

Rabbi David Wolpe's

Off The Pulpit

March 19, 2015

The Jewish Thing To Do

Jews venerate memory. So important is memory to Jews that one characterization of God in our prayers is *Zochair kol Hanishkachot* — the one who remembers everything forgotten. To be God is to have the gift of perfect memory.

The great medievalist Curtius, whose work was a rescue mission for medieval European culture, wrote, "Upon memory rests the individual's consciousness of his identity above all change." When the world shifts about you, memory is the stabilizing force that keeps you who you are.

Jews have been a people of the book because for most of history, books were the records of our past, the generational family diaries. The book was the magic

wand of memory, calling up ages past, teaching us the deeds of our ancestors, chronicling their mistakes and extolling their triumphs. To be a Jew is less to commit to a set of beliefs than to a network of recollection.

So if you have an aged parent or grandparent, ask them about their lives. If you are getting older, gather your family around and tell them your tale. Add to our memories so we can better know who we are. Tell the story — it's the Jewish thing to do.

[The Jews Cannot Rely on Miracles.](#)

[Watch Rabbi Wolpe speak at AIPAC's General Session.](#)

Rabbi Wolpe's new book *David: The Divided Heart* is available now.