



BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY OF EXILE

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The paper explores the dynamics of exile and restoration both in the old and new Testaments through Biblical Spirituality. Paying attention to the dynamics of spiritual relation, the paper traces the Divine-human relation beginning from Genesis 3, the fall of Adam and Eve to the Patriarchs specifically Abraham. It also explores the time of the kingdom and temples leading to the Assyrian and Babylonian Exile. Taking a cue from the beginning of the Gospels, the paper shows the continuity of exile in the New Testament as it shows the connection between the Passover, the last supper, the passion and death of Jesus, Resurrection, and Ascension, and the celebration of the sacrament of Eucharist.

Keywords: exile, restoration, biblical spirituality, Jewish and Christian Scriptures

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“Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us, and after this exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.”

The understanding and experience of exile are expressed in the *Salve Regina*, a prayer to the Blessed Mother. The prayer characterizes the exilic experience: crying, sighing, mourning, and weeping. The human condition is a valley of tears. More than the historical exile of Israelites – Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian/Median, Grecian, and Roman – the exile from the lens of biblical spirituality¹ goes back from the beginning to the fall of Adam and Eve. In the estrangement of

¹ To provide an understanding of Spirituality, it is recognized as a “... relational process between G-d and man. The accent falls one moment on the divine pole (the Awesome, the Holy, the Merciful, the Infinite) and the next on the human pole (application, dedication, awakening). These constitute an original relational whole within which the two poles appear. The two poles interlock: for humans, the divine emanations form the way back to G-d; G-d’s abundant mercy takes shape in human’s works of mercy; G-d’s holiness is received by believers in the sanctification of their life. As a result of this reciprocity, human conduct is both active and passive: G-d’s mercy is received in deeds of mercy; the fear of G-d trembles at the Secret to which it reaches out; the knowledge of G-d is G-d-given knowledge. The relation between G-d and man is a process extending from the very first great touch to respectful love (“fear”); from living in the commonplace world to being completely consumed in the reality of G-d (holiness); from the ultimate emanation of G-d to a state of attachment to the Infinite (kabbala), from original wholeness to complete maturity (perfection). The original wholeness of man looks forward to a complete surrender-in-love; the human spirit finds its completion in union with the Spirit of G-d; the divine core reaches its resting place when it breathes along with the self-giving of the Father. The relational process is realized in the substance of human existence: the intellect (knowledge, attention, awakening, contemplation), the will (devotion, attachment, *kaawwana*, fervency, inwardness), the memory, control of one’s drives, lifestyle, the ordering of time and space, social interaction, the religious life, and culture. The intimacy of the relational process and the concentration which flows from it affect a contraction that is peculiar to itself (its language and logic, inwardness, mysticism, kabbala) and a dissociation from the prevailing patterns (the world, instrumental rationality, which has been secularized and objectivized, the unmerciful, externality). In spirituality, the goal is not to name or define the celestial pole. It appears within the wholeness of the relational process following the phase in which this process finds itself: as wholly other than the finite (holiness), as great touch (“fear”), as an unfolding of power in which man shares (kabbala), and as Spirit who animates our spirit (spirituality). The views held concerning G-d and the divine names must be understood in the light of the relational process in which they function. Also, the human pole must be read considering this process. By its position in the spiritual process, the human pole is touched and made to tremble (“fear”), applies itself to the search for G-d (contemplation), devotes itself fervently to G-d (devotion, piety), makes itself receptive and allows itself to be purified (asceticism), appropriates G-d’s life to itself (inner life), lets itself be transported outside of itself in love (mysticism), and that on all the levels of existence (asceticism, inner life). Through this relational process, its original wholeness and ultimate maturity come to light (perfection). Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*. (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 364-365.

our first parents from G-d’s garden, we became all the banished children of Eve, however, not the banished children of G-d.² It is essential to note the use of Children of Eve and not children of G-d. Why? As we will be presented later on, in the exilic experience of G-d’s people, they became both geographically distant from the temple and spiritually distant from God. They seemingly experienced that G-d had left them in their exile. However, such estrangement became an opportunity for G-d to restore what had been lost to them. G-d immediately carried out the restoration plan of humanity’s exile from Him.³ In humanity’s exile, he sighs, mourns, and weeps as he is confronted with the vulnerability and

² In the Torah, G-d’s first interaction with human beings is described as taking place in the story of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were put by G-d in the Garden of Eden, a paradise, to work the land and take care of it. However, G-d cautions them, saying, “You are free to eat from any tree in this entire garden,” excluding the Tree of Knowledge. If you consume anything from it, you will most certainly perish.” We know what happened. They eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge (Garden and Tree), and instantly, they become aware of their nakedness, at which point they hide. G-d expelled all humanity from the Garden of Eden as a form of retribution. The beginning of one’s time spent in exile is the act of banishment. This is the conventional interpretation of G-d as someone that is ever-vigilant, deeply involved in the lives of humans, and punishes those who do not obey Him.

However, in the *Zohar*, considered the essential book of Kabbalah, the Jewish mystics known as kabbalists present a different account of this story. Kabbalists believed that one of G-d’s names was “Et,” a Hebrew word composed of the first and last letters of the alphabet. It is considered both the beginning and the end of the Hebrew language and is thought to cover all aspects of divine communication.

According to *Zohar*’s interpretation, the line in the Torah that says “Vayigraesh et ha-adam” should be read as “And he expelled G-d, Adam did.” G-d was not the one who banished humanity from the Garden of Eden; instead, it was humanity that cast G-d out of the garden.

³ G-d’s plan of restoration is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man was a figure of Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. It is not surprising, then, that all the truths above find their root and attain their crown in Him.

He, Who is “the image of the invisible G-d” (Col. 1:15), is Himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam, He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature, as He assumed it, was not annulled, by that very fact, it has been raised to a divine dignity in our respect too. For by His incarnation, the Son of G-d has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, thought with a human mind, acted by human choice, and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has been made one of us, like us in all things except sin.

As an innocent lamb, He merited for us life by the free shedding of His blood. In Him G-d reconciled us to Himself and among ourselves; from bondage to the devil and sin, He delivered us so that each one of us can say with the Apostle: The Son of G-d “loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20). By suffering for us He not only provided us with an example for our imitation, He blazed a trail, and if we follow it, life and death are made holy and take on a new meaning.” *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.





corruption of his nature. However, exile is not the end. It points back to G-d Himself, “show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.” The Israelites were not sent into exile just to be punished but to let them return to G-d. Here are the fundamental dynamics in the Divine and Human Relatedness: cycles of exile and restoration.

EXILE: HUMANITY’S ESTRANGEMENT FROM G-D

The first exile of humanity separated them from the presence of G-d and brought the curse of G-d’s wrath unto humankind and the rest of creation.⁴ What was the curse? More than the difficulty of labor, unable to grow and mature spiritually, death due to sin, and unfaithfulness to G-d, the real curse is the growing separation from G-d, forming a needy, vulnerable, and sensitive space in the human person. He tries to fill his neediness as he seeks to possess goods that he deems will satisfy his neediness, only to magnify one’s emptiness. Such neediness grows, so as with the disturbance of the emotional, pointing to the human condition of human vulnerability that choices made are subject to one’s weakness. The person is obscured in his sightseeing that everything is left to his hands. However, none shall satisfy, fulfill, and complete his neediness not until it makes a return to G-d. This is the exilic experience. As humanity became alienated and estranged from G-d, they became enemies of G-d. And for society to fully return to G-d, it will require the very action G-d for humanity to be restored from exile. Psalm 124:8 proclaims, “Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.” Humanity cannot return to G-d without Him working for us.

⁴ f. Rom. 8:20-22. “For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of G-d. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now.”

While it is a man who was expelled from G-d’s presence, it was through G-d’s action that made way for them to return to the ‘Garden,’ in the presence of G-d.⁵ Such is carried out in the covenantal relationship between G-d and His people, providing them with laws and commandments to be obeyed, so that in their faithfulness, they come close to Him. In keeping G-d’s commands, humanity is blessed. In breaking them, they are cursed. The blessing is nearness to G-d due to one’s faithfulness. The curse of being away from G-d.⁶

THE DOMINO EFFECT OF EXILE

Humanity descended into greater evil after being exiled from the garden. Humanity grew in the dividedness of their desire for G-d, finding goods that they hastily replaced for G-d. The idolatrous and adulterous heart of humanity,⁷ made them farther and farther away from G-d: Cain, the first murderer, was expelled from the presence of the Lord in Eden,⁸ Noah was taken by the deluge to Ararat, outside Eden’s borders.

⁵ G-d promised to send a Redeemer to save us from exile and, eventually, death (Gen. 3:15). If we truly see that G-d is with us, we will have the experience that G-d is on our side. Not to tolerate or let us do what we want, but to bring us back to Him. Without G-d on our side, we would be lost and never find our way. Psalm 124 says, “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side... Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth! Why speak of heaven and earth? Because it refers to G-d as creator, which does not only reveal Him as the cause of our existence, but also the one who sustains, protects, delivers us, and makes sure that we are well. This is what it means that G-d is on our side. It is not a complete and entitled understanding of G-d on our side. And for G-d to be on our side means that the goal is to return to Him. G-d is drawing us back to Him.”

⁶ We are reminded of the Beatitudes in Luke, where blessedness is opposed to woe. A blessed life is a life that has G-d, which is realized in one’s faithfulness to G-d. Obey the law; you will be blessed because dedication brings nearness to G-d. Blessedness is to be intimate with G-d. Our blessedness is G-d Himself. If one does not obey the commandments, one becomes lifeless and cursed because one is drawn away from G-d. Blessedness is not what we have acquired in ourselves but having G-d in our lives.

Even if one has the earth’s goods, it does not follow that one’s life is blessed because the blessedness only comes when G-d is there. Go back to the Garden, or better still welcoming G-d in the garden of our lives, is blessedness. It is a life of intimate union with G-d, walking with G-d, a life of simplicity and beauty.

⁷ Command against idolatry in the Scriptures: Exodus 20:3-6, Leviticus 19:4, Judges 10:14, Psalms 135:15-18, Psalms 16:4, Isaiah 44:9-20, Isaiah 45:20, Jonah 2:8, 1 Corinthians 10:7, 1 Corinthians 10:14, Colossians 3:5, Galatians 5:19-21, Galatians 4:8, 1 John 5:21, and Revelation 9:20.

⁸ Gen. 4:16.





This geographical shift intensified humanity's plight by removing humanity far and far away from G-d's garden. Nonetheless, G-d reinforced the covenant of favor with Noah, indicating that society will recover what was lost in the deluge and the fall through Noah.⁹

The Noahic covenant marked the return 'to G-d's garden.'¹⁰ It signaled not only the end of the flood but restoring humanity to G-d's favor. Through G-d's action, humankind started to make a return to 'Eden.' Such 'return' generates hope for the coming of G-d's reign. And this has been the whole drama of the journey in the scripture: return to G-d, הַבּוּשָׁה, teshuvah.¹¹

THE "RETURN" OF ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS TO G-D

Rather than G-d's wrath and curse, Abraham's departure was inspired by grace and blessing. Abraham had left his home.¹² Abram is moving as he pursues something, although at first obscured. His leaving was not abandoning but *returning* to G-d. Before the covenant with G-d, Abraham's life did not seem blessed.¹³ It is when only in a covenantal relationship with G-d that Abram started to experience the holy generosity of G-d. He promised Abraham the

land of Canaan as well as an untold number of descendants. G-d would expand Abraham's influence across nations via these offspring.¹⁴ These were not realized during Abraham's lifetime, yet he trusted G-d. The promise is not separate from the giver of the promise. Even if Abraham did not see the fulness of the promise, it was fulfilled, as later generations will testify, but more importantly, his fulfillment is with G-d.¹⁵ Abraham did not need to see, for since it is G-d who made the promise, it would happen. For Abraham, his fulfillment of the promise is no other than G-d Himself.

Israel's exile is prolonged because of their unfaithfulness to G-d. Such is a recurring theme in the Old Testament.¹⁶ Except for Joshua and Caleb, the entire generation perished in the wilderness. It appears here that G-d is not fulfilling His promise. Its realization cannot be

⁹ Gen. 6:18; 9:9.

¹⁰ It was hoped that Cain as the firstborn of Eve, was the fulfillment of Gen. 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." However, as the narrative unfolds, he became more estranged from G-d as punishment, "Cain went away from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden." Gen. 4:16

¹¹ Teshuvah a Hebrew word, literally means "return", referring to the "return to G-d." Teshuvah is often translated as "repentance." It is one of the most significant themes and spiritual components of the Jewish High Holidays.

¹² Gen. 12: 1-3. Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

¹³ When Abraham landed in Canaan, the land was experiencing a severe famine, Gen. 12:10. Due to the famine, Joseph temporarily evacuated his family to Egypt before returning to Canaan. Abraham's life did not appear to be blessed during this time. Abram was obliged to lead his household into battle after his wife was stolen and taken to Pharaoh's harem Gen. 12-14.

¹⁴ "Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Gen. 12: 1-3.

¹⁵ The appearance of Abraham in the story of the rich man and Lazarus as a spokesperson of G-d, showed that the children of Abraham believe that he is with G-d.

¹⁶ "In those days, all the princes of Judah, the priests, and the people added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all the abominations of the nations and polluting the LORD's temple which he had consecrated in Jerusalem." 2 Chronicles 36:14. The book the second book of Chronicles speaks the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel and G-d's constant desire to save them. G-d, as He promised Noah, will never desire the destruction and condemnation of His people but only to keep them. The opening lines of the reading summarized the history of the Israelites - infidelity to infidelity. As G-d's faithfulness remains a constant, Israel met it with abominations rather than fidelity. This shows the lack of gratitude of Israel towards G-d, who has done great things for them. Despite this unreciprocated love, G-d continues in his mercy to save his people and the Holy Temple. He sends prophets, messengers, and teachers to remind them of their covenant with G-d and amend their ways. But instead of listening to them and returning to G-d, they mocked and scoffed at them. This adds up to the list of Israel's infidelity towards G-d.

Israel's infidelity is a result of the hardness of their hearts. Vanity, egotism, arrogance - these made their hearts hard. The over-importance of the self made them think they do not need messengers, teachers, and prophets; they do not need even G-d. Out of their infidelity to G-d, they have made themselves their own G-ds. And where did it lead them? Exile in Babylon and oppression by the Chaldeans. This reminds us of the commandments of G-d. All the commandments are an aid to keep Israel faithful to its relationship with G-d and focus on G-d. If Israel worships other false G-ds, they will return to their slavery. The moment they forget the true G-d, failing to worship Him truly, they are enslaved again. Now, they are oppressed and enslaved by the Chaldeans.

G-d remains faithful to his desire to save Israel. If they do not listen to messengers, teachers, and prophets, He will raise someone outside of Israel to save His people. He used Cyrus, the King of Persia, to let the Israelites go home and rebuild the temple.





perceived. However, the ambiguousness of G-d's promise is due to Israel's inability to remain committed and faithful to G-d. Humankind is no longer susceptible to His grace, for they continue to stray from Him instead of returning to Him.

The unfaithfulness of Israel becomes visible in the time of the Kings and Prophets. Israel asked Samuel to tell G-d to give them a King.¹⁷ Such a request is an outright rejection of the one true king who liberated them from their slavery in Egypt.¹⁸ G-d had already proven Himself to be the best king by redeeming them from Egypt; however, Israel wanted to be like the surrounding nations. They wanted to have an earthly king for them to indulge in idol worship of false G-ds just as the surrounding pagan nations did so that they could manipulate their G-d. Israel did not want to follow G-d or obey His commands.

Samuel told the people of Israel the weighty information of what this earthly king would claim as his rights. Despite these drastic, dreaded, and horrible "rights" of the earthly king, Israel insisted on having an earthly king. The people of Israel proclaimed, "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."¹⁹ In reply, the Lord said, "Listen to them and give them a king."²⁰ The people of Israel wanted to have an earthly king because they wanted to be "like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."²¹ G-d had already been fighting their battles; however, it seemed Israel had forgotten this crucial piece of information. The Lord had been guiding, protecting, and giving victory to Israel ever since

their exodus from Egypt. Israel had disregarded that they would have never even left slavery from Egypt if it was not for the Mighty Hand of G-d.

Nevertheless, G-d was giving the people of Israel free choice to decide on their form of government and kingship. Saul became the first king of Israel, and he proved to be a terrible king. Israel did not flourish under Saul's rule. The second king of Israel, David, was a man after G-d's heart. David did come across struggles with sin during his kingship; however, he always repented and turned back to the Lord. Throughout the time of the kings of Israel, there has been a mix of good and evil kings. Some would follow the Lord and obey Him, whereas other kings rejected the Lord and participated in the worship of false G-ds.

The historical exile occurred after the time of kings and prophets. There were several notable exiles of Israel and Judah throughout history. One of the most significant was the Assyrians' forced dispersal of Israel's northern kingdom. The Babylonians deported the most prominent citizens of the southern kingdom of Judah. The exile brought the faith of Israel back into the desert. The destruction of the holy city and the temple, the end of kingship, and the deportation of significant population segments meant a complete dismantling of the worship of G-d. The existential experience of many was that Yahweh abandoned them; if not, He is dead. At the same time, however, the exile was, for some, the beginning of a spiritual awakening in which the worship of G-d was reduced to its core: "He is there-though we do not know how" for every form of mediation has vanished.

There was an attempt to restore the kingdom in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, but it failed because Israel remained idolatrous and adulterous. There was unfaithfulness, infidelity, and disloyalty to G-d. The restoration shall take place in

¹⁷ 1 Sam. 8: 4-22.

¹⁸ "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day, I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other G-ds, so they are doing to you." 1 Samuel 8:7-8.

¹⁹ 1 Samuel 8:19-20.

²⁰ 1 Samuel 8:21.

²¹ 1 Samuel 8:20.





humanity's utmost effort to be faithful to G-d. Although the covenant relation with G-d assures humanity that when G-d's kingdom will come to its fulness, however, until then, humankind suffers, and their lives resemble that of Abraham's. We are all Abraham. We live and walk by trusting G-d, **הַיְמוּנָה**, Emunah.

The term **הַיְמוּנָה**, Emunah is generally translated in English as "faith" or "belief." The book of Genesis tells us, "After these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying: 'Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, thy reward shall be exceeding great.'" Now, for the first time, Abraham questions God: "O Lord God, what will you give me, seeing I go hence childless...to me thou hast given no seed." Over and over again, God has assured Abraham that his offspring will inherit the land he has been led. But Abraham has not had any more children, and he cannot pass on his great reward to anyone if he does not have any. In response, God brings Abraham outside and says: "Look now towards heaven and count the stars, if thou be able to count them...so shall thy seed be." What is Abraham's response to this new promise? "הַקִּדְצָ אֶל הָעֵבֶשְׁשִׁי, בְּשֵׁהָב יָמִיהוּ", VeHe'emin BaHashem, VaYachsheveha Lo Tzedakah - And he trusted in G-d, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."²² Abraham's act of righteousness demonstrates his faith in God. The 'Emunah' mentioned here is more than just believing that specific claims about God are valid; it is faith in God, confidence in God, and reliance on God, all of which require action compatible with that posture of trust and support.

Many significant events occurred between the testaments, but no progress was made. No realization of redemption occurred. They were merely preparations for the Lord's entrance. Jesus alone would deliver God's people from exile. According to the Hebrew Scriptures, Israel

²² Genesis 15: 1-6.

continued to be in exile. There are references in the Old Testament and at the beginning of the four Gospels, showing that Israel remains in exile. In the 2 Maccabees, a prayer reflects the experience of exile is expressed, "Gather together our scattered people, set free those who are slaves among the Gentiles..."²³

In the case of the Gospels, Matthew's genealogy did not indicate that the exile ended before the birth of Jesus. Further, in Mark's first chapter, people still came to John the Baptist seeking a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, implying that they were still in exile because they were still not forgiven. Luke's canticle of Simeon was waiting for Israel's consolation, showing that the condition of exile continued. In the second chapter of John, the wedding at Cana is narrated where there was a lack of wine. The wedding captures the Divine-human relationship. There was an emptiness on the part of the human reality. They have no wine. Emptiness and nothingness are the existential experiences of exile. At the same time, it awaits being created again and filled anew.

Further, the Gospels, specifically of Matthew and Luke, speak of lost (sheep, coin, and son), mirroring the experience of exile. The Gospels are geared toward finding what has been lost. G-d will find those who were lost and bring them back to His sheepfold, to His garden so that they may have the fullness of life. All this was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who accomplished the restoration of all that was lost, all those who have wandered in a foreign land, and brought them back to G-d.

²³ 2 Macc.1:27-29. The full text is, "Gather together our scattered people, set free those who are slaves among the Gentiles, look on those who are rejected and despised, and let the Gentiles know that you are our G-d. 28 Punish those who oppress and are insolent with pride. Plant your people in your holy place, as Moses promised."





THE RESTORATION FROM EXILE IN JESUS

Jesus existed while Israel was in exile. Captivity. Mk 1: 14 “Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” It is a foreshadowing of what Jesus, as the son of God, will accomplish regarding exile. Jesus’ as the human face of God’s love, will end humanity’s exile, which goes back to Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:23-24.

G-D’S HESED

The covenant relationship²⁴ established from the beginning of creation provides the space where the love of G-d is immensely poured into us. In that pouring of love, the exile will come to an end. The Torah refers to this as חֶסֶד, hesed. It takes place in the relational dynamics where the person higher in position pours out his compassion and mercy on the one in a lower part: no covenant relationship, no hesed. Since the very nature of G-d is love (mercy, compassion, kindness, among others), He will never stop until Israel is restored from its captivity. To do otherwise would mean He lacks hesed, which is opposite to His very nature. In the New Testament, G-d’s covenant is fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus is the human face of G-d’s love (hesed).

The canticle of Zechariah²⁵ does not only puts together the promises of God and the hope that

²⁴ The covenant relation in scriptures: Edenic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and new covenant in Jesus.

²⁵ Canticle of Zechariah, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; He has come to His people and set them free. He has raised up for us a mighty Savior, born of the house of His servant David. Through His holy prophets He promised of old that He would save us from our enemies, from the hands of all who hate us. He promised to show mercy to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant. This was the oath He swore to our father Abraham: to set us free from the hands of our enemies, free to worship Him without fear, Holy and righteous in His sight All the days of our life. You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, For you will go before the Lord to prepare His way, To give his people knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins. In the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, And to guide our feet into the way of peace.” Luke 1:68-79.

they will be fulfilled but echoes the hesed of G-d: “He promised to show mercy to our fathers... In the tender compassion of our Lord.” Similar to the Canticle of Mary,²⁶ it speaks of God’s “mercy on those who fear Him in every generation.” Both canticles speak of God’s promise to be fulfilled in Jesus. It is because of God’s hesed that He will end the exile, not grudgingly because past promises compelled Him but because it is everlasting faithful love. He desired from the very beginning to bring His people out of exile and restore them with steadfast and faithful love.²⁷

JESUS AS THE FULFILMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the public ministry of Jesus, many signs showed that He is indeed G-d’s Hesed. In the continued sinfulness of Israel, He fulfills His promise in the covenantal relationship. G-d’s Hesed caused Him to free mankind from exile.²⁸ This, of course, is best exemplified through typological reading.²⁹ What was said in the Old Testament finds its completion, satisfaction, and fulfillment in Jesus.

In the Old Testament, Israel was referred to as the firstborn³⁰ of G-d; in the New Testament, Jesus was called sinless Israel.³¹ There is a striking

²⁶ Canticle of Mary, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; My Spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant. From this day, all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is His Name. He has mercy on those who fear Him In every generation. He has shown the strength of His arm; He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. He has come to the help of His servant Israel, for He has remembered His promise of mercy, He made to our fathers, Abraham, and his children forever.” Luke 1:46-55.

²⁷ Dt. 4:31, 30:3, 32:36; Mic 7:18-19; Isa 54:7-8, 60:10; Ps 79:8, 102:13.

²⁸ Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8, Eph 2:4; Matt 9:36.

²⁹ What is Typology? Typology describes a particular method of Bible interpretation. When Christians study the Old Testament typologically, they recognize “types” that foreshadow a fulfillment in the New Testament. The second reading provides a suitable illustration of this idea. Paul referred to Adam as a “type” of Jesus (Romans 5:14). Other instances include Saint Peter’s analogy of the historic deluge to Christian baptism (1 Peter 3:20-21). The Letter to the Hebrews described the ancient Law as “a foreshadowing of future blessings” (Hebrews 10:1). There are further examples that can be provided, but the crucial point is that the Apostles utilized typology. Typology has allowed us to comprehend the readings.

³⁰ Exodus 4:22.

³¹ 2 Cor. 5:21.





resemblance between Israel and Jesus. Like Israel, Jesus was brought to Egypt, and baptized in the Jordan. He was tempted for 40 days in the wilderness, but unlike Israel, he resisted and did not complain about the food, test G-d, or serve Satan. Jesus entered the world and defeated sin and the evil one, similar to the Israelites defeating the Canaanites.

Jesus fulfills Israel's story and shows Himself as the faithful sinless Israel. He entered its condition, stood where it stood (exile), and His sacrifice ended the exile. Jesus is fulfilling the Divine-human aspects of the new exodus. He supplied manna-like nourishment in the feeding of the five thousand men. He healed those who were sick. He freed us from the slavery of sin, the evil one, and the world. He gathered 12 apostles and issued commands to them on his divine authority, as G-d did with the twelve tribes of Israel. He fulfilled G-d's promise and restored Israel from its exile. Jesus, as sinless Israel, G-d came to receive Israel's judgment. His blood removes God's wrath from his people. His blood inaugurated a new covenant. He is the servant who suffers. He completed God's justice. He rescued us from the law's curse by becoming a curse on our behalf. The crucifixion and death of Jesus ended exile.

THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION AS RESTORATION FROM EXILE

The cross symbolizes exile, but the resurrection signifies restoration. The passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus are the central theme of the New Testament - the paschal mystery. The crucifixion of Jesus ended Israel's exile. Jesus enters our human condition to restore it completely.

Matthew highlights Jesus as the "New Israel." It indicates that He is the "son" of God. The cross was accomplished once and for all, while the sacrifice is offered in eternal glory. What started in Eden when Adam and Eve were banished from the garden finds its restoration in the cross and resurrection of Jesus. In a way, this teaches us that when we look at Adam and Eve's fall, our eyes must be ushered to the one flow of God's hesed, His saving action, finding its fulfillment and completion in Jesus. Specifically, It is necessary and valuable to see not only the connection but the one flow of the story from Passover of Israelites to the Last Supper of Jesus, to His passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, to our the celebration of sacraments, specifically the Eucharist.

THE FIRST BORN AS SACRIFICE

Earlier, we mentioned Jesus as the New Israel, the firstborn of G-d. To understand the importance of the firstborn deeper, we are brought back to the Passover in Exodus 3. The Passover is important, If not most because it opened the door more expansive (the entrance is already open) for G-d to carry out His work of salvation and to continue the restoration of Israel out of His hesed. "Thus says the Lord: Israel is my firstborn son.... Let my son go that he may worship me."³² This is essential in understanding the Passover itself. God is telling other nations that they were all sons but that Israel is the eldest and he holds importance.

Those familiar with the story of the ten Plague knew well that the firstborn sons of the Israelites were preserved from death. It was because of the Passover. G-d gave specific instructions: take a lamb, put the blood on the doorpost and lintel,

³² Exodus 4:22-23.





and eat the lamb.³³ In obeying God's instruction, not only were the firstborn sons alive but Israel were also brought out of slavery. They were led to Mt. Sinai where G-d made a covenant with them. The exodus is not just the coming out of Egypt but the entering into a covenant between God and His people, וַיִּכְלַם וַיְבָרֵךְ, Avinu Malkeinu entering into a loving relationship with the son Israel, His firstborn. G-d was interested in restoring the relationship where there is communion between the Father and His children, the people of Israel. The Passover, in a way, ends not in the exodus itself but in the arrival of the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, the mountain of G-d. The end of Passover is restoring the relationship with G-d through covenant.

A better understanding of the covenant is gained when related to sacrifice. The tenth plague marked all the firstborn sons for death. All firstborn sons were destined to die. In a sense, the death of the Egyptians' firstborn constitutes a reluctant sacrifice. A sacrifice was also made for the Israelites, but, unlike the Egyptians, the spotless lamb was a willing offering. Such understanding of sacrifice sets the Last Supper and the Holy Eucharist in the covenant relationship with God.

In the last supper of the Lord, Jesus performed the prescribed liturgy for the Pesach. However, it

³³ Exodus 12: 1-13. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month, they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a home is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then, the assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses where they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Please do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; you shall burn anything that remains until the morning. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand, and you shall devour it. It is the Passover of the Lord. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

was not completed in the last supper but in the crucifixion of Jesus in Calvary. In the account of Mark, the Passover liturgy was performed except for drinking the fourth cup.³⁴ Hallel, the undrunk cup, signifies the taking of the people as His people, and He will be their G-d. The 4th cup has something to do with making us one with G-d, restoration with G-d. More than the idea of missing to drink the fourth cup is the ongoing saving action of God that is about to be fulfilled in Jesus.

After the last supper, Jesus, with the disciples, went to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mt. of Olives. Again, a typology between the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane. Adam chose the wrong tree, but Jesus chose the right one. Adam went to the forbidden tree and caused humanity's damnation. Jesus went to the tree of life that caused mankind's salvation. As it is said in the Preface on the Feast of the Exultation of the Cross, "For you placed the salvation of the human race on the wood of the Cross, so that, where death arose, life might again spring forth and the evil one, who conquered on a tree, might likewise be conquered, through Christ our Lord."

Noticeable are the three points in the account of the garden of Gethsemane, "They (disciples) went to a place called Gethsemane... He took with him Peter and James and John... And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed..." Again, a typology of the layers of the tabernacle: the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. On the yearly Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur, only the high priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies. To atone for his sins and those of the people, the high priest would sprinkle the blood

³⁴ "Truly I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of G-d." Mk 14:22. Seder has four obligatory cups to drink with the corresponding expression of deliverance. 1st Kiddush: "I will free you"; 2nd Maggid "I will deliver you"; 3rd Birkat Hamazon: "I will redeem you"; and 4th Hallel: I will take you as my people, and I will be your G-d.





of a slaughtered bull and a sacrificed goat on the ark's atonement cover. Such atonement of sins is carried out not with the blood of the slaughtered bull and sacrificed goat but with the very blood of Jesus as He suffered and died on the cross.

In Mk 15:23, Jesus refused the wine offered on the way to calvary but only received it in John 19:28 to fulfill the scripture. "I am thirsty." This was not just literal thirst. He was thirsty for a long time. What is He thirsty of? The key is in His next words on the cross. He said, "It is finished." The hyssop branch used to sprinkle the lamb's blood on the doorpost is the branch where the sponge with wine was offered to Jesus, indicating the ongoing Passover. After which, according to the account of John, Jesus said, "It is finished."³⁵ The Passover sacrifice is completed. Through His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus Christ, the New Israel, the Firstborn and Only Begotten Son of the Father, completes the firstborn son's unwitting sacrifice to Egypt. He is offering the sacrifice by the Father's instructions. This is how Jesus makes the unwitting sacrifice of Egypt come to pass.

By sacrificing a spotless lamb with no broken bones, he also fulfills Israel's obligation to make a sacrifice. Jesus is the spotless lamb, blameless Israel, who will be offered up as a pure sacrifice on the altar of the cross. However, Passover is only completed when the 'meat' is eaten. The restoration from exile was not accomplished just through the sacrifice and blood of the Lamb but the eating and partaking of the 'lamb' in the Eucharistic meal.

Since sacrifice is God's hesed, the Eucharist meal is all about it. It is a sacrifice to reconcile with God and restore our relationship with Him. Making a teshuvah, or returning to God, requires sacrifice. The Eucharist is the sacrifice

³⁵ Jn. 19:30.

of Jesus, the Passover of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, that restores us to God. Jesus who died once and for all is now the Lamb that once was slain and stands near the throne presiding the Eucharistic worship and sacrifice both in the heavens and the earth.³⁶ The sacraments, especially our participation in the Eucharist, are where we find our liberation from exile and restoration in the relationship with G-d. This is the way for us to be in communion with G-d, to have the lost fellowship again with G-d, a return to Eden: teshuvah.

Let us end with the Preface IV of the Sunday in Ordinary Time:

"For by His birth, He brought renewal
to humanity's fallen state,
and by His suffering, canceled out our sins;
by His rising from the dead,
He has opened the way to eternal life,
and by ascending to you, O Father,
He has unlocked the gates of heaven."

³⁶ Rev. 5:6. "I saw a lamb standing in the center near the throne with the four living creatures and the leaders. The lamb looked like he had been slaughtered. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent all over the world. ⁷ He took the scroll from the right hand of the one who sits on the throne."





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