

Prosthetic Memory in the Old Testament

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ABSTRACT

In the OT "remembering" often denotes the experience of reliving special events of the past and thereby making them virtually present. Several texts are advanced in an argument that, where remembering is aided by an external sign or symbol, its function is not necessarily limited to the prevention of forgetting but also to stimulate constructive mental action. It is proposed to interpret this with the help of the thesis of "prosthetic memory" put forward by Alison Landsberg for the visual arts. The visual aid does not only prevent knowledge of the past to fade away, but positively stimulates new interpretive action. It is shown that this nuance is combined with the idea of education where prosthetic memory occurs in the OT. It is proposed that the purpose of these prostheses to memory is the pertinent interpretation of Torah and educational instructions as well as their translation into acts appropriate to new contexts.

A INTRODUCTION

The concept of remembering is central in the OT and has received extensive attention in scholarship, especially since a burst of monographs in the nineteen-sixties.¹ As far as I can see, an aspect that has not been noted, is what I would call "prosthetic memory." This not only means that memory of the past is aided by a prosthesis, but that the remembrance as such expands further still to enable a specific function in the present. "Prosthetic" is that which is added on, which comes extra and achieves what cannot be attained without it, or can only be accomplished with difficulty. Comparable to our orthopaedic world that knows various prostheses to the human body for aiding and enabling attendant human activities, so Israel knew various prostheses to memory in order to aid specific religious activities. I owe the metaphor to Alison Landsberg, who applied it to the visual arts, but I shall use it in my own way² to investigate a specific func-

¹ Willy Schottroff, *"Gedenken" im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament: Die Wurzel zākar im semitischen Sprachkreis* (2nd ed.; WMANT 15; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967); cf. also Piet A. H. de Boer, *Gedenken und Gedächtnis in der Welt des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1962); Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (London: SCM, 1962).

² In this, I follow the lead of Reina-Marie Loader, "Sarajevo: Shelved Memories" (Ph.D. diss., University of Reading, 2011), 37-38, who independently applies what Alison Landsberg, "Prosthetic Memory: The Ethics and Politics of Memory in an Age of Mass Culture," in *Memory and Popular Film* (ed. P. Grainge; Manchester:

tion of memory aids in Israel.

I shall now advance several instances of aids to memory in the OT. First, we attend to texts where memory is not only aided in the sense of preventing forgetfulness, but where the prosthetic element is geared towards a specific goal or action.

B PROSTHESIS IN SPECIFIC TEXTS

In the Books of Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy the phenomenon occurs in a number of passages. It seems to be especially associated with the motif of education and/or with texts later selected to make up the *Shema*.

1 The *zizit* Commandment

The commandment to put tassels on the garments of the Israelites occurs in two places. In Num 15:37-41 it says:

³⁷ And Yahweh said to Moses: ³⁸ Speak to the Israelites, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments through their generations and to put a purple cord on the tassel of each corner. ³⁹ And it will be a tassel for you so that, when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of Yahweh and practise them, and not follow the lust of your heart and your eyes. ⁴⁰ The purpose is that you shall remember and practise all my commandments, and you shall be holy to your God. ⁴¹ I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am Yahweh your God.

In Deut 22:12 the commandment is much shorter:

¹² You shall make tassels on the four corners of the cloak with which you cover yourself.

Together with Deut 6:4-9 and 11:13-21, the first of the two *zizit* texts is part of the *Shema* and therefore plays a prominent part in Jewish faith and religious practice. For our purpose there are two important aspects. First, the fact that the tassels to be attached to the garments (called צִיצִית³ in Numbers and נְדָלִים in Deuteronomy) are to be clearly visible. Secondly, meticulous formulation of the purpose for which their display is intended in vv. 39-40. A visible part of the normal clothing is highlighted, not only for prayer purposes, but for everyday use, as is clear enough in the Numbers version but even more so in the

Manchester University Press, 2003), 144-161, calls by this name, notably an aid to memory that invites and stimulates active involvement.

³ The form is singular and could be taken as a collective or a reference to the phenomenon as such (cf. the singular suffix אָתָּה that follows in v. 39, whereas the noun in vv. 38 and 39 as well as the suffix is plural in the Samaritan Pentateuch).

terse apodictic formulation of the Deuteronomy version. The form of the tassel fringe has no other use apart from being seen, and the purple or blue colour makes this all the more prominent. The reason for wearing these is stated twice in successive verses, namely that Israel will remember (זכר) the divine commandments (מצוות) and practise (עשה) them. The impact of seeing them is specifically stressed in v. 39: "... and you will see (וראייתם) it and you will remember (וזכרתם) all the commandments of the Lord and you will put them into practice (עשיתם)."⁴

The *zizit* is therefore a visual aid to remembering, but that which is effected by the aid is not merely a reminder to prevent the commandments from slipping the memory. It is not only negative in that it causes something *not* to happen. On the contrary, it causes something to happen. It is thus a stimulus to practise obedience to the stipulations of the law. The functional element is particularly clear in the repetition of v. 40, which begins with למען, "for the purpose of." To be sure, the visible *zizit* is certainly *also* a reminder of the past, for the basis in the history of Israel's liberation from Egypt is emphatically used to undergird the whole commandment (v. 41). Israel is reminded of what Yahweh had done for her liberation at the exodus,⁵ but only thinking back is not enough – she must now also *understand* that past, which gives her the responsibility to interpret it.

Moreover, the repeated nominal declaration "I am Yahweh, your God" gives the purpose of *zizit* a confessional turn. What the tassels aid, is Israel's confession of faith in her God and her acceptance of being holy unto him by putting his commandments into practise. In addition to serving an abiding familiarity with the exodus story, the prosthesis provides a threefold stimulus: *confession* of one God, putting the faith into *practise*, and being a *holy* people. Far from inculcating nostalgia, the memory aid prompts thinking and doing and is therefore an aid to responsibility. Retaining as it does its validity "through the generations," it is self-perpetuating. Israel is therefore given a prosthesis to assume responsibility for interpreting the liberation from Egypt and the giving of the commandments at Sinai as the basis of faith and obedience for all time to come. *Cum grano salis* it can therefore be said that the *zizit* aids the past to attain the goal for which it happened, namely a relationship of faith and observance of the Torah. This is articulated in the expression, והייתם קדשים לאלהיכם

⁴ Willy Schottroff, "זכר *zkr* gedenken," *THAT I*: 510-511, shows a clear tendency of the root זכר to transcend thinking and to relate to deeds (revealing "einen über bloßes Denken hinausreichenden tathaften Bezug").

⁵ Hendrik Jagersma, *Numeri I* (POut; Nijkerk: Callenbach 1983), 242, thinks the historical memory is also suggestively present in the words "to be your God" (v. 41), which he relates to the promise made to the patriarchs (cf. Gen 17:7).

("and you shall be holy unto your God"). It is no wonder that the Numbers text is part of the Shema.

2 *Tefillin/ṭōṭāpot* in Exodus

In the Book of Exodus the command to have a sign (אֹת) on the hand and a reminder (זִכְרוֹן) or frontlets (טוֹטְפוֹת) between the eyes occurs twice (as well as twice in Deuteronomy, see B3 below). In Exod 13 a second set of instructions for the feast of unleavened bread is given (vv. 3-10).⁶ This is followed by a section on the redemption of the firstborn (vv. 11-16).⁷ The main issue in both of these sections is the didactic element, notably the teaching given by the father to his son about the meaning of all this (vv. 8 and 14-15, not only the latter, as Childs, *loc. cit.*, seems to suggest). In both cases the interpretive explanation of the father is directly linked to the outward "sign" that is to go with it:

⁸ You shall tell your son on that day, "It is because of what Yahweh did for me when I came out of Egypt."

⁹ It shall be for you a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead, so that the teaching of Yahweh may be in your mouth, because with a strong hand Yahweh brought you out of Egypt.

¹⁰ You shall keep this ordinance at its proper time from year to year.

...

¹⁴ When in future your son asks you, "What does this mean?" you shall answer, "By strength of hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. ¹⁵ When Pharaoh made it hard for us, Yahweh killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of humans to the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to Yahweh every male that first opens the womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem."

¹⁶ It shall serve as a sign on your hand and as frontlets on your forehead that by strength of hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt.

In both these passages rituals are linked to the exodus from Egypt, first the feast of the unleavened bread and then the redemption of the firstborn as a reference to the final plague over Egypt, when the firstborn sons of the Egyptians died (Exod 11:4-6; 12:29-30). The fact that the father teaches the son

⁶ The first set is given in Exod 12:14-20.

⁷ A list of parallels between vv. 3-10 and 11-16 is given by Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: John Knox 2004), 203: "Both are related to the entry into the promised land (5//11); both focus on the answer to the son (8//14); both require the visible sign of remembrance on the hand (9//16); both are grounded in the exodus formula (9//16)."

about the meaning the past has for their own time and the further fact that this observance is required to take place permanently "from year to year" (v. 10), go hand in glove with the use of visible aids to memory. In the first passage the "sign" (אֹתָהּ) on the hand is accompanied by a "reminder" (זִכְרוֹן, from the verb זָכַר, "remember") between the eyes, so that the term itself explains the function of the frontlets. By virtue of the close association of a near parallelism to the sign on the hand, it also states the intention of the sign on the hand.

Childs thinks that the historicising of the two ceremonies is to be internalised. That is so, but the internalising *is* not the purpose – it *has* a purpose. Durham calls it "the actualization of the exodus-deliverance" and regards the medium for this to be ritual.⁸ This means that the experience of the deliverance from Egypt is to be kept alive in later generations, which is the goal of the fatherly education. The feast of the unleavened bread and the ritual of the redemption of the firstborn provide the framework for the fulfilment of the father's educational obligation since it offers opportunities at the annual feast and at the redemption of the firstborn of animals.⁹ To this end both father and son receive a tangible medium to enable them to reach the goal of the remembrance of the exodus. That is the outward sign on the hand and on the forehead. Although the signs became the *tefillin*¹⁰ of later Judaism, it is not clear exactly what they originally consisted of or what they looked like. Nevertheless, in the context they have a powerful didactic effect.

The verb הָיָה in both v. 9 and v. 16 ("and it shall be") carries the third person singular subject "it." In either case this can grammatically refer to the father's teaching. "It," the teaching prescribed in respectively v. 8 and vv. 14-15 would then have to be the sign. But this is unlikely for several reasons. First, the signs will in such a case be on the hand and the stern of only the father, who will then not be reminded to speak as the final construction in v. 9 clearly requires. On the contrary, the sign inspiring the father's words would become meaningless because it will depend on itself (his speaking). His speaking cannot be a sign to evoke itself. He would in such a case have to remember of his own accord, tell about his memory and only his narrative can become a "sign" for the son. But, finally, it is difficult to see how the education itself *is* a sign rather than *using* a sign, how the son can conceive of it as a sign and why the

⁸ John I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC 3; Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 177, 179.

⁹ It stands to reason that a firstborn son cannot remember his own redemption, but the firstborn of livestock would often offer him the opportunity to witness the ceremony. Cf. also the singular, "all the firstborn of *my* sons" (v. 15), which could only mean the firstborn of every wife or slave, since from the father's own perspective he can only have one firstborn. Alternatively, the singular could be taken as distributive, obliquely suggesting that every father should do and say as here commanded.

¹⁰ In the Targum Onkelos תְּפִלִּין is the translation for the Hebrew טוֹשֵׁפֶת in v. 16.

father should be excluded from the sign he himself carries/speaks. Neither can the sign be the events of Egypt,¹¹ since these cannot be worn unless symbolically, which in turn requires a symbol to carry them.

In v. 9 the mentioning of the frontlet between the eyes is followed by למען and a final clause plus substantiation clause with כי for the sign on the hand: "... so that the teaching of Yahweh may be in your mouth, because with a strong hand Yahweh brought you out of Egypt." Therefore the sign on the hand is associated with the strong hand with which God delivered them and the purpose of the sign on the stern is said to be the explanatory teaching of the father. This is all the more powerful because the son would not only see the external signs at the feast of the unleavened bread or the redeeming ceremonies of the firstborn, but daily. Therefore he would frequently be inclined to ask and the father would often have occasion to explain about the liberation of Israel and the redemption of the Israelite firstborn in Egypt. Especially since a son cannot remember his own redemption ceremony, that event from his infancy as well as the mighty events to which it points along with Passover (as the feast is termed in Deut 16:1-8), are foregrounded on a continual basis. So the tefillin spur catechetical teaching, aid the faith and become a stimulus to accept the religious responsibilities of father and son. The signs therefore simultaneously call for the father's participation in religious education and support him and his son alike with occasion, symbolic content and incentive to accept the duties that come with their faith. That, again, is a prosthesis to their memory because it is value added to the recalling of the past.

3 *Tefillin and Mezuzot in Deuteronomy*

The *tefillin* or *tōtāpot* occur in two further texts, both of them in Deuteronomy and, like Num 15:37-41, both are constituents of the *Shema*'. But in these two cases they occur in the company of a third prosthesis to memory, notably the *mezuzot* to be attached to the doorposts.

The *Shema*' proper, Deut 6:4-9, begins with the famous dictum that God is one and is therefore¹² to be loved (vv. 4-5). Its second section (vv. 6-9) is the

¹¹ The Rashi annotation to v. 9 regards the exodus from Egypt itself, not the phenomenon of *tefillin*, as the subject of the first verb: לך לאות ("The exodus from Egypt shall be to you as a sign"). The annotation to v. 10 then states: שתכתוב פרשיות הללו ותקשרם בראש ובזרוע ("This means that you shall write these passages and bind them on the head and on the arm"), which retains the relevance for tefillin despite taking the "sign" to be the exodus events themselves; cf. Rashi, *Pentateuch with Targum Onkelos, Haphtoroth and Prayers for Sabbath and Rashi's Commentary* (eds. and trans. M Rosenbaum and A.M. Silberman; London: Shapiro & Valentine 1946).

¹² As expressed by waw consecutive וְאָהַבְתָּ with the suffix conjugation standing for the imperative or jussive based on the preceding statement.

passage directly relevant for our purpose:

⁶ And these words that I am commanding you today must be in your heart. ⁷ Impress them on your children and talk about them when you sit in your house and when you go on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸ And bind them as a sign on your hand, and they must be frontlets between your eyes, ⁹ and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The other passage from Deuteronomy incorporated into the *Shema*, 11:13-21, begins with a reference to the command to listen and love Yahweh and sets out the blessings that will accrue if they obey and the punishments that will follow if they don't (vv. 13-17). Then comes the command to use prostheses in order to attain the goal (vv. 18-21):

¹⁸ You shall put these words of mine on your heart and on your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and bind them as frontlets on your forehead. ¹⁹ Teach them to your children, by talking about them when you sit in your house and when you go on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. ²⁰ And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹ so that your days and the days of your children may become many in the land that Yahweh swore to your ancestors to give them, all the days that the sky is above the earth.

In both passages it is possible to take the binding of the signs on the hand and the stern as metaphorical. But several arguments can be mustered against this. First, the "putting" (שׂים) of the commandments on the heart and the soul is clearly metaphorical, so that an expansion of the metaphor to add the hand and the stern to the heart and the soul would make little sense.

Next, the intention is to internalise the commandments so that they can be obeyed "... with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut 6:5). So, where the commandments are intended to be really, is in the minds and innermost being of the Israelites (heart and soul), not on their hands and foreheads. Being in the mind is not a sign, but the real thing. It follows that wearing them on the hand and the stern must be an external aid to settling them in the mind (אזיח, which the words on the heart are not). Secondly, the addition of the doorposts (*mezuzot*) can hardly be "only" metaphorical, since it would in such a case serve the same purpose as a supposed metaphorical wearing on the hand and on the stern. All three would have to be metaphors for metaphors (having them written on the hand, stern and doorpost as metaphors for the metaphor to engrave them in the heart/soul). Thirdly, evidence from Mesopotamia has long been known for the existence of apotropaic inscriptions on the arms.¹³ The same goes for the writing on the

¹³ Cf. Ephraim A. Speiser, "TWTPPT." *JQR* 48/2 (1957): 208-217, 211.

doorposts, for which Weinfeld has adduced evidence from Egypt, where religious texts were indeed written on doorposts.¹⁴

What the signs on the hand, stern and doorpost however certainly are *not* in the texts we have been examining, is apotropaic. They are not charms to ward off misfortune or demons, neither are they amulets to ensure good luck.¹⁵ The apotropaic use in Mesopotamia and Egypt may be regarded as proven, while the *tefillin* and *mezuzot* may have acquired such a quality in the course of later tradition, but in these texts this is not the case. As in the texts from Exodus, the educational motif is also present in the Deuteronomic texts, which, to be sure, is characteristic of Deuteronomy in other contexts as well.¹⁶ The command to make *tefillin* and *mezuzot* is not only intertwined with the education motif, but is also framed by the motif of total obedience. In Deut 11:13 the infinitive absolute שמע תשמע ("closely listen to") is used, while v. 22 refers back to "these" commandments by means of the infinitive absolute, further enhanced by *nun paragogicum*, שמר תשמרון ("thoroughly heed"). The blessing and punishment mentioned in Deut 11:14-15, 17 are not the results of the use or non-use of amulets, but of the obedience or disobedience to the religious commandments (cf. 6:10-11, where the blessing is a gracious gift of God). So, the external phenomenon may be related to what is known from the ancient Near Eastern context, but its function is altered as it is integrated into Israel's faith of obedience to the word of God. Since it does not charm, but persuades, stimulates and encourages on the basis of God's mighty acts,¹⁷ we again have a prosthesis to memory, not only of what happened, but in order to make conscious and informed decisions of faith as time goes on.

4 Necklace and Tablet in Proverbs

There are three cases of prosthetic memory in the Book of Proverbs, of which the first presents the most problematic text but also the best manifestation of the phenomenon. This is Prov 3:3, which should be read together with the surrounding verses in order to account for the problem of the text.

¹ My son, do not forget my teaching,
and let your heart keep my commands;

¹⁴ Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11* (AB 5; New York: Doubleday 1991), 341-343.

¹⁵ For this reason the term "phylactery," Greek φυλακτήριον, "amulet" (from the verb φυλάσσειν, "guard," "protect") is not an appropriate designation for *tefillin* (cf. the plural in Matt 23:5, τὰ φυλακτήρια).

¹⁶ Cf. Deut 4:1, 5, 9, 10, 14; 5:31.

¹⁷ Reference to the liberation from Egypt is not part of the selection of Deuteronomic passages that later became part of the *Shema*, but it is part of the literary context in which they stand in the Bible (Deut 10:19, 22; 11:1-7). Here too remembrance is part and parcel of the education (Deut 6:20-25, almost exactly as in Exod 13:14-15).

- ² for length of days and years of life
and peace they will increase for you.
³ »Kindness and faithfulness should not forsake you;«
bind them around your neck,
[write them on the tablet of your heart,]
⁴ and so find favour and good repute
in the sight of God and of people.

In its present form, v. 3 seems too long for the metrical arrangement, in the Septuagint it differs from the MT, and it seems to contain a quotation or gloss from one of the other two relevant texts (Prov 7:3; cf. also 6:21).

The text as it stands has three sub-units:

- (a) »Kindness and faithfulness should not forsake you«
- (b) bind them around your neck
- (c) [write them on the tablet of your heart]

Units (a) and (c), respectively marked » « and [], are the controversial ones. Some commentators consider the first unit (a) to be "suspect," meaning that it is an addition to what stood there in the first place. Others argue that the third unit (c) is to be regarded as the addition because it is absent in the Septuagint Codex Vaticanus and because it also occurs in 7:3, so that it could be a gloss derived from the latter verse.¹⁸

What is clear, is that both (a) and (c) now stand in the text. What is also clear, is that the verse is too long for a stich in the carefully composed unit. What seems probable is that there were pre-stages of the verse in which the debated units appeared. I would suggest the following reconstruction of a probable redactional process:

Originally, there was no reference to kindness and faithfulness (v. 3a) and the third person plural suffixes thus referred to the teaching and commandments that had to be bound around the neck and written on the tablet of the heart.

¹⁸ E.g. Otto Plöger, *Sprüche Salomos (Proverbia)*, (BKAT 17; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 32, and Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 18A; New York: Doubleday 2000), 141, 144-145, for the first alternative; and Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914), 56, 58; Berend Gemser, *Sprüche Salomos* (2nd ed.; HAT 16; Tübingen: Mohr, 1963), 26; Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2004), 236, 241; and somewhat more carefully, William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach* (2nd ed.; OTL; London: SCM, 1977), 291, for the second.

Then the editor who shaped Prov 3 inserted »a« in v. 3:¹⁹ In this form, the suffixes no longer refer to the general teaching (תורה) and commandments (מצוה), but to the kindness and faithfulness (חסד and אמת). This enhanced the central idea of piety, which is explicable in a poem focusing precisely on the aspects of piety with which wisdom goes.²⁰

The hypothetical original reading would thus have been quite sapiential but not particularly pious. Whoever inserted v. 3a provided an adaptation to suit a context that integrates wisdom and piety. But the price is that v. 3 now became a tristich, a line consisting of three subunits. This is not unusual, but it does make the line very long in relation to the others that are all bistichs. This may be a reason why the Septuagint does not have v. 3c. It or its *Vorlage* could have eliminated the four words that duplicate 7:3b, thereby returning to a verse length in line with the rest of the poem.

So, the pupil or son is required to wear either the Torah and commandments mediated by the teacher or father around his neck or to do so with kindness and faithfulness. In the first case the concept would be general and comprehensive, somewhat like in the Pentateuchal texts that we have examined. In the second case the teaching would be specified as two defined concepts, *viz.* kindness and faithfulness. In either case the requirement is moral conduct during the life awaiting the young man.

The injunction of v. 1 not to forget the teaching can be summed up by using the word "dismembering" (Waltke).²¹ If re-membering what one has been taught suggests actively putting together its aspects at a later stage, then forgetting as its opposite would mean to dis-member the teaching. Retaining the precepts in the heart may mean that they are already there, although this does not necessarily have to be the case.²² As in the Pentateuch, "not forgetting" leads to positive results because it is constructive (v. 2; cf. the blessing of "long life" in Deut 6:2; 11:21). Conversely, "forgetting" is destructive and could therefore be expected to lead to negative results.

The necklace and the writing tablet in v. 3bc may be plain metaphors. That would metaphorically suggest the motif of remembering: *as* a necklace

¹⁹ This seems similar to what Arndt Meinhold, *Sprüche Kapitel 1-15* (vol. 1 of *Die Sprüche*; ZBK; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1991), 73, intends with his remark that v. 3a probably came to stand in its present place at the time of the writing ("beim Abfassen") of Prov 3.

²⁰ As McKane, *Proverbs*, 291, shows, the injunction is followed by "phraseology redolent of law and covenant (cf. Exod 13:9, 16; Deut 6:8; 11:18; Jer 31:3; cf. 17:1)."

²¹ Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 240.

²² If it is, it would strengthen the argument that "write them on the tablet of your heart" in v. 3c is derived from Prov 7:3, which would fit the enhancement of the pious gist of Prov 3.

and a writing tablet remind one of something, *so* the learner should always remember kindness and faithfulness. The verbs זָכַר ("remember") and שָׁכַח ("forget") are not used here, but the motif of remembering / not forgetting is centralised by the ideas of a necklace and a tablet. The motif of remembering is already powerfully present in the verse and would be even more so if these are physical objects. The heart is thought of as already retaining the complete teaching of the sage (v. 1). Therefore the present form of v. 3 is best understood not only as a metaphor for the same thing, but rather as a reference to a real necklace inscribed with two specific words from sapiential teaching, namely kindness and faithfulness, in the same way that the tefillin contain the *Shema*^c text. Moreover, the inscribed necklace hanging onto the chest is parallel to the writing on the tablet of the heart, whether the latter is a metaphorical tablet referring to the heart itself or a literal tablet dangling on the chest together with other ornaments as part of the necklace. This cannot be apotropaic imagery of a necklace with a charm to deflect evil,²³ because it extends an injunction to moral behaviour (אֵל-תִּעֲזָבוּ), not to the use of good luck amulets. The necklace with or without a little tablet is therefore a prosthesis to memory. In reminding its owner of something, it helps the bearer to re-member – not only in the sense of recalling a thought, but also by stimulating constructive mental action. This is particularly clear in the sapiential context where the recounting of salvation history is absent. The necklace becomes an aid to practice kindness and faithfulness. Not forgetting them thus means to remember them by actually practicing them.²⁴ חֶסֶד can signify a kind attitude or an act of kindness. While it is not necessarily an expression of covenantal kindness,²⁵ it does occur together with the idea of covenant (e.g. in Deuteronomic-Deuteronomistic literature such as Deut 7:9, 12; 1 Kgs 8:23) and carries prominent theological overtones.²⁶

As v. 2 contains the consequence to be expected from obedience to the injunctions of v. 1, so v. 4 expresses the consequence of obedience to the injunctions of v. 3.

²³ Cf. Patrick D. Miller, "Apotropaic Imagery in Proverbs 6:20-22," *JNES* 29 (1970): 129-130.

²⁴ Whereas Meinhold, *Sprüche*, 74, takes the two concepts of kindness and faithfulness to be a hendiadys, the plural suffix is used in the present text to refer to them. Therefore they are distinct but related virtues.

²⁵ Cf. Nelson Glueck, *Das Wort ḥæsəd im alttestamentlichen Sprachgebrauche, als menschliche und göttliche gemeinschaftsgemäße Verhaltensweise* (Gießen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1927; repr., 1961), 1-68.

²⁶ The theological dimension of the expression is developed by Edgar Kellenberger, *ḥæsəd wä'amät als Ausdruck einer Glaubenserfahrung* (ATANT 69; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 1982), *passim*.

The fact that the MT as it stands contains clear parallels between v. 3 and Prov 6:20-21 and 7:1-3 can be taken as an expression of commenting intertextuality:

²⁰ My son, keep your father's commandment,
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

²¹ Bind them on your heart always,
tie them on your neck.

¹ My son, keep my words
and retain my commandments with you.

² Keep my commandments and live,
keep my teachings as the apple of your eye;

³ bind them on your fingers,
write them on the tablet of your heart.

In the context of the redactional unit Prov 1-9, its effect is to strengthen the theological dimension of Prov 3, which is deeply imbued with piety as it is (cf. v. 9). In the other two chapters the injunction to bind teaching "on" (על) the heart, "on" the neck, "on" the fingers and write them "on" the tablet of the heart also occurs in the context of teaching given *now*, to be permanently applied in the *future* (תמיד, "always," Prov 6:21) and to bring beneficial results. So in all of them the external reminder of a necklace, a ring and perhaps a miniature tablet are devices to hinge the future to the past. Even in the wisdom tradition this is so, for, notwithstanding the absence of salvation history, the teaching being given soon becomes past in the future, which is why it should not be forgotten (Prov 3:1), "always" be considered (Prov 6:21), and be "retained" (Prov 7:1). The necklace enables the pupil to re-member the teaching of his youth, that is, it is a prosthesis to think for himself in new situations and thus to put the teachings together in new constellations as appropriate in those later circumstances.

C CONCLUSION

In all of the texts we have studied, the teaching offered in the form of commands and injunctions with or without supporting narratives is accompanied by physical equipment designed to enhance its effectiveness. What distinguishes these devices from other memorial objects, such as Jacob's rock at Bethel (Gen 28:18; 31:13), the memorial of the crossing of the Jordan (Jos 4:1-7), the witness against the tribes of Israel (Jos 24:26-27), or the Ebenezer Stone put up by Samuel (1 Sam 7:12) is the presence of didactic content to be remembered and applied with their help. Their aid entails prompting considered obedience to the commandments towards which they point. It may of course be argued that all memorials in some sense imply keeping the past present. But what makes an external sign prosthetic, is that it explicitly invites or requires the acceptance of responsibility to engage with that past (or the present that will soon become the past) and to base conscious

decisions for the design of religious and ethical life on it. When this is not present, the memorial may or may not have been understood prosthetically in the extra-literary world, but that is not part of the literary profile. In some cases textual reference to such memorials may reveal etiological explanations of the memorials' existence, but that would be the opposite of prosthetic memory. For, instead of explaining life in terms of the imaginative use of the memorial, it explains the memorial in terms of what can be imagined of its origin in life.

Even if aids to memory may be called "signs," all "signs" are not aids to memory. Whether or not the word *אוֹת*, "sign" is used in texts describing them, signs may for instance also be events (Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel, 1 Kgs 18), supernatural phenomena (Gideon's fleece, Judg 6:36-40; King Hezekiah's sundial, 2 Kgs 20:8-11) or some unspecified occurrence (the sign for King Ahaz, Isa 7:11-16). However, these are not aids to memory, but furnish proof of credibility or of identification,²⁷ which is a different matter altogether.

In all the instances from the Pentateuch there is a clear dialectic between memory of the past and expectation for the future based on that past (for instance, Num 15:41//39; Exod 13:3//5, 14//16; Deut 6:20-23//1, 10, 25). This calls to mind what Childs²⁸ terms "the redactor's use of the dialectic between redemption as hope and redemption as memory." In my opinion, it is not only a matter of redactional technique. It is rather a dialectic carried by the prosthetic function of aid to memory, which was noticed and maintained by the redactor(s) of these texts. Although the idea of redemption does not feature in the sapiential texts, the thought structure is the same: educational injunctions from one's youth are to be remembered throughout one's life and applied in the hope of enhancing the quality of life by so doing. The sages knew and used the same didactic support system as the theologians. Ironically, this seems to be confirmed by the rejection of *tefillin* in the early days of the Jewish Reform Movement. Abraham Geiger rejected *tefillin* as originating in pagan amulets and faulty exegesis.²⁹ As Koltun-Fromm comments on Geiger's experience of historical memory in relation to this custom, "Geiger cannot relive a past and reawaken a sensitivity so out of touch with his modern world."³⁰ By its very negativity, this supports the interpretation I have offered. For the inability to *now* relive the topicality of the past makes it impossible to accept a prosthesis that exists for precisely that reason.

²⁷ Cf. Fritz Stolz, "אוֹת, 'ó t Zeichen," *THAT* I: 91-95, 91.

²⁸ Childs, *Exodus*, 205.

²⁹ Cf. Yaakov Gartner, "Tefillin," *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (ed. A. Berlin and M. Grossman; Oxford: OUP, 2011), 725-726.

³⁰ Ken Koltun-Fromm, *Abraham Geiger's Liberal Judaism: Personal Meaning and Religion Authority* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 77.

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