REDEMPTION

Salvation from the states or circumstances that destroy the value of human existence or human existence itself. The word "redeemer" and its related terms "redeem" and "redemption" appear in the Bible some 130 times and are derived from two Hebrew roots: pdh ... and g'l.... Thought used to describe divine activity as well, they arose in ordinary human affairs and it is in this context in which they must first be understood. Pdh is the more general of the two, with cognates of related meaning in Akkadian, Arabic, and Ethiopic. It belongs to the domain of commercial law, and refers to the payment of an equivalent for what is released or secured. The verb pdh, unlike g'l, indicates nothing about the relation of the agent to the object of redemption, which in the Bible is always a person or another living being. Its usage does not differ in cultic that of activity from a normal commercial transaction. In both cases a person or an animal is released in return for money or an acceptable replacement (cf. Ex 13:13; 34:20; Lev. 27:27; 1 Sam. 14:45 with Ex. 21:7-8; Lev. 19:20; Job 6:23). G'l is more restricted in usage and does not appear to have cognates in other Semitic languages. It is connected with family law and reflects the Israelite conception of the importance of preserving the solidarity of the clan. ("redeemer") is the next of kin who acts to maintain the vitality of his extended family group by preventing any breaches from occurring in it. Thus he acquires the alienated property of his kinsman (Lev. 25:25) purchases it when it is in danger of being lost to a stranger (cf. Jer. 32:6ff.)....

Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972

¹ Cognate: A person or thing related in origin