

# Celebrating the Memory: The Proto-Commandment

## Exegetical-Hermeneutical Study of Ex 12:14

### Introduction

“[T]his I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lam 3:21–23).<sup>1</sup>

There is something special about this hymn taken from the book of Lamentations! Lamentations is one of the most melancholic books in the entire Bible; it is full of misery and mourning. Yet, in the centre of this book, we have a joyful celebratory passage where the author calls to mind **דִּקְוָה**, the steadfast love of the Lord. Memory of God’s steadfast love helps the author to see the light at the end of the tunnel of tragedy caused by the disastrous event of the Babylonian exile. It is **זְכָרוֹן**, the memory, which helps him to do so.

God gives, gives and forgives; we get, get and forget. Forgetting is blissful at times, especially when negativity in the past has been overwhelming. Indian socio-political psyche has a short memory and collective amnesia.<sup>2</sup> History is forgotten and hence repeated. Collective memory forms society. If this consciousness is forgotten, society loses the ground of its being; it loses its meaning-system and thereby culture deteriorates, people become shallow, impoverished and baseless. Hence it is essential for a community of believers to be rooted and grounded in their foundational experiences. It may be because of that, that in Ex 12:14, God commands Israel and to all of us to *remember* the foundational event of exodus by celebrating its memory annually in the form of the Passover festival.

Ex 12:14, the verse under study gives a divine command. It is the first command given to the people of Israel and hence I have called it Proto-commandment. Ex 12:14 is a bridge verse connecting the twin-festival of the Passover and the Unleavened Bread. This sentence has got three clauses and hence I call it a three-fold command. In this paper, firstly we will deal with the text and its context. Here we will focus on the three important background concepts. Then, we will go through the detailed exegesis of the text by focusing

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis has also quoted Lam 3:21–23 along with Lam 3:17 and 3:26 in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), promulgated on 24 Nov 2013, to bring out the possibility of rejoicing even in the midst of suffering (cf. EG 6). Cf. also Hab 3:17–19.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, in his encyclical letter *Lumen Fidei* (LF), promulgated on 29 June 2013, speaks about “a massive amnesia in our contemporary world” (LF 25).

our attention on the three-fold command. Then we will develop a theology of the text, put forward in three statements: (1) Memory is a key foundation of religion, (2) Celebration is a major sustaining principle of religion and most importantly (3) Proto-Commandment of Celebrating the Memory heralds the Ten Commandments. Finally, we will see some contextual implications of the text.

## 1. Translation of the Text

My own interpretative translation of the Ex 12:14, which I have used for my exegesis, reads as follows: “This day ought to be a memorial-day to you; you ought to celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you ought to celebrate it as a perpetual ordinance.” It is important to situate this text in its historical and literary context.

## 2. Historical Context

Keeping the focus of this paper in mind, we will concentrate on three important concepts: Memory of the exodus, Celebration of the Passover, and Torah-Centric Outlook of Judaism. These three concepts deal with the history *in* the text. Besides, these three concepts, the Babylonian exile<sup>3</sup> is an important concept which deals with the history *behind* the text. I have given references to this tragic event wherever necessary, but have not included it as a separate unit.

**2.1.1. The Memory of the Exodus:** In its existential actuality, the exodus, more than any other event of the Hebrew Bible, embodies William Faulkner’s adage: “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”<sup>4</sup> The exodus is undoubtedly the most important and foundational event for the Israelites.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately there is hardly any historical evidence for it. However we must agree with Z. Zevit: “The absence of evidence may not be interpreted facilely as evidence of absence.”<sup>6</sup> According to the most acceptable view, a certain ‘Moses Group’ experienced the exodus liberation from Egyptian slavery and their experience was

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Brueggemann rightly states, “The book of Exodus . . . is to be understood as a literary, pastoral, liturgical, and theological response to an acute crisis. Texts that ostensibly concern thirteenth-century matters in fact are heard in a sixth- to fourth-century crisis.” Walter Brueggemann, *The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections* (NIB 1; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 884.

<sup>4</sup> William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Random House, 1951), 92, cited in Ronald Hendel, “Exodus in Biblical Memory,” *JBL* 12 (2001): 601.

<sup>5</sup> Käsemann asserted, “Jesus means freedom.” So here, “Yahweh means exodus.” Cited in Brueggemann, *Book of Exodus*, 943. Cf. Am 9:7, where Yahweh is called a God who causes exoduses for many other peoples, not exclusively for Israel.

<sup>6</sup> Z. Zevit, “Three Debates about Bible and Archeology,” *Bib* 83 (2002): 24, cited in George Edayadiyil, *Exodus Event: Its Historical Kernel* (Banglore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2007), 13.

internalized by Israelite settlers in Canaan, having 'Apiru<sup>7</sup> background. Historical memory played a great role in forming this "Faith history,"<sup>8</sup> "saving history,"<sup>9</sup> or "proto-history."<sup>10</sup>

Memory of an oppressed, subjugated people played an important role in shaping the narrative of the exodus. It is worth considering Ronald Handel's study "Exodus in Biblical Memory."<sup>11</sup> Ronald Hendel discusses the issue of cultural memory. He states, "Cultural memories tend to be a mixture of historical truth and fiction, composed of "authentic" historical details, folklore motifs, ethnic self-fashioning, ideological claims, and narrative imagination."<sup>12</sup> He analyzes Jan Assmann's concept of 'mnemohistory.'<sup>13</sup> What is important for us to note is Hendel's observation that the historically true and the symbolically true are interwoven in such a way that the past authorizes and encompasses the present.<sup>14</sup> Thus, according to this view, Israelite settlers in Canaan also had the memory of Egyptian subjugation in Canaan itself and Moses group's experience of exodus fitted well with their experience. These memories are written down with the intention to educate future generations. Israelites forgot God and they had to face the exile. Hence they should remember God and His commands so that he will work out another exodus.

**2.1.2. The Celebration of the Passover:** The Passover and the exodus are deeply connected. The Passover is the most important festival for the Jews. Immense scholarly research has gone into the study of the twin-festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread. Surrounding cultures and religions deeply influenced Israelite celebrations. Israelites borrowed, adapted various practices, however, they stripped off mythical and magical elements of pagan agricultural feasts and gave salvation-historical dimension to these festivals. מִצּוֹת was a

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<sup>7</sup> Edayadiyil in his book *Exodus Event: Its Historical Kernel* gives an extensive discussion (51–54) on the differences between 'Apiru and 'ibri and comes to the conclusion that "as a social class all Hebrews were 'Apiru, but not all 'Apiru were Hebrews." Edayadiyil, *Exodus Event*, 54. "'Apiru" originally referred to "persons without family affiliation" in the sociological sense, foreign mercenaries, captives, and slaves, and consequently foreigners of inferior legal status within a kingdom." Georg Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion*, (trans. David E. Green; London: S.P.C.K., 1968; repr., 1981), 30. Drawing on the scholarship of Greenberg and Mendenhall, John McKenzie, in his *Dictionary of the Bible* states, "It is therefore difficult to identify the biblical Hebrews with the Habiru. On the other hand, it is difficult to separate them entirely." John L. McKenzie, "Hebrew," *Dictionary of the Bible* 346.

<sup>8</sup> Edayadiyil, *Exodus Event*, 127.

<sup>9</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. E. M. G. Stalker; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962; repr., 1963), 1:123.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony R. Ceresko, *Old Testament: A Liberation Perspective* (Bombay: St Pauls Press, 1992), 140.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Hendel, "Exodus in Biblical Memory," 601–22.

<sup>12</sup> Hendel, "Exodus in Biblical Memory," 602.

<sup>13</sup> Handel quotes Assmann, "Unlike history proper, mnemohistory is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered. . . . Mnemohistory is reception theory applied to history." Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 8–9, cited in Hendel, "Exodus in Biblical Memory," 603.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Hendel, "Exodus in Biblical Memory," 621.

Canaanite, agrarian feast according to the Solar Calendar. It was celebrated by Israelite settlers in Canaan, mainly by the people of the Northern Israel, whereas פסח was a nomadic apotropaic ritual feast following Lunar Calendar and was celebrated by the Moses Group in the South Israel.

	<b>Feast of the Passover</b>	<b>Feast of the Unleavened Bread</b>
1	Nomadic pastoral apotropaic ritual spring time feast	Agricultural spring festival
2	Lunar Calendar	Solar Calendar
3	Feast of ‘the Moses group’	Feast of ‘the Israelite settlers in Canaan’
4	Belonged to South Israel	Belonged to North Israel

Since the two spring festivals occurred in close proximity to each other, and both coincided with the time of the exodus, all three elements merged and were fused into one unified entity. The pre-Israelite ingredients were stripped of their former content and were invested with completely new associations and meanings connected with the exodus.<sup>15</sup> They were combined at the time of the reform of Josiah or earlier and new meaning was given to them. According to the changing situation, like the exile, the place and manner of celebration of the feast changed. Cult played a crucial role in the shaping of the feast narrative tradition.

**2.1.3. Torah-Centric Outlook of Judaism:** Judaism is intrinsically Torah-centric religion. Law is given the utmost importance. Hence, even today every adult Jew<sup>16</sup> undergoes the religious ceremony called *קִרְבַּן מִצְוָה / קִרְבַּן מִצְוָה* making oneself a son/daughter of the commandment/law. There are 613 commandments, 365 are negative commands and 248 are positive commands, which are mainly relational in nature emphasizing covenant relationship. These laws cover everything. Increasingly, Christian scholars have started having positive understanding of the law as ‘grace’. I see feast ordinance, which is our subject matter, as a symbolic representation of the saving events.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus* (The JPS Torah commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 57.

<sup>16</sup> Male at the age of 13 and female at the age of 12.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. W. A. Crisswell, *Believer's Study Bible* (electro. ed.; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995, electro. ed. 1997), n.p. (Ex 12:24).

### 3. Literary Context

We can trace the given text in the context of the 10<sup>th</sup> plague in the book of Exodus. With God's remembering his Covenant with Patriarchs in Ex 2:24, God acts and the history of salvation begins. Immediately after the announcement of the tenth plague, before its execution, we have the narration of the Passover. As Clements states, "It is at once both the occasion of the tenth plague and the final terrible 'sign' from God which secures the release of Israel."<sup>18</sup> In Ex 12:1-13:16, we have three inter-related traditions dealing with Passover, Unleavened Bread and Consecration of the first-born. Ex 12:1-20 deals with the twin-feast and Ex 12:14 is the bridge verse.<sup>19</sup>

### 4. Literary Genre and Setting

Ex 12:1-28 is ingeniously crafted using two literary genres: narrative<sup>20</sup> and ordinance. In the words of Gorman: "The genres of "story" and "instruction" are complementary and interactive."<sup>21</sup> The Priestly authors (P) have beautifully combined these two parts in liturgical setting to re-present the event of the exodus for the Israelites in the exile. The desperate exilic context of P drove them to combine the medium of 'cultic law' with narrative, to put forth the message of liberation. Legal language brings out the urgency demanded by the exilic context.

### 5. Source Criticism

According to Plastaras, "Most of the material in 12:1-13:16 undoubtedly goes back to the time of Moses, but other prescriptions reflect conditions which prevailed only several centuries afterward."<sup>22</sup> He further states, "It is hard to escape the conclusion that many different layers of tradition dating from the time of Moses all the way down to the exile have

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<sup>18</sup> Ronald E. Clements, *Exodus* (The Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 66. Gorman's comment also enlightens us in this regard: "The most extensive discussion of Passover is found in Exod. 12-13. These chapters reflect a complex literary development with several distinct layers of traditions. In these chapters the primary prescription for the observance are delivered to Israel in the context of and in relation to the final plague of Yahweh against Egypt, the death of the firstborn. It is important to recognize that the ritual of Passover is situated within a larger narrative context that provides details not only for the narrative enactment of the ritual "in the past" but also for the enactment of the ritual "in the future."<sup>21</sup> Frank Gorman, "Passover, Feast of," *Eerdmans' Dictionary of the Bible* 1013.

<sup>19</sup> According to Durham, "two separate sets of instructions, representing two originally separate sets of ritual, have here been brought together in a sequence linked by a verse that refers both to Passover Day and the first day of seven days of eating unleavened bread cakes." John I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC 3; Dallas: Word Books, 2002), 157.

<sup>20</sup> I would like to qualify the word 'narrative' by using the word 'narrative testimony' for the genre. It is important to see the narration in the Bible as a testimony, as a witness.

<sup>21</sup> Gorman, "Passover," 1013.

<sup>22</sup> James Plastaras, *The God of Exodus: The Theology of the Exodus Narratives* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966), 142.

been lumped together and introduced by the standard formula, “The LORD said to Moses . . .”<sup>23</sup> Scholars are unanimous about the source of Ex 12:1–20, which is attributed to P. Thus there is a clear consensus that Ex 12:14 is written by Priestly authors. Priestly authors are often criticized by scholars for their focus on cult and rituals. However we must realize that they played a great role in rebuilding the Jewish nation in the extremely tragic situation of the exile.

## 6. Linguistic Analysis

We have only 13 Hebrew words in Ex 12:14, without any textual critical problems. There are two verbal forms  $\text{וַיִּזְכֹּר}$ , and  $\text{לִזְכֹּר}$  (twice) used in qal. The three verbs form three clauses in the sentence, all having equal weight. Two ‘waw consecutive/conversive’ (ו) help to distinguish the starting of two clauses. Waw consecutive turns the perfect form of these verbs into ‘imperfect’ meaning.<sup>24</sup>

Lambdin considers three meanings of the imperfect: (a) future, (b) habitual and (c) modal. He states, “the imperfect must frequently be translated in one of several modally modified ways, using the English equivalents “may, might, would, could, can, should”.”<sup>25</sup> In my interpretative translation I have used the modal meaning in line with the NJB translation of the Bible, thus translating it with the enforcing ‘ought to.’

Besides these three verbal forms, we have six nouns, two in each clause: (a)  $\text{יָוֵם}$ , and  $\text{זִכְרוֹן}$ , (b)  $\text{הַיּוֹם}$ , and  $\text{יְהוָה}$ , and (c)  $\text{דְּרֹתֵיכֶם}$ , and  $\text{הַקָּה}$ <sup>26</sup>, two adjectives:  $\text{הַיּוֹם}$ , and  $\text{עוֹלָם}$ , one preposition with a pronominal suffix:  $\text{לְכֶם}$  and one direct object marker with a pronominal suffix:  $\text{אֹתוֹ}$ . In the following section, we are going to concentrate on these 13 words, the ‘inspired words’ which the Jews and the Christians consider ‘word/s of God.’

## 7. Working Structure of Ex 12:14

The text under study is a single statute/ordinance or command from the Lord. However, it has three parts. I would like to analyze this three-fold instruction/command/law

<sup>23</sup> Plastaras, *God of Exodus*, 142.

<sup>24</sup>  $\text{וַיִּזְכֹּר}$  is parsed as: waw consecutive, qal perfect, 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular and  $\text{וַיִּזְכֹּרְכֶם}$ : waw consecutive, qal perfect, 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural. The third verbal form  $\text{וַיִּזְכֹּרְכֶם}$  is qal imperfect, 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural with 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), 100.

<sup>26</sup> Except  $\text{לְכֶם}$  all other nouns have either prefix or suffix or in construct form.  $\text{דְּרֹתֵיכֶם}$  has all the three: prepositional prefix, masculine plural construct and 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural suffix.

by using the following working structure. I have presented it as a simple structure without using parallelism, chiasmic or concentric structural elements.<sup>27</sup>

A. Instruction concerning the institution of the ‘Memorial’

וְהָיָה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לָכֶם לְזִכְרוֹן

- a. Obligation of the Memorial: וְהָיָה (ought to be)
- b. Object of the Memorial: הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה (This day)
- c. Onus of the Memorial: לָכֶם (to you [pl.])
- d. Ontology of the Memorial: לְזִכְרוֹן (a memorial-day)

B. Instruction concerning the celebration of the ‘Memorial’: וְחַגְגְתֶם אֹתוֹ חַג לַיהוָה

- a. Action of the Memorial: וְחַגְגְתֶם אֹתוֹ חַג (you ought to celebrate it as a feast)
- b. Axis of the Memorial: לַיהוָה (to the Lord)

C. Instruction concerning the perpetuation of the ‘Memorial’

לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם חֻקַּת עוֹלָם תִּחְגַּגְהוּ

- a. Duration of the Memorial: לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם (throughout your generations)
- b. Demand of the Memorial: חֻקַּת עוֹלָם תִּחְגַּגְהוּ (you ought to celebrate it as a perpetual ordinance).

## 7. Analysis of the Text

### 7.1. First Command: Institution of the Memorial

In the first command, we have the *obligation of the memorial* described by וְהָיָה, as the two chapters dealing with the Passover consists of legal/instructional material and ‘ought’ is not merely a ‘cultic ought’ but it is a ‘moral ought’ of the ethical God of commandments. הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, this day is the *object of the memorial*. It is not χρόνος, but καιρός, a divinely appointed time. It is the most important, transforming day, which has lasting effect on the Jews. This day is a brand new start for the ‘Hebrews’ to become a ‘people of God.’<sup>28</sup> This day is the day of the exodus, the day of the tenth plague and which combines both Passover

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<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless I have used ‘alliterations’ in the formation of the three-fold structure to make it catchy and attractive.

<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to see how the Passover was celebrated both while leaving Egypt, the land of slavery and immediately after entering the promised land as free people (Josh 5:10–12). Cf. also Mishnah Pesahim 10:5 which speaks about this transformation.

evening and the first day of the Unleavened bread as the post-exilic Jewish day is from evening to evening. The word לָכֶם (to you) describes that the *onus of the memorial* is on Israelites. ‘The whole congregation of Israel’ was enjoined to celebrate the Passover memorial (cf. Ex 12:3, 6, 47). The memorial-day is to be celebrated by them because God is going to liberate them.

The most important word in the first command is לְזָכְרוֹן which I have translated as the memorial-day. Let us briefly understand the *ontology of the memorial*. It is like a wake-up call. It is a reminder of something else and not remembrance per se or something remembered. Durham beautifully explains, “לְזָכְרוֹן “for remembering” has the significance here of an anniversary, but still more, suggests the cultic emphasis upon the exodus deliverance as a present-tense event, an event of continuing effectiveness.”<sup>29</sup> The noun זָכְרוֹן has at least three meanings: (i) like זָכַר, it can mean remembrance (cf. Eccl 1:11; 2:16 stating the dead are not remembered), (ii) it is a memorandum, record, or ‘something to be remembered’ in itself (cf. Ex 17:14), and (iii) it is a memorial or reminder of something else.<sup>30</sup> Childs translates זָכְרוֹן as a ‘memorial sign.’<sup>31</sup> Eising, too, agrees with it by showing how it occurs several times alongside אֵוֶת.<sup>32</sup>

Focus is on the relationship between God and people and among the people. It connects past, present and future. Action is an intrinsic part of God’s remembering and the same is expected of Israel by remembering God and obeying God’s commands. This word occurs 7 times in Exodus, all the times with cultic connotations. Ex 13:9 asks Israelites to imbibe memory in their body. There is an intimate link between remembrance and celebration as in Est 9:28, זָכַר is translated as observe/celebrate. זָכְרוֹן which is a ‘memorial-day’ of the Passover festival in our context basically performs the function of ‘actualizing,’ ‘re-activating,’ ‘re-presenting’ and ‘re-entering’ into the event of redemption for later generations so that they can also partake into the original event. According to Fretheim, “The

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<sup>29</sup> Durham, *Exodus*, 156.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Leslie C. Allen, “זָכַר,” *NIDOTTE* 1:1104. Childs classifies it into two broad categories: (i) a passive sense of *memorandum*, a thing worthy itself of remembrance and (ii) active meaning: a memorial which calls something else to remembrance. Cf. Brevard Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (Studies in Biblical Theology 37; London: SCM Press, 1962), 66.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Childs, *Memory and Tradition*, 66.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Eising, “זָכַר,” *TDOT* 4:77. Cf. also Josh 4:6; Ex 13:9; Num 17:3, 5 (16:38, 40); Ex 12:13.



reenactment is as much salvific event as the original enactment.”<sup>33</sup> This re-enactment became a great source of hope and comfort for the exilic community.

## 7.2. Second Command: Celebration of the Memorial

Jews in the exile celebrated the memory of the exodus and modified the practice. In and through retro-projective development, new tradition of Passover developed. Moses and Aaron had asked the Pharaoh on behalf of God to allow the Israelites to go in the wilderness to celebrate the festival to the Lord (cf. Ex 5:1; 10:9). Chacko says, “The Israelites did not go on a three days’ journey into the wilderness, in order to carry out the festival; rather they celebrated the festival in Egypt.”<sup>34</sup> This was of great significance to the Jews in the exile. The exodus, the mighty act of salvation followed the celebration of the Passover. It would have been quite heartening to the Jews facing the similar situation. ‘If God acted in a particular way in the past after the celebration of the Passover, God will hopefully act in a like manner in the future, too, liberating us from the Babylonian captivity and bringing us back home.’ This hope and faith must have prompted them to celebrate the Passover with renewed zeal.

Celebration of feasts has a great impact on human psyche. It boosts memory and creates community relationship. God’s action was liberation and people’s action was celebration. The *action of the memorial* is expressed by the key verb in the second command: לָחַג and it’s also expressed in the related noun חַג. In OT usage, חַג refers to a community festival of the Israelites, determined by the solar year. It is marked by rejoicing and songs of thanksgiving (cf. Deut 16:14; Amos 8:10; Hos 2:13[11]; Ezek 6:22), and above all by the joyous processions that make their way to the sanctuary to offer sacrifice (cf. Am 5:21; Nah 2:1[1:15]; Is 30:29; Zech 14:16; Ps 42:3, 5[2, 4]; 2 Chr 5:3).<sup>35</sup> Jewish festivals had a strong social element of caring for the least, the last and the lost. It is clearly seen in the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah tells people: “Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10, cf. Est 9:19, 22).

Dobson brings out the celebratory and commemorative importance of Israelite feasts when he states, “The religious festivals of the Israelites became chiefly occasions for rejoicing before God, and for remembering what He had done for them (cf. 12:14, 24–27;

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<sup>33</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 139.

<sup>34</sup> Modayil M. Chacko, *Liberation and Service of God* (Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 2002), 168.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Kedar-Kopfstein, “חַג chagh; חַג hgg,” *TDOT* 4:206.

13:3–9; Josh 4:4–7).”<sup>36</sup> During feasts, people get ec-static and they get transported into the salvific past. Celebration of feasts held dynamic and transformative character for the Jews, especially during their exilic times and it continues to hold even today.

The word לַיהוָה speaks about the *axis of the memorial*. The whole memorial revolves around Yahweh. It was Yahweh who took the initiative. Yahweh is the one who drafted the entire script of the exodus. In the Bible the word פֶּסַח (Passover) often goes with לַיהוָה, showing their intimate connection. The purpose of the three-fold instruction is mainly to remember Yahweh and Yahweh’s deeds because the remembrance of Yahweh is salvific.<sup>37</sup>

### 7.3. Third Command: Perpetuation of the Memorial

The Passover feast is instituted by the Lord as a ‘memorial-day,’ however, what is the use of it if it is forgotten by the present generation and not passed on to succeeding generations. In that case ‘memorial’ will no longer be a ‘memorial.’ לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם (throughout your generations) describes the *duration of the memorial*. The memorial is to be celebrated not only in the present, but in future as well, till eternity. BDB gives an extensive discussion with four primary meanings of דֹּר referring to: (i) period, age, generation, (ii) of people living at a particular time (period, age), (iii) quality of generation, and (iv) habitation. The second part dealing with people is divided into three: (a) in the present, (b) present and future and (c) especially of a future generation, of posterity. In this last part of ‘posterity,’ we find the form in Ex 12:14: לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם. These forms are usually plural constructs with suffixes.<sup>38</sup>

Children’s education in religion and morals is very important and that is stressed in Ex 12:26 and also in Mishnah Pesahim 10:4. Jewish festival ritual found in Mishnah has a potential of bridging the historical distance, the generation gap. This bridging the gap held great significance for the Jews in the exile. However, in order to achieve this outcome, the biblical authors made use of a literary device well-known to them at their time and that is ‘law/ordinance/statute/instruction/ commandment.’

The last phrase, עֹלָם תִּתְקַדְּשׁוּ (celebration of perpetual ordinance), describes the *demand of the memorial*. Yahweh is the God of ethical demands and he makes a demand of love on the people. Ordinances/laws reveal God’s authority and will. Passover ordinance is a

<sup>36</sup> John H. Dobson, *A Guide to the Book of Exodus* (Volley Forge: Judson Press, 1977; repr., 1978), 62.

<sup>37</sup> This is found in Indian religions very prominently in the form of worship called ‘*namjapa*’ or ‘*namsmaran*,’ i.e. recalling or remembering the name. Ultimately we become what we remember.

<sup>38</sup> Gn 17:7, 17:9, 17:12, Ex 12:14, 12:17, 12:42, 16:32, 16:33, 27:21, 29:42, 30:8, 30:10, 30:21, 30:31, 31:13, 31:16, 40:15, Lv 3:17, 6:11, 7:36, 10:9 (all P). Cf. Brown et al. “דֹּר,” (BDB #2082), 189.

memorial willed by God for God’s people. In the Hebrew Bible, the words *הקדש*, *טִפְשׁוּת*, and *הַצִּוּוּת* are interchangeably used. Hence ordinance is almost similar to commandment. Butler brings out the demand in the Passover ordinance. He says, “It was not a suggestion from God but was an “ordinance.” It was a law of God which required this observance.”<sup>39</sup> The Passover laws are the only laws given in the land of Egypt (cf. Ex 12:1).<sup>40</sup> They are enjoined to keep these laws through the repeated command: ‘Celebrate/observe this day throughout your generations as a perpetual ordinance’ (cf. Ex 12:14, 17, 24; 13:10).<sup>41</sup> Deuteronomy gives the rationale behind Israel’s obedience: “Remember you were slave in Egypt and God redeemed you” (Deut 24:18; cf. Ex 20:2; Deut 5:6, 15; 15:15; 16:12; 24:22). Israel is commanded not to go back to Egypt’s slavish ways (cf. also Is 30:1; 31:1; Ezek 17:15; Jer 42:19). Besides, there are strict sanctions for not celebrating feasts (Ex 12:15, 19; Num 9:13; Zech 14:16–19; Est 9:28).

## 8. NT Cross-References

Exodus 12 held important place for the Christians right from the apostolic times. Ex 12:14 memorial reminds us of *ἀνάμνησις* in NT. *ἀνάμνησις* occurs 6 times in NT. Three occurrences are Eucharistic (Lk 22:19 and 1 Cor 11:24, 25). Whereas, the remaining three occurrences concern women: Two of them are used by Jesus to refer to the woman who anointed his head (Mk 14:9, Mt 26:13) and one is found in Mary’s Magnificat (Lk 1:54). Passover in NT is compared with Jesus’ Paschal mystery. Synoptics speak about the Passover meal and the institution of the Eucharist. We have synoptic love command and Johannine New commandment. Besides these important commandments, on Maundy Thursday, Jesus gives a similar command to his disciples: “Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19).

## 9. Theological Implications of the Text

### 9.1. Theology of Memory: A Key Foundation of Religion:

Memory plays a great role in the formation of 4 C’s: Cult, creed, code and community structure. In Judaism and Christianity, religious traditions are shaped in and through the memory of liberation. Pope Francis shows the important role of memory in building our faith

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<sup>39</sup> John Butler, *Analytical Bible Expositor: Exodus* (Clinton, IA: LBC Publications, 2008), 117.

<sup>40</sup> According to Sarna, “this chapter is an exception to the rule that all the laws were promulgated in the wilderness.” Sarna, *Exodus*, 53.

<sup>41</sup> Other annual events and feasts and Levitical regulations were also called “lasting ordinances” (e.g., Ex 27:21; 28:43; 29:9; 30:21; Lev. 16:29, 31, 34; 23:14, 21, 41).

in his encyclical letter *Lumen Fidei*. In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, he calls memory the “deuteronomic” dimension of faith and goes on to state, “The believer is essentially “one who remembers”” (EG 13).

Liberation and memory are deeply connected. God decisively intervened in history through exodus and paschal mystery. Liberative memory of exodus generated great power for Jews. It strengthened and encouraged them to withstand terrible tragedies like the exile and the holocaust. The exodus theme was carried forward in the NT thought. Tangible bodily dimension plays an important role in liberative memory. Berliner calls the body a “vital site of memory.”<sup>42</sup> In Japanese, the word for memorized is, literally, implanted in the body.<sup>43</sup> Jews knew the importance of bodily memory, which helped them to keep the memory of liberation alive and active. Jesus a Jew left a lasting memorial for the Church with the tangible symbols of bread and wine used for the Passover meal. In Ignatian spirituality, too, we see the importance of the application of senses.

Through the complex two-way ‘tradition-making’ process, retro-projective development of tradition/s took place. There is an intimate link between memory of liberation and tradition. Jewish memory is very strong and has worked for their progress and prosperity. Jewish memory of liberation underwent a long process of interpretation and re-interpretation according to the changing situations. However, the Jews not only reinterpreted their past, but they went one step forward. For the Jews, the past is no more past. This phenomenon can be expressed in a term called ‘contemporaneity.’ Contemporaneity is “the quality of being current or of the present.”<sup>44</sup> Contemporaneity is bridging the generation gap and entering into the solidarity with past generation, and actualizing the past. This is strongly seen in Mishnah Pesahim 10:4-5. Contemporaneity also led to the retro-projective tradition-making. Through such phenomenon, memory becomes instrumental in forming religious traditions and becomes a key foundational element of religion.

## **9.2. Theology of Celebration: A Major Sustaining Principle of Religion:**

First words of God to humans in Gen 1:28, be fruitful (פְּרֹה) and multiply (רַבֵּה), indicate growth and development, and hence they can be called the words of blessing and

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<sup>42</sup> David Berliner, “Abuses of Memory on the Memory: Boom in Anthropology,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2005), 200. He speaks about memory’s relationship to places and objects.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. George Lacey, “Eucharist as Intersection between Memory and Forgetfulness,” *Worship* 77, no. 1 (2003): 55.

<sup>44</sup> Memidex Free Online Dictionary, “Contemporaneity,” n.p. [cited 15 Jan 2014]. Online: <http://www.memidex.com/contemporaneity+currentness>.

celebration. Similarly the first divine command in Ex 12:14 to the people of Israel is to celebrate their new peoplehood. The same can be said about Eucharistic words in Lk 22:19, where Jesus asks the disciple to celebrate their new fellowship in and through the Church. I strongly believe that the celebration of liturgy and feasts with their memorial and celebratory aspects sustain religious community and thus religion itself.

Priestly authors expressed the memory of liberation in the form of liturgical tradition. In the celebration of liturgy, there is remembrance of God and God's salvific actions. During the liturgical celebrations, time gap is bridged and original salvific event is made available to the new generation. Liturgy plays both subversive and stabilizing roles. Balancing these two opposites, liturgy sustains religion. There is always a danger of being 'too cultic' by forgetting original inspiration and hence we need to always remember the basic experience.

Let us look at two representative liturgies: Jewish Passover Seder and Christian Eucharist. In Passover *Hagaddah*, celebratory aspects are seen by drinking of four cups of wine, reclining at the table and singing Hallel. Jesus too celebrated on the eve of his crucifixion by having a fellowship meal with his disciples. Passover liturgy brings about contemporaneity. Similar phenomenon is seen in Eucharistic ἀνάμνησις. It is interesting to see why Paul gives the account of Eucharist in 1 Cor 11. Corinthian community no longer remembered what Jesus did and they did not do what Jesus did. Their words and gestures had become empty. In order to remind them, Paul gave the account of the Eucharist.<sup>45</sup> In Eucharist, we remember major redemptive events, but most importantly we remember the Lord and we are re-membered as one Church, the body of Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist, re-activating, re-presenting of Jesus' Paschal mystery takes place and we re-enter into the salvific event of Calvary.<sup>46</sup>

In celebration of feasts, community comes together. Passover Lamb, cooked whole without bones being broken, describes this unity. During Passover celebration, laymen rose to the dignity of priesthood as they themselves sacrificed animals (Cf. Philo, *The Special Laws* 2.145). Festivals arouse and incite memory. They have dynamic and transformative character. In and through festivals, in two-way dynamic process, tradition history get 'established' and are 'remembered.' Easter the greatest Christian feast is in fact Christian Passover. Jesus didn't change the meaning of the Passover, but enhanced and broadened its meaning. The

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Eugene La Verdere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 42, cited in Peter Atkins, *Memory and Liturgy: The Place of Memory in the Composition and Practice of Liturgy* (Hants, England: Brookfield, 2004), 61.

<sup>46</sup> Lacey, "Eucharist," 54.

celebration of these foundational mysteries throughout future generations sustains both Judaism and Christianity and gives them the strength to weather all kinds of problems and difficulties and emerge stronger.

### **9.3. Celebrating the Memory: The Proto-Commandment: The Herald of the Ten Commandments:**

To prove this thesis statement, I base my arguments on a well-accepted theological premise: Grace precedes demand. Feast ordinance is a “symbolic representation of the saving events in which those who are redeemed participate.”<sup>47</sup> Passover is thus symbolic representation of the exodus. In the context of Sinai Covenant, the Ten Commandments and other laws were given. The exodus precedes Sinai. Sinai derives its importance from the exodus liberation. No exodus, no Sinai. Since Passover is equated with the exodus event. We can go on to say, no Passover, no Sinai and hence no Ten Commandments. Thus, the Passover ordinance becomes a pre-condition for the Ten Commandments. If we study the 613 commandments in Judaism, we will find that the only commandments prior to the Sinai Covenant are found in the section dealing with the Passover (Ex 12:1–13:16). 15 out of 613 commandments are found here.<sup>48</sup> All of them are related to the Passover festival. Although, Ex 12:14 is not found in these 15, it is the basis of these 15 commands.

We must realize that the Ten Commandments come in the context of the exodus. The exodus was not a contextless emancipation. The Ten Commandments were given to institutionalize the exodus experience: to establish perspectives, procedures, policies, and institutions that will generate exodus-like social relationships. The ultimate purpose is “in order to preclude a return to pre-Exodus exploitation.”<sup>49</sup> The Passover ordinance challenges us to establish renewed relationship with God and community in order to avoid such oppressive situation. The same command is concretized in the Ten Commandments. I call Ex

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<sup>47</sup> Crisswell, *Believer's Study Bible*, n.p. (Ex 12:24).

<sup>48</sup> There is one law dealing with ‘time and season’ (#107), three related to ‘the first-born’ (#368–70), one related to ‘Tithes, Taxes and *T'rumah* [Hebrew Offerings]’ (#402) and ten laws dealing with ‘Sacrifices and Offerings’ (#459–68). Cf. <http://www.hisglory.us/>, “The 613 Laws of the Old Testament,” n.p. [cited 21 Jan 2014]. Online: [http://www.friendsofsabbath.org/Further\\_Research/Law%20of%20God/THE%20613%20LAWS%20of%20the%20OLD%20TESTAMENT.pdf](http://www.friendsofsabbath.org/Further_Research/Law%20of%20God/THE%20613%20LAWS%20of%20the%20OLD%20TESTAMENT.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 184. Pope Francis too speaks about this, “It is in the light of faith, of complete entrustment to the God who saves, that the Ten Commandments take on their deepest truth, as seen in the words which introduce them: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (*Ex* 20:2). The Decalogue is not a set of negative commands, but concrete directions for emerging from the desert of the selfish and self-enclosed ego in order to enter into dialogue with God, to be embraced by his mercy and then to bring that mercy to others” (*LF* 46).

12:14 as ‘the Commandment of Grace’ which precedes and heralds the Ten Commandments, which I call ‘Commandments of Demand’.

The same can be said in the NT. Jesus gives the New commandment of love *after* the washing the feet of the disciples. The washing of the feet is Johannine counterpart of the Synoptic Eucharist. Hence, we can analogously say that the Eucharistic commandment “Do this in memory of me” in Lk 22:19 *precedes* the New Commandment. The New Command is “Love one another *just as* I have loved you.” According to me, the phrase ‘just as’ points to the Eucharistic sacrificial love of Jesus. Thus in both the OT and the NT, the proto-commandments herald the Ten Commandments and the New Commandment respectively.

## **10. Contextual Application of the Text**

I wish to suggest six shifts so that the Church in India can truly celebrate the memory of liberation in its liturgy and life. I find these shifts embodied in the person of Pope Francis and especially in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. The first two shifts deal with the attitude of the Church, the third and the fourth deal with the liturgy and the last two deal with a new way of being the Church in India.

1. From authoritarian elitism to liberative praxis
2. From alienating hard-heartedness to dialogical communion
3. From overly cerebral liturgy to celebratory liturgy
4. From wordy liturgy to bodily liturgy
5. From centralized Church to participatory Church
6. From triumphalistic Church to poor Church

## **Conclusion**

Fire can easily die out. Grace can easily be lost. Original inspiration can easily be forgotten. That is why it is very important to rekindle, to re-found, to remember, to represent and to relive the original experience by getting to the root of the experience. This paper was an attempt to go back to the foundational experience of Judaism and partly of Christianity and relive, remember and celebrate the memory so that we may celebrate this transforming memory and make the experience of God’s liberation ever present for the least, the last and the lost. Amen! Alleluia!

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