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Abstract:

Among the dilemmas of education, there is also searching for frames of reference – to the sources of values, transfer of heritage, formation of identity. This article constitutes an attempt of reaching for seemingly out-of-date but still present texts, the works which created essential foundations for the contemporary culture. The author, by referring to the selected excerpts from the Old and New Testaments, attempts to show the extent of their topicality and “usefulness” in searching for answers of the contemporary education.

Keywords: Identity, Tradition, Social heritage, Memory, Education.

Shema Yisrael ... Listen, Israel ...

These words come from the beginning of a special kind of prayer in the Jewish tradition, a prayer regarded as the most important one. More than that. Some interpreters (Krajewski 2004, 217) point out that this is a characteristically canonical text in the Torah. Characteristically, as is often emphasized, from the point of view of this tradition it is difficult to identify a particular, canonical fragment. The whole of the Torah is, in reality, such a text. *Listen, Israel* - recited at least twice a day, as part of the morning and evening prayers. It is also recited just before going to bed. It is written in the *Book of Deuteronomy*: “May these words that I command you remain in your heart. You will teach them to your children; they will talk about them at home, on a journey, going to sleep and rising from sleep ...” (*Deut.* 6: 6–7). The order of recitation is not accidental. In the tradition of the Torah, the day begins at dusk and lasts through the night, the morning, until the following dusk.

Referring to Abraham J. Heschel, Stanislaw Krajewski emphasizes the special property of the tradition of the Jewish faith. Specifically, “the Jewish faith is to a large extent a memory. A memory of revelation”. (Krajewski 2004, 224) In fact, in this record, one can find a clear directive to remember, but also to communicate. Put differently, there is a directive to preserve and transmit one’s heritage but also an awareness of the essence of this heritage. Remember at home, remember while traveling, remember before going to sleep, remember when, after waking up, when you tend to your duties. Keep them inside, in your heart, in your memory. Memory which, to echo Heschel, is “the soul’s witness against the variability of the mind” (Heschel 2001, 136), hence the important message of cultivating memory and heritage. Then, there is the special instruction: you will instill

this in your children - instruction, summons, command, appearing time and again on the pages of the Torah—to pass something to your children, your successors. Let us recall Abraham’s dramatic cry: “what good is this reward if I have no one to whom to bequeath it?” (*Genesis*, 15:2)

Among the pages of a book written thousands of years ago, we find an obvious message of the idea of a universal education, from early childhood, until late adulthood. In the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and David we find many such appeals. In Moses’s farewell address, too. That, which today has taken on the form of the various conceptions of a lifelong education, continuing education, “lifelong learning”, the idea of children’s and adults’ universal education. (Krajewski 2004, 224) However, I want to go back to what opened this reflection. The words that begin this prayer, *Listen, Israel*, and the following verses: “The Lord is our God; the Lord only (Shema Yisrael, Adonai Elohim, Adonai Echad)”. (*Deut.* 6: 4)

There is a story associated with this prayer.¹ During the Second World War, many Jews all over Europe, wanting to save their children from a certain death at the hands of the Nazis, gave them up into the hands of foreigners. It was an obvious parental “instinct.” Although, in part and characteristically, a will of the nation’s survival...What good is this reward if I have no one to whom to bequeath it? (*Genesis* 15:2)

The testimonies of these events remain in the memories of many. Their natural expression can be found, for example, in the collections of Yad Vashem. Many among the Jewish children, often very young ones, were sent to monastic orphanages, run primarily by Catholic orders. This included children saved by the lay people, who gave them up to avoid danger, or for other reasons. Orphans too found refuge there.

After the war, some Jewish organizations made efforts to find Jewish children in orphanages. One of the organizers of these activities was Rabbi Josef Kahaneman (Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman Zatsl). As the story goes, also commemorated in Yaakov Shwekey’s moving song, the task of finding Jewish children was not an easy one. Their entire childhood disappeared in a period of dread; often, in order to save them, their caregivers baptized them and instilled in them the foundations of Christianity. All this so their true origins would not be revealed. The children did not know their own language; oftentimes, they did not even have their real names. Instead of Schmul or Izchak, one found Janek or Roman. Even the real surnames provided no proof: Miller sounds German, Machowicz Russian, Świerski Polish. There were no documents because they were destroyed for the good of the children. How to recognize them? According to this peculiar legend, Josef Kahaneman and his associates asked the orphanage directors to observe the children as they were going to sleep.

In the evening, they entered the large rooms filled with rows of beds, on which laid the children on the verge of slumber, many of whom have resided in the orphanage since the beginning of the war. They walked slowly through the room, reciting the words *Shema Yisrael, Adonai Elohim, Adonai Echad*. And then, many of the children began to recall, through the tears and in their “native” languages (Polish, English, Russian), their mothers and fathers.

Saving the Jewish children from death, the nuns, and even earlier their adopted Christian parents, imparted to them the knowledge of the Holy Trinity, of the Gospels. But in no way did the words of a prayer that their real Jewish mothers whispered to them before bed escape these children's memories, hidden somewhere, perhaps even in the subconscious, words remembered since childhood ... In the language of their national and religious tradition. The sad fact is that this beautiful story contained among certain (fortunately few) Jewish groups² a note of sarcasm, even accusations against the Christian clergy, accusations of conversion or indoctrination. Yet, no one doubts that this Christian upbringing of the Jewish orphans was necessary to save them during the war.

This, however, leads me to a certain reflection. The social group, the human group, can survive only with biological and cultural continuity. Of course, in the former case, continuity is assured through processes of procreation. But one cannot fail to notice that saving the children was not just a parental instinct. It was also group behavior. On the other hand, cultural continuity can be maintained, among other things, thanks to upbringing. Its constituent element was also the transmission of tradition, complete with a command. Also, through the evening prayer. A prayer that, after all, regardless of place or country of origin, was passed down in the language of tradition, in Hebrew. Language, therefore, plays an important role in preserving and transmitting heritage, but also in the context of foreign cultural influences. Learn foreign languages, otherwise, you'll be nothing. These words are spoken to children even today. Do they not mean sometimes: why do I need a native tongue if its knowledge does not let me be somebody? The canon of school readings stripped of the classics of national, Polish literature.

I am aware of the risk of juxtaposing the Holocaust of the Second World War with the peculiar storm, tsunami even, of popular culture, of various concepts, worldviews, or ideologies; postmodernism, gender, political correctness, and similar mirages and fantasies, including the influence of foreign cultures and traditions. The contemporary world of the white man who lives in increasing fear of Islamization. However, it is hard for me to resist the impression that these processes have a certain common denominator. Destruction, interruption of cultural continuity. When tradition is not rooted deeply enough ...

I can bring myself to understand the adults, parents who often for good reason, but sometimes under the pretext of fashion or career prospects, consciously open themselves or lease their children out to civilization. However, is it not worth asking a question when, after some time, the storm passes: what words will be used by the grownups to restore to future generations their own traditions? In the pursuit of building a future career, drawing on the discoveries of modern science that a child can and should learn and develop intellectual properties even in the fetal period. Yes, it is true. It is possible to cite many research results on this subject, to reach for concepts that are often still unproven, neuro-cognitive. For this purpose, we can even harness modern genetics and strive toward realizing the fantasy of cloning. But...Which words are taken from the evening

ritual, which words that are remembered from tradition will awaken the memory of future generations?

This is not a question specific to the evening prayer. This question concerns the memory of tradition, the memory of one's roots. Which words from our hearts, from our souls, will we bestow on our daughters, our sons? Which words will they talk about at home, on a trip, going to sleep and waking up? Even when I am the least religious? Perhaps then the memory of the beginning, the memory of a past time, is crucial. Isn't this the reason why the special call is repeated in such a special way: "Remember"? Especially things and events that "should be remembered."

"So that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt." (Deut., 16: 3) This verse refers to a difficult experience, but above all, it underscores an extremely important moment, an important breakthrough. Yes, you were a slave, you were in a difficult position, you were entangled in a series of difficult and painful moments. But here you can - you should - believe that it is possible that in one day you will escape from slavery, a time when this experience will become merely a thing of the past. Merely? No, because in your memory you ought to keep the facts of your release, the fact of leaving. This fact happened a long time ago, yet it endures, its consequences existing in the present. (Krajewski 2004, 259)

An exodus is, after all, a kind of archetype of regaining, or rather obtaining, freedom, despite an enormous resistance by earthly powers. Egypt was undoubtedly a world power, a mighty supremacy. How many trials, marked by the plagues, did Moses undertake to convince, to persuade the pharaoh? Terrible and severe trials, yet ultimately ineffective, such was the pharaoh's power, so great was the addiction embedded in captivity. Thus, the memory of leaving is the memory of regaining freedom. At the same time, in our modern pronouncement, this exodus from Egypt can also signify the possibility of coming to terms with limitations, blockages, including psychological ones, limiting our view of the world, restricting our perception. "Remember the day of the exodus" is also a call to free oneself from these restrictions. Contained in it might also be this call: Yes, it is possible. You were a slave, and yet you regained your freedom.

However, do not try to soothe your "conscience." It is easy, all too easy for the eyes of imagination to enclose in the word "slave" a muddled, oppressed figure, in order not to see the other side. We often find on these pages mentions of Israelites who, while in Egypt, were living in the lap of luxury and enjoying many honors but forgetting about their roots and traditions. You regained your freedom - thus, you also escaped from the glitz, the supposed stability, the abundance that has pushed you away from your values, from your roots. You were a slave, yet you regained your freedom. This is also a reference to the future, because, although it has not been said explicitly, it was, after all, not just a way out of Egypt. It was a way "out," but also a way "toward."

The memory of the beginning, the memory of the past - the treasury of tradition. Where am I in relation to it? Is there a place for rarities - treasures of intimacy, the greatest and most lasting foundation of my identity, my most deeply protected experiences? So profoundly strong, so deeply experienced. "Only be careful, and watch yourself closely so that you do not forget the things your

eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to your children's children." (*Deut.* 4: 9)

In our lives, in the life of each one of us, of great importance is not only memory but also the ability to forget - sometimes naturally, other times intentionally. It is understandable that if something ceases to matter to us, if something is "unnecessary" or unobtainable, it becomes forgotten. Yet, sometimes we forget on purpose, in a way described by Heidegger as an escape of a being prior to its proper existence. (Heidegger 1994, 371) We suppress, we eject from our memory something that is - or sometimes seems to be - uncomfortable to us, something that torments and worries us. Sometimes forgetfulness seems to be an enormous grace, a gift through which we can - or so it seems to us - regain our strength to be able to be, to continue to be. At other times, however, this intentional forgetting may lead to a degradation, a distortion of ourselves. Intentional forgetting: the desire to erase from our life certain events that we define or perceive - whether rightly or not - as inconvenient. Our memory becomes unreliable then. We can whitewash certain events in sentimental memory. Then those memories that have imprisoned us in patterns of behavior take on a sense of stability. As it sometimes happens, wrongly so.

Has not our age become an epoch of degraded memory? (Petrykowski 2003, 136) Are we not long overdue, therefore, to restore the meaning and proper importance of many crucial concepts: love, responsibility, honesty? We have devalued these, as well as many others, manipulating their meaning at will. One more thing: do these imperatives to remember not turn our attention to what, after all, is no longer revelatory? It is high time to reflect on the pedagogy of taming the experience of the past - of tradition - through the present, for the sake of the future.

It is becoming increasingly clear that there is a regression, almost complete elimination, of the influence of past experience on the entire balance of experience that is evident in contemporary generations. The past plays a less and less important role in shaping the image of the present, the form of life, and thus its participation in creating the image of a future world is smaller, almost negligible.

Do we not also, in bringing up our youth, face a new pedagogy of constructing new principles for a current, "correct" life, bypassing references to tradition as a source, as essential material? Does this not lead to the dominance of the principle of "living in the moment," of eliminating the need for perspective? Where targeted, forward-looking activities are reduced in favor of reactionary ones? Perhaps it is nevertheless worth it to take a moment to reflect on the rapid progress of civilization.

Memory and the command to remember, the word "Remember," is one of the most common invocations in Jewish religion. (Krajewski 2004, 244) And it is precisely from this tradition that Jesus of Nazareth emerged. "Remember" - recorded in the famous verses of the *Book of Deuteronomy* and the *Book of Exodus*. It is not in reference to one's own experience that this command is uttered, but to a shared memory meant to constitute a particular foundation that underlies the formation of the community. In this sense, the tradition of remembering concerns

not only one's roots in the past, but certain community obligations in the present, which are a unique and vital bedrock for the future.

How often does one find in the *Torah* or in the *Old Testament* references to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, or Solomon? This is a special kind of symbolism of tradition, which is simultaneously an ongoing living source. Yet, we also find these appeals in the *New Testament*. If I were to confine myself to the *Torah*, I would consider it legitimate to say that this beginning is the essence of Jewish identity. But it was this text that gave rise to Jesus of Nazareth. The tradition which created the foundations of contemporary white man's culture is rooted in the Christian tradition, which itself grows out of the Judaic tradition.

In the Jewish tradition, memory is not an end unto itself. It is a particular means of shaping the present. As A. J. Heschel writes, "the wealth of the soul is contained in its memory ...When we wish to understand ourselves, to discover what is most precious in our lives, we examine our memory. Memory is the soul's witness to the variability of the mind." (Heschel 2001, 136) Memory in tradition has one more dimension - the dimension of the future. In Jewish liturgy, (Krajewski 2004, 248) the sense of personal experience, so clearly defined during the Seder, is not just empty rhetoric. In their time, each participant ought to feel as if they were just about to leave Egypt. And yet, captivity is not a modern condition. Here, after all, the issue does not concern certain ritual reproductions, but the feeling of identifying with the beginning. This particular spiritual reality is important in the context of the future. As found in one of the Midrashim, when Israel was about to receive the *Torah*, God demanded a guarantee that it would be respected. Mere promises and references to ancestors did not help. God only agreed when, instead of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, the Israelites offered their own children as guarantors. "Our children shall be the guarantors. Future generations." (Krajewski 2004, 248) And one more context: during the Passover, Jews above all should remember not only the escape from Egypt, but the goal - the Promised Land. It happened in the past, but it has a dimension of the future, because it is associated with a long journey to a destination that was promised, but difficult to reach.

How eloquent was Stefan Czarnowski when he wrote that "the present does not surrender its rights in the most traditionalist group. We are constantly changing our attitudes toward antiquity, still working on its transformation, on its becoming present. For antiquity endures solely as the present, while the present is a transformed, an updated antiquity and a nascent future." (Czarnowski 1948, 197)

Contemporary humanity seems to live simultaneously in a number of different times. On the one hand, thanks to memory we exist in the past; in the present, we experience the actuality of events taking place, thanks to an unceasing modification of "collective" memory. Finally, we live in the future, thanks to an ongoing perspective filled with visions and projections.

Time: omnipresent and integrally associated with place and space, with the whole of human life, both in the dimensions of the individual and of the species. Societies and their cultures, as well as individuals, differ not only in their conception of space, but also of time. This temporal caesura

- past, present, and future. The past and the present are known to us; the future might cause anxiety and remains unrecognizable. Time cannot be undone - this time machine, allowing one to go back in time or to discover the unknown, is a reflection of our longing for the passage of time, for the past, as well as our fear of the future. Meanwhile, the present “is the reality that we experience, the point of our existence, with its own appropriate mixture of joy and sadness. The future, on the contrary, is a vision.” (Tuan 1987, 246) Isn't it justified, this anxiety caused by a noticeable abatement in the present of the past - of tradition - in the shaping of the present and the future?

Hence, should we not direct our thoughts especially toward the question of how we convey the past (tradition) to future generations? Is that not the result of this domination of faith in the power of knowledge and intellectual effort? It happened in the past, but it has a dimension of the future, because it is associated with the long journey toward a promised, yet hard to reach, destination.

We can find so many interesting interpretations of the parable of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. (Jn. 4: 5–42) I do not want to explain or clarify anything. I merely want to write about what is important to me in this story; or, better, what I find so. For I read it as an important message for the part of the “world” that we might call intercultural education, as well as a profound message for shaping the attitudes of tolerance and love. Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew; this is beyond doubt. He was a Jew no matter who his father was, because his mother was a Jew, and that alone is enough to say that the necessary and sufficient condition was satisfied.

For a variety of reasons, we can determine that, in that part of the world, he belonged to a certain tradition and culture, which, using our contemporary terms, we would call a dominant one. Jews in a distinctive manner “despised” the Samaritans, considered them apostates, although ... Exactly: the Samaritans worshiped the same God, God of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus. They were, however, a religious - and, in a certain sense, ethnic - minority.

And here is a Jew - no matter that he is a special Jew - who shows no hesitation in conveying to a “stranger” - the Samaritan woman - what he considers to be good, important, valuable. He does not just ask her for water, but communicates to her - and, through her, to her people - the Word. Everyone is therefore worthy of “receiving” the word. He does not disrespect her, he does not treat her with an air of superiority, but gives her something that he thinks is valuable. He asks her for water, letting her know that he does not fear her, does not worry about deception, albeit she is of an alien, “hostile” tribe. He shows her trust. “You, too, can help me quench my thirst.”

If we were to look through “others’ eyes,” how many of us - self-satisfied with our “racial,” religious, traditional, cultural superiority - would ask a stranger for water? How many of us would share a part of ourselves? With others? With strangers?

I will remain for a moment with one dimension of our perception of Jesus of Nazareth. He was a teacher, a Jew. Let us call him - as did the Samaritan woman - a prophet, a man. He wanted to share his “knowledge,” which, according to tradition, was “given” to him by the God of Israel, with

a complete stranger. And he did not hesitate, despite knowing that he was in a foreign, inhospitable land inhabited by the Samaritans.

I wrote elsewhere about the parable of Jonah, who fled his God-entrusted mission among the Ninevites. (Petrykowski 2009, 195-200) Indeed, Jonah went to great lengths not to meet the inhabitants of Nineveh. He was scared for his life, although he was filled with “knowledge” given to him by God. Not only out of fear was he anxious to reveal it.

Do we not find, in Jesus’s encounter at Sychar, a message that everyone is worthy of sharing what we find valuable? In the case of this encounter, I find something deeper still. Here, the Samaritan woman, upon meeting a Jew, does not hesitate to draw his attention to two important matters. First, she tells him: it is you, the Jews, who despise us. Not the other way around. Moreover, she very clearly emphasizes their related provenance: “our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself, as did his sons” (*Jn.* 4: 12) Jacob, the brother of Esau, son of Isaac, grandson of Abraham, Jesus’s ancestor.

In the case of Jesus, this takes on a special significance: do we not read on the first pages of the *Gospel of Matthew* that Jesus’s lineage is also derived from Jacob, his father Isaac, and grandfather Abraham? Of course! We are the descendants of the same Abraham. And we worship the same God, although you Jews claim that he ought to be worshipped on the hill in Jerusalem, whereas we worship him on Mount Gerazi. This is what the Samaritan woman tells him.

Perhaps it would be useful to describe this thread in more details, for there was a time when the Samaritans went to the temple in Jerusalem. So it was until the time of Babylonian captivity, more specifically, the return from it. Not having a sufficient historical background, I will not describe it more closely; you can find it, for example, in Josef Flavius. (Flawiusz 2001) One thing is certain: the same forefather Abraham and the same God.

Do you remember Ishmael and Isaac, both from the same father and worshipping the same God? In a sense, what connects Ishmael with Isaac also connects the Samaritan woman with Jesus. What makes her, a Samaritan, worse than Jesus? Nothing more than a different religion and culture?

And finally, perhaps the most dramatic and the most intimate context. The Samaritan woman is specifically excluded – “this happened around the sixth hour of the day”, hence at a time when no one else was at the well. At this hour, only someone who either does not want to or cannot come with others would then fetch the water. It is not difficult to deduce that since she is from the same tribe, the woman is excluded for non-ethnic reasons. Custom. Yes, of course, we learn that she had several husbands or partners. The current one is not even her husband, hence, according to custom or law, she is not in a socially acceptable relationship. She is not a leper or a cripple. Yet, she is unwelcome. And we also learn that Jesus of Nazareth knows this. Certainly, theologians have long found justification for this, indicating that Jesus is a divine being and hence knows everything. The Samaritan woman sees in this a sign that Jesus is a prophet.

Atheists will likely sneer. If we accept that Jesus of Nazareth was only a Teacher and only a human, then how could he have known that she was an excluded woman? Of course, based on the

time, at which she was the only one who came to the well for water. Thus, Jesus knows the customs of another tribe, of another tradition.

More: he tells her that she has had several husbands. No, not men, but husbands. She was thus previously in unions that the law regarded as marriages. She was not, as some interpreters would have it, a “dissolute” woman. In many cultures, particularly among the Jews, but also in many other traditions (sometimes even today), upon getting married women changed the way they dressed, how they covered their heads, their hairstyles, perhaps even wore special signs (a wedding ring? an armlet?). If Jesus, as the non-Christians want, was not a prophet, if he was not a God, then he showed an extraordinary gift of recognizing cultural codes, specific signs that would have allowed him to say: you have been married several times. Jesus does not condemn this woman for having been married many times. He simply states the fact: I understand the codes of your culture and the signs of your tradition. I do not judge you. But I can be and am open to your particular situation.

We hear the same, after all, when he states that the woman’s current partner is “not your husband”. (*Jn. 4: 18*) Maybe this is why you come at this hour? Maybe your water jug is a vessel that is used by two people, and it contains the signs of another relationship? We do not know how he knew. We do know, however, that he can “read” the signs of another culture, of a different tradition, a different custom.

And while talking to the Samaritan woman, he makes it clear: I know who you are, I know what these signs mean, the things that you have with you. We could multiply the examples and presumptions, such as Jesus’s psychological abilities. There is, however, a more important matter. You are from a different culture, I am on your land, by a well linked to your tradition, I understand the signs that you reveal to me. And yet, I want to talk to you, I have something invaluable to tell you. Everyone is worthy of it. Do we not, in some sense, find here a trace of Moses? Moses, serving the pharaoh. Moses, the criminal. Moses, verbally handicapped.

This special, in my opinion, attitude of openness, tolerance, and readiness to learn about a foreign culture. Jesus does not say: you are wrongdoers, you are unfaithful, strangers, worse even. He says instead: I want to tell you something, no matter who you are. And I do it willingly; I will come into your house, I will spend time with you. Because, although you are different, you are not worse, less worthy. Yes, this is the message that I find in this story.

There is still another side to this story. In the majority of interpretations, I read that Jesus came to Samaria, in the vicinity of Sychar. Then the Samaritan woman arrived at the well and ... But what if we read this story completely differently? Here is a woman - although in this scenario I would prefer to avoid any particular gender determination because in our colloquial, stereotypical thinking this creates a risk of simplification. I would rather this be simply a person. Here is a person in constant search for love. One relationship, another, a third... none of the marriages lasted. Perhaps it is not necessarily about relationships, marriage... Perhaps this includes friends, colleagues, maybe even a job that we frequently have to change.

I honestly do not know why this woman had several husbands. I read simplified interpretations that she was unable to truly love, that her relationships were limited to corporeality. Yet, perhaps it was not she, but her partners, husbands, who were shallow, Peter Pans, from one flower to another. And what if it was they who abandoned, wounded, this woman yearning for love? Not taking into account the fact that she will be rejected, socially excluded?

Maybe it was not he or she who abandoned the job as if they did not want to work at all. Maybe it was the employers who were dishonest, who did not fairly reward hard work? Maybe... so many reasons for and possibilities of being wounded ...

Maybe it was from being exhausted by these aches and bruises that she decided to stay with another man, another person, informally. Perhaps all she had left was a “junk” deal, a job without a formal agreement, which would at least provide her with some peace, some modest sense of security. Only to avoid being lonely? Being homeless? Unemployed?

Having accepted her fate, she fulfills her burdensome duties: she goes alone to fetch water from the well, “at the sixth hour of the day”, unlike any “decent” person. And she meets a man, Jesus, whom she did not know, who not only does not ridicule her but asks for a drink. Asks her for anything at all.

Note that she immediately recognizes that he is not a member of her tribe. Based on his outfit? His manner of speaking? How could she have known that a Jew would stop in the despised Samaria? Somehow, she knew: “you are a Jew”. And even though she knows that this man is a stranger, an enemy, she talks to him. She accepts him in her land. In her home. She is open and honest, perhaps hungry for love - she feels that he does not just want the water, does not want her body. He wants to give her something. Hope? Faith? And she feels it.

“Living water” - in the local tradition this concept meant spring water, water most desired in those conditions. It was also a symbol of life, a new life given by God. A life filled with love. The living water that is in me: I give you love. Does not love manifest itself, above all, in giving? And here this stranger gives me, a condemned and wounded Samaritan woman, love, living water.

And I too deserve love. And despite my circumstances, I have a chance for love, for... Is there not something of this Samaritan woman in all of us? At all times, at a place like this well: not a temple, after all, although an important place nonetheless. A permanent meeting point. A place of Hope? A place that lets you quench your Thirst? There are “things” that cannot be found anywhere in the world, but there are also places where you can find such “things.”

Is this not also a certain expression of hope? No matter when you arrive, no matter who you are, no matter how badly you are wounded: there is a well where you can meet another person, a person who does not hesitate, who wants to give you love. Give you a new quality of life. “Living water.”

There is a well in Samaria, not on the holy hill in Jerusalem... There is every place, everywhere, hostile and friendly, far and near ... There are “things” that cannot be found anywhere in the world, but there are also places where you can find such “things.”

It was no accident that this woman was there; she was there every day. It was Jesus who found her by accident. Was it a coincidence? Do you remember how Joseph was searching for his brothers in Shechem? And by chance, he happened to meet a man who heard where his brothers went? Was that a coincidence? And if Joseph did not meet this man, what fate would have befallen Israel? The Samaritan woman met Jesus by chance. Was it really by chance? In an unremarkable place. And she learned: I give you love. Was Jesus the Messenger? There is a well near Sychar... Am I the Samaritan woman? Are you the Messenger? Or maybe you? Are you the Samaritan woman? And I... am I the Messenger?

Endnotes

1. See <http://frumlife.blogspot.com/2010/12/shema-yisroela-legend-and-song.html>; also <http://betweenjerusalemmandtelaviv.blogspot.com/2011/05/song-for-yom-hashoah.html>
2. Cf. <http://frumlife.blogspot.com/2010/12/shema-yisroela-legend-and-song.html>

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