

Memory Source Sheet

Matthew Miller

The Blessing of Forgetting

Sichot HaRan, Ch. 26

Most people think of forgetting as a serious drawback. But to me it has a great advantage. If you did not forget, it would be utterly impossible to serve God. You would remember your entire past, and these memories would drag you down...

David Robson (BBC)

Professor Charan Ranganath:

An analogy I like to give is to imagine that I went to your house, and asked: why aren't you a hoarder? ... If we didn't forget anything, we'd be hoarding memories, and you'd never be able to find what you want, when you want it.

Divine Memory and Forgetting

Job 11:6

וַיֹּגֵד־לְךָ | תַּעֲלָמוֹת חֲכָמָה כִּי־כַפְלִים לְתוֹשִׁיָּהּ וְדַע כִּי־יִשָּׁח לְךָ אֱלֹהִים מֵעוֹנֶךָ:

He would tell you the secrets of wisdom... And know that God has overlooked for you some of your iniquity.

- **Ibn Ezra:** ישח - ישכח (forgets)
- **Steinsaltz:** God can forget your sins, that is, forgive you for them.

Rosh Hashanah, Zichronot

כִּי אֵין שְׂכָחָה לִפְנֵי כִסֵּא כְבוֹדְךָ. וְאֵין נִסְתָּר מִנֶּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ

for there is no forgetfulness before the throne of Your Glory...

Marc Zvi Brettler

Zichronot: Asking an Omniscient God to Remember

We are asking God to use selective memory, a feature that is well-documented in scientific literature, where it is sometimes called "selective forgetting."

Memory and Mourning

Rashi on Genesis 37:35

וַיִּמָּאן לְהַתְנַחֵם. אֵין אָדָם מְקַבֵּל תְּנַחוּמִין עַל הַחַי וְסָבוּר שָׂמֵת. שְׁעַל הַמֵּת נִגְזְרָה נִגְזְרָה שִׁישְׁתַּכַּח מִן הַלֵּב וְלֹא עַל הַחַי

A person does not accept consolation for one living whom he believes to be dead, for with regard to the dead it is decreed that he be forgotten from the heart...

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Selective Memory

Genesis 41:51 - The Naming of Menashe

וַיִּקְרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת-שְׁם הַבְּכוֹר מְנַשֶּׁה כִּי-נִשְׁכַּח אֶת-כָּל-עֲמָלִי וְאֶת כָּל-בֵּית אָבִי:

Joseph named the first-born Manasseh, meaning, "God has made me forget completely my hardship and my parental home."

Q: How could Yosef have forgotten his parental home?

R. Yisrael Salanter: Yosef could never have forgotten. Even by naming his son this very name makes him remember. This is a classic case of selective memory.

Technology and Memory

Hard Fork Podcast

What I do worry about, though, is, I actually think it's a good thing that we can forget some things... I found a floppy disk that contained logs of a lot of my old instant message transcripts from middle school.

James Poulos, The Technology of Memory

Gordon Bell:

I feel much freer about remembering something now. I've got this machine, this slave, that does it.

Literary and Educational Perspectives

Alexander Pope, Eloisa to Abelard

*How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!
The world forgetting, by the world forgot
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!
Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resign'd.*

B.F. Skinner

Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten.

