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A little something to remember me by:

The relation between ritual and remembrance in the Pentateuch

In a vast amount of Semitic dedicatory inscriptions from the Persian and Hellenistic period the votary asks for "good remembrance" from the deity in return for the dedicated object. But what does it mean to be remembered favorably by a deity? The act of remembering on behalf of a goddess or god is not merely a cognitive exercise of recalling a past event, but an act that is expected to have a tangible beneficial effect for the one remembered; Yahweh remembers Noah in the ark in Genesis 8:1 and makes the waters withdraw and Yahweh remembers the childless Rachel in Genesis 30:22 and opens her womb. To be remembered by Yahweh is to be taken care of.

In this paper I wish to explore the relation between ritual acts and God's remembrance in the Pentateuch in order to shed light on the relationship between votive practice (giving gifts to the gods) and blessing in the Hebrew Bible and its surrounding world.

In this paper I wish to explore the relationship between Yahweh's remembrance of his worshippers and ritual acts and objects in the Pentateuch. This relationship may add an extra dimension to our understanding of the well-known terminology of good remembrance in dedicatory inscriptions.

The phrase "for good remembrance" (*ldkrwn ṭb*) and the more common "may he be remembered for good" (*dkyr lṭb*) and variations of these appear frequently in Aramaic in both inscriptions and graffiti from Nabataea, Palmyra, Dura Europos, Hatra and Palestine.[1] With the discovery of a Persian to Hellenistic period sanctuary dedicated to Yahweh on Mount Gerizim and of the dedicatory inscriptions from Gerizim, this well-attested Aramaic formula of dedication has now recently appeared in a context of Yahwistic worship as well.[2]

[1] A majority of these can be found in CIS Vol II. For a good presentation to some of the inscriptions carrying the be remembered for good/for good remembrance formula see John F. Healey, "'May he be Remembered for Good': An Aramaic Formula", *Targumic and Cognate Studies: Essays in Honour of Martin McNamara*, Ed. by Kevin J. Cathcart and Michael Maher, Sheffield Academic Press, 1996, pp. 177-186 (with references). See also Mark Lidzbarski, *Handbuch der Nordsemitischen Epigraphik nebst Ausgewählten Inschriften*, I. Text, Weimar, Verlag von Emil Felber, 1898, pp. 165-169 and Schottroff, *'Gedenken' im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*, 1967, pp. 58-89. Many of the inscriptions from Hatra are published by Fuad Safar in "Inscriptions of Hatra", *Sumer*, Vol. IX, No. 1, 1953, pp. 7-20 and the synagogue inscriptions are catalogued in Joseph Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic: The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues*, Carta, Jerusalem, 1978 (Hebrew), see index p. 150.

[2] Yitzhak Magen, Haggai Misgav and Levana Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations, Volume I, The Aramaic Hebrew and Samaritan Inscriptions*, Staff Officer of Archaeology – Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria, Israel Antiquities Authorities, Jerusalem, 2004; Yitzhak Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations, Volume II, A Temple City*, Staff Officer of Archaeology – Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria, Israel Antiquities Authorities, Jerusalem, 2008; Yitzhak Magen, "The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim in Light of the Archaeological Evidence", *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, edited by Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers and Rainer Albertz, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana, 2007, pp. 157-211.

Roughly speaking, the inscriptions with a version of the remembrance formula appear in three different contexts: 1) funerary, 2) as graffiti and 3) in a sanctuary setting, inscribed on temple walls or pavement or on statues and altars.

As an example of the first category I may mention this Palmyrene inscription in a chamber tomb founded in 98 CE and belonging to Abdastor:

> "May Moqaimu son of Belshuri be remembered (*dkyr*) for good (*bṭb*)."[3]

Another example is this funerary stele, found in Oumm el-Amed, south of Tyre. This inscription is one of the comparatively rare occurrences of remembrance terminology in Phoenician and Punic:

> "This is the memorial (*skr*) stele of Ba'alyaton, son of Ba'alyaton, [head of] the olivepress."[4]

These two examples help to illustrate the difficulties with inscriptions found in a funerary context; their function may be purely commemorative, as is probably the case with the stele from Oumm el-Amed, and they may be intended as either commemorations, invocations or dedications. In the case of the inscription from the tomb of Abdastor it is impossible to know whether Moqaimu is deceased or alive and whether this has any effect on the meaning of "remembrance". It is very possible, perhaps even likely, that inscriptions with remembrance formulae found in funerary contexts serve functions that are directly parallel with similar inscriptions found in sanctuary contexts, but for the moment I will leave funerary inscriptions out of the discussion.

The most numerous examples by far of the remembrance formula are graffiti, particularly Nabataean graffiti carved on large rocks and boulders along the major trade routes and roads in the Sinai Peninsula and in the regions around Petra and Hegra.[5]

The Nabataean graffiti generally begin with "remembered be" (*dkyr*), "peace to" (*šlm*) or "blessed be" (*bryk*), or a combination of two or all of these expressions, followed by a name and very often the expression "for good" (*bṭb*) is added.[6]

Among the Nabataean graffiti from Wadi Haggag in central northeastern Sinai we find examples of all three expressions:

> "Rembered be (*dkyr*) Hantalu son of 'Amru for good (*bṭb*)".[7]

> "Blessed be (*bryk*) Honai'u son of 'Abd'alba'ali for good".[8]

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[3]Harald Ingholt, "Inscriptions and Sculptures from Palmyra II", *Berytus*, vol. 5, 1938, pp. 93-140, p. 137; Klaas Dijkstra, *Life and Loyalty: A Study in the Socio-Religious Culture of Syria and Mesopotamia in the Graeco-Roman Period Based on Epigraphical Evidence*, Brill, 1995, p. 91.

[4] Maurice Dunand et Raymond Duru, *Oumm El-'Amed: Une ville de l'époque hellénistique aux échelles de Tyr, Texte*, Paris, 1962, p. 187.

[5] Avraham Negev stated in 1979 that about 3000 Nabatean graffiti had been found ("Graffiti and Dedications", BASOR no. 235, 1979, pp. 27-30). A majority of these can be found in CIS vol II.

[6] Negev, "Graffiti and Dedications", p. 27.

[7] Avraham Negev, *The Inscriptions of Wadi Haggag, Sinai*, Qedem vol 6, Jerusalem, 1977, No. 210, p. 54.

"Remembered be for good and peace (*šlm*) to 'Owaimu son of Wa'ilu for good".[9]

Sometimes the same formulae occur in Greek inscriptions and graffiti as well, the Greek synonym for remembered being "mnaesthae" (μνησθη).[10]

The difficulty with these graffiti is how we should interpret them; are they mere graffiti in the modern sense of the word, belonging to the "Kilroy was here"-type, or are they in fact invocations to a deity?

Avraham Negev argues, that the Nabataean graffiti should all be interpreted as invocations or prayers and that even the ones containing only a name should be read as abbreviated versions of the formula "remembered be/peace to/blessed be PN for good before the deity".[11] I am inclined to agree with Negev that these graffiti are expressions of more than travelers wanting to eternalize themselves 'just because', but unfortunately the context of these mini-texts is so uncertain that we can only speculate about their origin and function.

The third context is a sanctuary setting where the remembrance formula appears on parts of the sanctuary building itself, such as walls or pavement, or on cultic paraphernalia, such as altars and statues. Because the broader context in these cases is clearly cultic and because names of divinities are often mentioned in the inscriptions it is reasonable to assume that these inscriptions are either dedications or invocations.

For the present paper I have picked as examples the previously mentioned Yahweh sanctuary on Mount Gerizim, near present day Nablus, and a Nabataean Allat sanctuary from Ramm, also known as wadi Rumm.[12] I shall commence with the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim:

During the Mount Gerizim Excavations which were carried out between 1983 and 2006 under the direction of Yitzhak Magen a Yahwistic sanctuary and a Hellenistic city were uncovered at the site

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[8] Negev, *The Inscriptions of Wadi Haggag, Sinai*, 1977, No. 226, p. 57.
[9] Negev, *The Inscriptions of Wadi Haggag, Sinai*, 1977, No. 222, p. 57.
[10] Negev, *The Inscriptions of Wadi Haggag, Sinai*, 1977, Nos. 3, 47, 105, 127, 130, 137, 163, 172 and 177.
[11] Negev, "Graffiti and Dedications", 1979, p. 27; Negev, Nabatean Archaeology Today, New York University Press, 1986, p. 116.
[12] In the dissertation I have selected a handful of examples of 'good remembrance inscriptions' from a sanctuary setting, but due to limitations of space in this paper I have decided to focus on the Mount Gerizim inscriptions and only one comparative example. So far my case-studies include the dedicatory inscriptions from the Asur-Sheruah temple in post-Assyrian Assur (Walter Andrae, *Das wiedererstandene Assur*, J.C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1938; Walter Andrae und Heinz Lenzen, *Die Partherstadt Assur*, Otto Zeller, 1967; Basile Aggoula, *Inscriptions et graffites araméens d'Assour*, Napoli, 1985; Andrae, Walter and P. Jensen: „Aramäische Inschriften aus Assur und Hatra aus der Partherzeit", *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft*, Nr. 60, juli 1920, pp. 1-51), the Nabataean inscriptions from Jebel Moneijah (Negev, Avraham: "A Nabatean Sanctuary at Jebel Moneijah, Southern Sinai", *Israel Exploration Journal*, volume 27, number 4, 1977, pp. 219-231; Negev, Avraham: "Nabatean Inscriptions in Southern Sinai", *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (winter 1982), pp. 21-25), The Hatrene inscriptions from building E or the so called "Hellenistic Temple" in Hatra (Vattioni, Francesco. Le Iscrizioni di Hatra. Supplemento n. 28 agli ANNALI, vol. 41 (1981), fasc. 3, Napoli: Istituto Orientale di Napoli, 1981; Yasuyoshi Okada, "Pseudoperipteral temples in late-antiquity Mesopotamia: A note on the last stage of the Babylonian tradition in architecture", Al-Rafidan, vol. 18, 1997, pp. 281-285) and the Syriac inscriptions from Sumatar Harabesi (Drijvers and Healey: *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrrhoene*, 1999; H.J.W. Drijvers: "New Syriac Inscriptions and Archaeological finds from Edessa and Sumatar Harabesi", *BSOAS*, vol 36:1, 1973, pp. 1-14).

of Mount Gerizim.[13] The sanctuary shows signs of two main building phases: The first face is the construction of the Persian-period sacred precinct in the mid-fifth century B.C.E.[14] This structure occupies the highest spot on the mount and was the first structure to be built on Mount Gerizim. The Persian-period temple was active for approximately 250 years until the second building phase which dates to the early second century B.C.E., during the reign of Antiochus III, when a new temple and precinct was build on top of the Persian-period structure. There are no signs of abandonment or discontinuity between the Persian and Hellenistic periods. The Hellenistic city was founded around the sacred precinct in the late fourth century B.C.E. and reached its maximal size of about 400 dunams, which is 800 m. long and some 500 m. wide, in the second century B.C.E. Both city and temple were destroyed by John Hyrcanus I in 111-110 B.C.E.[15]

The sacred precinct at Mount Gerizim appears to conform to regulations for the cult known from the Pentateuch both with regard to a ban on pictures, purification rules for priests and the assemblage of sacrificial bones found on the mountain.[16] Although Mount Gerizim in later tradition became, and remains to this day, the centre for the Samaritan religion there is nothing distinctly Samaritan about the Persian and Hellenistic period sanctuary at Gerizim. What we find at Gerizim is rather an example of a proto-Jewish, or proto-Samaritan if you will, cult comparable to the contemporary Yahwistic cults in Jerusalem and Elephantine.[17]

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[13] One inscription written in Paleo-Hebrew contains the name YHWH and thus clearly identifies the sanctuary as Yahwistic, see Yitzhak Magen, *A Temple City*, 2008, p. 155. For an excellent overview of the excavations see Yitzhak Magen, "The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim", 2007. A Late-Roman-period citadel and a Byzantine church precinct dedicated to Mary Theotokos was also uncovered (see below) and the Roman Temple to Zeus Hypsistos on the northern hill north of the city was reexcavated.

[14] Magen sums up the evidence on dating as follows: "To conclude this section on the dating of the first phase of the sacred precinct at the site, we may state, on the basis of pottery, coins, and C-14 testing – and with a great degree of certainty – that the first phase of the precinct was built in the fifth century B.C.E." (Magen, "The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple", 2007, p. 180). This evidence conclusively disproves a construction date in the fourth century as it is described by Josephus in Ant. 11.302-12, 321-25, see Magen, "The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple", 2007, pp. 190-91.

[15] After the destruction the city remained uninhabited. In the early fourth century CE during the Byzantine period parts of the sacred precinct were reconstructed by the Samaritans and in the late fifth century the area was badly damaged when the emperor Zenon demolished the precinct in order to make way for the construction of a church dedicated to Mary "Mother of God".Yitzhak Magen, "The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple", 2007; Yitzhak Magen, Haggai Misgav and Levana Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations, Volume I, The Aramaic Hebrew and Samaritan Inscriptions*, Staff Officer of Archaeology – Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria, Israel Antiquities Authorities, Jerusalem, 2004.

[16] Yitzhak Magen, *A Temple City*, 2008, pp. 141-164. A contentious issue is whether the cult at Mount Gerizim shared the xenophobia voiced in the traditions of Ezra and Nehemiah. Bob Becking argues that if the Persian name Bagohi is reconstructed correctly in inscription no. 27, then the sanctuary seems to have been open to people with a Persian background: "Earliest Samaritan Inscriptions: A Parting of the Ways?", 2007, in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, edited by Lipschits, Knoppers and Albertz, Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2007, pp. 213-222, pp. 218-219. Against this, although not addressing Becking's point directly, is Magen's observation that there were no imported ceramics to be found on Gerizim. To Magen this indicates strict observance of the laws of Gentile impurity: *A Temple City*, 2008, p. 160.

[17] Bob Becking, "Earliest Samaritan Inscriptions: A Parting of the Ways?", 2007, p. 216 and 220. The excavators follow the tradition voiced by Josephus that the temple at Gerizim was modeled after the temple in Jerusalem and they do not point to any distinctly Samaritan or non-jerusalemite features in the sacred precinct, Yitzhak Magen, *A Temple City*, 2008, pp. 98 and 141-164.

During the excavations some four hundred inscriptions were found in and around the temple precinct.[18] The majority of these are written in Aramaic using either lapidary Aramaic or Proto-Jewish script. The remaining inscriptions are written in Paleo-Hebrew ("Neo-Hebrew") and Samaritan.[19] The Aramaic, Hebrew and Samaritan inscriptions were published by the excavators in 2004.[20] The few inscriptions written in Samaritan script belong to the medieval period. The Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions date to the Hellenistic period but some of them may belong to the earliest building phase of the sanctuary in the Persian period. In the following I will focus on the Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions. The vast majority of the Mt. Gerizim inscriptions are dedicatory or votive inscriptions and they follow either a long or short version of a dedicatory formula. The short formula is 'That which offered PN son of PN (from GN) for himself, his wife and his sons'. The long formula begins in the same way but adds the ending 'for good remembrance before God in this place'.[21]

An example of an unusually well preserved and practically intact inscription is no. 147: "That which offered Delayah son of Shimon for himself and for his sons [this] stone for good remembrance before God in this place."[22] This inscription is a good example of the dedicatory formula in its full length but it is also a rarity because it explicitly states the nature of the offering referred to by the relative particle, namely "this stone".[23] I will return to the question of what is offered below.

The Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions are carved on building and paving stones and regrettably with only one exception none of the inscriptions were found in situ due to the destruction and rebuilding of the site. The excavators estimate that the hundreds of inscriptions found so far may only be a small part of what could have originally been thousands. Since none of the inscriptions were found in situ they can not be dated using stratigraphic data and their original location can not be determined with certainty. However, the quality and working of the building stones does seem to give an indication of where the inscriptions were situated in the sacred precinct; it is possible that the inscriptions are all carved on stones that were part of an inner wall, separating the inner precinct

[18] The presentation of the inscriptions in the following is based on Magen, Misgav and Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, 2004, pp. 1-41.

[19] Neo-Hebrew is the term used in the publication of the Gerizim inscriptions to describe what is generally referred to as Paleo-Hebrew, see Magen, Misgav and Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, 2004, p. 30 and Joseph Naveh, "Scripts and Inscriptions in Ancient Samaria", *IEJ* 48, pp. 91-100, 1998.

[20] 36 of the inscriptions were published prior to this in Joseph Naveh and Yitzhak Magen, "Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions of the Second-Century BCE at Mount Gerizim", *Atiqot* XXXII, 1997, pp. 9*-17*. A body of Greek inscriptions, some from the Hellenistic period but most belonging to the Byzantine period, were uncovered as well, but are not yet published, Magen, Misgav and Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, 2004, p. 13.

[21] Sometimes the dedicators are women. In some rare cases a woman's name is listed alongside her husband's so that she appears a co-dedicator and not merely as beneficiary. In other cases a woman is mentioned as sole dedicator with no mention of a husband perhaps because the woman was divorced, widowed or financially independent. See Magen, Misgav and Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, 2004, p. 20ff.

[22] My translation. In the publication the word order is changed, "Delayah son of Shimon offered [this] stone for himself and his sons for good remembrance before God in this place" (Magen, Misgav and Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, 2004, p. 137), I have chosen to preserve the Semitic word order in order to emphasize the formulaic dedicatory language.

[23] Only one other inscription, no. 148, mentions "this stone" as the offering, see Magen, Misgav and Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, 2004, pp. 138-9.

only accessible to priests from the external precinct. The general impression is that the stones were not originally prepared for an inscription, but that the inscriptions were added only after the stones were set in place in the wall.[24] All of the inscriptions show a fairly high level of workmanship and have very few spelling errors. This along with the fact that most of the inscriptions follow variations of a set formula and that only one inscription can be found on any one stone indicate that the inscriptions were carried out by skilled craftsmen, perhaps even by temple officials. It is inconceivable that the inscriptions were carved without the consent of the temple.[25]

Now let us return to the question of what the relative particle refers to in the dedicatory formula "that which offered". In only two of the inscriptions is the nature of the offering made explicit with a reference to "this stone".[26] It is possible that the actual stone carrying the inscription is meant in every single instance, but rather than the building stones them selves the dedicatory formula probably refers to a gift of sacrifices or money, or the equivalent of money, dedicated to the deity and eternalized with an inscription.[27] In light of the tradition in the Hebrew Bible for describing contributions of valuables and sacrifices to the deity in terms of either construction or restoration of the tabernacle/temple as in Exodus 25 or II Kings 12 and II Chronicles 24 it is a possibility that the gifts to the deity presented at Gerizim were interpreted along these lines as well.[28] Thus, an offering although not of the stone itself could be understood to equal the value of a stone or be interpreted as a contribution to the general maintenance of the temple and thereby give the donor and his beneficiaries the "right of dedication" to a certain stone and the right to have an inscription made on this stone, commemorating the gift.[29]

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[24] Joseph Naveh and Yitzhak Magen, "Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions of the Second-Century BCE at Mount Gerizim", 1997, p. 10*; Magen, Misgav and Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, 2004, p. 14.

[25] Three types of building stone were found in the Mt. Gerizim sanctuary. The outer walls were built of hewn quarry stones covered with three layers of plaster. Very little of the plaster remains, so it is impossible to determine whether these stones once carried inscriptions. The inscribed stones were all ashlars with marginal drafting or with fine comb dressing. This indicates that the inscribed ashlars were incorporated in walls built of dressed, unplastered stones, possibly an inner wall, separating the external precinct of the temple from the internal precinct, which was only accessible to priests. The external side of the inner wall would have been accessible to visitors to the temple and it would have been possible for them to engrave inscriptions on this side. The Aramaic inscriptions are all carved on ashlars with either marginal drafting or comb dressing and could have been incorporated in the external side of the inner wall around the temple. The Neo-Hebrew inscriptions were all carved on stones with very fine comb dressing and could have been incorporated in the internal side of the inner wall. The excavators assume that there is a connection between the priestly class in the temple and the use of the Neo-Hebrew script. Most of the inscriptions written in Neo-Hebrew are not dedicatory and have clear priestly connotations such as priestly titles and names and could thus have belonged to the temple itself; see Magen, Misgav and Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, 2004, pp. 13-16, 34-35.

[26] No. 147 and 148. These two inscriptions that do make explicit reference to "this stone" are both carved on huge lintels, one of which is 146 cm long and the other a little more than two meters. The exceptional size and value of these stones could be the reason for why they are mentioned explicitly. See Magen, Misgav and Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, 2004, pp. 137-9.

[27] In favour of the former explanation, see Joseph Naveh and Yitzhak Magen, "Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions of the Second Century B.C.E. at Mount Gerizim", *'Atiqot* 32, 1997, pp. 9-17, p. 11. Magen, Misgav and Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, 2004, pp. 17-18.

[28] Magen, Misgav and Tsfania, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, 2004, pp. 17-18, Michael L. Satlow, "Giving for a Return", 1996, pp. 96-97; Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville Kentucky, 1993, p. 505ff.

[29] Such a practice would to some extent mirror the practice of redemption in Lev 27, where dedications of land and sacrifices are given an 'exchange value'.

Now let us turn to the second example: The natural rock sanctuary of Jebel Ramm was recorded by Savignac and Horsfield in the early 1930'ies. The sanctuary is centered on the spring Ayin es-Shallaleh and consisted of a walled pool and hydraulic system as well as a number of betyls and inscriptions. The rock sanctuary is not to be confused with the Allat temple in the wadi North of Ayin es-Shallaleh.[30]

A dedicatory inscription mentioning "the king Rabel, king of the Nabataeans" indicates a date for the construction of the sanctuary probably during the reign of King Rabel II in the late first century CE.[31] And an inscription to the left of a betyl depicting a human figure, standing in front of a crescent, identifies the deity of the Sanctuary as "Allat of Bosra".[32] A total of 25 Nabataean and two Greek inscriptions have been discovered at the site. Of these 12 Nabataean and 1 Greek contain a remembrance formula. The majority of the Nabataean inscriptions follow a formula with a third person feminine perfect form of the verb with an optative meaning:

> "May Allat remember (dkrt) Waber, the mason, son of Gadan and Taymu and Gadan, his brothers, for good (bṭb)."[33]

Two inscriptions have a different formula with a passive form of the verb: "remembered be".[34]

Generally, the inscriptions from Jebel Ramm are well executed, probably by skilled craftsmen using special tools. Some of them are even surrounded by a cartouche.[35]

If we compare these two cases there are several similarities and a couple of notable differences: all the inscriptions come from a sanctuary setting and they all contain a version of a remembrance formula, where a deity is asked to remember the worshipper and her family "for good".

The inscriptions have been placed in central and visible places in the sanctuaries, primarily on walls, and the quality and uniformity of the inscriptions is so high that it is likely that they were executed by a small number of experts using special tools. It follows that the inscriptions could not have been put up without at least the accept, and possibly the assistance, of the administrators of the sanctuaries.

The most conspicuous difference is the lack of explicit dedicatory terminology in the example from Jebel Ramm. The Mount Gerizim inscriptions consistently refer to something "offered", using a

[30] Savignac, "Notes de Voyage – Le Sanctuaire d'Allat a Iram", *Revue Biblique*, vol. 41, 1932, pp. 581-597; Savignac, "Le Sanctuaire d'Allat a Iram", *Revue Biblique*, vol. 42, 1933, pp. 405-422, Savignac, "Chronique: Le Sanctuaire d'Allat a Iram (suite)", *Revue Biblique*, 43, 1934, pp. 572-589; Savignac and Horsfield, "Le Temple de Ramm", Revue Biblique vol 44, 1935, pp. 245-278; John F. Healey, *The Religion of the Nabataeans*, Brill 2001, pp. 56-59; Laurent Tholbecq. "The Nabateo-Roman Site of Wadi Ramm (Iram): A new appraisal" pages 241-254 in *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan*, vol 42 (1998).

[31] Savignac, *RB* 41, 1932, p. 587; Savignac *RB* 42, 1933, pp. 407-11; Healey, *The Religion of the Nabataeans*, 2001, p. 110.

[32] Inscription No. 2, Savignac, *RB* 42, 1933, pp. 411-412; Savignac *RB* 43, 1934, pp. 582-585.

[33] Inscription No. 13, Savignac, *RB* 42, 1933, p. 420. For the grammar see Hoftijzer and Jongeling, Dictionary of the North-west Semitic Inscriptions, Brill, 1995, p. 323 and Savignac, *RB* 42, 1933, p. 413. The other inscriptions with the same formula are nos. 3, 5, 7-11, 13-15 and 21-22.

[34] Nos. 5 and 22.

[35] Savignac, *RB* 42, 1933, p. 422.

hiphil form of the verb *qarav*. This indicates that the "good rembrance" is desired in return for whatever has been given. In comparison, the other inscriptions mention no gift, only a request to be remembered for good. We cannot know, however, if the Jebel Ramm inscriptions were also accompanied by a gift. Perhaps the act of making the inscription itself or having it commissioned could be seen as a service, an act of worship, which would be as pleasing to the deity as a separate gift?

By giving a gift, votive object, one leaves an eternal memento of the act of worship and giving, and creates a special link to the deity. The votive object and in particular the inscribed votive object insure that the votary and his act of worship will be *remembered* by the deity and thus the durable votive object creates a visible, tangible and constant link between god and man. As Mary Beard puts it in her study of the written word in Roman Religion, "Inscribed votive texts enacted that crucial conversion of an *occasional* sacrifice into a *permanent* relationship."[36]

The archaeologist Andrew Jones uses the sign theory developed by C.S. Peirce to describe this relationship between material objects and memory; rather than mere external banks or deposits of memory material objects function as what Peirce called "indexical signs" of past actions or events.[37] The index "is a sign which refers to the object it denotes by being really affected by that object".[38] Thus, a rash is an indexical sign or index of measles, a weathervane is an index of the wind's direction and smoke is an index of fire.[39] The index does not equal what it signifies, but it points to it. The material object serves as an index of the past and therefore it helps to invoke memory: "As material indices objects have the capacity to elicit remembrance. Remembrance is a process distributed between people and objects, and the process of evocation indexed by objects allows people to remember."[40]

In relation to inscriptions containing the remembrance formula, one could say that the inscription and its physical presence in the temple, in the place where the deity is thought to be, bring about the remembrance asked for in the text. This is true for both examples mentioned above. They serve as 'reminders' to the deity, placed in the sanctuary to ensure that the worshippers are given the deity's special attention. By virtue of the material presence of the inscription in the sanctuary, "before the god", the worshipper is perpetually brought to the deity's attention and consequently remembered, not forgotten, by the deity.

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[36] Mary Beard, "Writing and Religion: Ancient Literacy and the function of the written word in Roman Religion", Pages 35-58 in *Literacy in the Roman World*, Edited by J. H. Humphrey. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1991, p. 48.

[37] Andrew Jones, *Memory and Material Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 22ff.; Charles S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960.

[38] Justus Buchler, *The Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, New York: Dover, 1955, p. 102.

[39] Roy A. Rappaport, Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 54-55; Andrew Jones, *Memory and Material Culture*, 2007, p. 23.

[40] Andrew Jones, *Memory and Material Culture*, 2007, pp. 24-26, quote p. 26.

This relationship between material objects and memory is both recognized and utilized in the Hebrew Bible.[41] To name but one example in Num 15:37-40 Yahweh commands the Israelites to put fringes on the corners of their garments: "You have the fringe so that, when you see it, you will remember (*zkr*) all the commandments of Yahweh and do them" (39a). In this passage, the fringe on the garment is meant to index Yahweh's commandments to the Israelites. However, the people of Israel are not the only ones thought to be in need of memory aid in the Hebrew Bible; in Genesis 9 Yahweh places his bow in the sky as a sign to remind him of his covenant with Noah: "When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember (*lzkr*) the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth" (9:16).

Generally, in the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh's remembrance entails more than a mental exercise to recall past events – with or without aid from material objects. As Brevard S. Childs puts it, "God's remembering has not only a psychological effect, but an ontological as well."[42] To be remembered by Yahweh is thought to have a tangible beneficial effect for the one remembered; Yahweh remembers Noah in the ark in Genesis 8:1 and makes the waters withdraw and Yahweh remembers the childless Rachel in Genesis 30:22 and opens her womb. Yahweh's good remembrance can also function by means of intermediaries: In Genesis 19:29 Yahweh remembers Abraham and rescues Lot from the destruction of the cities of the plain and in Exodus 32:12 Moses intercedes for the Israelites by asking Yahweh to remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel (cf Deut 9:27).[43]

The consequences of good remembrance equal blessing and to some extent the two are the same, but the emphasis on remembrance seems to indicate something more, something personalized – to be remembered by the deity is to have the deity's special attention.

In the Pentateuch we find several passages where material objects in the shape of ritual artifacts are intended to aid Yahweh's memory and remind him of the Israelites. According to Gerhard von Rad the gist of the Israelite cult was to bring the people of Israel to Yahweh's remembrance: "Sucht man in der atl Kultsprache nach einer entsprechend allgemeinen Formel für die Bedeutung der Kultus für Israel hatte, so könnte man sagen, dass er Israel bei Jahweh ins Gedächtnis bringt."[44]

The ritual objects intended to assist Yahweh's memory are called "mementoes" or "reminders" (*zikkarôn*) and they appear predominantly in the priestly materials in the Pentateuch.[45] For instance in Numbers 10:10 towards the end of the passage giving the instructions for the manufacture of the

[41] Although not exactly 'under-studied' the topic of remembrance and memory in the Hebrew Bible has not received a great deal of attention and as far as attention has been given the emphasis has been on the Israelites remembering rather than Yahweh. See Schottroff, *'Gedenken' im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*, 1967; Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962; Charles Louis Kesler, "The Memory Motif in the God-Man Relationship of the Old Testament", unpublished dissertation, Nortwestern University, 1956; Adriane Leveen, *Memory and Tradition in the Book of Numbers*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
[42] Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, 1962, p. 33.
[43] See also Exodus 2:24 and 6:5.
[44] Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Band 1; Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels, München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1957, p. 241.
[45] Generally Yahweh's remembrance is seen solely as a benefit, but in Numbers 5:15.18 it may have negative or retributive connotations, when the grain offering of the wife suspected of adultery is called "a grain offering of remembrance" (*minḥat hazikkārôn*), Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, 1962, p. 67.

two silver trumpets: "Also on your days of rejoicing, at your appointed festivals, and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over your sacrifices of well-being; they shall serve as a reminder (*zikkarôn*) before your God: I am Yahweh." In the previous verse the same trumpets are to be sounded when the Israelites go to war, "so that you may be remembered (*nizkartem*) before Yahweh your God and be saved from your enemies."

While stressing the importance of the aspect of memory to the theology of the priestly authors Adriane B. Leeven writes, "The trumpets remind God of Israel while the sacrifices that accompany the blowing of the trumpets express the people's gratitude for the constancy of that divine presence, sealing their relationship."[46]

Another example of a *zikkarôn* intended to preserve and maintain the relationship between Yahweh and Israel are the gemstones on Aaron's breastplate and the two stones on the Ephod in Exodus 28.[47] The stones on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, engraved with the names of the sons of Israel, are "stones of remembrance" (*'abnêy zikkārôn*) and "Aaron shall bear their names before Yahweh on his two shoulders for remembrance (*zikkārôn*)" (28:12, see also 39:7). Similarly the twelve stones on the breastplate are each engraved with one of the names of the sons of Israel and they are to be "a continual (*tāmîd*) remembrance (*zikkārôn*) before Yahweh" (28:29). The engraved stones underline the high priest's cultic role as the representative of the entire people and as the only person able to enter the Holy of Holies he brings the people of Israel to Yahweh's attention by physically bringing a reminder of their existence into Yahweh's presence.[48]

The remaining two occurrences of *zikkārôn* occur in two passages that share a number of themes; the ordinance about the half-shekel to the sanctuary in Exodus 30:11-16 and the narrative passage about the spoils of war taken from the Midianites and given to the Tabernacle in Numbers 31:48-54. Both passages concern a census, which apparently is a great sin against Yahweh, and therefore it is necessary to ransom (*kpr*) the lives of the people afterwards.[49] In both cases a sum of money is given to the sanctuary and the money is described as a reminder (*zikkārôn)* before Yahweh.[50]

In Exodus 30:16a it is explicated that the money are to be used for the service (*'ăbōdat*) in the Tent of Meeting, perhaps in accordance with Exodus 25:1-9, also mentioned above, where Yahweh

[46] Adriane B. Leeven, "Variations on a Theme: Differing Conceptions of Memory in the Book of Numbers", *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, vol 27:2, 2002, pp. 201-221, p. 211.
[47] The exact character of the *ḥošen*, breastplate or breastpouch, is debated. See Othmar Keel, "Die Brusttasche des Hohenpriesters als Element priesterschriftlicher Theologie", *Das Manna Fällt auch heute Noch: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Theologie des Alten, Ersten Testament. Festschrift für Erich Zenger*, edited by Frank-Lothar Hossfeld und Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, Freiburg: Herder, 2004, pp. 379-391, pp. 381-382. See also Jacob Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, The Anchor Bible, New York: Doubleday, 1991, pp. 501ff. on the priestly vestments.
[48] Othmar Keel, "Brusttasche", 2004, p. 384. See also Frank H. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: space, time and status in the priestly world view*, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990.
[49] For the translation of *kpr*, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1991, p. 708; Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 21-36*, The Anchor Bible, New York: Doubleday, 2000, p. 462.
[50] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1991, pp. 707- 708; Michael Fishbane, „Cencus and Intercession in a Priestly Text (Exodus 30:11-16) and in its Midrashic Transformation", *Pomegranates and Golden Bells*, Edited by Wright, Freeman and Hurvitz, USA, Eisenbrauns, 1995, pp. 103-112; E. A. Speiser, "Cencus and Ritual Expiation in Mari and Israel", *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No 149, 1958, pp. 17-25.

commands the Israelites to donate valuables for the construction of the sanctuary.[51] In Numbers 31:54 the gold is simply brought in to the Tent of Meeting – perhaps to be put on display there.

To sum up, in the Pentateuch we find several examples of cultic actions or objects said to serve as reminders before Yahweh. In some cases these are symbolic representations of persons that are literally brought to the deity's attention by being brought in to the deity's presence as is the case with the onyx stones on the Ephod and the gem stones on the breastplate in Exodus 28. In other cases the reminders are prescribed ritual acts as the sounding of the trumpets in Numbers 10:9-10 and finally we see gifts of money or treasure donated to the sanctuary described as reminders before Yahweh in Exodus 30:16 and Numbers 31:54.

So if we look at both the textual material from the Pentateuch and the inscriptions containing a good remembrance formula we find very similar ways of thinking of the remembrance of the deity. To be remembered by the deity is desirable, equal to blessing, and expected to be beneficent both for the person remembered and hers or his dependents and relatives.

Of course there is a possibility that the formulaic language of remembrance in our inscriptions has been formalized to a degree where it has become 'frozen' and therefore 'meaningless' in Fritz Staal's sense of the word.[52] However, if we dare to assume that this is not the case, our material shows an extraordinary similarity in the ways of thinking about blessing, materiality and giving gifts to the gods and in the practices that are a reflection of these ideas. We find this closeness of ideas and practices not only between the inscriptions from Mount Gerizim and the Pentateuch, which perhaps comes as less of a surprise, but also from contemporary religious systems in the Levant.

In both text and inscriptions there is a recognition of the close link between material objects and memory and the desired good remembrance may be obtained by placing a material representation, an index, in the sanctuary which is the place where the deity is supposed to be.

[51] In relation to this, it is interesting to note that Othmar Keel interprets the names of the Israelites inscribed on the stones in Ex 28 as a donor or foundation inscription (Stifterinschrift): "Zikkaron bezeichnet hier wie auch in Sach 6,14 die Funktion einer Stifterinschrift. Der Kult wird nach den Vorstellung der Priesterschrift ja nicht wie in der monarchischen Zeit vom König, sondern vom Zwölfstämme-Volk „gestiftet" d.h. finanziert (vgl. Ex 25,1-7).", „Brusttasche", 2004, pp. 385-386.

[52] Frits Staal, "The Meaninglessness of Ritual", *Numen*, Vol 26:1, 1979, pp. 2-22.