

Patterns of Redemption

Introduction

I'd like to read you a passage out of the Passover Haggadah. I brought with me a classic. This is the Maxwell House Coffee edition of the Haggadah from 1965.

The story of the Maxwell House Haggadah is interesting. If I have time at the end of my lecture, I will tell you the story, but I have a lot to say.

Here's the passage I'd like to read. I apologize for the archaic language:

Rabbi Elazar, the son of Azaria, said: "Verily, I am like a man of 70 years of age, yet I was not able to prove that the narration of the departure from Egypt should be made at night until the son of Zoma proved it from the following words of scripture: That thou mayest remember the day of thy going forth from Egypt all the days of thy life. The days of thy life, said he, referred to the days alone, but all the days of thy life include the nights also. The doctors, however (meaning the sages) say thus: The days of thy life refer to this world only, but all the days of thy life include the time of Messiah.

This often-overlooked passage from the Haggadah cites the second half of Deuteronomy 16:3

"That you may remember **all** the days of your life the day when you came out of the land of Egypt."

The debate is about what the word "all" comes to include. According to Rabbi Elazar, it means not just the daytime part of the day, but also night. According to the sages, it means the commandment applies not just to the current age, but also the Messianic era.

Bear in mind that the Hebrew word translated "remember" does not just mean to recall mentally. It implies a verbal expression. It means to mention out loud.

But why is this debate in the Passover Haggadah at all? The command to tell the story of the exodus from Egypt on Passover night does not come from this verse. It comes from Exodus 13:8: "You shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.'"

The verse from Deuteronomy gives us a command to mention the exodus from Egypt every day of the year, and according to Rabbi Elazar, twice a day.

The Siddur

But I'm not here to talk about the Haggadah, I'm here to talk about the Siddur, and specifically the patterns of redemption in the Siddur.

The Siddur is the Jewish prayer book. It is not just a collected assortment of prayers. It's not like a hymnal that you pick and choose from a la carte. It's more like a symphony that takes you through a process involving many steps toward a destination.

And the Siddur is a guide not just to prayer but Jewish life altogether. It doesn't contain creeds, so to speak, but it's the closest that Judaism has to a theological manual. It shapes the perspective of the reader, and it does this by contextualizing our experiences.

Humans experience all kinds of events in life, but each person has a filter through which one processes these experiences. The siddur aims to guide us in forming a healthy filter.

For example, the siddur contains blessings that a person should say when experiencing natural phenomena.

A clap of thunder can be frightening, especially for children. But the Siddur tells us that if a person hears thunder, one should say "Blessed are you, LORD our God, king of the universe, whose strength and power fill the world."

This guides us not to see the thunderstorm as having power of itself apart from God. The blessing harnesses that moment of emotion we feel and directs it toward awe and recognition of the Creator.

The Siddur shapes our thinking by contextualizing all our life experiences, including the experience of the passage of time itself.

The siddur is a symphony. A symphony is not a collection of tunes; it is a musical megastructure guided by the principles of music theory. In the same way, the Siddur is a megastructure with its own internal consistency and integrity, woven together with strands and fibers according to a set of principles and laws.

Let me give you one example of a law of siddur construction. A blessing in the familiar format "Blessed are you, O LORD our God, King of the universe" is a royal invocation of God's name that must follow certain protocols. Some brachot, like the bracha for thunder, are just a single line. Others could be a long paragraph, that brings in lots of topical threads. If so, then the paragraph will end with a conclusion called a *chatimah*: a sentence in the format "Blessed are You, O LORD." There is a protocol in Jewish law that no matter what direction the paragraph goes, the sentence that comes immediately prior to that concluding line, prior to the *chatimah*, must express the basic essence of the blessing. So if you want to understand the point of any long bracha, examine the sentence that comes just before the line "Blessed are You O LORD." This rule is called *me'ein chatimah samuch lachatimah*.

A Messianic Siddur

The fact that the Siddur is held together by numerous technical principles like this gives me pause when it comes to developing Messianic innovations in liturgy.

I have been working for many years on crafting a Messianic Siddur. I am not the first person by a long shot to embark on such a project. But I'm honestly glad that it has taken me so long, because

over the years I have come to realize how much I have yet to learn about what went into the architecture and art of this book.

And the more I have studied and learned and processed, the more I have realized that developing a Messianic Siddur is like making lemon-flavored lemonade. Lemonade is already lemon flavored. And a siddur is already Messianic by nature.

That is because the Siddur guides us to cry out to God in unity to bring the solution to our collective troubles. And it also guides us in comprehending and visualizing what that solution looks like.

From the perspective of Orthodox and historical Judaism, that solution is the coming of the Messiah and the final redemption. The Siddur wants us to know this and to seek this redemption. And thus, the Siddur, by its very nature, is Messianic.

That's not to say a Messianic Siddur isn't needed. We, as Messianic Jews who follow Yeshua and know him to be the Messiah, want to invoke his name.

But if we don't understand and tap into the natural Messianic energy that already exists in the siddur, we are likely to derail it by cutting and pasting in Messianic passages with only superficial connections. We will end up with a liturgy that feels disjointed, unnatural, and forced. But if we take the time to really appreciate what the Siddur wants to teach about redemption, we can leverage that to integrate our devotion to Yeshua the Messiah and arrive at something both powerful and indigenous to Judaism.

The siddur contains many individual prayers and phrases that mention the Messiah, but I want to zoom out and look at how the larger patterns point to the Messiah. I have many such patterns in mind, but I have to select one or else this will be a seminar and not just a lecture.

Crash Course in Jewish Prayer

But in order for me to show you such a pattern, I need to give you a crash course in Jewish prayer, in case you're not familiar. In Judaism, daily prayer is an obligation on every single human being. Prayer is engaging in relationship with God, which is the reason humans were created. Every moment you spend in prayer is a moment you are fulfilling your purpose for existence. Judaism teaches that prayer can happen in any language, in any place, and any time of the day.

But there is another dimension to prayer in Judaism, and that is service. Have you ever wondered why Christians and Jews both refer to a prayer meeting as a "service"? It is because it is connected to the service of the kohanim, the priests, offering sacrifices in the Temple. The Torah refers to their daily offerings as "service."

The Rabbis called prayer "the service of the heart," as opposed to the "service of the altar." That within each one of us there is a Temple, and there is no one else but you who can perform its rituals. Jewish prayer follows the rhythm of the Torah's prescribed sacrifices. Initially it accompanied them; now, in the absence of the Temple, it stands alone.

Numbers 28 prescribes the rhythm of the daily burnt offerings, the korban tamid. One lamb was offered every morning and one every afternoon; all other sacrifices were sandwiched in between these two, apart from korban Pesach, the Passover lamb.

So the first thing to notice is that Jewish prayer services happen every day, not just on a weekly day of worship. If you live in a Jewish community, you can join a minyan, a congregation, every day. If not, you are still responsible for performing this duty on your own.

Second, there are three times of prayer each day. Evening, morning, and afternoon. Ma'ariv, shacharit, and minchah. The morning and afternoon prayers (shacharit and minchah) correspond to the morning and afternoon burnt offering. The evening prayer (ma'ariv) corresponds to the overnight smoldering of the leftovers on the altar, a sacred duty described in Leviticus 6.

Those three times of prayer sweep across the globe like waves as the earth turns on its axis.

Two core components form the main structure of these three prayer times. Everything else is either preparatory or auxiliary. The two components are the Shema and the Amidah.

The Shema is recited only at evening and morning (ma'ariv and shacharit). The Shema consists of not only the famous line, Hear O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD is One, but that full paragraph in Deuteronomy 6, another paragraph from Deuteronomy 11, and a third paragraph from Numbers 15. These three readings from the Torah are buttressed by three blessings as well: two beforehand and one afterward. The three biblical paragraphs plus the blessings before and after form the structural component known as the recitation of the Shema.

The other component is the Amidah or the Shemoneh Esrei. This is a sequence of 19 short blessings. The first three are praise, the thirteen in the middle are petitions, and the last three are thanks. On Shabbat the thirteen petitions in the middle are replaced with one blessing about Shabbat, so the prayer has seven blessings.

The Amidah is recited at all three times of prayer, and that is because it is meant to correspond to the sacrificial services. The Shema, however, is not directly related to the sacrifices. The reason we recite the Shema twice a day, evening and morning, is because of the text itself:

You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

The second paragraph, from Deuteronomy 11, contains nearly identical language. To the sages, when you lie down and when you rise up are not literal, but they refer to times of day: evening and morning. So since we are already praying every evening and morning, based on the sacrifices, we include these biblical passages.

A Deeper Look

We have two interesting questions to ask: First, why don't they interpret this literally as at the moment of going to bed and waking up? Second, what about the third paragraph, from Numbers, that does not include this phrasing, but seems to be mostly about wearing tzitzis?

The blessings that come before and after these scriptural paragraphs follow a pattern. The first one is about God as Creator of the universe. The second is about the covenant at Mount Sinai, the love relationship between God and Israel expressed through the study and observance of the commandments. The blessing afterward is about God as Redeemer, and especially the exodus from Egypt. Both the evening and morning blessings follow this pattern (Creator, Covenant, Redemption), but other than that, there are notable differences between the two.

As I described before, the purpose of these blessings is to contextualize our experience of reciting the Shema and shape the filters through which we perceive the world. So we can learn a lot about Jewish thought and theology by analyzing the wording of those blessings.

Let's take a look at some of those differences between how those blessings read in the nighttime version and the daytime version.

In the evening, the first blessing, the one for creation, is fairly brief. It emphasizes that God is the one who brought on the darkness. In fact, the word *Ma'ariv* comes from this blessing and means, "he brings darkness." Remember the rule I cited before, called *me'ein chatimah samuch lachatimah*? The essence of a bracha must be stated immediately prior to the closing line. What is the *me'ein chatimah* of this blessing? It is the sentence, "May the living and enduring God continuously reign over us, for all eternity." What does that prayer have to do with evening? It just says that God is living, enduring, and his kingship over us is continual. Something to ponder.

The creation blessing in the morning Shema is quite different and much longer. It opens by telling us that he makes peace, that he illuminates the earth with compassion. He created bright luminaries that shine on his works, demonstrating his glory. Then the blessing goes a step further, inviting us to participate in an apocalyptic vision. The siddur brings us up into the heavenly realms where we see angels surrounding his throne, like the visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John, where the angels cry out "Holy, Holy, Holy." Finally, what is the *me'ein chatimah* that appears just before the closing line of the blessing? "May you shine a new light on Zion, and may we all speedily merit its light." So it's looking forward to something in the future.

Let's look at blessing two, which is about the love relationship between God and Israel, expressed through the covenant of Torah.

In the evening, once again, the blessing is brief. In it we promise to study and meditate on the Torah day and night, when we lie down and rise up, for they are our life and the length of our days. The *me'ein chatimah* is honestly a bit foreboding: "May you not remove your love from us forever."

Let's contrast that with the one for morning. Here we ask God to show us grace and compassion, and grant us divine assistance to understand and observe the Torah. We ask God to fulfill his covenant by breaking the yoke from our necks and gathering us from the four corners of the earth into the land of Israel. The *me'ein chatimah* is beautiful: "And You, our King, have brought us close to your great name forever in truth, in love, to offer praiseful thanks to you, and proclaim your oneness with love, and to love your name."

Now let's consider the third blessing.

In the evening we emphasize God's faithfulness. He exacts vengeance on our enemies, as he did to Pharaoh, striking his firstborn dead. The Israelites at the sea willingly accepted God's kingship over themselves. And the *me'ein chatimah*: "For Hashem has redeemed Jacob and delivered him from a power mightier than he."

The morning blessing, quite notably, repeats the word *emet*—true—over and over. It presents God's truth as a beloved and undeniable fact. It spans history and expresses thanks for the many salvations of the past. It emphasizes God taking his people out of slavery and bondage, in fulfillment of his promises. It describes the joy with which the Israelites sang the song at the sea, calling it a "new song." The *me'ein chatimah*: "Rock of Israel, arise to the aid of Israel and liberate, as you pledged, Judah and Israel. As it is said: Our Redeemer – Hashem, Master of Legions, is his name – is the Holy One of Israel."

Through this pattern of blessings, the Siddur is not only training us to understand the Shema, but it is teaching us how to interpret the passage of time itself, especially the cycle of night and day.

In order to really understand the Siddur's message here, I have to give you another crash course: this time in Jewish eschatology.

Jewish Eschatology

Eschatology means study of the end times. A foundational concept in Jewish eschatology is the dichotomy between Exile and Redemption—galut and ge'ulah.

If you know the words "exile" and "redemption" from another context, set them aside. These words have a specialized meaning in the context of Jewish eschatology.

There are many examples of this dichotomy that I could cite from the Tanakh, but a clear and concise example is found in the second paragraph of the Shema, in Deuteronomy 11.

"It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. "He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied."

So according to this passage, keeping the covenant means Israel's rootedness in the land, the openness of the heavens, peace, security, and satisfaction. This encapsulates the concept of redemption.

But if you turn away:

"The anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

According to this warning, when the heavens are closed and the land itself rejects you, resulting in a loss of sovereignty, security and peace, God forbid, this describes the experience of exile.

A prime example of this occurred with the Babylonian Exile. King Nebuchadnezzar came and deported the citizens of Judah to Babylon. Prophets such as Jeremiah teach us that this exile occurred as the result of Israel's lack of covenant fidelity. So Exile means detachment from the land.

But it's not all or nothing. It's like a pendulum that has been swinging back and forth throughout Jewish history. We have times of more connectedness to the land, more connectedness to God, more openness of the heavens, more revelation of God. There are times when things are not going so well—we lack sovereignty over the land, we lack peace, we lack connection, and we lack residency within the land.

The back-and-forth transition between exile and redemption is depicted clearly for us in the first chapter of Matthew, the genealogy of Yeshua. This chapter divides the generations of the kings of Israel into groups of fourteen. From Abraham to David, the peak of Israel's connection to the land: 14 generations. From David to the Babylonian Exile: 14 generations. From the darkness of the Babylonian Exile to the birth of Yeshua the Messiah: 14 generations. From light to darkness and back to light again.

The number 14 alludes to the waxing and waning of the Moon which each take place over 14-day periods. The siddur as well uses the lunar phases as a symbol Israel's fluctuation between exile and redemption, between detachment and connection to the land. The experience of Israel over history, encapsulated in the genealogy of her kings, is a constant cycle of back-and-forth between these two states. This history of the kings of Israel and Judah is the spinal cord of the Tanakh; you have to understand this history to make any sense of the prophets, because the prophets urged Israel to covenant faithfulness, warned them of the consequences of failure, and consoled them about Israel's eventual return from exile.

It is in this context, the good news about the return from Exile, that all the most overt messianic prophecies occur. When you read in Jeremiah or in Isaiah or Ezekiel about the Messiah, these prophets are talking about him in the context of the return from exile.

This teaches us that the coming of Messiah is ultimately a swing of the pendulum into redemption, but one that finally takes us all the way there and will never go back. It's going to be like previous redemptions, but more so, and it will be permanent.

The prophets compare this ultimate redemption to the exodus from Egypt. Egypt is thus the prototype of all exiles, and the exodus is the prototype of all redemptions—especially the Messianic redemption.

The Cosmic Timeline

Now that you understand exile and redemption, a second important concept in Jewish eschatology is the cosmic timeline.

In the historic Jewish view, human existence is divided into three eras. It begins with this current world, or this current age: *olam hazeh*. It ends with the future world, the age to come: *olam haba*.

These two terms appear several times in the New Testament. And in between, there is a transitional period known as the days of Messiah, or Messianic Era: the kingdom of heaven.

Many prophetic promises God made to the patriarchs and to Israel have still not come to pass. The Messianic era is when we will see all those promises fulfilled, literally and completely. A kingdom will be established, Yeshua the Messiah will literally sit on his throne in Jerusalem. Israel will be gathered from the four corners of the earth, and even the righteous dead will be raised so that their own eyes can see these promises come true. According to many traditional sources, this kingdom lasts for a thousand years, and it is like the universe experiences Shabbat at the end of a long week.

After that, we move into *olam haba*, world to come, a time that is beyond our capacity to understand or to describe. It's a time of bliss, a time of connection with God like never before. And it lasts for eternity.

That's standard, historic Jewish eschatology. And this helps us answer our questions about the Shema.

Night and day is an experience we all share every 24 hours. At night the darkness means we feel vulnerable and insecure; we can't see what's ahead of us.

Then morning comes and everything is different. The path ahead becomes clear. The invisible becomes visible. We feel secure and at peace and we can see we're not alone.

The siddur guides us through that experience of night and day to tell us that this is a microcosm of history, of exile and redemption.

At *ma'ariv*, the siddur guides us to pray from the perspective of exile. Even when the Temple was standing, at night its doors were closed. Instead of a sacrifice, there was only the smoldering remains of what once was.

Shacharit guides us to pray from the perspective of redemption, teaching us to utilize the comfort and security we feel to envision a permanent change to the world's existence.

The reason we say the Shema twice a day is because of the wording: when you lie down and when you arise. This is not just talking about our physical posture: lying down is the feeling of sinking, of degradation, of death. Rising up is regaining yourself, putting on strength; it is resurrection.

Whether we feel like we are falling or rising, either collectively as a nation or personally in our lives, the siddur wants us to remember one thing: God is One. The darkness is not an external force that somehow slipped through God's defenses. Hashem is in complete control of both situations: light and darkness, exile and redemption.

The Third Paragraph

This helps us understand the first two paragraphs of the Shema, which both use the words "when you lie down and when you arise." But what about the third paragraph?

Remember the verse we started with, from the Haggadah? Deuteronomy 16:3:

“That you may remember all the days of your life the day when you came out of the land of Egypt.”

It is a commandment in the Torah to remember—that is, to mention—the exodus from Egypt every single day. And according to Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, twice a day: both by night and by day.

And although the third paragraph talks about tzitzit, it was chosen because of its concluding line, Numbers 15:41: “I am the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the LORD your God.”

By saying this sentence each time we say the Shema, we fulfill our obligation to mention the exodus from Egypt by night and by day.

But why twice a day? Wouldn't it be enough to mention it just once? And why is this brought up at the Seder, which is a once-a-year event?

It is because of the dual nature of what the Passover lamb represents. On one hand the Passover lamb that our ancestors had at their seders every year symbolizes how God destroyed the firstborn of Egypt, but passed over the doors of our ancestors when he saw the blood on our doorposts. This happened at midnight.

But the Passover lamb also symbolizes that God brought us out of Egypt. The physical departure of the Israelites from Egypt did not take place until morning (Numbers 33:3, Exodus 12:22).

When did the Israelites actually become free people? There was a redemption that happened at night and there was a redemption that happened by day. At midnight, even though they remained in Egypt, they were no longer slaves. Their status had changed. Their ownership had changed. They were free, even as they remained in the midst of a place of impurity and time of darkness.

But then came the second redemption, when we physically came out from Egypt at the rising of the sun. Not just a spiritual transfer, but a geographic transition from a kingdom of darkness to a kingdom of light.

The sages have a saying: As was the redemption from Egypt, so will be the messianic redemption. We can learn from this: Just as there were two kinds of redemption from Egypt, by night and by day, there are also two aspects to freedom from exile that are to take place through the hand of Messiah.

And it is not hard from a Messianic Jewish perspective to see how these two redemptions will take place through our Messiah Yeshua, who came already once in the midst of darkness and will come again on the clouds of heaven.

Conclusion

We could spend our lives going to bed, waking up; feeling vulnerable, feeling secure and never realize what it is all about. The siddur is training us to see the bigger picture. The sun is setting tonight but one day it will rise and never set again.

This pattern, the two recitations of the Shema, is just one of many examples of Messianic superstructures in the Siddur. The Siddur is naturally Messianic, just like lemon in lemonade. And if

we engage in it, embrace it, and allow it to shape our perception of the world, we can integrate our devotion to our Master Yeshua in a way that is perfectly at home within the native soil of Judaism.

Postscript – The Maxwell House Haggadah

So what's the story with the Maxwell House Haggadah?

In the early 20th century, many American Jews were not so sure about drinking coffee during Passover. That's because on Passover, Ashkenazi Jews abstain from kitniyos, a category that includes legumes. But while coffee is commonly referred to as a "bean," it is not a legume at all, so there is no reason to forbid it on Passover.

An entrepreneur, a marketer named Joseph Jacobs captured the Jewish market on behalf of Maxwell House by securing kosher certification for the coffee. He also ran a promotion where if you bought a can of their coffee, you would get a free Passover Haggadah. A standard Haggadah with the traditional text and Maxwell House branding.

In the process, not only did he lay claim to the Jewish market, but he also ended up publishing and distributing one of the most widely used Haggadas in America. And the promotion that Joseph Jacobs started 93 years ago continues to this day; the longest-running advertising promotion in history.