


ARAMAIC BIBLE COMPANION

THE CUP

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LEST WE FORGET There is a very moving gospel hymn which more than any other carries the theme of this monograph and it is the special purpose of this little document to ally the gospel account of Gethsemane and the Upper Room for that matter-and indeed past eternity with the crowning event of God's grace at Calvary-the Cross in all its glory. I quote the hymn and would encourage the reader to look it up sing it reverently and *cum laud*...

Lest I forget Gethsemane

Lest I forget thine agony

Lest I forget thy love for me

Lead me to Calvary.

EASTER

Jesus said "Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me!"

The very greatest theme in time and eternity is the theme of God's perfect plan of redemption through the lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Expressed in theology it is the story of the Triune God in His person QNUMA/RUHA(fundamental being and Spirit) and work QUM(glorious work of raising man in His image-by His redemption and to His eternal abode). Expressed yet again it is the theme of God's perfection of goodness in combining in His person holiness, love, creative energy justice, mercy and grace with humility. Expressed yet again it is "God in Christ" "God in flesh" "The God-man" accepting the "cup of suffering and redemption". In one sense the scope of this monograph is akin to John's gospel-unending but like the Easter Event it gives one the feeling of eternity compressed into a week or the universe resolved into gross weight and minute dimension.

SUFFERING

All suffering is not redemptive –some is simply tragic, some is gross inhumanity-some we describe as "misadventure". By contrast the suffering or passion of our Lord Jesus Christ in all its stark portrayal in Mel Gibson's epic film *THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST* is purposeful. Even in death Christ sees of the travail of His soul as the thief believes and the disciples stand faithful and the centurion is stirred to confess the Son of God. So the passion of our Lord supremely as annotated in the gospel accounts and as uniquely expressed by our Lord in the Upper Room, tasted at Gethsemane and experienced on the Cross of Calvary is Redemption in its utter reality. In other words it does something nothing else could do-it reaches from the heights of holiness and to the depths of anguish and despair of the human condition and regains the lost soul and wayward spirit of man for the life of eternity with God by the atoning death and the shedding of the blood of the perfect Son of God.

THE CUP –GENERAL RELEVANCE

The first cup of which we read in scripture is that of Joseph with which it is said the great Vizier would divine and most certainly without pursuing that notion the placement of the **cup of spiritual discernment** in Benjamin's sack led to the **searching of the hearts** of the erstwhile perfidious brethren.

Alexander Cruden in his concordance writes ""The cup figuratively speaks of the contents of a cup 1Cor.11.27 or for suffering which one underwent as one drinks a cup of nauseous medicine to the dregs Isaiah51.17 and Matthew 26.39.

Of the **Cup of Suffering** to be delivered by the hands of wicked men Christ spoke in camera with His disciples "Are you able to drink of the cup of which I drink?"

[Matt.20.22 and Mark 10.39?] He elucidated prophetically that they would indeed suffer for Him later but gave them to notice their unpreparedness whilst He reserved for them a fruitful ministry akin to His own before they should suffer.

The **cup of Wrath** poured on the wicked as portrayed in the Apocalypse 14.10 is that of God and of the Lamb and is without admixture absolute divine anger –those who drink it are marked worshippers of the "beast" and it is associated with the "winepress trodden without the city of Jerusalem in the tribulation."(14.20).

THE INEFFABLE STATEMENT

"Father if it is possible let this cup pass from me but not my will but thine be done!"

THE CUP-AS RELATING TO OUR LORD AND US

It is Luke in his gospel record (Lk22.20) who records that after supper Jesus shared the **cup of redemption** in the upper room. We need to look with the greatest care at how he presents and distributes this cup. (1) It is given to the apostles-even whilst Judas was at supper table. (2)It is shared among the eleven and fully absorbed by them (3) Our Lord clearly states He will not finish it or even drink from it. The significance of course is that the full benefits of the gospel are for the children of God as the drinking of the **cup of atoning suffering** to the dregs belongs to Him-our Lord. The first big question is 'Did Jesus drink **this redemption cup** in the upper room?' What do gospel writers say?

MATTHEW'S RECORD

Matthew 26 27-29 reads "He took the cup and gave thanks and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink it henceforth until that day when I drink it new with you in the Father's kingdom". *We might ask how the Aramaic chimes in this passage. The traditional blessing was "Blessed are You Lord our God King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine". Following this the Lord gave the cup to the disciples saying "Take ~~ye~~—drink out of it all of you. This is my blood of (new) covenant which is shed substitution or in exchange or **release** of many" [John of Ephesus speaks of "fighting **to release** the blasphemy of the triple tax of the emperor] **SHEBAQON**. Our Lord added that He would not "from this hour" drink of the fruit of the vine until He drinks it with the disciples in the kingdom. This is a reference to the Messianic kingdom on earth. It also tends to show that either within the hour Christ had participated in **the first two cups** or that at this moment He took the third. The expression "from this hour" is preferable since "in this or at this moment" is the alternative and there is no "at" in the Aramaic.*

Mark records that “He gave the blessing (for provision) in each case-and even in the case of the bread He said “Take-this indicates my body”. *The Aramaic expressed with the vowel “O” tends to mean “indicates” and with the vowel “I” is “of the essence of” which puts in doubt the old Lutheran clause “Hoc est corpus meum”*. Peter (in “Mark”) records that they all drank from the cup. Peter further says “He said intimately to them ܠܠܗܠܠܐ *LOTH* “This my blood of the New Covenant which is exchange or substitute is shed for hosts. Verily I say to you that I shall not drink later or after (this) fruit of the vine ܠܠܗܠܠܐ *TOB* until I drink it new in the kingdom of God..

Luke 22.14-20 records “And when the moment **هنا** ADNA came He reclined with the twelve. And He said to them “With deep feeling and clear perception and precious sensitivity **هنا** RAGATHA I have desired that I should eat this Passover with you before I suffer pain and mental passion or disquiet **هنا** HUSHAH. For I tell you that hereafter **هنا** MICIL I shall not eat it until it is perfected in the kingdom of God. And He took, raised or authored (even removed) **هنا** NASAB a cup and gave thanks and He said “Take this and *divide it among you* for **I say to you that I shall not drink from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come.**” And He gave intimately to them and said ‘This my body will be given on behalf of your persons-this you shall be continually doing to recollect, remember and celebrate me” **هنا** DICER and thus also **above the cup from after they had banqueted –He said “This cup is the New Testament in my blood which for “conversion /change” and “substitution” **هنا** HALAPHICON shall be shed.**” *Luke speaks of the cup representing something yet to happen and so it occurs in the after supper reference.* However, the hand of him that shall betray me is on the table-and the Son of Man goes away exactly as it was appointed yet woe to that man by whose hand He shall be betrayed.” *Luke is very clear that Jesus included “Passover” or communion as a supper He would not celebrate until the Kingdom comes. Even the Emmaus event was not a true supper-for Jesus left preemptively. He categorically vowed He would not again drink of the wine which they divided amongst them. It is very significant that He pronounced a second time above the cup the call to commemorate His blood shed. There can be little doubt but that our Lord invested the cup with utterly fresh significance and that the purpose was redemption to be fully imbibed by the disciples. In speaking of substitution He used the word **هنا** which also means “conversion”.*

In Gethsemane Jesus sweated “water as great drops of blood” Luke 22.44. This is a manifest foreshadowing of Calvary and foretaste of the agony of the cross. In the Gethsemane prayer the word “possible” is vital. It is the term “**ܫܚܚܐ** SHACHAH and it reappears in the phrase “*He will not try you above that you are able but will with the trial provide a way of escape that **you may be able** to bear it*”. The hypothesis

Jesus is working on is the **weakness of the flesh** and the re-assurance early given was the “strength” afforded by the presence of an angel. Where we read “If it is possible” we should perhaps read “If the flesh can bear it”! [Ref. 1Corinthians10.13]

There would appear to be a nuance in the prayer which at least one sage has seemed to spot. Its provenance is accurate and I have examined the implications below.

(1) Our Lord’s **FIRST PRAYER** continued His concentration on “the cup” after the upper room albeit on an intimately higher divine plain as He engaged in prayer that the cup “pass away” in poor confusing English idiom. The word in Aramaic is **ܐܒܝܪ** **ABER** and in defense of a better understanding it may mean “pass through” or “go quickly” or “overflow” as readily if not more plainly in the light of previous statements demonstrating that “the Son of man must be crucified” than as “lapse” or “removal” (Heb **רָם**-remove or depart-as in the Exodus) –the “but” **ܒܪܡ** **BARAM** that follows in Aramaic can be understood to mean “as long as” “(it is)**not exactly as I will but** **ܐܠܐ** **ALA exactly what you wish**”. This is a supplication with a detailed plea It is curious that our Lord should wish utterly **to remove the cup** which in the upper room He absolutely undertook even to the extent of referring to His drinking in God’s kingdom and with assurance enjoining His disciples to drink into its benefits. It is the more strange since our Lord parried Peter later about the “swords” indicating He could have had “12 legions of angels”. The proposition about the angels is one He was competent to make and may well have been part of the divine understanding of how this event in all its trauma could have been alternatively supervised-but the understanding seems to be that our Saviour was content it should be an event where heaven’s part was hidden and the crucifixion itself proceeded naturally, quickly and largely under darkness.

(2) In His **SECOND PRAYER** He uses the word “but”/ “except” with the hypothesis of “drinking” or “willingness” **ܫܬܢܐ** **SHATAN** and drops any minor variant or amendment. **This is a prayer of self-dedication or full acceptance.**

(3) **The 27th SHEBAQ** of Matthew “He left them” occurs in 26.44 where we have our Lord’s **THIRD PRAYER** :“If it cannot pass but I drink it let it so be by thy will”. He allowed the disciples to remain **where they were** and went away again lastly and prayed =John uses the word **ܐܝܢܐ** **intimately** “to Him” **ܠܗ** **LEH**. *The emphasis is absolutely on “intimacy” at a profound agreed level. The expression “prayed to him” in the context of “He left them” declares positioning though it appears brusque even irreverent unless one give full weight to the preposition LE which speaks of very close understanding and intimacy. The expression **ܡܠܬܬܐ** **MALTHA** “The same words” can mean “something” or “consent” or “pledge” or a “discourse”. It bespeaks companionship beyond that of even the disciples. This devotional prayer stresses the value of absolute unbroken constant intimacy to covenant.*

To summarise the prayers declare our Lord’s

1. REQUEST FOR ACCELELARATION

2. COMMITMENT TO ACCEPTANCE

3. SOLIDARITY(IN DEVOTION TO COVENANT) ACCENTUATED

APHRAATES THE SAGE GOD WAS IN CHRIST

The Persian 4th Century Edessa sage with ancient access to the Aramaic Diatessaron and the Old Syriac text interpreted “Let this cup pass” as “Let it pass hidden or in secret” [*Aphraates 459.1*] O the valiance of Jesus! Certainly Jesus indicated that His drinking of it was essential in the Father’s will but that He suffered largely under cover of darkness (whilst not in a corner) may well be a partial answer in appreciating the supplication of the Lord. The Passover of ancient Egypt was a terrible event but it happened in the depths of night. Darkness was merciful to Christ if a terrifying warning to the Jews and indeed the world of their gross wickedness.

The Prayer of Christ does have the nuance of “Let not my *exact will* be done but *your exact will*” and this is therefore a matter not of *collision* but of *communion and interchange* between Father and Son. In the prayer trilogy this “hidden passing” is an important detail for it is at the centre of three requests. The “communion” of Father and Son was perfect at all times during the passion contrary to what many scholars tell us. The triune God in His QNUMA cannot be impeached, divided or separated. The point at which light returned at the sixth hour is when our Lord cried “Why have you let me remain?” –just then light broke. The reason is evident –the curtain was rent and death was imminent and the evidence of atonement accomplished was immediately plain for all to see. **The Lord’s 4th appeal on the cross following three in Gethsemane** respects why He has not yet been able to drink the last dregs of the cup and having endured to enter the heavenly joy set before Him. By now the shield of darkness symbolizing the Passover had gone. There is cogency in the Sage’s insight.

THE QUESTION RE-EMERGES

“My God my God why do I remain?” SHEBAQTHANI(AZEBACTHANI exactly translates “gone” or “left?” as in psalm 22-our word is thought to come from a Targum commentary!) The implications of the cup were not finished until it was drained to the dregs. This question then constitutes the fourth prayerful query about the cup and the expositor’s mind plays between two *SHEBAQs* or distressful and *apparent* abandonments. What but death could separate Ruth from Naomi-what but the death of Christ could unite us to Him?

As generally understood this is a query tantamount to *a priori* chiding that God the Father would absent Him unfeelingly. An important point to make is that the centurion in charge commanded a regular soldier doing a kindness-holding the sponge he had dipped in a vinegar anodyne to the mouth of Jesus- to *withdraw* and “leave him alone” or “let Him remain” *SHEBAQU* to await presumed divine response.

The first *apparent* “inertia” is divine and the second is human. Yet was neither devoid of compassion and the centurion deemed dramatic events were imminent and indeed they were for as day dawned new that mid afternoon-literally at 3pm. (1) The Father continued in absolute solidarity [*cf The angel in Gethsemane*] and delight in His obedient well-beloved Son to progress reconciliation in our Lord’s imminent death. (2) He answered the Sons three earlier requests and this final cry in such a way that the expedition of Jesus’ death by crucifixion was notable and went on record as the soldiers wondered that “He was already dead”. He had entered into joy. The fourth prayer was *immediately* answered. (3) The Father had also kept a low profile and yet

shrouded the suffering at Calvary if not the entire world in darkness-bringing home in awe to myriads worldwide a momentous divine event which later the apostles could herald worldwide. The Son had spoken in anguish amid a hidden dynamic of “intimacy” with the Father in His final response with the words –“Father into thy hands I commit my Spirit” and (4) **Eloha who dwelt amid the cherubim** responded by “tearing of the veil” that separated man and God blending the fulfillment of prophecies in Psalm 22 Psalm 69, Isaiah 53 et alii. The immediate sequel after the brief gesture of the soldier-the centurion’s staccato command and the hasty withdrawal of the kind soldier was the cry “It is finished” and its immediate sequel the cry “Father into your hands I commend my Spirit”. *This is “the Triumph of the Crucified” and we do well to widen it to the Triumph of the Grace of God in His triune justice and holiness and love through the substitutionary atoning death of His perfect “sin offering”-the LAMB OF GOD who takes away the sin of the world.*

FINIS

Bob Coffey

L'shuvkha Marya

To the glory of the Lord

Aramaic Bible Companion

**THE
TRIUMPH OF
THE CRUCIFIED**

**GRACE
&
SUFFERING**

**ARAMAIC BIBLE COMPANION
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AND JESUS' PRAYER**