


**THE CUP  
AND OUR LORD'S  
GETHSEMANE PRAYERS**

**THE  
HOW WHAT AND WHY  
OF THE “CUP”**

**THE  
TRIUMPH OF THE CRUCIFIED**

**Aramaic Bible Companion**

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**“LEST I FORGET GETHSEMANE”** is the title of 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. 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 / 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’S RECORD

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 tvl *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 bvf *TOB* until I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

## LUKE’S RECORD

Luke 22.14-20 records “And when the moment Ond9 *ADNA* came He reclined with the twelve. And He said to them “With deep feeling and clear perception and precious sensitivity Otgr *RAGATHA* I have desired that I should eat this Passover with you before I suffer pain and mental passion or disquiet HWx *HUSHAH*. For I tell you that hereafter lykm *MICIL* I shall not eat it until it is perfected in the kingdom of God. And He took, raised or authored (even removed) bsn *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”rkd *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” nvkylz *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 pre-emptive departure closed the meal. 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 plx which also means "conversion".*

## GETHSEMANE

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 xkw SHACAH 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 rbl **ABER** and in defence 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 rws-remove or depart-as in the Exodus) –the “but” mrb **BARAM** that follows in Aramaic can be understood to mean “as long as” “(it is)**not exactly as I will but AIA 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 stranger still 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” Ntw **SHATAN** and drops any minor variant or amendment. **This is a prayer of SELF-DEDICATION or full acceptance.**

(3) In our Lord’s **THIRD PRAYER** when “he left them”(Matthew’s 27<sup>th</sup> **SHEBAQ**)26.44 our Lord prays “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 hl **intimately** “to Him” hl **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 EL which speaks of **very close understanding and intimacy**. The expression atlm **MALTA** “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 on “*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 Valiant Lord 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 and theologians 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 4<sup>th</sup> appeal on the cross following three prayers 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?

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 fulfilment 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.***

### **ADDENDUM ON "VOWS"**

#### **GETHSEMANE & PRAYER Matthew 26 36-40**

Then Jesus came united with them *υπαγω* to Gethsemane "Garden of winepress" and said "sit down or oppose him" *καθισατε αυτου* "while I make my vow there". And going further he took Peter James and John and began to be sorrowful and not at home *αδημονειν*. He said to them "My soul is distressed unto death. Stay here and watch with me". Going forward a very short way he fell on his face – vowing with these words "Father if it is possible, let this little cup pass from me" – as a danger passed, rather *πλην* your will not mine be done. The audible prayer confirms (a) trials were hard for the Lord too (b) the will of God is inviolable cf. *υ53*

#### **MUTUAL WEAKNESS OF PETER & THE MASTER 40-44**

Jesus came back and found them asleep and said to Peter, "Are you not strong enough to watch one hour with me?" He stated the situation – "The spirit is willing – the flesh is weak" Jesus repeated His vow – this time as He moved forward. The striking difference between Peter and our Lord is that Peter slept and our Lord prayed under intensely greater strain. There is here the ultimate lesson to the disciple and indeed the church on the vital need to hold by *the vows* one makes. The vow of Peter "Though all forsake you I will not" was simultaneously being tested along with the vow implicit in 'The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many'. Our Lord could see a way by which Peter could skirt

suffering as a result of His intercession and authority but none for Himself because His vow was sacrosanct and with that He was content saying “Father if it is not possible for this cup to bypass me, unless I drink it – *Your will be done*” (*That is a vow*). Back again to sleeping disciples and then He went away praying the same thing. The significance for Peter of course and the others was momentous. They saw in a flash the solemnity of “vows”. When in years yet to be as many as ten of them would die for the Lord they would have expressed themselves exactly alike ‘Your will be done’.

## GREEK CLASSICAL LIGHT ON THE OPERATIVE TERM

### **ΠΑΡΕΡΧΟΜΑΙ (let this cup “pass”) 26.24**

Matthew’s narrative encompasses “the alabaster box of spikenard” story; the “supper institution” story, the triple “Gethsemane prayer & vow”, the story of the “armed soldiers and betrayer” who apprehend the Master, the “testimony to Caiaphas” and “Peter’s denial at cockcrow”. In verses 2, 12, 15, 24, 28, 31,32 we have seven testimonies to Jesus’ death and in v.53 a reference to the possibility of the intervention of 1200 angels to prevent the cross. ***Christ distinctly said the Father valued Him above all and that He could appeal the sacrificial process with immediate effect at His call.*** Whatever alternative action or timing might be agreed the integrity of the Lord and His sovereign plan having advanced to the presentation to Israel for the glory of His name with the witness of the law and prophets could not be aborted. What our Lord did not do was to make any such call. Instead He made three pleas in verses 39, 42 & 44. The first may include any of the following sentiments but **not** “Let it **not** be done” the necessity was fundamental to God and man—the *ως* or timing was comforting to our Lord—that ***How*** was vital. [1] *Let it (the cup) go by...like a ship sailing to port! Let it go by... speeded up! Let it go by... disregarded! Let it go by... melting like a cloud! Let it go by...with just a few words!* These Aristotelian uses though not the language Jesus used afford in “speeded up” a similar meaning for *παρελθατο*. [2] “If or when this cup cannot pass from me that I drink it, let Your will be

done!” This is not the “**How** of the cup but the sheer necessity of the cup which Christ recognized-the **What** must be. No-one else was worthy and no other time was prophetically possible. No re-scheduling could occur. The third [3] request like the second found the disciples asleep. Without the cup the sleep of death for sin would have encompassed all mankind. The “weakness of the flesh” –the **Why** which Christ understood so very well and to some extent experienced so acutely in Gethsemane helped Him to pursue the task as did the strengthening angel that spoke of the Father’s love and the 12 legions. He had been praying about the strength of Peter’s faith and looking forward to the “New Man” that the cross and Pentecost would make possible.

#### **ARAMAIC USAGE AND ANALOGY**

*HE WAS INTIMATE WITH HIM (LOH)26.44* And He left them **SHABAQ41** and going away **AZAL** again bwt **TUB** “returning again”-the best analogy is the “tide”. So this scene is one where the Lord comes to them like the tide coming in and then going out three times in all. The references to repeated prayer are well considered as tides. With tides there is the power of the moon and so there is the influence of the church and its prayer life...He prayed to Him the third time the same words. The “to Him” is not irreverent- it is an intimate **LOH** indicative of absolute **ONENESS** in the ransoming and redeeming work. **This final prayer is a PRAYER OF PRONOUNCED UNION**

**FINIS**

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