In this case, it is Israel's duty to destroy the idolatrous objects, a commandment that highlights the covenantal partnership. Israel and God are joined together in a common task: the elimination of the foreign gods.

enemy. Such behavior is unacceptable within the boundaries of marriage and royal jurisdiction.

The *matzevot* and *asherot* are cultic objects that provide a physical testament to this act of adultery. Their connection to one of the worst offenses in the Torah (idolatry) is enough to warrant their destruction. Even more so, they are the tools by which foreign gods are summoned, which is problematic since the Bible "recognizes the inherently incarnational thought of image-worship, that man-made objects can, through cultic use, become the media for hierophanies."[138] Therefore, destroy the ritual object, which is the conduit between man and god, and man will be unsuccessful in his attempt to summon the presence of foreign gods. Nahum Sarna takes it a step farther arguing that our biblical ancestors saw the *matzevah* as "the repository of a divinity or spirit."[139] If so, then the command to destroy was not simply to eliminate holy ground or sacred objects, but potentially some form of deicide: to destroy foreign gods who resided in that space.

Yet, the greatest offense may be found in the very nature of the rock/tree: The *matzevah* and the *asherah* are taken from the natural world and transformed by man to create a tool for facilitating idol worship. By using such elements, man creates an *enduring, concretized form* and believes he has done so through his own power – a double insult to YHWH and the biblical authors.

Nature is too often tamed to serve the needs of man. According to the Tanakh, stones may be hewn for cisterns, the foundations of homes, tombs and the walls of the Temple. But the altars for YHWH must be constructed of unhewn stone according to the repeated commandment from God.

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[138] N. Wyatt, "Asherah," *DDD*, 103.
[139] Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 199.

Deuteronomy 27:5-6

(ה) וּבָנִיתָ שָּׁם מִזְבַּח לַיקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִזְבַּח אֲבָנִים לֹא תָנִיף עֲלֵיהֶם בַּרְזֶל׃
(ו) אַבְנֵים שְׁלֵמוֹת תִּבְנֶה אֶת מִזְבַּח יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהַעֲלִיתָ עָלָיו עוֹלֹת לַיקֹוָק אֱלֹהֶיךָ׃

5 There, too, you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. Do not wield an iron tool over them; 6 you must build the altar of the LORD your God of unhewn stones. You shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God,

This object that facilitates sacred conversation between man and God through the ritual of sacrifice must not show signs any external signs of domination by man. Monuments must be constructed carefully. As will be seen in Chapter 3, every element bears symbolic meaning.

**Part 3: Holocaust Memorials**

The effort to create monuments that mark significant events continues within the Jewish community today, primarily directed towards Holocaust commemoration. Finding ways to memorialize the Holocaust is a particularly challenging endeavor. People continue to see the Holocaust as a unique event; a rupture in time; a moment that shattered language and metaphor so that it could not be explained, much less memorialized.[140] As a result, most Jewish communities commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day using as many different mediums as possible: survivor testimonies, education sessions, music, art, movies and documentaries. While the Jewish community uses many tools to facilitate memory (e.g. liturgy, rituals, written records), the monument continues to feature prominently in our efforts to remember.

Contemporary artists have reproduced and expanded on the biblical models of memorialization. Stone continues to be used as a symbol of endurance and a means of preservation, but there are also new building materials reflective of modernity as well as the natural resources native to locations outside of the Middle East. Location is still carefully chosen: Holocaust monuments are set up at the original site of events (e.g. concentration camps), but they are also built outside of Europe. Similar to Joshua's efforts in Canaan, monuments in Israel and the United States are built in order to point to a set of events in the distance, and at the same time, to consecrate space in a new land.

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[140] Dora Appel describes the nature of the Holocaust as "difficult, elusive, enormous, and even ungraspable." Yet, rather than abandoning the effort, it is instead a charge to rethink "traditional" modes of expression and/or seek out new heuristic devices. [Dora Apel, *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 4.]

While our ancestors rarely returned to their memorial sites, today, there is an expectation that monuments will be visited and revisited by natives and tourists. In fact, there is a responsibility assigned to every visitor to take on the obligation of memory in partnership with the monument. In response to an aging survivor population and the inevitable absence of first-hand witnesses there has been a strong memorial effort to create two kinds of enduring witnesses: witnesses made of stone as seen in the Bible, and secondary witnesses, those people who come to visit the monuments to receive a set of memories about a certain event and therefore take on the responsibility of preserving the story. "The art of memory," writes James Young, scholar of Holocaust literature and more recently, a leading expert on the art and meaning of Holocaust memorials and monuments, "neither begins with a monument's ground-breaking nor ends with the ceremonies conducted at its base. Rather, this art consists in the ongoing activity of memory...in our own participation in the memorial's performance."[141]

In the following chapter, monuments from Germany, Israel and the USA will be examined for their design, their message, and their efficacy in achieving their goals. Some will follow the traditional pattern of memorialization; others will challenge the classic form of monuments and memory.

***Israel***

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, was esablished in 1953 by an act of the Israeli Knesset. Its name is derived from Isaiah 56:5, "And to them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name (*yad*

[141] James Young, *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, (Munich and New York: Prestel Verlag and The Jewish Museum, 1994), 38.

*va-shem*) that shall not be cut off." It is a museum, an art gallery, a site for learning and research, and an archive. Its location is fitting: it sits on *Har Hazikaron*, the Mount of Remembrance, in Jerusalem. The most recent addition of a new wing called The New Israel Holocaust History Museum literally cuts through the mountain as it tells the story of the Shoah. Intended to be an informational and experiential exhibit, the new wing, according to journalist Joel Leyden, "will try to tell both the macro story and the micro stories of individuals and small groups, stressing the personal story in the historical and thematic narrative."[142] Leyden's comment captures the tension between history and memory that challenges our attempts to concretize our experience in print and monument. For that reason, the new wing is an historical time-line expanded by personal narratives.

**The Valley of the Communities, Jerusalem**

At the western edge of Yad Vashem, down a long path away from the indoor exhibits and the center of the museum, sits the Valley of the Communities. Designed by Lipa Yahalom and Dan Zur,[143] the "exhibit" is a 2.5 acre labyrinth, dug out of natural bedrock and consisting of 107 walls built from Jerusalem stone. Just as Daedalus' mythic labyrinth consisted of winding passages, intended to deceive and disorient, so too does the Valley create an uneasy feeling for its visitors. Pockets of space are created (over 100 open-air sections) by the placement of the walls making the exhibit both a monument of presence and absence. Only people fill the voids, and even then, visitors are humbled by the 30 foot towering walls rising up on all sides.

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[142] Online: http://www.israelnewsagency.com/yadvashemholocaustisraelnew88480313.html

[143] Construction began in October of 1983 and the Valley was dedicated in 1992.

The monument is dug into the ground, surrounded by the earth, if not swallowed up by it. According to the Yad Vashem website,[144] the architects were inspired by the prophetic vision of the Valley of the Dry Bones found in the book of Ezekiel: "The hand of the LORD (*yad Adonai*) came upon me. He took me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the valley. It was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many of them spread over the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'O mortal, can these bones live again?' I replied, 'O Lord GOD, only You know.' And He said to me, 'Prophesy over these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!' Thus said the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live again." (Ezekeiel 37:1-5) The vision is one of redemption, of bringing the dead back to life. It is a challenging task: from the depths, the Valley of the Communities must communicate this message of hope and renewal in spite of its sunken state.

Though the architects clearly use stone as a medium for memorialization, they also use the natural resource of the valley. Part of what makes the experience so powerful is the descent that leads to the monument. While the stone still symbolizes preservation and eternality, its natural form may be secondary to the exhibit's location. Our ancestors

[144] Online: http://www1.yadvashem.org.il "The Valley of the Communities"

showed similar concerned about location when building their monuments. Often, it was the site of an encounter with God or of a profound experience that created sacred space; that space was then marked by a monument. The biblical pattern is repeated in the construction of the Valley of the Communities: first choose the space, then, construct the monument. Joshua also seriously considers location: despite the conflicting reports, both Gilgal and Shechem are as significant as the stones themselves.

At the entrance is the following inscription which sets the tone for the visitor's experience: *This memorial commemorates the Jewish communities destroyed by Nazi Germany and its collaborators, and the few which suffered but survived in the shadow of the Holocaust. For more than one thousand years, Jews lived in Europe, organizing communities to preserve their distinct identity. In periods of relative tranquility, Jewish culture flourished, but in periods of unrest, Jews were forced to flee. Wherever they settled, they endowed the people amongst whom they lived with their talents. Here, their stories will be told...* There are over 5,000 Jewish communities destroyed by Nazi Germany that are commemorated in the Valley of the Communities. The walls bear the names of cities in pre-War Europe; each one home to a Jewish community, some large and some small. The names are arranged by region, with the region's main community (e.g. Warsaw) engraved directly into the stone and the surrounding cities inscribed on stone-colored marble plaques and affixed nearby. According to graphic artist David Grossman, the type-font was carefully considered before beginning the engraving process. "We developed a form of lettering based on ancient Hebrew engravings over 2000 years old,"[145] commented Grossman. The decision reflects a desire to create a sense

[145] Online: http://www1.yadvashem.org.il "The Valley of the Communities"

of authenticity based on the Jewish understanding that what is old is valuable. It also connects to ancient forms of engraving on stones, both in the ANE, and as an integral part of the Israelite's covenantal tradition (e.g. Ten Commandments engraved on stone tablets).

The practice of preserving memories, an act of retrieving material from the past, is enhanced in value by the ancient type-font. It reassures the visitor that in spite of the destruction, the stories and memories will be preserved just as Jewish culture and literature has been preserved over time.[146] Still, it is a choice to engrave words or images. Jacob's monuments were set up in their natural form, whereas Moses and Joshua engraved upon theirs. This choice remains a memorial issue for architects and artists today. When is writing/engraving appropriate? When it is, what words or symbols are written? How will it be displayed?

Not surprisingly, the Jewish community continues to respond well to the use of stone monuments as an aid to memory. The height and weight of the stone walls sends a message of endurance and strength, a far more lasting repository of memory than the human body. Though the descent and the seemingly endless passageways evoke both claustrophobia and the feeling of being lost or trapped, the overall experience is intended to be one of hope. By preserving the names of all that was destroyed, Yad Vashem has chosen to make a statement about the power of human beings to overturn the vicissitudes of time. The massive effort celebrates our strength, ingenuity, and mastery of

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Unfortunately, there is no discussion in the Tanakh addressing the style of writing that Moses or Joshua used to inscribe the words of God. The theme will be picked up by rabbis in the midrashic writings much later on.

[146] There is also a strong connection between Torah study and Jewish identity; yet another facet of Jewish life destroyed by the Nazis through their staged book-burnings as well as their genocide.

machinery/tools; the scale of the monument teaches us humility. The stones hold all of these themes and messages along with the names. It is another example of the multi-vocal nature of such monuments.

**The Warsaw Ghetto Monument, Warsaw/Jerusalem**

A far different monument is located on the main grounds of the museum.[147] Whereas the Valley is constructed of stone pillars and engraved names, the Warsaw Ghetto Monument is dominated by the human form. Whereas the Valley creates space for reflection and abstract thought, the Warsaw Ghetto Monument is overly determined by human forms and recognizable icons like a revolver and a Torah scroll. Both monuments remember loss; both communicate a message of hope. Yet, they do this work in very different ways.

Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument, was first unveiled in Warsaw on April 19, 1948, to mark the fifth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It is known both for its theme, the first revolt of Jews against the Nazis, as well as its form. The

[147] Recent changes to the museum, due to the new wing as well as a new methodology of Holocaust remembrance, may have shifted the location of the monuments as of 2006 to a temporary home.

monument consists of two bronze reliefs mounted on opposite sides of a granite wall.[148] While the wall represents classic monument-form, it is not the wall, but the bas reliefs of human beings that dominate the memorial. On one side, heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto are depicted in mythic form. They are massive in size, muscular, and determined. Each person carries a weapon: a grenade, a dagger, a rock, a rifle. The central figure is meant to represent Mordechai Anielewicz, the commander of the revolt. A woman, her breast bared, holds a child as she is engulfed in flames; yet she and the child are raising their arms in a show of defiance. In Warsaw, a plaque, written in Hebrew, Yiddish and Polish at its base reads: *To the Jewish people: Its Heroes and Martyrs.*

The Martyrs are found on the other side of the wall, the side facing away from the main plaza where people gather. On this side, twelve people, one for each tribe of Israel, are being led off to Exile. While it should be clear that this particular exile is related to the Holocaust, there is only a slight hint of Nazi presence in the scene indicated by army helmets and bayonets. Otherwise, this form could represent numerous exiles in Jewish history. The people appear frail and vulnerable. They sink into the wall as opposed to the Heroes who seem to emerge from within it. One older man, positioned in the center of the Martyrs, carries a Torah scroll and raises his hand upward as if to beseech God for mercy. But compared to the Heroes, this request can be understood to go unanswered. For these 12 souls, there is no divine intervention, no personal salvation. The granite wall is, in effect, a large tombstone marking their tragic deaths. Visitors leave stones according to

[148] The granite had already been cut for Arno Breker, the German sculptor, and commissioned by Hitler to build a Nazi victory monument in Berlin. [James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 169.]

Jewish tradition.[149] Meanwhile, the Heroes, emerging from the stone, have been brought back to life stronger and more heroic than before. Their resurrection is not thanks to God, but due to the hands of men; specifically, the hands of the artist. Ultimately, the Warsaw Ghetto Monument celebrates the human form and the human achievements and not the abstract concept of God.[150]

In Warsaw, it is impossible to see both images at the same time. Though they are joined by a common wall, they do not overlap. As a result, Rapaport offers the public two separate identities of the Jewish people. The message, perhaps, is that one cannot be a Hero and a Martyr at the same time. If visitors must choose, they are encouraged to choose the Heroes who face the main square and dominate the overall exhibit.

According to James Young, despite Rapoport's efforts to create an exclusively Jewish memorial, it soon became clear that many other groups also found meaning in visiting the monument. Rapoport's ideas shaped the design, but he could not control the experience. The image of the Heroes resonated with more than one group. The themes of oppression and resistance, of suffering and redemption were no longer the exclusive property of the Jews. "With the state's blessing," writes Young, "it is now as much a gathering place for Polish war veterans as for Jews...everyone memorializes something

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[149] The origin of the ritual is unknown, but the biblical tradition of erecting stones as markers strongly suggests that the contemporary practice evolved from a similar desire to mark/signify an important location or a significant interchange, in this case between the living and the dead.

[150] "I needed to show the heroism," said Rapoport, "to illustrate it literally in figures everyone, not just artists, would respond to. This was to be a public monument, after all. And what do human beings respond to? Faces, figures, the human form. I did not want to represent resistance in the abstract: it was not an abstract uprising. It was real." (James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 168.)

different here, of course; each creates different meaning in the monument."[151] The unique ability of the monument to facilitate myriad relationships is also found in the stone pile and pillar erected by Jacob and Laban.

In 1973, Yad Vashem chose to reproduce Rapoport's monument in Israel in honor of a new *Warsaw Ghetto Square*, where all future Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations would begin. According to Young, there were concerns for the sustainability of Jewish life in Poland, especially following the anti-Semitic purges of Jews from the government and from unions in response to the Six Day War. Rapoport's monument in Warsaw had already proven to be an accessible site for numerous groups (including Palestinians who identified with the struggle to overcome persecution) and the fear was that someday, there would be no Jewish visitors left to sustain its original message. Thus, the monument was replicated in Yad Vashem with a few minor changes.

This time, the bronze reliefs were mounted on a red brick wall, symbolizing the ghetto walls, and they were placed side by side and not front to back. Between the reliefs they placed the inscription: *bedamaich chayi* ("In your blood you shall live," Ezekiel 16:6). The new set-up created a powerful narrative: on the right, the march to the concentration camps; on the left, the Hero's defiant stance. One could "read" the texts of the people moving from oppression to liberation, the central theme of the Passover Haggadah, and the founding narrative of the State of Israel. The personal and national transformation is inspirational. Accordingly, the Israeli army conducts ceremonies and educational programs for their soldiers in the presence of these images. The soldiers can

[151] Ibid, 156.

look upon these images and see themselves as direct descendants of the Ghetto fighters.[152]

In 1953, the Israeli government designated the 27th of Nisan, a date halfway through the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, as *Yom HaShoah ve'Hagevurah*, the official Day of Holocaust and Heroism.[153] The date and the name bear testimony to the debate in Israel concerning the memorialization of the Holocaust: Is the Shoah another example of Jewish passivity and defeat to add to the historical record, or is this a case study of resistance and heroism that ends with the triumphant founding of the State of Israel? For many Israelis, heroism was the only option and it dominated the history books and public ceremonies for years. In fact, when the new square was dedicated, only the Heroes' relief had been installed.[154] The Martyrs were presented a year and half later. While this debate has weakened over the years, its effects are preserved in the monuments and the public discourse.[155]

The Holocaust is not the only historical event caught in the narrative of heroism and martyrdom. Yael Zerubavel's research shows a pattern of identifying and reclaiming many historical episodes that fit into this model for the purpose of constructing a certain

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[152] Ibid, 182.

[153] Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) Zeruvbavel notes that six more years passed before the Israeli government mandated the observance of the day making it an integral part of Israeli society.

[154] One final change: the bare-breasted woman behind Anielewicz was covered up out of respect to the religious community.

[155] According to Zerubavel, "Israelis' shocking realization of their own vulnerability during 1973 weakened earlier condemnation of the victims for "going like sheep to the slaughter...the new Holocaust commemorative narrative implies that its victims have become a model of moral and spiritual strength that can inspire Israeli soldiers." (Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition,* 193.)

type of national identity. When highlighting the battles of Bar Kokhba, Masada, Tel Hai, and the Warsaw Ghetto, the message is clear: authentic Jewish identity is born out of resistance and heroism. Each event proves a "pattern of besiegement, confrontation and survival throughout Jewish history,"[156] that further supports the Zionist national identity.[157]

In contrast to this phenomenon, Rapoport's work has made its way to the USA as well, though it is only the Last March that has been reproduced in New York, Syracuse and Dallas.[158] Unlike Israel which celebrates the heroism, America has tended towards commemorating the tragic loss of six million. Young notes that "The memorials of every community organize public memory of the Holocaust according to a particular understanding of events. Every memorial is a result of its particular time and place, its historical and political context."[159] Looking at the same design, Americans see Martyrs and Israelis see Heroes.

***Germany***

**The Way of Human Rights, Nuremberg**

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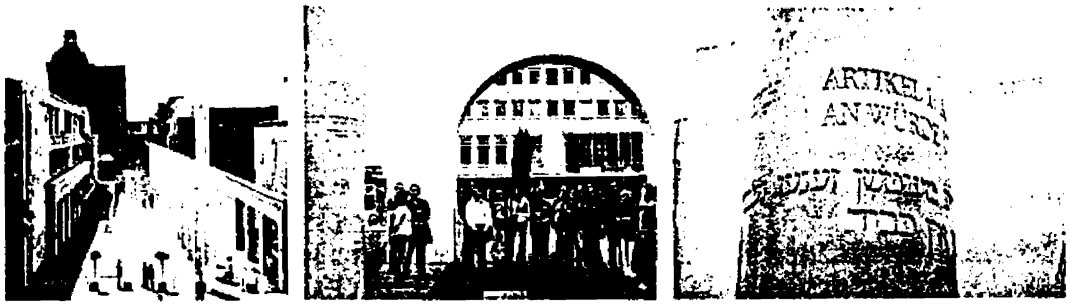
[156] Ibid, 218.

[157] Even the liturgical year, when "read" through this lens of Heroism, supports the national identity-agenda. According to Zerubavel, as we move "from bondage (Passover) and victimization (the Holocaust Remembrance) through a national struggle (the Memorial Day for Israeli soldiers) to national independence (Israel's Independence Day)...the annual holiday cycle reinforces the commemorative structures shaped by the Zionist collective memory." Ibid, 219.

[158] That is, aside from a much modified version of the fighters in the Workman's Circle Building in NY. (James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 184.)

[159] Young, *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, 20.



The Way of Human Rights, installed in Nuremberg, Germany, is a universal monument. While Rapoport designed for the Jewish community, the Way of Human Rights is intended for all human beings. Designed by Dani Karavan, an Israeli artist, and dedicated in 1993, the monument remembers the utter destruction of human life during World War II and the hope for a better future expressed by the United Nations in its aftermath. These themes are communicated using the "sacred text" of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

The monument is placed on a side street next to the National Art museum. It begins on one end with a large white archway. Inside the arch, inscribed into the stone, are the words *lo tirzach*, do not murder, pointing to the Hebrew Bible as the source of morality. The inscription of the 6th commandment is written with vowels and trope marks, reminding those visitors who recognize the symbols that these words come from the Torah. No translation is written in English.

Engraved on the face of the gateway is a scrolling text, written in French, English and German,: *des droits de l'homme nations unies paris 10 decembre 1948 universal declaration of human rights united nations allegemeine erklarung der menschenrechte vereinte nationen declaration universelle.* Close by are three square, squat stones that are good for sitting. A small, squat column prevents cars from driving under the arch and down the side street; yet, there is a fire station, towards the end of the exhibit and off to

the side, that uses the passageway for emergencies. On the opposite end, the ruins of a medieval gate create a bookend-effect for the Way. Old and new are fused together by a language of eternal truth regarding human rights and dignity.

There are twenty-seven white pillars that appear to be a few feet taller than the arch, evenly spaced a few feet apart, lining the side street. Each pillar bears the words of one article from the Declaration of Human Rights. Each article is engraved into the arch first in German and then in another language. The secondary language represents either an ethnic demographic that suffered during WWII or one that has experienced the pain of displacement, genocide, or discrimination (e.g. Yiddish, Czech, English, Italian, Armenian, Kurdish, Arabic, Chinese, Zulu, Hopi, Cambodian, Spanish).[160] As seen in the picture above, an abbreviated version of the full article is engraved, first in German and then in Yiddish.[161] One must walk around the column twice, head tilted up and back, in order to read the full text written towards the tops of the columns.

Though there are 30 articles in the UDHR, there are only twenty-seven pillars. In the place of article twenty-one, there is an oak tree and not a column. The tree, according to a local tour guide, is intended to represent all of the languages in the world so as not to exclude any group. Columns are also missing for articles twenty-four and thirty, but their absence is not thematically driven. Instead, on the ground, in the footprint of the would-be columns, are the texts of the two articles written in the pattern an inward spiral. Our

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[160] "I created thirty columns with the thirty paragraphs of the Declaration of Human Rights in German and in thirty different languages, starting with Yiddish. And then other people who are discriminated against and other people who fight against discrimination." Dani Karavan, Oct 2001, Online: http://www.forum2000.cz/conferences/2001/transcripts.php?id=116

[161] When children are born, they are free and each should be treated in the same way. They have reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a friendly manner. Online: http://web.amnesty.org/pages/aboutai_udhr

tour guide explained that no columns could be placed there because of the local fire station and the functional need for fire trucks to drive from their garage, situated behind the columns, into the small side street and onto the main road. Thus, two columns had to be eliminated and the design was recast to accommodate the pre-existing station. The end of the alley was to have been host to a human rights museum, but it has yet to be constructed.

The Nuremberg Laws drafted in 1935 and the Nuremberg Trials, held between 1945 and 1949 in the Palace of Justice, will always define this city as both the site of legal abuse and the official expression of justice post-World War II. The same legal system that took away people's rights (and eventually their lives) was seized by the Allies and re-directed at the perpetrators. This time, justice was truly served.

As a direct result of this history, human rights have become a recurring theme in art as well as politics in the city of Nuremberg.[162] Since 1995, the city assigns a "Nuremberg International Human Rights Award" to individuals or groups defending human rights worldwide. On September 25, 2005, Tamara Chikunova received the award for her work in Uzbekistan. Dani Karavan sat on the nominating committee.

The residents of Nuremberg have made a choice. Rather than focus on the violations of human rights, they spend their time and resources on creating a world in which rights are protected and human life is celebrated. The city as been renamed and re-

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[162] "Since the opening of this impressive row of columns, each of which contains an article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), human rights education has become an important part of extracurricular education as well as a part of school curriculum in Nuremberg. The Nuremberg Human Rights Center and the Youth Center for Cultural and Political Education can look back upon ten years of continuous work in this area. Central to this work is the link between the Street of Human Rights location and the most important human rights document, the UDHR." Online: http://www.menschenrechte.org/beitraege/bildung/beitBIL003.htm

consecrated a way that parallels Jacob's revisiting Bethel – giving it a new name and a new identity in Genesis 35. Nuremberg has been recast as a *zikaron* for human rights.

The Way of Human Rights resembles most closely the sets of stones erected by Moses and Joshua. The engraved articles are modern-day commandments; they were revealed to the masses at a time of heightened emotion (the aftermath of World War II), by an alleged source of great power, the United Nations. The articles are meant to ensure we all live in a just and equitable society – a society that cares for the stranger, widow and orphan, for example, whose rights can be easily taken away. Just like God's word, the articles have been engraved in stone for purposes of announcement and preservation. Long after the death of those who witnessed the atrocities of World War II, the record will remain: a testimony to future generations.

The exhibit is placed on a common pedestrian passageway. Most people pay no attention to the pillars as they walk by them. Perhaps Dani Karavan would not be bothered by the casual nature of people's walk past the pillars. In his dedication speech he said, "This is not a memorial place of the Holocaust, this is no Monument. It is a road, which humans go through." The articles should shape our lives as we continue to grow and evolve, they should not cause an unnatural stop in order for us to absorb their message. Human rights should be as natural to our lives as a walk from one street to another.

**Counter-Monument, Harburg**

In the late 20th and early 21st century, a series of counter-monuments were built to challenge the traditional forms of memorialization. Once again, we see how monuments reflect the socio-political environment in which they are designed and created. Counter-

monuments are most often built by people who did not have a direct experience of the Holocaust. The absence of first-hand knowledge requires the artist to use secondary memory or "post-memory" in order to construct their pieces. Despite the desire of many survivors and subsequent generations to find healing and closure from their experiences, the general theme of these post-memory artists "is the rejection of aesthetic redemption in Holocaust commemoration..."[163] There is no relief. There is no redemption to be observed or commemorated.[164]

Conceptual artists Jochen and Esther Gerz designed a monument called Gegen-Denkmal, literally Counter-Monument, in 1986 answering an invitation from the city of Hamburg to create a "Monument against Fascism, War and Violence – and for Peace and Human Rights." Of course, the monument as an artistic form was used by Fascists to celebrate their war and their acts of violence. How could the Gerzes accomplish their goal of

[163] Jay Winter, "At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture." *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (June 2001): 357-358.

[164] See also Roger Simon's work on remembrance as a *difficult return*: a psychic and social responsibility to bring the dead into presence, a responsibility that concurrently involves learning to live with, and in relation to, loss. This form of remembrance inevitably instantiates loss and thus bears no ultimate consolation. (Apel, *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing*, 5-6)

building an "antifascist monument without resorting to what they regarded as the fascist tendency in all monuments?"[165]

Their artistic challenge is reminiscent of the Jewish obligation to remember Amalek: The Gerzes planned to build-up a monument whose goal would be to recall a memory (Fascism, War, etc.) in order that the memory might be broken down and destroyed. Yet, the monument, would remain standing, seemingly defying the original goal – unless, they changed its form.

The Gerzes chose to create something new, a "self-abnegating monument, literally self-effacing,"[166] that could offer a contemporary illustration of how memory functions. They first challenged the element of location: instead of placing their work in the center of the city, they chose the urban, commercial center of Harburg. Memory does not only function in designated public space like parks or government buildings. It can happen anywhere. In Harburg, they created a 12-meter high, one-meter-square pillar made of hollow aluminum, plated with a thin layer of lead, with the following sign attached: *We invite the citizens of Harburg, and visitors to this town, to add their names here to ours. In doing so, we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this 12 meter tall lead column, it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day it will have disappeared completely, and the site of the Harburg monument against fascism will be empty. In the end, it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice.*

A steel-pointed stylus was attached to each corner and visitors were invited to sign the monument, engraving into the lead their images and thoughts. There were no

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[165] Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 28.
[166] Ibid, 28.

rules. People signed their names, drew cartoon characters, or crossed out other people's writing. Some even left swastikas, which the Gerzes understood to be yet another form of "signature." As the space filled up with markings, the monument was lowered, a little bit at a time, into a chamber in the ground until it was completely sunk. Today, the remnant is a sign and a burial stone, inscribed "Harburg's Monument Against Fascism."

This monument is built on the idea that it is the interaction and partnership between monument and visitor that truly evokes memory and therefore accomplishes the memorial task. While our inclination is to look at the finished product, the Gerz's monument challenges us to think about deliberate method of construction and the ritual of visitation as well. The monument's *total aesthetic performance*[167] is revealed in the constant process of remembering. That is why the Gerz's eventually remove the pillar: it draws attention away from the physical form and returns the burden/responsibility of memory to the people.[168] The overbearing, solid, metal pillar will no longer serve as an unassailable fortress protecting the memories of World War II. Human beings, in spite of their frailty and mortality, are the true bearers of memory.

Young warns that concretization may actually destroy memory if we allow the memorial to do the work of remembering. "For once we assign monumental form to memory we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember."[169] As a result, Young identifies a certain responsibility of the viewer, an assignment he calls: *Memory-Work*[170]. The monument provides an indicator towards a virtual cache of

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[167] Young, *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, 25.
[168] Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* 30.
[169] Ibid, 5.
[170] Ibid, 127.

memories that visitors must examine and select. The goal is to work in partnership with the model to evoke the memories, to bring them to life, to make them real for our time.[171]

Counter-monuments nicely illustrate many components of Young's theory: the socio-political forces that shape monuments, their dialogical nature, the recognition of memorial space as the site of memory, and the responsibility of the individual to participate in the process of memorialization. Such a model of interaction and partnership seems to be absent from the designs of our biblical ancestor-architects. Joshua's stones are set up and then the people move on to conquer the land. For our ancestors, the stone appears to be the vault into which the experience is deposited and preserved. There is no obligation to revisit, but there are other, more interactive ways to remember. The Israelites used other mnemonic techniques that were less tangible and more focused on the individual such as fringes on their garments, naming their children, and the celebration of holidays.

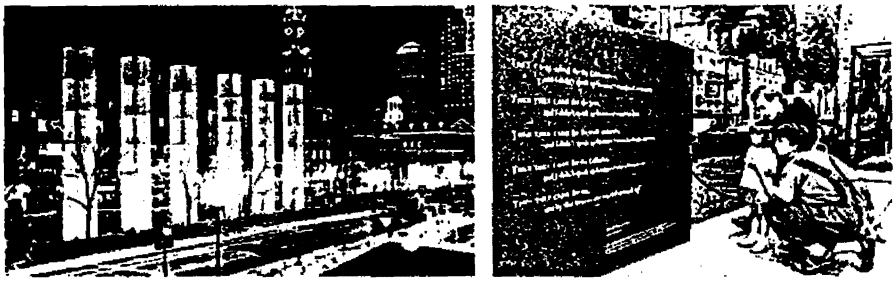
### *The United States of America*

Each country builds its monuments according to its unique history and its national narrative. The Holocaust did not take place on U.S. soil; therefore, Americans do not have specific sites to mark in the same way as Germans. While there is a strong Jewish-American voice, it does not determine the national agenda with regard to public space and commemoration with the same force as in Israel. And yet, there are Holocaust monuments in most major cities, a national museum in D.C., and American presidents

[171] "In all of this, we recognize that *the art of memory* neither begins with a monument's ground-breaking nor ends with the ceremonies conducted at its base. Rather, this art consists in the ongoing activity of memory, in the debates surrounding these memorials, in our own participation in the memorial's performance." (Young, *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, 38.)

officially mark Holocaust Remembrance Day with public ceremonies and speeches. The Holocaust has been adopted by America as a subject worthy of time, space and funding; the question is why? When viewed through the American lens, what does this event symbolize? What lessons does it teach?

**The New England Holocaust Memorial, Boston**



Installed in Boston between Faneuil Hall and City Hall, and situated on the famous *freedom trail*[172], the New England Holocaust Memorial (dedicated Oct. 1995) is woven into the myth of America origins. Similar to the Gerz's counter-monument, the space chosen is atypical for monuments: a traffic island in the middle of a busy street in downtown Boston. The monument consists of six glass towers, 54 feet high, and illuminated from within, top to bottom. Six million numbers are etched in the glass: one for each Jewish victim of the Holocaust.

Visitors are directed to walk down a black granite path, through the foot of each tower. Along the path, there is an outline of twenty key historical events documenting the

[172] The Freedom Trail connects sixteen historic sites between Boston Common and The Bunker Hill Monument in Charlestown with a red-brick line drawn on the ground. Online: http://www.thefreedomtrail.org

Nazi's rise to power and their exploitation and murder of human beings.[173] As a complement to the historical timeline, personal memories are inscribed in the glass panels at the base of each tower offering powerful accounts of pain and suffering, as well as resistance;[174] additionally, brief pieces of information about the time period are engraved on the ground in between towers offering visitors an even more thorough understanding of the events.[175] As visitors enter the first tower, they pass over the word "Remember" inscribed in the pathway both in English and in Hebrew. At the final tower, visitors once again cross over the word "Remember," this time inscribed in English and Yiddish. Both inscriptions are explicit concerning the goal of the monument; they issue forth a charge to each and every visitor: Remember.

One of the main goals of the monument is education. Thus, words are engraved on the ground and on the glass, along with the numbers, to relay clear historical and personal facts. Abstract art might not otherwise be able to communicate the entirety of the message, and so words are crucial to the monument's goal. The architect, Stanley Saitowitz, commented, "I hope that visitors to the Memorial take away with them the ungraspable nature of the Holocaust, the completely overwhelming, inexplicable dimension of dimension. And coupled with that, a sense of hope that survival and the

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[173] E.g. *January 1933*: The Nazi Party takes power in Germany, Hitler becomes Chancellor; *September 1941*: In two days, mobile killing units shoot 33,771 Ukranian Jews at Babi Yar - the largest single massacre of the Holocaust. For a full list of facts, see online: http://www.nehm.com/contents/chronology.html

[174] E.g. At first the bodies weren't burned, they were buried. In January, 1944, we were forced to dig up the bodies so they could be burned. When the last mast grave was opened, I recognized my whole family – my mother, my sisters and their kids. They were all in there. (Motke Zaidl, Holocaust Survivor, Deported from Lithuania and forced to work the death detail at Chelmo) Online: http://www.nehm.com/contents/personal1.html

[175] E.g. While most people aided the Nazis or simply looked the other way, there were some courageous individuals in Germany and throughout Europe who risked their lives to save the Jews. Online: www.nehm.com

building of this memorial make possible."[176] The inability to express the event is achieved through the abstract art; the hope is inspired through learning and the possibility of human transformation through education. It is a monument of contradiction in theme as well as substance: words and numbers, steel and glass, devastation and hope.[177]

In the footprint of each tower, a stainless steel grate covers a six-foot deep chamber, each chamber bearing the name of one of the six primary Nazi death camps: Majdanek, Chelmno, Sobibor, Treblinka, Belzec, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. At the bottom of the pits, smoldering coals illuminate the names of the camps and send up smoke into the 6 glass pillars, transforming them into symbolic crematorium smokestacks.

This monument chose not to use stone, but rather glass and light to create the towers of remembrance, offering a luminescent quality that was unavailable to our biblical ancestors. And yet despite their beauty and commanding appearance, the towers were not enough. Six million numbers were etched into the glass, a permanent witness to the lives that were lost. Similar to the pillars in Nuremberg, the decision to engrave indicates a selection of important information. It is not the word of God, but a record of human life. Paradoxically, with the theme of permanence comes the theme of vulnerability. While the monument can be rebuilt and reinforced, it does not prevent the

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[176] Online: www.nehm.com/design/

[177] Stanley Saitowitz submitted the following thoughts as he entered the competition: Some think of it as six candles, others call it a menorah. Some a colonnade walling the civic plaza, others six towers of spirit. Some six columns for six million Jews, others six exhausts of life. Some call it a city of ice, others remember a ruin of some civilization. Some speak of six pillars of breath, others six chambers of gas. Some think of it as a fragment of Boston City Hall, others call the buried chambers Hell. Some think the pits of fire are six death camps, others feel the shadows of six million numbers tattoo their flesh. Online: www.nehm.com/design/architect.html

visitor from seeing the glass as fragile material.[178] In this case, the burden of memory may be shifted back to the visitor who witnesses a monument that may not be eternal and immutable.

The last stop of the exhibit is a large black granite panel upon which is inscribed the legendary quotation from Lutheran Pastor Martin Niemoeller: *First they came for the Communists, but I was not a Communist so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Socialists and the Trade Unionists, but I was neither, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew so I did not speak out. And when they came for me, there was no one left to speak out for me.* Niemoeller's quote demands a shift in responsibility: having learned about the Holocaust, the visitor is now asked to consider his/her own stance towards injustice. According to Young, Holocaust monuments are only effective if they sensitize visitors to other people's pain and suffering and inspire them to address injustice in our world today. The experience must create social change and transformation. If not, then the monument has failed in its task. "The art of memory remains incomplete, an empty exercise," writes Young, "until visitors have grasped – and then responded to – current suffering in the world in light of a remembered past."[179]

In truth, no monument is ever seen in isolation. There is always a larger story. To build a memorial in the U.S. is to build within a culture that values freedom and choice. The monument is situated on the Freedom Trail. It is now a part of the national story; and so, it reflects these ideals and political positions as it is presented to the public. On the day of its formal dedication, the following text was read: *As you walk this Freedom Trail,*

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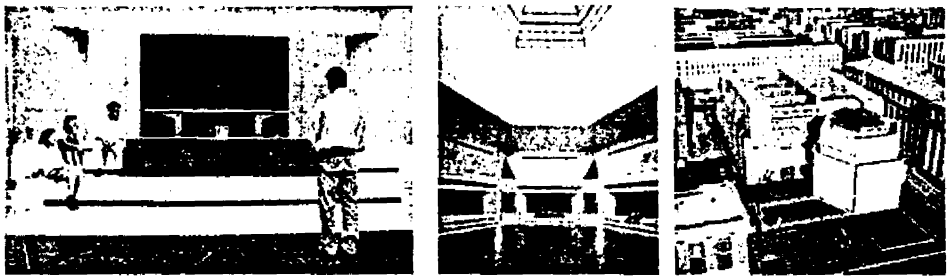
[178] See article on necessary renovations and upkeep of memorial due to weather and visitors, online: http://www.nehm.com/current/details.php?id=12&type=news

[179] Young, *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, 38

*pause here to reflect on the consequences of a world in which there is no freedom – a world in which basic human rights are not protected. And know that wherever prejudice, discrimination and victimization are tolerated, evil like the Holocaust can happen again.*[180] The lesson learned from the Holocaust is expressed through American values and rhetoric. In response to the ultimate display of evil, all Americans are charged to join the fight against racism and discrimination; to embrace the principles of equality, freedom, and democracy that will prevent such atrocities from every taking place again. Just as Israel selects images to support a particular Zionist identity, mainstream America focuses on the parts of the Holocaust that best fit into the American narrative.[181]

**The Hall of Remembrance, Washington D.C.**



In 1978, President Carter established the President's Commission on the Holocaust with the express goal of presenting ideas for Holocaust memorialization, education, activism and public commemoration within the United Sates.[182] In 1980,

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[180] Online: http://www.nehm.com/contents/dedication.html

[181] It is interesting to note that Jewish Americans privately commissioned Rapoport's "Last March" which has little resonance with the national American narrative.

[182] The recommendations, presented in 1979 were as follows: That a living memorial be established to honor the victims and survivors of the Holocaust and to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust will be taught in perpetuity; That an educational foundation be established to stimulate and support research in the teaching of the Holocaust; That a Committee on Conscience be established that would collect

Congress unanimously passed legislation to establish the United States Holocaust Memorial Council naming Elie Wiesel as the first Chairman. The Museum became the epicenter of the Committee's efforts with its ability to fulfill numerous goals through its location and design. Since its opening in 1993, the Museum has hosted more than 22.8 million visitors.

The USHMM is unique because its exhibits and designs reflect American values. According to the Director of the USHMM, Jeshajahu Weinberg, "the museum fulfills its commemorative function primarily through...mass education rather than merely through sculptural aesthetics."[183] There is a strong impetus for learning from the past: first, so that we do not repeat our mistakes; and second, because evolution (intellectual, technological and cultural) is a fundamental value for most Americans. We pride ourselves on our achievements as measured against the successes and failures of the past. The Holocaust reveals a more barbaric side of humanity, not to mention a moral failure of the United States for failing to act sooner and with greater force. The museum challenges us to consider who we are, both our inheritance from the past and the traditions we hope to pass on to future generations. As a result, USHMM is intended to be a "conceptual museum" rather than a traditional, "object oriented" one. The goal is to teach concepts and complex information, not simply to display material (e.g. a pile of shoes collected by the Nazis) to be witnessed. The goal is personal and communal transformation.

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information on and alert the national conscience regarding reports of actual or potential outbreaks of genocide throughout the world; and that a national Day of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust be established in perpetuity and be held annually. Online: http://www.ushmm.org/research/library/index.php?content=faq/

[183] Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), xiv.

Within the museum is the Hall of Remembrance, named the official National Memorial for Holocaust Victims. Placed on the second floor, visitors reach the Hall at the end of their tour of the permanent exhibition. It is intended to be a room for contemplation – a resting space after a difficult and disorienting exploration of history and memory. To ensure this outcome, the architect designed the hall with clear, open space, simple form, and natural light. The Hall is 6,000 square feet and bordered by 6 limestone walls. It rises up 3 stories climaxing in a 6 sided skylight. The floor is also shaped by 6 sides. There are broad steps on the perimeter of the room designed for sitting. From the outside, the Hall noticeably protrudes from the main red brick building with its hexagonal form and limestone exterior.

The Hall is punctuated by a large black plaque engraved with the words of Deuteronomy 4:9, "Only guard yourself and guard your soul carefully, lest you forget the things your eyes saw, and lest these things depart your heart all the days of your life. And you shall make them known to your children and to your children's children." In front of the plaque there is a single eternal flame which rests on a black marble memorial that holds soil (and presumably ashes) accompanied by the following inscription: *Here lies earth gathered from death camps, concentration camps, sites of mass execution, and ghettos in Nazi occupied Europe and from cemeteries of American soldiers who fought and died to defeat Nazi Germany.* Visitors may light small memorial candles to be placed on the walls in front of black panels that bear the names of concentration camps[184] on one

[184] Majdanek, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Chelmno, Belzec, Treblinka, Sobibor, Dachau, Ravensbruck, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, and Sachsenhausen.

side and death marches[185] on the other. Biblical epitaphs are also engraved into the limestone walls above the panels.[186]

Aside from the skylight, there are narrow, vertical slits in the corners of the walls that let in more natural light. These windows allow for only partial views of the Mall and the monuments outside. There are also two *shtenders* from which formal speeches may be made. All public gatherings marking Yom HaShoah are held in this room.

To build the museum, the architect, James Ingo Freed used his memories of the images he saw of concentration camps and ghettos visited before starting his designs. The building would be constructed using the same process of recollection that survivors use to tell their stories; the "data" would be remembered as a blend of authentic and interpretive details, fed through the life and experience of the architect. Overall, it was to be a nontraditional design allowing people to create their own personalized experience as they entered the building.

Freed had only one nonnegotiable architectural requirement: the hexagonal shape of the Hall. The six sides were intended to represent both the Star of David and the six million Jews who died. The rest of the design decisions were focused on the abstract. In the end, it was the Hall that generated the most discussion between Freed, the Holocaust Council and the Fine Arts Commission. As the last stop for visitors, the committees wanted to ensure a feeling of "hope" as the lasting impression of the museum. To do this, they asked Freed to create a clear view of the Mall, a memorial playground of

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[185] Ponary, Ninth Fort, Jasenovac, Stutthof, Transnistria, Bergen-Belsen, Teresienstadt, Janowska, Babi Yar, and Rumbula.

[186] Genesis 4:10, "Then Adonai said, "What have you done? Hark, your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground!" and Deuteronomy 30:19 "Also, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life -- if you and your offspring would live."

monuments dedicated to the popular American themes of freedom and liberation. The committees wanted the panoramic view, filling the room with light and optimism; Freed disagreed arguing that it would offer a misplaced sense of hope and context. Yes, the space is a refuge for contemplation and silence, and yet it should not offer too much comfort. Yes, the liberation of Europe led to freedom, but the celebration of American liberties as seen through the icons of heroism should not overwhelm the visitor. Eventually, the windows were obscured with limestone instead of brick and narrow slits were left open providing a partial view.

Freed's effort to resist comfort is reminiscent of the Gerz's Counter-Monument. The goal is not to find solace in American citizenship and inspiration in triumphant architecture. Rather, there is pedagogical responsibility linking one generation to the next that must be fulfilled. (See above for text of epitaph, Deuteronomy 4:9) It is the feeling of discomfort and disquietude that sparks the necessary awareness - the moment we finally pay attention - which leads to action.[187] According to the plan, this feeling of insufficiency was integrated into the museum's architecture and design. "Irresolution, imbalances are built in," writes Freed. "It is essential that people are left with what separates them more than with what joins them together. We created differences, so that memory must play a part."[188]

[187] See Chapter I under "Memory as Attention and Action" for examples of this exact pattern in the Bible: pain/suffering, attention, action.

[188] James Young, *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, 96.

**Conclusion**

Memory is the enduring language of connection, amongst human beings and between people and God. The monuments we build signify these myriad relationships. Through their concretized form, they give shape to concepts that are difficult to express. They are a natural link between the past, present and future – a conduit that transmits information through time as well as space. For all of these reasons, monuments are central to the performance of memory in the Tanakh.

The most important goal of the biblical authors is to maintain the covenant between God and Israel. This involves constant reminders to both parties of the commitments they made (e.g. divine protection and human loyalty) through the covenantal language of accountability called memory. This process of reminding is aided by mnemonic devices, most often, tangible ritual objects that point to a specific idea to be remembered. Thus, *mezuzah*, *tefillin* and *tzitzit*, mark the boundaries of one's home, head, arm, and body in order to signify the boundaries defined by the covenant and the expectations of appropriate behavior.

Stones provide another means of stimulating memory. Set up as altars, pillars or portable tablets, stones serve as cultic furnishings, symbolic witnesses, or written documents that record the terms of treaties, oaths, and covenants. As gravestones and boundary markers, they delineate both space and time, marking off property and extending life after death through the preservation of names and stories. Our choice of building material is not accidental: with its qualities of strength and endurance, stone reveals our deep desire to preserve memories, experiences and information for eternity.

Contemporary efforts at memorialization involve the conservation of old techniques as well as the creation of new models for memory. Stone pillars continue to serve as symbolic witnesses. They are familiar and acceptable symbols; they are easily engraved; they endure over time. Alternatively, there is also an effort to break away from old forms by incorporating new materials (light, glass, steel), new icons (the human figure), and new portrayals of remembrance (absence instead of presence).[189]

The memories we preserve shape who we are and how we act. For the Jewish people, the Bible serves as one of the most significant collections. From this source, memories are selected, interpreted and concretized in monuments and rituals that shape contemporary practice. The strong connection between memory and Jewish identity has motivated people to think more carefully about what memories are being preserved. Michael Goldberg argues for the core of Jewish memory to be built from the events surrounding Sinai (e.g. Exodus and covenant) and not those of the Holocaust.[190] Jewish feminists have worked to re/discover women's voices within the Bible to allow for the creation of new rituals and liturgy.[191] Their efforts have proven that in order to transform identity, it is not enough to select new texts; actions must be changed, as well. The body is capable of preserving memory with great efficacy (e.g. *kashrut*, circumcision, Shabbat

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[189] For example, Daniel Libeskind attempts to capture the essence of the "void" in his architecture: "the void of public space, and the void of memory." [Daniel Libeskind, "Trauma," in *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art After the Holocaust,* (eds. Shelley Hornstein, Laura Levitt and Laurence J. Silberstein. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 44.]

[190] See Michael Goldberg's book, *Why Should Jews Survive? Looking Past the Holocaust Toward a Jewish Future.* (Oxford University Press, 1995)

[191] See Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*, (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991) and Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath, and the New Moon Festival*, (HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).

observance); the Israelites' gastronomical memory of Egyptian delicacies (the fish, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic, as cited in Numbers 11:5) almost cause them to turn back as they make their way towards the Promised Land.

In spite of these concentrated efforts to rediscover and reprioritize texts, today's Jewish community suffers from a lack of collective memory. "The decline," writes Yosef Yerushalmi, "is only a symptom of the unraveling of that common network of belief and praxis through whose mechanisms...the past was once made present."[192] We no longer share the same stories, in part because they have not been passed down, and in part because we are making different choices in the process of transmission and preservation. We have forgotten our rituals that point us towards our shared memories. Our literature preserves what has become a familiar struggle for the Jewish community:

> When the founder of Hasidic Judaism, the great Rabbi Israel Shem Tov, saw misfortune threatening the Jews, it was his custom to go into a certain part of the forest to meditate. There he would light a fire, say a special prayer, and the miracle would be accomplished and the misfortune averted. Later, when his disciple, the celebrated Maggid of Mezritch, had occasion for the same reason to intercede with heaven, he would go to the same place in the forest and say, "Master of the Universe, listen! I do not know how to light the fire, but I am still able to say the prayer." Again the miracle would be accomplished. Still later, Rabbi Moshe-leib of Sasov, in order to save his people once more, would go into the forest and say, "I do not know how to light the fire. I do not know the prayer, but I know the place and this must be sufficient." It was sufficient, and the miracle was accomplished. Then it fell to Rabbi Israel of Rizhin to overcome misfortune. Sitting in his armchair, his head in his hands, he spoke to God, "I am unable to light the fire and I do not know the prayer and I cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do is to tell the story, and this must be sufficient." And it was sufficient. For God made man because he loves stories.[193]

Today, we struggle to tell the story.

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[192] Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, 96.
[193] Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, (New York: Shocken Books, 1947)

Perhaps we have lost interest in memory. Instead of inspiring us, it is depressing us. It has become a practice characterized by intellectual competition (Who can remember the most?) and weighed down by guilt (Why didn't you remember?). James Young's presentation of memory as *tikkun*, a concept that rekindles the transformative qualities of remembrance, may provide a means by which memory can once again serve as a central practice of the Jewish community. The use of *lema'an*, for the sake of, is a language of teleology. We are preserving memories in order to teach our children the ideals towards which we aspire and the world we hope to build. Thus, memory is not only a pedagogical tool; it is a tool of action and transformation. "The duty of memory," writes Paul Ricoeur, "is the duty to do justice."[194]

The Bible presents memory as a bond between thought and action. We are simply incomplete in our ritual observance of memory if we do not act. The greatest illustration of this is our effort to fill the world with justice and compassion as a direct result of our experience with slavery: "You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt," (Exodus 23:9) Memory is "history as judgment," writes Cynthia Ozick, and the Jews willfully carried the memory of four hundred years of torment in order to turn "the concrete memory of slavery into a universalizing metaphor of reciprocity."[195] This is the power of memory, preserved within the Jewish tradition, and available to us, if we only follow the signs.

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[194] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 89.

[195] Cynthia Ozick, "Metaphor & Memory," in *Metaphor & Memory*, (New York: Vintage International, 1980), 276-278

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