



The Complexity of Memory during the Yamim Noraim

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Eric Kandel, In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind, 2006

The insights provided by the new science of mind are most evident in our understanding of the molecular mechanisms the brain uses to store memories. Memory - the ability to acquire and store information as simple as the routine details of daily life and as complex as abstract knowledge of geography or algebra - is one of the most remarkable aspects of human behavior. Memory enables us to solve the problems we confront in everyday life by marshaling several facts at once, an ability that is vital to problem solving. In a larger sense, memory provides our lives with continuity. It gives us a coherent picture of the past that puts current experience in perspective. The picture may not be rational or accurate, but it persists. Without the binding force of memory, experience would be splintered into as many fragments as there are moments in life. Without the mental time travel provided by memory, we would have no awareness of our personal history, no way of remembering the joys that serve as the luminous milestones of our life. We are who we are because of what we learn and what we remember.

Our memory processes serve us best when we can easily recall the joyful events of our lives and dilute the emotional impact of traumatic events and disappointments. But sometimes, horrific memories persist and damage people's lives, as happens in post-traumatic stress disorder, a condition suffered by some people who have experienced at first hand the terrible events of the Holocaust, or war, rape, or natural disaster.

Memory is essential not only for the continuity of individual identity, but also for the transmission of culture and for the evolution and continuity of societies over centuries... All human accomplishments, from antiquity to

modern times, are products of a shared memory accumulated over centuries, whether through written records or through a carefully protected oral tradition.

Much as shared memory enriches our lives as individuals, loss of memory destroys our sense of self. It severs the connection with the past and with other people, and it can afflict the developing infant as well as the mature adult. Down's syndrome, Alzheimer's disease, and age-related memory loss are familiar examples of the many diseases that affect memory. We now know that defects in memory contribute to psychiatric disorders as well: schizophrenia, depression, and anxiety states carry with them the added burden of defective memory function.

Yizkor

יזכור

(3) 'Yizkor' for a mother:

(4) Remember, God, the soul of my mother, my teacher (the name of the mother, daughter of the name of her father), who went to her world, because I will - without making a vow - give charity for her. In recompense for this, let her soul be bound with the Binding of life (God), with the soul of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah, and with the other righteous men and women in the Garden of Eden. And let us say, Amen.

(ג) 'יזכור' לאם:

(ד) יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים נַשְׁמַת אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי
(שם האם בת שם אביה) שְׁהִלְכָה
לְעוֹלָמָהּ, בְּעֶבֶר נְשָׂאתָן בְּלִי נָדָר
צְדָקָה בַּעֲדָהּ. בְּשִׁכְרָה זֶה תִּהְיֶה נִפְשָׁהּ
צְרוּרָה בְּצִרוֹר הַחַיִּים עִם נַשְׁמַת
אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, שָׂרָה רַבִּקָּה
רַחֵל וְלֵאָה, וְעִם נְשֵׁי צַדִּיקִים
וְצַדִּיקָנוֹת שְׁבִגְן עֵדֶן. וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

Machzor Yom Kippur Ashkenaz,

Musaf for Yom Kippur,

Shemoneh Esrei 5

(5) Remember us for life King, Who desires life; and inscribe us in the Book of Life, for Your sake, Living God.

Unetaneh Tokef (excerpt)

(1) We lend power to the holiness of this day. For it is tremendous and awe filled, and on it your kingship will be exalted, your throne will be established in loving-kindness, and you will sit on that throne in truth.

(2) It is true that you are the one who judges, and reproves, who knows all, and bears witness, who inscribes, and seals, who reckons and enumerates. **You remember all that is forgotten. You open the book of records, and from it, all shall be read. In it lies each person's insignia..**

(4) On Rosh Hashanah it is inscribed, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed - how many shall pass away and how many shall be born, who shall live and who shall die, who in good time..

Berakhot 8b:7

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi further advised: **And be careful** to continue to respect **an elder who has forgotten his Torah knowledge due to circumstances beyond his control. As we say:** Both **the tablets** of the Covenant **and the broken tablets are placed in the Ark.**

מחזור אשכנז ליום כיפור, תפלת

מוסף, שמונה עשרה ה'

(ה) זְכַרְנוּ לְחַיִּים מֶלֶךְ חַיָּץ בְּחַיִּים
וְכַתְּבֵנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים לְמַעַנְךָ אֱלֹקִים
חַיִּים:

ונתנה תוקף

(א) וּנְתַנָּה תִקְוָה קִדְשָׁת הַיּוֹם כִּי הוּא
נוֹרָא וְאִים וְבוֹ תִנָּשָׂא מַלְכוּתְךָ וְיִכּוֹן
בְּחֶסֶד כְּסֵאֲךָ וְתִשָּׁב עָלֶיךָ בְּאַמֶּת
(ב) אָמֵת כִּי אַתָּה הוּא דִין וּמוֹכִיחַ
וְיֹדֵעַ וְעֹד וְכוֹתֵב וְחוֹתֵם וְסוֹפֵר
וּמוֹנֶה וְתֹזֶכֶר כָּל הַנְּשָׁכָחוֹת וְתִפְתָּח
אֶת סֵפֶר הַזְּכָרוֹנוֹת וּמֵאֲלֵיו יִקְרָא
וְחוֹתֵם יָד כָּל אָדָם בּוֹ...

((ד) בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכְתְּבוּן, וּבְיוֹם
צוּם כְּפוּר יִחַתְמוּן. כִּמָּה יַעֲבִירוּן,
וְכִמָּה יִבְרָאוּן, מִי יִחְיֶה, וּמִי יָמוּת, מִי
יִקְצוּ, וּמִי לֹא יִקְצוּ...

ברכות ח' ב:ז'

וְהִזְהָרוּ בְּזִקְן נְשִׁיכָח תִּלְמוּדוֹ
מִחֲמַת אוֹנָסוֹ. דְּאִמְרִינן: לוֹחֹת
וְשִׁבְרֵי לוֹחֹת מוֹנְחוֹת בְּאֶרֶן.

**Machzor Rosh Hashanah Ashkenaz, Musaf,
First Day of Rosh Hashana, Zikhronot**

(1) **You** remember the dealings of today's world, and You [also] consider the behavior of all those who lived in earlier times. In Your Presence are revealed all hidden things and the multitude of secrets from the beginning of creation; **for there is no forgetfulness before the throne of Your Glory, and there is nothing hidden from Your eyes.** You remember all that has been done, and even all that which is formed is not concealed from You. All is revealed and known before You Adonoy, our God Who observes and looks until the end of all generations. For You set an appointed time of remembrance, to consider every soul and being; to cause numerous deeds to be remembered and the multitude of creatures without end. From the beginning of creation, You have made this known, and from before time You have revealed it. This day [Rosh Hashana] is the beginning of Your work a memorial of the first day. For it is a statute for Yisrael a [day of] judgment of the God of Yaakov. And over countries [judgment] is pronounced, which of them is destined for the sword [war] and which for peace, which for famine and which for abundance. And on it, creatures are brought to mind, **to be remembered for life or for death.** Who is not considered on this day? For the remembrance of all that is formed comes before You: the dealings of man, and the decree of his fate, and the misdeeds of man's actions, the thoughts of man and his schemes, and the motives for the deeds of man. Fortunate is the man who does not forget You, the son of man who gains strength in You. For those who seek You will never stumble, and never will they be disgraced— all who trust in You. For the

מחזור אשכנז לראש השנה, תפילת
מוסף, יום ראשון של ראש השנה,
זכרונות

(א) אַתָּה זוכֵר מַעֲשֵׂה עוֹלָם וּפְּקֻדָּה
כָּל־יְצוּרֵי קֶדֶם. לְפָנֶיךָ נִגְלוּ כָּל־
תַּעֲלֹמוֹת וְהַמּוֹן נִסְתָּרוֹת
שְׁמֵיבְרָאשִׁית. כִּי אֵין שְׂכָחָה לְפָנֶיךָ כֶּסֶם
כְּבוֹדָךָ. וְאֵין נִסְתָּר מִנֶּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ: אַתָּה
זוכֵר אֶת כָּל הַמַּפְעֵל. וְגַם כָּל־הַיְצוּר
לֹא נִכְחַד מִמֶּךָ. הַכֹּל גָּלוּי וְיָדוּעַ לְפָנֶיךָ
יִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ. צוּפָה וּמַבִּיט עַד סוֹף כָּל
הַדּוֹרוֹת. כִּי תָבִיא חֹק זַכָּרוֹן לְהַפְקִיד
כָּל רוּחַ וְנַפֶּשׁ. לְהַזְכִּיר מַעֲשִׂים רַבִּים
וְהַמּוֹן בְּרִיּוֹת לְאֵין תְּכַלִּית. מִבְּרָאשִׁית
כְּזֹאת הוֹדַעְתָּ. וּמִלְפָּנֶיךָ אוֹתָהּ גָּלִיתָ.
זֶה הַיּוֹם תַּחֲלֵת מַעֲשֵׂיךָ זַכָּרוֹן לַיּוֹם
רִאשׁוֹן. כִּי חֹק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא מִשְׁפָּט
לְאַלְקֵי יַעֲקֹב: וְעַל הַמַּדִּינוֹת בּוֹ יֵאָמֵר
אִי זֶה לְחֶרֶב. וְאִי זֶה לְשָׁלוֹם. אִי זֶה
לְרָעָב. וְאִי זֶה לְשָׂבַע. וּבְרִיּוֹת בּוֹ
יִפְקְדוּ. לְהַזְכִּיר לַחַיִּים וְלַמֵּתִים: מִי
לֹא נִפְקָד כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. כִּי זָכַר כָּל
הַיְצוּר לְפָנֶיךָ בָּא. מַעֲשֵׂה אִישׁ
וּפְקֻדָּתוֹ. וְעַל־לֵלוֹת מַצְעָדֵי גִבּוֹר.
מִחֲשָׁבוֹת אָדָם וּמַחֲבֻלוֹתָיו וְיִצְרֵי
מַעֲלָלֵי אִישׁ: אֲשֶׁר־יֵאָמֵר אִישׁ שְׂלֵא
יִשְׁכַּחְךָ. וּבֶן אָדָם יִתְאַמֵּץ בָּךְ. כִּי
דוֹרְשֵׁיךָ לְעוֹלָם לֹא יִכָּשְׁלוּ. וְלֹא
יִכָּלְמוּ לְנֶצַח כָּל הַחוֹסִים בָּךְ: כִּי זָכַר
כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים לְפָנֶיךָ בָּא וְאַתָּה דוֹרֵשׁ

remembrance of all their deeds come before You, and You examine the deeds of all of them. And Noah too, You remembered with love, and [therefore] decreed for him a promise of deliverance and compassion, when You brought the flood-waters to destroy all flesh because of the wickedness of their deeds. Therefore, his remembrance came before You, Adonoy, our God, to multiply his seed like the dust of the earth, and his descendants as the sand of the sea; as it is written in Your Torah; "And God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the Ark, and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters were calmed." And it is said: "And God heard their groaning cry, and God remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaakov." And it is said: "I will remember My covenant with Yaakov, and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham, will I remember; and the land [of Yisrael] I will remember."

(2) **And** in Your holy words it is written: "He made a memorial for His wonders, gracious and merciful is Adonoy." And it is said: "He gave food to those who fear Him; He is ever mindful of His covenant." And it is said: "And He remembered His covenant for them, and He relented in accordance with His abundant kindness."

(3) **And** by the hand of Your servants, the Prophets it is written: "Go and proclaim it in the ears of Yerushalayim, saying: thus said Adonoy, I remembered for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridal days, how you followed Me into the wilderness, in a land that was not cultivated." And it is said: "I will remember My covenant [which I made] with you in the days of your youth, and I will

מַעֲשֵׂה כָלָם: וְגַם אֶת זֶם בְּאַהֲבָה
זָכַרְתָּ. וּתְפַקְדָּהוּ בְּדִבְרֵי יְשׁוּעָה
וּרְחֻמִּים בִּהְבִּיאָךָ אֶת מִי הַמַּבּוּל
לְשַׁחַת כָּל בָּשָׂר מִפְּנֵי רָע מַעַלְלֵיהֶם.
עַל כֵּן זָכְרוֹנוֹ בָּא לְפָנֶיךָ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ
לְהַרְבוֹת זֶרְעוֹ כְּעַפְרוֹת תַּבַּל. וְצִאֲצָאֵינוּ
כְּחוֹל הַיָּם. כִּפְתּוּב בְּתוֹרָתְךָ וַיִּזְכֹּר
אֱלֹקִים אֶת זֶם וְאֶת כָּל הַחַיָּה וְאֶת כָּל
הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתִּבָּה וַיַּעֲבֵר
אֱלֹקִים רוּחַ עַל הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשְׁכּוּ הַמַּיִם:
וַנֹּאמֶר וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶת נַאֲקָתָם
וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת אַבְרָהָם
אֶת יִצְחָק וְאֶת יַעֲקֹב: וַנֹּאמֶר וַיִּזְכֹּרְתִּי
אֶת בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת אֶת־בְּרִיתִי
יִצְחָק וְאֶת אֶת בְּרִיתִי אַבְרָהָם אֲזָכֹר
וְהָאָרֶץ אֲזָכֹר:

(ב) וּבְדִבְרֵי קְדוֹשְׁךָ כְּתוּב לֵאמֹר: זָכֹר
עֲשֵׂה לְנַפְלָאֲתֵינוּ חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יי:
וַנֹּאמֶר טָרַף נָתַן לִירְאָיו יִזְכֹּר לְעוֹלָם
בְּרִיתוֹ: וַנֹּאמֶר וַיִּזְכֹּר לָהֶם בְּרִיתוֹ
וַיִּנָּחֶם כְּרַב חֲסִדָּיו:

(ג) וְעַל יְדֵי עֲבָדֶיךָ הַנְּבִיאִים כְּתוּב
לֵאמֹר: הִלֹּךְ וַקְרָאתָ בְּאָזְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם
לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר יי זָכַרְתִּי לָךְ חֲסִד
נְעוּרֶיךָ אֲהַבֵּת כָּל־וּלְתֶיךָ לְכַתֹּם אַחֲרֵי
בְּמִדְּבָר בְּאָרֶץ לֹא זְרוּעָה: וַנֹּאמֶר
וַיִּזְכֹּרְתִּי אֲנִי אֶת בְּרִיתִי אוֹתְךָ בִּימֵי
נְעוּרֶיךָ וְהַקִּימוֹתִי לָךְ בְּרִית עוֹלָם:
וַנֹּאמֶר הִבֵּן יְקִיר לִי אֶפְרַיִם אִם יִלְד
שְׁעֵשׂוּעִים כִּי מִדֵּי דְבָרִי בּוֹ זָכֹר
אֲזָכְרֶנּוּ עוֹד עַל כֵּן הֵמוּ מַעֲי לֹו רַחֵם
אַרְחֻמֶּנּוּ נָאָם יי:

(ד) אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ זָכְרֶנּוּ

fulfill it for you as an everlasting covenant.”

And it is said: “Is Ephraim not My precious son, is he not a child of delight? For whenever I speak of him, I recall him even more; Therefore, My innermost being is aroused for him, I will surely have compassion on him, says Adonoy.”

(4) **Our God** and God of our fathers remember us favorably before You and be mindful of us for deliverance and compassion from the eternal high heavens. Remember in our behalf, Adonoy, our God, the covenant, the kindness and the oath which You swore to our father Avraham on Mount Moriah, and let there appear before You the binding with which our father Avraham bound his son Yitzchak upon the altar, and how he suppressed his compassion to do Your will with a whole heart; so may Your compassion suppress Your anger against us, and in Your great goodness turn Your fierce anger away from Your people, and from Your city, from Your land, and from Your territorial heritage. And fulfill for us Adonoy, our God the promise You made in Your Torah, through Your servant, Moshe, from the mouth of Your glory, as it is said: **“I will remember for them the covenant with their forefathers whom I took out of the land of Mitzrayim, before the eyes of the nations, to be their God; I am Adonoy.”** For He Who remembers all forgotten things from eternity, are You, and there is no forgetfulness before the Throne of Your Glory; and the binding of Yitzchak—on behalf of his descendants— may You remember it today with compassion. Blessed are You Adonoy, **Who remembers the covenant.**

בְּזִכְרוֹן טוֹב לְפָנֶיךָ וּפְקֻדָּנוּ בְּפִקְדֻת
יְשׁוּעָה וְרַחֲמִים מְשֻׁמִּי שְׁמִי קָדָם וּזְכָר
לָנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת הַבְּרִית וְאֶת הַחֶסֶד
וְאֶת־הַשְּׁבוּעָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְרָהָם
אֲבִינוּ בְּהַר הַמֹּרִיָּה וְתַרְאֶה לְפָנֶיךָ
עֲקֵדָה שְׁעָקֵד אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ אֶת יִצְחָק
בְּנוֹ עַל גִּבִּי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְכַבֵּשׁ רַחֲמָיו
לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנְךָ בְּלִבְבִּי שְׁלָם כֵּן יְכַבְּשׁוּ
רַחֲמֶיךָ אֶת כַּעַסְךָ מֵעָלֵינוּ וּבְטוֹבָה
הַגְּדוֹל יָשׁוּב חֲרוֹן אַפֶּךָ מֵעַמְּךָ וּמֵעִירְךָ
וּמֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִנִּחַלְתְּךָ. וְקִיָּם לָנוּ יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־הִבְטַחְתָּנוּ
בְּתוֹרָתְךָ עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה עַבְדְּךָ מִפִּי
כְּבוֹדְךָ כְּאֹמֹר: וּזְכַרְתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית
רִאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם לַעֲיִנִי הַגּוֹיִם לִהְיוֹת לָהֶם
לְאֱלֹקִים אֲנִי יי: כִּי זֹכָר כָּל הַנִּשְׁכָּחוֹת
אֲתָה הוּא מַעֲוָלָם וְאֵין שִׁכְחָה לְפָנֶי
כִּסֵּא כְבוֹדְךָ. וְעֲקֵדָת יִצְחָק לִזְרָעוֹ (שֶׁל
יַעֲקֹב) הַיּוֹם בְּרַחֲמִים תִּזְכּוֹר: בְּרוּךְ
אַתָּה יי זֹכֵר הַבְּרִית:

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory, 1996

(p. 107-8)

We cannot speak meaningfully of "forgetting" without simultaneously considering what we mean by "remembering." And so I shall make a provisional distinction between memory (*mneme*) and recollection (*anamnesis*). Memory, for our purposes, will be that which is essentially unbroken, continuous. Anamnesis will serve to describe the recollection of that which has been forgotten. In true Jewish fashion I have, of course, borrowed these terms from the Greeks, specifically from Plato, where they refer not to history but to philosophic knowledge of the eternal Ideas. Except for those rare individuals whose souls have retained traces of their prenatal memories of the world of the Ideas, all true knowledge is anamnesis, all true learning an effort to recall what has been forgotten. There is a curious parallel to this in the Talmud [tractate *Niddah*], where we are told that the fetus in the womb knows the entire Torah and can see from one end of the world to the other. But at the very moment of birth an angel comes and slaps the infant on the mouth (in later legend he kisses him), whereupon he immediately forgets everything and (alas) must learn the Torah anew.

Niddah 30b:23

And once the fetus emerges into the airspace of the world, an angel comes and slaps it on its mouth, causing it to forget the entire Torah, as it is stated: "Sin crouches at the entrance" (Genesis 4:7), i.e., when a person enters the world he is immediately liable to sin due to his loss of Torah knowledge.

נדה ל' ב:כ"ג

וכיון שבא לאויר העולם בא מלאך
וסטרו על פיו ומשכחו כל התורה
כולה שנאמר (בראשית ד, ז) לפתח
חטאת רובץ

Deuteronomy 8:11

דברים ח':י"א

(11) Take care lest you forget your God " and fail to keep the divine commandments, rules, and laws which I enjoin upon you today.

(יא) הַשְׁמַר לְךָ פֶּן־תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת־יְיָ
אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְבַלְתִּי שְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו
וְחֻקֹּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֶנְכִּי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם:

Yerushalmi, Zakhor (p. 108-9)**Quotes Deut 8:11, 14, 19**

This astonishing assumption, that an entire people cannot only be admonished to remember but held absolutely responsible for forgetting, is made as though it were self-evident. Yet surely, collective forgetting is at least as problematic a notion as collective memory. If we take it in a psychological sense it becomes virtually meaningless. Strictly speaking, peoples, groups, can only forget the present, not the past. That is to say, the individuals who comprise the group can forget events that occurred within their own lifetime; they are incapable of forgetting the past that preceded them, in the sense that the individual human being forgets earlier stages in his own life history. When we say that a people "remembers" we are really saying that a past has been actively transmitted to the present generation and that this past has been accepted as meaningful.

Conversely, a people "forgets" when the generation that now possesses the past does not convey it to the next, or when the latter rejects what it receives and does not pass it onward, which is to say the same thing. The break in transmission can occur abruptly or by a process of erosion. But the principle remains. A people can never "forget" what it has never received in the first place... All the admonitions to "remember" and not to "forget," by which the Jewish people felt itself addressed, would have been to no avail if the rites and historical narratives had not been canonized as "Torah" - literally "Teaching" in the broadest sense - and if "Torah" in turn, had not constantly renewed itself as "Tradition."

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