

The Importance of Remembering by Building Altars



Shalom all

Today is Day 16 of Month 3 on the Creator's Calendar, also known as May 25, 2024 on the Roman calendar.

This is Memorial Day weekend in the United States of America. It is a National Holiday when people are encouraged to remember those who died in military service.

Most people go on vacation and party. Camping, boating, barbeque, and drinking are on the agenda for most. Very few actually remember anything except for the fact that they get an extra day off of work.

Those who observe Memorial Day may attend parades, place flags at gravesites, and hold ceremonies. Their actions are a form of

remembrance that memorializes the day. It can be a very solemn event.

Remembering is essential for people and societies. It is the “glue” that holds them together. Despite all their differences, it is supposed to be something that they have in common - a shared memory that is important to them all.

The degree of collective societal observance can be a gauge of the strength of a particular society. For instance, if you have a family who died in a past war and you go to their gravesite to remember their sacrifice, that means you have “skin in the game.” You have a connection versus someone who recently snuck across the border to get a bunch of free stuff and can’t even speak the language.

As a result, if you have a society filled with people who have nothing in common, with no shared memories, that society is destined to fail. That is what we are seeing in America. It used to be called a “melting pot” because people would blend their differences and join together as Americans. Now, there is not much melting. America is not very united these days.

Well, interestingly, YHWH sets forth the proper way to incorporate the foreigner and the stranger into Yisrael. Remember how Joshua built an Altar on Mount Ebal and wrote the Commandments on stones from the Jordan?

“¹ Now Moses, with the elders of Yisrael, commanded the people, saying: Keep all the commandments which I command you today. ² And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which YHWH your Elohim is giving you, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime. ³ You shall write on them all the words of this Torah, when you have crossed over, that you may enter the land which YHWH your Elohim is giving you, “a land flowing with

milk and honey,' just as YHWH the Elohim of your fathers promised you. ⁴ Therefore it shall be, when you have crossed over the Jordan, that on Mount Ebal you shall set up these stones, which I command you today, and you shall whitewash them with lime. ⁵ And there you shall build an altar to YHWH your Elohim, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them. ⁶ You shall build with whole stones the altar of YHWH your Elohim, and offer burnt offerings on it to YHWH your Elohim. ⁷ You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before YHWH your Elohim. ⁸ And you shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this Torah." Deuteronomy 27:1-8

First and foremost, all the people are supposed to keep all the Commandments. That ensures that everyone is living in unity.

There was a specific purpose for this choosing Mount Ebal as the place for the altar and the writing.

Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim are essentially a gateway into the Land, and Shechem was literally called "between the shoulders" of these two mountains.

This was the place where Abram entered the Land, and it was also where Jacob brought his family when he returned to it.

It was like an immigration intake facility where new arrivals would come to the place of the Covenant first. They would know the "law of the Land" and figure out the difference between "holy" and profane, blessings and curses.

This was a place of remembrance. The strangers would be told the story of the ceremony that once took place there.

Of course, all that history was the background surrounding the story of Yahushua and the Samaritan woman at the well we discussed last week.

The stranger was expected to follow the rules of the Land (the Torah) while visiting.

*“One Torah shall be for the native-born
and for the stranger who dwells among you.”*

Exodus 12:49

*“One Torah and one custom shall be for you
and for the stranger who dwells with you.”*

Numbers 15:16

Those words were written on the stones. It was the same Torah for everybody.

In case they didn't fully grasp it at Shechem, the rules were posted on every doorpost and gate throughout the Land.

The Commandment of the Mezuzah (מְזוּזָה) is as follows:

“⁶ And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts (מְזוּזָה) of your house and on your gates.”
Deuteronomy 6:6-9

The word for “doorposts” is “mezuzah” (מְזוּזָה) in Hebrew. That is why you often see “mezuzot” on the doorposts of those in Judaism. The problem is that they typically consist of a rolled-up scroll in a tube.

The actual writing is hidden from view, so it completely misses the point. They treat the tube as a sort of talisman or charm that wards off evil instead of displaying the words that can actually be read.

I sell various options on the shemayisrael.net website that are visible and can be seen and read. It's a start. I would actually like to design something that contains all the words.

Here is the "mezuzah" Command with an explanation of its intended purpose.

"¹⁸ Therefore you shall lay up these words of Mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ¹⁹ You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ²⁰ And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹ that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which YHWH swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth." Deuteronomy 11:18-21

So, there is an express purpose for this Command. It is not just about putting a tube on your doorpost so you can check that box off your list. The point is that you and your children see the Words and remember them. You need to get them inside you and obey them so that the blessings of obedience are passed on to the next generation.

They were for the benefit of all the people, and also visible for the stranger to see and learn.

When I was involved in evangelical Christianity, there was an enormous emphasis on "witnessing." It could sometimes become daunting and unnatural as you tried to force a conversation about Jesus into every situation. That is not witnessing; that is proselytizing.

Our witness is when we live the Commandments through our love of YHWH, and our lives of obedience provide a witness to others who can read the Instructions on our gates as they walk by the way and on our doorposts when they come to visit.

Those words should explain why we are different. You don't have to hit people over the head with a Bible. You simply need to post the Words for them to read, and then live the words and speak the words.

So, the Commandments were everywhere in the Land for everyone to read, to hear, and to obey. There are also "memorial days" found within those Words.

In fact, the first Feast in the cycle of Appointed Times carries a specific instruction to remember. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we are commanded to commemorate the day that the Yisraelites left Egypt.

"³ And Moses said to the people: Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand YHWH brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. ⁴ On this day you are going out, in the month of the abib. ⁵ And it shall be, when YHWH brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. ⁶ Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to YHWH. ⁷ Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. ⁸ And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what YHWH did for me when I came up from Egypt.' ⁹ It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that YHWH'S Torah may be in your mouth; for with a Strong

Hand YHWH has brought you out of Egypt. ¹⁰ You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.” Exodus 13:3-10

Like the mezuzah, this “memorial day” is a sign. It is something to be seen and heard as the words are spoken and passed on to the next generation.

Now, there is something very special about this memorial that you only see if you read it in context.

Remember that the Passover meal that preceded the Feast of Unleavened Bread was specifically instituted to protect the firstborn in the houses covered by the blood.

The firstborn who were covered lived, and the firstborn who were not covered died. So, there is incredible focus on the firstborn already.

Now consider the portion of Scriptures proceeding the Commandment to remember.

“¹ Then YHWH spoke to Moses, saying, ² Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Yisrael, both of man and beast; it is Mine.” Exodus 13:1-2.

Now, consider the passage following the Commandment to remember.

“¹¹ And it shall be, when YHWH brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, ¹² that you shall set apart to YHWH all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be YHWH'S. ¹³ But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. ¹⁴ So it shall

be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of Hand YHWH brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that YHWH killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to YHWH all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.' ¹⁶ It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand YHWH brought us out of Egypt." Exodus 13:11-16

So, this remembrance is all focused on the firstborn, and we remember to confirm that the focus was on the firstborn when they left Egypt. Indeed, every birth of every firstborn was a remembrance as well.

Why so much emphasis on the firstborn? Well, the firstborn of the family was a priest in the Melchizedek Order. They were the ones who actually slaughtered the Passover lambs in Egypt.

Remember how Abel presented the firstborn of his flocks. YHWH respected Abel and his offering (see Genesis 4:4). Abel was performing the service of Melchizedek.

The firstborn of every house would be the mediator between YHWH and his family. This points to the firstborn Son of all Creation. We see this in the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:1, and it is confirmed by John 1.

Yahushua, as the firstborn of YHWH, shed His blood on Passover as the Lamb of Elohim. Therefore, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we have the privilege of not only remembering the Exodus from Egypt but also remembering the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb rehearsal by Yahushua.

As we remember the past, it also helps us to look forward to the future and the promise of a Greater Exodus. That is one of the benefits of remembering. We remember that we need to continue in the Way so that we may be part of the first fruits presented by the Firstborn.

That leads to another important “memorial day” that happens once a week – the Shabbat.

Here is the Commandment spoken by YHWH from the Mountain.

“⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it set apart (qodesh). ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is the Sabbath of YHWH your Elohim. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days YHWH made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, YHWH blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart.” Exodus 20:8-11

We are specifically told to “remember” this day. So, every seven days, we should remember to set the day apart, and the fulfillment of remembering involves our actions.

Our remembrance of the Sabbath is supposed to remind us of Creation Week. Many people do not understand what happened on Day 1.

A close examination of the Hebrew text reveals that it was not a brand new creation of matter from nothing. The ingredients were already there when YHWH began to fashion our world.

The earth and the water were present in darkness when YHWH began fashioning His creation as a potter works with water and clay. It should remind us that we are a work in progress and that the Creator

wants to continue to mold us into His likeness. I thank YHWH every day that He gives me more time to continue the process.

We must immerse in the living waters in order to stay moist and pliable so that the Master can continue to form us.

When was the last time that you remembered Creation on the Sabbath? Only if we actually rest are we properly remembering, and our resting is a “sign” to others that we are remembering.

This is a good example of the difference between the Eastern and Western mindset. To a Westerner, the idea of remembering involves a thought, while remembering to a Hebrew means doing something - like building an altar.

Christians are taught to make a “decision” and “believe” in their heart, but they are often told that they don’t have to follow the Torah as a demonstration or sign of their belief.

They want to be “saved”, but on their own terms.

We recently concluded Shavuot. Remember how, at Mount Sinai, the people rejected the voice of YHWH? They weren’t comfortable hearing the sound of the shofar. They wanted a mediator who wasn’t so loud and intimidating.

As a result, Moses went up the mountain to receive the instructions, but that wasn’t good enough either. He took too long, and the people started getting restless. So, they decided to declare a Feast to YHWH and worship a golden calf. They said they were doing it for YHWH, but they were acting like a bunch of Egyptians.

This is exactly what Christians are doing when they celebrate Christmas and Easter. They aren't thinking or acting like Hebrews. They are acting like Babylonians.

I hope the problem is apparent - the people wanted a relationship on their own terms, but that is unacceptable in the eyes of YHWH.

Are you restless or uncomfortable with how things are going in your Covenant journey? Have you gotten stuck on your way out of Babylon, or are you getting tired of waiting? Is living in a tent too difficult? Are you sick of camping?

Are you remembering all the pleasures of Egypt? Would you rather go back to the known comforts of Babylon instead of facing the unknown challenges on the way to the Promised Land?

Many of you have read my latest book titled [*Leaving Babylon*](#), where I focus on the journey of Abram out of Babylon. I like to point out that it was his father, Terah, who was first called to lead his family out of Babylon.

Terah got as far as Haran and was about to cross over the Euphrates when he stopped short.

I always wonder what happened. Did he talk to some locals and ask for directions? They would have likely responded, "You're going where? Don't you know there are giants across the river? They eat people, and they'll probably have you and your family for lunch."

Did this give Terah pause? Did he stop to reassess and remember the safety and security of Babylon?

He might have decided that the risks were too high and decided that Haran was as far as he was willing to go. The problem is that he was still in Babylon. The Promises awaited in the Promised Land.

That is the deal. We need to follow YHWH if we want to dwell with Him. That is why Yahushua was constantly on the move, and He told people, "Follow Me." They had to get up and move. They had to exert themselves.

This world is being shaken, and it has been very disorienting for some people who have had their world rocked. Many resort to the comfort and security of Babylon instead of trusting YHWH to lead them out. They want to retreat to their recliner and their remote control and tune out. It's getting crazy out there, after all.

The comfort zone is a dangerous place to be because it breeds apathy and complacency. I, for one, am extremely thankful for the experience of the last several years. It was a real wake-up call concerning the coordinated evil that rules the world, and it was a reminder that they want us dead.

It allowed me to explore my relationship with YHWH in ways previously unimagined. We all need to get out of our comfort zones if we truly want to follow YHWH.

YHWH does not exist within a paradigm of man-made religion, and He doesn't fit well into the American dream either.

I encourage you to step out of the familiar and get ready to walk into the unknown - just like Abram.

The enemy doesn't want you to cross over. He wants you to remain stuck in Haran, fearing what lies on the other side. Our tendency is to find a safe space, but YHWH wants us to step out and learn how to

trust Him. That is the lesson that YHWH repeatedly showed the Yisraelites on their journey to the Promised Land.

The weekly rehearsal of the Sabbath and all of the annual rehearsals are meant to teach us to remember, and that is what helps to build our faith. It will remind us that we serve an Elohim of miracles.

When we remember and act accordingly, He will remember His Covenant people.

“⁴⁰ But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, ⁴¹ and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt ⁴² then I will remember My Covenant with Jacob, and My Covenant with Isaac and My Covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the Land. ⁴³ The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; they will accept their guilt, because they despised My judgments and because their soul abhorred My statutes. ⁴⁴ Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am YHWH their Elohim. ⁴⁵ But for their sake I will remember the Covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the Nations, that I might be their Elohim: I am YHWH.” Leviticus 26:40-45

Notice the emphasis on remembering that traces back to Abraham. Sadly, Terah might have been in this lineage if he didn't stay in Babylon.

Only when Abram crossed over and finally arrived in the Covenant Land did he begin erecting altars. They were memorials, testifying that YHWH was faithful to His people and His promises.

Hebrews build memorials so that we can remember the goodness of YHWH. Have you built any altars, or have you forgotten all the things YHWH has done for you?

In difficult times, it is important to remember not only the promises made but also the promises fulfilled.

So, as we spend this day resting and remembering, maybe take some time to remember all of the altars you have built on your journey out of Babylon. If you haven't built any, I encourage you to take a moment to remember and think about what altars you would build and where you would build them.

Altars are meant to last through time so we can look upon them and remember them. They help us to stay focused on the Covenant and not get distracted by this world.

That is also why we rehearse the Appointed Times. They are landmarks that we return to, waypoints on our journey.

You all are clearly aware of the fact that we are in the midst of the annual cycle of the Appointed Times, and it is significant to note that the next Appointed Time is a day of remembrance – Memorial Day.

Yom Teruah, called “the Day of Blasting,” lands on Day 1 of Month 7. So, you must know when a year begins, when a month begins, and when a day begins in order to observe this Appointed Time properly. You need to reckon all of the markers of time correctly – the two great lights provided through Genesis 1:14.

Of course, Yahushua was born on Yom Teruah, and a “great sign” was provided in the skies when He was born. His birth was an incredible

confirmation that the day begins after sunset because He was born at the beginning of Yom Teruah on September 11, 3 BCE.

“Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.” Revelation 12:1

It was after sunset when Day 1 of Month 7 began, and when the sign described in Revelation 12 was visible to those anticipating the Appointed Time.

Shofars were blown throughout the Land, announcing the birth of the King. It was right after sunset when the glow of the set sun could still be seen with the first crescent moon in the sky. This is the time often referred to as “twilight” or “between the evenings.” It is also when the Passover Lambs are slaughtered.

It is amazing that the two great lights were a part of that sign and provided the markers for the specific Appointed Time.

That sign alone should put to rest all those who insist upon promoting the notion that a day begins at sunrise.

Of course, sunrise is the opposite of “twilight.” It is “the dawning of the day” when the sun shines light in the darkness. But remember that the first day of creation began in darkness, and then YHWH spoke light into creation. The evening and the morning were the first day – “yom echad.” (see Genesis 1:5)

“Yom echad” can also mean “unified day” and it shows how a full day, consisting of the dark portion and the light portion, is stitched together into a complete cycle. That is very Hebrew.

The problem is that many people try to apply their Western thinking to an Eastern text. That is primarily why people searching for their “Hebrew Roots” spread so much confusion.

If we remember Creation when we remember the Sabbath each week, these issues become clear. We begin Shabbat in darkness, just as Creation began in darkness.

Evening occurs after sunset. It marks the beginning of the day when we can see the light of the moon, which marks the passage of days. It all makes perfect sense, but sadly, there are those who confuse the sheep because they are trying to understand Hebrew roots with Western minds.

Now, here is the commandment concerning Yom Teruah.

“²³ And YHWH spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴ Speak to the people of Yisrael, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial (zikrone) proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. ²⁵ You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall present a food offering to YHWH.” Leviticus 23:23-25

The Hebrew word “zikrone” (זִכְרוֹן) means “a memorial, remembrance or a record.” So, Yom Teruah is the real “Memorial Day” if you follow YHWH.

Amazingly, we are exactly in the middle of the week of seven months. There are 3 ½ months until Yom Teruah. We are literally in “the midst of a week.”

If you are in America, I encourage you to look forward to Yom Teruah when we have the privilege and honor of remembering the Birth of

Yahushua along with His teaching, His renewal of the Covenant, His Death, Resurrection and the Sending of the Spirit.

We don't simply memorialize His death. The focus is on His Birth and Life. Indeed, it is His birthday. I find it interesting that YHWH built a birthday celebration into the Appointed Times.

I know that some people like to point out that birthday celebrations have pagan origins, but the simple fact is that mankind has always kept track of people's ages. That is why genealogies are so important and helpful in reckoning Biblical time.

When we remember the Messiah on YHWH's Memorial Day, we also recall the promises of the good things to come. As a result, only the followers of Yahushua can truly celebrate the fullness of this incredible Appointed Time. Specifically, those followers of Yahushua who use the two great lights and reckon time properly.

As we passed through Shavuot, I encouraged people to keep counting because this is no time to be complacent. Continuing to count helps keep us focused on the lessons that Yisrael was supposed to learn on the way to the Promised Land.

If we continue to track the Children of Yisrael on their journey out of Egypt to the Promised Land, we know that Moses went up the mountain on Shavuot to receive further instructions.

While Moses was gone, the Children of Yisrael were not without instructions. YHWH had just spoken the Ten Words, often called The Ten Commandments.

How could they forget those Words? They should have been resonating in their brains and rattling their bones.

In addition, water was still flowing from the rock, and manna was still appearing six days a week.

They had all been circumcised in Egypt, so that sign was a constant reminder of the Covenant. They bore the sign of the Covenant that traced back to their father, Abraham.

They knew their origins, and they likely knew the oral traditions and the Torah instructions as well. After all, Abraham knew the Torah, he obeyed it, and he surely taught it to his household. All who dwelled with him were circumcised.

Remember what was spoken of concerning Abraham – “... because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My Torah.” Genesis 26:5

So, the fact that Moses was absent does not mean that the Yisraelites did not know how to live. They had reminders everywhere.

The same holds true with us.

Yahushua ascended nearly 2,000 years ago, and we anxiously await His return. Nevertheless, He taught us how to live.

He showed us through the example of His life. He even distilled the Ten Words into Two Great Commands.

“³⁷ Yahushua said to him, You shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the First and Great Commandment. ³⁹ And the Second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ On these two Commandments hang all the Torah and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:37-40

We also have reminders everywhere, and we have the Spirit to help us remember.

So, as you rest on Shabbat and look to the two great lights to help you count your days to “Memorial Day” (Yom Teruah), let us remember the two great commandments as we await His return.

Remember to build altars for YHWH so you don’t end up building a golden calf.

Berakhot

Todd

Shema Yisrael (Hear O Yisrael) are the words that Yahushua spoke when asked what was the First Command.

*“The first of all the Commandments is: ‘Hear, O Yisrael,
YHWH our Elohim, YHWH is one.’”*

Mark 12:29

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Matthew 11:15