

In The Land of Egypt — Teaching Notes

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In The Land of Egypt

✚ "Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt..." (Exodus 12:1 NKJV)

— This chapter describes the:

- Exodus from Egypt
- Laws of the Passover
- Plague of the firstborn

— But why does it state an obvious fact, "in the land of Egypt?"

The Passover

❖ The Passover is one of the most significant events in Jewish history:

- God fulfilled His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to bring the Israelites out of Egypt;
- He freed us from the bondage of physical slavery; and
- He brought us into the land of Canaan that He had promised to our forefathers.

❖ First and foremost, we are told that the entirety of the Exodus is a demonstration of God's immeasurable love for Israel.

— But, how can we connect *Yeshua* to the Passover, and more ambiguous, how can we connect *Yeshua* to our exodus from Egypt?

The Tanach and Talmud

❖ The first five books of the *Tanach* are called the *Torah* or *Chumash*, and mean 'law' or 'instruction'. They contain God's 613 written commandments given to Moses and Israel through the Mosaic covenant.

❖ Accompanying the written law was the oral law, the *Mishna*. This narrative and its accompanying rabbinic commentaries, the *Gemara* comprise the two volumes of the *Talmud* (Jerusalem and Babylonian). *Talmud* means 'teaching' or 'study'.

Biblical Exegesis

- ❖ According to Jewish lexical tradition, any given biblical text can have four levels of meaning.
- ❖ These four levels correlate with four classical methods of biblical exegesis, i.e. interpretation used by the rabbis and Jewish scholars in reading the Hebrew bible, the *Tanach*.
- ❖ The classical methods together are called *Pardes*, and can be remembered by their acrostic, PRDS or paradise. They are listed below in their order of interpretation:
 1. *Peshat* – Literal sense
 2. *Remez* – Allusion
 3. *Drash* – Deeper sense
 4. *Sod* – Secret
- ❖ *Peshat* looks at the simple literal meaning of the text, and is the most common form used in Christian biblical study.
- ❖ *Remez* follows hints built into the biblical text that create an illusion to another related text found somewhere else in the bible.
- ❖ *Drash* unveils the depth meaning in the text, which can only be brought out through excavation.
- ❖ *Sod* explores the secret, deepest and most mystical dimension of the text.
 - The Talmud provides us a simple principle: “A biblical text does not depart from its simple meaning.” Learn your midrash; find the secret meaning—but leave the simple meaning intact.

Origin of Midrash

- ❖ The word *Midrash* comes from the Hebrew root *Drash*, which means to ‘study,’ ‘inquire,’ or ‘investigate’. It is also the root of the word *Derasha*, which means ‘homily’ or ‘sermon’.
- ❖ Compilation of the *Midrash* occurred over many centuries, with some of the earliest writings dating back to around 400 B.C., and later writings dating from 10 A.D. to 1200 A.D.

What is Midrash?

- ❖ *Midrash* (plural, *Midrashim*) is the rabbinic sages, called *Chazal*’s methodical and thought provoking process to teach the *Tanach* and the *Talmud*.

- The Encyclopedia Britannica says: “*Midrash* developed into a sophisticated interpretive system that reconciled apparent biblical contradictions, established the scriptural basis of new laws, and enriched biblical content with new meaning.”
- The Jewish Encyclopedia says: “The term *Midrash* designates an exegesis which, going more deeply than the mere literal sense, attempts to penetrate into the spirit of the Scriptures, to examine the text from all sides, and thereby to derive interpretations which are not immediately obvious.”
- ❖ *Midrash* assumes that something in the text is missing, i.e. the text says something but beneath or behind the said there is the meaningful unsaid.
- ❖ *Midrash* reads between the lines to extract vital meaning that are not there explicitly in black and white, but are certainly there implicitly.
- ❖ One of the ways that *Midrash* operates is by way of what is called *Haggadah*, e.g. legends, stories, folklore, and traditions.

Types of Midrash

- ❖ *Midrash* exists to two major forms: *Halakhic* or *Halakha* which incorporates the body of legal teachings derived from the *Tanach* and the *Talmud*, i.e., study of the Mosaic Law, and
- ❖ *Haggada* which is the interpretive and homiletic story telling derived from the *Tanach*'s biblical narrative. Included in this category are also stories about the rabbis, historiography, proverbs, and parables that are metaphoric in nature.
 - *Midrash Haggada*, a subset of *Haggada* generally correlates directly to a biblical verse or topic, and incorporates interpretations of the biblical text.

Midrashic Structure

- ❖ *Midrash Haggada* typically incorporates several systematic elements into its methodology:
 1. A *Mashal*, which is the *Midrashic* story. The *Mashal* can either a parable or an expansion of the biblical story that fills in missing gaps. It is usually introduced with a phrase like: “To what might this thing be compared?” Or “This may be compared to?”
 2. A *Nimshal* which is an explanation of the *Mashal*. The *Nimshal* can also be in parable form or can be an expansion of the biblical story. It is usually introduced with the word ‘thus’. There can be more than one *Mashal* or *Nimshal* in a *Midrashic* narrative.

3. The *Mashal* and *Nimshal* are attached to the biblical story from the *Tanach* which is called the *Akeda*. Elements of the *Akeda* can be pulled directly into the *Midrashic* narrative.
4. A rabbinical question characteristic of *Chazal*: '*Lama Li*', which translates: "Why do I need this word, verse, or phrase?" Or "What does the *Mashal* add to my understanding of the text, and what would be missing if I read the text without the aid of this *Mashal*?" It can also include other rabbinical questions that directly challenge the narrative, sometimes rhetorical.
5. A proof-text called a *Pethita*, which is a verse from another part of the bible that is used for commentary.

Parable of a High Priest

- ❖ Let's start with a parable from rabbinic midrash (lore):
 - R. Shimon said: Great is [God's] love of Israel that the Holy One blessed be He revealed Himself in a place of idol worship, a place of filth, and a place of impurity in order to redeem them.
 - A high priest (*Kohen*) drops his *Terumah* into a graveyard.
 - Traditionally, the *Terumah* was an offering, the portion of the tithe set aside by the Israelites for the *Kohanim*, the sons of Aaron.
 - The translation however fails to convey the subtleties and multiple layers of meaning contained in the original Hebrew language.
 - In fact the word does not mean a 'gift' or an 'offering' at all.
 - It is derived from two separate roots that mean both 'to separate and to elevate.'
 - Therefore, this is much more than just an ordinary gift or a charitable donation of expendable funds.
 - The priest said, 'What shall I do?'
 - 'To render myself impure is impossible, and to abandon my *Terumah* is impossible.'
 - 'Better to render myself impure one time, and return and purify myself, rather than lose my *Terumah*.'
 - After some contemplation the high priest decides to enter the graveyard and retrieve His *Terumah* rather than abandon it.
 - This is no small matter since deliberate violation of this command carried the penalty of lashes, and disqualified the priest from fulfilling his priestly function for the duration of his impurity.

Comparing the Elements – Part 1

<i>Parable</i>	<i>Metaphores</i>
A high priest (<i>Kohen</i>)	The Holy One Blessed be He
His <i>Terumah</i>	Our forefathers, Israel
The falling of the <i>Terumah</i> into the graveyard	--
The graveyard	The land of Egypt, death of the firstborn
His dilemma	'How will I redeem them?'
To render himself impure	--
To abandon his <i>Terumah</i>	'to abandon them is impossible'
His decision	To go down and save them, defile Himself
Returning and purifying himself	God being purified by Aaron (Numbers 18:1)

Aaron the High Priest

- ❖ Aaron and his sons are at the very core of the Levitical priesthood.
- ❖ Descendent from Levi through Kohath, Aaron and his brother Moses were given a mantle and calling that can only have belonged to God Himself.
- ❖ As such, they would sit in the place of Yeshua until He would rightfully come to the earth, and take for Himself His own priesthood according to His own divine order of Melchizedek.

Aaron Purifies God

- ❖ The purification ritual of the sanctuary, including the holy of holies is the one commanded for the Day of Atonement.
- ❖ Its purpose was to atone for human impurity, not for God's.
- ❖ However, it appears that God must undergo some form of purification after descending into Egypt.
- ❖ That purification He receives from a human being, namely Aaron.

- “Then the Lord said to Aaron: You and your sons and your father’s house with you shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity [impurity] associated with your priesthood.” (Numbers 18:1)

Comparing the Elements – Part 2

<i>Parable</i>	<i>Metaphores</i>
A Kohen	The Holy One Blessed be He
His <i>Terumah</i>	Our forefathers, Israel [Now being Yeshua, for it says: <i>“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.”</i> (Deuteronomy 18:15)]
The falling of the <i>Terumah</i> into the graveyard	[Yeshua came to the earth, <i>“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”</i> (John 1:14)]
The graveyard	The land of Egypt, death of the firstborn [Now the world and because Israel has been exiled to the nations, <i>“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”</i> (John 3:16)]
His dilemma	‘How will I redeem them?’ [With His great arm, Yeshua, <i>“... and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? (Isaiah 53:1)”</i>]
To render himself impure	[Yeshua became our sin, <i>“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”</i> (2Corinthians 5:21)]
To abandon his <i>Terumah</i>	‘to abandon them is impossible’ [Yeshua allowed Himself to separate from the Father. <i>“...My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”</i> (Matthew 27:46)]

His decision	To go down and save them, defile Himself [Yeshua entered a graveyard: <i>"For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead..."</i> (1Peter 4:6)]
Returning and purifying himself	God being purified by Aaron [God now being purified by Yeshua, <i>"...when I provide you an atonement for all you have done,"</i> says the Lord God. (Ezekiel 16:63)]

The Tabernacle of God

- ✠ And the Lord said: "you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." (Exodus 19:6).
- α This promise was given to Israel, and we see the Church, the *Kahal* or *Ecclesia* as a fulfillment of this foreshadow and a recipient of His promise through Israel, "for salvation is of the Jews." (John 4:22).
- α "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light," (1Peter 2:9).
- ❖ Jew and gentile together as One New Man are given to Yeshua as a gift, a *Terumah* to assist in His labor and service of the tabernacle of God; a building not made of stone, but of flesh, and the place that God has chosen for His Holy habitation.
- α "Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart." (2Corinthians 3:3).
- α For, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people." (Revelation 21:3).
- ❖ "This in fact is the whole [purpose] of man, and the purpose for which he, and all the worlds, both upper and lower, were created: that God should have such a dwelling-place here below — how this earthly abode for God is the purpose of all creation."

The Terumah

- ❖ The word *Terumah* was used by God in requesting the Israelites bring an heirloom, something of immeasurable value to help build the tabernacle.

- ❖ How many people will take an expensive and irreplaceable heirloom and give it away to a friend or much less a stranger?
- Α As such, this word also describes *Yeshua*, the Christ, for “the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” (Matthew 13:44).
- ❖ *Yeshua* is of the blessed lineage and covenant promise made to King David, as it says: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren.”
- ❖ *Yeshua* died on the cross in order to purify and build the true tabernacle of God, the Church.
- ❖ He was both separated from the Father and elevated to a place of glory.
- ❖ The sages tell us that when one takes his material possessions and separates them for God, he uplifts those very possessions as well as himself.
- Α So too with *Yeshua*. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” (John 3:14).
- ❖ For this we see that God the Father and the Son are both glorified in His Sacrifice.
- ❖ To the one receiving the *Terumah*, this portion becomes an inheritance, so we, the Church are Christ’s inheritance.
- ❖ We are Christ’s *Terumah*.
- ❖ Like Him, we also are separated and lifted up as an heirloom, an offering of immeasurable value.

God’s Intoxicating Love

- ❖ God is so enamored and so in love with Israel that He cannot fathom abandoning us in a graveyard, even though He Himself will become defiled if He comes down to retrieve us.
- ❖ Egypt was a graveyard in the wake of the plague, but also the whole world is a graveyard for it is defiled with death.
- ❖ Further, the Lord had exiled Israel to all the nations.
- ❖ God’s intoxicating love brings Him to a place where He does not consider sending anyone but Himself to redeem us, and so He, *Yeshua*, God’s *Terumah* came in the flesh and was dropped into a graveyard, so that we might be swept up together with *Yeshua* in His arms and presented as a sweet *Terumah* unto *Yahweh*.
- Α “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” (Ephesians 5:2).

- ❖ Regardless of the cost to Himself, *Yeshua* was willing to retrieve His precious possession even if it required a penalty.
- ✚ "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5).
- ❖ In lowering Himself, *Yeshua* underwent the same ritual purification as Aaron, a man born in the flesh.
- Ⲁ "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." (Hebrews 2:9).
- ❖ As Aaron purified God, so *Yeshua* purified the Father by atoning for human iniquity.
 - The high priest (*Kohen*) in the parable is God, Blessed be He.
 - Moses and Aaron were only a foreshadow.
- ❖ This is a difficult statement as we know that God is anything but impure since there is no iniquity in Him, nor can He become impure since He cannot sin.
- ❖ Yet, the scripture is clear when it says that He became our sin.
- ❖ He became our impurity.
- ❖ *Yeshua* came to fulfill His law which required a man born of the flesh to atone for God's sanctuary.
- ❖ So, how did God reconcile our impurity which He became?
- ❖ He crucified it with Himself on the cross.
- ✚ "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin..." (Isaiah 53:10).

Conclusion

- ❖ In conclusion, this Midrash helps us understand why God said: "in the land of Egypt."
- ❖ For it is the complete story of the Passover and the spiritual translation to *Yeshua*.
- ❖ The Passover and the exodus from Egypt are integrally connected to *Yeshua's* declaration of the New Covenant on the evening of the Passover.
- ❖ These are not separate events, but rather a continuation of one active progression of God's redemption and salvation for Israel, and now all of humanity.
- ✚ "It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, [and from the whole earth]..." (Isaiah 11:11).

- ❖ This Midrash also clearly helps us understand the immeasurable cost that God paid in order to redeem and purify His sanctuary from human sin.
- ❖ In *Yeshua*, we the Church, Jew and gentile together as One New Man are Crist's *Terumah* and the sanctuary of God, atoned for and purified by His own blood, the blood of *Yeshua*, God's *Terumah*.
- ❖ Oh, the depth of God's love for us is so great that it defies understanding.

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