

Friday Tefillah: Blessing 7

Redemption

Look on our affliction, plead our cause,
And redeem us soon for Your name's sake,
For You are a powerful Redeemer.
Blessed are You, 'ה, the Redeemer of Israel.

רֵאֵה בְּעֵינֵינוּ וְרִיבָה רִיבֵנוּ
וּגְאַלְנוּ מִהֵרָה לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ
כִּי גּוֹאֵל חֲזַק אַתָּה
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' גּוֹאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל

From the Genizah

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What Is Redemption?

Leviticus 25: 25-28

If your kinsman is in straits and has to sell part of his holding, his nearest **redeemer** shall come and **redeem** what his kinsman has sold.

If a man has no one to redeem for him, but prospers and acquires enough to **redeem** with, he shall compute the years since its sale, refund the difference to the man to whom he sold it, and return to his holding.

If he lacks sufficient means to recover it, what he sold shall remain with the purchaser until the jubilee; in the jubilee year it shall be released, and he shall return to his holding.

וּיִקְרָא כִּי־הוּא
כִּי־יִמְוָה אֲחִיךָ וּמָכַר מֵאֲחֻזָּתוֹ וּבָא גֹאֵל הַקָּרֵב
אֵלָיו וּגְאַל אֶת מִמְכָר אֲחִיו:
וְאִישׁ כִּי לֹא יִהְיֶה־לּוֹ גֹּאֵל וְהִשְׂיָגָה יָדוֹ וּמָצָא כְּדֵי
גְאֻלָּתוֹ:
וְחָשַׁב אֶת־שְׁנֵי מִמְכָרוֹ וְהָשִׁיב אֶת־הָעֶדְף לְאִישׁ
אֲשֶׁר מָכַר־לוֹ וְשָׁב לְאֲחֻזָּתוֹ:
וְאִם לֹא־מָצָאָה יָדוֹ דֵּי הָשִׁיב לוֹ וְהָיָה מִמְכָרוֹ
בְּיַד הַקֹּנֵה אֹתוֹ עַד שְׁנַת הַיּוֹבֵל וַיִּצָּא בַּיּוֹבֵל וְשָׁב
לְאֲחֻזָּתוֹ:

Ruth 4:3-6

He said to the **redeemer**, "Naomi, now returned from the country of Moab, must sell the piece of land which belonged to our kinsman Elimelech.

I thought I should disclose the matter to you and say: Acquire it in the presence of those seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you are willing to **redeem it, redeem!** But if you will **not redeem**, tell me, that I may know. For there is no one to redeem but you, and I come after you." "I am willing to **redeem** it," he replied. Boaz continued, "When you acquire the property from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabite, you must also acquire the wife of the deceased, so as to perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his estate."

The redeemer replied, "Then I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own estate. You take over my right of redemption, for I am unable to exercise it."

רוּת ד'
וַיֹּאמֶר לְגֹאֵל חֲלֹקֶת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר לְאֲחִינוּ
לְאֵלִימֶלֶךְ מְכַרָה נַעֲמִי הַשֹּׁבָה מִשְׂדֵּה מוֹאָב:
וְאֲנִי אֲמַרְתִּי אֲגַלָּה אֲזַנְךָ לְאִמְרֵךְ קִנְיָה נִגְד
הַיֹּשְׁבִים וְנִגְדָה זְקִנִי עִמִּי אִם־תִּגְאָל גֹּאֵל
וְאִם־לֹא יִגְאָל הַגִּידָה לִּי וְאֲדַעַה כִּי אֵין זֹלָתְךָ
לְגֹאֵל וְאֲנִי אֲחַרֶיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֲגֹאֵל:
וַיֹּאמֶר בְּעֵז בְּיוֹם־קְנוֹתְךָ הַשָּׂדֶה מִיַּד נַעֲמִי
וּמֵאֵת רוּת הַמוֹאֲבִיָּה אֲשֶׁת־הַמֵּת קְנִיתָ לְהַקִּים
שֵׁם־הַמֵּת עַל־נַחֲלָתוֹ:
וַיֹּאמֶר הַגֹּאֵל לֹא אוֹכַל (לְגֹאֵל־) לִּי
פֶן־אֲשַׁחִית אֶת־נַחֲלָתִי גֹאֵל־לְךָ אַתָּה
אֶת־גֹּאֲלֹתִי כִּי לֹא־אוֹכַל לְגֹאֵל:

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Despite the salvific resonance of the English noun “redeemer,” *go’el* is less a theological term than a legal term. The *go’el* is the kinsman who sets right a wrong that has been done to one of his close relatives.

Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*, Jeremiah 50:34

Individual Redemption

<p>Psalms 119: 153-154 See my affliction and free me, For Your teaching I have not forgotten. Argue my cause and redeem me, Through Your utterance give me life.</p>	<p>תהילים קי"ט רֵאֵה-עֲנִי וְחַלְצֵנִי כִּי-תוֹרַתְךָ לֹא שָׁכַחְתִּי: רִיבֵה רִיבִי וּגְאַלְנִי לֹא-מַרְתֵּךְ חַיִּי:</p>
<p>Psalms 103: 1-4 Bless, O my being, ה', And everything in me, His holy name. Bless, O my being, ה', And do not forget all His generous acts. Who forgives all your wrongs, Heals all your illnesses, Redeems your life from the Pit, Crowns you with kindness and compassion</p>	<p>תהילים ק"ג בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת-ה' וְכָל-קִרְבִי אֶת-יְשֵׁם קְדוֹשׁוֹ: בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת-ה' וְאַל-תִּשְׁכַּחִי כָל-גְּמוּלוֹי: הַסֵּלַח לְכָל-עֲוֹנוֹתֵי הָרָפָא לְכָל-תַּחֲלוּאֵיכִי: הַגּוֹאֵל מִשַּׁחַת חַיִּיכִי הַמַּעֲטֵרְכִי חֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים:</p>
<p>Rashi on Megillah 17b “It is the beginning of redemption” - even though this redemption is not the redemption from exile, rather it is [a request for God] to redeem us from the troubles that come upon us always.</p>	<p>רש"י מגילה י"ז אתחלתא דגאולה היא - ואף על גב דהאי גאולה לאו גאולה דגלות היא, אלא שיגאלנו מן הצרות הבאות עלינו תמיד.</p>
<p>Please, God, see where I am hurt and when I am in trouble. Use the power of <i>Gevurah</i> to see me through. R' Zalman Shachter-Shalomi with Joel Segal, <i>Davening</i>, p.124</p>	
<p>The commentators explain that this request is not for national redemption, the subject of later blessings. Here the reference is to release from personal crises; captivity, persecution, misfortune or affliction. R' Jonathan Sacks, <i>The Koren Siddur</i></p>	

National Redemption

<p>Isaiah 49:7 Thus said ה', Israel's Redeemer, its Holy One, to the despised one, reviled by nations, to the slave of rulers. Kings shall see and rise, princes, and bow down, for the sake of ה', Who is faithful, Israel's Holy One Who has chosen you.</p>	<p>ישעיהו מ"ט כֹּה אָמַר-ה' גֹּאֲלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל קְדוֹשׁוֹ לְבַזָּה-נִפְשׁ לְמַתְעֵב גּוֹי לְעֶבֶד מַשְׁלִים מְלָכִים יִרְאוּ וְקָמוּ שָׂרִים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְמַעַן ה' אֲשֶׁר נָאֲמַן קִדְּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבְחָרֶנּוּ:</p>
<p>Isaiah 49: 25-26 For thus said ה': even a warrior's captive shall be taken away and a tyrant's prey freed. And with your contender I will contend, And your children I Myself will rescue. And I will feed your oppressors their own flesh, And as with wine they shall be drunk on their blood. And all flesh shall know That I am ה', your Rescuer, And your Redeemer, the strong one of Jacob.</p>	<p>ישעיהו מ"ט כִּי-כֹה אָמַר ה' גַּם-שָׁבִי גְבוּר יִקַּח וּמִלְקוֹחַ עֲרִיצַי יִמְלֹט וְאֶת-יְרִיבִי אֶנְכִּי אֲרִיב וְאֶת-בְּנֵי אֶנְכִּי אוֹשִׁיעַ: וְהֵאֲכַלְתִּי אֶת-מוֹנִיךָ אֶת-בְּשָׂרְךָ וְכַעֲסִים דָּמָם יִשְׁכְּרוּן וַיִּדְעוּ כָל-בָּשָׂר כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מוֹשִׁיעֶךָ וּגְאֻלְךָ אֲבִיר יַעֲקֹב:</p>
<p>Exodus 3: 6-7 "I am," He said, "the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. And ה' continued, "I indeed have seen the plight of My people in Egypt and have heeded their outcry because of their taskmasters; yes, I am mindful of their sufferings."</p>	<p>שמות ג' וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִיךָ אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּסְתֵּר מִשְׁפָּה פָּנָיו כִּי יָרָא מֵהַבַּיִט אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' רָאֵה רָאִיתִי אֶת-עַנְי עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרָיִם וְאֶת-צַעֲקוֹתָם שָׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי נַגְשָׁיו כִּי יִדְעֵתִי אֶת-מַכְאֲבוֹ:</p>

Redemption: the Seventh Blessing and Communal Redemption

After recognizing: our ability to know [Blessing 4 - Knowledge], our penchant for sin and our ability to repent [Blessing 5 - Repentance], and God's willingness to forgive [Blessing 6 - Forgiveness], the slate is wiped clean, so to speak, and we can turn to our various needs. The ultimate need is redemption.

In Christianity, Jesus redeems the *individual* from sin, but Judaism rejects that as impossible if we are to retain our distinctly human character as beings with free will and its attendant responsibility. Judaism therefore envisions redemption of the *community* not from sin but from the limitations and frustrations of life.

We therefore speak of God as "Redeemer of Israel," after which all the subsequent blessings of the middle section of the *Amidah* articulate what redemption is. Following the order of the *Amidah*, redemption would be a state in which there is health [Blessing 8], food [Blessing 9], ingathering of exiles [Blessing 10], justice [Blessing 11], defeat of Israel's enemies [Blessing 12], reward for the righteous [Blessing 13] a rebuilt Jerusalem [Blessing 14], and the messianic rule of the scion of David [Blessing 15].

This blessing, then, acts as a heading for the blessings that follow, culminating in the last prayer of the middle section, asking God to listen to our prayer [Blessing 16].