

FROM 'SIGN/אוֹת' TO 'MEMORIAL/זְכָרוֹן' IN EXODUS 13:1-16¹

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Abstract

From the perspective of cultural memory the cultic tradition of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread in Exodus 13:3-10 acted as a sign (אוֹת) and a memorial or commemoration (זְכָרוֹן) of the Exodus as an act of divine deliverance. The dialectic between 'sign' and 'memorial/commemoration/reminder' is framed by references to the consecration of the first-born male (13:1-2, 11-15) and the phylacteries ('tefillin') that functioned as a sign (אוֹת) on the hand and symbols (טוֹטְפוֹת) on the forehead (13:16). Exodus 13 is not merely the duplication of material arguing for the observance of the Passover in the previous chapter (12:14-28) but it constitutes a combination of the cognitive act of remembering and the ritual act of commemoration. It will be argued that the central role of memory and commemoration as complementary concepts in the observance of the Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread is expanded by adding the instruction of wearing a 'sign' on the hand and between the eyes. These signs can be considered as embodied metaphors respectively for power and action and for perception and observation; thus going beyond the mere ritual or cultic commemoration of the exodus. This interpretation will be tested by comparing Exodus 13 with other texts in the Hexateuch where a similar link between 'sign' and 'memorial' is found. The element of 'sign' adds to the notion of ritual commemoration the cognitive evocation of remembrance – a potent mechanism to enhance the identity shaping function of cultural memory (Ex 12:13; Num 17:3,5; Josh 4:6f).

Keywords: Cultural Memory; Exodus 13:1-16; Feast of Unleavened Bread; Memorial; Sign

Introduction

In this contribution it will be argued that the central role of memory and commemoration – as complementary concepts in the observance of the Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread – is expanded by adding the instruction of wearing a 'sign' on the hand and 'memorial' or 'reminder' between the eyes, as embodied metaphors respectively for power and action and for perception and observation; thus going beyond the mere ritual or cultic commemoration of the exodus. Ronald Hendel (2001:601-608) made a valuable contribution by shifting the focus from attempts to prove the historical veracity of the

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references to the exodus in the Hebrew Bible to the mnemonic shaping of historical memories, especially during times of trauma.

This interpretation will be tested by focusing on Exodus 13:9 and 16 and briefly comparing them with other texts in the Hexateuch where a similar link between ‘sign’ and ‘memorial’ is found (Ex 12:13-14; Josh 4:6f). Some attention will also be given to the use of an ‘everlasting sign’ that ‘shall not be cut off’ – in Isaiah 55:13.

The elements of ‘sign’ and ‘memorial’ add to the notion of ritual commemoration the cognitive evocation of remembrance – a potent mechanism to enhance the identity shaping function of cultural memory. Diana Edelman (2011:161) proposes that, “Ritual is one of the means by which social meaning is encoded in a culture, enforcing a sense of shared distinctive practices and creating the impression that the associations they evoke are special.” Further on she provides some clarification relevant for this contribution by providing some examples: “ritual acts like the unleavened bread, the redemption of the firstborn and a possible sign upon the hand and a reminder on the forehead” [13:9,16] (Edelman 2011:189).

Comments on Exodus 13:1 - 16

Any attempt to engage with Exodus 13:9 and 16 must take into consideration that they form part of 12:1-13:16; a passage that Christoph Berner (2010:267) recently described as being a complex network of *halachischer Bestimmungen* with a literary character that was “extremely complicated”.

The text in Exodus 12:1-13:16 probably consists of a combination of priestly and non-priestly material as suggested by the duplication of topics – in 12:1-13 and 21-27 the Israelites are commanded to select a sheep or goat for the paschal meal, while 12:15-19 and 13:3-9 provide instruction about the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (Propp 1999:373). Berner (2010:276) is more explicit in dividing the passage as a whole into priestly (12:1-20,42-51) and deuteronomic material (12:21-27; 13:1-16).

A form critical analysis of 13:1-16 identifies two speeches: a short speech in which YHWH instructs Moses about the consecration of the firstborn (13:1-2); which is followed by a much longer speech by Moses to the people about the Feast of Unleavened Bread (13:3-10) and about the consecration of the firstborn (13:11-16). Each of the concluding sections of the speeches by Moses are introduced by a command to keep the festival and ritual (13:3 and 11-12) and is concluded by an explanation of the festival and ritual (13:8 and 14-15), as well as making provision for a sign in 13:9-10 and 16 (Coats 1999:94-95).

In the short speech by YHWH to Moses in 13:1-2 the central divine command is about the consecration of the firstborn and according to Thomas Dozeman (2009:287-288) it not only provides the ‘hermeneutical lens’ for the interpretation of 13:3-16, but is also central to what he refers to as ‘the P History’. He also suggests that 13:1-2 is a later introduction inserted by the so-called ‘P-author’ in accordance with a pattern of similar priestly additions in narratives related to the plague cycle and the teaching of the Passover. Most other commentators accept the programmatic introduction that verses 1-2 constitute but opt rather for a non-P designation of origin – recently Propp (1999) and Berner (2010).

In the longer speech by Moses to the people in 13:3-16, the Feast of the Unleavened Bread is discussed in somewhat non-priestly terms in 13:3-10. John van Seters (1994:119) provided a useful summary of how scholarship reconstructed the development of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread without presupposing an independent origin for the feast rooted in

'an ancient Canaanite agricultural festival' and concomitantly 'its pre-Israelite antiquity' – an argument developed by Halbe (1975) almost two decades earlier.

The discussion of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread is framed by the command to 'remember' (זָכַר) in verse 3, and to observe (וְשָׁמַרְתָּ) it as a statute (אֲתִיהֶקֶה) in verse 10. It is striking that the instructions on the unleavened bread and the firstborn are introduced by the command by Moses to 'remember this day' and that this command is expressed by the infinitive absolute of זָכַר instead of the more usual imperative implying an emphatic imperative that indicates proper action based on what was remembered (GKC 346.113bb). Yerushalmi (1982:10) makes a humorous but important point in this regard: "The biblical appeal to remember thus has little to do with curiosity about the past. Israel is told that it must be a kingdom of priests and a holy people; nowhere is it suggested that it become a nation of historians."

Within this framework the Feast of the Unleavened Bread is discussed by starting with the description of different elements of the Exodus: coming out of Egypt as the 'house of slavery' and how YHWH brought them out with a 'strong hand' (verse 3); emphasising that it was YHWH who brought them "into the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Hivite and the Jebusite" and "which he promised to your fathers to give to you" (verse 5); the length of the feast must be seven days during which only unleavened bread can be eaten and no leaven in any form is allowed (verses 6-7); the intergenerational instruction of the children in verse 8 is not solicited by any question and it starts almost abruptly by pointing out what YHWH did when they went out of Egypt, and continues in verse 9 with the description of the 'sign on your hand' and 'a memorial between your eyes' (more about this verse later in the discussion). This is concluded by a second reference to how YHWH brought them out of Egypt with 'a strong hand' (verse 9b). The instructions about the Feast of the Unleavened Bread are therefore framed not only by the commands to 'remember' and 'observe' but also by the double reference that Israel was brought out of Egypt by the 'strong arm' of YHWH. Strictly speaking the reference to 'strong hand' in verse 3 is expressed by יָד זָכָה while in verse 9 'hand of strength' יָד חֲזָקָה is used (Fischer & Markl 2009:144).

The second part of the speech by Moses that focuses on the consecration of the firstborn (13:11-16) seems to presuppose the opening verse of the first part (verse 3) and starts in verse 11 with the description of how it was YHWH who brought them to the land of the Canaanite (with no reference to the other four tribes mentioned in verse 5) and continues, as in verse 5, with the promise to the fathers. In verses 12 and 13 the gist of the consecration of the firstborn is discussed (similar to the discussion of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread in verses 6-7) and it is made clear that all firstborn (including animals) are dedicated to YHWH with the possibility that some might be redeemed by a substitute (the kid for the donkey in verse 13). The intergenerational instruction in verse 14 is triggered by a future question articulated by a child ('son') and the answer commences with the description of how YHWH brought Israel out of Egypt with 'a strong hand,' as well as the reference to Egypt as 'the house of slavery' (similar to verses 3 and 9). Different from verse 9 in which the description of the sign follows immediately after the reference to being brought out of Egypt, a description is given in verse 15 of elements of the Exodus that are relevant for the discussion of the consecration of the firstborn and mention is also made of the possibility of redemption. The reference to the death of the firstborn in Egypt just before the advent of the Exodus seems to be advanced as an (aetiological?) reason why all firstborn must be

dedicated or sacrificed to YHWH; in the end being qualified by the remark that the human firstborn can be redeemed. In verse 16 the intergenerational instruction is concluded by the reference to the ‘sign on your hand’ and a ‘mark between your eyes’ which closely resembles the preceding verse 9. For the fourth time in 13:3-16 mention is made of how YHWH brought Israel out of Egypt with ‘a strong arm’ and thereby links are established with verses 3,9,14 and 16. In close connection to the fourfold repetition of the ‘strong arm’ (with minor variations) of YHWH one must take note of the statistic that the most frequent way of referring to the Exodus in general is the verb יצא and that it is used no fewer than seven times in 13:3-16 – twice in verse 3, as well as in verses 4,8,9,14 and 16 (Dozeman 2009:204).

One is struck by the abundance of material resembling the book of Deuteronomy in 13:3-16: the exhortation that Israel had to remember (זָכַר) in 13:3 resonates with several passages in Deuteronomy (5:15; 7:18; 9:7; 15:15; 16:3,12; 12:9,18, 22; 25:17); in 13:3 and 14 mention is made of how YHWH rescued Israel from the ‘house of slavery’ (מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים) and this corresponds with Deuteronomy (5:6; 6:12; 7:8; 13:6,11); the oath to the Patriarchs in 13:5 has an exact parallel in Deuteronomy 7:13 (וְשָׁבַע לְאֲבֹתָיִךְ לֵאמֹר לָתֵת לְךָ). Similar divine oaths to the ‘fathers’ can be found in Deuteronomy 1:8; 6:10; 10:11; 11:9, 21; 26:3; 31:7.

It is of special importance for this study that one must take note that the instructions to teach one’s children and to wear the *torah* of YHWH (תּוֹרַת יְהוָה) as a ‘sign’ on your arm or hand and as a ‘memorial’ or ‘circlet’ between your eyes in Exodus 13:9 and 16, also find close parallels in Deuteronomy 6:6-9 and 11:18-20 (Propp 1999:380). This is also the first time that the important expression ‘instruction of YHWH’ is used in the Hebrew Bible, in the concluding description of how Israel left Egypt and just before the episode regarding the crossing of the Re(e)d Sea commences in the following two chapters. Further research should look into the possibility that the consecration of the firstborn to YHWH forms a somewhat ironic *inclusio* with the killing of the firstborn Israelite sons by Pharaoh in chapter 1.

The sections in 12:1-13:16 that seem to have a deuteronomic ring to it, due to corresponding words and expressions, also seem to be structured in a similar fashion (Deut 12:21-27 and 13:1-16): there are three corresponding sequences where an initial command communicated just before entry into the Promised Land is followed by the instruction of children – 12:25 and 12:26f; 13:5-7 and 13:8; 13:11-13 and 13:14f (Berner 2010:276). In the last two sequences the instruction of the children are followed by marking the arms or hands with a sign and the forehead with a memorial or circlet (13:9 and 16).

Before continuing with the discussion of 13:9 and 16 one must be aware that a comparison of the priestly reference to the Feast of the Unleavened Bread in 12:14-20 with the more deuteronomic version in 13:3-10 reveals a complex set of similarities and differences. Amidst this complex relationship it becomes clear that the command to ‘remember this day’ in the first part of 13:3 (which is the same as the concluding remark of the priestly section in 12:41) is programmatic for both the Feast of the Unleavened Bread and the subsequent references to the Firstborn. Taken as a whole one can concur with Berner (2010:277 & 313) that 13:1-16 can be viewed as a ‘*nachpriestliche[n] Entwicklungsstufe*’ in which an older description of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (13:3-6) was later framed by instructions related to the Firstborn (13:1-2 and 11-16). Recently it has been

argued that 13:1-16 can be considered to be a 'spät-dtr. Redaktion' that is also discernible in Exodus 12:21-27 (Albertz 2012:202).

It would seem that the instruction of the children described in 13:14-16 provided an aetiology for the instructions relating to the Firstborn; it bears the closest resemblance to Deuteronomy 6:8 and 20-25 and may be the oldest of the three instructions. Subsequently a similar instruction of children was formulated to explain the Passover in 12:26-27 by using the death of the firstborn as a type of aetiology. In a concluding revision a similar instruction of children was added to explain the Feast of Unleavened Bread in 13:8-9 (Berner 2010:336).

With his extensive background of the history of Israelite religion Albertz (2012:221-222) provides the following short history of the development of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread: According to the oldest Israelite festival calendar in Exodus 23:14-19 this feast was one of three pilgrim festivals (ca 8th Century). In Leviticus 23:15-20 it is clear that in the early stages of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread it maintained a strong agricultural character. From Deuteronomy 16:1-8 one can deduce that this feast now takes place at the central sanctuary in Jerusalem and that there is a close connection with the Passover and some of the events related to the Exodus. Amidst the centralising of the feast each household still had to cleanse themselves from leaven (ca 7th Century BCE). During the time after the exile and the rebuilding of the temple the Feast of Unleavened Bread was combined with the Passover to become yet again an annual pilgrim festival (ca 5th Century BCE).

'Sign/אֹת' and 'Memorial/זָכָרוֹן' in Exodus 13:9 and 16

Although 'sign' and 'memorial' or 'reminder' can be used as synonymous concepts they can also express related but different nuances within the semantic fields of memory and commemoration. Looking at the use of אֹת in Exodus 1-15, one is struck by the concentration of its use in the calling of Moses in Exodus 3 and the so-called plague narratives in Exodus 7-12 (Schulmeister 2010:120).

According to Dianne Bergant (2009:31) the verb זָכַר "denotes an action of calling to mind" and that "it often implies that appropriate action is taken as a result of remembering"; while זָכָר (*memory*) refers to that which is remembered. In similar vein זָכָרוֹן is described as the denotation of "a physical sign that functions as a reminder of an object or event of importance". Tigay (2007:339) also makes a strong argument for translating זָכָרוֹן as 'reminder' because it usually "refers to a concrete object that 'evokes' remembrance" (see also Childs 1962:66-70 in this regard). Moreover Bergant (2009:32) refers to the following examples to illustrate that זָכָרוֹן entails being a 'reminder' – the stones bearing the names of the sons of Jacob in the priestly garment of Aaron in Exodus 28:12, 29; the tax that had to ward off evil due to the taking of a census in Exodus 30:16; the plates made from the censors of the sinful priests in Numbers 17:5(16:40 English).

Of more significance to this contribution are the few passages in the Hebrew Bible where אֹת and זָכָרוֹן are used together: In Exodus 12:13-14 the blood on the doorposts of the houses was considered to be a 'sign', while the commemoration of the day became a 'memorial' for the day of salvation when Israel was rescued from Egypt; in Joshua 4:6-7 the stones at Gilgal were considered to be a 'sign' in response to the question posed by the

children and it also becomes a ‘memorial forever’ (עֲדָ-עוֹלָם) to remind future generations how the ark of the covenant ‘cut off’ the waters of the Jordan River to enable the people of Israel to cross it and to gain entry into the Promised Land. In similar vein the concluding verse of Second Isaiah (Isa 55:13), anticipates how in future thorns and briars will be replaced by cypresses and myrtles; and how this will be to the ‘name’ (some translate *shem* with ‘memorial’) of the Lord an ‘everlasting sign’ (לְאֵזוֹת עוֹלָם) that will not be ‘cut off’ (similar to the wordplay on the ‘cutting’ of the water when crossing the Jordan River by the ark of the covenant and the stereotypical ‘cutting of the covenant’), Koole (1998:446-447) considers נִסִּי to be something that refers to something else about which there must be certainty (one might add ‘clarity’). As the trees will not be ‘cut off’ so Israel in exile will not be ‘cut off’ – the covenant is still in existence and will assure the future for the exiled people of God.

Scholarship has not yet reached consensus on to what extent the ‘sign’ in 13:9 and 16 must be understood literally and or metaphorically. As already discussed above, similar instructions can be found in Deuteronomy where the Israelites are instructed to bind the words of Moses as a sign on your hand and that it will be like a circlet between your eyes in 6:6, 8 and 11:18 (Propp 1999:423). In wisdom literature similar commands can be found in Proverbs where the sayings of the father must be observed, bound on the fingers and written on the tablet of one’s heart in 7:1-3. See also Proverbs 6:20-21 according to which the commands of the father must be observed and the mother’s directions be heeded; all of these must be bound to the heart and worn on your throat.

The convention of wearing something as a reminder of an important event or occurrence in one’s life can also be traced in the Ancient Near East: according to *Gilgamesh* XI:163-165 the goddess Ishtar wore a necklace as a reminder of the traumatic flood (*ANET* 95 & Tigay 1982:321-331).

It is not clear whether the instruction in 13:9 form part of the instruction of the child that started in the previous verse. On the one hand, an argument can be developed that it is not part of the instruction of the child by pointing out that verse 9 refers back to the Feast of Unleavened Bread already in existence according to verses 6-7; but on the other hand, one can argue that the child is instructed to wear the ‘sign’ and the ‘memorial’ as part of a reinterpretation of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread in future. Whatever choice is made in this regard, it seems without a doubt that the reason for observing the Feast of the Unleavened Bread was “to keep alive the memory of the great deeds of YHWH and insuring that it is passed on ... to the children; in particular the firstborn son” (Houtman 1996:213-214).

As with 13:9 one has to consider whether verse 16 forms part of the answer to, or instruction of the son. Again it seems clear that the customs related to the consecration of the firstborn “are to insure that YHWH’s great deeds will be remembered and that the story will passed on ... to the children, in particular the firstborn son” (Houtman 1996:218). There is an important difference between verses 9 and 16: in verse 9 the children do not seem to be included in the wearing of the ‘sign’ and ‘memorial’ while they are incorporated in verse 16. This aspect has been overlooked by most commentators in the past but recently emphasised by Fischer & Markl (2009:148): “Jetzt soll auch die junge Generation die erwähnten Erinnerungszeichen an Arm und Stirn tragen.”

What does the ‘sign’ on the hand refer to and to which hand? Both verses 9 and 16 start with הַיָּדָא and one should consider what the ‘it’ refers to. What is expected to be worn as a

reminder? Despite its obvious ambiguity the 'it' may refer to memories of the exodus. Carol Meyers (2005:102) provides a striking interpretation: "This is likely a somewhat elliptical metaphoric expression, meant to accentuate the way the memory of the exodus functions as do jewellery and or amulets worn on the wrist or as a circlet on the head; that is, the exodus and its meaning are to be ever precious and always present." Turning to the interpretation of the hand – later Jewish tradition presumes it to be the left hand based on the reading of יְדֵיָהּ as being a contraction of 'hand, יָד', and ', 'to be weak, כְּרִהָה' (bMenah. 36b; *Mek. I*, 151f.).

If the sign had to have authority and significance, one would rather consider the right hand to be the more likely choice due to its relative importance in comparison to the left hand. What did the 'sign' consist of? Scholarly suggestions about the denotation of the 'sign' have varied from a tattoo or painted mark on the hand in Isaiah 44:5; 49:16, to a ring around the finger or wrist in Genesis 41:42; Jeremiah 22:24 and Esther 3:10. Should one, however, take seriously the strong relationship between Exodus 13:9 and 20 with Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18 then it becomes significant that the passages in Deuteronomy make use of the verb קָשַׁר ('to bind'). This would make most sense if the object was tied to the hand or arm like a bracelet. Houtman (1996:219-220) concludes that 13:9 and 16 "can hardly be taken in any other sense than figurative."

The interpretation of 'memorial' and 'headbands' or 'frontlets' (טוֹטְפוֹת) and their position on the forehead confronts one with perennial exegetical conundrums. At first, attention will be given to the expression 'between your eyes' (בֵּין עֵינַיִךְ) in 13:9 and 16. It forms part of at least eight expressions in the Hebrew Bible, also found in several Ugaritic texts, in which paired limbs feature, that constitutes a reference to what is in between – in this case the 'forehead' (Hamilton 2011:200). Secondly, טוֹטְפוֹת is notoriously difficult to translate because it appears only three times in the Hebrew Bible – apart from Exodus 13:16, also in Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18. It would seem as if the Septuagint translation of ἀσάλευτον ('immovable'), presupposes a metaphorical understanding of this enigmatic concept: "that is, the ritual of Exod 13 and the 'words' of Deut 6 and 11 are not to be moved from one's mind" (Hamilton 2011:200).

Both Othmar Keel (1981:159-240) and Tigay (1982:321-331) feel most comfortable with the translation 'headband' in view of its use in Middle-Hebrew, as well as the iconographical representations of Ancient Near Eastern women wearing circlets and pendants around the forehead. After considering alternatives such as an inscription or tattoo on the head, the later Jewish understanding of *tefillin* or 'phylacteries' as being something worn around the head or forehead, proves to be conclusive for Houtman (1996:219) and most recent commentators agree with Keel that "it seems best to think of a small plate fastened to a headband, containing a symbol or name of YHWH." Exodus 13,9 and 14-16, as well as Deuteronomy 6, 8-9 triggered the use of observant Jews of "small leather boxes tied to the forehead and left arm" and in these small boxes are kept "strips of parchment on which are written Ex 13:1-16; Deut 6:4-6 [the famous 'Shema']; and 11:13-21" (Enns 2000:252).²

In response to Allison Landsberg (2004:144-161), who coined the phrase 'prosthetic memory' in her research on visual arts and the function of memory in mass culture, James Loader (2012:583-597) made the interesting suggestion to consider the possibility that

² In the New Testament reference is also made to the 'phylacteries' in Matthew 23:5.

memory as the act of ‘remembering’ in the Old Testament could, in certain passages, develop a ‘prosthetic’ function. Where remembering is aided by signs and symbols their function might be more than the prevention of forgetfulness. “The visual aid does not only prevent knowledge of the past to fade away, but positively stimulates new interpretative action” (Loader 2012:583). In this regard one is also reminded of the conclusions by Paul Connerton (1989) and Pierre Nora (1997) that the investigation of social and cultural memory should incorporate an appreciation for performance and human embodiment – crucial for further reflection on the possible role of ‘prosthetic memory’ in the on-going process of reinterpretation.

Conclusion

For quite some time many Biblical scholars presupposed the Hebrew Bible was unique within the Ancient Near East due to its historical consciousness exemplified, amongst others, by the exodus narratives. This viewpoint came under heavy criticism by those who pointed out similar trends in Ancient Near Eastern texts and who also reminded scholarship about the undeniable cyclical features in the Hebrew Bible itself – like the annual cycle of feasts that formed part of the early Jewish liturgical calendar.

Memories about the exodus were not only about the recollection of the past but also about retelling it in future as on-going evidence of YHWH’s power. The impact of memories cannot be explained by linear (narrative) or cyclical (ritual) models but by imagining it as a creative spiral of on-going reinterpretation that repeats while it progresses. Framing the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the consecration of the firstborn and reminding future generations to reflect on the ‘strong hand’ of YHWH with ‘signs’ and ‘memorials’ on their own hands and foreheads, are good examples of the this ‘prosthetic’ use of memory³.

According to the research by Ruth van Dyke and Susan Allcock (2003:4-10) four intersecting categories can be identified for the transmission of social and cultural memory: ritual behaviour, narratives, representations and places. It is therefore not by chance that the first three categories can be found in Exodus 13:1-16. The category of ‘place’ is probably implied because the Feast of the Unleavened Bread usually took place at the temple in Jerusalem.

From the perspective of cultural memory the cultic tradition of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread in Exodus 13:3-10 acted as a sign (אֹת) and a memorial or commemoration (זִכָּרוֹן) of the Exodus as an act of divine deliverance. Albertz (2012:223) is therefore correct when he interprets Exodus 13:9 and 16 in close connection with Deuteronomy 6:8 and concludes that the ‘sign’ and ‘memorial’ can be understood as a *persönliche[s] Merkzeichen* that were “remembered with joy and thanksgiving due to the salvation through YHWH.”

Exodus 13 is not merely the duplication of material arguing for the observance of the Passover in the previous chapter (12:14-28) but it constitutes a combination of the cognitive act of remembering and the ritual act of commemoration. In the concluding section on the account of the exodus out of Egypt Moses exhorts the people to keep the memory of the exodus alive by “making it *visible* through religious rituals” in 13:3 and 9, 16; and by

³ Here one must be reminded that in Exodus 13, 1-16 there are six references to ‘going out’ of Egypt and four indications that the “strong hand” of YHWH was responsible for Israel leaving Egypt.

"making it audible through explanation" as exemplified by the intergenerational instruction in 13:8.9, 14-16 (Houtman 1996:143).

The corresponding construction of the descriptions of the feasts of the Passover and Unleavened Bread, combined with the Consecration of the Firstborn, as well as the command to commemorate them appropriates a cultic transformation of the present in view of the exodus events of the past. The instruction of children combined with the wearing of signs and memorials ensured that the memories of deliverance embedded in the exodus events were kept alive for the future. Assmann (2010:15) makes it clear: "Moses' main concern is to transform the living memory of the group into a cultural memory that can be transmitted to future generations." This process of the evolvment of a cultural memory by visual and audible means is clearly illustrated in? Exodus 13:9, 12-16.

The dialectic between 'sign' and 'memorial/commemoration/reminder' is framed by references to the consecration of the first-born male (13:1-2, 11-15) and the phylacteries (*tefillin*) that functioned as a sign (אֹת) on the hand and as headbands (טֹטְפֹת) on the forehead (13:16). Keeping alive the memory of how YHWH saved his people from oppression with a 'strong hand' in the past by the on-going commemoration and reflection, allows the contextually qualified 'sign' on the hand to become a 'memorial' and a 'reminder' on the forehead that generates hope in and for the future! This is vividly reflected in the Jewish Passover-Haggadah of the Seder evening in which praise and thanksgiving about the past combine in the commemoration with a hopeful expectation for the future. The Passover, as well as the 'signs' and 'reminders' (phylacteries), have profound theological significance because they not only remind those who take part of past events as such, but more importantly remind the participants how God remembered them (Von Rad 1962:242). One can also contemplate the possibility that this commemoration could function "as an invocation of God to be mindful of his people Israel..." (see the comments made by Sarna 1991:179 on Ex 28:12).

Hartman (1978:373-387) made a useful distinction between a so-called 'Sinai hope' and an 'Exodus hope:' the first is what he refers to as *halakhic* type of hope that liberates action because it challenges humankind to take responsibility for the actions – be obedient to the instruction given on Sinai; while the second type of hope is more radical because it anticipates divine intervention in future that will resolve existing problems – expect an exodus type intervention in the future without which no hope is possible. The commemorative celebration of the Exodus during the Passover and related feasts kept the hope for a better future alive due to the memories of the exodus.

Hans Walter Wolff (1973:114) pointed out in his well-known '*Anthropologie*' that many references to 'hand' in the Hebrew Bible implies some form of power, human and divine: *Die Vorstellung vom Körperglied tritt bei 'yad' weithin ganz zurück hinter die Bedeutung Kraft, die mit der Hand ab dem ersten Mittel von Macht gegeben ist.* There is, therefore, an appropriate resonance between the multiple references to the 'strong hand' of YHWH in the exodus events (13:1-16) and the powerful and evocative 'sign' that must be worn on the hand (13:9,14) in future.

'Signs' can become 'memorials' and 'reminders' that go beyond an aetiological identification of past events as causes for phenomena in the present. The questions posed by children are future orientated and stimulate the reinterpretation of past events to be able to stand up to the theological and ethical challenges that will crop up in future. Memories are

not only about the past from the perspective of the present – they are indeed also about the anticipation of the future and establish continuity between them all!

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