

PARSHAT EKEV
DEUTERONOMY 7:12-11:25
20 AV 5781/29 JULY 2021



Pivot

Oil on canvass by George L. K. Morris

MEMORY AND HEARING:
CONTINUITY AND DISRUPTION

1. There is nothing new about the quality that we have come to call abstract.... In great works of the past there has always been a dual achievement—the plastic, or structural, on the one hand, and the literary on the other. (George L. K. Morris)
2. Memory
 - a. Only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to remember felt as a religious imperative to an entire people....Memory is always problematic, usually deceptive, sometimes treacherous...Yet the Hebrew Bible seems to have no hesitations in commanding memory. Its injunctions to remember are unconditional, and even when not commanded, remembrance is always pivotal. (Yosef Yerushalmi)
 - b. *When you have eaten and are satisfied*, bless Adonai your God for the good land God has given you (Deuteronomy 8:10). Be careful that you do not forget Adonai your

God, failing to observe God's commands, laws and decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, *when you eat and are satisfied*, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget Adonai your God... You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But *remember* Adonai your God, for it is God who gives you the power to produce wealth and so confirms the covenant God swore to your ancestors, *as it is today* (Deuteronomy 8:11-18)

- c. And this shall serve you as a sign on your hand and *oolzicaron* between your eyes... (Exodus 13:9)
...bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be bands between your eyes and teach them to your children... (Deuteronomy 11:18-19).
- d. Judaism...[is] a technology of memory, a set of practices designed to make the past present. (Adam Kirsch, "Only Jewish History Is So Hard to Write")

3. Hearing

- a. *Sh'ma, Yisarel!* You are about to cross the Jordan... (Deuteronomy 9:1)
- b. If you *sh'ma tishm'oo* the directions that I direct to you today... (Deuteronomy 11:13)
- c. All the people answered as one, saying, "All the matters that God has spoken we will do!" (Exodus 24:3)
And they said, "All that God has spoken we will do and we will hear." (Exodus 24:7)
- d. To hear is to open up to vulnerability, change, contingency. (Avivah Zornberg)
- e. Listening to another human being, let alone God, is an act of opening up to a mind radically other than our own. This takes courage. To listen is to make myself vulnerable....It's the people not like us who make us grow. (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks)