

WHY WE REMEMBER

A Devotional Meditation on YOM TERUAH (FEAST OF TRUMPETS / ROSH HASHANA)

Exodus 3:13-17, 20:1-18; Numbers 15:37-41; Deuteronomy 25:17-18, 32:4-9; Psalm 11; Jeremiah 31:21; Ecclesiastes 12:1-3; Romans 11:17-18; Ephesians 2:11-13

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The head of God's biblical year is a time of remembering. Jewish tradition says God created human beings on Rosh Hashanah, the sixth day of creation. By that reckoning, we have entered the 5787th year of the world's existence, and of our creation as images of the Living God. That is cause for celebration and making noise, which is why the Creator commanded that we mark this day with blowing trumpets.*



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We must remember not only the good things, but also the painful things. That's why this particular day of remembering is especially meaningful for Americans, because it's the 25th year since evil men decided to inflict incalculable harm on our nation.

What are we to do with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001? How are we to remember them as they slide into the sea of human memories? Even now, many who hear me are not old enough to remember the world before 9/11. To them, that world is a foreign as the world of ancient Israel. But I remember.

In my lifetime, I have talked with people who remembered World War II, the Great Depression, World War I, and the Spanish-American War. Those people talked with others who remembered the American Civil War and the Mexican-American War. And those people talked with others who remembered the American Revolution and life before there was a United States.

Four generations of my living memory go back three hundred years. What I don't remember personally, I learned from those who were there. They left records and writings, just as Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles left records and writings so that we could learn and remember.

This is of God. He commands us to remember. Here are some of the things he specifically mentioned:

* "The Purpose of Creation" Chabad.org, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4456/jewish/The-Purpose-of-Creation.htm.

- Remember who he is:

Say this to the people of Israel: "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 is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

Exodus 3:15 ESV

- Remember his set-apart time:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Exodus 20:8 ESV

- Remember who we are and what we are to do:

So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD your God.

Numbers 15:40-41 ESV

- Remember the enemies of God and of his Kingdom:

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, how he attacked you on the way when you were faint and weary, and cut off your tail, those who were lagging behind you, and he did not fear God."

Deuteronomy 25:17-18 ESV

- Remember the foundation of the Covenant into which we are adopted:

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.

Romans 11:17-18 ESV

- Remember what we were before we were adopted into God's Covenant, and how we were brought in:

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called 'the uncircumcision' by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Ephesians 2:11-13 ESV

The Creator also told us how we are to do this remembering:

Remember the days of old;
consider the years of many generations;
ask your father, and he will show you,
your elders, and they will tell you.

Deuteronomy 32:7 ESV

This is more important than we realize. We live in a culture that demonizes the foundations of godly civilization, which is the Judeo-Christian civilization as we have known it. Our civilization is just as imperfect as the civilization of ancient Israel from which it was derived, not because the Creator who established it is imperfect, but because we, his images, are still imperfect.

The great error of our day is the tendency to point out the flaws while ignoring the principles by which we know they are flaws. As a result, we have no idea how to keep the Sabbath holy because we have no concept of holiness, and we have trouble honoring our fathers and mothers because we are no longer sure what a mother is, and because fatherhood has somehow become linked with toxic masculinity.

We live in a time such as David described when he asked, “if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3 ESV) The answer is to do what Jeremiah prescribed in the famous New Covenant chapter:

Set up road markers for yourself;
make yourself guideposts;
consider well the highway,
the road by which you went.
Return, O virgin Israel,
return to these your cities.

Jeremiah 31:21 ESV

That’s a prophetic call to return to our roots in the Covenant God established with our father Abraham. Once we have returned and recovered those ancient ways, we have a responsibility to future generations to guard them. The best way to do that is by taking the advice of David’s son Solomon:

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come
and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”

Ecclesiastes 12:1 ESV