

Remember Where You Came From

Parashat Ki Tavo — Devarim (Deuteronomy) 26:1–11

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Central Thought

The Almighty commanded Israel to remember where they had been, what He had done for them, and how they came to possess the blessings they now enjoyed.

Biblical remembrance is more than recalling past events. **Remembering should produce humility, gratitude, faithfulness, compassion, and generosity.**

We do not remember where we came from so that we can live in the past. We remember where we came from so that we never forget Who brought us to where we are.

I. The Basket Told a Story

Devarim 26:1–4

1 “Then it shall be, when you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, and you possess it and live in it, 2 that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground which you bring in from your land that the Lord your God gives

you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God chooses to establish His name. 3 “You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, ‘I declare this day to the Lord my God that I have entered the land which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.’ 4 “Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God.

When Israel entered the land and began enjoying its produce, the people were commanded to take the firstfruits of the land and bring them before The Almighty.

The basket of firstfruits represented much more than an agricultural offering.

It testified:

The land had been given by The Almighty.

The harvest had been made possible by The Almighty.

The blessing they were enjoying had not been obtained by their strength alone.

They had received what generations before them had only hoped to see.

The basket was a visible reminder:

“I did not get here by myself.”

Application for Us

We also possess things that can easily become ordinary to us simply because we have had them for a while.

We may forget that:

something we now take for granted was once something we prayed for;

knowledge we now consider basic was once something we did not understand;

opportunities we enjoy today were once unavailable to us;

people The Almighty placed in our lives helped us reach where we are today.

Blessings become dangerous when we begin treating them as accomplishments rather than gifts.

II. “My Father Was a Wandering Aramean”

Devarim 26:5–8

⁵ “You shall answer and say before the Lord your God, ‘My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; but there he became a great, mighty and populous nation. ⁶ ‘And the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, and imposed hard labor on us. ⁷ ‘Then we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression; ⁸ and the Lord brought us

out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and wonders;

When the worshiper presented his firstfruits, he was required to tell the story of Israel.

He remembered:

His ancestor had been a wandering Aramean.

Israel went down into Egypt as a small family.

They became a great people.

The Egyptians mistreated and oppressed them.

Israel cried out to The Almighty.

The Almighty heard their cry.

He saw their affliction.

He delivered them with a mighty hand.

Israel was not permitted to allow prosperity to erase its memory.

Why Remember the Difficult Parts?

The Almighty was not commanding Israel to continually relive its suffering.

They remembered Egypt because Egypt made their present blessing understandable.

Without remembering Egypt, they might eventually look at the land and say:

“Look at what we have accomplished.”

Remembering allowed them instead to say:

“Look at what The Almighty has done.”

Application for Us

There is value in occasionally remembering where we once were.

Not so that we can remain there.

Not so that we continually condemn ourselves for past failures.

But so that we recognize how much The Almighty has taught us, carried us through, and provided for us.

III. “He Brought Us to This Place”

Devarim 26:9–10

⁹ and He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ ‘Now behold, I have brought the first of the produce of the ground which You, O Lord have given me.’ And you shall set it down before the Lord your God, and worship before the Lord your God;

The confession continues:

“He brought us to this place...”

Notice who is doing the work throughout the passage.

He heard.

He saw.

He brought us out.

He brought us in.

Israel certainly walked, worked, fought, planted, and harvested.

But behind their story was the faithfulness of The Almighty.

The fruit in the basket was evidence that the promises made generations earlier had not been forgotten.

A Similar Instruction to Followers of Messiah

Sha'ul gives an interesting instruction in Ephesians 2:11–13:

¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by those called “Circumcision”—circumcision in the flesh, made by human hands— ¹² *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

He tells non-Jewish believers to remember that they had once been:

separated from Messiah;

alienated from the commonwealth of Israel;

strangers to the covenants of promise;

without hope and without Elohim in the world.

But something had changed.

They had been brought near.

Like the declaration of the firstfruits, Sha'ul teaches believers to remember both:

where they once stood

and

where they had now been brought.

Application for Us

Our spiritual growth should never cause us to become arrogant toward someone

who has not yet learned what we have learned.

We should remember:

There was a time when we did not know either.

IV. Remembering Should Change Us

Devarim 26:11

¹¹ and you and the Levite and the alien who is among you shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given you and your household.

The passage does not end with the worshiper simply remembering the past.

It says:

“You shall rejoice in every good thing which Adonai your Elohim has given to you...”

And that rejoicing includes others:

the Levite;

the stranger living among them;

the household.

Remembering produces action.

The Biblical Pattern

Memory → Gratitude → Generosity

If I remember receiving mercy, I should become more merciful.

If I remember needing help, I should become more willing to help.

If I remember being welcomed, I should become more welcoming.

If I remember how patiently The Almighty has taught me, I should become more patient with someone who is still learning.

If I remember that everything I possess ultimately came from Him, I should become more willing to share what I have.

V. Yeishua and the Importance of Remembering

Mark 5:18–20

¹⁸ As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. ¹⁹ And He did not let him, but He said to him, “Go home to your people and report to them what great things the lord has done for you, and *how* he had mercy on you.” ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Yeishua had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

After Yeishua delivered the man who had lived among the tombs, the man wanted to travel with him.

Instead, Yeishua told him:

“Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you...”

The man had a story.

There was a before.

And there was an after.

Yeishua did not tell him to forget what he had been.

He told him to remember it in light of what The Almighty had now done for him through the master (Yeishua).

His past became testimony rather than identity.

What Do We Remember?

Each of us could ask:

What has The Almighty brought me through?

What have I learned that I once did not understand?

What prayer has been answered that I now take for granted?

Who patiently helped me when I was still learning?

What opportunities have I received that I once did not have?

Where can I see the faithfulness of The Almighty when I look backward?

But there is another important question:

What has remembering produced in me?

Has it made me:

more grateful?

more humble?

more patient?

more generous?

more compassionate?

more willing to help someone else along the way?

Conclusion

The Israelite standing before The Almighty with his basket of firstfruits was holding evidence of how far The Almighty had brought his people.

He could look at the fruit.

He could remember Egypt.

He could remember the promises.

And he could say:

“He brought me to this place.”

There are times when we need to do the same.

Look at where you are.

Remember where you came from.

Remember what you have learned.

Remember who helped you.

Remember the prayers that were answered.

Remember the doors that were opened.

Remember the mercy you received.

Then remember Who brought you here.

We do not remember where we came from so that we can live in the past. We

remember where we came from so that we never forget Who brought us to where

we are.

Final Question

Each of us should ask ourselves in our hearts and minds: If I truly remember what The Almighty has done for me, how should that change the way I treat Him—and the way I treat the people around me?