

## REMEMBERING: A CENTRAL THEME IN BIBLICAL WORSHIP

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Of all the capacities of the human brain, the acquisition, retention, and recall of information are undeniably among the most marvelous and mysterious. Experts in intelligence declare that every impression experienced by an individual, verbal or otherwise, is stored away in the cognitive memory bank, waiting there to be retrieved and brought to the consciousness of those who wish and are able to recover it.<sup>1</sup> Such capacity, though not understood scientifically by the ancients (or even fully by moderns for that matter), has been celebrated and pressed into the service of the intellectual, cultural, and religious life of all people. Human beings have always had the desire and the ability to bring the past into the present by way of memory and in so doing to perpetuate tradition by repristination and reenactment.<sup>2</sup>

This was true, of course, of OT Israel as well, as her sacred texts, canonical and otherwise, abundantly attest. But to the natural proclivity to remember as a cultural necessity is added, in Israel's case, the remarkable assertion that Yahweh, her God, also remembers and demands of his people that they too remember. And the thing that Israel is most of all mandated to remember is God himself, namely, his person and his acts in history and experience.

To remember presupposes something memorable, a word or event that has taken place and become part of the perception. For Israel to remember God, then, is to suggest that the ultimately unknowable has become at least partially knowable through revelation, that is, through Scripture and other means, and to remember his redemptive acts is to become aware of those events of history that truly are the substance of *Heilsgeschichte*.<sup>3</sup> The meaning of these events was not left to the random guesswork of historical observers to decipher but was identified as meaningful theological events

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<sup>1</sup> Irwin Goldstein, "Information Processing," *International Encyclopedia of Psychiatry, Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and Neurology* (ed. Benjamin B. Wolman; New York: Aesculapius, 1977) 6:50.

<sup>2</sup> Reenactment, in fact, is seen by the famous philosopher of history, R. G. Collingwood, to be the very basis for historical knowledge. But reenactment, he also argues, is based on memory, both that of the historian and that of others whom or about whom he knows. See his *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946) esp. pp. 282, 296.

<sup>3</sup> Many scholars see these creedalized in such passages as Deut 26:5b–9 and Josh 24:2–13 which, in effect, are brief recitals of the historical turning points of Yahweh's election and guidance of his people. See e.g. Gerhard von Rad, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: SCM, 1966) 3–8.

worthy of recall by spiritually enlightened prophets who could see the hand of God in particular circumstances.

If a purpose of memory, especially collective or community memory, is to retrieve the past so as to bring it into the heuristic service of the present, then the injunction placed on Israel to remember Yahweh and his works of the past was precisely designed to inculcate the truth embodied in them and to reenact or even relive them for every generation. This is a leading theme of OT worship. It was only as Israel reflected upon Yahweh and repeated the paradigmatic acts of his sovereign grace on their behalf that they could justly claim to be worshiping him.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to explore the notion of remembrance in the Bible (particularly in the OT) as it relates to worship. There is remarkably little information in the Bible about modes or forms of worship but the concerns and topics of worship are pervasive, especially in Psalms and Chronicles. Underlying it all are the implicit and explicit predications of the indispensability of memory, the affirmations that worship is inconceivable without knowing (remembering) who God is and what he has done on behalf of his people. If this is the Biblical model, it is quite unnecessary to emphasize that modern worship can ill afford to neglect remembrance as a core theological principle.

#### I. THE LEXICAL DATA

By far the most common term in the OT for “remember” is the root *zkr* in all its various cognate forms.<sup>5</sup> The verb occurs 222 times in all parts of the canon, 165 times in Qal and otherwise divided nearly evenly between Ni and Hi. The standard lexicons<sup>6</sup> translate respectively “remember,” “be thought of, named, remembered,” “cause to remember, make known,” and the like. Synonyms consist of phrases such as “keep a thing in one’s knowledge,” “lay something upon one’s heart,” or “do not forget” (*lō’ šikhī*). The nominals *zēker* and *zikkārôn*, meaning “remembrance, memory, memorial” are used interchangeably for the most part.

LXX translates *zkr* primarily by *mimnēskomai* or *mnēmoneuō*, the two most common terms also in the NT to speak of remembering. The theological significance of the Hebrew terminology is carried over into the NT where memory also is appealed to as a part of Christian worship. The verb *škh* is usually rendered by Greek *epilanthanomai*.

1. *The verbs zkr and (lō’) škh.* The verbs *zkr* and *škh*, the only two that are significant to this study, occur with either a divine or human subject and with a number of direct objects. These two will be considered with their various subjects and objects and then, more particularly, in the context of worship.

<sup>4</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 1:242–243.

<sup>5</sup> For a careful lexical analysis see H. Eising, “זכר,” *TDOT* 4:64–82; cf. also Leslie C. Allen, “זכר,” *NIDOTTE* 1:1100–1106.

<sup>6</sup> *BDB* 269–271; *KB* 255–257.

a. *zkr with the divine subject*. In obviously anthropomorphic language the OT speaks of God as remembering a number of things including (1) the covenant (Gen 9:15, 16; Exod 2:24; 6:5; Lev 26:42, 45; Jer 14:21; Ezek 16:60; Pss 105:8; 106:45; 111:5; 119:49; cf. 104:42); (2) his *hesed*, etc. (2 Chr 6:42; Hab 3:2; Pss 25:6; 98:3; cf. Jer 2:2); (3) people, including mankind in general (Ps 8:4 [5]); Israel/Judah (Jer 31:19 [20]; Pss 115:12; 136:23), various individuals (Gen 8:1; 19:29; 30:22; Exod 32:13; Neh 6:14; 13:14, 22, 29, 31; Isa 49:1; Jer 15:15; Ps 106:4), and his servants (Deut 9:27) and the congregation (Ps 74:2); (4) offerings and sacrifices (Ps 20:4 [3]); (5) iniquity (Isa 64:8; Jer 14:10; 44:21; Hos 8:13; 9:9; Ps 25:7); and (6) Israel's troubles (Lam 3:19; 5:1).

b. *zkr with a human subject*. Man remembers or is called upon to remember (1) God/Yahweh (Exod 20:24; Deut 8:18; Judg 8:34; 1 Chr 16:4; Isa 17:10; 43:26; Jer 20:9; 51:50; Jonah 2:7 [8]; Zech 10:9; Pss 20:7 [8]; 22:27 [28]; 45:17 [18]; 77:3 [4]; 119:55; Eccl 12:1); (2) the covenant/Torah/commandments (Num 15:39, 40; Josh 1:13; 1 Chr 16:15; Mal 4:4 [3:22]; Pss 103:18; 106:7); (3) the past, including creation (Exod 20:8), bondage/slavery (Deut 5:15; 15:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22), exodus and deliverance (Exod 13:3; Deut 16:3), divine guidance (Deut 8:2; Ps 78:42), history in general (Deut 32:7; Isa 44:21; Pss 78:35; 143:5), Yahweh's mighty acts (Deut 7:18; 24:9; 1 Chr 16:12; Neh 9:17; Ezek 16:63; Pss 77:11 [12]; 105:5), the evil of the nations (Deut 25:17; Ezek 21:31 [32]), and Israel's own sinful ways (Ezek 16:61); and (4) the present and future, including Yahweh's righteousness (Ps 71:16), the ark (Jer 3:16), Zion/Jerusalem (Isa 23:16; Jer 51:50; Ps 137:1, 6), and (my) song (Ps 77:6 [7]).

c. (*lō'*) *škḥ with the divine subject*. God is said not to forget Israel (Isa 44:21; 49:15; Jer 23:39) and the covenant he has made with them (Deut 4:31).

d. (*lō'*) *škḥ with a human subject*. To be remembered and/or not forgotten are (1) Yahweh (Deut 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19) or God (Job 8:13; Pss 9:17; 50:22); (2) the covenant (Deut 4:23; 2 Kgs 17:38) with its laws, precepts, statutes, etc. (Ps 119:61, 83, 93, 109, 141); (3) the works of God (Deut 4:9; Pss 78:7; 103:2; Prov 4:5); and (4) Jerusalem (Ps 137:5).

2. *The nominals zēker and zikkārôn*. a. *zēker*. The nominal *zēker* is employed with respect to Yahweh himself (Ps 6:5 [6]); his name (Exod 3:15; Isa 26:8; Hos 12 [5]; Pss 30:4 [5]; 102:13; 135:13); his attributes and works (Pss 111:4; 145:7); and of other gods (Isa 26:14).

b. *zikkārôn*. The nominal *zikkārôn* is associated with such items or ideas as the Passover (Exod 12:14), the phylacteries (Exod 13:9), the stones of the high priest's shoulder-straps (Exod 28:12; 39:7), the trumpet (Lev 23:24; Num 10:10), the enemies of the Jews (Neh 2:20), and a book written for those who fear God (Mal 3:16).

## II. REMEMBERING/MEMORY AND THE THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP

The Biblical witness is clear that remembering as an attitude or act in the abstract has little value beyond its being a potentially helpful contemplative exercise. In line with Hebrew psychology in general, remembering

has practical implications and applications. God and man alike remember because of something meaningful in the past or in order to bring something about in the present or future, that is, remembering exists both as a result and also to effect a purpose.<sup>7</sup>

It can be argued that, by definition, worship is proper human response to divine initiative. More specifically, it is recognition of who God is and what he has done and the ways and means by which that should be celebrated.<sup>8</sup> This is where remembering enters the process, for it is precisely the person and works of God that must be brought to mind as objects of adoration and wonder, and these are recovered only as the worshiper has the capacity to recall them. Thus, the Word and tradition, vehicles of the transmission of the past, come to bear along with ever-continuing existential appreciation of God in the believer's present. But part of the worshiper's confidence in God and his ways lies in God's own memory, in his assurance that he has not forgotten his people and the covenant basis of their relationship to him. It is because God remembers that those who worship him can recall his past and present benefits with full knowledge that the object of their devotion is reliable and therefore worthy of their implicit trust. It will be helpful now to examine the Biblical teaching about the nature of both divine and human remembering and how they interplay to create worship.

1. *Remembering as divine initiative.* In line with our observation that remembering in the Bible is not a psychological abstraction but an exercise freighted with practical repercussions, the following discussion links God's remembering of specific objects with the implications of such remembrance for worship.

a. *God remembers his covenants.* Fundamental to God's relationship to his creation is its covenant basis, one that existed even before the creation of humankind (Gen 1:26–28). And it is because God remembers his covenants that the recipients of their benefits can have confidence in them. That is, there are inherent reflexes to God's remembrance. It is the cause to which are inextricably linked either baneful or beneficial results. Thus, he said to Noah, "I will remember my covenant . . . [and] never again will the waters . . . destroy all life" (Gen 9:15–16). The memory in this case results in the promise of no more annihilation by a universal flood. Also, on the eve of the exodus God said "I have remembered my covenant" (Exod 6:5), and on that basis the event itself was predicated. Should his people go into exile and there repent, he would "remember my covenant" (Lev 26:42; cf. v. 45) and restore them to their land. The same promise is found in Ezek 16:60, 61 where Yahweh says to Judah, "I will remember the covenant I made with you . . . and you will remember your ways and be ashamed. . . ." The psalmist recounts that, despite Israel's sins in the wilderness, "for their sake he

<sup>7</sup> Eising, "זכר," 81.

<sup>8</sup> This is a way of speaking of the connection between worship and form. Dyrness expresses this connection well: "Worship is the response of the believing heart to God . . . Cult is simply the form of Israel's response to the revelation of God." William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1979) 143.

[Yahweh] remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented" (Ps 106:45). The synonymous phrase "not to forget" (*škh*) makes the same point. Moses encourages the people who may be in distress that "the Lord your God is a merciful God" who will not "forget the covenant with your forefathers" (Deut 4:31).

Closely related is God's remembering his *hesed* and other attributes that bind him to covenant fidelity. David pleads with Yahweh to remember "your great mercy (*rahāmim*) and love (*hesed*)" but to "remember not the sins of my youth" (Ps 25:6–7). To remember these things is tantamount to acting upon them, for good or for bad.

b. *God remembers (his) people.* The Lord is the God of all the earth, so obviously he has all its peoples "in mind" incessantly. However, he remembers redemptively those whom he has chosen.<sup>9</sup> This again demonstrates the powerful activity of the divine remembrance. God does more than call people to mind—he remembers them with purpose. He remembered Noah and delivered him from the flood (Gen 8:1). He remembered Abraham and saved Lot from judgment (Gen 19:29). He remembered Rachel and opened her womb (Gen 30:22). When Moses pleaded with God on Israel's behalf, the Lord remembered Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; i.e., he remembered the promises to the patriarchs (Exod 32:13).

Nehemiah on three occasions asked God to remember him. (1) "Remember me . . . and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done" (Neh 13:14); (2) "Remember me . . . and show mercy to me (*hūsā 'alay*) according to your great love" (*hesed*) (Neh 13:22); (3) "Remember me with favor (*l'eṭōbā*), O my God" (Neh 13:31). In each instance, the remembering is to effect a good result.

Isaiah records the conviction of the servant, "Before I was born the Lord called me; from my birth he had made mention of my name" (*hizkîr š'emî*, lit. "brought my name to remembrance"; Isa 49:1). For God to remember in this case was to elect the servant to his role. Jeremiah prays that Yahweh might remember him, an act that would produce divine care and protection (Jer 15:15). The same prophet recounts Yahweh's eschatological remembrance of Ephraim: "Though I often speak against him, I still remember him" (Jer 31:19 [20]). The result is that he will have mercy on him (v. 20 [21]). The psalmist celebrates the fact that "The Lord remembers us and will bless us" (Ps 115:12). Once more it is clear that remembrance has repercussions in deed.

c. *God remembers acts and deeds.* God also responds to human action by remembering it. Positively, the psalmist prays on behalf of the king, "May he [Yahweh] remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings" (Ps 20:4 [3]). This is in a worship context and is suggestive of the part that remembrance plays there from the divine standpoint.<sup>10</sup> He remembers human worship because it brings him pleasure. But God also remembers

<sup>9</sup> As Dumbrell happily puts it, "Biblically, when the past is 'remembered,' what is often meant is that what is done in present experience is logically dependent upon some past event." William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984) 31.

<sup>10</sup> Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 206. Van Gemeren suggests that the remembrance is synonymous with acceptance. Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991) 5:190.

wickedness Speaking of Judah Jeremiah says, "he [Yahweh] will now remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins" (Jer 14:10). Hosea notes that Yahweh is not pleased with the offerings of his people and, in fact, "will remember their wickedness and punish their sins" with the result that they will go back to Egypt (Hos 8:13). The divine memory here translates into divine retribution.

2. *Remembering as human response.* If worship is initiated by the God who remembers, it finds full expression in the response of God's people who also are called upon to remember. In fact, it is precisely in remembering that a basis for worship exists, for it is God and his works that must be brought to mind regularly and repeatedly as objects of contemplation and celebration. But again, it is not recollection in the abstract; true worship demands participation by reciprocal act and even by reenactment. This at least is the picture that emerges from a survey of the Biblical witness. The following are the ways the believer and/or the believing community is called upon to remember.

a. *The worshiper remembers God.* Fundamental to Israel's faith was the recognition and recollection that Yahweh was Israel's God. At the very outset of the covenant relationship at Sinai the Lord had said, "wherever I cause my name to be honored (*'azkîr*, lit. "cause to be remembered"), I will come to you and bless you" (Exod 20:24). To remember the name is, of course, to remember God.<sup>11</sup> And this remembrance is here at least connected to specific places of God's own choosing.

Deuteronomy is particularly rich in this respect. Moses enjoins Israel to "Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe [all the covenant requirements]" (Deut 8:11). To the contrary, they must remember him, for it is he who confirms his covenant by giving "the ability to produce wealth" (8:18). Moreover, if they do forget him—which is described as following and worshiping other gods—they will perish (8:19).<sup>12</sup> To remember is to be obedient in loyalty and worship. The linkage between remembering Yahweh and worshiping him is also established by David who chides those who trust (*hizkîr*, lit. bring to mind) chariots and horses rather than Yahweh their God (Ps 20:7 [8]). The same psalmist declares that "all the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord . . . [and] bow down before him" (Ps 22:27 [28]). Remembering again implies submission and undivided loyalty.

An interesting connection between remembering and the whole apparatus of community worship and praise occurs in 1 Chr 16:4: "He [David] appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to make petition [*l'ezkîr*, lit. "to bring to mind," that is, to invoke God]. . . ."<sup>13</sup> Jeremiah said he would no longer mention (*'ezk'ennû*, lit. "bring to remem-

<sup>11</sup> This is not the place to get into the so-called "Name theology," in which the divine name is a metaphor for God himself. For this see e.g. Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978) 197–213.

<sup>12</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 189–190.

<sup>13</sup> Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993) 315.

brance”) the Lord as a prophet, but the word of God burning in his very bones gave him no such option (Jer 20:9). To remember false gods is to worship them, as Joshua makes clear. “Do not invoke (*lō’ tazkîrû*, lit. ‘do not bring to mind’) the names of [false] gods . . . [and do] not serve them (*lō’ ta’abdûm*) or bow down to them (*lō’ tištaḥwû lâhem*)” (Josh 23:7). “To serve” and “to bow down” are, of course, standard terms for worship.<sup>14</sup>

b. *The worshiper remembers the covenants and their requirements.* Though “remembering God” surely by itself means more than merely calling him to mind, its lack of precision demands more objective or tangible expression. That is, what is there to remember about God beyond himself and his ineffable, transcendent nature and attributes? Worship may (indeed, must) embrace an encounter with the person of God—a way of remembering him—but it is not complete without an understanding of and response to his mighty works. These, too, must be remembered, and in such a way as to affect human behavior and action.

An enlightening text in this regard is Num 15:39: “You [Israel] will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the Lord, *that you may obey them. . .*” To remember the covenant requirements is tantamount to doing them.<sup>15</sup> Verse 40 goes on to assert that such response to memory will bring holiness. In Deuteronomy Moses commands, “Be careful not to forget (*pen tiškiḥû*) the covenant,” for to do so is to lead to false worship, to idolatry (Deut 4:23). The connection is even clearer in 2 Kgs 17:38–39: “Do not forget the covenant I have made with you and do not worship other gods. Rather, worship the Lord your God. . . .” It is in remembering that idolatry can be precluded.

David adds his voice by insisting that the Lord’s love (*ḥesed*) is “with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts” (Ps 103:17–18). Those who, to the contrary, forget the redeeming acts of God are prone to rebellion (Ps 106:7). They are not like the poet of Psalm 119 who over and over again attributes his faithfulness to Yahweh to his constant remembering of Yahweh and his ways. It is because he remembers his name that he can keep his law (v. 55). He does not forget Yahweh’s law (v. 61), decrees (v. 83), and precepts (v. 93), all of which are synechdocal of the entire covenant.

c. *The worshiper remembers God’s acts in the past.* It is impossible to understand the self-revelation of God himself in the Bible discretely, for his person and his works are interlinked. He does what he is, and he is what he does. To remember Yahweh is to reflect on his acts, and to recollect the acts is to better understand him and worship him.

The first of the mighty works of God is, of course, creation itself. It is not surprising, therefore, that the motive clause of the fourth commandment—

<sup>14</sup> For an exhaustive list of the combination עבד / השתחווה (and vice versa) and the use of these terms in worship texts, see H. D. Preuss, “חורה,” *TDOT* 4:254–255.

<sup>15</sup> Ashley captures the idea well when he says that remembering “does not mean simply bringing something to mind, but using whatever means necessary to make real in the present what was real in the past: the power and love of Yahweh shown in statutes and ordinances for the guidance of his people (cf. Deut. 6:24; 10:13). Remembering in this sense includes doing.” Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 295.

“Remember the Sabbath day”—is: “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth . . .” (Exod 20:8–11). Remembering here is not an option—it is a command (inf. abs.). And the result of remembering is cessation from labor. The ceremony of Sabbath-keeping, a focal point of Israel’s worship, is inextricably linked to memory.<sup>16</sup> The motive clause in the Deuteronomy Decalogue is different (“you were slaves in Egypt”), as is the object of memory.<sup>17</sup> This time the day is to be observed (*šāmôr*), and the reason for its observation (the exodus deliverance) is to be remembered (Deut 5:12, 15). In both versions the day is sacralized by events that are to be commemorated.

Other holy days and eras also find their source in the past and are reprinted by remembrance. This is true, for example, of the sabbatical year release of slaves (Deut 15:15) and the Festival of Weeks (Deut 16:12). Most important is the rationale for the celebration of the festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread. As to the former Yahweh commands, “Commemorate (*zākôr*, lit. ‘remember’) this day, the day you came out of Egypt . . .” (Exod 13:3). This festival, of paramount significance to Jews up to the present day, is predicated on remembrance. The same is true of Massot, though the instruction this time is to celebrate it *so as to* bring the redemptive event back to mind (Deut 16:3). Memory, then, is both the trigger to celebration and worship and a result to be achieved by them.

The traditional rituals associated with these festivals suggest that memory of the events to which they attest is best achieved by reenacting or dramatizing them. This is particularly clear with respect to Passover—Massot, of course (Exod 12:14, 17), and, in fact, their very observance as ritual was to answer the question of generations to come: “what does this ceremony mean to you?” (Exod 12:26).<sup>18</sup> This is implicit also in the passage following the Deuteronomic Decalogue and Shema, in which children must be taught the ancient traditions by word, example, and symbolism (Deut 6:6–9). Virtually every activity of every day was calculated to conjure up memories of the past, so that the children of the present and future could reflect on their God and celebrate his mighty acts on their behalf.

The force of this is captured by David in Ps 143:5–6:

I remember the days of long ago;  
I meditate on all your works  
and consider what your hands have done.  
I spread out my hands to you;  
my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.

<sup>16</sup> Childs translates, “Remember to keep the sabbath holy . . .,” an acceptable rendering, and he correctly sees the sabbath as the *’ôt* (sign) to remind both God and Israel “of the eternal covenantal relationship which was the ultimate purpose of creation.” Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974) 416.

<sup>17</sup> For other differences between the two, both formally and conceptually, see my *Deuteronomy* (NAC 4; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994) 149–152.

<sup>18</sup> The ritual, qualifications, and meaning of these festivals are outlined in the Mishnah (*Mo’ed Pesahim*). Cf. Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) 229–251. Of special interest is *Pesahim* 10:5E: “In every generation a person is duty-bound to regard himself as if he personally has gone forth from Egypt. . . .” This illustrates the role of memory in binding the past to the present.



This act of prayer (so *pēras* in v. 6, *BDB* 831) is prompted by remembering God's past goodness. This is in line with another exhortation by Moses to "be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget (*pen tiškah*) the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them" (Deut 4:9). This retention of the past would form the foundation of proper worship in the future (Deut 4:15–31).

A poignant and powerful illustration of the centrality of memory to proper worship is the plight of the exilic community as related in Psalm 137. There in Babylon, the poet says, "we sat and wept when we remembered Zion" (v. 1). This is more than homesickness, for when the captors request the Jews to sing songs of Zion, they reply that this cannot be done outside the sacred precincts (v. 4).<sup>19</sup> Then the psalmist, reflecting on the need to remember the holy city and its temple as the locus of community worship, cries out in imprecation, *'im 'eškāhēk y'ērūšālāim tiškah y'mīnī* ("if I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right [hand] forget"; v. 5). And he goes on to say, "may my tongue cling to my palate if I do not remember you" (*'im lō' 'ezk'rēkī*; v. 6). Praise is impossible when Jerusalem and all it signifies is forgotten. This forgetting is more than mental lapse. It is failing to recognize the significance of special times and places for legitimate worship (v. 6).

3. *Remembrance in NT worship.* Remembrance as a constituent of NT worship is, not surprisingly, associated with (and limited to) the Lord's Supper, for the Lord's Supper was instituted as a New Covenant expression of the Passover-Unleavened Bread ceremony of the OT (Luke 22:7–8; cf. Matt 26:17–19; Mark 14:12–15). Just as that festival was to be celebrated as a memorial to the exodus redemption (Exod 13:14–16), so the Lord's Supper was to be a perpetual reminder of the new and greater exodus by which all sinners could find release from sin's bondage and deliverance into new and everlasting life.

As its inauguration Jesus, having taken the bread and wine and blessed them, said, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). The word translated "remembrance" (*anamnēsis*) is regularly used in LXX to render Hebrew *'azkārâ*, a nominal from *zkr*, "remember." The Hebrew vocable occurs only seven times, all but once in Leviticus (2:2, 9, 16; 5:12; 6:8 [15]; 24:7; cf. Num 5:26). The NIV consistently translates it "memorial portion," the idea being that the offerings so described drew attention to Yahweh, that is, brought him and his saving works to mind (cf. *TDOT* 4:80).

This is at least the point in the Lord's Supper observation—it is to be done in his remembrance.<sup>20</sup> Paul reinforces this interpretation in 1 Corinthians, where he presents the authoritative theological interpretation of

<sup>19</sup> Kraus observes that the verb *zkr* here "probably does not refer to any precious memory but to the communal cultic lament." Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 502.

<sup>20</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 805: "The action is to remind the disciples of Jesus and of the significance of his death."

the Eucharist. Both the eating of the bread and drinking of the cup are in remembrance (*anamnēsis*) of Christ (1 Cor 11:24, 25). Whenever these are done properly, Paul says, “you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (v. 26). The symbolism or reenactment of the death of our Lord is a proclamation without words of the fundamental work of human redemption.<sup>21</sup> It is ritual and drama that eloquently calls to mind the meaning of the gospel.

### III. CONCLUSION

Though by no means exhaustive, the following list of theological and practical observations about remembering and worship are offered for consideration. The plea offered with it is that it be understood that there is more to worship than remembrance. The stated thrust of this paper, however, has been to focus on this aspect of public approach to God and to do so primarily on the basis of OT patterns and proclamations.

1. *Israel is not the Church and the Church is not Israel.* However, both are the people of God and of the same God. He who revealed himself to Israel in OT times has revealed himself even more fully in Christ and in the NT. Nothing in that revelation, however, necessitates a different understanding of the fundamental nature of God, of worshiping communities, or of the basic principles and practice of worship.

2. *Worship in the OT is inextricably linked to remembering.* It was incumbent on Israel to recognize that Yahweh took note of people and events, that is, he “remembered”; that they too must remember him and his mighty acts of creation and redemption; and that remembering was not limited to the abstraction of passive thought but involved active response.

3. *This response as a whole may be defined as worship.* Every word of praise, every petition, every act of ritual and ceremony, every obedient work—all these are worship and all are triggered by remembrance and depend on remembrance, if they are to be carried on into the future as part of the living tradition and mission of the Church.

4. *In practical terms, the Christian worshiper must seek every means of bringing to mind the person and attributes of God.* This includes reflecting deeply upon his salvific work from remotest times to the present and celebrating in Biblical ways what these mean to corporate and individual life and experience. The definition of worship must be broadened to incorporate the notion of response in all its forms, for obedient and loving response is the essence of what it means to be a believer.

<sup>21</sup> For the Lord’s Supper as “doing,” see Alasdair I. C. Heron, *Table and Tradition* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983) 29–30.