RABBINIC FUTURES, SHORT AND LONG TERM

Part of the Fall Learning Series, Back to the Future: Jewish Perspectives on What Comes Next

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David Kraemer has been part of the JTS community since 1977 when he enrolled at The Graduate School after completing his undergraduate degree at Brandeis University.

He began teaching as a graduate student in 1980, receiving his PhD in 1984. Dr. Kraemer's focus as a professor is on the literary analysis of rabbinic literature, rabbinic ritual, the social and religious history of Jews in late antiquity, and Jewish diaspora ideologies. He accepted the position of Librarian in 2004 and played a crucial role in forging policy and expanding the impact of the Library's world-renowned collections and programs.

Dr. Kraemer is a prolific author and commentator. In addition to his books (see below), he has written influential articles on the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Mishnah, and other subjects, along with a commentary on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 2nd and 3rd editions). His most recent book, *Embracing Exile: The Case for Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford University Press, 2025), was named one of "The Best Books of 2025" by *The New Yorker*.

As time passed following the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, the rabbis never gave up on the hope of ultimate restoration, continuing to anticipate a *long-term* future when the anointed king of Judah (the *messiah*) would be returned to his throne, the Temple rebuilt, and so forth. But while hoping for this future, they simultaneously built a Judaism for the long "short-term," one that would make it possible for Jews to wait for many generations until the final restoration.

In this session, we will explore this "short-term/long-term" strategy and ask what wisdom it offers for us today.

Weekday Amidah:

אַתָּה חוֹנֵן לְאָדָם דָּעַת וּמְלַמֵּד לֶאֱנוֹשׁ בִּינָה: חָנֵּנוּ מֵאִתְּךָ דֵּעָה בִּינָה וְהַשְׂכֵּל: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה חוֹנֵן הַדָּעַת:

You favor man with perception and teach mankind understanding. Grant us knowledge, understanding and intellect from You. Blessed are You, Adonoy, Grantor of perception.

הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ אָבִינוּ לְתוֹרָתֶךָ וְקָרְבֵנוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ לַעֲבוֹדָתֶךָ וְהַחֲזִירֵנוּ בִּתְשׁוּבָה שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה הָרוֹצֶה בִּתְשׁוּבָה:

Cause us to return, our Father, to Your Torah and bring us near, our King, to Your service; and bring us back in whole-hearted repentance before You Blessed are You, Adonoy, Who desires penitence.

סְלַח לָנוּ אָבִינוּ כִּי חָטָאנוּ מְחַל לָנוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ כִּי פָשָׁעְנוּ כִּי מוֹחֵל וְסוֹלֵחַ אָתָּה: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה חַנּוּן הַמַּרְבֶּה לִסְלוֹחַ:

Pardon us, our Father, for we have sinned, forgive us, our King, for we have transgressed; for You forgive and pardon. Blessed are You, Adonoy, Gracious One, Who pardons abundantly.

רְאֵה בְעָנְיֵנוּ וְרִיבָה רִיבֵנוּ וּגְאָלֵנוּ מְהֵרָה לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ כִּי גּוֹאֵל חָזָק אָתָּה: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה גּוֹאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Look upon our affliction and defend our cause: and redeem us speedily for the sake of Your Name; because You are a Mighty Redeemer. Blessed are You, Adonoy, Redeemer of Israel.

תְּקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל לְחֵרוּתֵנוּ וְשָׂא נֵס לְקַבֵּץ גָּלֻיּוֹתֵינוּ וְקַבְּצֵנוּ יָחַד מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מְקַבֵּץ נִדְחֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Sound the great *shofar* for our liberty, and raise a banner to gather our exiles, and gather us together from the four corners of the earth. Blessed are You, Adonoy, Gatherer of the dispersed of His people Israel.

Festival Musaf:

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ. גַּלֵּה כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתְךָ עָלֵינוּ מְהֵרָה. וְהוֹפַע וְהִנָּשֵׂא עָלֵינוּ לְעֵינֵי כָּל חַי. וְקָרֵב פְּזוּרֵינוּ מִבֵּין הַגּוֹיִם. וּנְפוּצוֹתֵינוּ כַּנֵּס מִיַּרְכְּתֵי אָרֶץ. וַהֲבִיאֵנוּ לְצִיּוֹן עִירְךָ בְּרִנָּה. וְלִירוּשָׁלַיִם בֵּית מִקְדָּשְׁךָ בְּשִׂמְחַת עוֹלָם. וְשָׁם נַעֲשֶׂה לְפָנֶיךָ אֶת קָרְבְּנוֹת חוֹבוֹתֵינוּ תְּמִידִים כְּסִדְרָם וּמוּסָפִים כְּהִלְכָתָם׃

Our Father, Our King, soon reveal the glory of your kingdom to us, and appear elevate us in the eyes of all creatures. And gather our dispersed from among the nations and our scattered from the ends of the earth. And bring us to your city, Zion, with song and to Jerusalem and your Temple with eternal joy. And there we will perform the obligatory sacrificial service, the daily offerings in their order and the supplementary offerings according to their regulations.

בְּנֵה בֵיתְךָ כְּבַתְּחִלָּה וְכוֹנֵן מִקְדָּשְׁךָ עַל מְכוֹנוֹ. וְהַרְאֵנוּ בְּבִנְיָנוֹ וְשַׂמְּחֵנוּ בְּתִקּוּנוֹ. וְהָשֵׁב כֹּהֲנִים לַעֲבוֹדָתָם וּלְוִיִּם לְשִׁירָם וּלְזִמְרָם. וְהָשֵׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל לִנְוֵיהֶם. וְשָׁם נַעֲלֶה וְנֵרָאֶה וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְפָנֶיךָ בְּשָׁלֹשׁ פַּעֲמֵי רְגָלֵינוּ כַּכָּתוּב בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ. שָׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יֵרָאֶה כָל זְכוּרְךָ אֶת פְּנֵי ה׳ אֱלֹהֶיךָ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחָר. בְּחַג הַמַּצוֹת. וּבְחַג הַשָּׁבֻעוֹת. וּבְחַג הַסֻּכּוֹת. וְלֹא יֵרָאֶה אֶת פְּנֵי ה׳ רֵיקָם. אִישׁ כְּמַתְּנַת יָדוֹ כְּבִרְכַּת ה׳ אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ׃

Build your House as at first and set your sanctuary on its foundation. And show us its rebuilding and make us joyful in its restoration. And restore the Priests to their service and the Levites to their song. And return Israel to their pleasant home. There we will go up and be seen and bow down to you in our three pilgrimages, as it is written in your Torah…

Mishnah Berakhot

מֵאֵימָתַי קוֹרִין אֶת שְׁמַע בְּעַרְבִית. מִשָּׁעָה שֶׁהַכֹּהֲנִים נִכְנָסִים לֶאֱכֹל בִּתְרוּמָתָן, עַד סוֹף הָאַשְׁמוּרָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה, דִּבְרֵי רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר. וַחֲכָמִים אוֹמְרִים, עַד חֲצוֹת. רַבָּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר, עַד שֶׁיַּעֲלֶה עַמּוּד הַשָּׁחַר.

1:1 From what time may one recite the Shema in the evening? From the time that the priests enter [their houses] in order to eat their terumah until the end of the first watch, the words of Rabbi Eliezer. The sages say: until midnight. Rabban Gamaliel says: until dawn.

מֵאֵימָתַי קוֹרִין אֶת שְׁמַע בְּשַׁחֲרִית. מִשֶּׁיַּכִּיר בֵּין תְּכֵלֶת לִלָּבָן. רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר, בֵּין תְּכֵלֶת לְכַרְתִּי וְגוֹמְרָהּ עַד הָנֵץ הַחַמָּה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אוֹמֵר, עַד שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁעוֹת, שֶׁכֵּן דֶּרֶךְ בְּנֵי מְלָכִים לַעֲמֹד בְּשָׁלֹשׁ שָׁעוֹת. הַקּוֹרֵא מִכָּאן וְאֵילָךְ לֹא הִפְסִיד, כְּאָדָם הַקּוֹרֵא בַּתּוֹרָה:

1:2 From what time may one recite the Shema in the morning? From the time that one can distinguish between blue and white. Rabbi Eliezer says: between blue and green. And he must finish it by sunrise. Rabbi Joshua says: until the third hour of the day, for such is the custom of the children of kings, to rise at the third hour. If one recites the Shema later he loses nothing, like one who reads in the Torah.

תְּפִלַּת הַשַּׁחַר, עַד חֲצוֹת. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר, עַד אַרְבַּע שָׁעוֹת. תְּפִלַּת הַמִּנְחָה עַד הָעֶרֶב. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר, עַד פְּלַג הַמִּנְחָה. תְּפִלַּת הָעֶרֶב אֵין לָהּ קֶבַע. וְשֶׁל מוּסָפִין כָּל הַיּוֹם. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר עַד שֶׁבַע שָׁעוֹת:

4:1 The morning Tefillah (Shacharit) is until midday. Rabbi Judah says until the fourth hour. The afternoon Tefillah (Minhah) until evening. Rabbi Judah says: until the middle of the afternoon. The evening prayer has no fixed time. The time for the additional prayers (musaf) is the whole day. Rabbi Judah says: until the seventh hour.