

## PREFACE

This book is a revision of my dissertation, “Memory and Religious Praxis: The Meaning and Function of Memory in Deuteronomic and Priestly Religion,” written under the supervision of Dr. Stephen Geller at the Jewish Theological Seminary. As its title indicates, the dissertation was most concerned with mapping the semantic field of memory in deuteronomic and priestly literature, and secondly with demonstrating the relationship between memory as so conceived and the religious programs of these two traditions as put forth in the Pentateuch. The present book shifts the focus somewhat, to explore the relationship between memory and covenant as each concept is understood by the authors behind D and P. The shift is not as wide as it might appear, for I maintain that “covenant” in both its priestly and deuteronomic manifestations is conceived of as a lived experience. For this reason, the religious programs envisioned and promulgated in deuteronomic and priestly literature remain central to this work. The principal changes I have made in this version are to condense the analysis of the two memory lexicons, and to give greater importance to an idea that I sketched at the end of the dissertation, namely the degree to which the employment of memory in the deuteronomic and priestly traditions is typologically anticipated in the two creation stories that begin Genesis. In other words, this book attempts to integrate deuteronomic and priestly conceptions of memory, the lived covenant, and cosmology, an ambitious undertaking, but one that I believe is justified by the importance the two traditions give to memory as a feature of the covenantal relationship between God and Israel.

The centrality of the covenant idea has been long recognized in connection to Deuteronomy, so much so that its theology is sometimes defined as “covenant theology.” Likewise, the importance of creation in priestly theology is well remarked upon. I hope to show that both ideas have currency

in both traditions, albeit to different degrees. The authors behind the Pentateuch, after all, came from the same place. Social location and periodicity may differentiate one tradition from one another, but I believe it is safe to presume they shared some basic tenets. Among these are the certainty of the special relationship between God and Israel and the conviction that to maintain that relationship demanded a high degree of mindfulness, whether on God's part or Israel's.

I have been exceedingly fortunate to have been guided in my work by a superior scholar of biblical religion. Every meeting with my advisor Stephen Geller brought me new insights. If his learning is cited more frequently than others, I hope it testifies to the sensitivity of his reading of the Hebrew Bible and his ability to relate disparate elements under the rubric of theology.

In addition to Dr. Geller, there are many others to thank. In certain ways, this book reflects the advice, encouragement, suggestions, and insights of all the teachers of Bible with whom I have been privileged to study, my students at the Jewish Theological Seminary and Fordham College, my adult students in the Me'ah and Context programs, and the many groups of individuals who I have been fortunate to teach. Some out of this group must be identified by name. I am very grateful to my readers, Susan Ackerman, David Marcus, Amy Kalmanofsky, and David Kraemer, and to Edward Greenstein, Shalom Paul, Adriane Leveen, Saul Olyan, David Carr, Ronald Hendel, Carol Newsom, and Michael Carasik, each of whom spurred my work forward in different ways. I also wish to acknowledge the ongoing support provided by the Graduate School at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and in particular Stephen Garfinkel, its Dean while I was a student there.

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