

Weekly Teaching

June 2, 2017

One of the most important keys to our surviving and thriving as Jews is the understanding that we need to combine our communal observances with our individual responsibilities.

As Jews, we claim our history, and re-live our history.

Our individual grasping of prideful heritage is strengthened because linear time doesn't apply to our history.

On Sukkot, we re-live our residence in the huts by which God sheltered us in the wilderness.

On Passover, we are once again slaves in Egypt, re-experiencing God's miracles and our redemption from slavery.

On Shavuot, we stand again at Mount Sinai, re-choosing our Covenantal relationship with God.

The list is long; liturgy and particularistic rituals serving as the catalysts by which we retain our ability to be an Eternal Holy People.

We "stand firm," existing outside of time.

God is the "Rock of Israel" and the Jewish People are God's Rock; we stand firm.

When a Jew goes graveside, we place stones at the grave of our loved one, as a reminder that the soul is eternal; it stands firmly with God forever.

But, I think this custom is even more significant.

We place our stones graveside because we are reminding ourselves and others who will come and visit, that the Jewish chain of continuity is unbroken.

Our loved ones are unbreakable links in our chain of Jewish tradition and love that is immune from time's ability to wither our Jewish selves.

The purposeful placing of these stones are not simply "memorial" markers; they are the testimony of our Jewish immortality.

In the book of Joshua, the 6th book of the Bible, we read the sequel to our Torah's narrative that traced our history through redemption, receiving Torah, wandering in the wilderness and standing at the border of our Promised Land ready to enter.

In the Book of Joshua, we stand at the Jordan River, ready to cross. God then commands us to cross the river, carrying the Ark of our Covenant with us. And, as we did with the Parting of the Sea in Egypt, we did as God instructed. And, as our spiritual ancestors' feet touched the waters of the river, the waters again parted.

Through our willingness to wade into the waters that stood as an obstacle in our way, carrying our Ark of the Covenant with us, the waters stood aside for us, and we entered our Promised Land.

And, as this miraculous parting of waters was still occurring, God told Joshua to have a person from each of the 12 tribes of Israel go back to the still dry part of land within the river, and each take a stone.

And, from these 12 rocks, the Jewish People placed their stones in a circle by which we marked our first Camp Site after our return to our Promised Land.

And, we have carried with us the “12 Stones” ever since; re-establishing our Jewish Camp Site in perpetuity.

Today, as I submit this article to be distributed for this Shabbat, I am now making my way to our Temple’s Cemetery.

My family unveils my mother’s Z’L stone marker, and we consecrate the monument that marks our love and respect.

But, more importantly, we will place on the stone marker our own stones; the stones that are in essence the “12 Stones” from the miraculous place of the “still dry part of land that was within the river.”

And, it’s with these stone markers, that we are transported yet again outside the boundaries of Time.

We reside together in our encampment; the Jewish souls of past, present and future; the unbroken chain of eternal Jewish continuity.

On this sacred “Island,” outside of Time, we stand together in our “Promised Land,” possessing all of our love.

Each of us holds our “12 Stones.” We simply need to remember to take them out from our “pockets” and mark the sacred space that pushes aside the limits of Time.

It’s in this self-constructed “Promised Land” that we stand firm with God, our People and all of our loved ones of Blessed Memory.

Shabbat Shalom,

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